

Supplement to the Article
Philoxenité – Pilgrimage Harbour of Abu Mina
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Localization of Philoxenité, I have discussed firstly in Athens in 1981 which was published in 1983¹. The next papers followed². The problem of localization of the Pharaonic city of Marea in place of the preserved extensive ruins of Byzantine harbour at the southern coast of the lake Mareotis seemed to be definitely solved by the recent discovery of a rural establishment under the remains of a big Byzantine church constructed at the harbour, which was located over the pottery workshop refuse and large pottery kiln producing amphorae during the 2-3rd century AD to store and distribute the local farm products³. Such kiln in this region belonged to a standard equipment of large rural estates, which had also their own marinas at the coast of the lake Mareotis to export their outcome⁴. Similar installations known at the lake shores since a long time, have been also recorded recently on the western arm of the Mareotis Lake by the archaeological expedition of Southampton University. Under, and around the ruins of a big Byzantine church on the promontory of Philoxenité there are no older structures predating the recently unearthed early Roman kiln.

On the western side of the main basin of Philoxenité there were also early Roman rural structures, delineated on my map of the site and published in *BAR* series 2113, p. 71, Fig. 4⁵. Until the modern road crossing the Lake Mariut, west of the Philoxenité church, several small structures of country character functioned in the early Roman period separately from the large early Roman rural estate at the promontory, yet, these small farms decayed in the 3rd century AD, like the big one identified below the church at Philoxenité, the other extensive rural estate with its huge pottery kiln excavated at Burg el Arab, and dozens

1 Rodziewicz, M., 1983: 199-216.

2 Rodziewicz, M., 2003: 27-47, with further references.

3 Babraj, K., Szymanska, H., 2010: 4, 6.

4 Rodziewicz, M., 2011: 39-56, Fig. 4-6; El-Ashmawi, 1998: 55-64.

5 Rodziewicz, M., 2010: 67-74, Fig. 4. 1-4.

of other early Roman pottery kilns registered around the Lake Mareotis by J.-Y. Empereur and Picon ⁶. The dyke earliest in the area (but also early Roman), and the most western from Philoxenité at the Lake Mareotis was built separately, and differently from the one well preserved in pilgrimage harbour, which had structured frame of the main basin done in the Byzantine time (Fig. 1).

The early Roman structures of this area were abandoned and ruined already in the 3rd century AD, and were not rebuilt or maintained later on. Their building material was reused in the created Byzantine harbour of Philoxenité which was much bigger than the older landing spots of private rural estates around. All archaeological research indicates that the area along the southeastern coast of the Lake Mareotis was abandoned at the end of 3rd century AD, and no large urban remains of that time or older ones were identified nearby. The pottery shards of 4th and 5th centuries as well as the other archaeological remains are very scanty in the region.

In our quest for identification the name of a main port on the western arm of the lake which served the Christian pilgrims going from Alexandria to the distant holy shrine of St Menas situated in the desert, about 15-18 km south of Philoxenité harbour, we centered our attention on Greek and Coptic literary sources as the most reliable and prime documents, considering later Arabic sources as of secondary character. However work of F. Jaritz concerning Arabic sources on Abu Mina unveiled some Arabic aspects of the story of Coptic Encomium, saved in Ethiopian version ⁷. This version differs from Coptic encomium in two main respects. It uses the Arabic transcriptions of the names of the lake port built in Byzantine period for pilgrims traveling to the holy shrine of Abu Mena, and mentions the name of the initiator of pilgrimage harbour construction and order giver as the emperor Athanasius himself at the very end of 5th – beginning of the 6th century, while his Praetorian Prefect Philoxenus is mentioned only as executioner of the new project. So it is not necessary according to her to assume that the name Philoxenité derived directly from the name of the prefect, but it is also possible that the name might derive from the Greek

⁶ Empereur, J.-Y., et Picon, M., 75-91.

