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## Roman Milestones Found in and around Savatra: Epigraphic Evaluation and Contributions to Historical Geography

### *Savatra ve Çevresinde Bulunan Roma Dönemi Mil Taşları: Epigrafik Değerlendirme ve Tarihi Coğrafyaya Katkıları*

İlker IŞIK\* Mehmet ALKAN\*\*

**Abstract:** This study examines the Roman Period milestones found in and around Savatra. The inscriptions are evaluated from epigraphic, historical, and historical-geographical perspectives. The milestones show that road repair activities continued around Savatra, especially in the first half of the 3rd century CE. The milestone dated to the reign of Severus Alexander records Lucius Bromius, an otherwise unattested governor of Galatia. Equally significant is the presence at Savatra of a milestone of Maximinus Thrax, an emperor subjected to damnatio memoriae, the traces of which are visible on the stone itself it shows that road works in the region continued during his short reign. This inscription also attests to the activity of Claudius Aradius Rufinus in southern Galatia. The inscriptions of Philippus Arabs and his son point to a further phase of repair around Savatra and Aksaklı. Taken together, these data indicate that Savatra was an important centre on the Galatia-Lycaonia frontier in the Roman Period. The study argues that the milestones provide new evidence for the historical geography of Eastern Lycaonia and for possible road connections around Savatra.

**Keywords:** Savatra, Eastern Lycaonia, Historical Geography, Roman Milestones, Governors of Galatia, Road Connections

**Öz:** Bu çalışmada Savatra ve çevresinde bulunan Roma Dönemi mil taşları değerlendirilmektedir. Yazıtlar epigrafik, tarihsel ve tarihî coğrafya açılarından ele alınmaktadır. Mil taşları, özellikle MS 3. yüzyılın ilk yarısında Savatra çevresinde yol onarım faaliyetlerinin sürdüğünü göstermektedir. Severus Alexander dönemine tarihlenen yazıt, başka kaynaklardan tanınmayan bir Galatia valisi olan Lucius Bromius'u belgelemektedir. *Damnatio memoriae*'a uğramış olan Maximinus Thrax'a ait ve taş üzerinde bu uygulamanın izlerini taşıyan bir mil taşının Savatra'da ele geçmesi ise, bölgedeki yol faaliyetlerinin onun kısa hükümdarlığı sırasında da sürdüğünü göstermesi bakımından önemlidir. Bu yazıt aynı zamanda Claudius Aradius Rufinus'un Galatia'nın güneyindeki faaliyetini belgelemektedir. Philippus Arabs ve oğluna ait mil taşları ise Savatra ve Aksaklı çevresinde bir başka onarım evresine işaret etmektedir. Bu veriler bir bütün olarak, Savatra'nın Roma Dönemi'nde Galatia-Lycaonia sınır hattında önemli bir merkez olduğunu göstermektedir. Çalışma, mil taşlarının Doğu Lycaonia'nın tarihî coğrafyası ve Savatra çevresindeki olası yol bağlantılarının belirlenmesi açısından yeni veriler sunduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Savatra, Doğu Lycaonia, Tarihi Coğrafya, Roma Mil Taşları, Galatia Valileri, Yol Bağlantıları

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## Introduction

Ancient roads and milestones constructed in Anatolia during the Roman Imperial Period provide important archaeological and epigraphic evidence for understanding the administrative, military, and economic organization of the provinces. These road routes were not merely lines of communication that defined the distance between two centres; they also offer evidence for the visibility of imperial authority in the provinces, the sphere of activity of provincial governors, and the reassessment of regional settlement networks. In this respect, milestones are of particular importance for identifying ancient road systems and strengthening route proposals, especially in regions whose historical geography has not yet been fully clarified<sup>1</sup>.

In general terms, the region of Lycaonia hosted numerous road networks throughout antiquity. When Savatra and its surroundings, which fall within Eastern Lycaonia, are considered specifically, the city and its environs provide important clues for the historical documentation of the region, both through milestones and other epigraphic finds. The area in which the ancient city is located, enriched by cultural interaction at frontier crossings, became a strategic passage point between neighbouring Galatia, Cappadocia, Isauria, and Cilicia throughout history. Iconium lies to the west of the region, Garsaura to the east, settlements such as Perta, Comitanassus, and Coropassus to the north and northeast, and routes opening toward Cana and Cybistra to the southeast. Archaeological surveys carried out between 2017 and 2023 in the areas around Bozdağ National Park, today within the districts of Karatay and Altınekin, show that the region was an important area in terms of settlement history, natural passages, and ancient road connections. In particular, the combined assessment of mounds, water sources, passes, and settlement density demonstrates that the region functioned as a corridor of movement and interaction from prehistoric times onward.

Savatra is one of the important settlement areas that stands out as a central point within this transportation system. Located on the eastern slopes of Bozdağ, within the boundaries of present-day Yağlıbayat Quarter, the city lies about 12 km inland from the 58th km of the modern Konya-Aksaray highway. Owing both to its early settlement remains and to its strategic position in the Roman and Byzantine periods, Savatra became a critical settlement centre in Eastern Lycaonia. The mound located within the ancient city is a settlement area that provides evidence from the Bronze Age onward and reveals the long history of the city. The presence of this mound indicates that the city played a long-term role in transportation, defence, and administrative organization from very early periods. Savatra, which possessed its own administrative mechanism, is known to have minted coins in the 1st century BCE and to have used the Greek ethnic ΣΟΑΤΡΕΙΣ on its legends. Later, in the Roman Imperial Period, it is reported to have had a minting activity from the reign of Traianus onward, and the phrase Lycaonian

<sup>1</sup> For a general assessment of Roman Period road networks and milestones in Anatolia, see French 1988; 2012; for the identification and importance of ancient roads around Savatra, see Ramsay 1960, 51-52.

League appears on its coins in the reign of Antoninus Pius<sup>2</sup>.

Previous studies on the road networks of Eastern Lycaonia show that the routes extending northeastward from Iconium to Aksaray had more than one line. In this respect, it may be observed that the Via Sebaste ran from Iconium through Tömek, Göçü, and Bozdağ National Park to Savatra, and from there to Comitanassus, Coropassus, and Garsaura (Fig. 1). In addition, the existence of another road line extending from the district of Altınekin through the northern part of Bozdağ to Perta (Gymir) and, via Comitanassus, toward Aksaray also appears plausible. Moreover, the stone-paved road identified between Konya and Aksaray provides new evidence for the Roman and medieval transportation network of the region. Some parts of this road are understood to have been double-laned, approximately 6 m wide, and aligned in accordance with the topography.



