

TWO NEW INSCRIPTIONS FROM UMM QEIS*

by

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In the summer months of 1993, two inscribed stones were collected by the Department of Antiquities at Umm Qeis, the site of ancient Gadara of the Decapolis. Unfortunately, the findspots provide no conclusive link with their original architectural context. The first, a hexagonal pedestal, had been reused as a windowframe in one of the houses owned and inhabited by the Rusan family in the deserted Late Ottoman village (Fig. 1 findspot A).¹ The second one, a limestone slab, was among scattered surface rubble on the terrace extending in front of the northern terrace (Fig. 1 findspot B). Both items were inventoried² and are on display in the open-air lapidarium of the upper courtyard of the Umm Qeis Museum.

Inscription A (Fig. 2)

The hexagonal pedestal consists of local dark grey, coarse grained olivine basalt which was quarried at the outskirts of the fertile Umm Qeis plateau. It measures 74 cm in height and 58 cm in its maximum diameter. There is no major damage, some traces of white wash originate from recent secondary use. The letters of the first line are 4.3 cm, those of the second 4.5 cm high. The stone has profiled mouldings at the top and the base, and is ornamented on all sides. Three of the sides show two fluted channels with rounded upper ends. The remaining sides are decorated with rhomboid or rectangular cassettes. These patterns are placed alternately. In shape, size and decoration this stone corresponds with an identical pedestal, which today stands upside-down in the southeastern apse of the central church on the western terrace of the Acropolis hill (Fig. 1 findspot C). In the Byzantine period it obviously supported a reliquary within this martyrion church. Prob-

bly both pedestals served as piers for columns in an older Roman building. According to the rhomboid pattern these two stones should be dated to the last decades of the first century BC or the beginning of the first century AD.³ On one face of the cornice profile of the Beit Rusan pedestal, one reads a clean-cut Greek inscription in two lines:

CYNTEXNIA
ΟΙΚΟΔΟΜΩΝ

Συντεχνία / οἰκοδόμων

“Guild of builders”

The inscription was probably chiselled into the stone at a later date and refers to a professional corporation of builders (οἰκοδόμοι).⁴ These urban craftsmen are further attested at Gadara by an epitaph from the northern cemetery (τεχνίτης),⁵ by countless masons' marks on basalt blocks in the western theatre and the underground mausoleum of Gadara, and in the theatre and on a row of seats at Emmatha/ Hammat Gader.⁶ οἰκοδόμοι of towns and villages in southern Syria developed sophisticated technical skills in the construction of basalt masonry, and they are frequently mentioned in building inscriptions of Hauranitis.⁷

At Decapoliitanian Gadara builders constituted their own guild, known in local Greek as “συντεχνία”.⁸ This term is not attested in ancient literary sources, but occurs mainly in inscriptions of Asia Minor and Syria. It was applied to social associations of various urban crafts. There are guilds of copper- or nailsmiths (συντεχνία ἠλοκόπων or χαλκέων) and engineers in charge of watermills (συντεχνία ὑδραλετῶν) in



1. Map of the Acropolis area of Gadara, indicating the findspots of A) the inscription of the mason's guild, B) of the *Legio VI Ferrata*, and C) of the hexagonal base re-used as a reliquary.

Phrygian Hierapolis,⁹ of linenweavers (συντεχνία τῶν λιτύφων/λινουργῶν) at Tralleis,¹⁰ Anazarbos¹¹ and Gerasa,¹² of textile dyers (συντεχνία τῶν βαφέων) at Sagalassos and Thyatira,¹³ and of gold- and silversmiths (συντεχνία τῶν χρυσοχόων καὶ ἀργυροκόπων) at Palmyre.¹⁴ It would surely go beyond the aim of this preliminary note to give here full account on the crafts and industries settled in the Decapolis. It may suffice to state that the new

inscription from Umm Qeis is important because it provides an insight into the civil, economic and social life of the ancient city.¹⁵

Inscription B (Fig. 3)

This stone bears traces of a Latin inscription and consists of porous, yellowish-ochre limestone, the surface of which is rather worn due to weathering. The block has the shape of a rectangular slab measuring 62.5



