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**The Sociopolitics of the Revivals of Classical Drama in
Greece, Spain, and Italy in the 20th Century**

ΔΙΔΑΚΤΟΡΙΚΗ ΔΙΑΤΡΙΒΗ

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Πλάντζος Δημήτριος (Επιβλέπων)

Κατάκης Στυλιανός (Συμβουλευτική επιτροπή)

Ιωαννίδου Ελευθερία (Συμβουλευτική επιτροπή)

Μιχελάκης Παντελής (Εξεταστική επιτροπή)

Sousa e Silva Maria de Fatima (Εξεταστική επιτροπή)

Librán Moreno Miriam (Εξεταστική επιτροπή)

Simões Rodrigues Nuno Manuel (Εξεταστική επιτροπή)

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Abstract

This thesis explores the revival of classical drama at ancient venues as a sociopolitical apparatus of the European nation-states in the 20th century. The modern use of Greco-Roman theatres, amphitheatres, and odeons depended on social or artistic influences and interconnections. In particular, the Spanish and Greek cases developed parallelly and addressed similar sociopolitical concepts, while the Italian example worked as a model for their theatrical tradition in the first decades of the 20th century. In theatrical terms, the repertoire and orientation of classical drama were affected by (inter)national trends, while power relations among theatrical directors, companies, and institutions determined the course of these artistic traditions. Staging classical drama in Greece and Spain transformed Greco-Roman venues into sociopolitical powerhouses that generated collective narratives, theatrical modernization, and economic development. Despite the distinct degree of ideological engagement with classical culture, political conditions in Greece and Spain during the 20th century offer a space for reflection and critical comparison. In this context, this study discusses how historical realities led to the staging of classical drama at Greco-Roman venues and how each country appropriated and showcased this classical heritage as sociopolitical capital.

Περίληψη

Η διατριβή διερευνά την αναβίωση του κλασικού δράματος σε αρχαιολογικούς χώρους ως κοινωνικοπολιτικό μηχανισμό των ευρωπαϊκών εθνών-κρατών κατά τον 20ό αιώνα. Η σύγχρονη χρήση των ελληνορωμαϊκών θεάτρων, αμφιθεάτρων και ωδείων εξαρτήθηκε από κοινωνικές ή καλλιτεχνικές επιρροές και διασυνδέσεις. Ειδικότερα, η ισπανική και η ελληνική περίπτωση αναπτύχθηκαν παράλληλα και απευθύνθηκαν σε παρόμοιες κοινωνικοπολιτικές αντιλήψεις, ενώ το ιταλικό παράδειγμα λειτούργησε ως πρότυπο για τη θεατρική τους παράδοση κατά τις πρώτες δεκαετίες του 20ού αιώνα. Από θεατρική άποψη, το ρεπερτόριο και ο προσανατολισμός του κλασικού δράματος επηρεάστηκαν από (υπερ)εθνικές τάσεις, ενώ οι σχέσεις εξουσίας μεταξύ θεατρικών σκηνοθετών, θιάσων και επίσημων φορέων καθόρισαν την πορεία αυτών των καλλιτεχνικών παραδόσεων. Η σκηνοθεσία του κλασικού δράματος στην Ελλάδα και την Ισπανία μετέτρεψε τους ελληνορωμαϊκούς χώρους σε κοινωνικοπολιτικούς φορείς εξουσίας που παρήγαγαν συλλογικές αφηγήσεις, θεατρικό εκσυγχρονισμό και οικονομική ανάπτυξη. Παρά τον διαφορετικό βαθμό ιδεολογικής εμπλοκής τους με τον κλασικό πολιτισμό, οι πολιτικές συνθήκες στην Ελλάδα και την Ισπανία κατά τον 20ό αιώνα προσφέρουν χώρο για στοχασμό και κριτική σύγκριση. Σε αυτό το πλαίσιο, η παρούσα μελέτη εξετάζει πώς οι ιστορικές πραγματικότητες οδήγησαν στη παραγωγή κλασικού δράματος σε ελληνορωμαϊκούς χώρους και πώς κάθε χώρα οικειοποιήθηκε και ανέδειξε αυτή την κλασική κληρονομιά ως εθνικό κοινωνικοπολιτικό κεφάλαιο.

Introduction

The performance reception of Greco-Roman drama bears a close relationship to fields such as theatre studies, classics, and literary criticism. As part of classical reception, performance reception is also related to the evaluation, synthesis, and analysis of history. The present study explores one aspect of performance reception – the revival of classical drama in the 20th century – as a sociopolitical apparatus of European nation-states. I focus on the historical realities that led to the staging of classical drama at ancient Greek and Roman theatres. I also examine the social dimension of these performances by rethinking aspects of their production, ideology, reception, and criticism. Issues of social reform, cultural and political legitimation, identity, and memory have informed many of the questions raised in this study. As I intend to interpret how these performances became integral components of an exploration of a national past, I shall also revisit the role of ancient drama festivals in creating collective identities and theatrical traditions.

These theatrical productions include fascinating political engagements with ideas about classical culture in the 20th century. I have paid particular attention to understudied archival material, in order to reassess official discourses on the revival of classical drama. As new empirical knowledge can reframe the afterlife of these performances, I consider archives to be active creators of meaning rather than simple repositories (Macintosh 2012). I have consulted archival collections at several institutions that provided me with significant primary sources. In particular, I collected and interpreted material from the Directorate for the Administration of the National Archive of Monuments of the Ministry of Culture of Greece, the Department of Performing Arts of the Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive - Cultural Foundation of National Bank of Greece, the Archive of the Greek National Theatre, the Historical Archives of the Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation, the Municipal Historical Archives of Merida, the Theatre Documentation Centre of the Ministry of Culture and Sport of Spain, the Archive of the French School at Athens, the Directorate for the Restoration of Ancient Monuments of the Ministry of Culture of Greece, the Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece, the Gennadius Library - Archives of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, the General State Archives of Greece, the Benaki Museum's Historical Archives, the Library of the Hellenic Parliament, the Spanish Royal Academy of History, the Municipal Archive of Malaga, and the General Administrative Archives of the National Archives of Spain. The abundance of archival evidence held by these institutions

brings new dimensions to current debates within the field of performance reception and classical reception studies.

In processing this material, I drew on Michelakis' assumption that archives 'can provide a productive framework for thinking about performance' (2010a, 96), principally because administrative and personal letters, the proceedings of Administrative Councils and Artistic committees, local government records of meetings, legislative reforms, publicity, political or professional mandates, formal requests, and censorship reports all constitute material evidence of the afterlife of a performance, thus offering an all-encompassing insight into a theatrical production. In addition, press engagement with performances has proved valuable as it frequently enabled me to verify other sources and provided highly useful indexes to performance dates, names, and venues.

The goal of this thesis is to contribute both to performance reception and the cultural history of the 20th century alike, principally by reevaluating the artistic, ideological, political, and social parameters that determined the course of the classical theatre revival. To this end, I shall reflect on a selected body of theatrical productions staged from the late 19th century to the 1970s. Rather than focusing on universal truths, I explore the fragmented nature of the classical revival that paralleled the sociopolitical realities of the 20th century. Underpinning the discussion in this study is the argument that Greco-Roman drama and the modern use of ancient venues were to a significant extent politicized via the regular intervention of political agents in organization and staging. According to Hall, 'watching the drama of previous stages of historical development and responding actively to its social and political conundra [...] and thus play a particularly vital role in such a process of historical understanding' (2004, 80). Therefore, I seek to define the historical and sociopolitical context that rendered these productions significant as cultural events. These issues are also addressed in the negative as I focus on initiatives, projects, and proposals that did not reach the theatrical stage. Yet, they nevertheless provide us with useful insights into the orientation of classical theatre in the 20th century.

My initial focus on three Mediterranean countries – Greece, Spain, and Italy – coincides with the geographical area where modern communities engaged ideologically with Greco-Roman theatres, amphitheatres, and stadiums in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The symbolic nature

that is attributed to their materiality has narrowed the focus of this study to productions that were staged at these venues.

Although I explore the classical revival in Greece, Spain, and Italy until the inter-war period, the primary focus is on Greece and Spain after the Second World War. The decision to concentrate on these two cases was based on the large number of Italian theatrical productions of classical drama staged in the second half of the 20th century, which rendered their study a fascinating yet colossal task. However, I shall refer to the Italian case whenever the interconnections between theatrical traditions require a comparative analysis, as it provides a valuable, diachronic reference point for Greece and Spain.

Despite their varying degree of ideological engagement with classical culture, these two countries' sociopolitical conditions in the 20th century offer a space for reflection, discussion, and critical comparison (Wrigley 2015, 25). Within this scope, I discuss how each appropriated and showcased classical heritage for the purposes of political capital. Likewise, the historical realities of the two countries have presented comparable, often parallel, development since the late 19th century, which is why I consider it pertinent to discuss how each responded to similar sociopolitical stimuli. In particular, following the national crises that obliged them both to reinvent their collective self-determination and abandon their imperialist views in the 1890s and 1920s, the subsequent shifts in power from republican regimes to dictatorships and the devastating effects of the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War led to the consolidation of authoritarian rule until the mid-1970s.

The chapters of this thesis unfold in a single narrative line, and the chronology locates the theatrical performances of Greco-Roman drama on a temporal continuum. To provide a more comprehensive discussion to this study, I draw on the periodization of the revival of classical drama in Greece proposed by Ioannidou (2010/2011, 389) and Van Steen (2016), bearing in mind Michelakis' work on the limitations and conventional character of such an endeavour (2017, 224–8). I identify five phases that roughly correspond to similar sociopolitical developments in the Mediterranean, responding to the evolution of the perception of classical drama. These phases coincide with the thesis' chapters.

The *first Chapter* identifies the revival of classical drama in Europe as a product of the idea of the nation-state in the late 19th century. It provides a brief critical discussion on how Greco-

Roman antiquity became an integral part of European modernity and prompted the emergence of the discipline of archaeology. The discussion engages with the social context of the first productions of classical drama at Greco-Roman venues and the relationship between tourism and antiquity. It argues that this relationship was fundamental to the formation of the idea of national heritage. How these productions shaped the theatrical tradition of the 20th century is discussed in the last sections. As modern companies appeared and standardized a professional and commercial approach to staging classical theatre at the turn of the century, these sections outline the first significant performances of classical drama in Italy, Greece, and Spain.

Chapter two shifts focus to the local perception of ancient drama performances. It looks at landmark productions that operated as sociopolitical enterprises during the inter-war period. It is suggested that local community participation in these productions shaped the dynamics of the cultural reception of inter-war performance, as they reflect distinctive dimensions of the clash between community-led and institutional archaeology, which dominated the national discourse on authenticity and identity. This chapter also highlights the political nature of these events and traces the sustained links that were forged among European intellectuals who were involved with performances of ancient drama. Since the late 1920s, regular performances inaugurated a more systematic engagement with classical drama at Greco-Roman theatres. On this basis, it is argued that the Delphic Festivals, the National Theatre of Greece, and the Festival of Merida created a powerful ideological identification with classical theatre in the model of the Festival of Syracuse.

Chapter three analyzes the theatrical productions of classical drama during and after the Second World War, beginning with a critical assessment of the events as artistic phenomena that exercise power and authority. It explores how Italian fascism and German Nazism controlled artistic production and instituted the cultural policy of Greece and Spain. It is argued that Greco-Roman culture proved crucial in establishing a totalitarian way to experience reality. In the early post-war period, the economic, social, and humanitarian crisis that the successive wars provoked, led to the consolidation of authoritative regimes that imposed a classicized perception of theatre. A critical point of discussion in this regard is the staging of classical theatre as a national spectacle. This section of Chapter 3 presents and discusses how the fascist or fascistized use of classical venues in the early 1940s gave way to a conservative political terrain that created its national myths, heroes, and legends. It explores how theatrical institutions in the Greek and Spanish cases

implemented a unified, politicized, and nationalistic discourse into the theatrical production. To address these issues, I concentrate the focus on a selection of emblematic performances that reflected the politicized and doctrinaire use of ancient theatre.

Chapter four uses available archival material as a source for revisiting the production of classical drama in the 1950s. It examines the close affinity between the modern tourist phenomenon and a growing cosmopolitan perception of classical theatre. It is argued that in this period, institutional policies marked a milestone in the consolidation of the theatrical tradition of classical drama. The *festivalization* of culture is analyzed as a key feature in the performances of the 1950s and 1960s when the systematic production of classical drama created bourgeois festivals with international reach. This critical analysis allows the reader to follow the sociocultural shifts of the theatrical productions in Greece and Spain, observe their politicized nature, and recognize artistic and (inter)national patterns. These newly established festivals of ancient drama sought their identification as national exceptionalisms. In short, then, Chapter 4 argues that tourism, cosmopolitanism, and cultural politics were principal components of this period's festivals.

Chapter five examines the renovation that the festivals of classical drama implemented when public enthusiasm for classical repertoire began to decline in the 1960s. This final phase analyses the artistic response to the stereotyped performances that leading companies put on in the 1950s and early 1960s. Under discussion are the emergence of new companies and the shift towards music and alternative repertoire. This chapter considers the roles and meanings of classical theatre during the dictatorial regimes in Greece and Spain in the 1960s and 1970s by discussing their authoritarian intervention in the production of classical drama. This chapter concludes with the end of these dictatorships in Greece and Spain in the mid-1970s, which marked the beginning of a more democratic, reluctantly pluralist, and decentralized perception of classical theatre. Since the second half of the 1970s, the sociocultural nature of the festivals adopted new features, included multiple cultural events, new technological mediums, and permitted the participation of various national and international companies. Therefore, this period lays beyond the chronological span of this thesis.

Chapter 1 A New Sociocultural Tradition: The Revival of Classical Drama until 1926¹

1.1. Classical antiquity and the modern use of Greco-Roman theatres

The social reception of classical antiquities in Europe was widely dictated by institutional archaeologies and intellectuals in the second half of the 19th century, as a means of claiming a national dimension for their cultural past (Hamilakis and Yalouri 1996). As Díaz-Andreu (2003; 2009), Hamilakis (2004; 2007), and Plantzos (2008; 2017) have observed, archaeology as an autonomous discipline was intrinsically connected with notions of identity, politics and institutional power. European authorities and social elites began to view the material remains of classical antiquity as an integral part of their national heritage (Swenson 2013, ch. 2). These antiquities were inscribed into modernity's social space when archaeological institutions systematically excavated archaeological sites. Classical antiquity was also perceived as a common European heritage that served the sociopolitical self-determination of the European community.

Classical archaeology, according to Smith and Plantzos, 'has been a product of modernity's systematic attempt to colonize "its" Greco-Roman past' (2018, 10). By the beginning of the 20th century, national institutions hastily appropriated classical monuments and converted them into national and European heritage, which shaped the way modernity experienced collective memory. The presumable authentic character of these monuments was seen as an opportunity for a symbolic encounter with the past. Their materiality provided with a historical validation that permitted their assimilation into collective narratives (Hamilakis 2007, 17). A heterotopic identification of such spaces consists in ideologically connecting contemporary realities with an idealized perception of classical antiquity. Therefore, a heterotopic dimension of classical antiquity can be seen, according to Leontis and Ioannidou, as the distortion of ancient space that transcends the limits of past and present (Leontis 1995, 40–66; Ioannidou 2010/2011. See also Plantzos 2014a, 272–81).

¹ Sections of this chapter are also thoroughly discussed in Balaskas (2020) and Balaskas (2021).

The prevailing attitude of the period was that of a Romantic feeling of nostalgia towards the classical past, due to the fragmented materiality and temporal distance of the monuments. As pointed out by Plantzos, such fragments embody the transcendental absence of the past in the present and become the link between the two chronological spaces (Plantzos 2017, 129–33). Stewart also asserts:

‘Nostalgia is the repetition that mourns the inauthenticity of all repetition and denies the repetition’s capacity to form identity [...] By collective memory is meant the way in which groups map their myths about themselves and their worlds on to a specific time and place’ (1984, 23).

Ancient theatres, amphitheatres, odeons, and stadiums followed a singular trajectory in this tradition, given that their architectural character often permitted their modern restoration (Díaz-Andreu 1996; Mallouchou-Tufano 1998, 43–6), integration into the modern landscape (Plantzos 2014a, 257–61), and reuse for various productions. The quest for the reuse of these venues and the European claims on the intellectual ownership of the classics were given a material dimension through archaeological interventions. Similarly, the tourist industry encouraged the reconstruction of Greco-Roman theatres, intending to provide future tourist sites and cultural events (Vega de la Rosa 2008/2009).

Rowlands and Tilley argue that monuments ‘can evoke feelings through their materiality and form as well as symbolize social narratives of events and sacrifices retold in public rituals’ (2006, 500). In these terms, the dynamic combination of the natural, architectural, and symbolic dimensions that Greco-Roman venues encompassed was fundamental to their reception as authentic spaces. Therefore, I propose viewing the function of these monuments within the modern European culture through Walter Benjamin’s concept of *aura* (2008, 21–8). Benjamin employed the term *aura* to define the unique symbolic values that characterize every authentic work of art. This idealist approach rejects the mechanical reproduction of art and focuses on its direct and ritualistic perception. Accordingly, society’s engagement with ancient theatre encapsulated Benjamin’s *aura* since cultural authorities, intellectuals, and the national population viewed classical venues as unique monuments of eternal qualities. This *auratic* experience of culture permitted cultural authorities to nationalize classical monuments and dictate that their identification with the national past was their only legitimate interpretation (Hamilakis 2008).

Their reuse in the late 19th century revolved around the sociocultural elites' aim to create spaces of national memory (Nora 1989) by converting anonymous past into collective history. Formal meals, congresses, emblematic anniversaries, royal meetings, academic lectures, military honours, theatre and dance performances were some of the appropriate events that ancient venues could host since they offered a unique opportunity to engage with high culture. These events were highly meaningful because they combined what MacCannell defines as qualities of *spectacles* and *sights* (1992, 237–9). *Spectacles* are episodes bounded in time and produce a direct emotional response, while *sights* are emblematic entities that are experienced visually and have diachronic values. Therefore, the reuse of classical venues distorted the perception of time and space and provided a unique sensory experience to the public (See also Plantzos 2008).

Initially, the elite character of the engagement with classical theatres led to the development of national stereotypes and relationships of social exclusion and dependence (Duplá Ansuátegui and Cortadella 2014). However, European modernity needed to offer a collective artistic expression. To some degree, staging theatre at ancient venues corresponded to the 20th century's turn into a sociocentric view of life that favoured collective experiences, contradictions, and ideological shifts (Puchner 1987, 56; Wrigley 2015, ch. 1). Hence, by the early 20th century, the revival of classical drama became the principal objective of cultural institutions that sought to produce national productions. Yet, as González González (2007) and Van Steen (2000, ch. 1) have observed, classicists and intellectuals systematically reconfigured problematic parts of classical literature to make them fit the morality of the period.

The dynamic engagement with ancient theatre was moulded by distinct ideological impact and international trends in each country. The collective perception of the past was entangled in the clash between the national and regional perception of antiquity, as Tziovas has argued (1994). Similarly, political interventions also shaped the standardization of theatrical productions. In particular, the classical theatre was systematically politicized and linked with political interests and power legitimation, as Van Steen has demonstrated (2000, ch. 3 and 2007). This politicized nature of theatre often shaped the modern use of ancient venues (González-Vázquez 2015).

The above framework allows us to explore how staging classical drama quickly became a sociopolitical statement. Therefore, I suggest that the early modern performances of Greco-Roman drama at ancient venues were intellectual attempts to engage with the *auratic* qualities of classical

antiquity. I examine the purposes and implications of these productions, focusing on their sociocultural values and their role in creating a new theatrical tradition of classical drama in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

1.2. Revival of classical theatre: Syracuse as an international model

1.2.1. A new European theatrical tradition

France was the first to employ classical antiquity as a means to create a theatrical tradition. In 19th century Europe, the Roman theatre of Orange was the first ancient venue to systematically host modern spectacles. The celebration of the *Chorégies d'Orange* that began in 1869² soon became one of the most influential festivals in Europe (Mariéton 1908).³ The performances reflected a Romantic vision of artistic revival and a critical exploration of the ancient Greek drama as an intellectual expression between innovation and renovation (Humbert-Mougin 2003; Schoenmakers and Mavromoustakos 2010, 16–9).

The *Chorégies d'Orange* also coincided with a movement of cultural decentralization (Brennetot 2004). The French bourgeoisie was eager to occasionally leave urban centres that traditionally hosted large-scale events and visit the countryside to experience a fusion of high culture and natural beauty. *Fin de siècle* Parisian venues had to compete with the vogue for open-air theatres in the French countryside (Prévot 2017, 21–30). Greece and Italy experienced the same sociocultural reality some years later when sites such as Epidaurus, Delphi, and Syracuse captivated intellectuals and visitors, not only with their monumental presence but also with their organic integration into a remote natural landscape.

In addition, Michelakis considers Richard Wagner's opera productions in the Festival of Bayreuth as a turning point in the modern festivals of ancient Greek drama (Michelakis 2010b, 152). Rather than addressing the bourgeois public, Wagner's German romanticism reached the general populace with an all-encompassing concept of theatre. Since 1876, Wagner's spectacles

² Artistic productions were periodically staged in the theatre since 1860.

³ Inspired by the *Chorégies d'Orange*, the French protectorate of Tunisia participated in the celebration of the *Fêtes de Carthage* in 1906 and 1907; at the recently excavated Roman theatre of Carthage (Sherman 2021).

implemented a modernist ideal of total work of art and a nationalist approach to Greek drama (Goldhill 2008 and 2011, ch. 4). The international reach of the Festival of Bayreuth profoundly marked the perception and staging of ancient drama by inspiring the production of festivals as national spectacles in Europe (Michelakis 2010b). Although the beginning of this theatrical tradition had an elitist character, the powerful connection that the public developed with the performances facilitated its gradual democratization in the early decades of the 20th century.

1.2.2. Between tourism and antiquity in Italy

Although the French and German cases initiated this European theatrical endeavour, it was in Italy that classical theatre embraced modernity as a way of reinventing a collective tradition. The modern use of classical theatres in Italy was closely linked to two major factors, tourism and collective identities. These factors shaped the first initiatives to perform Greco-Roman drama and determined its ideological orientation. Powerful pressure groups transmitted the idea of a collective identity to the public by promoting a unified perception of geography, landscape, and antiquities. They also stimulated the growth of the tourist phenomenon by improving facilities and increasing the number of cultural activities. In particular:

‘The Touring Club Italiano (TCI), an organization which, it may be argued, better than a handful of nationalist intellectuals, charted the course of at least the Italian bourgeoisie to a certain sort of modernity and to a variety of national identity [...] A version of nation was insistently expressed as a project of modern technology and business practice to achieve nationalization of the Italian middle classes (Italian bourgeois citizenship), if not of the Italian masses’ (Bosworth 1997, 373–4).

The revival of ancient theatres as a means of cultural unification for the divided Italian nation coincided with Gabriele D’Annunzio’s⁴ Romantic aesthetics at the end of the 19th century (Miniotti 2017/2018, 57). At first, staging classical drama in Italy was a national quest that intellectuals such as D’Annunzio pursued after attending the *Chorégies d’Orange* (Corsi 1939, 26–8). Also, greatly influenced by Wagner and Nietzsche, D’Annunzio sought to create an Italian Bayreuth that would encompass all forms of art. Although he initially attempted to construct a new open-air theatre, he

⁴ D’Annunzio was an Italian poet, playwright, and aristocrat who occupied a prominent place in Italian literature in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

eventually chose Syracuse in Sicily as the ideal site for his theatrical vision in Italy (Corsi 1939, 26–8).

In Sicily, elite tourism emerged early because spectacles such as the annual motor race (Giro di Sicilia) led to the construction of relevant infrastructure. This development also impacted the relationship between tourism and classical antiquities. For instance, the organizing committee of the race attempted to extend the visitors' stay in Sicily by proposing tourist activities: reduced fees for cultural activities, sports, opera, and visits to the theatre of Syracuse (Cassar 2009). These tourist destinations were equipped with restaurants, modern facilities, and a road network, which facilitated the reuse of the theatre for artistic performances.

Despite the popularity of Syracuse, it was the ancient theatre of Fiesole that inaugurated the modern use of classical venues in Italy with the performance of *Oedipus Rex* in 1911 and 1913 (Orvieto 1929; Corsi 1939, 106–10). Later, many ancient venues such as Taormina, Agrigento, and Paestum, began to be reused for open-air performances and other spectacles (Corsi 1939; Amoroso 1997; Treu 2007).

In 1914 the local aristocrat Mario Tommaso Gargallo took the initiative to organize the first Festival of Syracuse. He collaborated with philologist Ettore Romagnoli, who directed the spectacles, while the *Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico* (INDA) later assumed the organization of the festival. In contrast to the national views of D'Annunzio, who advocated an Italian identification of the theatre, Gargallo introduced a Sicilian individuality and a Greco-Sicilian identity. The first emblematic performance was Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* that reflected a quest for authenticity (see also Michelakis 2005, 17). Aeschylus' relationship with Sicily must have been the decisive factor in his selection.⁵ Also, the fact that *Agamemnon* was part of the *Oresteia*, the only surviving Greek trilogy, provided a sense of authenticity, as the spectacle seemed to recreate the Athenian Festival of the City Dionisia.⁶ In any case, the discovery of the Mycenaean antiquities by the businessman and amateur archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann had converted the Mycenaean

⁵ Aeschylus visited Sicily at least once, performed his plays there, and died in the Sicilian city of Gela. See also Orsi 1929.

⁶ For instance, we read at the programme of the festival of 1921: 'The powerful drama, the *Oresteia*, the only trilogy extant of the great tragedian in which the myth and legend of the glorious Hellenic people live for ever, had returned, after so many centuries of oblivion, to move the multitudes' (The Italian State Tourist Department 1921, 5).

civilization that *Agamemnon* displayed into an intellectual landmark in European modernity (Vasilikou 2011, 77–8 and 118–31; Seiragakis 2015).

The Sicilian orientation of the festival remained apparent until the populist politics of Mussolini's regime established a national centralized identity (Lamers and Reitz-Joosse 2016; Treu 2016, 225; Miniotti 2017/2018). Until then, the Festival of Syracuse produced a sociocultural event that engaged with the Italian bourgeoisie and the rhetoric of the Sicilian regional identity.

After *Agamemnon*, the festival returned in 1921 with *The Libation Bearers* and in 1922 with *Oedipus Rex* and *The Bacchae*, which received a positive response. In particular, *The Libation Bearers* was organized with the support of the Patronate of the Italian State Tourist Department, which intended to continue the success of 1914 and create a theatrical tradition 'after so many centuries of oblivion' (The Italian State Tourist Department 1921, 5). The English version of the programme of the spectacle contains tourist information about hotels, railways stations, and travelling for visitors of Syracuse (The Italian State Tourist Department 1921). Detailed tourist indications and plans for visiting the Syracusan monuments illustrate the complex cultural production, while a regional identification of the festival was apparent: 'That day in beautiful Sicilian spring-time, when nature is robed in all the colours of sea and sky of that enchantress called Syracuse [...] the spirit of the peerless tragedian saw again the land once hospitable to him'. The Greco-Italian tradition is exalted in the publication, highlighting relations with Greek metropolis and Sicilian high culture (The Italian State Tourist Department 1921, 5).⁷ Under these circumstances, the revival of ancient drama in Italy had decisive effects on the emergence of the classical tradition in other European countries. Romagnoli's international appeal, the regional approach of the spectacles, and the implementation of modernist techniques contributed to the internationalization of the festival. When fascism took control of the INDA and the organization of the festival in 1925 (and more systematically in 1930), national orientation prevailed, and the spectacles expressed the sociopolitical strategy of the fascist regime (Macintosh 1997, 306; Treu 2016, 226).

⁷ On the second day of the festival, the politician Vittorio Emanuele Orlando pronounced a histrionic speech extolling the Sicilian cultural identity (*Politeia* 25 April 1921, 3; Miniotti 2017/2018, 59–70).

1.2.3. Tourism and classical antiquities in Spain and Greece

National and regional tourist institutions in Spain and Greece were based on Italian models or developed simultaneously (Vlachos 2016, ch. 3). These state institutions played a fundamental role in transforming antiquities into national heritage, as they symbolically linked ancient material culture with collective identities. As a result, tourism and economic prospects became crucial factors in the appropriation of classical antiquity in the early 20th century.

The industrialization and gradual liberalization of Spanish society resulted in the sociopolitical movement of *regeneracionismo*, which attempted to resolve critical national and ideological issues (Wulff Alonso 2003, 193–9; Moreno Garrido 2007, 61–5). Modernization and economic development became some of the principal objectives in this period. This early investment in tourism created a profitable national industry, often following the examples of Italy (Bosworth 1997; (Pack 2006, 24–32; Vlachos 2016, ch. 3).

Despite the lack of national identification with classical heritage, the monumental status of emblematic archaeological sites attracted the attention of national and regional authorities that viewed them as an opportunity for tourist growth (Díaz-Andreu 2016). Peripheral institutions began promoting regional antiquities as landmarks of local particularity, while national agents converted them into national monuments. In addition, the creation of the *Comisaría Regia del Turismo* in 1911 aimed to promote tourism and protect national heritage. The marquess Benigno de la Vega-Inclán played a key role in this sociocultural modernization (Moreno Garrido 2005; Menéndez Robles 2007, 108–16) since he focused on safeguarding the historical and tourist character of national monuments.

During this period, national institutions financed the excavation and restoration of emblematic sites. As a result, Numantia, Italica, Merida and Saguntum were the major archaeological sites that acquired an early tourist character, mainly because of their monumental status and architectural integrity (Díaz-Andreu 2003, table I; Díaz-Andreu 2016, 39–40). In particular, after the beginning of the excavation in Merida in 1910, reuse of the Roman theatre quickly seemed an enticing opportunity for the modern town, a welcome chance to attract financial capital to remote Extremadura (*El Liberal* 8 July 1913, 3; *Suplemento a El Sol* 12 June 1920, 8). At least from 1910 to 1935, Merida received a large percentage of the national budget for excavations and restoration of its antiquities that accelerated its public acclaim (Mélida Alinari

1915, 4–6; Mérida Alinari 1925/1926, 158–71; *Gaceta de Madrid* 1 May 1927, 758–9; Barroso Martínez and Morgado Portero 1998, 41–7; Díaz-Andreu 2003; Morán Sánchez 2021). Tourist growth and international recognition would be a noteworthy reimbursement for this investment (Lantier 1915; Vallois 1919). This is why the Delegation of Badajoz and the Merida city council systematically promoted the local Roman theatre as a tourist attraction and a modern venue in the model of Syracuse.⁸

Syracuse became an ideal model for one more reason. Apart from the successful establishment of its ancient drama festival, what made Syracuse especially relevant to Merida was its regional character that existed at the beginning of its cultural biography. Although Extremadura did not aspire to a political emancipation from the centre, the possibility of creating a theatrical spectacle that would attract large numbers of tourists to the region and the town of Merida began to be considered a promising regional economic plan. Even before the end of the restoration works in the theatre of Merida, certain allusions to regional values had already appeared; most celebrations of the 1920s focused not only on cultural interests but also on the identification of the monument as an integral part of the regional heritage of Extremadura.

Official and formal visits to such monuments also contributed to the growth of archaeological tourism in the Spanish periphery (Moreno Garrido 2007). For instance, day-trippers began visiting Merida to admire its monumental ruins. It was included in tourist guides and became popular among schools, politicians, and intellectuals.⁹ It was this kind of visits that received national coverage and propagated the site's potential as a tourist attraction and a cultural landmark.

⁸ Saguntum experienced a similar development. The first official tourist projects involved the transportation service from the port to the Roman theatre and improvement in the road network (*Las Provincias* 16 May 1926, 6).

⁹ These trips were facilitated by a series of maps and guides that were published for the first time in the early 20th century. Those gave to excursionists the essential information to visit the Spanish countryside (Ríos Reviejo 2014, 67–97). School excursions (*La Correspondencia de España* 11 January 1912, 3; *Mundo Gráfico* 25 December 1912, 5; *La Libertad* 11 May 1920, 2; *La Esfera* 3 June 1922, 23; *Nuevo Día* 9 March 1927), celebrities (*Mundo Gráfico* 5 February 1913, 25), politicians (*La Correspondencia de España* 19 April 1911, 3; *La Voz* 28 January 1929, 12; *Heraldo de Madrid* 29 January 1929, 4; *El Sol* 31 May 1932, 5), the dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera (*ABC Madrid* 8 October 1926), the king and members of the Royal Family (*Mundo Gráfico* 19 July 1916, 29; *El Siglo Futuro* 19 December 1927, 2; *La Época* 19 December 1927, 2), and journalists (*Mercurio* 20 January 1916, 24–5; *El Imparcial* 5 September 1919, 3) desired to have a glimpse of the promising monument.

Nonetheless, the lack of an adequate road network in Extremadura was still an unaddressed and unfortunate reality in the 1920s (*El Sol* 12 June 1920, 8; *El Siglo Futuro* 1 May 1926, 2; *El Sol* 2 June 1927, 1),¹⁰ while the low quality of any hostelry service and even local resistance to external visits complicated tourist development (*Heraldo Deportivo* 15 December 1931, 133–53; *El Imparcial* 5 September 1919, 3; *El Siglo Futuro* 1 May 1926, 2). In a way, Merida was almost an exotic destination for the Spanish bourgeoisie, a rural town that was still inventing its Roman past.

Similarly, in Greece, authorities incorporated the modern use of ancient venues into their political agenda and participated in decisions that determined the course of classical theatre. Especially after the First World War, archaeological tourism became a central issue in public discussion, and ancient venues began to be systematically used for cultural spectacles.

National and private institutions created a social canvas that shaped tourist initiatives. In particular, the Greek state attempted to control tourism growth by creating societies that supervised different aspects of the movement, such as the *Grafeion Xenon kai Ektheseon* (Γραφεῖον Ξένων καὶ Ἐκθέσεων) and the *Etaireia ton Filoxenon* (Ἑταιρεία τῶν Φιλοξένων) (Vlachos 2015; Vlachos 2016, 88). The Hellenic Touring Club (HTC)¹¹ also actively promoted the connection of the Greek countryside with big urban centres (Siatopoulos 1991, ch. 2). When the *Grafeion Xenon kai Ektheseon* was later upgraded to *Aftotelis Ypiresia Xenon kai Ektheseon* (Ἀύτοτελής Ὑπηρεσία Ξένων καὶ Ἐκθέσεων), the improvement of facilities at archaeological sites and the organization of exhibitions, festivities, and spectacles became its principal objectives (Vlachos 2016, 90–1). However, many initiatives proved insufficient to cope with the growing tourist phenomenon and to meet the demands of the national agenda.

The lack of modern infrastructure slowed down the development of tourist movement, and consequently the systematic use of ancient theatres. The need for a road network that connected renowned venues such as in Delphi and Epidaurus with urban centres¹² became indispensable for

¹⁰ However, it appears that by 1929 the road network from Madrid had been improved, perhaps in view of the Sevillian Exposition the same year, ‘The Spanish road until Badajoz is a magnificent track, where cars move without effort’ (‘La carretera española hasta Badajoz es una magnífica pista, en la que el coche se desliza sin esfuerzo’, *El Sol* 3 December 1929, 5). English translations of newspaper articles and primary sources are my own.

¹¹ It was founded in 1921 as Hiking Club.

¹² HANBG, 17/5 1942, Report of the Administrative Council, Session 26 April 1928.

the modernization of the underdeveloped Greek countryside. At the same time, hostelry services and basic tourist facilities were scarce. Indicative of the situation is that in 1921, the Society of Greek Hotel Owners requested state investment and financial support from the government to improve tourist infrastructure.¹³

1.3. The revival of ancient Greek drama in Greece (19th century–1920s)

Western influence determined the relationship between the national population and the classics in Greece. Since European powers viewed Greece as the organic heir of classical civilization, Greek intelligentsia eagerly established a symbolic engagement with it (Herzfeld 2002; Hamilakis 2007, 35–56). This power relation also influenced the style of performing ancient drama, which was impregnated with Western features and methods.¹⁴ At the same time, public reception of ancient drama was dominated by patriotic claims, especially in challenging circumstances (Van Steen 2007: 123–7).

In Greece, the quest for a national theatre became a long-term aspiration for intellectuals and journalists (Georgiou 2018). The modern Greek engagement with antiquity led Greek philologists, novelists, poets, and directors, to passionately publish their aspirations for a national theatrical stage (Michelakis 2010b). For instance, in ‘The Greek Bayreuth’ published in the newspaper *To Asty* on 4 April 1899, Pavlos Nirvanas envisioned the future of Greek theatre and expressed the national quest for a theatrical tradition of classical drama. Initially, Bayreuth and Orange became sources of inspiration for Greek dramatists, who often considered native elements of popular tradition as alien to ancient culture (Ioannidou 2010/2011, 390; Tsatsoulis 2017, 59–64).

The theatre of Dionysus, the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, and later the theatre of Epidauros, possessed an uncontested spiritual impact at a national level that endowed them with a collective

¹³ HANBG, 17/5 1942, Report of the Administrative Council, Session 28 March 1921.

¹⁴ On the Western influence on the staging of ancient drama in modern Greece, see Tsatsoulis (2015). This relationship was reciprocal. For Jo Smith and Plantzos, classical antiquity in the West ‘was more than a feeble whim of the upper classes, wishing to embellish their country estates with quasi-Grecian charm. It was a strong intellectual movement. In effect, Greek art was becoming the modern signature of the West’ (2018, 9).

identity for the Greek population (Ioannidou 2010/2011; Mavromoustakos 2010; Michelakis 2010b).¹⁵ This nationalist entanglement with the classics reflects what Leontis has described as the Greek claim on the continuity of the Hellenic *ethos* and *topos* from ancient Greece into the modern world (1995, ch. 3). Such affirmation found its way into culture through the identification of ancient theatre as a *topos* of authentic origins and classical prestige.

Konstantinos Kyriakos Aristias' foundation of the company Filodramatiki Etairia (Φιλοδραματική Έταιρία) in 1840 was the first official attempt to create a theatrical tradition of classical drama in Greece. He intended to reuse the theatre of Dionysus in Athens, where the renowned Greek tragedians and comedians put on their dramas (Sideris 1976, 24; Antoniou 2011). The theatre of Dionysus received a high symbolic value and was considered the de facto classical venue, where tragedy was performed for the first time. Aristias' vision was to put on the most 'appropriate' (*προσφυστέρας*, Sideris 1976, 23) Greek dramas, the ones that fitted 19th-century social imperatives (Van Steen 2000, ch. 1). Despite the ambition of the project, Filodramatiki Etairia ceased its activities after a few official performances.

Aristias' unsuccessful attempt to establish a theatrical tradition disappointed the Greek intellectual Alexandros Rizos Rangavis and his circle,¹⁶ especially after the revival of *Antigone* in France and Germany in 1863 (Sideris 1963a, 35–6; Iliadis 2011). The movement of open-air theatres in Europe not only demanded a new repertoire but also redefined the limits of performance (Konstantinakou 2014, 3). This is why Rangavis actively pursued the revival of ancient drama in

¹⁵ The foundation of the Archaeological Society at Athens in 1837 aimed not only to locate and restore antiquities but also to convert them into national landmarks (Mallouchou-Tufano 1998, 25–37). The Parthenon, for instance, was used as a venue on special occasions and for the meetings of the Archaeological Society (*Panellinion Leukoma Ethnikis Ekatontaetiridos, 1821–1921: I 'Chrysi Vivlos' tis Ellados* 1925, 66).

¹⁶ Rangavis was professor of archaeology, intellectual and statesman with substantial contribution to the standardization of the Greek literature and the classical orientation of the Greek state. According to Rangavis' memoirs, he unsuccessfully planned to put on *Antigone* at the Odeon during the visit of the Brazilian Emperor Pedro II in 1876. Rangavis suggested that they fully restored the monument and systematically staged ancient Greek drama (Rangavis 1895, 166). See also Macintosh 1997.

its original venues. In so doing, he translated many tragedies into *katharevousa*¹⁷ and was a keen advocate of the creation of a National Theatre.

Even though Aristias' endeavour proved fruitless, he was the first who materialized the idea of a regular theatrical production of classical drama in the country. However, although the theatre of Dionysus was considered the ideal candidate for theatrical revival, it was rarely used due to instability problems (*I Proia* 20 May 1932, 1–2).¹⁸ As large-scale performances and installations were impossible, the Odeon became the Athenian alternative (Figure 1; See also Mallouchou-Tufano 1998, 240–1).

The interest in classical theatre grew and the renowned Italian actress Adelaide Ristori was the protagonist of another official attempt to produce ancient drama. During her tour in Europe in 1865, where she performed at various modern theatres, she also visited Athens. When she later expressed her admiration for the Athenian antiquities, she revealed that king George I invited her to stay and perform at the theatre of Dionysus:

‘Unfortunately, a previous agreement which I could not break, rendered me unable to comply with the courteous request of King George, who, seeing the enthusiasm manifested by his people (some of whom had made incredible sacrifices to attend my performances), tried to induce me to take part in a grand representation which should revive, in the nineteenth century the costumes and stage-effects of ancient Greek tragedy, as far as was consistent with the exigencies of the modern theatre. It was to be a daylight performance in the theatre of Bacchus, where all Greece would assemble. That classic enclosure should be put into the best possible condition for the entertainment by the Athenian architects. How can I describe my disappointment at having to refuse this tempting proposal made me by His Majesty? For myself, I was only too delighted at the idea of appearing upon the stage of that ancient theatre in

¹⁷ A conservative form of the Modern Greek language that was invented in the 18th century to converge ancient Greek and contemporary vernacular Greek.

¹⁸ Despite its precarious condition, few small-scale isolated events were held at the theatre of Dionysus in the 19th century, such as music events and lectures given by the University professor Nikos Politis (*To Asty* 11 December 1894; *O Noumas* 8 July 1907, 1–2).



Figure 1. Photograph of a scene from a music event at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus in Athens (1922). Archive of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT) – Petros Poulidis Collection.

classic Greece; of reviving for a moment the art of Sophocles and Aeschylus; reposing, in spirit, in the majesty of Olympus! It would have been a memorable event in my life. But, unhappily, the prose of that wretched contract overpowered the poetical enchantment I would fain have shared' (Ristori 1888, 87–8).

Despite Ristori's cordial refusal, this episode epitomized the growing impatience of the Greek authorities to revive classical drama. George's proposal was materialized two years later, during the celebrations of his wedding with Olga Constantinovna of Russia. A society of students from the University of Athens wished to honour the new queen consort by performing classical drama at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus in 1867 (*Aion* 17 August 1867, 3–4).

Sophocles' *Antigone* and Aristophanes' *Clouds* were initially proposed, but the performances were repeatedly postponed due to unsuitable weather conditions. *Antigone* was finally staged on 7 December 1867, but *Clouds* had to be cancelled (*Ethnikon Megaleion* 13

November 1867, 4; *Aion* 16 November 1867, 1; *Aion* 30 November 1867, 4). During the performance, classical statues, flowers, a banquet, and other ornaments decorated the Odeon and provided a noble character that attracted the interest of the attendees. However, the performance was criticized by the press for using a modern Greek translation instead of the original language (*Aion* 9 December 1867, 1).

Although the excavation and restoration of the monument had started in 1848, its delicate condition was still apparent to visitors (*Aion* 26 October 1867, 3). Wooden seats were placed where marble was missing, and the stage was reconstructed ‘according to the ancient rhythm’,¹⁹ about two months before the performance.

Rangavis viewed this endeavour as the beginning of a new period for ancient drama in Greece.²⁰ The performance represented the ‘resurrection of the Greek stage in the city of Athens, near the site where the masterpieces of Greek theatre were staged for the first time’.²¹ To some degree, *Antigone* introduced the nationalist rhetoric of the Greek exclusive ownership of ancient drama. As we read in the newspaper *Aion*, ‘the masterpiece of tragedy was performed in translation, in the motherland of the glorious poet and in front of the ones who claim the direct lineage from ancient Greeks’.²²

From that point onwards, the Greek claim of exclusive authority over classical drama was regularly part of public discussion. *Antigone* motivated the University students to perform again a month later and create an amateur tradition of ancient drama spectacles at the Odeon (Sideris 1976, 45–54). Despite the initial enthusiasm, the performances did not receive significant media attention and were often neglected by contemporary critics.

The next formal request to reuse the theatre of Dionysus came in 1896 by the École Française d’Athènes (EFA) and the company Comédie Française. The celebration of the 50th anniversary

¹⁹ ‘κατά τὸν ἀρχαίον ῥυθμόν’ (*Ethnikon Megaleion* 16 November 1867, 3). It is unclear whether the article refers to the *pulpitum* or the *orchestra*.

²⁰ Rangavis was the excavator of the Odeon along with Pittakis.

²¹ ‘ἀνάστασις τῆς ἐλληνικῆς σκηνῆς ἐν τῇ πόλει αὐτῇ τῶν Ἀθηνῶν καὶ παρὰ τῷ τόπῳ, ὅπου ἐδιδάχθησαν τὸ πρῶτον τὰ ἀριστουργήματα τοῦ ἐλληνικοῦ θεάτρου’ (*Aion* 17 August 1867, 3–4).

²² ‘παρεστάθῃ μεταπεφρασμένον τὸ ἀριστοῦργημα τῆς τραγωδίας, ἐν τῇ πατρίδι αὐτῇ τοῦ μεγάλου ποιητοῦ καὶ ἐνώπιον ἐκείνων, οἵτινες ἀξιοῦσιν ἀδιάκοπον τὴν ἀπὸ ἀρχαίων Ἑλλήνων καταγωγὴν’ (*Aion* 9 December 1867, 1).

of the School provided the ideal occasion for the staging of an ancient Greek tragedy. The French actor Jean Mounet-Sully, famous for his participation in the *Chorégies d'Orange*, was selected to perform his master play, *Oedipus Rex* (Macintosh 1997, 289–90; Macintosh 2009, ch. 5). The director of the EFA, Théophile Homolle, also proposed *Antigone*.²³ However, the French celebration was postponed due to the Greco-Turkish war that erupted in April 1897 (Konstantinakou 2014). An official meeting was held the following year to commemorate the anniversary (*Independent* 23 June 1898), but without Mounet-Sully, who finally put on *Oedipus Rex* at the Municipal Theatre of Athens – instead of the theatre of Dionysus – in 1899 and made a deep impression on the Athenian public (Monory 1976, 129).

D'Annunzio's visit to Athens the same year also played an important role in popularizing classical drama. He travelled to Greece with his partner, actress Eleonora Duse, to promote his tragedy *La Città Morta*. Duse was amazed by the spectacular character of the Athenian antiquities and promised to organize a performance at the theatre of Dionysus (*To Asty* 28 January 1899, 2). Although the initial cancellation of the spectacle temporarily distanced D'Annunzio from the Athenian public, he had already contributed to the popularization of ancient theatre and classical revival in Greece.

The presence of well-known international figures in the country stimulated Greek intellectuals to pursue the revival of ancient Greek drama. As a result, a collective attempt to modernize artistic expression emerged; intellectuals, journalists, and theatre critics popularized public dialogue and addressed sociocultural issues, such as the authenticity and the limits of classical theatre (*To Asty* 18 January 1899, 1; Glytzouris 2010).

Konstantinos Christomanos emerged from this intellectual introspection and created a professional theatrical stage with his company Nea Skini in February 1901 (Pipinia 1999; Ioannidou 2010/2011, 393). His first performance symbolically took place at the theatre of Dionysus. Renowned personalities, such as the poets Kostis Palamas and Lambros Porfyas, the novelist and journalist Grigorios Xenopoulos, the historian Giannis Vlachogiannis, and Nirvanas, attended the spectacle and vouched for the new undertaking (Sideris 1947).

²³ AEFA, Archive 7, ADM 24, Organisation du jubilé et projet de congrès international d'archéologie classique (1895–1901).

Christomanos sought to standardize a professional interpretation of ancient tragedy and, together with the newly founded Royal Theatre of Greece, which made its first appearance in the theatrical stage under the direction of Angelos Vlachos,²⁴ introduced the use of the demotic language into the classical theatre (Sideris 1947; Monory 1976, 148; Glytzouris 2011, ch. 3; Georgiou 2011).²⁵ Also, the staging of Jean Moréas' tragedy *Iphigénie* at the Panathenaic Stadium in 1904 consolidated the theatrical fervour.²⁶ These endeavours and the emergence of liberal cultural magazines such as *Noumas*, created a modernist perception of ancient drama and viewed classical venues as the ideal sites for modern performances.²⁷

In contrast to these approaches, Georgios Mistriotis' company *Etairia pros Didaskalian Archaion Dramaton* (Εταιρία πρὸς Διδασκαλίαν Ἀρχαίων Δραμάτων, Society for the Instruction of Ancient Drama) was created at the turn of the century and adopted an archaeolatric approach to classical drama. The company advocated the revival of the authentic Greek theatre as a national spectacle (Sideris 1976, 113–6). In his attempt to resuscitate the classical tradition, Mistriotis sought to reconstruct an authentic performance of the 5th century BCE during the rehearsals for *Iphigenia in Tauris* (*Neon Asty* 5 February 1902). In so doing, he used the original language and a conservative use of the chorus (Antoniou 2011, 92). Many intellectuals strongly criticized Mistriotis for his anachronistic performances and called for theatrical productions in a language understood by the audience (Antoniou 2011). Mistriotis' inflexibility led to the notorious incident of the *Oresteia*, a social dispute over the translation of the *Oresteia* by the Royal Theatre that resulted in one death in November 1903, when he incited violent demonstrations against the performance (Van Steen 2000, 113–7; Van Steen 2011b).

²⁴ He was later replaced by Thomas Oikonomou.

²⁵ The Royal Theatre was founded under the protection of the king, mimicking the model and structure of the *Comédie Française* (*La Gazette de France* 8 August 1898; *Le Petit Journal* 8 August 1898; *Le Soleil* 10 August 1898). It was disbanded in 1908 because it failed to create a solid theatrical tradition and reassure financial stability.

²⁶ Jean Moréas (born Ioannis Papadiamantopoulos) was a Greek poet and essayist who lived in Paris. See also Tziovas 2014, 215–7. Moréas had successfully performed his *Iphigénie* at the theatre of Orange and the Odeon in Paris (Bradley 1910). In Athens, the performance was also staged in French and received mixed critics (*Estia* 30 October 1904, 1; Sideris 1976, 207–10).

²⁷ A new attempt to create a festival of classical drama appeared in 1903; because of the celebration of the Intercalated Olympic Games in Athens in 1906 (*Estia* 17 July 1903).