Fig. 1. General view of a possible ancient road route around Bozdağ

Nevertheless, the southern and southeastern connections of Savatra, especially the possible road line extending toward Cana and Cybistra, have not yet been clarified with certainty. Ballance suggested that in the Roman Period a connection may have led from Savatra to Cana and Cybistra and from there to the Cilician Gates<sup>3</sup>; however, he also stated that no milestones were known to support this hypothesis. The milestones recently identified along the Yağlıbayat-Aksaklı-Beşagıl road network make it necessary to re-examine this route. Therefore, the milestones in and around Savatra should be considered not only as epigraphic documents

<sup>2</sup> For the place of Savatra/Soatra see Strab. XII. 6. 1; for the 1st-century BCE coins of Savatra and the ethnic ΣΟΑΤΡΕΙΣ, see Aulock 1976, 73; for minting activity from the reign of Traianus onward and the Lycaonian League legend under Antoninus Pius, see Ramsay 1960, 419.

<sup>3</sup> Hild & Hellenkemper 1990, 302 s.v. Kilikiai Pylai.

but also as evidence contributing to the reassessment of settlement and transportation relations in Eastern Lycaonia<sup>4</sup>.

In this study, the Roman milestones in and around Savatra, which provide new epigraphic data when considered together with the previously proposed evidence for the road networks of Eastern Lycaonia, are examined in terms of their epigraphic, historical, and topographical characteristics. The contribution of these documents to the historical geography of Eastern Lycaonia constitutes another aspect of the study. The inscriptions dated to the reigns of Severus Alexander, Maximinus Thrax, and Philippus Arabs show that the roads around Savatra were repaired by the imperial administration in the first half of the 3rd century CE. In particular, Lucius Bromius, named in the milestone of Severus Alexander, may be an otherwise unattested governor of Galatia. The other milestone, dated to the reign of Maximinus Thrax, documents the activity of Claudius Aradius Rufinus in southern Galatia. The inscriptions of Philippus Arabs and his son point to a new phase of repair around Savatra-Aksaklı in 244-246 CE and probably preserve the name of an otherwise unknown governor of Galatia.

In light of these data, the principal aim of this study is not to reconstruct the road network around Savatra with absolute certainty. Rather, it seeks to evaluate what these inscriptions mean for the provincial administration of Galatia, the regional position of Savatra, and the historical geography of Eastern Lycaonia. The Savatra-Aksaklı-Beşagıl/Cana connection is therefore treated not as a confirmed route but as a cautious possible connection supported by epigraphic and topographical data.

### **Historical geography of Savatra and Eastern Lycaonia**

Eastern Lycaonia is one of the strategic regions where the west-east and north-south lines of communication in Central Anatolia intersect. Because the region lies between Iconium to the west, Garsaura and Cappadocia to the east, Isauria and Cilicia to the south, and Galatia to the north, it was a geography characterized by intensive military, commercial, and administrative mobility throughout antiquity. The plain-slope transitions around Bozdağ National Park played a decisive role in shaping the transportation routes of the region. For this reason, the roads of Eastern Lycaonia appear not merely as routes connecting two settlements but also as part of Rome's interprovincial control, military logistics, and security strategy.

The topographical structure of the region is one of the fundamental factors that must be considered in identifying ancient road networks. The surveys conducted between 2017 and 2023 revealed that Bozdağ National Park, located in the eastern part of Lycaonia, forms a natural east-west boundary line and that certain points of this natural barrier hosted road networks connecting Lycaonia with Galatia and Cappadocia (Figs. 1-5). This indicates that the road networks of Eastern Lycaonia should be examined not only according to the direction of

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<sup>4</sup> Ballance 1958, 223-234.

modern settlements, but also together with ancient settlement density, natural passages, water sources, and military control points<sup>5</sup>.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

<sup>5</sup> Magie 1950, 134-136; Işık & Uyan 2020, fig. 4; Işık & Büyükaslan 2024, 366.

Savatra stands out as one of the central points of this transportation system. Situated on the eastern slopes of Bozdağ, the city is among the frontier settlements of Eastern Lycaonia together with Perta and Cana. In the Roman Period, due to changes in geographical and administrative boundaries, Savatra was at times included in Galatia and at times in Lycaonia. This suggests that the city was not merely a local settlement, but a strategic centre controlling frontier passages and regional connections. Savatra may be regarded as a military-strategic centre securing the Galatia-Lycaonia frontier. In this respect, the towers and fortresses following the foot of Bozdağ and incorporated into the Galatian frontier, together with the settlement pattern adapted to the natural terrain, appear to have been established to support this defensive system<sup>6</sup>.

Among the main road lines in Eastern Lycaonia, the Via Sebaste is the first to draw attention. Created to strengthen Roman military and administrative control in Anatolia, this road system was particularly important because it allowed rapid intervention against security problems in and around Isauria. The Via Sebaste is thought to have begun in Pisidia, continued between Neapolis, Kızıldağ, and the Sultan Mountains, reached Iconium, and from there passed through Tömek, Göçü, and Bozdağ National Park to Savatra, then on to Comitanassus, Coropassus, and Garsaura. This route placed Savatra at an important stop on the main artery extending along the Iconium-Garsaura line<sup>7</sup>.

The second important line in the region is the route that runs northeast from Iconium and reaches Aksaray through Altinekin, Perta, and Comitanassus. This road follows the northern part of Bozdağ and connects Perta and the surrounding settlements to the main transportation system. A road network beginning from Altinekin and proceeding through the northern part of Bozdağ toward Perta, Comitanassus, Ubinnaca, and Salmabriai has been mentioned. This line and the Via Sebaste are reported to intersect around Comitanassus, but to diverge in different directions after Comitanassus. Thus, Comitanassus emerges as a critical intermediate point for understanding the connections between Savatra, Perta, and Garsaura<sup>8</sup>.