2. Umm Qeis, Museum: hexagonal basalt base with the inscription of the mason's guild.

x 35 cm in size. The inscription field was originally framed by a flat border, of which a bit is still visible at the right part of the stone. The letters in both lines are 7.5 cm high. The left part of the abbreviation "[LE]G(IO)" in the second line is entirely destroyed. The slightly visible second perpendicular dash behind V is not the Roman numeral VII. Even though its horizontal strokes are entirely worn, this letter should be restored as F of F(errat). In consequence we propose as a conjectural reading:

VEX
[LE]G VI F

Vex(illatio)
(Le)g[ionis] Sextae F(errat)

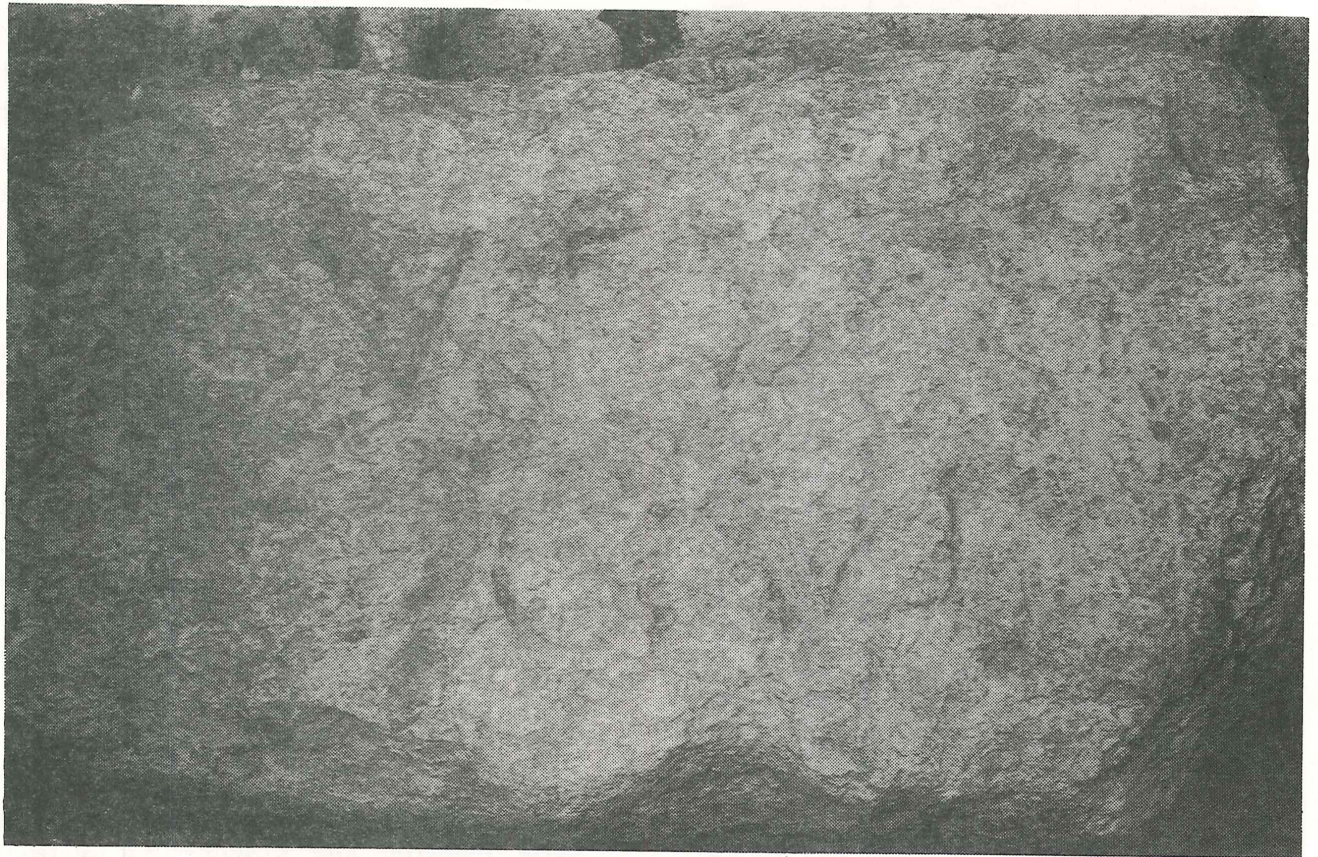
"Detachment of
the *Legio VI F(errat)*".

