A NEW READING OF THE LATIN−ARAMAIC NESES BILINGUAL (IDR III1 167 = PAT 0994), ARAMAIC LINE 2

Jeremy M. Hutton[*], *Nathaniel E. Greene*[**]

Introduction: Inspecting the Banat Museum's Holdings

The cultural reach of Roman-era Palmyra extended well beyond the city-state's regional boundaries in Syria. Aramaic-speaking Palmyrene soldiers serving in the Roman army made their way throughout the ancient world: outside of their primary homeland in Syria, these scattered individuals left record of their lives in such far-flung places as Britain, Italy, and North Africa. One such center of Palmyrene activity in the wider ancient world was the area of Tibiscum and Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa in western Romania (ancient Dacia). Archaeologists have recently discovered a significant temple complex at the latter site,[1] and four bilingual inscriptions in Latin and Palmyrene Aramaic (with an additional inscription solely in Aramaic) have been excavated at the former site since the middle of the 19th century.

On June 10, 2016, the authors visited the Banat Museum (Muzeul Banatului) in Timişoara, Romania, in order to perform Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) on the bilingual Latin–Palmyrene Aramaic inscriptions in the museum's collection. We were greeted very cordially by the director of the Museum, Dr. Claudiu Ilaş, as well as by two staff members, Dr. Călin Timoc (Researcher and Muzeograph 1A), and Dr. Flutur Alexandru (Muzeograph, Secţia de Arheologie).

The latter two individuals accompanied us from the Museum's newly refurbished headquarters, in the Bastion along Strada Martin Luther, to the Museum's lapidarium, housed in the old Huniade Castle in the center of the old town of Timişoara. There we imaged two items in the museum's possession in short order: *IDR* III$_1$ 154 (*PAT* 0251 = *CIL* III 3.7999 = *CIS* 3906 = *HNE*, 482 d. γ4)[2] and *IDR* III$_1$ 170[3], both Latin–Palmyrene bilingual inscriptions. The former contains six lines of Latin and a single line of Aramaic. The latter consists of four fragmentary lines of Latin and a single line of Aramaic. The loss of broader context prohibits definitive reconstruction of the Latin text. Both inscriptions originated in the Roman-era city of Tibiscum, just to the north of the modern city of Caransebeş, Romania, and currently under excavation by a team coordinated by Dr. Adrian Ardet of the Caransebeş Museum.

After photography of these two inscriptions was complete, our hosts set about trying to find two other inscriptions we had hoped to image, both of which had recently returned from a traveling exhibition on writing. The third inscription, *IDR* III$_1$ 167[4] (= *PAT* 0994), is a large stele carved on a thin

[2] Russu 1977, 178–180 no. 154. The piece was first published in Torma 1882, 120–122 no. 72, with a comment by Th. Nöldeke; see subsequently Nöldeke 1890; Moga-Russu 1974, 59–60 no. 30. It is mentioned also in Sanie 1981, 360, fig. 1:2; Adams 2003, 255–256 no. 7; and Kaizer 2004, 565; Hutton-Greene 2016. *PAT* numbers refer to the corpus collected in Hillers-Cussini 1996.
[3] Russu 1977, 200–201 no. 170; Moga-Russu 1974, 80–82 no. 43; also mentioned in Sanie 1981, 360, photographs in fig. 1:3 (Sanie has inadvertently mislabeled *IDR* III$_1$ 170 in the caption); Kaizer 2004, 566; and Yon 2013, 341 no. 17.
[4] Russu 1977, 196–198 no. 167. First published as Sanie

piece of limestone, displaying six lines of Latin and four lines of Aramaic. The left side of the stele had apparently been removed in antiquity when the stone was reused in a secondary context. The published photographs of this inscription, while sufficient for their time, are inadequate for epigraphic and palaeographic study; moreover, although the readings and philological comments of the editor (Silviu Sanie) are highly learned, some of the details remain disputed or conjectural. The stone itself had been fractured during the excavation[5]; this fracture obscured some of the Aramaic text, apparently chipping off the central section of line 2 and obscuring the reading of that line, as well as that of the middle section of line 4. Therefore, we hoped to verify Sanie's readings through personal inspection, possibly improving on some of them with the use of RTI. The fourth inscription, *IDR* III$_1$ 178[6], consists of a single Latin letter (*M*), and a fragmentary line of Aramaic. Neither inscription could be found in a cursory search at the Banat Museum's lapidarium, and Călin Timoc arranged for us to travel together to the Museum's repository on the outskirts of town. We searched the storeroom there for about an hour, without success. The afternoon was pressing on and we would need to leave the premises soon in order to accommodate the security guards' schedule, so Timoc suggested that we make one final search at the lapidarium.

IDR III¹ 167 (= PAT 0994):
Inspecting the Artifact

After another period of searching at the lapidarium, we were able to locate *IDR* III$_1$ 167 in the crate in which it had traveled. The artifact itself has undergone some physical changes since publication of the initial photographs. First, the stone has been mounted on a thick backing of plaster. This backing is designed to reinforce the stone, holding it together in the proper arrangement. Second, the original fracture(s) obscuring the Aramaic text has been repaired through the application of cement to the cracks on the front of the inscription.[7] This

has the effect of obscuring much of the Aramaic text; the difficulty is compounded by the similarity in color of the cement and the stone to which it has been applied. Finally, the stone itself was broken horizontally along one of the original lines of breakage, apparently during its transit around Romania. (The stele has since been repaired, and was photographed in its entirety by J. M. Hutton and R. J. Pruett on April 15, 2018; see fig. 8). After a quick evaluation of the situation, we did not think we would be able to draw many novel readings from the Aramaic inscription, especially in the places we had hoped. We therefore decided to forego performing RTI on the inscription, opting instead for conventional photography of its two constituent pieces in three separate sections.[8]

The upper half of the stele could not be stood vertically because of the unevenness of the fracture. We had to lay the stele on the floor, using a tripod to shoot this fragment in two stages: the portrait in the upper panel (see fig. 1) and the Latin inscription itself (including most of line 1 and the first half of lines 2 and 3 of the Aramaic text; see fig. 2). The bottom half of the stele could be set up on its base, allowing us to situate it vertically for photography (see fig. 3). This portion of the stele contained the bulk of the Aramaic inscription, and consisted of two pieces: the major portion remained in one piece, but a small fragment bearing the top half of the left portion of line 2 had broken away. The small fragment had previously been reattached to the major sections of the stele with a thin layer of plaster on each side. Hutton handled the fragment himself, placing it on top of the stele's lower half. Its placement with respect to the lower half of the stele was clear, since the thin plaster layer separating the two pieces fit perfectly. However, as inspection of fig. 4 demonstrates, the addition of the plaster layer had the effect of offsetting the small fragment slightly to the left of its initial position on the (unbroken) stele. This slight offset must be taken into account in the following observations (see fig. 5).

