

## INSCRIPTIONS FROM WADI KALALAT

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Some 35 fragments of inscriptions on stone were found in the 1997 and 1998 excavations in the large *hydreuma* in Wadi Kalalat *circa* 8.5 km southwest of Berenike (see Table 18-6 and Chapter 17; Sidebotham 1995b: 87-93; Sidebotham 1996: 384-391). Most of these were found in trench KA97-1 a 5 m x 5 m trench at the main (eastern) gate of the fort. These preserve bits of inscriptions in both Greek and Latin. Most are too small to offer any sense, with only a few letters surviving on each; in some, indeed, it is impossible to tell what language they are in, because no surviving letters are diagnostic. Several of the Greek fragments, however, appear to belong to a single inscription or a group of related inscriptions, of which another fragment was found in the 1998 excavations in trench KA98-3 about 15 m north of the 1997 finds.<sup>24</sup>

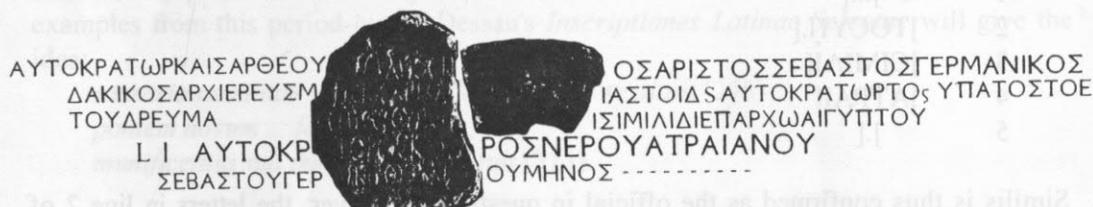


Figure 18-1 Photomontage reconstructing the inscription preserved on the two largest stones (Catalogue number 35 from trench KA98-3 and number 13 from trench KA97-1). Photographs by S.E. Sidebotham.

All pottery found associated with the inscriptions is early Roman. The two largest fragments from each year join, nearly touching (see photomontage, Figure 18-1), to offer clearly the remains of the imperial titulature of Trajan:

<sup>24</sup>I am grateful to D.A. Gould, who excavated the trenches, for the information that all of the fragments were from wall tumble or dump loci, with pieces found "haphazardly in several different positions and angles." They gave, she says, the impression that the inscription(s) had been smashed and scattered. Ashlar blocks at the main gate were also robbed out, and the dispersal of the inscription fragments may have been part of the same dismantling. The archaeological context, thus, does not contribute to solving the puzzles that the fragments offer.

Catalogue numbers 35 (left) and 13 (right) (see also Figure 18-1):

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1 | ] M                            |
| 2 | ]ΝΕΡΟΥΑΥΙΟCΝΕΡΟΥΑΤΡΑΙΑΝ[       |
| 3 | ]ΓΙCΤΟCΔΗΜΑΡΧΙΚΗCΕΞΟΥC[        |
| 4 | ]ΕΠΙCΕΡΟΥΙΩΙ. (. . . ) . . . [ |
| 5 | ]ΑΤΟΡΟCΚΑΙCΑ[                  |
| 6 | ]ΜΑΝΙΚΟΥΔΑΚΙΚ[                 |

Once a Trajanic date is established, it seems a reasonable hypothesis that the person referred to in line 3 of fragment 35/13 is a high official, and in fact Servius Sulpicius Similis was prefect of Egypt from August 107 to 112 or a little later (Bastianini 1975: 281; Bastianini 1980: 80; Hoogendijk and Van Minnen 1991, *P. Leid. Inst.* 32.4). With this in mind, it becomes clear that another fragment also belongs to a Trajanic inscription:

Catalogue number 14 (Plate 18-4):

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| 1 | ]...[    |
| 2 | ]ΤΟCΥΠ[  |
| 3 | ]CΙΜΙΛΙ[ |
| 4 | ]ΑΤΡΑΙ[  |
| 5 | ]...[    |

Similis is thus confirmed as the official in question. Moreover, the letters in line 2 of fragment 14 must represent part of Trajan's titulature, and they are readily placed as representing the iteration number after Αὐτοκράτωρ and the beginning of the word ὑπατοc. That gives us Imp. VI, which was, in fact, Trajan's iteration as of the second half of 106 AD and until sometime in the second half of 114 AD (cf. Kienast 1996: 122-124). That coincides with the period of Similis's prefecture. We come now to another fragment:

Catalogue number 28 (Plate 18-5):

