

Η ΑΓΟΡΑ ΣΤΗ ΜΕΣΟΓΕΙΟ
από τους ομηρικούς
έως τους ρωμαϊκούς χρόνους

THE AGORA
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN
from Homeric to Roman times

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THE AGORA AT THE TIME OF THE FORUM: THE EXAMPLE OF THE CYCLADES IN ROMAN IMPERIAL TIMES¹

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Introduction

In a famous and abundantly interpreted passage about Panopeus (Phocis), Pausanias remembers that it is difficult to give the name of “city” to settlements “that have neither administrative building (ἀρχεῖα), nor gymnasium, nor theatre, nor agora, nor water running down towards a fountain”.² So as well as the gymnasium – a place for training and παιδεία –, and the theatre – a place for entertainment and gatherings –, the agora seems to be part of the necessary architectural equipment that define a Greek city, even during the Roman Imperial period. Orators of the Second Sophistic and Asia Minor’s inscriptions from Imperial times frequently mention the agora as a gathering place with intense activity: they particularly insist on its commercial vocation.³ The agora of the leading Greek cities therefore still formed “the nerve centre of the city life” even during the Roman Empire.⁴

Nevertheless, literary sources depict a very different situation in the Cyclades. Ancient writers used the destiny of Delos as a model and they applied the Delian pattern to the whole group of islands. In their opinion, the Cyclades went through nothing but decline and desertion; their *agorai* and their public buildings fell into ruins and desolation.⁵ But the destiny of Delos in the Roman Empire should never be used as a model for a study of the other islands. Indeed, the development of Apollo’s island is a very specific case that cannot possibly be compared with any other one. I shall present some epigraphic evidence and describe the main architectural developments that can be observed in the *agorai* of the Cyclades from the first century BC onwards. My aim is to show that, in opposition to what can be read in ancient literature, we can in fact sketch out, at a “regional” level, a development pattern of the Cycladic *agorai*, and even a dynamic one.

1. This paper lies within the framework of my PhD dissertation entitled “Les Cyclades sous l’Empire romain: Formes et Limites d’une «Renaissance»”. I would like to thank my professors R. Étienne and F. Prost for their advice and confidence; my relatives and friends C. Bouras, J.-L. Le Quéré and L. Senhaji for the proofreading of the English version; my colleague C.P. Dickenson for our interesting discussions on the theme of “Roman *agorai*”.

2. Pausanias, X, 4, 1: “ὀνομάσαι τις πόλιν καὶ τούτους οἷς γε οὐκ

ἀρχεῖα οὐ γυμνάσιόν ἐστιν, οὐ θέατρον οὐκ ἀγορὰν ἔχουσιν, οὐχ ὕδωρ κατερχόμενον ἐς κρήνην”.

3. PONT 2010, 73. See also in the conference proceedings the paper of C. P. Dickenson, “The Agora as Political centre in the Roman Period”.

4. PONT 2010, 108.

5. For an exhaustive list of this literary evidence, see BRUN 1996, 196-209.

Description of the ruins

Delos: a special case (Fig. 1)

The four *agorai* of Delos – or at least those to which modern archaeologists refer by this name – ceased to be used from the first century B.C. and completely stopped housing political or commercial activities.⁶ The “Agora of the Delians” may have kept some political function in the second and the early first century BC, but this is still to be proved. From the second half of the first century BC, there was definitely nothing of the sort anymore, because civic institutions had disappeared from the island. The *Bouleuterion* was abandoned; the *Prytaneion* was demolished and its marbles were reused in other buildings.⁷ Besides, from 69 BC, Delos stopped relaying the Mediterranean trade and being a commercial nerve centre. So, the public spaces built for commercial purpose near the wharf and the Sacred Harbour (“Agora of Theophrastos” and “Agora of the Competaliasts”) could no longer play

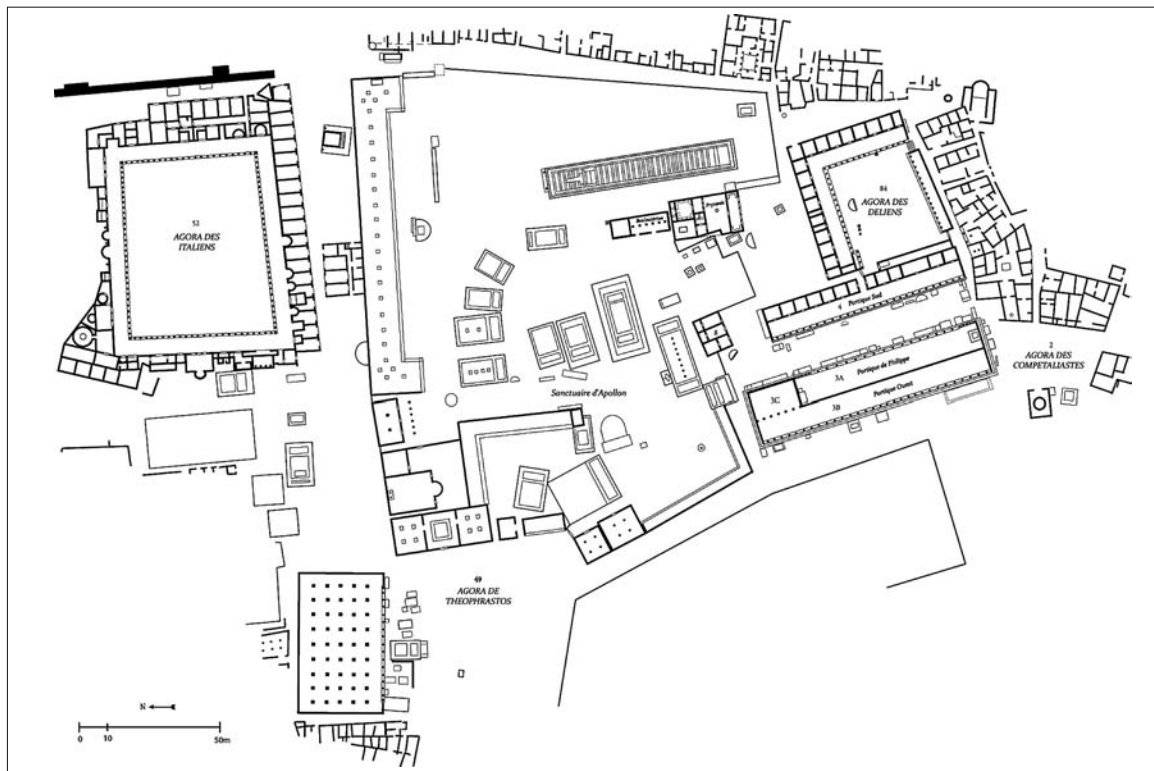


Fig. 1. Restitution of the “agorai” of Delos (E. Le Quéré, from Bruneau-Ducat 2005, Pl. I, II, III & VII)

6. For a summary and bibliography on these Delian *agorai*, see BRUNEAU - DUCAT 2005, *GD* 2; 49; 52; 84 and HELLMANN 1992, 28-30.

