

Zeitschrift: Museum Helveticum : schweizerische Zeitschrift für klassische Altertumswissenschaft = Revue suisse pour l'étude de l'antiquité classique = Rivista svizzera di filologia classica

Herausgeber: Schweizerische Vereinigung für Altertumswissenschaft

Band: 5 (1948)

Heft: 1

Artikel: Delian Inscriptions on the Theatre Auditorium

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-7284>

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Delian Inscriptions on the Theatre Auditorium

By O. A. W. Dilke

Although there is no mention prior to 279 B.C., in the extant inscriptions from Delos¹, of the auditorium and supporting walls (analemmata) of the theatre, we are still able to trace their development from a rather primitive to a highly advanced state. The first references² are to a mortgage of 175 drs. on the *περιοικοδομία* of the theatre, and a wage of 7 drs. for cleaning out the orchestra and seats and removing earth (*χοῦν*). The word given for "seats" is *θάκοι*, which is used in later inscriptions for stone seats but cannot have that meaning here. Homolle³ misread *ΘΑΚΟΥΣ* as *ΟΑΚΟΥΣ* (lit. "furrows"), and was surprised at the poetic imagery! Actually is a very reasonable word to use for wooden ikria as well as stone seating.

The accumulation of earth over the auditorium and orchestra suggests that the orchestra was simply of earth, and the auditorium of earthen tiers, the seats (but not the fronts) of which were covered with rough wooden planks. Thus after each session, or at least once a year, it would be necessary to clear away the earth displaced by the spectators. Properly constructed wooden seats, however, may have been in use, as at Athens in the early fifth century, in which case the task of cleaning would have been lighter. As we find in 250 B.C.⁴ an item of 1½ drs. for cleaning the *θέατρον* (auditorium), the first alternative, however primitive it seems, is preferable for 279 B.C., when the charge is 7 drs. An earlier group of inscriptions⁵ refers to a fixed wooden skene and proscenium about 300 B.C.; but while the stage was constantly being embellished (300, 282, 281, 279 B.C., etc.), the auditorium had been receiving no attention at all. We should therefore not be surprised at its rapid evolution between 279 and 246 B.C. As to the *περιοικοδομία*, it must, as Bulle suggests⁶, be a wooden fence round the top of the auditorium, taking the place of the later circular analemma; for the sum mentioned as mortgage is not large. Even at this date the parodos walls must have been of stone in order to support such great masses.

¹ See Homolle in B.C.H. 1894, 162; F. Dürrbach, *Choix d'Inscriptions de Délos*; H. Bulle, *Untersuchungen an griechischen Theatern*, p. 174.

² IG XI 2. 161 A. 42 and 81.

³ See n. 1. The mistake is repeated by A. Müller in *Philologus Suppl.* VII 68, 78, and by Haigh, *Attic Theatre*, 3rd ed., p. 379.

⁴ See p. 62 below.

⁵ Bulle, op. cit. 174.

⁶ Op. cit. 181.

The only relevant item for 275 B.C.⁷ may be translated: "For the construction of the seating of the theatre, second instalment, 1500 drs." (or up to 1700 drs., as figures are missing). Bulle⁸ says that there must have been two instalments only, making the total about 3300 drs., and doubts whether the whole auditorium is included; but it is more likely that it was included, and perhaps we may rather suggest three instalments, for there are lacunæ in the inscriptions. The seating is still wooden, but of a solid and semi-permanent nature, each row probably being nailed down to the row below it. Wood was never expensive, and a sum of about 5000 drs. could have covered the whole area.

Under 269 B.C. we have two payments to one Anticus and one payment to Philandrides of Paros. Anticus' work⁹ consists of 1189 drs. for the *δίοδος* and 190 drs. for clearing the space for it. It is agreed that this is the first reference to stone-work, and Chamonard¹⁰ shows it to be work on the *diazoma*. Bulle¹¹, thinking that these two sums are too large for a passage alone, would have the word *δίοδος* refer to the whole upper portion, later called the *ἐπιθέατρον* and imagines that the 1189 drs. are for wooden seats. But *δίοδος* signifies a definite passage, as do *πάροδος* and *εἴσοδος*¹², and cannot possibly refer to a mere area. Moreover if in 250 B.C. and later the inscriptions always use the word *ἐπιθέατρον*, why should *δίοδος* be so used in 269 B.C.? It was probably the only word in classical and Hellenistic times for what we call the *diazoma*¹³. Nor do the sums mentioned present many difficulties. It is true that 190 drs. indicate rather a large removal of earth. We may perhaps conjecture that up to this time there had been no *diazoma*, or only a very narrow one, and that this sum was for digging wider and deeper all round (*ἀνακαθᾶραι τὸν τόπον πάντα κύκλῳ*). The 1189 drs. would be for the stone paving of the *diazoma* and for its back wall, composed of *euthyn-teria*, orthostates and coping-stones¹⁴. The doorways preserved at each end of the *diazoma* were probably a later addition.