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
|   | ----- |
| 1 | ]ΔC   |
| 2 | ]ΠΤΟΥ |
|   | ----- |

The sinusoidal curve is virtually certain to be a numeral marker for fourth or fourteenth (if iota can be read before delta, as I think is possible), while -πτου must be the end of Αἰγύπτου in Similis' title. We know that Trajan's 14th year of tribunician power was 10 December 109 AD to 9 December 110 AD, and it thus seems a reasonable conclusion that the inscription can be dated to that year, which falls between Trajan's fifth and sixth

consulates. As we shall see, the regnal year must be 13 or 14, and one might argue that the numeral in this fragment refers to the regnal year. This view is untenable, however, because the -πτου below it must belong to Similis' title, which comes before, not after, the dating. During this period, Trajan already had the epithets Germanicus and Dacicus, but not yet Parthicus (which dates to 116 AD). These two epithets duly appear in the last line, which with the preceding one are in the genitive rather than the nominative and thus are part of a dating formula rather than the nominative titulature at the start.

We would appear to have almost everything needed for reconstructing the inscription as follows. The Egyptian regnal year must be 13 (109/110 AD) or 14 (110/111 AD), thus ιγ or ιδ, depending on when during the trib.pot. 14 year the inscription falls. The overall shape of the inscription is sufficiently clear. The emperor, in the genitive, is the subject of an action, the prefect providing an intermediary and date. The regnal year date, with the genitive, then follows. What the apparent *mu* in line 1 in fragment 35/13 refers to, I cannot say. The form is characteristic of a class of imperial Roman inscriptions recording construction of public works of various sorts. Such inscriptions are abundantly preserved in Latin, where they begin with the imperial titulature, often given very fully as here, then have a phrase with the object of the construction and a concluding verb. A few examples from this period out of Dessau's *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* will give the idea:

*sacraria numinum vetustate collapsa a solo restituit* (295)

*pontem novum ... fecit* (293)

*munificentia sua templum ... restituit* (313).

A fragmentary fourth-century example was found at Abu Sha'ar on the Red Sea coast (Bagnall and Sheridan 1994: 159-163). Greek instances are much less common, but there are nonetheless good examples from outside Egypt that may be compared to our inscription (Cagnat 1906 IGRR III, 15 and 39, a road and city walls respectively). And:

IGRR I 1142 (Hadrian): ὁδὸν καινὴν Ἀδριανὴν ἀπὸ Βερενίκης εἰς Ἀντινόου ... ἔτεμεν

("he cut a new Via Hadriana from Berenike to Antinoopolis"), followed by a date.

IGRR I 1056 (Augustus): ποταμὸν Σεβασ[τὸν] ἀπὸ Σχεδίας ἤγαγεν ... ἐπὶ ἐπάρχου τῆς

Αἰγύπτου Γαίου Ἰουλίου Ἀκύλα ("he brought the Augustan canal from Schedia... when C.

Julius Aquila was prefect of Egypt"), followed by a date;

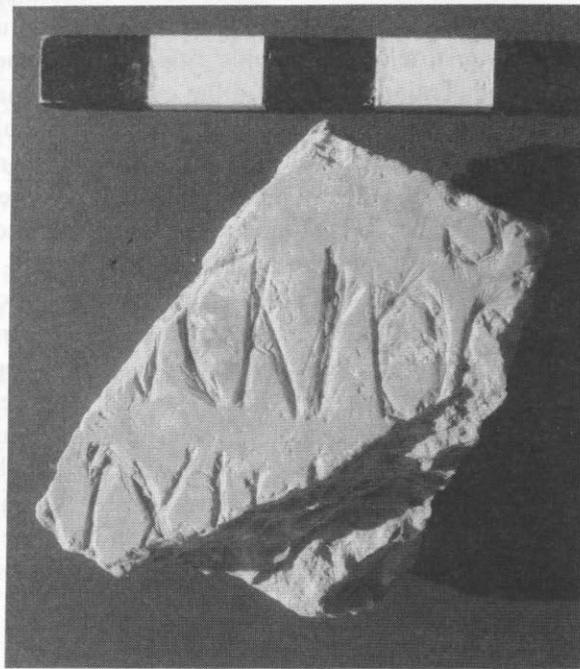


Plate 18-2 Inscription fragment, catalogue number 1 from trench KA97-1. Scale = 20 cm. Photograph by S.E. Sidebotham.