7. ÉTIENNE 1997, 324.

the same role in Roman Imperial times. Archaeological evidence is unanimous in showing that all the public squares of Delos experienced a kind of “privatization” in Roman times. From the Augustan period, the houses that had accommodated shops and stores by the “Agora of Theophrastos” and the “Agora of the Competaliasts” were turned into ordinary dwellings. They were even extended and encroached on the public places. The porticoes of the “Agora of the Competaliasts” were walled up in the second century AD and their marbles were reused in the building of new houses. This building work can be seen as a proof that all economic activities must have stopped in that area. Finally, as far as the Delian *agorai* are concerned, the last development of importance in the Roman Empire is to be seen in the large *thermae* that were constructed in ancient public spaces. These alterations reflect a drastic change in the functions and conceptions of public spaces, as well as a transformation of social habits. As for the “Agora of the Italians”, it was deserted between 60 and 50 BC and the building remained unfinished. Afterwards, only rural installations reoccupied the place, and especially wine-presses.

On the contrary, according to archaeological and epigraphic evidence, the situation seems to have been very different in the other *agorai* of the Cyclades. I do not intend to give an exhaustive presentation of these data in the present paper. My aim is merely to describe the best-documented and the most significant examples, and to focus on some Roman architectural developments.

Andros: agora and makellos in Palaiopolis (Fig. 2)

In the main city of Andros, Palaiopolis, the agora occupied, already from Classical times, a plain by the sea and was practically in contact with the ancient harbour. The boundaries of this public space are not well defined yet, nor is the chronological sequence of the buildings. Nevertheless, the ongoing archaeological excavations bring to light every year new data that fill in our knowledge of the agora’s shape, composition and functions, mostly in Hellenistic and Roman times.⁸ An important building phase in the agora of Palaiopolis dates to the end of the third or the first half of the second century BC. At that time, paved streets, a portico (Stoa Γ) and a building with a peristyle court and monumental *propylaea* (*Building Δ*) were built. In the mid-second century AD, construction work was undertaken on *Building Δ*. A silver denarius bearing the effigy of the Empress Sabine (AD 124-138) was found in the peristyle court, which suggests that the building was still in use in the Hadrianic period and that Andros was maintaining relations with Rome.⁹ We do not know yet if the building then still had the same commercial and craft functions as before. *Building Δ* was modified once again subsequently. Eventually, in the mid-third century AD at the latest, a new building (*Building E*) was set up in the same spot, probably a house that reoccupied the peristyle court.¹⁰

8. For an exhaustive presentation of the excavations in the agora of Palaiopolis, see PALAIOKRASSA-KOPITSA 1996, 21-39 and 252-270; PALAIOKRASSA-KOPITSA 2004, 121-149 and PALAIOKRASSA-KOPITSA 2007, 47-70. See also in the conference proceedings the paper of L. Palaiokrassa,

“Η αγορά της αρχαίας Ανδρου. Μορφή και διαστηριότητες”.

9. At least eight statue bases dedicated to the emperor Hadrian have been found in Palaiopolis.

10. PALAIOKRASSA-KOPITSA 2004, 137.

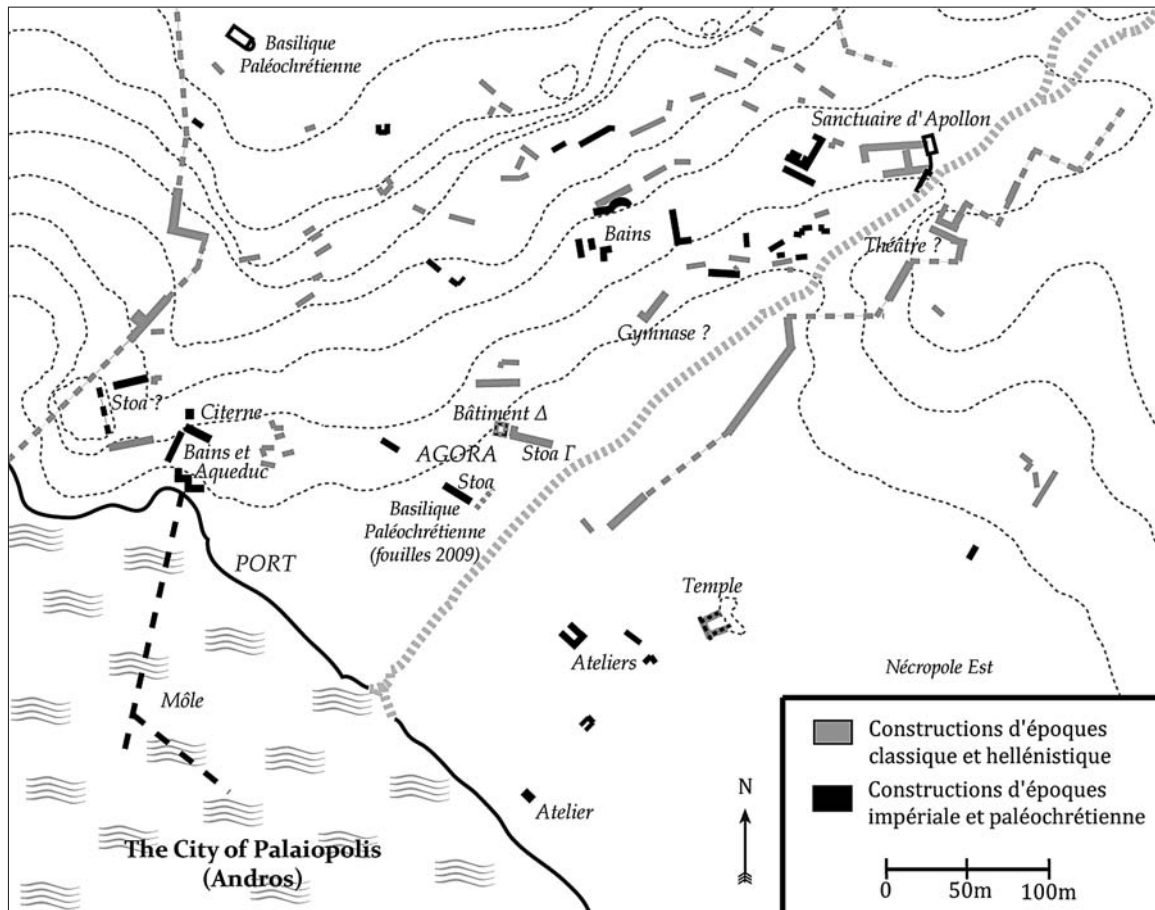


Fig. 2: Plan of the city of Palaiopolis (Andros). (E. Le Quéré, from *Palaiokrassa-Kopitsa* 1996, Pl. II).

