1 Introduction

1.1 Brief history of the research

Despite its monumental scale, the theatre of ancient Messene has long been neglected by scholars. One possible reason for this neglect might be related to the quarrying of the seating blocks for the neighbouring Arsinoe Fountain and basilica church that started in Late Antiquity. When Pausanias visited the monumental theatre of ancient Messene, he said: »… and not far from the theatre, there is the sanctuary of Serapis and Isis«[1]. This detail is also indirectly mentioned by Plutarch, who was writing at a time when the theatre was in use[2]. Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether Pausanias's intention was to refer to the *ekklesiasterion* of the Asklepieion, sometimes also called the ›Small Theatre‹, which is located to the south of the agora[3].

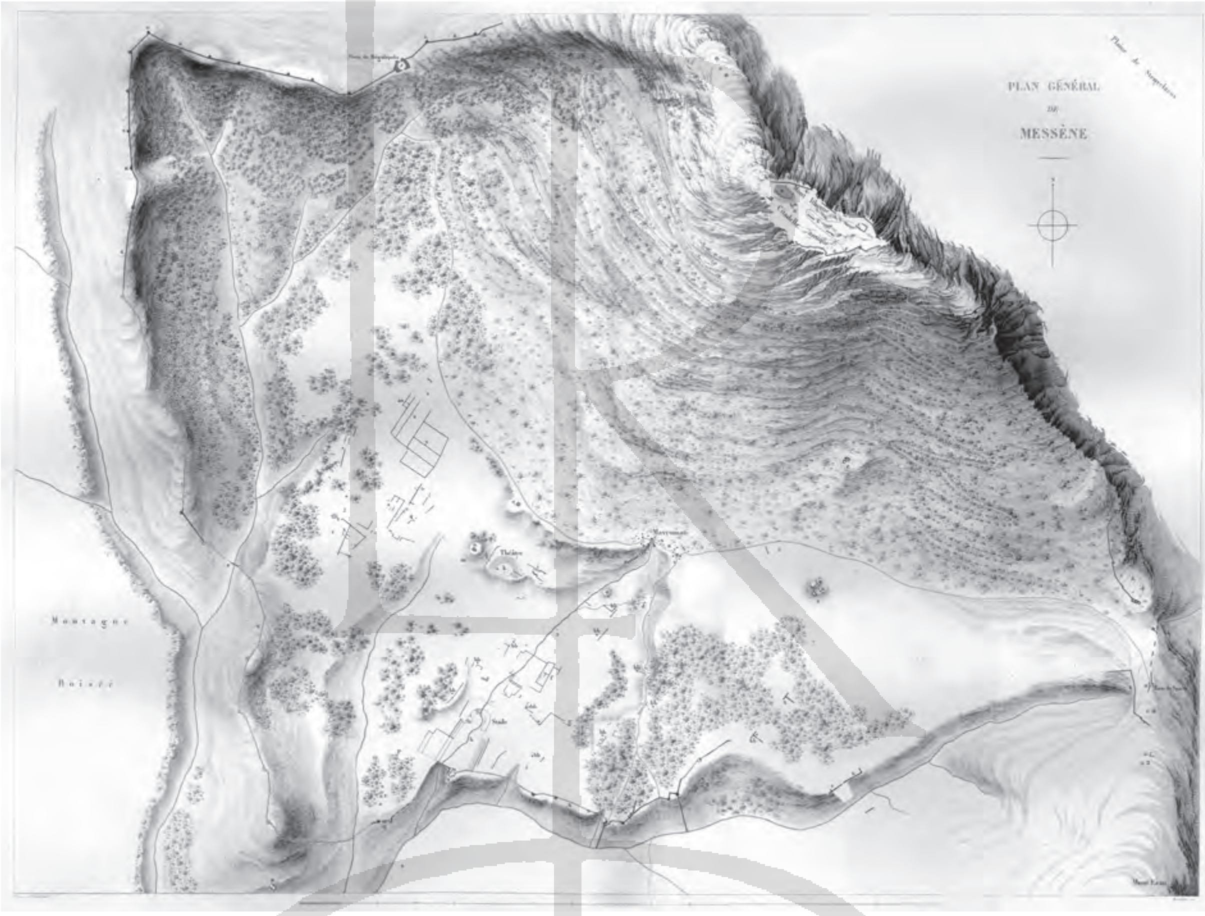
Early modern investigations at Messene were conducted by French travellers and reported in the early nineteenth century »Expédition scientifique de Morée«[4]. The French mission undertook a general investigation of the city, including a quick survey of monuments such as the Asklepieion, the theatre, the stadium, and the monumental Arcadian Gate[5]. The theatre was drawn in the city plan roughly in the correct position. Some sketches of the theatre were published, including the stepped entrance of the outer wall of the auditorium and a pair of architectural blocks *(fig. 1)*[6]. However, the German travellers who followed misinterpreted a ca. 60 m long and ca. 3 m high wall of the theatre as belonging to another building[7].

In 1895, the Archaeological Service of Athens began the systematic excavation of Messene. The first excavations were conducted by Georgios Oikonomos in 1909 and 1925. Anastasios Orlandos, then General Secretary of the Archaeological Service at Athens, led the excavations from 1958 to 1974. None of these excavations focused on the theatre.

In 1986, the excavation of the theatre began with Prof. Petros Themelis, head of the Society of Messenian Archaeological Studies. Initial systematic excavations started in 1996 in the southern part of the east lateral entrance to the orchestra *(parodos)*, and continued from 1998 to 2001 with the west *parodos*, the orchestra, the scene building and the west part of the auditorium *(koilon/cavea)*; parts of these areas were restored. The lower and upper parts of the auditorium (the *theatron* and the *epitheatron*, or the *ima* and the *summa cavea*), the orchestra and the retaining walls *(analemmata)* of the auditorium were restored by Themelis between 2007 and 2012. From 2007 to 2016, the author and the Architectural Team of Kumamoto University conducted fieldwork at Messene.