A third important group of evidence for the road networks of Eastern Lycaonia is the stone-paved road discovered between Konya and Aksaray. This route is an ancient road approximately 85 km long, well preserved in some sections but partly lost in areas of intensive agricultural activity. When the coordinates of the road were recorded by GPS, overlaid with topographical maps in ArcGIS, and compared with the Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire, it became clear that this route was not included in the existing digital map of Roman roads. This is significant because it demonstrates the presence of local or regional road lines that have not yet fully

<sup>6</sup> Sherk 1980, 959; Kurt 2010, 125; Kaya 2011, 136-137.

<sup>7</sup> For the Via Sebaste and the Iconium-Savatra-Garsaura line, see Levick 1967, 38; Arslan 2013, 660-665; Bahar & Arslan 2024, 115-128.

<sup>8</sup> Işık & Uyan 2020, 1888.

entered the literature<sup>9</sup>. The structural characteristics of this road line are also noteworthy. It was constructed along a straight line using a technique that bears traces of the Roman road-building system. The route from Konya to Ak Han in Aksaray via Akbař Han, Karadona, Akören Kışla, Ortakuyu, and Malır Höyük (Ubinnaca) was found to be double-laned in some sections, with each lane approximately 3 m wide and a total road width of about 6 m. Remains of khans, ceramic finds, and rock-cut tombs were also identified along the road; these data show that the road continued to be used after the Roman Period, during the Middle Ages. This evidence indicates that the road system of Eastern Lycaonia did not consist of a single main line, but rather of a multilayered network of routes used in different periods, connected to one another, and showing continuity in some sections<sup>10</sup>.

Nevertheless, the southern and southeastern connections of Savatra, especially the possible line extending toward Cana and Cybistra, have not yet been clarified with certainty. The milestones recently identified along the Yağlıbayat-Aksaklı-Beřağıl road network make it necessary to reconsider these connections from the perspective of historical geography. For this reason, the milestones in and around Savatra should be treated not only as epigraphic documents but also as data that help evaluate the settlement and transportation relations of Eastern Lycaonia. The location of the ancient city of Cana is one of the elements that supports this route proposal. Cana is located near Savatra, on the southeastern slope of Bozdağ National Park, and is defined as one of the southeasternmost ancient settlements of Eastern Lycaonia. Its position on the southbound road network at the 55th km of the Konya-Aksaray D-300 highway suggests that it was not merely a mountainous settlement, but also a centre that may have played a role in controlling the connections extending south and southeast from Savatra. The presence around Cana of fortifications, a church, mound areas, reused architectural elements, ceramics from the Roman-Byzantine and Seljuk periods, and funerary steles shows that this settlement had a long-term and multilayered use<sup>11</sup>. The military and religious identity of Cana in the Roman and Byzantine periods makes the road connections associated with Savatra more meaningful. These structures may have been established not only for defensive purposes but also to protect the roads and trade caravans of the region. In this context, the Savatra-Aksaklı-Beřağıl/Cana line may be considered not merely as a secondary road connecting two settlements, but as a connection that monitored Roman military and commercial movement toward the east and southeast<sup>12</sup>.

The milestones identified in and around Savatra illuminate the chronological and administrative dimensions of these road networks. The concentration of inscriptions dated to the reigns

<sup>9</sup> Iřık & Uyan 2020, 1888-1889.

<sup>10</sup> Davies 1998, 2.

<sup>11</sup> For the place of Cana in historical geography, see Ramsay 1960, 380; for Roman-Byzantine epitaphs and archaeological evidence around Cana, see Bildirici 2009, 209.

<sup>12</sup> For an assessment of Cana as a frontier post and of its function in protecting roads and caravans, see Iřık 2026.

of Severus Alexander, Maximinus Thrax, and Philippus Arabs in the same geographical area shows that the roads around Savatra were regularly repaired by the imperial administration in the first half of the 3rd century CE. This demonstrates that the region was not a rural area that had lost its function during this period; rather, it remained a passage zone of military, administrative, and logistical importance. In particular, the presence of the names of governors of Galatia in these inscriptions suggests that the road activities around Savatra were carried out at the level of the provincial administration rather than through local initiative.

Within this framework, the milestones indicate that Savatra was not associated with a single linear route only. Rather, they point to a road environment in which the Iconium-Garsaura axis, the northern links through Perta and Comitanassus, and the possible southeastern connection toward Aksaklı and Beşağıl/Cana should be considered together. These connections are discussed in detail below and are treated with different degrees of certainty according to the available epigraphic, topographical, and survey evidence. Thus, the milestones examined in this study are not merely epigraphic catalogue material. They also appear as fundamental documents that allow the historical geography of Eastern Lycaonia to be reconsidered. The catalogue and epigraphic interpretation presented below aim to clarify the chronology of road repair activities around Savatra, the governors of Galatia involved in these activities, and the possible connections associated with these roads.

## Inscriptions

### No. 1. Milestone of the reign of Severus Alexander (Fig. 6)

Cylindrical marble milestone. The monument is preserved in the garden of a house in Savatra/Yağlıbayat Quarter. The inscription was carved on the body in regular lines. Although the letters are partly worn, most of the text is legible. Traces of erasure are visible in the line containing the emperor's name (Fig. 6).

Dimensions: H.: 1.79 m; diam.: 0.32 m; letter h.: 0.02-0.03 m.

Date: 232-235 CE.

|                               |                             |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| [Imp(erator)] Caes(ar),       | 8 Felix Aug(ustus) [re]s-   |
| divi Sev[eri]                 | tituit mi[l](ia) [p(assum)] |
| Pii nepos, [divi]             | 10 per Luciu[m]             |
| 4 Antonin[i]                  | Bromium [su]um              |
| filius, M[(arcus) Aur(elius)] | 12 leg(atum) Aug(usti)      |
| 6 Severus                     | pr(o) p(raetore).           |
| [[Alexander Pius]]            |                             |



Fig. 6

[Imp(erator)] Caes(ar) M[(arcus) Aur(elius)] Severus [[Alexander Pius]] Felix Aug(ustus), grandson of the deified Sev[erus] Pius and son of the deified Antoninus, restored the mil[l](ia) [p(assuum)] through his own legate Lucius Bromius.

L. 6-8: The erasure of the emperor's name can be explained by the *damnatio memoriae* imposed after the death of Severus Alexander in 235 CE.

