



*Marble head of kouros statue  
from the cult building in Insula 10,  
ht. 23.3 cm, 6<sup>th</sup> century BC  
(TP63.11, Thorikos archive/KVG).*

dedicated to Hera Teleia and Zeus Teleios. Another important site is the stoa in the Adami plain, perhaps part of a sanctuary dedicated to Demeter. As ancient cults commonly reflected group identity and informed social interactions, their study can be particularly rewarding on a local level, such as at Thorikos.

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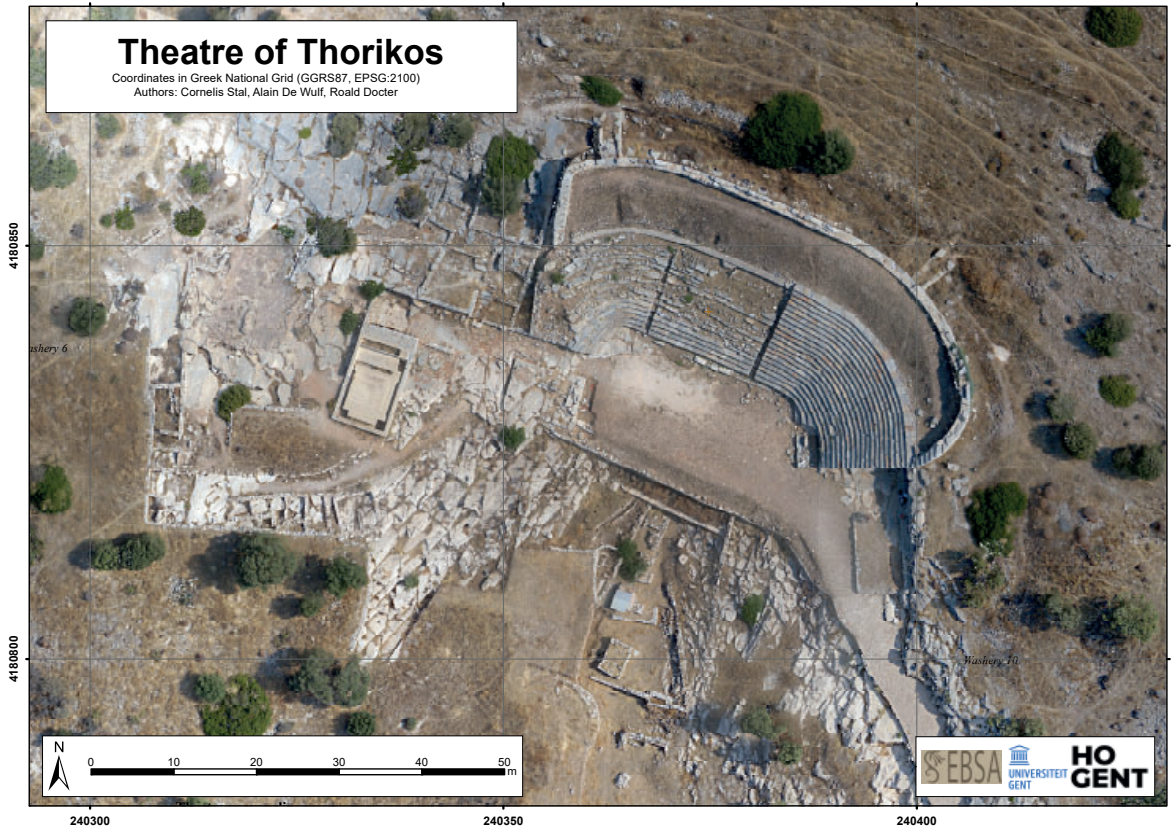
References: Ekroth 2002, 150-53; *SEG* XXX, 147 cfr. Lupu 2005, 65; Labarbe 1977, 56; Mussche 1998, 59; De Smet, forthcoming; van den Eijnde 2010, 15 and 50.

## 15. The Theatre

Thorikos' theatre is the most renowned, conspicuous and controversial monument of the site. Materially and visually imposing with its peculiar, ellipsoid shape (sometimes called primitive, archaic or simply irregular), it has struck locals and travelers alike through the centuries. Early 19<sup>th</sup>-century engravings and late 19<sup>th</sup>-century photos capture this unique landmark of the Lavrion landscape well.

