

Passageway and Its Double: Reconsideration of Function of Parodos in Greek Theatre

Jungman Park

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, South Korea

0288

The Asian Conference on Arts & Humanities 2013

Official Conference Proceedings 2013



iafor

iafor
The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

Parodos are the two side entrances to the *orchestra*, the performing space, in the ancient Greek theatre building. Of interest is that the parodos were the sole structural component that maintained the original shape while others—*orchestra*, *theatron* (auditorium), *skene* (platform stage and multi-functional storage)—experienced gradual or abrupt changes in shape over the years.

This paper begins with a couple of questions. How was Parodos able to maintain its original form despite the span of time? Was there any special reason, if any, for that? Answering the question, this paper suggests a possibility that Parodos could be the most important and even essential elements in the construction of Greek theatre building. For evidence, this paper explores the relationship between Parodos and street procession tradition that was the core part of state/national festivals in the Ancient Greece. Related to this, this paper assumes that the unidirectional passageway, as seen in the Panathenaic Way in Athens, could be the simplest and most efficient pathway form to carry out the purpose of citizen participation in the procession and festival. From this, this paper leads to an argument that the unidirectional pathway form found in the street procession could be the archetypal form of Parodos. For evidence, this paper finds that unidirectional pathways existed ubiquitous in the Agora, the center of the Athenian life in terms of economic, political, and cultural aspects and therefore most popular space in the city-state. Serving as market place, administration quarters, and civic meeting place, Agora also served as the gateway for the street procession in the Dionysiac cult and festival called City Dionysia. Additionally, the Panathenaic Way passed through the Agora. Agora is also known as the place for the earliest Athenian theatricalities prior to the construction of Theatre of Dionysus, the first permanent theatre in Athens. This paper examines the formal and functional analogies between the Parodos in Greek theatres and the unidirectional passageways found in the Agora. From discussion, this paper develops an assumption that Theatre of Dionysus not only did but also 'should' follow the legacy of Agora in terms of purpose (citizen participation) and form (unilateral passageway) to complete the purpose, and that Parodos were the theatrical rendition of pathways found in Agora as well as the Panathenaic Way in the street procession. As a conclusion, this paper argues that Parodos play double roles, that is, the passageways both for theatrical and civic causes.

Procession and Panathenaic Way

The Athenians, like all Greeks, worshipped the variety of gods. Accordingly, civic or national festivals related with religious cults were celebrated by the whole city. The City Dionysia was one of the important festivals of Athens, held in March annually for the worship of the god of Dionysus. The key event of this festival and others was the citizen procession in honor of gods (Camp and Fisher 2002, p. 130). As a civic event, this national festival fundamentally depended on the participation of citizens. The procession was indispensable in order to encourage the citizens' participation. In particular, unidirectional pathway, as seen in the Panathenaic Way, was the simplest and most effective form to maximize the civic participation.

The Panathenaic Way, a long and wide processional way through the City of Athens

to the Acropolis where the sanctuary of Dionysus was located, began at the Dipylon Gate, the north-west entrance of the city. This entrance was no other than the gateway to the Agora, the economic, political and cultural center of the city life and, therefore, most frequented place in the Athens. Running from the Dipylon Gate to the Acropolis, the Panathenaic Way passed diagonally through the Agora. The geographical position of the Panathenaic Way reveals its importance. Passing through the most populated place and at the same time the only way to the sacred precincts, this processional way created a connection, physically and figuratively, between mundanity and divinity. At this point, the function of the Panathenaic Way goes beyond the practical dimension as the pathway for citizen procession, and reaches more fundamentally social dimension. As the worldly ranks of citizens are lead by the Panathenaic Way to the religious sanctuary, the civic festivity's purpose of participation and communication is completed in the prototypical form of religious ritual.

The procession was not the all of the Dionysiac Cult. While the procession was the beginning and the main part of the City Dionysia, theatrical events were the grand finale of the procession. As Pickard-Cambridge maintains, in a religious procession called *pompei* sacrifices and offerings were carried along the processional parade to the precinct of Dionysus and then dramatic contests began (Noy 2002, p. 180). Theatrical events were inseparable from religious cults, and it was no exception to the City Dionysia. When the procession arrived at the sanctuary of Dionysus, the phallus-shaped symbol of Dionysus was carried in the parade, which was followed by a revel of drinking, singing, and dancing (Camp and Fisher 2002, p. 134). The processional way, the device to trigger and complete the civic festival purpose of participation and solidarity, is not only the passage to the mundanity-divinity connection, but also becomes the pathway to return the religious sanctuary to the earthly realm of theatricality in the last step of the religious festival. Like this, the City Dionysia embodies a cyclic structure (Mundane-Divine-Mundane), symbolizing the mythology of Dionysus in an enactment of his life, death and resurrection. The processional way, the device that enables the cyclic structure becomes a passage for participation and communication to connect symbolically and actually the three dimensions of human life: Living/Agora, Religion/Sanctuary, and Entertainment/Theatre.