L. 8: The expression *milia passuum* does not literally mean "road", but denotes Roman miles, that is, units of one thousand paces. In the present formula with *restituit*, it should be understood as referring to the restoration of the measured or mile-marked road section. Since no numeral is preserved after *mil(ia) p(assuum)*, the exact length of the repaired section cannot be determined. The restoration *mi[l](ia) [p(assuum)]* remains tentative; the expression is more commonly abbreviated as *m(ilia) p(assuum)* or *mil(ia) p(assuum)* in milestone inscriptions.

L. 10-13: Lucius Bromius is given in the inscription with the title *legatus Augusti pro praetore*. Considering the gap in the list of governors of Galatia between 232 and 235 CE, this person may have been one of the last governors of Galatia under Severus Alexander.<sup>13</sup>

## No. 2. Milestone of the reign of Maximinus Thrax (Fig. 7)

Cylindrical marble milestone. The monument was found at the same location as No. 1 in Savatra/Yağlıbayat. The inscription was carved on the body in large and clearly visible letters (Fig. 7).

<sup>13</sup> For the list of Galatian governors under Severus Alexander and the gap between 232 and 235 CE, cf. Christol & Lorient 2001, 97-121.

Dimensions: H.: 1.95 m; diam.: 0.32 m; letter h.: 0.06-0.07 m.

Date: 235-238 CE.

- Imperator Cae-  
 2 sar Gaius Iuli-  
 us Verus Maxi-  
 4 [m]inus pius felix  
 Augustus res-  
 6 tituit milia  
 passus per  
 8 Claudium  
 Aradium  
 10 Rufinum  
 leg(atum) eius  
 12 [p](ro) pr(aetore).



Fig. 7

*Imperator Caesar Gaius Iulius Verus Maximinus Pius Felix Augustus, restored the milia passus through his own legate Claudius Aradius Rufinus.*

L. 1-6: The titulature of emperor Maximinus Thrax allows the inscription to be dated to 235-238 CE.

The form *milia passus* is retained as it appears in the inscription; contextually, it belongs to the same distance formula as *milia passuum*. The use of *restituit* indicates the restoration of a measured or mile-marked road section rather than the literal restoration of “miles” as abstract units.

L. 8-12: Claudius Aradius Rufinus is given in the inscription as *legatus pro praetore*. When evaluated together with the Samsun-Havza milestone, it becomes clear that the governor supervised road repair activities both in the north and in the south of the province of Galatia. The Savatra inscription supports the reading of the governor’s praenomen as Claudius<sup>14</sup>.

### No. 3. Milestone of Philippus Arabs and his son (Fig. 8)

Cylindrical limestone milestone. The monument was found in Savatra/Yağlıbayat at the same location as Nos. 1 and 2. Although parts of the inscription are worn, the imperial names and the verb of repair are preserved (Fig. 8).

Dimensions: H.: 2.05 m; diam.: 0.34 m; letter h.: 0.04-0.06 m.

Date: 244-246 CE.

<sup>14</sup> For the Havza milestone and the governorship of Aradius Rufinus in Galatia, see Takmer 2016, 828-856.

- Imp(erator) Çæ(sar) [M](arcus) Iulius
- 2 Ph[ilippus p]i<u>s
- fe[l]ix Aug(ustus) e]t M(arcus)
- 4 Iuli[us Philip]pus
- Cæ(sar) fi[lius e]ius
- 6 resti[tueru]nt
- mil(ia) pa[ssuu]m US
- 8 Cl. Cor[---]um Ma-
- rcellu[m l(egatum)? e]orum.
- Imp(erator) Cæ(sar) [M](arcus) Iulius Ph[ilippus P]ius Fe[l]ix Aug(ustus) and his son M(arcus) Iuli[us Philip]pus Cæ(sar) restored the milia passuum through their legate (?) Cl. Cor[---]us Marcellus.*

L. 1-6: The joint mention of Philippus Arabs and his son Marcus Iulius Philippus Caesar allows the inscription to be dated to 244-246 CE.

L. 7: The letters *US* preserved at the end of the line cannot be securely interpreted. They are therefore retained in the text but are not included in the translation.

L. 8-9: For the name read as Cl. Cor[---]us Marcellus, the completion Cl(audius) Cor[rad]us Marcellus may be proposed. If the restoration *l(egatum) eorum* is accepted, the person in question may have served as a legate with gubernatorial authority in Galatia.

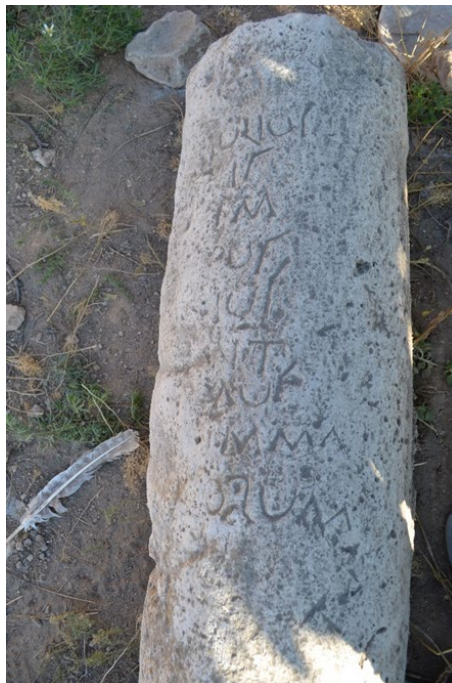


Fig. 8

#### No. 4. Fragmentary milestone (Fig. 9)

Fragmentary limestone milestone. The monument is preserved in the garden of a house in Savatra/Yağlıbayat. The first part of the inscription is missing; the text was probably carved on two

superimposed blocks, but the upper block has not survived (Fig. 9).

Dimensions: H.: 0.63 m; diam.: 0.27 m; letter h.: 0.05-0.07 m.

- [-----]  
 ?] Aug[ustus]  
 2 ? pe]r mil[(ia) p(assuum)]?  
 ?]PP[--]TUS  
 4 CL [..]DIUM ·  
 CLOR[--]U  
 6 leg(atum) suu[m]  
 pr(o) <sup>vv</sup> p[r](aetore).

L. 1-2: The reading Aug[ustus] indicates that an element of the imperial titulature may have been preserved.

L. 6-7: The expressions *leg(atum) suum* and *pr(o) pr(aetore)* suggest that the fragment may have belonged to a road repair inscription carried out through a governor. Because the preserved text does not form a complete syntactic unit, the interpretation of this fragment must remain tentative.



