



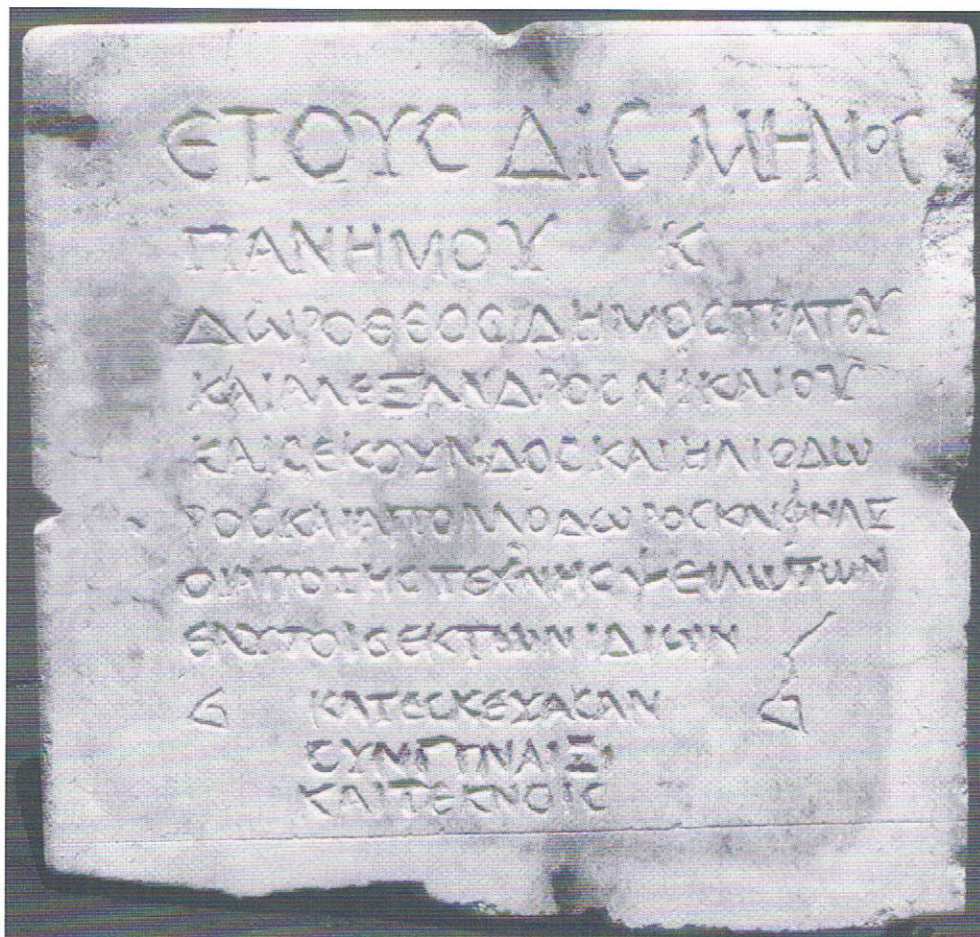
Ψειλωτής (Psilotes)

ARCHAEOLOGY & HISTORY IN THE
LEBANON ISSUE TWENTY : AUTUMN
2004, Pp. 75-82.

A NEW GREEK WORD FROM THE SANCTUARY OF ESHMUN AT SIDON

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* This contribution originates from the cooperation of the authors in the edition of yet unpublished material from the Eshmun sanctuary at Sidon. R.A.S. is occupied with the architectural testimonies, H. P. M. with the Phoenician, and R. W. with the Greek inscriptions. The principal authors of the following parts are easily recognizable. They are grateful to Andrew Lawrence for checking the English.