Meanwhile, the cases of the theatres of Delphi and Epidaurus followed a different course due to their long distance from the capital and the large excavation project that was needed for their consolidation. At the end of the 19th century, near the recently excavated theatre of Delphi, the local community had yet to re-discover and re-determine its relationship with local heritage. The French Archaeological School of Athens had obtained a licence to demolish the village of Kastri to conduct an extended excavation (Kastorchis 1879, 82–4; Kokkou 2009, 122) and reconstruct it nearby (Kastriotis 1894). Around the same time, the archaeologist Panagiotis Kavvadias began excavating the archaeological site of Epidaurus after the Ministry of Education decided to deforest and investigate the area (Kavvadias 1882). The startling discovery of the theatre attracted media interest and converted Epidaurus into a national landmark. Epidaurus was traditionally linked with the nearby village Ligourio. The locals ceded their lands and voluntarily assisted in the excavations in exchange for the construction of a road that would connect the ancient theatre with the town of Nauplio (Boletis 2002, 432–5; Kondis 2017/18, 128–31). As a result, two agricultural villages, Kastri and Ligourio, were to be profoundly affected by new archaeological discoveries.

Kavvadias was the first to propose the organization of spectacles in Epidaurus. In particular, he suggested performing theatrical, athletic, and music spectacles at the theatre during the celebration in honour of the General of the Greek War of Independence, Theodoros Kolokotronis, in the nearby Nauplio (*To Asty* 31 January 1900). The popularity of the celebration would facilitate the transportation of spectators to Epidaurus.²⁸ Although the project had to be cancelled due to the lack of a quality road network that connected Epidaurus with big urban centres, Kavvadias asserted that:

‘These national festivities can be performed in Epidaurus when a road from the Sanctuary to the beach of Palaia Epidaurus is built because it will benefit the locals from Epidaurus and the visitors of the Sanctuary’.²⁹

Despite initial enthusiasm, Kavvadias’ projects were not materialized, and the Greek theatrical

²⁸ One of the committee members responsible for the organization of the performances was Mistriotis.

²⁹ ‘Τοιαῦτα ἔθνικαὶ ἑορταὶ δύνανται νὰ τελεσθῶσιν ἐν Ἐπιδαύρῳ, ὅταν συντελεσθῇ ἡ ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἱεροῦ μέχρι τῆς κατὰ τὴν παραλίαν παλαιᾶς Ἐπιδαύρου ἀμαξιτοῦς, ἥτις καὶ εἰς τοὺς Ἐπιδαυρίους θὰ εἶνε εὐεργετικὴ καὶ εἰς τοὺς ἐπισκέπτας τοῦ Ἱεροῦ’ (Kavvadias 1901, 19; See also Kavvadias 1891).

production in the 1910s was reduced due to consecutive military disputes.³⁰ Meanwhile, new social phenomena emerged and influenced the relationship between artistic expression and the commercial aspects of theatre. While the theatres of Epidauros and Delphi were not used for formal theatrical performances until a decade later, companies in Athens continued their artistic production.

During this period, the need for a clear commercial strategy and high society contacts benefited private companies such as the Kotopouli Theatre Company, run by one of the leading actresses of the Royal Theatre, Marika Kotopouli (Bastias 1929, 213–8). Kotopouli Theatre Company became one of the prominent theatre companies in Greece until the 1920s (Constantinidis 1987, 25). However, she hesitated to perform ancient Greek dramas for many years, fearing media criticism and financial failure (Constantinidis 1987). In the meantime, Kotopouli staged modern plays inspired by ancient myths, such as Hofmannsthal's *Elektra* (1911), Moréas' *Iphigénie* (1912), and Goethe's *Iphigeneia among the Taurians* (1913). Yet, these did not activate the national reflexes as powerfully as original ancient Greek dramas.

In the meantime, the success and modernist profile of the Festival of Syracuse attracted Greek intellectuals and served as a model for the staging of classical drama in Greece. The adoption of Western approaches to drama fitted into the monumentalization of the theatrical stage in Greece and resulted in what Tsatsoulis have called *aggressive nativism* (2017, 74–80). Yet, modern performances at ancient venues gave the impression of a national exceptionality.

By 1920, Greece had to deal with an extended national territory and a new population. One of the most emblematic performances of the period, which marked a significant milestone in the theatrical tradition in Greece, was held on 15 September 1920 at the Odeon. Aeschylus' *The Persians* was staged under the direction of Fotos Politis³¹ and captivated the Athenian public. It was the Greek Prime Minister of the time, Eleftherios Venizelos, who had proposed the staging of the tragedy. *The Persians* operated as an ideological battle-cry that served Greek propagandistic claims since the early 19th century (Van Steen 2007; Van Steen 2010, ch. 2). In 1920, as Greece

³⁰ The participation of Greece in the Balkan Wars (1912 and 1913), the sociopolitical crisis of 1914–1916, its entrance to the First World War, and the Greco-Turkish War of 1919–1922 (Clogg 2021, 78–97).

³¹ The theatrical director Fotos Politis participated in the foundation of the theatrical group Hellenic Theater Company (Εταιρεία Ελληνικού Θεάτρου) in the late 1910s (Sideris 1976, 266–78; Puchner 1987).

was in a military conflict with the Ottoman Empire, the performance embodied the political struggle to consolidate national unity against the barbarian other (Van Steen 2007; Boletsi 2013, 4–6 and 80–3).

In addition, the execution of the patriotic composition *I Simfonia tis Leventias* by the composer Manolis Kalomoiris converted the spectacle into a direct allusion to the war against the Ottoman Empire (Just 1989, 83). The performance accompanied another militaristic celebration at the Panathenaic Stadium, where the Prime Minister, the King, politicians and archbishops gathered to honour the victorious Greek campaign in Western Anatolia (*Acropolis* 15 September 1920; *Athinai* 15 September 1920, 1; *Acropolis* 16 September 1920, 1; *Athinai* 16 September 1920, 1–2). Therefore, ancient Greek dramas were interpreted to create collective experiences and patriotic claims.

At the end of the performance, Venizelos committed himself to restore the damaged marble seats of the Odeon and create a new National Theatre after the war.³² However, due to the political and humanitarian crisis that followed the final Ottoman victory in the war and the population exchange between the two countries (Clogg 2021, 98–103), the National Theatre had to wait for another decade (Delta 1964). In any case, the regular use of the Odeon of Herodes Atticus for ancient drama, music, and dance spectacles converted it into the classical venue *par excellence*.

Meanwhile, when *Libation Bearers* was staged in Syracuse in 1921, Kotopouli attended the performance and forged a fruitful intellectual contact. In particular, during her stay in Rome the same year, Kotopouli met with the archaeologist Giacomo Boni and Italian politicians, who invited her to the Festival of Syracuse (Bastias 1929, 217–8). She joined Gargallo, Romagnoli, and the organizing committee after the festival, and performed parts of *Iphigenia* for a select audience (Miniotti 2017/18). The journalist Aimilia Karavia (Figure 2), who accompanied her, exalted the Hellenic character of the Sicilian landscape, music, and culture (*Politeia* 24 April 1921, 1–2). After the spectacles, Kotopouli enigmatically expressed her confidence that she would create a similar theatrical tradition in Greece: ‘her [Kotopouli’s] eyes deeply concealed the nostalgia for

³² *Ethnos* 16 September 1920. Calls for the creation of another national theatre emerged soon after the disbandment of the Royal Theatre. For instance, in 1911, the playwright Polivios Dimitrakopoulos formally proposed that Venizelos created a national organization (VA, Memorandum by Dimitrakopoulos to Eleftherios Venizelos 12 January 1911).

the ancient dream and the promise that she will revive it in our Greece'.³³

When she returned to Greece, Kotopouli continued her theatrical production in Athens and systematically produced ancient Greek drama. A monumental performance was held in 1924 when she directed and starred in the *Oresteia* at the Odeon in honour of the regent and future emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, who was visiting Greece (*Eleutheron Vima* 21 August 1924, 3). When later Kotopouli staged *Hecuba* at the Panathenaic Stadium (Figure 3), Romagnoli had planned to visit Athens and attend the spectacle (*Eleutheron Vima* 14 September 1927). The production of *Hecuba* at the stadium is of enormous importance because the personalities involved with it continued to work in Greek drama long after the performance, as members, actors, and directors. The performance corresponded to Kotopouli's attempt to approach the Greek spectators by

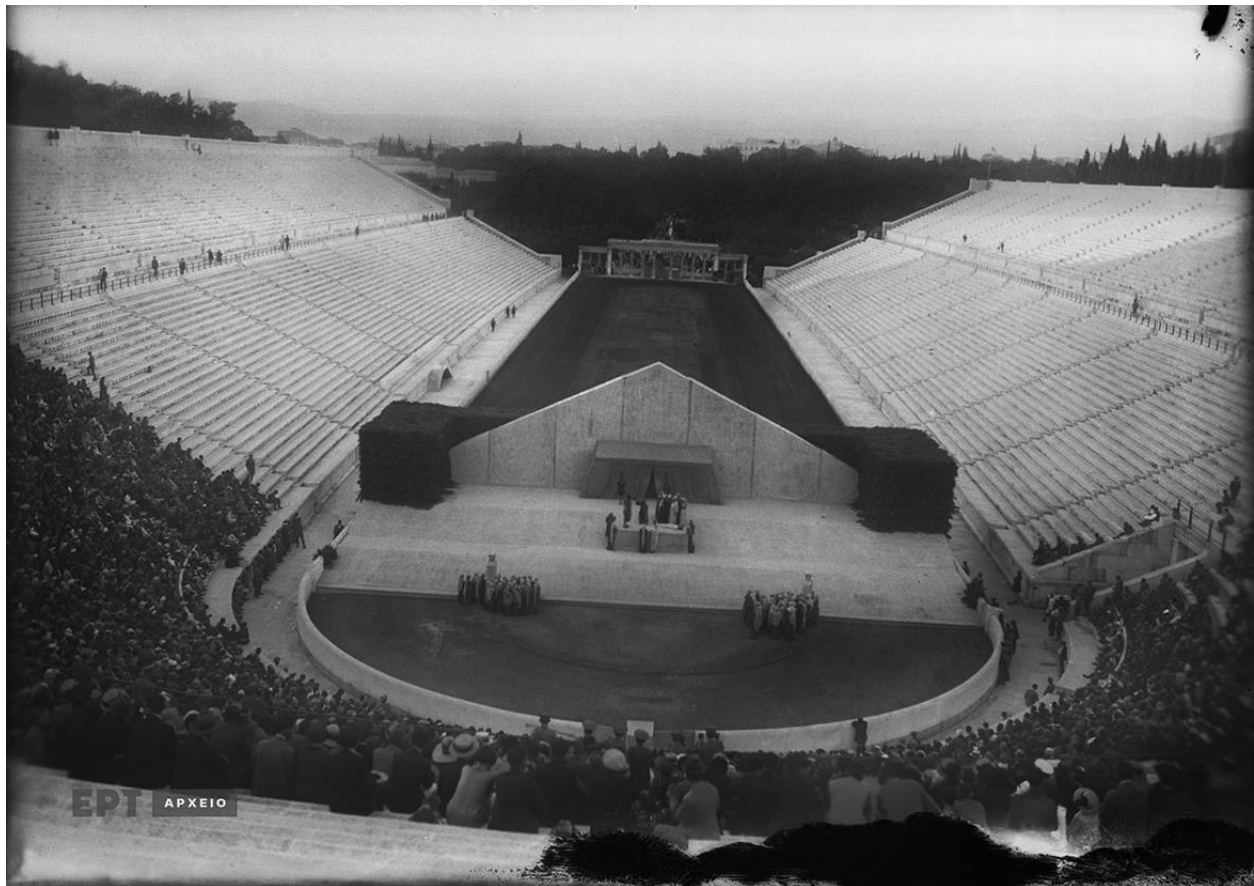


Figure 3. Photograph of a scene from Euripides' *Hecuba* (1927) at the Panathenaic Stadium in Athens by the Kotopouli Theatre Company. Archive of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT) – Petros Poulidis Collection.

³³ 'τὰ μάτια της ἔκρυναν βαθειὰ ὄλην τὴν νοσταλγίαν τοῦ ἀρχαίου ὀνείρου καὶ ὄλην τὴν ὑπόσχεσιν ὅτι θὰ τὸ ἀναβιώσῃ εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα μας' (*Politeia* 27 April 1921, 4).

offering a spectacle they could identify as the tragic story of Hecuba. In particular, she focused on the collective suffering of refugees, alluding to the thousands of Greek refugees from Asia Minor (Bastias 1927, 266–74), whose arrival in Greece some years earlier had fundamentally reshaped the configuration of national identity (Sfikas 1999, 226).

1.4. The classical tradition in Spain (19th century–1920s)

1.4.1. The *Idearium Español*

In the case of Spain, where social engagement with the archaeological record was not as strong as in Greece, ideological identification with antiquity was minimal. At the same time, the revival of Greco-Roman drama developed slower and systematic theatrical productions were still scarce in the 19th century (González-Vázquez 2019). However, after losing the last colonies of its old Empire in 1898 (Díaz-Andreu 2003, 35), Spain needed to consolidate a unified national identity within the new boundaries. Cultural homogenization could also alleviate peripheral proto-nationalisms, which sought their ideological space by implementing alternative collective narratives in the peninsula (Hobsbawm 2012, 106–7 and 119–20).

Despite the belated Spanish encounter with the classics, the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries marked a period of reevaluation of the connection with the classical tradition. Significantly, official institutions were founded to reflect on scientific and pedagogical movements, while legislative reform led to a national engagement with renowned Spanish monuments (Díaz-Andreu 1995). Similarly, cultural magazines such as *La Revista de Occidente* edited by José Ortega y Gasset and *Nuevo Mundo* edited by José del Perojo and Mariano Zavala introduced the idea of a European classical tradition into public discourse (Lemke-Duque 2015). However, the archaeological record was not transmuted into symbolic national heritage for the general populace and archaeological literature was underdeveloped until the beginning of the 20th century (Díaz-Andreu 1995), even though intellectuals and philologists occasionally pursued a symbolic connection with the classical tradition.³⁴

³⁴ See, for instance, Díaz-Andreu's analysis on the Spanish intellectual and politician Joaquín Costa who advocated the idea of a unified Celtiberian 'nation' at the end of the 19th century (1996, 54).

During this collective introspection, the Roman stoic philosopher and dramatist, Seneca³⁵ became a source of national self-determination. The historian and philologist Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, the writer Ángel Ganivet, and the Generation of '98³⁶ viewed *senequism* as a means to reinvent Spain after the existential crisis of the *fin de siècle* and heal the collective nostalgia of the Spanish Empire (Krauel 2012). Ganivet's essay *Idearium Español* intended to put Seneca's stoicism and spirituality at the centre of the intellectual discussion (Baldwin 2020). At the same time, the Generation of '98 modernized social and cultural discourse by introducing new sociopolitical ideas to national education and popular theatre.

In addition, legendary national landmarks of the classical tradition, such as the historical sieges of Saguntum and Numantia, found their way to literary and cultural production. The Siege of Saguntum was a battle between local Saguntines and Carthaginians in 218 BCE, which escalated into the Second Punic war. It took place at the town of Saguntum near the modern city of Sagunto in the Valencian Community. The battle had a symbolic place in the Spanish and Valencian collective narrative as a heroic defence against the invader (Wulff Alonso 2003, 229). Similarly, The Siege of Numantia was considered a fragment of national history that represented national sacrifice and freedom.³⁷ Less than a century later, the Celtiberian fortified settlement of Numantia,³⁸ near the modern Spanish city of Soria, was one of the epicentres of the Numantine War. The native population of Numantia had to defend its territory against the Roman invaders. The siege lasted many months (134 and 133 BCE) and concluded with the subjugation of the locals to the will of the Roman Empire. In these terms, according to the national historiography and

³⁵ Lucius Annaeus Seneca the Younger was born in Cordoba, Spain in 4 BCE.

³⁶ The Generation of '98 was a group of novelists, poets and philosophers who associated themselves with modernism and the aesthetic renewal of the Spanish national expression. See also Tulimirovic 2015.

³⁷ On the importance of the Numantian antiquities in the construction of a unified Spanish identity, see also Díaz-Andreu (1994); De Armas (1998); Gracia Alonso (2017).

³⁸ The symbolic importance of the Iberian culture for the national self-determination was exemplified in the Spanish participation in the International Expositions of Archeology (*Mostra Internazionale di Archeologia*) and Fine Arts at the Baths of Diocletian in Rome in 1911. There, Spanish archaeologists showcased the Iberian character of the peninsula and officially introduced a narrative of national history that appropriated the pre-roman period (Tortosa 2015).

literature,³⁹ Sagunto and Numantia were the two national battles in which the Spanish population proved its perseverance and unity. They showcased the fight of a nation against external invasions and demonstrated Spanish national unity (Castillo 2018). These *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1989) engaged more systematically with the Spanish national imagination in the late 19th century.

Meanwhile, the Spanish Golden Age drama remained the foundation stone of Spanish national culture. Commenting on the issue, the Spanish translator Brieva Salvatierra⁴⁰ claimed that the Spain of the time could not embrace Greco-Roman culture unless it first nationalized its cultural heritage (González Delgado and González González 2010, 78–9 and 181). This is why, the concept of classical theatre in 19th and 20th century Spain encompassed not only Greco-Roman theatre, but also 16th and 17th-century Spanish playwrights, such as Pedro Calderón de la Barca, Lope de Vega, and Miguel de Cervantes. Golden Age drama fitted the nation's traditional Catholic moral and projected the image of a unified Spanish Empire.

1.4.2. Engaging with classical drama in Spain

Translations and editions of Greco-Roman literature increased and produced an extended classical corpus in the late 19th century (Morenilla Talens 2005; González Delgado and González González 2007). The reinvention of the classics began within academic circles, and classical philologists initiated their students into the revival of Greco-Roman drama by performing select plays. These ancient drama performances soon acquired pedagogical features that corresponded with shifting philological interests within an academic milieu (Blanco López 2010; González-Vázquez 2019) but simultaneously escaped any direct ideological engagement with the public.

Following the example of Germany and France, *Oedipus Rex* attracted the classicists' interest because it was viewed as the drama that reflected most authentically the Athenian tragic element and morality at the beginning of this encounter with the Greco-Roman tradition (Macintosh 1997, 286–90). It also reflected on the nature of the Spanish monarchic authority of the period (González Delgado and González González 2010, 187). The same occurred with

³⁹ See, for instance, the historiographer Modesto Lafuente and his multivolume work *Historia General de España desde los Tiempos Primitivos hasta Nuestros Días* published between 1887 and 1890, and widely disseminated until the early 20th century.

⁴⁰ Salvatierra translated Aeschylus into Spanish for the *Biblioteca Clásica* in 1880 (Morenilla Talens 2005, 444).

Antigone that was standardized as a sociopolitical tragedy and moral drama after its translation by Antonio González Garbín in 1889 (Macintosh 1997, 286–8; González Delgado 2021). Spanish philologists who translated classical literature usually filtered the original text through the Catholic precepts of the period. This is why, as González González argues, illustrious national classics collection such as *Biblioteca Clásica* systematically employed censorship to prevent the use of obscene language and immoral examples (2007). As a result, conservative adaptations of Aristophanic comedies appeared, such as *Lysistrata* and *The Acharnians*.

It was Plautus who first inspired Spanish intellectuals to stage classical drama. Critical editions and translations of Plautus' comedies gained popularity and played a significant role in the staging of classical theatre in Spain (García-Hernández, López Gregoris, and González-Vázquez 2014). Although the performance of Plautine comedies in the original became a frequent academic activity, the theatrical tradition also grew beyond the intellectual circles. Sometimes Spanish translation was also used, as in the case of *The Captives* in 1879, translated by Menéndez Pelayo and directed by Alfredo Adolfo Camús at the Teatro Español in Madrid. The comedy was staged by students of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Madrid and was widely acclaimed (Blanco López 2015, 188–93).⁴¹ The production was inspired by German performances of the play that became the model for the Spanish spectacle of the time, such as the university production of *The Captives* in Berlin (1844). Therefore, Spanish intellectuals reluctantly began to explore the revival of classical drama and engage with contemporary European theatre.

In the early 20th century, the legacy of Greco-Roman antiquity in Spain infiltrated the works of numerous artists and intellectuals of a variety of schools, producing a shift towards an academic, theoretical, and politicized perception of the classics (Morenilla Talens 2006, 437–45). This cultural elite assumed the role of the caretaker of the 'ruins' of classical antiquity and claimed the need to bring them back to life:

⁴¹ Numerous literary adaptations and few commercial performances of Plautus in the 19th century indicate the growing interest in classical theatre. See also Delgado González and González González 2007, 71.

‘Oh, old mutilated and vanished cities, eternal values of times and cultures, pages of stone on which the wise man leaning over them deciphers, like a modern geomancer, the millenarian hieroglyph of his civilization’.⁴²

Many of these intellectuals viewed the early decades of the 20th century as an opportunity to align themselves with similar European tendencies. As a result, classical antiquity managed to reach the Spanish audiences through literature and theatre by being identified with new trends of European modernity (García Jurado 1997; González-Vázquez 2019). This opened up an opportunity to renovate the Spanish theatre through the prestige and ‘glorious character’ of Greco-Roman culture (Morenilla Talens 2006, 437–9).

The Spanish regional particularity, in terms of the coexistence of several proto-nationalisms (Hobsbawm 2012, 106–7 and 119–20) mainly in Catalonia, Basque Country, and to a lesser extent Galicia, determined the nature of the cultural and collective mosaic of the period (Duplá Ansuátegui and Cortadella 2014). It was then that movements such as the Catalan noucentisme promulgated a regional classicism that diverged from the centralized orientation, both in linguistic and symbolic presuppositions (Piquer Sanclemente 2012). Noucentisme’s deep connection with a classical Hellenism and a Mediterranean identity (Calvo Calvo 2010) reflected the region’s alignment with European modernity and produced cultural initiatives with a political base (Pascual Sastre 1992; Morenilla Talens 2005, 441–5). This is why professional performances of classical drama in Catalonia that attempted to implement European trends in the context of *Reinaxença* were met with great success and recognition (González-Vázquez 2016, 107–9).⁴³

In the meantime, the first calls for the systematic reuse of ancient theatres came from intellectuals with an international background who aimed to align Spanish cultural tradition with the European modernist reception of classical antiquities (*Flores y Abejas* 11 July 1926, 5; Díaz-Andreu 1996). To heal the feeling of nostalgia towards the classical past, archaeologists and classicists committed themselves to reconstruct the monuments’ symbolic integrity. From the

⁴² ‘Oh, viejas ciudades mutiladas y desaparecidas, eternos valores de los tiempos y de las culturas, páginas de piedra en las que el sabio, sobre ellas inclinado, descifra como un moderno geomante el geroglífico milenario de su civilización’ (*Por Esos Mundos* 1 June 1916, 72).

⁴³ The Catalan Romantic movement of *Reinaxença* dominated the region’s theatrical scene in the second half of the 19th century and included historical themes, patriotic exaltation, and regional nostalgia.

beginning of the excavations in Merida (Figure 4), detailed notices of the work's progression were regularly published in the press, demonstrating the diffusion of information by the excavators themselves (See, for instance, *La Ilustración Española y Americana* 8 August 1912 and *La Esfera* 20 March 1920). Besides, an article published in 1910 by the journalist Enrique Salanava in the magazine *Por Esos Mundos* (December 1910, 1005) made the first documented reflection on converting the ancient theatre of Merida into a site of spectacle. Salanava's European reference was the Roman theatre of Orange, and his suggestion was intended to connect the Spanish populace with national heritage and increase tourist attraction.

Similar aspirations were expressed by the archaeologist Jorge Bonsor, who suggested to the theatre's excavator José Ramón Mélida that they organize cultural spectacles. In one of his letters on 11 March 1912, we read: 'I desired to have the satisfaction to be able one day to occupy a seat there, to attend a performance of a classical play, a concert, or even better, ancient floral games'.⁴⁴ The same year, in the declaration of the antiquities of Merida as a national monument (*Official State Gazette* 210, 28 July 1912, 225 and *Official State Gazette* 57 26 February 1913, 495–96), the journalist Marcos Rafael Blanco Belmonte covering the local event offered a glimpse of his Romantic vision of a revival, describing an imaginary performance of Plautus' *Aulularia* in the theatre (*La Ilustración Española y Americana*, 8 August 1912, 9; Blanco López 2015, 359–63), in his attempt to overcome his sense of temporal distance of the restored monument. A similar Romantic reconstruction was narrated by Luis Bello in 1927 when he imagined a supposed portico of a 'Roman school' set in the orchestra of the Roman theatre and spiritually narrated a Roman scene as taking place in front of his eyes (*El Sol* 22 June 1927, 1). These *auratic* narratives assumed that visiting the Roman monument could bend time for the intellectuals and so help revive classical antiquities. Thus, the desire to prove this relationship across time as genuine was to be implemented through adopting nostalgic attitudes to the ancient theatre (Plantzos 2014a, 257–61). Although we encounter such attitudes more in cases such as Greece (Plantzos 2014a, 261–81), where national imagination was powerfully engaged with antiquities, it is evident that they were not absent in Spain.

⁴⁴ 'estaba deseando tener la satisfacción de poder, algún día, ocupar un asiento allí para asistir a la representación de una obra clásica, un concierto o, aún mejor, unos antiguos juegos florales' (Letter 145, 11 March 1912, Maier Allende 1999, 190–1).



Figure 4. Photograph of the Roman theatre of Merida in the 1910s (Mélida Alinari 1915, 45). Hispanic Digital Library, National Library of Spain (BNE).

Mélida combined the necessary qualifications to become one of the monument's modern ambassadors (Casado Rigalt 2006). His knowledge of ancient theatre and drama,⁴⁵ his active role in the Spanish Excursionist Society (Letter 246, 1 May 1920, Caballero Rodríguez and Álvarez Martínez 2011, 176), his authority as director of the National Archaeological Museum, and his numerous international connections (Díaz-Andreu 2008), all transformed him into an excellent agent for the dissemination of information on Merida's antiquities. More precisely, the reuse of the theatre as a modern venue was inaugurated with Mélida's conference in April 1914 (*La Correspondencia de España* 12 April 1914, 3; *La Correspondencia de España* 15 April 1914, 6),

⁴⁵ *La Ilustración Española y Americana* (22 March 1884, 183–6), where he offers a detailed review of a theatrical performance, spectators, and Romantic atmosphere; *La Ilustración Española y Americana* 15 January 1901, 34).

when he assembled teachers, students, and delegates from institutions from Extremadura to hear about the theatre's recovery. Mérida's conference was the first manifestation of collective memory that connected the antiquities of Merida with the local populace. Indeed, from that point on, the touristic possibilities of the theatre started to be appreciated, and local authorities began to promote them as a means of economic development (*El Bloque* 14 April 1914, 1).

During this transitional period of interventions in the theatre, many initiatives for its reuse were undertaken, whether as a theatrical venue or for the staging of cultural events. Perhaps the most remarkable, albeit unsuccessful, case was the interest shown by the famous actress of the time, Maria Guerrero, who desired to perform there during her successive visits in 1920 and 1922.⁴⁶ What was significant in that project was not only that the theatre would come to national prominence but also the fact that this was approved of and desired by Mérida (Letter 310, 4 August 1923, Caballero Rodríguez and Álvarez Martínez 2011, 222). Although he supported the idea of celebrating concrete events of high culture, his priority was the monument's protection, and he disagreed with its regular use. This reluctance is indicative of his feeling of having an exclusive moral authority over the prestige of the monument, and it also gives us a glimpse of the reality of formal concession regarding the theatrical space. Between 1920 and 1923, a pedagogical lecture and two floral games took place in the theatre, after having been met with strong opposition from Mérida. However, by 1921, he was no longer responsible for deciding on concessions and his opinion had mostly symbolic value. Rather, he indicates the existence of a Sub-commission for Monuments of Merida (Subcomisión de Monumentos de Mérida) as the agent to be consulted, whenever petitions for reuse were submitted. The final decision appears to be reserved for the Minister and director of Fine Arts, who would usually just confirm the Sub-commission's report. However, from Madrid where he resided, his authority over Merida's antiquities remained uncontested (Letter 245, 13 April 1920 and 246, 1 May 1920, Caballero Rodríguez and Álvarez Martínez 2011, 175–6). On the other hand, Maximiliano Macías, as the main excavator of the

⁴⁶ Guerrero's visits to Merida is mentioned by Mérida in his letters 245, 13 April 1920 and 289, 9 April 1922 (Caballero Rodríguez and Álvarez Martínez 2011, 175 and 208). She appears to visit the town along with her children and the otherwise unknown actor Santiago in 1920, and the actor Fernando Díaz de Mendoza in 1922. These must be the visits at which she appears to have promised locals a performance in the theatre, as claims *La Voz* (21 January 1922, 3). See also González-Vázquez 2015, 492–3).

theatre and secretary of the Sub-commission, was also inextricably linked with Mérida's antiquities (Macías 1913; Mélida Alinari and Macías 1932).

Excavations at the theatre lasted for six campaigns from 1910 to 1915 (Mélida Alinari and Macías 1932). Its good conservation and the discovery of many architectural parts permitted an extensive restoration. These restoration projects reached the press as an echo of the regenerative discussion of the period about the national Spanish culture.⁴⁷ In this spirit, two campaigns were implemented and conditioned the reuse of the theatre (Monleón 2004, 49–53). The first phase extended from 1921 to early 1922 and the second from 1923 to 1925 (Barroso Martínez and Morgado Portero 1998, 61).

In the meantime, the pedagogical lecture, organized by the otherwise unknown Professor Ruano, was met with indignation from Mélida for its grossness (Letter 245, 13 April 1920 and 246, 1 May 1920, Caballero Rodríguez and Álvarez Martínez 2011, 175–6). The floral games took place in December 1922 and 1923 with a dynamic regional, Catholic, and patriotic character (Leal Ramos 1923), organized by the congregation of San Luis. They consisted of a series of cultural competitions celebrated in honour of Inmaculada and Saint Eulalia, the town's patrons (*El Siglo Futuro* 13 October 1922, 4 and 30 December 1922, 2). The highlight of the games was the participation of a chorus of young local girls (*La Acción* 14 October 1922, 5; *La Esfera* 24 July 1926, 34). Macías not only participated in the organizing committee but also designed the girls' dresses (Caballero Rodríguez 2008, 330–1). These represented Roman tunics and pallia, which were remarkably displayed in various photos at the theatre (*La Semana Gráfica* 30 December 1922, 17; *La Hormiga de Oro* 22 December 1923, 836; *La Esfera* 24 July 1926, 34),⁴⁸ despite Mélida's disagreement with the competitions (Letter 309, 29 July 1923, Caballero Rodríguez and Álvarez Martínez 2011, 221–2).⁴⁹ The following year, under the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de

⁴⁷ Regeneracionismo was an intellectual movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, against the perceived decadence of the Spanish nation and culture, especially after the loss of the last Spanish colonies (Casado Rigalt 2006, 82–3).

⁴⁸ While most sources indicate the theatre Ponce de León as the main hall of the celebration, the newspaper *El Siglo Futuro* (18 December 1922, 2) places it at the Roman theatre.

⁴⁹ In contrast to Mélida's conservative approach, classicist José Alsina called for the systematic modern use of Mérida, Sagunto, Tarragona and Italica. Inspired by Mounet-Sully's *Oedipus Rex*, he viewed the revival of Greco-Roman drama in Spain as an opportunity to create a national theatrical tradition (*ABC Madrid* 27 August 1924, 8).

Rivera, a performance that took place in Merida became the first unofficial reuse of the theatre for classical drama. It was a school performance of Plautus' *The Captives*, which probably had almost no audience, organized by Professor Santos Coco (Caballero Rodríguez 2008, 334). Finally, small-scale events were also organized at the theatre by local intellectuals and demonstrated the organic relationship between the local population and antiquities. Lectures on Oedipus' myth and recitation of verses about regional ideals (*Revista del Ateneo* 15 September 1925, 22; *La Época* 20 February 1926, 3) attested to the local engagement with the theatre of Merida and its perception as a regional landmark. Indicative to this local and regional identification of the monument was the 1926 recitation of local poetry, by the poet Juan Luis Cordero in 1926 (*Letras Regionales* February 1926, 17). The event corresponded to the embodiment of regional ideals and their cultural expression through the prestigious local venue.

Chapter 2 Theatrical Revival as Sociopolitical Statement (1927–1938)⁵⁰

2.1. Classical culture and malleable identities: National and local heritage

2.1.1. Nationalized Heritage

National institutions that had emerged in the late 19th and early 20th century methodically sought during the inter-war period to document, study, consolidate, and disseminate their cultural heritage, as national capital (Anderson 1991, 9–46; Hamilakis 2007 ch. 3; Plantzos 2014a, ch. 7). These systematic efforts aimed to entangle the national populace with national heritage and the territorial space in which it was located, performing a nostalgic reconfiguration of national past. The experience of the First World War had converted these activities into questions of national significance in the self-determination and standardization of the states. Such a dynamic procedure can be comprehended as the constitution of a national archive that offered the opportunity to both convert these monuments to lieux de memoire and appropriate them as vehicles for the nations' sociocultural modernization (Nora 1989; Plantzos 2014a, 255–65). In addition, what characterizes the late inter-war period is that public reception of these monuments was a quest that such activities had to substantially consider and experiment with, as these developments addressed the notion of a unified populace and corresponded to the pursuit of national reach. Thus, a popular – rather than elite – engagement with national heritage would be crucial for the successful implementation of the geographical self-determination of the nation states.

During the same period, modernization and nationalization of the theatrical stage was one of the main quests in the theatrical production in Europe (McConachie 2008; Fischer-Lichte 2017, esp. ch. 4). A series of theatrical questions that marked the development of artistic activity (such as the role of director and the emergence of national theatres) were interpreted as part of this tradition and greatly influenced the theatrical production. The paramount need for the newly established regimes of the 1930s to legitimize their power and address the national populace via

⁵⁰ Sections of this chapter are also thoroughly discussed on Balaskas (2020) and Balaskas (2021).

sociocultural institutions, highly influenced the inter-war perception of theatre. As a result, regular theatrical spectacles at classical venues emerged and attempted to forge an ideological identification with collective memory. However, the fact that ancient venues were often located far from the urban centres, directed such ideological interests towards the local population that lived nearby and preserved a distinct, experiential perception of these monuments.

In Greece this also coincided with the standardization of the national language that dominated and excluded the regional idioms and customs (Seiragakis 2010). For instance, while the Delphic Festivals at the theatre of Delphi (1927 and 1930) presented a regional manifestation of customs and particularities, the National Theatre promulgated the homogenization of language, customs, and heritage in the Arvanites' village of Ligourio, in a way imposing the national premises of the state. As a whole, the theatres at Delphi and Epidauros became the emblematic spaces of cultural revival, where, despite the lack of modern infrastructure, would exalt the theatrical tradition in inter-war Greece and become the main venues where such malleable identities would begin to transform to a consolidated national narrative (*Eleutheron Vima* 13 September 1938, 2). Not only did the political and intellectual authorities dictate the reuse of ancient theatres, but they also intervened directly in decisions that determined theatrical traditions.

Meanwhile, this period marked a belated attempt of the Spanish intellectual elites to form a Spanish archive of national heritage (Cean-Bermúdez 1932; Díaz-Andreu 1995; Ríos Reviejo 2014). Following the extensive archaeological intervention in classical antiquities that ensued the Spanish legislation in 1911 (Junta Superior de Excavaciones y Antigüedades 1922; Díaz-Andreu 2003, 39), a series of attempts were made to introduce classical heritage to the Spanish society. As Mérida's popularity acquired a national dimension (Monleón 2004, 61–75) during the 1920s, a theatrical revival at the Roman theatre was a natural development and followed the emergent excursionist trends. This coincided with the establishment of the Second Spanish Republic in 1931 and its attempt to introduce social reform. In total, a series of political instabilities provided the frame for cultural renovation and national reconfiguration.

What appears to be common in the Greek and Spanish cases of the inter-war period is their inspiration from the Syracuse festival for regular drama performances with a tourist aspect and collective identification in ancient theatres (*Politeia* 27 April 1921, 4; *Luz* 15 May 1933, 6; *Luz* 20

June 1933, 12; Sideris 1976, 343–66).⁵¹ The Delphic Festivals were directly inspired and related to them, even though opted for a more spiritual orientation. As in the case of Syracuse in 1914, the National Theatre of Greece⁵² chose *Agamemnon* to inaugurate its theatrical production in 1932, serving similar popular aspirations, as the Italian festival offered a long-envisioned project. Apparently, the inauguration of Summer Seasons at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus (1934–1936) followed a similar precept.

Although the theatre of Merida already had many European examples to follow for its theatrical revival (The Delphic Festivals and the sporadic performances in the Panathenaic Stadium in Athens were already widely known to the circles of theatre critics and intellectuals, *El Sol* 7 January 1934, 4), it was the Syracusan example that became its model in its way to modernization. Thus, if spectacles in Bayreuth and Orange (*Nuevo Mundo* 30 June 1933, 4–5; Sideris 1976, 140–2) inspired the desire to put on classical productions in Greece and Spain, it was Syracuse that implemented them in a modern successful festival and appeared as the model for most open-air festivals of the time (Corsi 1939).

This is why in 1928, Arturo Gazul, a journalist from Extremadura, saw in the theatre of Merida the opportunity to repeat Syracuse's example of evoking popular sentiment (Monleón 2004, 64; Morenilla Talens 2006, 431–84; González-Vázquez 2015, footnote 11; González-Vázquez 2016, 109). He published a series of articles, creating an intellectual dialogue with other local journalists, in *Correo Extremeño*, after attending performances at the Festival of Syracuse in Italy.⁵³ The Italian example seemed to him especially appealing for Extremadura, as the 1914 performance of *Agamemnon* in Syracuse 'turned a marginalized and impoverished Sicily into a

⁵¹ Even at the case of Delphi, where Sikelianos' revival opposed the cultural precepts of European modernism, the *Chorégies d'Orange* and the Festival of Syracuse were the models that had to be followed (*I Vradyni* 11 January 1925, 3; *I Vradyni* 12 January 1925, 3).

⁵² In the 20th century, its official name alternated between National Theatre and Royal Theatre following the political regime shifts in Greece.

⁵³ Gazul's proposal was to create a Spanish festival for ancient drama and that of the Spanish Golden Age. He argues against the exclusiveness of performing only ancient dramas in Merida, by proposing to stage Spanish Golden Age or British drama (*Correo Extremeño* 19 December 1928, 1).

privileged site for the production and consumption of Greek drama as national heritage' (Michelakis 2005, 17).

Intellectuals from Greece and Spain had no extended history of cultural interconnections in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but the ones that established during the 1920s and 1930s provide a valuable insight into their sociocultural dynamics. This cultural contact between Greece and Spain mainly concentrated on the fields of archaeology and classics. In these early decades of the 20th century, it was Greek and Spanish intellectuals who were educated in France or Italy that found connecting components between the two countries, while the press provoked a better understanding of the international developments. In addition, the sociopolitical instability that the two countries experienced after their parallel military and diplomatic humiliations in 1921 and 1922 (Sfikas 2003) strengthened the demands for national regeneration and modernization in both countries. This would eventually reach the artistic expression that often resorted to the classical culture and its prestigious legacy.

2.1.2. Local heritage in the Spanish periphery

The city of Merida enjoyed a wide recognition among the Spanish intellectuals, while, at the same time, the local experiential relationship with its monuments continued to actively determine its course (*La Ilustración Española y Americana* 8 August 1912, 70–4; Mérida 1932). In particular, the theatre of Merida retained a strong local and regional identification along with an institutional and national prestige. The locals used to call the theatre 'The Seven Chairs' ('Las Siete Sillas'), a name that referred to the seven parts of the *summa cavea*, the highest section of the seating area of the theatre that were visible before the excavation. The local myth had them as the site where Mauritanian rulers of the region met and sat. Alternatively, they constituted the meeting point of the seven capital vices (los siete azotes), symbolic representations of the locals' sins, who reunited every winter and planned their felonies. These folkloric legends continued to exist even after the theatre's excavation, being murmured by old people around the town (*El Heraldo de Madrid* 2 January 1928, 8).

In the 1920s Merida was still a remote site, where wealthy citizens from around Spain, societies, schools and groups from the region chose to visit as a peripheral site of excursion and archaeological tour. A conscious identification of the space as an icon of the region's identity took place in the celebration of the Mutualismo Escolar, a state mechanism of school finance and

students' support in 1929, when the theatre was perceived of as a focus for Extremadura's monumental qualities. Through patriotic discourses, pedagogical ideals were fused with a local acceptance of the monument as collective heritage (*La Previsión en la Escuela* 1928).⁵⁴ Hence, the ancient theatre offered a chance of establishing a collective experience. Meanwhile, the instinctive receptiveness of the local population to a national appropriation of the monument resulted in the powerful nationalization of regional particularities.

For Spanish intellectuals, the comical coexistence of the local commerce, craftsmanship and livestock farming with the eternal monuments was a historical reality that involuntarily had to bear, in the process of the monumentalization of the city (*La Voz* 21 January 1922, 3; *El Sol* 22 June 1927, 1). To impose this monumental image, the authorities had to perform expropriation strategies at the fields around the theatre that pertained to local peasants, similarly to what we encountered some years earlier in Delphi and Epidaurus (*Correo de la Mañana*, 9 November 1914, 1). This expropriation also took place in symbolic level, as many elitist visitors sought to find and reconstruct in the locals' faces the same Romans that lived in the city thousands of years earlier.

In light of these developments, local perspective would soon change, and Roman monuments of the area would come to represent a vision of prosperity, regional prestige, and tourist expansion in the following years. The national press began to dedicate illustrated features to the legendary Roman monuments that attested to the Roman presence and the classical tradition in the peninsula, but it did not become part of the collective narratives of the Spanish nationalism in the period. Roman theatres and amphitheatres received particular attention as they often conserved their overwhelming and monumental material aspect in the natural landscape (*La Vanguardia* 14 February 1925, 5; *La Unión Ilustrada*, 9 February 1930, 28; Díaz-Andreu 2016). Acinipo (Ronda), Clunia (Peñalba de Castro), Bilbilis (Calatayud), Emerita Augusta (Mérida), Italica (Sevilla) found their way to the public as Roman monuments of excursionist interest and adventurous or exotic outlook, along with their European counterparts (*La Esfera* 1 December 1928, 21–8; *El Sol* 15 March 1936, 8). This excursionist spirit towards artistic and archaeological sites that was introduced by the tourist institutions of the time (Pack 2006, 24–32; Díaz-Andreu 2016) was close to the ongoing movements in Venizelos' government in Greece and its tourist

⁵⁴ It seems that the municipal band along with selected children from Merida sang the society's hymn, in the form of a small concert (*Nuevo Día* 4 June 1928, 2).

endeavour after the foundation of the first Greek tourist organization (*El Sol* 25 February 1930, 8; Vlachos 2016 ch. 4).

This challenge to modernize the Spanish periphery was widely prompted in international projects responding to the new economic opportunities. The Iberoamerican Exposition in Seville and the International Exposition in Barcelona in 1929 would provide external recognition and would promote Spanish cultural identity (Moreno Garrido 2014; Díaz-Andreu 2016). These projects attracted a large number of excursionists, workers, locals, and politicians to such places and promoted a collective understanding of the cities' monuments (*Viajes por España* January 1928, 23). However, the social impact of these expositions was not limited to the host cities, but many other peripheral centres were prepared for a growth of visitors during and after the events (*El Sol* 7 April 1929, 1).⁵⁵ Accordingly, a proposal for a cultural production was submitted by the Athenaeum of Granada to the director of the Exposition of Seville. The plan included performances of classical drama in the Roman theatre of Merida, along with Spanish drama and cultural activities that would take place in Seville and Granada. The aim was to create a unique artistic production for the visitors, who would experience a fusion of Greco-Roman, oriental, and Spanish theatrical spectacles (*El Imparcial* 10 November 1928, 5). What is apparent in this case is that cultural and ideological interests aligned, offering possibilities for the international promotion of Spanish monuments, based on a new economic model that met the needs of European modernity (Díaz-Andreu 1996). Thus, from the late 1920s on, the internationalization of regional heritage would seem to offer an appealing chance for economic development and modernization in the Spanish periphery.

2.1.3. National and indigenous archaeologies in Greece

In the case of Greece, in Delphi and Epidaurus, the locals had previously owned the archaeological sites and also retained a strong attachment to them. While the national press extolled the ancient theatres there as magnificent examples of national heritage (*To Asty* 4 April 1899, 1; *To Asty* 31 January 1900, 2; *Empros* 10 May 1927, 1), the locals saw themselves as humble peasants

⁵⁵ The example of Cadiz, the main port of arrival for many ships from America, is indicative of the effects of these productions at national level (Moreno Garrido 2014).

safeguarding their own countryside (Ouranis 1967). Thus, community participation in the revival of these ancient theatres could be said to involve two dynamic clashes.

First, local identification with heritage led to a clash of interests between nationalism and regionalism in Greece. As Tziovas argues, ‘often ethnic identity or local cultures are appropriated by nationalism or national culture, and there is a common practice of subsuming ethnicity under nationality’ (Tziovas 1994, 115). To explore this clash, I shall expand on the ideas behind Tziovas’ linguistic contentions to include cultural and political perceptions of local heritage (Tziovas 1994). In particular, I argue that national politics can be seen as a centripetal force that seeks to absorb peripheral individualities, whereas regional identity can be seen as a centrifugal one that tugs local particularities away from the centre (Tziovas 1994, 96). Over time, the meeting and interaction of these forces in Greece has done much to diminish linguistic, social, and cultural differences in the name of national uniformity.

This type of internal colonialism (Papadopoulos 2016) was in most cases deliberately incorporated into state-run nation-building projects and produced lasting effects on local communities. Employing hegemonic discourses on national values, such projects involved state appropriation of peripheral traditions and the nationalization of regional heritage. The concomitant exercise of control also led to a second clash, this time between modern Western archaeology and non-official indigenous archaeologies (Hamilakis 2008). In this context, Hamilakis has proposed a wider definition of archaeology, summarizing it as a series of practices and discourses regarding ancient things, and includes groups or individuals that have created their own narratives about the material traces of the past. In particular, he asserts that ‘orientalist classicism, the Western European imagination, and the colonial desire for the possession of classical objects encountered the national fantasy of Greek diasporic scholars and merchants’ (Hamilakis 2008, 276). In our case, western and institutional perception of archaeology contrasts with the indigenous, local and regional, experiential archaeology exercised by peripheral groups and communities.

Local discourses came from a variety of groups and individuals that had formed their own interpretations and had engaged with the material traces of the past through a series of significant practices. As Plantzos notes, these perspectives were generally dismissed by national agents who sought to assume control of the material traces of classical antiquity in order to transform them into emblems of national identity (Plantzos 2008). In that spirit, ancient remains were reimagined

and revived to construct a present seen through the prism of an idealized and timeless past (Plantzos 2014a, ch. 8), while Western classicism and the modern Greek national imagination contrasted starkly with regional and indigenous archaeologies as instinctively exercised by peripheral groups.

These ideological clashes encompass the heterotopic dimension of classical Greek antiquities noted by Ioannidou (2010/11). Initiatives to reuse ancient theatres stimulated a connection between present-day Greek communities and the classical past by systematically exposing them to cultural revivals. As Van Steen has demonstrated, by the 19th century the Greek intelligentsia had already begun to focus on the national issue in order to forge a homogeneous identity (Van Steen 2016) with actions that included staging ancient Greek drama. One of the main purposes of these revivals was to raise awareness among Greek communities of this national heritage and laud its supreme importance. By imposing this vision of culture, agents of nationalism sought to homogenize national identity and eradicate any regional discourses of localized heritage.

A crucial element in delivering this vision was a process of ‘ethnogenesis’ (Kotsakis 1998). Unlike places in northern Greece where a national attempt at internal colonization was strategically implemented (Peckham 2004), Delphi did not represent any particular ideological or linguistic challenges to this concept of centralized nationalism. Ligourio was a slightly different case since its population was largely comprised of Arvanites (Zervas 2014). However, it was simply that the existence of community-led discourses on antiquities did not contribute to the homogeneous construction of a national rhetoric. Where any such factors existed regarding classical heritage, they needed to be eradicated through purist archaeological approaches and dictates that monumentalized antiquities. One example of this is the change of the name of Kastri to Delphi as part of the Hellenization and classicization of toponymy taking place all around Greece (Peckham 2000).

2.2. Delphic Festivals and local engagement (1927–1930)

Those responsible for organizing the Delphic Festivals, Eva Palmer and Angelos Sikelianos, employed the local community in Delphi as a means to demonstrate the existence of a genuine connection and continuity between antiquity and modern Greek folk culture. To this same end, the

festivals also included a series of events that involved music, dance, theatre, and athletic activities.⁵⁶ The overall approach was vaguely spiritual and intentionally distanced from the style of ancient drama performances established thus far in Modern Greece,⁵⁷ instead attempting to harmonically fuse music, dance, poetry and acting in the theatrical productions.

When assessing the approach taken to the Delphic Festivals, one must bear in mind that it consisted of a blend of ideas and perspectives ranging from Sikelianos' nationalist (and internationalist) ideals to Eva's avant-garde perception of nature and space, while Nikolaos Aiginitis' internationalist perspective prompted him to attempt to align the Delphic initiative with the Festival of Syracuse (Aiginitis 1967, 208–11; Burke 1975). Eva and Angelos' relationship with Isadora and Raymond Duncan also shaped the aesthetics of the performances (Glytzouris 2012), as did their acquaintance with the couple Tanagra and Vassos Kanellos⁵⁸ and George Cram Cook. Cook was an American writer and journalist who had moved to Delphi in 1922, adopted the local way of life⁵⁹ and remained there until his death in 1924; one of his plans had been to direct a play in the ancient theatre using locals as actors, and thus to some extent he influenced Eva's and Angelos' decision to include the community in their production (Glytzouris 2011, 459–66; Tsitsiridis 2017; Leontis 2019, 150–4). What all these shared, in terms of the ideological orientation of their artistic production, was an experiential view of classical culture and a belief that the Greek landscape retained a universal essence that offered an alternative to Western

⁵⁶ For audiovisual documentation, see the AAHBC: <https://archive.ert.gr/6841/>. For Eva's perception of the union of poetry, music, and gymnastics, see Palmer Sikelianos 1993, 106–7.

⁵⁷ The festivals were mainly financed by Eva. For an extended analysis of Eva's contribution see Leontis 2019, 148–64. See also Tsatsoulis 2017, 91–108. The revival in Greece had already adopted either a western theatrical tradition or a nationalistic attitude that involved national exaltation and often the use of the ancient text in the performance. Staging of plays by Thomas Oikonomou and Konstantinos Christomanos provide clear examples of the two traditions, respectively.

⁵⁸ Vassos and Tanagra Kanellos were dancers with studies in the United States who adopted an experiential and ritualistic approach to classical dance. They performed classical spectacles at various ancient venues in the mid-1920s and focused on the recreation of the ancient Greek spirit (Kanellos 1964, 39–43). They often accompanied their productions with reconstructed ancient instruments and poetic recitations. According to Kanellos, Sikelianos reached him through their common friend Philadelphus (Kanellos 1964, 11–2).

