

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:



MNHMAMAMAKAPIOY
IOYCTOYΓAMPOYMAPINOY

Μνήμα {μα} Μακαρίου
Ἰούστου γαμροῦ Μαρίνου

“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: ΓΑΜΡΟΥ is most likely a misspelling of γαμβροῦ. 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 (ἀγορανομούντων), which the editor has not dated,² while the names Makarios (e. g. *SEG* XXXVII 1492) and Marinos (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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Pinhas Porat
David Goren

¹ *LSJ*⁹ s.v., p. 337. For epigraphic occurrences see *MAMA* X 105; *SEG* XXXI 1004 et al.

² Y. Meshorer, The Lead Weight of the Market Inspector Simon, *Biblical Archaeologist* 49, 1986, pp. 16–17 (= *SEG* XXXVI 1342); Y. Neeman, *Sepphoris in the Period of the Second Temple, the Mishna and the Talmud* (Heb.), Jerusalem 1993, pp. 325–326 and n. 58.