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THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF CORYCUS – TWO MORE INSCRIPTIONS

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The accepted body of evidence for the Jewish community at Corycus in Cilicia is not large - a mere ten epitaphs. Mostly brief and mostly from the early Byzantine period (4-6th centuries), they represent just a tiny fraction - a fiftieth approximately - of the contents of the city's large, mainly Christian, necropolis. All ten inscriptions have long been known, even if rarely studied.¹ Three came to light in the late nineteenth century.² The remainder entered the public domain in 1931 with Keil and Wilhelm's definitive edition of the *Grabinschriften* of Corycus in *MAMA III*.³ To my knowledge, no additions have been contemplated in the sixty years since.⁴ For all that, it seems to me that the body of Jewish material from the city can be expanded. There are, in my opinion, more Jewish inscriptions among the *Grabinschriften* of Corycus than Keil and Wilhelm were prepared to recognise and the purpose of this short paper is to argue for the Jewishness of two of them - *MAMA III* 751 and 684. To be sure, neither possesses either of the features that K. and W. clearly judged indispensable for the certain identification of a text as Jewish - a depiction of the menorah or the presence of the words *Ioudaios* or *Hebreos*. However, to treat these as the only admissible criteria for identifying a text as Jewish is to be unduly restrictive. There was no obligation upon a Jew even to mention his Jewishness, let alone use overtly Jewish symbolism on his grave. That many chose not to or did not think to do so is proved by the survival elsewhere of numerous 'unsigned' but indisputably Jewish epitaphs.⁵ To establish the Jewishness of a text,

¹ I have attempted to fill this gap in my forthcoming article: 'The Jews of Corycus: a neglected Diasporan community.'

² Now *CIJ II* 786, 788 and 790. While there was never any doubt about the Jewishness of nos. 786 and 790, initially no. 788 was classified as Christian owing to the first editor's oversight of the menorah on the sarcophagus lid. For the (incomplete) editio princeps, see L.Duchesne, 'Les Nécropoles Chrétiennes d'Isaurie III,' *BCH* 7, 1883, 234-5.

³ J.Keil and A.Wilhelm, *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua III*, Manchester 1931, nos. 205, 237, 295, 440, 448, 607 and 679.

⁴ J.B.Frey simply incorporated in *CIJ II* the material identified by K. and W. as Jewish. See *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaicarum II*, Rome 1952, nos. 785-794. Only minimal textual changes were made - as, for instance, in no. 787, where he correctly judged K. and W.'s completion of the name *Iako* as *Iako(bou)* unnecessary. In the more recent listing of G.Vermes, F.Millar and M.Goodman in *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ III*, Edinburgh 1986, 34, the *MAMA/CIJ* texts are simply reproduced in an abbreviated form. G.Dagron and D.Feissel's *Inscriptions de Cilicie*, Paris 1987 contains no new Jewish material from Corycus. There is, however, some, from *Diocaesarea* (no. 14) and *Tarsus* (no. 36).

⁵ Analysis of the hundreds of attested inscriptions from the Jewish catacombs at Rome, for instance, has shown that "... common though it (sc. the menorah) is, it appears on fewer than one third of the inscriptions, and far more than half of the epitaphs bore no symbol whatsoever." See H.J.Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome*, Philadelphia 1960, 198. And Frey's index in *CIJ I* of the catacomb material reveals less than a dozen cases of *Ioudaios* and *Hebreos*. Of these, three relate to proselytes (nos. 21, 68, 202) and two to immigrants (nos. 296 and 370) - outsiders clearly who wished to make their status absolutely plain.

other criteria, no less valid, may be used. Findspot, nomenclature, titlature, as well as other kinds of terminology, have often been enough to clinch the matter.⁶ It is criteria such as these that will be applied in this paper.

