

TWO GREEK INSCRIPTIONS ON MOSAICS FROM THE THEATER AT SHUNI

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Two Greek inscriptions, set in a mosaic pavement in the pool adjoining the eastern side of the theater of Shuni, celebrate the foundation of this structure by the otherwise unknown governor of First Palestine Flavius Marcianus Antipater, whose term of office can be dated by his titulature to the second half of the fifth or the early sixth century CE. One of the inscriptions, though fragmentary, can be recognized as an epigram. Both inscriptions exhibit a high level of sophistication, fitting the site where they were found, the location of a renowned Maiumas festival known for its cultural refinement.

Keywords: Greek epigraphy, epigram, literary puns, metrics, titulature of governors, First Palestine

INTRODUCTION

The ancient remains at Shuni, long known to scholars, have yielded several inscriptions, both from chance finds in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and from excavations carried out at the site on behalf of the Jewish National Fund (KKL–JNF) and the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums (now the IAA) in the 1980s and 1990s (Shenhav 1990a; 1990b; 1991; 1993; 1997; Golan 1999; Abumokh 2001). Two early finds and several fragments of marble plaques from the recent excavations were described under the entry ‘Kefar Shuni’ in the second volume of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae-Palaestinae*, dedicated to Caesarea and the Middle Coast (CIIP II: Nos. 2095–2100). The early finds are a statue base bearing a Latin inscription in honor of a former *duumvir* of Caesarea (*Colonia Prima Flavia Augusta Caesarea*: CIIP II: No. 2095) and a Greek and Hebrew epitaph (CIIP II: No. 2098); the recent finds are in Latin, but the nature of the inscriptions could not be identified, as only a few letters were preserved in each of the fragments. The editors did not call into question the origin of these finds in Shuni, and there is no reason to doubt that their findspot was there; however, the fragments recovered in the Abumokh

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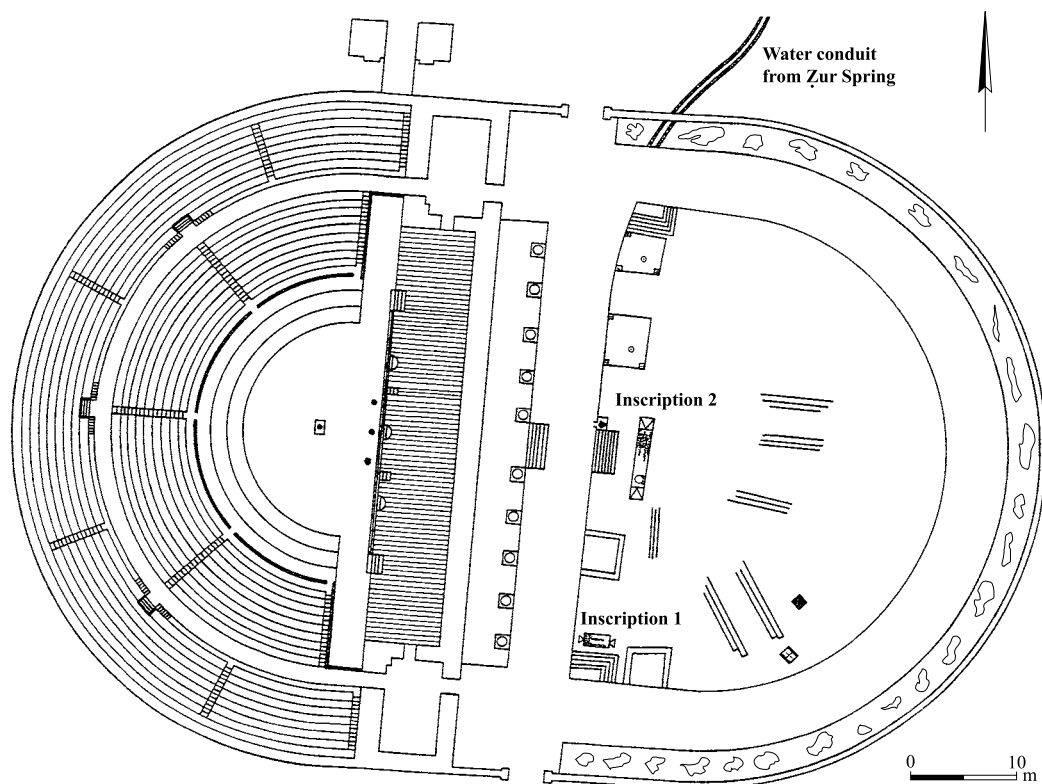


