Flavius John, Scholasticus: A Note on PSI 963

James G. Keenan
Loyola University Chicago, jkeenan@luc.edu

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PSI 963 is a lease of a vetch-seller’s shop (ὀρβυσωλεῖον); its provenance is Oxyrhynchus, its date 581 A.D. The name, titles and paternity of the lessor take up all of lines 8-13, and the first half of line 14. I reproduce the first three of these lines as they are given in the editio princeps:

Φλαοψίω Ἱωάννη τῷ καὶ Λαμπατίῳ
τῷ σοφωτάτῳ καὶ ἐλλογῳ(ωτάτῳ) σημ[εια-?]?
φόρον ταύτης τῆς Ἀρκάδων ἐπαρχί(ας).

The emendations which I shall propose here have been verified against a photograph very kindly provided to me by the Istituto Papirologico G. Vitelli. I begin with some minor observations on line 8, then proceed to a more substantive change in lines 9-10.

Φλαοψίω

Read instead Φλαοψίω. Both spellings are common (cf. Preisigke, Namenbuch Col. 466), but requirements of space indicate that the shorter version was written here. Moreover, the traces after alpha are identical with the ligatures between the alphas and upsilons, and with the upper left-hand portions of the upsilons, in αὐτοκ(ράτορος) (line 4) and αὐτοῦ (line 5).

Λαμπατίῳ

Read instead Λαμπαδίῳ. Λαμπάδιος is the correct form of the name (cf. Namenbuch, and Foraboschi, Onomasticon s.v.). Although interchange of dentals is common in the papyri,¹ the traces before iota, if I interpret them rightly, better conform to delta than to tau.² I cannot verify the certitude of the final omega.

2. The change from Λαμπάδιος to Λαμπάδιος is made tacitly in Foraboschi, Onomasticon.
Shortly after the editio princeps, Otto Hornickel, citing probability (perhaps having in mind the incongruity of case, genitive where dative was expected), and the standard application of the adjectives ἐλλογμώτατος and σοφωτατος to men who were orators and men of law ("rhetorisch und juristisch gebildeter Personen"), proposed to read συν[ηγόρ(φ)], i.e. "advocate," at the end of line 9. (In the following line φόρου then becomes a separate word, a borrowing of the Latin forum, here in the sense of "tribunal.")

Hornickel’s emendation was not reported in the Berichtigungs­liste, and has, accordingly, escaped scholarly attention. It was however, recently noted and accepted by Axel Claus, who observed: "Der συνήγορος Flavios Joannes konnte den Prädikaten σοφωτατος και ἐλλογμώτατος nach gut ein σχολαστικός gewesen sein." Hornickel, insofar as I can tell, neither saw the papyrus, nor a photograph of it. My own inspection of the photograph now confirms that σχ[ολ(αστικώ)] is, in fact, the correct reading. The chi is slightly obscured because: 1) the right-hand radius of the lambda of Λαμπαδίῳ, from the line above, runs into the upper left-hand radius of the chi, and 2) a portion of the lower right-hand radius of the chi, toward the crux of the letter, is missing. Nevertheless, the letter, formed exactly like the chi in ἀρχόντων (line 11), is certain.

Read then: σχ[ολ(αστικώ)] | φόρου.

In summary, we may now read PSI 963.8-10 as:

Φλαυίῳ Ἰωάννη τῷ καὶ Λαμπαδίῳ

3. The editor (note ad loc.) comments: "Se la prima parte della parola è letta bene, correggi σημεα | φόρω."  

4. Ehren- und Rangprädikate in den Papyrusurkunden: Ein Beitrag zum römischen und byzantinischen Titelwesen (Diss. Giessen, 1930), pp. 7-8, esp. p. 7 n. 6. He was also, apparently, influenced by the parallel afforded by SB 7033, which he cites on p. 7, where (lines 21-22) a certain Makarios, ὃ ἐλλογμώτατος συνήγορος τοῦ Ῥεβαῖων φόρου, is mentioned. See now the republication of part of this text as P. Princ. 82.


6. So, e.g., PSI 963.9 will still be found in Spoglio lessicale III mentioned s.v. σημειαφόρος. Perhaps partly responsible is a misprint in the list of readings emended by Hornickel in his dissertation (above, n. 4), p. 37. There "Soc 936,8" should read "Soc 963,8."


8. Or perhaps σχ[ολ(αστικώ)]]. Abbreviation is needed because the lacuna is too small to accommodate the full word. For the common abbreviation σχολ, cf. inter alia P. Lond. V 1701.14, 1761.18; P. Lips. 100 4.3; SP XX 122.11; BGU 1094.15.
i.e., “Flavius John alias Lampadius, the most wise and most eloquent scholasticus of the forum of this province of Arcadia.” Although a number of scholastici of the forum of the Thebaid have previously been known from the papyri,9 John is the first known certainly to have been attached to the forum of Arcadia.

9. For full references, Claus (above, n. 7), pp. 30 f., with discussion, pp. 77 ff.