Previous Readings: Russu (1969) & Sanie
(1970a); Hillers and Cussini (1996)

As early as the initial publication of the stele, it has been recognized that the left edge of the stele

1970a; also catalogued in Moga-Russu 1974, 70–73 no. 37; Sanie 1981, 360, fig. 1:4 (Sanie has inadvertently mislabeled *IDR* III$_1$ 167 in the caption); Țeposu Marinescu 1982, 134 no. 132; Reuter 1999, 533 no. 156; and discussed as well in Sanie 1970b, 240; Adams 2003, 258 no. 11; Kaizer 2004, 565–566.

5   Personal communication, C. Timoc, June 10, 2016.

6   Russu 1977, 210 no. 178; Moga-Russu 1974, 82–83 no. 45; Sanie 1981, 360, fig. 1:2; Kaizer 2004, 566–567; Yon 2013, 341 no. 18.

7   The application of cement to Palmyrene antiquities seems to have been common curatorial practice in some circles

during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It would be unfair to suggest that this was a practice adopted only by the curatorial staff of the Banat Museum.

8   We did, however, take several photos with raking light. The benefits of that technique are discussed in Greene-Parker 2015, 225 n. 31.

has been lost. The position of the text–in some cases immediately abutting the stone's present left edge and in other cases lost entirely in the lacuna–suggests that the inscribed panel extended at least a few centimeters beyond its present state. For some comparison, the lower right curve of the *D* in line 1, which is still visible upon close consultation, sits very near to the stone's left edge. Yet, the *DM* in most Latin inscriptions is centered. The position of the *D* therefore suggests at least two letters have been lost at the left end of each of lines 2–6 of the Latin (and several centimeters of rough-hewn-stele outside the frame's boundary beyond that). Furthermore, comparison of the earliest photographs against the present state of the stele confirms that some cement has been added to the sur-

interpretation; we provide our own transcription of the Latin text shortly below, and of the Aramaic text at the end of this study.

Readings of the inscription have predominantly followed the original readings of the Latin by I. I. Russu,[12] and of the Aramaic by S. Sanie.[13] We have provided Sanie's original reading (with those emendations) here alongside Hillers and Cussini's reading from *PAT*. We have slightly emended the latter as well: as Ted Kaizer has pointed out,[14] *PAT* contains incorrect lineation, collapsing the actual inscription's lines 4 and 5 into a single line (4). The name of *MALCHUS* spans lines 4–5, and that of *IER*[*HEUS*] may have run from line 5 onto line 6. Discrepancies between readings given here are set in boldface type:

Russu 1969 & Sanie 1970a:

Hillers-Cussini 1996:

Latin Text:

1. *D*(*is*) *M*(*anibus*)
2. *N*[*E*]*SES IERHEI* (***filius***)
3. [*7?*/***EX***] *N*(*umeri*) *PAL*(*myrenorum*) *VIXIT*
4. [*A*]*N*(*nis*) *XXV MA*-
5. *LCHUS ET IER*
6. *F*(*ratri*) *B*(*ene*) *M*(*erenti*) *P*(*osuerunt*)

1. *D*(*is*) *M*(*anibus*)
2. *N*[*E*]*SES IERHEI* [***F*(*ilius*)**]
3. [*7?*][9] *N*(*umeri*) *PAL*(*myrenorum*) *VIXIT*
4. [*A*]*N*(*nis*) *XXV MA*-
5. *LCHUS ET IER*
6. *F*(*ratri*) *B*(*ene*) *M*(*erenti*) *P*(*osuerunt*)

Aramaic Text:

1. ʿbd mlkw
2. *lnšʾ* [. .] ***w*** [**.**] ***w n***[10]
3. šnt 4.100+60+10
4. *byrḥ ṭbt*[11]

1. ʿbd mlkw
2. *lnšʾ* [….] [ʾ***ḥ***ʾ]***w***ʾ***ḥ***ʾ
3. šnt 4.100+60+10
4. *byrḥ ṭbt*

face of the stele and some letters reinscribed by a modern restorer (e.g., the lower parts of *S* and *E* in Latin line 1, as well as the upper portions of *P*, *A*, and *L* in line 2, etc.; see fig. 2). We did not notice this restoration upon our initial inspection of the inscription–in large part because of the dwindling time to perform the photography, but also because the restoration effort had closely matched the color and texture of the underlying stone. Upon our closer inspection of the photographs, however, we began to notice several spots where the edge of the cement could be distinguished from the base stone. Digital manipulation of the images–and especially conversion to photo-negative–allows more obvious discernment of the cemented area (see fig. 7). The following analysis takes into account the history of

A third recent transcription of the Latin has been proposed by the staff of the Web-based catalogue of Latin inscriptions, *Ubi Erat Lupa*, run by the University of Salzburg.[15] The editors of that project, represented by Friederike Harl on this text, suggest a similar transcription on the basis of their own photographs and colla-

leg of the *X* can be seen, meaning that the reconstruction should actually read [*E*]ˊ*X* (see our transcription below).

[10]   Although Sanie (1970a, 408) originally read the final character of Aramaic line 2 as *h*, he later corrected that reading to *n* after direct study of the inscription in the Banat Museum (Sanie 1981, 360). The original reading is reflected in *PAT*'s transcription.

[11]   For discussion of this word, see below.

[12]   Russu 1969, 175.

[13]   Sanie 1970a.

[14]   Kaizer 2004, 566.

[15]   Online: http://www.ubi-erat-lupa.org/monument. php?id = 15016 (accessed Oct. 8, 2016); see also the *Epigraphische Datenbank Heidelberg*, housed at the Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, online: http://edh-www.adw. uni-heidelberg.de/edh/inschrift/HD046564 (accessed Oct. 8, 2016).