The history of the sanctuary of Eshmun at Sidon, around three kilometers to the north of the city, starts in the late 6th century BC ¹. After its foundation or, more likely, after its first architectural development under King Eshmunazar II and his mother Amashtart, and after a first monumental extension of the whole complex around 500 BC under their successor, Bodashtart, the sanctuary had its architectural peak in the first half of the 4th century BC. On the podium built by Bodashtart, which was around 25 m. high, there were two great buildings of Greek, probably Pentelic marble: an ionic propylon and an amphiprostylos with exterior façades also in the ionic order, but in the interior a cella of oriental type, reflecting the local cult tradition. In the same period, the sanctuary filled up with votives made from the same kind of imported stone ². The biggest and best-preserved marble votive, the so-called 'Tribune of Eshmun', decorated with two figured friezes, was also made around 350 BC ³. After that, in the early Hellenistic period, the area adjacent to the north-east of the Bodashtart Podium was built over with an extended sacred complex, whose two parts were joined together, and at the same time separated, by a common wall:

the so-called 'Pool of the Throne of Ashtart' and the 'Children's Frieze Building' ⁴. Not much later, the sanctuary seems to have started to decline. A small Byzantine church is the most recent building whose foundations have been preserved ⁵.

Whereas in the extra-mural sanctuary of Eshmun, the votives and buildings made from Greek marble in the western style had their peak in the fourth century, imported Greek marble had already been used a century earlier in the city itself and its periphery. There are some fragments of column of oriental type from some kind of palace, that had been found on the former fringe of the city. They later came to the Ford Collection and subsequently to the National Museum of Beyrouth. It was only during their recent restoration before the reopening of the Museum that their material was recognized: not local limestone, as had been assumed for a long time, but Greek marble ⁶. Already in the early fifth century, Phoenician type anthropoid sarcophagi had been made from marble of the Cyclades at Aradus and Sidon ⁷. The two earlier examples of the royal sarcophagi, decorated with reliefs, the so-called Satrap Sarcophagus and Lycian Sarcophagus, are also made from Cycladic marble ⁸, whereas the two younger ones, the Mourning-Women Sarcophagus and the Alexander Sarcophagus ⁹, are from Attic marble.

From the fifth century onward, therefore, Phoenician stone-masons and sculptors must have been familiar with elements of Greek iconography and style, which they had to fit into various kinds of work, ordered by the court and by wealthy merchants. They also had to learn to cope with the unusually hard stone, which splits in very particular ways. At first, Greek sculptors from the Cyclades must have helped them. Later on, architects and sculptors from Attica followed. These specialists taught the local apprentices how to deal with the imported marble and, if needed for a particular piece of art, how to use the iconographical and stylistic features of Greek art.

There are widely diverging opinions on the extent of influence by immigrant Greek artists on Phoenician art of the Persian era. One group of scholars suggests that an initial phase with immigrant Greek artists 'implanting' Greek ideas into Phoenician art was sufficient ¹⁰. Others are convinced that during the fifth and fourth centuries, migrating artists from Greece and Asia Minor periodically passed by the Phoenician cities to produce works ordered by wealthy local people ¹¹. For this group of scholars only a repeated presence of Greek artists can explain the heterogeneous bits and pieces of western influence in Phoenician sarcophagi and votives.

According to their respective position in this question, scholars have assumed that the immigrant Greeks joined the local workshops or founded their own workshops, employing local craftsmen and teaching them to work the marble. Of course, there was not the faintest hint as to the formation and structure of such workshops, and even less so of a professional organization of these stone-masons and sculptors. Now, a Greek inscription sheds at least a little light on these matters although its content refers to a rather late period of the sanctuary; it is dated to the year 214 of the Sidonian

era, i.e. 104 AD ¹². This inscription, too, belongs to the documents that have disappeared during the civil war.

Catherine Apicella, in her important work on Sidon in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, on the basis of the few epigraphical texts available in 2002 suggested that the local craftsmen had been organized in guilds or corporations (τέχνηαι) from the Hellenistic period onward ¹³. Her conclusions are based on the inscriptions of the cutlers dated to 48/47 BC and - thanks to a hint from Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais ¹⁴ - on an inscription of 104 AD mentioning a guild of ψειλωταί. Their name will be at the centre of the present article. In addition, Apicella refers to a passage in a papyrus from the Zenon Archive.