In all likelihood, then, the lacuna in line 3 of Figure 18-1 referred to the construction or reconstruction of the fort, perhaps to ὑδρευμα followed by a verb in the aorist, ending in *nu*; the stroke preserved before ἐπί in line 4 is a vertical hasta, compatible with such a reading. Unfortunately, none of the surviving fragments recognizably comes from this section. If το ὑδρευμα is correct, probably about eight to ten letters stood between it and the concluding -εν of the verb, depending on whether the line was slightly indented compared to line 1 or not.

There is no surprise in finding Sulpicius Similis engaged in such construction. Another *hydreuma* near Mons Claudianus was constructed *per Sulpicium Similem praef. Aeg.* (Bernand 1977: 84-88, no. 37 = Cagnat 1906 IGRR I: 1259) and dedicated in year 12 (108/9). The same year saw a dedication of a gate at Panopolis on behalf of Trajan (Bernand 1977: 207-216, no. 79 = Cagnat 1906 IGRR I: 1148). It is also possible that the fragmentary inscription from Mons Porphyrites (Bernand 1977: 55-56, no. 19) records works by Sulpicius Similis (cf. Cuvigny 1996: 101). By his order a commander ὄριον ἔστησε, set up a boundary marker, in Lower Nubia in March, 111 AD (*SB* I 3919, near Abisko in the area of Debod; cf. Bernand 1977: 215-216). One finds ἐπί followed more commonly by the genitive, but the dative with evidently the same temporal sense is well attested (cf. Bernand 1977: 103, no. 42).

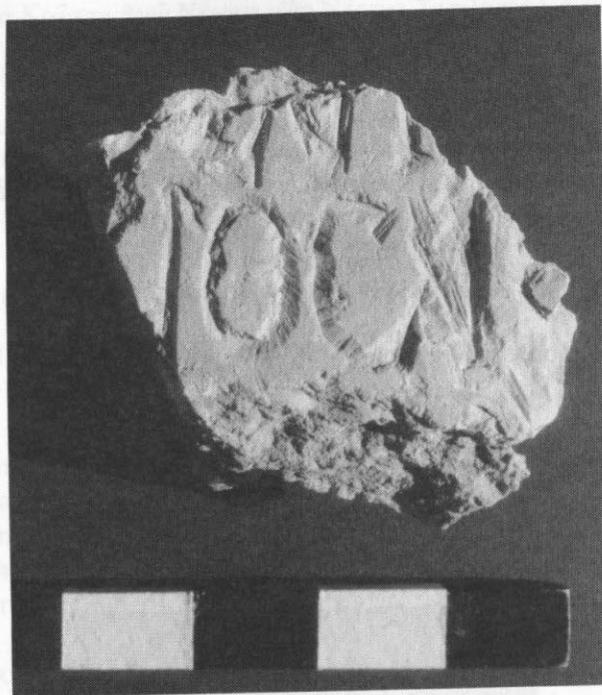


Plate 18-3 Inscription fragment, catalogue number 12 from trench KA97-1. Scale = 20 cm.  
 Photograph by S.E. Sidebotham.

But there are problems with the reconstruction underlying this understanding of our fragments. First, it can readily be seen in the restored text, and even more clearly in the photomontage with restoration (Figure 18-1), that catalogue number 28 (Plate 18-5) offers the difficulty that the contents of its first line stands considerably to the left of those of its second line; they cannot have been aligned as on the actual fragment. Because the surviving letters of two lines determine the positions, this difficulty is inescapable. It should be pointed out that the size of the lettering in the fragments is not very consistent, and that the typeface in which the restorations are presented is not that of the inscription itself. For this reason, the spatial impact of the restorations is only approximate. But differences caused by these facts should affect the horizontal position of text only modestly. Nor are matters better with catalogue number 14 (Plate 18-4), for there the remains of τὸ ζ ὕπ must stand far to the right of Σμίλιδι in the following line. And convincing proof that at least one additional inscription existed is provided by another fragment:

Catalogue number 1 (Plate 18-2):

--  
 1 ]ΑΝΟC[  
 2 ]ΡΧΙ.[

This fragment duplicates the -av- from Τραιανός from catalogue number 13, and because it clearly preserves part of the *sigma* of the nominative name, it cannot belong to the genitive dating formula later in the inscription. It therefore must belong to another inscription. The traces in line 2 of fragment 1 after ρχι appear to be compatible with κη but not with εν: δημαρχικῆς, then, rather than ἀρχιερέυς.