⁷ Jaritz, F., 1993.

world Filoxenia as it is suggested by F. Jaritz, which she translates into German as "Gastfreundschaft", meaning friendly hospitality, which in Arabic texts is called Iksānîṭā / Filuksānîḏā⁸. F. Jaritz associates the name of the harbour used by pilgrims going to Abu Mina with such names in Arabic sources as Filuksanida/Filoksenida, Filuksanita/Filoksenita or Loxoneta. There is also known shortened version of this name Iksānîṭā⁹. However, they all refer to the Greek name Filoxenité and they are appearing in stories referring to Byzantine period, although told slightly later by people who referred to travelers from Alexandria to St. Menas holy shrine (Mari Mina) and who stayed in Philoxenité's harbour facilities. They frequently used the corrupted name of the place. The Byzantine travelers were landing there, going to church, to market, buying food and finding lodging. The next day they were traveling to the holly shrine of Abu Mena. There is a story of Alexandrian Jew (the inhabitant of a very large city at that time) who, while going to Abu Mina stopped "in small village Filuksanida", while in another stories Filuksanida is named as a town, not a village¹⁰. It is so in the story of a woman which is living in the town Filuksanida¹¹. There is also another shortened name of Philoxenité used in the story of a pig being killed by the devil in the harbour of Loksoneta¹².

J. Drescher in his *Apa Mena*, points that Philoxenité represents the Coptic Philoxaneidé and Philoxanité¹³. In the Greek version of the Miracles of St. Menas it is called Loxoneta¹⁴. C. M. Kaufmann in his monumental book "*Die Menasstadt und das Nationalheiligtum der altchristlichen Ägypter*"¹⁵, identifies the name Loksoneta with the lost main Mareotic harbour which served the pilgrims heading to Abu Mena. Then, at the very beginning of the 20th century Kaufmann has not suspected that the place of visible extensive ruins at the lake shore suggested by Mahmoud el Falaki as Pharaonic Marea, the capital of the ancient nome, is only the place existing in Byzantine period (since it was not excavated at that time and not studied) which was functioning only as

8 Jaritz, F., 1993: 297.

9 Jaritz, F., 1993: 297.

10 Jaritz, F., 1993: 169-170.

11 Jaritz, F., 1993: 168.

12 Jaritz, F., 1993: 297, note 986.

13 Drescher, J., 1946: 112, 116, 120.

14 Drescher, J., 1949: 15.

15 Kaufmann, C. M., 1910: 90; Jaritz, F., 1993: 297, footnote 984.

long as Abu Mina was serving as a pilgrimage holy center. Kaufmann by using the term Loksoneta for the lost major Mareotic harbour, identified a very important aspect of the name in very early mediaeval time. There was no need to use this term later on since the Christian pilgrimage harbour was abandoned and ruined, and was forgotten in the mediaeval time ¹⁶. All ancient and Byzantine names in this region vanished quickly as the result of depopulation of the territory due to the decrease of the water level in the lake Mariut from the seventh century onwards (neglected, not maintained canals etc). There is nearly completely lack of mediaeval glazed pottery on archaeological sites on the southern coast of the western arm of the Lake Mareotis.

