THE AUTOCRATIC THEATRE OF HIERON II

Hieron II of Syracuse reigned for fifty-four years, from 269 to 215 BC – longer than any other Hellenistic monarch. His kingdom was relatively small and always required the support of external powers: first the Ptolemies and then the Romans. It survived his death in 215 BC by a mere eleven months, indicating how crucial Hieron himself had been to its preservation. The literary tradition on him is unequivocally positive. His success lay in defining his position in Syracuse and Sicily as traditional, benevolent, popular, divinely-favoured, and unshakeable. This definition took place in a vast range of media, but here I argue that the theatre that Hieron built in Syracuse was fundamental to the construction of his autocracy.[1]

DESCRIPTION OF THE THEATRE

The theatre is cut into the south face of the Temenites Hill, which forms the south edge of the Epipolai plateau. The hill had been inhabited before the arrival of the Greeks in Sicily and became an extramural sanctuary shortly after Syracuse's foundation.[2] The eastern part of the hill was a major quarry. To the north there was a large necropolis. Under Hieron, the area became part of the urban conglomeration, the centre of his new sub-city: Neapolis.[3]

Hieron's theatre is only briefly mentioned in the literary sources. Most information must come from the physical remains of the theatre.[4] Unfortunately, the archaeology of the site is difficult. The structure was repeatedly modified over a long period of time, starting in the classical period and continuing until late antiquity. Whereas normally ancient builders constructed new buildings atop the

[1] Thanks to Peter Wilson and Eric Csapo for inviting me to contribute, to Juliane Zachhuber, Harry Morgan, Panagiotis Christoforou, Elodie Paillard, Lorenzo Campagna, Peter Wilson, and Dick Green, as well as audiences in Sydney, Leicester, and Messina for helpful comments, and to the British Academy for the funding that enabled this research.
On Hieron generally, see De Sensi Sestito 1977; Eckstein 1980; Hoyos 1985; Bell 1999 and 2011; Portale 2004; Lehmler 2005. Coinage: Caccamo Caltabiano, Carroccio and Oteri 1997; Wolf and Lorber 2011. Epigraphy: Dimartino 2006 with further bibliography; Walthall 2011.
[2] Polacco, Trojani and Scolari 1989, p. 118-9.
[3] Portale 2015, p. 699-705; *pace* Voza 1993/4, p. 1287-1291.
[4] Diod. 16.83; Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.119. Main archaeological discussions: Rizzo 1923; Bernabò Brea 1967; Polacco and Anti 1981; Polacco 1990a; Polacco, Trojani and Scolari 1989; Wilson 1990, p. 68-72; Campagna 2004, p. 171-83. Full bibliography in Todisco 2002, p. 223 n. 17. Hellenistic theatres generally: Von Hesberg 2009.

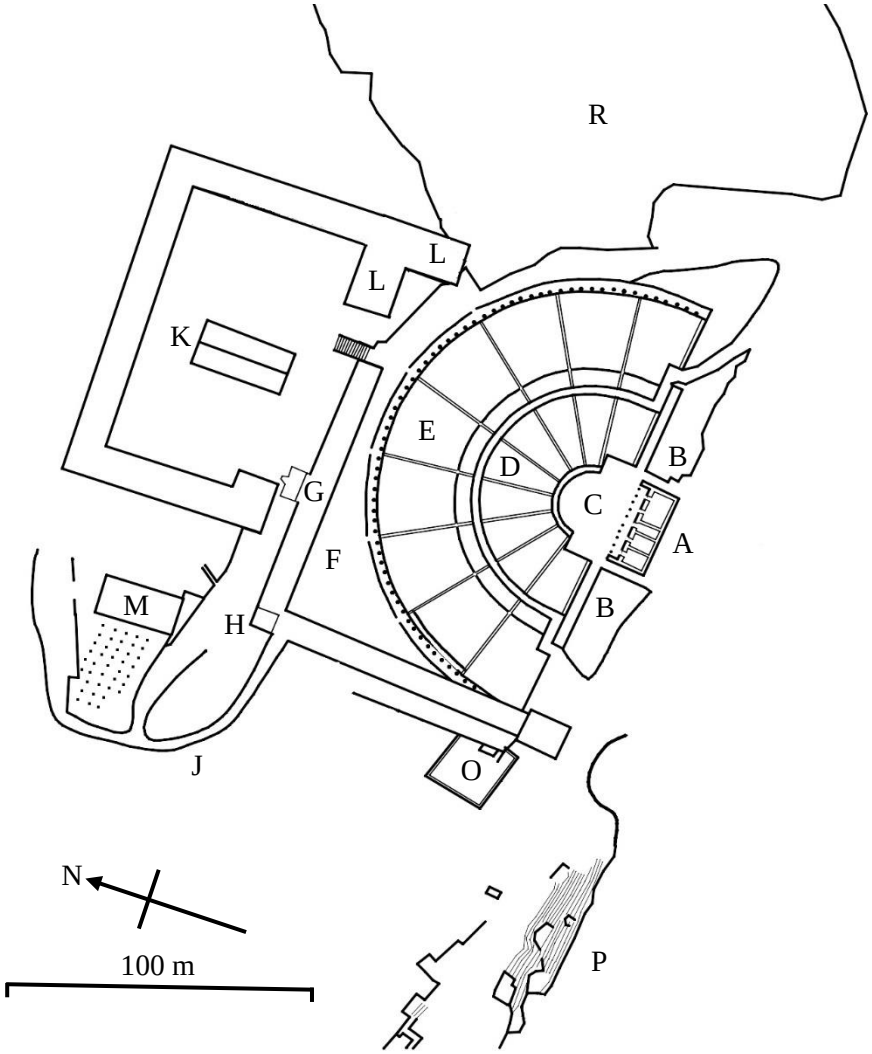
foundations of the old, with a rock-cut structure like this, each new phase removed the previous one, so there is no stratigraphy. Moreover, the structure has been poorly treated since antiquity. In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, it was repeatedly spoliated. From 1576 until 1921, it was the site of a number of water mills. The cuttings for the foundations of these structures and for the drainage channels connected to them run all over the site and are often difficult to distinguish from ancient cuttings and the water from them, which was constantly flowing over the whole site, has heavily damaged the soft Sicilian stone. As a result of these archaeological difficulties, it is difficult to reconstruct the history of the site and its setting. Whether there was a theatre on this site before Hieron is a topic of great controversy. I am of the opinion that there were theatrical performances on the site from the fifth century BC, but very few of the arguments in this chapter depend upon this.[5] What is necessary is to describe what Hieron's theatre looked like, starting from the bottom and working upwards, with a particular stress on the evidence that places various components of the theatre in the time of Hieron, rather than earlier or later. The complex as a whole is depicted in *fig.* 1, a detailed plan of the theatre in *fig.* 2.

The theatre had a stone *skene* (A on *fig.* 1 and 2), probably two stories high, known to us only from foundations and a couple of architectural fragments which were reused as building material in the Roman period. These indicate that it had a raised stage—possibly connected to the orchestra by steps. Behind this, was a lower story with Ionic columns and architraves, into which *pinakes* were inserted to form a backdrop, and an upper story in the Doric order.[6] The architectural fragments can be dated to Hieron's reign on stylistic grounds. Three sculptural elements have been recovered from the *skene* of Hieron's theatre: an ornamental lionhead waterspout, and two *telamones*: a satyr and a mainad (*fig.* 6-7).[7] On either side of the *skene* there were narrow *parodoi* running in a north-south direction, and

[5] That there was a theatre in Syracuse in the classical period is not in doubt: there are many literary references to it from the fifth century onwards: e.g. Eustathios, *Schol. in Hom. Od*. 3.68; Plut. *Timol*. 38; Hermipp. *FGrH* 1026 F84. Peter Wilson points out that depictions of theatrical scenes on late fourth-century *phylax* vases consistently depict a substantial stage building (pers. comm.). The dispute is whether that theatre was located on the same site as Hieron's theatre. Against: Bernabò Brea 1967; Mertens 1984; Campagna 2004, p. 171. For: Polacco and Anti 1981, p. 157-90; Pöhlmann 2015, 153-5. Others identify the earlier theatre with the so-called *teatro rettilineare* (P on *fig.* 1), slightly west of Hieron's theatre; see n. 18.

[6] Rizzo 1923, p. 87-101; Bernabò Brea 1967, p. 115-32; Polacco and Anti 1981, p. 69-103, 193-7; Von Sydow 1984, p. 287, 322.

[7] Rizzo 1923, p. 101-5.



