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aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 93 (1992) 222

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The Aphrodito Murder Case (P. Mich. XIII 660 and 661) and the Ghost-epithet κακοστοιμένος

When P.J. Sijpesteijn published P.Mich. XIII he included two documents which deal with a murder case where the defendant is the soldier Menas (P. Mich. 660 and 661). According to the editor Menas bears the epithet κακοστοιμένος (660.10 and 661.12 and 14), which to my knowledge is not recorded in any other Greek papyrus or literary and subliterary source. Sijpesteijn translates the epithet, without any comment, as "evildoer", and the word is recorded in the General Index by G.A. Segal as deriving from a verb "κακοστοιούν", unknown otherwise. Unfortunately, the reader is not warned anywhere in the volume that this would be a hapax. Moreover, in order to yield the needed sense ("evildoer") the form would have to be a middle participle, pace Segal's entry in the index. And finally, the formation of a word κακοστοίμαι (from κάκος) is doubtful, to say the least.

Already in 1977, when J. Gascou reviewed the volume, he suspected the incorrectness of the reading in all three occurrences. Instead he suggested the reading καθοστοιμένος (for κακοστοιμένος), to correspond with the Latin title devotus or devotissimus, but he had no way of confirming the reading as there is no complete photograph in the edition of either papyri.1

J.G. Keenan in a recent letter (June 18, 1991) also expressed doubts about the incorrectness of κακοστοιμένος and asked me to check the original in our collection. I am now in the position to confirm that both the reading and the entry in the General Index of P. Mich. XIII should be eliminated, as the correct reading of the papyri is indeed καθοστοιμένος (in 660.10), καθοστοιμεί(νος) and καθοστοιμένον (in 661.12 and 14 respectively).

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1 Gascou notes his objection in the following way: "le soldat Ménas est qualifié de κακοστοιμένος ou "evildoer" (cf. encore 661.12 et 14). Cette forme est bien étrange. Je suppose qu’il faut rétablir dans les trois cas καθοστοιμένος pour κακοστοιμένος, devotus, devotissimus, épithete habituelle des soldats du Bas-Empire, mais il n’y a pas de photographie permettant de trancher" (Chron. d’Èg. 52 [1977] 361). Subsequently, Gascou's correction was admitted in the BL, and the editors accepted it with a dotted theta (BL VII, p. 116). However, the correction has escaped the attention in recent discussions, such as L.S.B. MacCoull in JJP 20 (1991) 107.