

## The Location and Significance of the Theater at Nicaea in the Context of Roman Theaters

Nihal KARADORUK    
Corresponding Author

Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Iznik  
Museum, Bursa, Türkiye.  
nihal.kardoruk@gmail.com

Ali Kazım ÖZ    
Author

Dokuz Eylül University, Faculty of  
Letters, Department of Archaeology,  
Izmir, Türkiye.  
ali.oz@deu.edu.tr

### Abstract

*The ancient city of Nicaea, located the Iznik district of Bursa, borders of the Ancient Bithynia. The city is located on important roads, made it an important center from the Hellenistic Period to the Ottoman Period. In the city where the Roman ruins under modern settlement, the only structure that has survived to this period is the theatre. The first information about the construction is taken from the Pliny letters. According to the letters, it is stated that the construction of the main units of the theater, the cavea and scaena, was completed in 111 AD, and new additions were planned to be made with the financial aid from sponsors. It represents the only example in Anatolia built completely independent of the ground, with its rows of seats raised using vault and arch technology, without any slope. In the theatre, which is thought to have been approximately 24 m. high and had a capacity of 10 thousand people, the trapezoidal vaults carrying the ima cavea, some of the barrel vaults carrying the media cavea, the substructure plan of the scaena, the piers carrying the summa cavea or portico, and the ambulacrum have been preserved. The differences it contains, when compared to other contemporary theaters built within the borders of the Roman Empire, put the building in a special location among Roman theatres. The Nicaea Theater, which was built with meticulous workmanship and has a hybrid plan, is a structure unique to Turkey and has the character of an architectural heritage in this respect.*

**Keywords:** Bithynia, Architecture, Roman, Theater, Nicaea.

Submitted 10.01.2025  
Revision Requested Last 04.08.2025  
Revision Received 02.09.2025  
Accepted Date 17.09.2025  
Publication Date 25.09.2025

### Cite this article

Karadoruk, N. & Öz, A. K. (2025). The Location and Significance of the Theater at Nicaea in the Context of Roman Theaters, *Oannes*, 7(2), September, pp. 248-271.



The content of this journal is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 International License.

## Genişletilmiş Özet

Bithynia sınırları içerisinde Askania Limne (İznik Gölü) kıyısında yer alan antik Nikaia kenti, Bithynia Krallığı'ndan itibaren sırasıyla Roma, Bizans, Laskaris Dönemi, Anadolu Selçukluları ve Erken Osmanlı egemenliğine girmiş ve bu süreçte önemli bir merkez olarak varlığını sürdürmüştür. Roma kalıntılarının büyük çoğunluğu sonraki medeniyetlerin imar politikalarında ve doğal afetler nedeni ile zarar gören ya da modern yerleşim altında kalan kentte, bu döneme tanıklık eden günümüze kadar korunabilmiş tek yapı tiyatrodur.

Tiyatronun yapım aşamasına dair ilk bilgiler Bithynia'ya vali olarak atanan Genç Plinius ve İmparator Traianus arasında geçen mektuplardan alınmaktadır. Mektuplara göre MS 111 yılında tiyatro inşaat halindedir ve özel kişiler yardımı ile yeni yapı birimlerinin eklenmesi planlanmaktadır. Mektuplarda ek olarak duvarlarda bazı çatlamaların ve zeminde çökmelerin olduğu, kalitesiz malzeme kullanıldığı gibi bilgiler verilerek tiyatronun ifa edilemez bir tasarım olduğu belirtilir. 2016-2024 yılları arasında yapılan kazı çalışmalarında Plinius mektuplarında bahsedilen problemlerin tamamı yapı içerisinde gözlemlenmiştir. Mektuplar tiyatro inşasının bitmediği yönünde bir algıya neden olsa da yapılan son dönem çalışmaları ve buluntular yapının bitirildiğini ve kullanıldığını göstermiştir.

Tiyatro 102,32 x 79,04 m boyutlarında moloz taş ve harç kullanılarak, opus caementicium tekniğiyle inşa edilmiştir. Yüksekliğinin yaklaşık 24 m. kapasitesinin ise 10 bin kişilik olduğu düşünülmektedir. Üç katlı cavea'da ima cavea yedi adet trapezoidal tonoz, media cavea 10 adet beşik tonoz, summa cavea ya da sütunlu portiko 28 adet paye/fil ayağı tarafından taşınmaktadır. İma cavea'yı ayağa kaldıran trapezoidal tonozlar arasında yer alan koridorlar sayesinde tiyatronun alt yapısında sirkülasyon sağlanmıştır. Bu tonozlar ayrıca media cavea'yı taşıyan beşik tonozlarla kapılar yardımı ile birbirine bağlanmıştır. Cavea'nın doğusunda ve batısında additus maximus tonozlu geçitlerinin üzerinde birer tribunalia bulunur. Analemma duvarı üzerinde iki ve arka cepheye iki adet olmak üzere dört adet vomitorium bulunmaktadır. Vomitorium arasına ziyaretçi sirkülasyonunu hızlandırabilmek adına summa cavea'ya doğrudan çıkış ve inişi sağlayan dört sahanlıklı merdiven kovaları eklenmiştir. Yalnızca alt yapı planı korunan scaena, pulpitum'a çıkan beş kapısı ile Türkiye'deki diğer örnekler gibi Anadolu tipinde inşa edilmiştir. Scaena'nın zengin süslemeli scaena frons'a sahip olduğu kazılarda ele geçen mimari bloklardan, mimari plastik parçalardan ve kent surlarında devşirme olarak kullanılan mimari bloklardan anlaşılmaktadır.

1980 yılından günümüze kadar belirli periyotlarla kazı çalışmaları devam eden tiyatronun, sit alanı içerisindeki hemen hemen tüm mimari sınırları kazılmıştır. Çalışmalar çevre düzenlemesi ve dış hat kazıları şeklinde devam etmektedir. Doğal afetler, şehrin çekim merkezi olması nedeniyle yapılan savaşlar ve orijinal kullanımından sonra taş ocağı, dini yapı, toplu mezarlık, seramik atölyesi ve çöplük olarak kullanılması nedeniyle özellikle scaena, oturma basamakları, orkestra tabanı, dış duvarlar, kemerler ve tonozlar onarılamayacak şekilde hasar görmüştür.

Hibrit bir plana sahip olan tiyatronun en önemli özelliklerinden biri İznik kentinin geçirdiği tüm sosyal, ekonomik, kültürel ve toplumsal değişimlerin somut kalıntılarının tiyatro içerisinde görülmesidir. Yapı MS 2. yüzyıldan MS 17. yüzyıla kadar sürekli kullanılmıştır ve bu özelliği ile İznik'in tüm tarihini bir arada tutan tek yapıdır. 2023-2024 yılları arasında restorasyon ve konservasyon çalışmaları tamamlandıktan sonra ziyarete açılan tiyatrodaki hem orijinal yapıyı hem de sonraki tüm kullanımları koruyarak çok katmanlı bir gezi güzergahı hazırlanmıştır.

Plinius'un mektuplarından MS 111 yılında inşa edildiği kesin olarak bilinen tiyatro, cavea'nın yamaç eğimi olmadan inşa edilmesi, Anadolu tipi scaena ve scaena'nın yan kanatlarında portiko amaçlı kullanılan sütunlu galeriler ve galerileri saran mimari örüntü (bazilika), üç katlı dış cephe mimarisi ile Roma tiyatrolarının karakteristik özelliklerini yansıtır. Bu yüzden Anadolu dışındaki özellikle İtalya'daki çağdaş tiyatro örnekleri ile benzer özellikler gösterir. Özellikle tonoz ve kemer mimarisi ile yamaç eğiminden tümüyle bağımsız yapılan tiyatro Anadolu sınırları içerisinde tek örneği oluşturur. Ancak cavea ve orkestra'nın 180 dereceyi aşmasıyla Yunan tiyatrolarının özelliklerini taşır. Roma Dönemi'nde yapılmasına ve Roma karakteri taşımasına rağmen Yunan tiyatrolarının özelliklerini de yansıtmaması, tiyatro mimarisi köklerine bağlılığın devam ettiğini göstermektedir. Scaena'nın yan kanatlarında bulunan iki katlı sütunlu galeriler İznik tiyatrosuna özgüdür ve benzer kullanım işlevine sahip yapı birimi ancak Anadolu dışındaki önemli tiyatrolarda görülmektedir. Söz konusu galeriler, örneklerin çoğundan da mimari olarak farklılık göstermektedir. Roma İmparatorluğu sınırları içerisinde çağdaş tiyatrolar ile karşılaştırıldığında bünyesinde barındırdığı farklılıklar Nicaea tiyatrosunu özel bir yere koymaktadır. Bu çalışmadaki amaç; analogik örnekler ışığında tiyatronun çağdaş tiyatrolar ile benzerlik ve farklılıklarını ortaya koymaktır.

## Introduction

The ancient city of Nicaea is located in the Iznik District of Bursa Province and was founded on the shores of the Iznik Lake, known as "Askania Limne" (Fig. 1) (Strabon, *Geographika*, XII.4.7). In the city of Nicaea, which suffered great damage in the historical process and most of the ruins were under modern settlement, one of the rare structures that witnessed the Roman Period and survived is the theater. Among the ancient buildings, theaters are one of the structures that attract the most attention of the visitors of the period. Nicaea Theater was also frequently visited by travellers (see Pococke, 1745; Sestini, 1789; Osten, 1837; Fellows, 1839; Texier, 1839; Ainsworth, 1842; Hell, 1855; Hell, 1860; Texier, 1862; Goltz, 1896; Launay, 1913; Lubenau & Sahm, 1930; Schneider, 1943; Grelot & Mango, 1988; Kinneir, 1988; Peyssonel, 2005 for more detail). While some of the visitors identified the ruins as a theater, others had different opinions about these ruins (Ermiş, 2014, p. 212). However, rather than these simple descriptions, the most comprehensive

information about the theater comes from the letters written to the emperor by Pliny the Younger, a historian and statesman appointed governor of Bithynia by the Roman Emperor Trajan (98-117 AD). Pliny explains financial, political and judicial reasons of the construction in his 10 book *Epistulae*. He mentions that a theater was built in the city of Nicaea, that a lot of money was spent and that this money did not serve a purpose that slightly fragmented stones were used in its construction and therefore cracks occurred. Some parts collapsed because it was built on soft ground that private individuals undertook the costs of the theater. The porticos and galleries surrounding the *cavea* pit was an unnecessary design since the main structure was not completed (Pliny, *Epistulae*, X. 39, 40).

