

Varia Epigraphica

Five Greek Funerary Inscriptions

Pinchas Porat

Four of the five inscriptions now reside in the Beit Gordon Museum at Dagania A, while the fifth is in private hands.*

Inscription No. 1.

This inscribed stone was discovered during the excavations of the Crusader Fortress of Belvoir, conducted under the direction of Mr. M. Ben-Dov on behalf of the Israel National Parks Authority in 1966–67. The stone, found in the inner courtyard of the fortress, was probably in secondary use as a door step.¹

The stone is black porous basalt measuring about 95x32 cm. and about 15 cm. in thickness. The letters, which average about 5 cm. in height, are executed somewhat haphazardly with large variations in size, especially the *omicron*. There are some variations in form throughout the inscription, Fig. 1:

1. Σῶμα φοιβαδίου Ἰολίου θίου
2. τόδε σῆμα καλύπτει ψυχὰ [ἐς]
3. [ο]ύρανὸν εἴ, κ<αί>φρ(ού)δη μάκαρες.

* I wish to thank Mr. A. Eitan, the Director of the Israel Department of Antiquities for permission to publish these inscriptions and Dr. B. Isaac of Tel Aviv University for his valuable assistance and comments. Inscription No. 1 was placed at my disposal by Mr. Z. Vinogradov of Beit Gordon and Mr. M. Ben-Dov, the excavator of Belvoir. Inscriptions Nos. 2–4 were placed at my disposal by Mr. B. Ben-Yacov of Kibbutz Ma'agan; inscription No. 5 was placed at my disposal by Mr. Y. Ben-Moshe of Kibbutz Mesillot. I thank them all.

1 M. Ben-Dov, in *Eretz Shomron* (Jerusalem 1973) (in Hebrew).

Translation:

"This grave covers the body of Phoibadíos the son of Julius Thias. Soul, you are gone to heaven and departed to the blessed ones".

Notes:

Since we have the formula "ψυχὴ ἐξ οὐρανόν" which seems to be Christian and the forms of the letters and spelling seem to be late, I would suggest a late Byzantine date (fifth–seventh centuries C.E.).

The name Phoibadíos is listed by Pape² and Preisigke.³ The feminine name Phoibada is known only from Kourion.⁴ The letters I O are a possible dittography of the last two letters of Phoibadíos, but I prefer to read them as an abbreviation of Julius or a similar name.⁵ The name Thias, in the gen. θίου, appears on an inscription dated to the I–II centuries C.E.⁶ But if this line is not complete (?) the name might have been θιουθίου⁷ or some similar name.

While τὸδε σῆμα is very common in Jewish, Pagan and Christian epitaphs, the word καλύπτει is much less so.⁸ In place of καλύπτει we can have ἔχει in pagan epitaphs,⁹ or κρύπτει in Christian epitaphs.¹⁰ ψυχὴ εἰς οὐρανόν appears in Christian epitaphs¹¹ but is unknown to me in a Jewish or Pagan epitaph. The verb εἶ is the predicate of ψυχῇ, which is used here in a vocative sense. The word φρουδῇ, here used as a verbal adjective, is known to me in only one inscription from Naples.¹² φρουδος, η, ον formed from πρὸ ὁδοῦ can refer to death as "gone" or "departed", e.g. "φρουδος αὐτὸς εἰ θανών" "thou are departed by death, "dead and gone" (Sophocles, *Electra*, 1152); or "φρουδος ἐξ Ἀϊδην" "gone to Hades," (Euripides, *Medea*, 1110). μάκαρες are the "blessed dead" in both Pagan and Christian epitaphs. But the term can also appear in Jewish epitaphs.¹³

2 W. Pape, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Eigennamen* Braunschweig, 1911, 1637.

3 F. Preisigke, *Namenbuch* (Heidelberg, 1922), Col. 467.

4 T. Mitford, *The Inscriptions of Kourion* (Philadelphia, 1971) 285 ff.

5 M. Avi Yonah, "Abbreviations in Greek Inscriptions," *QDAP IX* (1940) 72.

6 *SEG XXI* (1923) Nr. 993, 2, p. 314.

7 *MAMA VIII* (1928) Nr. 221a, p. 39.

8 *ibid.*; G. Kaibel, *Epigrammata Graeca* (Hildesheim 1965), Nr. 288, p. 110.

9 R. Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs* (Urbana 1942) 32.

10 *ibid.* 304 f.

11 e.g. *Epigrammata Graeca* Nrs. 422 and 736, see n. 9.

12 *ibid.* 560, 10.

13 P. Frey, *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaicarum* (Roma 1936) Nr. 688; M. Schwabe, *Beth She'arim II* (Jerusalem 1974) Nrs. 176, 183 (in Hebrew); *MAMA III* Nrs. 205, 237.

Inscription No. 2

This inscription was probably broken off of a much larger tombstone. The stone is black basalt measuring about 47x28x23 cm. The letters, averaging about 3–4 cm. in height, are somewhat carelessly inscribed, especially the N and A in the first row. Double lines separate each row of letters and a single line encloses the entire inscription. The stone is from Golan and now at Beit Gordon.

1. Ἐνθάδε κ(ε)ῖται>
2. Βάσσος καλ-
3. ὧς βιώσας
4. ἔτ(η)μ'.

Translation:

“Here lies Bassos who lived happily 40 years”.