The other inscription of 269 B.C.¹⁵ records a payment of 3500 drs. to Philandrides as first instalment for the stone-work *εἰς τὰς κρηπίδας τὰς ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ*, 1000 feet; thus if there were two instalments, the total would be about 7000 drs. Unfortunately *κρηπίδες* is an ambiguous word, but perhaps best interpreted as in Liddell and Scott, "tiers of seats". These would be the first stone seats laid down in the auditorium, and would, as we have seen, have cost about 7 drs. per foot.

⁷ IG XI 2. 163 A. 25.

⁸ Op. cit. 182.

⁹ IG XI 2. 203 A. 82, 85.

¹⁰ B.C.H. 1896, 280.

¹¹ Op. cit. 187.

¹² The latter is found in a Delian inscription as early as 300 B.C., IG XI 2. 142. 27. For *δίοδος* see Liddell and Scott.

¹³ Apart from Vitruvius, the word *διάζωμα* is only known in one late inscription from Aphrodisias (Caria), IG II, addenda 2755.

¹⁴ The shape and measurements of the coping-stones, many of which are preserved, are given in B.C.H. 1896, 263, fig. 1.

¹⁵ IG XI 2. 203 A. 95.

This was not an exceptional price for seating, as shown by the inscription of 250 B.C. quoted below. The seats, as excavated¹⁶, are made of two pieces, one for each seat and footrest, one for the seat support. Apart from foundation blocks the seating is in Parian marble. It is nowhere mentioned that this two-block method, parallel at Thera and elsewhere, is sometimes replaced next to stairways by solid single blocks¹⁷.

Bulle takes *κρηπίδες* to mean the stone analemma mentioned in B.C.H. 1896, 262. He cannot agree that stone seats could have preceded stone supporting walls. This objection is not valid, since although there has been no mention of stone supporting walls, the inscriptions are full of lacunæ, and the work done by Anticus in this year would also suggest their presence. They may have been erected on any occasion after 300 B.C. Moreover, although they have a thin revetment of marble, the great bulk of them consists of rough and irregular blocks of dark local stone. Would it have been necessary to employ a man of Paros for this work? The Parian artisans and contractors were employed specially for the finest marble, such as is used in the lower rows of seats. The price of 7000 drs. would also be exceptionally high for wall construction. Normal meanings of *κρηπίς* are (1) groundwork or foundation, (2) river quay or bridge abutment¹⁸. But one important passage has been overlooked, Eur. *Ion* 38: τὸν παῖδα κρηπίδων ἔπι | τίθημι ναοῦ τοῦδε. Both here and in the inscription the plural form suggests steps or rows of seats rather than a single wall.

The next relevant inscriptions are in 250 B.C. One¹⁹ records a payment for 200 feet of stonework for the *θέατρον*, at 7 drs. per foot. This is almost certainly for seats; when the word *θέατρον* is used by itself²⁰, we are usually to understand it of the lower part of the auditorium. A second inscription²¹ notes the payment of 1½ drs. for cleaning the theatre: Bulle translates "8 drs." by mistake, the figures being 111. As the seating was by now mostly of marble, cleaning would have become far simpler. Next²² there is work on the *ἐπιθέατρον*, 200 feet (of which 198¼ completed) at 4 drs. 5¾ ob. per foot. Liddell and Scott, 9th ed., translate *ἐπιθέατρον* as "building near the theatre". It surely means, rather, "seats above the diazoma". The epitheatron seats preserved are of rougher stone and workmanship than the lower seats, and some appear to be only 25 cms. high, though most are 35 cms. Thus it is easy to see why the cost is only 4 drs. 5¾ ob. instead of 7 drs.; the stone and workmanship would be local, not Parian. The last item in 250 B.C.²³ is a sum of 47 drs. to Euolides *ἐργολαβήσαντι τὸν ὀρθοστάτην καὶ*

¹⁶ See Vallois in *Nouvelles Archives des Missions Scientifiques* 1921, 213.

¹⁷ We found this on our visit to Delos in 1939.

¹⁸ Liddell and Scott, 9th ed.

¹⁹ IG XI 2. 278 A. 92.

²⁰ But the inscriptions also speak of *ἡ σκηνή ἢ ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ* etc. Inscriptions which might refer to the stage-buildings are therefore omitted.

²¹ IG XI 2. 287 A. 46.

²² IG XI 2. 287 A. 46.

²³ IG XI 2. 287 A. 120.

τὸν καταληπτῆρα θεῖναι, καὶ ἐργάσασθαι ἐν τῷ ἐπιθεάτρῳ. The usual interpretation of the “orthostate and καταληπτῆρ” is that it means the whole top of the circular analemma and parodos walls, which are crowned by coping-stones. For this purpose, however, the sum of 47 drs., which includes work on the epitheatron, would have been grossly inadequate, even if, as has been suggested²⁴, the stones were re-used. These coping-stones are all similar, and cannot be ascribed to different dates. Bulle seems correct in identifying it with the back wall of the diazoma²⁵; yet even so he is not justified in thinking that the whole of this could be made for less than 47 drs. The preserved back wall of the diazoma is of grey local marble, but patching in white marble can be seen. Assuming that the payments to Anticus in 269 B.C. included this back wall, it must now have been patched in places. This explanation also accounts for the singular (τὸν ὀρθοστάτην), which would be strange in speaking of a long series of orthostates. Καταληπτῆρ, which in Hesychius means a strap, perhaps here denotes some kind of hand-rail.

