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IDION AND IDIOTIKON PLOION

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 89 (1991) 69–70

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Idion and idiotikon ploion

In naukleros documents ships are often called ίδιον πλοῖον or ίδιωτικόν πλοῖον. Whereas the meaning of the latter expression is clear ("a private ship"), the former can, at face value, mean either "private ship" or "(his, my) own ship"1. The problem has first been raised by F.Oertel in 19172 and was recently resumed, with a short status quaestionis, by Meyer-Termeer3. Both decided in favour of the more general meaning "private ship". Meyer-Termeer points out that only if a personal pronoun (ἐμόν) or a definite article accompanies ίδιον, we have certainty that the "private ship" was also the property of the naukleros (or kubernetes). Others felt inclined to translate ίδιον πλοῖον as "his own boat", no doubt because in the context this usually looks the more natural translation4.

Meyer-Termeer cites two passages where in her view this interpretation is excluded and where the only possible translation is "a private ship". The first is P.Mil. Vogl. III 189, mentioning a certain Panesatis κυβερνήτης ίδιον πλοῖον Ἐλληνικοῦ Οὐσίδωρος, "captain of a private boat of the Greek type, belonging to Ousidwros". Since the owner of the boat Ousidwros is explicitly mentioned, the boat cannot belong to the kubernetes and ίδιος cannot mean "his own boat". However, the personal name Ουσίδωρος, considered by the editors as a "forma analoga e parallela ad Ἱσίδωρος", is very strange. Cl. Gallazzi, whom I asked to check the original in Milan for this word, read it as ἄξυπταλώρος5. This reading is beyond doubt, as I could ascertain from a photograph kindly sent to me by Gallazzi. Though the word is apparently new6, there can be no doubt that it is a simple variant, no doubt due to dissimilation7, of ὄξυπτρωρος, "with a sharp prow", a very fitting description for a boat8. With this new reading Panesatis may be considered as the owner and we can translate the phrase κυβερνήτης ίδιον πλοῖον Ἐλληνικοῦ ὀξύπταλώρου as "captain of his own boat, of a Greek type, with a sharp prow".

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1 On ίδιος meaning both "private" and "his own", see E.MAYSER, Grammatik II.2, pp. 73-74.
2 F.OERTEL, Die Liturgie, p. 122 and n. 4.
4 Thus H.HAUBEN, ZPE 8 (1971), p. 274 n. 77 and O.KRUGER, P.Ross.-Georg. II 94 (both cited by MEYER-TERMEER, op. cit., p. 31 nn. 98 and 99). Following Oertel, Preisigke’s Wörterbuch I, col. 687 translates in several instances the group πλοῖον ίδιον by "Privatschiff". None of the examples given is, however, compelling. P.Par 18 b l.8, for instance, was recently reedited in Pap. Lugd.-Bat. 19, pp. 230-231 with the translation "in his own ship"; P.Lond. III 948 l.2 = MEYER, Juristische Papyri no. 43 = M. DAVID - B.A. VAN GRONINGEN, Papyrological Primer 4 (1965) no.49; Meyer leaves the problem open, but David and Van Groningen resolutely translate "owner and captain of his ship".
5 Cf. already Parson’s suggestion (Gnomon 38, 1966, p. 675, not included in BL V, p. 72) to read σκαφόπταλωρος.
6 In the papyri the word is attested here for the first time. In Liddell-Scott the word ὀξύπτρωρος is listed only with the derivative sense "sharp-pointed".
8 Cf. also the alternation between σκαφόπτρωρος (P.Oxy. XLII 3031 l. 3) "with a bow like a skάφη and σκαφόπτλωρος (P.Cairo Preis. 34 l. 6). In BGU II 812 col. 2 ll. 2 and 4 σκαφόπτρωρος και σκαφόπτλωρος respectively should be supplemented, unless here also dissimilation has occurred.
The other text cited by Meyer-Termeer is Pap. Lugd.-Bat. XI 1. In this papyrus ἰδιὸν and ἱδιωτικόν are used for the same boat, but the use of the two words is not at all indiscriminate, as Meyer-Termeer thinks. On the contrary, in col.1 l.4 and col.2 l.3, in the part of the text that is formulated in the objective style, ἱδιωτικός is used in its only possible sense "a private boat". No information is given here about the identity of the owner. But in col.2 l.21 (and no doubt also in col.1 l.22, now in lacuna) the kubernetes speaks for himself in the first person and proudly calls the ship τὸν προκείμενον ἰδιὸν ἐμὸν πλοῖον. In the expression ἰδιὸν ἐμὸν, ἱδιὸς is used to strengthen the reflexive pronoun, a well-known usage in later Greek.

I would have liked to conclude that πλοῖον ἱδιὸν means in all known instances "his own ship". However, since the note by Meyer-Termeer two new texts have been published which throw new light on the problem.

In P.Erasm. II 4510 Heroides is called naukleros of a boat belonging to the Macedonians (μακεδόνων κερκουροσκάφης). On the back is a short docket, read as follows by the editor:


καὶ χ.υ

The editor translates this as "a private sea-going ship" and refers to Oertel, p. 122 n. 4 for the translation of ἱδιὸς as "private". If ἱδιὸς is rightly read, it must indeed mean "private", not "his own" because of the recto. But the docket is much abraded and therefore this passage cannot be adduced as proof for the meaning of ἱδιὸν in naukleros documents. In the forthcoming English edition of P.Erasm. II Ph.A. Verdult has changed the reading into ἱδιωτικόν, thus avoiding the problem.

But the evidence of P.Rainer Cent. 44 cannot be circumvened. The granary official Stotoetis declares that he has loaded 725 artabas of grain εἰς κερκουρον ἱδιὸν, ἐὑρίσκειν καὶ Βερυσίους. The editor’s translation "in das private Schiff" must be right here and the problem of ἱδιὸς cannot therefore be solved once and for all. Although in most instances an ἱδιὸν πλοῖον will no doubt have been the property of the naukleros, it can not be excluded that in some cases it is in fact a private boat, belonging to a different person.

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9 Cf. F.T. GIGNAC, A Grammar, II, p. 171 (with bibliography in n.2). The expression τὸ ἱδιὸν ἐμὸν πλοῖον cannot, therefore, be translated as "das Privatschiff, das ich zu meiner Verfügung habe" (thus Meyer-Termeer, op. cit., p. 32 n. 103), but should be rendered as "my own ship".