During the excavation of the theatre, from 1986 until 2010, annual reports and occasional interim reports were published by Themelis[8]. Some short reports and notices on the research taking place in Messene mentioned the theatre[9], and several authors have since written brief reports and preliminary studies on the theatre[10].

1 Paus. 4, 32, 6 (edition Jones – Ormerod 1926).
2 Plu. Arat. 49.
3 For the *ekklesiasterion*/odeum of the Asklepieion at Messene, see Birtachas 2008; Hayashida et al. 2013, 4 f.
4 Blouet et al. 1831, 23–51 pls. 18–47.
5 Blouet et al. 1831, fig. 22 k.
6 Blouet et al. 1831, pls. 36, 1. 2. 5. 6; 37, 5. 6.
7 Curtius 1851/1852, 123–129. 291–293; Vischer 1857, 447 f.; Baedeker 1908, 273–305. 341–354.
8 Themelis 1986a, 103; Themelis 1986b, 78; Themelis 1987a, 98; Themelis 1987b, 73; Themelis 1988a, 30; Themelis 1988b, 45–52; Themelis 1989a, 35; Themelis 1989b, 91 f.; Themelis 1994; Themelis 1996a, 50–52; Themelis 1996b, 153–156; Themelis 1997a, 36; Themelis 1997b, 85–89; Themelis 1998a, 41–43; Themelis 1998b, 102–106; Themelis 1998c, 10 f. plan 1 fig. 7; Themelis 1999a, 47; Themelis 1999b, 76–81; Themelis 2000a, 58–61; Themelis 2000b, 76–82; Themelis 2001a, 46–49; Themelis 2001b, 64–70; Themelis 2002a, 27–30; Themelis 2002b, 22–33; Themelis 2003a, 30–32; Themelis 2003b, 26–28; Themelis 2003c, 51 f. figs. 18. 19. 32; Themelis 2004a, 24; Themelis 2004b, 28 f.; Themelis 2005a, 41–44; Themelis 2005b, 39–48; Themelis 2006a, 39–41; Themelis 2006b, 23–43; Themelis 2007a, 42–46; Themelis 2007b, 24–28; Themelis 2008a, 46–52; Themelis 2008b, 33–37; Themelis 2009a, 42–46; Themelis 2009b, 62–69; Themelis 2010a, 29–32; Themelis 2010b, 53–58; Themelis 2010c; Themelis 2010d, 125; Themelis 2012; Themelis 2014, 49–63 figs. 19–41; Themelis 2015a; Themelis 2015b.
9 Sear 2006, 41. 45. 94. 401 f.; Müth 2007, 79–89; Spawforth 2012, 211–217.
10 Iwata et al. 2012; Yoshitake 2013b; Yoshitake 2013c; Yoshitake 2016b; Yoshitake 2019; Yoshitake – Yamazato 2019.



1 City plan of Messene, 1831

1.2 Objectives, organisation and methodology of the research

1.2.1 Objectives

The first objective of this study is to record the newly excavated theatre building by documenting the surviving architectural remains. The existing structures of the theatre are described in detail and illustrated by stone-by-stone line drawings, the architectural members that originally belonged to the theatre are catalogued, and all the well-preserved pieces are illustrated by photographs and line drawings.

The second objective is to propose a reconstruction of the theatre based on a careful examination of the extant architectural remains. Because a large number of architectural blocks were reused in later periods and only a limited number of blocks of the superstructure have survived, the reconstructions include hypothetical propositions and are in part based on comparisons with buildings contemporary to the theatre of Messene. Naturally, the degree of reliability of each reconstruction depends on the survival rate of the remains.

The third objective is to analyse the architectural ornamentation of the *scaenae frons* of the Roman scene building and to date its construction. Comparisons with architectural ornaments of the same period may provide us with a date for the construction of the scene building.

The fourth objective is to document the remains of the theatre and to determine how the different elements of the theatre may have functioned. The *skenotheke*, the mobile stage *(skene)*, the canvas roof *(velum)* and the stage curtain *(aulaeum)* are all accompanied by detailed illustrations and photographs. Their presumed original form and function are reconstructed based on literary sources and comparisons with contemporary examples.

The fifth objective is to examine the constructional aspects of the Messene theatre, including the building materials and techniques, the craftsmanship, the design, and the masons' marks.

The sixth and final objective is to propose a chronology for each building phase from the Late Classical to the Late Roman period. Since the theatre building was one of the largest monuments of the ancient city, its building phases will be considered alongside the construction of other major public buildings in the city.