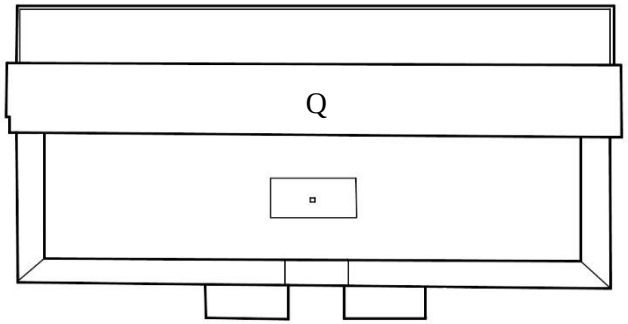


***Fig*. 1, Neapolis Theatre complex:**
A: *Skene*.
B: *Piloni*.
C: Orchestra.
D: Lower *Koilon*.
E: Upper *Koilon*
F: L-shaped stoa.
G: Grotto della Nymphe.
H: Mouseion.
J: Via dei sepulchri.
K: Archaic temple.
L: Temples of Demeter and Kore (?).
M: Podium A.
O: Sanctuary of Pyrphoros (?).
P: '*Teatro rettilineare*'.
Q: Great Altar
R: *Latomiai*

Created by the author from aerial photography, with reference to the plans published in Polacco and Anti 1981 and 1989, Gentile 1952, Voza 2006, and Wolf 2016.

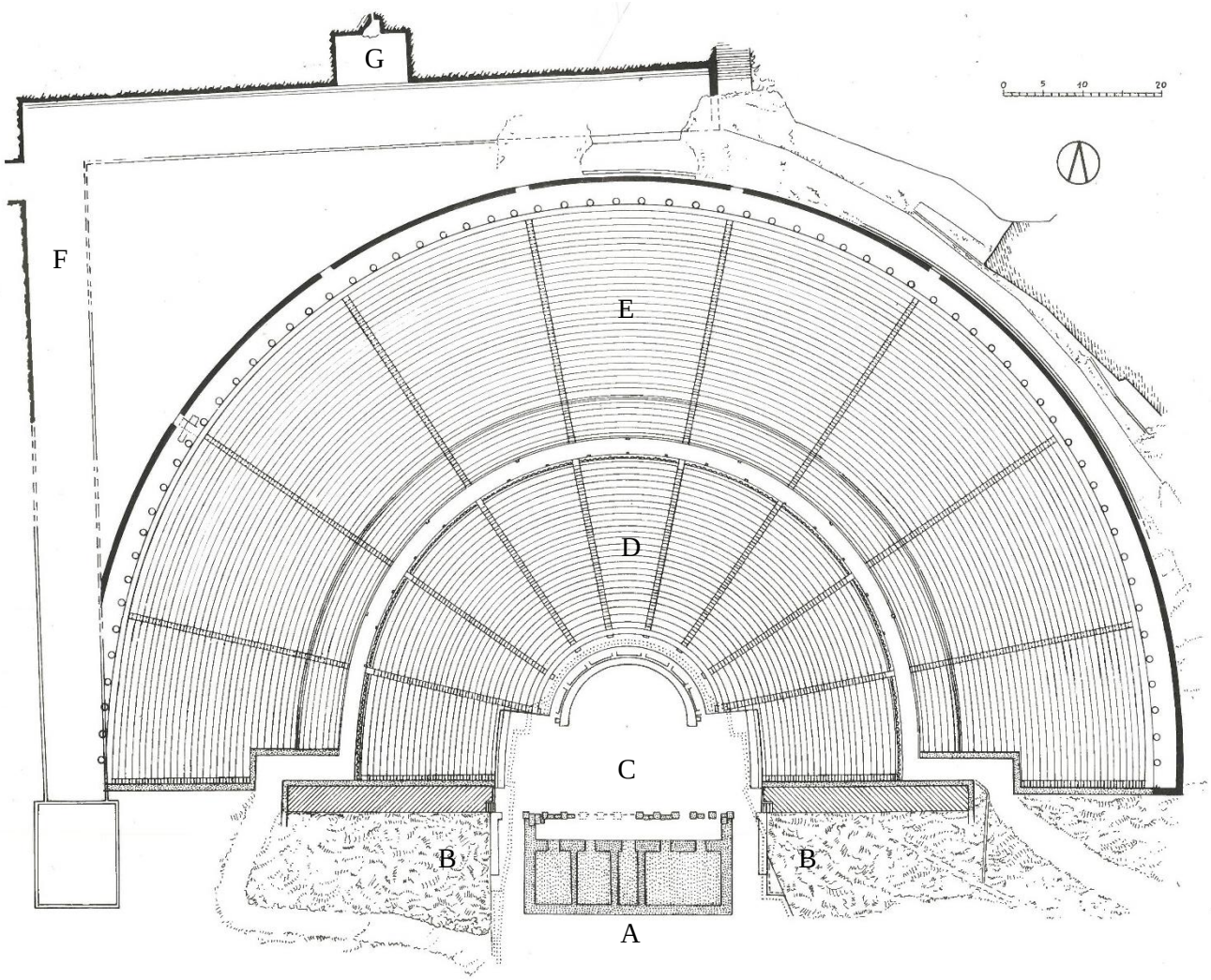


***Fig.* 2: Hieron's theatre, from Polacco and Anti, 1988, tb. 28.**

***Fig.* 3: Modern view of the theatre, courtesy of Laura Löser.**

beyond them were two large rectangular blocks of living rock, referred to as *piloni* (B), which had been carved into the shape of squat rectangular towers. Both of them are separated from the *koilon* by deep ditches 25.5 m long and 3.5 m wide, which served as *skenothekai* – sheds which contained a wooden stage that was rolled into the orchestra when required. The tracks for the stage can still be seen in places at the base of the ditches. It is unclear whether these were in use in Hieron's time or belonged to an earlier period of the theatre.[8]

The orchestra (C) was horseshoe-shaped. It is now a mess of different drainage systems, from different stages in the life of the theatre, whose relative chronology is very contentious and fortunately it is not necessary to go into it here. The *prohedriai* are no longer visible because of Roman period modifications, but their size and location are shown by the *euripoi* (drainage ditches) that used to run in front of them.[9]

Behind the orchestra rises the *koilon*, which had a diameter of 130 metres and a capacity of around 15,800 people (assuming 0.5 m^2 per person). It has nine wedges of seating and is split into a lower (D) and an upper (E) part by a passageway, commonly known in modern scholarship as a '*diazoma*', which is clearly dated to Hieron by a monumental inscription discussed below in more detail. This means that the whole *koilon* as we see it now is substantially that of Hieron's theatre. However, the colonnade directly behind the *koilon*, depicted in *fig.* 1 and 2, is likely to be a Roman addition.[10]

Above the theatre was an L-shaped stoa (F), with two rows of columns. Architectural fragments preserve traces of blue and red paint and are securely dated to the Hieronian period – they are of the same style as the *skene* fragments.[11] In the centre, at the back, is a grotto now known as the *Grotto delle Nymphe* (G), an artificial expansion of a natural hollow in the cliff-face. A torrent of water flows into it through a 1.3 km long subterranean aqueduct – part of a system of underground aqueducts built under

[8] Bernabò Brea 1967, p. 105-11; Polacco and Anti 1981, p. 55-68, 182-3.
[9] Rizzo 1923, p. 53-62; Bernabò Brea 1967, p. 111-5; Polacco and Anti 1981, p. 105-24, 191-3.
[10] Rizzo 1923, p. 29-52; Bernabò Brea 1967, p. 101-5; Polacco and Anti 1981, p. 125-52; Wilson 1990, p. 68. This use of the term 'diazoma' is anachronistic: Moretti 2018, p. 195-202 has shown that the term did not mean this in ancient Greek (the actual term was *dihodos*).
[11] Rizzo 1923, p. 119-23; Von Sydow 1984, p. 307-8; Polacco 1990b, p. 34-41.

Hieron.[12] This area was heavily modified in order to feed the early modern watermills on the site, so it is not clear how the water left the grotto in Hieron's time, but it probably flowed along a drain at the back of the *koilon* and on towards the Great Altar. A votive plaque depicting Pan was recovered from this grotto.