On the lower terrace of the agora, some ancient marbles were reused for the construction of an Early Christian Basilica (5th-6th century AD). Noteworthy among these architectural fragments excavated by archaeologists are: two Roman statues, two bases with Augustan inscriptions, and above all, a piece of inscribed entablature from the mid-second century AD. The preserved letters of the inscription suggest that the stone was part of a marketplace (*makellos*). Besides, most of the inscribed statue bases, sculptures and architectural fragments found on the site of the ancient agora date from the Late Hellenistic and Roman periods.¹¹

11. PALAIOKRASSA-KOPITSA 1996, 257; *Eleutherotypia Ethnos* (21.09.09), <http://www.enet.gr/>.

Melos: the site of the “Three Churches” or a Roman agora? (Fig. 3)

The locality known as “Three Churches”, just above the ancient theatre of Melos, had been identified some time ago as the area of the city’s agora.¹² However, at present only two ancient buildings are visible. One is a massive podium, located in the centre of the area. The first archaeologists who worked on site identified it as a temple, which is why it is called today “*Temple I*”. But in the absence of any elevation or architectural fragments belonging to this monument, it seems difficult to determine its function and chronology with certainty. The second building, located in the southeast of the area, is a very old baptistery of cruciform plan, probably surrounded by four columns.¹³

Most of the material excavated in the late nineteenth century – nowadays exhibited in the Melos

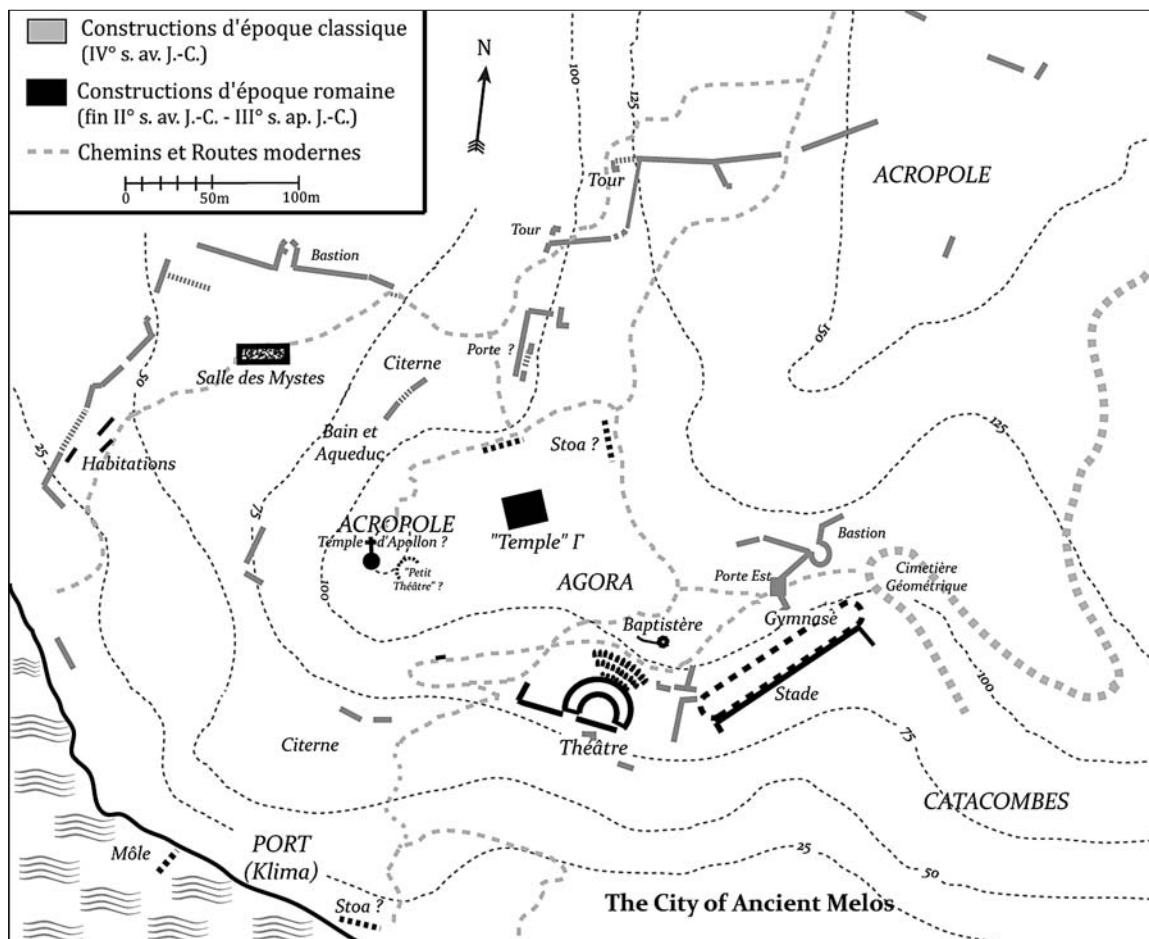


Fig. 3. Plan of the city of Ancient Melos. (E. Le Quéré, from Smith 1895-1896, 64 & Sparkes 1982, 54).

12. For an exhaustive presentation of the excavations in the agora of Melos, see SMITH 1895-1896, 70; MACKENZIE

1897, 129-133 and SPARKES 1982, 54-56.

13. MACKENZIE 1897, 130.

Archaeological Museum – comes from this southeast site,¹⁴ which has not been excavated since. These statues, inscriptions, ceramics and architectural fragments all date from the Roman period (late 2nd century BC – 3rd century AD).¹⁵ That was to the great displeasure of the British archaeologists, who tried to find out vestiges of the Classical city of Melos, the one that dared to brave the Athenians.¹⁶ As sporadic and isolated as they are, these snippets of evidence are nonetheless interesting for our subject, since they suggest that this agora must have been an important civic centre during Roman Imperial times.