[9]   Sanie (1970a, 405 n. 1, followed by Hillers-Cussini 1996, 159, *ad loc.*), reconstructed a sign resembling the number "7" (found in *PAT* 0253) which "signifies '*centurio* et *centuria*'"; for this quotation, see de Luynes 1848, 704; Kaizer (2004, 566) basically follows Sanie's other suggestion, reconstructing "[*E*(*x*)] *N*(*umero*)…". In our photograph, the bottom right

tion of the inscription (see immediately below). We juxtapose here our own reading of the Latin inscription. In our transcription, as elsewhere, *ITALICIZED CAPITALS* indicate extant readings; [full brackets] mark entirely reconstructed readings; and (*parentheses with italicized uncials*) indicate material intentionally abbreviated by the text's author(s). In addition, ˹corner-brackets˺ mark damaged-but-legible readings; and outlined characters mark readings partly or entirely reconstructed and reinscribed in the cement appliqué. We have not employed bold letters in our transcription to mark points of divergence from the previous transcriptions, but we have marked word dividers with a period (.) or, in the case of decorative dividers, a tilde (~).[16] We continue to use

line 6, as reconstructed by Moga and Russu, and followed by Kaizer.[18] Indeed, several interpreters reconstruct the traces of an *S* immediately before the *F* of line 6, and the original photographs may bear this reading out (although the published photographs are difficult to interpret). However, we cannot not see any indication of an *S* in our photographs, although this reading cannot be considered definitive: it may be the case that traces of *S* in line 6 have subsequently been obscured, since the lower curve of *S*, shown as definitive in previous drawings, is presently obscured by the plaster that was applied to hold the two large fragments of the stele together. Even so, drawings reconstructing [-*HEUS*] at the beginning of line 6 are forced to reconstruct disproportionately narrow letters,

Ubi Erat Lupa:

1. [*D*(*is*)] *M*(*anibus*)
2. *N*[*E*]*SES IERHEI*
3. **[*E*(*x*)]** *N*(*umero*) *PAL*(*myrenorum*) *VIXIT*
4. [*A*]*N*(*nos*) *XXV MA*-
5. [*L*]*CHUS ET IER*
6. **[*HEU*]***S F*(*ratri*) *B*(*ene*) *M*(*erenti*) *P*(*osuerunt*)

Hutton and Greene:
Latin Text:

1. ˹*D*˺ (*is*) *M*(*anibus*)
2. ˹*N*˺[*E*]*SES* . *IERHEI*
3. [*E*]˹*X*˺ (*numero*) . *PAL*(*myrenorum*) *VIXIT*
4. [*A*]˹*N*˺ (*nos*) . *XXV* ˹.˺ *MA*-
5. [*L*]˹*C*˺*HUS ET IER*
6. *F*(*ratri*) . *B*(*ene*) ~ *M*(*erenti*) . *P*(*osuerunt*) .

these sigla in the discussion below.

Although the reading offered by *Ubi Erat Lupa* differs in some details from the previous readings, the readings of the full inscription largely agree. The Latin text contains a stereotyped opening, ˹*D*˺(*is*) *M*(*anibus*) ("To the departed spirits").[17] After this opening, the name of the deceased individual is found. The stele was erected to commemorate Nēšā son of Yarḥai (˹*N*˺[*E*]*SES IERHEI*, line 2) by two individuals, Malkū and Yar(ḥai?) (*MA*[*L*]˹*C*˺*HUS ET IER*). The name *MALCHUS* is not completely contained in the inscription (see fig. 2), but, through reference to line 2 of the Aramaic text, can be reliably reconstructed as *MA*[*L*]˹*C*˺*HUS*, spanning lines 4–5 of the Latin. The tail end of the name *IER*[*HEUS?*] likewise must be reconstructed: Previous interpreters have assumed that both this individual, Yar(ḥai?), and Malkū were the brothers of Nēšā; on this account, the second brother (*IER* – at the end of line 5) was named after their (common) father Yarḥai (*IERHEI*; line 2). It is possible that the remainder of the name ([-*HEUS*]) originally appeared at the left side of

despite assuming a ligature between *H* and *E*.[19] Moreover, the abbreviation *F. B. M. P.* would be reasonably well-centered in the inscription's field, were the name simply to be abbreviated on line 5 as *IER*, with no continuation on line 6. Accordingly, Sanie–followed by Hillers and Cussini–provided only the reading *IER* in line 5, apparently considering it an abbreviation of the personal name. Without further evidence to the contrary, we are inclined to follow them in this reading.

The suspicion that the three individuals named on the stele, Nēšā, Malkū, and Yar(ḥay) were brothers led researchers to interpret the *F* of line 6 as the indirect object of the closing formula, *B*(*ene*) *M*(*erenti*) *P*(*osuerunt*) 'well-deserving, they placed [it]'. Reading *F* as the indirect object led these interpreters to reconstruct the dative singular *F*(*ratri*), 'to (their) brother'. This reconstruction, however, does not sit well in the larger corpus of Latin epigraphy, as we understand it. Although *B M P* does occur (without *F*) as a fixed phrase in the monolingual Latin memorials from Tibiscum (*IDR* III$_1$ 154 = *PAT* 0251; *IDR* III$_1$ 177), so too does *F B M* (*P*) (*IDR* III$_1$ 162, 164). In the latter

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[16] We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer at *Aramaic Studies* who recommended we attend to the presence of word dividers in the inscription.
[17] See, e.g, Sandys 1969, 62–63; and Lassère 2005, 1:234–235.

[18] Russu 177, 197, drawing; Moga-Russu 1974, 71, 73, and drawing; and Kaizer 2004, 566. Cf. Russu 1969, 175.
[19] Russu 1977, 197, drawing; Moga-Russu 1974, 72, drawing.