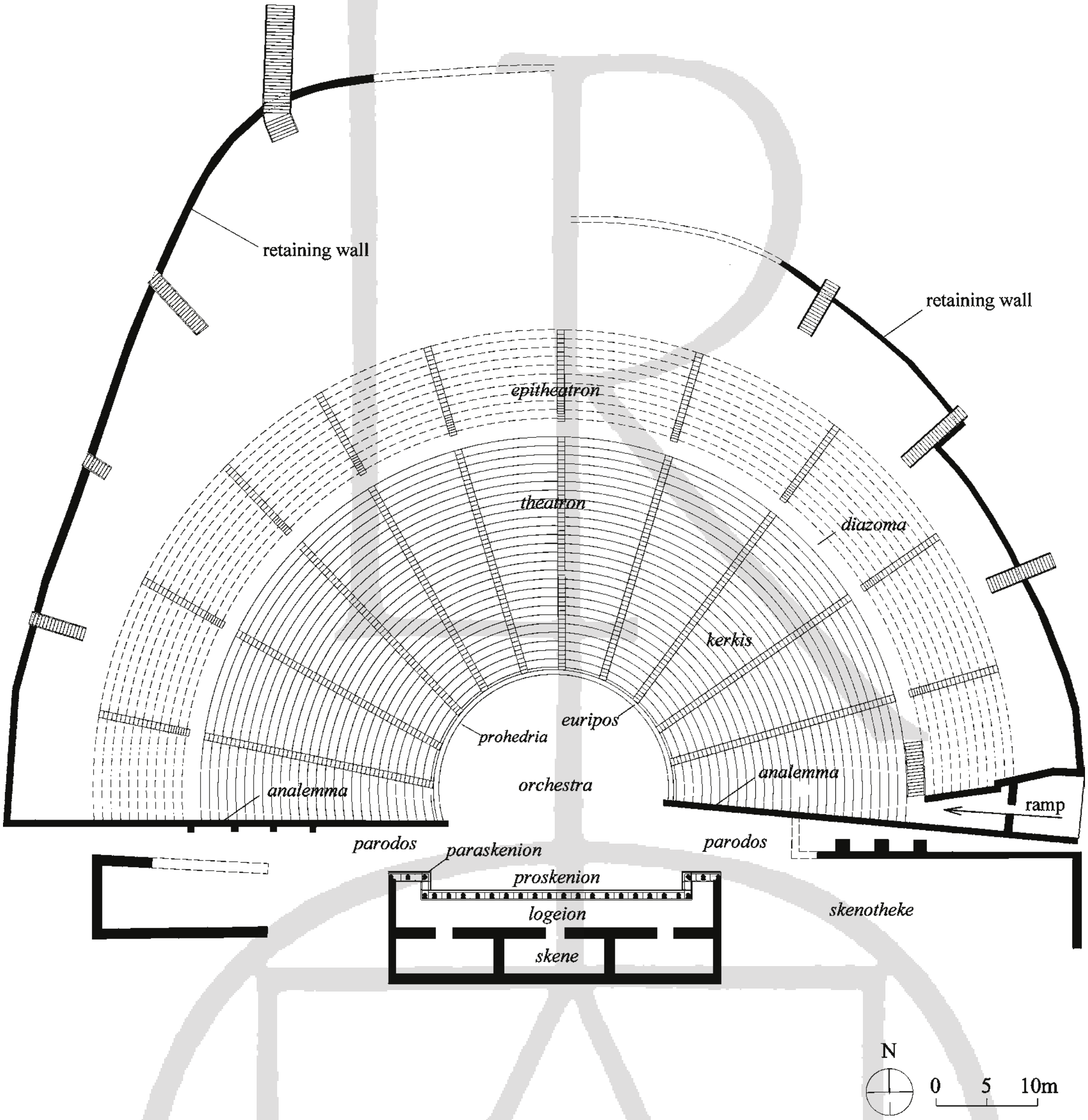
1.2.2 Organisation

The monograph is organised as follows. The location and remains of the theatre are presented in Chapter 2. The theatre at Messene consists of three parts: the round orchestra, the horseshoe-shaped auditorium, and the scene building. The architectural blocks of the superstructure of the theatre, discovered during excavations and in neighbouring ancient buildings, are presented in Chapter 3. The *skenotheke*, the large storage room for the mobile scenery, is discussed in Chapter 4. In addition, the function of the grooves in the floor of the building is described, and a reconstruction of the mobile stage is proposed. In Chapter 5, the reconstruction of the Hellenistic theatre is discussed, and the form of the Hellenistic scene building is reconstructed based on the construction materials found reused in later structures. In the Roman period, the theatre was adapted to the Roman fashion with the addition of a *scaenae frons*; these modifications are discussed in Chapter 6. The architectural ornamentation of the *scaenae frons* is studied in Chapter 7, which aims at providing a precise date for the Roman scene building. Two architectural features, the canvas roof *(velum)* and the stage curtain *(aulaeum)*, are discussed in detail in Chapter 8. The building materials, construction techniques, design, and masons' marks are analysed in Chapter 9. The building phases of the theatre are reconstructed in Chapter 10. Finally, the architectural significance of the Messene theatre, including the Hellenistic stone scene building, the mobile stage *(skene)* with its storage building *(skenotheke)*, and the Roman *scaenae frons*, is addressed in Chapter 11.

1.2.3 Methodology

The Architectural Team of Kumamoto University started its research in Messene in 2007, and the survey of the theatre began in 2008. Campaigns were conducted for about two months every summer until 2010; then, from 2011 until 2016, the data collected were sorted and analysed, the descriptions written, and the graphic documentation generated. The in-situ architectural remains of the theatre and of the pedestals of the *scaenae frons*, which are housed in the Archaeological Museum of Ancient Messene, were also drawn and recorded.

Since the measuring and recording methods used to collect data affect the reliability of the data and could also be a reference for other studies, we think it is necessary to present them in detail. On-site measurements were taken to create drawings of the elevation and vertical cross-sections of the theatre and the scene building, as well as drawings of major architectural blocks; both traditional manual measurement methods and digital photogrammetry were used. Specifically, in order to draw the plans of the remains, a total station was used to measure all the corners of each individual block of the theatre. Eslon tape measures, carpenter's squares, and plumb lines were then used to measure the offset from baseline and create a plan at a 1 : 50 scale. For the vertical cross-sections and elevations, digital photogrammetry was used to create orthographic images. The blocks excavated near the theatre were measured using metal tape measures, carpenter's squares, and straight rulers, and were drawn at a 1 : 10 or 1 : 5 scale.



