

HIPPODAMUS AND RHODES

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"The present city", says Strabo in his long account of Rhodes (14. 2. 9), "was founded at the time of the Peloponnesian War by the same architect, ὡς Πειραιῶν, as Peiraeus", namely Hippodamus. The verb, ἐκτίσθη implies that Hippodamus played an active and indeed a leading role, though it need not mean that he was regarded as *ktistes* in the formal sense – he was certainly not *ktistes* of Peiraeus. This tradition has been firmly rejected by modern authorities,¹ mainly on the ground that the foundation of Rhodes in 408 B.C. is too late for him. Indeed there has been a general tendency to play down his importance in the history of architecture. Perhaps his long hair and foppishness² have counted against him, as against Lysias' client Mantitheos (16. 18). This note is a recantation, an attempt to give Hippodamus his due and to show that there is no sufficient reason to deny him the planning of Rhodes.

The time is opportune for a reconsideration of the question since the plan of the city has been restored by the researches of Mr. J. Kondis and Mr. J. Bradford³ with a clarity and a degree of completeness which one would not have thought possible a few years ago. What has been revealed is precisely what we have learnt to call Hippodamian, though of course this does not necessarily mean that it is due to Hippodamus himself. A single great rectangular grid is applied to the fine "theatre-like" site sloping gently down from the "acropolis" on the west side of the peninsula to the main harbour (and probably the agora) on the east; and into this the elements of the city are skilfully inserted, with an impressive use of terracing in places. Excavation has inevitably been sporadic, but aerial photography, observation on the surface, and deduction from mediaeval streets and suburban lanes and even field divisions have added

¹ A. von Gerkan, *Griechische Städteanlagen* (Berlin 1924) 48; E. Fabricius, s. v. *Städtebau*, Pauly-Wissowa, II. Reihe, Halbb. 6 (1929) col. 1993-4, cf. VIII, Halbb. 15. (1913) col. 1732; R. E. Wycherley, *How the Greeks Built Cities* (London 1949 and 1962) 17; W. B. Dinsmoor, *Architecture of Ancient Greece* (London and New York 1950) 214; F. Castagnoli, *Ippodamo di Mileto e l'Urbanistica a Pianta Ortogonale* (Rome 1956) 62; R. Martin, *L'Urbanisme dans la Grèce Antique* (Paris 1956) 103-4. W. Judeich, in *Topographie von Athen* (München 1931) 76, n. 2, thinks the attribution "wenig wahrscheinlich", even though he dates the work of Hippodamus at Peiraeus, and the *horoi* (see n. 9 below) comparatively late.

² Castagnoli, op. cit., 65 gives a more generous appraisal.

³ J. D. Kondis, *Συμβολὴ εἰς τὴν μελέτην τῆς ἱστορικῆς τῆς Ῥόδου* (Rhodes 1954; *Ath. Mit.* 73 (1958) 146-158 (with the most up-to-date plan); additions in *Πρακτικὰ* AE 1959, 267 ff. and *Ἐργον* AE 1961, 196 ff. (cf. *BCH*, 86, 1962, 885). J. Bradford, *Antiquaries Journal*, 36 (1956) 57-69; *Ancient Landscapes* (London 1957) 277-280, plan fig. 25.

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much and made a coherent plan possible. The remains are almost all Hellenistic and Roman; and it is not entirely clear whether the plan goes back to the foundation of the city.⁴ For that matter, on archaeological evidence alone, one might fail to deduce that there was a great city on the site at all in the fourth century. One need not doubt that Rhodes was a well-planned city from the beginning; and it is difficult to believe that a radically different plan was superimposed.

Incidentally it is now more obvious why the city was said to be theatre-like.⁵ This was once taken to mean that it was semicircular with streets radiating from the centre. Later, when in the light of increasing knowledge of Hippodamian planning this was seen to be highly unlikely, it was assumed that the comparison was due solely to the natural conformation of the site. Now however one can see that it does after all have some reference to the street-plan too.

The eastern shore of the peninsula, with its harbours, runs N. W.-S. E., diagonally in relation to the street-grid, which is orientated N.-S. and E.-W. Thus from the region of the Great Harbour, the "orchestra", with the ground rising gently to west and south-west, one would get the impression of facing a great theatre, its tiers forming not a semi-circle but the sides of a triangle.

The reasons for rejecting Hippodamus are three. Strabo himself, with his ὡς φασιν, seems not to accept the tradition. Hippodamus had strong Athenian connections, and Rhodes had broken away from Athens by 408 B.C. and resumed her Dorian connections. Thirdly, it is unlikely that Hippodamus was still alive in 408 B.C., and if he was, he was incredibly old for such a task.