⁵⁹ Cook wore a foustanella, participated in the social life of the village, and saw himself as one of the Delphi population (Glytzouris 2011, 459–61).

modernity.⁶⁰

The selection of *Prometheus Bound* to inaugurate the Delphic Festivals could be considered a diplomatic artifice. Instead of focusing on Prometheus' rebellion against the established order, which could be provocative, given the bourgeoisie and high-class spectators who were invited at the theatre (Figure 5), the main objective was to address a symbolic representation of ecumenism. Sikelianos' idea of intellectual salvation of the human race through the Delphic Organization rather determined the parallelism of Prometheus with a Christian martyr, as benefactor of humanity and scapegoat (Glytzouris 2010, 2101–2). It also provided a feeling of catharsis as the tragic hero experiences without remorse his punishment for the protection of humanity.⁶¹ Hence, Christian-byzantine elements that were in the centre of the Delphic endeavour were also justified (Tsatsoulis 2017, 91–6). By doing this, Sikelianos and Palmer attempted to construct a positive system of symbolic ideas that universalized the Delphic Festivals and concealed unfortunate references (Valverde García 2014). What made the Delphic Festivals essential in national terms was the projection of a native, non-Western perception of ancient drama that connected an archaic universality with Christian and byzantine elements (Tsatsoulis 2017, 91–108).

In addition, the Delphic Festivals reshaped and crystallized the inter-war cultural expression of Hellenicity (Leontis 1995; Glytzouris 2010, 2100–1). An alternative vision of folk culture and Byzantine tradition was amalgamated with a powerful expression of spirituality that involved cultural and athletic activities,⁶² in response to the horror of the First World War and the Asia Minor Disaster of 1922 (Leontis 2019, 103–16).⁶³ Sikelianos' approach was strongly influenced by these catastrophes, and his ultimate goal was to make Delphi a centre for universal

⁶⁰ Glytzouris 2011 459–66. Glytzouris argues that the celebration of the Delphic Festivals produced the first conscious performances of ancient drama that organically displayed the notion of Greek continuity (Glytzouris 2012, 276–8).

⁶¹ Even the choice of *Prometheus Bound* was made because of the play's relationship with the myth of Iapetus; in other words, it served the ideal of an ecumenical renaissance. In reality, it related to a new, more spiritual resurrection of the Modern Greek nationalism of the 19th century in the Inter-war years, a re-definition of the Hellenic-Christian ideal and its re-affirmation as a key component of Greek ideology (Glytzouris 2010, 1102).

⁶² Similar athletic events had already taken place in revivals of ancient games from the mid-19th century onwards (Bastea 2000, 204–12).

⁶³ For audiovisual documentation, see the AAHBC: <https://archive.ert.gr/6866/>.



Figure 5. Photograph of the public at the ancient theatre of Delphi during the Second Delphic Festival (1930). Archive of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT) – Petros Poulidis Collection.

peace and culture.⁶⁴ This perception of intercultural reciprocity is explicitly present in Aeschylus' *The Suppliants*, which for Sikelianos represented the encounter and confluence of various cultures (Tsatsoulis 2017, 91–108). Furthermore, the Delphic Festivals encapsulated a unique approach to staging ancient drama in Greece: they were the first attempt in Greece to depart from European tradition. In pursuit of this goal, Eva introduced novel techniques in the use of music, popular tradition, and the human body (Tsatsoulis 2015, 318–26; Leontis 2019, 154–64). Ultimately, the event exerted a profound influence on many aspects of theatrical production, such as costumes, direction and sets, and served as an alternative to the stardom system of ancient drama productions

⁶⁴ The image of Prometheus as a Christian figure of sacrifice in the performance of *Prometheus Bound* is one of the symbols of peace and hope for a new beginning (Glytzouris 2010).

in Greece.⁶⁵ Since the Delphic Festivals represented a response to a period of crisis, they invited international audiences and addressed historical hardships through mystical aesthetics (Leontis 2019, 148–52).

By underscoring the significance of Wilhelm Leyhausen's *Sprechchor*⁶⁶ in ancient dramas staged in the inter-war period, Ioannidou suggests a dialogue between this and Sikelianos' approach, an idea supported by their shared fascination with archaic art and the primordial, Dionysian element (Ioannidou 2013, 327–45).⁶⁷ Furthermore, Sikelianos and Leyhausen both attempted to move away from conventional bourgeois culture and towards the eternal values of Greek drama, through which, according to Ioannidou, their ideas underlying their respective artistic projects pointed to the appeal of fascism (Ioannidou 2013).⁶⁸

In symbolic terms, involvement of the local youth played an important role in the Delphic approach, bestowing the impression of a natural connection with the classical past. The athletic games organized at the stadium of Delphi provided an opportunity to exalt the male body as a symbol of the continuity of Greek culture ever since antiquity in terms of masculinity and youth, essentially depicting the male body as a model of vigour and power that signified a continuum between past and present, simply by transforming classical figures and representations into live athletes (Plantzos, 2014b). Eva seemed to imply this in her application to the Archaeological Department of the Ministry of Education to reuse the stadium, when she lauded the local youth from Mount Parnassus for their courage and strength: 'the Greek populace preserves the [athletic] tradition in all its splendour, but nowhere as much on Greek soil as in the sturdy populace of Parnassos'.⁶⁹ Similarly, she provides a compelling image of local young men in the spectacles: 'The resurrection of ancient Greece united with the new Greek life. The word of Aeschylus echoed;

⁶⁵ For instance, the performances by Kyveli Andrianou and Marika Kotopouli (Sideris 1976, 240–53 and 293–301).

⁶⁶ German term that describes the chorus' group recitation.

⁶⁷ Their relation can also be appreciated through the correspondence between Leyhausen and Eva in the early 1930s (ESA/BM, folder 31).

⁶⁸ The 1934 production of Aeschylus' *The Persians* by Leyhausen at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus reflected this teleological approach (Mavromoustakos 2004).

⁶⁹ DAHAAR, Box 602 B, Folder C (1925), Subfolder 3/39. The plan was for the Delphic Festivals to take place in 1926, as Eva and Angelos had already obtained permission to perform in the stadium and theatre, but they were postponed until the following year.

the young men showed their vigour [...] in throwing stones and javelins; songs of Roumeli and of Epirus were heard; valiant boys and beautiful girls danced on the threshing [...] with their bright dresses; Greek peasant art was displayed before Greeks and foreigners in the [...] brought together by Angelica Hatgimichali'.⁷⁰

By contrast, the young local women were earmarked for an artistic role and were initially intended to form the play's chorus. Although they were ultimately rejected, they nevertheless participated in the spectacles by performing local dances (*I Vradyni* 11 January 1925; *I Vradyni* 12 January 1925; Tsarouchis 1966, 234; Glytzouris 2010), which were accompanied by villagers singing kleftic songs. In a documentary produced decades later, one of the women gave a direct account of her experience, in which she proudly described her participation: 'I was the best in the festival, ask Pagoula, in dance and everything [...] we took part [...] and Sikelianos treated us, we were fourteen years old, to orange juice and suchlike, because we were the Delphi team; they took special care of us'.⁷¹

Her affectionate attitude towards Sikelianos possibly reflects the general euphoria that the festivals aroused in the village, which for the first time witnessed a large number of Greeks and foreigners gathering enthusiastically there. Gradually, the community – primarily the local youth – and the village in which they lived acquired the role of being 'on display': the young men were portrayed as the genuine descendants of a population that had inhabited the same site down through the ages, while the village became what Dicks described as a talking environment: a space that functions as an exhibition presenting a series of unique symbols and messages to its visitors (Dicks 2004, 17). The emergence of such an environment was the result of the organizers' attempt to transform the community into an exhibition in itself, as proof of cultural authenticity (MacCannell 1999, 91–107); hence, the festival programme declared:

Exhibition of Arts and Crafts [...] an exhibition organized and displayed in various houses of the village will include examples of crafts of all sorts which still exist in

⁷⁰ ESA/BM folder 15, notebook 7–8.

⁷¹ Παρασκήνιο: Η αναβίωση του αρχαίου δράματος, Δελφικές Γιορτές 1927 (1998), AAHBC: <https://archive.ert.gr/6841/>.

Greece so that the visitor will form an idea of the life and art, along with the manners and customs of modern Greek peasants.⁷²

Presumably, Eva believed that Greek folk customs and crafts had been preserved unchanged, retaining elements of the ancient Greek essence alongside the oriental characteristics of more recent Greek tradition, and felt that this would be consummately illustrated by the village of Delphi. This explains her attempt to revive Greek antiquity through an alternative approach, adopting elements from folk tradition and Byzantine music (Leontis 2019, 103–20). This vision was echoed in the work of the famous photographer Elli Seraidari (also known as Nelly's), who covered both festivals (Damaskos 2008; Katsari 2013). Nelly's idealized perception of antiquity ingeniously reflected Eva's fusion of classical and modern Greek customs and chimed perfectly with the ideological orientation of the festival. A reminiscence from Yannis Tsarouchis, the renowned painter and set designer who attended the festival, echoed this blend of conceptions as he reflected on local participation:

‘at sunset, among other games, the children in Delphi were also imitating the performance of Prometheus. Through their fresh, heroic voices, in the mountains, as they were reciting what they remembered, a Greek essence was revealed to me. An essence that the performance itself did not reflect so clearly’.⁷³

It was thus the local representation of classical values, delivered via the voices of children from Delphi, which Tsarouchis deemed most authentic and natural. The systematization of local customs achieved through the festivals was to some extent regarded as contrasting with the more natural, even organic, relationship between the locals and their heritage. As illustrated by the Greek cultural activity of the period, indigenous archaeologies often come to forge and represent the idea of a national identity, embodying the virtues of the nation's indigenous heritage to a degree that state-sponsored and academic archaeology does not and could not (Plantzos 2014b).

⁷² Delphic Festival Programme 1927 (ESA/BM folder 15).

⁷³ ‘Τὰ μικρὰ παιδιὰ στοὺς Δελφοὺς κατὰ τὸ ἡλιοβασίλεμα ἀνάμεσα στὰ ἄλλα παιχνίδια τοὺς ἐμιμοῦντο καὶ τὴν παράσταση τοῦ Προμηθεά. Οἱ δροσερεῖς ἡρωϊκὲς φωνές τοὺς, μέσα στὰ βουνά, καθὼς ἀπάγγελαν ὅ,τι θυμόνταν καὶ ὅπως τὸ θυμόνταν, μοῦ ἀποκάλυψαν μιὰ ἐλληνικὴ οὐσία. Μιὰ οὐσία ποὺ ἡ ἴδια ἡ παράσταση δὲν ἔδιδε τόσο καθαρά’ (Tsarouchis 1966, 234).

The goal of attenuating regional particularities is apparent in the additional performance staged exclusively for the locals in Delphi and described in the following anonymously published poem:

‘Disciplined local peasants / not one of them attended the first performance / but they did attend the one intended / for them on the third day / [...] once they had dressed up / no one stayed at home / [...] a sea of faces / [...] even though the sun was burning them / it lit up their clothes / a thousand crazed gleams / an unimaginable revolution of colours’.⁷⁴

Treating regional communities as exotic museum pieces is precisely what bestows alleged superiority on the collectivizing forces, while undermining the locals’ capacity to establish a rapport with the intellectual public by presenting them as passive, quaint figures. In other words, by marking out peripheral groups as special and different from the main national body, agents of modernity attempt to annex and absorb the cultural life of pre-modern societies (Dicks 2004, 31). According to Glytzouris, Sikelianos’ revival of the Delphic Festivals ‘was another attempt of ideological formulation of a Greek elite community. The criticism in the professional modern Greek theatre of the era, as well as the Greek upper-class reaction to mass sport, clearly constitute a continuity with the ideals of a native amateurism as a vehicle for the social distinction of elite from the middle classes’ (2010, 2106). On this way of thinking, though, although classical antiquity may have been a fundamental component of the bourgeoisie’s national narrative, it was only the remote Greek rural population that supposedly retained an organic perception of it. In the eyes of the idealist (and adoptive Greek) Eva, this relationship was proof of the continuity of Greek culture from ancient to modern times, whereas for the locals, antiquities remained local objects experienced in everyday life. This was evidenced by their protective attitude towards the archaeological site (Ouranis 1967, 239), which was more a reaction to its increasing popularity⁷⁵

⁷⁴ ‘Πειθαρχικοί οι χωριάτες οι γειτονικοί / κανείς τους στην παράσταση δεν πάτησε την πρώτη / αλλά ήρθανε σ’ αυτή που προωρίστηκε / γι’ αυτούς την τρίτη την ημέρα. [...] αφού καλά στολίστηκαν / [...] στο σπίτι του δεν έμεινε κανείς / [...] ανθρωποθάλασσα αληθινή / [...] ο Ήλιος ας τους έψενε/όμως τους φώταε τις φορεσιές / με χίλιες δυό τρελλές αναλαμπές / αφάνταστη χρωμάτων επανάσταση’ (Georgantas 1971, 77).

⁷⁵ In Dicks’ analysis: ‘In cultural centres, however, where there is a strong educational function alongside tourist spectacle, local people may participate out of a conscious commitment to local history’ (Dicks 2004, 61).

than to any centralized national narrative. The locals' harmonious integration of antiquities and everyday activities seems to have disturbed some visitors, as can be seen in the newspaper *Estia*:

‘Visitors to Delphi [...] aspire to enjoy a moment of serenity and reflection in order to reconstruct the Sanctuary in their imagination as it once was, but this is not possible with nightshirts hung out in plain view from the houses overlooking the excavations, or with the noise from the public road’.⁷⁶

In contrast to Tsarouchis, the writer and journalist Spyridon Paganelis complained that the locals' voices intruded on the ears of a daydreamer (Paganelis 1909, 57–9). As he strolled around Delphi soaking up the ambience – an act as much spatial as temporal – the ruins transported him back to an atmospheric past, from which he was rudely awakened by savage cries returning him to the wretched reality of the modern inhabitants of Delphi: ‘The peasants’ cries assault the hearing of the daydreamer, with the dissonant discordance of a boisterous reality [...] in the sacred silence and the devout reverie of the soul absorbed in the charm of a lost world that once lived and thrived here’ (Paganelis 1909, 57). His words show that despite the locals' eager participation in the festivals, this native archaeology that perceived antiquity as an integral and organic part of the landscape still contrasted unfavourably with the classicizing national attitude towards those same antiquities. Perhaps more importantly, it also reflects the extent to which Western modernity had permeated the mindset of Greek intellectuals, who sought to impose an unequivocal and authoritative view of classical antiquity. The locals' vivid interpretation of ancient theatre as a central but ordinary part of existence is here in conflict with modernist perceptions of national heritage.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ ‘Ο επισκέπτης τῶν Δελφῶν [...] ἔχει τὴν ἀξίωσιν νὰ τύχη μιᾶς στιγμῆς γαλήνης καὶ συγκεντρώσεως, διὰ ν’ ἀναπαραστήσῃ μὲ τὴν φαντασίαν τοῦ τὸ Ἱερὸν ὡς ἦτο ποτὲ, πράγμα, τὸ ὁποῖον δὲν ἐπιτυγχάνεται οὕτω μὲ τὴν θέαν τῶν ἀπλωμένων νυκτικῶν τῶν ἄνωθι τῶν ἀνασκαφῶν οἰκιῶν, οὔτε μὲ τὴν θορυβώδη κίνησιν τῆς δημοσίας οδοῦ’ (*Estia*, n.d., retrieved from AKK/ASCSA, Series III, Folder 101.1).

⁷⁷ The locals' use of the theatres was not always conducive to the protection of the site: reports from both Delphi and Epidaurus in the early 1930s decried their repeated use of the archaeological sites for pasture and agriculture, which often led to neglect and damage, as indicated by the many cases of animals pastured on archaeological sites at Delphi (DAHAAR, Box 602 E, Folder D (1933), Subfolder 3/16; Box 602 ST, Folder ST (1934), Subfolder 3/24). For similar cases in Epidaurus, see DAHAAR, Box 602 E, Folder B, Subfolder 3/12.

Despite the positive reactions, Greek leftist journalists and intellectuals extensively criticized the recondite ideas of the Festivals. Kosmas Politis, for instance, heavily criticized Sikelianos' obscure spirit (*Socialistiki Zoi* 20 June 1930, 113–4).⁷⁸ For instance, Politis addressed issues such as the archaeolatry of the modern Greek intelligentsia that persisted in exercising its abstruse cant over the uninitiated population. Sikelianos' utopian ideology, his pursuit of a new human who would bring a spiritual revolution, and his perception of tradition as an opportunity to create a new conceptual reality (Ben-Ghiat 2001, 2–3) brought him close to the Italian fascist movement, in the eyes of the intellectual circles of *Noumas* (June 1930, 142; see also Van Steen 2002 and Van Steen 2008). At the same time, conservative circles also criticized the festival on the grounds that it lacked professionalism and quality. It was often described as a spectacle of aesthetic pomposity and naivety (Rotas 1927).

In the aftermath of the Delphic Festivals, requests to reuse ancient venues such as the Odeon gradually increased, but most companies had only amateur ambitions. In addition, while director Fotos Politis had created the company Professional School of Drama (Επαγγελματική Σχολή Θεάτρου) in 1925 and had had an extensive theatrical activity, he had to dissolve it in 1929 because he was involved with the upcoming foundation of the new National Theatre of Greece. Beyond the fulfillment of the diachronic national claim for a state theatre, it was the celebration of the 100-year anniversary of the Greek state that rendered the creation of the National Theatre imperative. The committee responsible for the celebration advocated the need for a theatrical company that represented the national values of such an emblematic commemoration.⁷⁹ Therefore, Minister of Education Georgios Papandreou and the Venizelos Government pursued the creation of a modern company that projected national aesthetics. Coincidentally, the committee of the Delphic Festivals officially requested to be part of the national anniversary, as the celebration coincided with the second Festival.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ For the socialist view on performing ancient theatre in the 1920s see also Van Steen 2007, 126.

⁷⁹ Triantafyllou 2015. It was the Sub-committee of National Museums and Herodes Theatre (Υποεπιτροπή Εθνικών Μουσείων και Θεάτρου Ηρώδου) and National Theatre Sub-committee (Υποεπιτροπή Εθνικού Θεάτρου) that assumed the responsibility of the restoration of the Odeon and the foundation of the National Theatre. See also AID/GSAG, Folder 47, Subfolder 1; *Estia* 5 March 1929; *Patris* 30 March 1929.

⁸⁰ AID/GSAG, Folder 50, Subfolder 11. However, the reason for the abandonment of the project is unknown.

The national press and the *Association of Greek Actors* (*Σωματεῖον Ἑλλήνων Ἡθοποιῶν*) stressed the national significance of the celebration and the need for performances that could honour the symbolic values of the event at the Odeon.⁸¹ Greek intellectuals unanimously supported the initiative (Antoniou 2011, 78–80), and the National Theatre was officially created in May 1930. Yet artistic disputes, conflicting interests, and the pursuit of power soon undermined its cultural authority. Confrontation among actors, directors, and politicians led to sociopolitical conflicts that ended only when Fotos Politis was assigned director of the institution (Stamatoyannaki 2013).

Meanwhile, the Odeon of Herodes Atticus was restored and fenced to host the large-scale spectacles of the National Theatre. Until 1929, its condition had deteriorated and presented damages that impeded the production of modern spectacles.⁸² Ioannis Damvergis, General Secretary of the committee of the 100-year anniversary of the Greek state and later President of the National Theatre, considerably contributed to the refurbishment of the Odeon,⁸³ by collaborating with architect Anastasios Orlandos in the restoration works (seats, entrances, and backstage).⁸⁴ Damvergis' efforts to reconstruct the Odeon as a modern venue indicates the authorities' intention to prepare the ancient monument for future large-scale spectacles. Soon after the foundation of the National Theatre, the GNTO and Spyros Melas proposed organizing annual festivals at the Odeon, in which the national company would perform Aeschylus' tragedies (Mallouchou-Tufano 1998, 241–2).⁸⁵

Although the third Delphic Festival was planned for 1933, the spectacle was cancelled after the rejection of the Greek government to finance the foundation of a Delphic University. In an undated letter, Eva disclosed that the Greek state decided to only support the festivals if they took

⁸¹ AID/GSAG, Folder 47, Subfolder 1.

⁸² The Orlandos agreed with the proposal of fencing it and stated that no performance should take place until the works were finished (DAHAAR, Box 602 C, Folder A (1929), Subfolder 3/57).

⁸³ AID/GSAG, Folder 47, Subfolder 1. Letter by Papandreou to Damvergis proposing his participation as a member of the Council of the National Theatre in May 1929.

⁸⁴ AID/GSAG, Folder 43, Subfolder 1. Telegram by Anastasios Orlandos to Damvergis.

⁸⁵ The name Royal Theatre appeared for the first time in the premier of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* on 29 October 1935, aligning the denomination with the state transition, few days before the official restoration of monarchy. This change was ratified by law on the eve of the referendum (Stamatoyannaki 2013, note 226). For the struggles and directional disputes in the first two years of its existence see Stamatoyannaki 2013, 51–60 and Arvaniti 2010, ch. 3.

up a commercial or tourist character in the model of similar European spectacles.⁸⁶ In her notebook,⁸⁷ she claimed that the Delphic Festivals were the only rational escape from the hostilities and tragic events of the world and their commercialization would convert Delphi into ‘a sort of Coney Island or Hollywood, or Luna Park’.⁸⁸ To continue the Delphic legacy, Sikelianos and Palmer managed to organize at least one performance in Athens. The project used a natural slope with theatrical shape at the Philopappos hill to stage Sikelianos’ tragedy *The Dithyramb of the Rose* on 24 April 1933 (Puchner 2003). It involved the construction of a semi-permanent theatre that was cut off from the residential area in Athens, but in reality, it represented a temporary solution that would prepare the ground for their ultimate goal; the construction of a copy of the theatre of Epidauros in Athens financed by the Greek state.⁸⁹

After the abandonment of the project in 1933, the 10th anniversary of the first Delphic Festival was celebrated at the hall of Parnassos Literary Society. The *National Herald* (13 June 1937) offers an intriguing account of the celebration. In particular, one of the speakers, the journalist Michael Rodas informed about Sikelianos’ ongoing projects to revive the ancient Greek drama and the Delphic Idea. A *Delphic Organization* was officially created in Greece in 1934 (Law 6323, FEK 382, 3 November 1934) after the proposal of the Minister of Education, Ioannis

⁸⁶ ESA/BM folder 9.

⁸⁷ ESA/BM folder 15. As Leontis stresses, her preference for amateur performers and her non-commercial approach to staging testify to her wider utopian vision (2019, 161–4).

⁸⁸ ESA/BM folder 15, notebook 27–30. Despite Sikelianos’ spiritual objectives, the Greek press, and even Aiginitis, viewed the Delphic endeavour as an ideal start in the appropriation of Greek heritage for the sake of economic restructuring of Greece (*Patris* 1 May 1930, 1; *Ethnos* 2 May 1930, 1).

⁸⁹ ESA/BM folder 9. After the second Delphic Festival, Eva began to focus on the grandiosity and monumental scale of the theatre of Epidauros. During the preparations of the 1939 New York World’s Fair, Eva suggested to the Greek state the reconstruction of the theatre of Epidauros there and its later exploitation as cultural venue. According to her correspondence (most probably written at some point in 1937), by reconstructing the theatre of Epidauros, the overwhelming power of the Greek tragedy would triumph before the American eyes. She also proposed that the National Theatre participate in the endeavour. However, despite her suggestions, the Greek pavilion adopted a different, classicizing style of Metaxas’ aesthetics, in harmony with the fascist orientation of various European states of the time (Markessinis 2011).

Makropoulos, who brought the issue to the Greek Senate.⁹⁰ According to the secretary of the Delphic Organization, Dimitris Ntountounakis, the project involved the construction of a basic infrastructure at Delphi by Dimitris Pikionis. This would be divided and conceded to international institutions that would build their guesthouses as part of an ecumenical community (*Paratiritis* 21 July 1934, 1). However, the lack of money and external positive response led to its gradual abandonment.

2.3. International collaboration and the contacts among European intellectuals

The occasions that offered the opportunity for international contacts among classicists were the Italian open-air spectacles and the Delphic Festivals in 1927 and 1930. The Italian spectacles worked mainly as incentive for implementation of national projects of cultural revival, while the Delphic experiment concentrated intellectuals from around Europe and propelled international contact and collaboration.⁹¹ Representatives of European institutions and organizations appeared to be the ideal agents for the creation of an international spiritual union, at a time when the classical culture dominated the public sphere (Wrigley 2015, ch. 3). Scholars from around Europe also found in Delphi an opportunity to extend their contacts and talk about their work (*Corriere della*

⁹⁰ AKK/ASCSA Series III, Folder 101.1, Acts of the Greek Senate, Session 4 September 1934, 14–6. See also *Paratiritis* 21 July 1934. Negotiations did not only involve the revival of the Delphic ideals of Sikelianos like in other similar European endeavours, but also the nature and language of such events (ancient Greek, katharevousa or demotic language). Despite the eventual abandonment of the project, even in 1938 and perhaps in view of the new developments in the revival of the ancient drama by the National Theatre, Sikelianos attempted to contact Bastias to discuss the revival of his Delphic Idea (Bournazakis 2000, 244–5).

⁹¹ Although the reception of the Festival of Syracuse in Greece was enthusiastic until 1927, it was derided by Greek intellectuals after the celebration of the Delphic Festivals. For instance, Alkis Thrylos fiercely criticized the Sicilian spectacle in 1927 for its scenographic approach, costumes, and chorus (1927a). However, his disappointment had to do with the aesthetic perspective of the open-air theatre, which did not project the appropriate emotional effect. Similarly, the novelist and journalist Grigorios Xenopoulos also expressed his dissatisfaction with the Festival of Syracuse because it lacked authentic expression. Xenopoulos believed that this quality could only be displayed in Greece, which was the cradle of civilization. (*I Diaplasis ton Paidon* 21 May 1927b; Thrylos 1927b). Therefore, intellectual circles that viewed the Delphic Festivals as an opportunity to create a theatrical tradition of ancient drama in Greece began considering the Italian festival as a competitor.

Sera 11 May 1927, 3).⁹² At the same time, diplomatic connection of the Delphic Festivals with similar ventures would ensure its stature. This is why the Delphi organizers attempted to collaborate with the Festival of Syracuse and the INDA. Aiginitis approached the INDA with a vision of Mediterranean cooperation, an international attempt to encourage the excursionist movement and classical revival. His relationship with the INDA materialized in his participation at the publication of two articles in the Italian theatrical journal *Dioniso*,⁹³ where he addressed aspects of the Greek classical revival in the early 20th century⁹⁴ and the myth of Euripides' *Alcestes*.⁹⁵ He indeed forged an intellectual circle and close relationship with the Italian organizers of the Festival of Syracuse, who invited him to become member of the Institute. During his participation at the Festival in 1930, symbolic exchange of gifts appeared momentarily to embody Sikelianos' international ideals (Venezia 2008). Italian intellectuals assigned him to bring and symbolically plant a papyrus sedge at Delphi. The planting took place near Kastalia springs, where Aiginitis pronounced a grandiloquent speech that alluded to the future Greco-Italian cooperation and international harmony: 'an Italophile atmosphere was also formed in Delphi. Both the Greek and Italian press enthusiastically covered the success of the Delphic Festival 1930 and the idea of

⁹² International exhibitions, world fairs, and congresses created a prominent international arena that facilitated intellectuals' communication and collaboration (Swenson 2013, ch. 3).

⁹³ *Dioniso* kept covering issues on the Greek theatrical issues during this period, probably under the guidance of Aiginitis and Philadelphus (see also Miniotti 2017/2018, 70–1). The journal retained its international character with articles on the revival at Orange, Delphi, but also classical theatre in the United Kingdom, Germany and even Spain with the cultural programme at the Teatre Grec of the Exposition in Barcelona during the first years of publication. The journal offered perhaps the first example of an introspection in the classical revival of drama in the 20th century and covered an international spectrum that was quite impressive in the issues raised and discussed. Additionally, it covered extensive material on the particular features and revival of many ancient theatres around Italy, with articles and features of Italian intellectuals, archaeologists, and members of the INDA.

⁹⁴ Kotopouli, Kanellos, Philadelphus, and the Delphic Festivals among others (Aiginitis 1929a).

⁹⁵ Aiginitis 1929b. During its first volumes the journal was open to international spectacles and particularly issues on Greek revival, offering space for publication to another Greek intellectual, Philadelphus, who published on ancient theatre and Kanellos' classical dances (Philadelphus 1929a; Philadelphus 1929b; Philadelphus 1930).

Greek-Italian collaboration'.⁹⁶ However, despite the Greek enthusiasm for such opportunity⁹⁷ such a collaboration was in name only since the dynamics of the two Festivals were completely unequal.

Similarly, cosmopolitan Spanish and Greek intellectuals sought a European cultural collaboration and a position in European modernity. The Spanish press extensively covered the first Delphic celebrations and compared them with the Bayreuth spectacles (*La Nación* 23 April 1927, 1; *La Época* 10 May 1927, 1). It was Eva and her economic investment that mostly impressed the Spanish news (*Heraldo de Madrid* 10 May 1927, 5). The Hellenist José Alsina Clota (*La Nación* 15 June 1927, 2) and the pioneer journalist María Luz Morales (*El Sol* 25 June 1927, 9) were among those who systematically covered the events.

It was, however, the Catalan writer, critic, and future politician Joan Estelrich i Artigues who attended the festival of 1927 and covered the events as correspondent for the newspaper *El Sol*. Estelrich was director of the Fundació Bernat Metge, institution that introduced and disseminated the Greek and Latin classics in the Catalan language from 1922 onwards. He saw the Delphic Festivals as a spiritual endeavour that merged a robust simplicity with the eternal symbolism of the Delphic oracle (*El Sol* 27 May 1927, 1; *El Sol* 8 June 1927, 2), yet he avoided verbalisms and the triumphalism of Sikelianos' discourse (*El Sol* 2 June 1927, 9).⁹⁸ The occasion offered him the opportunity to establish contacts with the EFA, an institution that represented large part of the international audience.⁹⁹

Crucial for this professional collaboration was the role of the Greek archaeologist and

⁹⁶ 'Δημιουργήθη και στους Δελφούς ιταλόφιλη ατμόσφαιρα. Τόσο δε ο ελληνικός τύπος όσο κι ο ιταλικός έγραψαν ενθουσιαστικά για την επιτυχία των Δελφικών Εορτών 1930, αλλά και για την ιδέα της ιταλοελληνικής συνεργασίας. Όλα όμως εκείνα σταμάτησαν εκεί' (*I Proia* 8 May 1930, 6).

⁹⁷ *Eleutheros Typos* (20 January 1927, 1) proposed exchange of ancient drama performances between Greeks and Italians in Delphi, the theatre of Dionysus, Syracuse, and Rome.

⁹⁸ Interestingly, Gazul's proposals came some months after the Delphic Festivals.

⁹⁹ In fact, Estelrich referred to the archaeologist and writer Saturnino Ximenes Enrich and his attempts to bring Hispanoamerican archaeologists to excavate in Greece together with the French institution, in an attempt to tighten professional contact (*El Sol* 10 June 1927, 2).

writer Alexandros Philadelphus who also attended the spectacles.¹⁰⁰ According to Estelrich, Philadelphus would make a professional trip to Spain, where he would attempt to create an extraordinary contact between the two countries and bring classical heritage in the front of cultural discussion (*El Sol* 27 May 1927, 1). What Estelrich referred to, was the attempt of the Spanish archaeologist José Ramón Mélida and Philadelphus to create a Spanish Archaeological Institute in Athens (Bellón Ruiz 2010, 128). However, the lack of funding and available personnel were decisive factors in the final abandonment of the project.¹⁰¹ Similarly, a little later, Catalan scholars and archaeologists in close contact with the Fundació Bernat Metge and politicians such as Francesc Cambó, contemplated the creation of a Catalan School of Archaeology in Athens to promote Catalan regional claims (Vidal 2016).¹⁰²

These relationships had been further extended through the artistic productions of the Catalan dancer Aurea de Sarrá, who had devoted her life to classical harmony, choreography, and plastic dances (*ABC Madrid* 3 June 1928, 7). By interpreting Antigone, Electra and Demeter, Aurea had adopted Duncan's modern choreographic approach and had received international fame. Her artistic expeditions to Italy (at the Flavian Amphitheatre in Rome in the presence of Mussolini) and Egypt (at the temple of Karnak and the temple of Isis on the island of Philae) had also brought her to Greece in 1926 (*Messenger d'Athènes* 28 April 1926). There, her connection with Greek intellectuals such as Philadelphus, Kostis and Nafsika Palamas, Nelly's and the dictator

¹⁰⁰ Philadelphus was self-proclaimed successor of Mistrionis, and founded the semi-professional theatrical company *Euripides*. His performances followed a conservative approach that attempted to recreate the 'authentic' classical spirit.

¹⁰¹ The project was revived some years later by the archaeologist José Ignacio Hervada, who worked mainly in Delos, along with the EFA in 1934 (Bellón Ruiz 2010, 128–132).

¹⁰² This Catalan attempt to promote classical Greek culture in the region reflected its ideological diversity from the rest of Spain in terms of the regional heritage. The ancient Greek monuments of Emporion functioned as symbolic lever to nurture the Catalan nationalism and promote its own national (or regional in cases like the conservative Cambó) objectives. The construction of the open-air Teatre Grec in the model of the Epidauros theatre on the hill of Montjuïc by Ramon Reventós for the 1929 Barcelona International Exposition attest for such orientation and for an early modernization attempt of the Spanish region of Catalonia. The same occurs with a series of cultural manifestations and archaeological endeavours, such as the International Congress of Archaeology the same year, which contrast with the more stagnated rest of Spain that needed to wait for the Second Republic to assume a proper endeavour of classical culture in direct relation with antiquities. See also Gracia Alonso 2013.

Theodoros Pangalos, who had recently seized power, had resulted in the organization of numerous dance performances.¹⁰³ During her stay in Greece, she had performed classical dances alone or along with other Greek dancers at the theatre of Dionysus, the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, Delphi, Eleusis, the temple of Zeus and even the Acropolis (Ayensa i Prat 2017). It had been mainly Philadelphus' conservative theatrical company Euripides that had organized and participated at Aurea's spectacles in Greece, with the Greek press often parodying them as a mere farse.

It was with Nafsika Palamas and Philadelphus that Aurea passed some months in Catalonia after the Delphic Festivals of 1927, in the same trip that Philadelphus came in contact with Spanish archaeologists. Palamas and Philadelphus probably attended Aurea's performance *Festa Popular d'una Alta Valor Clàssica*, organized by the Fundació Bernat Metge and Estelrich (Vilallonga 2008). Along with her performances at the Teatre Grec and L'Arc de Berà, these spectacles marked a direct result of the intellectual interconnection between the two countries.¹⁰⁴ Thus, immediately after the first Delphic Festival and some months after Aurea's stay in Greece, Catalan intellectuals and artists disseminated classical antiquity and the idea of a common European and Hellenic heritage. Even though their initial endeavours remained isolated, soon the classical culture would emerge in greater level in the rest of Spain.

Another Catalan from the same intellectual circles, Eugeni d'Ors i Rovira, journalist, writer and philosopher, assumed a little later a profound connection with the Greek matters. D'Ors supported the idea of universal cooperation and actively engaged with Angelos Sikelianos' Delphic vision during the Second Delphic Festival in 1930 in a trip supervised by the EFA. He represented Spain in the International Institute of Spiritual Cooperation in Paris, an institution that promoted international cooperation in artistic and cultural fields. During his trip to Greece, d'Ors covered the Delphic Festivals in great detail both for Greek and Spanish newspapers, such as *Eleutheron Vima* (Fraggou Kikilia 2005) and *Blanco y Negro*.¹⁰⁵ His articles on the Delphic

¹⁰³ International acquaintances with figures such as Josep Clarà (Vilallonga 1999, 43–5) and Enrique Gómez Carrillo, close friend to Philadelphus (Vilallonga 2008), must have facilitated her spectacles in Greece.

¹⁰⁴ She also performed in Barcelona at the 5th International Congress of Archaeology (*La Esfera* 19 October 1929, 23), which Mélida and Macías also attended, and during a Congress of skin cancer in 1929 (*Blanco y Negro* 10 November 1929, 57).

¹⁰⁵ For the Spanish artistic newspaper *Blanco y Negro*, he had adopted the alias *Un Ingenio de esta Corte* in his column 'Calendario y Lunario, La vida breve', from 1925 to 1931.

Festivals provide a compelling account of the Spanish activities and international contacts. D'Ors started publishing on the matter already in March (*Blanco y Negro* 3 March 1930, 100) and provided an extensive description of his trip (*Blanco y Negro* 18 May 1930, 92–3) and his acquaintance with the Spanish sculptor Josép Clará, the aristocrat Margot Calleja (wife of the German diplomat in Spain Erich Heberlein) and the Argentinian painter Rodolfo Alcorta, who were also invited to the festivals. Another significant personality that was formally invited was the writer and professor of Classical philology at the University of Salamanca Miguel de Unamuno. Unamuno remained especially connected with the Greek intelligentsia of the time and kept correspondence with Nafsika Palamas, Spyros Melas, Pantelis Prevelakis, and other Greek intellectuals (Metzidakis 1989). Unamuno's profound knowledge of classical literature and the modern Greek revival of ancient drama were significant factors for his involvement with the Festival of Merida few years later.

While D'Ors' philosophical mindset advocated for the fusion of aesthetics with science and politics to achieve a European unity (D'Ors 2006, 100–5) he systematically supported a Mediterranean classicism and spiritual universalism (Malé I Pegueroles, Cabré Monne, and Jufresa Muñoz 2004). His idealist perception of classical Greece, equal to many intellectuals in Spain and Catalonia in the period, stemmed from Noucentisme's belief that it was the only way European culture would reach its high destination (*I Vradyni* 26 April 1930). By rejecting liberal nationalism in favour of a nationalist elitism based on antiparliamentary system, d'Ors defended the idea of a supranational cultural unity in a noucentist Europe (Pascual Sastre 1992). His approach was doomed to develop later to the intellectual legitimization of Falangism and a totalitarian classicism in Spain (Duplá 2012; See also section 3.3). His noucentist approach appears in the reception of the Delphic ideal as the beginning of a change in the spiritual world, which rejects modernizing aspirations for tourist development in Delphi. In contrast, his vision encapsulated a fusion of cultural, spiritual, philosophical, and athletic activities in Delphi. His conception of the festival laid in the intellectual attempt to reconcile the theatrical tendencies of naturism and avant-garde into a new mode of universal representation. For d'Ors, the Christianization of the figure of Prometheus along with the byzantine music was an attempt to charge ancient tragedy with eternal qualities (*Blanco y Negro* 8 June 1930, 67–70).

During his trip, d'Ors did not fail to interact with prestigious Greek and international circles that included politicians, journalists, diplomats, and intellectuals in Athens (the costume designer and decorator Panos Aravantinos, the aristocratic family Efkleidi, and the minister Andreas Michalakopoulos, among others, *Blanco y Negro* 15 June 1930, 75–6); he attended the Panathenaic procession (part of the celebration of the 100-year anniversary of the Greek State that took place in that period), a revival of a classical festivity that was celebrated in the whole city and culminated at the Acropolis hill. Even during the Delphic Festival, the numerous international attendees presented a quasi-diplomatic opportunity for d'Ors, who interacted with them in view of international collaborations (*Blanco y Negro* 15 June 1930, 76; *Blanco y Negro* 29 June 1930, 68–9).

In the discussion of the international members on the Delphic endeavour, d'Ors adopted a dominant role and was one of the main supporters of Sikelianos' vision. His proposal involved the creation of a cultural and spiritual institution that would disseminate the Delphic Idea and establish a philosophical centre (*Eleutheron Vima* 4 May 1930). Despite his confrontation with French representatives such as Gabriel Boissy and Gastón Rageot (president of the *Société des Gens de Létres*) on the nature of the Delphic approach, as they sustained a more practical, theatrical, and artistic approach, d'Ors' ambitious yet delusional proposal was accepted by the intellectuals who signed the creation of the Delphic Idea. Later, these French intellectuals accused d'Ors of the neglect to revive ancient tragedy in Spain (*La Gaceta Literaria* 15 June 1930, 1). D'Ors and possibly Sikelianos had in mind a federal aim of an Amphictyonic league with occidental orientation and European style (*La Gaceta Literaria* 15 June 1930, 1–2).¹⁰⁶ In a way, the growing philhellenism of Catalonia from the end of the 19th century was as part of the regional and national claims related to its Greek heritage and claim of exceptionality in the Spanish nation state (García Alonso 2013).

Another Spanish artist of the time was also involved with the Delphic Idea and the national intelligentsia, however his participation to the Festivals is not documented. This artist is the painter

¹⁰⁶ Despite the failure to materialize Sikelianos ideas, d'Ors remained devoted to the cause of international unity through humanities, science, and culture, and even decades later would claim the emerging need to recommence ecumenical endeavours (D'Ors 1949). In the same spirit see also d'Ors 1944.

Gregorio Prieto, member of the Spanish *Generation of '27*.¹⁰⁷ His cosmopolitan character and European adventures brought him to Paris, Italy (*Academia de España en Roma*) and Greece in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Prieto's deep connection with the Greek and classical art is highly visible in his paintings from that period on, due to his contact with the classical culture. In his first trip to Greece in 1930, he learnt of the Delphic Festivals and finally made it there to a trip that marked his artistic expression (Carrasco 2007). Sikelianos contributed to the holistic perception of the Greek spirit and the ritualistic romanticism that traverses his works. The Delphic Idea remained in Prieto's mind as the place where the internal connection between ancient culture and tragedy could connect with the modern spectator in a harmonic engagement beyond the perception of time. The influence of the Greek culture as a whole led him to present his own exhibition in Athens in 1930 (Carrasco 2007, 92)¹⁰⁸ and 1933 (*El Heraldo de Madrid* 28 December 1933, 10; *Luz* 28 December 1933, 3), thanks to his important network of Greek intellectuals such as Palamas and Sikelianos.

The same inter-war inquiries turn the interest of Greek intellectuals from another sphere of social conception towards the Spanish paradigm. The cosmopolitan, neoromantic character of individual Greek writers and journalists such as Kostas Ouranis, Zacharias Papantoniou, and Nikos Kazantzakis, urged them to seek contact with European culture, art, and architecture (Kazantzakis and Ouranis had a deep connection with Sikelianos). Spain became central to their international expeditions, which they documented through extensive publications to the press (and later monographs). Despite the fact that their readings on the Spanish customs and people originated in a variety of cliché statements and narratives, mainly from the 19th century French and British intellectuals that focused on the commonplace, customary villagers and landscapes, their views on the quick-shifting Spanish society produced interesting insights that shaped the image of Spain in the broader public in Greece from the 1920s, the Spanish Civil War, and until the early 1950s (Paleologos 2016).

¹⁰⁷ The Generation of '27 was a large literary and artistic group that arose in the 1920s and produced avant-garde forms of art and literature. Its members adopted an intellectual style and attempted to reconceptualize their cultural reality by balancing between tradition and renovation.

¹⁰⁸ There, from 5 to 9 June 1930 he exhibited paintings inspired by the Delphic Festivals.

Ouranis had begun his numerous trips to Spain in 1919, while Kazantzakis had visited the country as a journalist for the first time in 1926 to cover the character and orientation of the dictatorship, in view of the similar regime in Greece of the time.¹⁰⁹ These three intellectuals attempted to grasp the Spanish mentality, converse with the Castillian and Moorish art and architecture, along with the Spanish classical tradition of the Spanish Golden Age. Their accounts attested to the ongoing structural changes of the Spanish society towards modernity in the 1920s and grasped the Spanish quest for modern life and national regeneration that characterized the country after the identity crisis of 1898. Kazantzakis turned towards Spanish classical literature and philosophy such as Unamuno's spiritualism (Quiroz Pizarro 2015), Francisco Giner de los Rios' *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, and Ortega y Gasset's Europeanism, which formulated the manifestation of the Spanish longing for modernity (Kazantzakis 2002). Kazantzakis had a deep connection with Spanish literature and intellectuals such as Juan Ramón Jiménez, Rosa Chacel Arimón and her husband Timoteo Pérez Rubio. His translations and articles on Spanish artists and writers were some of the first accounts that introduced the Spanish culture to Greece. Ouranis also identified the clash between the all-encompassing traditional perception of life with the emerging modernist vision for liberalization in the early decades of the 20th century (Ouranis 1997). Their account therefore seems an accidental capture of the emerging social and political rejection of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship and the republican endeavour of the 1930s.

2.4. Festival of Merida and the republican revival (1932–1934)

After the loss of political and institutional support, dictator Primo de Rivera was forced to resign in March 1930. The honour and prestige of king Alfonso XIII, who had initially permitted the establishment of the seven-year dictatorship, was also heavily damaged. Despite his desperate attempts to reverse the political course, he was forced to abdicate in April 1931 by the outcome of the municipal elections and the revolutionary committee that a little later proclaimed the republican regime. It was under these circumstances that the new regime introduced a new sociocultural

¹⁰⁹ Additionally, Kazantzakis and Papantoniou were journal reporters for the two fronts for the national government and the insurgent army, respectively (Papantoniou 1982).

reform, which intended to overcome elitism, popularize artistic expression, and legitimize its modernizing status.

At the same time, following the sociocultural prestige that Merida had acquired during the previous years, and the numerous cultural revivals that had taken place at the Roman theatre, its use as ideological vehicle for the new regime was expected. A formal project for theatrical performances was set up on the initiative of the Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts, Fernando de los Ríos in 1932 (*Crónica* 2 July 1933, 20; See also González-Vázquez 2015, 497 and González-Vázquez 2016, 109–10). His idea resulted in negotiations with the Mayor of Merida that led to the performance of Seneca's *Medea* on 18 June 1933 by the company of Margarita Xirgu and Enrique Borrás, under the direction of Cipriano de Rivas Cherif (Figure 6).

The principles of Republican Spain that produced these cultural expressions were those of an intellectual bourgeoisie that emerged along with the new regime. In this way, the allusion of the spectacle to Republican ideals was not only expressed by the presence of various members of the government, including the president,¹¹⁰ and the singing of the Republic's *Himno de Riego*¹¹¹ but also through the broader social context of the performance. In reality, the festival was executed in the spirit of *Misiones Pedagógicas*¹¹² with the aim of cultivating theatrical tradition and of reducing illiteracy rates in peripheral centres, through popular theatre. In these terms, the play reflected the cultural and social transformation of the Spanish Republic. No matter what, Seneca could easily be identified with the ideological and intellectual transformation the republic was

¹¹⁰ What exasperated right-wing press and caused many caustic critics was that the director of the play Rivas-Cherif was close friend and brother-in-law of Manuel Azaña, the Prime Minister of the time and later President of the Republic. Rivas-Cherif's implications with the political life of the Republic is also apparent in his later arrest and condemn to death penalty in Germany, under Franco's program of extermination of political and civilian adversaries from 1939 on in Germany and later Nazi occupied France.

¹¹¹ The anthem of Riego was sung in Spain as a semi-official national anthem during the Second Spanish Republic, with many varying lyrics.

¹¹² *Misiones Pedagógicas* was a national project that aimed to support general culture and organize cultural events in the Spanish periphery (Monleón 2004, 61–75; González-Vázquez 2015, 493–5; Ferrer Cayón 2016, 75–9). Monleón claimed that in the first half of the 20th century, Greek classics were only subject of a limited number of agents that addressed experts, theatre and art historians, and philologists, and sought to examine the social reality of ancient culture through the ancient text. In contrast, in 1933 it was the secular character of the Second Republic that prompted the connection of a modern spectacle with ancient drama (Monleón 1997, 63–9).



Figure 6. Photograph of a scene from the staging of *Medea* by the company of Xirgu-Borrás (1933). Municipal Historical Archive of Merida.

opting for those years and with a modern Spanish identity. In terms of the materiality of the ancient theatre, its open character that permitted a direct contact between spectators and artists was thought to match with the aims of popular culture that the Republic was seeking. In practice, the organization of large-scale theatrical spectacles was also encouraged by the tourist delegation of local and regional competences that were implemented by the recently founded *Patronato de Turismo*.¹¹³ On this basis, the performance took place thanks to the collaboration of different pressure groups, that contained national, regional, and artistic agents, who were more than eager to adapt an international trend into the modern ideological framework of Spanish republican identity.

As a matter of fact, the right for the full dissolution of marriage was made legal in Spain in 1931 and one year later the Spanish feminist movement achieved the approval of women's suffrage (González-Vázquez 2016, 109–10). With this in mind, the fact that it was the Republican actress

¹¹³ The equivalent of the later National Tourism Organization. For the Republican tourist reforms see Moreno Garrido 2007, 117–28.

Margarita Xirgu who chose to perform *Medea* (*El Sol* 13 April 1933, 8) could be interpreted as the celebration of the social transformation being implemented at the time. Xirgu could have seen *Medea* as an expression of the women's emancipation in the newly established regime, as has been the case elsewhere (Mimoso-Ruiz 1982, 149–71; Hall 2000a, 66–9; Macintosh 2000, 17–9). Rivas Cherif narrated the story behind the production in his article in *El Sol* on 3 June 1933. He claimed that the idea came after Xirgu's accidental visit to Merida. She was delighted to realize that an open-air theatre of monumental size was in condition to host classical performances. Therefore, when the political circumstances were favourable and Fernando de los Rios planned to perform Seneca, she chose *Medea*. The commissioning of *Medea*'s translation to the most renown Spanish classicist of the time, Miguel de Unamuno, is indicative of the spectacles' ambition.

In addition, in Seneca's version of *Medea* laid an opportunity of expressing an ideological identification with the Spanish national past and an allusion to collective memory (*Luz* 27 July 1934, 1; González-Vázquez 2015, 494–5). Discussing the play's aspirations in the newspaper *Luz*, the novelist and journalist Juan Chabás stated that Euripides's *Medea* 'would not represent as precisely as Seneca's version the essential quality of our literary and dramatic tradition', and continued, comparing the Roman author with modern Spanish authors: 'These qualities are present in Seneca's style and can be also found in his "Medea" [...] Andalusian qualities of Seneca that later have fully been achieved in our theatre'.¹¹⁴ Seneca's tragedy provided the justification for labelling the festival as a national and political landmark (*El Sol* 7 January 1934, 4), for, as we saw earlier, he was born in the Andalusian city of Cordoba. His 'Spanish' birthplace became the means through which the theatre would be charged with national values and engage the Spanish audience. Similarly, Rivas-Cherif perceived Seneca as Spain's contribution to the monumental Latin drama, and as the prehistory of Spanish theatre that continued with dramatists such as Calderón, Luis de Góngora, and José Echegaray (*Crónica* 2 July 1933, 20). The selection of Seneca's *Medea* instead of Euripides' version aimed to establish an ideological engagement with national memory of the

¹¹⁴ 'no representarían tan exactamente como la versión de Séneca la esencial calidad de nuestra tradición literaria y dramática' and 'Esas cualidades están presentes en el estilo de Séneca, y hállanse también en su "Medea" [...] cualidades andaluzas de Séneca, que luego hemos de ver con plenitud de expresión lograda en nuestro teatro' (*Luz* 13 June 1933, 6).