Fig. 9

#### No. 5. Milestone of Philippus Arabs and his son from Ennek/Aksaklı (Fig. 10)

Previously published milestone. It was first copied by the original editor at Ennek and is reported to be located today in the village of Aksaklı. In this study, the editions of Callander 1906 and French 2012 are used (Fig. 10)<sup>15</sup>.

Edition: Callander 1906, 160 no. 10; French 2012, 133-134 no. 82B.

Date: 244-246 CE.

- |                             |                  |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Imp(erator) Cae(sar)        | 6 Philippus      |
| 2 M(arcus) Iulius           | Caesar           |
| Philippus                   | 8 filius eius    |
| 4 p(ius) f(elix) Aug(ustus) | [r]esti[tuerunt] |
| et M(arcus) Iul(ius)        | [per -----]      |

*Imp(erator) Cae(sar) M(arcus) Iulius Philippus P(ius) F(elix) Aug(ustus) and his son M(arcus) Iul(ius) Philippus Caesar [---] restored [---].*

<sup>15</sup> Callander 1906, 160 no. 10; French 2012, 133-134 no. 82B.



Fig. 10

L. 1-8: The joint mention of Philippus Arabs and his son indicates that the stone belongs to the same chronological phase as No. 3.

L. 9-10: The restorations [r]esti[tuerunt] and [per -----] make it possible to infer a road repair context. The findspot of the stone at Aksaklı is important for the Savatra-Aksaklı-Beşagıl/Cana line.

#### No. 6. Milestone of the reign of Hadrianus from Obrukhan

Milestone identified in the cemetery area of Obrukhan.

Edition: MAMA VIII, 261; French 2012, 121-122 no. 79A.

Date: 128/129 CE.

[Imp. Caesar divi]

[Traiani Parthi]-

[ci f(ilius), divi Nervae]

nepos, Traianus

2 Hadrianus Aug(ustus),  
pont(ifex) max(imus), trib(unicia) pote(state)

4 XIII, co(n)s(ul) III,  
<sup>vac.</sup> p(ater) p(atriciae) <sup>vac.</sup>

6 m(ilia) <sup>vac. (?)</sup>  
m(ilia) p(assuum) VII.

*[Imperator Caesar] Traianus Hadrianus Aug(ustus), [son of the deified Traianus Parthicus], grandson [of the deified Nerva], pontifex maximus, holder of the tribunicia potestas for the 13th time, consul for the 3th time, father of the fatherland. VII Roman miles.*

L. 2-4: Hadrianus' titles *tribunicia potestas XIII* and *consul III* date the inscription to 128/129 CE.

L. 6: The expression *VII milia passuum* denotes a distance of seven Roman miles. However, the point from which this distance was measured cannot be determined with certainty from the available evidence.

### **Epigraphic and historical evaluation**

The milestones identified in and around Savatra demonstrate not only the physical route of the Roman road system in Eastern Lycaonia, but also the administrative mechanism by which this route was supervised. Their common feature is that they document road repair activities through the names of emperors and governors of Galatia. This suggests that the roads around Savatra were not local secondary paths, but official routes monitored by the provincial administration and repaired at specific times.

#### **The reign of Severus Alexander and Lucius Bromius**

The first milestone identified at Savatra belongs to the reign of Severus Alexander and states that the road was repaired through a governor named Lucius Bromius. The erasure of the emperor's name in line 7 is associated with the *damnatio memoriae* imposed after the death of Severus Alexander in 235 CE. In this respect, the stone is important both for road repair and for the reflection of imperial politics in the provinces. The most noteworthy aspect of the inscription is that it preserves the name Lucius Bromius. A gap is known in the list of governors of Galatia between 232 and 235 CE, and therefore Lucius Bromius may have been an otherwise unattested governor who served during these years. If this proposal is accepted, the Savatra inscription adds a new name to the prosopography of the provincial administration of Galatia.

This evidence strengthens the position of Savatra within the Roman administrative system. The fact that the road repair was carried out directly through a governor bearing the title *legatus Augusti pro praetore* shows that the route in question was important not only for local transportation but also on a provincial scale. For this reason, the inscription of Lucius Bromius may be regarded as one of the key documents for the road organization of Eastern Lycaonia in the early 3rd century CE.

#### **The reign of Emperor Maximinus Thrax and governor Claudius Aradius Rufinus**

The second milestone is dated to the reign of Maximinus Thrax and records that the road repair was carried out through Claudius Aradius Rufinus. The use of the emperor's full name together with the titles *pius felix Augustus*, followed by the formula *restituit milia passus per Claudium Aradium Rufinum legatum eius pro praetore*, reflects the conventional structure of a road repair inscription. The importance of Claudius Aradius Rufinus is not limited to the Savatra inscription. The same governor is also attested on another milestone found at Havza and dated to 236 CE. The Savatra inscription is especially valuable for the reading of the governor's name; whereas the praenomen in the Havza inscription had been restored as C(aius), the Savatra

inscription clearly shows that the name was Claudius<sup>16</sup>.

When the Havza and Savatra inscriptions are considered together, it becomes clear that Claudius Aradius Rufinus supervised road repair activities both in the north and in the south of the province of Galatia. This shows that road maintenance programs in Galatia were carried out over a broad geographical area and that the provincial governor played an active role in these activities. The inclusion of Savatra in this framework supports the view that the city was a strategic node on Galatia's southeastern line of communication.

#### **The reign of Emperor Philippus Arabs and the possibility of a new governor**

The third milestone is dated to the reign of Philippus Arabs and his son Marcus Iulius Philippus Caesar. The joint mention of father and son shows that the repair was carried out under their shared imperial authority. The use of the verb *restituere* in the text clearly indicates that the activity was a road repair. The most problematic and at the same time most important part of this inscription is the governor's name preserved in line 8. For the expression *Cl. Cor[---]us Marcellus*, the completion *Cl(audius) Cor[rad]us Marcellus* may be proposed. According to the present evaluation, this person may have been an otherwise unattested governor of Galatia. In that case, the milestones around Savatra constitute an important epigraphic group that documents not one but probably two new governors of Galatia.