To start with the more clear-cut case: MAMA III 751. Here K. and W.'s text simply reads: [C]ωματοθήκη / Φιλονομίου / [ί]οῦ Φιλίππου. Since it clearly fails to meet either of K. and W.'s criteria, it is easy to see why it was not considered Jewish. But there are nonetheless two powerful reasons - findspot and nomenclature - for thinking that the deceased was a Jew. This epitaph is inscribed on the lid of the very same sarcophagus as that of Damianos the Jew.⁷ Why then was Philonomios not similarly accepted as such by K. and W.? The reason lies in their method of setting out their data: for ease of reference K. and W. decided to alphabetise their material.⁸ Thus in most of the cases where there was more than one epitaph on a sarcophagus - re-use of burial places at Corycus was very common - the names of those once deposited in that sarcophagus end up being listed apart.⁹ Thus the vital link between Damianos and Philonomios was severed and inadvertently lost. That Philonomios was indeed a Jew like his partner in burial Damianos is strengthened by his name. Unknown in the wider, non-Jewish community at Corycus and unattested elsewhere, it nonetheless encapsulates a value - love of the Law - that occurs widely and frequently in Jewish epigraphic sources. To take just one example - Rome. The epitaphs from there show that *observantia legis* was a quality for which the Jews praised their dead¹⁰ and that among the funerary epithets they favoured, two of the more common were *philonomos* (lover of the Law)¹¹ and its parallel *philetolos* (lover of the commandments).¹² As for Philipos (sic), the name of Philonomios' father, though never used extensively by Jews even in the more Hellenised communities of the Diaspora,¹³ it had nonetheless been part of the Jewish *onomastikon* at least since Hyrcanus I's reign (135/4-104 BC). While its most famous bearer

⁶ A master of this kind of detective work was Louis Robert. See, for instance, *Études Anatoliennes*, Paris 1937,411, where he identifies a Trallian inscription as Jewish on the basis of the two words *theosebes* and *eulogia* and *Rev.Phil.* 32,1958,36-47, where an inscription from Side, published as Christian, is re-identified as Jewish mainly on the basis of nomenclature and titlature.

⁷ See MAMA III 751 - "Auf der andern Schräge n.295". MAMA III 295 = CIJ II 789 = [Θήκη Δ]αμια[v]ο[ῖ] / Ἰουδέου.

⁸ For their policy of recording epitaphs, *op.cit.* 131.

⁹ There are numerous examples among the Christian epitaphs of Corycus. Note: MAMA III 203 and 543; 209 and 714; 223 and 662; 227 and 407 etc.

¹⁰ CIJ I 476 (epitaph of Regina); cf. no. 72 (epitaph of Julia Irene Arista) - *iuste legem colenti*.

¹¹ For *philonomos* at Rome, see CIJ I 111; U.M.Fasola, *RAC* 52,1976,19-20; J.M.Reynolds and R.Tannenbaum, *Jews and Godfearers at Aphrodisias*, Cambridge 1987,68 note 41. For an example from Malta, see H.Solin, *Juden und Syrer in der römischen Welt*, ANRW II.29.2, 1983,747.

¹² CIJ I, 132, 203 and 509.

¹³ CPJ III 195 has just two examples, from Leontopolis and Edfu respectively, in its prosopographical index; Lüderitz lists only a father and son of the name in Cyrenaika. See G.Lüderitz, *Corpus jüdischer Zeugnisse aus der Cyrenaika*, Wiesbaden 1983, no. 55. The case in Appendix 14a is doubtful.

was Herod the Great's son, the tetrarch Philip, its earliest was the father of Hyrcanus I's ambassador to Rome, Sosipater.¹⁴

If we turn now to our second inscription, MAMA III 684, we shall see that here too a powerful case can be put together for classifying this as Jewish - this time on onomastic grounds alone. But first, the text. As printed by K. and W., this runs: *Καμουήλ... / ἐκγόνων Καμου/ῆ εἰς Θεόδοτον / καὶ Καμοήν*. If the sense is not obvious, that is because what we have here is not one inscription but two. Samuel in line one, as K. and W.'s description makes clear, was crudely carved at a later date over an erasure.¹⁵ The words in lines 2-4 thus represent the final part of an earlier epitaph. Even if the precise relationships of the men in this (family?) group are hard to establish,¹⁶ there seems little doubt that they must have been Jewish. Take the name Samoues/Samoēs which occurs twice in the second text. A very rare form of one of the most widely occurring of Jewish names, Samuel,¹⁷ it is found almost nowhere except in specifically Jewish locations. (For the one exception, a stray Attic find, see below). Though so uncommon that it has generally either gone unrecognised¹⁸ or been completely misinterpreted,¹⁹ it is nonetheless to be found not just in the Jewish necropoleis of Jaffa²⁰ and Beth She'arim²¹ but perhaps even at the very heart of the synagogue at Sardis.²² And, significantly, in the one other instance of this name at Corycus, it occurs on a sarcophagus which is clearly marked as Jewish. In MAMA III

¹⁴ Jos.Ant. XIV 248. For two late examples from Rome (3rd-4th centuries), see CIJ I 334 and Fasola (n.11) 11-12.