Therefore, as in Greece and Asia Minor, also the Sidonian craftsmen were forming guilds, of which in fact a few more have made their appearance in the meantime. These organizations allowed better control of work, workers, orders, and wages. The prefect of such a guild at Sidon, as elsewhere, had the title of an ἄρχων.

The most important study on these matters remains Franz Poland's '*Geschichte des griechischen Vereinswesens*', published 1909 as the 38th volume of '*Preisschriften gekrönt und herausgegeben von der Fürstlichen Jablonowskischen Gesellschaft*' ¹⁵. It makes it quite clear that the Sidonian τέχνηαι belong to the category of professional societies or – more precisely – guilds. For instance, a guild of kline-makers (i.e. makers of couches, beds), attested at Sidon, has been long known from Tralles ¹⁶. On the other hand, we may wonder why there is as yet no testimony of an organization of textile workers at Sidon, given the importance of the production of purple-dyed cloth and the frequent attestation of such organizations elsewhere ¹⁷. As for the stone-masons and sculptors, already Poland has stated the rarity of their guilds; besides λιθοξόοι on the island of Paros and μαρμαράριοι (of unknown location) he only cites some evidence for architects at Paphos on Cyprus at the time when the city was under Egyptian rule, and in Egypt itself ¹⁸.

Poland assumed that this kind of professional organizations had started in late Hellenistic times, already under Roman influence ¹⁹. On the basis of new finds we can now date the process to the early Hellenistic period, with some predecessors going back to the early fourth century BC ²⁰. At Sidon, too, however, the earliest testimonies are from the mid-first century BC. If similar organizations should have existed as early as the Persian era, we would have a chance to know more about the cooperation of Phoenicians and Greeks in Sidonian workshops.

The fact that most or all of the preserved inscriptions mentioning Sidonian guilds are precisely from the sanctuary of the healing god, Eshmun, may have its reason in the position of the sanctuary outside the city with its permanent building activity. On the other hand, it seems to have been typical of professional guilds to worship the principal city deities ²¹. An important part of their cult consisted of regular sacrifices with subsequent banquets,

which used to take place in so-called 'Hestiatoria', large dining halls within the precincts of the sanctuaries. In fact, in the northern part of the Eshmun sanctuary, within the dense network of walls, two buildings can be identified whose simple structure is typical of such dining halls. The entrance is on one of the short sides, and along the three other sides a pedestal served as support for the mattresses on which those invited to the banquet reclined ²². The smaller dining hall would house around 30, the bigger almost 50 symposiasts. Whether these halls were the property of particular guilds or could be hired, we do not know.

Most of the Greek inscriptions from the sanctuary of Eshmun are from late Hellenistic and early Roman times, especially the texts which mention the professional guilds. They give us some valuable insight into the social structures and ritual traditions of the time, albeit at a rather late period, when the sanctuary had long passed its heyday. Apart from the cutlers and klinemakers, mentioned above, there are the carpenters, the smiths, and not least, the craftsmen designated by the word *ψειλωταί*, which neither Rey-Coquais nor Apicella tried to translate. Here is the relevant inscription:

Plaque of white marble, inv. E 1042, found 1968 in square 13/12 ²³. Measures: 23 x 23 x 2.5 cm. Around the inscription, there is a thin line forming a rectangle 20 cm. wide and 18.5 cm. high. Letter forms: lunar sigma, cursive omega, upsilon partly without a vertical. Mentioned by Rey-Coquais ²⁴ and Apicella ²⁵, see fig. 1.