Spanish public. Therefore, the spectacle, play, and author coincided with the Republic's perception of the popular feeling and aesthetics.

It corresponded to the energetic intellectual ambition and the republican ideals that emerged with the Generation of '27 and popularized artistic expression (Monleón 2008). During this endeavour, Seneca's role as a national author found its place in the cultural manifestation of the Republic. In such terms, the Republic and the Generation of '27 appropriated *senequism* as a representation of the spirit of the Spanish nation during a time when the intellectual bourgeoisie sought to determine its spiritual values (Baldwin 2020).

The quest for national spectacles and theatrical modernization were combined to create the need for regular reuse of the theatre (*Crónica* 2 July 1933, 20). However, despite his national optimism, Chabás was bound to recognize the Spanish lack of theatrical tradition in classics, compared to Greece:

'In Greece, perhaps a certain traditional air that has been preserved for centuries "sul loco" persists. In Spain, the Roman tradition does not even remotely exist. The Greeks can aspire to give to their representations an ancient colour thanks to erudite reconstructions. In Spain, it would be ridiculous to attempt such a thing, as it would only lend a pretentious aspect and archival rancidity to such festivities'.¹¹⁵

This, however, did not seem to preoccupy him, as he suggested that the classical tradition could be created on the roots of that first performance in Merida (*Luz* 20 June 1933, 12).

The spectacles also connected Rivas Cherif with European theatrical modernity, in terms of his proximity to Max Reinhardt's spatial perception.¹¹⁶ Reinhardt's influence on Rivas Cherif involved open air performances, not only in Merida but also later the same year in Madrid and

¹¹⁵ 'En Grecia perdura quizá cierto aire tradicional conservado secularmente "sul loco". En España, la tradición romana no existe ni aun remotamente. Los griegos pueden aspirar a dar a sus representaciones un color antiguo merced a reconstrucciones eruditas [...] En España sería ridículo intentar semejante cosa, que sólo prestaría un color pedantesco y de una ranciedad de archivo a tales fiestas' (*El Sol* 7 January 1934).

¹¹⁶ Max Reinhardt was one of the most prominent directors of German-language theatre in the first half of the 20th century. Reinhardt, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Richard Strauss, Alfred Roller, and Franz Schalk are regarded as the founders of the Salzburg Festival.

Barcelona. Large chorus, plastic movement, and rituality were only some aesthetic qualities that demonstrate Reinhardt's influence on Rivas Cherif (Gil Fombellida 2003, ch. 5). These were implemented in Merida to create performances with expressive movement, where human presence symbolically connected with space and light.¹¹⁷ Besides, Spanish intellectuals that were involved in the 1933 spectacle, such as Rivas Cherif and Chabás, had studied and worked in Italy, and perhaps came across or learnt from first-hand the Italian theatrical revival.

What Rivas Cherif desired to bring to the Spanish stage was a professional national theatre that could address popular sentiment. To achieve that, he had to manoeuvre between the establishment of an official national theatre like the Comedie Française or the INDA and the experimentations of the Republican theatre of La Barraca,¹¹⁸ with the two-fold aim of both preserving tradition and renovating the Spanish theatre (*Luz* 18 January 1934, 10). In addition, he repeatedly alluded to the national theatres of Greece and England, and envisioned a similar institution for Spain (*El Sol* 29 July 1932, 3; *El Sol* 10 September 1932, 8; *Luz* 18 January 1934, 10). The social transformation that Spain was experiencing at that time can be seen in Rivas Cherif's attempt to seek a balance between a modern European theatre with classical values and the popular Republican sentiment (Gentilli 1993, 87–94). Rivas-Cherif's objectives were also expressed from 1932 by the granting to the Xirgu-Borra's company and himself by the Town Hall of Madrid of the Teatro Español for three years (González-Vázquez 2015, 495–6), the theatre that permitted the organization of the productions at Merida. The sociocultural implications of such a concession were put forward in a clear and concise way. The company aimed to popularize the Spanish theatre by staging ancient and contemporary authors, and introduce plays of popular character and American dramas. Social measures were adopted in order to increase public

¹¹⁷ For an analysis of Rivas Cherif's chorus and its movement on stage, see García-Ramos Merlo (2014).

¹¹⁸ La Barraca was a university theatrical society that belonged to the *Federación Universitaria Escolar* of the Central University of Madrid. Most members belonged to the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts and it was directed by Federico García Lorca and Eduardo Ugarte. It was founded by Fernando de los Ríos and financed by the Ministry of Public Instruction. Its goal was to bring to the villages and hamlets classical Greek theatre, that of Roman, and that of the Spanish Golden Age, including plans to perform in the theatre of Merida (*Nuevo Mundo* 11 December 1931, 10–2). To understand the connection between La Barraca and post-war Spanish theatre it is important to note that members of the former later became actors and directors of the Falange and Teatro Español Universitario (TEU). Modesto Higuera, for instance, became director of TEU in 1941 (Doménech 2015).

attendance, while the educational and pedagogical role aimed to make quality theatre broadly accessible (Rodrigo 1974, 186–7; Domínguez 2008). At a time when the role of director was almost unknown in Spain and professional actors and actresses were only a small percentage, Rivas Cherif's vision was to create a School of Theatre that would aspire an innovator spirit of discipline and order, inspired by Reinhardt and Gordon Craig (*El Sol* 29 July 1932, 3; *El Sol* 10 September 1932, 8).¹¹⁹

Maintenance works took place before the spectacle to prepare the site for the reception of the public. These included carpentry works, maintenance of the road that leads to the theatre, and works on the monument's stage.¹²⁰ Mérida's strict policy on the revival of the theatre had obliged Rivas-Cherif to pledge that no architectural elements would be added to the stage (Rivas Cherif 1991, 110 and 263–9). In addition, aspirations for annual theatre festivals in Merida and Sagunto were revealed by the organizers (Figure 7), who suggested the large-scale, systematic reuse of classical venues around the country:

‘Merida and Sagunto could be the two centres of these cycles, and both cities would eventually represent in Spain and the world what Verona and Syracuse in Italy and Bayreuth in Germany mean [...] France in its midday Roman theaters, Greece in Delphi, Italy, as we have already said, in Syracuse and Verona, have popularized the performances of classical theater’.¹²¹

After Merida's performance, Rivas Cherif had an ambitious plan. He visited Sagunto to inspect the site and organize the logistics for the performance (*Luz* 1 July 1933, 12). *Medea* was programmed to be staged at the Roman theatre of the town during the annual local festivities

¹¹⁹ The term used at the time was *asesor literario* (literary advisor), instead of director. However, Max Reinhardt's influence on the dominant role of the director was prominent in the performance (Rivas Cherif 1991, 223–4; Morenilla Talens 2006, 462–8).

¹²⁰ MHAM/LGM/BA/P, Session 3 July 1933, 74.

¹²¹ ‘Mérida y Sagunto podrían ser los dos centros de esos ciclos, y ambas ciudades acabarían por representar en España y en el mundo lo que significan Verona y Siracusa en Italia y Bayreuth en Alemania [...] Francia en sus teatros romanos del Mediodía, Grecia en Delfos, Italia, como ya hemos dicho, en Siracusa y Verona, han hecho famosas las interpretaciones del teatro clásico’ (*Luz* 20 June 1933, 12). The term *cycle* (Spanish *ciclo*, Italian *ciclo*) is used here to signify annual festival, as in the Festival of Syracuse.

(*Ahora* 2 July 1933, 10), while some restauration works were issued earlier that year (*Official State Gazette* 208, 27 July 1933, 607).¹²² However, due to the monument's instability, the performance was finally suspended (*La Voz* 27 July 1933, 3; *Ahora* 30 July 1933, 44). Classical venues in Tarragona and Italica were also proposed to be part of the festivals (*Luz* 15 May 1933, 6). Rivas Cherif's intention was to perform *Spartacus* and other spectacles that would correspond to the authentic revival of open-air theatre (*Luz* 22 September 1933); this is why he contemplated performing an 'oriental' play, possibly Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*, at the Arab palace of Alhambra, gladiators' competitions at the amphitheatre of Merida, and horse races at its Circus. 'That would



Figure 7. Overall view of the Roman theatre of Sagunto and the above castle (around 1870). Hispanic Digital Library, National Library of Spain (BNE).

¹²² Additionally, a year earlier, a subvention of 1.800 pesetas was agreed by the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts, due to the dilapidated condition of the theatre, in the form of rescue intervention (*Official State Gazette* 210, 28 July 1932, 735-6).

be like bringing Spain back to life'¹²³ he commented.

In artistic terms, the theatrical revival of Merida was also projected as an international expression that especially connected to France and Italy. Merida's aspirations to follow European theatrical trends can be seen in its identification as the Spanish Rome in every opportunity. Beyond the invitation of the ambassador of Italy Raffaele Guariglia (Domínguez Méndez 2013)¹²⁴ and his propagandistic gesture that promoted the Italian fascist ideals (Plantzos and Balaskas forthcoming), the ministry of Fine-Arts of Rome later invited the company to perform *Medea*, together with other plays at the Roman forum and other venues in Italy.¹²⁵ In addition, a committee was assigned for the mutual propagation of culture and arts between France and Spain, through the Institute of Spanish Studies of the Sorbonne University (*Ahora* 14 April 1933, 10). Its project included a parallel production of Seneca's *Medea* in a Parisian theatre and in Merida in 1933, in a spirit of common theatrical tradition and good will for future collaborations. To some extent, the French and Italian implication, with parallel cultural events, reflected the countries' interest in the Spanish case and the sociopolitical character of the cultural production.

During this period, coach or train trips to Merida were often advertised by the travel agency *Viajes Iberia*, which organized 'peregrinations' (*peregrinaciones*) to attend the spectacles at the theatre (*El Heraldo de Madrid* 20 April 1935, 10).¹²⁶ Other tourist companies also offered trips from different regions of Spain. Since Merida did not have enough hostelry services, many visitors had to be transported to the nearby village Alange after the performances (*El Heraldo de Madrid* 24 August 1934, 12). Commercial modernist magazines such as *Autodatos* also included the theatre of Merida into their travel guides as an indispensable trip to see landmarks of the national heritage (February 1935).

However, it seems that contrary to other European cases of the period, and despite its success, the Festival of Merida did not produce what Ioannidou has described in the Greek case as

¹²³ 'Eso sería como ir resucitando a España' (*Crónica* 2 July 1933, 20).

¹²⁴ Despite Guariglia's diplomatic presence and ceremonious gesture, the Journal *Dioniso* only referred to Merida's performances in the following summer season, by dedicating a brief feature (Arias 1935/1936, 51).

¹²⁵ However, the italo-abisinian war suspended the project (Rivas Cherif 1991).

¹²⁶ However, the participation of the famous bullfighter, Félix Colomo, in a bullfight in Madrid the same day, prevented some from travelling to Merida (*La Libertad* 20 June 1933, 1).

the urge to affirm national links with the ancient past through the heterotopic dimension of the theatres (2010/2011). Despite the regional similarities with the Festival of Syracuse, the Spanish public (national or local) did not express a collective engagement with the ancient theatre of Merida and the attempt to provide an ideological nexus with classical antiquity did not succeed. Such ideological concern can be seen in the intellectuals of the period, such as the poet Luis Cernuda who argued: ‘I can only deplore that Greece will never touch the Spanish heart or mind, the most remote and ignorant, in Europe, of the “the glory that Greece once was”’.¹²⁷ However, part of the national press and certain cultural magazines offered an enthusiastic reception of the spectacles, indicating the existence of a limited group of bourgeois that were engaged with the cultural features that were reflected by the Roman theatre. At local level, however, dissemination of photographic material and propagation of any possible social interaction in the aftermath of the performances was among the first activities of the municipal authorities.¹²⁸ Expropriation and reconstruction of the area around the other Roman landmark of the city, the Trajan Arch, and reconstruction of the theatre would also prepare the city for an international festival in 1934.¹²⁹

In political terms, the spectacles were condemned as a social scandal by the opposition party.¹³⁰ The subvention of 50,000 Spanish pesetas by the government (and a total budget of 75.000 pesetas, *Luz* 22 September 1933), the free tickets offered for the performance,¹³¹ the lack of tourist facilities, and the economic recession in Extremadura (*El Siglo Futuro* 19 June 1933, 3; *Igualdad* 26 June 1933, 2), all were fiercely criticized by the conservative press, which focused mostly on the political aspect of the performances. The defamatory attacks provoked the reaction of the

¹²⁷ ‘No puedo menos que deplorar que Grecia nunca tocara al corazón ni a la mente española, los más remotos e ignorantes, en Europa, de “la gloria que fue Grecia”’ (Cernuda 1993, 657). See also Ortega Garrido 2010, 381.

¹²⁸ MHAM/LGM/BA/P, Session 7 August 1933, 94v–5, and MHAM/LGM/BA/P, Session 14 August 1933, 99v.

¹²⁹ MHAM/LGM/BA/P, Session 14 August 1933, 103. López Díaz offers valuable insights into the revival of the theatre of Merida, and despite minor mistakes, compiles key moments of the production and municipal organization in the republican period (2011).

¹³⁰ What exasperated the right-wing press and caused many caustic criticisms was that Rivas Cherif was the close friend and brother-in-law of the Prime Minister, Manuel Azaña.

¹³¹ The final subvention was 50.000 pesetas and was assigned by the Ministry of Public Instruction (MHAM/LGM/BA/P, Session 30 July 1934, 87). Although no official figures have survived, the annual sum of the company’s performances were, according to *Luz*, 65.000 pesetas, 28.000 spectators, of whom 11.000 received free entrance (*Luz* 22 September 1933, 6).

Provincial Government of Badajoz, which addressed the issue as political stigmatism of the performance – such as in the case of the Catholic newspaper *El Debate* – and accorded to take measures for safeguarding the popular benefit of such cultural endeavours.¹³²

Despite these objections, the following year's festival was properly organized under the title *Semana Romana* (Monleón 2004, 76–82) and was directed by a newly founded, eponymous Local Patronage that would defend its interests at the national level.¹³³ Spectacles included an extended programme, with performances of Seneca's *Medea*, Hofmannsthal's *Elektra*,¹³⁴ and classical dances. Regional identification linked the festival with the town's cultural life, as its celebration coincided with the annual local folk festivities. *Semana Romana* actually began in the last days of the local festivities, as the hotel services of the town could not cope with such a large number of visitors. On that occasion, the festival was quite different than the previous year's, with the local and provincial element being more visible. Merida presented a multifaceted aspect, attracting local merchants, excursionists, foreigners, and intellectuals (*El Heraldo de Madrid* 13 September 1934, 4), while travel agencies from around Spain promoted the festival by offering tourist excursions. These spectacles offered the opportunity to include classical monuments in the Spanish tourism propaganda for the first time.

The selection of *Elektra* was probably a convenient choice, as it had been performed by Xirgu some years before in Mexico and El Retiro in Madrid,¹³⁵ and thus it was already tried and tested for open air spaces. Notably, the first performance of *Elektra* was part of Xirgu's tour in Latin America and was staged in the Tribuna Monumental of Chapultepec Park in the City of Mexico, a semi-circular monument of Roman style, with particular symbolic significance for the Mexican collective identity. The play possessed a series of advantages that led to its selection in Merida; it fitted the intellectual demands of the ancient theatre by identifying it as significant cultural venue and it satisfied the aesthetic precepts of the Republican regime.

¹³² DAPDB/BA, Session 20 June 1933, 29.

¹³³ The organizing committee was formed in July and intervene in the completion of the project. MHAM/LGM/BA/P, Session 16 July 1934, 76–7.

¹³⁴ One of the *Elektra* performances had to be cancelled due to delay of the sets in their transportation to Merida. The improvised solution was to perform Francisco Alonso's play *Las Leandras* instead (*Gutiérrez* 15 September 1934, 6).

¹³⁵ It was a celebration for the establishment of the republican regime (Rodrigo 1974, 179–80).

2.5. The theatre of Merida as political arena (1934–1935)

The political significance of the spectacle was also extensively propagated by the socialist Mayor of Merida of the time, Andrés Nieto Carmona,¹³⁶ who was in frequent contact with the President of the Republic and systematically informed him about developments of the project.¹³⁷ The intervention of the new minister of War, Diego Hidalgo Durán, who due to his origins from Mérida facilitated a subvention and assisted in the logistics at the Festival, was determinant for the fruitful realization of the event.¹³⁸ However, despite the political support, the endeavour cannot be interpreted as purely national spectacle. The lack of a national mechanism that could process, propagate, and continue the legacy of the festival testifies for that. Rivas Cherif was responsible not only for the theatrical direction, but also for the propaganda and the economic management of the spectacles. Similarly, the local authorities had informally assigned the Mayor and the Local Patronage *Semana Romana* as responsible for the logistics (Figure 8).

After the last successful performance of *Elektra* on 9 September 1934 and the satisfaction of the political elite that attended the festivals, next year's festival seemed guaranteed. Newspapers were festooned with headlines anticipating the annual performances and suggested future plays (*El Heraldo de Madrid* 1 August 1934, 5). Rivas Cherif had already selected future dramas and had planned to reform the ancient theatre according to a letter he sent to the writer and impresario Luis París on 6 September 1934: 'I would like to stage here [...] *Orpheus*, or *Norma*, or Spontini's *La Vestale* [...] It would be easy to obtain (finance) from the Ministry [...] to fix and number the steps of the cavea'.¹³⁹

However, at the end of 1934, an inspection by the Royal Academy of Fine Arts (*Real Academia de Bellas Artes*) took place in the theatre. The architect in charge, Teodoro de Anasagasti

¹³⁶ MHAM/LGM/BA/P, Session, 30 July 1934, 89–90.

¹³⁷ MHAM/LGM/BA/P, Session, 14 April 1934, 15v–6.

¹³⁸ MHAM/LGM/BA/P, Session, 16 July 1934, 76–7. See also *Hoy* 18 July 1934 and López Díaz 2011.

¹³⁹ 'me gustaría hacer aquí [...] un *Orfeo*, o una *Norma*, o una *Vestal* de Spontini [...] Sería fácil, con tiempo obtener del Ministerio (subvención) [...] para arreglar los escalones de la gradería y numerarla' (Gil Fombellida 2003, 327–8).

discovered damage to the cavea, ostensibly produced by the spectators of the previous years, and in the session of 7 January 1935 of the Royal Academy suggested the suspension of performances for conservation and the introduction of measures to prevent further damage.¹⁴⁰ A year later, in a conference given at the Athenaeum of Madrid, Anasagasti would refer to the case of Mérida as an unavoidable measure for the preservation of Roman heritage, despite the first promising impressions of the possibility of a successful festival (*El Sol* 5 July 1936, 6). Omission of security and general order at the theatre might be considered possible, because, despite the organizers' intention to exhibit the monument's symbolic materiality, their artistic precepts did not consider the fragile nature of the ancient venue. The austere sets and the lack of further adornment that Mérida had imposed, probably concentrates the possible damage in the cavea.

Failure to safeguard the theatre's architectural integrity quickly became an argument in the conservative press, which condemned the damage done and pronounced on the low quality of the previous performances (*El Siglo Futuro* 8 January 1935, 1; *La Nación* 9 January 1935, 4 and 9; *La Cruz* 10 January 1935, 2). While the Republican press questioned the damage as described by Anasagasti, intuiting favouritism and calling for further investigation, the Local Patronage (Patronato Local Semana Romana) unsuccessfully attempted to delay the implementation of the decision until the director of the excavations submitted his final report (*Ahora* 24 January 1935, 11; *La Voz* 24 January 1935, 4). In an attempt to question Anasagasti's report, Rivas Cherif compared the use of the theatre of Mérida with examples from Greece, Italy, and France, in an interview in February (*La Voz* 2 February 1935, 3). In addition, hope was not entirely lost for the Local Government of Mérida, which applied for finance for the celebration of the festival *Semana Romana* in May.¹⁴¹ When these attempts were officially denied, final suspension of the festival

¹⁴⁰ Anasagasti's Report at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando asserted that 'he has been able to verify the great damage caused by the public in the Cavea or tiered seats of the Roman theater during the last public performances of *Medea*, and this part of the theater has to be enclosed in order to preserve it in its original form' ('ha podido comprobar los grandes destrozos ocasionados por el público en la Cavea o gradería del teatro romano durante las últimas representaciones públicas de *Medea*, debiendo acotarse este trozo para conservarle protegido en su forma originaria') (DLMG, Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando, Acts of the Ordinary Session, 7 January 1935, 622, http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/bellas_arte_san_fernando/archivo/). See also *Madrid Científico* 1935, 6.

¹⁴¹ MHAM/LGM/BA/P, Session, 12 June 1935, 28v.

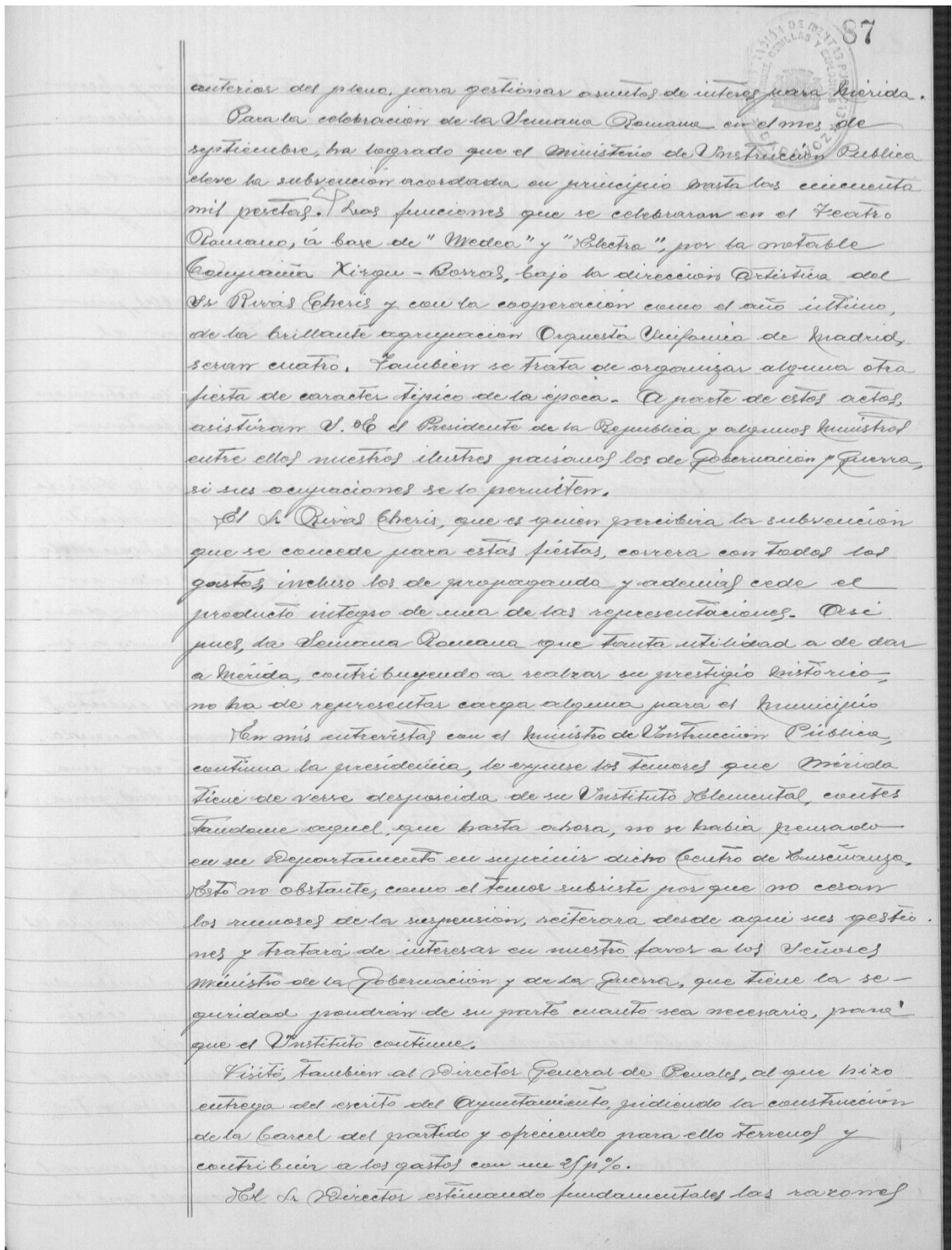


Figure 8. Page 87 from the Book of Acts of the Plenary of the Local Government of Merida, Session 30 July 1934. The text informs of the subvention and logistics of the celebration of Semana Romana at the theatre of Merida. Municipal Historical Archive of Merida.

was inevitable.¹⁴² This would put an end to the sociocultural undertaking of republican agents to ideologically engage with the politics and poetics of the Roman theatre.

Theatrical modernization in Spain was also influenced by the politics of the time and a complementary narrative can offer another perspective (González Bernardo 2011). A shift in national politics occurred after two right-wing parties (*Partido Republicano Radical* and *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas*) took power in October 1934. After the socialists' rejection of the political shift, social upheavals and mass strikes especially in Catalonia and Asturias shook the country. When the new government suppressed the general strikes, many political positions were replaced. One of them was the Mayor of Madrid, Pedro Rico, who was deposed on 6 October 1934. The new Mayor, Rafael Salazar Alonso quickly demonstrated that he would not tolerate cultural and artistic experimentation and the Teatro Español was to be handed over to another group more suited to the new political orientation. The suppression of Xirgu-Borra's work started at the end of 1934 and soon it became evident that the future of Merida's spectacles was uncertain (Aguilera and Aznar Soler 1999, 185–9; González-Vázquez 2015, 496–7).¹⁴³ Despite the attempts of the Local Patronage and Merida's Local Government to celebrate another performance in 1935, the lack of national funding and political will suspended future performances (Sánchez Matas 1991, 79–84; López Díaz 2011, 340–4). A performance on 23 June 1935 was their last at the Teatro Español, as they were later compelled to look for theatrical home in Italy and Mexico (Aguilera and Aznar-Soler 1999, 185–9).

Despite the attempt of cultural homogenization and pedagogic tutelage, the lack of ideological engagement of the public with classical culture as national heritage became apparent. The public success and republican advocacy of the festivals were not enough to convert them into national landmarks that re-established the lost roots with Roman antiquity. The public that ideologically engaged with the symbolic materiality of classical antiquity was limited. One of the reasons, which marked the course of the festivals in the 1950s and 1960s, was that the national focus on other 'glorious' pasts of Spanish history, such as the Spanish Golden Age, and its modern political and cultural diversification dominated and prevented the public from fully engaging with

¹⁴² MHAM/LGM/BA/P, Session, 14 August 1935, 64v.

¹⁴³ Contrarily to Sánchez' claim that the actors were occupied with other projects, Xirgu-Borrás company did not return to Merida in 1935 mainly due to the political circumstances (Sánchez Matas 1996).

classical culture. Rather, the festivals were identified as expression of republican culture, local or regional cultural achievement and governmental cultural policy until the rise in tension that preceded the Spanish Civil War.

2.6. National Theatre and *Electra* as a national project (1936–1938)

On 4 August 1936 the Greek military officer and Prime Minister, Ioannis Metaxas, assumed dictatorial powers with the support of king George II. Recurrent point of reference for the legitimization of his self-coup was the Civil War that erupted in Spain a month earlier, after the nationalist and military coup (Sfikas 2003; Clogg 2021, 115–8). Alleging a state of emergency against possible communist empowerment, Metaxas ideologically used the Spanish case to justify the imposition of his totalitarian regime (Sfikas 2003).¹⁴⁴

Despite Metaxas' antiparliamentarianism and claims for national rebirth, the 4th of August regime, as it was named, far from constituting a radical break with the past, it implemented a conservative and authoritarian reinvention of earlier domestic policy (Carabott 2003). To assess this new sociopolitical reality, the regime extensively alleged to classical culture. Metaxas implemented an eclectic view on Greek past and used vague generalities to create a *Neon Kratos*, (*Νέον Κράτος*, New State), in which the past would be conceptualized as a national myth (Carabott 2003; Kallis 2017). In theatrical terms, the regime was greatly influenced by the figure of Kostis Bastias¹⁴⁵ and his views on the systematic reuse of ancient theatres as national capital. Bastias enjoyed a position of influence under the Metaxas dictatorship since being appointed general director of the National Theatre and director of letters and fine arts of the Ministry of Education in 1937. In such an ultra-nationalist regime, ancient Greek drama also served as propaganda, with the National Theatre being transformed into a cultural façade for the dictatorship (*Tria Eti*

¹⁴⁴ Metaxas' government and the Greek businessman Prodromos Bodosakis-Athanasiadis intervened in the Spanish Civil War by supplying weapons to both sides on a large scale (Sfikas 2003, ch. 4; Katsoudas 2004; Filippis 2008, 24–8).

¹⁴⁵ Bastias was journalist and editor, who became director of the National Theatre and the National Opera (Bastias 2005, 236–50 and 283–310).

*Diakuberniseos tou K. Ioannou Metaxa (1936–1939) 1939).*¹⁴⁶

Two main developments in the theatrical expression accompanied the classical turn of Metaxas' dictatorship. The first, involved the total control of repertoire and direction through a series of legislations that imposed strict censorship (Emergency law 446, FEK 23, 25 January 1937). The control of the theatrical expression was responsibility of the Directorate of Letters and the Theatre, which belonged to the Chamber of Letters and Fine Arts (Emergency Law 1779, FEK 224, 3 June 1939). Director of the Chamber was Bastias.¹⁴⁷ The second attempt was towards the production of mass spectacles, with special emphasis on ancient theatre. To implement this demand, extensive discussion took place among the members of the Council of the Royal Theatre, which led to reduction on ticket price and the concession that theatre ought to reach the broader masses of the population and implement its populist politics (*Ethnos* 12 September 1938, 3; Petrakis 2006, 118–26). In fact, Bastias' Royal Theatre, and in less extent Kotopouli's company¹⁴⁸, became Metaxas' instrument of monumental productions that promoted national ideology. Ancient theatre in particular was of crucial importance, as it would provide a new revival of ancient heritage for a glorified future.

To some degree, the classical orientation that the National Theatre adopted with the systematic use of ancient venues in Greece undertook the project that the state had already proposed to Sikelianos and Palmer some years earlier. The National Theatre had to reorganize and re-examine theatrical activity in venues more accessible than Delphi and towards a modern artistic

¹⁴⁶ This does not mean that the ancient drama performances blindly followed the ideological precepts of the dictatorship. Rather, Metaxas had given Bastias absolute authority to decide on matters of artistic expression, with a view to claiming the National Theatre as a cultural accomplishment of the regime (Bastias 2012, 32–50). Metaxas' interview with Bastias in *I Vradyni* (15 September 1936, 1–2) indicates their agreement concerning the artistic and ideological objectives of the National Theatre, including the idea of the inauguration of permanent venues outside Athens.

¹⁴⁷ Bastias commissioned Doxiadis to construct a theatre in the model of an ancient venue on the west side of Philopappos Hill, at a site named Koili (Biris 1966, 330–1 and 394–7; Dakoura-Vogiatzoglou 2004, 7). He aimed to construct a large theatre that could host dance spectacles, modern drama, and music. Works began in 1939 but were permanently interrupted a year later, as the damage caused to the archaeological site of Koili obliged the city planning Commission to intervene and request Metaxas to cancel the construction (Fessa 1991, 69–73; Fessa 1994, 72–3).

¹⁴⁸ Kotopouli Theatre Company was proclaimed semi-state during Metaxas' years thanks to Kotopouli's excellent relations with representatives of the regime.

and national orientation with tourist aims (*Eleutheron Vima* 31 May 1930, 1; *Imerisios Kiriks* 4 October 1936). This is why, the Odeon of Herodes Atticus was the first to host performances of ancient drama in the Summer Season 1936 and 1937. The project involved a systematic employment of the monumental status that the Odeon projected and its implementation into an annual event. *Electra* (1936 and 1937) and *Hippolytus* (1937) were the plays that inaugurated the new endeavour that aspired to ‘find one day the method of the correct staging of these masterpieces’¹⁴⁹ and received a puzzled public response (*Acropolis* 6 October 1936, 2). While the main newspapers acclaimed Mitropoulos’ music (*Acropolis* 6 October 1936, 2) and the opportunity of theatrical revival for the National Theatre (*Ethniki* 20 July 1937), they were reluctant to praise the chorus’ and actors’ performance (*Estia* 5 October 1936, 1; *Ethnos* 5 October 1936, 1; *I Vradyni* 5 October 1936, 2). The first reluctant reaction, however, would not reduce the importance of these national spectacles that inaugurated the systematic and professional use of ancient venues as compulsive projection of national prestige. Three years later, in a propagandistic publication, the regime would panegyrically claim the organization and consolidation of the Festival of Ancient Drama at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus (*Tria Eti Diakuberniseos tou K. Ioannou Metaxa* (1936–1939) 1939).

Monographs of the period reveal the significance that the tourist phenomenon acquired in public discussion. According to the civil engineer Athanasios Manos, the emergent restoration of ancient theatres and stadiums would considerably increase their tourist attraction (Manos 1935, 27; Plantzos 2014a, 274). For Manos, the reuse of classical venues was an ideal method to produce native art and expand tourist activity in Greece. Similarly, Stelios Hiliadakis, director of the Vice-ministry of Press and Tourism, would pinpoint antiquities and natural therapeutic springs as the principal sources of tourism. To preserve this tourist attraction, he advocated the restoration and conditioning of emblematic archaeological sites, which he argued ‘are in Greece, but they do not only belong to the Greeks. We are their safeguards, and we have the chance to take care of their

¹⁴⁹ ‘μπορεῖ νὰ βρῇ κάποτε τὸν τρόπο τῆς σωστῆς διδασκαλίας τῶν ἀρχαίων αὐτῶν ἀριστουργημάτων’ (Programme of the Week of Ancient Drama, 6–7 DANTG: www.nt-archive.gr/viewfiles1.aspx?webSpeech=&playID=874&programID=801&gotoPage=6).

preservation and good shape.¹⁵⁰

In 1938, The Hellenic Touring Club approached Kostis Bastias, who accepted its proposal for a performance at the ancient theatre of Epidauros, as a natural development of the previous years' festival at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus by the National Theatre (*Paraskinia* 17 September 1938).¹⁵¹ It was these two organizations that filed the official request to perform *Electra* at the theatre of Epidauros (Figure 9). The fact that the written request was issued four days before the official rehearsal indicate that an oral agreement might have preceded.¹⁵² In any case, Bastias' position at the time, must have facilitated the production and bureaucratic procedures.¹⁵³ The discussions in the Administrative Council of the National Theatre on 11 May 1938 were indicative of the perception of the ancient theatre productions in Greece in comparison to its European parallels:

‘The issue of open-air performances of the National Theatre have been a subject of long studies, not only by the responsible agents of the Institution, which lies under our direction, but by all those responsible for the worldwide Theatre. And despite in the Western, Central, and Northern Europe meteorological reasons impose the performances in covered spaces avoiding any weather contingency, the issue of open-air performances has been the most appealing and significant experiment for every worthy theatre director. / Wherever remnants of ancient theatres have been found, like in Syracuse, when arenas like in Orange [...] there were organized performances of ancient dramas and historic plays by important drama poets [...] with great success’.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ ‘βρίσκονται στην Ελλάδα, αλλά δεν ανήκουν μόνο στους Έλληνες. Εμείς είμαστε οι θεματοφύλακές τους και σ’εμάς έλαχε ή τιμή να φροντίσουμε για τη διατήρησή τους και για την καλή τους εμφάνιση’ (Hiliadakis 1939, 45).

¹⁵¹ See also Bastias 2005, 284, where Kostas Bastias appears as the sole instigator of the performance.

¹⁵² Oral communication between the agent that requested the event and the authorities seemed frequent, at least until the 1936, as handwritten references in many requests reveal. Oral permission or rejection would accelerate procedures and minimize time for both sides. See for example DAHAAR, Box 602 D, Folder B (1932), Subfolder 3/28.

¹⁵³ DAHAAR, Box 603 D, Folder A (1938), Subfolder 3/8.

¹⁵⁴ ‘Τό ζήτημα τῶν ὑπαιθρίων παραστάσεων τοῦ Βασιτικοῦ Θεάτρου ἀπετέλεσε θέμα μακράς μελέτης ὄχι μόνον τῶν ἀρμοδίων ὑπηρεσιῶν τοῦ Ἰδρύματος, τό ὅποϊον τελεῖ ὑπό τήν Ἡμετέραν διοίκησιν, ἀλλά καί ὅλων τῶν θεατρικῶν ἀρμοδιοτήτων εἰς τό παγκόσμιον Θέατρον. Καί μολοντί εἰς τήν Δυτικήν, τήν Κεντρικήν καί τή Βόρειαν Εὐρώπην

Performed on 15 September 1938 in Epidaurus, *Electra* was a national cultural event that attracted the attention of renowned critics and intellectuals. It was a revival of the production staged in the summers of 1936 and 1937 at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, adapted to the architectural and natural setting of Epidaurus. The performance embodied the principles and objectives of the National Theatre as a repository of ancient Greek drama and high-quality theatre, as described in its foundation act published in the *Greek Government Gazette* (Law 406, FEK 31 December 1930).¹⁵⁵ Meanwhile, the Acts of the Council of the National Theatre on 11 May 1938 specifically stated that ancient Greek drama, and especially tragedy performed in ancient theatres, was an expression of high art that the National Theatre should exploit for cultural and economic reasons.¹⁵⁶

The large seating capacity of ancient theatres rendered them ideal venues for mass productions and national spectacles, while the fact that Dimitris Rondiris was the play's director guaranteed a modern interpretation with strong European influences and a rigorous but flexible approach (Mavromoustakos 2010).¹⁵⁷ A prominent figure in the National Theatre's revival of ancient drama in open spaces, Rondiris had received a German education which introduced him to the school of Reinhardt and prompted him to incorporate Western aesthetics into productions of ancient drama (Tsatsoulis 2015, 305–17; Tsatsoulis 2017, 59–64). However, the Western tradition as inserted into the Greek artistic panorama was divorced from the sociocultural conditions of Greece and paid little heed to national particularities.¹⁵⁸ Leyhausen's influence on Rondiris was more evident in the staging of the play. The chorus performance, the *Sprechchor* and the ritualized

λόγοι μετεωρολογικοί επιβάλλουν τὰς παραστάσεις εἰς χώρους κλειστοὺς προφυλαγμένους ἀπὸ κάθε καιρικό ἀπρόοπτον, τὸ ζήτημα τῶν παραστάσεων τῆς ὑπαίθρου ἀπετέλεσε τὸ προσφυλέστερον καὶ μεγαλειωδέστερον πείραμα δι' ὅλους τοὺς ἀξίους τοῦ ὀνόματος Διευθυντὰς Θεάτρων καὶ Σκηνοθέτας. / Ὅπου ὑπῆρχαν ὑπολείμματα ἀρχαίων θεάτρων ὅπως εἰς τὰς Συρακούσας, ὅπου ὑπῆρχαν ἀρένες ὅπως στήν Ὁράγγην [...] ὁργανώθηκαν παραστάσεις καὶ ἀρχαίων δραμάτων καὶ ἱστορικῶν ἔργων μεγάλων δραματικῶν ποιητῶν [...] μέ ὅλως ἐξαιρετικὴν ἐπιτυχίαν' (ANTG/BAAC, Session 11 May 1938).

¹⁵⁵ Some of the National Theatre's first productions are discussed in Roilou 1999, 191–202.

¹⁵⁶ ANTG/BAAC, Session 11 May 1938.

¹⁵⁷ Rondiris was a Greek actor and director who joined the Marika Kotopouli Theatre Company in 1923 and later became assistant director of the National Theatre (Arvaniti 2010, 155–272).

¹⁵⁸ For a discussion of the politics and social correlation of the direction of the national repertoire in relation to dictatorship and political dependence see also Delgado 2014.

atmosphere of the production all reflected ideas that Leyhausen had been implementing in previous years when staging ancient drama (Ioannidou 2013, 338–9). As a result of these constraints, *Electra* was eventually staged as a monumental production with little or no consideration of local particularities or interests other than regional touristic prospects.

Consequently, the locals experienced the performance in Epidaurus as an official, centralized production that assigned them the role of mere spectators. Besides the government's desire to gain their support for the initiative, their invitation to the performance with a reduced-priced ticket may also have been a means of securing media success by filling any empty seats. However, the locals continued to engage with the theatre, seizing the opportunity provided by the event for social encounters in their neighbourhood. Even without an active role in the production, as regular frequenters of the site they maintained their own pragmatic attitudes towards both the site and the performance. Furthermore, due to the remoteness of the location, they were constantly involved in production logistics, serving as drivers for the cast, renting houses to visitors and acting as guards at the theatre, among other activities.¹⁵⁹ Their active engagement with the performance is revealed in the following quotation:

‘But among the spectators [they were] [...] a few thousand – and this is quite overwhelming – naive peasants from the villages around Epidaurus. They began flocking to the sacred place from the morning, most of them arriving on foot from far away. At the time of the performance, they paid for their cheap ticket, watched the tragedy reverently, from the upper tier, and at the end applauded with enthusiasm. Real theatre becomes the property of the populace’.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ *Naupliaki Icho*, 28 August 1938, 2 and *Naupliaki Icho* 11 September 1938, 2. See also the documentary ‘Λυγγουριό και αρχαίο θέατρο’ (2007) directed by Giorgos Antoniou, about the relationship between locals and the theatre.

¹⁶⁰ ‘Αλλά μεταξύ τῶν θεατῶν [...] ἄρκεται δὲ χιλιάδες – και τοῦτο εἶνε τὸ ἐξαιρετικὰ συγκινητικὸν – ἀπλοϊκῶν χωρικῶν ἀπὸ τὰ κοντινὰ εἰς τὴν Ἐπίδauρον χωρία. Οἱ τελευταῖοι αὐτοὶ ἤρχισαν νὰ συρρέουν ἀπὸ τὸ πρωῒ εἰς τὸν ἱερὸν τόπον, οἱ περισσότεροι πεζοὶ και ἀπὸ μακρυνὰς ἀποστάσεις, τὴν ὥραν δὲ τῆς παραστάσεως ἐπλήρωσαν τὸ εἰσιτήριον τῶν, φθινὸν δι’ αὐτούς, παρηκολούθησαν ἀπὸ τὸ ἐπάνω διάζωμα μὲ εὐλάβειαν τὴν διδασκαλίαν τῆς τραγωδίας και εἰς τὸ τέλος ἐχειροκρότησαν μὲ ἐνθουσιασμόν τοὺς ἐκτελεστάς. Τὸ πραγματικὸν θέατρον γίνεται κτῆμα και τοῦ Λαοῦ’ (*Ethnos* 12 September 1938, 3).

Η χθεσινή παράσταση

τὸν διακρι-
 ρίον, ἐργαζομέν-
 ῃν ἀκροῖαν
 ῥαχίαν ὁμα-
 ρουμένην γὰρ
 ὁσέων ἐκκινε-
 ῖ ἄρμονίαν. Ἡ
 ἐπιτυχία τῆς
 ἀσφαλῶς σῆ-
 ραισίν ἀπὸ τῆν
 ῆς αἰσθη-
 τικῆς, ἡ ἀπο-
 θέσθαι τὴν
 ῥαχίαν, ὅτι
 ἡ ἀσφαλῶς
 ἀσφαλῶς διὰ τὰς
 ἀσφαλῶς δρᾶμα-

[illegible]

ΑΛΛΑΒΕΤΑΣ

Είκοσι και οι Ρουμάνοι μάχη

Αθανία Ι

ΔΟΤΑ
Ν ΠΝΕΥΜΑ
ΕΤΟΡΙΑΙ

δικος ὁ ἴλος ἐ-
κθῆ εἰς τὴν πε-
ν τοῦ Πανατοῦ,
αἰχμάλωτος, ἐ-
περολόγον Γκα-
συμβουλεύθη.
καλὰ τοῦ ἀ-

ἐπιστρέφας ἐκ
του, ἐκάλεισε
τον ἀστρολόγον
αἰάουθι ὡρὸς
ἐλίοτι, τὸν ἡρώ-
μα ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι.

ἀπήνησεν ὁ
δὲν τὸ γνωρί-
σιν πού γνωρί-
α θὰ ἀποθάνω
της Μεγαλειότη-

εἶπε τότε ὁ βα-
στὴς καλῶ!

ζὼν εἶμαι ἀ-
ταίω ἐγώ, ἀπὴν
εὐφράλμα δικό
σαν ὁ Λουδοβί-

Αδελφός μου μοι δίδου
 μου κάνεις μά-
 τού κερδίζεις

ἀπήνησεν ὁ
ἐκ τῆς Μι-
σηγίας δὲν εἶπε
ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν

καὶ τὸ κατω-

στην.



καρέτσα και

ember 1938,

This last phrase represents the official stance on national theatrical performances for the masses and reflects the regime's populist practice of creating a national spectacle in the countryside, in line with Bastias' views. In general, similar descriptions of the locals as humble peasants, astonished at the breathtaking performances, were not rare in the national press and established a supposed contrast between uneducated, pre-modern peasants and intellectually sophisticated spectators.¹⁶¹ In particular, the locals' enthusiastic identification with the play's heroes was contrasted with the Western regard for authenticity and modernity. After describing the spectators' reaction to the play, the conservative newspaper *I Vradyni* concluded: 'It is between these two extremes – the spontaneous emotion of the naïve peasant and the reserved intellectual joy of the educated foreigner – that the critic of the Epidauros performance should find a proper balanced stance.'¹⁶² An interesting pattern can be seen in such critiques, especially as regards the National Theatre's performances; they employed a criterion based on the supposedly authentic element of the performance and national identity that had to be preserved and sanctified. These interpretations viewed the performances as exemplary for addressing the ideological issues of the period, while often neglecting the theatrical treatment as such (Papazoglou 2014, 207–58).

Expressions of gratitude and joy defined the locals' emotional attachment to the revived ancient site. During the performances, they viewed their theatres as living relics from another era, now being used for their original purpose. Their eager engagement with such performances also indicates their expectation that the number of visitors would increase and yield benefits for the community. Locals had demonstrated similar reactions the previous year, 1937, when the Ancient Theatre Group of the Sorbonne visited Epidauros and gave an informal performance of *The*

¹⁶¹ See, for instance, *I Proia* 13 September 1938, 2: 'The gathering of peasants from the vicinity is notable. Although uninitiated in questions of high art, they watched the performance silent and motionless for two hours, not only out of curiosity, but because they felt the thrill and terror of the tragedy permeating them' ('Ἄλλ' ὅ,τι ἀξίζει νὰ σημειωθῇ, εἶνε. Ὅσο καὶ νὰ ἦταν ἀμύητοι στὰ ζητήματα τῆς ὑψηλῆς τέχνης, ὅμως παρακολουθήσανε τὴν παράσταση ἐπὶ δυὸ - ὅρες σιωπηλοὶ καὶ ἀκίνητοι ὅχι ἀπὸ περιέργεια μονάχα, παρὰ καὶ γιατί νιώθανε νὰ τοὺς διαπερνᾷ τὸ ρῖγος τῆς τραγωδίας'). While for many locals it must indeed have been the first time, they had watched an ancient drama performed, this quotation demonstrates the impression of authority that such state-organized events instilled and reproduced through the national press.

¹⁶² 'Ἀνάμεσα εἰς τοὺς δύο αὐτοὺς πόλους, τὴν αὐθορμήτως ἐκχειλίζουσιν συγκίνησιν τοῦ ἀπλοῦκοῦ χωρικοῦ καὶ τὴν συγκρατημένην πνευματικὴν χαρὰν τοῦ μορφωμένου ξένου, θὰ ἔπρεπε νὰ σταθῇ ἡ κριτικὴ τῆς παραστάσεως τῆς Ἐπιδάουρου' (*I Vradyni* 13 September 1938, 3).

Persians, arousing amazement among inhabitants passing the site (Burgaud 1984; Patron 1997, 48–53; Mavromoustakos 2018). That was the first documented modern performance of ancient drama in Epidauros, while the same company officially performed the play at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus around the same period (*Acropolis* 10 August 1937, 2; *Acropolis* 11 August 1937, 3). While the performance in Epidauros was an informal staging without official audience, it enjoyed the regime’s wide acceptance and press acclaim in Athens.¹⁶³

In addition, the locals’ engagement with the performances reflected their feeling of ownership of the theatre as part of their regional heritage. For them, although the theatre might represent high culture worthy of national (and international) renown, they primarily regarded it as a locale for socialization. This ideological clash ensured that central agents extolled regional heritage (including classical monuments) and implemented a nationalist conception of it, which locals were compelled to endure passively. Thus, their archaeological discourse, in which the theatre formed an integral part of their neighbourhood and lives, was ignored in favour of a centralized interpretation based on an exclusionary nationalism that ‘purified’ the classical antiquities, transforming them into historical monuments. From the perspective of institutional archaeology, the only envisaged benefit to locals of the performances would come from the money spent by other spectators. However, the lack of basic tourist facilities in Greece at the time rendered it unlikely that local communities would reap any substantial financial reward.

The auspicious success of the performances in Epidauros was celebrated by the Council of the National Theatre, since the high attendance resulted to economic success that ensured similar projects in the future: ‘A great number of foreign specialists attended in this year [...] in addition, Greek critics acclaimed this year’s performances and we did not hesitate together with the Hellenic

¹⁶³ The regime’s need for international recognition and diplomatic legitimation must have played an important role in the concession of the performance. The director of the EFA, who intervened in the negotiations, requested that the Greek a delegate in France had to personally inform Metaxas about the issue. At the same time, the National Theatre and the Ministry eagerly collaborated and assisted the French students with the logistics of the play (DAHAAR, Box 603 B, Folder A (1937), Subfolder 3/9). See also *Acropolis* 10 August 1937, 2 and Mavromoustakos 2010.

Touring Club, to implement an old plan to perform in other appropriate ancient theatres outside Athens'.¹⁶⁴

In total, the 1938 performance had the role of a national rehearsal. The direction of the National Theatre along with the national authorities foresaw the expansion of this practice to other ancient venues, which would project to the Greek populace the ideals of a conservative classical perception, as it was envisioned by Bastias and Rondiris. Similarly, the Minister of Education, Konstantinos Georgakopoulos, and the Archaeological Council foresaw the possibilities that the theatre of Epidauros offered; in a letter to the Directorate for the Restoration of Ancient and Historical Monuments on 16 September 1938, five days after the performance, the minister anticipated a series of restoration works at the theatre (mainly the damaged tiers) that would promote the revival of ancient drama in the future.¹⁶⁵ At the same time the Touring Club had already requested the construction of a small-scale infrastructure close to the theatre of Epidauros, and already contemplated about establishing a regular spectacle. The continuity of this theatrical activity would align the Greek Theatre with the large-scale European theatrical traditions in ancient drama and the internal populist politics of theatre for the masses.