¹⁵ MAMA III 684 - comm. ad loc. - "tief roh, auf Rasur".

¹⁶ Clearly, as K. and W.'s parallels ad loc. show, someone had made over to Theodotus and Samoēs the chamber in which they were buried but precisely who is not absolutely clear.

¹⁷ See B.Lifshitz in M.Schwabe and B.Lifshitz, Beth She'arim II, The Greek Inscriptions, Jerusalem 1974,83 and 208 (abbreviated below as BS II).

¹⁸ CIJ II 952 - Samoues/Amachiou. (Jaffa) Frey, following Clermont Ganneau and other earlier editors, read the text as Samoue(l) Samachiou. But the insertion of the lambda is quite unnecessary. Both Samoues and Amachios are good Jewish names which occur in a number of Diasporan inscriptions of imperial date. For an Amachios at Rome, see Fasola (n.11) 25-6; for one at Aphrodisias, see Reynolds and Tannenbaum (n.11) 5 and 97 with discussion of meaning and further examples. By contrast, Samachias, derived by Clermont Ganneau (Pal.Expl.Fund Quart.St., 1900,119-20) from the rare Hebrew name Semachiah, is most unlikely. When Greek-speaking Jews did use Hebrew names, they tended to choose common ones. Semachiah only occurs once in the whole Bible (I Chron. 26.7.), where it is the name of a Korahite gatekeeper. (Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible - s.v. Semachiah).

¹⁹ A.T.Kraabel apud G.Hanfmann, Sardis from Prehistoric to Roman Times, Cambridge, Mass. 1983,184 suggests that the name of the priest and sophodidaskalos in the damaged inscription from the centre of the Sardis synagogue "bears a semitic name Samoē". However, he cites no authority for this allegedly undeclinable semitic name. If, as is quite possible, Samoēs is to be read in this fragmentary votive inscription (reported in BASOR 187,1967,29 as *eyche/. oe (h)ie/reos ke so/phodidas/kalou*), what it must represent is a genitive case in agreement with *hier eos* and *sophodidaskalou*. That would give Samoēs in the nominative.

²⁰ CIJ II 952.

²¹ Lifshitz favours this interpretation. See BS II (n.17) no. 105 - comm. ad loc.

²² Kraabel (n.19) 189 - "... in the centre of the Main Hall is the Synagogue's most important inscription, the dedication of 'Samoē (sic), priest and sophodidaskalos';".

679, not only is the epitaph embellished with the menorah but the deceased are specifically described as Jews: *Καμοῆ Κοπᾶ κ(αὶ) Αὐξέντιος / Εἰουδέων*.

Strong pointer though Samoues/Samoēs is, however, to the Jewish nature of our inscription, the survival of the one slightly ambiguous case from Athens - [κοιμητ]/ἥριον / Καμοῆ / τοῦ υἱοῦ / Πυθα.. - means that we cannot use this argument alone to make our case for Judaism.²³ To do that, we must focus upon the other main feature of our text which also points to a Jewish identity - viz. the unusual form, at least for Corycus, of the name Samuel.

At Corycus, Samuel, in common with a number of Biblical names, e.g. Simeon and Jacob, occurs with fair frequency in the early Byzantine period.²⁴ But while these three names are found both in the Jewish and Christian communities of the city, the forms preferred by each group are quite different. Thus while Symeonios is used only by the Christians, as the symbolism of all nine relevant sarcophagi shows,²⁵ the Jews prefer *Σύμων* (gen. -ωνος)²⁶ - the Greek rendering of Simeon particularly favoured by the Jews of the Palestinian littoral in imperial times.²⁷ Similarly with Jacob, while the Christians almost always use the declined form *Iakobos*,²⁸ undeclined *Ἰακώ* is the form we find in the Jewish community.²⁹ This likewise was a special favourite of the Palestinian Jews.³⁰ What then are we to make of undeclined Samuel? Since the Christian Samuels have a marked

²³ Dittenberger (IG III 3450) left open the question of whether this inscription, found on the Acropolis at Athens, was Jewish or Christian. The probability, however, must be that Samoēs is a Jew. All the other examples of the name are Jewish. Further, *koimeterion*, normally a Christian word for tomb, was definitely used also by the Jews of Athens. See CIJ I 712 and 713. Dittenberger's emendation of *Samoe* to *Samoe(l)* is rightly criticised by K. and W. at MAMA III 679 as unnecessary.

²⁴ K. and W.'s index in MAMA III contains seven citations of the name compared with ten for Simeon and fifteen for Jacob.

