

New Observations on the Dionysian Scene Mosaic Panels in the House of the Triumph of Dionysus in Daphne-Antiocheia: Iconographic Description of the *Periaktos* System in the Decorative Architecture of the Theatre Stage Building

Antiocheia Dionysos Zaferi Evi'ndeki Dionysos Sahneli Mozaik Panoları Üzerine Yeni Gözlemler: Tiyatro Sahne Binasının Dekor Mimarisinde *Periaktos* Sisteminin İkonografik Betimlemesi

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Abstract


In the ancient settlement of Daphne in the Harbiye district of Antakya, excavations carried out by American and French teams between 1932 and 1940 uncovered Roman ruins such as a theatre, church and villa. In the publications on the mosaic, the objects on either side of the actors and masks in the L-shaped panels of the Dionysian centre panel in the Dionysian Victory House have been interpreted as boxes and drawers. With this study, it has been seen that the mosaic panel of the Roman villa called "The House of the Triumph of Dionysus", where a theatrical theme related to the god Dionysos is processed, is the first known iconographic expression of the wooden, prismatic rotating decor system periaktos found in the theatre stage building. We know about the periaktos from the accounts of Vitruvius. Since this decor system was made of wood, it was not possible to find archaeological remains of it. The only archaeological data on the periaktos system is the stone platform on which the periaktos system sits in the stage building of the Kaunos theatre discovered by Prof. Varkıvañç. With this study, the pictorial expression of the stage decor system on mosaics, which we know from Vitruvius' reports, has also been identified.

Keywords: Antioch-Daphne mosaics, Ancient Greco-Roman theatre, stage building architecture, periaktos, stage decor.

Öz

Antakya'nın Harbiye ilçesinde bulunan Daphne antik yerleşiminde, 1932-1940 yılları arasında Amerikan ve Fransız ekipleri tarafından yapılan kazılarda tiyatro, kilise ve villa gibi Roma kalıntıları ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Mozaik üzerine yapılan yayınlarda, Dionysos Zafer Evi'ndeki Dionysos merkez panelinin L biçimli panellerinde oyuncuların ve maskelerin her iki yanındaki objeler kutu ve çekmece olarak yorumlanmıştır. Bu çalışmayla, tanrı Dionysos ile ilgili bir tiyatro temasının işlendiği "Dionysos'un Zafer Evi" adlı Roma villasının mozaik panelinin, tiyatro sahne binasında bulunan ahşap, prizmatik dönen dekor sistemi periaktosunun bilinen ilk ikonografik ifadesi olduğu görülmüştür. Periaktosu Vitruvius'un anlatımlarından biliyoruz. Bu dekor sistemi ahşaptan yapıldığı için arkeolojik kalıntısına rastlamak mümkün olmamıştır. Periaktos sistemine ilişkin tek arkeolojik veri, Prof. Varkıvañç tarafından keşfedilen Kaunos tiyatrosunun sahne binasında periaktos sisteminin oturduğu taş platformdur. Bu çalışmayla Vitruvius'un raporlarından bildiğimiz sahne dekor sisteminin mozaikler üzerindeki resimsel anlatımı da tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Antakya-Daphne mozaikleri, Antik Yunan-Roma tiyatrosu, sahne binası mimarisi, periaktos, sahne dekoru.

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Daphne lies 6 kilometres from Antiocheia (Poccardi 2020: 13-26), in a region rich in water resources in the south-west (Wilber 1938a: 49-56, city map II and VIII). Malalas mentions that the city of Daphne was founded outside the sacred grove and the temple of Athena, and that the temple of Apollo was at the centre of the sacred grove (Libanius, Or. 11.96, 11.236), and that this place was called Daphnaean. (Malalas <http://www.calameo.com/books/000675905f2f4bf509d49>, access date: 31.05.2014).

The excavations at Daphne, near Antiocheia Ad Orontes, were carried out by a commission set up by American and French excavation teams in the years 1932-1940 (Kenfield 2014: 41; Meyer 2020: 35-70; Özdilek 2014: 219-250). During the excavations carried out in areas close to water springs at Harbiye between 1932 and 1940, structures belonging to theatre (Wilber 1938b: 57-95) and Roman villas were uncovered. The Daphne theatre, church (Downey 1934: 107-113; Kenfield 2014: 43;) and Roman villas were also excavated.

Libanius of Antioch speaks of Daphne's sacrifices to Apollo, the Olympic games and theatre festivals. According to Libanius, Daphne was the centre of festivals and theatrical performances entertainment (Libanius, Or. 11.266). The growing interest in the city in Roman times led to the region being urbanised according to a regular plan. Already, Antioch, which enjoyed a high level of prosperity, was one of the three great cities of the Empire - Rome and Alexandria - and was of a high intellectual level at the time. One of the very few examples of amphitheatres in Asia Minor, a propaganda tool for the Roman Empire, was built in Antioch in Caesar's time (Golvin 1988: 42). The presence of numerous Roman theatres in Antioch and Daphne (Wilber 1938b: 57-95) indicates the existence of a dynamic cultural life. Other structures that show its high intellectual level and wealth are its villas adorned with mosaics that rival those of Rome (Michon 1934: 255-256). Daphne is a seaside resort where the wealthy families of Antioch would retire during the festivities. The information about life and buildings in the city described on the border of the Yaktō Megalopsychia mosaic is important for showing the splendor of Roman life in Daphne (Levi 1947: 279-283). The mosaics of Daphne provide us with information about everyday life. They also provide information about the art and music of theatre in mythological stories, particularly the Dionysian mosaics.