The Agora is worth attention since it was the start line of the long way procession. Besides, the Agora is significant for another reason. It was possibly the original place for the theatrical competition to celebrate the Dionysiac Cult. Oscar Brockett (2003) argues that tragic competition was presented at the City Dionysia in 534 BC and fixes this year the beginning of both the tragic contest and "the connection between theatre and state" (p. 13). However, Brockett makes no further explanation for the 'geographical' location of the 'connection.' Related to this, Richard and Helen Leacock (1984) argue that Greek civic festivals "took place on any flat, open space in a village" (p. 2). Of interest is that such geographical environment and features for theatricality is found in the Agora site. The Agora was undoubtedly a flat and open space in the center of Athens. In addition, the open and flat spaces found in the Agora were frequently furnished with wooden benches or scaffolding called *ikria* where the citizens sat to watch theatricalities. Preshadowing more sophisticated theatrical counterparts, *orchestra* and *theatron*, in the later years, these two components in the Agora turn out to be instrumental evidence for Richard and Helen Leacock's assumption that the Agora "could be used" for theatrical events (Leacock 1984, p. 2). In this respect, this paper calls the theatre spaces in the Agora the Agora-Theatre. The

Agora-Theatre could be the geographical origin of the connection between state and theatre Brockett missed or ignored to locate.

Religious structures such as temple and altar are also found in the Agora-Theatre.¹ Considering that the procession was the intrinsic part of the religious cult and that the Agora was the start line of the procession, it is not surprising to find such religious structures in the Agora-Theatre. Rather, of interest here is that religion and theatre were connected in this market place. The function of the Agora was multi-fold: market place, sacred area, theatre place, and finally the ground for collectivity represented by the Athenian citizen's participation in both everyday life and civic festival. In other words, the Agora was the market, the sanctuary, the theatre and even Athens itself.

While passing through the Agora, the Panathenaic Way becomes a passage to the Agora-Theatre at the same time. That is to say, this main road for the procession toward the Acropolis branches off and forms a secondary procession leading to the Agora-Theatre. Here, the secondary procession becomes a passageway to enter 'in' the theatre place, connecting religion/state to the everyday/theatre. Making a 'loop' type of movement, the procession passes through the flat and open theatre space and joins back the main procession on the Panathenaic Way (Noy 2002, p. 183).² At this moment, the secondary procession becomes a passageway to come 'out' of the theatre place.

The main processional parade kept going toward the Acropolis where the Panathenaic Way finally finished. Yet, it did not mean that the procession finished along with the arrival at the Acropolis and the subsequent termination of the Panathenaic Way. Arriving at the Acropolis, the crowd of citizens was welcome to the participation in another event being prepared at the southeast foot of the hill where the sanctuary of Dionysus was located. It was the tragic competition to celebrate the worship of Dionysus. Now, the Dionysus's phallus was carried 'in' his sanctuary along the slope, 'followed by' the crowd of citizens (Camp and Fisher 2002, p. 134), which formed an additional processional way which can be called the Panathenaic Way 'Extra'. Here, the Panathenaic Way Extra functioned as the passageway to go 'in' the theatre place, connecting religion to theatre, which reminds of the secondary processional way-in to the the Agora-Theatre. While the Agora-Theatre is the on-the-way station, the theatre place here at the Acropolis slope becomes a terminal for the long-way procession. When the enshrinement of the Dionysus phallus in his place was all set, then the theatrical contest is presented for the grand finale of the City Dionysia. The theatrical events here at the end of a procession put the city state's "identity and structure comprehensively on display" (Wiles 1997, p. 25-26).

¹ Such an arrangement (temple, orchestra, theatron) is discovered not only at the Agora of Athens. Rather, it was a universal feature found most in both public places and theatrical places in the Greek empire. The public places include Minoan palaces of Crete (Palace of Gournia, Palace of Knossos) and at Lato. More evidence is found in mainland Greece at Eleusis (Leacroft 1984, p. 2-4). The theatrical places include Theatre at Ikaria, Theatre at Thorickos, Theatre of Dionysus. (See Palyvou 2001, and Gebhard 1974).

