

(ii) Interim report on the inscriptions from the *aedes* of the fort near Tel Shalem

Avner Ecker, Benjamin Arubas, Michael Heinzelmann
and David Mevorah

Ever since the discovery of a building inscription of a *vexillatio* of the *legio VI Ferrata* near Tel Shalem,¹ it was clear that the area was a locus of Roman military activity. In the following years the vicinity of the Tel yielded the inscription of a Hadrianic arch whose letter-size is surpassed only by the lettering on the Pantheon and the Arch of Titus in Rome.² Most recently, the headquarters complex of the fort (*principia*), and in particular the regimental shrine (*aedes* or *sacellum*), have been uncovered (see above). Within and in front of the *aedes* were found three inscriptions:³ a dedicatory inscription to Caracalla on a statue base in front of the building (no. 1), and two mosaic inscriptions inside, one at the entrance to the nave (no. 2), the other at its far end (no. 3). The fills covering the building produced stamped roof-tiles bearing three different formulae. The new inscriptions prove that the building was the *aedes* of the *Ala VII Phrygum*. The earliest attestation of its presence in *Syria Palaestina* is inferred from a military diploma of A.D. 139⁴ found at Apheka, not far from Tel Shalem. Assuming that the *Ala Phrygum*, attested without the number VII in the province of *Syria* up to A.D. 88,⁵ is the same unit as the *Ala VII Phrygum* of our inscriptions, its transfer to *Iudaea* is most likely to be associated with the suppression of the Bar Kokhba Revolt.⁶ The inscriptions published here provide the latest known date for its stay in *Syria Palaestina*, some 40 years after the latest date so far attested in military diplomas.⁷

1. Base of a statue dedicated to Caracalla (see figs. 10-11)

Four statue bases were discovered at the entrance to the hall. An inscribed marble slab (107 cm high, 70 cm wide, depth varying from 3.8 to 6 cm) broken into 14 pieces was found

- 1 N. Tsori, "An inscription of the Legio VI Ferrata from the northern Jordan Valley," *IEJ* 21 (1971) 53-54.
- 2 W. Eck and G. Foerster, "Ein Triumphbogen für Hadrian im Tal von Beth Shean bei Tel Shalem," *JRA* 12 (1999) 294-313; *AE* 1999, 1688.
- 3 Two other small fragments, each with no more than 3 letters inscribed in Latin on marble, are not treated in this interim report.
- 4 *CIL* XVI 87.
- 5 Following D. Kennedy, "Ala Phrygum and Ala VII Phrygum," *ZPE* 118 (1997) 300-4; P. Holder, "Two commanders of Ala Phrygum," *ZPE* 140 (2002) 287-95. See mentions of the *Ala Phrygum* in military diplomas: H. M. Cotton and W. Eck, "The impact of the Bar Kokhba revolt on Rome: another military diploma from AD 160 from Syria Palaestina," *Michmanim* 23 (2011) 7-22; W. Eck and A. Pangerl, "Eine Konstitution für das Heer von Syria Palaestina aus der Mitte der antoninischen Herrschaftszeit mit einem Auxiliärpräfekten Cn. Domitius Corbulo," *SCI* 35 (2016) 85-95, especially 93. For the creation of *auxilia* from Asia Minor, see J. Bennett, "The regular Roman auxiliary regiments formed from the provinces of Asia Minor," *Anatolica* 37 (2011) 251-74.
- 6 See W. Eck, "The Bar Kokhba revolt: the Roman point of view," *JRS* 89 (1999) 76-89; id., *Rom und Iudaea* (Tübingen 2007) 125.
- 7 The latest diplomata of soldiers in *ala VII Phrygum*, three in all, date to A.D. 160; see Eck and Pangerl, *SCI* (supra n.5) 93. They consist of: *RMD* VI 612; *RMD* III 173; *AE* 2005. 1730 = *RMD* VI 613; *Michmanim* 2011 (supra n.5) 7ff. = *AE* 2011. 1810. The *cohors quarta Phrygium* mentioned at *Not. Dig. Or.* XXXVII as a unit in *Palaestina* cannot be considered the same unit.