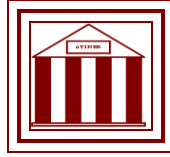


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**ARC2013-0729**

**The Architecture of the Ancient  
Caunus City Theatre**

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Athens Institute for Education and Research

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## **The Architecture of the Ancient Caunus City Theatre**

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### **Abstract**

Ancient city Caunus is situated on the southwest shore of Anatolia, across the island of Rhodes. Today it is located within the borders of the town of Köyceğiz, across from the town of Dalyan and on the western bank of the Dalyan (Calbis) river which connects Köyceğiz Lake with the Mediterranean.

Being a port during antiquity, the city now lies far away from the seashore due to the formation of the Dalyan Delta. The situation of its harbor was strategically important for ships sailing between the Aegean Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean. Therefore, the great powers at different times in antiquity fought bitterly with each other to control this harbour city.

The theater, which is situated on the western slope of the Acropolis, is not only the best-preserved Hellenic theater among the theaters in Anatolia, but is also one of the buildings of Caunus that has survived in a good state of preservation. Cavea has approximately 5000 seat capacity. The rows are divided into two sections by the diazoma, which divides the whole theatron horizontally. It is divided into nine wedge-shaped kerkides. There are 15 seats in the upper Cavea and 18 seats in the lower Cavea. In recent years of our archeological studies, a fountain was found at the collapsed northwestern side of the theater.

The aim of this paper is to describe architecture of the ancient theater of the city Kaunos, and define the touches to it.

**Keywords:**

**Corresponding Author:**

## Introduction

Caunus, an ancient city in Anatolia, is situated on the southern shore of Turkey, across from the Island of Rhodos. When geographically considered, its hinterland opens out towards Lycia in the east, where it is separated from the rest of Caria by semicircular mountain range immediately to the west and the north. At the present day, Caunus is located within the borders of the modern village Çandır of the town of Köyceğiz, across from the town of Dalyan and on the western bank of the Dalyan (Calbis) River which connects Köyceğiz Lake to the Mediterranean. Being an important port during antiquity, the city now lies 8 km away from the seashore due to the formation of the Dalyan Delta.

When we study the written sources of the history of Caunus, Herodotus informs us; ‘After conquering the Ionians, Harpagus proceed to attack the Carians, the Caunians and the Lycians.’ Herodotus also writes about the local people and says, ‘The Caunians, in my judgment, are aboriginals; but by their own account they came from Crete. In their language, either they have approximated to the Carians or the Carian to them -on this point I cannot speak with certainty. In their customs, however, they differ greatly from the Carians, and not only so, but from all other men.’ G. Bean also emphasizes that, Caunians language, although it resembles the Carian language a lot, it also has some specific characteristics. The founders of Caunus were different from their neighbours by their language, traditions and customs as well as by their own deities, and they appeared as if they were another distinct and indigenous culture of Anatolia.

The fact that the founders of Caunus were natives of Anatolia is also proven by its particular and different local name in the Lycian version of the Trilingual Inscription from the Letoon: **Kbid**. This Lycian version of the name Caunus was also carved on the “Pillar” located in the agora of Xanthos and is further supported by a fourth century B.C. bilingual stele, which was unearthed in the course of our excavations. The name Caunus in the Greek Text has its counterpart in the Carian text as **Kbid**. Based on our present knowledge, it is obvious that the Caunians used the local name of their city until the end of the 4th century BC. But how did the name Caunus come into use during the time of Herodotus? To be honest this is quite difficult to explain. Recent research has emphasized that Caunus is a Greek name. This name change could perhaps be explained by the “story” that Greek colonizers change the names of the cities to Greek names to claim the foundations, a method we find in most Anatolian cities.

When we approach the city from the Dalyan River, the carved rock tombs attract the attention. The top ones are temple facing and the lower ones are simple. There is a large unfinished tomb which has four columns. It has been known that the rock tombs have been used in different periods.

Caunus was a commercial city and its main trade “commodities” were slaves, salted fish and salt that was used in the production of eye ointment. In addition to these, resin and rosin from Turkish black pine for building ships were important trade products.

**Figure 1.** *The Plan of Caunus City*



**Figure 2.** *Some Important Buildings in the City*



## **The Architecture of the City**

The geomorphological and topographical changes that marked the environment prior to, during and after the foundation of the city make Caunus quite interesting, not only in its geographical and urban aspect, but also in its political and social life, its economical and cultural changes and achievements. Geography was particularly important in the situation of the buildings, in the case of forming the urban structure, walls, harbours, and man-made terraces in the city's progress.