² Kinnert Noy argues that the passageway in the Greek theatre suggests a 'loop' type of movement, which connected the Athenian spectators not connect the Athenian spectators to the procession but also link their present theatrical experience with their cultural past or older form of artistic communication.

Analogy: Agora and Theatre of Dionysus

The Agora and the sanctuary of Dionysus, the two geographical extremes of the procession for the Dionysiac Cult, have in common in terms of form and function. Firstly, the Agora was the political, civic, and religious hub as well as commercial center of Athens. Accordingly, public buildings with a wide variety of applications were constructed in and around the Agora. Public buildings included Bouleuterion (assembly hall) and headquarters of *strategoi* (general or military commander) on the west, and law court on the east. Religious buildings were also constructed in and around the Agora square, which included Metroon (sanctuary of Rhea, Mother of the Olympian Gods), Hephasisteion (temple of Hephaistos), Altar of Twelve Gods, and the domed burial chamber called Tholos (Martin 1996, p. 117-118; Camp and Fisher 2002, p. 170-173; Camp 1986, p. 35-150; Leacraft 1966, p. 20-25).

The most prominent building type in the Agora Square is a 2-story rectangular building called Stoa. Stoa consists of two lines of colonnades, independent rooms, and a roof on the top, covering the entire to provide for business. In fact, the mentioned public buildings in the Agora Square followed the Stoa form. The primary function of the Stoa was to provide the citizens with shelters from direct sunlight, rain or wind. In addition, the Stoa was itself a multi-purpose building unit. Inside the narrow and long colonnaded space, Stoas housed many rooms with different usages such as markets, public offices, magistrates' headquarters, storerooms, paintings galleries, and strolling and meeting places. Mostly built on the edges of the Agora square, Stoas were the most frequented and familiar places in the Agora.³ Also arts works of paintings and reliefs were often displayed on the wall of office rooms facing the corridor, which served as civic art venue or galleries for citizens. For instance, the Painted Stoa, located in the north of the Agora Square, had removable wooden panells on the wall of office rooms and here paintings were exhibited, which proves the Stoa's role of art gallery at that time (Camp 1986, p. 66-71).

Located at the Agora Square the central political, economic and cultural backbone of Athens, Stoa was crowded everyday with people with a variety of needs to meet. The in and out of the Stoa was full of energy and busy with soliciting and bargaining of sellers and customers as easily seen in the market place today. Citizens sat in the shady corridors of Stoa and discussed with neighbors politics, society, philosophy and life. Likewise, Stoa was the everyday space familiar to the citizens of the times.

The 'multi-purpose' nature of the space in the Agora Square is also found in the Theatre of Dionysus built in 499 BC. The most distinct in this theatre site are the flat and open space at the ground level and the sloping seating placed on the hillside. Despite the formal change through the gap of time, these two elements maintained its functional originality in the Agora-Theatre. In addition, temple and altar or *thymele* found in this theatre place represented its relations to the religious function, which was foreshadowed by the Agora-Theatre. Related to the economic and the political functions, the evidence of Stoa site found in this theatre place is significant. Stoa

³ Shady and comfortable environment of Stoa attracted many congregations, and the contemporary thinkers frequented the corridors of Stoa and preached their philosophy and outlook on life to the public. Contemporary philosopher Zeno also enjoyed discussions with followers in the corridors of Stoa, and the name of his Stoicism derives from the meeting place Stoa (Camp 1986, p. 72).

building was not the original component but the later entry during the recovery operation of the Theatre of Dionysus in the 440s BC.⁴ Yet, the 'additional' construction of Stoa buildings in the theatre site is an important clue to explain the multi-functional nature of the Theatre of Dionysus. As mentioned above, Stoa is a multi-function unit housing rooms of different usages such as markets, public offices, military headquarters, storages, strolling and meeting places as well as shelter from weather. In short, the addition of Stoa buildings to the theatre place consequently explains the assumed nature, that is, multipurpose complex of the Theater of Dionysus.