Thera: extension and monumentalization of the agora in the Roman Empire (Fig.4)

In the Cyclades, the agora of the ancient city of Thera is by far the best documented, because it has been almost completely excavated. The great amount of epigraphic and archaeological evidence has helped archaeologists to understand the different building phases in this area.¹⁷ Besides, Thera is a

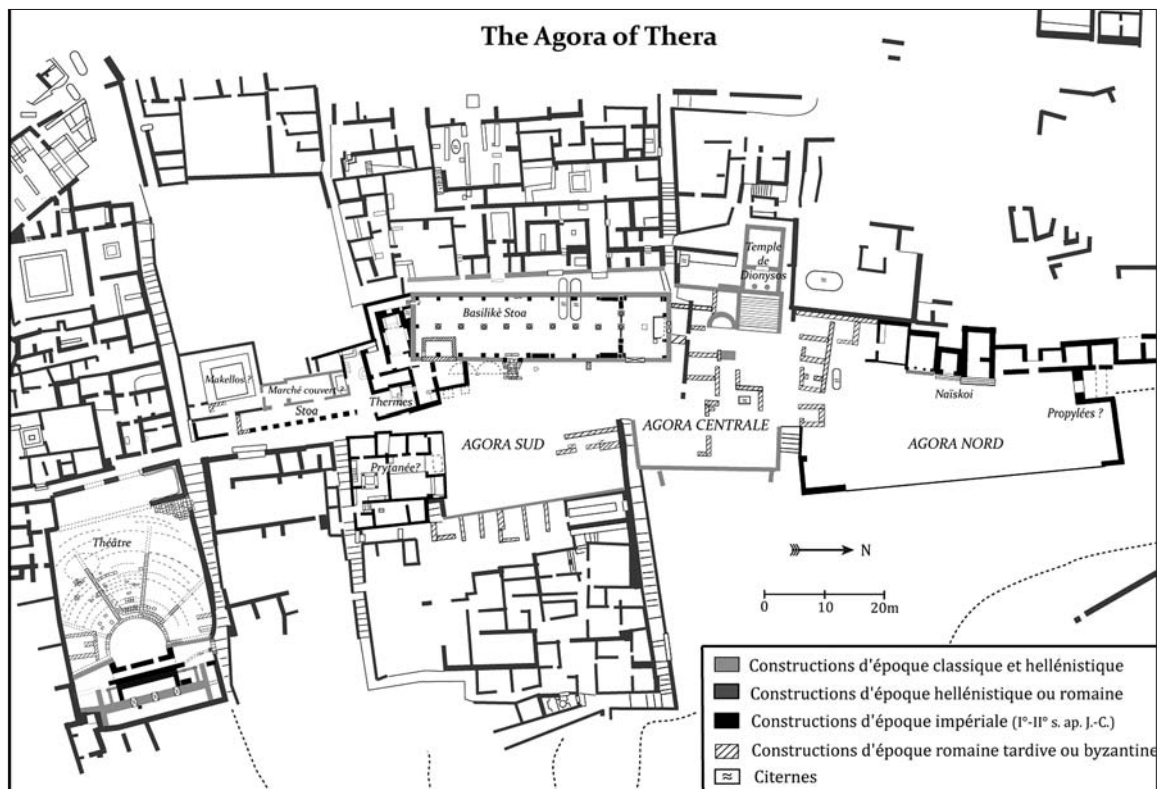


Fig. 4. Plan of the Agora of Thera. (E. Le Quééré, from Hoepfner 1997, Pl. I).

14. There, at the end of the 19th century, the British archaeologists found about 15 statues, several inscribed bases and some architectural fragments, all from Roman times.

15. MACKENZIE 1897, 130: "in fact nothing which can have belonged to a period antecedent to Roman Imperial times".

16. MACKENZIE 1897, 132: "With the lack of a Pausanias for

the islands, we have particularly to regret that excavation has yielded no monumental evidence as to the nature of the site in Greek as distinguished from Roman times".

17. HILLER 1899, 217-249; WITSCHERL 1997, 24-31, 38-42, 46; GIESE-KOSE 2006.

wonderful example for our study, due to the unprecedented architectural development that took place in the agora during the Roman Empire. At that time, two important phases of building activity were undertaken. The first one dates back to the beginning of Roman Imperial times, – from the reign of Augustus until the reign of Claudius or thereabouts – when the agora was extended to the north. A new and third place was thus created (“*North Agora*”), and the surface area of the two earlier places (“*Middle Agora*” and “*South Agora*”) was almost doubled.

The second phase dates to the mid-second century AD, when building activities, refittings and reorganizations were undertaken in many parts of the city. In the agora, building work focused on the *Basilike Stoa* and the surrounding area. Archaeological excavations conducted in the late nineteenth century revealed several noticeable refittings inside the Stoa, the most important one being the creation of a separate room on the north side of the building. There, some statues of the emperor and his family were erected on a large pedestal (*bathron*) raised for this purpose. At the same time, medium-sized baths (or *thermae*) were built in the same area; they even encroached on the south part of the Stoa, where a small entrance connected the two buildings. During this last phase, the “*Market Hall*” was also extended with some new shops and a portico along the street. There is no point stressing the situation any further. All these examples show that in Roman Imperial times there was intensive building activity in the agora of Thera.

Epigraphic evidence: Interventions of euergetai in the cycladic *agorai* (Table 1)

In addition to the listed archaeological evidence, some imperial inscriptions mention interventions of local *euergetai* (benefactors) in the agora of their city, or on some buildings of the agora. Among them, a text from Seriphos tells us that in the Imperial period, two citizens – whose names have not been completely preserved – undertook to restore the island’s agora.¹⁸ His testimony is of a particular interest for two reasons: first, we have almost no archaeological remains of the city’s ancient buildings, because the site of the ancient city of Seriphos has been reoccupied and rebuilt continuously until nowadays. So, this inscription proves that Seriphos had a public place, already called “agora” in antiquity, and thus is truly regarded as a “city”. On the other hand, and contrary to the widespread view regarding this little rocky island, it shows that the city of Seriphos was still thriving in Imperial times, to such an extent that wealthy citizens deemed it necessary to restore there the civic and symbolic centre. As for Amorgos, in the mid-first century AD, Theodosia, daughter of Philippos, undertook to rebuild at her own expense the agora of the city of Arkesini.¹⁹ Archaeologists have not yet located the agora in question, since no excavations have been undertaken in the territory of Arkesini.