In this study, the mosaic found in the Roman villa "House of the Triumph of Dionysus" near Daphne (Fig. 1), studied by Doro Levi, will be examined in terms of *periaktos* arrangements in ancient theatre stage buildings. Two of the figurative panels decorating the triclinium-plan reception room of the House of the Triumph of Dionysus, contain Dionysian masks placed between two triangular prisms, previously identified as drawers, boxes and half-open doors. We propose to interpret these panels as *periaktoi*, a system of prismatic decoration that changes according to the play.

Periaktoi Iconography in the Mosaics of the Dionysiac Scene¹:

The pavimental decoration in the *triclinium* has a classic U + T configuration. The central panel is badly damaged and surrounded by seven figured panels. The bar of the T is a rectangular panel depicting a Dionysian procession (Levi

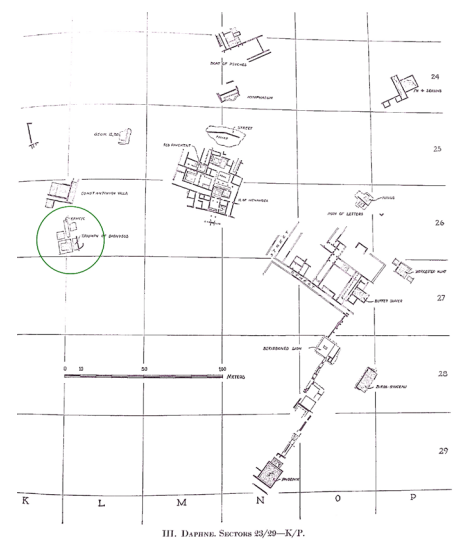


Figure 1
Plan of Daphne (Levi 1947: pl. III).

¹ "Le system Periaktos dans la mosaïque du Triomphe de Dionysos" was presented by the authors as a poster at XV^e Colloque de l'Association Internationale pour l'Étude de la Mosaïque Antique (AIEMA) in Lyon 2022. In this article, the mechanical decorations in the theatre stage buildings are examined and comparisons are made with examples of theatre stage buildings and theatre plays on vase paintings and mosaics in visual arts.

Figure 2a
The mosaic of the House of the Triumph of Dionysus in Daphne (© Hatay Archaeology Museum).

Figure 2b
The House of the Triumph of Dionysus in Daphne (Levi 1947: pl. III modified).

1947: 91-94; Cimok 2000: 90-93) (Figs. 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b and 4). It is dated second century AD.

The *triclinium* had the figured panels arranged in a T-shape with the perpendicular line of the T surrounded on three sides by geometric decoration (Figs. 2a, 2b). The entire T-profile is framed by two rows of dentils enclosing a guilloché, a frame that also forms the partitions between the panels.

