

HOMONYMS CAUSING CONFUSION IN TOPONYMY : EXAMPLES FROM APHRODITO AND THE ANTAIOPOLITE NOME

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For my doctoral research, I have undertaken the global study of place names in the Antaiopolite Nome. The choice of this specific nome is justified by the important quantity of papyri related to it, mostly coming from the village of Aphrodito, modern Kom Ishqaw. These include documents dating from two periods, *i.e.* the sixth century AD Dioscorus archives, and the eighth century Basileios archives containing some Qurra ben Sharik papyri. A priority in this study of toponyms was to inventory all the villages clearly attested as located in this nome, that is those centres of habitation designated as κῶμαι.

This rather clear and limited project, to list villages of the Antaiopolite nome by going through toponym indexes and papyrological editions, soon led to several difficulties. The purpose of this paper is to present two of these difficulties linked to the question of homonyms. The first difficulty is specific to the history of this area and the way it has been described by papyrologists since the beginning of the 20th century. Assigning villages to nomes has brought to light how much confusion there is in naming the nomes themselves. The second difficulty is of a methodological nature that pertains to any study of toponyms : to what extent should two slightly different spellings be considered as one or two different toponyms, meaning one or two actually different places ? In fact, what is a slightly different spelling ? What limit should we put on « variant names » ?

First of all, the question of homonyms is to be studied at the level of the nomes themselves : if Ἀφροδίτης κῶμη is clearly attested as a village of the Antaiopolite nome in the sixth century, the rest of its history is less obvious. Following the pioneering study by Henri Gauthier on the tenth nome of Upper Egypt, it is generally admitted that Aphrodito was the *metropolis* of the Pharaonic nome that was named the Aphroditopolite nome under the Ptolemies¹. The city was then superseded by Antaiopolis in the Roman and Byzantine period, before recovering a pre-eminent role as the centre of a pagarchy at the beginning of Arabic rule. Thus an « Aphroditopolite nome » appeared as a denomination of this area in several modern works dealing with the periods before and after the sixth / seventh century AD.

The problem is, however, that there is another, well-attested « Aphroditopolite nome » around Aphroditopolis, modern Atfih, the *metropolis* of the 22nd nome of Upper Egypt, to the south of Memphis. The confusion between these two nomes was greatly increased by the fact that Calderini's *Dizionario geografico* made no attempt to distinguish them and referred to both as « Afroditopoli », leaving the reader to choose between two areas more than 300 km apart. This work often labelled as « Afroditopoli » toponyms in the neighbourhood of, or sometimes simply mentioned in papyri from, Aphrodito. Worse, this name is sometimes given to toponyms around Aphrodito in texts where the village is without any doubt a simple κῶμη of the Antaiopolite nome².

This ambiguity has led even specialists of toponymy – such as Marie Drew-Bear – to make mistakes³. In her article on the Hermopolite toponym Τοοῦ, she said that there was a homonym village in the « Aphroditopolite » nome, not specifying Atfih or Kom Ishqaw, and another in the Herakleopolite nome. She then discussed P.Oxy. VII 1068, a text dealing with the transport of a mummy from the Arsinoite nome to Alexandria, during which a stop

¹ See Gauthier (1913).

² See *e.g.* Calderini, *Diz. geogr. Suppl.* 1, p. 36 *s.v.* Ἀνουφίου κλήρος : P.Mich. XIII 666, 3 has κῶμη Ἀφροδίτης τοῦ Ἀνταιοπολίτου [νο]μ(οῦ).

³ Drew-Bear (1979) 305–307.

was made at Toou. She went against the editor's suggestion of the Herakleopolite village and preferred the Hermopolite hypothesis, rejecting the Aphroditopolite nome as being too far to the south. It seems clear that she had in mind the area around Kom Ishqaw and not Atfih, which would fit perfectly along the way from the Fayum to Alexandria. Other sources show definitively that the village of Toou belonged to the nome located around Atfih⁴.

This ambiguity comes from the ancient texts themselves, since none of the scribes mentioning an Aphroditopolite nome found it necessary to be more precise. It seems obvious, however, that the administration could not function with two nomes having exactly the same name; as a matter of fact, all the other nome couples had distinctive epithets. For example, in P.Oxy. XLVII 3362, a list of the *strategoï* of Egypt from the mid-second century AD, the two Apollonopolite nomes are said to be ἄνω τό(πων) and κ]άτω τό(πων)⁵. The evidence for an Aphroditopolite nome located roughly between the Lycopolite and the Panopolite nomes comes from Pliny the Elder and Ptolemy, while before them Agatharchides of Cnidus and Strabo mentioned in this part of Upper Egypt only an Ἀφροδίτης πόλις⁶.

