

The purpose of this article¹ is to present and analyze several newly discovered inscriptions found during the April-May 2011 survey conducted by the Polish-Syrian archaeological mission under the direction of Prof. Michał Gawlikowski.

We emphasize that the inscriptions presented below are very badly preserved which makes their reading difficult. Our interpretations and reconstructions are based on various previous publications, and therefore necessarily speculative. The inscriptions studied here illustrate perfectly already known epigraphic formulae of Palmyra. The aim of this paper is to complete the existing corpus of the texts from Palmyra. Also we wish to rectify the information regarding one inscription, already published but for which the find spot had been wrongly attributed.

■ 1. UNILINGUAL ARAMAIC HONORIFIC INSCRIPTION ON A CONSOLE

The inscribed console hewn from local limestone material was found on a slope, south of the defensive wall. More precisely it was found between the U-shaped bastions A 403 and A 406 according to Schnädelbach² and has been submitted for a very long time to atmospheric erosion, which seriously influenced its present shape. According to Delplace and Dentzer-Feydy's proposal, the console most probably belonged to the type 3.3.2.³ The exact dating of this kind of corbel is not precise, but most probably, such types of console

were made in the second half of the 2nd century CE and in the first half of the 3rd century CE. Taking into consideration the find spots where this type of corbel have been recognized, it would seem that this particular corbel was taken from the unfinished columned street which originally linked the Tetrapyle with the temple of Arsu.

Since the material used for the preparation of the corbel was not of the highest quality, not only is the text of the inscription mostly missing, but also the console's structure is full of cracks and other defects. This stone block was most probably taken for reuse during the construction of the defensive wall. In other words, some architectonic structures of Palmyra were spoiled in the search for cheap building material. It cannot be excluded that this console was taken from the city fragment of the already mentioned Tetrapyle and the sanctuary of Arsu, but it is also possible that it was taken from any other monumental structure in the western or southwestern part of the city.

As mentioned above, this object is inscribed and contains an Aramaic inscription much longer than the surviving fragment. We assume that the inscription on the console was bilingual in Greek and Aramaic, but that the Greek version is completely unreadable. On the other hand, there is a possibility that the text was not bilingual. In some cases the honorific inscriptions in Palmyrenian epigraphy were written in their Aramaic version only. The question is instead the genre of the text: we know from the evidence that it was honorific texts that were usually engraved on the consoles, but we cannot exclude some examples of dedications for deities.⁴

Most likely the inscription had originally five or six lines, of which only two lines can be read, as the rest of the text is illegible. On the basis of the paleography,

1. We are grateful to M. Michał Gawlikowski for entrusting us with the publications of these texts, and to Mrs. Françoise Briquel Chatonnet for her attentive reading and remarks. We would also like to express our thanks to Mss. Aleksandra Zwolinska and Blanka Kotlinska for correcting the English.
2. K. SCHNÄDELBACH, *Topographia Palmyrena. 1, Topography*, Damascus, 2010, pp. 59-60.
3. Ch. DELPLACE, J. DENTZER-FEYDY, "Consoles et épigraphie", in *L'agora de Palmyre* (Ausonius éditions, Mémoires 14;

Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 175), Bordeaux – Beyrouth, 2005, pp. 260-261, 268, 270.