Fig. 1. The theater and pool of Shuni, showing the findspots of the inscriptions (drawing: K. Abumokh).

excavations in the theater were obviously in secondary use, as were most likely the old finds: the Jewish epitaph probably came from one of the cemeteries surrounding Caesarea, and the statue of the *duumvir* was most likely erected in the city, as suggested by Lehmann and Holum (2000:37).² It seems reasonable to infer that both the tombstone and the statue base were brought to this spot as building material during the construction or renovation of the theater or the pool, or even during the construction of the industrial complex that was built in the orchestra when the theater went out of use toward the end of the Byzantine period (Shenhav 1997:63). If so, a question mark must also be placed on the origin of the fragments uncovered in the 1990s excavations.

The remains at Shuni include a theater (Area A), erected in the early third century CE and restored in the early fifth century CE; a semicircular structure enclosing a pool, built in front of the theater (Area C); and a system of channels and pools (Area B) carrying water from the Shuni Springs that fed also the high-level aqueduct of Caesarea (Fig. 1). The presence of the theater, the pool and the infrastructure for water supply fully justify the

² According to these authors, the inscription belongs to the second century CE and therefore, it should be dated earlier than the monumentalization of the site by the erection of the theatre.

identification of the site as the location of a water festival known as Maiumas;³ the toponym Miyamas is still preserved in this area (see *Registry of Monuments and Historic Sites—Yalqut Ha-Pirsumim*: §48). Area C was paved with a mosaic, now mostly destroyed. This paper focuses on two Greek inscriptions uncovered in this area, deciphered by the author at the excavators' request in the late 1990s. One inscription (No. 2) greatly suffered from its exposure since its excavation.

THE INSCRIPTIONS

Inscription 1

This inscription was never properly published, although it was described by Shenhav (1997:65–66), who presented a sketch accompanied by an approximate Hebrew translation. An English translation was also published by Dvorjetski (2012:108). The present author found both translations to be inaccurate and hence, a new interpretation is presented hereby.

The inscription (Fig. 2) is set in the mosaic pavement of the pool, in front of a flight of steps entering the pool in the southwestern corner of Area C. It is framed by a *tabula ansata* (126.5 × 243.0 cm, including the handles, each measuring 129 × 52 cm),⁴ and oriented to the north, so that it could be read by those entering through a doorway at this location. The rectangular panel and the triangular handles are framed by rows of red tesserae, and the fill of the triangles is made of yellow tesserae with a white circle in the middle. The six lines of script were executed in pink tesserae. The letters, on average 17–18 cm high, belong to the oval alphabet of the Byzantine period. No abbreviation signs are used, except for a small *stigma* marking the abbreviation of Φλ(αούιον), and no Christian symbols appear, not even the small cross which usually opens inscriptions of this period. Traces of change or repair can be discerned in the upper left corner, where the space between the second and third letters, and between the third and fourth letters, is wider than in the rest of the inscription. The letter *pi* is distinctly thicker than the other letters, and a solitary dark tessera occupies the gap between the *pi* and *iota*. One wonders whether the inscription originally opened with a cross, which was later removed, and the first letters reshaped to fill the gap. If this was the case, the removal of the cross may have not necessarily been a mark of hostility to Christianity but an act of respect toward the sacred symbol, considering the immodest aspects of the Maiumas festivities.

³ For the Maiumas festival held at Shuni and in other locations in the ancient Land of Israel, see Dvorjetski 2012.

⁴ I wish to thank Peter Gendelman who helped me in the preparation of this publication by re-checking the measurements, colors and other details of the inscription *in situ*. The photographs he took, alas, reveal the deterioration of the mosaic pavement in the years since the original photos included in the present publication were taken.



Fig. 2. Inscription 1.

