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HANGING AROUND DOWNTOWN

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Though not among the great of the Greek literature, Hesychius provides a lot of interesting reading. The evidence listed by him is so abundant and diffuse that one often encounters lexicographical points for further discussion. The following reports one such case.

Recently, while studying the location of the ancient harbour of Eresus on Lesbos,¹ I noticed the following entry in Hesychius' work: λιμὴν· ἀγορά, καὶ ἐνδιατριβή. Πάφιοι. In other words, it would have been customary in (Nea) Paphos, on Cyprus, to use the word *limen* 'harbour' of the *agora*. This is conceivable, because the same practice is also known elsewhere. Thus the Thessalians used the word *limen* of the market, as, reportedly, they used *agora* of the harbour.² Significantly, the use of *limen* for *agora* is confirmed by the third-century politography inscription IG IX 2, 517, 42–3 from Larissa: τὸς ταγὸς ἐ[γ]γρά[ψαν]/τας ἐν λεύκουμα ἐσθέμεν αὐτὸς ἐν τὸν λιμένα. This example shows that the *limen* need not have been located on the sea, for the city of Larissa was an inland settlement, with a commercial harbour, on the river Peneios.³ In fact, considering that in Thessaly there was only one seashore town of significance (Iolcus), the question of where

* This research has been carried out within the framework of the project "Interaction Between the Greek and the Roman World in Antiquity" (Academy of Finland).

¹ "Eresian Memories", forthcoming in *ZPE*.

² D. Chr. 11,23: οἶονεὶ τὴν ἀγορὰν ἐκάλει λιμένα, Θετταλῶν ἀκοῦσας; Gal. *Thras.* 3,2 (5, 868, 6–7 K): ἀλλὰ Θετταλούς γ' ἔφην τὴν ὑφ' ἡμῶν προσαγορευομένην ἀγορὰν οὕτως (scil. λιμένα) ὀνομάζειν; Theon, *Prog.* 81, 24 [*Rhet. Gr.* II]: ὡς εἶ τις ἀγορὰν ὀνομάζει τὸν λιμένα, καθάπερ Θετταλοί; Hsch. ἀγορά: ὄνομα τόπου, ἢ λιμένος· Θετταλοὶ δὲ καὶ τὸν λιμένα ἀγορὰν καλοῦσι (similarly, *Lex. Seguer.*, *Gloss. Rhet.* [Bekker, *Anecd. Gr.* I, p. 210, 9], and Phot. s.v.).

³ For some attempts to locate the market place called *limen* in Larissa, see L. Büchner, *RE* XII (1925) 870. Cf. further N. Verdélis, *Prakt. Arkh. Hetair.* 1955, 147 ff.; *BCH* 1956, 308 f.

the harbour was located seems to have been of secondary importance. Moreover, one may note that, instead of referring to Thessalian cities, the literary sources (listed in n. 2) only record the Θεσσαλοί (and their way of speaking). Those living in Thessaly may well have used the word *limen* of any *agora* in the Greek world.

As far as I can see, such evidence implies coexistence of, and organic unity between, harbours and markets. It is hardly imaginable that a city *agora* situated far from harbours could have been called *limen*. Not even the Thessalians would have referred by that term to a city *agora* somewhere in the mountains of Central Greece. But if *limen* and *agora* were neighbouring, or amalgamated, the local people could well have called them by interchangeable names.⁴ I say 'could', because one should not assume that the use of *limen* for *agora*, or *agora* for *limen*, was a rule constantly observed for centuries. As a matter of fact, (even early) inscriptions show that the word *agora* was commonly used of 'market (place)' in Thessalian cities, including Larissa (the above-mentioned inscription IG IX 2, 517 also mentions the institution of *agoranomia*). Similarly, *limen*, of course, also denoted 'harbour' in Larissa and elsewhere in Thessaly. It follows that the use of *limen* for *agora*, and vice versa, may not have been a purely language/dialect-specific feature; it was rather an optional habit based on topographical reality.⁵ Though the terminological juxtaposition of *limen* and *agora* is described as typical of Thessaly and Paphos, there is no reason to think that the phenomenon was regionally limited to these cases.⁶ For surely

⁴ Of course, this also applies to modern times. Since the Market Place of Helsinki is bordered by the sea, one may go to buy fish and other provisions "at the harbour".