Ἔτους ΔΙC μηνὸς	In the year 214 (= 104 AD), in the month
Πανήμου Κ	Panemos, on the 20th (day),
Δωρόθεος Δημοστράτου	Dorotheos, son of Demonstratos,
καὶ Ἀλέξανδρος Νικαίου	and Alexandros, son of Nikaios,
καὶ Σεκουνδος καὶ Ἡλιόδω-	and Sekoundos, and Heliodo-
ρος καὶ Ἀπολλόδωρος καὶ ΦΗΛΞ	ros, and Apollodoros, and Ph....,
οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς τέχνης ψειλωτῶν	(members) of the guild of the Psilotai,
ἐαυτοῖς ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων	for themselves from their own means
[leaf] κατεσκεύασαν [leaf]	have built (this),
σὺν γυναιξὶ	with their wives
καὶ τέκνοις	and children.

The name starting with Φ is not clear. The readings Φηλξ (for Felix or Φύλαξ?) and Φήαξ (for Φαίαξ, with horizontal bar missing in the alpha) are both unsatisfactory.

Now, what profession do we have to seek behind the expression *ψειλωταί*? It is true, there is in Greek a verb *ψιλώω*, attested from early times, which is often spelled *ψει-* and has the meaning of 'shear, depilate'. This immediately reminds one of the barber's profession.

However, the verb *ψιλώω* as well as the noun for the respective action, *ψίλωσις*, are only very rarely used in the sense of 'shave' or 'shaving', respectively, and if they are, the hair of the entire head is referred to (thus:

'shear a bald head'). And, what is more, for the agent noun, *ψιλωτής*, which should have designated the professional, there is not a single attestation in antiquity apart from our inscription. The only testimony is by John Tzetzes in the late Byzantine period, but with a completely different meaning: 'those who write and pronounce the smooth breathing (*spiritus lenis*) in the word-initial position' (e.g. in ἐξ). 79 We are well informed about the Greek language of the Roman Empire and would expect such a noun to be attested somewhere if it had been in current use, especially since a profession organized in a guild and recorded in a prominent sanctuary of a famous city must have been a widespread phenomenon.

If we are already uneasy in view of the lack of more attestations of this noun, we have to be quite unsatisfied with its supposed, but unattested, meaning 'barber', a profession which hardly fits the context of the Eshmun sanctuary²⁶. The only way out of these difficulties was to assume an expression restricted to the local speech variety, and the obvious solution was a loan from the local North-West Semitic language. Thus, the classicist asked the semitist, and the latter's search for a suitable Semitic etymon was short and successful, as we shall see in a moment. Obviously, the Semitic word was borrowed into Greek and adapted morphologically (-τής) and perhaps even phonologically, as happens frequently in many languages. Obviously the Greek verb *ψιλόω* offered itself as a point of reference. The actions for which it was used, namely depilating animal skins and cutting off the branches and twigs of trees, resembled certain actions of the profession in question. In addition, the adaptation suggested itself because the agent noun *ψιλωτής* was not current in Greek.

The solution for *ψειλωταί* is the Semitic root *psl*, attested in Ugaritic, Punic, Palmyrene, Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac²⁷. There are as yet no attestations in Phoenician texts from Phoenicia or the colonies (except Carthage), but this can easily be due to the scarcity of texts from these regions. The verb *psl* means 'to cut stone', 'to sculpture'. Apart from the verb, there is a number of nominal derivatives, meaning 'cut stone', 'stone block', 'statue', 'divine effigy', 'stone-mason, sculptor'.

In administrative texts from Ugarit (= Ras Shamra, 14th century BC) there are *psl(m)* appearing as one of the guilds²⁸. They did not only work in stone. Apart from the *psl hzm*, who produce stone arrow-heads, there are *psl qšt*, who carve bows.

In the Old Testament²⁹, *päsäl* and *pasil* is used for an image of god (or rather, from the perspective of the authors, of an idol), which was either carved in wood, sometimes covered by a metal layer, or cut in stone. We also read that Moses was ordered by God to cut (*psl*, Exodus 34,1.4) a second pair of law tablets. In our context, however, the most important passage is the following: In order to build the Temple at Jerusalem, Solomon has to call Phoenician craftsmen. Among other things they have to help cut the huge blocks that will form the foundation of the building. First Book of Kings, 5,32: 'The builders of Solomon and those of Hiram (King of Tyrus) as well as

the people from Gebal (Byblus) then cut (*psl*) them (i.e. the blocks) and prepared wood and stone in order to build the temple.' This is an important testimony for the high reputation of Phoenician craftsmen, especially stone-masons and sculptors, in Israel.