¹⁶⁴ 'Τὴν ἐφετεινὴν περίοδον παρηκολούθησε πλῆθος ξένων εἰδικῶν [...] Ἐκτὸς τούτων ἡ ἑλληνικὴ κριτικὴ σύσσωμος ἐπῆνεσε τὰς ἐφετεινὰς μας παραστάσεις ἐπὶ πλεόν δε δὲν ἐδιστάσαμεν ἐν συνεργασίᾳ μετὰ τῆς Περιηγητικῆς Λέσχης νὰ πραγματοποιήσωμεν καὶ παλαιὸν σχέδιον τοῦ Θεάτρου τῶν παραστάσεων δηλαδὴ εἰς ἄλλα σωζόμενα ἀρχαῖα θέατρα ἐκτὸς τῶν Ἀθηνῶν' (ANTG/BAAC, Session 4 October 1938).

¹⁶⁵ Letter by K. Georgakopoulos to the director of Conservation and Restoration of Ancient and Historic Monuments on 16 September 1938, DAHAAR, Box 603 E, Folder D (1938), Subfolder 3/3; DCRAHM, Box 318, Folder 1, Correspondence 1917–1950. See also *Eleutheron Vima* 14 September 1938, 2.

Chapter 3 From Fascism to National Unity (1939–1949)

3.1. Cultural politics, fascism, and ideological reform

Diplomatic relations between Spain and fascist Italy were initiated during Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, but a geopolitical dispute over territories in North Africa had distanced the two regimes (Tusell Gómez and Saz Campos 1982; Díaz-Andreu 2016). The main fascist party in Spain, the Falange, had established systematic relations with the Italian regime since its foundation in 1933.¹⁶⁶ However, it was mainly during and immediately after the Spanish Civil War that cultural production came to reflect these sociopolitical contacts. Although Franco's military dictatorship was ideologically closer to Metaxas' Greece (Katsoudas 2004; Kallis 2007), the political platform that contributed to the Republican defeat in the Spanish Civil War initially adopted a fascistized form of government (Paxton 2013; Rodríguez Barreira 2014). The Falange systematically disseminated fascist discourse and assimilated Mussolini's cultural aesthetics. Consequently, public events (Vázquez Astorga 2004; Duplá Ansuátegui 2017; Plantzos and Balaskas forthcoming) and artistic performances in ancient venues alluded to Roman imperial ideals.

During the Second World War (1939–1945), fascism also employed this aestheticized approach to politics in the Axis-occupied territories. In occupied Greece (1941–1944), German and Italian productions in Greco-Roman theatres were instrumentalized for the purposes of internal propaganda and the external display of power, while national Greek performances normalized the Axis' sociocultural authority.

Classical productions in Greece and Spain served to reinforce power and authority, representing fascism's ability to control cultural production and instigate bureaucratic reform (Falasca-Zamponi 1997, 1–8; Griffin 2007, 70–4). In these terms, power can be seen as a top-down

¹⁶⁶ It was founded in October 1933 with the name *Falange Española*. Due to poor election results in 1934, the party merged with the nationalist and fascist movement *Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista* and was renamed *Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista (FE de las JONS)*. When, after the Civil War, Francisco Franco dictated a fusion of the party with the carlist movement *Comunión Tradicionalista*, it adopted its definitive name *Falange Española Tradicionalista de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista (FET de las JONS)*.

strategy to dominate sociocultural expression. The fascist authorities imposed their cultural aesthetics and inserted their militant, ultra-nationalist agenda into the European cultural industry (Koepnick 1999, 192).

According to Falasca-Zamponi, fascism beguiled the masses by anaesthetizing their senses and offering a cultic experience (Falasca-Zamponi 1997, 9–14). It emphasized a deified perception of politics combined with sensory alienation. Drawing on Benjamin's accounts of the aestheticization of politics under fascism, Falasca-Zamponi contends that this paradoxical combination led to the negation of human nature and a distortion of reality beyond social and aesthetic limits (Falasca-Zamponi 1997, 9–14). The introduction of aesthetics into politics not only perpetuated early 20th century modernist nationalism but also transformed sociopolitical reality into a community building project (Koepnick 1996). Esposito also draws on Benjamin's accounts and attests that:

‘It seems reasonable not only to view fascism as a political religion, and therefore a result of the sacralization of politics, but also to keep in mind the aestheticization of politics that finds expression in it [...] Through its objectification in public buildings, rituals, ceremonies and mass culture (e.g., the *Esposizione dell'aeronautica italiana*, or popular war books), it became the central element in the aesthetic-cultural generation of community. In fascism the values, norms and heroes of community were aesthetically staged and experienced as integral parts of a cult practice’ (Esposito 2015, 353).

Thus, civic spaces were transformed into sites for spectacular politics (Falasca-Zamponi 1997, ch. 1; Griffin 2007, ch. 8). The associated productions were linked to the multi-layered temporality of fascism and its palingenetic myth (Griffin 2007, 224–7), reflecting feelings of nostalgia for eternal renown, while their spectators were encouraged to feel part of an enactment (Griffin 1991, 35–6). In this context, performances at ancient venues chimed with a mechanism for urban control that employed historical monuments as a space to express the new totalitarian reality (Hagen 2008). Radio, film, and public events became the ideal channels for shaping reality, rewriting history, and disseminating a metaphysical version of past and future (Griffin 1991 29–30; Ben-Ghiat 2001, 174–80). For this reason, the Axis forces in Greece immediately requisitioned mass communication outlets, such as newspapers and radio stations (Griffin 2007, 310–5; Pomeroy

2018, 264–85). Programmes in German and Italian dominated radio broadcasts in Athens, while the national press delivered German courses to facilitate everyday communication with the German authorities. Similarly, in Spain, the propaganda machine of the Falange exerted ideological control over social and artistic expression. The Italian LUCE Institute and the Spanish NO-DO¹⁶⁷ served as audiovisual apparatuses that systematically disseminated the regimes' powerful propaganda.

After the Second World War, authoritarian regimes with a deeply conservative, anti-communist, and anti-leftist stance consolidated their authority in Greece and Spain. These political establishments decisively conditioned public discourse and cultural expression. I propose viewing the artistic production of the early post-war years through Foucault's concept of power relations (Foucault 1978, 94–7). From this perspective, the exercise of power extends throughout the social fabric and involves mechanisms and institutions rather than a centralized authority. As power relations are not exercised solely by the state, a series of internal pressures and disputes dominates sociocultural reality.

In Spain, the reuse of ancient venues no longer represented imperial *romanità*, but instead epitomized the ideological pillars of Franco's *Nuevo Estado*.¹⁶⁸ Especially from 1943 onwards, the Franco regime opted to instil a national-Catholic identity and national unity (Saz Campos 2004; Díaz-Andreu 2016). Thereafter, classicism was filtered through Spain's Catholic past and historical particularities. This development formed part of the defascistization¹⁶⁹ of the regime under Franco (Gallego Margaleff 2013). Nationalist discourse reflected a shift in political authority towards a conservative compromise and occasionally sparked disagreement between the Falange and the regime's Catholic section. In contrast, during the Greek Civil War, which lasted from 1946 to 1949, authoritarian Greek governments dominated cultural expression and social discipline

¹⁶⁷ The series of cinema newsreels NO-DO (Noticiario y Documentales) significantly contributed to the state propaganda by projecting audiovisual reports to the Spanish citizens from 1943.

¹⁶⁸ Saz Campos defines Franco's political establishment as 'informal authoritarian compromise', in a sense that numerous political components and formal powers (the army, the church, the business community, monarchist circles, the Falange etc.) were subordinated under Franco's supreme authority (Saz Campos 2004). For Franco's peculiar political administration see Gil Pecharromán 2013, ch. 2.

¹⁶⁹ Defascistization of the Spanish regime was a progressive process during which the fascist Falange lost its influential presence in policy-making and was overcome by the other political powers (Payne 1999, ch. 11).

without any significant internal disputes (Clogg 2021, 135–41). However, the national institutions had to find a way to monopolize cultural expression. The war occasionally disrupted but did not prevent artistic productions at ancient sites, even outside Athens.

Only a few theatrical productions took place at ancient venues from 1945 to 1949, yet they fully embodied the sociopolitical turn to conservatism and national unity. Confrontation between social, cultural, and political agents reshaped artistic production in Greece and Spain, as internal disputes between national institutions and theatrical agents reflected a network of power relations that governed artistic expression of the period. On this basis, political interventionism transformed theatre into a national issue of authority and ideological consolidation.

3.2. Fascism, legislation, and censorship

At the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, regional and provincial institutions controlled Francoist propaganda. Following the creation of the National Delegation of Press and Propaganda in 1937, state propaganda fell into the hands of the President of the Political Council of the Falange, Ramón Serrano Suñer. Under Franco's first government in January 1938, censorship and propaganda became central issues that were tightly interwoven. The regime issued censorship legislation that included laws on the press (Law 550, *Official State Gazette* 24 April 1938, 6938–6940),¹⁷⁰ book publication, and public events (Hurtley 2007). Later, in the *Official State Gazette* 211 (30 July 1939, 4119–20), censorship was endowed with a unified strategy under the direction of the *Sección de Censura*.

According to O'Leary (cited in Hurtley 2007, 63), 'Franco realized that by controlling or influencing what Althusser termed ideological state apparatuses, the ruling elite could influence and shape the values, choices and lived reality of the populace'. Despite this centralized approach, internal disputes between competing elements of the regime proved detrimental to the implementation of uniform censorship. The Falangist poet Dionisio Ridruejo was appointed head of the Propaganda Service (*ABC Sevilla* 3 March 1938, 9) and Luis Escobar head of the National

¹⁷⁰ In addition, after the 1938 legislation, journalism became an apparatus of absolute state control, vigilance, and propaganda (Delgado Idarreta 2004).

Theatre Department (until January 1939). Initially, the fascist sectors seem to have assumed responsibility for theatre productions, even after Suñer retired from the presidency of the Falange in September 1942 (Muñoz Cáliz 2008). However, from 1945 onwards, the Ministry of National Education, which was under the control of the Catholic section of the regime, assumed responsibility for theatrical production (Díez Puertas 2009). The 1945 Law on Theatre consolidated the theatrical censorship of the national-Catholic administration (Mutualidad y Montepío de Empresarios de Espectáculos de España 1948).

Similar legislative reforms were issued by the Greek collaborationist government in command of the Axis powers that occupied the Kingdom of Greece during the Second World War. The invasion by German and Bulgarian armies in April 1941 was undertaken to assist their Italian ally, which had been at war with Greece since October 1940. This led to the unilateral surrender of Greek military officers and a triple occupation of the Greek territory by Germany, Italy, and Bulgaria, following months of armed resistance. One of these officers, Georgios Tsolakoglou, was appointed Prime Minister in the collaborationist government formed at the end of April. The authorities were permitted to exercise total control over national institutions, obstruct their functioning, and arbitrarily formulate their sociocultural policy. According to Graeber (2012), bureaucratic absurdity in cultural life corresponds to structural violence. In artistic production, absurdity was manifested in the bureaucratic and institutional reality of management, the concession policy, negotiations for reuse, and (the lack of) protection of ancient theatres. This exercise of control was extended to cultural production as new legislation shaped the curation of Greek antiquities and heritage. First, the Directorate of Antiquities and Historical Monuments was placed under the General Directorate of Antiquities, Letters, and Fine Arts (Legislative Decree 15 FEK 158, 8 May 1941). However, a little later, the authorities issued a sweeping new reform that divided the General Directorate of Antiquities, Letters, and Fine Arts into three autonomous bodies: the Directorate of Antiquities, the Directorate of Letters, Theatre, and Cinema, and the Directorate of Fine Arts (Legislative Decree 214 FEK 210, 25 June 1941; Legislative Decree 497 FEK 311, 22 September 1941). Finally, Legislative Decree 361 (FEK 266, 7 August 1941) thrust the National Theatre into the embrace of the newly created Directorate of Letters, Theatre, and Cinema, which pertained to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and National Education.

This legislation also included structural changes in the administration of the Royal Theatre. Legislative Decree 2 (FEK 153, 5 May 1941) officially abolished its independence by designating a governmental commissioner who assumed total responsibility (including the position of director) and was directly appointed by the Prime Minister. In addition, the official name of the organization was once again changed, from Royal Theatre (Βασιλικόν Θέατρον) to National Theatre (Εθνικόν Θέατρον).¹⁷¹

As a result of these reforms, Nikolaos Giokarinis was appointed governmental commissioner and director of the National Theatre on 8 May 1941 (Legislative Decree 16, FEK 159, 8 May 1941).¹⁷² Giokarinis was a conservative journalist who held the position of press commissioner and was responsible for Axis propaganda in Greece. He remained in office for two years, during which time he introduced Italian pieces in the National Opera, which operated as part of the National Theatre until 1944 (Argyriou 2002, 59–63),¹⁷³ and invited Italian artists to perform in Athens. He also collaborated on the Greek edition of the fascist magazine *Quadrivio* (*Κουαδρίβιο*), which extolled the virtues of the Greek-Italian cultural relationship and attempted to ideologically legitimize the Italian occupation by publishing pieces written by renowned Greek intellectuals.

At the same time, the new regime tightened the mechanisms of control over cultural expression that had been introduced in the previous period; Legislative Decrees completed Ioannis Metaxas' legislation on censorship (Legislative Decree 1850, FEK 111, 11 July 1941; Legislative Decree 1108, FEK 48, 6 March 1942). Instructions to stage German or Italian plays and suppress those written by British or French authors were among the measures introduced. In the following years, censorship was further regulated by Ioannis Rallis' collaborationist government (Legislative Decree 485 FEK 267, 16 August 1943), a process that occurred in three stages, implemented by

¹⁷¹ This followed the change of the country's official name from the Kingdom of Greece to the Hellenic State (Ελληνική Πολιτεία) and the prohibition of any formal reference to the king or royal titles (Legislative Decree 11, FEK 156, 7 May 1941).

¹⁷² Shortly afterwards, the positions of governmental commissioner and director of the National Theatre were again separated (Legislative Decree 361, FEK 266, 7 August 1941). Under Metaxas' authoritarian dictatorship (1936–1941), cultural expression at the National Theatre was similarly placed in the hands of Kostis Bastias (Balaskas 2021).

¹⁷³ From December 1942 the Administrative Council of the Organization was presided over by the Prime Minister himself (Legislative Decree 2127, FEK 35, 18 February 1943).

Greek, Italian, and German authorities (Dizelos 1962).

3.3. Fascism and theatre in Spain: The Falange (1937–1944)

The fascistization of the Spanish political scene had already begun in the 1920s, following Mussolini's rise to power in Italy and active attempts by Italian fascism to expand its sphere of influence and intervene in Spanish society during the Spanish Republic (Plantzos and Balaskas forthcoming).¹⁷⁴ At the same time, Republican sociopolitical reform radicalized the Falange, although the latter did not produce its propaganda material and performances until after the Spanish Civil War. During that period, the Falange presented Spain as a fascist nation whose imperial status was based on a uniform, patriotic identity (Duplá Ansuátegui 2003, 75; Gallego Margaleff 2005).

The adoption of a new calendar in emulation of fascist Italy also evidenced this fascist orientation (De Francisco Olmos 2009). The alternative calendar was used mainly for bureaucratic, official, or media documents and propaganda after the coup of 1936. In particular, the war years 1936, 1937, 1938, and 1939 were named the I, II, III, and IV *Año Triunfal* (1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Triumphal Year), respectively. Following the final victory against the legitimate Republican regime, the year 1939 was renamed the *Año de la Victoria* (Year of Victory).

Journals such as *Jerarquia* (Duplá Ansuátegui 2012) and *Vértice* introduced a totalitarian and ultra-nationalist narrative that appropriated imperial *romanità* as a national issue, although they did not manage to disseminate fascist discourse as effectively as their Italian counterparts. Meanwhile, Spanish archaeologists and classicists who supported the Falange, such as Martín Almagro Basch and Eugenio d'Ors, contributed to the appropriation of the political aspect of Roman antiquities in Spain and their perception as imperial assets (López Izquierdo 1942; Gracia Alonso 2009, ch. 7). For instance, Almagro Basch's systematic excavation of Empúries in Catalonia showcased the Spanish version of fascistized heritage. Imperial objectives and a fascistized Mediterranean identity were apparent in the presentation of his journal *Ampurias*:

¹⁷⁴ It was also part of fascism's desire to expand Italian influence abroad through interventions in cultural policy and propaganda (Ben-Ghiat 2001; Domínguez 2013).

‘Its name comes from the Greco-Roman city from which the Greeks brought a touch of Mediterranean civilization to the Peninsula. Empúries is the westernmost Greek city. The Romans disembarked there for the first time to fight Carthage. Cato the Elder built the first civilized settlement there. Following the Roman conquest, Spain ceased to be a land of tribes and became an imperial land’.¹⁷⁵

As Wulff Alonso suggests, this case illustrates how archaeologists and classicists consolidated Spanish identification with the Roman past (2003, 231–4). Monumental archaeology gradually replaced liberal ideals (Gracia Alonso 2012) and public celebrations were regularly adorned with temporary architectural decoration that symbolically evoked the imperial aesthetics of the Roman empire.¹⁷⁶ The celebration of the bimillenary of the Roman Emperor Augustus in cities such as Zaragoza and Tarragona (1938–1940) embodied the regime’s ideological identification with Italian fascism (Duplá Ansuátegui 2017; Plantzos and Balaskas forthcoming). Similarly, in a spectacular public ceremony during a visit of the Italian Conde Galeazzo Ciano¹⁷⁷ to Spain in July 1939, even Franco momentarily adopted a fascist profile:

‘The feelings of friendship between our two countries are born out of a common history, in which at times it was the turn of the Roman legions to fertilize our land with their blood, and at other times it fell to the Spanish to leave their ashes in the sister lands of Italy’.¹⁷⁸

Under these circumstances, the theatre of Merida became an ideal space to celebrate a Spanish *romanità*, an identity that the Falange imposed in its attempt to emulate Italian fascism, evidencing an ideological use of the theatre that reflected the political values that classical heritage had

¹⁷⁵ ‘Su nombre es el de la ciudad greco-romana por donde los griegos trajeron a la Península el soplo de la civilización mediterránea. Ampurias es la última ciudad griega de occidente. En ella los romanos desembarcan por primera vez para combatir a Cartago. Y en ella asienta Catón el Grande el primer gran campamento civilizador. Tras la conquista romana España dejó de ser tierra de tribus y pasó a ser tierra imperial’ (*Ampurias* 1, ‘Editorial’ 1939).

¹⁷⁶ For the works and importance of the Department of Plastics of the National Service of Press and Propaganda, the responsible for decorating those events, see Vázquez Astorga 2004.

¹⁷⁷ Minister of Foreign Affairs and Secretary of Press and Propaganda in Mussolini’s government.

¹⁷⁸ ‘Los sentimientos de amistad de nuestros dos países han nacido de una historia en común, en la que unas veces tocó a las legiones romanas fecundar con su sangre nuestra tierra, y otras cupo a los españoles el honor de dejar sus cenizas en las tierras hermanas de Italia’ (*La Nueva España* 14 July 1939, 4).

acquired. The glorification of Merida by the falangist archaeologist Julio Martínez Santa-Olalla, who presented the city as one of the most splendid creations of the Roman world in Spain (*Legiones y Falanges* October 1941, 32), attested to this new identity. During the Spanish Civil War, the theatre was used to stage a monumental performance that commemorated the assistance of Italian legionaries from the *Corpo Truppe Volontarie*, who had fought alongside Franco's troops (Rodrigo 2016, ch. 2). The Italian soldiers were headed to the port of Cadiz on their way back to their homeland, and Merida offered an ideal Roman backdrop:

'The streets of Merida were adorned with flags and at various points were placed posters with quotes from the Generalissimo and General Astray that exalted Italy and the legionaries, as well as photographs of the Caudillo and Mussolini. In the Roman Theatre, medals were presented by Spanish women who offered them as mementoes'.¹⁷⁹

Considering that the theatre was used by local civilians as a refuge during bombardment of the city in the Civil War, the ceremony cynically demonstrated the militaristic fervour of fascist imperialism (López Díaz 2011, 420).¹⁸⁰ The legionaries also received a warm welcome in Seville and Cadiz, where fascist celebrations exalted the imperial *romanità* (*Diario de Burgos* 15 October 1938, 1; *Pensamiento Alavés* 15 October 1938; *Patria* 16 October 1938, 2; Vázquez Astorga 2004).

In the following years, few productions were staged in the Roman theatre, merely a handful of plays and some military celebrations commemorating meaningful events. According to Paxton (2013), the creation and social impact of new institutions in early Francoist Spain reflected the fascistization of the regime, as evidenced, for example, by the *Sección Femenina*, the women's branch of the Falange (Vázquez Astorga 2004). Thus, the regime's first classical drama

¹⁷⁹ 'Las calles de Mérida estaban engalanadas con banderas y en diversos puntos se colocaron carteles con frases del Generalísimo y del General Millán Astray de exaltación a Italia y a los legionarios, así como fotografías del Caudillo y de Mussolini. En el Teatro Romano tuvo lugar la entrega de unas medallas que las mujeres españolas les impusieron como recuerdo' (*La Prensa* 16 October 1938, 4).

¹⁸⁰ Merida was a strategic location that connected the northern and southern zones of the rebel army, which captured and secured control of the city in August 1936.

production, Plautus' *Aulularia*, was organized by the Carro de la Farándula, a theatre company operating within the *Sección Femenina* and financed by the Merida city council (Figure 10).¹⁸¹

The press reiterated the imperial objectives of the performance, which were to 'associate the city's name with its magnificent imperial Roman monuments and [...] to use these ruins to disseminate classical culture and art'.¹⁸² In addition, allusions to Catholic dogma inaugurated a national tradition that was systematically reproduced at the Roman theatre over the following decades (*ABC Madrid* 2 January 1940, 11). Therefore, the initiative of the Carro de la Farándula company to perform classical drama at the theatre, in keeping with the spirit of similar productions in Italy, can be considered part of the fascistization of Spain.

The choice of play was a question of theatrical tradition.¹⁸³ From the late 19th century until the 1930s, *Aulularia* was translated several times into Spanish, sometimes directly from the Latin and others from French editions (Blanco López 2010, 208–9). Besides being an undemanding play for public consumption, *Aulularia* followed a philological tradition that had facilitated earlier staging at interior venues. The performance did not attract a wide audience, but its repetition in Madrid three months later was met with great success. Press critics praised the performance and repeatedly referred to the fresh, diachronic quality of Plautus' comedies (*Hoja del Lunes Madrid* 11 December 1939, 3; *Informaciones* 11 December 1939, 5; *Ya* 12 December 1939).

The performance was staged on 1 October to commemorate Franco's ascension to power (González-Vázquez 2015; González-Vázquez 2016). At the same time, the provincial delegate of the theatre voiced the play's objectives when he claimed that classical drama symbolically connected Spanish literature with national monuments (*Hoy* 21 September 1939; *Arriba* 29 September 1939; Monleón 2004, 85). Hence, the Falange presented itself as the caretaker of Roman civilization in the Spanish periphery.

¹⁸¹ MHAM/LGM/BA/P, Session 3 October 1939, 11v. See also González-Vázquez 2015.

¹⁸² 'asociar el nombre de la ciudad a sus magníficos monumentos de la Roma Imperial y [...] utilizar las ruinas de estos para difundir la cultura y el arte clásico' (*Proa* 24 September 1939, 4). This notion of Hispanidad that the fascist component of the regime attempted so desperately to implement during the first years also found its way through literature. See, for instance, Giménez Caballero 1939. For an extensive analysis of the issue see also García Candeira 2019.

¹⁸³ MHAM/LGM/BA/P, Session, 18 September 1939, 5v–6.

y baston de mando adquiridos por subscripción abierta entre todas las Corporaciones Municipales de la provincia de Badajoz se ha de rendir en luego al ilustre General Pella, a cuyos altos dotes de mando debió nuestra Ciudad no caer de nuevo en poder de los rojos el memorable día 14 de Agosto de 1.936, que el Alcalde presidente, asista a dicho homenaje en nombre y representación del Ayuntamiento.

A propuesta del Jester Delegado del Establecimiento y del Sr. Mondejar, que son los que directamente han intervenido en el asunto, adjudicar el blanqueo de la Iglesia del Hospital Municipal de San Juan de Dios en la cantidad alzada de mil trescientas pesetas, corriendo a su cargo los accidentes del trabajo que puedan ocurrir a Antonio Espada, como autor de la proposición mas ventajosa de cuantas se presentaron en el concurso abierto al efecto.

El Jester Sr. Garcia Gil da cuenta de las gestiones que en su ultimo viaje a Madrid, entre otras de gran interes para el Municipio, hizo el Sr. Alcalde para lograr que el Teatro Nacional de la Palange, de una representación clasica en nuestro Teatro Romano, marco adecuadamente para esta clase de fiestas.

Dichas gestiones han obtenido un éxito completo y la notable Agrupación Artística de referencia, se presta gustosa a la idea y tiene ya elegida y en ensayo, la obra que pondrá en escena, que es la notable comedia romana de Marco Accio Plauto denominada Ex- Aulularia, sin cobrar otro estipendio, que los gastos que el montaje de la obra y desplazamiento a Mérida de los componentes de la Agrupación ocasionen.

La Gestora acoge complacida esta feliz iniciativa del Alcalde que ha de contribuir a sostener el prestigio de que Mérida goza ante los extraneros, y le da un amplio voto de confianza para organizar la fiesta, patrocinada por el Ayuntamiento, que desde luego satisfará de sus fondos con cargo a Imprevistos el déficit que pueda resultar entre los limitados gastos que ocasionen dado el desinterés y altruismo con que procede la Agrupación, y los ingresos que se obtengan por la venta de localidades.

Figure 10. Page 6 from the Book of Acts of the Plenary of the Local Government of Merida, Session 18 September 1939. The text informs of the agreement to perform Plautus' *Aulularia* at the theatre of Merida. Municipal Historical Archive of Merida.

The *Sección Femenina* returned to the Roman theatre for a solemn event in 1944. The site offered the ideal symbolism for the institution's 8th National Council (*Consejo Nacional*). The youth organization of the Falange, the National Delegation of the Youth Front (*Delegación Nacional del Frente de Juventudes*), also helped to organize the event. Flags, falangist insignias, a small-scale parade, and a secular ceremony followed a Catholic mass at the church of Saint Eulalia (Figure 11). The local authorities offered a warm welcome to the military personnel, politicians, and spectators in attendance. The political event included official speeches, such one given by the general vice-secretary of the Falange, Manuel de Mora-Figueroa,¹⁸⁴ in which he repeatedly alluded to his vision of a Spanish empire and a National syndicalist political system. The Youth Front band later sang the Falange anthem, 'Cara al Sol', and guests were presented with special medals (*La Provincia* 27 January 1944, 1). Folkloric dance exhibitions by the *Sección Femenina* completed the event.¹⁸⁵

Overall, it was an act of reaffirmation of Falangist commitment to the imperial fascist vision, a time when the process of desfascistization of the regime had already begun (Gallego Margaleff 2013) and most of the Falangists who actively supported the alliance with the Axis powers had lost power. During this process, a triumphal resuscitation of the Roman past portrayed the theatre of Merida as proof of national unity (De la Barrera 2006, 121–6; Ortueta 2010).

3.4. The Axis occupation and classical heritage in Greece (1941–1944)

The German and Italian authorities introduced a new way of experiencing classical theatre and ancient monuments in Greece, exerting tight control and introducing extensive legislation that dissolved the authority of state institutions and mechanisms. Nevertheless, it was mainly Greek cultural organizations (especially the National Theatre and the Athens Conservatoire) that continued to systematically use the Odeon of Herodes Atticus. However, the sociopolitical control over these organizations exercised by collaborationist governments determined the limits of their

¹⁸⁴ Mora-Figueroa was an ancient member of the Falange and supporter of the alliance with the Axis forces. He had also served in the Blue Division, a unit of Spanish volunteers who fought within the Wehrmacht on the Soviet Front during the Second World War.

¹⁸⁵ For audiovisual documentation, see the RTVE, <http://www.rtve.es/filmoteca/no-do/not-58/1468395/>.



Figure 11. Photograph of the General vice-secretary of the Falange, Manuel de Mora-Figueroa, giving a speech at the theatre of Merida during the 8th National Council of the Sección Femenina (1944). Roman Art National Museum (Archivo Fotográfico).

activities. Charity events intended for the relief of the civilian population were also organized at the Odeon by private organizations and artistic societies. More importantly, the German and Italian authorities either participated in some of the artistic performances produced by the main Greek companies or staged their own symbolic productions.

Besides its convenient location, the Odeon dovetailed well with the monumental aesthetics of fascism. Its clean lines next to the Acropolis projected a symbolic grandiosity that fascism claimed as its own (Griffin 2007, 245–9 and 291–5). The public attending these events was consisted of Greeks, Germans, and Italians, but it is impossible to estimate either the audience numbers or exact composition. On some occasions, Greek spectators could only attend a performance by private invitation (*I Vradyni* 6 August 1941, 1); at others, they were even prevented from visiting the ancient monument at gunpoint (Ministry of Religious Affairs and National Education 1946, 115). Usually, many seats were reserved for German and Italian military personnel. Whenever they had the chance, however, many Greeks found creative ways to escape threatening reality by attending plays (Theodoropoulou 1941, 576–7).

The (im)balance of power that emerged during the occupation determined the course of the theatrical performances staged in Athens until the final withdrawal of the last Axis troops in October 1944,¹⁸⁶ while legislative reform of Greek cultural institutions ensured that classical productions served the symbolic objectives of the occupying forces. Performances at the Odeon mainly involved the collaboration of the Ministry of Education, the German and Italian authorities, the Archaeological Council, and those cultural institutions that requested permission to perform. During the first months of the occupation, the National Theatre organized a *Summer Season of Ancient Drama* and staged two tragedies, while the Athens Conservatoire performed almost every Saturday.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Italian troops had already withdrawn after the armistice between Italy and the Allies in September 1943, while the Bulgarian withdrawal took place in late October 1944.

¹⁸⁷ DAHAAR Box 604 A, Folder A 1941, Subfolder 3/5. The paramount importance of these productions for the local population appears repeatedly in official correspondence. The Athens Conservatoire referred to the desire of the Athenian public to attend musical entertainment, and to the more than 80 families comprising the Conservatoire that needed to work and make a living in such harsh times. In contrast to the heads of some Greek cultural institutions,

The National Theatre's first tragedy was Sophocles' *Antigone*, which was scheduled for ten performances under the direction of Takis Mouzenidis.¹⁸⁸ Unfortunately, documentation on the production is scarce. The collaborationist prime minister Tsolakoglou, various ministers, members of the German and Italian military authorities, and Greek intellectuals attended the play's premiere (*I Proia* 20 June 1941, 2). Theatre critics were very positive and repeatedly referred to the enthusiastic response of the German and Italian spectators (*I Proia* 20 June 1941, 2; *I Vradyni* 20 June 1941, 1; *Proinos Typos* 20 June 1941, 1). Evidencing German technological dominance, the performance was broadcast live on national radio in Germany, even though the play was performed in modern Greek (*I Vradyni* 20 June 1941, 1).¹⁸⁹ Despite the revolutionary spirit traditionally exhibited in *Antigone*, the choice of play was not as unexpected as it might seem under the circumstances, since it was a revival of a production staged the previous year and had already been scheduled to take place before the occupation occurred (*Athinaika Nea* 8 October 1940, 2).¹⁹⁰

The National Theatre also staged Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, which was met with an enthusiastic reception among the occupying forces and Greek critics.¹⁹¹ During the summer season

many of their actors, actresses, and technicians were members of the *National Liberation Front* (Εθνικό Απελευθερωτικό Μέτωπο), the main Greek resistance movement, closely tied to the Communist Party of Greece and other leftist groups.

¹⁸⁸ See the *Summer Season of Ancient Dramas* Programme 1941, DANTG: www.nt-archive.gr/viewfiles1.aspx?webSpeech=&playID=288&programID=878&gotoPage=1).

¹⁸⁹ Radio transmissions of artistic performances had already been broadcast in Greece before the occupation, but they did not play the extensive propaganda role that they subsequently acquired (Theodoropoulou 1941, 576–7).

¹⁹⁰ What is more, Nazi intellectuals had assimilated Sophocles into the Aryan race: 'Eugen Fischer, who collaborated with Günther in editing a 1933 volume titled *Deutsche Köpfe nordischer Rasse* (*German profiles, Nordic race*), an anthology of images of impeccable Germanic faces [...] an image of a statue of Sophocles, who also successfully passed the racial test, read simply, "Sophocles. Nordic."' (Chapoutot 2016, 58).

¹⁹¹ Under Rondiris' direction (*I Vradyni* 18 July 1941, 1). Thylos mentioned the problematic use of chorus (1941, 703–4). See also the *Summer Season of Ancient Drama* Programme 1941, DANTG: www.nt-archive.gr/viewfiles1.aspx?webSpeech=&playID=703&programID=479&gotoPage=1. In October, the German authorities expressed their satisfaction and donated 50,000 marks for the performance of Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, which was staged in honour of German troops on the Central Stage of the National Theatre (ANTG/BAAC, session 28 October 1941).

of 1942, the Odeon was again handed over to the National Theatre, which staged *Medea*.¹⁹² This time, the reception was mixed. While the music and translation were generally applauded (*Eleutheron Vima* 26 September 1942; *I Proia* 27 September 1942), the sets and Mouzenidis' realistic direction were felt to exhibit many weaknesses (*Athinaika Nea* 26 September 1942). A little later, after Rondiris' resignation¹⁹³ and Mouzenidis' dismissal,¹⁹⁴ the National Theatre was left without theatrical directors midway through the 1942 season. Despite Linos Karzis' attempt to emulate Giokarinis and work as a theatrical director in the National Theatre (he aimed to create an autonomous ancient drama section), his name was never seriously considered.¹⁹⁵ Instead, in 1943, Karzis' theatrical company Thymelikos Thiasos became semi-state owned.

Despite extensive use of the Odeon in the summer, Greek national institutions had failed to protect the structure and maintain it in a suitable condition. This neglect prompted the intervention of archaeological authorities, which officially requested that the monument be protected. The director of the Acropolis Museum, Ioannis Miliadis, repeatedly denounced the National Theatre's negligence, contending that it had damaged the Odeon.¹⁹⁶ Similarly, in February 1942, the director of Antiquities at the Ministry of Education, Ioannis Polygenis, protested that the National Theatre's harmful activities had led to damage, thefts, and deterioration of the Odeon. In particular, he claimed that the National Theatre had removed the wooden seats and the metal gates that prevented access to the site after the summer season of 1941.¹⁹⁷ Thus,

¹⁹² Also, under the direction of Mouzenidis (*Summer Season of Ancient Drama Programme 1942*, DANTG: <http://www.nt-archive.gr/playDetails.aspx?playID=752>).

¹⁹³ Until then, he had actively contributed to the National Theatre's productions. What led to Rondiris' resignation in late 1942 was Giokarinis' refusal to accept a more influential role and increased responsibilities (ANTG/BAAC, session 27 February 1942).

¹⁹⁴ He was fired directly by the Prime Minister, mainly due to his activities against Giokarinis (ANTG/BAAC, session 28 January 1943).

¹⁹⁵ Linos Karzis was a writer, theatrical director, and founder of the company Thymelikos Thiasos. He had aimed to recreate the ancient Greek 'spirit' by staging classical tragedy since the 1920s. He fervently supported Sikelianos' Delphic Festivals and adopted an archaizing perception of classical drama (Tsatsoulis 2017, 108–17).

¹⁹⁶ This damage also involved the cavea of the monument (DAHAAR, Box 604 B, Folder A (1947), Subfolder 3/14).

¹⁹⁷ DAHAAR, Box 604 A, Folder A (1942), Subfolder 3/3. The extreme conditions that a large part of the Athenian society had to endure, due to the lack of basic necessities, might account for the thefts that took place at the Odeon (DAHAAR, Box 604 A, Folder A (1942), Subfolder 3/3).

despite the fact that the National Theatre had hired a guard for the Odeon, it remained almost completely unprotected.¹⁹⁸ The Minister of Education and Vice President of the collaborationist government, Konstantinos Logothetopoulos, also condemned the National Theatre's activities, claiming that the Odeon 'remains unfenced and there is a danger that the monument may suffer substantial damage'.¹⁹⁹ By December 1942, the National Theatre had resolved some of these issues; it temporarily blocked the entrances to the Odeon with concrete walls and removed the sets of *Medea* that covered part of the site.²⁰⁰

At the same time, local institutions, cultural or educational companies, and small private organizations continued to submit requests to organize cultural events that supported impoverished Athenians.²⁰¹ Although these requests were not always rejected out of hand, serving senior officials of the German and Italian forces always remained the first priority. Some performances did take place, but they often went unnoticed by the press and other print media.

German and Italian artists participated in a variety of Greek productions. Naturally, these depicted the new sociocultural reality that the Athenian population had to endure. Operas and concerts with classical content played an important role at the Odeon, and were usually performed by Greek artists with German or Italian directors or conductors, some of whom were serving at the time in the occupying forces. For instance, the Athens city council proposed the otherwise unknown artists, Er. Perricone and Nino Fucile, as the main singers in a benefit concert for impoverished children in July 1942: at that time, Perricone and Fucile were serving in the Italian fascist army as major and sergeant, respectively. According to the Mayor of Athens, who submitted the request, they had explicitly expressed their desire to perform at the Odeon.²⁰²

Some extraordinary initiatives further evidenced the fascist authority's sway over artistic production in Athens. For instance, the Minister of the Interior, Panagiotis Demestichas, proposed

¹⁹⁸ DAHAAR, Box 604 A, Folder A (1942), Subfolder 3/3.

¹⁹⁹ 'ἀπομένει σήμερον ἀφρακτον καί κίνδυνος ὑπάρχει νά ἔχωμεν πολλές καταστροφάς τοῦ μνημείου' (Letter to the National Theatre, 13 November 1942, DAHAAR, Box 604 A, Folder A (1942), Subfolder 3/3).

²⁰⁰ DAHAAR, Box 604 A, Folder A (1942), Subfolder 3/3.

²⁰¹ These included a lecture by Angelos Sikelianos on 17 September 1943. See DAHAAR, Box 604 A, Folder A (1943), Subfolder 3/2; DAHAAR, Box 604 A, Folder A (1944), Subfolder 3/10.

²⁰² DAHAAR, Box 604 A, Folder A (1942), Subfolder 3/3.

a series of concerts in honour of the German military authorities that was of a clearly symbolic nature, as the Athens Philharmonic Union would play music by Ludwig van Beethoven, Richard Wagner, and Arrigo Boito, composers who occupied prominent place in Axis propaganda (*Acropolis* 29 July 1941, 2).²⁰³ The grandiose culmination of the event was scheduled for the 30 August at the Panathenaic Stadium (*I Vradyni* 16 July 1941, 1).²⁰⁴

The most distinguished production of the period was Richard Strauss' *Elektra*, organized by the National Theatre in collaboration with the German Embassy in Athens. Although it was initially scheduled to take place in September 1941, the premiere was postponed until the following summer season due to illness on the part of the leading actress. According to Giokarinis' letter to the Directorate of Antiquities of the Ministry of Education on 29 May 1942:

'In regard to the summer season, the National Theatre was invited by the then German delegation to collaborate in staging Strauss' musical tragedy "Elektra", starring German artists arriving especially from Berlin.- These performances shall be staged in the Theatre of Herodes Atticus on the 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd and 23rd June unless postponed by the German authorities'.²⁰⁵

Elektra was finally staged in June 1942 under the direction of Ntinios Giannopoulos and was met with an enthusiastic reception from the commandeered press (*I Kathimerini* 26 June 1942, 1; *Athinaika Nea* 27 June 1942, 1). Led by the German conductor Franz von Hösslin, it was performed by a group of German singers, Greek singers from the National Opera, and the Athens Conservatoire Symphony Orchestra. Using Hugo von Hofmannsthal's version,²⁰⁶ the performance

²⁰³ For the changing nature of Wagner's Hellenism and his connection with the Third Reich, see Goldhill 2011, ch. 4.

²⁰⁴ The complete lack of information about the final event at the Stadium may indicate that it was eventually cancelled.

²⁰⁵ "Όσον άφορᾷ τήν θερινήν περίοδον τό Έθνικόν Θέατρον παρεκλήθη παρά τής ένταύθα Γερμανικής άντιπροσωπείας όπως συμμετάσχη εις τήν διδασκαλίαν τής μουσικής τραγωδίας τοῦ Στράους «Ηλέκτρα» εις τήν όποίαν θά πρωταγωνιστήσουν Γερμανοί Καλλιτέχναι ειδικῶς άφικνούμενοι έκ Βερολίνου.- Αί παραστάσεις αὔται πρόκειται νά δοθοῦν εις τό Θέατρον Ηρώδου τοῦ Άττικού τήν 19ην, 20ην, 21ην, 22αν καί 23ην τοῦ προσεχούς Ιουνίου πλὴν τής περιπτώσεως άναβολῆς έκ μέρους τῶν Γερμανικῶν Άρχῶν' (Letter to the Directorate of Antiquities of the Ministry of Education, 29 May 1942, DAHAAR, Box 604 A, Folder A (1942), Subfolder 3/3).

²⁰⁶ Hofmannsthal's *Elektra* was known to the Greek public through the artists Marika Kotopouli and Katina Paxinou, who had performed it repeatedly between 1911 and 1930. Hofmannsthal was an Austrian poet, librettist, dramatist,

attempted to align classical monuments with the aesthetics of power (Falasca-Zamponi 1997, 10–1).

The selected version, with music by Strauss, may have been intended to showcase the German capacity for creating art that could challenge – or leverage the legacy of – ancient Greek dramatists.²⁰⁷ However, the few detailed critical reviews of the time claimed that Strauss’ distance from Aeschylus’ version confused the Greek public (*Athinaika Nea* 26 June 1942, 1; *Eleutheron Vima* 26 June 1942, 2). Strauss’ early connection with the German Reich and the Nazi regime’s later ideological appropriation of his music coloured the political connotations of the play, which was staged in the presence of many high-ranking foreigners (*Athinaika Nea* 24 June 1942, 1; *Athinaika Nea* 25 June 1942, 1; *I Kathimerini* 26 June 1942, 1). In an official letter to Strauss, Logothetopoulos complimented him on the extraordinary performance beneath the Greek sky of Athens (*Eleutheron Vima* 26 June 1942, 2; Kourbana 2017), comparing the performance to symbolic events at indoor venues in Germany and advocating the spiritual unification of the two cultures. For the Greek actors and actresses who participated, this was a difficult project, but it covered their basic necessities of life during one of the most challenging periods of the occupation. *Elektra* was followed by some small-scale productions at the Odeon, including pieces by Beethoven (*I Kathimerini* 26 June 1942, 3; Kourbana 2017) and a performance of *Orfeo ed Euridice* in Italian.

The occupation forces were invited to attend these National Theatre performances at the Odeon, but were not directly involved in the production (Figure 12). In contrast, German and Italian productions, or those in which the Axis authorities collaborated with Greek institutions, served a dual purpose. First, they provided entertainment for the Axis soldiers involved in the Greek campaign, since these constituted a large part of the audience at many of the performances. The fascist propaganda machine demanded ‘submission through entertainment’ (O’Brien 2004, 1–2), an exercise of power that was extensively employed with German soldiers on the front. Axis forces ‘transformed the political self into an item of mass consumption [...] a symbolic spectacle meant to produce lonely crowds and unite the masses as separate’ (Koepnick 1999, 198–9). In

and one of the most renowned writers in the German language in the early 20th century (Fischer-Lichte 2017, ch. 4). His extensive collaboration with Strauss produced libretti for many of the latter’s operas, including *Elektra* in 1909.

²⁰⁷ This claim reflected the idea of an *Anschluss* that would form a Greater Germany.



Figure 12. Photograph of a concert (perhaps performed by the State Orchestra) at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus during the Axis occupation of Greece. Photographic Collection of Byron Mitos.

these terms, entertaining the soldiers was crucial to propagating the totalitarian aesthetics of power, and became a means to emotionally sustain the war on the Greek front.

The second purpose was to make a symbolic statement. Not only did the Axis forces physically occupy Greek territory, but they also used cultural expression to legitimize their totalitarian authority. Symbolically, use of the Odeon indicated that fascism had appropriated Greek antiquities as monuments of eternal worth. Classical drama performances in Germany were periodically staged at Romanesque churches and open-air spaces, as noted by Fischer-Lichte and Ioannidou (Fischer-Lichte 2008; Ioannidou 2013), but the Odeon offered an opportunity to embody fascist aesthetics at a classical venue. Therefore, a desire to aesthetically cloak naked power underpinned the fascist control of monumental civic space in Greece, while the transmission

of this artistic domination back to Germany was a paramount consideration (Falasca-Zamponi 1997; Torsten 2001).

Legislative reforms enabled extensive archaeological interventions that introduced a new ideological appropriation of Greek heritage. The Germans increased the scale of their excavations in Greece, mainly through the participation of archaeologists and experts from the German Archaeological Institute at Athens (Kankeleit 2018; Kankeleit 2019). Excavation at Olympia comprised the most obvious example of Nazi aesthetic appropriation of civic space, and presented a significant opportunity for Nazi intellectuals to powerfully associate the Aryan myth with Greek cultural heritage and historical monuments (Chapoutot 2012; Burgeon 2017; Altekamp 2018, 312). It represented an attempt to resurrect ancient Greece and portray Germany as the new heir to the classical spirit, especially after the Berlin Olympics in 1936 (Fischer-Lichte 2008; Fischer-Lichte 2017, ch. 5; Burgeon 2017).

Equally, the Italian Archaeological Institute at Athens promoted fascist aesthetics and legitimized the Italian occupation of Greece by giving increased prominence to Roman antiquities in Athens (Sakka 2018). The Romanization of Athens was a centralized operation that aimed to manufacture another Mussolinian Rome. The project was met with a hostile reaction from the Greek Archaeological Council and archaeologists such as Antonios Keramopoulos (Sakka 2018, 456–7). For Mussolini and the Italian occupying forces, the symbolic reconstruction of another major classical city would celebrate the principles of imperial *romanità* (Fogu 2003; Kallis 2011). This would not only ensure Greek subordination to the totalitarian power of imperial Italy but would also construct the foundations of a bright fascist future in Greece (Falasca-Zamponi 1997, 91–4). In addition, the Italians wished to promote their imperialist authority through a large-scale excavation as powerfully as the Germans did at Olympia. However, their endeavour in Athens was unsuccessful. The only excavation campaign was carried out at the Roman forum and lasted no longer than a few months in 1942 (Sakka 2018, 456–7). Even so, Mussolini symbolically chose to visit only the Italian excavation and the hill of the Acropolis on his short visit to Athens on 20 July 1942 (*I Proia* 21 July 1942, 1).²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ For audiovisual documentation, see the AIL: <http://fondoluce.archivioluce.com/LuceUnesco/avanzata/scheda/video/IL5000017179/2/IL-Duce-ad-Atene.html?luoghi=Africa>.

3.5. Post-war conservatism and the National Theatre (1945–1947)

Upon the withdrawal of the Axis forces from Greece in October 1944, the British took over the country to prevent the growing influence of the Communist Party within the resistance movement (Clogg 2021, 119–34). Since the beginning of the Greek Civil War that officially erupted in 1946, national institutions in Greece systematically employed and perpetuated the discourse of *ethnikofrosyni*.²⁰⁹ Advocates of this discourse in the artistic field were mainly the National Theatre and National Opera, which introduced a conservative vision into the theatrical stage.

According to Althusser (1999, 82–3), national theatres and their artistic production belong to the state apparatuses that perpetuate the dominant ideology in the same way as national education or national museum (Althusser 1971, 127–82). The National Theatre’s authoritative stance aimed to dominate the artistic production of the new anticommunist monarchy.²¹⁰ In this context, classical tradition was in the centre of the national imagination. Staging classical theatre embodied the engagement with ancient Greece as a fundamental value of the national discourse. Decisions on the theatrical repertoire, general policy, and reuse of the ancient venues were often taken directly by agents of the Ministry of Education or even the Prime Minister. These acts suggest an intervention in the autonomy of the national institutions. In addition, power relations among these institutions led to disputes about which company would perform at the most prominent venue in Athens, the Odeon of Herodes Atticus.

This period was also characterized by many requests for performance at ancient venues.²¹¹ Several requests involved charity events in favour of war victims, national commemorations, public events for non-profit organizations and other social issues at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus.

²⁰⁹ *Ethnikofrosyni* (national mindedness) is a political discourse that somehow represented the Greek version of the Cold War. It fused nationalistic ideas, moralistic notions of patriotism, anticommunism, national unity, and religious sentiment. It used to describe the notion of national mindedness or national conviction that emerged during and after the Greek Civil War (Van Steen 2015a, 7). See also Voglis 2002, 66, 101, and 228; Papadimitriou 2006, 62–70; Noutsos 2009, 109–31; Van Steen 2011a, 85 and 142–7; Kazamias 2014.

²¹⁰ King George II returned to Greece in September 1946 after a disputed referendum. Following his sudden death in April 1947, he was succeeded by his brother Paul I.

²¹¹ DAHAAR, Box 604 D, Folder B (1949), Subfolder A.

Meanwhile, theatrical companies such as *Thymelikos Thiasos* attempted to challenge the exclusive use of ancient venues by national institutions (Tsatsoulis 2017, 108–17). However, most proposals that requested to put up classical drama were rejected, due to the Ministry's policy of excluding unknown or non-professional companies from performing at classical venues.

To officially regulate these issues the Archaeological Service adopted policies on companies that requested to perform at the Odeon. Exalting Greek culture became a central requirement and introduced the discourse of *ethnikofrosyni* in cultural expression. In addition, the company had to be prominent in the theatrical stage of Greece; amateur theatrical groups or youth companies were not allowed to put up a play. Requests for modern dramas were rejected, as only the National Orchestra had the right to stage modern plays at archaeological sites. The same occurred with foreign theatrical plays, even Shakespeare,²¹² that were excluded from the repertoire.