⁵ Fr. Bechtel, *Die gr. Dialekte* I, Berlin 1921, 208, held the appearance of λιμήν = ἀγορά in Thessaly as a dialectal feature. Moreover, he seems to have thought that all the evidence adduced above should be taken to refer to *limen* in the meaning 'market place'. Following this view, the evidence for *agora* standing for 'harbour' should be corrected in favour of *limen* = 'market'. Note, further, the interesting hypothesis suggested by F. Gschnitzer, *Innsbrucker Beiträge z. Kulturwiss.* 23 (1985) 123 ff. = *Kleine Schriften zum griechischen und römischen Altertum* I (Historia Einzelschr. 149), Stuttgart 2001, 331 ff.: before obtaining the specific meaning 'harbour', λιμήν, together with the related λειμών, would also have denoted '(moist) grass, meadow'. This early meaning of *limen* (which was lost later on) would have survived in Thessaly where the word began to be used of the market place (p. 124 = 332: "Denn es liegt in der Natur der Dinge, daß die in der feuchten, zeitweise vielleicht noch überschwemmten Niederung gelegene Wiese sich zum Versammlungs- und Marktplatz gut eignet").

⁶ According to Gschnitzer (above n. 5) 123 = 331, the evidence from outside Thessaly is

one should not expect that writers recorded every possible site in the Mediterranean where people used expressions departing from the standard.

What, then, should be done with καὶ ἐνδιατριβή of the Hesychian entry? This word is not recorded in *LSJ* (not even in the *Revised Supplement*) nor is it commented on by the editors; ms. variants are not reported. According to the *TLG* cd-rom, no other attestations are known. As such, ἐνδιατριβή would be perfectly plausible besides the verb ἐνδιατρίβω 'to spend (time) in', 'to dwell upon' (cf. διατρίβω : διατριβή). However, I wonder whether the entry should be understood as follows: λιμὴν· ἀγορά, καὶ ἐν <αὐτῇ> διατριβή. Πάφιοι. If this is so, the Paphians used the word *limen* not only of the market (place) itself but also of what many people did there, i.e., shopping, business, sauntering about, or just promenading. The people of Paphos attending the market, or going downtown, would have been "at the harbour". Perhaps they even used a verb for this activity, deriving from λιμὴν, and comparable to ἀγοράζω 'to frequent the market', 'to do business (there)', 'to lounge (there)'. An expression referring to the harbour would have been apposite, as the local agora was in fact situated close by. Recent field surveys, and discoveries of fragments of sea walls on dry land, suggest that the Hellenistic and Roman harbour basin extended inland as far as about 150 m north of the modern shoreline of Kato Paphos.⁷

The *agora*, the centre of Greek city life, is often described as the place par excellence of διατριβή 'pastime'. In his *Clouds*, where the two Arguments are trying to outstrip each other, Aristophanes, lines 1055–57,⁸

dubious (including the Hesychian Paphos example, *ibid.* n. 2). This is certainly true of *Ditt. Syll.*³ 731, a first-century B.C. decree from Tomi, lines 24–25: παραπραθῆναι δὲ αὐτοῖς ὑπὸ τῶν ἀρχόντων [ν / ἐ]ν τῷ λιμένι τῶν ἐφ' ἱερέω Ἀριστοφάνου. Emending the engraved ΤΩΙ after λιμένι to ΤΩΝ, Dittenberger thought of *arkhontes* of the harbour (= *agora*) in office under the priesthood of Aristophanes. However, I. Stoian, *I.Scyth.Min.* II 2, retaining the reading τῶι, understood the phrase as a reference to an occasional *limen* (= market/fair) which took place when A. was priest. A further – and better – possibility would be to consider the officers as *limenarkhai*, see Ph. Gauthier – G. Rougemont, *REG* 101 (1988) 298; Gschnitzer (above n. 5) 125 = 333 n. 2: "Hafenmagistrate".

⁷ See E. Herscher, *AJA* 99 (1995) 284 f. (figs 27–8); *ibid.* 102 (1998) 343. While in Old Paphos there had been only a mooring-place (ὑφορμος; Strabo 14,6,3), the new city, founded towards the late fourth century B.C., was famous for the remarkable harbour installations. The harbour itself is described as "triple" in Stad. 297,2 (*GGM* I, p. 502, cf. tab. XXVI).