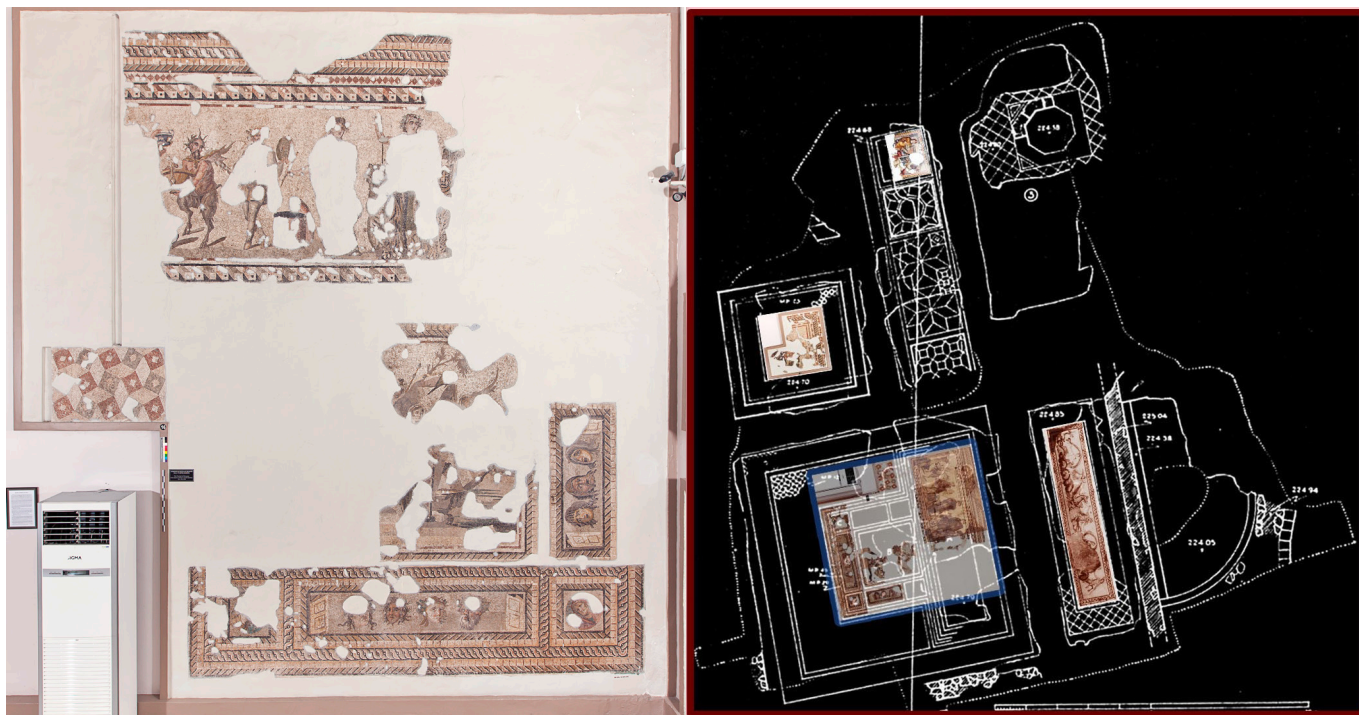


Figure 2c
Pan and Silenus (Illustrated by N. Sönmez).

Four of the seven panels surrounding the central panel survive. These are two corner squares depicting female busts and two rectangular panels depicting masks and heads framed on either side by prismatic elements described as “doors, drawers, or boxes in which the theatre masks were stored” (Figs. 3a, 3b).



Figure 3a
Masks and *periaktoi* (after Özdilek 2014: 230 fig. 10).

Figure 3b
Illustration of masks and *periaktoi* (A. Bereket and N. Sönmez).

The thick, short vertical line of the T is divided into a figured central panel and seven decorative panels around it, three rectangular panels and four small square corner panels (Fig. 2a). The figures on the perpendicular central panel and those on the horizontal bar of the T show heads and masks, each facing its opposite wall, while the individual heads on the four corner panels are placed obliquely facing the corners (Fig. 2a).

The side panel facing the bottom of the room has four heads (Fig. 4); facing the sides of the room, the other two, only one of which is preserved, three theatre masks (Figs. 3a, 3b).

“Half-open door panels on the side of each indicate the caskets” by Doro Levi (Levi 1947: 92) and “caskets” by Fatih Cimok (Cimok 2000: 91) are described as drawers and boxes in which masks can be placed, whereas the objects in the corners are thought to be *periaktoi*.

The only preserved head in the corner panels, the one to the right of the largest rectangular panel, is a veiled female head, with dishevelled tufts of hair protruding from her veil (Fig. 2a). The head is tilted slightly towards one shoulder and looks to one side with a pathetic expression. The four neighbouring heads are cut off at



Figure 4
Actors and *periaktoi* (Özdilek 2014: 230
fig. 11).

the neck, as if to represent masks (Fig. 4). One is a bearded head crowned with tendrils, and the other three are women or teenage girls, one a darker colour than the others as if to indicate a Negro servant (Fig. 4). The preserved panel on the right shows three tragic masks, one representing a bearded man between two female masks (Figs. 3a, 3b).

Only part of the left side has survived of the wide, low composition that formed the horizontal bar of the T (Levi 1947: 91-94; Rüstemoğlu 1997: 31; Cimok 2000: 90-93) (Figs. 2a, 2b). It includes the central group of Dionysos on his chariot pulled by tigers, but has not preserved the corner of the scene on the left (Fig. 2a). Here, at least one figure is entirely lost, in addition to the one whose hands can be seen and parts of the drapery near the edge of the break. The chariot of tigers, as well as Dionysos himself inside, is depicted from the front, which gives the whole its character as a highly centralised composition, in which movement starts from the centre and gradually increases towards the sides. The tigers are motionless. Only a chariot wheel is visible on the left, behind the paws of a tiger. Dionysos, holding a rein with his bare right arm, is crowned with a splendid crown of flowers and leaves, made from glass tesserae in many shades of blue, green, red and orange (Fig. 2a). The god stares into space with fixed, slightly melancholy eyes.

The woman may be a *maenad* standing next to the chariot and Dionysos. Her head, facing Dionysos, is also adorned with a rich crown of flowers. Her left foot is barely forward and at rest. Her bare right arm, emerging from the folds of her cloak, holds a sceptre made of gilded metal. Her body is very damaged. The woman wears a garment that reaches to her feet.

On the ground between the woman and the *Silenus*?, there is a *cista* and a cylindrical box for storing sacred objects (Fig. 2a).

We think the figure next to it is *Silenus*. However, it was first interpreted as a *maenad* by Doro Levi and then by Fatih Cimok (Levi 1947: 93; Cimok 2000: 92). The upper part of the head, of which a small part is preserved, is bald and part of his mustache and he is wearing *satyric* pant under his tunic. It is thought that this figure cannot be a female *maenad* due to its bald and bearded appearance and the physical characteristics of its clothing arrangement and legs. *Silenus* is depicted

playing the *tympanum*, which he carries in his left hand, with his left foot crossed and moving as if walking. In the figure's right hand was a thyrs, or torch, the tip of which was hidden behind an animal skin from Pan's shoulders (Fig. 2c).