4. Honorific inscriptions: CIS II 3927 (engraved on a stone plate), Inv. XII 49 (dedication hewn on a console).

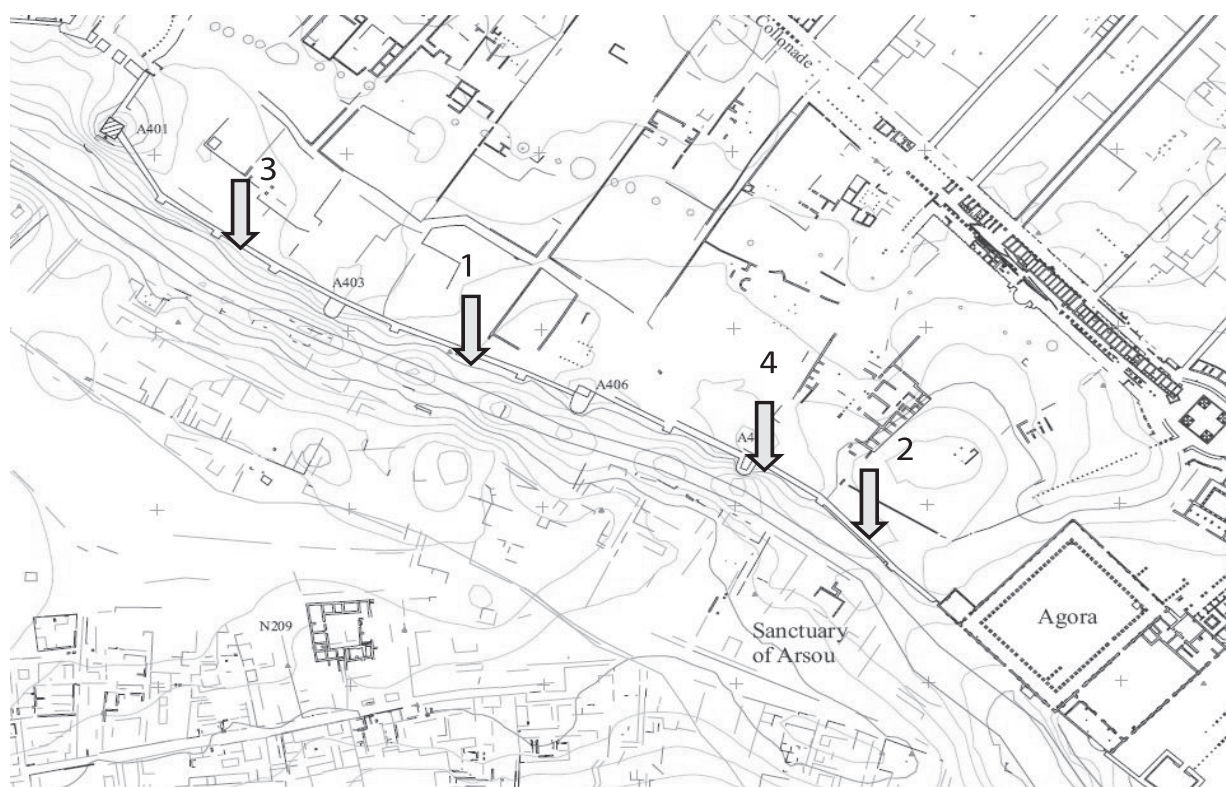


Figure 1 - The find spots of the newly discovered inscriptions, based on K. SCHNÄDELBACH, *Topographia Palmyrena* (*supra*, n. 2), t. 1, pp. 59-60.

(since the exact date is not preserved), the text can be dated to the first half of the 2nd century CE. An even more specific dating can be proposed: in the 20's or 30's of the 2nd century CE.⁵ The letters engraved on the console are very similar to those visible on the Tariff inscription. We assume that the date was written at the end or at the beginning of the inscription.

We propose the following reading:

1. Illegible
2. [_ _].YL' [1-3 letters] MŞBYT' DNH / TŞBYT' K[LH]
3. Illegible
4. [_ _]GDBWL L.[.]L[_ _] / [_ _]GLBWL L[M]L[KBL _ _]?



Critical commentary

Line 2 :

- YL' is the ending of a name of non-Semitic origin, most probably Greek or even Latin. If our supposition concerning the dating of the inscription is correct, it is possible to reconstruct this preserved ending as a name like Julius or Aurelius. The first proposal is more probable.
- MŞBYT' or TŞBYT' – Both variants are epigraphically possible since we have many other occurrences of both from Palmyra, especially in the honorific inscriptions. See: BS III 45 (PAT 0197); CIS II 3952 (PAT 0298), 3959 (PAT 0305). A word MŞBYT' in this context appears for instance in BS III 45⁶ as a synonym for the word ŞLM', a statue, most often used in this case.