Strabo may simply be saying that he was informed at Rhodes that Hippodamus was the architect. The subject could indeed be "people in general", or "authorities on the subject"; but in the context it is most probably "the Rhodians". There was of course a tendency to attribute a notable work, when the author was not beyond dispute, to the most famous available name, for the sake of prestige; and this may have happened at Rhodes, the plan being attributed to the Master when in fact it was due to a follower or was merely "in his manner". But it would be much more difficult and unlikely than in the case of a particular work of art. The foundation and planning of a new city in the late fifth century would be accompanied by much official business and ceremony. Decrees would be passed and publicly recorded,⁶ probably not only

⁴ Mr. Kondis, to whom I am much indebted for plans and other material, tells me that he is increasingly convinced that it does; the very scanty early remains do seem to conform to the grid; see *Ath. Mit.*, 73. 156. Of course development would be piece-meal, perhaps beginning from the harbour region; but the whole area seems to be taken in by the one plan, with provision for future growth on the same lines.

⁵ Diodorus Siculus, 19. 45; 20. 83.

⁶ Cf. the decree passed at Colophon in the 4th century about the rebuilding of the city, *Hesperia*, 13 (1944) 91 ff.

in the new capital but at the three founding cities. Subsequently honours might be paid and also duly recorded. Records may have been largely obliterated at Rhodes in the great earthquake of 227 B.C., but not before the tradition had been firmly established. Thus Strabo's statement may well rest on a secure foundation.

The argument based on Rhodes' estrangement from Athens carries little or no weight. We do not know what Hippodamus was doing in the years following the foundation of Thurii in 443 B.C., in which he took part. If he lived for several decades his connection with Athens may have worn thin or broken. By 408 B.C. many of Athens' friends must have been turning sadly away, as indeed were some of her own citizens. Hippodamus may have attained the status of an international figure in the closing stages.

The only formidable argument is the one derived from Hippodamus' age. We are not called upon to discuss the general expectation of life in the fifth century B.C. The question is whether a clear piece of evidence that Hippodamus lived to a great old age and that he remained active to the end ought to be rejected. One can of course confront the doubters with the simple fact that a number of great artists have retained their creative powers intact in their eighties and even their nineties. If with von Gerkan⁷ and most modern authorities one takes Hippodamus' birth right back to the beginning of the century, and at the same time grants him Rhodes, his career will come very close to coinciding with that of Sophocles, who at the age of ninety, taking up the theme of an earlier masterpiece, produced a play which silenced those who alleged that his powers were failing. Michelangelo was still working with overpowering energy in his late eighties. Frank Lloyd Wright,⁸ well-established far back in Victorian times, was still a dominant force in the time of Elizabeth II, in his early nineties.

But there are limits to credibility, and no doubt these would be passed if one assumed that the architect of Rhodes had worked at Peiraeus in the early days under Themistocles, as some have done in consequence of Foucart's study of the boundary stones found at Peiraeus.⁹ This is the main difficulty which must be faced. For Foucart the *horoi* provided vital evidence to support his belief that 'la construction de la ville de Pirée, sur le plan d'Hippodamos, est due a Thémistocle.' Except for certain late stragglers, he assigned the main body of the stones to the years immediately after the Persian Wars. One may doubt whether they can be dated with much accuracy.¹⁰ More recent epi-

⁷ *Op. cit.*, 46; cf. Castagnoli, *op. cit.*, 65. The dating of his birth depends entirely on deductions from his presumed later activities.

⁸ See Henry Russell Hitchcock, *Architecture in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Pelican History of Art 1958) 320 and 332.

⁹ *IG* i², 887 ff; P Foucart, *Journal des Savants*, 1907, 177-186; cf. Martin *op. cit.*, 104.

¹⁰ I note the warning of A. G. Woodhead, *The Study of Greek Inscriptions* (Cambridge 1959) 62-63.

graphists have learnt caution. Allowance has to be made for the idiosyncrasies of stone-cutters. *Horoi* might tend towards archaism.