The text reads:

- ΕΠΙΦΛΑΣΜΑΡΚΙΑΝΟΥ
 ΑΝΤΙΠΑΤΡΟΥΤΟΥΛΑΜΠΡΟ
 ΤΑΤΟΥΚΑΙΜΕΓΑΛΟΠΡΕΠΕΣΤΑ
 4 ΤΟΥΥΠΑΤΙΚΟΥΚΑΙΤΟΥΤΟΤΟ
 ΟΡΟΣΕΤΕΜΦΘΗΚΑΙΤΟΕΡΓΟΝ
 ΕΚΘΕΜΕΛΙΩΝΕΚΤΕΙΣΘΗ

- Ἐπὶ Φλ(αυίου) Μαρκιανοῦ
 Ἀντιπάτρου τοῦ λαμπρο-
 τάτου καὶ μεγαλοπρεπεστά-
 4 του ὑπατικοῦ καὶ τοῦτο τὸ
 ὄρος ἐτέμφθη καὶ τὸ ἔργον
 ἐκ θεμελίων ἐκτείσθη.

Translation: Under Flavius Marcianus Antipater, the *clarissimus* and most magnificent consular, this mountain was carved and this building was erected from the foundations.

The gist of the inscription seems clear: two combined works (καὶ ... καὶ ...) were carried out, some hewing of the hill on whose slope the theater and the pool lie, and the building of the structure containing the pool; perhaps this project also involved the rebuilding of the theater. But what kind of hewing, and more to the point, what verbal form is ἐτέμφθη?

Although it immediately recalls the aorist passive of τέμνω, ‘to cut’, it cannot possibly be either a regular or an irregular form of it. The aorist passive of τέμνω is ἐτμήθη, with the metathesis (ταμ/τμη) that is a constant feature of this form and of those derived from it. Even if the inscription was drafted by some provincial bumpkin who overlooked the metathesis—a mistake more easily to be expected from a modern student than from a literate Greek speaker even in Late Antiquity—why the intrusion of the *phi*? In any case, there are no grounds to surmise that the inscription was drafted by an unskilled writer: it is an official dedication, written in the ‘golden period’ of Late Antique culture in Palestine, in one of the capitals of Hellenic learning and education in the region, and almost certainly by the same person who wrote Inscription 2, which is in verse (see below). Such a gross mistake seems impossible. It is also impossible to dismiss this form as a phonetic spelling, for there is nothing in the theme of τέμνω that may justify the intrusion of a labial before the ending -θη of the aorist passive. The form ἐτέμφθη is coined on ἐπέμφθη (from πέμπειν, ‘to send’, where the labial is part of the root), but while we cannot exclude a scribal error on the part of the person who prepared the text for the mosaicist to copy, or of the mosaicist himself, ἐπέμφθη (‘was sent’) would make no sense in this context. Nor is there another Greek verb—regardless of its meaning—with a theme τεμβ/π that might have originated the form ἐτέμφθη. However, the word τέμπη does exist, both as the name of the famous valley in Thessaly between Mount Olympus and Mount Ossa, through which the Peneus River flows into the Aegean Sea, and as a common noun indicating a beautiful vale. The noun also has some derivatives: beside Τεμπεΐτης and Τεμπικός, ‘dweller of the vale of Tempe’ (also used as a metaphor), there is τεμπώδης, ‘like a vale’, and the variant form, τέμπος (neuter), found in Byzantine writings.⁵ But even if the noun had a comparative adaptability, and might possibly have generated a verb meaning ‘to make into a vale’, such a hypothetical verb could not have taken on the form τέμπω, infinitive τέμπειν, as the derivation of a verb from a noun is only effected by the addition of a suffix. With a causative verb, the suffix would usually be -όω or -ίζω.⁶ Therefore, ἐτέμφθη cannot be the aorist of a *bona fide* verb.

One possible explanation remains: this odd form was intended as a pun. Thus, the regular aorist passive of τέμνω was purposely garbled to give it a false etymology from τέμπη, to say that the mountain was not simply ‘carved’, but ‘carved so that it was transformed into a beautiful vale’, or ‘into a vale as beautiful as Tempe’—which perfectly describes the change made in the natural panorama by the creation of the enclosure with the pool. The work that was carried out must be understood as hewing the stony surface to create a new form, not just as ‘quarrying the mountain’ in the sense of removing rock to produce material for construction, as in Dvorjetski’s interpretation.

⁵ E.g., Theophylactus Simocatta, *Historiarum libri*, ed. de Boor 1887:279, written under Heraclius, in the early seventh century.

⁶ See Heilmann 1963:221–223.