⁸ Transl. J. Henderson (Loeb ed. 1998).

makes the Worse one play with the changed meaning of *agora* (in Homer, 'place of assembly' or 'public speech', in A.'s time, mostly, 'market' or 'city centre'):

Then you scorn time spent in the agora [ἐν ἀγορᾷ τὴν διατριβὴν ψέγεις], while I encourage it. If it were something bad, Homer would never have called Nestor and every other sagacious person, "man of the agora".

However, markets were not only places where people could do some business or shopping, for various dangers could lurk there. In his book on *Virginity*, Basilius of Caesarea advised young maidens to avoid walking around unsafe lanes and market places because disreputable loiterers often gathered there (ἀκόσμων ἀνθρώπων ... τὰς διατριβὰς).⁹ On the whole, *diatribe* is frequently coupled with *agora*, whatever the social implications of people attending the market may have been in individual cases.

It is not surprising that *limen* and *agora* often appear together in the literary sources, as if forming an organic unity. The two places had a lot in common, constituting, in fact, the commercial and social backbone of a Greek city. Many political and religious institutions were also located in the *agora*, just as altars, statues and temples could be dedicated around harbours. The connection between *agora* and *limen* was especially strong when the two were situated close to each other or even side by side.

The word *diatribe*, suggesting 'lounging' or 'spending time', also occurs jointly with the combination of *limen* and *agora*. When the narrator of Lucian's *True Story*, describing the Lamptown (1,29), told that "On landing, we did not find any man at all, but a lot of lamps running about and loitering in the public square and at the harbour",¹⁰ the writer would have had before his eyes the image of crowds of people wandering about the market and loafing around the harbour. In Greek there was even a specific term for such people, that is, *spermologos* 'one who picks up scraps of knowledge', 'idle babbler' (cf. the explanation of *Etym. Gud.* s.v.

⁹ Bas. Caes. 637, 22 (Migne, *PG* 30, p. 713): μηδαμοῦ μὲν ἐν ἀπρεπέσι στενωποῖς, ἢ ἀγοραῖς, ἔνθα ἀκόσμων ἀνθρώπων συμβαίνει τὰς διατριβὰς συγκροτεῖσθαι, ...

¹⁰ Ἀποβάντες δὲ ἄνθρωπον μὲν οὐδένα εὔρομεν, λύχνους δε πολλοὺς περιθέοντας καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ καὶ περὶ τὸν λιμένα διατρίβοντας (transl. A. M. Harmon, Loeb ed. 1913, vol. I, p. 283).

σπερμολόγος [ed. Sturz p. 510, 43]: ἐκ μεταφορᾶς δὲ ἔλεγον τοὺς παρὰ τὰς ἀγορὰς καὶ τοὺς λιμένας διατρίβοντας). Many of those attending the market and the harbour would have belonged to this category of people.

"Doing the *limen*", or "frequenting the harbour/market", might recall the still so common habit on the Greek islands, and elsewhere in the Mediterranean, of people promenading in city squares and along waterfronts before and after dining. However, the Paphians may not have been as extravagant as the fourth-century B.C. Byzantians, or the weak-willed Calchedonians. Of these, Theopompus of Chius says in the eighth book of his *History of Philip*:¹¹

The Byzantians had by this time long had a democratic government; also their city was situated at a trading-post, and the entire populace spent their time in the market-place and by the water-side [καὶ τὸν δῆμον ἅπαντα περὶ τὴν ἀγορὰν καὶ τὸν λιμένα διατρίβειν]; hence they had accustomed themselves to dissipation and amours and drinking in the taverns. As for the Calchedonians, before they all came to have a share with the Byzantians in the government, they devoted themselves unceasingly to the better pursuits of life; but after they had once tasted of the democratic liberties of the Byzantians, they sank utterly into corrupt luxury, and in their daily lives, from having been the most sober and restrained, they became wine-bibbers and spendthrifts.

Something similar may now be happening in Ag. Napa on the east coast of Cyprus. According to many, this old fishing village has become Europe's No. 1 party spot...

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¹¹ Ath. 526 e-f = *FrGrHist* II B 115 F 62, transl. C. B. Gulick (Athenaeus, Loeb ed. 1933, vol. V, p. 377).