

THE MEANING OF LIMEN KLEISTOS IN THE ARCHAIC AND CLASSICAL ERAS

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Although all the scientific publications regarding ancient Greek-Roman harbour systems often mention the expression «λιμὴν κλειστός», the meaning of this phrase still remains obscure. The academic world still diverges on the correct way to interpret this phrase, even though over the years several theories have been put forward. The aim of this poster is to carry out a re-examination of the meaning of the expression «λιμὴν κλειστός», focusing the analysis on the Archaic and Classical eras only. The study is based on written sources and archaeological information that are available today: it has taken into account every single entry of «λιμὴν κλειστός» found in the Periplus of Pseudo-Scylax, in order to demonstrate a new possible interpretation.

BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION



In historical and archaeological publications on harbours, the phrase «λιμὴν κλειστός» is often mentioned, especially when referring to the Graeco-Roman world. The expression must have a specific meaning, since it appears 14 times in the Periplus of Pseudo-Scylax, the only geographical text that has survived to the present, and which probably derives from a technical periplus written in the late Archaic era. In this context, the expression should derive from technical, nautical terminology or, at least, should refer to a specific trait that harbours would have had in that era. The present research focuses on the meaning that the expression should have had in the Archaic and Classical eras, taking into account the cases that have been found in the Periplus of Pseudo-Scylax only. There are two basic reasons for this selection –one chronological and one linguistic in nature: first of all, the Periplus of Pseudo-Scylax is the only existing literary periplus written in an era that is chronologically close to the subject of this study (since the original matrix can be referred to the Late Archaic era); secondly, the Periplus adopts a jargon with a technical basis, which does not seem to have survived across the years and all the various literary genres.

STATE OF THE QUESTION



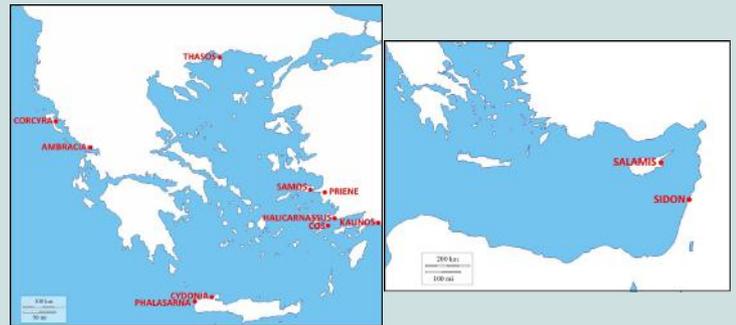
The debate on this topic began in the early 20th century, when the phrase «λιμὴν κλειστός» became a subject of research for several scholars. In 1898 Ardaillon - in his «Quomodo Graeci collocaverint portus atque aedificaverint» - maintains that the Greeks used it to distinguish between natural and artificial harbours: the latter were built by men and then “closed” by means of the construction of moles (Ardaillon 1898: 33). In response to that claim the following theories were put forward:

- According to Lehmann-Hartleben (1923) a λιμὴν κλειστός should be any harbour located inside the city walls, as well as a closed harbour with a narrow entrance.
- Von Gerkan (1924: 110-114) associated the phrase λιμὴν κλειστός with military harbours that, in his opinion, used to be closed with barriers.
- Rougé (1966: 116-117) defined “ports fermés” as those harbours which had a narrow entrance that could have been closed with chains.
- Moreschini (1997: 344) wrote that they were “harbours provided with moles, that clearly represented an artificial closure, but to which, if necessary, it could be added another defensive structure in order to completely close the entrance. It should be borne in mind that these kinds that this kind of harbours were probably located inside the city walls”.
- Blackman (2008: 654) maintained that a harbour was considered “closed” when “the city walls were extended along the harbour moles, to end in towers as at any normal city gate”.

CASE STUDIES



The expression «λιμὴν κλειστός» appears 14 times in the Periplus of Pseudo-Scylax, referring to the following harbours (Figs. 1 & 2):



Figures 1 and 2: Maps showing the location of the 14 closed harbours mentioned in the Periplus of Pseudo-Scylax.

RESULTS



Considering the 14 cases of “closed harbours” recorded by Pseudo-Scylax and comparing archaeological information with the most common theories, we find that there is not a precise correlation between archaeological results and the most relevant hypothesis, so far as the Archaic and Classical eras are concerned (Fig. 3).

λιμὴν κλειστός	Harbour inside the city walls (Lehmann-Hartleben 1923)	Harbour closed with chains (Von Gerkan 1924)	Military harbour (Rougé 1966)	Harbour closed by moles which were extension of the city walls (Blackman 2008)	Harbour with a naturally narrow and/or artificially narrowed entrance (Mauro 2017)
Corcyra, Alkinoos basin	X		X		X
Corcyra, Hyliaikos basin	X				
Corcyra, Arion basin	?	?	?	?	?
Ambracia	X			?	X
Thasos, military harbor	X		X	X	X
Samos	X			X	X
Paros	?	?	?	?	X?
Priene	?	?	?	?	?
Halicarnassus	X		?	?	X
Kaunos	?	?	?	?	?
Kos	X				X
Phalassarna	X				X
Cydonia	?				X
Salamis, Cyprus	X?			X?	X
Sidon	?			?	X

Figure 3. Presence/absence of particular features in harbours identified as λιμὴν κλειστός by Scylax.

In light of the available data and analyzing the 14 cases, we propose that in the Archaic and Classical eras the expression λιμὴν κλειστός used by Scylax could be employed simply to identify harbour with a naturally narrow (Cydonia, Sidon) and/or artificially narrowed entrances.

ESSENTIAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

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