Concrete evidence of the structural problems in the theater mentioned in the letters was revealed during the excavations. Slightly fragmented stones were found in some of the boundary walls between the trapezoidal vaults and barrel vaults. Furthermore, water described as swampy ground in the drilling work opened in one of the barrel vaults. Collapses in the ground in the drilling work carried out in the southeast corner of the western colonnaded gallery, the pillars carrying the *portico* surrounding the *media cavea* could be traced (see Özügül, 2017; Ekin Meriç et al., 2018; Ekin Meriç, et al., 2019; Ekin Meriç, et al., 2020; Ekin Meriç, et al., 2022 for more detail). Apart from these letters, there is no information about the architectural features of the theater in ancient sources (Schneider, 1943, p. 8; Ferrero, 1974, p. 14). As far as it is understood from the letters, that the construction of the theater was started before 111 AD and construction phase continued with new additions during the Trajan Period.

The theater, which fulfilled its original function for about 200 years, has continued its existence until today (Fig. 2) with different identities such as quarry, religious building, garbage dump, ceramic workshop and mass graveyard (see Ekin Meriç, 2019; Kardoruk, 2022b for more detail). This situation caused serious damage to the original structure of the theater. Therefore, along with the *scaena*, the seating steps, *orchestra* flooring, exterior walls, arches and vaults have been damaged beyond repair. In the *cavea*, the *ima cavea* and the trapezoidal vaults carrying it, a few of the barrel vaults carrying the *media cavea*, some of the pillars carrying the *summa cavea* (*portico*) and a part of the *ambulacrum* foundation have survived to the present day. Since 1980, excavations have been ongoing in the theater, and its differences compared to other contemporary theaters place it in a special situation among the Roman theaters. The aim of this study is to reveal the similar and different features of the Nicaea Theater by comparing it with other contemporary theaters.

### Architectural Features

The theater, which was built with *opus caementicium* technique using rubble stone and mortar, is thought to have a height of approximately 24 m and a capacity of 10 thousand people (Fig. 3) (Öz, 2019, p. 8). It differs from similar examples in Anatolia because it was raised on a flat area with vault and arch technology. With this feature, it is compared with such important theaters outside Anatolia.

### Infrastructure System and Spectacular Circulation

In Roman theaters, the *cavea* is divided into three sections: *ima* (lower), *media* (middle) and *summa* (upper). It is known that the *ima cavea* was used by rulers, priests, soldiers and important Roman citizens, the *media cavea* by middle-class citizens, and the *summa cavea* by slaves, poor people and women (Fig. 4) (Sear, 2006, p. 3; Öz & Ekin Meriç, 2021, p. 56, 58). In the three-stored *cavea*, the *ima cavea* is supported by seven trapezoidal vaults, the *media cavea* by 10 barrel vaults, and the *summa cavea* or *portico* by 28 pillars (Fig. 5). The arch and vault system, which is only seen in important theaters within the borders of the Roman Empire, is not found in Anatolia. A similar supporting infrastructure system is seen in examples such as Beneventum (Iannace & Trematerra, 2013, p. 2, fig. 2), Ostia (Pansini, 2017, p. 180, fig.1), Arelate (Small, 1983, p. 62, III.7; Moretti et al., 2010, p. 156, fig. 20), Pompey (Hanson, 1959, Illust. 19), Leptis Magna (Sear, 2006, p. 283, kat. pl. 256), Iguvium (Sear, 2004, p. 214, fig.1), Marcellus (Fiechter, 1914, abb. 71).

The trapezoidal vaults that support the *ima cavea* are connected to each other by narrow corridors and these passages allow 180° rotation in the substructure of the theater. These vaults are also connected to the barrel vaults (Fig. 6) that support the *media cavea*. The interconnection of the substructure system with narrow corridors and doors is also important in terms of showing that human circulation was carried out with the help of these vaults. A person who enters the trapezoidal vaults by using the *additus* in the east can

exit from the *additus* in the west by turning the theater 180 degrees at the bottom. There is no similar example of this connection system used in the vaults of the understructure of the Nicaea Theater. The lower structure was also connected to the *orchestra* by a narrow corridor opening from the central vault (Fig. 7) carrying the *ima cavea*. Similar transition examples are also found in Ostia (Pansini, 2017, p. 180, fig.1), Libarna (Romeo & Tucci, 2005, fig. 2), Camulodunum (Sear, 2006, p. 197, kat. pl. 120), Beneventum (Iannace & Trematerra, 2013, p. 2, fig. 2), Grumentum (Sear, 2006, p. 146, kat. pl. 41; Isler, 2017, p. 316), Tyndaris (Sear, 2006, p. 194, kat. pl. 117, pl. 51), Derventum (Sear, 2006, p. 201, kat. pl. 128, pl. 54), Aventicum (Bridel, 2016, p. 164, fig. 8), Albanum Domitiani (Sear, 2006, p. 201, kat. pl. 128, pl. 54), Stobi (Gebhard, 2011, p. 331, fig. 6), Palmyra (Frezouls, 1961, pl. VI- 2) and Aubigne-Racan (Sear, 2006, p. 225, kat. pl. 170) theaters. Among these theaters, Grumentum, Tyndaris, Derventum, Nicopolis, Aventicum and Stobi have three transitions to *orchestra*. In the Nicaea Theater, although there are three openings on the *rigole* wall, the entrance is provided only from the middle axis.

Between trapezoidal and barrel vaults carrying the *cavea* are reserved for the *vomitorium*, which leads to the *media cavea* and is important for the circulation of the crowded audience. The theater has a total of four *vomitórios*, two on the analemma to the north (Fig. 8) and two to the south of the theater. *Vomitorium* passages on the rear façade of the theater at the level of the *ambulacrum* are also found in the theaters of Iguvium (Sear, 2004, p. 214, fig.1), Ostia (Pansini, 2017, p. 180, fig. 1), Side (Mansel, 1962, res. 4), Interamna Praetuttianorum (Sear, 2006, p. 158, kat. pl. 60), Tergeste (Malacrino, 2005, p. 122, fig. 25), Patara (Alanyalı, 2005, p. 9, res. 2), Verona (Valluzzi, 2015, p. 15, fig. 1.17), Lugdunum (Gros, 1980, p. 293, fig. 347), Tipasa (Hanson, 1959, Illust. 23) and Albintimilium (Astori et al., 2002, fig. 2). However, the numbers differ in the examples given. In some examples, the number of *vomitorium* can be six or five. The example of exit to the *media cavea* through the *analemma* on both sides of the *scaena* is seen in the theaters of Ephesus (Krinzinger & Ruggendorfer, 2017, taf. 2, abb. 2), Herculaneum (Fiechter, 1914, abb. 73; Schlüter, 2003, p. 38, abb. 3), Leptis Magna (Small, 1983, p. 57, III. 3; Bomgardner, 2016, p. 68, fig. 5), Nysa (Kadioğlu, 2002, taf. 1), Vasio (Sear, 2006, p. 251, kat. pl. 216), Miletus (Krauss, 1973, abb. 165), Aspendos (Boz, 2006, p. 31, pic. 4.1; Sear, 2006, p. 112; Mallampati & Demirer, 2011, pp. 62-84, 66, fig. 4.8) and Prusias ad Hypium (Sear, 2006, p. 359, kat. pl. 369; Okan et al., 2022, pp. 93-66, 52, fig. 5). Examples of *vomitorium* on the side wings are seen in most of the Roman or Greco-Roman theater structures leaning against the slope within Anatolia. The *vomitorium* on the rear façade, however, has similar characteristics with the examples outside Anatolia, which are completely independent from the ground and are supported by arch and vault technology. Between the four *vomitorium*, which are the main passages, there are small stairwells with four landings, wide enough for one person to pass through, providing access to the *summa cavea* (Öz, 2019, p. 4; Öz & Ekin Meriç, 2021, pp. 54-55). There are no similar examples of such passages on the analemma wall at the level of the *ambulacrum*.

In the Nicaea theater, a special transition area was built for the *tribunalia*. These transitions, which are also seen (Sear, 2006, fig. 22, pl. 9-10, 13, 31, 66, 99-100, 105) in Arausio, Pompeii grand theater, Spolegium, Bostra and Gerasa north theater differ in Nicaea Theater. In these examples, only the *additus maximus* was used for the transition to the *tribunalia*, whereas in this theater both the *additus maximus* and a transition through the *pulpitum* connected to the *scaena* on the *analemma* wall were used. The area between the *tribunalia* and the *orchestra* is reserved for the vaults of the *additus maximus*, and here we see the double vault system (Fig. 9) seen only in the great theater of Pompeii (Sear, 2006, pl. 12) and Arausio (Fiechter, 1914, abb. 78a; Antunes, 2017, p. 63, Illust. 26) among contemporary theaters.

Roman theaters were usually surrounded by a colonnaded gallery after the *media cavea* or *summa cavea*. Until the recent excavations, the only mention of this colonnaded gallery is Pliny's letters, which provides important information about its construction. The excavations revealed that the piers were the ones carrying the *summa cavea* or upper *portico* (*summum in ligneis*). It is understood from the traces on the piers that there were plaster half columns on the outward facing surfaces of the piers as in the Colosseum. The complete destruction of the façade from the piers to the uppermost boundary of the theater makes it difficult to understand which architectural order was used here. Not all of the piers have survived to the present day (Fig. 10), especially in the southeast and northwest, while the remains of the foundation on which the *ambulacrum* rested remain in the south. There are inscriptions on the front faces of the preserved

piers. When the piers are placed parallel to the perimeter of the theater, it is understood that there were 28 piers (Öz, 2019, p. 5). Examples of *summa cavea* or colonnaded gallery raised on piers/elephant pillar are seen in many Roman theaters such as Vasio (Sear, 2006, p. 251, kat. pl. 216), Ostia (Pansini, 2017, p. 180, fig. 1), Beneventum (Iannace & Trematerra, 2013, p. 2, fig. 2), Falerio Picenus (Sear, 2006, p. 156, kat. pl. 57), Libarna (Romeo & Tucci, 2005, fig. 2), Grumentum (Sear, 2006, p. 146, kat. pl. 41; Isler, 2017, p. 316), Tauromenium (Sear, 1996, p. 43, fig. 2), Derwentum (Sear, 2006, p. 201, kat. pl. 128, pl. 54), Sabratha (Lopez, 2017, p. 20, fig. 3), Arelate (Small, 1983, p. 62, Ill. 7; Moretti et al., 2010, p. 156, fig. 20), Salona (Sear, 2006, p. 256, kat. pl. 220; Isler, 2017, p. 679, Salona), Gortyn (Manzetti, 2016, p. 38, fig. 1, 2), Chersonesus (Sear, 2006, p. 294, kat. pl. 269), Ferentium (Tuccini, 2012, p. 32) and Pola grand theater (Isler, 2015, p. 19, fig. 1). While some of the legs were made straight, some were made with support in front and behind to support the arches and for exterior decorations. There is a similar situation in the theater of Nicaea and the same design is seen in the theater of Beneventum. However, as in the theaters of Chersonesus, Gortyn, Ostia and Falerio Picenus, there are also examples of the outermost supported piers for façade decoration only. It has been proved that this feature, which is seen in all Roman theaters where the piers are raised from the ground, is also in the theater of Nicaea.

