

Notationes Legentis

Ξενοκρίται

Nearly a quarter-century after its publication, *P.Oxy.* XLII 3016 continues to stir discussion of the meaning of ξενοκρίτης (cf. most recently *ZPE* 112 [1996] 192-196). The difficulty begins with the scarcity of detail in *P.Oxy.* 3016, and is compounded by the infrequency of the term—the editor’s introduction to 3016 cites only three other occurrences in inscriptions and papyri.

The late Arnaldo Momigliano devoted one of the last lectures he delivered in the United States to reminding his audience of ancient historians that all their work rests ultimately upon texts, and we rely on philology to establish sound, or at least usable, texts. In his introduction to *P.Oxy.* 3016, the editor, Peter Parsons, laid out the bits of available evidence and their implications. The ensuing discussions have sought to identify ξενοκρίτης as an item of legal terminology—with no agreed result. What if we were to take our cue from Momigliano’s lecture and approach the problem from the philological side? How does this combination of ξένος and κρίτης present itself in the circumstances in which it occurs?

P.Oxy. 3016 has, added by a second hand, the caption ὑπομνη(ατισμῶν) ἡγεμόνος. There follow (1) a date in A.D. 148, (2) the words ἀναγνωσθεῖσιν ἀποφάσεων ξενοκριτῶν, (3) the names (all Roman) of the judges, fifteen in number, and (4) an exiguous fragment of nine lines in Latin, the only consecutive text being *mulier de qua agitur*.

Since these judges appear from their names to be Roman citizens and they render their decisions in Latin, it has been generally assumed (as already mentioned) that ξενοκρίτης translates some Latin legal term. The editor’s caveat, “if they are a Roman institution,” has been generally overlooked or ignored. But that caveat points the way to another solution, viz. that these ξενοκρίται of *P.Oxy.* 3016 were indeed Romans in Egypt, but their function was not that of a Roman institution. The clue lies in