



**Roma Tre**

DIPARTIMENTO DI  
STUDI UMANISTICI

**RES PUBLICA LITTERARUM**  
STUDIES IN THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

QUADERNI

6

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*In re publica litterarum liberi nos sumus*

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*Roma Tre-Press*

2025

## RES PUBLICA LITTERARUM • QUADERNI

La terza serie di «Res publica litterarum - Studies in Classical Tradition», edita dalla Roma TrE-Press sotto gli auspici del Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici del medesimo Ateneo, torna a essere affiancata da una collana di studi e ricerche, come l'aveva concepita il suo fondatore Sesto Prete quando insegnava all'Università del Kansas.

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STUDIES IN THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

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# PPRET INSCRIPTIONS

INSCRIPTIONS PERTAINING TO THE PRAETORIAN  
PREFECTS FROM 284 TO 395 AD.  
PAPER EDITION

PIERFRANCESCO PORENA,  
ELEONORA ANGIUS, ANDREA BERNIER,  
GIORDANA FRANCESCHINI, IRENE VAGIONAKIS

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LIBERI NOS SUMUS

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GREEK INSCRIPTION IN HONOUR OF A PRAET. PREFECT  
OF CONSTANTIUS II AUG. AND JULIAN CAES.  
BY THE REGION OF BATANEA (PHOENICES LIBANENSIS)<sup>1</sup>

EDITIONS: Sartre 1999, pp. 219-21 (with photo, fig. 3) (= Sartre 2014, pp. 277 f.)  
= *AE* 1999, 1699 = *SEG XLIX* (1999), 2105 = *BE* 2001, 507; (Sartre in) Yon,  
Gatier 2009, pp. 102-5, nr. 23 (with photo); *IGLS XIV/2*, 555a (with photo)

PLRE: NEW - inscription unknown to the *PLRE*

PRAETORIAN PREFECTS: Anonymous praetorian prefect of the East

DATE OF THE INSCRIPTION: 358/360 AD

PROVENANCE AND LOCATION

Ancient city: Aire. Modern city: Al-Sanamein (Syria). Province: Phoenices Libanensis. Diocese: Oriens. Regional prefecture: Oriens.

Provenance: found in 1997 in the road to the West of the *Tycheion* of Al-Sanamein. Current location: in the garden of a house near the *Tycheion* of Al-Sanamein. Ancient location: public space.

TYPE AND MATERIAL OF THE SUPPORT AND TEXT LAYOUT

Type of support: statue base. Material: limestone.

Reuse of the inscribed field: uncertain. Reuse of the monument: no. Opisthographic: yes.

Dimensions of support: Height: 29 cm. Width: 95 cm. Breadth: 92 cm. Dimensions of letters: 3.5 cm.

Inscribed field: One inscribed field (*frons*); the back and left faces bear a different inscription (*IGLS XIV/2*, 556a). The first line of the inscription is ruined. Two other faces of the base bear a previous inscription, the dedication *IGLS XIV/2*, 556a.

Writing technique: chiselled. Language: Greek. Rhythm: prose. Palaeography: squared capitals.

TEXT CATEGORY: Honorary inscription for an anonymous praetorian prefect

1. The author would like to thank Professor M. Sartre for his invaluable help in compiling the bibliography for this inscription during the closures imposed by the pandemic.

## GREEK TEXT

Τὸν λ[α]μπρότατο[ν - - -]  
 τὸν τοῦ ἱεροῦ πραιτωρίου (*sic*) ἔπαρχον τοῦ δεσποτοῦ ἡμῶν  
 Κωνσταντίου τοῦ Αὐγούστου καὶ Νικήτου καὶ τοῦ ἐπι=  
 φανεστάτου Καίσαρος Ἰουλιανοῦ δι' οὗ ἰρήνη (*sic*) καὶ ἀμεριμνία  
 5 ὑπῆρξεν ἡ Βατανέα τὸν εὐεργέτην καὶ σωτήρα ἀνέστησεν,  
 ἐπὶ Φλ(αουίου) Μαξίμου τοῦ διασημοτάτου δουκιναρίου τοῦ σάλτου.

## CRITICAL EDITION

Edition based on *IGLS XIV/2*; *AE 1999*, 1699; *SEG XLIX (1999)*, 2105.