14

cases, *F B M (P)* only potentially indicates a familial relation (*F*[*ilius*], 'son', or *F*[*rater*], 'brother') followed by the stereotyped phrase *B*(*ene*) *M*(*erenti*) *P*(*onere* [inf.]).[20] In Latin inscriptions, *F* frequently abbreviates *fecit* ('he made [it]') or its plural inflection *fecerunt* ('they made [it]'), and this final line could thus be a slight divergence from an otherwise stereotypical phrase in which the direct object is entirely implicit: *F*(*ecerunt*) *B*(*ene*) *M*(*erenti*) *P*(*osuerunt*), 'well deserving, they made [it] and placed [it] [for their brother]'. Another consideration mitigates the probability of reading *F*[*ratri*] in line 6, namely, the possibility that the abbreviation in fact represented *F*[*ratres*], the plural nominative form 'brothers'. In this case, *F*[*ratres*] would stand in apposition to the names of the stele's dedicants: 'Malkū and Yar[ḥai], (his) brothers, dedicated it, well-deserving'. Although we leave this problem for Latin epigraphers to discuss further, our new reading of the Aramaic text may provide further leverage on the meaning of the Latin abbreviations here (see below). Altogether, the data contained in the Latin text correspond precisely to those deemed "essential" to funerary inscriptions by Jean-Marie Lassère: (a) consecration to the Manes; (b) the name of the deceased; (c) the age of the deceased (see below); (d) the dedicants of the memorial; and (e) final formulae.[21]

The Corrected Reading of the Aramaic Text: Local Observations

The Aramaic text has typically received much less consideration than has the Latin text. Because the left side of the stele had been removed in antiquity, apparently to re-size the stone for secondary employment, and because Aramaic line 1 had been fractured beyond legibility already by the time of Sanie's initial publication, readings of Aramaic lines 1 and 2 have always proved difficult. Further, we should be clear that much of the Aramaic text is presently obscured by concrete. In those places, we have been forced to rely on Sanie's initial readings, in combination with earlier photographs. For example, line 1 has been nearly completely covered by plaster; only the first two letters, ʿb remain unobscured, but photographs in the initial publication show a *d* clearly following the *b*. After a somewhat abnormally long break, possibly enough to fit

a narrow letter, the upper half of the letters ʾmlkʾ can be made out in the original photographs, justifying reconstruction of the name ʾmlkʾ[w]. The broken area to the left of the name does not permit and firm readings from the original photographs; it is now fully covered by plaster. Supplementing the current readings with readings drawn from the original photographs, we therefore read:

1. ʿbd[x] ʾmlkʾ[w]

The first half of line 2 is similarly obscured by plaster; only the top half of the first letter, *lamed*, is visible; further to the left we can make out the bottom right of the *aleph*. In the original photographs, *nun* and *shin* may be made out between these two, allowing the certain reading *lnš*. Through analysis of our photographs, we have been able to correct the reading of the text at the end of line 2 in the Aramaic text of *IDR* III₁ 167 (*PAT* 0994). In section 2, we described the alignment of the small fragment (labeled as such in fig. 4) with the bulk of the stele's bottom fragment. Hutton handled the piece, setting it gently and determining its fit on the plaster that had been used to connect it with the large piece. However, upon photographing the inscription, we realized that the piece itself, when placed firmly on the plaster, was situated slightly to the left of its original position. It then became apparent that, while the fragment fit without question, previous attempts to preserve and restore the inscription caused it to be dislodged from its original position as part of the larger stele. In our drawing of the epigraph (fig. 5), we have adjusted the position of this piece, aligning the two constituent fragments through reference to the very clear *waw* in the middle of the small fragment. We base the following new reading on this arrangement. Moreover, we have marked the concrete in the drawing with *light grey*, to differentiate the concrete from the base stone more clearly (in reality, the two are very close in color). Fractured areas of the stone are marked in *dark grey*.

The *waw* mentioned above is flanked by two legible graphemes. Contrary to previous readings, the preceding letter is clearly a *he*, with a long horizontal segment continuing into the right leg, and intersected by the short left leg hanging from its center-point. A nearly identical *he* can be seen in the Aramaic portion of the Guras bilingual inscription (*IDR* III₁ 154 = *PAT* 0251), also hailing from Tibiscum (see fig. 6). As noted above (n. 14), Sanie's revised reading recognized the presence of a *nun* to the left of the *waw*. We are able to confirm

20   Of these two cases, the former more surely contains a familial relation, since it is part of a longer abbreviated phrase, *OPT*(*i*)*O P.E.F.B.M.*, which was reconstructed as *OPT*(*i*)*O P*(*ater²*) *E*(*t*) *F*(*il.*) *B*(*ene*) *M*(*erenti*) (i.e., "…optio, father and son; well-deserving") by Russu (1977, 191).
21   Lassère 2005, 234–242.

this reading, evidenced by a long, downward-right sloping segment; only the short northeast sloping segment of the *nun*'s head has been lost in the break.

Two more traces of letters may be seen in the second line of the inscription. To the right of the clear *he*, we see the bottom of the back-curved vertical stroke of a *waw*. In the photograph, this segment appears to be discontinuous, interrupted in the middle. Close inspection of our photographs reveals that this interruption is only apparent, caused by the presence of a small glob of concrete that found its way into the *waw*'s incised downward stroke. To the right of the very bottom of this fractured *waw* is a short, predominantly horizontal segment, sloping slightly downward to the right. The rest of this letter is lost in the break, but the traces are consistent with *bet, ḥet, mem, samek, ʿayin, pe, ṣade, taw*, and perhaps *lamed*, which seems to have been carved very narrowly in this inscription (compare the exemplar at the beginning of line 2). Of these, the slightly angled stance favors *ḥet, ṣade*, or *taw*.

Finally, note must be taken of the stroke at the far left end of the tablet. It has long thrown readings of the Aramaic text into confusion, since at first glance it resembles the size and shape of many of the letters. Sanie originally read this stroke as the right leg of a *he*, but later recanted this reading, calling this stroke "a part of the border of the inscription's field (*une partie de la bordure du champ de l'inscription*)."[22] We do not read this as a letter–perhaps it was a paratextual marker (a word-divider, perhaps, or an indication that the line had finished), but it cannot be part of the frame, as Sanie suggested, since the left edge of the frame sat several centimeters to the left originally. Not only is this stroke not in the right position to comprise part of the frame, but also, it does not continue beyond the height of this line. Further, inspection of the stroke shows that the ends of the stroke do not have the nicely squared-off appearance of the clearer graphemes in this inscription. Finally, the width of the stroke, while approximately that of the graphemes to its right, is not uniform, and its centerline wanders back and forth. This is not an intentional grapheme; more probably, it was a mark from the tool of a secondary stonecutter tasked with carving the stele down to size for its subsequent re-employment.