The next figure is the bearded Pan, his goat-hoofed legs spread in a bold stance, probably because he is carrying a full and therefore heavy metal crater (Fig. 2c). A crown of large leaves adorns his head around his high horns. His body is shown leaning forwards, but his head is turned backwards and his gaze suggests that he is drunk. He is shown wearing an animal skin around his neck, which looks like a wing flapping behind him.

On the far left, near where the mosaic was smashed, a fragment of a dancing *maenad*, holding a crater upwards with both hands - only the part described here has been preserved. The shadows of the *maenad* and Pan beside him fall obliquely backwards (Fig. 2a).

Analogy of Mosaic Examples with Expressions Related to Theatre and Dionysos:

- In the "House of the Mysteries of Isis- from Daphne" masks in double and single metopes are depicted on the sides of the panel preserved in the centre of the second room, as in our example. However, there is no depiction of theatre scenery (Levi 1947: XXXIII).

- In the House of the Masks-from Daphne" the emblema has series of squares and rectangles with filling ornaments in accentuated rainbow style. Within the six squares are a *Silenus*, female tragedy masks and a female bust. There is no depiction of theatre architecture on the mosaic panel (Rüstemoğlu 1997: 25; Cimok 2000: 239).

- In the "Drinking Contest mosaic-Atrium House from Daphne" Dionysos, lying on a bed on the floor, and Herakles, opposite him, are engaged in a wine drinking contest. The narrative takes place in nature and there is no description of the theatre architecture (Cimok 2000: 26).

- In the "Drinking Contest mosaic-House of Drinking Contest" This mosaic from Antioch is in the collection of the Princeton Museum. This mosaic also depicts the drinking contest between Dionysos and Herakles. The contest is depicted in the *scaenae frons* of the theatre, in front of the *thyromata*, in the *logeion*. In the architectural arrangement in *Aedicula* style, it is seen that the curtain on the stage was gathered up (Levi 1947: XXX; Cimok 2000: 135).

- In the "Dionysos and Ariadne- House of Dionysos and Ariadne from Seleukia Pieria" The tragedy "Ariadne the Forsaken" is depicted in the *logeion* in front of three *thyromata* in the *skenefrons* within the architecture of the theatre stage building (Cimok 2000: 124).

- In the "Menander and Glykera-House of Menander" Menander's Comedy of Glykera is described without the architectural details of the theatre stage building. The "new comedy writer" Menander and Glykera are lying on the kline behind a trestle table in the *symposium scene*. Standing next to them is Komodia holding a mask in her hand, and in front of her feet is a box called *Scrinium*, in which the rolls with the theatre plays are kept. A mask and a roll are depicted on the box (Cimok 2000: 180).

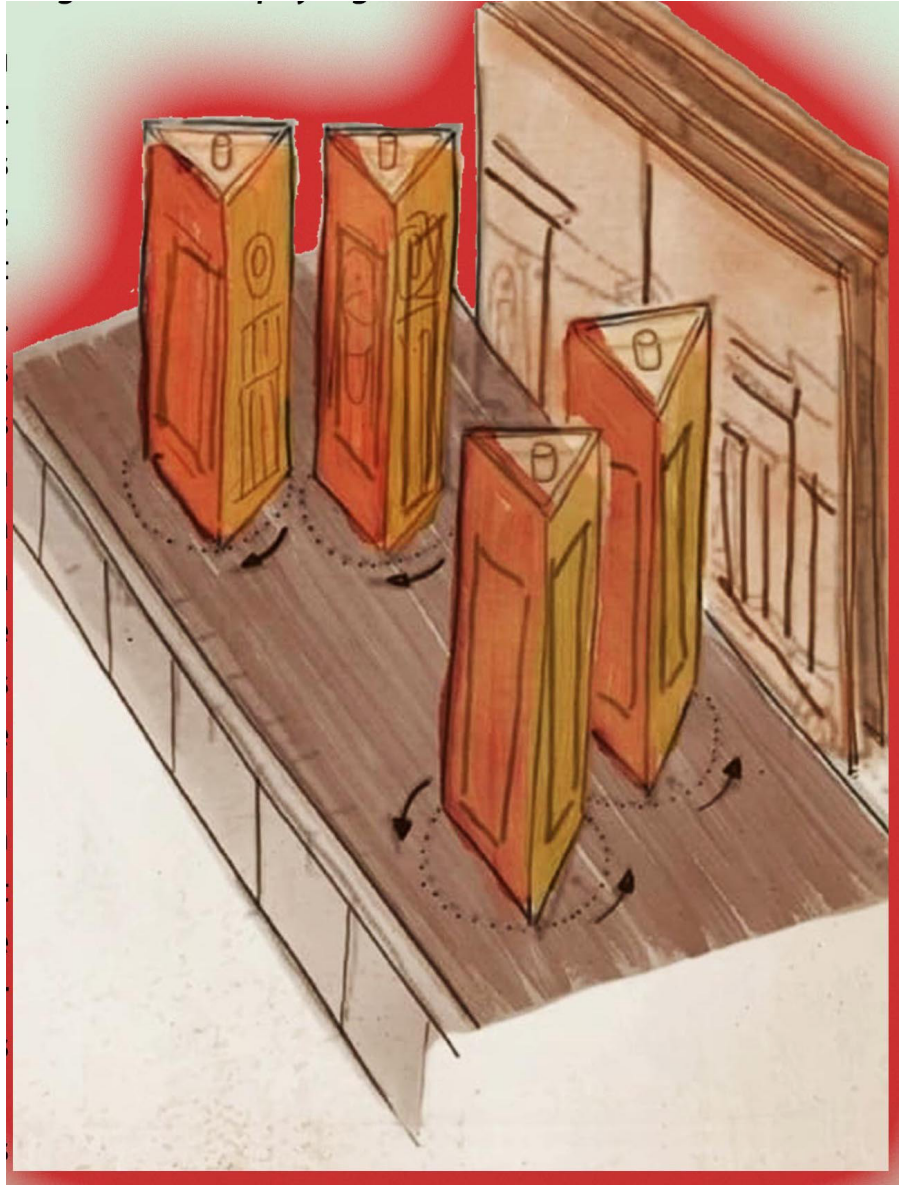
- In the panel from "The Villa of Zosimos from Zeugma", with a description of the play The Woman at Breakfast by the comedy writer Menander, there is a description of a single- storey three-door stage building behind the stage with three seated women and two standing maids next to them (Önal et al. 2007: 191).