Finally, there is one more small fragment:

Catalogue number 12 (Plate 18-3):

--  
 1 ]...[  
 2 ]ΡΟCΝ.[  
 ----



Plate 18-4 Inscription fragment, catalogue number 14 from trench KA97-1. Scale = 20 cm. Photograph by S.E. Sidebotham.

[Αὐτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ θεοῦ Νέρουα υἱὸς Νέρουα Τραι]ανὸς [Ἄριστος Σεβαστὸς

Γερμανικὸς] Δακικὸς

[ἀρχιερεὺς μέγιστος δημ]αρχικ[ῆς ἐξουσίας τὸ ἰδ αὐτοκράτωρ]

τὸ ς ὕπ[ατος τὸ ε]

[ 18-20 ἐπὶ Σερουίωι Σουλ]πικ[ίωι] Σιμίλ[ιδι ἐπάρχωι Αἰγύπτου]

[(ἔτους) .. Αὐτοκράτορος Καίσα]ρος Νε[ρουα Τραιανοῦ]

[Σεβαστοῦ Γερμανικοῦ Δακικοῦ month, day]

That is, line 2 would have only 20 letters restored vs. 40 in line 1. It is conceivable that this line was deeply indented as lines 4-5 would be, but that is not the model that the first inscription followed. We must, therefore, remain skeptical that we know with certainty which of these four fragments are to be combined with which. That has no effect on the restoration of the text, however, as no part in which it diverged has survived.

If the above analysis is correct, there were at least two, and perhaps three, inscriptions with similar or identical wording, but different layout. Other than the two fragments joined, the fragments are presented on Plates 18-2 to 18-5 without attempts to place them relative to one another. The circumstances of finding and character of the fort do not suggest that the fragments come from different gates. It is of course possible that they recorded different actions concerning the fort; none of the words from those sections have come to light so far, and the different layouts of the second (and third) inscriptions could reflect such differences. The remainder of the texts, however, appear to be identical in wording.

This could, so far as the *ποcv* preserved in line 2 of fragment 12 goes, join line 4 of the fragment 35 on the right, below fragment 13. But the purely vertical stroke traces above those letters cannot be reconciled with the beginning of Σουλπίκιος, where it would need to be under σου. It too, then, should belong to another inscription.

It appears, then, that none of these four smaller fragments can belong to the inscription constituted by the two larger ones, unless one does serious violence to the restoration by arbitrarily omitting elements or leaving blank spaces on the stone. Catalogue number 12 comes the closest, but even it is difficult to accommodate. It is thus necessary to suppose that more than one inscription was erected here. But how many more?

It is easy to see that catalogue numbers 12 and 14 can belong to the same inscription. Number 12 and lines 3-4 of number 14 may be combined as follows:

Σουλ]πικ[ίωι] Σιμίλι[δι

Καίσα]ρος Νε[βρου]α Τραι[ανού

It may also be argued that catalogue number 1 stands 24-25 letters to the left of number 14. One would then have the following:

Τραι]ανός [Ἄριστος Σεβαστός Γερμανικός] Δακ[ικός

δημ]αρχικ[ῆς ἐξουσίας τὸ .. ἀυτοκράτωρ] τὸ ς ὕπ[ατος

It has to be admitted, however, that the traces printed as *δαχ* here are very exiguous, and only the alpha has any claim to provide real support.

Catalogue number 28, unfortunately, cannot be accommodated in this reconstruction any more than in the first inscription. The *ιδς* would stand after ἐξουσίας τὸ, while the *πτου* of Αἰγύπτου would have to stand substantially, about 30 letters, to the right in the next line. If the above reconstruction is wrong, number 28 might belong with some one or two of the others, but at the cost of dislodging one of the current pieces; and there would then be a third inscription all the same. Nonetheless, it has the value of confirming what must be the tribunician iteration number and the end of Similis' title.