Other interventions concern specific buildings in the agora. In Thera, the *Basilike Stoa* (βασιλική στοά) was restored twice or even three times by Theran citizens, firstly, perhaps in Augustan times.²⁰ Then, in the reign of Trajan, three citizens had the roof repaired at their own expense, maybe after an

18. *IG* XII 5, 511.

19. *IG* XII 7, 49, l. 13-15 : “τήν ἐκ πολλῶν χρόνων[ν] ἡμελη-
[μένην καὶ πεπτ]ωκ[υ]αν ἀγορὰν ἐπι[φανῶς κατα]-

σ[κ]ε[υ]άσα[ι].”

20. *IG* XII 5, 323 (very lacunary).

TABLE 1					
Interventions in the Cycladian agoras in Roman Imperial times: epigraphical evidences					
<i>(chronological order)</i>					
Island and City	Date	Building(s)	Benefactor(s)	Work carried on	References
Augustan Period					
THERA	Augustan period	portico / <i>bouleuterion</i>	/	Intervention on the <i>Basilike Stoa</i> ? (lacunary inscription)	<i>IG XII 3, 323</i>
1st century A.D.					
AMORGOS (Arkésinë)	middle of the 1st century A.D.	agora	Theodosia, daughter of Philippos	Rebuilding of the agora	<i>IG XII 7, 49</i>
ANDROS (Palaiopolis)	1st century A.D.	<i>bouleuterion</i>	Aphthonetos, son of Iuliades	Supervision (<i>epistates</i>) of the <i>bouleuterion's</i> restoration work	<i>IG XII 5, 755</i>
MELOS	1st century A.D. ?	portico	Lucius Magius Eros	Building or Rebuilding of a portico (<i>porticus/στόα</i>)	<i>IG XII 3, 1078</i>
MELOS	1st century A.D. ?	portico	Magia Pulchra (?), daughter of Lucius Magius Eros	Building of a small portico (<i>porticula / σφόδιον</i>) and of a precinct(?) (<i>[περιβόλιον]</i>) for Athena	<i>IG XII 3, 1079</i>
2nd century A.D.					
MELOS	102-116 A.D.	portico / monumental building	the Melians?	Construction of a portico or a monumental building dedicated to Trajan and Athena	<i>IG XII 3, 1080</i>
THERA (Agora)	102-116 A.D.	portico / <i>bouleuterion</i>	Agathopous, son of Eutychos ; Poluouchos and Aristodamos, sons of Kartidamas	Repairing of the <i>Basilike Stoa's</i> roof	<i>IG XII 3, 324</i>
THERA (Agora)	149 A.D.	portico / <i>bouleuterion</i>	T. Flavius Cleitosthenes	Repairing of the <i>Basilike Stoa</i> and of other buildings in the city	<i>IG XII 3, 325</i>
THERA (Agora and Harbours of the city)	150 A.D.	baths, portico / <i>bouleuterion</i> , temple, <i>Kaisareion</i>	T. Flavius Cleitosthenes	Building of baths (<i>βλανεῖα</i>) in the city's harbours; Restoration (in the agora) of the <i>Basilike Stoa</i> , the wooden <i>dryphactos</i> , the temple of Tyche and the old <i>Kaisareion</i>	<i>IG XII 3, 326</i>
ANDROS (Palaiopolis)	2nd century A.D.	<i>makellos</i>	/	Intervention on a <i>makellos</i> dedicated to Marcus Aurelius	Palaiokrassa-Kopitsa (2007), p. 68
AMORGOS (Minoa)	2nd-3rd century A.D.	public buildings	[- -], daughter of Serapion	Construction of public buildings (<i>ἔργα</i>)	<i>IG XII 7, 399</i>
Roman Empire (date cannot be determined with any certainty)					
ANDROS (Palaiopolis)	1st-3rd century A.D.	agora	/	Buildings near the agora (?)	<i>IG XII Suppl., 295</i>
SERIPHOS	1st-3rd century A.D.	agora	Two citizens	Restoration or Rebuilding of the agora	<i>IG XII 5, 511</i>

Tab. 1: Interventions in the Cycladic agorai in Roman Imperial times: epigraphic evidence

earthquake.²¹ Finally, two inscriptions built into the west wall of the Stoa record that Titus Flavius Kleitosthenes, a wealthy citizen of Thera, undertook in the mid-second century AD the restoration of a great number of public buildings, including the *Basilike Stoa*.²² Another Imperial inscription

21. *IG XII 3, 324*.

from Palaiopolis (Andros) may refer to work carried out on buildings near the agora.²³ As mentioned before, a *makellos* was also probably built in the agora of this island in the mid-second century AD²⁴

Interpretation: Chronology of the developments

Let me try and draw up the end result of these architectural transformations which altered the appearance of the Cycladic *agorai* in the Roman Empire. I wonder, in particular, if it is possible to identify a “regional” pattern of evolution that would be shared by all the islands; or if some of them have a distinctive feature and a peculiar development that set them apart from the others?

The evidence gathered from the Cyclades in Imperial times never refers to an *ex nihilo* construction of a whole agora, contrary to what happened in several cities of Asia Minor. Most of the islands experienced nothing but transformations, restorations and reconstructions of buildings belonging to the Classical or Hellenistic *agorai*. Nevertheless, the vestiges on Melos and Naxos indicate that their *agorai* – or a greater part of them – may have been entirely refitted. It seems that the Naxians and the Melians did not repair or restore, but rebuilt “on top” of the previous agora. The rebuilding or restoration of the whole agora at Arkesini (Amorgos), as well as in Seriphos, is also attested.²⁵ Pottery finds from Naxos suggest that the agora must have been refitted during the first century AD, while in Arkesini the refitting of the civic place dates back to the middle or the end of the first century AD. At that time, the *bouleuterion* of Andros was also restored and a portico was built in the Melian agora.²⁶ These various pieces of evidence quite similarly prove that several *agorai* of the Cyclades were largely restored during the first century AD. Both ancient and modern writers and historians have unanimously interpreted these testimonies as irrevocable proof of decline. According to them, the Cyclades collapsed in Roman times, since even the *agorai*, the archetypal symbols of civic life and the state, were crumbling and falling into ruins.²⁷ But I think we can give another meaning to this phenomenon.