At the northwest corner of the stoa, there was a rock-cut chamber (H), now largely open to the air, with benches carved into the walls. This is probably the Mouseion, which is mentioned as a meeting place in second century BC honorific inscriptions of the Dionysiac and Aphrodisiac artists found nearby. Three statues of female figures found here may be Muses and a large number of votive bowls and Rhodian and Syracusan amphora handles dating to the third/second century BC suggest that this chamber was in active use for ritual feasting in Hieron's time.[13]

From this corner of the stoa, a rock-cut road with ruts for wagon traffic, now known as the *Via dei Sepulchri* (J), leads up to the flat area above and behind the theatre. There, Hieron built a square courtyard, measuring 110 x 90 metres surrounded by a stoa on three sides. In the centre, perfectly aligned with the axis of the theatre below, there was or had been an archaic temple, usually identified as the temple of Apollo Temenites (K). This was modified in the fifth century BC to incorporate two tombs. At some point it was demolished.[14] At the southeast corner of this stoa there seem to have been two temples (L), perhaps the temples of Demeter and Kore mentioned by Cicero, looming over the theatre below. Architectural fragments of these have been found in the *Latomiai* (R), buried in the silt

[12] Rizzo 1923, p. 114-9; Polacco 1990b, p. 41-6; Wilson 2000; Guzzardi 2001.
[13] Orsi 1909; Rizzo 1923, p. 123-34; Polacco 1990b, p. 46-9; Inscriptions: *I Sic.* 832-3, 1579; Gentili 1961; Moretti 1963; Fountoulakis 2000; Le Guen 2001, p. 1.319-26, 2.77, 2.86; Aneziri 2001/2. Dionysios I is reported to have dedicated various relicts of Euripides in a Mouseion (Anon. *Vit. Eur*. 80-5 = Hermipp. *FGrH* F84; Wilson 2017, p. 14-5), but the structure here discussed must post-date him. In *P Oxy.* LXXIX 3202,ll. 32-6, a papyrus copy of a first century AD inscription, the Syracusan *demos* grants a victorious poet *oikesis* (right to reside) in the space.
[14] No archaeological evidence for the date of demolition has been published. Voza 1993/4, proposes that the tombs belonged to Gelon I and his wife Demarete. There is no positive evidence for this and it cannot be reconciled with the description of Gelon's tomb in Diod. 11.38.3-5, which places it in a field (ἀγρόν) with nine towers, owned by Demarete, 200 stades (about 40 km) outside the city of Syracuse. Gelon's tomb is reported to have been demolished by Carthaginian besiegers, but the Temenites hill was inside the walls from 415 BC (Thuc. 6.75) and so can never have been accessible to a Carthaginian force.

at the base of the cliff, where they fell sometime in the Middle Ages. These are of the same style as the other Hieronian architectural fragments discussed so far.[15]

West of the stoa was another structure, known as 'Podium A' (M), which seems to be a temple, in an enclosure entered through a large *propylon* to the north. An artificially flattened courtyard to the west of Podium A, contains forty-five regularly spaced square pits cut into the stone. These may be offering pits related to the *thesmophoria* or planters for trees.[16] There are three ditches for offerings to the north of Podium A and another ditch (or tomb?) inside it. The complex probably continued to the north – part of a 'theatroid' structure is visible at the very northern edge of the archaeological park, but is mostly covered by modern building.

There are yet further structures at the bottom of the hill, at the level of the orchestra. To the west of the orchestra there is another *temenos* (O) with an area of 21.75 x 20 metres. This contains a sacred hearth, and a large table which might be an altar or a base for a pair of large seated statues. Votive deposits go back to the seventh century but a fragmentary inscription on the table is of Hellenistic date; it may identify the area as a sanctuary of Demeter Pyrphoros.[17] Slightly further to the southwest is the set of steps known as the *teatro rettilineare* (P), sometimes presented as a predecessor to the theatre of Hieron, although there is no firm evidence for its dating.[18] To the southeast of the theatre is the Great Altar of Hieron (Q), the largest Greek altar ever built. Fragments of the altar's entablature are identical to those from the *skene* of the theatre, indicating that they were built in a single moment. Topography and votive deposits show that it too had been an active religious site before Hieron.[19]

Thus, Hieron's theatre was part of a large religious complex, whose individual components were interlinked. Processions up to the sanctuaries at the top of the hill had to pass by the theatre. The water for rituals conducted at the Great Altar probably reached it after flowing through the *Grotto delle*

[15] Voza 1984/5, p. 673-7; Voza 1993/4, p. 1288-91; Voza 2006; Wolf 2016, p. 83. For the association of Demeter and Kore with the theatre in Sicily, see note 54.
[16] *Megara* for the *Thesmophoria:* Polacco, Trojani and Scolari 1989, p. 111-5. Planters: Voza 2006. There are more of these '*pozzetti*' to the northeast of (L).
[17] Stucchi 1952; Manganaro 1977, p. 158; Polacco 1990c, p. 144-9.
[18] Gentili 1952; Ginouvès 1972; Pöhlmann 2015, p. 148. A Hieronian date might be indicated by the fact that the structure shares its axis with a tomb of that date.
[19] Von Sydow 1984, p. 285-7; Karlsson 1996; Bell 1999; Parisi Presicce 2004; Vonderstein 2006, p. 137-41; Wolf 2016, p. 33-56.

Nymphe and down along the eastern side of the theatre. The clamour and stench of sacrifices at the Great Altar would be impossible for people in the theatre to ignore. Although this complex is imperfectly known to us, the individual sanctuaries in this space all seem to have been active for centuries by Hieron's time and almost all of them were completely remodelled during his reign.

AUTOCRATIC BUILDING

Any kind of large-scale construction had an autocratic tinge in Greek discourse – as shown by Athenian experiences of and responses to large-scale construction.[20] In Greek Sicily, this connection was particularly strong and had several strands.

Firstly, the individual in charge of construction held an immense amount of power. The archetypal Sicilian tyrant, Phalaris of Akragas, is said by Polyainos to have been appointed chief of works for a temple on the Akragantine acropolis in the sixth century BC. Polyainos emphasises how the position gave him control over money, men loyal to himself rather than the *demos*, and a fortified centre – all of which made him independent of those who had appointed him and enabled him to seize control of Akragas.[21]

Secondly, construction allowed rulers to demonstrate their efficacy. One of the defining stories of Dionysios I's rise to power was his construction of the massive fortification system encircling Epipolai. Diodoros describes the construction process, which saw the massive five-and-a-half kilometre wall built in thirty days, by pulling in vast numbers of citizens (reportedly 60,000) and organising them intelligently.[22] The message of large-scale construction was thus not just, 'look how much the ruler can accomplish' but 'look how much we can accomplish under the ruler's direction.'

A third aspect is illuminated by the explanation of a reference in the fifth-century BC Syracusan comic playwright, Sophron, by the twelfth-century AD commentator on Homer, Eustathios:

[20] Peisistratos: Shapiro 1989, p. 1-17, 125-6, 133-41; Perikles: Crat. F73, F258 K.A; Herodes Atticus: Tobin 1997.
[21] Polyaen. 5.1.1.
[22] Diod. 14.18.

> [Εὐδαίμων] ἱστορῶν καὶ ὅτι τοῦ Συρακουσίου τούτου κύριον, Δημόκοπος ἦν ἀρχιτέκτων. ἐπεὶ δὲ τελεσιουργήσας τὸ θέατρον μύρον τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ πολίταις διένεμε, Μύριλλα ἐπεκλήθη.
>
> *[Eudaimon] records also that the bearer of this Syracusan name, Demokopos was a chief of works. Since he distributed perfume* (myron) *to his own citizens after he completed work on the theatre, he was called Myrilla*.[23]

The story is fictionalised: Demokopos is not a real name, but a synonym for 'demagogue' and Sophron's reference is part of a discourse against individual power in the second Syracusan democracy (467-404 BC). The idea is that construction was one of the best venues for assertive individuals to weaponise euergetism, using building projects to place the *populus* in their debt, both through the benefits arising from the construction process itself and through the spectacle that followed its completion. The permanence of the structure helped turn that moment of euergetism into a concrete and enduring relationship of debt.[24]

Construction is a temporary process that results in a permanent structure; it embodies the routinisation of a ruler's charismatic authority. All of this is relevant to Hieron's decision to build his theatre on such a scale: it demonstrated forever his power apart from and over the Syracusans and immortalised the unequal relationship of benefaction and debt between them.

A BUILDING PROGRAMME

Hieron's theatre was not a lone structure, but the centrepiece of a building programme. Parts of this complex, such as the Great Altar, the large network of aqueducts, and the new sub-city of Neapolis, have already been mentioned. Other construction under Hieron included a new Temple of Olympian Zeus in the *agora*, a new palace on Ortygia, and expansion of the Euryalos fortress. That building programme as a whole had an autocratic tinge.[25]

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[23] Eustathios, *Schol. in Hom. Od*. 3.68.
[24] Demokopos: Pöhlmann 2015, p. 153-4; Wilson 2017, p. 6-8; cf. Greenhalgh 1981, p. 54-60 (Theatre of Pompey). Euergetism: Veyne 1990 [1976], esp. p. 147-9; Gauthier 1985; Ma 1999, p. 182-94.
[25] On this building programme, see especially Von Sydow 1984, p. 340-6; Campagna 2004; Lehmler 2005; Portale 2015; Wolf 2016, p. 101-2.