1: Τὸν λ[α]μπρότατο[ν - - -]οι, *IGLS XIV/2*

2: πραιτωρίου

3: Νικήτου, *IGLS XIV/2*

4: εἰρήνη

5: ὑπῆρξεν, *IGLS XIV/2*; εὐεργετήν, *IGLS XIV/2*; σωτήρα, *IGLS XIV/2*

## TRANSLATIONS

– English: «Of clarissimus rank, ..., the prefect of the sacred praetorium of our master Constantius Augustus and Victorious and of the most noble Caesar Iulianus, thanks to whom there is peace and security, the Batanaea has erected (the statue of his) benefactor and saviour, under Flavius Maximus, the most perfect ducenarius of the saltus».

– French (Sartre in *IGLS XIV/2*, 555a): «Le clarissime ... préfet du [sacré] prétoire de notre maître Constance Auguste et Vainqueur et du très illustre César Julien, par lequel paix et sérénité existent, la Batanée a dressé (la statue de son) bienfaiteur et sauveur, sous Flavius Maximus, l'éminent ducénaire du saltus».

– Italian: «Il chiarissimo ..., prefetto del sacro pretorio del nostro signore Constantius Augusto e Vincitore e del nobilissimo Cesare Iulianus, grazie al quale c'è la pace e la sicurezza, la Batanea ha eretto (la statua del suo) benefattore e salvatore, sotto Flavius Maximus, il perfettissimo ducenario del saltus».

## THE INSCRIPTION AND ITS PREFECTS: CRITICAL COMMENTARY, UPDATING, OVERVIEWS

The inscription was found in the ancient site of Aire / Αἶρη (Barrington Atlas, tab. 69; Sartre 1999, fig. 1; *IGLS XIV/1* Carte de la Syrie du Sud) on the Roman road connecting Damascus-Airè-Neve-Capitolias, now Sanamein («the two idols»), 50 km South of Damascus in Syria. Aire / Sanamein is

located in the northern part of the Batanea, the plain between Mount Hermon to the North, the Galaunitis massifs to the West and Trachonitis to the East, in the province of Phoenices Libanensis, bordering the province of Arabia (concerning Batanea, cf. Dentzer [éd.] 1985; A. and M. Sartre in *IGLS XIV/1*, pp. 3-20; on Aire cf. *IGLS XIV/2*, pp. 529-32). Since the High Empire Aire had been the administrative seat of an imperial *saltus*. The latter is attested by our inscription (l. 6), and by three other inscriptions dating to the 2nd/3rd Century AD, which mention imperial *procuratores* in the same locality (*IGLS XIV/2*, 554, 555, 561b; on legionaries in this area, especially belonging to the *legio III Gallica* cf. *IGLS XIV/1*, p. 16). Although the sources are silent, Aire may have been a *civitas* in the late empire, since it was already the seat of a bishop in 325 AD and again in 451 AD; but it may have been one of the *metrokômiiai* of Syria (on this type of administrative and commercial centre, see Dagrón 1979, Sartre 1999 and with different opinions Gnoli 2013; synthesis by Carrié 2012, pp. 45 f.), although no source attributes the title of *metrokômia* to Aire (cf. *IGLS XIV/2*, p. 534).

The base was found in 1997 in Aire / Sanamein, along a road about 50 m North-West of the sanctuary of Tyche / Fortune (the *Tycheion*) and now it lies in the garden of a house near the remains of the same temple (the details of the discovery and possible reuse of the base in later structures are not known, and the information in *IGLS XIV/2*, 555a and 556a is not coherent). The *Tycheion* was built in 191 AD and consisted of a building of about 12 m. by 12 m., which is still visible (for the dedication of the temple, see *IGLS XIV/2*, 548; on this building cf. Freyberger 1989; Freyberger 2010, pp. 488-90, Abb. 30, 31; Oenbrink 2000; Clauss-Balty 2008, pp. 272-76.) A topographical link between the monumental area of the *Tycheion*, and the neighbouring Temple of Zeus Airèsios or Kyrios, and the base in honour of the praetorian praefect seems very likely. The inscription is in fact ophistographic: on the two opposite sides, left and right with respect to the epigraphic field of our inscription, two parts of the same inscription in Greek were engraved simultaneously (*IGLS XIV/2*, 556a). The opistographic text celebrates the offering of the statue of a child (Zenodôros), which was consecrated to the deity together with an offering of four candlesticks by the father (Moschion) priest of the 'Great Tyche'. This double inscription, dating from the 3rd Century AD, is the oldest. The dedication to the praetorian praefect was probably engraved around a century later in 355/360 AD. It is possible that the *Tycheion* of Aire was no longer in use at this time and that the inscribed base of Moschion could have been reused. The base of Moschion may have been moved from the *Tycheion* in front of or into the nearby seat of the ad-