Scientific studies and ancient sources tell us that the Mediterranean World experienced many earthquakes during the 1st century A.D., and thus some cities were entirely destroyed. This seismic activity can be a possible explanation for the ruins on Thera and Melos.²⁸ Otherwise, we know that during the first century BC, because of the Mithridatic Wars, the Civil Wars and the raids of pirates, some islands suffered severe destructions.²⁹ Therefore, we could reverse the viewpoint and interpret the testimonies of restored buildings from the very beginning of the first century AD as proof of a constant and unflinching interest in the agora, which the islanders hastened to rebuild after any serious damage was incurred.

22. *IG* XII 3, 325 and 326.

23. *IG* XII *Suppl.*, 295. This inscription is very lacunary. It reads only “[τὰ κα]τὰ τὴν ἀγορὰν” (l. 2) and “Σεβαστὸν” (l.5).

24. Palaiokrassa-Kopitsa 2007, 23, Fig. 15; 60.

25. *IG* XII 7, 49 and *IG* XII 5, 511.

26. *IG* XII 5, 755 and *IG* XII 3, 1078.

27. *IG* XII 7, 49, l. 13-14: “τὴν] ἐκ πολλῶν χρόνων[ν] ἡμε-

λη[μένην καὶ πεπτ]ωκ[υ]αν ἀγορὰν”.

28. It was for precisely the same reasons that restoration work was undertaken on the macellum of Pompeii in AD 62, in the agora of Hierapolis in the reign of Flavian, or in the agora of Smyrna as a consequence of the violent earthquake of AD 177. See PONT 2010, 81.

29. For example on Delos (BRUNEAU - DUCAT 2005, 42-43) or on Tenos (ÉTIENNE 1990, 135-149).

Thera is an exception in this Cycladic cityscape of the first century AD: unlike the inhabitants of the neighbouring islands, the Therans were not satisfied with merely stopgap measures and restorations. In fact, quite the reverse: the agora's surface area was extended from around the reign of Claudius and splendid honorary monuments were raised at the end of the first century AD. A real monumental programme was implemented for the embellishment and improvement of their agora, and not just a rebuilding project. We have no parallels for such a phenomenon in the other islands at that time. Melos may have known an important Roman phase in its city planning and an early architectural development of its agora (second-first century BC?), but for the moment there are insufficient archaeological data to assert this with certainty.

In the second century AD, building work undertaken in the *agorai* of the Cyclades is of a very different kind. Except for the Theran Basilike Stoa, the roof of which was repaired twice (under Trajan and Antoninus Pius) – certainly because of the strong seismic and volcanic activity on the island –, insular cities knew nothing but refittings and embellishments of particular buildings in their *agorai*, and no more restorations of ruins. Notwithstanding, the wealthy citizen Kleitosthenes did not content himself with having the roof of the Stoa repaired. He also made some alterations in the building, decorated it with statues and wall paintings, converted a part of it into a room dedicated to the emperor and his family, and added the adjoining *thermae*. The same is true for Andros, where *Building Δ* was transformed during the second century AD (under Marcus Aurelius?) and was perhaps called “*makellos*”. According to this evidence, we are not dealing with repairs aimed at returning the buildings to their previous state, but with architectural alterations that must reflect the insular adaptability to new realities of the time.

Nevertheless, the case of the Naxian agora remains doubtful, because it seems that it was rebuilt entirely in the second century AD. Indeed, excavations and stratigraphic sections have shown that the area of the Hellenistic agora was covered with new constructions in Imperial times.³⁰ Even where Hellenistic ruins have been found, the vestiges show that the area was filled in completely and rebuilt probably during the second century AD.³¹ The constructions uncovered are mostly porticoes that bounded the agora. Is this the result of a simple wish to beautify and adorn the city, like the main cities of Asia Minor; or a wish to extend the area in order to fulfil new needs? Is this the consequence of large-scale destructions and damage in the Hellenistic agora? So that instead of repairing or restoring, the Naxians preferred to fill in the Hellenistic agora, in order to rebuild it. Thus, they would have taken advantage of some disaster to rebuild a new and larger agora. So huge is the lack of archaeological and epigraphic evidences for the Naxian agora that we cannot answer these questions at present. Unfortunately, all we can do is note the fact, anyhow puzzling and interesting.

30. *IAE* 1988, 208-218; MÜLLER 2003, 42-47; NICOLET-PIERRE 2009, 401. It clearly appears in the excavations report that a Roman agora entirely covered the previous one, and even exceeded the surface area of the Hellenistic agora.

31. *IAE* 1988, 213: “ὅλος ο χώρος ἔδειξε ὅτι ἡ ἐπίχωση ἀνα-νεώθηκε κατὰ τοὺς αὐτοκρατορικοὺς χρόνους”.

So, in the Cyclades, there were interventions in the *agorai* from the first century AD, and even from the early years of Augustus' reign. It is a commonly held view that the architectural revival in Greek cities took place only from the second century AD, and especially from the reign of Hadrian onwards. But, we can see in the Cyclades that solicitude for the maintenance and embellishment of the *agorai* has always existed; there is nothing new about it in Roman times. This concern perpetuates a Hellenistic tradition, even though we can notice a pause or a slowdown of building work around the mid-first century BC. Nevertheless, a distinction should be made between the first century AD, when the islanders eagerly hastened to rebuild, and the second century AD, when they altered and adorned some specific public buildings. After that, the *evergetai's* interest in the Cycladic *agorai* seems to decline during the third century AD, when they turn more to the construction of sacred monuments.³² As far as we can judge, the situation in Asia Minor is quite similar. There, *agorai* became huge building sites from Flavian times, or even from the second century AD.³³ There, the concern of the cities for their *agorai* decreased during the third century AD as well, and totally disappeared in the fourth century AD, when the sole preoccupations of the *evergetai* were the building of baths, theatres and fountains.³⁴

This outline of the insular cityscape, sketched out through the theme of the agora, proves that the Cyclades were by no means excluded from the general movement of architectural progress that Greek cities experienced in Roman Imperial times. This is the absolute opposite of what can be read in the ancient sources, in which the Cyclades seem to live on the fringes of the Empire and are only depicted as an "outcast" area. This process is, of course, much less impressive in the islands, in comparison to the monumental building programmes undertaken in Ephesus or Athens in those days. But we must not forget that these two great cities are very specific cases in the Roman World. If we pay attention to the evolutionary pattern of small and medium-sized cities in Greece or Asia Minor, the facts are quite comparable as far as chronology, building types and afforded means are concerned. Besides, this study of Cycladic *agorai* shows once again how Delos proves to be atypical, with its own distinctive course. Its architectural evolution is cut off from the neighbouring islands, from every point of view: frequency and chronology of architectural phenomena are different; changes and buildings in public areas too.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to give an exhaustive description and interpretation of the whole history of the Cycladic *agorai* in Roman Imperial times. So, among many themes and aspects of the subject, I shall broach only two issues, two observations that shed new light on the issue. The first is the important development of one specific architectural type, the portico, from which we can draw conclusions regarding architectural influences and "Romanization" in the Cyclades. The other concerns the transformation of several Cycladic *agorai* into places for projecting civic and imperial prestige, which can highlight some economic and social changes in the insular cities at that time.