National institutions did not show the same diligence to protect the integrity of ancient monuments. According to safety requirements, the Ministry limited the number of spectators at the Odeon to 2.000 or 2.500, until its restoration was completed.²¹³ However, its systematic and unsupervised use damaged the monument. Due to unfortunate incidents in many of the productions (excessive number of spectators, damage to marbles, dirtiness, and deterioration of the site), the authorities requested the cease of the regular use of ancient monuments around Acropolis hill.²¹⁴ Both the Odeon of Herodes Atticus and the theatre of Dionysus presented a deteriorated aspect. Two main reasons explain their poor condition, according to the responsible authorities of the time; the lack of thorough safety measures during the performances and the systematic uncontrolled access of people from the surrounding hills. The latter seems to have damaged the monuments to that extend that in 1947 the Archaeological Council forbade the visit to the two venues unless visitors had official permission.²¹⁵ Some small-scale interventions took place after Miliadis'

²¹² Shakespeare's dramas were quite popular in festivals of Classical drama in Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom. His classical appeal made many directors include him in the classical repertoire (see next chapter).

²¹³ DAHAAR, Box 604 B, Folder A (1947), Subfolder A.

²¹⁴ DAHAAR, Box 604 D, Folder B (1949), Subfolder 3/3. Miliadis accused the National Orchestra that, despite the official indications, in at least one case permitted the entrance of more than 1000 extra spectators, who were placed on the upper tiers and could be responsible for damage to the monument.

²¹⁵ DAHAAR, Box 604 B, Folder A (1947), Subfolder A 3/14.

continuous complaints.²¹⁶

From 1945 to 1947, the National Theatre had to cope with an internal crisis and reorganize its cast and administration, as many actors and actresses had abandoned the country, were incarcerated, or worked elsewhere (Theotokas 1946). The moderate intellectual Giorgos Theotokas assumed its direction in February 1945, soon after the centrist Nikolaos Plastiras formed his Government. During his service, Theotokas unsuccessfully attempted to modernize and reorganize both the repertoire and performance style of the National Theatre. At the same time, he managed to keep the theatrical productions somehow uninfluenced by the ongoing political turmoil. However, due to the intense national division that dominated public discourse during the Civil War, most conservative newspapers such as *I Kathimerini* launched a fierce media criticism against Theotokas' role in the National Theatre (Theotokas 1946; Michalopoulos 2014, 234).

Although the National Theatre did not stage ancient drama during this period, Theotokas made a great effort to create a native classical drama tradition. In particular, it was an early attempt to study and work on a native style instead of the westernized performances of ancient drama that dominated Greek theatre until that time (Tsatsoulis 2015). The Minister of Education, Athanasiadis-Niovas, proposed the initial project and aimed to create a department that would exclusively study and perform ancient drama. This initiative provoked major disputes between Theotokas and Michael Rodas, a member of the Council of the National Theatre, about the possibility of Karzis' recruitment. In particular, Rodas fiercely attacked Theotokas' decision to assign the direction of an ancient drama to Karzis. Tensions led to Rodas' resignation from the Council and the final abandonment of the plan. Following the fruitless negotiations with the National Theatre in 1942 and 1946,²¹⁷ Karzis denounced his arbitrary exclusion from the organization. He also accused the National Theatre of repeatedly overcoming favourable decisions

²¹⁶ One of them was the connection of permanent electric light at the Odeon. Until 1947, companies used electricity from the Museum of Acropolis located on top of the hill; this equipment converted it into an independent theatrical venue with basic technical facilities (DAHAAR, Box 604 B, Folder A (1947), Subfolder A 3/14).

²¹⁷ ANTG/BAAC, Session 10, 24 April 1945. Theotokas and members of the Council supported Karzis' position as director of classical drama in the National Theatre (Michalopoulos 2014, 229–39). Alkis Thrylos commented in *Elliniko Aima* (10 September 1947) that Karzis was the only Greek director that adopted an indigenous style of performing ancient drama.

taken by the Archaeological Council, to prevent *Thymelikos Thiasos* performing at ancient venues.²¹⁸

After the first election in 10 years, the conservative politician Konstantinos Tsaldaris formed a new government and was elected Prime Minister in May 1946 (Panourgíá 2009, 78–80; Clogg 2021, 135–7). Soon after that, Rondiris replaced Theotokas as director of the National Theatre. The shift of political powers resulted in a purge in the body of the company, as the reactivation of the pre-war law 4615 (FEK 141, 5 May 1930; *Eleutheria* 14 May 1946, 2) authorized Rondiris to freely dismiss members of the Council (Legislative Decree 80, FEK 262, 3 September 1946). Thus, Rondiris dominated the intellectual discussion and marked the conservative orientation of the National Theatre during the Civil War (Michalopoulos 2017, 229–39).

A turn to the traditional national perception of classicism and a tolerance to the repressive mechanisms of the Greek state defined Rondiris' direction.²¹⁹ Rondiris avoided engaging openly with political issues while he silently endorsed the exclusionary politics of the state. The repertoire suspended Theotokas' experimentations and banned performances with sociopolitical content. For instance, in May 1946, Rondiris cancelled the summer programme of the previous Council and chose *The Persians* to exhibit the sociopolitical stance of the organization. The spectacle was symbolically performed on 27 October to celebrate the Greek commemoration of the Second World War. However, intellectuals such as Stratis Myrivilis encouraged the public to see in the

²¹⁸ The sabotage of *Thymelikos Thiasos* continued during Rondiris' period and led to a fierce dispute between Rondiris and Karzis. Following the systematic impediments imposed by the National Theatre, the Archaeological Council claimed in 1948 that only the National Theatre could put on classical dramas at the Odeon. Then, Karzis requested and received permission to use the of Koili, at Filopappos Hill, the same natural formation that Sikelianos used the previous decade. When the Ministry rejected his request to organize a 'Summer Festivals of Dionysus' with *The Bacchae*, *Ion* and *The Persians* at the Odeon in 1949, he proposed to the Archaeological Council to construct a wooden theatre of 4.000–5.000 seats at Koilon, and reserve the right to perform there for at least ten years. The complications of this plan obliged the Archaeological Council and Tsatsos to intervene and reconsider Karzis' request to perform at the Odeon. Tsatsos decided to ignore the threats of the National Theatre and finally granted Karzis permission to use the Odeon for his performance *Prometheus Bounded*.

²¹⁹ Mostly by excluding actors and actresses, and by appointing the casts according to their political affiliation (Michalopoulos 2017, 351–70).

face of the Persian army the ‘internal enemy’ of the state (*Elliniko Aima* 10 November 1946). In particular, Myrivilis identified the Persian threat that appeared in the play as the communist army fighting in the Greek Civil War. Despite the national orientation of the play, it was heavily criticized for theatrical stagnation and lack of artistic quality (*Elliniko Aima* 29 October 1946; *Eleutheria* 31 October 1946),

Rondiris would not perform another ancient drama until 1949. During this period, he directed almost all performances and concentrated in his hands the administrative and artistic responsibilities of the company.²²⁰ However, despite the scarce production of ancient drama, the National Theatre soon presented an ambitious international project. Tours in the United States and the United Kingdom aimed to promote classical Greek drama as the native spectacle of Greece. The project became a national issue, and many sociopolitical circles welcomed the idea enthusiastically. Its two principal supporters were the director of *I Kathimerini* Georgios Vlachou and Rondiris. Although the National Theatre attempted to secure finance even through the budget of the Marshall Plan, the project was finally cancelled (Michalopoulos 2014, 229–39).

Following the unsuccessful attempt to create an international tradition, the National Theatre turned its attention towards the national audience and the reuse of ancient Greek venues. On 24 May 1947, the President of the Administrative Council of the National Theatre, Georgios Oikonomos and the General Secretary, Achilleas Kyrou, dispatched a mail to the Archaeological Council addressing two crucial issues. The first was the policy on the reuse of ancient venues. The National Theatre persisted in its demand to have an official opinion on the requests that companies sent to the Ministry of Education. The second issue was the need to restore the Odeon of Herodes Atticus and the theatre of Epidauros, for which the National Theatre assumed the cost. Oikonomos and Kyrou expected that after the restoration, they could claim exclusive rights to reuse these venues. The Archaeological Council accepted the offer, and Orlandos was appointed responsible for the restoration work.²²¹ The following year, the project was succeeded by the European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan) that financed the restoration of many renowned archaeological

²²⁰ His reluctance to form an artistic committee showcases the centralized and conservative orientation of the National Theatre at the period (Michalopoulos 2017, 386–92).

²²¹ DAHAAR, Box 604 B, Folder A (1947), Subfolder A 3/15.

sites, among them Epidaurus.

The uneasy coexistence of the National Theatre with Western representatives marked the Greek artistic and social dependency on international institutions. In the first years after the Second World War, the presence of the British ‘Entertainments National Service Association’ at the main hall of the National Theatre conditioned the theatrical production and artistic tendencies in the Athenian stage (Michalopoulos 2017, 217–9). In addition, in 1947, the EFA celebrated its centenary in Athens and laid the groundwork for the Greek theatrical tradition of the following years.

The director of the EFA, Robert Demangel, requested to perform classical drama in many ancient venues.²²² The Groupe de Théâtre Antique de la Sorbonne chose to perform *The Persians* and *Agamemnon*. Due to the Civil War, areas in the Greek countryside, such as Delphi, were unapproachable; thus, the company could only perform at the theatre of Epidaurus and the Odeon of Herodes Atticus. The Hellenic Touring Club (HTC) assumed the responsibility for the logistics and finance of the performances.²²³ At the same time, the French committee for the centenary organized various artistic and diplomatic acts in Paris and Athens.²²⁴ The event was a diplomatic celebration of the French and Greek relations in a new era of peace and progress. The commemorative stele that was dedicated to the fallen of the two World Wars marked this symbolic representation.

Newspapers gave various and often contradictory appraisals of the plays; although in general, *The Persians* received more positive critiques than *Agamemnon* (*Eleutheri Ellada* 18 September 1947; *Edo Athinai* 20 September 1947). The lack of infrastructure and the refusal of the Greek state to assist in the initiative became a valuable lesson for the following years.²²⁵ Greek theatrical circles and Greek authorities realized that they had to deal with a new way of making theatre. In post-war Europe, the revival of ancient drama had not only artistic but also economic aspirations (See also Van Steen 2002). However, the necessary tourist development and modern

²²² DAHAAR, Box 604 D, Folder B (1949), Subfolder A 3/17.

²²³ AEFA, 7 ADM 26, Centenaire de l'EFA. See also Hellenic Touring Club, September 1947, 30 and *France* 11 July 1947, 1.

²²⁴ AEFA, 7 ADM 25, Centenaire de l'EFA.

²²⁵ AEFA, 7 ADM 25, Centenaire de l'EFA, Réunions du comité athénien du centenaire, Session 26 November 1947.

infrastructure were still inexistent in Greece. Most importantly, the financial aid of the European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan) that began in 1948 produced lasting effects on Greek cultural life, national heritage, tourism, and international relations. Until 1952 extensive restorations in many archaeological sites would convert the country into a heritage tourist destination (MacCannell 1999, 91–107).

3.6. Classical venues and Franco's National Catholicism (1945–1948)

3.6.1. *Antigone* at the Roman Amphitheatre of Italica (1946)

In 1942, when fascism still prevailed in Europe, the Spanish regime arrived at a relatively stable internal compromise under Franco's supreme authority (Saz Campos 2004). In the *Nuevo Estado*,²²⁶ neither the fascist Falange nor any other member of the coalition had the power to overcome Franco's national Catholic establishment (Gallego Margaleff 2013). In terms of the construction of the national past, the *Nuevo Estado* focused on a monolithic centralized collective memory. Franco's regime alluded to glorious periods of Spanish Catholic history when a united empire represented the traditional values of the Golden Age Spain. Therefore, the reuse of classical venues began reflecting the new ultra-conservative discourse. The institutions of the new regime assumed the authority to control public discourse through the creation of national martyrs and the reimagination of classical myths.

One of the most significant performances of the period was José María Pemán's version of *Antigone*.²²⁷ It was staged at the Roman amphitheatre of Italica by the company of the Teatro Español under the direction of Cayetano Luca de Tena (*La Prensa* 27 May 1946, 4). The production celebrated the 500th anniversary of the humanist Elio Antonio Nebrija and was performed on 25 May in honour of the Diplomatic Corps. Dictator Franco attended the event accompanied by Spanish ministers (*ABC Madrid* 26 May 1946, 25). He had visited the area for the inauguration of the Archaeological Museum of Sevilla and had toured around the city and its

²²⁶ The state that Franco established in the nationalist zone of the Civil War and existed until his death in 1975.

²²⁷ Pemán was a Spanish journalist, playwright and translator. Although a monarchist, he passionately supported Franco and the Falange during the Civil War. His devotion to the movement ensured him a successful career after the war.

monuments before visiting nearby villages on his way to Cadiz (*ABC Madrid* 26 May 1946, 23; *La Vanguardia* 26 May 1946, 3).

Actors and actresses performed *Antigone* at the arena and at one side of the cavea, while the public was seated at the remaining cavea (*ABC Sevilla* 28 May 1946, 5). Sets had only two decorative elements, Antigone's cave and Creon's palace (López de la Torre 1946). Even though it was produced in only a few days, *Antigone* was enthusiastically acclaimed by critics. The unique use of lights, the plastic movement, and the harmony of the chorus were praised (*ABC Sevilla* 14 June 1946, 6; Pemán 1998, 179–81). Not only did the performance in Italica fascinate the intellectual circles with its theatrical monumentality, but it also inspired the desire to create annual national productions at the amphitheatre. In contrast to Merida, Italica lies just a few kilometres from Sevilla, the capital of Andalusia, offering relatively good network connections (López de la Torre 1946).

Pemán and Luca de Tena presented Antigone as a humble, compassionate woman that consciously sacrificed her life to preserve her moral values (López de la Torre 1946). In 1971, Pemán recalled the performance and sophisticatedly acknowledged the political symbolism of the play in front of which, however, the authorities had remained ignorant (*ABC Madrid* 14 August 1971, 3). For Pemán, *Antigone*'s political aspect was concealed behind its historical distance from modern Spain, while the political authorities around Franco differentiated his regime from Creon's absolute monarchy. Despite Pemán's monarchical convictions, considering his initial loyalty to the regime, Creon's absurd role in the tragedy could not simply picture Franco.

Essentially, this was not the first time that Pemán's *Antigone* was performed in Franco's Spain. Pemán was commissioned by Luca de Tena to rework the classical play for a performance at the Teatro Español the previous year (Pemán 1998, 182–3). While the play was certainly performed in simpler terms than the spectacular staging in Italica, key features such as lighting, chorus movement, and scenic approach offered an identifiable production to the numerous political and cultural authorities that attended (González-Vázquez 2015).

Considering the Spanish political context, Antigone's myth could become an ideological offence against the regime. However, this version clearly emphasized the emotional aspect of the play. Pemán acknowledged that his adaptation was 'as close as possible to our Christian and

Romantic theatre, maintaining, however, sufficient tone and aroma of Hellenism'.²²⁸ Family love and divine right were displayed as the main features of a traditional society, where Christian order prevailed over civil rights. The heroine became a Christian martyr who sacrificed herself not because of the tyrant, but because people hesitated to save her. According to Pemán, Antigone became a Catholic prophet and a figure that was at the same time 'pre-Christian, martyr, free, in love: loved by simple souls'.²²⁹ This is why her death came not by a cruel and horrendous – for the Catholic dogma – suicide, but by starvation (Errandonea 1946). This symbolism reflected the national Catholic perception of the play, according to which women had to sacrifice themselves for their family in every possible way, even by biological death (González-Vazquez 2015). Pemán's activism against women's suffrage during the previous decade accounts for such an approach.²³⁰ After all, the performance remained loyal to the Francoist, Catholic regime of the mid-1940s and served as the state mechanism to strengthen its ideological dominance.

In addition, Antigone's concern to bury her brothers also reminded the audience about the right and legitimization of burial in early Francoist Spain. During a period when Franco's detention camps and prisons systematically filled unmarked mass graves of republican adversaries and civilians, assuming the right to decide on the enemy body, another circumstance showcased the regime's power that cynically marked the dead bodies' political life beyond the grave (Ribeiro de Menezes 2018, 115–8). According to Agamben (1998, 119–23), this biopolitical privilege corresponds to thanatopolitical (or necropolitical) technologies that produce new collective narratives. If thanatopolitical strategies are technologies of power according to which the authorities exercise their right to make live or to let die (Foucault 2003, 239–64), Franco's regime systematically implemented them in the creation of the new national Catholic state. Franco's

²²⁸ 'la más parecida posible a la de nuestro teatro cristiano y romántico, manteniendo, sin embargo, un suficiente tono y aroma de helenismo' (Pemán 1946, 47).

²²⁹ 'pre-cristiana, mártir, libre, enamorada: amada por las almas sencillas' (Pemán 1946, 45). Although the Christianization of Antigone and other classical figures was crucial in the symbolic reconfiguration of the classical culture in Spain, it was not a national exclusivity. In the second half of the 19th century, French performances represented a Christianized heroine that harmonically fit the religious element of her character in Sophocles' play (Fraise 1966).

²³⁰ He was the editor of the short-lived journal *Ellas*, a propagandistic magazine that advocated the national-Catholic destiny of Spanish women.

Nuevo Estado regenerated Spain by distinguishing those worthy of life and glory, and those who needed to perish and be forgotten.

The founder of the Falange and son of the previous dictator, José Antonio Primo de Rivera was executed for military insurrection and conspiracy against the Republic in November 1936. Instead of confirming his death, Franco's propaganda machine craftily concealed it for about two years and converted him into the Absent martyr (*el Ausente*), only to reveal the truth in November 1938. Following the fall of Madrid to Franco's forces and the unconditional surrender of the Republicans in late March 1939, the Falangists symbolically evoked Primo de Rivera to accompany the 'liberators' from his 'sanctuary of eternal victories' (*ABC Madrid* 29 March 1939, 3).

Primo de Rivera's body was soon exhumated and ceremoniously reburied in presence of military personnel and Falangists at a cemetery in the city of Alicante, close to the site where he was executed. He received a solemn, ritualistic spectacle that resembled fascist ceremonies in Italy and Germany (*ABC Madrid* 5 April 1939, 13; Griffin 2007, 21–38). Not surprisingly, Mussolini and Hitler sent wreaths of flowers to honour his death. (*ABC Madrid* 1 December 1939, 4–5). His powerful legacy was compared with Cid, the Spanish national hero who mythically won victories even dead (*ABC Madrid* 14 November 1939, 5) and became the foundation of a glorious national future.

To showcase the strong attachment of the regime to the fallen hero, Franco ordered the reburial of Primo de Rivera's remains. He was ceremoniously recovered and transferred from Alicante to the Escorial monastery in Madrid on the shoulders of Falangists in a ten-day Christian procession. His funeral projected reverence and monumentality of a figure that paved the way for the new Spanish nation (*ABC Madrid* 27 April 1939, 1). According to the state propaganda, Primo de Rivera belonged to every Spanish who received him performing the fascist salute (*ABC Madrid* 14 November 1939, 5). Through the fascist procession and Catholic burial, Primo de Rivera became the ideological steppingstone for the future of Franco's regime (Gil Pecharromán 1996, 522–6). A solemn spectacle involved the litany of the coffin around villages and a cohort of

Falangists accompanying it.²³¹ Franco's regime succeeded in converting his monumental burial into an act of national justice and Christian duty, even though the relations of the two men had always been quite turbulent (Paxton 2013). In the following decade, Primo de Rivera's tomb became a site of annual celebrations of a funerary cult.²³² Franco created a tradition of worship by appropriating Primo de Rivera's body to legitimize his power (Iordachi 2016; Thomàs Andreu 2019, ch. 5). In this context, Pemán's *Antigone* symbolically aligned the caring, charismatic martyr with Franco's regime. Also, Primo de Rivera's burial legitimated Franco as supreme leader, responsible to decide over the life or death of his subjects, and determine the future of the Spanish state.

3.6.2. Merida and Sagunto: Theatre and National Catholicism (1947–1948)

Although classical drama performances were not staged in Merida until the following decade, the occasional use of the theatre by amateur organizations reflected their concern for the nationalization of heritage. For instance, the Teatro Español *Universitario* put up Calderón's *auto sacramental Life Is a Dream* at the Roman theatre²³³ to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the conquistador Hernán Cortes on 12 October 1947 (*Hoja del Lunes Madrid* 29 September 1947, 6; *ABC Madrid* 10 October 1947). The performance was an amateur undertaking that involved only a few actors. Orientalist elements and the universal values of the monument combined and

²³¹ When two years later, Mussolini's son, Bruno, was killed in a flying accident, a procession of burial and heroization followed the same line. A train procession from Pisa to Forlì accompanied him near his hometown, Predappio. See AIL: <https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000016684/2/estreme-onoranze-bruno-mussolini-caduto-eroicamente-nell-adempimento-del-suo-dovere.html?startPage=60>.

²³² Ribeiro de Menezes 2018, 118–22. See also RTVE, [http://www.rtve.es/filmoteca/no-do/not-48/1467150/\(00:09:42–00:12:24\)](http://www.rtve.es/filmoteca/no-do/not-48/1467150/(00:09:42–00:12:24)). For the productions of 1939 and 1942 see also AIL: <https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000022716/2/una-tappa-del-trionfale-viaggio-dal-mediterraneo-all-altipiano-castiglia-spolie-jose-antonio-primo-de-rivera-fondatore-della.html?startPage=0> and <https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000050274/2/spagna-nel-vi-anniversario-della-morte-jose-antonio-primo-de-rivera-cerimonia-commemorazionemadrid-e-fiaccolata-notturna.html?startPage=0>.

²³³ An *auto sacramental* is a Spanish allegorical religious drama. Pedro Calderón de la Barca was a Spanish dramatist and poet of the 17th century, who wrote about 80 *auto sacramentales*.

produced an ideological pastiche that prepared the ground for the classical productions of the following years.²³⁴

Life Is a Dream was an opportunity to embody the new conservative reality into the theatrical stage. In contrast to the *auto sacramentales* that Rivas Cherif, Xirgu, Lorca, and La Barraca put up during the Republican period and represented an avant-garde European orientation, '[t]he nationalists promoted the re-establishment of the genre's original historical coordinates, its hierarchical societal structure, and its overtly ecclesiastical state' (Kasten 2012, 67). In other words, they represented the new state of religious, political, and national unity (Wulff Alonso 2003, ch. 7; Kasten 2011). For this reason, Calderón's *auto sacramentales* were extensively used as artistic propaganda and state apparatus to unify the masses (Kasten 2012, 69).

One year later, the theatre of Sagunto hosted its first theatrical revival in the 20th century. Miguel de Cervantes' tragedy *The Siege of Numantia* was staged under the direction of Luca de Tena. The performance commemorated Cervantes' 400th anniversary; thus, a patriotic play that exalted national freedom, resistance, and sacrifice was the most suitable choice (Wulff Alonso 2003, 229; See also section 1.4.1). Textual adaptation was undertaken by Francisco Sanchez-Castañer, professor of Spanish literature at the nearby University of Valencia, who also organized the logistics of the production (Sánchez-Castañer 1976). As Pemán later affirmed, *The Siege of Numantia* converted Seneca's stoicism into the principal component of Spanish identity (Pemán 1959, 19).²³⁵

The play was performed on 29 May and 6 June in a reverse staging; spectators were seated at the orchestra while the play was staged in the cavea (Sánchez-Castañer 1976). Luca de Tena considered that a traditional arrangement would be anti-theatrical, due to the poor condition of the scene building (Sánchez-Castañer 1976). In addition, the landscape behind the cavea (the side that

²³⁴ For audiovisual documentation, see also RTVE, <http://www.rtve.es/filmoteca/no-do/not-251/1467472/>.

²³⁵ Rafael Alberti's adaptation of the play was staged amidst the flames of the Civil War in the Teatro de Arte y Propaganda of Madrid. That production exalted the resistance of republican soldiers by openly alluding to the Civil War (Sánchez-Castañer 1976; López Fonseca 2016).

spectators faced) provided a graphic view of the medieval castle that stands on the hill. The setting provided an epic background that fitted the classical character of the play.²³⁶

Press critics praised the performance as highly original and applauded the amateur actors and actresses who ‘gave their soul’ to regenerate Franco’s national spirit’ (Muñoz Carabantes 1992, 83–94). The repeated use of the word *peregrination* (*peregrinación*) to describe the attendance to the performance in the press indicates its spiritual identification with a collective endeavour. Angel Valbuena Prat made it clear in the magazine *Insula* (15 September 1948, 8) by claiming that ‘Numantia is Don Quijote of an impossible heroism, made possible by Spanish people’.²³⁷

The local features of the production meant to engage the Saguntine population with the material culture of the classical heritage. A great deal of attention was given to details such as music, spectacular chorus, costumes, and decoration, to provide an ‘authentic’ and emotive experience. Overall, it corresponded to the long University tradition of classical drama in Spain (Blanco López 2010; Balaskas 2020). In addition, the Numantine siege was a theatrical reflection of Franco’s economic policies of national autarky and self-sufficiency that led to acute social and humanitarian crisis at least during the first decade after the Civil War (Brydan 2019, ch. 2). The theatrical production reproduced the regime’s politics as national exclusivity and historical singularity in a period of international isolation.

3.7. National dispute and ancient Greek drama (1948–1949)

Attempting to establish a national culture and dominate the theatrical stage, Greek cultural institutions presented an ideological conservatism similar to the Spanish. In any case, what made Greece approach the Francoist Spain, even against the recommendations of the United States and

²³⁶ The same year, another performance celebrated the epic continuity of Spanish identity. It was the commemoration of the Seize of Malaga (Conquista de Málaga), a battle that took place during the Reconquest of the city by the Catholic monarchs in 1487, against the Emirate of Granada. The performance was staged at the Moorish fortress of Malaga (Alcazaba), where the actual events had taken place.

²³⁷ ‘Numancia es el Don Quijote de un heroísmo imposible, hecho posible por españoles’ (*Insula* 15 September 1948, 8).

the United Nations' Resolution 39,²³⁸ was a common anticommunist conviction. Even though centrist politicians were initially reluctant to openly endorse Spain, the Greek political elite repeatedly demonstrated its sympathy towards Franco's anticommunist regime. The common struggle against the communist threat and the need to forge a conservative state of national unity re-established the relations of the two countries (Hassiotis 2010).

After years of internal reorganization, in the summer season of 1948, Rondiris and the National Theatre wanted to re-assume a leading role in the revival of ancient drama. However, a dispute between the National Theatre and the National Opera led to a sociopolitical clash. The early attempt of the National Opera to claim the exclusive use of the Odeon²³⁹ would exclude the National Theatre from performing at the venue for one more summer season.²⁴⁰ As negotiations between the institutions did not resolve the dispute, the Archaeological Council summoned the directors of the three major organizations (National Theatre, State Orchestra, and National Opera) to negotiate the artistic programme.²⁴¹ Inability to reach an agreement finally excluded the National Theatre from performing. The problem continued the following season when both institutions requested permission to perform at the Odeon in August.²⁴² However, the Archaeological Council mediated a solution by equally distributing the summer season.

As a result, the National Theatre implemented a strategy to dominate the theatrical stage in Greece. Both institutions attempted to influence the Archaeological Council and the Ministry of Education; to secure the socioeconomic benefits that tourism promised. As one of the principal

²³⁸ The United Nations concluded that the Franco's regime was fascist, collaborated with the Axis forces and 'was a guilty party with Hitler and Mussolini in the conspiracy to wage war' (United Nations General Assembly 1946).

²³⁹ DAHAAR, Box 604 D, Folder B (1950), Subfolders 3/3 and 3/7.

²⁴⁰ DAHAAR, Box 604 D, Folder B (1950), Subfolders 3/3 and 3/7. In March 1948, the Odeon was so damaged that, following Stikas' report, the Archaeological Council postponed all performances until restoration was completed (DAHAAR, Box 605 C, Folder A (1954), Subfolder 3/36). Later, the lack of construction material obliged the authorities to suspend the works until autumn. Works fully recommenced in late September (DAHAAR, Box 605 C, Folder A (1954), Subfolder 3/36) and would continue intermittently until 1967, under the supervision of Orlandos and Stikas (1948–1965) and Chalarambos Bouras (1965–1967). From 1948 to 1952, the European Reconstruction Program financed the restoration. When the programme finished, the Ministry of Education and the Hellenic Tourist Organization assumed the cost (Mallouchou-Tufano 2010).

²⁴¹ DAHAAR, Box 604 D, Folder B (1950), Subfolders 3/3 and 3/7.

²⁴² DAHAAR, Box 604 D, Folder B (1950), Subfolders 3/3 and 3/7.

aims of the Ministry's policy was the exaltation of the 'ancient Greek dramaturgy and modern Greek art',²⁴³ the National Theatre systematically asserted that National Opera's performances did not contain Greek content. For instance, in 1948, the minister of Education, Dimitrios Vourdoubas, rejected Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida* because the opera is set in ancient Egypt. Graphically, one of the handwritten notes on the original document of the National Opera's request reflects the reluctant stance of the authorities: 'are there concerns about Aida?'.²⁴⁴ A letter of protest by the National Theatre reveals these internal pressures:

'requests were made to stage performances of foreign melodramas at an Ancient Greek Theatre, which have absolutely no relation with the Greek dramatic and National tradition. The Council hopes that the Archaeological Council, agreeing with these opinions, will protect the ancient Greek theatres from these unpleasant contingencies'.²⁴⁵

It seems improbable that the heads of the National Theatre ignored the musical character of the Odeon. Therefore, the cry for authenticity – after years of sharing the venue with the National Opera – seems to be an attempt to devalue the artistic production of the company and claim the exclusive use of the site for classical drama.

The session of 28 January 1949 of the Archaeological Council revealed the political significance of the issue. The intervention of the Minister of Education, Konstantinos Tsatsos, was a decisive factor in modifying the dates conceded to each national institution,²⁴⁶ as he ordered that the National Theatre used the Odeon in August. Also, he aligned with the claims of the National Theatre about the monument's Greek character and overcame the Archaeological Council's

²⁴³ 'ἀρχαίαν Ἑλληνικὴν δραματούργειαν καὶ σύγχρονον ἑλληνικὴν τέχνην' (Report of the Archaeological Council on the performance of *Aida* by the National Opera, DAHAAR, Box 604 D, Folder B (1950), Subfolder 3/3).

²⁴⁴ 'διὰ τὴν Αἴντα [sic], ὑπάρχουν ἐνδοιασμοί;' (DAHAAR, Box 604 D (1950), Folder B, Subfolder 3/3).

²⁴⁵ 'ἐζητήθη νὰ δοθοῦν μέσα εἰς ἓνα Ἀρχαῖον Ἑλληνικὸν Θέατρον παραστάσεις ξένων μελοδραμάτων, μὴ ἔχόντων οὐδεμίαν ἀπολύτως σχέσιν μετὰ τὴν Ἑλληνικὴν δραματικὴν καὶ Ἑθνικὴν παράδοσιν. Ἐλπίζει δὲ τὸ Συμβούλιον ὅτι τὸ Ἀρχαιολογικὸν Συμβούλιον, συμμεριζόμενον πλήρως τὰ ἀπόψεις αὐτάς, θὰ προστατεύσῃ τὰ ἀρχαῖα Ἑλληνικά θέατρα ἀπὸ τοιαῦτα δυσάρεστα ἐνδεχόμενα' (DAHAAR, Box 604 D, Folder B (1950), Subfolder 3/3).

²⁴⁶ DAHAAR, Box 604 D, Folder B (1950), Subfolder 3/3.

decision that permitted the performance of *Aida*.²⁴⁷ In the session of 27 April 1949, Tsatsos also put an end to the conflict between the two institutions by making clear that the Archaeological Service was the only institution in charge to decide about the reuse of ancient venues.²⁴⁸

An open meeting of members of the National Theatre was organized on 21 July 1949 and showcased the concern about the company's theatrical tradition. The main discussion concentrated on the revival of ancient drama as part of a national mission. Participants made clear that the National Theatre had to become the absolute stakeholder of ancient drama in Greece and revealed their plans to celebrate annual festivals in classical venues. Myrivilis, Rondiris, and a representative of the government desired to inaugurate such cultural endeavour for the sake of natives and foreigners.²⁴⁹

During this controversial season, the National Theatre finally performed the *Oresteia* in September. The Vice-Minister of Press and Information, Michael Ailianos, explicitly proclaimed the political nature of the performance by ideologically connecting Orestes' struggles with the Civil War (*Elliniki Dimiourgia* 1 September 1949, 388). Similarly, members of the National Theatre claimed the play's importance for the artistic expression of national culture (*Elliniki Dimiourgia* 1 September 1949, 446–9). Many critiques offered enthusiastic comments and praised Kotopouli's participation. Weaknesses, such as the lack of homogeneity (*Eleutheria* 11 September 1949; *I Vradyni* 14 September 1949), did not impede a generally positive response in Rondiris' conservative approach (*Ta Nea* 15 September 1949). Some months later, despite Rondiris' persistent attempts to retain his position, even by attempting to collaborate with his theatrical adversaries, Paxinou and Minotis,²⁵⁰ the new Minister of Education, Athanasiadis-Niovas, decided his replacement by Theotokas.

²⁴⁷ DAHAAR, Box 604 D, Folder B (1950), Subfolder 3/3.

²⁴⁸ DAHAAR, Box 604 D, Folder B (1950), Subfolder 3/3.

²⁴⁹ AAH/ELIA-MIET, Folder 1 Subfolder 4, National Theatre 1930–1964.

²⁵⁰ Paxinou was a renowned Greek actress and founding member of the National Theatre. During the Second World War, she moved to the United States, where she appeared in some Hollywood movies. She was married to the actor and director Alexis Minotis, who worked with Marika Kotopouli and later participated in many productions of the National Theatre.

In addition, the Hellenic Touring Club soon undertook the responsibility to decentralize the tourist movement in Greece. Archaeological excursions around the countryside, classical performances on the island of Aegina and concerts at the ancient theatre of Amphiareion²⁵¹ were only some of the activities that the Hellenic Touring Club produced during this period. At the same time, tourist institutions made their first international contacts (Papaeustratiou 1948), while the Local committees of Tourism improved the limited tourist experience in the model of similar local institutions from Italy (Choidas 1948; Vlachos 2016, ch. 8). These attempts belonged to the increasing demand for cultural spectacles; the need to improve tourist facilities and expand international tourism gradually produced social and institutional developments. In a time when the main archaeological sites in Greece were extensively restored, their systematic reuse transformed their identity. In particular, ancient venues ceased to be mere archaeological sites and began to be perceived as monumental theatrical installations. The alternation between restoration machinery and theatrical sets in the summer of 1949 indicated that the theatrical, monumental, and commercial character of the Odeon were intrinsically tied together. These developments played a crucial role in the theatrical reality of Greece in the following decade that marked the course of the festivals of ancient drama.

²⁵¹ The event at the theatre of Amphiareion involved a concert with string instruments. It was a production that the Touring Club had already organized in 1937 and 1938. The combination of natural beauty and classical monumentality produced an enchanting spectacle (Moretis 1950).

Chapter 4 *Festivalization* and National Spectacles (1950–1964)

4.1. The revival of classical drama in the 1950s: Tourism and mass spectacles in Greece and Spain

The social transformation that the nation-states experienced after the economic and social breakdown of the 1940s created new social perspectives that favoured the emergence of the tourist movement. The gradual financial recovery in the 1950s produced the circumstances for the popularization of Mediterranean tourism, not only in Greece and Spain but also in Italy and Southern France. Classical antiquity had a central role in the national and international appeal of this phenomenon. Ancient architectural units were virtually transformed into tourist heritage (Tournikiotis 2010, 14–23; Aesopos 2015). As Eisner argues, these sites were more literary (and spiritual) constructs than physical spaces (1991, 64–7).

The tourist movement and the standardization of the political regimes in power created the opportunity to systematically celebrate national spectacles. Theatre was crucial for the artistic production of the period and attracted prestigious artists and public finance. I consider the proliferation of theatrical productions and the creation of annual festivals in the 1950s as part of the process of *festivalization* (or *pamfestivalism*) of culture.²⁵² This process involves the convergence of ‘traditions, institutions and genres of cultural performance’ that shape collective identities and the understanding of public space (Roche 2011, 127). In addition, the need to reaffirm peace and prosperity in Europe found in the festivals a suitable apparatus to celebrate the prospects of this new period (Klaic 2014). Festivals are spatio-temporal events that determine the means through which citizens experience culture (Bennett and Woodward 2014). Thus, *festivalization* is the dynamic process that systematically shapes the national perception of public space and culture.

²⁵² Παμφεστιβαλισμός (*Epoches* February 1967, 46, 156).

The prewar theatrical revival of classical venues had demonstrated that large-scale productions of classical drama were possible. Also, the heterotopic perception of ancient space provided an ideological value to festivals in these venues (Ioannidou 2010/11). Therefore, *festivalization* also became a dynamic mechanism that transformed classical theatres into modern venues and sites of mass spectacle. In addition, the post-war perception of tourism required the display of authentic experiences that captivated visitors (MacCannell 1999, ch. 5). As classical monuments were genuine representations of the past, their authentic character was indisputable. The attempt to present festivals at ancient venues as authentic cultural expressions transformed them into spaces of great symbolic value. For that reason, national authorities endorsed performances at classical theatres that emphasized the collective character of culture and the authenticity of the setting.

Frey has identified that economic growth and political patronization are fundamental for periodic festivals (Frey 2011). Commercial and social strategies that aimed at achieving financial success intended to enhance public engagement through low ticket prices, press propaganda etc. The use of multiple classical venues, monumental staging, and participation of renowned actors and actresses transformed the post-war festivals into profit-oriented businesses.

The radical change in technology, transportation, and infrastructure underpinned the emergence of *festivalization* in the 1950s. The need for modern infrastructure began to be considered essential for the success of the festivals. On the one hand, these festivals created further demands for the facilities that these spaces had to provide and led to the construction of relevant infrastructure. By 1960, these facilities were permanently part of the ancient space in both Greece and Spain. On the other hand, the phenomenon that Roche has defined as *mobilization* also favoured *festivalization*; post-war mass tourism and travel permitted people to regularly visit these sites and attend the productions (Roche 2011, 131–2). Similarly, interventions to the monuments were indispensable and turned them into ‘usable tourism landscape’ (Plantzos 2019, 475). While in Greece most restoration works at classical venues began in the late 1940s and 1950s, the major classical theatres in Spain were restored in the 1950s and 1960s.

Festivals in this period corresponded to the notion of cultural particularism, which perceives the world as a cultural mosaic (Dicks 2004, 28–9). National (and regional) institutions recognized and claimed their national (or regional) exclusivities and attempted to display them

through the festivals. However, while Greece viewed the festivals of ancient drama as an organic part of its national identity and its international image, Spain relied on festivals as part of its national culture that intended to unify and entertain its population. The difference in the two cases lies in the fact that Greek archaeological tourism enabled the eminent integration of the country to the west and became a chance to earn international recognition (Vlachos 2016, 398). In contrast, in Francoist Spain, festivals and antiquities were sociocultural apparatuses that intended to attract the attention of the national public and catch up with the European artistic developments (Pack 2006, 83–5; Ferrer Cayón 2016, 167–269).

Political factors also favoured the process of *festivalization*; in Greece, the American initiative for economic aid determined the country's post-war identity (Clogg 2021, 142–3). The Economic Cooperation Administration Mission to Greece (ECA/G) by the European Recovery Program (ERP) promoted an alternative model for the Greek economy that was based on the development of a tourist sector rather than on industrialization. When the program was completed, the Greek National Tourism Organization (GNTO) continued to implement the American programmatic reforms. Similarly, the United Nations readmitted Spain in 1950, revoked its restrictions, and permitted the country to reintroduce itself into the west (United Nations General Assembly 1950). In addition, with the escalation of the Cold War, an economic plan for American aid was published in 1951 and financed the Francoist regime (Economic Cooperation Administration 1951; Calvo-González 2007). These developments created the necessary sociopolitical structures that enabled the celebration of national art in tourist productions. In contrast to Greece, these events were directed principally to the national populace.

This new sociocultural reality created the opportunity for many companies to reuse ancient venues and create their theatrical tradition. While the National Opera, Karzis, Paxinou, Minotis, and Kotopouli initially attempted to dominate the theatrical production in Epidaurus, Delphi, and the Odeon of Herodes Atticus,²⁵³ it was Rondiris' National Theatre that succeeded in inaugurating a modern spectacle with modern infrastructure and international ambitions in Greece. When political factors overthrew him, Aimilios Hourmouzios, the new general director of the National

²⁵³ Kostis Bastias' participation in Metaxas' dictatorship and his position as director of the National Theatre and National Opera did not affect his later implication with art. Bastias' ability to adapt and implicitly support popular political trends permitted him to have an active role as director of the National Opera until the late 1960s.

Theatre, established a ten-year tradition of festivals of classical drama that dominated the theatrical expression both nationally and internationally. The new Minister of Education (1956), Konstantinos Tsatsos, influenced the hellenocentric orientation of this endeavour (Georgakaki 2010; Plantzos 2019).

The Spanish ideological break with the Republican use of the past did not permit a simple continuation of the 1930s project in Merida.²⁵⁴ The social and political circumstances that emerged after the Spanish Civil War had given space to a new perception of nationalism that perceived classical culture as part of the Spanish Golden Age period. At the same time, following similar transformations as in France, in post-Civil War Spain, ‘the tragedy has become a real one and the aesthetic debates have turned into actual battles’ (Prévot 2017, 29). In the 1950s, the theatrical director José Tamayo and Pemán dominated the cultural expression at the Roman theatre of Merida (*ABC Madrid* 23 September 1955, 43). Their monumental approach claimed the awe of the masses and shaped public reception of classical tradition in post-war Spain. The festivals of ancient drama directed by Tamayo adopted a conservative national Catholic character that dealt with themes of power and control. The lack of a dynamic theatrical tradition in Spain before the war had two main results: The theatrical spectacles in classical venues could not produce powerful ideological engagement with the Spanish audience, yet intellectuals such as Pemán and Tamayo adapted and performed original dramas that transcended the classical canon that we encounter in Greece.

This does not mean that allusions to a symbolic national past disappeared in the 1950s and 1960s Spain. The prestigious character of ancient venues as monuments of a glorious past attracted the attention of Franco’s regime and its propagandistic apparatuses that exalted ‘the pure source of the most ancient stages such as the ancient Greek theatre of Montjuïc in Barcelona, or the Roman [theatre] in Sagunto, where myths revive in performances that recall past glories’.²⁵⁵ A new structural reform created the *Festivales de España*, a national institution that entertained the

²⁵⁴ It was only after the Spanish transition to democracy that certain intellectuals (directors, translators etc.) found their way to Merida, together with plays related to the Civil War (Ragué-Arias 2005, 15). Similarly, in Greece, director Karolos Koun represented many of his productions in Epidauros after the re-establishment of democracy in 1974.

²⁵⁵ ‘la fuente pura de los escenarios más antiguos como el teatro griego de Montjuïc en Barcelona, o el romano en Sagunto, donde cobran de nuevo vida los mitos con la puesta en escena de obras que recuerdan las grandezas pasadas’ (RTVE, <http://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/revista-a-imagenes/festivales-espana/2852862/>).

national populace and forged a sense of belonging to a unified community. They were propagandistic spectacles that led to the *festivalization* of culture around Spain. Some of these performances took place in ancient venues and eventually created a native theatrical tradition.

Meanwhile, the Italian festivals of classical drama also resumed their theatrical production and followed a national sociocultural trajectory. Despite their international reach, systematic collaboration and dialogue with Greek or Spanish institutions were scarce. It was principally Rondiris, who repeatedly performed at Italian classical venues during his international tour (*La Stampa* 24 July 1963; *La Nazione* 2 August 1964; *Il Messaggero* 8 August 1964). In the 1950s, the INDA reconceptualized its democratic focus and introduced a new artistic perspective at the theatre of Syracuse that abandoned D'Annunzio's pompous rhetoric (Amoroso 1997, 48–50). Therefore, a new generation of actors, actresses, and directors inaugurated a fresh perception of theatre, put on new theatrical plays, and avoided addressing political issues for many years. However, they often retained the conservative approach to ancient drama and the enormous stage sets. For instance, the INDA was still reluctant in producing ancient Greek comedies at the Festival of Syracuse (Treu 2016) and modernization of the staging was often criticized. Yet, classical theatres around Italy began producing Greco-Roman drama following new styles and orientations.

In sum, the *festivalization* of culture in post-war Greece and Spain served the national need to create conservative sociocultural institutions that promoted tourism, peace, and progress instead of war. In so doing, cultural institutions and intellectuals disseminated a national approach to classical tradition that perceived monuments as authentic spaces of classical glory. And, while in Greece, disputes and artistic rivalry were frequent in the 1950s, in the Spanish case, the authority of some theatrical agents was indisputable.

4.2. Tourism and revival of ancient theatre in Greece (1951–1954)

4.2.1. From the European Recovery Program to the GNTTO

Displaying tourist destinations as authentic spaces in Greece became a vehicle for economic growth after the Civil War. In particular, classical monuments assumed the role of national landmarks that connected modern society with its lived past. Mass tourism determined the reuse of these sites and their theatrical revival in the 1950s, at a time when economic reconstruction was

central in Alexandros Papagos' 1952–1955 government (Clogg 2021, 144–6). The creation of periodic festivals of ancient drama ensued decades of archaeological interventions in sites such as Olympia, Delphi, Epidauros, and Athens. Although cultural activity in ancient venues did not cease in the 1940s, aspirations for tourist development at the end of the decade shifted the way authorities dealt with archaeological sites and their natural landscapes.

This shift towards an organized tourist institution that combined archaeological, historical, and natural resources was not accidental. National and international authorities systematically cultivated a Greek tourist identity that was based on the display of antiquities and nature. It was implemented through the European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan) that advocated the opportunity to invest in tourism instead of industrial development in Greece (Organismos Koinis Asfaleias 1952; Vlachos 2016, 411–9).²⁵⁶

The main objectives of the American Mission for Aid to Greece (AMAG) and the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) were reconstruction (*anoikodomisi*) and economic development. The publication of the European Recovery Program for Greece (ERP) by the ECA in February 1949 made clear the American goals and reluctance to immediately finance the country due to the war and the lack of financial stability (Economic Cooperation Administration 1949, 3). The program involved developments in sections relevant to tourism and the improvement of living conditions in rural areas (e.g., road network, communications, housing, and public health measures). One of the primary goals was the military and economic development that would combat 'the Communist-inspired guerrillas' (Economic Cooperation Administration 1950, 1). Transportation and communication repairs were undergone to achieve it. These repairs also improved the road network and *mobility* around Greece and enabled the celebration of tourist events outside urban centres (Economic Cooperation Administration 1950, 1).

The ERP identified the 'historical interest' and 'fine climate and scenery' as the most important assets of the Greek plan for recovery (Economic Cooperation Administration 1949, 29 and 32–3). This program set the financial bases for the development of the notion of the 'Greek

²⁵⁶ This had a double benefit for the Americans; firstly, the total budget was significantly reduced (compared with an investment in heavy industry), and second, they artfully avoided economic competition between the European states (Vlachos 2016, 435–6; Aesopos 2015, 107; Plantzos 2015).

landscape’, ‘Aegean blue’ and ‘natural beauty’ (Aesopos 2015). Following the American vision, the Greek past was transformed into a commercial good; a source of revenue for the Greek state (Alifragkis and Athanasiou 2018, 602). However, the Marshal Plan failed to implement profound reforms in the Greek tourist industry, as it often opted for foreign exchange earnings instead of development goals. Yet even though only a small part of tourism planning was finally achieved, its impact made Greek authorities realize that tourism was bound to become the core of Greek economic prospects. It introduced state control in the creation of tourist offer. Another crucial factor in the implementation of the Marshal Plan was the creation of tourist propaganda, organized tours, and festivals.

Upon the finalization of the American aid, the newly created National Greek Tourist Organization (GNTO) continued to work in the same direction. The GNTO focused on creating a stereotypical image of Greek antiquity that resorted to notions of authenticity and Greek exclusivity to promote the country as a tourist destination (González-Vaquerizo 2017; Alifragkis and Athanasiou 2018, 598–600). The general secretary of GNTO, Nikos Fokas, concentrated on developing the hotel industry, road network, and tourist infrastructures in the archaeological sites. Also, his emphasis on propaganda campaigns abroad considerably increased the tourist flow. However, as tourism had to sustain the inefficient Greek economy and the lack of heavy industrial production, modernization and financial recovery were slow (Athanasiou and Alifragkis 2018, 20–1).

In the 1950s, the Greek modernist view organically linked the natural landscape with the fragmented classical monuments into a heterotopic body (Mallouchou-Tufano 1998, 337; Plantzos 2017; Plantzos 2018). Thus, within a few years, when temporary facilities turned permanent, the theatres were not only heterotopic spaces (Ioannidou 2010/11) but also venues in which artistic and technocratic agents implemented their modernist vision (Loukaki 1997; Plantzos 2019). Especially, ancient theatres were restored and converted into sites of spectacle that facilitated tourist explosion. Also, in the 1950s, the Greek modernist view organically linked the natural landscape with the fragmented classical monuments into a heterotopic body (Mallouchou-Tufano 1998, 337; Plantzos 2017; Plantzos 2018). Thus, within a few years, when temporary facilities turned permanent, the theatres were not only heterotopic spaces (Ioannidou 2010/11) but also venues in which artistic and technocratic agents implemented their vision (Loukaki 1997; Plantzos

2019). These sites offered the opportunity to organize modern productions that attracted spectators towards the Greek countryside. By advertising these sites as authentic spaces of tourist experience, the national authorities reshaped the symbolic image of Greek monuments. Artistic events in monuments such as the theatre of Epidauros were meaningful because the natural landscape and ancient remains were strongly interconnected. Thus, interventions in the archaeological sites and the surrounding communities designated the new social reality.

4.2.2. The Homecoming Year and theatrical fervour

The monumental character of the theatre of Epidauros converted it into the most popular ancient venue in the early 1950s. The GNTTO encouraged the celebration of artistic spectacles and proclaimed their significance for the ‘tourist advertisement of Greece’.²⁵⁷ Many of these productions were organized by travel agencies such as *Hermes en Grèce* and *Voyages-Hellas* (in collaboration with the GNTTO),²⁵⁸ which began including theatrical performances at the theatre of Epidauros in their tourist activities. However, the fact that many of these spectacles were performed by amateur or unknown artists to entertain foreign tourists often provoked the disapproval of the Archaeological Council. Regardless of quality, these performances marked the first steps of the GNTTO towards the *festivalization* of Greek culture.

It was, however, the celebration of the Homecoming Year that marked the theatrical tradition in Greece. It was a cultural and sociopolitical event that the Greek state organized in 1951 to tighten the link between Greek diaspora and homeland. The Homecoming Year introduced the idea of a large-scale tourist productions of classical drama. Multiple events across the country served the nationalistic ideals of early post-war Greece and satisfied the American policy. They created a tourist market in Greece and contributed to the international propaganda and reconstruction of the national economy (Vogli 2013; Vlachos 2016, 417–8).

