The village of Philoxenos: a note

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THE VILLAGE OF PHILOXENOS: A NOTE

The documents dating from the VII-VIIIth cent., published a hundred years ago by Carl Wessely, unanimously call the locality Philoxenou chōrion: SPP III 123; X 15; X 193; X 276; and XX 229. In one document, SPP X 154, the name of the village could originally have been preceded by the designation of chōrion as were the toponyms in the following lines. In SPP X 105 and in SB I 5338 the name Philoxenou appears alone. The same village is, however, labelled kōme in three documents of the Byzantine period: SB I 4658, P. Grenf. II 88 (AD 602) and SB XX 14535.1

The village of Philoxenos is also known from two Berlin papyri of a much earlier date: BGU XIII 2281 (AD 189/90, without further designation) and BGU I 144 (IIIrd c. AD) where it is designated as eπoikión.

P. Oslo III 154 should be considered separately. The document dated by the editors to the 1Ird c. AD, seems to be a business letter but its state of preservation is by no means good enough to understand its contents in detail. In line 13 the editor reads: ]...Φιλοξεναπόλεως κτλ. with a note:

“(άπο) Φιλοξεναπόλεως for Φιλοξενοπόλεως (cf. Mayser, I, p. 61, for the differentiation the three successive o’s may have been important), elsewhere Φιλοξένου κώμη, χωρίον, έποίκιον, see Preis, Wtb., III, p. 337 and P. Tebt. II, p. 407. The former ‘πόλις’, as so many others, apparently in the course of time declined into a κώμη, thereupon into a χωρίον (έποικιον).”

* The present paper was written in Leuven in the academic year 2000/1 during the tenure of a fellowship in Instituut Klassieke Studies of Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.

But we cannot be sure that the reading of the document is correct, as can be seen from the photograph, part of which I reproduce here:

The reading suggested by the editors seems acceptable, at least the characters printed undotted. There is a space in front of πόλεως which may suggest a word break in this place. It is, therefore, not obvious whether we are dealing here with the name of a city.

Let us notice that, even if the reading is accepted, the Philoxenapolis of P. Oslo III 154 and Philoxenou epoikion of BGU I 144 are unlikely to be one and the same village. It seems impossible to find in the Roman period a locality labelled at the same time both epoikion and polis. If the identity of the two localities is given up, there is no evidence for assuming the Arsinoite provenance of P. Oslo III 154 (see the editors' note to line 7). If so, the village of Ταλού (line 7, reading uncertain) was not necessarily located in the Arsinoite.

The village of Philoxenos belonged to the meris of Herakleides. It has been suggested that the village is to be identified with that of Abuksa in Markaz of Iбshawai, 15 km NW from Medinet el-Fayum. But this suggestion is not upheld by S. Timm. However, the tenor of the Timm's article is by no means clear: he quotes the evidence for Philoxenou from Greek papyri sub voce “Abuksa” but at the same time he did not fill up the field “Griechische Name” of the locality and said that the identification itself was wrong!

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2 I obtained a digitized photograph via e-mail from Dr. Gunn HAALAND whom I would like to thank.

3 See P. Tebt. II, p. 357