Then, what was the purpose of the Stoa building added to the Theatre of Dionysus? Scholars have attempted to find the answer but mostly in 'theatrical' reasons, which include a dressing room and a store for scenery sets and other props in need (Leacroft 1984, p. 13; Brockett 2003, p. 32). The consideration of the unique nature, that is, the 'multi-ness' of Stoa building supplements additional possibilities of the answer. One possibility is the 'public aspect' of this building. In other words, the Stoa building in the Theatre of Dionysus could serve for the convenience of the procession members (both actors and audiences), and eventually promote the civic participation which is the goal of City Dionysia the national festival. In this sense, despite its late entry, the Stoa building was possibly an intrinsic element in the Greek theatre architecture, even as fundamental as other elements including *orchestra*, *theatron* and temple. In the ancient Greek era, theatricality was not an independent event for the sole purpose of entertainment, but a part of the national or civic festival for the purpose of participation and unity of the entire citizens. Given this situation, such 'public' reason could be more fundamental than the theatrical one.

The consideration of the genealogical relation between the Agora-Theatre and the Theatre of Dionysus will help better to understand the similarities of the two places. In the early 5th century BC, there was an accident in which the early mentioned temporary seats *ikria* in the Agora collapsed during a performance, subsequently causing many injuries. This accident hastened the movement of theatrical events, previously done in the Agora Square, to a flat and open vacant lot in the sanctuary of Dionysus, located in the southeast of the Acropolis (Camp 1986, p. 46; Leacroft 1984, p. 4). This new theatre place later developed to a permanent playhouse called the Theatre of Dionysus. This incident was the momentum from which the Athenian theatricality for the first time was separated from the original performing space, the Agora-Theatre. What is worth noting is the nature of this new theatre place to replace the Agora-Theatre. Located within the religious sanctuary and becoming the final destination of the processional parade, this newly found theatre place was guaranteeing the civic participation and unity, which is the ultimate goal of the national festival of City Dionysia. Despite the geographical and temporal gaps, the theatricality in the Theatre of Dionysus shares a common environment with the theatricality at the Agora-Theatre. Both share the space characters as multi-purpose complex to meet the religious, economic, and cultural demands of the Athenians. The additional construction of Stoa building in the Theatre of Dionysus proves the national requirement and need for the multi-purposiveness of theatrical space. In short, the Theatre of Dionysus was a kind of microcosm of the Agora-Theatre.

⁴ According to the plan of the Theatre of Dionysus in Dörpfeld's *Griechische Theatre* (1896), the first scholarly book on Greek theatre architecture, around the 440s B.C., this theatre had its completed form including the construction of stoa (Brockett 2003, p. 32).

Parodos: Passageways Double

As seen above, flat and open space for dancing (*orchestra*), stairs or auditorium seating (*ikria*), religious structures (temple and altar *thymele*), facilities for civic convenience (Stoas) are the spatial elements commonly found from both the Agora-Theatre and the Theatre of Dionysus. In the beginning part, this paper mentioned about the passageway from the Panathenatic Way to the flat and open space in the Agora Square. Not surprisingly, this element is also discovered in the Theatre of Dionysus, which is a set of side entrances to the *orchestra*. This time, the passageways is called have a special name. Separated from the Agora Square, moved to the Theatre of Dionysus, and located in this dedicated space of theatrical performance, the entrance to the flat and open space would be called as 'Parodos' which will be a theatrical terminology. In this respects, the term of Parodos is understood as the watershed between the two phases of theatrical environment: the Agora-Theatre and the Theatre of Dionysus, respectively.

What is worth noting is the legacy of the Agora remaining intact in the Parodos despite the geographical and temporal changes. Furthermore, its original form at the Agora-Theatre also remained intact while the other elements experienced drastic or gradual changes in shape through the passage of time.⁵ While called with a technical terminology, and dedicated to the theatrical use, Parodos maintains the archetypal purpose at the Agora Square, which is the pathway for procession. The audiences at the There of Dionysus were no other than the procession followers on the Panathenaic Way. They were the crowd of citizens who gathered at the Acropolis. They were the followers of the Dionysus' phallus escorted to the sanctuary along southeast slope. They were the citizens who came in the theatrical celebration along the Panathenaic Way Extra. Relaying the religious and theatrical events and terminating the entire processional parade, the Panathenaic Way Extra and Parodos met each other.