Three items in 247 (?) B.C.²⁶, which cannot have involved large sums, are for finishing the stone seating, including perhaps the Prohedria, which does not seem to be differentiated from the other seats in the inscriptions. As excavated it is quite distinct, consisting of marble benches with back-rests and side-arms, and normally constructed of two pieces²⁷.

Finally there are a number of items in 246 B.C. It is not certain which entrance (εἴσοδος) is meant in one in which Bion²⁸ is paid 719 drs.: Bulle suggests the one at the top centre of the auditorium. Another item²⁹ is 60 drs. to Ctesisthenes for repairing two kerkides near the entrance. Bulle³⁰ arbitrarily translates κερκίδας here as “pillars” (for the gates leading to the parodoi). Such a meaning is impossible; the phrase must refer to the first and second kerkides (*cunei*), which were adjacent to the Theatre Street parodos. There is also³¹ a small payment for bronze clamps on the seats. But the chief expenditure is represented by four items, of which the first three³² deal with the περίοδος and the fourth³³ with the περιτοιχοδομία. Ctesisthenes and Glaucias are each given 500 drs. for 100 feet each of stonework on the περίοδος at 5 drs. per foot; and Ctesisthenes is given various sums for the περίοδος at 3½ drs. per foot. Isodicus and Pantagoras are given various sums at 12 drs. 4 ob. per fathom (ὄργνα, 6 feet) for constructing the περιτοιχοδομία. The terms περίοδος and περιτοιχοδομία raise certain difficulties. It is most convenient to tabulate the lengths and costs, as added up in all instalments:—

²⁴ B.C.H. 1896, 273.

²⁵ Illustrated in M. Bieber, *Denkmäler zum Theaterwesen*, Pl. 10.

²⁶ Dürrbach, *Choix d'Inscriptions de Délos*, 291 b. 14, 16 (not 291 a. as Bulle gives); 291 d. 13.

²⁷ Contrary to the statement in P. E. Arias, *Il teatro greco fuori di Atene*, p. 122.

²⁸ Dürrbach, op. cit. 290. 176. Cf. B.C.H. 1894, 279.

²⁹ Dürrbach, op. cit. 270. 179.

³⁰ Op. cit. p. 190.

³¹ Dürrbach, op. cit. 290. 186.

³² Dürrbach, op. cit. 270. 180; 290. 182, 184.

³³ Dürrbach, op. cit. 290. 188.

περίοδος. Length 458 ft. Cost 1903 drs. Per foot 5 and $3\frac{1}{2}$ drs.

περιοιχοδομία³⁴. Length 480 ft. Cost 1013 $\frac{1}{3}$ drs. Per foot 2 drs. $0\frac{2}{3}$ ob.

It is noteworthy that 480 feet, at 30.8 cms. to the Greek foot, make 148 metres, and that the existing length of the circular analemma, without the parodos walls, is 149 metres. If 30.8 cms. to the foot was the measure used, then we have, in the *περιοιχοδομία*, either the orthostates and coping which crown the circular analemma, or the coping only. Bulle, considering that only the coping is meant, identifies the *περίοδος* with the orthostates below it. Although this word is commonly used of a circumference³⁵, it would be strange to use merely of this row of orthostates, and its proper meaning is a circular passage. Also, if it denoted the orthostates, why should it have a length of only 458 ft., as against 480 ft. for the coping? The natural meaning would be a narrow walk all round the top of the auditorium inside the analemma. As we know that the analemma rose towards the centre, the passage would also have risen. Unfortunately no trace of such a passage remains. But the epitheatron is so poorly preserved that we cannot be sure that it would have left any traces; and a similar passage exists at Thera, a theatre bearing several resemblances to Delos.

Considered as a whole, the inscriptions give a very fair idea of how the stone auditorium grew up. Careful estimates and contracts are made beforehand, and in one case³⁶ we find that payment is only made for work actually completed, which amounts to 198 $\frac{1}{4}$ ft. out of the estimated 200 ft.! The most striking fact is the late date (269 B.C.) at which stone seating was first installed in such an important town as Delos. The change from wood to stone comes long after the death of Alexander, and when it does it comes gradually, beginning with parts of the stage-buildings and finishing with the very summit of the auditorium.

³⁴ The length of this, being properly measure by a surveyor, is given in *δρῶναι*, but works out at 2 drs. $0\frac{2}{3}$ ob. per foot (not as Bulle, op. cit. 190 gives).

³⁵ E. g. Hdt. I 163, *τείχεος περίοδος*.

³⁶ See above, p. 62.

Berichtigung

Vol. 4, Fasc. 3, S. 146. In der Arbeit von Kurt Latte «Zu den neuen Alkaiosbruchstücken», ist in der letzten Zeile der rekonstruierten Schlußstrophe zu lesen:

Μύρσιλ[ον ἀμφαγάπαις ἔταιρον].