The fact that there is a unified style that dates architectural fragments to Hieron's time has already been mentioned. This style, which combines features of the Hellenistic mainstream with features that referred back to earlier Sicilian models, is characterised by distinctive forms of the Doric and Ionic orders (*fig*. 4-5). Often both orders are combined in a single structure. Some features of the decoration of the Dorian order are diagnostic: the foliage on the *kymation*, lion-head waterspouts (ornamental, not functional), and rosettes. There appear to be late fourth century precursors for the style, but it became common throughout eastern Sicily during Hieron's reign, before spreading through western Sicily in the second century BC.[26]

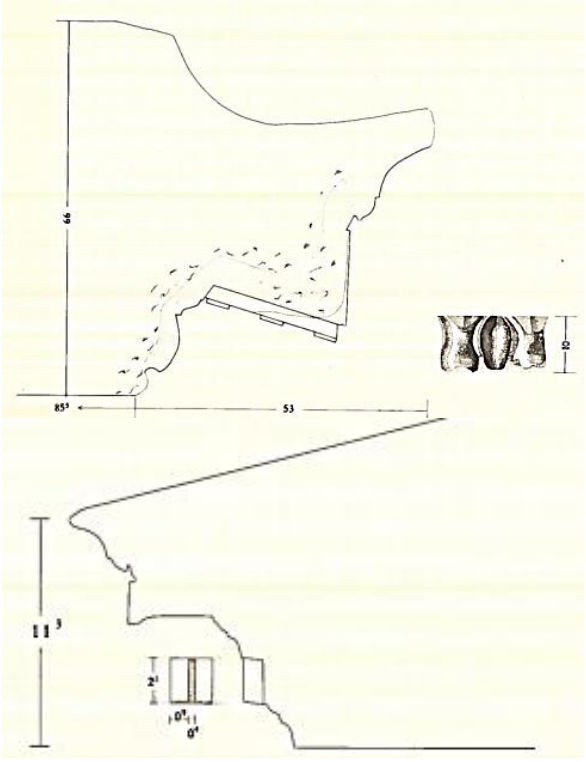

Fig. 4-5: Doric cornice, from the theatre *skene* (top); Ionic cornice, from Museo Paolo Orsi 40098, a Syracusan tomb (bottom), Von Sydow 1984, abb. 37 and 51.

It is tempting to associate buildings with elements in this style, in other cities within Hieron's kingdom with Hieron himself—notably at Akrai, Heloros, Morgantina, and Tauromenion. Wilhelm von Sydow identified some technical features of the style in Hieron's time, such as the shape and location of the brackets for metal clamps, which suggest that it was the product of a single architect or group of architects, but Lorenzo Campagna has emphasised that we cannot know and should not assume that all structures in the style, especially outside Syracuse, were initiated by Hieron, rather than local notables.[27] Nevertheless, the consistent use of this style in Hieron's buildings in Syracuse (and perhaps elsewhere) would have encouraged viewers to see all Hieron's buildings as part of a unified whole, encompassing the whole city of Syracuse (and possibly the whole kingdom).

[26] Von Sydow 1984, pp. 255-324, 335-9. Much of Von Sydow's material is reviewed in Wolf 2016.
[27] Von Sydow 1984, pp. 342-3; Campagna 2004, pp. 152-7. The influence of this style and of the theatre in particular is also visible in the theatres at Monte Iato, Solunto, Segesta, and Tyndaris. Direct involvement of Hieron can be ruled out in these cases, owing to their late date and/or their location outside Hieron's realm.

One motif that does seem to be associated with Hieron himself is the use of *telamones* (also called *atlantes*). These were corbels or engaged columns carved as figures bending forward to support blocks on their shoulders and forearms (to be distinguished from 'caryatids' which take the form of columns and bear the weight on their heads). Their first appearance was as the gigantic figures on the Temple of Olympian Zeus, built by the tyrant Theron at Akragas in the early fifth century. In the theatre, the motif takes the form of the satyr and mainad on the *skene*, which were mentioned above. The pose of the mainad and satyr of the theatre is directly modelled on that of Theron's *telamones*, suggesting the motif was intended to hearken back to the 'good tyrants' of the early Classical period, whom Hieron sought to co-opt as models for his own rule. The importance of these *telamones* and the link created by them

is shown by their recurrence on other Hieronian structures: the Altar of Hieron, where only the feet now survive, and even on the deck of the *Syrakosia*, Hieron's luxury yacht.[28]

It is striking that this element was drawn from temple architecture in particular and generalised to all Hieron's structures, including the theatre. A parallel is offered by Susan Walker who has argued that Augustus' extensive use of the Corinthian order on all buildings, which had previously been reserved for the most sacred part of the temple, was a conscious effort to emphasise the exceptional status of his Rome; we might see Hieron's generalisation of elements of temple architecture in a similar

Fig. 6-7: Satyr *telamon*, Museo Paolo Orsi 916, from Rizzo 1923, fig. 43; Mainad *telamon*, from Rizzo 1923, fig. 42.

[28] On *telamones* generally, see Vitr. 6.7.9, Schmidt 1982, p. 112-23 and King 1998, p. 275 and 289-301. For Hieron's *telamones*: Athen. *Deip.* 5.208b = Moschion *FGrH* 575 F1; Campagna 2004, p. 164-71; Lehmler 2005, p. 139, 228; Wolf 2016, p. 53-6. *Telamones* become common in Italy and Sicily in the Hellenistic period, especially on theatres (King 1998 provides a thorough list). The only example that might predate Hieron is that of the Iaitas (Monte Iato) theatre, which Isler, the excavator dated to the late fourth century BC. I follow the arguments of Wilson 1990, p. 69-71 for dating these around 200 BC. See also Csapo and Wilson 2020, pp. 283-4 (*non vidi*).

way.[29] The unified style of Hieron's buildings calls to mind the Augustan building programme in Rome more generally, too – it made Hieron an omnipresent feature of the urban landscape, a new founder, and allowed him to emphasise links between his new regime and an idealised past.

This sort of totalising project required Hieron to leave his mark on all the major buildings in the city. It especially required him to leave his mark on the theatre, since in the *poleis* of Hellenistic Sicily theatres were viewed as crucially important structures. When the historian Diodoros Siculus indulges his civic pride by eulogising his tiny hometown of Agyrhion in north-eastern Sicily, he starts with the theatre, and only then moves on to temples and political structures.[30] The theatre's central role in the community's entertainment, education, worship, deliberation, and local history meant that in Hellenistic Sicily, as Marconi puts it,

> … theatres took on the role that temples once held […] as symbols of the political independence, wealth, and power of the communities – even small ones – that built them.

Thus Hieron's all-encompassing remodelling of Syracuse had to include – had to focus on – the theatre.[31]

OLYMPIAN ZEUS AND THE DIAZOMA

Hieron also took advantage of specific features of the theatre's structure to communicate specific themes of his ideology of power. This is most apparent with the set of monumental inscriptions running along the wall of the diazoma (*IG* XIV 3), which have been mentioned already for their value for dating the *koilon*.[32] There were originally nine of these inscriptions, one in front of each wedge of theatre seating, from west to east:

[βασιλέος Γέλωνος]	[*Of King Gelon*]
βασιλίσσας Νηρηίδος	*Of Queen Nereis*
βασιλίσσας Φιλιστίδος	*Of Queen Philistis*
[β]ασιλ[έος Ἱέρω]νος	*Of King Hieron*
Διὸς Ὀλυμπίου	*Of Zeus Olympios*

[29] Walker 2000, p. 64.
[30] Diod. 16.83.3.
[31] Marconi 2012. Todisco 2002, p. 167-92 provides a full list of Sicilian theatres known in 2002, to which must now be added the theatre at Akragas: Caliò et al. 2017; and the unpublished theatre at Halaisa.
[32] *IG* XIV 3 = *I. Sic.* 824; Rizzo 1923, p. 50-1; Polacco and Anti 1981, p. 45-6; Dimartino 2006.