Notes:

κῖτε is written for κεῖται here as in other inscriptions.¹⁴ Bassos seems to have been a very common name.¹⁵

Inscription No. 3

This stone is black basalt measuring 35x98x12 cm. Single lines divide the rows of letters which vary greatly in size from 3 to 8 cm. high. The age of the deceased is within a “tabula ansata.” The stone is from the Golan and is now at Beit Gordon.

1. θάρσ(ε)ι
2. Ἑρμαυ[ῶς]
3. ἔτ(η)
4. ὁ'.

Translation

“Be brave Hermauos. 70 years old”.

Inscription No. 4

This is a small fragment of a tombstone, but no part of the inscription seems to be missing. The stone is black basalt measuring 26 x 35x17 cm. The letters are 4–5 cm. high. The age of the deceased is within a “tabula ansata.” The stone is from the Golan and is now at Beit Gordon.

14 L. Jalabert, *Inscriptions Grecques et Latines de la Syrie*, (Paris 1929) Nr. 1030; *MAMA VII*, Nrs. 104a, 104d, 344 and *MAMA VIII* Nr. 272.

15 Op. cit. n. 2 p. 201; Op. cit. n. 3, Col. 72.

1. θάρσ(ε)ι
2. Ἀδειο(ς)
3. ἔτ(η) μ ε .

Translation:

“Be brave Adeios. 45 years old”.

Notes:

Preisigke lists Ἀδεῖ[.]ου¹⁶ which would probably be this name, while the name is spelled Ἀδιος in a Byzantine inscription from Jerusalem.¹⁷

Inscription No. 5

This seems to be only the top part of a basalt tombstone, measuring 61x33x14 cm., which may have had more lines of writing. The letters are 7–10 cm. high. The stone is from the Golan and now at Kibbutz Mesillot.

1. Τύμ
2. βος
3. Νου
4. μερί
5. ου

Translation:

“Tomb of Noumerios”.

Notes:

Noumerios, a Latin name, is listed by Pape.¹⁸

Kibbutz Mesillot



Inscription No. 1

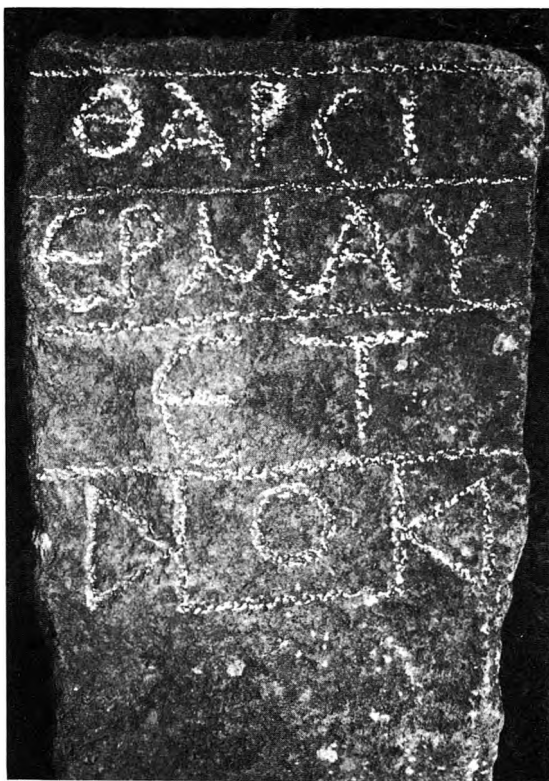
16 Op. cit. n. 3, Col. 104.

17 ibid. Col. 8; P. Thomsen, in *ZDPV* 64 (1941) nr. 123, p. 219.

18 Op. cit., n. 2, p. 1017.



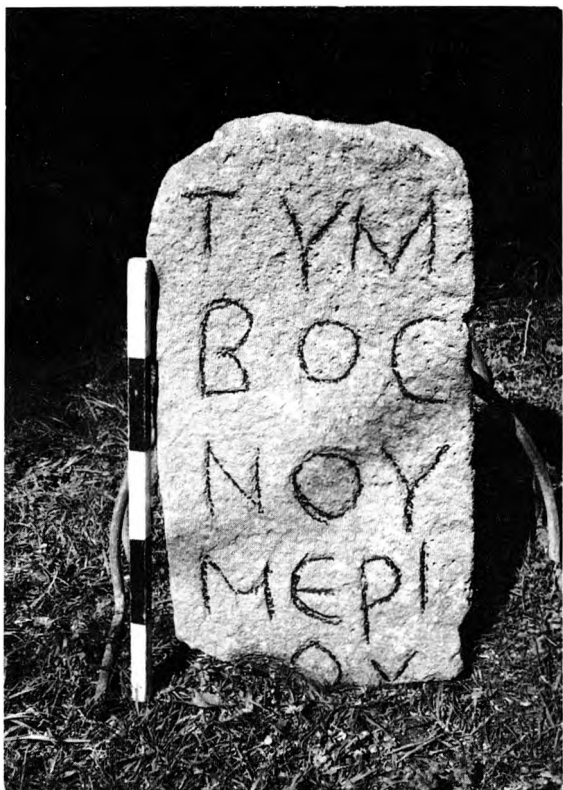
Inscription No. 2



Inscription No. 3



Inscription No. 4



Inscription No. 5



Centurial Stone from Shavei Tziyyon