### Analemma, Cavea and Orchestra

The most damaged part of the Nicaea Theater is the seating steps belonging to the audience. In the theater where no in-situ seating steps were found, the majority of the steps were destroyed on the city walls, in the mass construction activities of later civilizations and in the architectural additions after the original construction within the theater (see Öz, 2019, p. 4; Kardoruk, 2022b, pp. 31-62 for more detail.). During the excavations, almost no fragments were found except for five or six pieces thought to have been dragged down from above near the eastern *tribunalia*. It was understood that some of the destroyed seating steps found in the theater differed from those used as spolia and that they were *bisellum/prohedria* (Fig. 11). All of the seats, which have similar examples in many theaters in Anatolia such as Kadyanda (Özdilek, 2016, p. 172, fig. 60), Kibyra (Özdilek, 2016, p. 173, fig. 61), Myra (Özdilek, 2016, p. 173, fig. 62) and Ephesus (Heberdey et al., 1912, p. 42, fig. 81), have broken backrest sections used for reclining. The seats, the other details of which could not be reached due to too much destruction, must have been positioned at the bottom or top of the *cavea* (Öz, 2019, p. 4; Öz & Ekin Meriç, 2021, p. 55).

The *ima* and *media cavea* are separated by a circulation corridor called *praecinctio* (Greek: *Diazoma*). In the small section above the western *tribunalia* in the theater, the *praecinctio*, the 1 m. wall separating the *media cavea* from the *ima cavea*, and a very small section of the stairs on this wall providing the transition between the two *cavea* have been preserved. This type of access from the *ima cavea* to the *media cavea* is also seen in the theaters of Patara (Alanyalı, 2005, p. 9, res. 2), Myra (Özdilek, 2011, p. 382, kat. pl. 18), Kaunos (Say Özer & Özer, 2017, p. 177, fig. 5), Perge (Sear, 2006, p. 372, kat. pl. 392, pl. 119), Selge (Sear, 2006, p. 376, kat. pl. 400), Aspendos (Boz, 2006, p. 31, pic. 4.1; Sear, 2006, p. 112; Mallampati & Demirer, 2011, p. 66, fig. 4.8), Nysa (Kadioğlu, 2002, taf.1), Alinda (Sear, 2006, p. 337, kat. pl. 319), Pompey (Hanson, 1959, Illust. 19) and Hierapolis (Sear, 2006, p. 338, kat. pl. 334). Based on the measurements of the few seating steps found, it is thought that the *ima cavea* consisted of seven *cuneus* and each *cuneus* had 18 seating rows (Öz, 2019, p. 4). The *cuneus* adjacent to the analemma wall on the *additus maximus* to the east and west were reserved for special areas known as *tribunalia*. This section, which is unique to Roman theaters; Iguvium (Sear, 2004, p. 214, fig. 1), Tauromenium (Sear, 1996, p. 43, fig. 2), Arausio (Fiechter, 1914, abb. 78a; Bieber, 1961, p. 200, fig. 675; Antunes, 2017, p. 63, Illust. 26), Aspendos (Boz, 2006, p. 31, pic. 4.1; Sear, 2006, p. 112; Mallampati & Demirer, 2011, p. 66, fig. 4.8), Thugga (Fiechter, 1914, abb. 80a; Hanson, 1959, Illust. 24; Bejor, 1979, 42-9; Small, 1983, p. 67, Ill. 16), Bostra (Segal, 1981, p. 116, fig. 23; Segal, 1987, p. 11, abb. 20-21), Arelate (Small, 1983, p. 62, Ill. 7; Moretti et al., 2010, p. 156, fig. 20), Volaterrae (Pizzigati, 1995, taf. CCXCVI), Vienna (Hanson, 1959, Illust. 32; Anderson, 2013, 162-98) and Augusta Emerita (Cruz & Pizzo, 2018, p. 17, fig. 4) theaters are also located on the *additus maximus* like the Nicaea Theater. However, there are also theaters with examples of *tribunalia* use in different areas.

The *analemma* wall surrounding the *cavea* differs from many theaters in Anatolia and outside Anatolia. Starting from the *orchestra*, the *analemma* slopes until the entrance to the *additus maximus* and continues parallel to the *scaena* after the entrance. In Roman theaters, the *cavea* is mostly planned in semicircle, and *cavea* exceeding this degree are defined as Greek although they were built during the Roman Period. In the



Nicaea Theater, the *analemma* wall starts as a horseshoe plan and continues straight after the *additus maximus* as a semicircle plan in the Roman theater characteristics. The architectural feature of the *analemma* wall designed in this way is unique to the Nicaea Theater.

Another feature of the *analemma* wall is the presence of two small niches (Fig. 12) and an inscription under the niche (Yalman, 1987, p. 236). “ΑΓΑΘΗ ΤΥΧΗ ΘΕΑΣΤΑΣ ΝΕΜΕΣΕΙΣ ΑΙΛΙΑΝΟΣ ΑΣΚΛΗΠΙΟΔΟΤΟΣ ΓΝΩΜΟΝΗΚΟΣ ΑΝΕΘΗΚΕΝ”, “Blessed be the Goddess Nemesis, Ailianos Asclepiodotos, Expert of the Sundial”. Statues of the goddess Nemesis, symbolizing justice, race and revenge, were often found in theaters where gladiatorial fights were held (Yalman, 1987, pp. 236-237). This is important in terms of showing that gladiator fights were held in the Nicaea Theater. The discovery of many gladiator steles in the Iznik Museum are important archaeological artifacts that emphasize this issue (Şahin, 1979, 180a-276, 182a-277).

The colonnaded gallery surrounding the *media cavea* was sometimes integrated with the *summa cavea* by building a sitting step inside. However, the absence of any surviving remains of this level other than the substructure plan makes it difficult to reach a definite conclusion. *Portico* surrounding the *ima* or *summa cavea* or the *summa cavea* were used in almost all Roman theaters or in hybrid theaters revised in the Roman Period. The presence of a colonnaded gallery or *summa cavea* in the Nicaea Theater, as in the Marcellus (Fiechter, 1914, abb. 71), Leptis Magna (Sear, 2006, p. 283, kat. pl. 256), Bostra (Segal, 1981, p. 116, fig. 23; Segal, 1987, p. 11, abb. 20-21), Vienna (Hanson, 1959, Illust. 32; Anderson, 2013, p. 162-98), Pompey (Hanson, 1959, Illust. 19) and Thugga (Fiechter, 1914, abb. 80a; Hanson, 1959, Illust. 24; Bejor, 1979, 42-9; Small, 1983, p. 67, Ill. 16) theaters is proven by the pillar foundations surrounding the theater. The presence of Corinthian capitals among the fragments of entablature found between the piers during the excavations (Fig. 13) suggests that this *portico* or *summa cavea* was built in the Corinthian order on both sides facing the *scaena*.

Today, no architectural details can be seen in the *cavea* except the blockage filling between the vaults and the seating steps. The rows of blockage made of rubble stones bonded with lime mortar are irregular. The only remnant of the *media cavea* is the section east of the theater where the vault of the *vomitorium* is located and called the tower by the locals (Yalman, 1981, p. 31). Since the original seating benches of this section have not yet been recovered, it is thought to have more vertical dimensions to those in the *ima cavea*. There are no remains of the *summa cavea* other than the pillars carrying this level. Therefore, the information about the seating rows in this *cavea* is insufficient.

Unlike the Roman theaters, the *orchestra* of the Nicaea Theater is slightly more than a semicircle, horseshoe-shaped, since the *cavea* exceeds 180 degrees. The horseshoe-shaped *cavea*, one of the characteristics of the theaters built in the Hellenistic Period, shows that Anatolian culture remained attached to its Hellenistic origins even in the Roman Period (Öz, 2019, p. 6; Öz & Ekin Meriç, 2021, p. 58). The changes in theatrical activities in the Roman Period also changed the structures in which these activities were organized, and this change manifests itself in the theaters built in the Hellenistic Period. It is known that in theaters built in the Hellenistic Period such as Telmessos, Xanthos, Patara and Myra, the seating steps starting from the *orchestra* level were removed and a parapet wall was built, separating the *cavea* and *orchestra* from each other (Özdilek, 2016, p. 173). Most of the theaters built in the Roman Period were arranged in the form of a *conistra* or *colymbethra* and Sabratha (Bieber, 1961, p. 206, fig. 695), Leptis Magna (Bieber, 1961, p. 207, fig. 696), Tyndaris (Sear, 2006, pl. 51), Bostra (Sear, 2006, pl. 99), Gerasa (Sear, 2006, pl. 103, 105), Philadelphia (Sear, 2006, pl. 107) and Hierapolis (Sear, 2006, pl. 116) theaters are some of them. In the *cavea* exceeding the semicircle in the Nicaea theater, the *ima cavea* is arranged in the form of a high *conistra* and separated from the *orchestra* floor. There is a *rigole* between the *conistra* wall and the *ima cavea* to remove rainwater. It is also known that this wall allowed the staff to move during theater performances without being seen by the audience (Öz & Ekin Meriç 2021, p. 59).

No in-situ marble or brick pavements were found during the excavations to reach the floor of the *orchestra*, but a lime-mortared floor that could serve as a foundation was reached. The large number of marble slabs found during the works suggests that the floor had a rich marble decoration. The fact that a large number of marble blocks were found in the *orchestra* suggests that during the period when it was used as a quarry, the sitting steps were dragged into the *orchestra*, which caused the destruction of the floor.