Part of Gauthier's theory was based on the idea that Antaiou, qualified as a simple κώμη in Diodorus Siculus and absent from Agatharchides and Strabo, but appearing in Pliny and then Ptolemy, had become a city and a nome *metropolis* under the Roman administration⁷. An article by Nadine Quenouille summed up all the documentation now available on Antaiou in the Ptolemaic period and showed that this place was already a πόλις with institutions typical of a nome *metropolis*, for instance a royal bank⁸. As for Ἀφροδίτης πόλις, only two papyri containing this expression deal with a place that could correspond to Kom Ishqaw and not Atfih: PSI VII 816 (II BC) and P.Brem. 42 (II AD), which mentions also Phthla, a village well attested near Ἀφροδίτης κώμη in the sixth century texts⁹. Ἀφροδίτης πόλις in PSI VII 816 is likely to be Kom Ishqaw, as another papyrus, coming from the same cartonnage, is related to the same Aineas of this document who is said to be the *epistates* of this city: in PSI VII 815, 2, a complaint sent by a lady from Antaiou to Aineas, she describes him as τῶν σωματοφυλάκων ἐπὶ τοῦ Ἀφροδιτοπολίτου. It seems rather unlikely that the document could be referring to Atfih here. His text, however, is the only papyrological evidence that an administrative division called Aphroditopolite existed in this area, without specifying explicitly that it was a nome. The difficulty might be reduced by remembering that, more generally, the actual division of the Thebaid in nomes in the Ptolemaic period was proved to have been progressive: Katelijn Vandorpe has clearly established that, as a remnant from the New Kingdom and Late period, at the beginning of Ptolemaic rule the whole Thebaid first functioned as one nome, with a *strategos* at its head, while its subdivisions or provinces were under the control of an *epistates*, as we have seen one for Ἀφροδίτης πόλις¹⁰.

Thus, the documentation presently available does not allow the claim that the area around Kom Ishqaw ever had the status of a nome; the only Aphroditopolite nome was the one located around Atfih. It might, however, have been a subdivision of the Thebaid which

⁴ P.Oxy. XIV 1746 is a list of villages from the Aphroditopolite (Atfih) nome among which, beside Toou, several other villages are attested as linked with the Fayum and the Memphite area.

⁵ See P.Oxy. XLVII 3362, 3 and 11.

⁶ *GGM* I 122: ἡ Λύκων πόλις, εἶτα Ἀφροδίτης ἄλλη, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις Πανῶν; Strab. 17, 1, 41: εἶτα Λύκων πόλις καὶ Ἀφροδίτης καὶ Πανῶν πόλις; Plin. *Nat.* 5, 49: *Diospolitēn, Antaeopoliten, Aphroditopoliten, Lycopoliten*; 60–61: *Panopolis ac Veneris iterum et in Libyco Lycon*; Ptol. *Geog.* 4, 5, 65: Ἀφροδιτοπολίτης νομοῦ καὶ μητροπόλις μεσόγειος Ἀφροδίτης πόλις.

⁷ See Diod.Sic. 1, 21, 4; Plin. *Nat.* 5, 49; Ptol. *Geog.* 4, 5, 71.

⁸ See Quenouille (2002).

⁹ See also PSI VII 816, 7 (with relevant passage partly in lacuna): Αἰνέαι τῶι ἐπιστάτῃ τῆς Ἀφρο[δίτης πόλ(εως)]; P.Brem. 42, 4: Ἀφροδίτης πόλ(εως) κα(ὶ) Φθλάι.

¹⁰ See Vandorpe (2000) 171–173.

was not carried over into the new organisation in nomes. The first papyrus to give information on this area in the Roman period is SB XIV 12110 (AD 90/91), where the same *strategos* has authority over both the Antaiopolite nome and the Heptakomia. About twenty years later, the two areas are separated and the «Apollonopolite Heptakomias» nome appears, administrated by a *strategos* whose archives have been preserved, namely Apollonios. The already mentioned P.Brem. 42, a landlist specifying the quantity and nature of arouras in Aphrodites Polis and Phthla, belongs to his archives; this has led the editor to the hypothesis that the two places were then under his jurisdiction, as it would be otherwise difficult to explain the presence of such a document in his papers¹¹.

Further mentions of Kom Ishqaw date from the beginning and more securely the mid-fourth century respectively in P.Col. VIII 235 and several papyri from Kellis. The place is then what it will remain for two centuries, a *κώμη* of the Antaiopolite nome¹². Even at the beginning of the eighth century, when the place is called Aphrodito and seems to have become independent from Antaiou, it is still designated as a *κώμη* and is ruled not by a pagarch, as the other former nomes, but by a *dioiketes*¹³.

Thus, until new documents shed more light on the history of this area, it would be advisable to use the wording «Aphroditopolite nome» only to refer to the area around Atfih, or at least to give an explicit indication of which Aphrodites Polis is meant, clarifying this ambiguity of homonyms.

The second difficulty to be considered has to do with the homonyms among villages themselves. This arises from the scrupulous but sometimes misleading trend not to identify toponyms as soon as they display graphic variations, even minor ones. This, in fact, causes duplicate entries.

