PINHAS PORAT – DAVID GOREN

A GREEK EPITAPH FROM SEPPHORIS

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This inscribed stone was brought to our attention by Mr. N. Freeman who found it near some ancient burial caves in a cemetery south of ancient Sepphoris. The stone is hard limestone, it was not found in situ and, in its present condition, it measures 75 x 21 x 21 cm. It is clear that part of the stone is broken off. The stone served as the upper lintel of the entrance to a burial cave; the carved socket into which the upper part of the door fits can clearly be seen on the bottom of the stone. The ridge that held the door in place is 3.5 cm high. The long side of the ridge measures 75 x 16 cm while the short side measures 21 x 18 cm. The diameter of the socket measures 15 cm and its depth is 8 cm.

The inscription on the lintel seems complete. The well inscribed letters are 4–5 cm high. By the style of the letters, especially the “A”, this inscription can be dated to the early Byzantine period (5th–6th cent. AD?).

The inscription says:

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MNHMAMAMAKAPIOY Μνήμα {μα} Μακαρίου
IOYCTOYΓAMPOYMAPINOY Ιούστου γαμπρού Μαρίνου
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“Tomb of Makarios, son of Ioustos, son-in-law of Marinos.”

L. 1: {μα} is obviously a dittography, as the same couple of letters both ends the previous word and begins the next one.

L. 2: ΓΑΜΠΟΥ is most likely a misspelling of γαμπροῦ. Though this word can mean “brother-in-law” or even “father-in-law”, its most frequent meaning is “son-in-law”1. It is interesting to mention that the omission of β in the same word is attested by two early Byzantine epitaphs from Korykos, Cilicia Prima (MAMA III 493a, 709).

This epitaph includes three names in the genitive: those of the deceased, of his father and his father-in-law. Of these, Iustus is already attested at Sepphoris from a lead weight of the market inspectors (ῄγορανομοῆτον), which the editor has not dated,2 while the names Makarios (e. g. SEG XXXVII 1492) and Marinus (e. g. SEG XL 1441; SEG XLII 1423) occur elsewhere in this province. It is interesting to note that two of them are Latin names.

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1 LSJ s.v., p. 337. For epigraphic occurrences see MAMA X 105; SEG XXXI 1004 et al.