### Scaena and Colonnaded Galleries

The *scaena frons* sections of the theaters built in the Imperial Period are divided into two groups, East and West (Fiechter, 1914, p. 108, 112; Dombart, 1922, p. 4). In the *scaena*, circular, rectangular deep niches and three doors opening to the *pulpitum* are defined as Western, Roman Imperial type, while five doors opening to the *pulpitum* and flat without depth and niches are defined as Eastern, Anatolian type (Akyüz, 1993, p. 26; Öztürk, 1999, p. 61). Western examples with deep niches are very rare in Anatolia and Eastern examples are generally found (Waelkens, 1986, p. 86). Aspendos (Boz, 2006, p. 31, pic. 4.1; Sear, 2006, p. 112; Kadioğlu, 2004, p. 7; Mallampati & Demirer, 2011, p. 66, fig. 4.8) the *scaena* that was renewed again in the Roman Period and the *scaena* sections of Ephesus (Krinzinger & Ruggendorfer, 2017, p. 484, fig. 15), Selge (Sear, 2006, p. 376, kat. pl. 400), Myra (Özdilek, 2011, p. 382, kat. pl. 18), Sagalassus (Vandeput, 1992, fig. 4), Perge (Sear, 2006, p. 372, kat. pl. 392), Telmessus (Sear, 2006, p. 378, kat. pl. 402), Side (Mansel, 1962, res. 4), Aizonai (Özer & Korkmaz, 2014, p. 18, res. 4), Kaunos (Say Özer & Özer, 2017, p. 176, fig. 3), Kibyra (Sear, 2006, p. 332, kat. pl. 324) and Patara (Alanyalı, 2005, p. 9, res. 2) theaters are classified as Anatolian type. When the *scaena*, which has very limited information other than the substructure plan, is examined, it was built in Anatolian type with five doors (Fig. 14) opening to the *pulpitum* (Kardoruk, 2022a, p. 82; Kardoruk, 2022b, p. 36).

Some information about the *scaena* can be obtained from the preserved substructure plan and the blocks recovered during the excavations. There are four niches on the *scaena* façade of the preserved podium and these niches are symmetrically placed in the center (Fig. 15-16) of the *scaena*. The moldings and the decorations on them continue along the podium and have been preserved until today because they served as the foundation of the podium. The marble used in the moldings differ from the marble used in the frieze belt. The moldings are made of white marble, while the podium is made of gray local marble. On the podium, there are also marble slabs made of high-quality white marble on which the clothes, tools and equipment used by gladiators in the Roman Period are engraved in relief (see Mansel, 1966, pp. 351-378, for more detail Yalman, 1990, p. 308).

During the excavations at *scaena*, square postaments made of gray marble and octagonal postaments made of white marble were found in-situ. The square monoblock and pedestal postaments were positioned in front of the inner wall of the *proscena*. Near the square postaments are octagonal postaments made of white marble. Among the theaters found in Anatolia, the use of octagonal postaments in the *scaena frons* is also known from the Hierapolis Theater (Türkmen, 2007, lev. 48. 1-2).

Decorated pedestals, the first examples of which were seen during and after the Hellenistic Period, were also used in the *scaena frons* of the Nicaea Theater. There are also examples of square plasters among the pedestals, each with a different feature. Pedestals in this style have been compared to Italian examples rather than those found in Anatolia (Alp, 2008, p. 33). The square plaster bases would have carried plasters with three facades. In addition to ivy scrolls and acanthus leaves, mythological gods such as Heracles, Perseus, Pegasus and Eros were carved on the plaster fragments (Yalman, 1993, p. 186; Öz, 2019, p. 6; Öz & Ekin Meriç, 2021, p. 62). Similar plaster samples were also found in the neighboring city of Claudiopolis and dated to the 2nd century AD (Ward-Perkins, 1980, pl. XXVII, c/d).

The number of columns recovered from the *scaena frons* is quite small. The majority of the recovered examples were used as spolia on the late wall in front of the *scaena frons*. Among the columns used on the wall, there are examples made of marble and conglomerate. The Corinthian capitals carried by the columns are among the well-preserved architectural plastic fragments. The nearly complete capitals were used as spolia on the late wall like the columns, and the few remaining intact examples were delivered to the Iznik Museum. Examples of Corinthian capitals in a similar style are found in the ancient city of Miletopolis (Mert, 2016, res. 12) near Bursa. These capitals are important as they show that the *scaena frons* were made in the Corinthian order. As with the Corinthian capitals and columns, the number of architraves recovered is quite small. Some of the architraves were carried to the museum, some of them were used as spolia on the late wall in front of the *scaena frons*, and some of them were used in the construction activities in the city after the Roman Period (Kardoruk, 2020, p. 441). Similar preserved architraves are also seen in the ancient city of Side (Vandeput, 1992, pl. 115.3).

Except for the Corinthian capitals and architraves, there are almost no entablature fragments in the *scaena frons*. There is no information except for a few examples delivered to the museum and used as spolia in the area. Therefore, it is very difficult to understand what kind of architectural order was preferred in the cornice sections of the *scaena frons*. The few architectural blocks recovered are acanthus-leafed cantilevered *geison*, toothed *geison+sima* and pediment fragments in a similar style found in the theater of Parion (Başaran & Yıldızlı, 2016, p. 78, fig. 1-2).

The only source of information about the architectural plastic decoration used at *scaena frons* is the small architectural stone (Fig. 17) artifacts that were broken off from the architectural blocks or deliberately shaved off. Among the small fragments recovered; fragments decorated with Lesbian *kymation*, fragments decorated with Ionian *kymation*, fragments decorated with guilloche motif, fragments broken off from the *ranke* frieze (leaves, flowers, etc.), laurel leaves, grape clusters, fragments of Corinthian capitals (acanthus leaves, volutes, *abacus* flowers and plates), fragments of pedestals (Attic-Ionian type), fragments of Ionian bases (Attic-Ionian type). Laurel leaves, grape clusters, fragments of Corinthian capitals (acanthus leaves, volutes, *abacus* flowers and plates), pedestal fragments (Attic-Ionian type), Ionian capitals and volute fragments of these capitals, ceiling cassettes and fragments belonging to the cantilevered *geison+sima*. There are floral rosettes (used in the ceiling cassette and cantilevered *geison+sima*), architrave fragments (*fascia* sections), relief masks and fragments with relief depictions of animals, humans and mythological creatures. Among these fragments, the most abundant groups consist of leaves from *ranke* friezes and Corinthian capitals, moldings with Lesbos and Ionian *kymation*, floral decoration from Corinthian capitals and *ranke* decorations, and relief fragments of masks, humans and animals. The majority of these small fragments belong to the *scaena frons*. The small fragments recovered show that the theater was decorated with magnificent decorative pieces, but this value was destroyed after the end of the use phase.

It is understood that the *pulpitum*, where the plays were performed in the theater, was made of wood as the entrance places of the wooden poles in front of the *scaena* were revealed. A similar use of wooden *pulpitum* is also seen in the theater of Diocaesarea in Anatolia (Özdemir, 2023, p. 51, şek. 3.6). The wooden platform could be accessed through five doors opening to the *versurae* and *scaena frons*. The *hyposcaena* section under the wooden platform was completely destroyed by the additions made during the Byzantine Period.

On the back wall of the *scaena* there are three entrances known as *Hospitalia* and *Regia*. *Regia*, which means palace, represents the main entrance in the *scaena*, the central door, while *Hospitalia*, also called *Porta Regia* or *Valva Regia*, represents the secondary entrances on the sides of the main door. The *scaena* has four rooms separated from each other by corridors at the back, with *parascaena* at the easternmost and westernmost part, which are thought to be small rooms used for organizing games (İsler, 2017, p. 494). It is known that these back rooms in the *scaena* were used for decor and costume changes (Sear, 2006, p. 9). Around the main spaces there are eight smaller rooms used for service purposes. Similar infrastructure plans with multiple rooms and entrances and exits are also seen in the theaters of Kaunos (Say Özer & Özer, 2017, p. 177, fig. 5) and Prusias ad Hypium (Okan et al., 2022, p. 52, fig. 5).

During the excavations, it was observed that the remains of the *scaena* went beyond the fence surrounding the first-degree archaeological site. Since excavations could not be carried out in the areas outside the fence boundary, information on how the theater architecture continued in the north of the *scaena* is limited. However, no evidence of *porticus post scaenatum* and *quadriporticus* was found within the limited area excavated.

There is no information about the *scaena*, *proscena* and *versurae* of the Nicaea theater in ancient sources (Schneider, 1943, p. 8; Ferrero, 1974, p. 14; Yalman, 1987, p. 238). Very few architectural elements belonging to the *scaena frons*, which is thought to have two floors, have been recovered and most of the material belonging to it was spolia, the architectural plastic elements on them were shaved off and the remaining small part was used as spolia on the late period wall in front of the *scaena*. In this case, the number of architectural blocks that can be used in the *scaena frons* restitution is almost negligible. That the theater had an elaborately crafted and richly decorated *scaena frons* is evident from the shaved or broken architectural plastic fragments found during the excavations and the spolia theater blocks used in the



buildings built after the theater in the city (see Kardoruk, 2022a, pp. 133-138, for more detail Yalman, 1990, p. 308; Kardoruk 2022a, p. 84).

In the Nicaea Theater, there are colonnaded galleries on the side wings of the *scaena*, (Fig. 18) which are not found in Anatolia but are used as porticoes in important theaters abroad (see Kardoruk 2022a, pp. 162-214, for more detail). Anyone wishing to pass to the *scaena* from the *versurae* or to the *cavea* using the *vomitorium* and *additus maximus* to the east and west of the theater must pass through this colonnaded gallery. These two galleries, which can also be considered as the reception unit of the theater, are a two-storeyed structure with a column-parapet-*hermae*-parapet-column arrangement on the second floor and a parapet-column arrangement and parapet-column railing on both floors using the Corinthian order. A similar example with a single storey is found only in the theater of Beneventum. Compared to the Nicaea Theater, the Beneventum Theater is quite simple and built in Doric order (Iannace & Trematerra, 2013, p. 2, fig. 2).

### Conclusion

Nicaea (modern-day Iznik) is one of the important cities of the Bithynia Region of Asia Minor, which maintained its central characteristic from the Hellenistic Period until the Ottoman Period. The intensive development policies of each civilization continued by damaging or destroying the ruins of the previous civilization. Most of the Roman ruins of the city, most of which are under modern settlement, are dated to this period and the most spectacular building that has survived to the present day is the theater. For this reason, the theater is the only structure that keeps the multi-layered cultural heritage of the city of Nicaea alive until today. This article discusses the place of the theater among other Roman theaters in terms of its historical context, architectural design, construction techniques and unique spatial features.

