Corycus, the saffron capital of the ancient world\textsuperscript{1}), was a prosperous, cosmopolitan place throughout Roman imperial times and particularly so during the first three centuries of the Byzantine era\textsuperscript{2}). Situated in sub-Tauran coastal Cilicia, it had a natural south easterly orientation. So it is not surprising to find a strong Syrian (especially Antiochene) presence in the town\textsuperscript{3}) and a significant Semitic element in the Corycean onomastikon\textsuperscript{4}). That Jews also are to be found among the numerous artisans and craftsmen\textsuperscript{5}) of Corycus is equally unsurprising: already by Philo's day (early first century) Jews had emigrated in great numbers to the towns of coastal Cilicia\textsuperscript{6}) and as late as the fourth century the links between Cilicia and Palestine were still strong\textsuperscript{7}).

\textsuperscript{1}) For Corycus' primacy in classical antiquity as a producer of saffron products, see L. Robert, \textit{REA} 62 (1960), 334-5; for her fame as a saffron producer in the Middle Ages, see W. Heyd, \textit{Commerz du Levant} II (Leipzig 1886; reprinted Leipzig 1936), pp. 668-9.


\textsuperscript{3}) Among the numerous immigrants at Corycus listed by J. Keil and A. Wilhelm in \textit{Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua} III [hereafter \textit{MAMA} III], (Manchester 1931), by far the greatest number comes from Antioch and its environs. See \textit{MAMA} III nos. 240; 248; 376; 388; 443; 445; 455; 477; 478; 507; 563; 642. For a recent addition to the list, see G. Dagron and D. Feissel, \textit{Inscriptions de Cilicie} (Paris 1987), no. 18. For a discussion of the main villages from which these settlers originated (Kaperlatinios and Kapernagathon), see D. Feissel in \textit{Syria} 59 (1982), 321ff.

\textsuperscript{4}) E.g. Abeios, Abibbas, Zebinos. See \textit{MAMA} III nos. 217; 466 and 403.

\textsuperscript{5}) \textit{MAMA} III nos. 237; 344; 448 and 607 (infra nos. vi; viii and x.).


\textsuperscript{7}) For patriarchal control of Cilicia at that time, see Epiphanius, \textit{Haer.} 30.11. For contacts in the intervening period, note \textit{CJ} II no. 925—the epitaph at Jaffa (probably 2nd or 3rd century) of Judas, son of Joses, from Tarsus.
The first hard evidence for an established Jewish community at Corycus came to light as long ago as the early 1880's\(^8\). And since 1931, when Keil and Wilhelm published their definitive edition of the 500 or so inscriptions from the city's large necropolis in MAMA III\(^9\), enough evidence has existed not only to study this community within the framework of Corycean society as a whole but to show how its character subtly altered as the society of which it was part gradually moved from paganism to Christianity. To my knowledge, however, neither of these things has ever been done. My purpose here, therefore, is a simple one—to fill these gaps.

The body of evidence on which I shall be concentrating is not large—the ten, mostly brief, inscriptions from the city which Keil, Wilhelm and all subsequent commentators have recognised as indisputably Jewish\(^10\). Of these, while three (nos. i-iii infra) clearly belong to the pre-Christian period\(^11\), the rest (infra nos. iv-x) are in the style of the early Byzantine inscriptions of the city and thus probably belong, like them, mainly to the fifth and sixth centuries\(^12\). It is, of course, to be regretted that the evidence is not more substantial but it remains, for all that, well worth examining. In the first place, it contains much onomastic, occupational and other cultural data to which no commentary has yet done adequate justice. And secondly, it possesses the advantage—all too rare for Diasporan material from Graeco-Roman antiquity—of having a precise physical and social context—viz. the communal cemetery of a prosperous, provincial city\(^13\). This, as we shall see, permits useful comparisons to be made with the mainstream material. In conducting this short study, I shall not treat the ten inscriptions individually as that would result in too much needless repetition. Instead, I shall divide the material broadly into two parts. After a

---

\(^8\) See bibliography cited in CIJ II 790.

\(^9\) Supra note 3.

\(^10\) These are most conveniently found in CIJ II at nos. 785-794, where they are listed alphabetically according to the name of the deceased. The corresponding MAMA III numbers are: 205; 222; 237; 262; 295; 344; 440; 448; 607 and 679.

\(^11\) Infra note 17.

\(^12\) No. iv, however, may belong to the fourth century—infra note 53.

\(^13\) Uncertain provenance and dating has greatly reduced the historical value of a large number of Diasporan inscriptions and papyri, even substantial ones. The recently discovered Jews and Godfearers inscription from Aphrodisias is a case in point. Despite its impressive length, basic interpretation still remains a problem. See J. Reynolds and R. Tannenbaum, Jews and Godfearers at Aphrodisias (Cambridge 1987), ch. IV and the present author in Historia 41 (1992) 297-310.