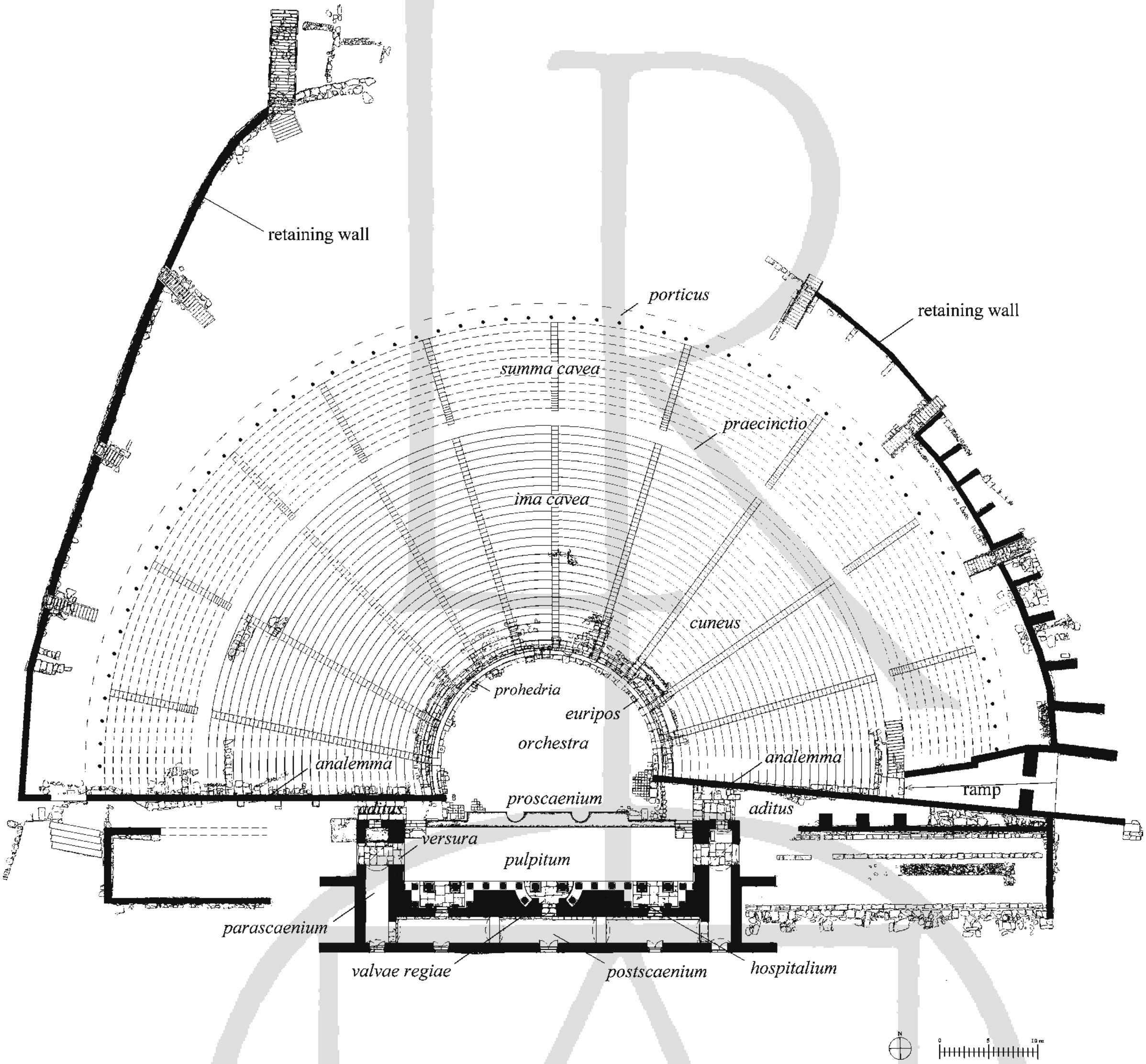
2 Terminology of the parts of the Greek theatre

1.3 Terminology

As von Gerkan pointed out a century ago, one of the major difficulties of studying ancient theatres is the terminology[11]. Most of our knowledge of theatre terminology comes from the works of ancient authors, especially Vitruvius's *De Architectura*, in which both Greek and Latin terms are used[12]. When theatres, like the one at Messene, are converted from the Hellenistic type to the Roman type, using Greek and Latin names to refer to specific elements can be misleading[13]. In accordance with recent research on theatre buildings, the following terminology is used here[14].

›Theatre‹ comes from the Greek word *theatron*, and means a place for viewing performances[15]. In this study, the term will refer to the building as a whole; ›theatrical performance‹ will refer to theatrical activities or plays. The Greek auditorium, called *koilon*, was usually divided into two zones, the *theatron* and the *epitheatron (fig. 2)*. Between these two zones, there

11 von Gerkan 1921, 121 f.
12 Vitr. 5, 6–9.
13 See chapter 5.
14 For the terminology of the Greek theatre, see Moretti – Mauduit 2015; for that of the Roman theatre, see Sear 2006, 1–10.
15 Vitr. 5, 7, 1–2.