[– – –]	[– – –]
[Ἡρ]ακλέο[ς κ]ρατε[ρό]φρονο[ς]	*Of Herakles Kraterophron*
[– – –]	[– – –]
[– – –]	[– – –]

These would have been used by visitors to the theatre in order to navigate to the part of the theatre where they were sitting. The centre is inscribed with the name of Zeus Olympios. On the wedges to the east, there seem to have been the names of further deities, but unfortunately, the inscriptions have been heavily damaged by the elements and only the name of Herakles Kraterophron is recoverable. To the west of the centre are the names of King Hieron, his wife Queen Philistis, his daughter-in-law Queen Nereis, and (nearly certainly) his son and co-regent, King Gelon II.

The first feature to note is the prominence given to Zeus Olympios. This god had always been important to Syracusan civic identity – the priest of Zeus Olympios was the eponymous official of Syracuse, and the list of Syracusan citizens was kept in the temple of Zeus Olympios. He was also important for the Syracusans' understanding of their connection to the wider Greek world. It was said that the river Alpheios flowed from Olympia, under the Adriatic Sea, and bubbled up in Syracuse as the spring of Arethousa, the emblem and sacred heart of the city, thereby linking Syracuse to Olympia. Thus, Zeus Olympios was a feature of the Syracusan urban world, and a key part of the Syracusan conception of themselves as part of the Greek world.[33] He was also the monarchical god *par excellence*, linked with kings by Hesiod, Attic Old Comedy, and Hellenistic poetry, honoured with massive temples by autocrats like Theron of Akragas and Peisistratos of Athens.[34] In periods of democracy at Syracuse, Zeus Olympios usually lost some of his prominence in favour of Zeus Eleutherios.[35] Hieron's building programme included the replacement of the extramural temple of Zeus Olympios at Syracuse, one of the oldest temples in the city, with a new temple in the agora, so there is a definite sense in which Hieron was reasserting Olympian Zeus' central place in the city.[36] The *diazoma* inscription insured that in the

[33] Diod. 16.70.6; Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.137; Strab. 6.2.4; Plut. *Nic.* 14.5; Vonderstein 2006, p. 119-43.
[34] e.g. Hes. *WD* 242-51, Call. *Hymn*. 1, Theoc. *Id.* 17. Theron: Diod. 13.82; Polyb. 9.27.2; Broucke 1996; Peisistratos: Shapiro 1989, p. 112-7.
[35] Diod. 11.72; Vonderstein 2006, p. 143-5
[36] Diod. 16.83.2; Cic.Verr.2.4.119; Liv. 24.21.9; Campagna 2004, p. 157-61; Lehmler 2005, p. 135-50; Vonderstein 2006, p. 132-40.

theatre, too, Zeus Olympios' position was literally central – with Hieron at his right hand. Syracusan civic identity and Hieron's monarchy were presented as totally in sync.[37]

The second aspect of the inscription is the presentation of a royal family or dynasty. Dynasties are not objective facts: they have to be publicised, which is what this inscription does, making a clear statement about the centrality of the royal family to Syracusan life. It also constructed a particular image of that dynasty as connected to the past, in line with international norms of the present, and with a future beyond Hieron himself. We see the construction of a dynastic past in a number of other contexts. Hieron had a set of paintings set up in the Temple of Athena depicting a range of earlier Sicilian rulers, as if they were a series culminating with Hieron, for example.[38] The *diazoma* inscription's contribution to this construction of a dynastic past is that, between them, the four royals presented here had (putative) genealogical links to all the previous monarchs of Syracuse.[39] In terms of the international norms of the present, the emphasis on the husband-wife pair obviously recalls those of Hieron's closest allies among the Hellenistic monarchies: the Ptolemies. We see this idea in coinage too, where Hieron's wife Philistis appears (more often than Hieron himself, in fact), in a guise closely modelled on the Ptolemaic coinage depicting Arsinoe II and Berenike II – the wives of Ptolemies II and III respectively.[40] As for the dynastic future, by presenting two royal pairs in succession, the inscription emphasises the idea that the regime was a dynasty which would continue beyond Hieron himself. This schema was not the only way that Hieron's family could have been presented – Hieron had daughters, sons-in-law, and grandchildren, but they would have complicated the message about the dynasty's future, so they are left out.[41]

The fact these inscriptions had a practical purpose means that, unlike most inscriptions, which most passers-by probably ignored most of the time, visitors to Hieron's theatre were forced to engage with the diazoma inscriptions. Thus, we see Hieron (or his architects) taking advantage of specific

[37] I leave aside the question of a ruler cult for Hieron; I intend to argue for its non-existence in a forthcoming publication. In favour: Consolo Langher 2004, p. 86-9; Serrati 2008; against: Lehmler 2005, p. 148-50.
[38] Cic. *Verr*. 2.4.122-3; Lehmler 2005; Portale 2004.
[39] De Sensi Sestito 1977, p. 183-4; Cf. OGIS 54; Satyr. *FGrH* 631 F2; *P. Oxy*. 25.2465 (Ptolemaic claims of Argead descent); Hekster 2015, esp. p. 111-233 (Roman emperors).
[40] Caccamo Caltabiano, Carroccio and Oteri 1997, p. 53-60, 65-76. Hieron and the Ptolemies: Caccamo Caltabiano 1995; Wolf and Lorber 2011.
[41] Cf. Péré-Noguès 2013 on Dionysios I's use of his wives and daughters; Rose 1997, esp. p. 11-45 on Julio-Claudian statue groups; Severy 2003, p. 68-77, 161-5 on Augustus.

features of the structure of the theatre and the way in which people would use it to propagate central themes of Hieron's dynastic and religious ideology.

THEATRICAL TEMPLATES

The idea of the dynastic past was also emphasised by construction on sites where earlier Syracusan monarchs had already been active. Hieron thereby built himself into key *loci* of power within the city and was able to place himself in relation to his predecessors.[42] For example, as we saw earlier, Dionysios' fortification works had been a key demonstration of his power; Hieron therefore invested enormous amounts of energy in rebuilding the centrepiece of those fortifications, the Hexapyla fortress. This phenomenon is at work with the theatre, which had been an important place for almost all earlier Syracusan monarchs. There were two key exemplars in this sphere: Hieron I and Dionysios I. Hieron II sought to tap into the positive aspects of the former's engagement with the theatre while avoiding aspects of the latter's engagement with the theatre which were more negative or (perhaps worse) laughable.

Hieron I's association with the theatre is well-known, because it is connected with Aischylos, who was brought in to give two theatrical performances: *Women of Aitna* and *The Persians*.[43] A summary of the *Women of Aitna* survives on papyrus and it reports that the play's action moved through a number of places of contemporary political relevance, very probably ending at the Hill of Temenites, which may indicate that it was the site of the play's performance.[44] By building on the same site, Hieron II associated himself with the earlier Hieron, as a patron of literary culture.

By contrast, the negative aspect of Dionysios' relationship to the theatre focussed on his excessive involvement in the process of theatrical production – the decision to write and possibly even star in dramas.[45] Our sources' disapproval of Dionysios' conduct is part of their general criticism of his relationship to society: his control of all aspects of civic life, engaging in (rigged) competitions for

[42] Cf. Augustus' building programme in Rome: Zanker 1988, p. 101-238; Walker 2000; Severy 2003, p. 165-84.
[43] *Vita Aeschyli* 9-10, 18; Σ Ar. *Ran*. 1028; Paus. 1.2.3; Kowalzig 2008; Bonanno 2010, p. 139-47; Bosher 2012; Morgan 2015, p. 96-109; Smith 2018, 11-8.
[44] *P. Oxy.* 2257. An improved text appears in Arata, Bastianini and Montanari 2004; they note that it is more likely a commentary than a *hypothesis*. The papyrus draws a parallel between *Women of Aitna* and the transfer of action from Delphi to the Areopagos in *Eumenides*. For other potential fragments: Smith 2018, 19-30.
[45] Diod. 15.6, 15.74; Plut. *Mor*. 833c; Duncan 2012; Wilson 2017, p. 10-7; Coppola 2019.

status in the *polis* sphere rather than competing with other rulers on behalf of the *polis* on the global stage.[46] Hieron II avoided this. By focusing his attention on the structure of the theatre, rather than productions in it, Hieron II firmly presented himself as one who enabled productions, like Hieron I; not an orchestrator like Dionysios I.