The city is located on a three-part land lying towards the sea. One of these is the Acropole with 152 m height; the second is the small Acropole, and the third, *Bilezikçi* Hill.

The most important characteristic of the city is its harbour, now known as *Sülüklü* Lake. It is located in the cove between the small Acropole and *Bilezikçi* Hill. The city is formed around this harbour. The situation of the harbor was strategically important for ships sailing between the Aegean Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean. Therefore, the great powers at different times in antiquity fought harshly with each other in order to control this harbour city. The historian Strabo especially mentioned that the harbour could be closed.

Another important characteristic of the city is its man-made terraces. They are on the hillsides surrounding the city and also on the hills. These terraces give the city monumentality. Another important characteristic of the city is its walls and buildings.

At the present day there aren't any examples of civil architecture, but the stoa and the fountain at Agora, Terrace Temple, the Domed Church, the Roman Bath and the Theatre are the most important surviving buildings. One of these places, Theatre, in many respects, is worth to investigate further.

## **The Theatre**

The theater is not only the best-preserved Hellenic theater among the theaters in Anatolia, but it is also one of the buildings of Caunus that has survived in a good state of preservation. 'The Theatre is in tolerable preservation; it is of inferior workmanship, has thirty-four rows of seats divided by a diazoma, and faces the sea.' writes RD Hoskyn at his Caunus survey in 1840.

When we question the location of theatre in the city, we realize that it connects to Acropolis, Domed Church and the Roman Bath. It is situated on the western slope of the Acropolis and has been built under a 27 degree angle.

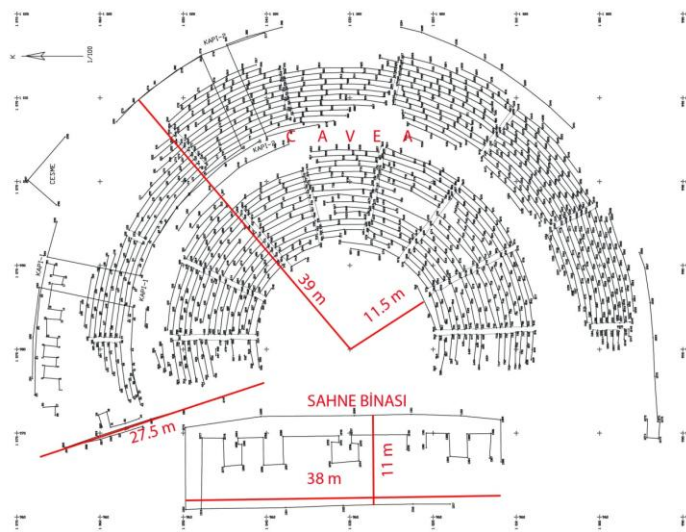
Today, some parts of Analemma at North and East side partially and the stage building is completely demolished. The southeastern and northwestern part of the cavea has been destroyed. The rows and stairs that are from limestone, leading to the upper cavea have partially collapsed.



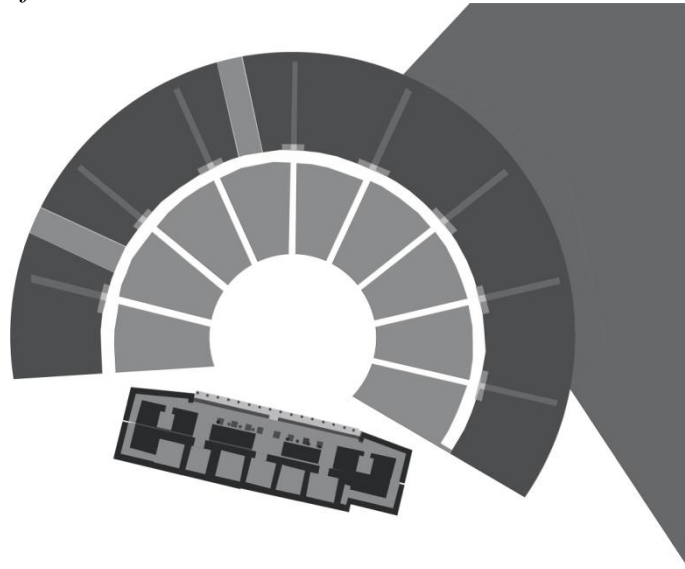
**Figure 3.** *Plan of the Theatre*



**Figure 4.** *Plan of the Theatre*



**Figure 5.** *Plan of the Theatre*



### **Cavea**

Cavea, which is carved into the bedrock, faces southwest and has a maximum 5000 seats capacity. The peripheral wall of the cavea of Caunus theatre is really interesting and full of mystery. At the northwest side, the Analemma wall reaches its highest level, which is 15.50 meters. But this height causes trouble at the structural system of the wall and now it is partly in ruins. As a result of archeological excavations in recent years, a monumental fountain was discovered under the ruins, at the bottom of the Analemma wall.

