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ΣΙΔΗΡΑΙΟΣ: *SPP* XX 217

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ΣΙΔΗΡΑΙΟΣ: *SPP XX 217*

In a recent article (*ZPE* 71 [1988] 99-104) A. Jördens holds that the Greek adjective *σιδήραιος* is unique and has a highly technical meaning. The article focuses upon *SPP XX 217*, a late sixth century document, where reference is made to a ζῶον *σιδήραιον*.¹ At first glance (as Jördens notes), we would suspect that the expression corresponds to ζῶον ἀθάνατον, a *terminus technicus* which in animal leases denotes the specific contractual obligation to replace an animal that has been lost, become incapacitated, or died, with another animal of the same kind ("the Eisern Vieh" of German legal terminology).² Yet (Jördens continues), *σιδήρειον* should be the orthographically correct form in such a contract; the adjectival form *σιδήραιος* (she suggests) should be occasioned by special circumstances.

Jördens (102) argues that the contract at issue involves not an animal but rather the position of an animal, "den Posten eines Tieres," on a communal water-wheel: "Ein solches Tier besteht dann faktisch aus mehreren Tieren, die sich jeweils im Schichtbericht ablösen. Mit dem ζῶον *σιδήραιον* wäre ... eine ... theoretische Einheit Tier umschrieben." Thus, the meaning of *σιδήραιος* would be something like "rundum einsatzfähig, nicht abnutzbar, unermüdllich."

Jördens' argument is ingenious and well-presented; it is also highly complex. Moreover, it is predicated upon the assumption that the use of the adjective *σιδήραιος* in metaphorical meaning is deliberately distinguished from *σιδηροῦς* and *σιδήρειος*. The argument proceeds from the fact that *σιδήραιος* is found only in the papyrus at issue ("Denn ... erscheint *σιδήραιος* in dem einen vorhandenen Beleg in übertragener Bedeutung," 99). In fact, Jördens even suggests (104) that the form may have been coined ("erfunden") by a notary deeming it necessary to emphasize the singularly unique circumstances surrounding the contract in *SPP XX 217*, although she admits that it may have been a matter of chance that only this instance has survived.

SPP XX 217, however, is not the only text in which the form *σιδήραιος* appears; it is also found in Joannes Lydus' *De magistratibus*. In the passage at issue (158.5-12), we read about the magistrates known as the *Augustales*: οὔτοι τὰς μὲν ἐγκληματικὰς ἐξετάσει ἔφερον τῷ δικατηρίῳ, ὑπαπιζόντων αὐτοῖς ... ἀπλικιταρίων τε καὶ κλαβικουλαρίων μετὰ πλήθους ῥαβδούχων *σιδηραίοις* δεσμοῖς ... καλευόντων τῷ φόβῳ τὸ δικατηρίον... Here, the meaning of *σιδήραιος* surely is unencumbered by special circumstances. It is simply a variant spelling of *σιδήρεος/σιδηροῦς*: the lictors who accompanied the *applitarii* and *clavicu-*

¹ H.C. Youtie, "PUG 50," *ZPE* 23 (1976) 109-114 (*Scriptiuncula post.* 361-366) discusses this text (113-114) and concludes that it clearly represents "the provisions of a contract for providing labor services" (114). Cf. also Youtie's n. 15 (113) on *σιδήραιος* = *σιδήρειος* where he gives several references to discussions of the adjective.

² D. Daube, *ZRG R.A.* 69 (1952) 388-392 also compares *s'n barzel* of Jewish Law (referred to by Jördens on p. 103).

larii inspired fear in the court with their "iron" shackles. Joannes Lydus was fully at home both in Greek and Roman institutions and in the language which pertained to them; had *κιδήρατος* only been used in metaphorical meaning and, in fact, had it been a *terminus technicus* such as that postulated by Jördens, it is unlikely that he would have used it as a synonym for *κιδηροῦς*.

κιδηραίοις is the spelling given by the editors of *De magistratibus*;³ P f b w show *κιδηρέοις*. In his commentary A.C. Bandy points to Sophocles' *Lexicon* 987 and Lampe 1232 where *κιδήρατος* is carried in both instances with reference to Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus. In *Catechesis* 16.19.15,⁴ Cyril makes reference to ὁ δαίμων, ὁ κιδηραίοις (*κιδηρέοις* m) δεμοῖς ὑπὸ πολλῶν μὴ κρατούμενος. Again, the meaning of *κιδηραίοις* is straightforward: iron fetters are at issue here. In fact *-αίος* is a common spelling for *-εος*, and both *κιδήρεος* and, at least originally, *κιδήρατος* reflect the use of the open form instead of the Attic contracted form *κιδηροῦς*.⁵ Thus *ἀργύρατος* appears in Joannes Lydos, *Mag.*106.4 (*ἀργυραίου*)⁶ and in the Byzantine *Historia Alexandri Magni* (*ἀργυραῖοι* Νύμφαι at 2337f. and *ἀργυραίοις* ἄρμασιν at 5581),⁷ but also in *P. Oxy.* 24.2419.9 (6th cent.) and occasionally in magical papyri.⁸

Admittedly, only the contracted form of *κιδηροῦς* has been found in other papyri,⁹ but the linguistic phenomenon is too common to be ignored here. There is no special and technical meaning in the spelling *κιδήρατος*. As Jördens quite correctly points out, some aspects of *SPP* XX 217 are unusual; however, it is not the use of the expression ζῶον κιδήρατον (i.e. ζῶον κιδήρεον) that makes them so.¹⁰

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³ A.C. Bandy (*Ioannes Lydus, On powers*, 1983). In the following it will be argued that *ε* and *αι* are variant spellings. If so, it may be preferable in literary texts to retain the traditional spelling (*κιδήρεος*).

⁴ *Cyrelli Hierosolymorum archiepiscopi opera quae supersunt omnia* II, edd. W.C. Reischl and J. Rupp, Munich 1860 (repr. Hildesheim 1967); but also in PG 33.945B. The interchange of *ε* and *αι* (see n. 5) in manuscripts is by far more common than it appears from these few examples. Most editors of literary texts do not indicate such spellings (and rightly so).

⁵ For the use of open *ἀργύρεος*, *εμάλλεος*, *χάλκεος*, and *χρύσεος* see F.T. Gignac, *A Grammar ...* II 116-120; for the common interchange between *ε* and *αι* *ibidem* I 191-193 and, for example, W. Crönert, *Memoria Graeca Herculanensis* (Leipzig 1903) 24.

⁶ Preferred by Bandy over the *ἀργυρέου* in P f b w; but see n. 3.

⁷ ed. S. Reichman, *Das byzantinische Alexandergedicht nach dem codex Marcianus 408 herausgegeben*, Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie 13 (Meisenheim am Glan 1963)]. The stress accent of the meter does not distinguish between long (*αι*) and short syllables (*ε*).

⁸ *PGM* 7.581 (3rd cent.) and 4.826 (4th cent.). The occurrences of *ἀργύρεος* in papyri are collected by Gignac (see n. 5) II 116 with n. 2.

⁹ Gignac (above, n. 5), p. 118 n. 2 lists the papyrus under discussion (*SPP* XX 217) as a doubtful example for *κιδήρατος/κιδήρεος*. His doubts are nourished by K.F.W. Schmidt's suggestion to correct *κιδηραίου* to *κιτηραίου* ("not acceptable," H.C. Youtie [see n. 1] 113 n. 15).

¹⁰ I am indebted to Professor L. Koenen for several valuable contributions which he made to this article.