THEATRE OF THE KINGDOM

Hieron's rule was not restricted to the city of Syracuse itself – he ruled over most of southeastern Sicily. The cities of this kingdom were ostensibly *symmachoi,* probably organised as a *Koinon ton Sikeliotan*, known from coinage and Cicero's *Verrines*.[47] By Cicero's time its central institution was the *Lex Hieronica*, which governed all agriculture in the realm, extracting a tithe of grain from every city, to be auctioned off at Syracuse. Whether this system operated in the same way—or at all—in Hieron's lifetime is disputed, but it is likely that the basic institution does go back to Hieron, since the law was named after him, the system seems similar to the grain tax system of third-century Ptolemaic Egypt, and because a number of standardised grain measures, inscribed with Hieron's name, have been found in different parts of his realm.[48]

According to Cicero, the grain tithes from the cities were customarily auctioned off annually in a grand assembly (*maximo conventu*) in Syracuse, attended by representatives from throughout the province of Sicilia.[49] This grand assembly must have taken place in the theatre, since it is the only venue that could accommodate them. Karlsson has proposed that this grand assembly went back to Hieron's time and that the nearby Great Altar – built at the same time as the theatre, for sacrifices of hundreds of cattle at a time – was the site of sacrifices associated with these meetings. If Karlsson is right, then the theatre was the site where Hieron's power over the kingdom (viz. his ability to levy tax) was annually affirmed.

The moment was an important one because the ability to ensure agricultural prosperity and to dispose of the profits had been a central aspect of Sicilian autocracy since the time of the Deinomenid tyrants

[46] Xen. *Hier.* 11 with Sordi 1980; Bonanno 2010, p. 231-8; Hieron II is seen engaging in 'correct' competition on Rhodes: Polyb. 5.88.
[47] Polyb. 1.62.8; Cic. Verr. 2.2.114, 154. Manganaro, 1965; De Sensi Sestitio, 1977, p. 117-23; Karlsson, 1996; Bell, 2011, p. 197-8.
[48] Pinzone 1979; Bell, 2007 and 2011; Walthall, 2011.
[49] Cic. Verr. 2.3.14, 149.

and was a key component of kingship throughout the Hellenistic world.[50] It was emphasised by Hieron, both domestically and internationally: he wrote a book on agriculture, built royal granaries next to his palace, and his massive pleasure cruiser the *Syrakosia* was ostensibly a grain transport, while Theokritos' encomium of him stresses agricultural prosperity.[51]

Regardless of whether Cicero's *conventus* took place in the theatre in Hieron's time, the theatre was important to this aspect of Hieron's self-representation because it was a key site where city and countryside met. Architecturally, a key example of this is the *Grotto delle Nymphe*, where water from the Syracusan countryside erupts into the civic environment, which was carved in a rough style so as to look like a natural cave. A votive relief of Pan found in the grotto supports this rupestral dimension.[52] On the *skene*, the satyr and mainad *telamones* played a similar role, as Dionysiac figures of the wilderness incorporated into this civic building, to watch over theatrical performances and civic deliberations alike. The theatre also functioned as a meeting place of city and country, as the site of theatrical festivals, when people of the countryside came into the city—as audiences and as characters in comic performances. At Syracuse, the link between comic performance and the countryside is clearest with the festivals of Artemis Lyaia, in which men of the countryside (*agroikoi*) came to the city in stereotypical rustic dress and sung satirical songs.[53] The theatre, then, had an important symbolic role in tying together the rural and urban aspects of Hieron's kingship.

These themes meet in Demeter and Kore, who were the patron goddesses of agricultural production and of Sicily, as well as being closely associated with drama in Sicily—apparently more so than Dionysos.[54] As the patrons of Sicily, they were frequently invoked by Syracusan autocrats as supporters of their

[50] Deinomenids: Kowalzig, 2008, p. 134-7. Hellenistic kings: Bringmann, 2001.
[51] Book: Varr. Rust. 1.8.1; Col. 1.1.8; Plin. *NH* 18.4.22. Granaries: Livy 24.21.11-2; Lehmler, 2005, p. 176-7. *Syrakosia:* Moschion *FGrH* 575 F1 = Athen. *Deip.* 5.206d-209e. Encomium: Theoc. *Id.* 16.85-99; Bell, 2011, p. 198-206.
[52] Polacco and Anti, 1981, p. 217.
[53] Lyaia: Diom. *GL* I p. 486 and Theoc. *Prolegom.* B; Favi 2017 argues that the establishment of this festival dates to Hieron II. Cf. Aristot. *Pol.* 1448a; Jones, 2004, p. 192-207.
[54] Hinz, 1998. Demeter-Kore and theatre: Diod. 5.4.7 (*aischrologia*); Maclachlan, 2012 (terracotta votives); Polacco, 1990b, 155-8; Kowalzig, 2008.

efforts to unify the island and as defenders of the Siceliotes from barbarian threats.[55] As remarked above, Hieron's theatre seems to have hosted an abundance of cult sites connected with these goddesses in the Syracusan *polis* religion: the temples on the upper terrace, the *pozzetti* on the upper terrace which may have been used for the *thesmophoria*, and the possible sanctuary of Demeter Pyrphoros west of the orchestra.[56] Thus, the theatre was also a key location in which the ideas discussed in this section, about Hieronian Syracuse's connection to broader units—the countryside, the kingdom, Sicily—were tied firmly into the *polis*' religion and topography of power.

THEATRICAL ASSEMBLIES

Cross-culturally, a ruler's approach to theatre is often a metaphor for the ruler's approach to social and political life. But in Syracuse it was a particularly natural metaphor because the theatre was also the central venue of political life, as the site of the assembly. Every Syracusan assembly that our sources localise takes place in the theatre.[57] It was the main place where the whole *demos* gathered as a body and exercised agency.

As a result, demonstrating supremacy in the theatre was a key part of establishing political supremacy generally. This is why it is so significant that the theatre's style, inscription, and location in the centre of the Neapolis made it such a Hieronian space, as discussed above. But supremacy was also demonstrated through performances in the theatre. The idea that the Athenian theatre was used to stage the domination of the *demos* over powerful individuals and of the *polis* over its empire is a familiar one.[58] This also meant that the theatre was a key venue for the interface between the *polis* and the autocrat – most famously in the case of Demetrios Poliorketes' rule over Athens.[59] There is a clear

[55] Demeter-Kore and Sicily: Pind. *N.* 1.13-14; Schol. in Theoc. 1.65 = Simonid. F200b Bergk; Diod. 5.2-4; Strabo 6.1.5. Demeter-Kore defeating foreigners: Timaios *FGrH* F 102b (413 BC), Diod. 14.63.1-2, 14.77.4-5 (397 BC), Plut. *Tim.* 8 (344 BC), Diod. 20.7 (317 BC).
[56] See n. 15, 16, and 17 above.
[57] Diod. 13.94 in 406 BC; Plut. *Dion* 38.2 and 43.1 in 355 BC; Plut. *Timol.* 34.4 in 343 BC; Corn. Nep. *Tim.* 4.2 and Plut. *Timol.* 38.6 after 338 BC; Just. 22.2.10 in 317 BC; Chariton *Kallirhoe* 1.1.12, set c. 400 BC. Parallels are often drawn between theatre and assembly audiences in ancient sources: Thuc. 3.37-8; Demosth. 19.337; Roselli 2011, p. 44-62.
[58] Individuals: [Xen.] *Ath.Pol.* 2.18; Dover 1972, p. 30-8; Goldhill 2000, p. 44-7. Empire: Isoc. 8.82 (display of tribute at the Dionysia, perhaps a parallel for the meetings of the *koinon ton Sikeliotan* discussed in the previous section).
[59] Chaniotis 1997, p. 234-48; Bell 2004; Plut. *Demetr.* 34; Thonemann 2005.

tradition of this in Syracuse. We have accounts of election for almost all of Syracuse's rulers.[60] Particularly telling for the practical importance of this is the account of the succession of Dionysios II to power after his father's death in 368 BC:

> Ὁ δὲ Διονύσιος ὁ νεώτερος διαδεξάμενος τὴν τυραννίδα, πρῶτον τὰ πλήθη συναγαγὼν εἰς ἐκκλησίαν παρεκάλεσε τοῖς οἰκείοις λόγοις τηρεῖν τὴν πατροπαράδοτον πρὸς αὐτὸν εὔνοιαν, ἔπειτα τὸν πατέρα μεγαλοπρεπῶς θάψας κατὰ τὴν ἀκρόπολιν πρὸς ταῖς βασιλίσι καλουμέναις πύλαις, ἠσφαλίσατο τὰ κατὰ τὴν ἀρχήν.
>
> *When Dionysios the Younger had inherited the tyranny,* first *he gathered the masses in an assembly and called on them with appropriate words to maintain the good will towards him which had been handed down by his father,* then *he buried his father magnificently on the Acropolis near the 'Royal' Gates, and his regime was secured*.[61]