Puns are well-known in Greek literature. When Odysseus told the Cyclops Polyphemus that his name was Οὔτις ('No-one'; *Od.* 9, 366–367), he was making a double pun: first, he played with the similarity of sound between Οὔτις and Ὀδυσσεύς, and second, he made a punning allusion to his μήτις, 'cunning', for μή and οὐ are both negative words and therefore, μήτις 'no-one', is equivalent to οὔτις.⁷ Polybius (*Histories* 26:1a) made a pun at the expense of King Antiochus III, whose regnal epithet was Epiphanes (Ἐπιφανής 'the magnificent'), whom he nicknamed Ἐπιμανής, 'demented'. Epigrams, especially erotic ones, made frequent use of puns, sometimes of a lecherous kind.⁸ If ἐτέμφθη in our inscription is a pun, it must be taken as evidence of the highly refined culture of the person who dictated the text, which fits perfectly well with the time and place, as well as with the fact that the inscription found nearby (No. 2), which also celebrates the work of Antipater, was a piece of poetry.

In Inscription 1, Flavius Marcianus Antipater is styled ὑπατικός, Latin *consularis*, 'consular', not to be confused with ὕπατος, 'consul'. In Late Antiquity, ὑπατικός was the title held by governors of major provinces (lesser provinces being governed by a ἡγεμών, *praeses*). Antipater was, therefore, the governor of First Palestine, whose metropolis, Caesarea, included the site of Shuni. A governor of this name is unknown;⁹ this is no wonder, as the lists of provincial governors in the region, and specifically that of First Palestine, contain more gaps than names (cf. Jones, Martindale and Morris 1971:1108; Martindale 1980:1286; 1992:1490–1491). It is possible, however, to establish the time range of Antipater's term of office, and thus to date the inscription, at least approximately, based on his titulature. The governor residing in Caesarea ruled initially over all Palaestina. In the fourth century, he was a *clarissimus consularis* (λαμπρότατος ὑπατικός) at least from the sixties of that century until c. 380 CE, when the holder of this office was raised to *proconsul*, with the rank of *spectabilis* (περίβλεπτος ἀνθύπατος). The honorific *magnificentissimus* (μεγαλοπρεπέστατος), formerly reserved for *illustres*, the highest level of imperial aristocracy, then began to be bestowed as a courtesy title on office holders ranking as *spectabiles*, as it was not yet usual to attach the latter attribute to their title.¹⁰

⁷ The pun saved Odysseus' life when Polyphemus, blinded in his sleep by his forced guests, called his fellow Cyclopes to help. To their question: 'Is anyone (ἢ μή τις) harming you?' the monster answered: 'No-one is killing me' (Οὔτις με κτείνει), and they bade him let them sleep, if nobody was hurting him (εἰ μὲν δὴ μή τις σε βιάζεται; *Od.* 9, 401–412; and cf. *Od.* 20, 20, where the hero says that it was μήτις that saved him from the cave of the Cyclops).

⁸ See, for instance, *Anthologia Graeca* 5:31; 12:11, 165, 239, 243, 247, 251.

⁹ A man called Antipater was *dux Palaestinae* in the late fifth or early sixth century (Martindale 1980:106, Antipater 2), but he cannot be the same man, for despite the fact that in Arabia the *dux* in some periods also fulfilled the duties of civil governor, with a separate bureau, as a rule the civil career was separate from the military commands.

¹⁰ For instance, Flavius Florentius, *proconsul* of Palestine in 385, is styled *μεγαλοπρεπέστατος ἀνθύπατος* in a Greek inscription on the High-Level Aqueduct of Caesarea (*SEG* 18: No. 626; *CIIP* 2: No. 1259). On the early use of *μεγαλοπρεπέστατος* for *spectabiles*, and later for mere *clarissimi*, see Sartre (1982:105–108; see also Delmaire 1984:158–159; Di Segni 1997:96).