The other milestone of the reign of Philippus Arabs was copied at Ennek and is now located at Aksaklı. The fact that this stone also belongs to the same emperor and his son suggests that a broad road repair activity may have been undertaken around Savatra-Aksaklı in 244-246 CE. When these two stones are considered together, it may be proposed that the repair under Philippus Arabs was not an isolated intervention but an activity covering more than one point on the same line.

#### **The fragmentary milestone and its value as auxiliary evidence**

Because of its state of preservation, the fourth stone is not suitable for determining a definite date or imperial name. Nevertheless, the preservation of the expressions *Aug[ustus]*, *mil[ia?]*, *leg(atum) suum*, and *pr(o) pr(aetore)* suggests that this fragment was also a milestone and probably a road repair inscription.

In its present state, this fragment is not sufficient to produce independent historical conclusions. However, it has value as auxiliary evidence for the concentration of several milestones in the same area around Savatra. In particular, a new reading of this stone through high-resolution photography, raking light, and RTI studies may allow both the imperial name and the governor's name to be determined more securely.

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<sup>16</sup> Takmer 2016, 828-856.

### The milestone of Hadrianus and the early chronological background

The Hadrianic milestone found in the cemetery area of Obrukhan is important because it shows that the road system in the region was already functioning in the early 2nd century CE. The inscription is dated to 128/129 CE by Hadrianus' titles *tribunicia potestas XIII* and *consul III*. This stone points to a phase earlier than the 3rd-century repair inscriptions from Savatra. Therefore, it suggests that the road system of Eastern Lycaonia cannot be explained only by the crises and repair activities of the 3rd century, but that a measured and marked route existed from the early imperial period onward. The fact that the Hadrianic milestone preserves the expression *VII milia passuum* is also important; however, the point from which the distance was calculated cannot be determined with certainty from the available evidence.

### The 3rd-century context: road repairs and security

The concentration of milestones around Savatra especially in the first half of the 3rd century CE may not be coincidental. The stones belonging to the reigns of Severus Alexander, Maximinus Thrax, and Philippus Arabs show that successive road repairs were undertaken in the same geographical area within a period of approximately fifteen years. This suggests that the roads of Eastern Lycaonia were intensively used during this period and required regular maintenance. This chronology becomes more meaningful when considered together with the military and political context of the region. Savatra is known to have functioned under the Roman Empire as a strategic military base securing the Galatia-Lycaonia frontier, and to have formed part of a defensive system supported by towers on the slopes of Bozdağ and fortresses along the eastern line. Moreover, Shapur I's attacks on Cappadocia in the 240s CE and the Sasanian threat faced by some military cities on the Galatia-Lycaonia frontier, including Savatra, in 251/252 CE increased the strategic importance of the region in the 3rd century CE<sup>17</sup>.

For this reason, the road repairs around Savatra should not be seen merely as technical interventions intended to improve transportation comfort. These repairs may have been connected with Rome's policy of maintaining military mobility toward the east and southeast, securing the frontier, and keeping the connections between provincial centres operational. Since this connection is not expressed directly in the inscriptions, however, it should be interpreted cautiously as being related to "military and administrative requirements".

### The governors of Galatia and the administrative importance of Savatra

The presence of the names of governors of Galatia on the milestones shows that the road activities around Savatra were carried out at the level of the provincial administration. The preservation in the inscriptions of names such as Lucius Bromius, Claudius Aradius Rufinus, and possibly *Cl. Cor[---]us Marcellus* demonstrates that this region belonged to a road organization

<sup>17</sup> For the military-strategic context of Savatra in the 3rd century CE, the threat of Shapur I, and developments in the Valerianus-Aurelianus period, see Belke & Restle 1984, 54.

supervised by the governor.

This situation is also consistent with Savatra's administrative position. The fact that in the Roman Period the city was at times included in Galatia and at times in Lycaonia shows its frontier character. In particular, the settlements such as Perta, Savatra, and Cana in Eastern Lycaonia appear to have been important regional centres in military and religious terms. The milestones provide an epigraphic and chronological basis for this strategic identity<sup>18</sup>.

### **General evaluation**

Three main conclusions emerge from the milestones in and around Savatra. First, the road system in the region appears to have been defined within the imperial road network from the reign of Hadrianus onward. Second, the repair inscriptions concentrated around Savatra in the first half of the 3rd century CE show that the road line was actively used and maintained by the provincial administration during this period. Third, the names of governors preserved in the inscriptions provide new evidence for the sphere of activity and chronology of the governors of Galatia. In this context, Savatra stands out not merely as a stop on the Iconium-Garsaura line, but as one of the important components of the regional road and security system together with centres such as Perta and Cana on the Galatia-Lycaonia frontier. The milestones are among the important epigraphic documents that support this interpretation.

### **Contributions to historical geography: possible road connections**

The milestones identified in and around Savatra make it possible to reassess the historical geography of Eastern Lycaonia not only through written sources and topographical observations but also with the help of direct epigraphic evidence. Previously proposed roads in the region have largely been discussed on the basis of the location of ancient settlements, natural passages, remains of khans, ceramic finds, and the relationship between modern roads and ancient routes. However, the discovery of milestones around Savatra, Yağlıbayat, Aksaklı, and Beşağıl shows that at least part of these connections may have belonged to the official road system in the Roman Period.

In this section, three possible connections are discussed by considering the milestones, settlement distribution, and previous survey data together: the Iconium-Savatra-Comitanassus-Coropassus-Garsaura line; the Savatra-Aksaklı-Beşağıl/Cana line; and the possible continuation through Cana toward Cybistra and the Cilician Gates.

One of the main routes in Eastern Lycaonia may be defined as the line extending east and north-east from Iconium to Savatra, Comitanassus, Coropassus, and Garsaura. Previous studies have

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<sup>18</sup> On the administrative position of Savatra between Galatia and Lycaonia and on Lycaonia within the territory of Galatia, see Kaya 2011, 136-137; for the presence of military garrison cities such as Savatra in Galatia and the cultural/military reasons for this, see Kaya 2011, 163-164. For Savatra as an important passage route connected with Lycaonia, see also Belke & Restle 1984, 101.

stated that the Via Sebaste ran from Iconium through Tömek, Göçü, and Bozdağ National Park to Savatra and from there continued to Comitanassus, Coropassus, and Garsaura. This road network is important as one of the main connections that provided access from inland Central Anatolia toward Cappadocia.