One of the celebrations took place in June 1951 at the theatre of Epidauros, where the Vienna Symphony performed a classical concert. Basic facilities were constructed to welcome the

²⁵⁷ ‘τουριστική διαφήμισιν της Ελλάδος’, DAHAAR, Box 605 A, Folder B (1952), Subfolder 3/5. See also DAHAAR, Box 605 B, Folder B (1953), Subfolder 3/5.

²⁵⁸ DAHAAR, Box 605 ST, Folder Z (1955), Subfolder 3/5.

public.²⁵⁹ Similarly, the road network from the theatre to Nauplio and the seaport close to Nea Epidaurus was repaired and appropriately signaled (*Eleutheria* 30 May 1951, 2; *Eleutheria* 21 June 1951, 1). The king and queen also attended the performance (*Eleutheria* 17 June 1951, 6). Even though the press celebrated the musical performances as the accomplishment of a national dream, the lack of experience in organizing large-scale event in such a remote place was apparent (*Eleutheria* 20 June 1951, 2). Despite these difficulties, the performances permitted the Greek state to expand cultural activity into the Greek countryside and invited the possibility of annual festivals.²⁶⁰

The theatrical productions that were organized at the theatre of Delphi provoked even more inconveniences due to the remoteness of the site.²⁶¹ The national press widely discussed the issue; journalists Alkis Thrylos and Petros Charis condemned the lack of appropriate facilities, while Angelos Terzakis, a historical member of the National Theatre, blamed the state institutions that had not constructed yet modern infrastructure (*To Vima* 12 August 1951). The event included dance spectacles performed by the company of Rallou Manou (*Athinaiki* 14 August 1951), a local exhibition, and the theatrical performance of *Oedipus Rex* by the National Theatre. Minotis and Paxinou had the protagonist roles in the play and made a spectacular return to the classical stage in Greece after years in the United States. *Oedipus Rex* revived Sikelianos' vision in Delphi with a new tourist-oriented project, according to Theotokas, who had re-assumed the role of general director of the National Theatre (Figure 13). Earlier that year, Theotokas had invited Minotis claiming that they were preparing 'a revival of the Delphic Festivals'.²⁶²

²⁵⁹ The trajectory by boat was approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes and 5 hours by bus. Accommodation and tourist services were organized in Nauplio, Argos and Mycenae (*Eleutheria* 6 June 1951, 2; *Eleutheria* 14 June 1951, 2).

²⁶⁰ For example, the letter of Andreas Lontos, a consultant from the Agency of Homecoming Year in Greece (*Eleutheria* 22 August 1951, 2).

²⁶¹ *Eleutheria* 22 June 1951, 2; *Eleutheria* 23 June 1951, 2; DAHAAR, Box 604 E, Folder B (1951), Subfolder 3/6. See also *Eos* 1962, 54, 6–8.

²⁶² 'μία αναβίωσις τῶν Δελφικῶν ἑορτῶν, AKPAM/ELIA-MIET, Folder 1, Subfolder 1, National Theatre 1932–1946. Letter on 4 January 1951. The use of the Greek term *Eoptés* instead of *Φέστιβαλ*, reveals exactly such cultural relation with the Sikelianos endeavour (Δελφικαὶ Ἑορταί). Finally, the official name was Festival of Delphi (Φεστιβάλ Δελφών). In any case, the decision to include folkloric and dance exhibitions in Delphi echoed Sikelianos' festivals.

The Homecoming Year productions in Athens provoked a dispute between the National Opera and *Thymelikos Thiasos*, an incident that exemplified the dynamic quest for festivals. Although *Thymelikos Thiasos* was one of the companies selected to perform in the Homecoming Year in Athens (*Seven Against Thebes*, *Prometheus Bound*, and *Lysistrata*),²⁶³ the committee unexpectedly cancelled the contract. The reason was that while *Thymelikos Thiasos* had received permission to perform at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus until 25 July, the National Opera convinced the Homecoming Year committee to change the date to 15 July.²⁶⁴ In addition, the company of Kotopouli requested to perform *Hecuba* at the Odeon as well.²⁶⁵ Even though Kotopouli and the National Theatre had to cancel their performances that year, the monument was initially granted for continuous use from May to September, even though it was being restored.

The following year marked the 25th anniversary of the Delphic Festivals. To celebrate the anniversary and commemorate the recent death of Sikelianos, *Thymelikos Thiasos* revived the festivals by repeating *Prometheus Bound* at the ancient theatre of Delphi.²⁶⁶ Karzis invited Eva Palmer, who lived in New York, to attend the spectacle.²⁶⁷ Karzis' letter marked the limits of his performance compared with the original Delphic Festivals.²⁶⁸ To provide an authentic character to the play, Karzis recruited the actor Georgios Bourlos in the cast. He offered a sense of continuity with Sikelianos' performances as he had participated in the original performance. During the festivals, Karzis' approach shifted for the first time towards a tourist event with commercial ends. In addition, he repeated the performance four times, and in each of them Prometheus was incarnated by a different actor. Actors from four countries spoke their language: the Greek Manos

²⁶³ DAHAAR, Box 604 ST, Folder E (1951), Subfolder 3/7.

²⁶⁴ DAHAAR, Box 604 ST, Folder E (1951), Subfolder 3/7.

²⁶⁵ DAHAAR Box 605 C, Folder A (1954), Subfolder 3/13 .

²⁶⁶ DAHAAR Box 605 A, Folder C (1952), Subfolder 3/1.

²⁶⁷ ESA/BM, Folder 46, Εισερχόμενη Αλληλογραφία Ένας Palmer - Σικελιανού (1952), letter from Linos Karzis to Eva Palmer on 18 January 1952. Koula Pratsika narrated that after the death of Angelos when Eva visited her for the last time, she expressed the intent to revive the spectacles with *Daidalos*, one of Sikelianos' tragedies, to commemorate his death (AAHBC, <https://archive.ert.gr/6841/>). In that final performance, Eva had decided that the chorus would be comprised of local peasants. She died a little later without accomplishing her project.

²⁶⁸ His Second Delphic Festival took place two years later and included *Seven Against Thebes* and the *Dionysian Hymn* (DAHAAR Box 605 B, Folder C (1953), Subfolder 3/5; Karzis, 1954).

Katrakis, the Norwegian Hans Jacob Nilsen, the Swiss Alfred Lohner, and the Canadian Norman Roland (they spoke in Greek, Norwegian, German, and English, respectively).²⁶⁹

Following the performance in Delphi, Paxinou and Minotis attempted to consolidate their position in Greek theatre and requested to perform at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus in September 1953 and Spring 1954.²⁷⁰ At the same time, they prepared for their international tour. In addition to their project, they also negotiated to participate at the spectacles of the National Theatre in Epidaurus with *Hecuba*.²⁷¹ However, after Rondiris' return to the National Theatre, his dispute with Minotis called off the project. In February 1954, the couple had already abandoned their plans for Epidaurus, even though the GNTTO pledged that they could perform in September.²⁷²

The interest that theatrical directors (Kotopouli, Minotis, Philadelphus, Karzis) showed in performing at ancient venues reflected their attempt to dominate the theatrical stage in Greece and secure their presence in a new form of artistic expression. However, it was the National Theatre that, after the continuous requests of the Archaeological Council, demanded the use of the Odeon for the whole summer season in 1953 and the monopoly in performing at these venues.²⁷³ The National Theatre justified its claim, invoking the programmatic mission of its foundation law that proclaimed the significance of 'the organization of large philological and artistic festivals of international character at the existing ancient theatres' (Law 406, FEK 31 December 1930). The Archaeological Council had to mediate and equally distribute the summer season, but the period of artistic domination of the National Theatre was already on the horizon.

In addition, in 1954, the EFA attempted to revive the performances of the Groupe de Théâtre Antique de la Sorbonne at Epidaurus. Loyal to its theatrical tradition, the company had

²⁶⁹ DAHAAR Box 605 B, Folder C (1953), Subfolder 3/5. For audiovisual documentation, see also HNAA, http://www.avarchive.gr/portal/digitalview.jsp?get_ac_id=2481.

²⁷⁰ Letter on 20 June 1953. DAHAAR Box 605 C, Folder A (1954), Subfolder 3/13; AKPAM/ELIA-MIET, Folder 56.3, 1953–1955 Εκάβη.

²⁷¹ AKPAM/ELIA-MIET, Folder 56, Subfolder 3, Αλληλογραφία για την Εκάβη (1953–1955).

²⁷² DAHAAR, Box 605 C, Folder A (1954), Subfolder 3/13; AKPAM/ELIA-MIET, Folder 56, Subfolder 3, Αλληλογραφία για την Εκάβη (1953–1955).

²⁷³ Letter on 6 August 1953, DAHAAR, Box 605 C, Folder A (1954), Subfolder 3/13.



Figure 13. Poster with a map and tourist information related to the Festival of Delphi (1951). Department for the Administration of the Historical Archive of Antiquities and Restorations, Directorate for the Administration of the National Archive of Monuments – Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports.

prepared Aeschylus' *The Persians*, Euripides' *Medea* and Plautus' *Amphitryon*. Despite the positive response of the Greek authorities, they had to cancel their trip to Greece, due to their busy programme during their European tour.²⁷⁴

4.3. The National Theatre of Greece and the beginning of a new theatrical tradition

4.3.1. Euripides' *Hippolytus* 1954

To inaugurate a large-scale tourist event in Epidaurus, the GNTTO assigned the celebration of an ancient drama performance to the National Theatre. The GNTTO would cover a possible deficit of

²⁷⁴ DAHAAR, Box 605 C, Folder A (1954), Subfolder 3/13.

up to 100 million drachma to minimize the financial risk for the theatrical company.²⁷⁵ The National Theatre eagerly assumed this role and put on *Hippolytus*, a play already performed earlier by Rondiris.²⁷⁶ In particular, the proposal was to produce

‘one performance of ancient tragedy at the ancient theatre of Epidaurus in June, while the Greek National Tourism Organization pledges, without setting a precedent, to repay up to 100 million drachma, in case of deficit produced by the ticket revenue. / The Admin. Council accepts the proposal and decides to perform the ancient tragedy “Hippolytus” in June’.²⁷⁷

An urgent restoration of the theatre began in April for the sake of the event. It lasted about two months and converted the monument into a theatrical venue ready to welcome the large public. The press highlighted the artistic progress that the performance achieved and criticized the logistics (the tourist pavilion, telephone line etc., *Vradyni* 12 August 1954).

As in the performance of 1938, what surprised the critics was the positive public response and the peasants who arrived from villages around Argolis to attend the performance (*To Vima* 10 August 1954; see also section 2.6). It convinced theatre critics and authorities that performances at ancient theatres in the Greek countryside could become a national phenomenon and a business model (*Estia* 14 July 1954). In addition, public reception proved, for the nationalist journalist

²⁷⁵ The final request that the sent to the Ministry of Education solicited the performance at various ancient theatres in Greece (DAHAAR, Box 605 D, Folder C (1954), Subfolder 3/9). Thus, in contrast to what Kaltsounas et. al. claim about the diachronic ritual quest of the revival of ancient drama in Greece, tourist and financial aspects were central issues in the theatrical productions at least since the early post-war revival (Kaltsounas et. al. 2021). Rather than pursuing a religious experience, performances of classical drama introduced a modern spectacle and a commercial product to the Greek public since the 1930s. Although Greek continuity depended on a symbolic appropriation of classical culture, the materiality of classical venues prevailed over their ritual elements.

²⁷⁶ See the programme of the play, DANTG, www.nt-archive.gr/viewfiles1.aspx?webSpeech=&playID=781&programID=650&gotoPage=1.

²⁷⁷ ‘μίας παράστασης αρχαίας τραγωδίας ἐν τῷ ἀρχαίῳ θεάτρῳ τῆς Ἐπιδαύρου κατὰ τοῦ προσεχούς Ιουνίου, τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Ὄργανισμοῦ Τουρισμοῦ ἀναλαμβάνοντος «ὅλως ἐξαιρετικῶς», χωρὶς τοῦτο νά θεωρηθῇ ὡς προηγούμενον των ὑποχρέωσιν ἀποπληρώσεως μέχρι ποσοῦ 100 ἑκατομμυρίων δραχμῶν ἐκ περιπτώσιν ἐλλείματος ἐκ τῶν εἰσπράξεως εἰσιτηρίων. / Τό Διοικ. Συμβούλιον ἀποδέχεται τήν πρότασιν καί ἀποφασίζει νά δώσῃ μίαν παράστασιν τῆς ἀρχαίας τραγωδίας «Ἴππόλυτος» κατὰ Ιούνιον’ (ANTG/BAAC, Session 13 April 1954, 1).

Spiros Melas, the organic engagement of the national populace with its ancestors, and the ‘racial heritage of the Greeks’ (*Estia* 12 August 1954).

The HTC was responsible for the transportation of many visitors, and it officially appeared as co-organizer along with the National Theatre and the GNTO (Siatopoulos 1991, ch. 4). According to *Athinaiki* (12 August 1954), the 10.000 spectators arrived by buses and boats of the Touring Club, with their vehicles from Athens and nearby towns or villages. In addition, the attendance of the Greek Royal couple and European Royal families who toured in Greece at the time demonstrated the international scope of the production, which reached the European high society and marked its cosmopolitan status.²⁷⁸

Following the indisputable success, the National Theatre put on two more performances with a reduced-priced ticket.²⁷⁹ Rondiris, the National Theatre, and the authorities soon began negotiating for future projects. They agreed that the following year’s festival would include classical drama, concerts, and cultural exhibitions,²⁸⁰ which would officially inaugurate the Festival of Epidauros in 1955. The ambitious programme also proposed possible performances in Argos, Megalopolis, Corinth, Sicyon, Patras, Athens, and Delphi, after the end of the Festival. A monumental performance of the *Oresteia* would exemplify the prestigious character of the National Theatre and would standardize the new theatrical tradition.²⁸¹ The Ministry of Education, the GNTO, and the Ministry of Trade generously financed the project.²⁸²

The GNTO and the HTC were appointed responsible for the tourist propaganda and the logistics of the productions. Tourism was decisive for the survival of the festivals and dictated the sociocultural perception of ancient space. It filtered Greek heritage as an authentic depiction of the

²⁷⁸ ANTG/BAAC, Session 27 July 1954. In fact, in the performance of 31 August 1954, kings, queens, princes and princesses from all around Europe assisted the event and provoked the enthusiasm of both the press and the public (*I Vradyni* 1 September 1954).

²⁷⁹ ANTG/BAAC, Session 13 July 1954. The local authorities gratefully thanked the National Theatre for providing them free access to the performance (ANTG/BAAC, Session 10 August 1954).

²⁸⁰ ANTG/BAAC, Session 27 July 1954, 3 August 1954; Session and 10 August 1954.

²⁸¹ ANTG/BAAC, Session 12 October 1954.

²⁸² ANTG/BAAC, Session 21 September 1954; 24 September 1954; 2 November 1954. According to the HTC, the three organizers (National Theatre, GNTO, and HTC) held a reunion with the General Secretary Ministry of Trade, Nikolaos Grigoriadis, who promised the full support of the Ministry (Anonymous 1954, 2).

past that had to be rehabilitated and restored to meet modern expectations. Following these developments, Greek journalists and intellectuals often considered this new perception of heritage as an ‘issue of national interest’ (‘ζήτημα εθνικού συμφέροντος’, *Athinaiki* 13 July 1954).

Rondiris’ influential personality concentrated the attention of the cultural elite at the ancient theatre of Epidauros. However, despite the enthusiastic comments on his role in this endeavour, a few months after *Hippolytus* he was dismissed from the National Theatre. The reason was that he was left without political support in the government after the loss of power of Prime Minister Papagos and Spyridon Markezinis’ resignation from the government some months earlier (*Eleutheria* 7 January 1955, 2 and 6 March 1955, 1; Kanakis 1999, 174). The political character of this decision demonstrated again the governmental need for centralized control. Conversations at the parliament between the deputy Konstantinos Vovolinis and the Minister of Education, Achilleas Gerokostopoulos, indicated the extent of the political intervention in Rondiris’ dismissal.²⁸³ Vovolinis implied that political rivalry and interests were behind the decision and a political confrontation dominated the political dialogue (Vovolinis 1955).

Despite Rondiris’ persistent efforts to persuade Papagos to prevent the change of direction that would make him lose his position,²⁸⁴ the decision was already taken (*Eleutheria* 6 January 1955, 2).²⁸⁵ Media, such as the liberal newspaper *Eleutheria*, began targeting Rondiris’ integrity and democratic spirit before 1955 (*Eleutheria* 6 and 7 January 1955). Their principal criticism was his absolute concentration of power (*Eleutheria* 6 March 1955, 1 and 7). Rondiris, in turn, accused politicians, Minotis and Paxinou, and the journalist from *I Kathimerini*, Aimilios Hourmouzios, of conspiring against the National Theatre while he was abroad earlier that year (Rondiris 1999, 136–7). Before the official break, Rondiris proposed directing a new autonomous section of ancient theatre within the National Theatre.²⁸⁶ Hourmouzios was assigned general director of the National Theatre in March 1955 according to Law 3167 (FEK 73, 23 March 1955).²⁸⁷ Later, Minotis’

²⁸³ Hellenic Parliament, Session 9 March 1955 (Vovolinis 1955).

²⁸⁴ ANTG/BAAC, Session 8 February 1955.

²⁸⁵ ANTG/BAAC, Session 8 February 1955.

²⁸⁶ ANTG/BAAC, Session 30 March 1955, 1.

²⁸⁷ ANTG/BAAC, Session 30 March 1955, 1–2.

appointment as theatrical director by Hourmouzios indicated the shift of power towards Minotis and Paxinou.

4.3.2. Classical monuments and permanent tourist facilities

According to Kalinski, the tourist paradox is the tendency of tourist areas to lose specific attributes that generated interest in the first place when such sites become popular (Kalinski 1967; Nikolakakis 2015, 38–9). In the Greek case, the need for modern infrastructure at ancient theatres became necessary for the festivals' success in the mid-1950s. This need transformed the monuments into spaces of modern entertainment, where their tourist potential prevailed over their archaeological integrity. National institutions gradually built new infrastructures that dominated the landscape of the archaeological site.

The theatre of Epidauros was the most representative case. Temporary tourist facilities for the celebration of the Festival of Epidauros appeared less and less convenient for the status that the authorities wished to attribute to the spectacles. By contrast, they proposed the installation of permanent infrastructure that marked the natural and archaeological landscape. In 1951, archaeologist Spyros Marinatos and engineer Spiros Paraschos issued a report that suggested the beautification and protection of Epidauros.²⁸⁸ It included improvement in the road network from the theatre to the port of Nea Epidauros, fencing of the site,²⁸⁹ and replacement of old facilities.²⁹⁰

By 1955, the temporary facilities at Epidauros (wooden shed, metallic bars, etc.) began being permanent parts of the ancient space. Discussions for further constructions started in May 1957 when the GNTTO submitted architectural plans for a guard's room, a vestiary, and a warehouse.²⁹¹ A guesthouse, restaurant, and pavilion were also built later (Moussa 2017). By 1960 the principal infrastructure around the archaeological site and the theatre was completed, and only

²⁸⁸ Μελέτη Μ/6, Εξωραϊστικά έργα εις Μυκήνας Επίδauρον και Γειτονικούς Αρχαιολογικούς Χώρους (DAHAAR, Box 601 A, Folder D (1952), Subfolder 3/2).

²⁸⁹ DCRAHM, Folder 318, Subfolder 3 Epidauros Correspondence 1950–1964; DAHAAR, Box 601 A, Folder D (1957), Subfolder 3/29.

²⁹⁰ In January 1960, the road network was still pending. The new road network would connect Athens with Epidauros through the village Sofiko; the Hellenic Touring Club announced that the new road network would considerably shorten the distance between the theatre and urban centres (*Periigitiki* January 1960, 42; *Periigitiki* March 1960, 46).

²⁹¹ DCRAHM, Folder 319, Subfolder Epidauros.

occasional replacement of old constructions took place.²⁹² This shift from temporary to permanent solutions transformed the aspect of the archaeological site. The claims of the HTC, a few years later, reflected this spirit: ‘systematic work adds facilities and cultural resources [...] so that the Festivals of Epidaurus can enjoy international acclaim’.²⁹³ The implementation of these projects introduced the new sociocultural realities of the ancient theatres.

As the Department of Restoration had the ultimate responsibility, the GNTTO needed permission before intervening in the archaeological sites.²⁹⁴ However, unauthorized activities of the GNTTO occasionally attracted the attention of the Archaeological Council and the local authorities. In 1955 the GNTTO set up an electrical installation around the theatre damaging the monument.²⁹⁵ Similarly, two years later, it placed a pumping machine and piping system without previous authorization.²⁹⁶

There is little doubt that tourist development followed similar patterns in other popular ancient sites. For instance, in the theatre of Delphi, during works for the setting-up of theatrical sets in 1951, part of the monument was accidentally coloured.²⁹⁷ Under these circumstances, Miliadis condemned the uncontrolled tourist explosion that compromised the monuments’ integrity and visitors safety.²⁹⁸ In addition, in a letter to the Directorate of Antiquities in August 1956, the curator of antiquities in Nauplio, Nikolaos Verdelis, described a state of disarray during the festivals.²⁹⁹ He denounced the unauthorized commercial activities around the theatre and the incapacity of the GNTTO and the National Theatre to prevent damage to the monument.

²⁹² DAHAAR, Box 601 A, Folder A (1961–1965).

²⁹³ ‘συστηματική εργασία προσθέτει εγκαταστάσεις και έργα πολιτισμού [...] ώστε οι Γιορτές της Επιδαύρου να μπορούν ν’ αξιώσουν την καθολική διεθνώς αναγνώριση’ (*Periigitiki*, June 1959, 16).

²⁹⁴ DCRAHM, Folder 319, Subfolder Epidaurus.

²⁹⁵ DCRAHM, Folder 318, Subfolder 3 Epidaurus Correspondence 1950–1964; DCRAHM, Folder 318, Subfolder 3 Epidaurus Correspondence 1950–1964. Eustathios Stikas, an inspector from the Directorate of Restoration of Monuments, denounced that workers had excavated a spot in the theatre where restoration was about to take place.

²⁹⁶ DCRAHM, Folder 318, Subfolder 3 Epidaurus Correspondence 1950–1964.

²⁹⁷ DAHAAR, Box 604 E, Folder B (1951), Subfolder 3/6.

²⁹⁸ DAHAAR, Box 598 A, Folder A (1956), Subfolder 3/39.

²⁹⁹ DAHAAR, Box 601 A, Folder E (1955–1961), Subfolder 3/29.

4.4. Parameters of revival: The Festival of Epidauros (1955–1964)

4.4.1. Hourmouzios and ancient drama

Hourmouzios' position as director coincided with Konstantinos Karamanlis' first period as Prime Minister of Greece (Karamanlis retained his position from October 1955 to June 1963). Despite the political interventions, commercial interests (Mavromoustakos 2005, 70; Sechopoulou 2018), and his brief 'diplomatic alliance' with Paxinou and Minotis to overthrow Rondiris, Hourmouzios' direction inaugurated a long period of stability in the National Theatre. It was the first time that the institution regularly presented a complete and coordinated repertoire at the beginning of the theatrical seasons (*Ta Nea* 17 September 1955).

During this period, modern Greek translation of ancient dramas played a significant role in the discussions about the repertoire. Ioannis Gryparis' translations remained largely undisputed in tragedy because he offered ideologically safe translations with a poetic language that appealed to the National Theatre (Georgousopoulos and Gogos 2004, 141–3). The works of Apostolos Melachrinou and Pantelis Prevelakis were also chosen and enjoyed an enviable reputation. In comedy, Thrassyvoulos Stavrou moderated the Aristophanic text in such a way that corresponded to the conservative character of the National Theatre.

Hourmouzios introduced a new moderate view and theorized the staging of tragedy. He failed to modernize ancient drama, but some performances presented a new horizon. In particular, he pursued 'modern stage apparatus in order to stress what has still survived from ancient drama, that is to say the poetic speech', and he perceived the drama as a spiritual whole that connected with the soul of the audience.³⁰⁰ He criticized faithful revivals (Sikelianos' or Karzis' approach) as absurd due to the distance separating the present from the classical past. That distance, according

³⁰⁰ AAH/ELIA-MIET, Folder 1,6 (National Theatre 1930–1964), Lecture in English on 'Contemporary Interpretation of Attic Drama', 1.

to Hourmouzios, has severed ‘our links with ancient Greek sensibility’.³⁰¹ However, he defended the stereotypical pompous speech that the National Theatre had adopted because:

‘we get much closer to the ancient spectator and we participate more in the message of the ancient poet if we seek the means by which speech is exalted -- not because speech needs exaltation but because it is claimed by the texture of its poetry’.³⁰²

During this period, poetic speech became the most valuable element of ancient drama, while harmonic movement and dialogue were the principal factors for the National Theatre’s spiritual modernization. Hourmouzios perceived the chorus as a single actor with multiple presences, subordinate to the needs of the dramatic action.³⁰³ In so doing, he left behind Rondiris’ and Mitropoulos’ emphasis on music (Hourmouzios 1978, 200). In any case, since the late 1950s, modernist composers introduced experimental – for the Greek standards – approaches to music in classical performances and established a modernist platform of musical compositions in Epidaurus (Chardas 2019; Balaskas forthcoming).

In addition, the process of *festivalization* reached its apogee, and the absolute dominance of the National Theatre in ancient venues became undisputed. According to Delipetrou, when a company is national, the public is the nation itself and its theatrical production is bound to have a national orientation (2016, 25). In this context, the National Theatre had to balance between the ideological authority of *ethnikofrosyni* and artistic ambition. A conservative compromise that safeguarded the national role and cultural authority of the National Theatre characterized Hourmouzios’ period.

However, the decision making did not necessarily correspond to national or political interest. Artistic issues such as the directors’ personal preferences, the availability of the cast, and the preservation of a dynamic stardom system greatly influenced the theatrical production. As Stamatopoulou claims, the repertoire and decision making aimed to perpetuate and balance the

³⁰¹ AAH/ELIA-MIET, Folder 1,6 (National Theatre 1930–1964), Lecture in English on ‘Contemporary Interpretation of Attic Drama’, 2.

³⁰² AAH/ELIA-MIET, Folder 1,6 (National Theatre 1930–1964), Lecture in English on ‘Contemporary Interpretation of Attic Drama’, 18–19.

³⁰³ AAH/ELIA-MIET, Folder 1, Subfolder 1/4 (National Theatre 1930–1964), 30.

artistic ambitions of the directors, who sought to establish their viewpoint on the revival of ancient drama (2017, 369). The Artistic Committee also had an informal role in self-censoring the plays. When the member of the committee, Ioannis Panagiotopoulos, claimed that ‘it would be appropriate that the Artistic Committee reviewed the translated texts, and occasionally correcting them to render them more intelligible’, his proposal was eagerly accepted by the Council.³⁰⁴

Officially, the principal responsibility of the Artistic Committee was to suggest dramas for the repertoire of the summer and winter seasons.³⁰⁵ Usually, the Administrative Council seriously considered its proposals. The governmental commissioner (who protected the state interests) and the GNTTO could also intervene in the selection of the plays. In practice, however, Hourmouzios often directly issued them. Then, the theatrical director had to read the text and submit his project (cast, music etc.) to the Council, in collaboration with Hourmouzios.³⁰⁶ Finally, the general director was responsible for negotiating with other institutions and the authorities, while the Council had an advisory role.

4.4.2. National Theatre and the Festival of Epidauros (1955–1959)

Despite the initial ambitious project that Rondiris had proposed, the inauguration of the Festival of Epidauros in 1955 significantly reduced its repertoire. The Artistic Committee finally suggested *Oedipus Rex*, *Hippolytus*, and *Hecuba*.³⁰⁷ At the same time, the celebration of the Festival of Athens the same year resumed the success that Epidauros had produced.³⁰⁸ The GNTTO

³⁰⁴ Θά ἦτο σκόπιμον, ἡ Καλλιτεχνική Επιτροπή νά ἐλέγχει τά κείμενα τῶν μεταφράσεων, ἐπιφέρουσα ἐνίοτε εἰς αὐτά διορθώσεις διά νά τά καταστήσῃ πλέον εὐληπτα’ (ANTG/BAAC, Session 8 February 1956, 1–2).

³⁰⁵ The committee was comprised of I. M. Panagiotopoulos, Aimilios Hourmouzios, Angelos Terzakis and Eleni Ourani (ANTG/BAACO, Session 8 February 1956, 1).

³⁰⁶ AKPAM/ELIA-MIET, Folder 1.3, Διανομή της Τραγωδίας «Οιδίπους ἐπὶ Κολωνῶ» του Σοφοκλέους, and Διανομή Ἀνδρικοῦ Χοροῦ της Τραγωδίας «Οιδίπους ἐπὶ Κολωνῶ» του Σοφοκλέους, 25 April 1958.

³⁰⁷ ANTG/BAAC, Session 25 April 1955, 1–2. See also the pressbook, DANTG: www.nt-archive.gr/viewFiles1.aspx?playID=919&programID=528. After Rondiris’ dismissal, director Giorgos Michailidis assumed the direction of the production, preserving Rondiris’ approach.

³⁰⁸ From 1956 onwards, the Festival of Athens – which adopted a more open character than Epidauros – was organized by a committee that depended on the GNTTO (Acts of Council of Ministers 2480, 30 December 1955 and 1699, 1 November 1956; Legislative Decree 3864, FEK 174, 23 October 1955). It was responsible for the organization of

systematically addressed the international appeal of the festivals and considered them a unique opportunity for tourist development. The scholar John Russell Brown graphically resumed the sociocultural reality of the Festival of Epidauros by describing the experience as ‘[a] performance lasting ninety minutes, a language few of the audience can understand, a play more than 2,400 years old, and the immediate result-continuous applause for more than twenty minutes’ (Brown 1965, 107).

Paxinou and Minotis soon became the indisputable protagonists of the Greek theatrical stage. Minotis had already directed *Oedipus Rex* and *Hecuba* earlier, while *Hippolytus* was a repetition of the previous year’s Rondiris’ staging. Even though Minotis’ dramas had a realistic, austere character that brought ancient drama closer to the modern public, many critics considered it too conventional. His aesthetic approach involved the use of chorus as a whole and the division between dramatic and lyric parts. Minotis called this approach ‘poetic realism’ (Minotis 1988, 135).³⁰⁹ His two dramas won national acclaim, but passion and poetic strength were missing (*I Avgi* 24 June 1955). While the chorus of both plays was static, *Oedipus Rex* was considered somehow unnatural (*Ethnos* 22 June 1955; *Anexartisia* 2 October 1955). The contrast with Rondiris’ *Hippolytus* was apparent in the critics’ eyes, even though both directors adopted a historical approach and pompous style. Music tension, imposing atmosphere, artistic unity, and rhythmic movement characterized *Hippolytus* (*I Kathimerini* 28 June 1955; *To Vima* 28 June 1955). In any case, the coexistence of two directorial styles showcased the confronting theatrical traditions of ancient drama in Greece (Arvaniti 2011, 272–6). On top of that, Karolos Koun’s theatrical production began to win international acclaim during the same period. However, the

periodic musical and theatrical performances. Also, the committee was responsible for drafting the artistic programme, communicating with artistic companies, and making collaborations.

³⁰⁹ While this approach overcame the archaeological performances of the past, it did not always fit the monumental character of ancient tragedy. One such example was *The Bacchae* in 1962, in which Minotis’ realism was considered inadequate to present the passionate Dionysian expression of the play (*Epitheoris Technis* June 1962, 746–50; Sampatakakis 2004, 151–5). To address this issue, the politician and translator Vassilis Rotas commented on the revival of ancient tragedy. In particular, he denounced the question of dimension that the realistic performances of the National Theatre arose. He claimed that productions in Epidauros did not fit the monumental character of the site and that most spectators could not appreciate the modest appearance of actors or their movement (*Eleutheria* 17 June 1962, 4; Rotas 1962).

Greek multifaceted theatrical stage was compromised by the political fixation with a public culture ‘where communities are subjected, biopolitically, to a strict ethical and aesthetic regime’ (Plantzos 2019, 476).

Comedies also began to be incorporated into the classical repertoire of the National Theatre in Epidauros. In 1956 Alexis Solomos experimentally directed *The Assembly Women* at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus.³¹⁰ Following the enormous success of the play there (*Acropolis* 13 July 1956; Thrylos 1956b), the Council and the Artistic Committee agreed to perform Aristophanes for the first time in Epidauros in 1957.³¹¹ Hourmouzios appeared certain about the success and actively supported the inclusion of more ancient comedies in the National Theatre’s repertoire. He endorsed Solomos’ deep knowledge, hard work, and capacity to put on Aristophanes.³¹² In these terms, the Festival of Epidauros gradually broadened its repertoire, and plays that some years ago were considered risky, found their way to the stage. In any case, Solomos (and later Spyros Evangelatos) adopted a bourgeois approach that emphasized the national identification and comical levity instead of Aristophanes’ controversial aspects (Van Steen 2000, 197–204; Diamantakou-Agathou 2015).

The festival of 1956 included *Medea* and *Antigone* and the repetition of *Oedipus Rex*, under Minotis’ direction. *Medea* presented the stereotypical realistic approach that Minotis had standardized, while the staging of *Antigone* innovated. The performances exhibited a passionate, dramatic ritual close to Hourmouzios’ style that spiritualized the experience at the classical venues in Epidauros and the Odeon (Thrylos 1956a; *To Vima* 2 October 1956). *Antigone* provoked the enthusiastic reception of the media, which identified the new elements as an attempt to modernize the revival of classical drama and fascinate the national and international public (*Acropolis* 26 June 1956; *Eleutheria* 26 June 1956, 1 and 5;).

Two incidents characterized *Antigone*’s eventful production and exemplified the internal issues that the National Theatre had to resolve in the early years of the festival. In the last performance of *Antigone*, an administrative incident demonstrated the inexperience of the Greek

³¹⁰ ANTG/BAAC, Session 2 October 1956, 1.

³¹¹ ANTG/BAAC, Session 19 February 1957, 1–2. See also the enthusiastic comments of *Acropolis* (25 June 1957).

³¹² ANTG/BAAC, Session 19 February 1957, 1–2.

institutions in modern tourist productions. Due to an administrative error, many extra tickets were sold. This sparked unprecedented unrest around the theatre when the koilon was already filled, and hundreds of spectators remained outside. After the incident, the authorities requested a reorganization of the festival, and momentarily, its future was at stake. Almost immediately after the summer season, the National Theatre seized upon the incident to claim that the budget for producing ancient dramas was too low. To avoid cancelling the following season, it received an increase in the finance.³¹³

The second incident took place some months later and revealed the internal disputes that marked the administration of the National Theatre until the 1970s. Minotis filed a complaint against Hourmouzios for a performance that was celebrated in honour of the President of Democracy of Lebanon, who had visited Greece.³¹⁴ While Hourmouzios awarded medals to other members of the cast of *Antigone*, he omitted to reward Minotis. The performance had taken place at the central building of the National theatre. The issue was resolved when the president of the National Theatre intermediated and endorsed Minotis' valuable role in the company.³¹⁵

Alexis Solomos systematically directed plays for the Festival of Epidaurus from 1957, while Takis Mouzenidis performed his first performance at the ancient venue in 1960. Kostis Michailidis presented an ambitious project in 1957, with the staging of *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, and 1958 with *Iphigeneia among the Taurians*.³¹⁶ Michailidis' endeavours received mixed criticism, mainly because of his traditional style that did not adopt a personalized tone (*I Vradyni* 20 August 1958; *Apogevmatini* 3 September 1958). Minotis retained the dominant role in the performances of ancient drama in Epidaurus and the Odeon, by directing original plays and many reworkings until 1963. Oedipus' and Hecuba's myths became his iconic themes, but their repetitive motive was not always positively received.

³¹³ ANTG/BAAC, Session 6 September 1956, 2–3.

³¹⁴ ANTG/BAAC, Session 3 December 1957.

³¹⁵ AKPAM/ELIA-MIET, Folder 1.3, Minotis' Letters to the General Direction of the National Theatre on the 12 November 1957 and 9 December 1957.

³¹⁶ The excavation and discovery of the temple of Artemis in Boeotia during the same period had brought the issue in the frontpages of national Greek newspapers that emphatically referred to the altar of Iphigeneia (*Eleutheria* 23 November 1958, 9).

Despite the efforts to present a modern international spectacle in Epidaurus, reduced attendance in 1957 and 1959 was perceived as stagnation (*Athinaiki* 17 June 1957; *Tachydromos* 22 June 1957).³¹⁷ The Council attributed it to the limited propaganda of the GNTO and the repetition of many plays. The stereotypical pompous style of the National Theatre and the success of other theatrical companies were some of the reasons for the decline. Also, the internal disputes that repeatedly reached the press further damaged the reputation of the company. Often, the premieres of Epidaurus were repeated the following year at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus³¹⁸ and many Athenians preferred to attend the performances in Athens than travel to Epidaurus. After realizing this gradual decline, Hourmouzios proposed the production of dramas that were not performed earlier by the National Theatre. *Frogs*, *Cyclops*, *Prometheus Bound*, and *Philoctetes* were suggested to reattract the interest of the public.³¹⁹

A new possibility for Rondiris' return to the National Theatre appeared in 1959. Due to Minotis' absence that season, Hourmouzios suggested assigning Rondiris the direction of tragedies for the Festival of Epidaurus. Angelos Terzakis and Hourmouzios negotiated with him and reached an agreement.³²⁰ Rondiris proposed to repeat his *Oresteia*. The production raised many expectations, as Rondiris' return could inaugurate a pluralist stage of distinguished directors. Despite the positive comments that focused on Rondiris' improvements from the 1949 *Oresteia*, the spectacle received mixed criticism (*Eikones* 29 June 1959; *Ta Nea* 8 July 1959). Rondiris' participation in the festival provoked Minotis' frustration, who, despite his voluntary absence, attempted to dominate the internal negotiations on the repertoire in 1959 and 1960. Upon Hourmouzios' reaction, he complained about the rejection of his proposals (*Electra* and *Hecuba*) in an official letter to the governmental commissioner.³²¹

³¹⁷ ANTG/BAAC, Session 30 June 1959, 1. In contrast, the Festival of Epidaurus in 1958 presented an unprecedented success. The Council reduced the number of performances and the ticket price, converting the festival into a mass spectacle (ANTG/BAAC, Session 7 January 1958, 2.).

³¹⁸ ANTG/BAAC, Session 30 June 1959, 1.

³¹⁹ ANTG/BAAC, Session 9 December 1958, 9; Session 29 December 1958, 1.

³²⁰ ANTG/BAAC, Session 13 January 1959, 1.

³²¹ AKPAM/ELIA-MIET 1.3, Letter by Minotis to the Governmental Commissioner of the National Theatre Kornoutos, 24 February 1959. Perhaps Paxinou's absence from the repertoire that year, despite her assignment of a

At the end of the season, Rondiris proposed becoming the exclusive director of ancient drama at the National Theatre. Hourmouzios rejected the offer, invited him to direct dramas in the winter season, and negotiated with him the direction of *The Persians* the following summer.³²² Negotiations collapsed in December 1959 after Rondiris' persistence in his initial proposal.³²³ Meanwhile, he had created the company Piraikon Theatron, and from the following year, he exclusively focused on its theatrical activities in Greece and abroad.

Koun was already another powerful alternative to the National Theatre's revival of ancient drama. He founded his company Theatro Technis (Art Theatre) in 1942, and since 1954 he followed a successful national and international tradition (Diamantakou-Agathou 2015). Koun's innovative staging of comedy fused national themes with the popular (native) tradition and became a valuable counterweight to the monopoly of the National Theatre (Glytzouris 2011, 591–5). His perception of Hellenicity reshaped the approach to ancient drama and contributed to the introduction of Greek modernism (Roilou-Panagodimitrakopoulou 2003, ch. 6). According to Van Steen, 'the Art Theater's first professional comic revivals had transformed the classical poet into a dynamic, politicized, popular antihero. As such, Aristophanes had played a prominent role in the process of defining Greece's folk identity and populist nationalism of the late 1950s' (Van Steen 2000, 176). However, Koun's modernization of the ancient drama – especially Aristophanes – often proved unwelcome in the sociopolitical reality of Greece of the 1950s. For instance, in 1959, a notorious ministerial decision cancelled Koun's staging of *Birds* at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus (Van Steen 2000, ch. 4). The post hoc censorship was issued by the Minister of Presidency, Konstantinos Tsatsos, who claimed that Rotas' free translation had offended the religious feelings of the national populace.³²⁴

role in Hecuba, was also a consequence of the couple's attempt to dominate the theatrical company. See also Stamatopoulou 2017, 344.

³²² ANTG/BAAC, Session 29 September 1959, 2.

³²³ ANTG/BAAC, Session 1 December 1959, 2.

³²⁴ Handwritten order by Tsatsos, AKT/ASCSA, Section III, Folder 63, Subfolder 1, (9.1–9.3).

4.4.3. Epidaurus Stardom and Confrontations (1960–1964)³²⁵

Konstantinos Karamanlis' government won the contentious national election of 1961³²⁶ and, alluding to the dominant rhetoric of *ethnikofrosyni*, perpetuated a period of ideological intolerance, hardening of repression measures, and the development of parastatal organizations. Following the murder of the United Democratic Left³²⁷ deputy Grigoris Lambrakis in May 1963 and a dubious police – and political – implication, the opposition parties managed to discredit the government in the eyes of the electorate and led the country to early elections (Close 2002, 103–7; Clogg 2021, 152–8). With Karamanlis instantly fleeing the country, his main political rival Georgios Papandreou won the elections and became Prime Minister in February 1964.

Under these circumstances, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, the GNTTO focused on the construction of tourist infrastructure for a social and political elite. The Hilton Hotel in Athens, the Xenia projects around Greece and the hotel Mont Parnes on top of Mount Parnitha attracted visitors of high economic status. At the same time, the emerging urban middle-class equally claimed its position in the sociocultural reality of the time. These intense developments reshaped the Festival of Epidaurus and Athens, and converted them into events of high culture that rose to international stardom. Although the conservative, nationalist approach to ancient drama remained present in most productions, the festivals reflected the cultural outcome of these socioeconomic changes.

The national authorities also attempted to attract the European and Greek high society to the festivals. These attempts culminated in 1960 and 1961 when Bastias was the director of the National Opera. The National Opera dominated public discourse by organizing an unprecedented spectacle in Epidaurus and attempting to challenge the monocracy of the National Theatre (Kondyli 2012). The participation of Maria Callas with Romani's *Norma* in 1960 and Cherubini's *Medea* in 1961 was considered an act of national importance. Callas was already an international

³²⁵ Parts of this section are also thoroughly discussed on Balaskas forthcoming.

³²⁶ Election that both the *Central Union* and the *United Democratic Left* denounced as fraudulent (Clogg 2021, 151–2).

³²⁷ The *United Democratic Left* (Ενωία Δημοκρατική Αριστερά) political party was founded in 1951 as a response to the outlawed Communist Party of Greece. It developed a moderate euro-communist stance until its dissolution in 1974.

superstar, and the announcement of her performance in Epidaurus attracted international attention, especially after her resounding appearance in the Festival of Athens in 1957 (Kondyli 2012). More importantly, this production encapsulated the aspiration of a sociocultural elite to modernize the Greek public space by attaching itself to the West (Nikolakakis 2015, 40–1).

Despite the popular and media success, the use of Epidaurus by the National Opera frustrated the Administrative Council of the National Theatre. Because public attendance at the Festival of Epidaurus was anticipated to be low after Callas' dazzling performances, Hourmouzios considered cancelling the performances of 1960 and 1961.³²⁸ At the same time, the inflexibility of the National Theatre with non-theatrical performances in Epidaurus reanimated its dispute with the National Opera (See also section 3.7).³²⁹ Bastias defended his decision to perform opera at the theatre. In his article in the cultural magazine *Theatro*, Bastias supported the use of the theatre of Epidaurus for operas, claiming that ancient theatre was not a matter of authenticity, but experimentation (Bastias 1961, 61).

The reaction of the National Theatre against Minotis and the actor Lambros Kostopoulos, who were invited to participate in the productions of the National Opera, indicates the degree of the institutional dispute. The National Theatre did not permit Kostopoulos to perform in *Norma* and threatened him with administrative sanction.³³⁰ Minotis, who had assumed the direction of the play (Bastias 2005, 462), notified the National Theatre after having accepted the invitation by the National Opera; as a result, Hourmouzios had no option but to allow it and request Minotis not to neglect his obligations with the National Theatre.³³¹

Callas' presence inaugurated a period of Greek stardom when the theatre of Epidaurus became the centre of attention of the Greek high society. The prestigious summer festival and the attendance of renowned artists and spectators converted it into a site where public relations, lavish

³²⁸ ANTG/BAAC, Session 1 December 1959, 2; Session 1 November 1960, 1–2; Session 15 November 1960, 1; Session 13 December 1960, 2; *I Vradyni* 7 August 1961, 7.

³²⁹ ANTG/BAAC, Session 16 May 1961, 3. See also Chardas 2019.

³³⁰ AKPAM/ELIA-MIET, Folder 57.2, Letter by Kostopoulos to the director of the National Opera, Bastias, 15 May 1961. The fact that the letter belongs to Minotis' archives indicates that the two men were in contact about the issue.

³³¹ AKPAM/ELIA-MIET, Folder 57.2, Letter by Minotis to the General Direction of the National Theatre, 18 May 1961 (and answer by Hourmouzios on 19 May 1961). See also Kondyli 2012.

lifestyle, and bourgeois spectacle created an artistic elite that dominated the Greek public life. At the same time, the increase of the number of plays and reduction of ticket prices in the 1960s democratized the festivals and attracted larger audiences that crowded the theatre to see their favourite ‘stars’ (See also Wrigley 2015, 77–97). The cultural journal *Epoches* graphically commented on this sociocultural reality: ‘at times, the protagonists look like national heroes and their disputes like great national issues’.³³² At a time when the cinema began creating national and international stars, theatre only reproduced this star-system (Rafailidis 1966).

Regardless of this institutional dispute and the inauspicious circumstances, in 1960, Minotis directed *The Phoenician Women* with great success.³³³ The production captivated the spectators and was financially successful, despite *Medea*’s interception. The Council considered it as the result of a well-established theatrical tradition that affected national consciousness in Greece.³³⁴ Similarly, in 1961, the cosmopolitan character of the theatre considerably impacted the sociocultural reality in Greece. Celebrities from around Europe, renowned Greek artists, journalists, and politicians attended *Electra* to take a glimpse of the festival (*Eleutheria* 20 June 1961, 2). This post-war upper class perceived Epidaurus as a site of elite status, theatrical stardom, and glamour (*Eleutheria* 17 June 1962, 4).

In addition, the confrontation between Minotis and the Council reignited after the summer season of 1960. As Minotis and Paxinou were busy working on other artistic projects, the Council assigned the direction of *Electra* to Mouzenidis and the leading role to Synodinou. For Minotis, this action violated their theatrical tradition because he had previously directed the play with Paxinou as *Electra*, and threatened to resign.³³⁵ Although this theatrical convention existed and actors or actresses were closely connected with specific roles, Minotis’ behaviour was directly related to the cosmopolitan character of the Greek theatre in the 1960s. In particular, following a successful – especially for Paxinou – career in the United States, the couple’s rise to stardom

³³² ‘φαντάζουν, ώρες - ώρες, οι πρωταγωνιστές του σαν εθνικοί ήρωες και οι διενέξεις τους σαν μεγάλες εθνικές υποθέσεις’ (*Epoches* July 1964, 15, 55).

³³³ ANTG/BAAC, Session 21 June 1960, 125 (1).

³³⁴ ANTG/BAAC, Session 19 July 1960, 145 (1).

³³⁵ AKPAM/ELIA-MIET, Folder 1.3, Letter by Minotis to the Council of the National Theatre, 19 October 1960.

permitted Minotis to repeatedly appeal for salary raise,³³⁶ to assert his authority in the company, and to threaten to abandon his position.³³⁷ To maintain its international prestige, the Administrative Council of the National Theatre realized that Minotis and Paxinou were indispensable for the institution. However, from 1960 onwards, Minotis attempted to control every aspect of the performances and systematically undermined Hourmouzios' authority in his attempt to lead the institution (*Acropolis* 6 March 1961; *Eleutheria*, 26 July 1963, 2).

For the 10th anniversary of the Festival of Epidauros in 1963, the National Theatre organized a commemorative event to honour the revival of ancient drama in Greece. The Council proposed performing plays of the four principal ancient Greek authors, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes.³³⁸ The project involved the staging of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, Euripides' *Alcestis*, Aristophanes' *The Wasps*, and Sophocles' *Electra*. However, due to the illness of Synodinou, the leading actress of *Electra*, and the lack of an extra male chorus for an alternative Sophocles' play (*Ajax* was proposed to replace *Electra*), the symbolic commemoration failed.

Instead, it was the repetition of Minotis' *Hecuba* that finally replaced *Electra* and proved a public and commercial success. (*To Vima* 17 July 1963). The other tragedy that Minotis directed, *Prometheus Bound*, also received an unanimously positive response, even though the use of masks and cothurns for the first time by Minotis surprised the theatre critics (*Eleutheria* 19 June 1963; *Ethnikos Kiryx* 20 June 1963). Although Minotis used them to amplify the gods' dimension on the stage (*Athinaiki* 19 June 1963), they did not seem to fit with his realistic approach (*Estia* 17 June 1963).

In the election of February 1964, the centrist party Centre Union (Ενώση Κέντρου) of Georgios Papandreou formed a new government. That year, Minotis was assigned the direction of *Agamemnon*. Because he delayed the assignment of the cast for months,³³⁹ Hourmouzios

³³⁶ ANTG/BAAC, Session 11 July 1961, 4; Session 7 November 1961, 4; AKPAM/ELIA-MIET, Folder 1.3, Letter by Minotis to the Council of the National Theatre 19 May 1958.

³³⁷ ANTG/BAAC, Session 1 November 1960, 1–2; Session 15 November 1960, 1; Session 13 December 1960, 2. National press and cultural magazines often criticized their behaviour (*Epitheorisi Technis* 79, 1961, 4).

³³⁸ ANTG/BAAC, Session 14 May 1963, 1.