Between the last years of the fourth century and the first years of the fifth, Palestine was divided into three smaller provinces: Palaestina (Prima) with Caesarea as its metropolis, Palaestina Secunda (metropolis: Scythopolis-Bet She'an) and Palaestina Tertia or Salutaris (metropolis: Petra). The existence of three Palaestinae is first attested in 409 CE by a rescript of Theodosius II (*CTh* 7, 4, 30). With this change, the governor residing in Caesarea became again a *clarissimus consularis*, while those in Scythopolis and Petra were *clarissimi praesides*. Seemingly, the subdivision happened in two stages: in c. 390 CE, Palaestina Salutaris was detached from Palaestina, and a few years later, Palaestina was further divided into Prima and Secunda, as is indicated by a group of inscriptions discovered in Bet She'an, in which at least four governors are styled *μεγαλοπρεπέστατος καὶ περίβλεπτος*. One of them, Artemidorus, is dated between 400 and 404, and all his colleagues bearing the same titulature must belong to the short intermediate period when Bet She'an was still ruled from Caesarea and before the governor residing in Caesarea was demoted to *clarissimus consularis* (Di Segni and Arubas 2009:133*–135*; Di Segni 2018:254–260). In 536 CE, the governor of Palaestina Prima was raised to proconsular, with the corresponding title of *spectabilis* (Mayerson 1988). Therefore, Flavius Marcianus Antipater could not have been a *clarissimus consularis* in the fourth century, as at that time *clarissimi* were not entitled to the honorific *μεγαλοπρεπέστατος*. Also, he could not have been a governor in the late fourth century, for he was not a proconsul but a *consularis*, nor in the intermediate period, when he still must have been a proconsul as indicated by the title *spectabilis*. The attribution of *μεγαλοπρεπέστατος* to governors whose rank was lower than proconsular (*consulares* and *praesides*) appeared only in the early sixth century (cf. Di Segni 1997:100–101), though an example from Elusa, referring to the *praeses* of Palaestina Tertia residing in Petra (*SEG* 31: No. 1401), is dated 454/5 CE. This was probably a personal rather than an *ex officio* rank, for the person was a mere *praeses*, and the possibility that this was also the case of Antipater should not be ignored. Thus Antipater's titulature pinpoints him in the second half of the fifth or in the early sixth century, before 536 CE. The shape of the letters and the almost complete lack of abbreviations point to a date in the fifth century, while the abbreviation with *stigma* did not come into use before the mid-fifth century.¹¹ All considered, Antipater's governorship and this inscription may be dated to the second half of the fifth or possibly at the beginning of the sixth century CE.

Inscription 2

A large *tabula ansata*, 581 cm long (811 cm including the handles, each 115 cm long) and 150 cm wide, is set in the floor of Area C, along its western edge and in front of a flight of steps that descends into the pool (Figs. 1, 3). It frames an eight-line inscription

¹¹ The use of a *stigma* to mark an abbreviation is known since the second–third centuries CE, but it appears only in the 430s in dated inscriptions from Palestine, becoming more frequent in the second half of the fifth century CE (Avi-Yonah 1940:37; Di Segni 2022:173–177, Tables 3–7; 179–185, Tables 2–8).

oriented to the east, with letters 14–15 cm high on average, which could be easily read by people standing or sitting on the wide border of the pool. The characters, formed of large red tesserae measuring 1.5–2.0 cm, belong to the oval alphabet. Like Inscription 1, the rectangular panel and the triangular handles are framed by rows of red tesserae, and the fill of the triangles is made of yellow tesserae with a white circle in the middle. Only the left-hand part of the rectangle is preserved, for a length of about 113 cm. The blank left margin of the script varies in width, with even lines more indented than the odd ones (Table 1).

It must be noted that the lines could not have extended over the entire length of the *tabula ansata* up to its right edge, as about one-third of its surface on this side was occupied by a round medallion. Only part of the medallion's exterior frame, a section of its lower right quadrant, remains; this, however, is sufficient for calculating the approximate diameter of the circle and its distance from the upper, lower and right edges of the *tabula ansata*.