5. J. CANTINEAU, *Grammaire du palmyrénien épigraphique*, Le Caire, 1935, paleographic table pp. 30-31.

6. C. DUNANT, *Le sanctuaire de Baalshamin à Palmyre. 3, Les inscriptions*, Rome, 1971.

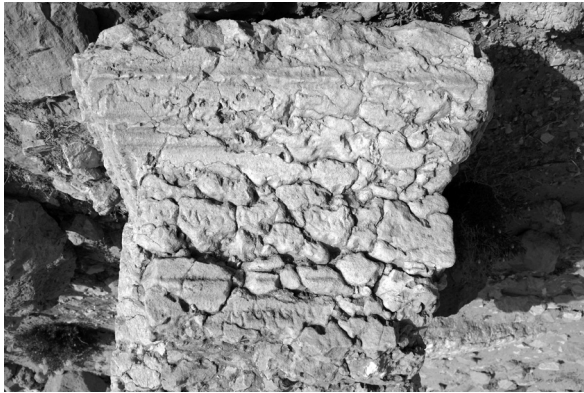


Figure 2 - Unilingual Aramaic honorific inscription on a console (photo: K. Jakubiak).

The word TSBYT' occurs in the inscription discovered in Rome dedicated to Aglibol and Malakbel (CIS II 3902 – PAT 0247) and in Palmyra in the Transversal Colonnade (CIS II 3952 – PAT 0298, Inv. XII 49 – PAT 1562).

Line 4:

- At first we thought that two different readings were possible here. Judging from the lacuna visible in the inscription, a reading GDBWL seemed adequate. But after further analysis this hypothesis was rejected, based on the fact that inscriptions which mentioned the Gaddibol tribe were written in a different way: BNY GDYBWL.⁷ We therefore prefer another interpretation for this fragment: the name of Aglibol, [ʿ]GLBWL, present in the already mentioned inscription and known from other Palmyrenian texts, especially those dedicated to local deities.

As we have noticed, the inscription is very badly preserved, and therefore its reading remains to a certain extent ambiguous. We cannot propose one single translation and interpretation.

■ 2. GREEK INSCRIPTION ON A CONSOLE

Our next inscription was originally engraved on a limestone corbel, most probably decorated with a statue the Palmyrenian Agora. From a typological point of view, this console is similar to the type 2.6 from Agora.⁸

The object itself is badly preserved, which affects the reading of the inscription. The Greek text originally

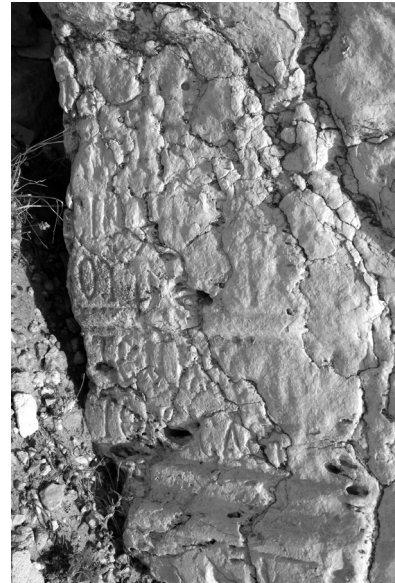


Figure 3 - Greek inscription on a console (photo: K. Jakubiak).

engraved on that console was written in six lines. Unfortunately the uppermost is entirely damaged. The inscription on the console was probably honorific in character.

Less than half of the original text has survived. Much of the text in the right side of the corbel is damaged and weathered.