Sculptors (*psl*) are particularly well represented in literary texts on tomb monuments at Hegra (Mada'in Salih, Saudi Arabia) from the first century AD ³⁰. Around thirty of approximately eighty tomb façades bear lengthy inscriptions in Nabataean dialect. Sixteen of them present the name or names of the sculptor(s) at the end. Thirteen of them were probably from one clan, that of *ʿAbdʿobodat*.

These are the most important attestations of *psl* used for Semitic stone-masons and sculptors. They are joined by the *ψειλωταί* at Sidon. Which derivative from the root *psl* was the model for the Greek borrowing, and where in the Near East and when precisely this happened, it is impossible to say. Nor can we know for certain from which Semitic language the word was taken. One point is clear, however: the word which was borrowed into Greek did not have a full vowel between the *p* and the *s*; at best there was a reduced vowel. (Unfortunately, there are many uncertainties as for the precise pronunciation of the spoken Semitic languages at that time.) Otherwise there could not have been the merger in Greek of *p* and *s* to *ψ* (*ps*). Now, such a realization of the root without a full vowel between *p* and *s* is typical of the Aramaic language family (including Syriac); see, for instance, Judaeo-Aramaic *pʿsilā* ('cut picture', 'statue of idol') and Syriac *psal* ('to cut stone').

If we try to corroborate the possibility of *ψειλωταί* being a loan word from Semitic, we may point to the opposite case of a Greek word borrowed into Aramaic. Greek *ψαλτήριον* (Latin *psalterium*) appears as *pʿsanterîn* in the Aramaic part of the Book of Daniel (chapter 3). Similar examples of Greek words beginning with *ψ* and borrowed into Semitic languages are to be found in post-Old Testament Hebrew and Aramaic as well as in Syriac.

Thus, we have been able to supplement the ancient Greek vocabulary by one item, the name of a profession of craftsmen, *ψειλωτής* 'stone-mason, sculptor', a word, however, which will not have been used in an area extending far beyond the boundaries of Sidon or at least beyond the Near East.

NOTES

1 As for the history of the sanctuary, the excavations, and the almost complete loss of the finds during the Lebanese civil war see, most recently, R. A. Stucky and H.-P. Mathys, 2000, "Le sanctuaire sidonien d'Echmoun à Bostan ech-Cheikh. Aperçu historique du site, des fouilles et des découvertes", *BAAL* 4, p. 123ff.; R. A. Stucky, 2002, "Das Heiligtum des Eschmun bei Sidon in vorhellenistischer Zeit", *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 118, p. 66ff.; *id.* 1998, "Le sanctuaire d'Echmoun à Sidon", *National Museum News* 7 pp. 3ff.

2 R. A. Stucky, 1993, *Die Skulpturen aus dem Eschmun-Heiligtum bei Sidon. Griechische, römische, kyprische und phönizische Statuen und Reliefs vom 6. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis zum 3. Jahrhundert n. Chr.*, Antike Kunst, Beiheft 17.

3 R. A. Stucky, 1984, *Tribune d'Echmoun. Ein griechischer Reliefzyklus des 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. in Sidon*, Antike Kunst, Beiheft 13; E. Will, 1985, "Un problème d'interprétation *græca*. La pseudo-tribune d'Echmoun à Sidon", *Syria* 62, p. 105ff.; Stucky (as n. 2), pp. 41ff., 109f., pls. 58–61.