The second inscription documents a military unit, active within or in the environs of the city, and the presence of detachments of the sixth Roman legion¹⁶ in northern 'Ajlun. Roman soldiers, some of them bearing a gentile nomenclature of Italian origin, are already attested at Gadara: A bilingual inscription,¹⁷ dating to the last two decades of the reign of Trajan,¹⁸ refers to a testamentary disposition in honour of the emperor on behalf of Marcus Iulius Secundus, a Roman officer in the rank of a *primus pilus*. Under the Antonines an anonymous *centurio* of the *legio IV Scythica*¹⁹ is associated with a public building in the city. Funerary epigraphy gives the names of various Gadarene veterans coming from or living in Gadara: they served in the *legiones II Traiana*,²⁰ *XIV Gemina*,²¹ and *X Fretensis*.²²

Military inscriptions of the *legio VI Ferrata* have been found at various places in Syria, Palestine and Arabia.²³ An example comparable to the new inscription comes from Gadara of Peraea, modern Salt, and is now on display at the Jordan Archaeological Museum at Amman.²⁴ Pioneer detachments of the Roman army were involved in such works as the construction of bridges, aqueducts or roads, which primarily were executed for strategic reasons but which benefited the civil population as well. Other *vexillationes* of the *legio VI Ferrata* were active at other urban centres of the area such as Gerasa,²⁵ Scythopolis, Samaria-Sebaste, Eleutheropolis and Caesarea Maritima.²⁶

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3. Umm Qeis, Museum : Limestone slab with the inscription of the vexillatio of the VI legio Ferrata.

Footnotes

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1. This inscription-block was first shown to us by Ahmad Rusan and subsequently recorded in the summer of 1987 during the epigraphical survey of P. W. Herz (*Archäologischer Anzeiger* 1990, 259f.). At that time the stone was still *in situ* (western chamber of Beit Rusan), but only few traces of the letters were visible. It was detached from its architectural context after the partial destruction of the house in the summer of 1993.
 2. Umm Qeis Museum no. 115, 116.
 3. Similar ornaments are preserved on cubical pedestals in front of a free-standing gate south of Tiberias, G. Foerster, in: *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (Oxford, Jerusalem 1978) 1174 bottom. In wall painting the rhomboid ornament is found as an imitation of marble incrustation on the pedestals of the colonnade in the lower terrace of the Herodian palace at Masada, cf. Y. Yadin, *Masada*³ (Frankfurt am Main, Vienna and Zurich 1967) 48f., on frescos in the shrine of Wadi Ramm (R. Wenning, in: H.-P. Kuhnen, *Palästina in griechisch-römischer Zeit. Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaften* II2 [1990] 398 pl. 24, 3), and on the "pilasters" of a Nabataean baetyl, P. C. Hammond, 'Ein nabatäisches Weihrelief aus Petra', *Bonner Jahrbücher* 181, 1981, 137ff.; F. Zayadine, 'The Pantheon of the Nabataean Inscriptions from Northern Egypt and the Sinai', *Aram* 2, 1990, 173 fig. 12.
 4. H. G. Liddell, R. Scott and H. S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 8th ed. (Oxford 1977) 1204 s.v. *οἰκοδομεύς*.