Nicaea Theater, which we know for sure that it was under construction in 111 AD from Pliny's letters, reflects the characteristic features of Roman theaters. It also bears the characteristics of Greek theaters with the *cavea* and *orchestra* in horseshoe plan. In addition, the colonnaded galleries used for portico purposes on the side wings of the *scaena* is the unique characteristic feature in Turkey. It is the only Roman theater in Anatolia that has been raised with vault and arch technology on a completely flat area independent of the slope of the hillside. It is distinguished from similar examples such as Side by the fact that Pliny the Younger, gave information about its construction date and architectural features and that the vaults carrying the lower *cavea* are in use. The Nicaea theater, which bears all the characteristic features of Roman Period theaters, can therefore be compared with other important Roman theaters in Italy and Europe.

The theater, which has a hybrid plan scheme, was built in the Roman Period, but it also incorporated features from the Hellenistic Period theaters. The analemma wall surrounding the *cavea* is unique among theaters in Anatolia and beyond. Half of the wall was built according to the horseshoe plan (Hellenistic character) and the other half according to the semicircle plan (Roman character). Unlike other Roman theaters, therefore, the orchestra of Nicaea is horseshoe-shaped plan, more than a semicircle. This demonstrates that Anatolian culture maintained its Greek origins during the Roman Period.

Examining the plans of the *scaenae frons* reveals that each theater has its own unique design, with no two being identical. Like all other theaters, the Nicaea Theater has features similar to its contemporaries, as well as unique qualities. Especially, the two-storey galleries on the side wings of the *scaena*, used as porticoes, are a unique structure of theater. Excavations revealed that the galleries were not a stand-alone structure but were probably connected to a *porticus post scaenium*, as evidenced by the surrounding foundation remains. Basilicas in theater, containing royal access (*versurae*) to the stage, are present a Roman character in almost all theaters from the 1st century AD. However, no other theaters in Anatolia have similar examples of basilicas complementing the theater. If the entire structure is uncovered during the expropriation and proven to be a basilica, it will be the only example in the world with two-storey galleries inside.

Nicaea is one of the most important cities in the Bithynia region, which maintained its central position from the Hellenistic Period to the Ottoman Period. The intensive development policies of each civilization continued by damaging or destroying the remains of the previous civilization. Most of the Roman ruins beneath the modern city belong to this period, and the theater is the only structure that has survived to the present day. The most important features of the theater is that it shows all the social, economic, cultural and

social changes that the city of Nicaea went through with remains. Apart from its different architectural character, it is only building that holds the entire history of Nicaea together. The earthquake zone of Bithynia, the intensity of the construction policies of later civilizations due to its characteristic, and the post-Roman period uses within the original structure caused serious damage to building. In the theater, which was opened to visitors after the Restoration and Conservation Project were completed between 2023-2024, a multi-layered cultural itinerary was prepared by preserving both the original structure and all subsequent uses.

---

**Ethics Committee Approval:** Ethics committee approval is not required.

**Peer-review:** Externally peer-reviewed.

**Conflict of Interest:** The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

**Financial Disclosure:** The authors declared that this study has no financial support.

---

## References

- Ainsworth, W. F. (1842). *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Chaldea and Armenia*. II, London.
- Akyüz, E. (1993). Ege'de Tiyatro. *Ege Mimarlık*, 4, 26-32.
- Alanyalı, H. S. (2005). Patara Tiyatrosu 2004 Çalışmaları. *Anadolu/Anatolia*, 29, 1-12. [https://doi.org/10.1501/andl\\_0000000324](https://doi.org/10.1501/andl_0000000324)
- Alp, A. O. (2008). Hellenistik-Roma Dönemi Anadolu Mimarlığında Bezemeli Kaideler. *Anadolu/Anatolia*, 34, 21-38. [https://doi.org/10.1501/andl\\_0000000358](https://doi.org/10.1501/andl_0000000358)
- Anderson, J. C. (2013). *Roman Architecture in Province*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Antunes, J. M. Q. (2017). A Identidade e a Forma Dos Edifícios Teatrais Nas Tipologias de Arquitetura. *Universidade Lusitana De Lisboa, Faculdade de Arquitetura e Artes Mestrado Integrado em Arquitetura*, Lisboa. <http://repositorio.ulusiada.pt/handle/11067/3722>
- Astori, B., Bonora, V. & Garnero, G. (2002). Il Rilievo Laser Scanner Del Teatro Romano Di Ventimiglia: Esperienze e Prospettive. *VI Conferenza Nazionale ASITA*. [https://www.academia.edu/81420406/Il\\_Rilievo\\_Laser\\_Scanner\\_Del\\_Teatro\\_Romano\\_DI\\_Ventimiglia\\_Esperienze\\_e\\_Prospettive](https://www.academia.edu/81420406/Il_Rilievo_Laser_Scanner_Del_Teatro_Romano_DI_Ventimiglia_Esperienze_e_Prospettive)
- Başaran, C. & Yıldızlı, M. (2016). Parion Tiyatrosu Roma Dönemi Mimari Bezemeleri. In C. Başaran & H. E. Ergürer (Eds.), *Parion Roma Tiyatrosu, 2006-2015 Yılı Çalışmaları, Mimarisi ve Buluntuları* (pp. 77-104). İçdaş, İstanbul.
- Bejor, G. (1979). La Decorazione Scultorea Dei Teatri Romani Nelle Province Africane. *Prospettiva*, 17, 37-46. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/24419853.pdf>
- Bieber, M. (1961). *The History of the Greek and Roman Theater*. Princeton University Press, New Jersey.
- Bomgardner, D. L. (2016). The Theatre-Temple Complex at Leptis Magna: Multiple Dimensions of Functionality or There's More Than One Way to Act on the Emperor. In T. Hufschmid (Ed.), *Theaterbauten als Teil Monumentaler Heiligtümer in den Northwestlichen Provinzen des Imperium Romanum: Architektur-Organisation-Nutzung* (pp. 63-80). Internationals Kolloquium in Augusta Raurica, Forschungen in August 50. [https://www.academia.edu/45081366/D\\_L\\_Bomgardner\\_The\\_Theatre\\_Temple\\_Complex\\_at\\_Lepcis\\_Magna\\_Multiple\\_dimensions\\_of\\_functionality\\_or\\_There\\_s\\_more\\_than\\_one\\_way\\_to\\_act\\_on\\_the\\_emperor](https://www.academia.edu/45081366/D_L_Bomgardner_The_Theatre_Temple_Complex_at_Lepcis_Magna_Multiple_dimensions_of_functionality_or_There_s_more_than_one_way_to_act_on_the_emperor)

- Boz, B. (2006). *Structural Analysis of Historic Aspendos Theatre* [Unpublished master dissertation]. Middle East Technical University. <https://etd.lib.metu.edu.tr/upload/12607115/index.pdf>
- Bridel, P. (2016). Gradins, Scenes et Cheminements Dans Les Edifices du Secteur Sacre D' Aventicum. In T. Hufschmid (Ed.), *Theaterbauten als Teil Monumentaler Heiligtümer in den Northwestlichen Provinzen des Imperium Romanum: Architektur-Organisation-Nutzung* (pp. 157-171). Internationals Kolloquium in Augusta Raurica, Forschungen in August 50.  
[https://www.academia.edu/36557134/Theaterbauten\\_als\\_Teil\\_monumentaler\\_Heiligt%C3%BCmer\\_in\\_den\\_nordwestlichen\\_Provinzen\\_des\\_Imperium\\_Romanum\\_Architektur\\_Organisation\\_Nutzung](https://www.academia.edu/36557134/Theaterbauten_als_Teil_monumentaler_Heiligt%C3%BCmer_in_den_nordwestlichen_Provinzen_des_Imperium_Romanum_Architektur_Organisation_Nutzung)
- Cruz, P. M. & Pizzo, A. (2018). El Teatro Y Anfiteatro De Augusta Emerita, Aspectos Arqueologicos, Cronologicos Y Urbanisticos. In P. M. Cruz (Ed.), *La Scaenae Frons Del Teatro Romano De Merida* (pp. 13-38). De Archivo Espanol De Arqueologia, LXXXVI, Consejo Superior De Investigaciones Cientificas, Merida. <https://digital.csic.es/handle/10261/239181>
- Dombart, T. (1922). *Das Palatinische Septizonium zu Rom*. München: C. H. Beck.
- Ekin-Meriç, A. (2019). İznik Tarihini Simgeleyen Bir Anıt: Antik Roma Tiyatrosu. *Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 21 (2), 339-355. <https://doi.org/10.16953/deusosbil.543499>
- Ekin-Meriç, A., Öz, A.K., Köşklük-Kaya, N., Kaya, F.H. & Kardoruk, N. (2018). İznik Roma Tiyatrosu 2016 Yılı Kazı ve Restorasyon Çalışmaları. 39. *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı*, II, Bursa, 285-300.
- Ekin-Meriç, A., Öz, A.K., Köşklük-Kaya, N., Kaya, F.H. & Kardoruk, N. (2019). İznik Roma Tiyatrosu 2017 Yılı Kazı ve Restorasyon Çalışmaları. 40. *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı*, I, Ankara, 293-310.
- Ekin-Meriç, A., Öz, A.K., Kardoruk, N., Köşklük-Kaya, N. & Kaya, F.H. (2020). İznik Roma Tiyatrosu 2018 Yılı Kazı ve Restorasyon Çalışmaları. 41. *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı*, I, Ankara, 265-284.
- Ekin-Meriç, A., Öz, A.K., Köşklük-Kaya, N., Kaya, F.H. & Kardoruk, N. (2022). İznik Roma Tiyatrosu 2019-2020 Yılları Kazı ve Restorasyon Çalışmaları. 2019-2020 Yılı Kazı Çalışmaları, I, Ankara, 189-216.
- Ermış, Ü. M. (2014). Seyyahların Gözüyle İznik Şehri ve Yapıları. *CIEPO 19, Osmanlı Öncesi ve Dönemi Tarihi Araştırmaları I*, 205-232.  
[https://www.academia.edu/11415334/Seyyahlar%C4%B1n\\_G%C3%B6z%C3%BCyle\\_%C4%B0znik\\_%C5%99Eehri\\_ve\\_Yap%C4%B1lar%C4%B1](https://www.academia.edu/11415334/Seyyahlar%C4%B1n_G%C3%B6z%C3%BCyle_%C4%B0znik_%C5%99Eehri_ve_Yap%C4%B1lar%C4%B1)
- Fellows, C. (1839). *A Journal Written During an Excursion in Asia Minor*. London.
- Ferrero, D. B. (1974). *Theatre Classics in Asia Minore IV*. Deduzioni e Propeste Roma.
- Fiechter, E. R. (1914). *Die Baugeschichtliche Entwicklung des Antiken Theaters*. Eine Studie, Mit 132 Abbildungen, University of Toronto, München.
- Frezouls, E. (1961). Recherches Les Theatres De L'Orient Syrien. *Syria*, XXXVIII, Fasc. 1/2, 54-86.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/4197263>
- Gebhard, E. (2011). Discovery of the First Theater at Stobi. *Folia Archaeologica Balkanica II*, 325-346.  
[http://periodica.fzf.ukim.edu.mk/fab/FAB\\_02\\_\(2012\)/FAB%2002.21.%20Gebhard,%20E.%20R.%20%20Discovery%20of%20the%20First%20Theater%20at%20Stobi.pdf](http://periodica.fzf.ukim.edu.mk/fab/FAB_02_(2012)/FAB%2002.21.%20Gebhard,%20E.%20R.%20%20Discovery%20of%20the%20First%20Theater%20at%20Stobi.pdf)
- Goltz, C. F. (1896). *Anatolische Ausflüge*. Berlin.
- Grelois, J. P. & Mango C. (1988). *Dr. John Covel Voyages en Turquie 1675-1677*. Paris.
- Gros, P. (1980). *L'Architecture Romaine*. Du Debut du III Siecle av. J.-C. A La Fin Du Haut-Empire I, Les Monuments Publics, Les Munuels D'Art Et D'Archeologie Antiques, Collection Dirigee Par Gerard Nicolini, Paris.
- Hanson, J. A. (1959). *Roman Theater-Temples*. Princeton University Press, New Jersey.
- Heberdey, R., Niemann G. & Wilberg, W. (1912). *Das Theater in Ephesos*. Forschungen in Ephesos, Österreichischen Archaeologischen Institute, II, Wien.