4 R. A. Stucky, 1997, "Le bâtiment aux frises d'enfants du sanctuaire d'Echmoun à Sidon", *Topoi* 7, p. 915ff.; *id.*, "Die 'Piscine du trône d'Astarté' und das 'Bâtiment aux frises d'enfants'. Zwei frühhellenistische Bauten bei Sidon und ihre Friese", in: R. Bol and D. Kreikenbom (eds.), *Sepulkral- und Votivdenkmäler östlicher Mittelmeergebiete (7. Jh. v. Chr. – 1. Jh. n. Chr.). Kulturbegrenzungen im Spannungsfeld von Akzeptanz und Resistenz, Akten des Internationalen Symposiums Mainz, 1.–3.11.2001* (in print).

5 M. Dunand, 1973, "Le temple d'Echmoun à Sidon. Essai

de chronologie", *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth* 26, pp. 7ff., 25, fig. 1, xxvi.

6 See R. A. Stucky, 2004, "Éléments de construction à décor animalier de Sidon et leur place dans la culture phénicienne des époques perse et hellénistique ancienne", in *A Decade of Archaeology and History in the Lebanon*, pp. 214–223.

7 These are the most recent studies on this kind of Phoenician works: K. Lembke, 2001, "Phönizische anthropoide Sarkophage", *Damaszener Forschungen* 10; S. Frede, *Die phönizischen anthropoiden Sarkophage*. Teil 1. Fundgruppen und Bestattungskontexte, in: R. Bol (ed.), 2000, *Forschungen zur phönizisch-punischen und zyprischen Plastik*, 1.1; S. Frede, *Die phönizischen anthropoiden Sarkophage*, Teil 2. "Tradition - Rezeption - Wandel", in: R. Bol (ed.), 2002, *Forschungen zur phönizisch-punischen und zyprischen Plastik*, 1.2.

8 I. Kleemann, 1958, *Der Satrapensarkophag aus Sidon*, *Istanbuler Forschungen* 20; B. Schmidt-Dounas, 1985, *Der Lykische Sarkophag aus Sidon*, *Istanbuler Mitteilungen*, Beiheft 30.

9 R. Fleischer, 1983, *Der Klagefrauensarkophag aus Sidon*, *Istanbuler Forschungen* 34; W. Koenigs and H. Philipp, 'Proportion und Größe', in: E.-L. Schwandner (ed.), 1996, *Säule und Gebälk. Zu Struktur und Wandlungsprozess griechisch-römischer Architektur*, Diskussionen zur Archäologie und Baugeschichte 6, pp. 133ff.; V. v. Graeve, 1970, *Der Alexander-sarkophag und seine Werkstatt*, *Istanbuler Forschungen* 28.

10 J. Elayi, 1988, "Les sarcophages phéniciens d'époque perse", *Iranica Antiqua* 23, p. 275ff.; *ead.*, 1989, *Sidon. Cité autonome de l'empire perse*, pp. 257ff.

11 Stucky (n. 2), p. 53ff. and (n. 3), p. 50ff.; see also the opinions of the scholars cited in n. 7 on the anthropoid sarcophagi.

12 For the Sidonian era see, e.g., C. Clermont-Ganneau, 1890, "Inscription grecque de Sidon

(séance du 21 novembre 1890)", *CRAI*, p. 460; H. Seyrig, 1951, "Antiquités syriennes 47: Antiquités de Beth-Maré", *Syria*, 28, p. 110; J.-P. Rey-Coquais, 2000, 'Inscriptions inédites de Sidon', in: G. Paci (ed.), *Ἐπιγραφαί, Miscellanea epigrafica in onore di Lidio Gasperini*, *ICHNIA* 5, vol. 2, pp. 799–832, esp. 816–19.

13 C. Apicella, 2002, *Sidon aux époques hellénistique et romaine. Essai d'histoire urbaine*, Thèse, Ecole Doctorale 'Science de l'Homme et de la Société', Université François Rabelais, Tours, (typescript), p. 179ff.; see already *ead.*, 'Sidon à l'époque hellénistique: quelques problèmes méconnus', in: M. Sartre (ed.), 2003, *La Syrie hellénistique*, *Topoi*, Supplément 4, pp. 125ff.