Archaeological exploration of the theatre began in 1886 by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. Investigations were resumed in 1963 and 1965 by the Committee for Belgian excavations in Greece, and in 2011-12 by the Greek Archaeological Service (Ephorate of Antiquities of East Attica). During these three campaigns, the theatre was partially excavated and the impressive retaining walls forming its idiosyncratic shape were revealed. The seating section



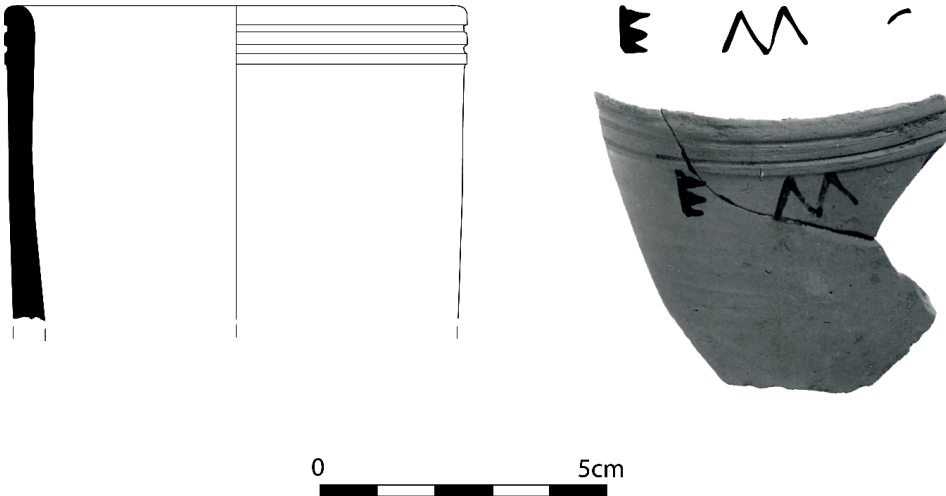


*Orthophotograph of the theatre and its surroundings  
(photo: CS).*

(*cavea* or *koilon*) is divided in two – the lower (earlier) with rows of built bench-seats, a small temple of Dionysos and an altar flanking the oblong stage (*orchestra*), as well as an enigmatic room with a bench. All these were erected on the surface of an earlier marble- and limestone quarry between two long-lived mines (one dates to the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC; both were active in Classical times) and a cemetery with conspicuous tombs from the 6<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.

Frequently but controversially referred to as the earliest theatre in the Greek world, the Thorikos installation seems to be a product of repeated interventions undertaken in order to transform an aggregation area, conveniently shaped in steps by the quarry, into a theatre proper. The earliest built feature organizing this space has been dated to the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, whereas what we see today was shaped by an extensive construction phase in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. Ancient theatres, especially those of the rural *chóra*, were inseparably linked to the sociopolitical organization of the Athenian polity, structured by Kleisthenes' demes-and-trittyes system, in place since the late 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Aside from accommodating the staging of *dráma* in the context of festivals in honour of





*Official standard dry measure with black dipinto 'DJEMO[SION]' (belonging to the demos) from the theatre orchestra, early 5<sup>th</sup> century BC (TC63.588; drawing J. Angenon; photo: Thorikos archive).*

Dionysos, theatres functioned as congregation *foci* for citizens contributing to the Athenian democratic institutions: debates, arbitration and appointments by allotment to the *Boule* council in the Athenian *agora* and other offices took place here. At Thorikos, the capacity of the theatre is estimated to 3184–3826 seats.

Excavating the soil covering the theatre at Thorikos entails coming to grips with an intriguing puzzle. Resolving it brings about an exciting immersion into a long process within which the transformation of a quarry space to a full-scale, stone-built theatre is entangled with the emergence of the ancient *polis* and its institutions. To advance this exploration, obtaining a deeper understanding of the process in the particular case of the mining town of Thorikos, a new Belgian-Greek project is currently revisiting the archives and finds of all excavations to date, as well as undertaking small-scale, targeted excavations and applying modern techniques such as 3D-scanning and reconstruction towards a comprehensive publication.

AnK, RFD

References: Miller 1885-86; Hackens 1963 and 1965; Palyvou 2001, 56; Vanhove 2006; Kapetanios, forthcoming.