- Hell, X. H. D. (1855). *Voyage en Turquie et en Perse*. I, Paris.
- Hell, X. H. D. (1860). *Voyage en Turquie et en Perse*. IV, Paris.
- Iannace, G. & Trematerra, A. (2013). The Rediscovery of Benevento Roman Theatre Acoustics. *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.culher.2013.11.012>
- Isler, H. P. (2015). Studies on Greek Theatres: History and Prospect, The Architecture of the Ancient Theatre. In R. Federiksen-Elizabeth & R. Gebhard-Alexander Sokolicek (Eds.), *Acts of an International Conference at the Danish Institute at Athens 27-30 January 2012* (pp. 15-38). Monograph of the Danish Institute at Athens 17. <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.608115.5>
- Isler, H. P. (2017). *Antike Theaterbauten Ein Handbuch*. Katalogband and Textband, Österreichische Akademie Der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse Denkschriften, 490 Band, Archäologische Forschungen, Band 27, Verlag Der Österreichischen Akademie Der Wissenschaften.
- Kadioğlu, M. (2004). Ankyra Tiyatrosu: Ön Rapor, Vorbericht über das Theater von Ankyra. In Z. Çizmeli Öğün, T. Sipahi & L. Keskin (Eds.), *Anadolu / Anatolia Ek Dizisi*, (pp.123-140, (1-13). I.- II. Ulusal Arkeolojik Araştırmalar Sempozyumu 1. [https://www.academia.edu/1087789/ANKYRA\\_T%C4%B0YATROSU\\_%C3%96N\\_RAPOR](https://www.academia.edu/1087789/ANKYRA_T%C4%B0YATROSU_%C3%96N_RAPOR)
- Kadioğlu, M. (2002). *Die Scaenae Frons Des Theaters von Nysa am Maander* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Albert-Ludwigs-Universität.
- Kardoruk, N. (2020). İznik Roma Tiyatrosu Taş Eserleri Üzerine Bazı Gözlemler. In Vedat Keleş (Ed.), *Propontis ve Çevre Kùltürleri, Parion Studies III* (pp. 435-450). Ege Yayınları.
- Kardoruk, N. (2022a). *İznik (Nicaea) Tiyatrosu Taş Eserleri: Sütunlu Galeriler ve Çevresi* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi.
- Kardoruk, N. (2022b). Yeni Bulgularla Birlikte İznik (Nicaea) Roma Tiyatrosu Kullanım İşlevleri ve Mimarisi. *Trakya Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakùltesi Dergisi*, 12 (24), 31-62. <https://doi.org/10.33207/trkede.1020718>
- Kinneir, J. M. (1818). *Journey Through Asia Minor, Armenia and Koordistan in the Year 1813 and 1814*. London.
- Krauss, F. (1973). *Das Theater Von Milet*. Das Hellenistische Theater, Der Römische Zuschauerbau, Milet, Ergebnisse Der Ausgrabungen und Untersuchungen Seit Dem Jahre 1899, Teil I, Band IV, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Walter De Gruyter&Co., Berlin.
- Krinzinger, F. & Ruggendorfer P. (2017). *Das Theater von Ephesos*. Archäologischer Befund, Funde und Chronologie, Tafelband, Forschungen in Ephesos Band II/1, Österreichischen Archäologischen Institut, Verlag Der Österreichischen Akademie Der Wissenschaften.
- Launay, L. D. (1913). *La Turquie Que L'on Voit*. Paris.
- Lopez, M. I. R. (2017). The Relief Decorations of the Ancient Roman Theater: The Case of Sabratha. *Music in Art*, XLII/1-2, 2017, 17-31. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/90019494>
- Lubenau, R. & Sahm, W. A. L. (1930). *Beschreibung Der Reisen Des Reinhold Lubenau*. II, Königsberg.
- Malacrino, C. G. (2005). Il Teatro Romano Di Scolacium. Contributo Per Una Rilettura Architettonica E Topografica. In Gustavo Traversari (Ed.), *Rivista Di Archeologia*, (pp. 97-141). Anno XXIX. [https://www.academia.edu/1528406/C\\_G\\_Malacrino\\_Il\\_teatro\\_romano\\_di\\_Scolacium\\_Contributo\\_p\\_er\\_una\\_rilettura\\_architettonica\\_e\\_urbanistica\\_in\\_Rivista\\_di\\_Archeologia\\_29\\_2005\\_pp\\_97\\_141](https://www.academia.edu/1528406/C_G_Malacrino_Il_teatro_romano_di_Scolacium_Contributo_p_er_una_rilettura_architettonica_e_urbanistica_in_Rivista_di_Archeologia_29_2005_pp_97_141)
- Mallampati, H. B. & Demirer, Ü. (2011). Architecture, Entertainment and Civic Life: The Theater at Psidian Antioch. In E. K. Gazda, D. Y. Ng & Ü. Demirer (Eds.), *Building a New Rome: The Imperial Colony of Psidian Antioch (25 BC-AD 700)*, (pp. 62-84). Kelsey Museum of Archaeology.

[https://www.academia.edu/21063194/Architecture Entertainment and Civic Life The Theater at Pisidian Antioch](https://www.academia.edu/21063194/Architecture_Entertainment_and_Civic_Life_The_Theater_at_Pisidian_Antioch)

- Mansel, A. M. (1962). Side Tiyatrosu. *Belleten*, 26, 45-56. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/2867221>
- Mansel, A. M. (1966). Side'nin Doğu Şehir kapısında Bulunan Silah Kabartmaları. *Belleten*, 30 (119), 351-378. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/2760295>
- Manzetti, M. C. (2016). 3D Visibility Analysis as a Tool to Validate Ancient Theatre Reconstructions: The Case of the Large Roman Theatre of Gortyn. *Virtual Archaeology Review*, 7 (15), 36-43. <https://doi.org/10.4995/var.2016.5922>
- Mert, İ. H. (2016). Miletopolis Antik Kentinde Bulunan Mimari Bezemeli Yapı Unsurları. In *Uluslararası III. Mustafa Kemalpaşa Sempozyumu*, 1, 75-86.
- Moretti, J. C., Badie, A. & Tardy, D. (2010). Les Fronsts De Scene En Narbonnaise. In Sebastian F. R. Asensio & N. Röring (Eds.), *La Scaenae Frons En La Arquitectura Teatral Romana*, (pp. 137-161). Universidad De Murcia Fundacion Teatro Romano De Cartagene 2009. [https://www.academia.edu/11534357/Les\\_fronsts\\_de\\_scene\\_en\\_Narbonnaise\\_dans\\_S\\_F\\_R\\_A\\_MALLO\\_ASENSIO\\_N\\_R%C3%A9RING\\_%C3%A9ds\\_La\\_scaenae\\_frons\\_en\\_la\\_architectura\\_teatral\\_romana\\_Murcie\\_2010\\_p\\_137\\_161](https://www.academia.edu/11534357/Les_fronsts_de_scene_en_Narbonnaise_dans_S_F_R_A_MALLO_ASENSIO_N_R%C3%A9RING_%C3%A9ds_La_scaenae_frons_en_la_architectura_teatral_romana_Murcie_2010_p_137_161)
- Okan, E., Bilir, A. & Çalışkan, D. (2022). Prusias Ad Hypium Antik Tiyatrosu: Yeni Kazılar, İlk Veriler. *Höyük*, 9, 93-66. [10.37879/hoyuk.2022.033](https://doi.org/10.37879/hoyuk.2022.033)
- Osten, P. V. (1837). *Denkwürdigkeiten und Erinnerungen aus dem Orient*. III, Stuttgart.
- Öz, A. K. (2019). Son Dönem Kazıları Bağlamında İznik Roma Tiyatrosu'nun Mimari Özellikleri. *Arkeoloji ve Sanat*, 161, 1-10. <https://search.trdizin.gov.tr/yayin/detay/432076/son-donem-kazilari-baglaminda-iznik-roma-tiyatrosunun-mimari-ozellikleri>
- Öz, A. K. & Ekin-Meriç, A. (2021). *İznik Roma Tiyatrosu*. Homer Kitapevi, İstanbul.
- Özdemir, O. (2023). *Diocaesarea Tiyatrosu* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Mersin Üniversitesi.
- Özdilek, B. (2011). *Rhodiapolis Tiyatrosu ve Lykia Tiyatroları* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation Akdeniz Üniversitesi]. <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/tezDetay.jsp?id=9kSt2hVBqXWbxbXa5nroA&no=gm1Tpip7Hc67nMS7KCboNg>
- Özdilek, B. (2016). Lykia Tiyatrolarına Genel Bakış/An Overview of Lycian Theaters. *Cedrus the Journal of MCRI*, IV, 139-185. <https://doi.org/10.13113/CEDRUS/201610>
- Özer, E. & Korkmaz H. (2014). Tarihsel Süreçte Aizanoi Kentindeki Dört Yapıda Tahrip ve Koruma. *Pamukkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 18, 11-20. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/411548>
- Öztürk, A. (1999). *Architektur Der Scaenae Frons Des Theaters von Perge* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Brandenburgischen Technischen Universität.
- Özügül, A. (2017). İznik Tiyatrosu 2015. 38. *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı*, 3, Ankara, 317-332.
- Pansini, A. (2017). The Domus of Apuleius at Ostia Antica: A Private Space in a Central Point of Public Life. *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference (TRAC)*, 179-193. [https://doi.org/10.16995/TRAC2016\\_179\\_193](https://doi.org/10.16995/TRAC2016_179_193)
- Peyssonel, C. D. (2005). 1745 yılında İzmit ve İznik'e Yapılmış Bir Gezinin Öyküsü (*Relation d'un Voyage fait a Nicomedie et a Nicee en 1745*). (F. Yavuz Ulugün, trans.) Kocaeli Yüksek Öğrenim Derneği Kültür Yayınları, 3, Kocaeli.