ministrative centre of the imperial *saltus* (see below), where the *procurator* Flavius Maximus had the monument to the praetorian prefect erected. The previous inscriptions on the two sides were not erased: perhaps they were plastered over, or the new inscription chiselled on the base was only visible from the front.

The first line of the inscription in honour of the praetorian prefect was engraved just below the upper edge of the epigraphic field, and it is damaged on its right side. Since the praetorian prefect's name is lost in that space – but nothing else – one wonders whether it was not deliberately erased. The editor, who examined the inscription, does not put forward this hypothesis, and the photos do not clarify whether the name was erased (Gnoli 2013, p. 281, thinks that it was erased).

The monument honouring the anonymous praetorian prefect as the benefactor and saviour of the whole region of Batanea (l. 5) and its location lead to the conclusion that the dignitary was a praetorian prefect of the East. It is impossible to know in what way he favoured that region, but it is probable that his benevolence had certain fiscal and administrative ramifications. For praetorian prefects of the East celebrated as benefactors, see Fl. Philippus at Perge (PPRET 29), Strategius Musonianus at Hierapolis of Phrygia (PPRET 43), Vindaeonius Anatolius at Perge (PPRET 47), Saturninius Secundus Salutius at Antioch of Pisidia (PPRET 52). For an Eastern prefect 'saviour of cities,' see PPRET 91; a Greek expression similar to the previous ones in the inscription for the praetorian prefect of Italia Illyricum Africa Petronius Probus in Crete (PPRET 58, l. 9); a reference to the easing of tax burdens in the inscription for the prefect Antonius Marcellinus in Crete (PPRET 21). For dedications in Latin decreed by communities to praetorian prefects (not always as patrons), see PPRET 24, 25, 32, 54, 59, 60, 61, 63, 73, 97.

The anonymous praetorian prefect of the East cited in the inscription from Aire / Sanamein served under Constantius II Augustus and Julian Caesar (ll. 3-4) and therefore his mandate can be placed to the period between November 355 AD and February 360 AD. Three prefects of the East are known in this period: Strategius Musonianus, Hermogenes, Helpidius.

Strategius Musonianus (*PLRE* I, pp. 611 f.; see PPRET 42, with biography; PPRET 43, 44) was not an aristocrat by birth, but a confidant of Constantine, who attained a high position through his cultural competence and reliability. He was of Phoenician origin (*Lib. or.* 1, 80), educated, a polyglot, correspondent of Libanius (Petit 1994, pp. 236-40), and a Christian with possible Arian tendencies. He served the emperor Constantius II both as a *comes* and as a diplomat. He was probably *praeses Thebaidos* in 349 AD, he was

certainly *proconsul* of Constantinople before 353 AD and *proconsul* of Achaia in 353 AD. After the lynching of the praefect of the East Domitianus (*PLRE* I, p. 262) in Antioch in 354 AD and the deposition of Constantius Gallus Caesar, Musonianus became the praetorian praefect of the East. He sat in office as praefect for the first time on July 25<sup>th</sup> 354 AD (*CTh* VIII 5, 5; *Amm.* XV 13, 1; *Lib. or.* 1, 106) and for the last time on June 7<sup>th</sup> 358 AD (*CTh* I 5, 6-7). He was probably dismissed before the end of the Summer of 358 AD (*Lib. epist.* 21), however before May 28<sup>th</sup> 359 AD (*CTh* I 7, 1), when his successor Hermogenes became praetorian praefect. Musonianus' power was extensive, particularly since the emperor Constantius II was away in Milan from 354 to 357, then in Sirmium from 357 to 359 AD. In that long period, from mid-354 AD at least until mid-358 AD, Musonianus was the most important civil authority in the Roman East. Ammianus (*Amm.* XV 13, 2) considers him a good administrator, very balanced in the government of the provinces, but prone to cruelty and greed in trials. If the name of the missing praefect in the first line of our inscription from Aire / Sanamein was erased, it is unlikely that the monument honoured Musonianus, because in two inscriptions from Hierapolis of Phrygia (PPRET 43, 44) and one from Paphos (PPRET 42) his name has remained intact.