²⁵ MAMA III 234; 478; 645; 733-735a; 736-8.

²⁶ MAMA III 205 = CIJ II 785.

²⁷ For Caesarea Maritima, see CIJ II 890 and Lifshitz RB 74,1967,53. For Jaffa, see CIJ II 905, 935 and 956. The other forms found there include: *Psimion* (CIJ II 923) and *Soimon* (CIJ II 943) and *Simon* (CIJ II 920).

²⁸ MAMA III 425-437 and 728. The only case that admits of any doubt is 432 - a "schöner Girlandensarkophag, in christlicher Zeit wiederverwendet." Its overtly pagan symbolism - *boukrania* and a human head - must incline us, however, towards a Christian rather than a Jewish identification. Dozens of old sarcophagi, when re-used by the Christians, retain the pagan symbolism of an earlier age (e.g. no. 470) but there is not a single example of this phenomenon among the Jewish ones.

²⁹ CIJ II 787, correcting the text of MAMA III 237. See note 4.

³⁰ So M.Schwabe in IEJ 3,1953,128. There are numerous examples from Palestine. For Gaza, see CIJ II 967 (bilingual Heb./Gk in which *bar Jakov* is translated *huios Iako*). For Caesarea Maritima, see CIJ II 890; SEG XVI 844. For Jaffa, see CIJ II 910; 927; 929; 956. For Beth She'arim, see CIJ II 1102 = BS II 83; CIJ II 1161 = BS II 126; SEG IX 905 = BS II 130. In some cases we find the name in close proximity to *Symon* (n.27) - e.g. CIJ II 890 - *Σύμων Ἰακώ* (Caesarea Maritima) and CIJ II 956 - *Σύμωνος υἱοῦ Ἰακώ* (Jaffa).

preference for the declined form Samouelos,³¹ it seems reasonable to deduce that our undeclined Samuel is by contrast probably a Jew.³²

Finally, we must look briefly at the one outstanding name, Theodotos. An old favourite with Diasporan Jews, for whom it was the equivalent of Jonathan,³³ it came nonetheless to be used also by Christians.³⁴ Were the name, then, to occur in an inscription devoid of all cultural indicators, one would be forced to leave the identity of its bearer open.³⁵ Here, though, we surely can decide. Paired, as it is, with the almost certainly Jewish Samoos and appearing on the very same monument as the probably Jewish Samuel, it seems reasonable to conclude that it too must have been borne by a Jew.

If my arguments are accepted and MAMA III 751 and 684 are indeed taken to be Jewish, what benefits accrue? On a general level, there are two modest gains: we can add a brand new name (Philonomios) to the Jewish onomastikon and we can significantly increase the number of certain attestations of the rare Hellenised form of Samuel - viz. Samo(u)es. As for the Jews of Corycus in particular, the chief merit of these two inscriptions is that they reinforce the picture I have sketched elsewhere of this neglected Diasporan community.³⁶ Thus the return to more traditional values in the early Byzantine period, for instance, now receives further support with the appearance of the name Philonomios. However, for all the new stress on things Jewish, the Jews still continued to be very much part and parcel of the society in which they had been living for centuries. In our focus upon the nomenclature of the two inscriptions, the siting and form of the two monuments on which they occur have been overlooked. But these too are significant. Like the previously known Jewish monuments of Corycus, these newly recognised ones are to be found not in a separate enclave within the city's necropolis but mixed in with the predominantly Christian memorials. And the epitaphs on them, no less than the forms of the monuments themselves, follow the usages of the wider Greek community, while retaining certain specifically Jewish features.³⁷ All this should make us wary about swallowing wholesale the conventional generalisations about the social isolation of the Jews in imperial times.³⁸ Clearly the picture was much more complicated, as even the limited evidence from Corycus makes clear.

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³¹ MAMA III 601; 680; 682-3; 685. The only Samouelos lacking any cultural indicator is no. 681.

³² The undeclined form of Jacob in Dagrón and Feissel's no. 36 from Tarsus (n.4) was one of the factors that led them to re-classify that document as Jewish.

³³ Reynolds and Tannenbaum (n.11) 101.

³⁴ As in MAMA III 387, 388, 390 and 391, for example.

³⁵ MAMA III 386.

³⁶ See above n.1.

³⁷ On the random siting of the Christian and Jewish monuments and their homogeneity - the gable-roofed sarcophagus was virtually the norm - see MAMA III, page 121.

³⁸ E.g. M. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine*, Oxford 1976, 216 and 247.