Savatra's position on this line is decisive for the interpretation of the milestones. The city is located on the eastern slopes of Bozdağ and controls the passage area on the Galatia-Lycaonia frontier. Previous studies have stated that Savatra lay on an important passage route and was associated with ancient road systems. Therefore, the milestones around Savatra may be related either to the main line running from Iconium to Garsaura or to the starting point of secondary roads branching from this line. Another factor increasing the importance of this line is the role of Comitanassus as a junction point. Previous studies have indicated that the Via Sebaste and the Altınekin-Perta-Comitanassus-Aksaray line intersected around Comitanassus but diverged in different directions after this point. This suggests that the Savatra-Comitanassus connection was not only an eastward main road but also a passage corridor joined by connections coming from the north and northeast.

The road repair inscriptions from Savatra dated to the reigns of Severus Alexander, Maximinus Thrax, and Philippus Arabs support the possibility that this main line, or branches associated with it, was active in the first half of the 3rd century CE. In particular, the presence of several road repair inscriptions in the same region within short intervals shows that the route was a road requiring regular maintenance and considered important by the provincial administration. One of the most important contributions of the Savatra milestones is that they bring the possible road connections leading south and southeast from Savatra back into discussion. In this respect, the Savatra-Aksaklı-Beşagıl/Cana line constitutes the most striking route proposal of the study.

As noted above, Cana's position on the southeastern slope of Bozdağ and near the southbound route from the Konya-Aksaray D-300 highway is relevant to the possible connections extending south and southeast from Savatra.

The southern and southeastern connections of Savatra are of particular importance for this study. The possible connection from Savatra toward Aksaklı and Beşagıl/Cana cannot be defined as a certain route on the basis of the present evidence. Nevertheless, the milestones identified along the Yağlıbayat-Aksaklı-Beşagıl line show that transportation relations in this direction should be reassessed in the context of the Roman Period. Therefore, the line should be treated not as a confirmed road, but as a possible connection supported by epigraphic and topographical data. At this point, the location of the milestones around Savatra, Aksaklı, and Beşagıl becomes decisive. The milestones of Severus Alexander, Maximinus Thrax, and Philippus Arabs found at the same location in Savatra document an active process of road repair around Yağlıbayat in the 3rd century CE. In addition, the milestone of Philippus Arabs and his

son, copied at Ennek and now located at Aksaklı, points to the same chronological phase. This indicates the presence of more than one road marker around Savatra-Aksaklı in the same period and shows that the route was not merely hypothetical. Furthermore, when the military-security importance of the connections between Lycaonia, Isauria, and Cilicia in the Roman Period is considered, the fortress and tower systems around Cana may have been related to the control of this possible line.

Topographically, the Savatra-Aksaklı-Beşagıl/Cana line is meaningful because transportation in this mountainous part of Eastern Lycaonia was shaped by natural passages and by settlements controlling them. The fortifications and other archaeological remains around Cana, already noted above, support the possibility that this area was involved in the control of roads and caravans.

Taken together, these data make it highly probable that the Savatra-Aksaklı-Beşagıl/Cana line was used in the Roman Period. However, the available evidence is not yet sufficient to determine the entire road network with certainty. Therefore, this line should be treated as a possible road connection supported by epigraphic evidence. The milestones strongly suggest the existence of the route; nevertheless, the precise limits of the road can be clarified only through detailed GPS data, topographical analysis, satellite imagery, and new field surveys. This proposal may contribute to reinterpreting the position of Savatra within a broader Roman road network. If the line extending from Savatra to Cana continued toward Cybistra and the Cilician Gates, Savatra may have functioned not merely as an intermediate station on the Iconium-Garsaura line, but as one of the junction points of a secondary yet strategic connection linking Central Anatolia to Cilicia.

### **The contribution of the milestones to the route discussion**

The contribution of the milestones in and around Savatra to the route discussion may be examined on three levels. First, the stones show not only that roads in the region were used in the Roman Period but also that they were repaired by the imperial administration. The use of the verbs *restituit* and *restituerunt* indicates the renewal of an existing road. This is especially important for understanding the chronology of the road system.

Second, the presence of the names of governors of Galatia in the inscriptions shows that these road activities were carried out at the level of the provincial administration. The names of Lucius Bromius, Claudius Aradius Rufinus, and possibly *Cl. Cor[---]us Marcellus* indicate that the route around Savatra was not only a local line but also a route of concern to the provincial government.

Third, the concentration of milestones at different points helps to understand the direction of the roads. The stones at Savatra document a road repair activity in the immediate surroundings of the city; the Aksaklı stone, by contrast, indicates that the line extended in the direction of

Aksaklı. The Hadrianic milestone from Obrukhan shows that the road system in the region was marked by distance measurement in an earlier imperial phase. When these data are analysed together, a three-stage model may be proposed for the Roman road network around Savatra. In the first stage, there was an early imperial road marked or organized in the reign of Hadrianus. In the second stage, this road system was repaired under Severus Alexander and Maximinus Thrax. In the third stage, under Philippus Arabs, a new repair activity took place on the same or related routes. This chronological continuity shows that the surroundings of Savatra remained an important transportation zone throughout the Roman Period.

#### **Schematic route model (Fig. 11)**

In light of the available evidence, the road connections centred on Savatra may be modelled only schematically as follows:

First line: The main route running eastward from Iconium reached Savatra through Tömek, Göçü, and the Bozdağ area; from there it continued toward Comitanassus, Coropassus, and Garsaura.

Second line: The route running northeast from Iconium connected to Comitanassus through Altınekin and Perta and from there proceeded toward Aksaray.

Third line: The possible connection branching south/southeast from Savatra followed the Yağlibayat-Aksaklı-Beşağıl/Cana direction and may have continued toward Cybistra/the Cilician Gates.

In this model, Savatra may be interpreted as a strategic centre with which the three lines were directly or indirectly associated. Its position on the Galatia-Lycaonia frontier, its military character, the defensive structures around it, and the concentration of milestones demonstrate that the city occupied a central place in both north-south and west-east transportation relations.

Therefore, although the Savatra milestones do not resolve all details of the road network of Eastern Lycaonia with certainty, they suggest that the road system in the region may have been more complex and multidirectional. The schematic model presented below is not a definitive route map, but a preliminary historical-geographical proposal based on the existing evidence.

