THEODORE F. BRUNNER

ΣΙΔΗΡΑΙΟΣ: SPP XX 217


© Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, Bonn
In a recent article (ZPE 71 [1988] 99-104) A. Jördens holds that the Greek adjective *sidhramaioi* 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 ζνον σιδηραιον. At first glance (as Jördens notes), we would suspect that the expression corresponds to ζνον άδανατον, 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). Yet (Jördens continues), σιδηραιον should be the orthographically correct form in such a contract; the adjectival form *sidhramaioi* (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 ζνον σιδηραιον wäre … eine … theoretische Einheit Tier umschrieben." Thus, the meaning of σιδηραιος would be something like "rundum einsatzfähig, nicht abnutzbar, unermüdlich."

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 σιδηραιος in metaphorical meaning is deliberately distinguished from σιδηρος and σιδηρειος. The argument proceeds from the fact that σιδηραιος is found only in the papyrus at issue ("Denn … erscheint σιδηραιος 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 *sidhramaioi* 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 Augstales: ούτοι τοις μὲν ἐγκληματικῶς ἔξετάσεις ἐφερον τῷ δικαστηρίῳ, ὑπακειζόντων αὐτοῖσ … ἀπλικαστρίον τε καὶ κλασικομαρίον μετὰ πλήθους ραβδοῦχον σιδηραιοίς δειμοὶ … σαλευόντων τῷ φόβῳ τῷ δικαστηρίῳ… Here, the meaning of σιδηραιος surely is unencumbered by special circumstances. It is simply a variant spelling of σιδηρειος/σιδηρος: the lictors who accompanied the applicitarii 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 σιδηραιος = σιδηρειος 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).
larri 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 σιδήρασις 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 σιδήρος.

σιδήρασις is the spelling given by the editors of De magistratibus;3 P f b w show σιδηράσις. In his commentary A.C. Bandy points to Sophocles' Lexicon 987 and Lampe 1232 where σιδήρασις is carried in both instances with reference to Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus. In Catechesis 16.19.15,4 Cyril makes reference to ὁ δοξίσαν, ὁ σιδηράσις (σιδήρασις μὴ) δεισίσαν ὑπὸ πολλῶν μὴ κρατοῦσαν. Again, the meaning of σιδηράσις is straightforward: iron fetters are at issue here. In fact -σις is a common spelling for -ες, and both σιδηράσις and, at least originally, σιδηράσις reflect the use of the open form instead of the Attic contracted form σιδηρός.5 Thus ἀγγύρασις appears in Joannes Lydos, Magn.106.4 (ἀγγυράσιον)6 and in the Byzantine Historia Alexandri Magni (ἀγγυράσιον Νύμφαο at 2337f. and ἀγγυράσιον ἄρματα 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 σιδηρός 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 σιδηράσις. As Jördens quite correctly points out, some aspects of SPP XX 217 are unusual; however, it is not the use of the expression ζῴον σιδηράσιον (i.e. θόον σιδηράσιον) that makes them so.10

Thesaurus Linguae Graecae
University of California, Irvine

3 A.C. Bandy (Joannes 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 (σιδήρασις).

4 Cyrilli 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 ἀγγύρος, σιδάλεος, 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 Graecae Herculaneensis (Leipzig 1903) 24.

6 Preferred by Bandy over the ἀγγυράσιον 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 ἀγγύρος 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 σιδήρασις/σιδηράσις. His doubts are nourished by K.F.W. Schmidt's suggestion to correct σιδηράσιον to σιδήρασιον ("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.