So far, many scholars have examined the functions of Parodos, restricting on its theatrical reasons. Mostly Parodos have been defined as the entrances of the chorus and actors to the *orchestra*. On the contrary, the consideration of the possibility that Parodos could be the most essential part of the theatre structure suggests a need to rethink about the function of Parodos. Parodos was truly the sole constant elements in the Theatre of Dionysus. In addition, the unidirectional pathway, as seen in the Panathenaic way, could be the simplest and most efficient form to complete the cause for the procession, that is, the citizens' participation and unity. The unidirectional passageway in the procession could be the archetype of the Parodos. That is to say, The Parodos were possibly the theatrical version of the passageway to the flat and

⁵ In the form of the Theatre of Dionysus during the Early Golden Age (499-446 BC), the *orchestra*, surrounded by the *theatron* on the hillside and the retaining wall on opposite side, took roughly rectangular or polygonal shape (Leacroft, *Theatre* 9). For the seating, *ikria* were furnished on the hillside as in the case at the Agora. A very simple *skene* was located around the *orchestra* (Dinsmoor 208). During the Pericles's remodeling in the 440s BC, the *theatron* was rebuilt and the free-from retaining wall changed into a straight one. The *theatron* went toward a symmetrical fan-shape. The *orchestra* was moved to northwest side by 45 feet and became tinier and more defined and circular by this time. Retaining walls added to support both sides of the *theatron*, which resulted in the sharper straight shape of the passageways or Parodos between the *theatron* and the retaining wall. The *skene* became more three-dimensional building. *Stoa* newly added to the theatre.

open square at the Agora Square. They were the miniature of the Panathenaic Way traversing the heart of Athens. In addition, the Parodos were the Panathenaic Way Extra that terminates the entire national religious cult by leading the processional members into the theatrical celebration and the subsequent realization of the civic collectivity. The conclusion is that the Parodos played the role of passageway double. It satisfied the theatrical necessity as the passage for dramatic action or the entrance and exit for actors and chorus. As the same time, the Parodos satisfied the civic cause by functioning as the processional passage to relay the theatre space to the other civic events for the national Dionysiac Cult.

References

- Blamire, Alec. (2001) Athenian Finance 454-404 BC. *Hesperia* 70(1): 99-126.
- Brockett, Oscar. (2003) *History of the Theatre*. 9th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Camp, John M. (1986) *The Athenian Agora: Excavations in the Heart of Classical Athens*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- (1996) Evacuations in Athenian Agora: 1994 and 1995. *Hesperia* 65(3): 231-261.
- (1999) Evacuations in Athenian Agora: 1996 and 1997. *Hesperia* 68(3): 255-283.
- Camp, John M. and Elizabeth A. Fisher. (2002) *The World of the Ancient Greeks*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Cole, Susan Guettel. (1988) *The Theatre and Society in the Classical World*. University of Michigan.
- Dinsmoor, William Bell. (1950) *The Architecture of Ancient Greece*. London and Sydney: B. T. Batsford.
- Dörpfeld, Wilhelm. (1896) *Das Griechische Theater*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung.
- Gebhard, Elizabeth. (1974) The Form of the Orchestra in the Early Greek Theatre. *Hesperia* 43(4): 428-440.
- Lawall, Mark L. (2000) Graffiti, Wine Selling, and the Reuse of Amphoras in the Athenian Agora. *Hesperia* 69(1): 3-90.
- Leacraft, Richard, and Helen Leacraft. (1966) *The Buildings of Ancient Greece*. New York: William R. Scott Inc.
- (1984) *Theatre and Playhouse*. London & New York: Methuen.
- Martin, Thomas R. (1996) *Ancient Greece: from Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Noy, Kinneret. (2002) Creating a Movement Space: the Passageway in Noh and Greek Theatres. *New Theatre Quarterly* (May): 176-85.
- Palyvou, Clairy. (2001) Notes on the Geometry of the Ancient Theatre of Thorikos. *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 1: 45-58
- Pickard-Cambridge, A. W. (1946) *The Theatre of Dionysus in Athens*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rees, Kelley. (1911) The Significance of the Parodoi in the Greek Theatre. *American Journal of Philology* 32(4): 377-402.
- Shear, T. Leslie, Jr. (1997) The Athenian Agora: Excavations of 1989-1993. *Hesperia* 66(4): 495-548.
- Vince, Ronald W. (1984) *Ancient and Medieval Theatre: A Historical Handbook*. Westport & London: Greenwood.

- Walbank, Michael B. (1996) Greek Inscriptions from Athenian Agora: Financial Documents. *Hesperia* 65(4): 433-465.
- (1998) Greek Inscriptions from Athenian Agora: Financial and Other Public Documents. *Hesperia* 67(1): 65-80.
- Wiles, David. (1997) *Tragedy in Athens: Performance Space And Theatrical Meaning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