#### **Conclusion**

The Roman milestones identified in and around Savatra provide important new evidence for the epigraphy, administrative history, and historical geography of Eastern Lycaonia. These inscriptions should be evaluated not merely as individual road repair documents, but as epigraphic sources contributing to our understanding of the transportation and security policy of the Roman Empire along the Galatia-Lycaonia frontier. In particular, the milestones dated to the reigns of Severus Alexander, Maximinus Thrax, and Philippus Arabs show that the roads around Savatra were regularly repaired by the imperial administration in the first half of the 3rd century CE.

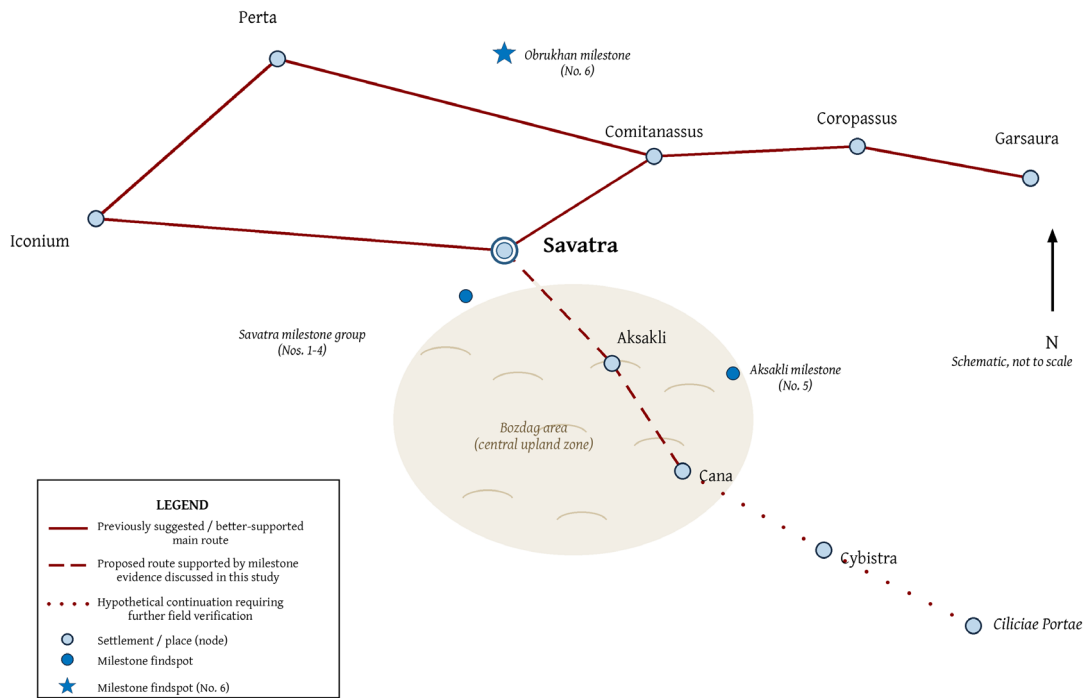


Fig. 11. Schematic route model showing the possible road connections around Savatra (not to scale)

The first milestone examined in this study documents a road repair carried out in the reign of Severus Alexander through the governor of Galatia named Lucius Bromius. The erasure of the emperor's name can be associated with the *damnatio memoriae* imposed after the death of Severus Alexander. More importantly, the name Lucius Bromius may be regarded as that of a new governor who could fill the gap in the existing list of governors of Galatia between 232 and 235 CE. In this respect, the inscription is a noteworthy document not only for the road network of Savatra but also for the prosopography of the province of Galatia.

The second milestone, dated to the reign of Maximinus Thrax, shows that Claudius Aradius Rufinus supervised the road repair around Savatra as governor of Galatia. The name of this governor was previously known from a milestone found at Havza; however, the Savatra inscription provides new contributions regarding the reading of the name and the extent of the governor's sphere of activity. A combined reading of the Havza and Savatra inscriptions shows that Claudius Aradius Rufinus carried out road repair activities both in the north and in the south of the province of Galatia. This suggests that road maintenance in Galatia was organized on a broad, province-wide scale.

The milestones of Philippus Arabs and his son point to a new phase of road repair around Savatra and Aksaklı in 244-246 CE. The name *Cl. Cor[---]us Marcellus* preserved in the Savatra inscription probably indicates an otherwise unattested governor of Galatia. When considered together with the previously published milestone of the reign of Philippus Arabs found at Aksaklı, it becomes clear that this repair activity was not an isolated intervention, but covered

a broader route around Savatra-Aksaklı. These milestones require the position of Savatra in the Roman Period to be reconsidered. Savatra has previously been defined as a strategic settlement located on the Galatia-Lycaonia frontier, on the slopes of Bozdağ. The settlement character of the city, documented by towers, fortresses, a theatre, a mound area, and inscriptions, indicates that it was not merely a rural centre, but an important city in military, administrative, and transportation terms. The milestones make this strategic identity more concrete.

From the perspective of historical geography, the milestones show that Savatra should be considered within a road network rather than along a single route. The detailed discussion above has distinguished between better-attested lines and more cautious route proposals, especially the southeastern connection toward Aksaklı and Beşagıl/Cana.

The reassessment of the Savatra-Aksaklı-Beşagıl/Cana connection remains one of the main contributions of the study. The available evidence does not determine the entire route with certainty; therefore, this connection should remain a cautious proposal to be tested through new surveys, GPS-based fieldwork, topographical analysis, and further epigraphic discoveries.

In conclusion, the Roman milestones in and around Savatra fill an important gap in the historical geography of Eastern Lycaonia. These documents suggest that Savatra and its immediate surroundings were part of a road network marked by a system of distance measurement from the 2nd century CE onward and documented by repair activities in the 3rd century CE. The governor names preserved in the inscriptions also provide new information about the sphere of activity and road policy of the provincial administration of Galatia in its southeastern sector. In this context, Savatra appears to have played an important role within the administrative and transportation geography of the Galatia-Lycaonia frontier in the Roman Period; the milestones are among the main epigraphic documents that make this role tangible.

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\* Abbreviations of epigraphical editions and reference works follow the “Liste des abréviations des éditions et ouvrages de référence pour l’épigraphie grecque alphabétique (GrEpiAbbr – Version 03, Septembre 2024)” developed by the Association Internationale d’Épigraphie Grecque et Latine.