Finally, we should separate the search for the location of Marea, the historical capital of the region in Pharaonic times, from Byzantine pilgrimage harbour of Philoxenité. Preserved names of the harbour in Arabic sources have equally informative power as in Greek and Coptic texts. The Arabic names confirmed the existence of Byzantine Philoxenité as a specialized harbour constructed for one purpose only i.e. for pilgrimages heading to the holy shrine of Abu Mina. The place is described in Ethiopian text, which in German translation runs as follows: *“Der Ort soll von Kaiser Anastasius (491-518) gegründet worden sein, der darin einen Markt, Kornspeicher und Unterkünfte am See erbauen ließ. Überdies wurden auf des Kaisers Befehl Unterkünfte und Wasserstellen für die Pilger entlang dem Weg zur Menasheiligtum eingerichtet”* ¹⁷. In Coptic texts relating to St. Menas published by Drescher is also said that in the time of Emperor Anastasius (491-518) the hospices were built by the lake, and resthouses for the multitudes to stay at. A market place was established where people might find and buy all their needs, also spacious depositories constructed, where the multitudes could leave their baggage, there were also set up porticoes supplied with drinkable water where people might rest etc. In his introduction to the *“Miracles of St. Menas”*, Drescher says that the Greek people have also known the lake-port of Mareotis as Loxonēta instead of Philoxenité ¹⁸. The original names decayed with the time and vanished from the vocabulary and became strange and unused by the modern population of the region. Yet, they prove that in the early Islamic period there was still an

16 Ramzi, M., 1940.

17 Jaritz, F., 1993: 297.

18 Drescher, J., 1949: 147-148.

interest in tradition of Christian unique pilgrimage center located far from Alexandria in the oasis, which, as Arabic sources suggest, existed still in the time of Arabic writer Bakri, who described the Abu Mena as green and flourishing place in 10th century AD. This fact has been proven by archaeological evidence meticulously assembled and documented by J. Engemann¹⁹. His research was devoted to the early Islamic glazed pottery uncovered in Abu Mena, and existence of a small mosque at this site. But it is very doubtful whether the massive pilgrimage to Abu Mina of the end 5th-6th century continued until the 10th century. The surface study of Philoxenité site in the early 1980s, and later researches brought to light nearly complete lack of early Islamic glazed pottery in, and around the harbour. The youngest pottery was not exceeding the end of 7th century AD. Therefore depopulation of the coastal area of Mareotis took place earlier than the site of Abu Mina, and therefore the names, including the Byzantine name Philoxenité and the names known in Coptic and Arabic texts Philoxaneidé, Filuksenida, Filoksanita, Loksoneta, Iksanita etc. vanished, while the name Abu Mena (Bu Mina) survived among the Bedouins, and still it is a very important place of caravan routes²⁰. In any text either Byzantine or later Arabic Pharaon' city of Marea connected with pilgrimage rout to the holly shrine of Abu Mena, or the lake harbour of Marea is mentioned. Archaeological researches in this place confirmed without any doubt that there are any physical traces of Pharaonic larger city, or Pharaonic settlement existed in this site.

Sources written in Greek, Coptic and Arabic versions provide us with description of transportation of the sarcophagus with the body of St. Menas through the Mediterranean Sea to Alexandria, and further on through the Lake Mareotis to the then unnamed place in Maryut, where the boat anchored, and where the sarcophagus was loaded on camels for further land transportation. It should be emphasized that the sarcophagus with the body of St. Menas has not landed in the harbour of Marea, but in the nameless anchorage in Maryut. There are no historical sources mentioning the lake harbour of Marea. Texts written in Arabic describing pilgrimages from Alexandria/Iskanderyia to the cult center of St. Menas in the desert,

19 Engemann, J., 1989: 161-177.

20 Decobert, C., 2002. The theoretical location of Marea in the region of modern Amreia and Ikingi Mariut by Christian Decobert, from strategical point of view is quite reasonable (to control the roads E-W and S-N).

name the harbour at the lake as Filoksaneide, Filuksenita, Filoksenite, Loksoneta, Iksaneta etc. clearly derived from the Byzantine name of Philoxenité, the newly created pilgrimage port built on order of emperor Anastasius (491-518) presumable in place where the boat with the sarcophagus of St. Menas had been anchored, since the pilgrims followed the route of the sarcophagus with the body of the holy St. Menas, famous for his miracles.

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List of Figures:

- Fig. 1:** Map of Byzantine Filoxenité, drawn by M. Rodziewicz.
Filoxenité Byzantine pilgrimage harbor: Nos. 5 – 17.
Western/coastal early Roman rural remains: Nos. 1 – 4.
Structured causeway on the eastern side of Filoxenité leading to the island: No. 18.