These observations leave us with a very clear reading of the end of Aramaic line 2:

[…]ˊḥ/ṣ/tˋwhwn

We have here the 3.m.pl. possessive suffix (-*hwn*) on a word the bound form of which ended in ˊḥ/ṣ/tˋw. In light of the accompanying Latin co-text, this word can reasonably be reconstructed as [ʾ]ˊḥˋwhwn, 'their brother'. Altogether, then, our reading of the second line is:

2. *lnšˊ* [ʾ]ˊḥˋwhwn

The first half of line 3 is surprisingly legible, given that the first word, *šnt* ('year'), spans the break. Although the first letter has been completely obscured by plaster in our photograph (bottom right of fig. 2), significant portions of the following two letters remain visible on both the upper and lower portions of the stele. The *šin* is clear in the photographs published with the *editio princeps*. Four vertical strokes are clearly visible (designating the numeral '4'), followed by a lacuna (now filled with plaster). To the left of the plaster, the left end of the numeral '100' can still be seen (it is clearer in the original photographs), and beyond that we see three '20' signs followed by the sign for '10'. Altogether, this group marks the year as *4.100+60+10* (= 470; i.e., 159 CE[23]), but it is unclear whether any smaller units were originally inscribed to the left of the '10' sign; if so, they were lost when the stele was trimmed for reemployment. Line 3 thus reads:

3. *šnt* 4.100+60+10

Line 4 is surprisingly clear. As would perhaps be expected, the year marker in line 3 is complemented and given further precision by the indication of the month. This identification is obvious from the initial word *byrḥ* ('in the month'), but unfortunately, the month name itself is not so easy to identify. The last two letters clearly read -*bt*, but preceding these letters is a broken area that is currently filled with a mix of plaster and cement, obscuring some of the script. Sanie originally read the month name here as *ṭbt*; Hillers and Cussini–and most later commentators–have also read *ṭbt*, following Sanie.[24] However, after his initial reading, Sanie later conceded that the traces near the beginning of the word suggested a stonecutter's error that was corrected in the course of the epigraph's

22 Sanie 1981, 360.
23 For this date, see Reuter 1999, 533; and Taylor 2001, 213 n. 84.
24 E.g., Hillers-Cussini 1996, 159, *ad loc.*

manufacture.[25] Specifically, he noted that the traces looked like the stonecutter had originally carved š, as though anticipating šbṭ, the month following ṭbt, but had then corrected the reading to ṭbt (see fig. 3). Indeed, the curved, northeast-southwest stroke does resemble the right-most arm of a š, and a straight, northwest-southeast stroke to the left of the cement repair does resemble the straight left haft of the same grapheme. A diagonal posing as the middle bar of the letter might be visible to the right of the cement repair. In short, Sanie's identification of the letter as a šin is plausible. However, the rightmost curve is intersected at its top end by a northwest-southeast sloping incision–it is not clear if this is an intentional stoke, but it does give the grapheme the appearance of an ʿayin whose top-bar was placed too high, or of a numeral '5'.[26] This reading seems unlikely, though, since we have been unable to find anywhere else in the Palmyrene corpus where the month name is preceded by a numeral (whether or not that numeral is intended to indicate the number of the month; furthermore, it cannot indicate the day, which would then interrupt the appositional construction yrḥ X, 'the month X'). Moreover, it is not altogether clear that this stroke was intentional–the rough area above the stroke shows signs of a second, less pronounced incision immediately above the deepest portion of the groove.

To complicate matters, this damaged letter, which we read here as ˹š˺, is followed by what appears to be an ornately inscribed vertical stroke; this stroke could be the letter *nun*, or it could be the left vertical of a *ḥet* or *ṣade* (in which case the diagonal preceding the stroke would form the cross-bar rather than the left haft of the preceding šin. The vertical stroke does not demonstrate the correct curvature to be the left leg of a *taw*, nor does the crossbar sit at the correct angle for that grapheme (see the *t* two letters later). We tentatively read ˹š˺n˹bt, but we are not confident in that reading. The proper spelling of the month name is šbṭ (with a *tet*); the *taw* is clear, however, and we can think of no plausible explanation for the phonological insertion of a *nun*, since transcriptional evidence and a continuous tradition of Aramaic vocalization indicate that the following *b* was not doubled (and therefore should not undergo nasalization and dissimilation (compare the typical form šəbaṭ < *šVbaṭ rather than ** šVnbVṭ < šVbbVṭ). Moreover, this reading does not lead nicely to a

month name known from the Palmyrene homeland.[27] At the same time, it seems unlikely that the stonecutter intended to insert the month name Tebeṭ here (as is asserted by Sanie and most subsequent commentators), but we have no better solution. We leave in abeyance the implications of our reading of line 4, with the hopes that more study and further discoveries may alleviate this difficulty:

4. *byrḥ* ˹š˺*n*˹*bt*

The Corrected Reading of the Aramaic Text: Global Observations

In addition to the difficulties posed by the current state of the stele and the repairs that have been made to it, scholars have pointed to what appears to be the divergence in content between the two component texts since the time of the stele's initial decipherment. Several differences between the Latin and Aramaic texts have contributed to the general conclusion that the two texts share only a partially overlapping set of propositions:

(1) This impression is instantiated already in the opening line, where the stereotyped opening of the Latin inscription, *D(is) M(anibus)*, is unreplicated in the Aramaic text.

(2) Typical readings of line 1 would seem that only Malkū is named as having established (ʿbd, '[he] made, prepared', Aramaic line 1) the stele, in contrast to the naming of two brothers in the Latin inscription.

(3) According to the Latin text, Nēšā belonged to the contingent of Palmyrene soldiers (probably based at Tibiscum, where the stele was discovered), and was twenty-five years old when he died ([*7²*/ *EX*] *N(umeri) PAL(myrenorum) VIXIT [A]N(nis) XXV*; Latin lines 2–3). Neither datum is related in the Aramaic text. Likewise, the Aramaic text contains the date of death[28] (šnt 4.100+60+10 *byrḥ* ṭbt/šbt; Aramaic lines 3–4), a datum that is common in Palmyrene Aramaic texts, but rarely found in the Latin inscriptions commemorating soldiers. This datum is missing entirely in the Latin text of *IDR* III₁ 167 (*PAT* 0994).

Having noted these divergences between the Latin and Aramaic texts, interpreters have typically used this evidence to argue that "two separate acts of composition" had produced the bilingual

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25   Sanie 1981, 360.
26   We are grateful to two anonymous reviewers at the journal *Aramaic Studies*, both of whom pointed this out to us.

27   See Taylor 2001, 207.
28   It is possible that the date indicates some other milestone, such as the date of interment or of manufacture of the stele, but that it records the date of death remains the most plausible. In the present circumstance at least, all three events could have been subsumed within the same month.