The object can be broadly dated to the second half of the 2nd century CE. If the dating for this type of architectural decoration is right, the object discovered during our field work can be dated to the period between 161-196 CE. Paleographic evidence confirms this hypothesis. The letters are similar to those observed in the honorific inscription from the Great Colonnade Inv. III, 27 dated to 158 CE. Since this eroded object was found ca. 20-30 meters west of the Curia building, this supposition seems legitimate.

Only fragments can be read; we attempt to restore some parts of the text:

1. H[_ _ _] illegible
2. [..]χιμο[. _ _ _]
3. [..]ΣΙΟΝ[_ _ _]
4. [τ]οῦ Π[_ _ _]
5. (between two mouldings, lower part of the console)
τεμῆς [χάριν _ _ _]
6. ἱερεῖς ΑΘ[_ _ _]

Critical commentary

Line 1:

- It is possible to reconstruct the honorific formula Ἡ Βουλῆ καὶ ὁ Δῆμος in this line, especially since

7. CIS II 3917 – PAT 0263.

8. Ch. DELPLACE, J. DENTZER-FEYDY, “Consoles et épigraphie” (*supra*, n. 3), pp. 259, 268-269.

the feminine form of the article may be read at the beginning of the line.

Line 2:

- We think that the reconstruction of the name Μοκίμος in the lacuna is reasonable, but there is a problem with the proper grammatical form. There are two possibilities: the genitive case seems to be correct here and used as a patronymic. If we accept the second supposition that the name of a donator or honorific title was given here, the personal name needs to be in the accusative in the inscription. The name “Mokimos”, certainly of Semitic origin, is widely known in the Palmyrenian onomasticon.⁹

Line 3:

- At the beginning of this line, a genealogy or a social function of the honoured person should be reconstructed.

Line 4:

- It is probable that after the article in the genitive one would find the mention of Palmyra itself. So we propose the interpretation: [τ]οῦ Π[αλμυρηνοῦ].

Line 5:

- The expression *τειμῆς χάριν* shows clearly the honorific character of the inscription (e.g. Inv X, 77 and 81 – PAT 1395 et 1397). Comparing other inscriptions from Palmyra we can find such formulae: *τειμῆς καὶ εὐνοίας ἔνεκεν, τειμῆς ἔνεκεν* (e.g. Inv. III, 27 ; Inv. X, 85 – PAT 1398), which are also possible in this lacuna.

Line 6:

- This fragment is difficult to interpret. If our proposal to read the word *ἱερεῖς* is correct, the reconstruction of the text after that word is still very problematic. We propose to read *Ἀθηνᾶς*. In some Greek inscriptions from Palmyra we find the name of Athena, who was associated with goddess Allat.¹⁰

Owing to the heavily damaged state of the text, an exact translation is, in our opinion, impossible to formulate. Much remains unclear in our understanding of the text. Even if our supposition about the

interpretation of the last line is correct, we could have here an attestation of the cultic function of the priest of Athena, probably assimilated with the goddess Allat. However, this is very speculative.

■ 3. BILINGUAL ALTAR FOR ZEUS HYPHISTOS/BAALSHAMIN

In reediting this text, we hope to suggest a more precise localization of the altar of which the place of origin has not been correctly identified until the present.¹¹

Greek and Aramaic inscriptions were engraved on the upper part of the monument, which was reused as a *spolium* in the Late Roman defensive wall. In previous publications, which analyzed the text engraved on the altar, it was mentioned that this cultic object was found near the Diocletian Camp, by the tower tomb no. 86.¹² However, the altar was originally fixed in the curtain wall and closed the space between stone blocks. Since this space was relatively large, but not sufficient to contain the whole altar, the object crashed into several pieces. Only the upper part of the altar has survived. Just under the inscription this cultic object was shattered. The uppermost part of the altar is also missing. That is why just after the localization of the object, it was thought that the inscription had never been published. The object, which is now located west of the U shaped bastion A 402, and between two towers protruding in front of the defensive wall,¹³ is laying free on the uppermost part of the slope just nearby the ruined curtain wall.