3 Terminology of the parts of the Roman theatre

was a horizontal corridor called the *diazoma* (pl. *diazomata*) in Greek. The *theatron* and the *epitheatron* were commonly divided into a number of vertical areas, called *kerkides* (sg. *kerkis*). The *prohedrion* (pl. *prohedria*) was the first seating row, reserved for guests of honour sitting on benches with backrests or thrones. The orchestras of Greek Hellenistic theatres were usually circular, and not used for acting but for dancing[16]. Occasionally, one or more altars were placed in the orchestra. Around the orchestra ran a narrow channel or drain called *euripos*. In Greek theatres, the scene building was never as high as in Roman theatres, and it was separated from the auditorium by open-air lateral passages called *parodoi* (sg. *parodos*). Finally, the extremities of the *theatron* and *epitheatron* were supported by massive retaining walls called *analemmata* (sg. *analemma*). The scene building usually consisted of two parts, the *skene* and the *proskenion*[17]. The *proskenion* was the front wall of the high stage, supported by engaged semi-columns framing wooden painted panels, the *pinakes*, or small doors that provided access to storage spaces. The façade of the *proskenion* was usually decorated by a Doric or Ionic order. Occasionally, the *proskenion* was equipped with two lateral walls making a return at both of its ends, the *paraskenia* (sg. *paraskenion*). The high stage was called the *logeion*, meaning a ›place of speech‹. The *hyposkenion*, which means ›under the

16 Dörpfeld – Reisch 1896, 277; Öztürk 2009, 12.

17 Dörpfeld – Reisch 1896, 379.

skene‹, was a space accessible from the colonnade or the lateral entrances of the *proskenion*[18]. Behind the *proskenion* stood a two-storey building, the *skene*, of which only the upper storey, the *episkenion*, was visible to the audience. The façade of the *skene* was a relatively high wall, with openings referred to as the *thyromata* (sg. *thyroma*). In the Early Hellenistic period, the orchestra was the place in front of the *proskenion* where acting and dancing took place, whereas at the end of the Hellenistic period, performances took place on the *proskenion* or *logeion*, in front of the *thyromata*[19].

Roman theatres usually adopt a different terminology *(fig. 3)*. The term *cavea* is used for the place where the audience sat during the Imperial period. The *cavea* tended to be subdivided into two or three horizontal parts – the *ima*, *media* and *summa cavea* – by broad corridors called *praecinctiones* (sg. *praecinctio*). Theatres had often some broad steps running around the rim of the orchestra, separated from the rest of the auditorium by a low stone wall or parapet called *balteus* (pl. *baltei*)[20]. In many Roman theatres, there was a colonnade, called a *porticus* by Vitruvius[21], running along the top of the *cavea*. The *cavea* was also subdivided vertically into *cunei* (sg. *cuneus*). The lateral entrances, between the scene building and the *cavea*, were called the *aditus maximi* (sg. *aditus maximus*). The *aditus maximi* were vaulted and were usually covered by seating platforms, called *tribunalia*, reserved for the praetors. The Roman stage area was called the *proscaenium*, equivalent to the Greek word *proskenion*. Along the foot of the *proscaenium* wall, an *aulaeum* (pl. *aulaea*) or drop curtain, which consisted of a series of sheets of fabric supported by wooden posts set up at regular intervals, was stored. The word *pulpitum* refers to the platform on which the actors stood. The area under the stage was called the *hyposcaenium*, equivalent to the Greek word *hyposkenion*. The back wall of the stage reached the same height as the top of the *cavea*. The term *scaenae frons* refers to the façade of the two- or three-storey scene building, itself decorated by the *columnatio*, which refers to several tiers of columnar orders. The *scaenae frons* wall was pierced by three doorways; Vitruvius referred to the lateral doorways as *hospitalia* (sg. *hospitalium*), and to the central one as *valvae regiae*[22]*.* The central *valvae regiae* were the main passageway, used by the principal actor; the right *hospitalium* (as seen from the auditorium) was used by the second-most important actor and the door to the left was used by less important people[23]. The *versurae* (sg. *versura*) are the lateral entrances to the Roman stage[24], opening into the *parascaenia* (sg. *parascaenium*), which are the corridors on each side of the stage. *Postscaenium* is a modern term used in the archaeological literature to refer to the built-up part of the scene building behind the *scaenae frons* façade. The auditorium was often covered by awning structures, or *vela* (sg. *velum*), especially during the hot season.

18 It was long thought that the term προσκήνιον originally referred only to the colonnade of the *skene*, but modern scholars have expanded the meaning of the term *proskenion* to refer to the terrace roof (i.e. the *logeion*) and the colonnade that supports it. The latter meaning is adopted in this study, see Moretti 2014, 127.
19 Dörpfeld – Reisch 1896, 379; von Gerkan 1921, 123; Öztürk 2009, 12.
20 Sear 2006, 5.
21 Vitr. 5, 6, 4.
22 Vitr. 5, 6, 8.
23 Beare 1950, 258–298.
24 Sear 2006, 9. The word *versurae*, sometimes used as a synonym of *parascaenia*, refers to the two projecting wings at either end of the scene building, but can also designate more specifically the two projecting walls that delimit the short sides of the stage. Vitruvius speaks of the *versurae procurrentes* which provide the two lateral entrances to the stage (Vitr. 5, 6, 8).

2 Theatre

2.1 Mentions of the theatre in ancient literature

The ancient district of Messenia comprises the plains of the southern tip of the Peloponnese. It is separated from Laconia by mountains to the east and north. It was ruled for many years by the Laconians of Sparta and was eventually freed from their domination following the battle of Leuctra in 371 B.C. Soon after, in 369 B.C., the city of Messene was founded by Epaminondas to become the capital of Messenia[25].

Pausanias, when passing through Messene, saw the theatre and an impressive monument nearby: »Not far from the theatre is a sanctuary of Serapis and Isis.«[26] This Iseion (Sanctuary of Isis) has been tentatively identified with the building located to the south of the theatre *(fig. 5)*.