The smoothness of the succession is remarkable since Dionysios II's rule would prove very unstable as a result of latent conflicts with members of his family and the wider Syracusan elite who wanted more power in the regime. It was because he had secured such a visible display of popular support for his claim to exclusive possession of his father's legacy that he was able to take power in the first place.[62]

Sicilian historiography is dotted with examples of people ruining this kind of political scene by speaking out of turn or going off script.[63] The best example of this comes from *P. Oxy.* XXIV 2399, an unknown historian's account of an assembly in 310 BC:

> Δι[ό]γνητος ὁ Φαλαίνιος ἐπικαλούμενος διεφθαρμένος ὑπ’ Ἀμίλκου καὶ τῶν φυγάδων καὶ παρεσκευασμένος ἂν δύνηται μεταστῆσαι τὴν πόλιν. ἐκκλησιαζόντων τῶν Συρακοσίων ὑπὲρ τοῦ πολέμου τοῦ παρεστῶτος ἐξαίφνης ἀναστὰς καὶ προανακρουσάμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ βήματος…
>
> *Diognetos 'the Whale' was corrupted by Hamilcar and the exiles and made preparations however he could to betray the polis. When the Syracusans were holding an Assembly about the ongoing war, he suddenly stood up and thrust forward up onto the speaker’s platform…*

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[60] Dionysios I: Diod. 13.94-96, 14.45, 14.64-70. Dion: Diod. 16.10.3, 16.20.6; Plut. *Dion* 33, 42.8-43. Agathokles: Diod. 19.9, Just. 22.2. Pyrrhos: Diod. 22.8.4.
[61] Diod. 15.74.5.
[62] Frisone 2015, p. 183-4.
[63] Cf. Diod. 13.91.3-4, 14.64.5; Plut. *Dion* 34; Plut. *Timol.* 37.3.

This sort of event was shocking when it occurred, because of its power – Diognetos' intervention caused the whole meeting to collapse into chaos – and because of its rarity. Social conventions shared by theatrical performance and political oratory built a particular relationship between performer and audience. On the one hand, the performer had a privileged right to the audience's attention. On the other, the audience as a collective had the right to judge the success of the performance – by their interventions (applause, hissing, heckling) during the performance and by their votes after it was over. The audience as individuals had much less power – intervening out of sync with the audience, much less breaking the fourth wall by invading the stage, was described by Theophrastos as 'abhorrent behaviour' (βδελυρία). There was powerful pressure to conform to the majority will, as it was discovered.[64] Successful autocrats took advantage of these social conventions to stage displays that emphasised the audience's unanimous support for them.

How exactly were these displays to be staged? There were two iconic scenes of Syracusan history, which provided models for autocratic display. The first is the Apology of Gelon, set in 479 BC:

> διὸ καὶ τῆς ὁρμῆς ἐπισχών, τὴν προθυμίαν τῶν στρατιωτῶν ἀποδεξάμενος, συνήγαγεν ἐκκλησίαν, προστάξας ἅπαντας ἀπαντᾶν μετὰ τῶν ὅπλων· αὐτὸς δὲ οὐ μόνον τῶν ὅπλων γυμνὸς εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἦλθεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀχίτων ἐν ἱματίῳ προσελθὼν ἀπελογίσατο μὲν περὶ παντὸς τοῦ βίου καὶ τῶν πεπραγμένων αὐτῷ πρὸς τοὺς Συρακοσίους· ἐφ' ἑκάστῳ δὲ τῶν λεγομένων ἐπισημαινομένων τῶν ὄχλων, καὶ θαυμαζόντων μάλιστα ὅτι γυμνὸν ἑαυτὸν παρεδεδώκει τοῖς βουλομένοις αὐτὸν ἀνελεῖν, τοσοῦτον ἀπεῖχε τοῦ τυχεῖν τιμωρίας ὡς τύραννος, ὥστε μιᾷ φωνῇ πάντας ἀποκαλεῖν εὐεργέτην καὶ σωτῆρα καὶ βασιλέα.
>
> *So, when [Gelon] was ending the campaign [against the Carthaginians], he perceived the enthusiasm of the soldiers, and gathered an assembly, ordering everyone to meet armed. But he himself came into the assembly not just stripped of his arms, but he came forward in a himation without even a chiton, and gave a defence of his whole life and of the things he had done for the Syracusans. At each of the things he said, the mob indicated its approval and was especially astonished that he had offered himself, naked, to those who might want to kill him – he was so far*

[64] Thuc. 3.37-8; Plat. *Leg.* 659b; Theophr. *Char.* 11.3; Revermann 2006, p. 160-2; Roselli 2011, p. 19-62; Wilson 2017, p. 4-5.

from receiving punishment as a tyrant that all in one voice they all declared him benefactor, saviour, and king.[65]

The episode has an anachronistic Hellenistic flavour; it illustrates how Diodoros – a Hellenistic Sicilian – expected a ruler to be acclaimed. The whole episode is thoroughly 'theatrical': the autocrat determines the form which the scene will take, with a particular focus on the use of creative costuming and staging to construct the right relationship between himself and the audience. In the meeting between the autocrat and the people, it is the latter who determine (apparently for good) what kind of ruler he is, but he has organised the encounter so that they can only reach one conclusion.[66]

The other iconic scene is an honour granted to Timoleon during his retirement after liberating Syracuse in 338 BC. We have versions of this from Plutarch and Cornelius Nepos, clearly derived from a single source. Plutarch's version goes like this:

καλὴν δὲ καὶ τὸ περὶ τὰς ἐκκλησίας γινόμενον ὄψιν εἰς τιμὴν αὐτοῦ [Τιμολέοντος] παρεῖχε· τὰ γὰρ ἄλλα δι' αὐτῶν κρίνοντες, ἐπὶ τὰς μείζονας διασκέψεις ἐκεῖνον ἐκάλουν. ὁ δὲ κομιζόμενος δι' ἀγορᾶς ἐπὶ ζεύγους πρὸς τὸ θέατρον ἐπορεύετο, καὶ τῆς ἀπήνης <ἐφ'> ἧσπερ ἐτύγχανε καθήμενος εἰσαγομένης, ὁ μὲν δῆμος ἠσπάζετο μιᾷ φωνῇ προσαγορεύων αὐτόν, ὁ δ' ἀντασπασάμενος, καὶ χρόνον τινὰ δοὺς ταῖς εὐφημίαις καὶ τοῖς ἐπαίνοις, εἶτα διακούσας τὸ ζητούμενον ἀπεφαίνετο γνώμην. ἐπιχειροτονηθείσης δὲ ταύτης, οἱ μὲν ὑπηρέται πάλιν ἀπῆγον διὰ τοῦ θεάτρου τὸ ζεῦγος, οἱ δὲ πολῖται βοῇ καὶ κρότῳ προπέμψαντες ἐκεῖνον, ἤδη τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν δημοσίων καθ' αὑτοὺς ἐχρημάτιζον.

And what was done in the assembly provided a beautiful sight in [Timoleon's] honour. Although [the Syracusans] decided most things among themselves, for the more important issues they would call him. And he would come through the agora in a wagon to the theatre, and when the vehicle in which he happened to be sat was brought in, the demos greeted him by name all in one voice, and he greeted them in return, gave some time for the plaudits and praise, then heard the matter of moment and declared his opinion. After they had voted for this, the servants took the wagon back

[65] Diod. 11.26.5-6. Cf. Diod. 19.9 (Agathokles); Plut. *Caes.* 61 (Caesar); Suet. *Aug.* 52 (Augustus).
[66] Chaniotis 1997; Bell 2004, p. 52-150; Von Hesberg 2009, p. 294-5. Anachronism: Rutter 1993.

through the theatre, and the citizens sent him off with shouting and applause, then dealt with the rest of the public business on their own.[67]

The key aspects of this passage are the way that theatre is again the venue in which the people affirm their respect for the ruler, the fact that they do so in unison, and the fact that Timoleon is represented as letting the Syracusans run their own show until and except when they need him. This last point links back to the distinction between Hieron I and Dionysios I emphasised above, contrasting with accounts of Dionysios I attending the assembly with an armed bodyguard.[68] Both of these iconic scenes represent the importance of creating a space in which the consent of the governed can (appear to) be freely given.

We see the same ideas in Hieron's relation with the people. Hieron's rise to power is described to us very briefly by Polybios, who tells us that Hieron was spontaneously appointed archon by the Syracusan army while it was on campaign and then broke into the city and seized control. But, he says, Hieron proved so compassionate and generous to his opponents that the Syracusans:

… ὥστε τοὺς Συρακοσίους, καίπερ οὐδαμῶς εὐδοκουμένους ἐπὶ ταῖς τῶν στρατιωτῶν ἀρχαιρεσίαις, τότε πάντας ὁμοθυμαδὸν εὐδοκῆσαι στρατηγὸν αὐτῶν ὑπάρχειν Ἱέρωνα.