5. F. Zayadine, 'A Dated Greek Inscription from Gadara-Umm Qeis', *ADAJ* 18 [1973], 78. The meaning of "τεχνίτης" is obscure: it may refer to one of the "famous poets or comedians of Gadara" organized in the association of the Dionysiac *technitai* (cf. S. Mittmann, *Beiträge zur Siedlungs- und Territorialgeschichte des nördlichen Ostjordanlandes*, *Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina Vereins* [Wiesbaden 1970] 176f. No. 12; B. Mershen and E. A. Knauf, 'From Gadara to Umm Qais', *ZDPV* 104 [1988] 131; U. Hübner, *Spiele und Spielzeug im antiken Palästina*, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis CXXI* [Freiburg/Switzerland and Göttingen 1992] 120f. n. 49). On the other hand, lyrical epitaphs of this kind were popular in the villages of Syrian Haurān during the Roman and Byzantine periods (cf. E. Littmann, *Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expedition to Syria in 1904-1905*, Division III A 2 (Leiden 1910) 94 Nr. 159). Thus it is also possible, as F. Zayadine suggested, that "τεχνίτης" means not a professional poet or one of the "great sons of Gadara", but only a simple craftsman, an employee of an architect, builder or mason. Such a worker could well have been registered in the guild mentioned in the inscription.
6. G. Schumacher, *Northern 'Ajlun - "within the Decapolis"* (London 1890) 73; S. Merrill, *East of the Jordan: A Record of Travel and Observation in the Countries of Moab, Gilead, and Bashan* (London 1881) 151; E. L. Sukenik, *The Ancient Synagogue of el-Hammeh* (Jerusalem 1935) 80 fig. 8. The presence of marble sculptors is indicated by unpublished inscriptions found between 1979 and 1982, cf. L. Di Segni and Y. Hirschfeld, 'Four Greek Inscriptions from Hammat Gader from the Reign of Anastasius', *IEJ* 36, 1986, 268 note 73; L. Di Segni, 'Greek Inscriptions of the bath-house in Hammat Gader', *Aram* 4 (forthcoming).
7. E. Littmann, *Greek and Latin Inscriptions, Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expedition to Syria in 1904-1905*, Sect. A: Southern Syria Part 2 (Leiden 1910) 94 No. 159 (Şalkhad); 104 No. 177 (il-Meshkūk); 112f. No. 197 (il-Ghāriyeh); Part 5 (Leiden 1915) 315 No. 685 ('Ormān); 330 No. 714 (Melah iṣ-Şarrār); 344 No. 738 (in-Nemārah); Part 7 (Leiden 1921) 374 No. 783¹; 376 No. 783⁵ (Djdiyeh), 383 No. 786-786¹ (Smēd), 386 No. 787⁸, 390f. No. 787¹⁰ (Mdjēdil), 438f. No. 800⁷ (Dāmit il-'Alyā). Cf. also the verbal form οἰκοδομέω and the related nomen οἰκοδομή Littmann loc. cit. 475 Index.
8. Liddell, Scott and Jones loc. cit. 1726f. s.v. *συντεχνία*; *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie* 8 A2 (Stuttgart 1932) 1456 s.v. *συντεχνία* (Poland). For guilds in Asia Minor: E. Ziebarth, *Das griechische Vereinswesen* (Leipzig 1896) 101ff.; in Palestine: A. Ben-David, *Talmudische Ökonomie I* (Hildesheim and New York 1974) 170ff.; in Egypt: P. van Minnen, 'Urban Craftsmen in Roman Egypt', *Münstersche Beiträge zur antiken Handesgeschichte* 6, 1, 1987, 31ff.
9. C. Humann (ed.), 'Altortümer von Hierapolis', *Jahrb. Deutsches Archäol. Institut, Erg.-Heft IV* (Berlin 1898) 114 No. 133 b (W. Judeich); Ziebarth loc. cit. 105; *Bulletin Épigraphique* 1971, 643; H. W. Pleket, *Epigraphica Anatolica* 12, 1988, 26ff.; *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum XXXVIII*, ed. H. W. Pleket and R. S. Stroud (Amsterdam 1991) 565 No. 1955.
10. Ziebarth loc. cit. 104; cf. Liddell, Scott and Jones loc. cit. 1052 s.v. *λυύφος*.
11. Ziebarth loc. cit. 106.
12. Cf. C. B. Welles, in: C. Kraeling, *Gerasa, City of the Decapolis* (New Haven 1938) 442 No. 190; Ben-David loc. cit. 172 note 168. Beside the weavers other organized commercial branches mentioned in Gerasene epigraphy were constituted by retail traders (Welles loc. cit. 411 No. 80-81), potters (ibid. 410 No. 79), goldsmiths (ibid. 486f. No. 335; 491f. No. 353), and the players of the three-stringed lute (ibid. 492 No. 354). For the famous manufactures of flax linen textiles at Scythopolis ibid. 156; Z. Zafrai, *The Economy of Roman Palestine* (London and New York 1994) 197ff.
13. Ziebarth loc. cit. 106.
14. *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft* 8 A2 (Stuttgart 1932) 1456 s.v. *συντεχνία*; Ziebarth loc. cit. 106; R. Drexhage, *Untersuchungen zum römischen Osthandel* (Bonn 1988) *passim*.
15. Another professional group at Gadara was formed by medical doctors on duty within the city or at the thermal spa of Hammat Gader. From the first century BC a charm by an anonymous Gadarene woman "against every kind of inflammation" is preserved on a Greek papyrus, cf. P. Maas, 'The Philinna Papyrus', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 62, 1942, 36. E. Brünnow and A. v. Domszowski, *Die Provincia Arabia II* (Strassburg 1905) 251 reported a sarcophagus in the eastern cemetery of Gadara. Its inscription names a Ζήνων ια[τρὸς...?] "Zenon the doctor" who died in the age of 19 (!) years. Unfortunately, there is no certainty for this reading since the