32. See LE QUÉRÉ, *PhD dissertation*.

34. PONT 2010, 109.

33. PONT 2010, 81.

The Porticos (stoai): buildings “in vogue”

In the Hellenistic Cyclades, building work was mainly connected with the city’s defence (walls and towers), as shown by the large number of towers still visible on Tenos, Amorgos, Siphnos, Kea and Naxos. But, from the time of Pompey, with the eradication of piracy in the Mediterranean, and from the Augustan era, with the establishment of the *pax romana*, there was no need of such defensive measures. Consequently, a great part of the constructions and restorations refocused on the monuments that made up the civic centre of the islands. Because of the fragmentary and heterogeneous nature of the sources, we cannot draw general conclusions that would be true for all the Cyclades during the whole Roman period. Nevertheless, I would insist on a common fact that emerges in the depicted insular cityscape: among all the constructed or restored civic buildings, cities and *euergetai* lavished their attention and money especially on porticoes (*stoai*). (Tab. 1)

From Hellenistic times, probably under the influence of the “Ionian-type” of *agorai* built in Asia Minor, “porticoes play the first part on the making up of the civic area and more generally of the cityscape”³⁵. From the second century BC, the “ancient-type” *agorai* that are encountered in mainland Greece and the islands gradually acquired some stoai that enclosed and isolated the public place from the rest of the city. Architectural developments in the “Agora of the Delians” on Delos are a good illustration of this phenomenon. Shortly after 100 BC, the “Agora of the Italians” was surrounded by four porticoes, one on each side, the first storeys of which bore some inscriptions mentioning the buildings as *stoai* (τὴν στοάν).³⁶

In Roman Imperial times, especially in Asia Minor, porticoes enclosing *agorai* or other places, as well as monumental gateways (*propylaea*), were still receiving great attention and important investments from the *euergetai*. These monuments truly contributed to the prestige and the “ornament” (*κόσμος*) of the city.³⁷ Though to a smaller extent, we can find some clues to this keen interest in porticoes in two Cycladic islands, Melos and Thera. In Thera, in the mid-second century AD, when the last building work was undertaken on the *Basilike Stoa*, a stoa opening onto the *Market Hall* was also built along the street leading to the theatre. In Melos, probably in the first century AD, Lucius Magnus Eros had a portico built or restored, while his daughter dedicated a “small portico” (*porticula* / στώδιον) to Athena.³⁸ Another portico or monumental construction may have been built in the agora in the reign of Trajan. In Naxos too, excavations have shown that several large porticoes were rebuilt on the site of the Hellenistic agora.

However sparse and trivial these results might appear, they are in fact very significant. In the two islands in question, Thera and Melos, there were thriving Roman communities and strong links with Rome and the emperor are attested. Nevertheless, the citizens did not choose to build *basilicae* – even though this building had become “an absolute must of the Imperial forum” – but *stoai*, “the quintes-

35. HELLMANN 2010, 267 and COULTON 1976.

36. *ID* 1685; 1686; 1687; 1735. See also HELLMANN 1992, 388.

37. PONT 2010, 84 and 181-186.

38. *IG* XII 3, 1078 (*porticus* / στώα) and 1079 (*porticula* / στώδιον).

sence of Greek architecture”.³⁹ Inscriptions are clear and unequivocal, because they are bilingual inscriptions; they give the term *porticus* as the Latin equivalent for *στόα* and *porticula* for *στόδιον*. Comparable to what the Italians from Delos had done a few years back, we are dealing here with a deliberate choice by Roman people or strongly “Romanized” communities to opt for a Greek architectural form; while in Rome at the time other architectural types were more “in vogue”. The *Basilike Stoa* of Thera is not an exception, because it is a basilica in name only, probably based on an imitation of the *Stoa Basilike* at Ephesus.⁴⁰

The cycladic *agorai* as *epiphanestatoi topoi*: Representation of the élites

From the Hellenistic period in all Greek cities, the proliferation of porticoes in the *agorai* areas goes hand in hand with a noticeable increase in the number of smaller honorific monuments, partly because of the upsurge of benefactions and *euergetic* donations at that time. This architectural and sculptural trend did not stop in Roman times. These Hellenistic and Roman transformations can clearly be seen in the Cycladic *agorai*, where honorific monuments, statues, dedications to famous citizens or emperors were erected.⁴¹ But the particularity of the Cyclades lies in the date of this phenomenon: except for Delos, the importance and the extent of the iconographic programmes set up in Roman Imperial times were unprecedented, even compared to the Hellenistic period.

For example, the North Agora of Thera was dominated on its west side by three “*naiskoi*”. These honorific monuments were large niches, or almost small temples, opening onto the street and housing statues of prominent Theran citizens. Some inscribed bases and sculpture fragments that come from these buildings inform us about the social context of their construction. This extension of the agora was in a way “monopolized” by wealthy families of Thera, who built there some highly prestigious honorific monuments. One of these *naiskoi* could even compete in size with the Temple of Dionysos, the main temple of the city. These monuments and their decoration are an archetypal illustration of the weight, the influence and the role played by wealthy citizens within their city in the Roman Empire. In a way, the *naiskoi* are an architectural expression, a “monumentalization” of institutional realities of the time. As P.M. Nigdelis stresses, the institutions of the Cyclades were gradually progressing during the Roman Empire, so that the Hellenistic “régime des notables” or “Honoratio-renrégime” was finally greatly reinforced.⁴² The South Agora of Thera, the oldest one of the city, was apparently reserved for the display of honorific monuments in Hellenistic times. But in the Roman period, when the *Basilike Stoa* was refitted, several Hellenistic *exedrae* and statue bases were levelled. From the Augustan era, statues of emperors were erected in this part of the agora and reached a scale that had never been seen before. Archaeologists have excavated at least twenty-five statue bases bearing inscriptions for different emperors.⁴³ The South Agora was probably dedicated to Roman emper-

39. Words from HELLMANN 2010, 292 and 267 respectively.

40. ALZINGER 1974, 26-28 and figs 14-22.

41. For a complete study of this iconographical program in

all the islands, see LE QUÉRÉ, *PhD dissertation*.