- Pizzigati, A. (1995). Il Teatro Romano Di Volterra: Maestranze Urbane E Locali. *Annali Della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe di Lettere e Filosofia*, Serie III, 25 (4), 1413-1435. [https://www.academia.edu/67015923/Il teatro romano di Volterra maestranze urbane e locali](https://www.academia.edu/67015923/Il_teatro_romano_di_Volterra_maestranze_urbane_e_locali)
- Pliny, (1915). *Pliny Letters* [Epistulae]. (William Melmoth, trans.) 2, Harward University Press, William Heineman LTD, London.
- Pococke, R. (1745). *A Description of the East and Some Other Countries, Vol.2, Part 2, Observations on the Island of the Archipelago, Asia Minor, Thrace, Greece and Some Other Parts of Europe*. London.
- Romeo, E. & Tucci, G. (2005). Integrated Survey Techniques the Study and the Restoration of the Archeological Heritage. *CIPA 2005 XX International Symposium*, Italy. <https://core.ac.uk/reader/301559083>
- Say Özer, Y. & Özer N. O. (2017). Formal Analysis and Principal Architectural Character of Caunus Theater. *Megaron*, 12(2), 173-183. [10.5505/MEGARON.2017.64436](https://doi.org/10.5505/MEGARON.2017.64436)
- Schlüter, A. (2003). Vergangenheit, Sprich Das Antike Theater von Herculaneum bei Napel. *Antike Welt*, 34, 1, 37-42.
- Schneider, A. M. (1943). *Die Römischen und Byzantinischen Denkmäler von İznik (Nicaea)*. İstanbuler Forschungen, 16, Berlin.
- Sear, F. (1996). The Theatre at Taormina-A New Chronology. *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 64, 41-79. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246200010345>
- Sear, F. (2004). The Roman Theatre at Gubbio. *Mediterranean Archaeology*, 7, Festschrift in Honour of J. Richard Green, 213-222. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24668153>
- Sear, F. (2006). *Roman Theaters an Architectural Study*. Oxford University Press, London.
- Segal, A. (1981). Roman Cities in the Province of Arabia. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 40 (2), 108-121. <https://doi.org/10.2307/989724>
- Segal, A. (1987). Die Theaterbauten im Alten Palastina in Römisch-Byzantinischer Zeit: Eine Historisch-Archäologische Untersuchung. *Antike Welt*, 18 (1), 2-21. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44432214>
- Sestini, D. (1789). *Voyage Dans La Grece Asiatique a La Peninsule De Cyzique, A Brusse Et A Nicee, Avec Des Details sur L'Histoire Naturelle Ces Contrees*. Paris.
- Small, D. B. (1983). Studies in Roman Theater Design. *American Journal of Archaeology*, 87 (1), 55-68. <https://doi.org/10.2307/504664>
- Strabon, (2000). *Antik Anadolu Coğrafyası: XII-XIII-XIV* (Adnan Pekman, trans.). Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, İstanbul.
- Şahin, S. (1979). *Katalog Der Antiken Inschriften des Museums von İznik (Nikaia)*. (İznik Müzesi Antik Yazıtlar Kataloğu). Stadt Gebiet und Die Nächste Umgebung der Stadt, (Şehir ve Yakın Çevresi), Inschriften Griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien, Band 9, Teil: I, Bonn: Rudolf Habelt Verlag.
- Texier, C. (1839). *Description de l'Asie Mineure*. I, Paris: Firmin Didot.
- Texier, C. (1862). *Asie Mineure: Description Géographique, Historique Et Archéologique des Provinces Et Des Villes De La Chersonnèse D'asie*. Paris.
- Tuccini, V. (2012). Il Sito Di Ferento. In L. Manfra (Ed.), *Il Teatro Romano Di Ferento* (pp. 32-60). Un Progetto Di Gestione Per La Valorizzazione Di Un Sito Del Lazio, Gangemi Editore.
- Türkmen, M. (2007). *Pamphylia ve Kilikia'da Severuslar Dönemi Mimaris* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. İstanbul Üniversitesi. <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/tezDetay.jsp?id=N9DDrNU8qUdRCiVwDTTevw&no=QjMNooDtCoA3lBnrEFLHdA>

- Valluzzi, M. R. (2015). *Identificazione Strutturale Del Teatro Romano Di Verona Mediante Monitoraggio Statico Dinamica*. Dipartimento Di Ingegneria Civile Edile Ambientale Corso di Laurea Magistrale in Ingegneria Edile-Architettura, Universite Degli Studi Di Padova, Anno-Academico. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/41985804.pdf>
- Vandeput, L. (1992). The Theatre-Façade at Sagalassus. *Anatolian Studies*, 42, 99-118. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3642954>
- Waelkens, M. (1986). Hellenistic and Roman Influence in the Imperial Architecture of Asia Minor. *Bulletin Supplemet*, The Greek Renaissance in Roman Empire: Papers from the Tenth British Museum Classical Colloquium, 5, 77-88. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43768506>
- Ward-Perkins, J. B. (1980). Nicomedia and Marble Trade. *Paper of British School at Rome*, 48, 23-69. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40310769>
- Yalman, B. (1981). İznik Tiyatro Kazısı 1980. 3. *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı*, Ankara, 31-34.
- Yalman, B. (1987). İznik Tiyatro Kazısı 1985. 8. *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı*, II, Ankara, 233-258.
- Yalman, B. (1990). İznik Tiyatro Kazısı 1988. 11. *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı*, II, Ankara, 301-324. Yalman, B. (1993). İznik Tiyatro Kazısı 1991. 14. *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı*, II, Ankara, 181-204.

## Figures

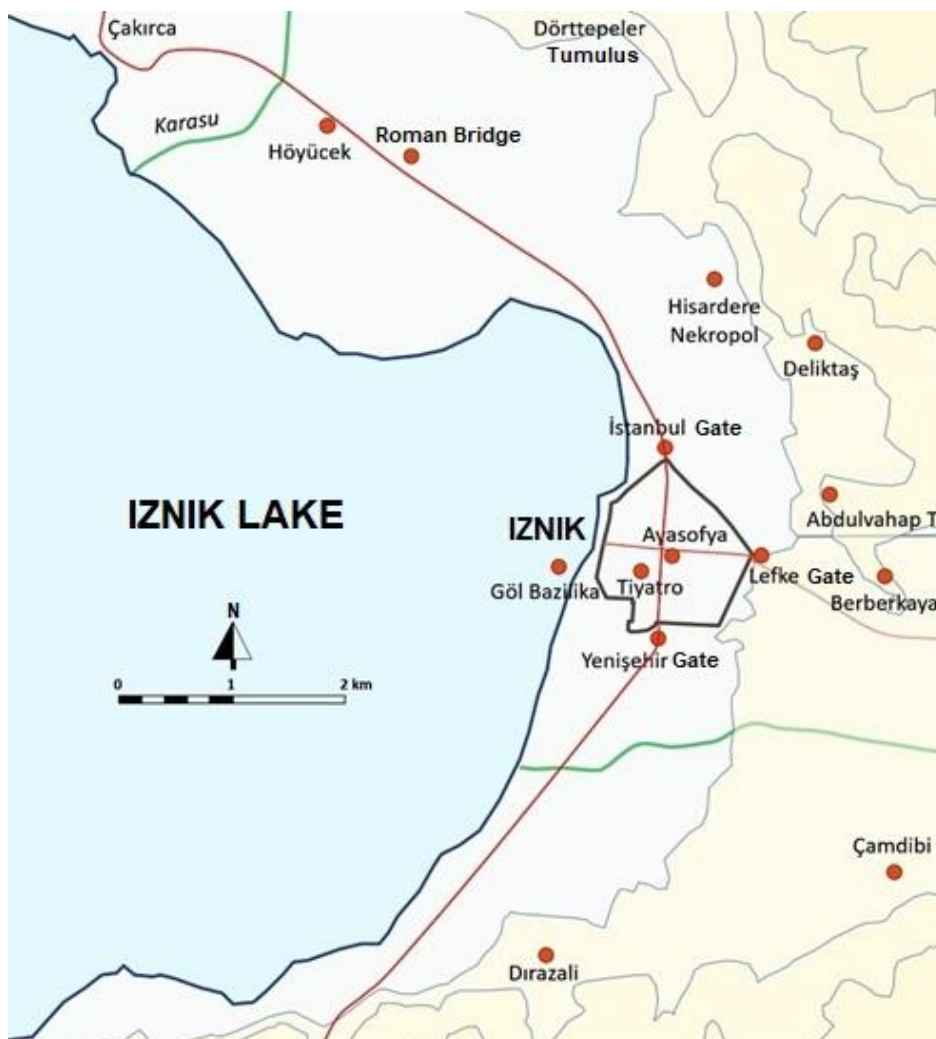


Fig. 1: Location of the ancient city of Nicaea.