Mechanical Decor Systems in Theatre Stage Buildings-*Periaktoi*

This paper proposes that the objects in the corners of the proposed theatre *proscena* are *periaktoi*. Therefore, let us talk about the mechanical decor systems used in the theatre *proscenium* and their working principles (Fig. 5).

Figure 5

The *periaktoi* system, <https://www.facebook.com/TPMTEATROPOPULAR/photos/a.518197671896623/1207132599669790/?type=3> (04.07.2023).



According to information from ancient literature, mobile and changeable sets were used in theatrical stage buildings to create changing images.

Before explaining the stage decor systems, it is necessary to look at the typological development of the stage building and the function of its architectural parts. With the content of theatre plays, stage building architecture has developed and decor systems have emerged. Since the decors were made of wood, they were not preserved. We learn the working principle of the decor systems from written sources, literary play narratives, vase paintings from visual arts, mosaics and detailed traces on the stone blocks that the decor system works with.

The three basic elements of theatre architecture are *cavea*, *orchestra* and stage building. Stage buildings are destructive with their complex, detailed, variable, multi-storey and mobile architecture and have many questions to be asked

(Özdilek 2012: 301). Each subsequent phase in stage buildings causes the structural details of the previous phase to be changed and removed (Varkıvanç 2016: 917).

Early examples of the stage building are wooden. In fact, the first theatres were travelling stages, and the first known travelling actor who entered into dialogue with the choir and went on tour during the Dionysian festivals in the 6th century BC belongs to Thespis and his stage. In the development of theatre architecture, first of all, while the plays were being played in the orchestra, benches called *ikria* were made of wood in the cavea section. When the wooden benches were demolished, the stone cavea section, which was statically strong and permanent, was built instead. While the plays were played in the orchestra during the classical period, gradually the *scaena* was included in the wooden plays in the form of tents and over time it became the most vital architectural part of the theatre architecture. We have information about the reconstruction of the wooden stage building in theatre architecture, its function and the content of the plays, the way they were played and the decor mechanisms in the stage building from the surviving theatre texts and vase paintings.

The visual depictions of travelling wooden *scaenae* are generally known from the red figure technique of vase painting in Southern Italy. On a crater from Apulia, Italy, there is a two-storey *scaenae* frons depicting the birth of Helen, and it is seen that a decor was created with a curtain in the *proscena*. The *logeion* on the 1st floor depicts the birth of Helen, and there is a door opening to the the back (<https://www.bridgemanimages.com/> access date: 14.3.2024).

Another example is a comedy stage from Southern Italy. In the narrative of a two-storey wooden stage building, the ascent to the *logeion* on the 1st floor is depicted with a wooden staircase (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/theater-outside-athens/comic-vases-in-south-italy/> access date: 14.3.2024).

Especially on the ceramics of the Apulia Region, we obtain information about the theatre stage buildings of the Classical period. In the analyses conducted, there is no expression related to the *ekkyklema* or *periaktoi* system.

Another example from South Italy depicts *Aischylos'* tragedy *Europa* and the Carians, with a depiction of the Doric proscenium façade in the background (<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/> access date: 14.3.2024).

The conversion of the stage building into stone coincides with the Nikias Peace Treaty, *Lycurgus* period 421-415 BC (Towsend 1986: 421-438). Fiechter called it the *Skenotheke* (Fiechter 1914: 29), Dörpfeld the colonnaded corridor (Dörpfeld-Reisch 1896: 6-96), Pickard-Cambridge the "Hall" (Pickard-Cambridge 1946: 149-150), Dinsmoor the "Stoa" (Dinsmoor 1950: 248).