Hermogenes (*PLRE* I, p. 423 Hermogenes 8, but see Hermogenes 2 and 9), was native of Pontus; he was a cultured official, an expert in rhetoric, law and philosophy as well as being a correspondent of Libanius (Petit 1994, pp. 121 f.). As mentioned, he was praetorian praefect perhaps from August 358 AD (*Lib. epist.* 21; *Amm.* XIX 12, 6) to early 360 AD (*Amm.* XXI 6, 9, of uncertain chronology; *CTh* I 7, 1, on May 28<sup>th</sup> 359 AD).

Helpidius (*PLRE* I, p. 414) was native of Paphlagonia and of humble origins. Apart from serving as a *notarius*, his career is unknown. He may have been *praeses Mauretaniae Sitifensis* (*CIL* VIII 20542) and *consularis Pannoniae* (*CTh* VII 20, 6) around 353 AD, but the two governors named Helpidius could be different from our praefect. He was nominated praetorian praefect of the East after Hermogenes, and remained in office from the beginning of 360 AD (the date February 4<sup>th</sup> 360 AD is cited by *CTh* XI 24, 1) and for almost the entire year of 361 AD. He remained faithful to Constantius II, until the emperor's death in November 361 AD (his successor Salutius is in office in December 361 AD). Upon leaving the prefecture, Helpidius was in danger of being lynched by Julian Augustus' troops and was only saved by the intervention of this emperor (*Lib. or.* 37, 11; *epist.* 740; *Amm.* XXII 3, 1). The correspondence with Libanius is concentrated in this two-year period 360/361 AD (Petit 1994, pp. 87-89).

It is likely that the praetorian prefect of the Aire / Sanamein inscription is Strategius Musonianus. The hypothesis is based on the length of his prefecture (four years), the political importance of this position, his Phoenician origin and his promotion of restoration works in the eastern cities (PPRET 42 and 44). Furthermore, in lines 4-5 of our inscription, the anonymous praetorian prefect is praised for the security he provided to the region of Batanea, before the reference to his role as «benefactor and saviour». The security of the eastern border was threatened from 359 AD, after the end of Musonianus' mandate, but it is likely that the dedicators are referring to Musonianus' control over all the eastern frontier from 354 AD onwards (cf. Lee 1993, pp. 106-12 and 172 f.). Moreover, Musonianus, who is praised as a good administrator, may have carefully looked after the interests of the imperial properties in the *saltus* of Batanea and could count the *ducenarius* Maximus among his clients. The erasing of the prefect's name near the upper edge of the block would have thus occurred accidentally.

The dedicator of the Aire / Sanamein monument is the personification of Batanea's plains, while the local authority responsible for its creation near the local *Tycheion* is the *ducenarius* of the *saltus*, Maximus (on the titles *praefectus* / *praepositus saltus* in late empire cf. *Not. dign. or.* 14, 7; see Woods 1994; Bartels 2008). Since the name is a very common one, it is difficult to say whether our *vir perfectissimus* Maximus could be one of those provincial governors who are known to have served between 355 and 375 AD (cf. *PLRE I*, pp. 582-85). Everything suggests that Aire/Sanamein was the administrative seat of the *saltus*, which might explain why the institutional profile of the community of Aire was defined neither as a *civitas*, nor as a *metrokhōmia*. The size of the *saltus* is unknown, but it did not appear to infringe on the Nabataean kingdom to the South: it therefore seems likely that it was centred upon Herod's family properties, perhaps already around 90 AD (see above). Concerning the productive and administrative imperial structures known as *saltus*, after Beaudouin 1897, cf. Soricelli 2004; on late imperial properties and their management cf. Vera 2014; Lo Cascio 2015; the imperial estates in the East seems to be less extensive than in the West (Kaplan 1976).

PIERFRANCESCO PORENA