Sometimes the smallest variation, as between *epsilon* and *eta*, has produced two different toponyms: Πακῆρκε is listed as an Antaiopolite village in Calderini's *Dizionario geografico* with only one reference to P.Mich. XIII 659. In this text, a certain Theodosios is said to come from Πακῆρκε¹⁴. He owns a *κτῆμα* located in the territory of Aphrodito. Nothing in the text makes it explicit that this toponym is not the well attested Panopolite village, Πακέρκη¹⁵.

Next, the toponym Τριπε was described as a village of the Antaiopolite nome by Calderini's *Dizionario geografico*, based solely on a reference in P.Cair.Masp. II 67138. In fact, another Panopolite toponym should be recognized: Τριφεῖον, named after the goddess Triphis, which has the Coptic name ⲗⲧⲣⲓⲡⲓⲈ¹⁶. More precisely, since the text mentions both a priest and some wool, this is most likely another way to name the famous White Monastery of Shenoute of which we have other mentions in the sixth century papyri from Aphrodito¹⁷. As for the graphic variation, Τριπε seems half way between the Greek Τριφεῖον and the Coptic ⲗⲧⲣⲓⲡⲓⲈ.

On the other hand, one should still be cautious and not go too far in identifying roughly similar toponyms, as this might lead to the assimilation of two different villages. For example, Tarrouthis was thought to be a variant name for Terythis. Tarrouthis is a well-attested Hermopolite village; the idea that there was another village bearing the same name in the Antaiopolite nome came from P.Lond. III 1007b–c, 4–5 (p. 264–265). There, a

¹¹ See P.Brem. p. 9 and 99.

¹² An explicit example is P.Kellis I 32, 4–6.

¹³ There are many examples, among which P.Lond. IV 1460, 35, a text listing runaways from Aphrodito: παγ(α)ρ(χί)ας Ἀν(ταίου) (καὶ) Ἀπόλλω(νος); P.Lond. IV 1379, 3 addressed to Βασιλείω διοικητῆ κώμη Ἀφροδιτώ without any lacuna in the wording.

¹⁴ See P.Mich. XIII 659, 119–120: κατὰ Θεοδόσιον τὸν ἀπὸ | Πακῆρκε; 167: Θεοδόσιος ὁ ἀπὸ Πακῆρκε.

¹⁵ See e.g. P.Panop.Beatty 1, 10 and 282.

¹⁶ See Amélineau (1893) 69–70 and Gauthier (1905) 78–79.

¹⁷ See P.Ross.Georg. III 48; P.Cair.Masp. III 67312.

person is said to be ἀπὸ κόμης Ταρρούθεως τοῦ [Ἀνταιοπολί]του νομοῦ, yet the name of the nome is lost in the lacuna. The choice of the editor to fill the lacuna in this way can be explained by the presence of the word Ἀνταιοπολιτῶν in line 11. However, it is not directly linked with Tarrouthis. Another person, coming from the same village, is said to be a priest in the mountain of Antaiopolis. Instead of speculating on the existence of a new village, it seems more sensible to understand here that an inhabitant of the otherwise well-known Hermopolite village moved and became a priest in the Antaiopolite nome.

This is not, though, the only attestation of Tarrouthis as allegedly located in the Antaiopolite nome. In SB XX 14669, known as the « Cadastre of Aphrodito » and recently re-edited by Jean Gascou, we find four mentions of a monastery of Tarouthis¹⁸. Nevertheless, it is not unreasonable to link this occurrence to the Hermopolite village, since in the same document there are other examples of monasteries located outside the nome, but without any indication of the nome in which they are located : this is the case, for example, of the monasteries of Apa Zenobios, Apa Sinouthes and Smine (Panopolite nome) and the monastery of Porbis, which in the first edition was located in the Hermopolite ; in the second edition, however, it was noted that it could be in the Apollonopolite Minor as well¹⁹. We thus have to consider Tarouthis (spelling with either one *rho* or two) as the Hermopolite village, whereas Terythis is well attested in the Antaiopolite nome²⁰.

The documentation concerning the Antaiopolite nome, although of considerable extent, can offer reliable information about its toponymy only if the texts are examined very closely, taking into account the meaning of each document, the social context and the spelling as checked on the original papyrus. The checking for homonyms must be continued through a close examination of the texts, focusing particularly on all those villages attested only once. A balance should be found between creating new toponyms because of a new spelling and hastily putting together similar forms that obviously do not refer to the same places.

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¹⁸ SB XX 14669, 98, 101, 103 and 105 in Gascou (2008).

¹⁹ See Gascou (2008) 283, n. 44 (Apa Zenobios) ; 284, n. 49 (Apa Sinouthes) ; 283, n. 45 (Smine) ; 282, n. 12 (Porbis).

²⁰ On the homonyms Terythis in the Cynopolite and Oxyrhynchite nomes, see Benaïssa (2009).