Demosthenes mentions for the first time the side sections of the stage building, which are used as dressing rooms by the choir and actors and called *paraskenion* in the terminology. The phrase "lower *paraskenion*" is mentioned in Delos inscriptions.

In the Early Classical period the stage building was one-storeyed, and in the Late Classical period it was designed by Dörpfeld in a two-storeyed reconstruction.

Archaeologically, we know that the development of the stage building continued in the Hellenistic Period and was fully completed in the Roman Period (Dörpfeld - Reisch 1896: 379 et seq.).

The theatre architecture of the Hellenistic Period consists of literary plays that

constitute the theatre culture. Decorations are also used according to the types of tragedy and comedy. The subject of the plays directly affected the decor mechanism used in the stage building. Until the Roman Period, the cavea and the stage building were designed as two separate units. The cavea and the stage building were open, and since the stage building was low-rise, the natural landscape visible from behind the scaena was a complement to the stage building decor. There are not many architectural plastic decoration elements in the stage building. Especially with the decorations, the subject of the play is explained. In the Roman Period, the cavea and the stage building merge and the theatre is covered. The stage building has 3 floors. It is decorated with architectural decoration and sculptures and relief friezes.

According to information from ancient literature, mobile and changeable sets were used in theatrical stage buildings to create changing images.

The most detailed information about stage decorations is given by Vitruvius.

Although the stage buildings were built of stone in the Middle and Late Hellenistic Periods, the theatres were overhauled during the Roman Empire period, modified in accordance with the traditions and needs of the period, and sometimes completely dismantled and rebuilt.

One of the earliest and best preserved examples of the Hellenistic Period in Anatolia is the Priene theatre. There are different opinions about the reconstruction of the stage building of the Priene theatre. According to Dörpfeld, in its first phase, the stage building was used as a backdrop and the plays were performed in the orchestra. In the 2nd phase, dated to 300 BC, he proposes a reconstruction of the stage building with 3 doors, the exit of which is from the thyromata in the centre (Dörpfeld - Reisch 1896: 379 et seq.).

Gerkan thinks that the first phase of the stage building was built in 300 BC, but the plays were not performed here in this period, and that the plays were performed in the stage building in the 2nd century BC (Gerkan 1959: 49-50).

According to Ferraro, the Hellenistic stage building has two storeys, the plays were performed in the *logeion* and there are wooden pinakes in the proscenium between the Doric columns (Ferraro 1988. 959).

Bulle (Bulle 1928: 250-253) and Fiechter (Fiechter 1914: 23) state that *Scaenae Frons* developed from the *thyromata* of the Late Hellenistic period. Hellenistic stage buildings are low. The proscenium is narrow, about 3 metres deep, and its façade is decorated with decorations and painted pinakes.

Archaeologically, the moving mechanism from the stage buildings are the door wings other than the revolving curtain *periaktos* in Kaunos (Varkıvanç 2016: 918). However, in ancient sources we learn from Plato, Polybios (XI:5), Vitruvius (V, 6, 8) and Pollux about technical and mechanical arrangements in theatres such as *deus ex machina*, *ekkyklema*, *eiskylema*, *exostra* and *periaktos* (Varkıvanç 2015: 184).

These systems were mostly made of wood and metal, and since they were mobile and portable, they have not survived to the present day. The stone blocks on which these mechanisms were mounted were replaced and removed in the later phases of the stage buildings (Varkıvanç 2016: 184). In the visual arts, the only *periaktos* depiction identified so far is the depiction in the Dionysian Victory House.

Ekkylema is a wheeled platform used to carry heavy loads such as actors and

sculptures between the orchestra and the stage building. There are two proposals for the reconstruction of the *ekkyklema*'s wood, the first is conceived as a rectangular prism or cylindrical platform that can move in all directions. The other proposal is a semi- or fully circular platform fixed to the opening in front of the stage building, rotating around a shaft like a door leaf. The working principle of the *periaktos* system is rotated on a vertical shaft placed in the upper and lower slots like a door leaf. There is no clue about the shaft, it is not known whether it was placed in the centre of the *periaktos* system or only at the top and bottom (Varkıvanç 2015: 185).

Like the *ekkyklema*, the *periaktos* was also made of wood, and the suggestions about its construction are controversial due to the lack of sufficient descriptions and remains. Our knowledge about the *periaktos* increased thanks to the narration of ancient sources and Varkıvanç's discovery of the stone blocks in situ in the *proscenium* of the stage building of the Kaunos theatre. Varkıvanç carried out experimental archaeology to understand how the *periaktos* worked. In line with *Vitruvius*' description, Roman frescoes with three different themes satirical, tragic and comic were printed on the wooden skeleton (Varkıvanç 2015: 201 fig. 14, 202 fig. 16).

It was observed that the only known pictorial depiction of the *periaktos* system found in this study has similar characteristics to the *periaktos* created by the experimental archaeological study with its pyramidal, wooden, retractable, rotating architecture located on both sides of the *proscenium*.