According to Plutarch, the theatre was the scene of the critical meeting between Philip V of Macedon and Aratus, general of the Achaean League, in 215/214 B.C., one day after a popular revolt that led to the massacre of city officials and 200 prosperous citizens (Plu. Arat. 50, 1–3):

> After this outrageous deed of Philip's, and while he was striving more than ever to set the Messenians by the ears, Aratus reached the city. He showed clearly that he was indignant himself, and would not check his son when he bitterly reproached and reviled Philip. Now, it would seem that the young man was a lover of Philip; and so, at this time, he told Philip, among other things, that he no longer thought him fair to look upon, after so foul a deed, but the most repulsive of men. Philip made no answer to him, although it was expected that he would, since in his anger he had many times cried out savagely while the young man was speaking, but as he meekly submitted to what had been said and was a person of moderation and not above the ordinary citizen, he gave the elder Aratus his hand, led him forth from the theatre, and brought him to the Ithomatas in order to sacrifice to Zeus and take a view of the place.[27]

From a passage in Livy, we learn that the theatre was not only a place for political meetings and gathering of the curia, but also a public assembly hall[28]. The inhabitants of the Messenian capital also gathered in the theatre in 183 B.C. to see the famous general of the Achaean League, Philopoemen of Megalopolis, who was captured during a battle won by the Messenians:

> So the crowd had blocked the gate, while each for himself, if he had not seen it with his own eyes, would scarcely accept so great a thing as true. The men who were bringing Philopoemen were hardly able to thrust aside the bystanders and enter the gate. An equally crowded mass had blocked the rest of the way; and when the largest part had been excluded from the spectacle, they suddenly filled the theatre, which adjoined the street, and with one voice all demanded that he should be brought there to be seen by the people. The magistrates and leading citizens, fearing that pity for so great a man, present before their eyes, might cause some disturbance, since regret at his former greatness compared with his present fortune would move some and recollection of his tremendous services others, place him in sight but at a distance, and then speedily removed him from the eyes of men, the praetor Diocrates saying that there were matters pertaining to the final issue of the war on which the magistrates wished to question him. Then, after taking him to the senate-house and calling the council, they began their deliberations.[29]

The functional character of the theatre described in these passages is also confirmed by an inscription dated to the first century A.D. and which mentioned the theatre[30].

25 Paus. 4, 27, 9; Themelis 1998c, 5; Themelis 2003c, 40; Themelis 2010c, 7 f.; Müth 2007, 9–11.
26 Paus. 4, 32, 6 (edition Jones – Ormerod 1926).
27 Plu. Arat., 49 (edition Perrin 1926).
28 Liv. 11, 39, 8–12.
29 Liv. 11, 39, 9–12 (translation Sage 1958).
30 IG V 2, 1432; Themelis 1998b, 102.

2.2 Location

Messene is located on the eastern flanks of the mountains of Messenia, overlooking the surrounding plains. The acropolis is located on Mount Ithome, and the city extends southwards along its gentle slopes *(fig. 4)*. A stretch of the city wall a few hundred metres long still stands in very good condition[31]. Excavations have so far uncovered the agora at the centre of the city, the theatre to its northwest, the temple of Asklepios directly to its south, and further south, the gymnasion complex with its stadium *(fig. 5)*. Judging from the surface area encompassed by the city walls, the ancient population could have amounted to a few thousands, who left when the city of Messene met its downfall[32].

The theatre is located on a plot of land naturally sloping from north to south[33]. The auditorium is partly hewn out of the natural bedrock and partly raised on an artificial fill of stones enclosed within a grid of walls. The theatre faces almost straight south (1 degree anticlockwise), without following the town grid orientation *(fig. 4)*. It is 34 m west from the northwest corner of the agora[34]. The Arsinoe Fountain is to the northeast of the theatre *(figs. 5. 6)*, and a paved road leads from the north of the theatre to the agora. Like other Greco-Roman theatres, the Messene theatre consists of three parts: the orchestra, the auditorium, and the scene building. Recent excavations have brought to light the remains of the orchestra, the foundations of the scene building, the *analemmata*, and the retaining wall of the auditorium, especially its western half. The excavations in the orchestra brought to light the architectural blocks from the auditorium and the scene building, which had collapsed there[35]. Most of the seat blocks broke in several fragments except for those on the lowest part of the *koilon* along the *euripos*; they were all discovered scattered in the orchestra and in the surrounding area, together with architectural fragments from the scene building *(figs. 7. 8 pl. 1, 1)*.

An overall observation of the auditorium revealed that although it had originally been designed as a *theatron* (consisting only of the *ima cavea*) with a horseshoe shape, in the Greek style, there are traces suggesting that it was later changed into a Roman-style semicircular *cavea* to which was added an *epitheatron (summa cavea)*. The Hellenistic scene building also appears to have been demolished and turned into a huge scene building during the Imperial period. The transformations that saw the theatre change from a Hellenistic into a Roman form are one of the main points of this research[36].

2.3 State of preservation

2.3.1 Orchestra

The orchestra[37], with an internal diameter of 21.6 m (or 23.7 m including the *euripos*), is paved with square stone slabs measuring 0.20 m on the side. These slabs are made of rose, white, or grey marble, like those of the *ekklesiasterion* (also known as odeum) of the Asklepieion[38]. An altar consisting of a flat slab and two jambs was restored and is now displayed in the northeastern part of the orchestra *(fig. 76 pls. 12, 2. 3; 16, 2)*. The *euripos* is a channel running along the circular ring of the orchestra and

31 Recent research suggests that the construction of the entire circuit of fortifications may have required two to three years: Bessac – Müth 2020.