… although not approving of the soldiers' decision to appoint archons at all, nevertheless were all of one mind in approving of Hieron being their commander.[69]

We do not get the same details of costuming and props that we receive for Gelon and Timoleon, but we are presented with the same idea of the importance of the masses in determining the character of the ruler and with the same emphasis on the masses' unanimity. *IG* XIV 7, a badly mutilated inscription from Hieron's reign takes us a bit further. Most of what survives seem to be an oath by Hieron (and possibly his heir and co-regent Gelon II as well) and the start of a reciprocal oath of the Syracusans:[70]

[67] Plut. *Timol*. 38; Corn. Nep. *Tim.* 4.2. Cf. Suet. *Aug.* 58.
[68] Diod. 20.63.3.
[69] Polyb. 1.8.3-4
[70] IG XIV 7 = *I Sic*. 827; Manganaro 1965, 2005; De Sensi Sestito 1977, p. 125-35; Dimartino 2006. Syracusan oaths: Wareh 2007.

- - - Λ[.]I - - -
- - - ὑμῖ]ν φροντίζειν
- - - βασιλέων καὶ τὰν
- - - -ίδων πᾶσαν παρ
- - - -ν εἰς ἀμὲ εὔνοιαν
- - - ἄρισ]τα μόνον παρεσκευ
[άσασθαι τοῖς Σ]υρακοσίοις. φανερὸν δὴ
- - - ἐ]ν τοσούτοις ἔτεσι ὡς
- - - οὐδενὸς τῶν π]ρότερον ἀγημένων
- - - τα]λικαῦται ὑπάρχ[οντι]
- - - τριακ]άδι τὸ τε κοινὴ[ν - -
- - - τ]ε ἀμεῖς ǫ̣ι [- -
- - - -ς ταὶ [- -

- - - - - - - - -
- - μ]ηδενί εξου- - -
διδῶτε, πράσσειν αδ- - -
πραξεῖν ἔτι δὲ καὶ τ- - -
οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν καὶ τ̣- - - - - - - - - - - - - τὰ ὅρκια
διαφυλάσσειν ἃ ἐντὶ [ὀμόμενα - - -
Ὅρκιον βουλᾶς κα[ὶ στραταγῶν?]
καὶ τῶν ἄλλων [πολιτᾶν?]
ὀμνύω τὰν Ἰστίαν τῶ[ν Συρακοσίων, καὶ τὸν Δία]
τὸν Ὀλύμπιον καὶ τὰ̣ν Γ[ᾶν καὶ τὸν Ἥλιον καὶ τὸν]
Ποσειδ[ᾶνα - - - - - -
- - - - - - - - -

- - - for you] to consider
- - - of the kings and the
- - - -ing all
- - - good will towards us
- - - to furnish only the
[best things] for the Syracusans. Clearly
- - - in so many years, like
- - - [none of the] earlier leaders
- - - are so much
- - - thirtieth and the shared
- - - we - - -
- - - - - -

- - - - - - - - -
- - nothing - - -
you shall give, is doing - - -
was doing. And also - - -
Your fathers and - - -
to maintain [the oaths] which are [sworn]
Oath of the Council and [strategoi?]
and the other [citizens?]
I swear by the Hearth of the [Syracusans, and by
[Zeus] Olympios, and Earth [and Sun and]
Poseidon - - -

In general, this inscription seems to confirm earlier points. The importance of tradition is seen in the reference to 'earlier leaders' and the importance of popular support in the reference to *eunoia*. But these oaths also provide the script for a ceremony, in which those ideals were redeclared. For logistical reasons, this probably took place in the theatre. The representatives of the *polis* (the *bouleutai*, the *strategoi* (probably), and the other *politai* or perhaps the other *archontes*) would then demonstrate their overwhelming support for Hieron – literally all in one voice. This encounter was important enough to be inscribed on stone. Since new magistrates took office each year, this ceremony was probably intended to be repeated annually. This was not the only such mass-proclamation of loyalty to the king; three honorific dedications of the Syracusans to Hieron and Gelon survive (as well as one from the *demos* of Tauromenion), and further dedications attested in literary sources. The legend ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΟΙ ΓΕΛΩΝΟΣ, 'the Syracusans (order this coin?) of Gelon' on a set of didrachms may also be the result of a decree of the Syracusans. All these dedications must have been the product of votes at assembly

meetings in the theatre. In the theatre, the will of the people was (ostensibly) in flux – to be tested, determined, and demonstrated. Once the crowd had dispersed, it was set in stone.[71]

SHAPING THE CROWD

The 'people' and the '*demos*' don't actually exist – they are an ideological construct. In modern politics we think we see 'the people' and their 'will' in elections and protests. In the Greek polis, one of the major places that the *demos* and its will was seen in this way was the theatre. Creating the space in which the people gathered thus gave Hieron the power to determine how the *demos* would see itself.

This idea is attested in Athens from the fifth century BC and in Hellenistic poleis generally, where front seat rights (*prohedria*) were awarded to benefactors, priests, officials, and ambassadors, there were assigned seats for *bouleutai* and *ephebes*, and citizens may have sat in their tribal groups. In a slightly different form, the *Lex Roscia theatralis* and *Lex Iulia theatralis*, it also occurs in Republican and Imperial Rome. The result of this practice was that the seated audience was a manifestation of the community in its ideal form, arranged according to merit – where merit is (ostensibly) defined not by wealth, or birth, or virtue, but solely in terms of service to the community. Those seated at the front were very much on show. Their prominence was a glorious honour, but they were on show and the weight of the eyes upon them was simultaneously a heavy burden. Challenges to individuals' right to *prohedria*, which are ubiquitous in ancient texts, are implicitly a challenge to the individuals' social and political prominence generally.[72]

The design of Hieron's theatre compounded this phenomenon. The diazoma splits the *koilon* in half. Today, there are steps leading both up and down from this point. But originally, there was a continuous wall between the diazoma and the upper *koilon*. The steps leading up from the diazoma were cut subsequently, as can be seen from the continuity of the base moulding of the diazoma across their cuttings, the greater steepness of the first eight steps, and the way that the steps have to double-back on

[71] Syracusan dedications: *I Sic.* 823, *I Sic.* 3009, *I Sic*. 3331; Paus. 6.15.6; Tauromenion: *SEG* 19.332; Levi 1970. Coins: Caccamo Caltabiano, Carroccio and Oteri 1997, p. 77-82. Cf. Wilson 2009 on *IG* I^3 102 in Athens; Bielfield 2012 on Priene.

[72] Athens: Pickard-Cambridge 1988, p. 268-70; Maass 1972; Goldhill 1987, p. 61; Roselli 2011, p. 63-86. Hellenistic *poleis*: Von Hesburg 2009; Moretti 2014, p. 123. *Leges theatrales*: Rawson 1991. Challenges: Aristoph. *Eq.* 702-4 (Kleon); Malnati 1988 (Juvenal and Martial).

themselves to reach the front seats of the upper *koilon*.[73] Until these steps leading up from the diazoma were cut, probably in Roman times, the upper *koilon* could only be accessed from above, by walking all the way up the east side of the theatre to the stoa and then descending. The very fact that steps were subsequently cut in the diazoma shows that this was very impractical – which implies that its original purpose was not practical, but ideological. Although the theatre as a whole could hold around 15,800, only about 3,500 of them could fit below the diazoma. This is significantly more than the possessors of *prohedria* in the community, but it is still a sub-set of the whole. By having the people who sat in the front, honoured seats, enter by a completely different entrance from *hoi polloi*, the distinction between those groups was further stressed.

Did *prohedria* in Hieron's theatre signify value to the *demos* or value to Hieron? One point of making the theatre such a Hieronian space, as discussed above, was to elide this distinction – to present the idea that value to Hieron and value to the *demos* were the same thing. To the people who used the monumental diazoma inscription to find their seats, the role of Hieron in placing them at the forefront of the community would have been particularly apparent, but it would also have appeared that in doing this he enjoyed the unanimous and unassailable support of the *demos*. The same factors that have led scholars to talk about the theatre in Athens as a democratic (or civic) space—its role as a place where the community saw an approximation of itself, discovered its will, was simultaneously carefully regulated and at its most powerful—are exactly those that made it crucial to Hieron and his fellow autocrats.

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[73] Polacco and Anti 1981, p. 141-2, 211. Cf. the late third century BC theatre at Delos: Moretti 2014, p. 122.

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