Made of wood, this equipment could be easily transported and adapted, offering the flexibility to create a stage atmosphere appropriate to the different subjects of the plays. What's more, by turning the other sides of the set towards the audience as the play unfolded, new backgrounds could be created (Fig. 6).

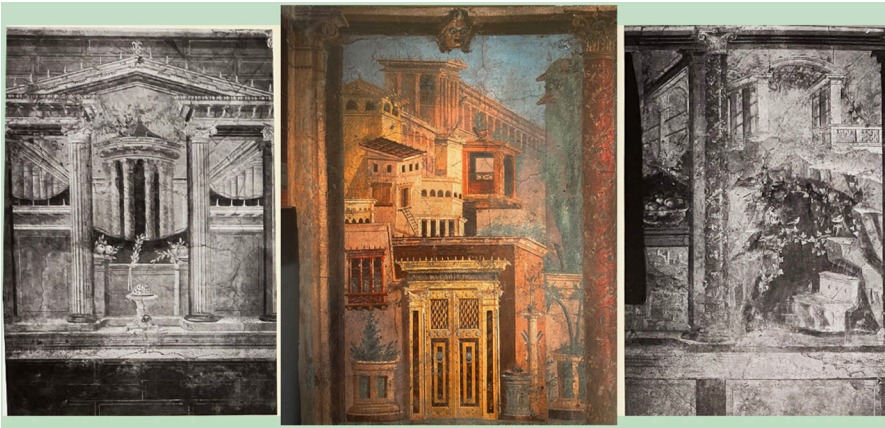


Figure 6
Theatre sets (Smith 2003: 168).

From *Vitruvius*' description below, it is thought that it was in the form of a vertical prismatic screen that would not be fixed to an opening in the stage building, and that it was in the form of a rotating screen in which three different subjects and landscapes were narrated on each of its three sides. The narration on each of the three sides of the prism was decorated with a single base *katablemata*-curtain on a wooden skeleton. This system allowed the images to be changed quickly and simply during the performance of the play.

Vitruvius describes *periaktos* as follows (Vitr. V-6):

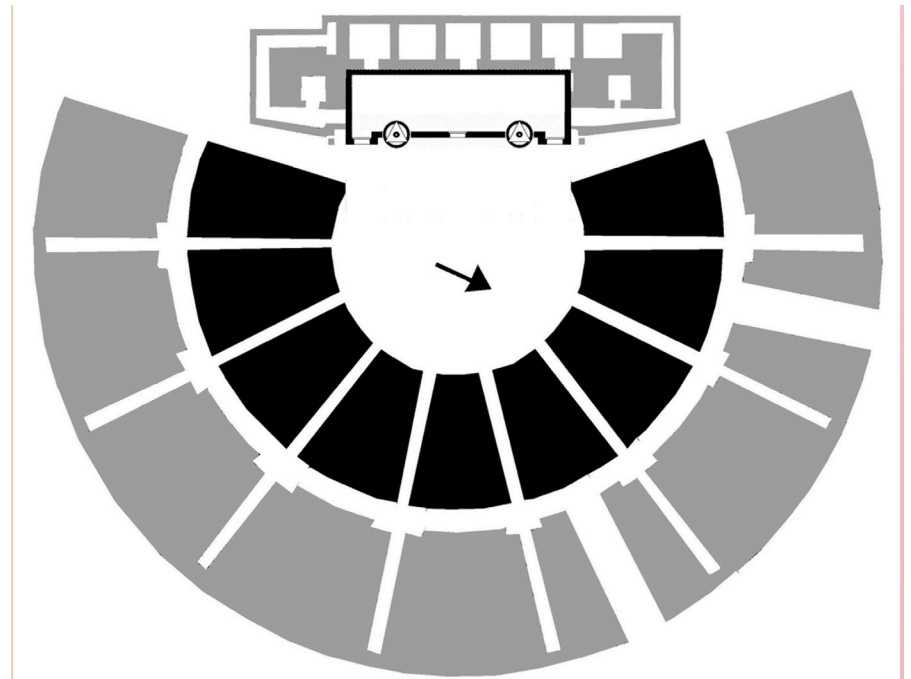
“The *scaena* itself follows the pattern below. In the middle are ornate double doors, like those of the royal palace. To the right and left are the doors to the guest rooms. At the back are the places reserved for decorating the stage, which

the Greeks called *periaktoi*, because they had three ornate faces and triangular rotating machine parts. When this changes, or when the gods appear on the stage accompanied by the sounds of sudden lightning, they are turned and a face with a different decoration is shown” (Vitr. V-6).

“There are three kinds of scenes, the first tragic, the second comic and the third satirical. The motifs of these scenes, which differ in their ornamentation, are not alike either. The tragic scenes are determined by columns, pediments, statues and other royal objects. The objects show windows of dwellings, while the satirical scenes are decorated with various rural images such as the style of trees, caves, mountains and landscapes” (Vitr. V-6; Smith 2003: 167-168) (Fig. 6).

Archaeological identification of the revolving curtain system (*periaktos*), one of the scenic devices that has been studied for almost 200 years in the light of ancient sources, is currently unique to the Kaunos theatre (Varkıvanç 2015: 181-202; Varkıvanç 2017: 267-289) (Fig. 7).