17

texts, even if that composition had potentially been at the hands of the same bilingual individual. According to this perspective, the two co-texts do not stand in a translation-translated relationship.[29] Yet, consideration of the Latin and Aramaic texts in terms of their corresponding propositions allows us to make further observations about the Aramaic inscription as a whole.

In the remainder of this study, we propose that the strength of these three observations can be mitigated somewhat through an approach informed by Descriptive Translation Studies. Jeremy M. Hutton and Catherine E. Bonesho have recently advanced an argument that the presence of *DM* in the Latin text and the apparent omission of a corresponding phrase in its Aramaic co-text (i.e., observation [1] above) do not necessarily render implausible the identification of one text as a translation of the other.[30] Similarly, the provision of some culturally favored data in one text without its representation in its co-text (i.e., observation [3]) also does not militate against an assessment that one text has been translated from the other.[31] Different expressions of age and length of military service should hardly be unexpected in bilingual inscriptions; it is quite common in Latin epigraphy to name the military unit and age of death, but these features are nearly unheard of in the Palmyrene sphere. Indeed, we only find these elements in some of the bilingual texts, where the Latin or Greek text has been translated more rotely into Aramaic than in the present case. The process of "cultural filtering," which Hutton and Bonesho draw from Andrew Chesterman, allows that translators make significant adaptations to their source texts when transferring them into a new linguistic (and, simultaneously, a new cultural) system. A similar argument has been forth recently by María José Estarán Tolosa.[32]

Finally, we observe that the reading ʿbd[x] *mlkw* ("Malkū made, prepared") in line 1 would make for a disproportionately short line. The definitive discovery of a 3.m.pl. possessive suffix in Aramaic line 2, probably attached to the word 'brother' (bound form: ʾḥw), demands a correspondingly plural antecedent, which could not be satisfied by the mention of merely one of the

brothers (*mlkw* in all previous readings). Our new reading of line 2 may thus suggest that the *IER* of the Latin text was, in fact, originally present in the Aramaic text as well. Accordingly, we tentatively reconstruct Aramaic line 1 as originally including the name of both brothers (with the name of the second possibly abbreviated as *yr* or *yrḥ*). This is precisely one of the readings that Sanie considered but ultimately rejected in 1981.[33] In fact, there is space for this addition, but the left side of the line was (a) broken off when the stele was being carved for its secondary context, and (b) further damaged when the stele was fractured during excavation. Despite potentially containing a more tightly overlapping proposition, our reconstruction still retains grammatical inconsistencies distinguishing the two texts: although our reading provides the same basic familial relationship of the three named sons of the elder Yarḥai, it does so with a different frame of reference in the Aramaic text ("Malkū [and Yar(ḥai)] … for Nēšā their [bro]ther") from the locution given in the corresponding Latin text ("Malcheus and Ier, [his] brothers").

Following on the preceding argument, the co-texts' respective propositions concerning who erected the memorial stone may be significantly brought into line–*assuming*, that is, that the *F* of Latin's line 6 (*F B M P*) does indeed serve as an abbreviation for *fratri*, '(their) brother', and not *fratres*, '(his) brothers' or *fecerunt*, 'they made (it)'.[34] If the *F* in these abbreviations was in fact intended to represent *fecerunt*, then, on the one hand, we would have no corresponding Latin text for the Aramaic indication that Malkū and Yarḥai were the brothers of Nēšā (ʾḥwhwn), but we would have direct verbal correspondence with the ʿbd(*w*) ('he/they made'; Aramaic line 1). Note, however, that *P(osuerunt)* already satisfies this correspondence, albeit imperfectly. If it is the case that Russu is correct in his earliest reading of the *F* as representing *fratri* 'for (their) brother', then we should note that it corresponds with our new reading of the end of line two ([ʾ]ʾḥʾwhwn, '[for] … their [bro]ther'). Although the personal possessive 'their' is only implicit in the Latin, this is to be expected–it was rarely included in formulae of this type. Correspondingly, our proposed new reading eliminates the final aspect of the perceived discordance between the Latin and Aramaic texts, and suggests that the lacunae in the inscription may in fact mask a much tighter correspondence between the two co-texts.[35]

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29   Adams 2003, 258; see also Adams *et alii* 2002. Similar expressions can be found in Davis-Stuckenbruck 1992, 276 n. 26; and Gzella 2005, 449; but cf. Gzella 2015, 254–256, where an analysis closer to our own is broached.
30   Hutton-Bonesho 2015, 280–281.
31   Hutton-Bonesho 2015, 282–284, 286–287.
32   Estarán 2015a; 2015b.

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33   Sanie 1981, 360.
34   See, e.g., Sandys 1969, 299.
35   See, e.g., Russu 1977, 198, where the fraternity of the

Conclusion

In summation, our reconstructed reading of the Aramaic text is:

1. ʿbd[w] ˹mlk˺[wyrḥʾyʾ]
2. lnšʾ [ʾ]˹ḥ˺whwn
3. šnt 4.100+60+10
4. byrḥ ˹š˺nʾbt

1. Malkū [and Yarḥʾaiʾ] made[36] (this memorial)
2. for Nēšā their [bro]ther.
3. Year 470 (= 159 c.e.)
4. in the month ˹Š?˺ [erasure?] ṬˈBT.

Furthermore, in addition to providing a new reading of Aramaic line 2 and problematizing Sanie's reconstruction of Aramaic line 4, we have given here some additional evidence for consideration of the set of propositions contained within the Latin and Aramaic co-texts as standing in a translated-translation relationship. This analysis rests on the suggestion that we have in this bilingual inscription the operation of "cultural filtering", in which the Aramaic text contains a different set of propositions from the Latin text because the translator was adhering to a difference set of literary conventions. More important to the evaluation of whether these texts stand in a translation relationship or a relationship of bilingual, but separate, production is the fact that the two texts overlap in the central data they convey (i.e., the death of Nēšā, his familial relations, etc.), and may demonstrate some important lexical commonalities. As a result, we conclude that our analysis thus contributes new data to the study of translation and bilingualism in Roman antiquity.

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dedicants with the decedent seems to be assumed, and the similarity of the names is mentioned. But if Russu's reading of *F* as abbreviating *fratri* ('for [their] brother') is correct, we are at a loss as to how, exactly, Russu was have been able to piece together the fraternal relationship between these three individuals without access to the Aramaic. The only explanation is that he inferred the relationship from the similarity of the names of Nēšā's father *IERHEI* and one of the stele's dedicants, *IER*[*HEUS*] on the basis of other texts.