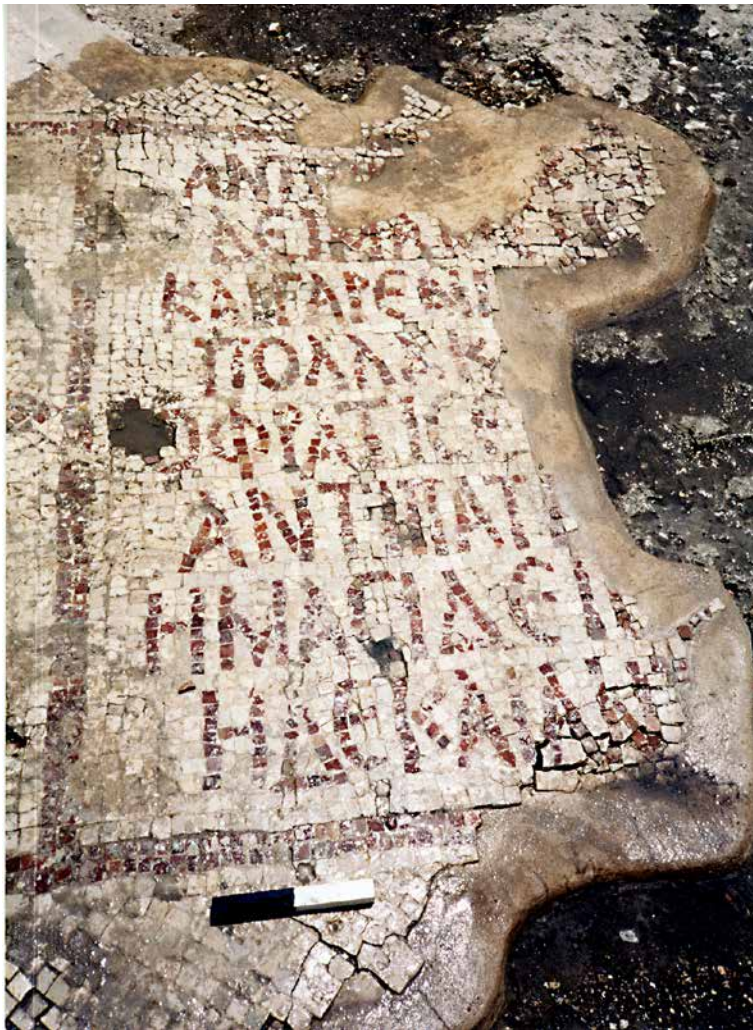


Fig. 3. Inscription 2.

Table 1. Width of Margins and Length of Script in Inscription 2

Line No.	Margin Width (cm)	Script Length (cm)
1	15	94
2	20	87
3	11	59
4	18	50
5	7	61
6	12	60
7	8	70
8	16	70

The medallion, with a diameter of c. 100–110 cm, was distanced some 80 cm from the right frame and 20–23 cm from the bottom and upper frames. This arrangement seems rather lopsided, and to make it look less awkward, the area containing the medallion may have been separated from the inscribed space by a vertical row of tesserae (now lost, with all the central part of the *tabula ansata*), so that the circle occupied the center of a rectangle. Whatever the internal division of the space within the *tabula ansata*, it is clear that at least one third of its length was not available for the text of Inscription 2, though possibly more writing had existed within the medallion, or outside it, or both. It is also worth noting that the *tabula ansata* is not centered on the axis of the semicircular building, and its distance from the northern wall (20.5 m) is markedly greater than the distance from the southern wall (18 m), roughly corresponding to the presumed length of the rectangular space surrounding the medallion (80 + 100 + 80 cm). Thus, the part of the *tabula* containing Inscription 2 was probably centered on the building's axis, while the entire panel with the medallion protruded southward. This may have been the result of a later change in the arrangement of the *tabula ansata*. Perhaps, it was originally shorter and in a later phase, it was lengthened by dismantling the right handle of the *tabula ansata* and adding a new panel with an attached restored handle. If so, it is most likely that the new panel contained another inscription, now lost, perhaps giving the date of completion of the work, or referring to repairs carried out in the pool. This, however, remains hypothetical, for the mosaic pavement in this area is destroyed.

The surviving text reads as follows:

ΑΝΤΙΠΑ- - ΚΑΙ - - -
ΔΕΙΜΑΜΕΝΟ - - - -
ΚΑΙΓΑΡΕΝΙ - - - -
4 ΠΟΛΛΑΚΙ - - - -
ΟΦΡΑΤΙΣΕ - - - -
ΑΝΤΙΠΑΤΡ - - - -
ΗΜΑCΙΔΕΙΙ - - - -
8 ΗΔΕΚΑΙΑΝΤ- - -

Too much of the text is lost to offer a restoration. However, even at first glance it is evident that all eight lines begin with a dactyl (_ _). Therefore, the inscription was an epigram, although it is not clear whether in hexameters or in elegiac distiches (i.e., in alternate hexameters and pentameters). The slight indentation of every second verse makes the latter more likely, as pentameters are shorter than hexameters.¹² It is impossible to tell how long the lines were, but even if the medallion occupied the center of its own rectangular frame, the remaining 320 cm were enough to accommodate an entire verse, considering how many letters and syllables were contained in the extant part of each line. The surviving text, indicating the metric rhythm, is presented below:

- Ἀντίπα|τρος KAI [- - -
 δειμάμε|νο[ς - - -
 καὶ γὰρ ἐν | Ι[- - -
 4 πολλα|ακ[ις | - - -
 ὄφρα τις | ἔ[- - -
 Ἀντίπα|τρο[- - -
 ἡμᾶς | ἰδ[εῖν - - -
 8 ἡδὲ καὶ | Ἀντ[ίπα|τρο- Ι - -

Some metric observations are in order. The second *alpha* of Ἀντίπατρος should be long, being followed by two consonants; however, Ἀντίπᾶ|τρος is used in a dactyl at the beginning of a hexameter in this and in other examples.¹³ The following syllable, KAI, is normally long whether it is the conjunction καί or belongs to a word, which would make the next foot a spondee. However, in poetic contexts, exceptions are not rare, some evident in this text, albeit its fragmentary state: in Line 8, καί is in a short position, as it is separated by a hiatus from the following vowel;¹⁴ in Line 2, γάρ, normally long in epic poetry—the style most often applied in epigrams on stone—and short in Attic prose, appears to be in a short position here;¹⁵ in Line 7, the long *alpha* of ἡμᾶς is in a short position, though this is found already in Homer (*Od.* 16, 372). Was a similar poetic license practiced with KAI in Line 1?

There is no doubt that the Antipate mentioned two or three times in this epigram is the same man mentioned in Inscription 1 as the governor of First Palestine responsible for the creation of the pool. It is unlikely that an epigram in the governor's honor would

¹² Hexameters contain six metric feet, all of which can be dactyls except the last, which always has two syllables, both long (_ _ , spondee), or one long and one short (_ _ , trochee), with stress on the first syllable. The first four feet can be dactyls or spondees. Pentameters consist of two halves, each of two feet, dactyls or spondees, followed by a long syllable.

¹³ See, for instance, *SEG* 8: No. 281 (a description of a painted dome from Be'er Sheva); *SEG* 43: No. 917 (a funerary epigram from Caesarea-Hadrianopolis in Paphlagonia, northern Turkey).

¹⁴ Numerous examples can be cited of ἡδὲ καὶ as a dactyl in epic and elegiac poetry (e.g., *Iliad* 2:265; 5:128; Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 1:329, 524, 1001; Theognis, *Elegiae* 1:369, 761).

¹⁵ An example is known from Theocritus (*Idyllia* 21, 44; καὶ γὰρ ἐν | ὕπνοις, a dactyl and a spondee at the end of a hexameter). Whether the *alpha* is short or long in our case cannot be established with certainty, for it depends on the letter following ἐν, which is not recognizable. If it was a vowel, as in Theocritus' verse, καὶ γὰρ ἐν is a dactyl, but if it was a consonant, ἐν would be in a long position and καὶ γὰρ would be a spondee.

couple his name with that of any other person. Therefore, KAI cannot be understood as the copulative conjunction καί. It may be an adverbial καί, meaning ‘also’ or ‘even’. Since the participle at the beginning of Line 2, δειμάμενος, means ‘having built’, the last four feet of Line 1 may have alluded to former construction projects carried out by the same Antipater before the present one.¹⁶ Alternatively, KAI may have been the first syllable of the toponym Καισάρεια, or the ethnic Καισαρεύς, which was treated as short as both the city’s and the citizen’s name were pronounced Κεσάρεια, Κεσαρεύς and often spelled with an *epsilon*.¹⁷ If this conjecture is true, the first verse of the epigram may have referred to Antipater’s origin (Ἀντιπα|τρὸς Κ<ε>[σα|ρεύς - - -) or, more likely, described Antipater’s function as governor of the province whose metropolis was Caesarea. For instance, a possible reconstruction may be Ἀντιπα|τρὸς Κ<ε>[σα|ρείας | ἄστεως | ἡνία | νομῶν, ‘Antipater, holding the reins of the city of Caesarea’, or Ἀντιπα|τρὸς Κ<ε>[σα|ρείας | ἀρχῆς | ἡνία | νομῶν, ‘Antipater, holding the reins of the government of Caesarea’.¹⁸ If so, this hypothesis would imply a very casual attitude toward metric rules on the part of the writer of this epigram, though metrical license is well-known in the poetry of Late Antiquity. In this period, the sense of syllable duration was declining, and the quantitative verse was rapidly losing ground to a meter based on the number and stress of syllables.