Figure 7
Kaunos theatre (Varkıvanç 2015: 197 fig. 2).



The reason why we have not found traces of *periaktos* in the stage buildings of theatres other than the Kaunos example so far is that the rotating curtain system was used in the early stages of the stage buildings in the Classical and Early Hellenistic Periods. The other important element, which we have not seen on any other examples since there are changes in the development of stage building architecture that destroy the previous phases, has been discovered to be the substructure blocks associated with the *periaktos* system as a result of Varkıvanç’s very meticulous and careful examination and interpretation.

Conclusion

Apart from the architectural arrangement on the floor stones in the Kaunos example (Varkıvanç 2015: 181) (Fig. 8) and the descriptions of *Vitruvius*, the only iconographic expression of *periaktos* in ancient painting, or mosaics, is that of the House of the Triumph of Dionysos that we have presented.

Thus, the structures previously referred to as “doors, drawers or boxes” must, according to our study, be *periaktos*.



Figure 8
The *Periaktos* at Kaunos (Varkıvanç 2015:
200-202 figs. 9, 15, 17).

The *periaktos* system was described by the famous architect and engineer *Vitruvius*. The *periaktos* system has no known expressions in ancient art or iconography. With the exception of the presence of stone floor blocks showing the *periaktos* mechanism in operation in the stage building of the Kaunos theatre in western Anatolia, no archaeological data is known about the system

mentioned. It is known that the stone and wooden architectural details used in the theatre's stage buildings are located on rotating triangular prisms, both in favour of understanding the architecture and content of plays, satirical, tragic and comic subjects. The operating principle of *periaktos* is similar to that of a door leaf. Although the *periaktos* in wood, an organic material, has not been discovered archaeologically, the presence of a pictorial description on this mosaic as the only example known to date provides important information for understanding this mechanism (Fig. 9).

Figure 9
Representation of *periaktos* on the mosaic
(Levi 1947; Özdilek 2014: 230 fig. 11
modified).

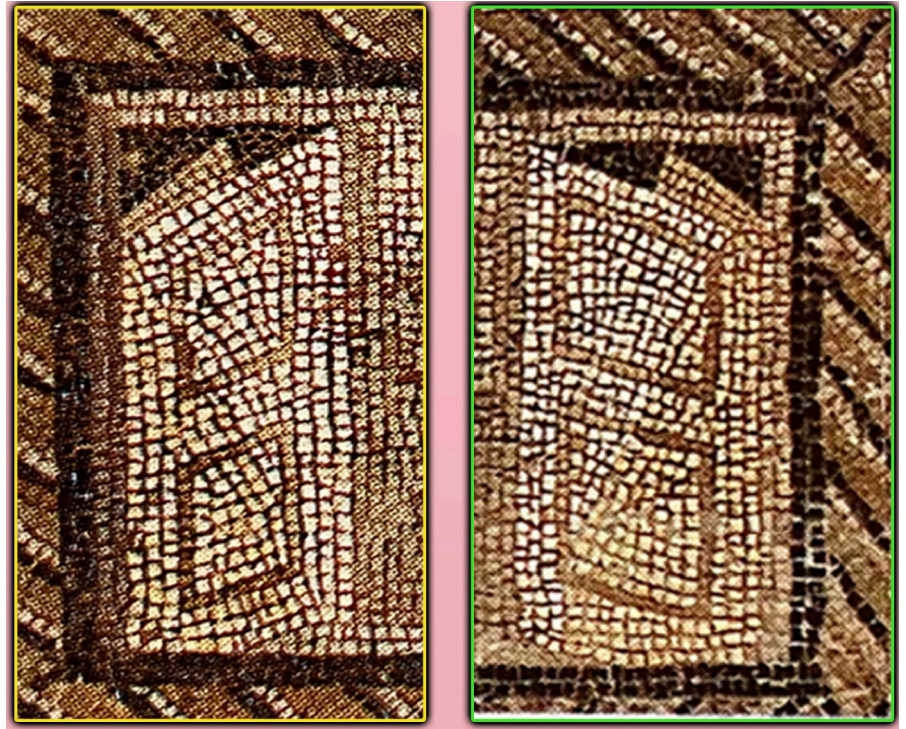


Figure 10
Information panels on *periaktos* from
Lugdunum Museum -Lyon
(photo: B. Özdilek 2022).

Since the Hellenistic Period, the *periaktos* system is still preferred as a practical mechanism for effective visual expressions on information and advertisement boards (Fig. 10). The most important reason for its preference is that it is mobile, has an easy mechanism, has three planar surfaces, and can quickly change the desired subject and provide effective information.

It is known that the *periaktos* system was used in the Hellenistic Period with the architectural development of the stage building. So far, apart from the accounts of ancient authors, the stone platform associated with the *periaktos* system identified by Varkıvanç in the Kaunos Theatre offers suggestions that reinforce the working principle of the *periaktos* through experimental archaeology. The only known pictorial depiction of the *periaktos* system is the panels recovered from the Dionysos Victory House. It is important in terms of increasing our limited archaeological knowledge about the *periaktos*.

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