

Aufidius Priscus, the *cohors Secunda Galatarum*, and Diocletian's re-organization of *Arabia* and *Palaestina*: the new tetrarchic inscription from 'Ayn Gharandal

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On June 17, 2013, the 'Ayn Gharandal Archaeological Project found a large Latin inscription resting face-down directly above the collapsed arch stones of the main gate of the Late Roman fort (figs. 1-2). Once lifted, the inscribed face of the block was found caked with sand, obscuring any details save for the borders of a carved *tabula ansata* and one or two letters of its text which still bore traces of red paint, to preserve which the stone was transferred, by permission of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, directly to the conservation laboratory of the American Center of Oriental Research in Amman, where it has been consolidated (fig. 3).¹



Fig. 1. The 'Ayn Gharandal inscription adjacent to the collapsed arch of the fort's gate (R. Darby).

The rectangular block (0.90 wide x 0.65 high x 0.25 m deep), which is of the same limestone used for masonry in the fort and bathhouse, probably derives from a quarry c.10 km to the north near Qa'a Es-Sa'idiyeen. All 4 sides are roughly dressed, as is the back. Traces of mortar still adhere, as do remnants of red paint which once filled the letters and ornamentation of the inscribed face,² which bears a *tabula ansata* framing a recessed central

1 Conservation was undertaken by Fatma Marii (Museum of Jordan) and Brittany Dolph (Cotsen/ Getty Institute conservation intern).

2 Similarly, "a thin reddish powdery layer" and "hints" of red paint were visible on the Udruh inscription at its discovery: D. Kennedy and H. Falahat, "Castra legionis VI Ferratae: a building inscription for the legionary fortress at Udruh near Petra," *JRA* 21 (2008) 157. See also Z. Meshel,