The Cavea is divided into nine wedge-shaped kerkides by eight staircases composed of 19 cm high steps. Each kerkis comprises thirty-three seats. These rows are divided into two sections by the 1.6 meter wide diazoma, which divides the whole cavea horizontally. Thus there are sixteen seats in the upper Cavea and eighteen seats in the lower cavea.

In almost every part of the cavea, one can see the holes for the wooden poles, where the awnings were stretched to protect the spectators from bad weather and the sun.

### *Orchestra*

The orchestra, which has a diameter 22,80 meter, is horseshoe-shaped. The floor of the orchestra is made of compressed soil on the bedrock. The lowest row of the cavea sits at the basement of the orchestra. The access to the Orchestra is on the ground by the northwest and from carved stairs of the bedrock by the southeast.

*Entrances*

There are four entrances at different elevations. Two entrances with barrel vaults, give access to the Diazoma. The entrance by northwest direction encloses stairs. The audiences, who use this entry, arrive at the landing of stairs by climbing the stairs, then by turning left or right, for their places. We can tell that the entrance was closed with a wooden door for a period by looking at the opposing holes. The ground of vaulted entrance, which passes directly to the diazoma by northeastern, has been covered by large rectangular stones.

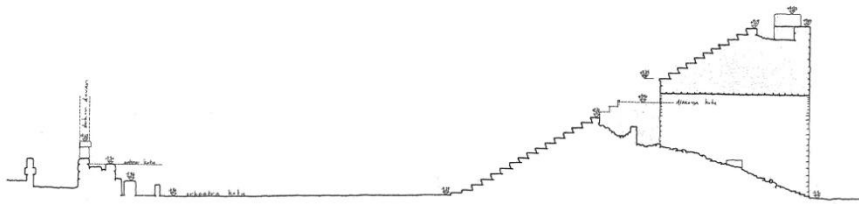
*Parodoi*

Cavea and Skene are joined with open parodoi. One of the parodoi is closed with no apparent reason.

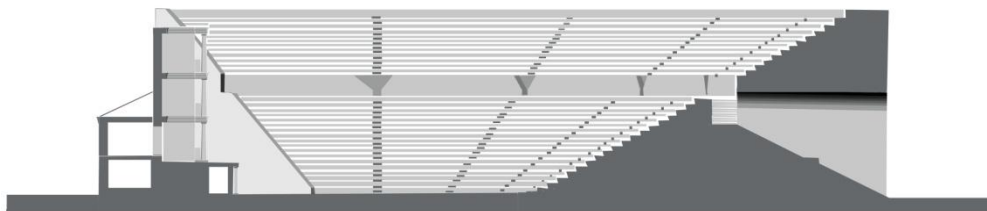
*Skene*

The Skene, which has been built of limestone blocks, has dimensions of 21,75 x 8,40 meters. The new space has been added near the skene in time. With this additional space, the Skene's new dimensions have become 38,50 x 10,40 meters. It is understood from the ruins that the skene is a two-storey building. The marble and the sandstone are found in the ruins of upper building. At the excavation works in here, many sculpture fragments have been found. The excavation and research of the skene is not yet completed.