There is another problem with the supposed second inscription. If catalogue number 1 belongs to the same inscription as number 14, the traces in line 1 of number 14 cannot be anything other than the start of Δακικός, and the line must have been longer than in the first inscription. But line 2 would then have less material before δημαρχικῆς, as follows:

13	BE97 4143-U-13	kalalat 01.011 PB 14	small stone fragment	404	18-1
14	BE97 4144-U-14	kalalat 01.008 PB 9	stone fragment	404, 409	18-4
15	BE97 4145-U-15	kalalat 01.ct	small stone fragment		
16	BE97 4146-U-16	kalalat 01.011 PB 15	small stone fragment		
17	BE97 4146-U-17	kalalat 01.011 PB 15	small stone fragment		
18	BE97 4146-U-18	kalalat 01.011 PB 15	small stone fragment		
19	BE97 4146-U-19	kalalat 01.011 PB 15	small stone fragment		
20	BE97 4146-U-20	kalalat 01.011 PB 15	small stone fragment		
21	BE97 4146-U-21	kalalat 01.011 PB 15	small stone fragment		
22	BE97 4146-U-22	kalalat 01.011 PB 15	small stone fragment		
23	BE97 4146-U-23	kalalat 01.011 PB 15	small stone fragment		
24	BE97 4146-U-24	kalalat 01.011 PB 15	small stone fragment		
25	BE97 4146-U-25	kalalat 01.011 PB 15	small stone fragment		
26	BE97 4146-U-26	kalalat 01.011 PB 15	small stone fragment		
27	BE97 4146-U-27	kalalat 01.011 PB 15	small stone fragment		
28	BE97 4147-U-28	kalalat 01.011 PB 13	stone fragment	404	18-5
29	BE97 4147-U-29	kalalat 01.011 PB 13	stone fragment		
30	BE97 4147-U-30	kalalat 01.011 PB 13	stone fragment		
31	BE97 4157-U-31	kalalat 01.cbs	small stone fragment		
32	BE97 4141-U-32	kalalat 01.004 PB 6	stone fragment		
33	BE97 4141-U-33	kalalat 01.004 PB 6	stone fragment		
34	BE98 1858-U-34	kalalat 02.003 PB 4	stone fragment		
35	BE98 3298-U-35	kalalat 03.005 PB 11	stone fragment	404	18-1

Table 18-6 Catalogue of the inscription fragments found at the large *hydreuma* in Wadi Kalalat from the Berenike 1997 and 1998 excavation seasons.

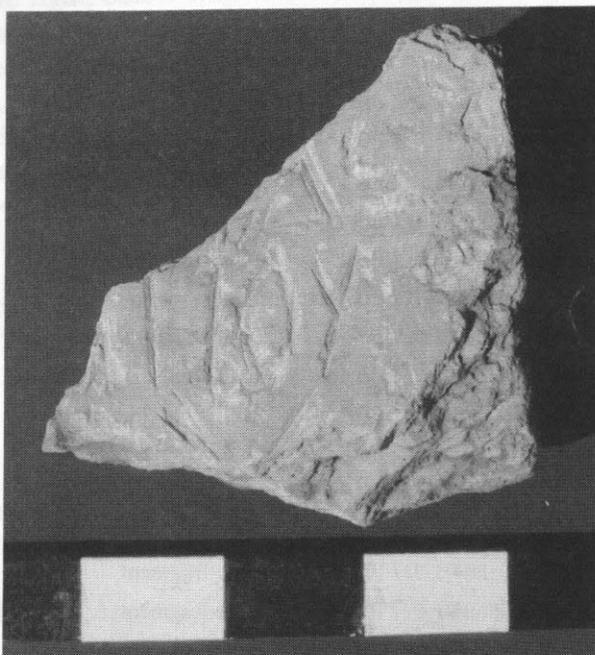


Plate 18-5 Inscription fragment, catalogue number 28 from trench KA97-1. Scale = 20 cm. Photograph by S.E. Sidebotham.

No.	Site ID	Context	Description	Page	Plate
1	BE97 4141-U-1	kalalat 01.004 PB 6	stone fragment	407	18-2
2	BE97 4141-U-2	kalalat 01.004 PB 6	stone fragment		
3	BE97 4141-U-3	kalalat 01.004 PB 6	stone fragment		
4	BE97 4141-U-4	kalalat 01.004 PB 6	stone fragment		
5	BE97 4141-U-5	kalalat 01.004 PB 6	stone fragment		
6	BE97 4141-U-6	kalalat 01.004 PB 6	stone fragment		
7	BE97 4141-U-7	kalalat 01.004 PB 6	stone fragment		
8	BE97 4142-U-8	kalalat 01.018 PB 28	stone fragment "LXIII"		
9	BE97 4143-U-9	kalalat 01.011 PB 14	small stone fragment		
10	BE97 4143-U-10	kalalat 01.011 PB 14	small stone fragment		
11	BE97 4143-U-11	kalalat 01.011 PB 14	small stone fragment		
12	BE97 4143-U-12	kalalat 01.011 PB 14	small stone fragment	408, 409	18-3