[36] In the suffix form of strong verbs, the 3.m.pl. inflection can be spelled without the normal *-w*; Cantineau 1935, 56–57; Rosenthal 1936, 57–58; Gzella 2015, 251–252. This is either an effect of selective agreement with the first member of a compound subject (compare Biblical Hebrew), or an effect of the phonological quiescence of the inflectional ending /-ū/ (as in Syriac, where the *-w* remains in the orthography, but is realized as phonetically [-ø]). Nonetheless, there may have been space in this line to accommodate the fully spelled 3.m.pl. form ʿbdw; unfortunately, the state of the inscription does not permit firm conclusions.

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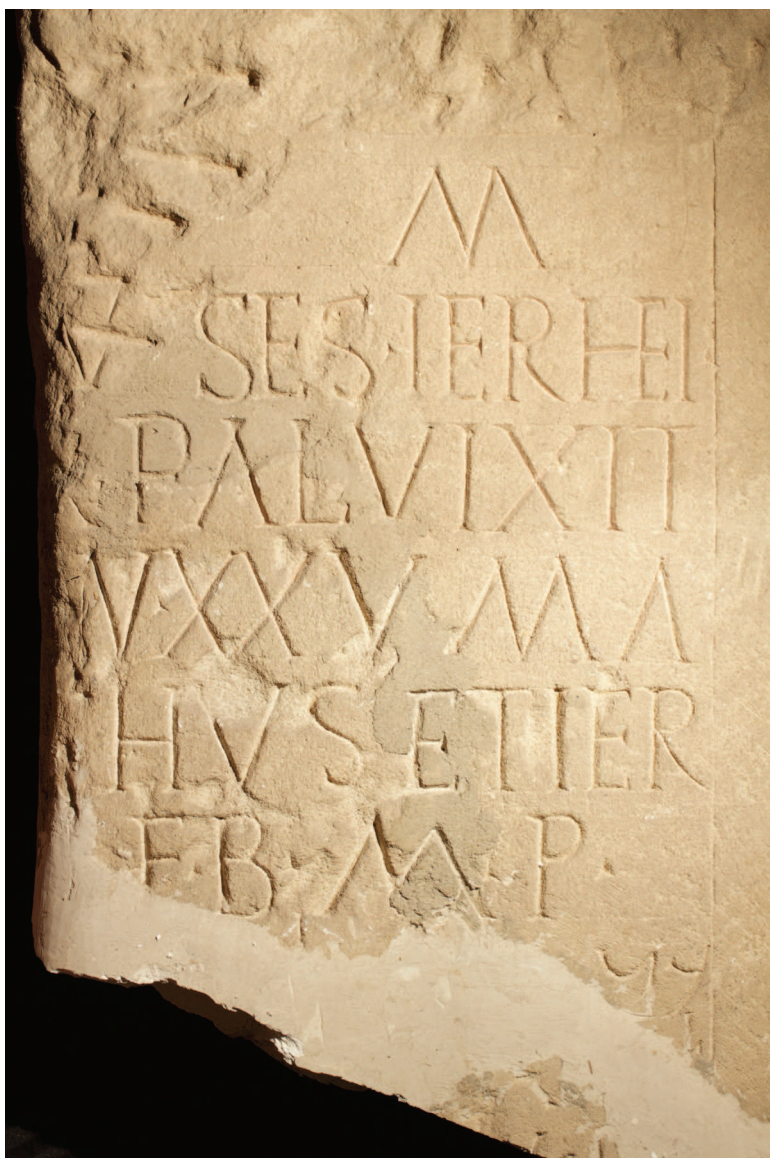
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*Fig. 1. Uppermost panel of IDR III₁
167 (= PAT 0994) Photo © 2016, N.
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*Fig. 2. Upper (Latin and Aramaic)
portion of IDR III₁ 167 (= PAT
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Fig. 3. Lower (Aramaic) portion of IDR III₁ 167 (= PAT 0994) Photo © 2016, N. E. Greene and J. M. Hutton, WPAIP
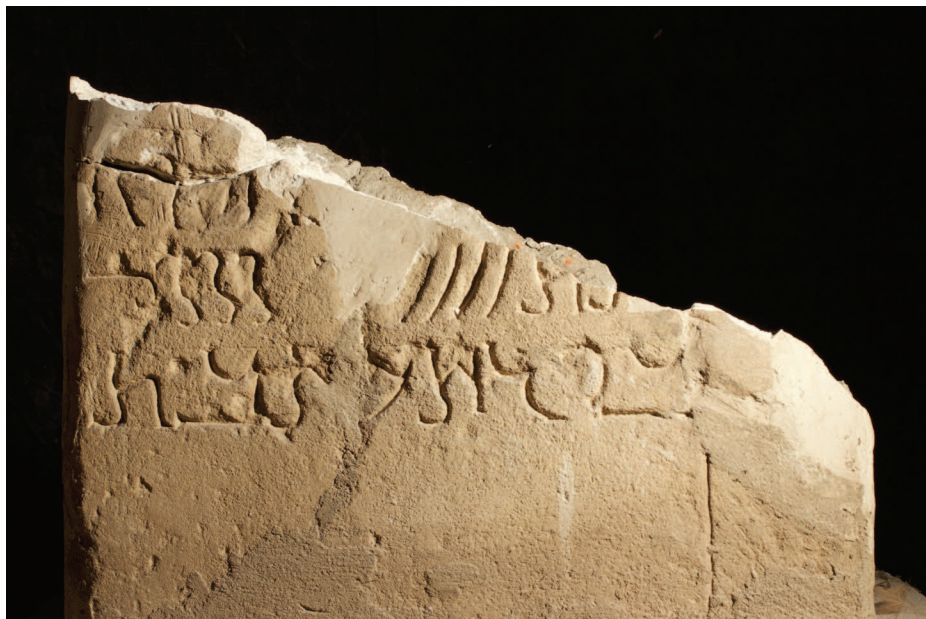