Many years later Miss Dorothy Kent Hill added six more stones,¹¹ and offered a somewhat different interpretation of them which might well point the way to a solution of our problem. One of the new *horoi* – found, be it noted, not at Peiraeus but on the northeast slope of the Acropolis – bears the same inscription as IG, i², 892, “From the street the ground towards the harbour is all public”. Miss Hill thinks that these stones are distinct, in material and form, from those of the main series, which are concerned with streets, the agora, the emporion, an anchorage, a propylon, a heroon, and so forth.¹² “There is a possibility”, she says, “that the boundary stones which set off a strip of land from a road to a harbour as public property, are earlier than the others of the series. The stones differ in form from the other stones, perhaps because Hippodamus had not yet undertaken the management of the planning; the stones set off territory for no definite structure, perhaps at an early date of the proceeding; these inscriptions alone mention neither ὄρος nor νέμησις, and the letter forms, although they do not prove earlier date, admit of its possibility. If these stones are earlier than the others, they should pertain to that part of the town which was of the greatest importance at the earliest date, that is, to the naval quarter, for the purpose in view at the beginning of the fortification of the Piraeus was naval and military, not commercial.” Foucart himself, arguing from general probability too that Themistocles must have got to work promptly with Hippodamus’ aid, had already asked, “Est-il vraisemblable qu’il s’en soit tenu là dans l’exécution de son projet favori, qu’il n’ait pas commencé les travaux nécessaires pour le port et pour la flotte, que tant de fois il avait proclamés indispensables à la puissance d’Athènes?” It is indeed improbable; and one should add that the great naval constructions and fortifications would take up much time and large resources, at a period when the upper city too was rising with much effort from its ruins. There would be men at Athens competent to direct this work; and the layout of the naval installations would be dictated by natural features and local experience rather than planning theory. Less urgent elements may have had to wait for some years. It may well be that the enterprising young man from Miletus, with his revolutionary ideas and his overall plan for the whole area, came in at the second stage. This does not conflict with Thucydides’ statement (I. 93) that Themistocles “persuaded the Athenians to build the rest of Peiraeus”. He seems to have naval and defensive construction chiefly in mind; and in any case the work would require many years and no doubt need to be “phased”.¹³

¹¹ *AJA*, 36 (1932) 254–259; *SEG*, 10, no. 376–384.

¹² The trittys *horoi*, IG i² 897 ff., are a different matter; see A. Raubitschek, *AJA*, 60 (1956) 279–282.

¹³ For this phasing cf. C. Wachsmuth, *Die Stadt Athen* i. (Leipzig 1874) 560; Martin,

We know extraordinarily little about ancient Greek architects. Indeed about the majority we know nothing. Our information about Hippodamus is less meagre than about most others, and it is unfortunate that an important part of it should be unnecessarily discredited and discarded. A wholly credible biography may be attempted somewhat as follows. As a young man, we may imagine, he gained experience and inspiration at the rebirth of his native city of Miletus. He came to Athens in his thirties, perhaps towards 460,¹⁴ in time to place his stamp upon the development of Peiraeus, and he lived at Peiraeus for a while. In 443 B.C. he went to Thurii, where he would find work to occupy him for some years.¹⁵ Obviously he impressed his personality and his ideas both architectural and political on his contemporaries, and won a reputation throughout Greece. The Rhodians, who according to Strabo attached the greatest importance to good architecture, knowing of him as γέρονθ' ἡβῶντα δ' εὐγλώσσῳ φρενί¹⁶ – a type of man for whom the Greeks had a peculiar respect – called in the veteran architect to advise them.

It has become increasingly clear from recent archaeological evidence that regular town-planning had its roots well back in the archaic period; but Hippodamus seems to have added a touch of personal genius. Mr. M. I. Finley rightly says, "Aristotle knew what he was saying when he spoke of the new, Hippodamean fashion".¹⁷ Hippodamus may be considered one of the great creative artists of fifth century Greece. There is no good reason to deny him the credit for the main design of what in the judgment of Strabo was architecturally the finest of Greek cities; and if we grant him Rhodes, we can certainly understand better the character and the reputation of his work.

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op. cit., 108, recognizes that it would be necessary, though he has Hippodamus on the job from the beginning.

¹⁴ Possibly even later, though one should probably not leave a very long interval between the phases. The Schol. on Aristophanes, *Knights*, 327, is either wrong or very vague in his use of κατὰ τὰ Μηδικὰ when he says that Hippodamus τὸν Πειραιᾶ κατὰ τὰ Μηδικὰ συνήγαγεν (it is doubtful whether the Hippodamus named as father of Archepolemus in *Knights*, 327, is the same man; see von Gerkan, *op. cit.*, 44).

¹⁵ Kondis notes an affinity between the plan of Rhodes and the plan of Thurii as described by Diodorus, 12. 10. 7; *Ath. Mit.*, 73 (1958) 149; cf. *Arch. Ephem.* 1956 (1958) 106–113. Martin, *op. cit.*, 104, doubts whether Hippodamus actually planned Thurii, since Diodorus does not say so; but it is unlikely, after he had established his position at Athens so firmly, that he would have gone to Thurii without some responsibility.

¹⁶ Aeschylus, *Supplices*, 775.

¹⁷ *The Ancient Greeks* (London 1963) 158.