Key:

- 1- Jetty of pre-Byzantine date
- 2- Rural estate with large water wheel
- 2a- Small kiln
- 3- Unidentified structure of rural character
- 4- Structure with mooring place

Structures identified in the pilgrimage harbour of Filoxenité:

- 5 - Pier
- 6 - Water wheel (*saqia*)
- 7 - Public double bath
- 8 - Insula with shops
- 9 - Public building
- 10 - Public lavatory
- 11 - Kibotos?
- 12 - Pier
- 13 - Transept Basilica (after: Grossmann 2002, Fig. 9)
- 14 - Eastern harbour
- 15 - Water wheel (Saqia)
- 16 - Public bath
- 17 - Rock-hewn tomb/hypogeum
- 18 - Causeway leading to the island
- 19 - Pilgrimage track to Abu Mina

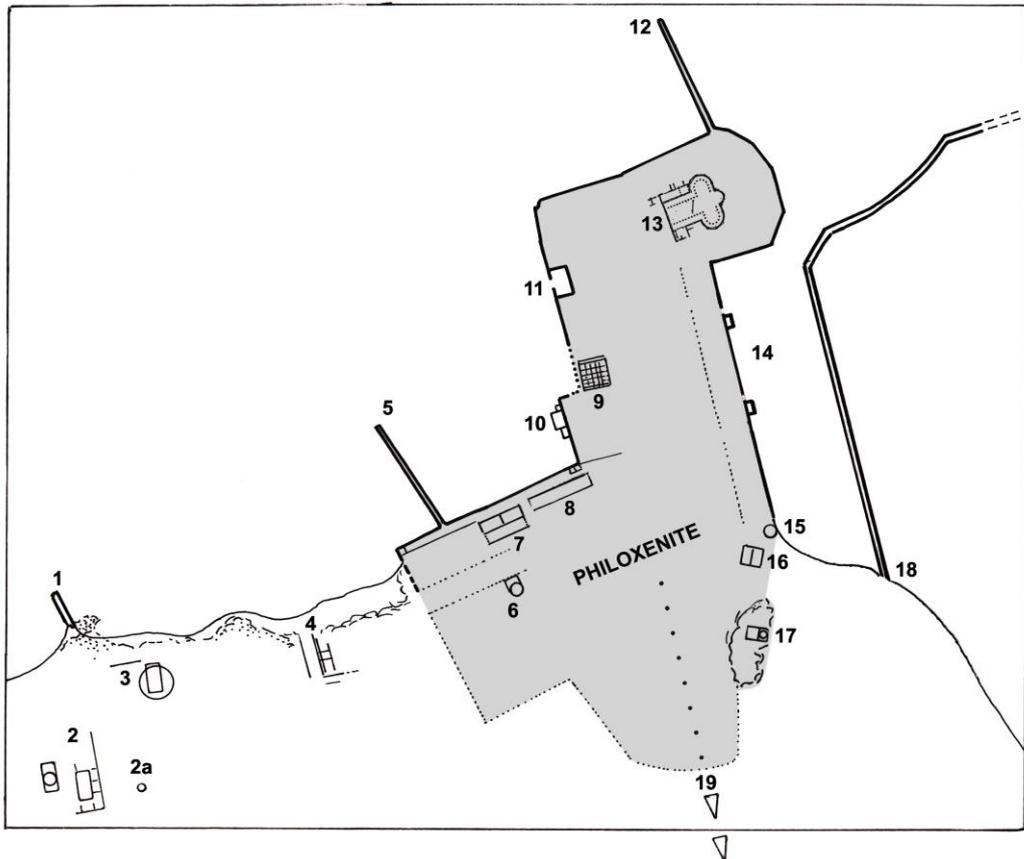


Fig. 1