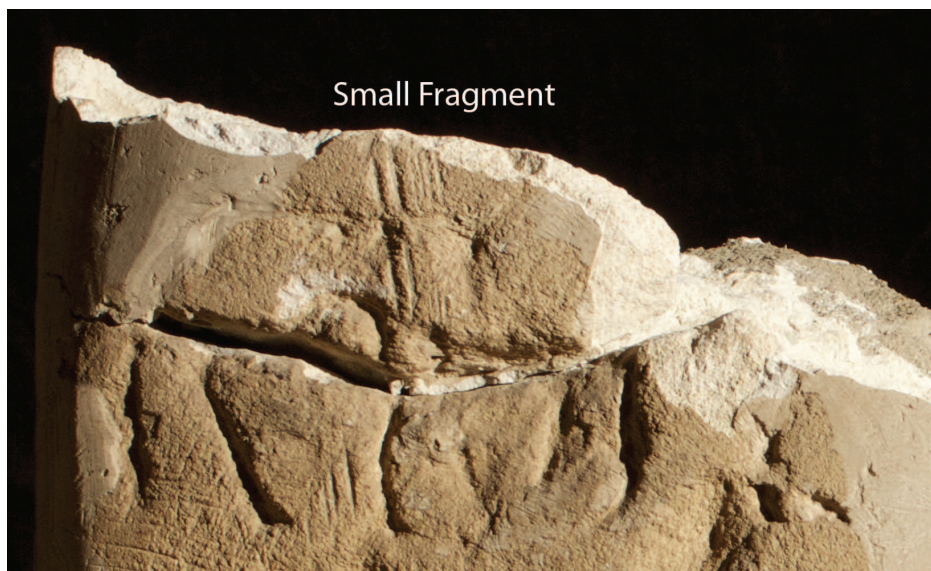*Fig. 4. Detail of IDR III₁ 167 (= PAT 0994): End of Line 2 Photo © 2016, N. E. Greene and J. M. Hutton, WPAIP*
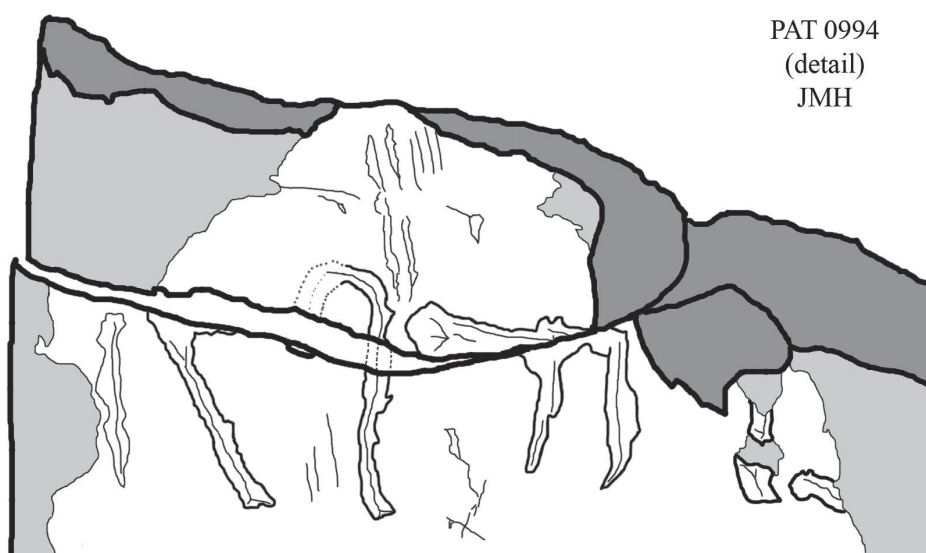
Small Fragment

Fig. 5. Detail of IDR III₁ 167 (= PAT 0994): End of Line 2 Drawing © J. M. Hutton
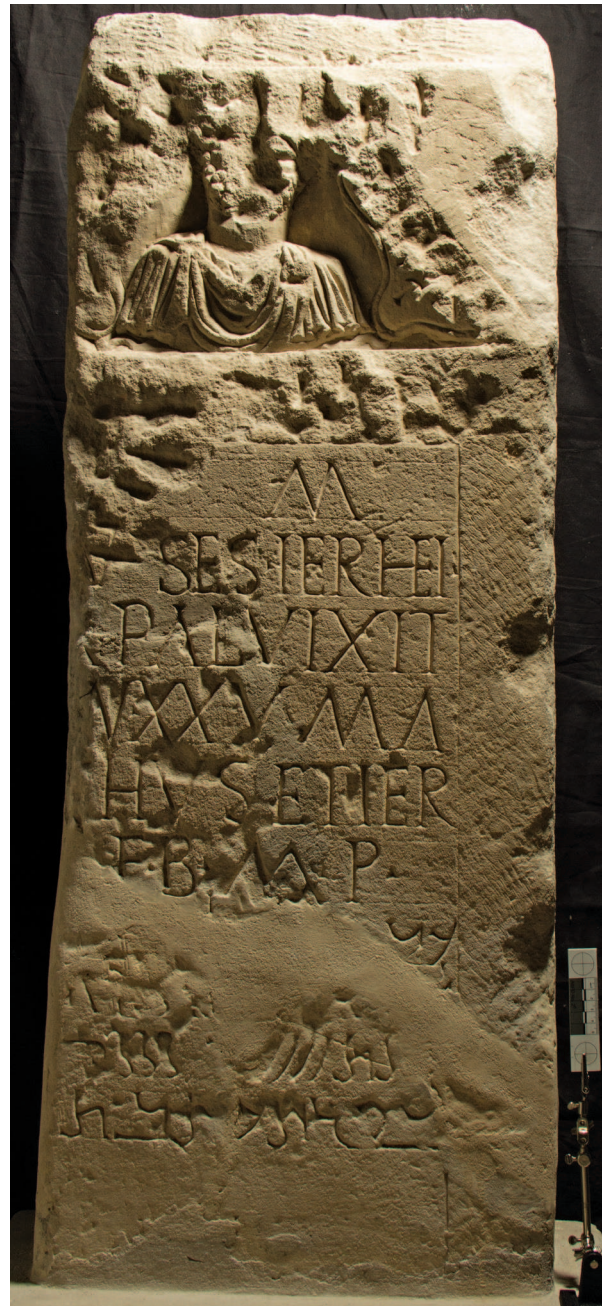
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23

Fig. 6. Detail of IDR III₁ 167 (= PAT 0251): Showing he in Aramaic
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Fig. 7. Photo Negative of Fig. 2: Upper (Latin and Aramaic) portion of IDR III₁ 167 (= PAT 0994)
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Fig. 8. Full Image of IDR III₁ 167 (= PAT 0994), Repaired Subsequent to Inspection by J. M. Hutton and N. E. Greene in 2016
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