*Fig. 2: Aerial view of the Nicaea Theater.*



*Fig. 3: 3D visual of the Nicaea Theater.*



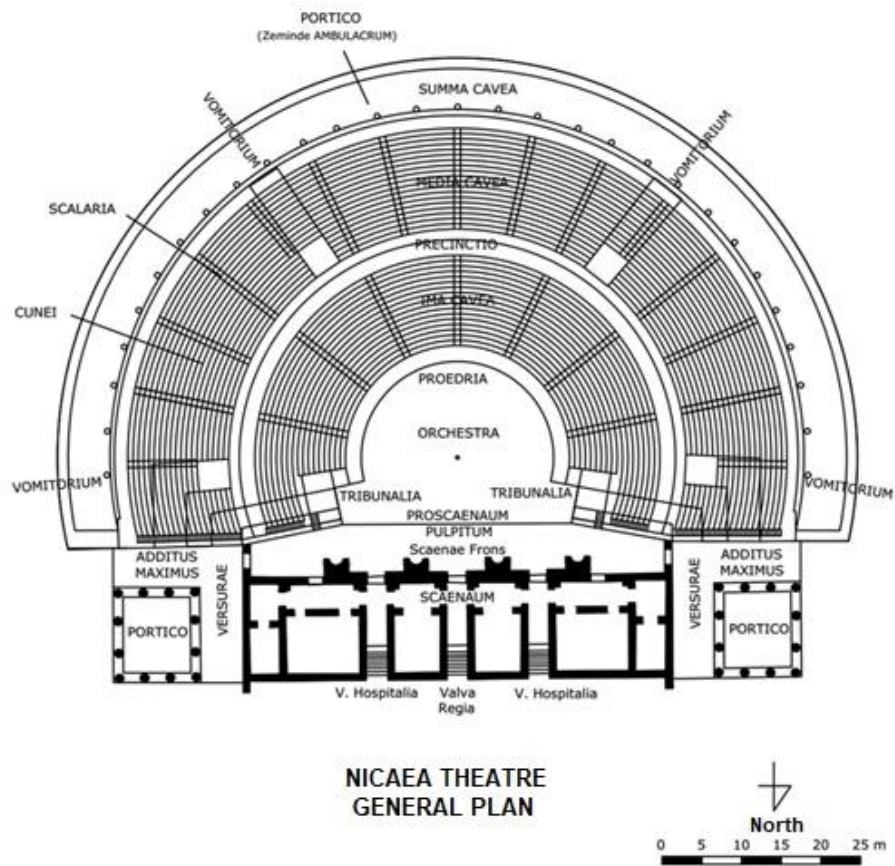


Fig. 4: The plan of the Nicaea Theater.

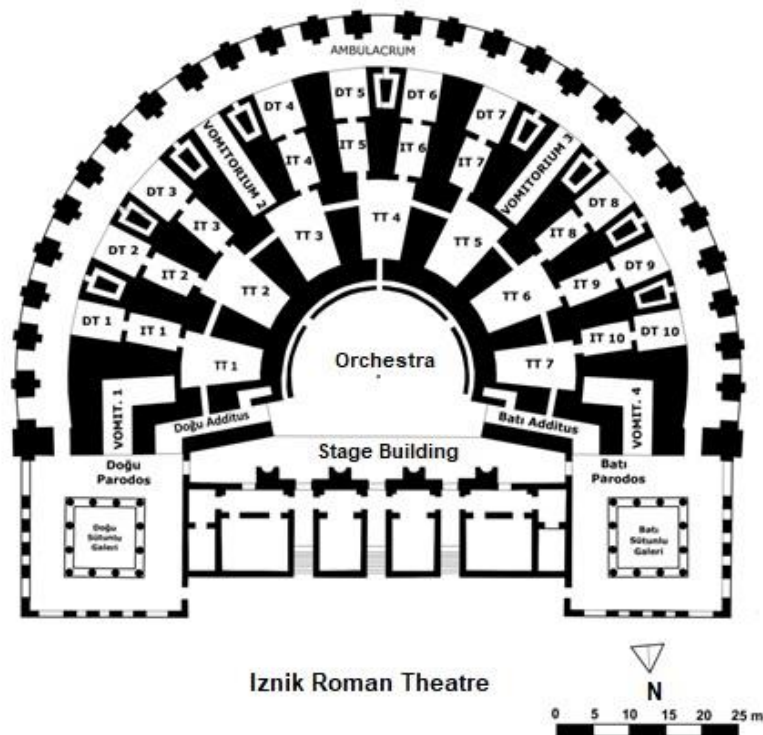


Fig. 5: The substructure plan of the Nicaea Theater.



*Fig. 6: Transitions from trapezoidal vaults to barrel vaults.*



*Fig. 7: Trapezoidal vault opening to the orchestra.*





*Fig. 8: East Vomitorium.*



*Fig. 9: Western Additus Maximus and double vault.*





*Fig. 10: Pillars that elevate the summa cavea.*



*Fig. 11: Theater seating step (Prohedria).*

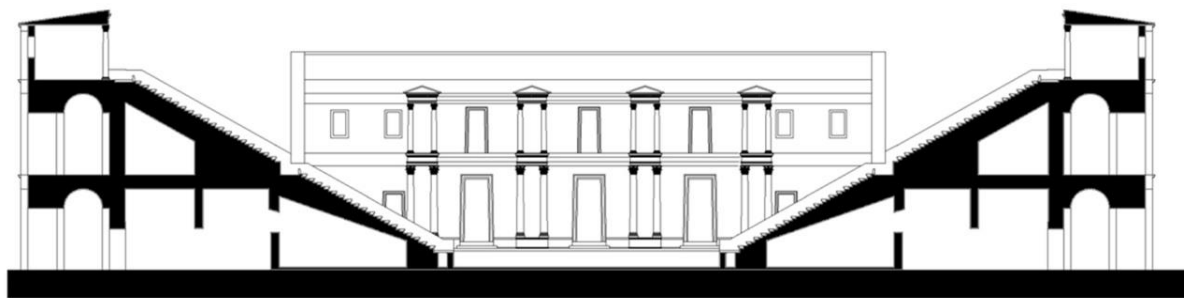


*Fig. 12: Nemesis Niches.*



*Fig. 13: Architectural blocks of Summa cavea.*





*Fig. 14: The drawing of Scaena Frons.*



*Fig. 15: Current status of the stage building.*



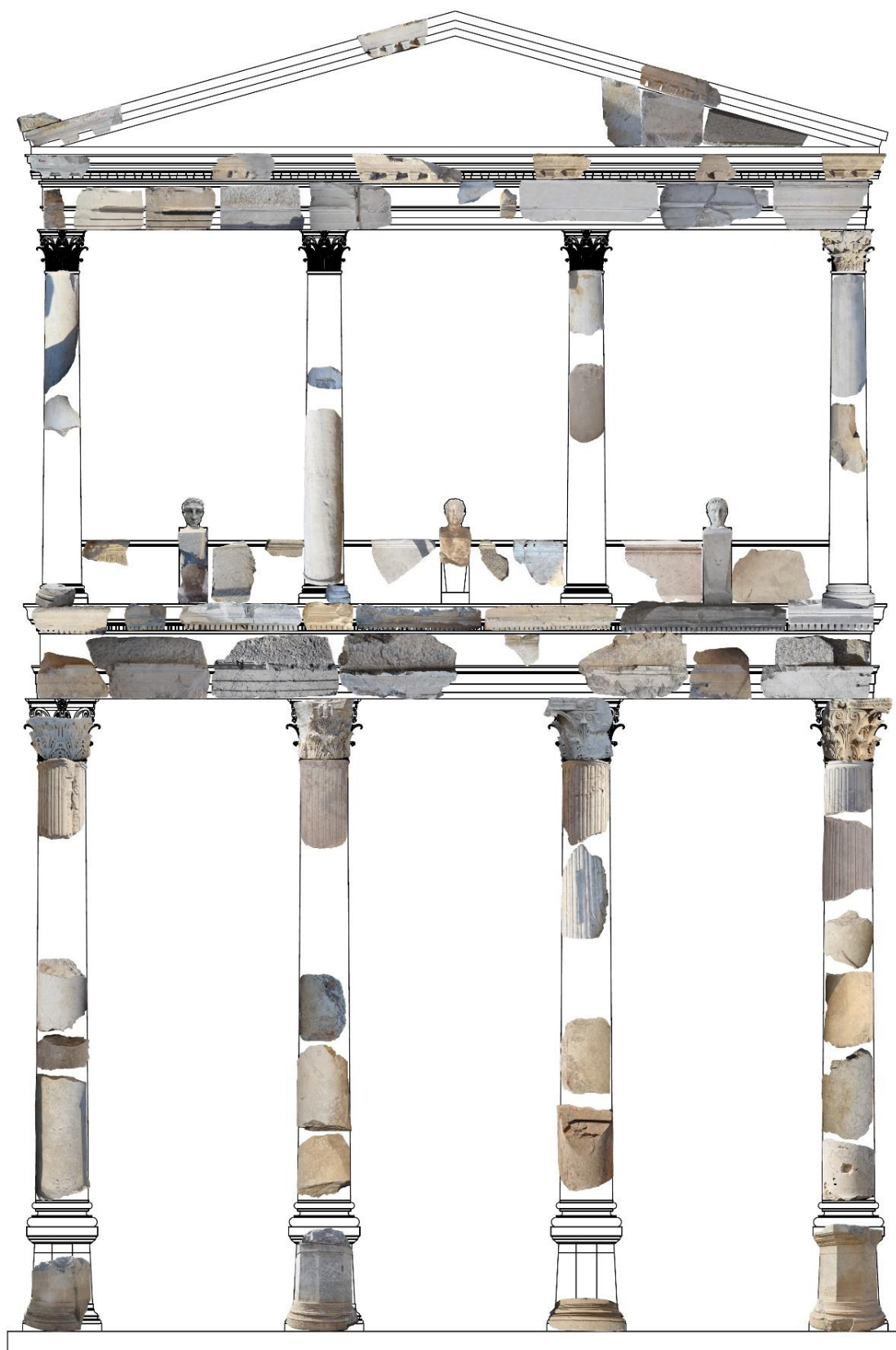


*Fig. 16: Architectural blocks of Scaena Frons.*



*Fig. 17: Small marble pieces broken off from architectural blocks.*





*Fig. 18: The Reconstruction of Colonnaded Gallery.*