The following translation refers to the preserved part of the inscription:

Antipater [- - - - -]
 having built [- - - - -]
 and indeed [- - - - -]
 4 often [- - - - -]
 until some/someone [- - - - -]
 Antipater [- - - - -]
 for us to see [- - - - -]
 8 and also Ant[ipater (?)¹⁹ - - - - -]

¹⁶ Δειμάμενος is the participle aorist of δέμω, ‘to build’, a verb used only in the past tense and almost exclusively in epic and lyric poetry, and occasionally in epigrams on stone imitating the epic or lyric styles (for epigraphic examples, see, for instance, *SEG* 46: Nos. 2066, 2078, ‘Atil and Shaqqa-Maximianopolis; 59: No. 1723, Umm el-Jimal; 61: No. 500, Ta’leh near Suweida, all sites in Hauran, dating from the Late Roman and the early Byzantine periods; *SEG* 44: No. 580, Constantinople, 447 CE).

¹⁷ See, for instance, *SEG* 40: No. 1505 (a votive inscription of a Samaritan on Mount Gerizim); 47: No. 2042 (memorial inscription from Hammat Gader); *CIIP* 2: No. 1586 (an epitaph from Caesarea); *SEG* 26: No. 1205; 29: No. 969; 65: No. 902 (Jewish epitaphs from Italy). All the cited cases are early Byzantine. For an example of meter based on pronunciation vis-à-vis with correct spelling, see *SEG* 36: No. 1345, where the name Μούκιος, pronounced Μοῦκις, is treated as disyllable to accommodate it in a dactyl with the first syllable of the following name (Μούκι(ο)ς Ἀ|λέξαν|δροῦς; cf. Di Segni and Hirschfeld 1986:258).

¹⁸ For ἡνία νομῶν (present participle of νομάω, ‘to wield, to handle’ a tool), see *SEG* 30: No. 317, Roman period epigram from Athens. We must exclude the more common ἡνία λαχών (*SEG* 36: No. 1344, from Hammat Gader; *SEG* 44: No. 580, from Constantinople), ἡνία ἔχων (*SEG* 8: No. 281, from Be’er Sheva’) or ἡνία κρατῶν (*SEG* 56: No. 1921, from Jarash), for the first syllable in all these verbs is short. All the expressions are metaphoric and refer to holding the reins of power.

¹⁹ This last occurrence of the name is not certain: it may be the preposition ἀντί, ‘opposite’ or ‘in place of’, possibly introducing a pun with the name of the governor.

CONCLUSIONS

The contribution of these inscriptions to our knowledge of early Byzantine Palestine is threefold: (1) they add a name to the meagre list of governors of First Palestine; (2) they help date the construction of the semicircular structure and the pool; and (3) they highlight the intellectual skill invested in this project and indicate that the celebrations held here were a festival rightly famous throughout the province for its cultural refinement.²⁰

ADDITIONAL NOTE

Fragmentary mosaic inscriptions are also known from Area B, south of the theater, where an aqueduct and a system of shallow pools were uncovered. The conduit conveyed water from the 'En Zur spring, and after feeding the pools joined the High-Level Aqueduct of Caesarea. A room adjacent to the aqueduct was paved with a mosaic dated to the late second or early third century CE, whose panels, though much damaged, were recognized as featuring personifications of the four seasons (Talgam 2014:52–53, Fig. 76). Fragmentary inscriptions—the labels that accompanied the destroyed personifications—survived in two of the panels. One consists of two lines:

- ΤΟΠΩ
- ΠΙΝΗ

The inscription was first read by V. Tzaferis, who interpreted the word in Line 1 as derived from τόπος, 'place', and the word in Line 2 as [εἰ]ρήνη (iotacism for εἰρήνη), 'peace', which led to naming this part of the site 'The place of peace'. However, the label must be read [με]τοπω|ρινή, 'Autumn', and no letters are missing from the second line. In the next panel four letters survive, only three of which are legible: ΘΕΡ.[-, obviously θερί[νή], 'Summer'.

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²⁰ Choricus of Gaza (*Apologia mimorum* [Or. 32] 95; ed. Foerster and Richtsteig 1929:365–366) describes the participation of rhetors in the festival and the attendance of the elite, and comments that many from his Gazan audience used to attend the event. A critical edition of this discourse accompanied by a French translation was recently published by Pernet (2019).

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