14 J.-P. Rey-Coquais (as n. 12), pp. 817, and 831 n. 88.

15 F. Poland, 1909, *Geschichte des griechischen Vereinswesens*, esp. on the guilds, p. 116ff.

16 Poland (as n. 15), p. 118.

17 Poland (as n. 15), pp. 116f.

18 Poland (as n. 15), pp. 118f.

19 Poland (as n. 15), pp. 514ff.

20 A. Burford-Cooper, 1997, "Berufsvereine, II. Griechenland und Rom", in: *Der Neue Pauly* 2 p. 582f.; W. Hoepfner, 2003, *Der Koloss von Rhodos und die Bauten des Helios. Neue Forschungen zu einem der sieben Weltwunder*, p. 43ff. with further bibliography in n. 55f.

21 Poland (as n. 15), pp. 173ff.

22 R. A. Stucky et al., *Das Eschmun-Heiligtum bei Sidon. Architektur und Inschriften*, Antike Kunst, Beiheft 19 (in print, to be published in 2005); on the Hestiatoria in Greek and Oriental cults see E. Will, 1976, "Banquets et salles de banquet dans les cultes de la Grèce et de l'Empire

romain", in: *Mélanges d'Histoire Ancienne et d'Archéologie offerts à Paul Collart*, p. 353ff. (= *id.*, 1995, *De l'Euphrate au Rhin. Aspects de l'hellénisation et de la romanisation du Proche-Orient*, Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique 135, p. 393ff.); *id.*, 1985, "Le sanctuaire de la Déesse Syrienne", *Exploration Archéologique de Délos* 35, p. 114ff., fig. 62; *id.*, 1997, "Les salles de banquet de Palmyre et d'autres lieux" *Topoi* 7, p. 873ff.; C. Börker, 1983, *Festbankett und griechische Architektur*, Xenia 4.

23 A map of the sanctuary is found in M. Dunand (as n. 5), p. 13, fig. 1. Dunand always specified the squares with two numbers (separated by a slash), the first for the north-south, the second for the west-east coordinate.

24 J.-P. Rey-Coquais (as n. 14).

25 C. Apicella (as n. 13).

26 Although the barbers, too, were sometimes organized in corporations (see *CIL* iv. 743), and their profession may claim some connection with the healing god.

27 Ugaritic: see below, n. 28; Punic and Palmyrenan: see J. Hoftijzer, K. Jongeling, 1995, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions*, Handbook of Oriental Studies, vol. 21, p. 922f.; Hebrew: see below, n. 29; Aramaic: see J. Levy, 1963, *Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midraschim*, vol. 4, p. 71–3; Syriac: see J. Payne Smith (Mrs. Margoliouth) (ed.), 1998, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary Founded upon the Thesaurus Syriacus by R. Payne Smith*, pp. 451f.

28 See *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, Handbook of Oriental Studies, vol. 67, 2003, p. 685 (with bibliographical references).

29 L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner (transl. and ed. under the supervision of M.E.J. Richardson), 1996, *The Hebrew*

and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, vol. 3, p. 948f. For further discussion see Chr. Dohmen, 1989, *psl*, in: *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, vol. 6, pp. 688–97.

30 J. F. Healey (ed., with introd, transl., and comm.), 1993, "The Nabataean Tomb Inscriptions of Mada'in Salih", *Journal of Semitic Studies*, Supplement 1, p. 264, s.v. *psl* ('mason, stone-cutter, sculptor'). See also A. Schmidt-Colinet, 1983, "A Nabataean Family of Sculptors at Hegra", *Berytus* 31, pp. 95–102; A. Schmidt-Colinet, 1987, "The Mason's Workshop of Hegra, its Relations to Petra, and the Tomb of Syllaïos", in: A. Hadidi (ed.), *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan*, vol. 3, pp. 143–50.