32 Roebuck estimated that the population of the whole of Messenia was more than 100,000: Roebuck 1945, 163.

33 Müth 2007, 44; Karali – Tzortzaki 2008, 4 f.

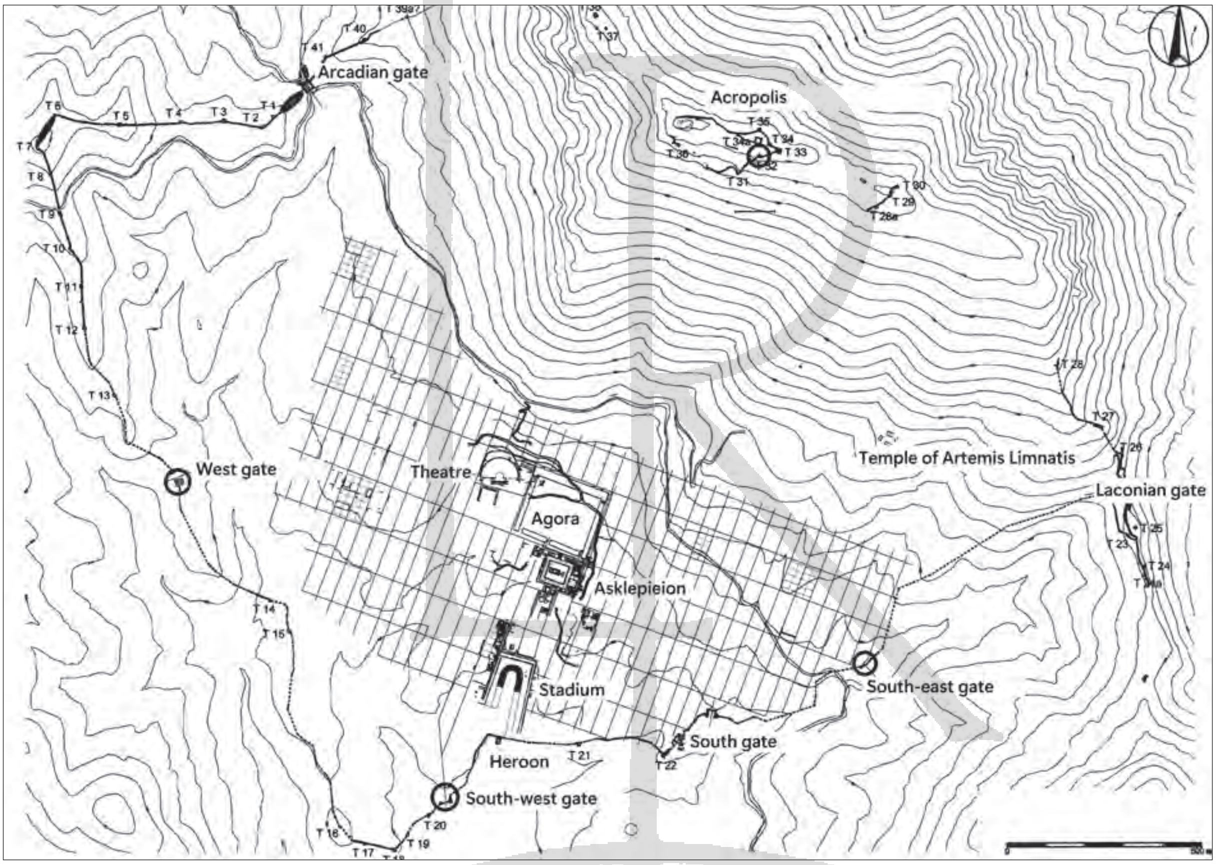
34 For the location of the agora next to the theatre of Messene: Müth 2007, 44; Karali – Tzortzaki 2008, 2; Sielhorst 2015, 100 f. 251 figs. 16–18.

35 Themelis 1986b, fig. 3; Themelis 1987b, 75.

36 On the issue of the Romanisation of Greek theatres in mainland Greece, see Isler 2017, 574–587. For a brief chronological overview on this topic, see Di Napoli 2015.

37 Themelis 2003a, 39 fig. 33; Themelis 2004a, 41 fig. 36; Themelis 2005b, 42 pl. 24 α; Themelis 2005a, 41 fig. 34; Themelis 2006b, 43 figs. 34. 35; Themelis 2006a, 39 fig. 33; Themelis 2007b, 24 f. fig. 23 β; Themelis 2007a, 44 fig. 40; Karali – Tzortzaki 2008, 6 figs. 9. 10; Themelis 2008a, 46 fig. 47; Themelis 2008b, pl. 33 α; Themelis 2010a, 29 f. fig. 19; Themelis 2010c, 24 fig. 20; Themelis 2015a, 205 fig. 1 b; Themelis 2015b, 51 fig. 21.