42. NIGDELIS 1990; GAUTHIER 1984, 91; QUASS 1993.

43. WITSCHERL 1997, 46.

ors, while the North extension was set aside for the enhancement of citizens. Some *agorai* of the Cyclades even became places reserved almost exclusively for the emperors, as in Melos for example.

In fact, a kind of partition in the *agorai* took place in some islands in Imperial times, with a much more impressive distinctiveness than in Hellenistic times. Well-defined areas were set aside for the notables' portrayal and prestige. The "competitive" behaviour of the *euergetai* was thus inscribed on stone and occupied a specific place in the cityscape. But beyond citizens' rivalry and the "race" for public recognition, possessing numerous statues became for all the cities in Roman Imperial times a very prestigious mark of distinction, to which Thera and Melos could aspire. Moreover, proximity between statues of emperors and those of *euergetai* in the agora was not insignificant: it was in a way a spatial expression of the new ties that linked by now most of the Cycladic *euergetai* to the emperor; especially since, in the Cyclades, imperial statues were always offered by particular citizens and not by the cities. On other islands, and especially Tenos, as was the case on Delos until the beginning of Roman times, the sanctuaries played this role of *epiphanestatoi topoi* more than the *agorai*.

Conclusion

We can conclude from the aforesaid that because the Cycladic *agorai* are potent political and economic symbols, study of them can inform us on many points: on the islands' economic and commercial situation, on the "social strategy" of the insular élites and, possibly, on institutional changes that would have affected the islands in Imperial times. So, to quote J.-Y. Marc, we can say about the Roman *agorai* that: "The political role of these centres has not vanished, it has changed".⁴⁴ We can go one step further and assert that the architecture of the Cycladic *agorai* reflects the specific political status granted to the Greek cities in the Roman Empire, very different from that held by the western towns. "The agora [...] is a slow conquest of a town planning connected with an original political structure".⁴⁵ These words of R. Martin about the Archaic agora are still full of meaning for the Imperial one. The *agorai* of the Cyclades were transformed gradually during the Roman Imperial period, with no abrupt change. This is due to the "original political structure" of the Greek cities, which were free and autonomous within the Roman World. The agora remains the archetypal symbol of civic life; and this civic pattern is spread out through the whole Eastern Empire.⁴⁶

We have also noticed that Cycladic cities must have been eager or obliged to adjust their agora to new economic realities (*makellos*), to new cultural habits (*thermae*), as well as to new worship (rooms for the Imperial cults). All these changes would be interpreted in terms of "Romanization", which is why several historians and archaeologists have interpreted the transformations of Roman *agorai* in Greece by using the *Urbs* of Rome and the imperial fora as the only criteria for comparison. However, the facts in the Cyclades, as in most Greek cities, prove to be far more complicated. Reality is distort-

44. MARC 1998, 14: "Le rôle politique de ces centres ne s'est pas évanoui, il s'est transformé". See also the conclusions of C.P. Dickenson in his paper.

45. MARTIN 1951, 274. See also MARC 1998, 13 and HELLMANN 2010, 290.

46. See the remarks in SARTRE 1997, 110-112.

ed when comparing the agora only to the Roman forum; and it cannot remain trapped by the sole concept of “Romanization”. The architectural evolution of the Cycladic *agorai* is, in spirit, very close to that of the other *agorai* in the Greek world. Indeed, with few exceptions, existing constructions are everywhere reused and modified in Roman times. From the well-documented cities in Greece and Asia Minor, we can draw a picture of such a common development at such a similar rate that we are obliged to reconsider the so-called insular decline. Given the example of Thera and its similarities with Ephesus, we may wonder if Cycladic *agorai* follow the Asian pattern – where cities enjoyed an unprecedented rise and dynamism in the Empire – rather than the Roman one. So, to qualify these evolutions in the *agorai* of the Cyclades, I would refer to notions such as “adaptability” or “modernization” rather than to the concept of “Romanization”. To my mind, these two notions have the advantage of keeping alive the invincible qualities of Greek autonomy, inventiveness and an ability to integrate. This adaptability may be stronger in an insular setting, since the islands had to manage by themselves, to find their own way of survival.

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η ΑΓΟΡΑ ΤΗΝ ΕΠΟΧΗ ΤΟΥ FORUM: ΤΟ ΠΑΡΑΔΕΙΓΜΑ ΤΩΝ ΚΥΚΛΑΔΩΝ ΣΤΟΥΣ ΡΩΜΑΪΚΟΥΣ ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΟΡΙΚΟΥΣ ΧΡΟΝΟΥΣ

Η άποψη ότι οι Κυκλάδες κατά την περίοδο της Ρωμαϊκής Αυτοκρατορίας γνώρισαν οικονομική και κοινωνική παρακμή, σε συνδυασμό με την κατάρρευση των δημοκρατικών θεσμών και των πολιτικών αξιών που χαρακτηρίζουν την πόλη των κλασικών χρόνων, είχε διαμορφωθεί ήδη από την αρχαιότητα. Σύμφωνα με αυτήν την άποψη, η παρακμή θα ήταν ιδιαίτερα εμφανής στην αρχιτεκτονική των δημόσιων κτηρίων και ειδικότερα στις αγορές των νησιωτικών πόλεων, οι οποίες θα είχαν μετατραπεί σε ερειπιώνες-σύμβολα της παρακμής της αρχαίας ελληνικής πόλης. Ωστόσο, η συγκεκριμένη αντίληψη για τις Κυκλάδες, που πηγάζει κυρίως από τις αναφορές στις αρχαίες πηγές, διαφέρει σημαντικά από την πραγματική εικόνα, όπως παρουσιάζεται από την αρχαιολογική μαρτυρία.

Για παράδειγμα, στις αγορές της Άνδρου, της Μήλου και της Θήρας έγιναν σημαντικές κατασκευές, επιδιορθώσεις, ακόμη και μνημειώδεις μετατροπές από τον 1ο έως και τον 3ο αι. μ.Χ. Πότε ακριβώς χρονολογούνται αυτές οι αρχιτεκτονικές μετατροπές; Πώς πρέπει να ερμηνεύσουμε αυτήν την αναδιοργάνωση που άλλαξε ριζικά τη μορφή των νησιωτικών αγορών των κλασικών χρόνων; Μπορούμε να διακρίνουμε ένα υπόδειγμα σε τοπικό επίπεδο ως προς την οργάνωση των ρωμαϊκών αγορών στις Κυκλάδες;