The text can be read and reconstructed following the previous authors' observations and lectures:

Greek:

1. [Δι̅ Ἰ]ψίστω καὶ Ἐπηκόω Μανναιος Αμματοῦ
2. [τοῦ] Ἀδδοῦδανου τοῦ Φιρμωνος ὑπὲρ σωτη[ρ]-
3. [ίας ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τ]ῶν τέκνων μηνι Περειτίω [ἔτους...]

9. J. K. STARK, *Personal names in Palmyrene inscriptions*, Oxford, 1971, pp. 35 and 96.

10. M. GAWLIKOWSKI, personal communication; J.-B. YON, P.-L. GATIER, *Choix d'inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*, Amman – Beyrouth – Damas – Alep, 2009, pp. 46-49 (no. 5). Cf. also the monumental statue of Athena found in the sanctuary of Allat.



11. M. GAWLIKOWSKI, personal communication and *Palmyre. 6, Le temple palmyrénien*, Warszawa, 1973, p. 92, no. 1; J.-B. YON, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie. 17, 1, Palmyre*, Beyrouth, 2012, no. 324. J.-B. Yon did not see this inscription. The differences on the level of reading and reconstruction are result of letters which are visible on the stone itself.

12. J. CANTINEAU, *Inscriptions palmyréniennes*, Damas, 1930, p. 11, no. 10 (PAT 1571); M. GAWLIKOWSKI, *Palmyre. 6 (supra, n. 11)*, pp. 92-93.

13. K. SCHNÄDELBACH, *Topographia Palmyrena (supra, n. 2)*, p. 59.

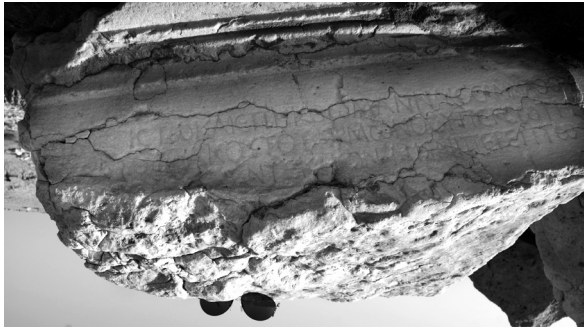


Figure 4 - Bilingual altar for Zeus Hypsistos/Baalshamin (photo: K. Jakubiak).

Palmyrenian:

1. LB'LŠMN RB' WRHMN' ['LT'] DH W[S]MK' 'BD
2. [M'NY BR] ' [M]T BR HD[WDN PRMWN'
'L] HYYWHY WHYY
3. BNWHY BYRH ŠBT ŠNT 400+[..]+1*

Translation

Greek:

For Zeus the Highest and Listener, Mannaïos, son of Ammathos, son of Haddoudanos, son of Firmon, for his own salvation and of his children. In the month Pereitios, year...

Palmyrenian:

For Baalshamin, the Great and the Merciful, this altar and the banquet hall dedicated Ma'anai, son of 'Ammat, son of Haddudan Firmon, for his life and the life of his sons. In the month Shebat, year 400+..+1.

As this text has already been published in previous studies, we have no need to discuss the content and the details of the inscription. However, the question of dating the inscription deserves more attention. It is possible to distinguish the symbol for 10 at the end of the date formula but also the reconstruction of at least two, if not three symbols, for 20 can be possible. Consequently the year can be reconstructed and proposed as 451 or 471.