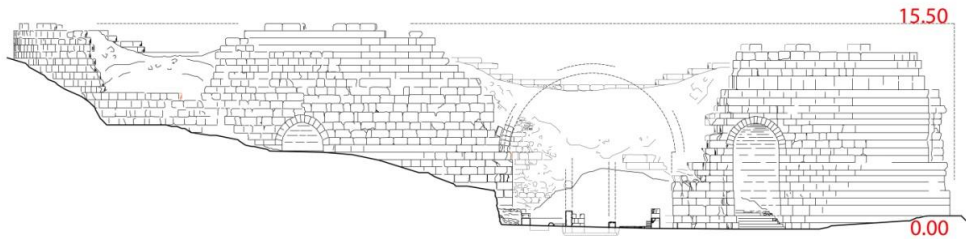
**Figure 6.** *Section of the Theatre*



**Figure 7.** *Section of the Theatre*



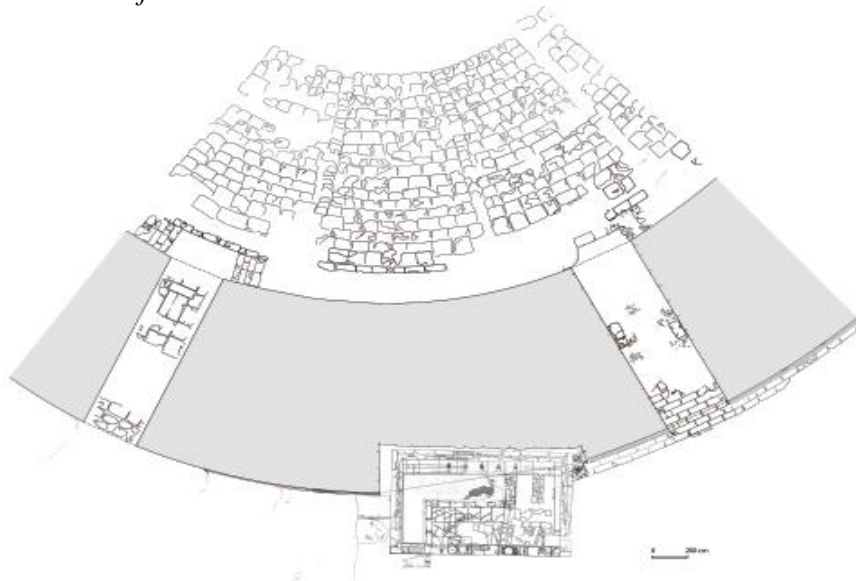
**Figure 8.** *Façade from Analemma and the Monumental Fountain*



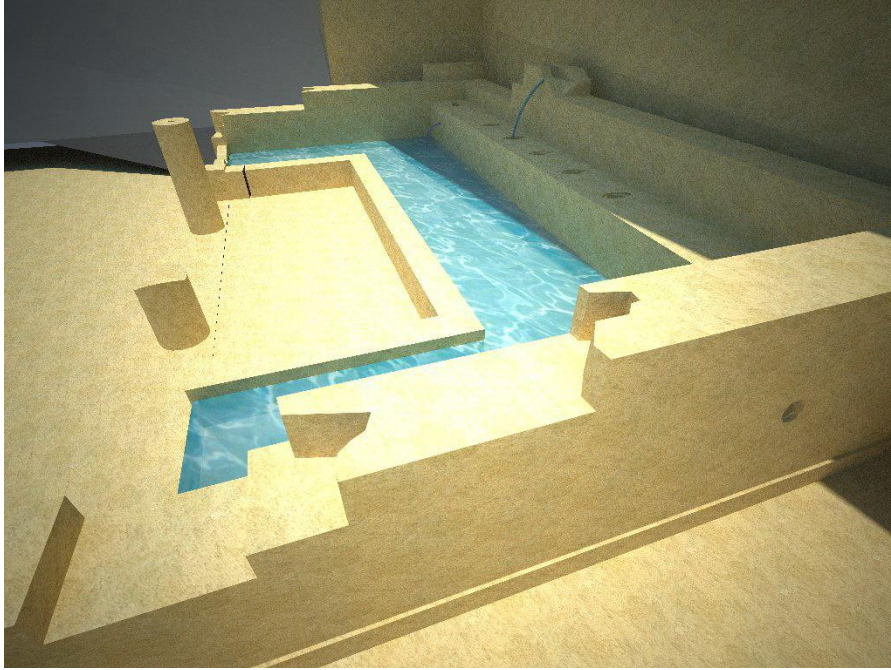
### **The Monumental Fountain at Analemma**

This monumental fountain at the analemma has a special feature for the Caunus Theatre. There is a niche in the wall, which is 11,85 meters in width. The dimensions of the fountain are 10,60 x 6,00 meters and it is covered with a vault which has a height of approximately 5,50 meters. In front of the fountain, there is a courtyard that is covered with stone plates. The facade of this courtyard has two columns and the sole entrance of the fountain is right there. The excavation and research of the fountain is not yet completed.

**Figure 9.** *Plan of the Fountain and vaulted entrances*



**Figure 10.** *A View from the Fountain*



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