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THE DELIAN ΧΩΜΑ

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During period of Delian independence (314-167 B.C.) the Delians often entrusted the oversight of construction or repair of sacred edifices to boards called ἐπιμεληταί, and two cases of epimeletai of public works are also known.¹ One public board, the ἐπιμεληταὶ τοῦ χώματος, first appears in 217 B.C. Their activities are attested in a number of inscriptions down to 171,² but the exact nature of their charge has escaped us due to uncertainty about the meaning of the word χώμα.³

Philippe Bruneau has recently argued that χώμα here means "landfill" ("remblai"). He points out that seawater occasionally seeps into the ground west of the street, and similar seepage has often been observed at the Agora of Theophrastos, which is known to have been built on a landfill.⁴ Rue 5, a major street which stands on slightly higher ground behind (to the east) of a series of commercial buildings designated α, β, and γ, would make more topographic sense if it had originally run directly along the waterfront.⁵ Bruneau thinks that Rue 5 ran farther south than it does today, serving as a "paralia" for the Delian port.⁶ The Rue du Théâtre also drew his suspicion; it seemed odd to him that such a major street should terminate well before the waterfront, as it does today, dead-ending in Rue 5.

I will add to Bruneau's arguments that the current arrangement of roads does not conduce to the easy delivery of building materials to the Theater. The accounts speak frequently of shipments of marble and poros for the Theater; it would be surprising indeed if the Delians had not assured a direct route from the sea such as the Rue du Théâtre would provide were it

¹ Vial 247-250, 256-257. I use the following non-standard abbreviations:

Bruneau = Philippe Bruneau, "Deliaca (IV). 36. Premier propos sur la front de mer: la façade maritime du Quartier du théâtre," BCH 105 (1981) 107-113; note that the texts of pp.112 and 113 have been accidentally transposed;

Choix = Felix Durrbach, Choix d'inscriptions de Délos avec traduction et commentaire (Paris 1921-22 [rep. 1977]);

GD = Philippe Bruneau and Jean Ducat, Guide de Délos³, (Paris 1983);

Vial = Claude Vial, Délos indépendante (314-167 avant J.-C.). Etude d'une communauté civique et de ses institutions = BCH suppl. 10 (Paris 1984).

² I.D. 355.12 (217 B.C.); 399A45-47 (192 B.C.); 442A79, 82, 89, 115, 118 (179 B.C.); 460t17, 19 (171 B.C.). Reviewed at Choix, p.89.

³ LSJ⁹s.v.

⁴ Bruneau 109. For the Agora of Theophrastos (= GD 49, p.161) see I.D. 1645.2 = Choix 95.2 of 126/5 B.C. χώμα here clearly means a landfill: τὰ χώματα περιβάλλοντα τῷ λιμένι (sc. Θεόφραστον).

⁵ See most conveniently Plan VI in GD, facing p.247. Rue 5 is the street tending north that begins (or ends) at the building marked 121.1 on the Plan. For a more detailed map (with the street names marked) see Joseph Chamonard, Le quartier du théâtre, Etude sur l'habitation délienne l'époque hellénistique = EAD viii (Paris 1922) Pl.V-VI.

⁶ Bruneau III; cf. point C on Fig.3, p.108.

extended west through building α.⁷

These considerations lead Bruneau to regard the ἐπιμεληταὶ τοῦ χώματος as charged with filling in the waterfront along Rue 5 to produce the land that buildings α-γ would later stand on.⁸ Bruneau properly recognizes the difficulties with the word χώμα, which earlier scholars had rendered as "mole" or "quay," without committing themselves;⁹ but Bruneau remarks, "Personnellement (et au risque de paraître prêcher pour mon saint), je doute que χώμα ait désigné spécialement un môle ou un quai: puisque l'administration ne sent pas le besoin de préciser, c'est qu'elle entend la totalité du terrassement par lequel on gagne sur la mer et je traduirai simplement par 'remblai'."¹⁰

In fact, it is possible to distinguish χώμα as a "remblai" ("landfill") from χώμα as a "mole" or "pier" in Delian usage: the Delian administrators themselves have done it. In every instance where χώμα occurs in connection with the epimeletai, it appears in the singular.¹¹ In the inscription honoring Theophrastos for having built up the land on which the Agora that bears his name stands, where there can be no doubt whatever the object in question is a landfill, a "remblai," the word appears in the plural: τὰ χώματα περιβαλόντα τῷ λιμένι (sc. Θεόφραστον; I.D. 1645.2). When the hieropoioi want to indicate the "dock" they use the word in the singular. I.G. xi 2.159A28 of 281 B.C. records payment "to the men who conveyed the stones from the dock to (destination missing)": τοῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ χώματος τοὺς λίθους προσκομίσασι πρὸς --. The same use appears in I.G. xi 2.199A33: Θράκωνι καὶ Κτήκωνι τοῖς ἀπενέγκουσιν ἀπὸ τοῦ χώματος τὰς δοκοὺς τὰς παρὰ Μικύθου.¹²

It follows clearly that the χώμα over which the epimeletai had supervision, which appears always in the singular, was a dock, not a landfill. The fact that their duties were expanded at least once to include the harbor strengthens the case.¹³ Philippe Bruneau may well be right that the waterfront west of Rue 5 is a landfill, but the commission in charge of it was not the ἐπιμεληταὶ τοῦ χώματος.

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⁷ On stone deliveries to the theater, see Gustave Glotz, "Un transport de marbre pour le théâtre de Délos," REG 32 (1919) 240-250.

⁸ Bruneau 110-111. I.D. 355.12 (217 B.C.) and 460t17, 19 (171 B.C.). For expenses associated with the χώμα, I.D. 399A45-47, 6206 dr. and 66-67, 2000 dr. (192 B.C.); I.D. 442A79, 82, 89, 115, 118, amounts of 500 dr., 160 dr. 1 + 1/4 + 2/12 ob., 500 dr., 107 dr. 1 + 1/4 + 1/12 ob., and 500 dr. (179 B.C.). Reviewed at Choix p.89.

⁹ Choix 89 and R.Vallois, Le Portique de Philippe = EAD vii (Paris 1923) 114. LSJ⁹ gives mole and pier (def. 4). The best study of the port of Delos remains J.Paris, "Contributions à l'étude des ports antiques du monde grec, II. Les établissements maritimes de Délos," BCH 40 (1916) 5-73.

¹⁰ Bruneau 110. Vial 340-341 apparently follows him; at least, he offers no alternative interpretation.

¹¹ I.D. 355.12; 399A45, 67; 442A79, 82, 89, 115, 118; and 460t17,19, in the expression [εἰς τὸ] χώμα καὶ λιμένα at 1.19.

¹² On the shipping of stone for construction of the theater, see Gustave Glotz, "Un transport de marbre pour le théâtre de Délos," REG 32 (1919) 240-250.

¹³ I.D. 460t 19.