Both possibilities are plausible on the basis of paleography. Other members of the same family mentioned in these texts can be found in the epigraphic evidence from Palmyra. The members of this family were very active in the city, mainly in the commercial and cultic field.¹⁴ Taking into account the Firmon

family activity in Palmyra, the proposal of the second date seems especially appropriate. Both inscriptions, Greek and Aramaic, clearly represent the period after 159 CE.¹⁵

4. FUNERARY INSCRIPTION ON THE FRAGMENT OF A DOOR LINTEL

The next inscription that we recovered was found close to the bastion A 408 and was originally engraved on a stone lintel which flanked the entrance to a tower tomb. We believe it originally decorated the same tomb together with the Aramaic inscription published by Gawlikowski and discovered in the same place, identified as the tomb of Theodoros.¹⁶ As he pointed out, the tomb had to be situated in a square bastion from the southern part of the wall of Diocletian just in the middle of the distance between the Agora and the Transversal Colonnade. The tomb, completely destroyed, must have been nearby, and its architectonic elements used in the construction of the bastion. The defensive wall was mainly constructed with large reused stone, architectonic fragments and decorations, such as fragments of lintels, pilasters, semi column bases and some curved architectonic details. Taking into consideration that all of these stone elements needed to be taken from the structure situated in the vicinity of the wall, it was possible to recognize in the field the nearest funeral building. It is almost entirely destroyed and until now the lowermost parts of its original foundations are only visible on the surface. The tomb, which was most probably destroyed and served as a source of cheap building material, was situated almost in front of the bastion. This funeral construction was situated on the opposite side of the *wadi* bed, just nearby its edge. Thanks to the erosion of the slope it was possible to recognize foundation elements, which probably belonged to the tower tomb structure.

As we have noted above, the newly discovered lintel contains a Greek inscription, of which only two fragmentary lines are now preserved. Comparing the bilingual inscription edited by Gawlikowski, we cannot exclude that an Aramaic version also existed in this case.¹⁷ However, no traces of the Aramaic version are visible on the stone block.

14. M. GAWLIKOWSKI, *Palmyre*. 6 (*supra*, n. 11), p. 50.

15. J.-B. YON, "Remarques sur une famille caravanière à Palmyre", *Syria* 75, 1998, pp. 153-160. About the family Firmon, *ibid.*, p. 155.

16. M. GAWLIKOWSKI, "Palmyrena", *Berytus* 19, 1970, pp. 69-70, no. 4.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 69 (PAT 0117) = IGLS 17, 1 (*supra*, n. 11), no. 542.

The date in the inscription did not survive but according to the paleographical criteria the inscription can be dated to the first half of the 3rd century CE or the end of the 2nd century CE.

The text is also comparable to the inscriptions CIS II 4201 (PAT 0557) and to the one known from the Theodoros tomb. In both cases the formulae used in the texts are similar.

The inscription can be read as follows:

1. [Τὸ μνημεῖον τοῦ ταφῆων[ος ὠ]χοδό[μησαν....]
2. [_ _]... υἱοῖς καὶ υἰωνοῖς [_ _]

Translation of this fragment:

1. The funeral monument built...
2. ... sons and grand-sons...



Figure 5 - Funerary inscription on the fragment of a door lintel (photo: K. Jakubiak).

For the reconstruction we use parallels from the inscriptions already mentioned which started with that formula, which seems to be popular in this type of texts.

However, we can link this Greek inscription with the Aramaic one, published by Gawlikowski in 1970.

■ CONCLUSIONS

The inscriptions presented in this paper do not allow specific conclusions. We are limited by the poor state of preservation of the inscriptions, caused by reutilization as well as the atmospheric erosion. All the texts presented here came from such secondary contexts.

In our study of these texts we have assumed the presence of typical and schematic formulae. Parallel texts have thus provided the bases for most of our interpretations. We are aware of the difficulties, both methodological and practical, which necessarily accompany such an assumption, and of the possible oversimplifications which result. Nevertheless an attempt to read and interpret the texts must be made.

The corpus of the inscriptions from Palmyra is still growing as a result of archaeological excavations as well as surface surveys. The new finds also illustrate the problems related to the preservation of the objects and to the proper identification of their architectural origin and placement.

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