- sarcophagus is lost. It seems more likely to restore IA as Ἰά(σωνος), thus giving the *patronymicon* of the diseased. More secure evidence of medical doctors at Gadara is provided by some surgical instruments belonging to a (female ?) dentist found in one of the tombs of the Byzantine crypt at the western hypogaeum: E. Künzl and Th. Weber, 'Das spätantike Grab eines Zahnarztes zu Gadara in der Dekapolis', *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 5, 1991, 81ff.; for this topic in general see J. Zias and K. Numeroff, 'Ancient Dentistry in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Brief Review', *IEJ* 36, 1986, 65-67.
16. *Dictionnaire des antiquités Grecques et Romaines*, ed. C. Daremberg and E. Saglio III. (Paris s.a.) 1082 s.v. *Legio VI Ferrata* (R. Cagnat); *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie* loc. cit. 12, 2 (Stuttgart 1925) 1587ff. s.v. *Legio* (Ritterling). Cf. below note 24.
 17. Umm Qeis, Private Property; P. W. Herz, 'Gadara in der Dekapolis', *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 1990, 260 fig. 40.
 18. Trajan received the title "Dacicus" in AD 102. After the Parthian war of AD 115 "Particus" was added to the imperial nomenclature. Due to the fact that the last victorious name is not mentioned in the inscription, the death of Marcus Iulius Secundus should be dated between AD 102 and 115.
 19. Cf. G. Mussies, 'Eine Architravinschrift aus Umm Qeis (Gadara) in Jordanien', *ZDPV* 105, 1989, 124ff.; *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* loc. cit. XXXIX (Amsterdam 1989) 515 No. 1624.
 20. Cf. E. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, rev. of the 4th edition by G. Vermes, F. Millar and M. Black II (Edinburgh 1979) 135 note 252.
 21. A lost funerary inscription of a certain P(ublius) Aelius, soldier of the *Legio XIV Gemina* has been copied by G. A. Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (London 1894) 461 note 3; *CIL III* Suppl. IV No. 12091; P. Schäfer, 'Der Bar-Kokhba-Aufstand', *Tübinger Studien zum antiken Judentum I* (Tübingen 1981) 128. This Legion was originally based at Moguntiacum (Mainz, Germany), later in Carnuntum. In the second half of the second century AD it participated in the Parthian wars of Lucius Verus and Septimius Severus.
 22. The Inscription of Gaius Annius was already copied by travellers of the late 19th century (cf. Mittmann loc. cit [see note 5] 178 No. 13 with note 45 [further lit.]). Today it is reused as a window lintel in the modern village. According to P. Herz (communication Mainz 1987) the abbreviation ΙΦ should be read as the Greek numeral ι' (scil.: δεκάτης) with the legion's surname Φ(ρεθη(ν)σίας), cf. Mittmann loc. cit. 173f. No. 10.
 23. Comprehensive study of this epigraphical type by D. L. Kennedy, 'Legio VI Ferrata: The Annexation and Early Garrison of Arabia', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 84, 1980, 299-302.
 24. P.-L. Gatier, *Inscriptions de la Jordanie II: Région Centrale*. *Inscriptions Grecques et Latines de la Syrie XXI*. Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique CXIV (Paris 1986) 31f. No. 3.
 25. C. B. Welles, in: C. Kraeling, *Gerasa, City of the Decapolis* (New Haven 1938) 435 No. 171.
 26. A. Negev, 'The High Level Aqueduct at Caesarea', *IEJ* 14, 1964, 244ff.; N. Tzori, 'An Inscription of the legio VI Ferrata from the Northern Jordan Valley', *IEJ* 21, 1971, 53-54.