38 Themelis 2003c, 69–72 fig. 54; Birtachas 2008; Themelis 2010c, 40–44; Themelis 2015b, 83–86, esp. figs. 72. 74. 76.



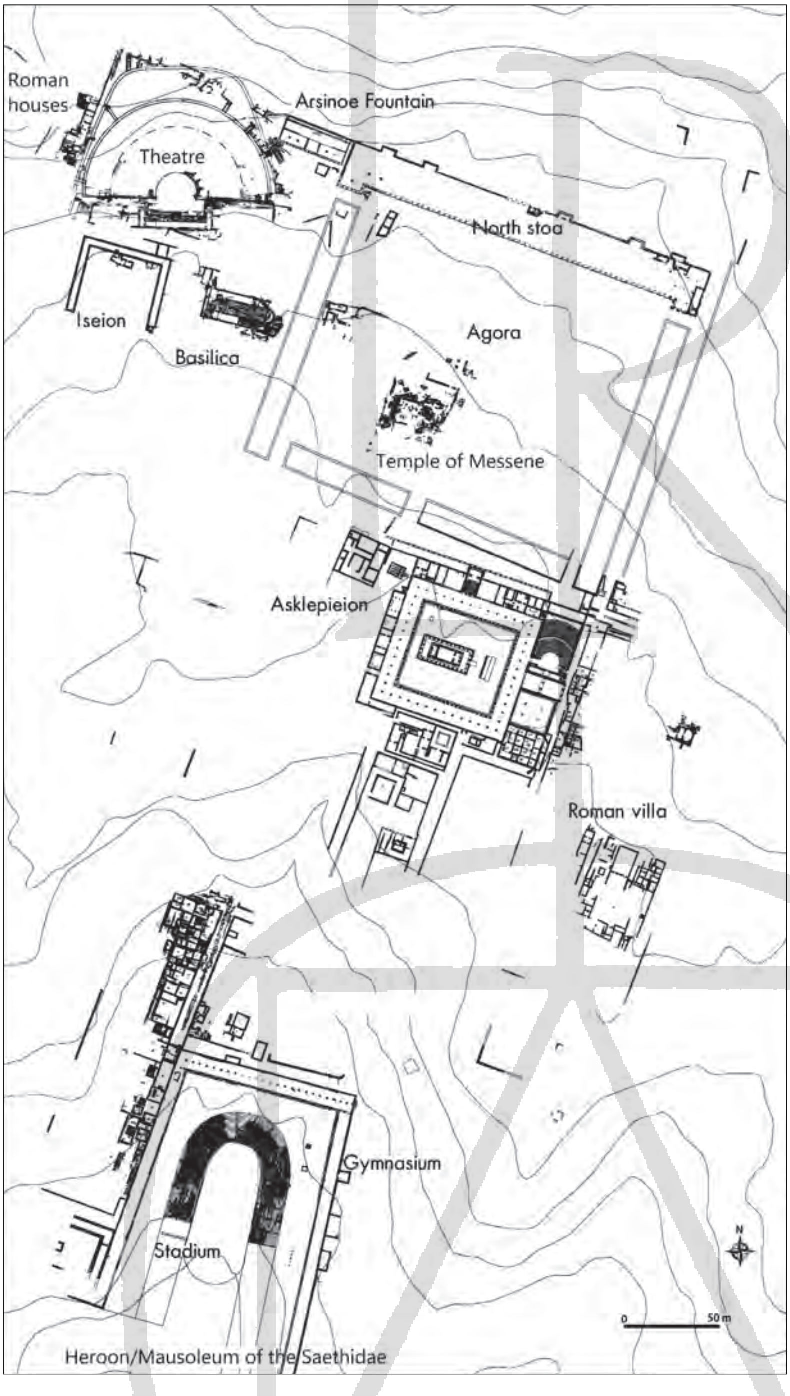
4 City plan of Messene (scale 1 : 20 000)

whose aim was to gather the water that gushed out at the bottom of the auditorium and lead it away from the orchestra[39]. Nowadays, groundwater still seasonally pours out of the ground, so the channel is still functional. The channel has a width of ca. 0.5 m. The gutter channel is made of squared *poros* stone blocks with a width of ca. 0.40 m. Every 2.7 to 3.8 m along the *euripos*, the blocks bear a 0.10–0.15 m long hole; these were presumably used for the posts supporting the *velum* (*pls. 12, 2; 14, 3* and *pl. I*)[40]. Additionally, four statue bases are still in place, two of which bear inscriptions (**14564**. **14565**: *pls. 15, 1; 16, 3*). To the east of the centre of the orchestra, a small sink-shaped cistern remains. On the west side, two freestanding thrones have been restored (**X2**. **X3**: *figs. 77. 78 pls. 14, 3–16, 1*)[41], hinting that similar thrones were probably set on either side of every stairway in the auditorium.

2.3.2 *Koilon (cavea)* and its retaining wall

Most of the seats of the *koilon* have been destroyed; those that are preserved in situ are all found along the orchestra's periphery[42]. About a thousand fragments of seat blocks have been discovered, most of which were put back in place on the lower part of the *koilon* before 2015[43]. Ten stairways divide the *koilon* into eleven *kerkides (fig. 8 pl. I)*. There are two types of

39 Karali – Tzortzaki 2008, 6 fig. 9; Themelis 2010c, 35 fig. 50; Themelis 2015b, 51 fig. 21.
40 See chapter 7, p. 89; Karali – Tzortzaki 2008, 7 figs. 13. 14.
41 The thrones were discovered and restored in 2005. See Themelis 2005a, 44 fig. 37; Themelis 2005b, 42 pl. 23 β. γ; Karali – Tzortzaki 2008, 7 fig. 15, appendix I figs. 2, 9; 2, 20; Themelis 2010c, fig. 23.
42 Themelis 2015a, 205 fig. 2; Themelis 2015b, fig. 21 (after modern restoration work). For the situation at the end of the excavations, see Karali – Tzortzaki 2008, 7 f. figs. 11–15; Themelis 2010c, 24 fig. 21.
43 On the excavation of the seat blocks, see Müth 2007, 81 f. fig. 28; Karali – Tzortzaki 2008, 4 fig. 1; Themelis 2010c, 36 figs. 51. 53.



5 Plan of the city centre of Messene (scale 1 : 4000)

stone seats: monolithic seats *(figs. 79–87 pl. 59, 3–7)* and seats consisting of a horizontal slab supported by a ca. 0.10-m wide vertical front panel *(pl. 13, 2. 3)*.

Although the whole of the auditorium made use of the natural slope of the hill, the upper part of the *koilon*, or *epitheatron*, was built above ground and a massive retaining wall was erected to support the embankment. Until 2008, excavations were conducted against the outer face of the auditorium, uncovering remains of the retaining wall stretching for more than 60 m *(pl. 22, 1–3)*[44]. Between the Roman houses with mosaic floors *(fig. 5)* and the west retaining wall,

44 The western retaining wall was already exposed before the excavation in 1986 led by Prof. Petros Themelis: Themelis 1986b, 78 figs. 4. 5; Themelis 1987a, 98 f. figs. 119. 120; Themelis 1987b, fig. 1 pls. 34. 35; Karali – Tzortzaki 2008, fig. 3, 20 (the elevation was drawn in 1987).