³³⁹ ANTG/BAAC, Session 20 May 1964, 2–3.

repeatedly requested an update. Finally, he admitted that he intentionally delayed working on *Agamemnon*, because he expected the administrative reform that would terminate Hourmouzios' direction.³⁴⁰ Minotis soon presented his resignation and revealed his oral deal with Papandreou to assume the new role of Administrative director of the National Theatre.³⁴¹ In a written complaint to the Ministry of Education that protested at such flagrant interference, the Council strongly condemned the lack of transparency in the decision-making and the violation of the independent character of the institution.³⁴² After nine years in the direction of the National Theatre, Hourmouzios was dismissed in spring 1964. During this period, he managed to create a mass spectacle and popularize classical drama. Despite his departure, the festival of 1964 was celebrated according to the repertoire that Hourmouzios' Council had chosen.³⁴³

That season also marked Solomos' resignation. He directed two dramas for the Festival of Epidauros, Aeschylus' *The Suppliants* and Aristophanes' *Peace*. He proposed the composer Iannis Xenakis write the music for *The Suppliants* as an experiment to modernize the performances of the Festival of Epidauros and overcome the signs of theatrical stagnation (Soulele 2011). The Council of the National Theatre viewed Solomos' proposal with great reluctance: most members of the Council objected to Xenakis' 'utterly modern' direction and music that could ruin the performance and dissatisfy the public.³⁴⁴ At the same time, what preoccupied them the most was that Xenakis could not be present at the performance due to his conviction (being a member of the Greek communist party, after his escape to France in 1947, Xenakis was sentenced in absentia to death for desertion, a sentence that was later commuted to life imprisonment).³⁴⁵ Such uncertainty

³⁴⁰ ANTG/BAAC, Session 14 April 1964, 1–10.

³⁴¹ The new structure of the National Theatre included an artistic director and an administrative director, instead of a general director (ANTG/BAAC, Session 25 May 1964, 2–3).

³⁴² ANTG/BAAC, Session 17 September 1964, 2–4; 28 September 1964, 1–5.

³⁴³ Minotis also added two plays in the Festival of Athens that had directed earlier, *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Hecuba*.

³⁴⁴ ANTG/BAAC, Session 25 May 1964, 4–5. Xenakis' choice pertained to a period when the National Theatre collaborated with Greek composers who introduced a modernist musical perception in ancient drama and reshaped the artistic expression of ancient speech (Chardas 2015).

³⁴⁵ The provisional Executive director Theotokas personally intervened and, despite the initial assurances of the Ministry of Presidency that Xenakis would be pardoned (ANTG/BAAC, Session 25 May 1964, 1), the Council had already lost all its hopes by June 1964 (ANTG/BAAC, Session 1 June 1964, 1).

made the Council doubt whether the play could be eventually staged, but it was finally persuaded after Solomos' reassurances that he would travel to Paris and work with Xenakis there.

Xenakis' innovation mainly consisted of increasing the chorus' presence in the play. In particular, the unified chorus of the suppliants had to dance and play music simultaneously. However, some critics claimed that the chorus' narration could not be heard (*I Kathimerini* 28 July 1964). What was unique in the performance was Xenakis' use of percussion, rattles and other 'primitive sounds' that were innovations in Epidauros' musical tradition, after Rondiris and Mitropoulos brief presence. The general response of the national press was more critical. Xenakis' interventions were interpreted as alien to the Greek audience and the National Theatre's traditional performances at Epidauros. Thrylos (1964) and Vasos Varikas (*Ta Nea* 3 August 1964) expressed that opinion.

While Xenakis escaped further criticism, Solomos found himself entangled in a political issue due to the direction of *Peace*, performed only a few days before *The Suppliants*. Specifically, his instructions to modernize the text and lampoon the current Prime Minister Papandreou (with a phrase that the actor Thodoros Moridis finally modified to satirize Karamanlis) led to sanctions against him and his final resignation before the end of the summer season.³⁴⁶ Solomos defended his intervention in the text by claiming that ancient comedy had to be actualized to meet the expectations of a modern audience (*Eleutheria* 19 August 1964, 2; *Eleutheria* 1 September 1964, 2).³⁴⁷ However, the members of the Council of the National Theatre considered his political interference as unacceptable, especially as he had had to adapt the ancient text.³⁴⁸ Solomos' work had also risen tensions before the summer season, when his direction of *Χριστός Πάσχω* triggered a boisterous reaction of the Greek orthodox church, principally due to the appearance of the figure of Christ (Delipetrou 2016, 19–25).

³⁴⁶ Solomos had anticipated this approach in an interview years before, by claiming that in ancient comedy, 'we can make insinuations about specific people or events serve their purpose using the method of generalization' ('νύξεις πού υπάρχουν για συγκεκριμένα πρόσωπα ή γεγονότα, μπορούμε κάλλιστα με τη μέθοδο της γενικεύσεως να τις κάνουμε να εξυπηρετήσουν το σκοπό τους' (*Periigitiki*, June 1960, 18).

³⁴⁷ ANTG/BAAC, Session 30 July 1964, 4–5.

³⁴⁸ ANTG/BAAC, Session 30 July 1964, 4–5; Session 2 September 1964, 3.

4.5. Tourism and *Festivales de España*: National spectacles and cultural politics (1951–1964)

Following the early examples of Italy and Switzerland, Spain had institutionalized its tourist project at the beginning of the 20th century (See section 1.2.3). However, the image of a sunny destination soon prevailed over the display of classical heritage (Pack 2006, ch. 3) and in the 1950s, Spain consolidated its position as a summer destination. Therefore, Franco's perception of international tourism relied almost exclusively on sea leisure and neglected classical heritage.

The primary objective was to integrate Spain into the European travel network as an alternative destination (Rosendorf 2006; Pack 2007). The publication of the monographs *Apología Turística de España* and *Nueva Apología Turística de España* by Rafael Calleja (Calleja 1943; Calleja 1957) was commissioned by the General Directorate of Tourism and was used for similar purposes. During the rising tensions of the Cold War, the United States found in Spain an anti-communist ally that could prove useful in the Western Bloc against the Soviet Union (Monleón 2004, 127–8; Calvo-González 2007). On this basis, tourist strategies, diplomatic relations, and American economic aid increased the international recognition of the country (Correyero Ruiz 2004, 76).

Upon the creation of the Ministry of Information and Tourism in 1951, the General Secretariat for Economic and Social Planning (Secretaría General para la Ordenación Económico-Social) made the first reluctant international steps. Advertisement, international tour operators, and renovation of tourism infrastructure increased international tourism especially in Mediterranean coasts (Costa del Sol, Costa Brava) and the Balearic Islands. This development that juxtaposed 'old world charm with modern accessibility, incidentally, was applied in a similar fashion to Greece' (Pack 2006, 71).

In this context, in 1952, the International Festival of Santander was organized in the homonymous Spanish city and replaced the university festivities that were celebrated the previous years. As more festivals began appearing in the Spanish periphery, the authorities unified them into a national institution, the *Festivales de España* that was organized for the first time in 1954 by the Ministry of Information and Tourism (Ministerio de Información y Turismo). Despite the growth in international tourism, these productions were primarily destined for national

consumption. Franco's dictatorship created this cultural project to reach the masses and provide an idea of unified cultural progress (Ferrer Cayón 2016, 167–269). To secure the controlled production of the festivals, the Ministry created the *Patronato de Información y Educación Popular* and its executive body, the *Junta Técnica* in November 1953 (*Official State Gazette* 58, 27 February 1954, 1093). The *Festivales de España* reproduced the nationalist orientation of the Francoist regime and sought to brighten up the Spanish summer with artistic performances in open-air venues (Monleón 1997). A considerable increase in spectacles around the country brought up the opportunity to reuse the best-preserved Roman theatres, such as the Roman theatre of Merida and Sagunto.

Even though the regime proclaimed the educational aims of the initiative (*Official State Gazette* 58, 27 February 1954, 1093), many peripheral festivals contained mediocre spectacles that were products of mechanisms of (self) censorship and institutional puritanism. In addition, the festivals followed Franco's populist agenda by engaging large numbers of spectators in the Spanish periphery and decentralizing cultural productions (*Ritmo* 353, Mayo 1965, 7).³⁴⁹ They also reaffirmed the status of the regime as an equal member in European modernity after a decade of sociopolitical embargo and isolation.³⁵⁰

However, the ephemeral character of the festivals, which lasted only a few days every year, did not have a lasting cultural effect in the Spanish countryside (Monleón 1964). Many venues remained without cultural and social context the rest of the year; thus, even though the relative success was guaranteed in most productions, locals considered them more as an opportunity for social encounter than an educational or pedagogical event (Monleón 1964; Monleón 2004, 127–8). Due to the growing popularity of the festivals, a Ministerial Order reorganized the institution in 1957 (*Official State Gazette* 168, 29 June 1957, 514–5). The description of the *Festivales de*

³⁴⁹ Although the general subdirector of popular culture, Enrique de la Hoz, claimed that the local management of the productions was the ultimate end, the centralized control conditioned big-scale initiatives at a local level (GAA, Box 52.20, 62279 (1966), Folder Badajoz, 'Festivales de España' 1966, Mérida).

³⁵⁰ According to the Cuban theatre director, Suárez Radillo, who lived in Madrid and collaborated with the cultural programme of the regime, from 1951 to 1963, a total of 315 festivals were organized, which produced 3000 events, in 34 Spanish provinces, engaging 12.000.000 spectators (1966, 116). However, only in 1963, 45 festivals celebrated 521 productions. In 1964, the festivals rose to 60, and in 1965 to 72.

España is revealing: ‘affordable for large masses of people, artistic and cultural manifestations that until now were aimed at tiny minorities’.³⁵¹

The organization of the festivals involved the participation of national and regional agents. Firstly, the ministry announced the annual National Plan of the *Festivales de España*.³⁵² Then, regional and local authorities had to apply for the production of any of the three categories of the Festival: international, national, or regional.³⁵³ Artistic companies that were interested in performing, submitted their formal requests to the Coordinating Board of the festivals (*Junta Coordinadora de Festivales*), which evaluated them according to the quality and artistic value of the proposals. Once the requests were admitted, a final plan was sent to the regional authorities to decide over the definite programme.

Although performances at the theatre of Mérida started taking place in 1953 and the first modern tourist facilities were constructed around the theatre to facilitate the public in 1956,³⁵⁴ they were included in the *Festivales de España* for the first time in 1963. Local authorities initially sponsored the performances ‘for the benefit of general culture and national knowledge of our great monuments’,³⁵⁵ because they considered the festival as the major tourist attraction of the city.³⁵⁶ To develop tourism infrastructure, the municipal Council also reconstructed the entrance to the theatre and amphitheatre.³⁵⁷ In addition, the construction of a new road network and a bridge that

³⁵¹ ‘Al alcance económico de grandes masas de población [...] manifestaciones artísticas y culturales que fueron hasta ahora de minorías reducidas’ (*Official State Gazette* 168, 29 June 1957, 514).

³⁵² GAA, Box 49.12, 44166 (1964), Folder Teatro Fomento-Badajoz, Mérida, Comisión de Programas 1, 9 November 1960; Suárez Radillo 1966, 116–7.

³⁵³ GAA, Box 49.12, 44266 (1954–1962), Folder Teatro Fomento, Badajoz, Mérida, Plan de Festivales Nacionales 1960–1962. Also, GAA, Box 49.12, 44147 (1965), Folder Teatro Fomento, Folder Badajoz, Mérida. An initial draft was first sent to the regional authorities before the National Plan (GAA, Box 49.12, 44166 (1964), Folder Teatro Fomento-Badajoz, Mérida, Citaciones Junta Coordinadora).

³⁵⁴ These installations were temporary and only remained at the theatre during the festivals (MHAM/LGM/BA/PG, Session 21 June 1955, 47v; Session 15 May 1956, 49v–50).

³⁵⁵ ‘en beneficio de la cultura general y del conocimiento en el ámbito nacional de nuestros grandes monumentos’ (MHAM/LGM/BA/PG, Session 26 April 1957, 82).

³⁵⁶ MHAM/LGM/BA/PG, Session 27 June 1957, 132.

³⁵⁷ MHAM/LGM/BA/PG, Session 3 January 1958, 1v–2.

crossed the river Guadiana indicated local authorities' concern about the tourist development of Merida.³⁵⁸

In 1963, the Festival of Merida was organized as an International Festival of the *Festivales de España* (See also section 4.6.3). At a regional level, the Provincial Deputation of Badajoz (through the General Sub-directorate of Popular Culture) was responsible for the formal communication with the central authorities. Also, the Merida city council prepared the archaeological site and usually was responsible for the logistics of the productions,³⁵⁹ while the National Commission had the overall supervision. The General Directorate of Fine Arts that depended on the Ministry of National Education decided on issues related to the safety and conservation of the monument. This institution intervened in the installation of the technical material (lights, sets etc.), and had the authority to cancel or postpone productions.³⁶⁰

4.6. Festival of Merida 1953–1964: ‘Grecia, Roma y Nosotros’³⁶¹

4.6.1. Post-War Revival of the theatre of Merida

University performances inaugurated the theatrical revival of the theatre of Merida in the 1950s. The first production was an initiative of the amateur company Teatro Popular Universitario (TPU)³⁶² that was financed by the National Delegation of Education and the Directorate of Fine Arts (Figure 14).³⁶³ The TPU reluctantly performed Seneca's *Phaedra* (*ABC Madrid* 11 November 1953, 19; *Pueblo* 11 November 1953; *Ateneo* 15 November 1953, 16; Sánchez Matas 1991, 87–104). Similarly, the company Teatro Español Universitario, which belonged to the Faculty of

³⁵⁸ MHAM/LGM/BA/PG, Session 3 January 1958, 1v–2; See also Muñoz de San Pedro 1967.

³⁵⁹ GAA, Box 52.20, 62279 (1966), Folder Badajoz, ‘Festivales de España’ 1966, Mérida; GAA, Box 52.20, 62279 (1966), Folder Badajoz, ‘Festivales de España’ 1966, Mérida.

³⁶⁰ For instance, it temporarily cancelled the Festival of Merida in 1966, after an inspection by the architects José Osuna and Fernando Esponera in June 1966 (GAA, Box 52.20, 62279 (1966), Folder Badajoz, ‘Festivales de España’ 1966 Mérida). The festival finally took place, even though the definite programme was issued in May (MHAM/LGM/BA/P, Session 12 May 1966, 50–1).

³⁶¹ ‘Greece, Rome and Us’ (*ABC Madrid* 2 April 1955, 4).

³⁶² It belonged to the *Departamento Nacional de Actividades Culturales* of the *Sindicato Español Universitario*.

³⁶³ MHAM/LGM/BA/PG, Session 5 November 1953, 60; 10 November 1953, 73v.

Philosophy and Letters of the University of Madrid, staged performances of ancient tragedy in 1955 (Aristophanes' *Clouds* and Seneca's *Medea*) and 1956 (Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*), but they received limited media attention (Figure 15).³⁶⁴ The same company also staged ancient drama in the Roman theatre of Sagunto in the 1950s. Directors and actors that participated in these productions also engaged with classical theatre in later festivals, such as José María Saussol, who directed another play in 1964, and the theatre critic Alfredo Marquerie, who later played an active role in the Festival of Malaga.

The national press often ignored these performances due to their amateur character, yet it described them as proof of the national interest for theatre (*ABC Madrid* 2 April 1955, 4; *Hoja del Lunes Madrid* 4 April 1955, 4). Performances such as the *Clouds* – the first time Aristophanes was staged in Merida and the last until 1977 – were highly acclaimed, despite their weaknesses (*ABC Madrid* 2 April 1955, 4). During these early years, the remoteness of Merida from large urban centres conditioned the development of the festivals. However, regional cultural expression systematically appropriated the theatre as the principal cultural landmark in Extremadura. Small-scale events such as the literary celebration of the journal *Olalla* in 1958 and the experiential contact of locals with the monument indicate its symbolic regional value (*La Vanguardia* 23 July 1963; Salguero Carvajal 2008). For intellectuals such as the local writer and journalist Pedro de Lorenzo, Merida and its Roman theatre portrayed the eternal qualities of the Spanish cultural identity (*Hoja del Lunes Barcelona* 18 May 1959, 2). De Lorenzo symbolically connected Merida's historical past (Roman, Lusitanian, universal)³⁶⁵ and theatrical revival with the emblematic figure of Ceres, the Roman statue found in the vicinities of the theatre during Macías' excavation (Mélida Alinari 1911).

From 1954 the organization of the Festival of Merida was principally undertaken by

³⁶⁴ *Medea* remained a symbolic play for the theatre of Merida, as its legacy transcended throughout the 20th-century theatrical revival with directors staging it in various versions.

³⁶⁵ Extremadura was the homeland of famous *conquistadores* who sailed for expeditions to the Americas in the 16th century.

Tamayo and Pemán,³⁶⁶ who produced the majority of performances of classical drama and became the most significant figures in determining the nature of the theatrical production. In addition, Sánchez-Castañer often contributed to the reworking of tragedies that were performed in the Roman theatre. Tamayo's uninterrupted participation in the festival until 1964 determined the staging of ancient drama in Spain. During the same period (until 1962), Tamayo was also director of the Teatro Español in Madrid and used it for rehearsals and for repeating the performances of Merida.



Figure 14. Photograph of a scene from Seneca's *Phaedra* staged by the Teatro Popular Universitario (1953). Roman Art National Museum (Archivo Fotográfico MNAR), 55-XIX-12.

³⁶⁶ Pemán diachronically advocated the ascension of the heir of the Bourbon's family, Juan, to the Spanish throne. However, although a devoted royalist, Pemán was one of the Spanish intellectuals who had actively supported a Spanish version of the Mussolinian regime in the past. See also Peña González 2013.

Under the dictatorship, Tamayo participated in the *Festivales de España* in productions at closed and open-air venues. In so doing, he managed to balance between his opportunist affinity to Franco's regime and the standardization of a conservative, realistic approach in the Spanish theatre (Kasten 2014). Tamayo also introduced many classical plays and European dramatists in Spain. In only a few years, he converted the Festival of Merida into one of the three most emblematic summer events of the dictatorship, along with the Festival of Santander and the Festival of Granada (Sánchez Matas 1991, 113–6).

His inclination to perform in peripheral festivals reflected his ultimate objectives. Since his first appearance in the Spanish theatre in the 1940s, Tamayo sought to become the cultural representative of the regime in the Spanish periphery and Spanish-speaking South America. Successive international tours displayed an image of a diplomatic guardian of the Spanish artistic production in the Americas, where he performed dramas of the Spanish Golden Age and Catholic auto sacramentales (Kasten 2016).³⁶⁷ This activity ensured the government's favourable stance towards his artistic production and consolidated his position in the theatrical stage (Kasten 2014). Tamayo's populist approach expanded theatrical activity into some of the most remote Spanish villages and reproduced a National Catholic perception of culture (Wulff Alonso 2003, 225–31). His performances fascinated the Spanish masses at the exterior of cathedrals (Granada, Burgos), historical squares (La Coruña, Sevilla), medieval or Moorish monuments (Alhambra in Granada, Alcazaba in Almeria and Cáceres), and ancient or modern open-air venues (Merida, Sagunto, Tarragona, Teatre Grec in Barcelona). Tamayo's alignment with the nationalist discourse of the regime also gave him opportunities for state funds and finance for his private company, *Compañía Lope de Vega*.

Tamayo's productions in the Festival of Merida included a variety of dramas. Ancient Greek and Roman plays, Shakespeare, Cervantes and Camus provided a classical repertoire that smoothly fitted the national idiosyncrasy. By employing Pemán's (and often Sanchez-Castañer's) reworkings in his spectacles, he reproduced the conservative politics of Franco's regime and aimed to fascinate the local and national population. Due to the lack of an ideological identification with classical antiquity in Spain, theatre directors were able to remove features of ancient drama that

³⁶⁷ For the opportunist character of Tamayo's trajectory in Spain and South America, see also Kasten 2017.

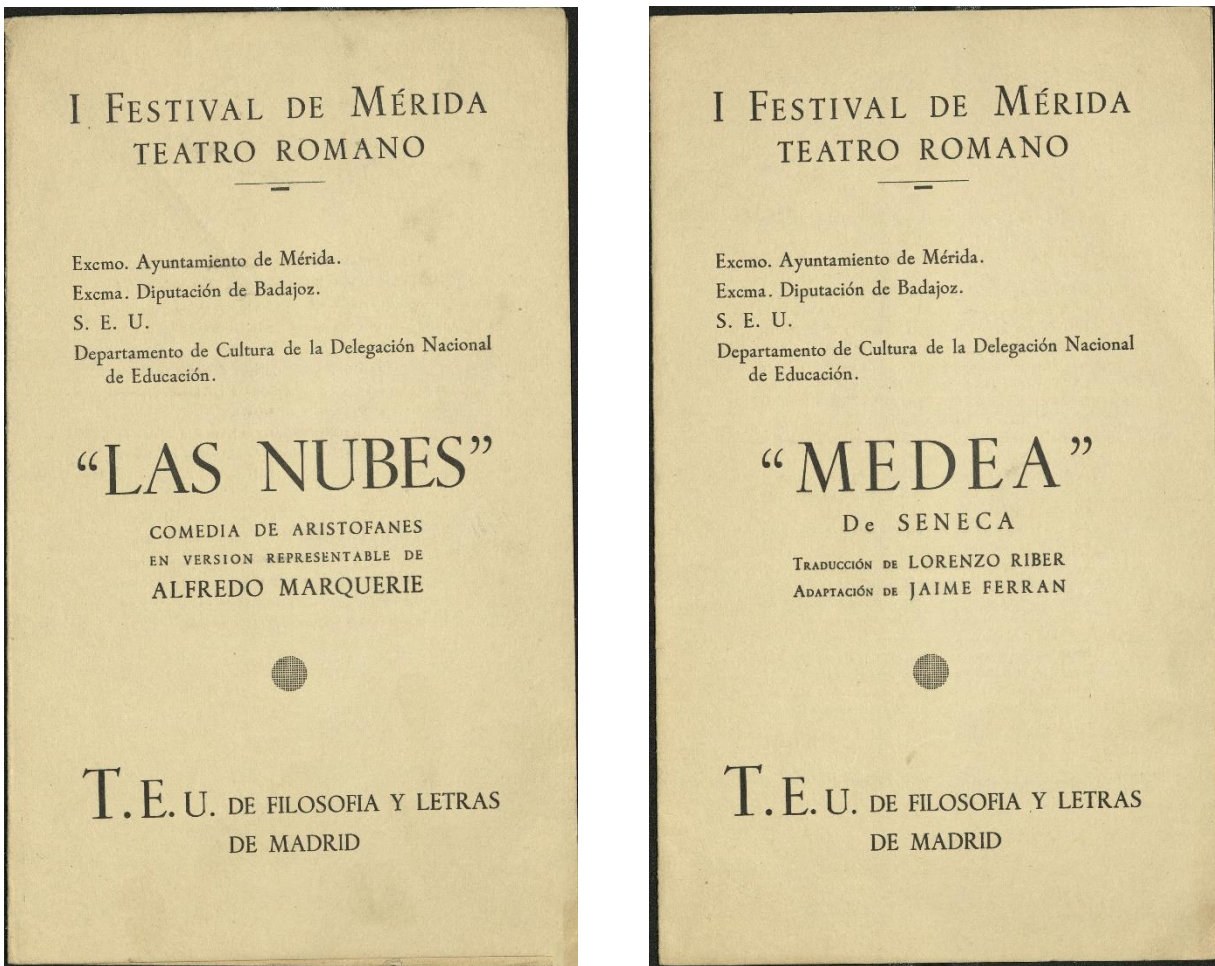


Figure 15. Covers of the playbills of *Clouds* and *Medea* at the theatre of Merida (1955), staged by the Teatro Español Universitario (TEU). Municipal Historical Archive of Merida.

did not fit modern theatre. This approach led to the creative reinterpretation of classical dramas that smoothly connected with the public, even though they were not considered as authentic representations of the past. What marked the authentic character of the classical performances in Spain was principally the monumentality of the Roman theatres of Merida and Sagunto (*La Hora* 28 January 1949, 13).

Pemán's and Tamayo's productions in Merida focused on themes of power, leadership, abuse of power, violence, and authority: *Oedipus Rex* (1954, 1960), *Julius Cesar* (1955, 1964), *Thyestes* (1956), *Othello* (1957), the *Oresteia* (1959, 1960), *The Siege of Numantia* (1961), *Caligula* (1963), and *Antigone* (1971) composed a repertoire that showcased the standardization and change of power. Besides, the question of power and authority had a central role in the cultural politics of Franco's dictatorship. Pemán's and Tamayo's work represented conservative spectacles

with large choruses, monumental and ritualistic nature that attracted the intellectual circles, local population, and tourists primarily from Spain and Portugal. The Christianization of the classical dramas in Merida coincided with the national Catholic dogma that the Spanish dictatorship had implemented. This approach transformed the universal principles of classical antiquity into a *lieu* of compassion and divine inspiration (Castillo 1942). Equally, monumental spectacles, vast stage sets by Sigfrido Burman, and hundreds of extras on the stage characterized Tamayo's performances that aimed to fill the large dimensions of the Roman theatre. The festivals attracted the media attention thanks to their popularity and Pemán's connection with the intellectual and political circles of the country. Reinhardt and other German directors of the time influenced Tamayo's perception of ancient space in such a way that monumental theatre became the central element in his performances (Tamayo 1961).

4.6.2. Tamayo's Reign (1954–1962)

In 1954, the Local Government of Merida invited Tamayo and his company to perform a classical drama at the Roman theatre for the first time (Monleón 1985, 123–6; Sánchez Matas 1991, 105–9). A prospect of a large-scale festival led the local authorities to seek regional and national support; hence, representatives of the Provincial Deputation of Badajoz collaborated with the general director of fine arts to launch a professional production at the venue.³⁶⁸ Tamayo had successfully staged Pemán's *Oedipus* – a creative reworking of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* – in various venues around the country the previous year.³⁶⁹ Incidentally, after a performance in Barcelona, Pemán had claimed that the play was 'from one side of the Mediterranean to the other [...] the essence of civilization and humanity'.³⁷⁰ Critics focused on the new elements Pemán introduced to the play, which were 'immersed in Christian faith'.³⁷¹ The monumental character of the Roman theatre of Merida corresponded to *Oedipus*. By introducing a series of partial revelations of truth, a multitudinous chorus of 150 characters, and a moralistic approach to the

³⁶⁸ DAPDB/BA, Session 29 March 1954, 41. The regional institution was particularly interested in the tourist aspect of the festival (DAPDB/BA, Session 9 June 1954, 81–2).

³⁶⁹ One of them took place in an open-air venue, at the square Maria Pita in A Coruña, in honour of Franco's wife (*La Vanguardia* 17 September 1954, 3). See also *ABC Madrid* 10 January 1954, 33.

³⁷⁰ 'de un extremo del Mediterráneo al otro extremo [...] un santo y seña en defensa de la civilización y de la humanidad' (*ABC Madrid* 12 March 1953, 32).

³⁷¹ 'empapado de fe cristiana' (*Solidaridad Nacional* 12 March 1953). See also *Dígame* 15 January 1954.

characters' sufferings, *Oedipus* exhibited Pemán's ascription of the Catholic faith to the classical heroes.³⁷² Although *Oedipus* was not initially produced for Merida, the performance at the Roman venue reinforced its authentic character (*Ideal* 6 June 1953, 3). The play also marked the pinnacle of Francisco Rabal's career, who rose to national stardom with his portrayal of Oedipus.³⁷³

As the vision of a celebration of an annual festival became a reality (*Ya* 11 June 1954), Tamayo returned to Merida in the summer season 1955 with Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, again in Pemán's adaptation (Figure 16). It was another monumental performance with more than 300 extras.³⁷⁴ A new feature singled out the spectacles in Merida and converted Tamayo's staging into a unique artistic phenomenon. *Julius Caesar* was performed both at the Roman theatre and amphitheatre.³⁷⁵ The first and second acts were staged at the theatre, while a spectacular horse invasion into the amphitheatre marked the beginning of the third act (*Informaciones* 14 June 1955, 8).³⁷⁶ In some scenes at the amphitheatre, actors also used part of its cavea. This spectacular approach emphasized the monumental character of the play, but many dialogues were inaudible in the crowd and the amphitheatre dwarfed the actors (*Informaciones* 21 June 1955; Sánchez Matas 1991, 112; Macintosh 1997, 301). Notwithstanding, the tourist character of the performances was making its first steady steps, and the public was principally comprised of locals, Spanish from around the country, and Portuguese spectators (*Informaciones* 21 June 1955). Merida was included in the cultural destinations of national tourist agencies, such as *Viajes Meliá*, that advertised tours to the city and tickets for the events (*Informaciones* 14 June 1955, 8).

The following year, Pemán adapted Seneca's *Thyestes* (Figure 17), which was again directed by Tamayo (*Hoja del Lunes Granada* 11 June 1956, 4; *Hoja del Lunes Madrid* 18 June 1956, 5). Seneca's Spanish origins justified the selection of the play, as he was, for the organizers,

³⁷² Unknown newspaper n.d. (retrieved from <http://hemerotecadigital.institutdelteatre.cat/handle/20.500.12268/68171>, 4).

³⁷³ Tamayo's ambition and determination brought together renowned actors, actresses, and musicians who further contributed to the fame of his company (Sánchez Matas 1991, 107).

³⁷⁴ Tamayo's monumental performances reminded Max Reinhardt's multitudinous staging in the first half of the 20th century (Macintosh 1997, 298–9).

³⁷⁵ The two monuments are located side by side. A brief audiovisual clip is available at: <https://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/revista-imagenes/teatro-clasico/2853843/>.

³⁷⁶ Spectators were relocated there during a break at the end of the second act (*Ya* 21 June 1955).

the ‘universal cordoban’ who glorified his homeland (see also section 1.4.1).³⁷⁷ Also, the attendance of local and regional authorities demonstrated the emerging cultural significance of the festival (*Hoja del Lunes Granada* 18 June 1956, 1). While the performance was acclaimed by most critics, the intellectual Gonzalo Torrente Ballester criticized its lack of connection with the Spanish ‘sensitivity’ (*Arriba* 6 October 1956, 15).

Shakespeare’s *Othello* was the only drama staged in the Roman theatre in 1957 (*ABC Madrid* 17 May 1957, 51).³⁷⁸ Surprisingly, the play was a version written by Nicolás González Ruiz³⁷⁹ (*ABC Madrid* 18 June 1957, 58), who adjusted it to the demands of the Spanish public and focused on the rhythmic movement and poetic speech (*ABC Madrid* 18 June 1957, 58). Tamayo staged more than 100 performances in the country that summer season, and a more extensive



Figure 16. Photograph of a scene from Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* by the Compañía Lope de Vega (1955). Roman Art National Museum (Archivo Fotográfico MNAR), 55-XIX-21.

³⁷⁷ ‘el cordobés universal’ (RTVE, <https://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/revista-imagenes/festivales-teatro/2870114/>). Photographic documentation can also be found at DLMG: http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/rabal/albumes_profesionales_tyestes/.

³⁷⁸ RTVE, <https://www.rtve.es/filmoteca/no-do/not-756/1487523/>.

³⁷⁹ Writer, journalist, and editorialist of the Catholic newspapers *El Debate* and *Ya*.

program in Merida was impossible (*Hoja del Lunes Madrid* 10 June 1957, 5). In addition, the ongoing construction of tourism facilities around the theatre by the Provincial Deputation impeded the performance of more spectacles.³⁸⁰

Even though *Othello* was within the scope of Tamayo's classical repertoire, the international success of the drama during the 1950s may have played a crucial role in its selection for the Festival of Merida. In particular, in 1956 and 1957, *Othello* enjoyed enormous commercial success in Italy, both in theatre and cinema with Vittorio Gassman in the main role. The Italian artistic accomplishment had undoubtedly reached the Spanish press and intellectual circles (*Blanco y Negro* 10 August 1957, 71). Although no evidence demonstrates direct influence, Tamayo could have considered Francisco Rabal's vigorous figure as Gassman's Spanish counterpart. Finally, the participation of the local population as extras contributed to the organic communication between the locals and classical heritage for one more year (Ruiz García 1958).

In 1958 we encounter Tamayo's first attempt to stage *Medea* at Merida, in a risky decision to use a translation of the antifranquist intellectual Alfonso Sastre.³⁸¹ However, due to Tamayo's illness, the play was not performed, and, although an alternative play was proposed, the Deputation of Badajoz decided to cancel the festival.³⁸²

Following the cancellation of the festival in 1958, the local and regional authorities worked for a spectacular return in the following season. Tamayo returned to Merida with Pemán's and Sanchez-Castañer's monumental adaptation of the *Oresteia*, in a colossal four-hour performance. The play was heavily promoted in the national press, and tourist agencies such as the famous *Iberotours* offered their services to national tourists (*ABC Madrid* 13 June 1959, 50).³⁸³ In this case, the adaptation was closer to the original text, but Tamayo's choice to preserve the conventions of Greek drama with an independent austere chorus and imposing percussion music did not convince the critics (*Ya* 17 July 1959, 7; *Solidaridad* 17 July 1959). The organizers claimed that they focused on the mystical transformation of the Erinyes and the spiritual transcendence of the vengeful city of Athens towards a civilized society (*ABC Madrid* 19 June 1959, 62–3). While

³⁸⁰ DAPDB/BA, Session 22 May 1957, 57.

³⁸¹ DAPDB/BA, Session 13 April 1958, 52; *La Vanguardia* 8 June 1958, 26.

³⁸² DAPDB/BA, Session 19 June 1958, 78 and 17 December 1958, 149.

³⁸³ For audiovisual documentation, see also RTVE, <https://www.rtve.es/filmoteca/no-do/not-860/1486353/>.

the first and second tragedies (*Agamemnon* and *Libation Bearers*) were staged at the Roman theatre, the third (*Eumenides*) was again transferred to the amphitheatre, where half of the cavea depicted Ares' hill, the site in which Orestes was judged (*ABC Madrid* 17 June 1959, 79).

The focus on the third play indicates another artistic reality of the post-war Spanish theatre. Orestes' moral conflict, sacred passion, judgement, and the final apotheotic pardon through the divine intervention of Athena neatly fit the plot of an auto sacramental (*El Correo Catalan* 17 July 1959). The organizers paid special attention to the moral and religious character of the tragedy so that the pagan crimes, vengeance, and fatal instincts of the first part could lead to justice and a final catharsis, a reproduction of the Catholic moralism in the regime's religious fixation (Kasten 2011). In addition, the chorus songs bore a close resemblance to Gregorian chants³⁸⁴ and reproduced their religious solemnity (*La Prensa* 16 July 1959; *Solidaridad* 17 July 1959). Given Tamayo's experience with auto sacramentales, such an endeavour perfectly fitted his theatrical style and the national Catholic character of the *Festivales de España*.



Figure 17. Photograph of a scene from Seneca's *Thyestes* by the Compañía Lope de Vega (1955). Municipal Historical Archive of Merida.

³⁸⁴ Gregorian chants were medieval sacred songs of the Roman Catholic Church chanted mainly in Latin.

Two issues demonstrated the international character of the production. The first was Pemán's speech; after expressing his gratitude to the organizers at the end of one of the performances, he momentarily assumed the role of spokesman of the regime by claiming that 'I expected that Aeschylus' words would reach Geneva as a message for peace and justice'.³⁸⁵ Pemán was referring to the Berlin Crisis and the conference of Geneva, Switzerland, in May 1959, where the Western allies failed to come to an agreement with the USSR over the fate of Berlin and Germany (Newman 2007, 101–22). Given the Spanish alignment with the American side and Pemán's good relations with the regime, his words did not lack political meaning.

The second issue involves the selection of the *Oresteia*. As we have seen, the play was performed by Rondiris in Greece during the same period (see section 4.4.2) and the Spanish press was eager to draw comparisons between the two performances (*Falange* 28 June 1959, 10). Sánchez-Castañer revealed in his interview at the newspaper *Informaciones* that a trip to Athens the previous year, where he attended a performance of the *Oresteia*, inspired him to write a Spanish version of Aeschylus' trilogy (*Informaciones* 26 November 1959). However, the *Oresteia* was not performed in 1958 nor any of the previous years in Greece.³⁸⁶ In any case, Sánchez-Castañer mentioned again his trip to Athens (that probably took place in 1954) and claimed that he attended performances at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, making it clear that he closely followed the theatrical tradition of Greece (*ABC Sevilla* 13 May 1962, 51). However, even though the two productions followed different approaches, specific elements such as the use of chorus and its participation in the action suggested Rondiris' influence. A third *Oresteia* staged in the theatre of Syracuse the same year (1960) indicated the underlying artistic interconnections between European international festivals. Gassman was appointed both the main actor and director of the play, translated into Italian by the prominent poet and novelist Pier Paolo Pasolini. In contrast to the Greek and Spanish *Oresteia*, Pasolini's poetic adaptation provoked a storm of protest among the most conservative critics, who condemned the unfaithful script (Treu 2016, 227). Pasolini's statement that Aeschylus' poetry was exclusively political reflected the conflict between irrational power and modern democratic forces in the sociocultural expression (Fusillo 2005).

³⁸⁵ 'esperaba que las palabras del viejo Esquilo llegaran a Ginebra, como un mensaje en pro de la paz y de la justicia', *ABC Madrid* 17 June 1959, 79.

³⁸⁶ The last time it was performed by the National Theatre was in 1954.

A large-scale performance interrupted Tamayo's monopoly at the theatre of Merida the same year (Sánchez Matas 1991, 120). It was the first appearance of Nuria Espert in the title role of Seneca's *Medea*, under the direction of Armando Moreno (*Hoja del Lunes Madrid* 14 September 1959, 5; *Imperio* 22 September 1959, 8; González Perlado 2005). The emblematic participation of the promising actress in Merida had a powerful impact on the symbolic self-determination of the site, bearing in mind Xirgu's legacy. From that moment onwards, Espert became a second diachronic Medea who revived Xirgu's inheritance in the Spanish stage. Although her triumph at the theatre in 1959 was a sporadic pause from her performances in Madrid (*La Vanguardia* 10 September 1959, 21), her legacy was inextricably tied with the site.

In 1960, the Festival of Merida repeated the *Oresteia* and *Oedipus* (Figure 18), but attendances declined significantly, and performances did not receive as much media attention as previous years (*La Vanguardia* 8 June 1960, 34; *ABC Madrid* 12 June 1960, 95–6). However, the *Oresteia* had successfully entertained the public at the Teatro Español during the winter season (*Hoja del Lunes Granada* 13 June 1960, 12). The plays were chosen after a project for the reorganization of the Festival failed earlier that year. In particular, in a literary meeting at the Teatro Español, Pemán suggested that they convert the Festival of Merida into a national spectacle by replacing the classical repertoire with Spanish Golden Age drama. Tamayo and the Deputation of Badajoz eagerly accepted this new project, which would 'revive and modernize the best plays of the Spanish classical theatre'.³⁸⁷

Pemán's project for the Festival of Merida was implemented the following year with Cervantes' *The Siege of Numantia*³⁸⁸ directed by Tamayo, while Spanish and Portuguese spectators, political authorities and intellectuals attended the performances (*ABC Sevilla* 18 June 1961, 69; *ABC Madrid* 20 June 1961, 37). To justify their selection, Pemán and Sánchez-Castañer defined the play as 'close to the origins of the Greek tragedies, spectacular, terrible'.³⁸⁹ Similarly, Tamayo presented a hybrid spectacle where ancient Greek tragedy and Iberian myths were fused into a single national performance (Compañía Lope de Vega 1961). In addition, later, Sanchez-

³⁸⁷ 'reavivar y traer a nueva actualidad los mejores títulos del teatro clásico español' (*ABC Madrid* 27 March 1960, 113).

³⁸⁸ It was adapted by Pemán and Sanchez-Castañer (*ABC Madrid* 15 June 1961, 83).

³⁸⁹ 'cercana en sus raíces a las tragedias griegas, espectacular, terrible' (Compañía Lope de Vega 1961).

Castañer attributed the decision to perform the tragedy to its success in Sagunto in 1948 (Sánchez-Castañer 1976, 13). The monumentality of the Roman venues provided the authentic character that converted the play into a national symbolism.³⁹⁰ The transition from the Roman theatre to the amphitheatre, the spectacular scenes,³⁹¹ the use of nearly 500 hundred extras, and the emphasis on the epic character of the play, engaged the public into a patriotic claim:

‘Everything is large here, from the scenery, the four hundred or five hundred people on stage, Romans, Numantians, named or anonymous; also, the lights, the fire, the catastrophes. The sky itself gives the impression of being a little enlarged’.³⁹²

As in 1948, Pemán’s version was a ceremony of martyrdom and patriotism, which emanated the national trust in the ‘dawn of a race’ (‘aurora de una raza’, *Arriba* 20 June 1961). In addition, the symbolic presence of Carmen Franco (Marquesa de Villaverde), daughter of the dictator Franco, in one of the performances converted the performance into a politicized event (*ABC Madrid* 18 June 1961, 113; *ABC Sevilla* 18 June 1961, 69).

4.6.3. Festival of Merida and international relations (1962–1964)

The diplomatic relations between Greece and Spain were entangled in 1962 when the Royal wedding of the Spanish prince Juan Carlos and the Greek princess Sophia (later Sofía) became a media spectacle.³⁹³ Never before did the press and high society of the two countries come closer. The newspaper *ABC* extensively covered the wedding in Athens and decided to engage the Spanish readers with the Greek culture to honour the new princess. In particular, it published a special issue

³⁹⁰ In an attempt to exhibit the authentic character of the production, in 1956, the tragedy was also staged in an open-air venue, next to the church of Santa María in the town Alcalá de Henares, where Cervantes was born (*ABC Madrid* 9 October 1956 35 and 37).

³⁹¹ In a breathtaking scene, the actor who incarnated the national hero, Viriato, performed an impressive jump from a tall tower, presumably sacrificing himself in front of the inevitable defeat (RTVE, <https://www.rtve.es/filmoteca/nota/not-964/1470338/>).

³⁹² ‘todo es grande aquí, desde los escenarios a las cuatrocientas o quinientas personas metidas en la escena, romanos y numantinos, nominados y anónimos; así como las luces, los fuegos, las catástrofes. El mismo cielo da la impresión de haberse agrandado un poco’ (*Arriba* 18 June 1961).

³⁹³ Juan Carlos was the son of Infante Juan, pretender to the Spanish throne and heir of king Alfonso XIII, while Sophia was the daughter of the then king of Greece, Paul and Queen of Greece Frederica.

containing ‘the glories of that marvelous archipelago, the cradle of the arts, letters and sciences that have laid the foundations of Western civilization’.³⁹⁴

The issue looked into the classical and Byzantine civilization, Greek myths, and their contemporary influences. Among the articles were Pemán’s and Sanchez-Castañer’s, who exemplified the Spanish perception of classical heritage. Pemán redacted a guide for a cultural trip



Figure 18. Cover of the playbill of *Oresteia* and *Oedipus* in the Festival of Merida, staged by the Compañía Lope de Vega (1960). Municipal Historical Archive of Merida.

³⁹⁴ ‘las glorias de aquel maravilloso archipiélago, cuna de las artes, de las letras y de las ciencias que han cimentado la civilización occidental’ (*ABC Madrid* 9 May 1962, 53).

to Greece, where he defined the Acropolis hill as the ultimate conception of harmony, rhythm, and universal value. The article also illustrated his steadfast claim for the restoration of the monarchy in Spain, as he claimed that ‘one should go to Greece with classical intransigence: order, reason, unity, monarchy, law, freedom’.³⁹⁵ Sánchez-Castañer chose to provide, for the first time in post-war Spain, a holistic view on the revival of classical drama (*ABC Sevilla* 13 May 1962, 53). He extolled the famous festivals at Merida, Sagunto, Italica, and the modern theatres of Montjuic and Teatro Español. This overview of the post-war Spanish theatre as part of an international tradition was perhaps the first attempt of Franco’s Spain to reconnect with the European tradition.

This international ambition was standardized in the following year when Tamayo staged Camus’ *Caligula* (*ABC Madrid* 13 June 1963, 82; *El Alcazar* 27 June 1963). He followed a more austere approach than the monumental performances of the previous years and was widely acclaimed by critics and the public (*ABC Madrid* 21 June 1963, 65–6).³⁹⁶ The Roman context of the play offered the appropriate authentic character, while Tamayo’s moralist approach corresponded to his adhesion to the Spanish Catholic regime (*Arriba* 3 October 1963). However, even though *Caligula* continued Tamayo’s theatrical tradition in Merida, where he regularly displayed questions of power and political authority, his innovation consisted in successfully introducing a play written by a controversial author to the Spanish public, despite Franco’s mechanisms of censorship.

Similarly, in 1963, we encounter the first Greek company at the Festival of Merida, which became the first foreign group performing at the Roman theatre. In particular, Rondiris’ Piraikon Theatron performed *Medea* and *Electra* in four performances in Merida before re-staging them in Madrid (*Eleutheria* 17 May 1963, 2).³⁹⁷ *Blanco y Negro* enthusiastically claimed that it was the most significant event of the year and exalted the cast and magnificent coherence of the performance (*Blanco y Negro* 1 June 1963, 66–8). What surprised the spectators was the emotive scenes, passionate chorus, and austere acting, an approach that contrasted starkly with Tamayo’s

³⁹⁵ ‘hay que ir [A Grecia] con intransigencias clásicas: orden, razón, unidad, monarquía, derecho, libertad’ (*ABC Madrid* 13 May 1962, 3).

³⁹⁶ For audiovisual documentation, see RTVE, <https://www.rtve.es/filmoteca/no-do/not-1069/1469167/>.

³⁹⁷ *Medea* was recorded and the audio is available at the CDAEM, <http://teatro.es/estrenos-teatro/medea-8998/documentos-en-sede/audios>.

monumental staging (*ABC Sevilla* 18 May 1963, 63–4; *Hoja del Lunes Madrid* 27 May 1963, 5). Critics noted the chorus' subtle yet dynamic role in the play (*La Vanguardia* 22 May 1963, 6), and considered the Greek origin of the company as an element of authenticity and artistic authority (*La Vanguardia* 17 May 1963, 9; *ABC Sevilla* 18 May 1963, 63). The Greek press that followed Rondiris' tour also rigorously covered Merida's spectacles (*Eleutheria* 14 May 1963, 2), yet most Greek intellectuals of the time largely ignored the Festival of Merida.³⁹⁸

The official reception of the Greek company in Merida was celebrated with a welcome event organized by the national authorities. In particular, they exalted the dedication of the Greek state to the authentic revival of classical tradition (Fraga Iribarne 1963, 3–6; Ferrer Cayón 2016, 79). However, Rondiris was so disappointed by the organization and facilities in Merida that he threatened to cancel the performance unless the organizers completed the necessary works.³⁹⁹ In contrast, the enthusiastic public reception moved Rondiris, who stated: 'The reactions of the public were incredible. This is the first time we have encountered such extraordinary attitudes' (Figure 19).⁴⁰⁰ The thank-you letter that Joaquin Araujo Dualde from the Ministry of Information and Tourism dispatched to Rondiris after the performances confirmed the great success (Figure 20).⁴⁰¹

Rondiris' international tour was organized by the successful impresario Theodoros Kritas, who claimed that:

'With these performances [...] he [Rondiris] will have achieved something unprecedented, a feat within the "line" and purposes of intellectual and educational communication among the European peoples, which has never been overcome by

³⁹⁸ The Greek magazine *Thespis* mentions Rondiris' performances in Greece, Italy, France, Yugoslavia, USSR, Finland, Portugal and Bulgaria but ignores the Spanish productions (Anonymous 1966). In Italy, Rondiris stayed a lot more, performing in various ancient theatres from 1960 onwards (*Tachydromos* 20 July 1962, 1; *Eleutheria* 16 February 1963, 2; *Eleutheria* 30 May 1963, 2).

³⁹⁹ DRA/MLP, Letters, Correspondences 1963, Letter from Rondiris to Vana Rondiri Tsoukala, 16 May 1963.

⁴⁰⁰ 'Οἱ ἀντιδράσεις τοῦ κοινοῦ ἀπίθανες. Πρώτη φορά βρεθήκαμε ἐ τέτοιες περίεργες ἐκδηλώσεις' (DRA/MLP, Letters, Correspondences 1963, Letter from Rondiris to Vana Rondiri Tsoukala, 16 May 1963).

⁴⁰¹ DRA/MLP, Letters, Correspondences 1963, Letter from Joaquin Araujo Dualde to Rondiris, 3 June 1963.

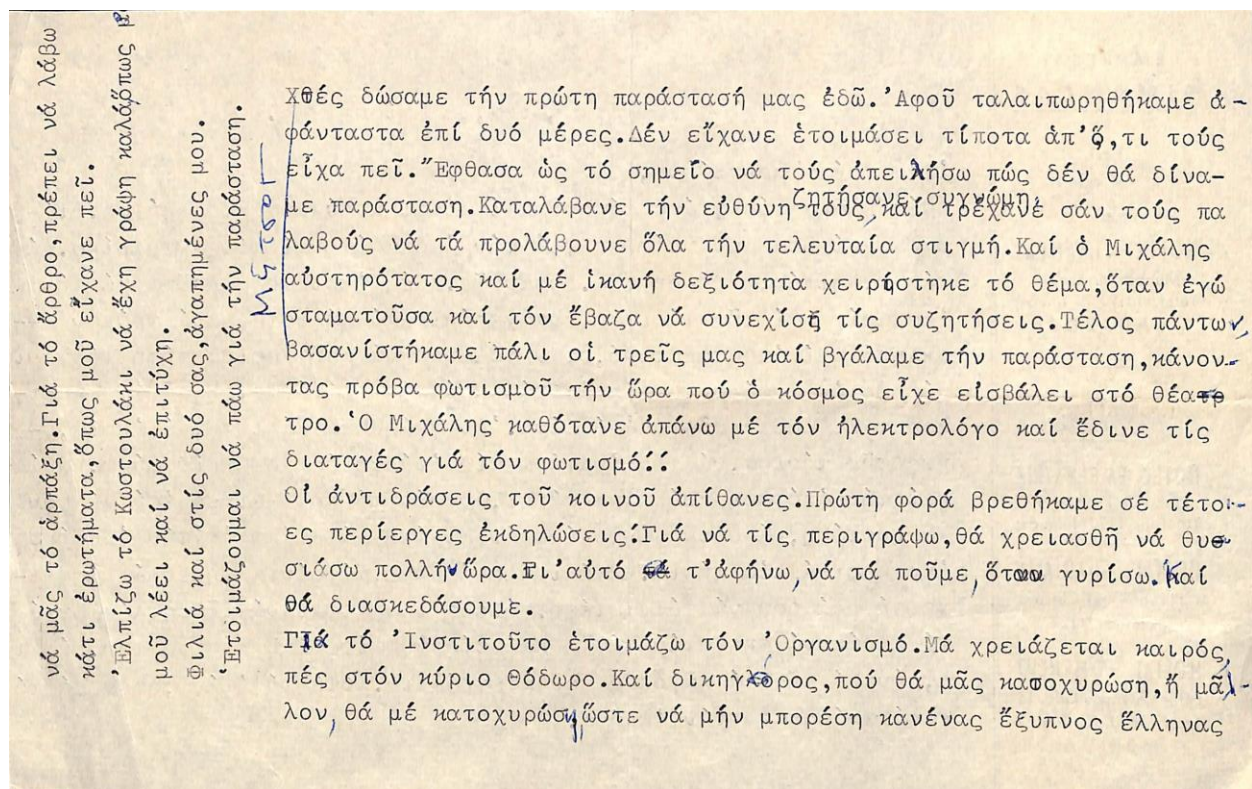
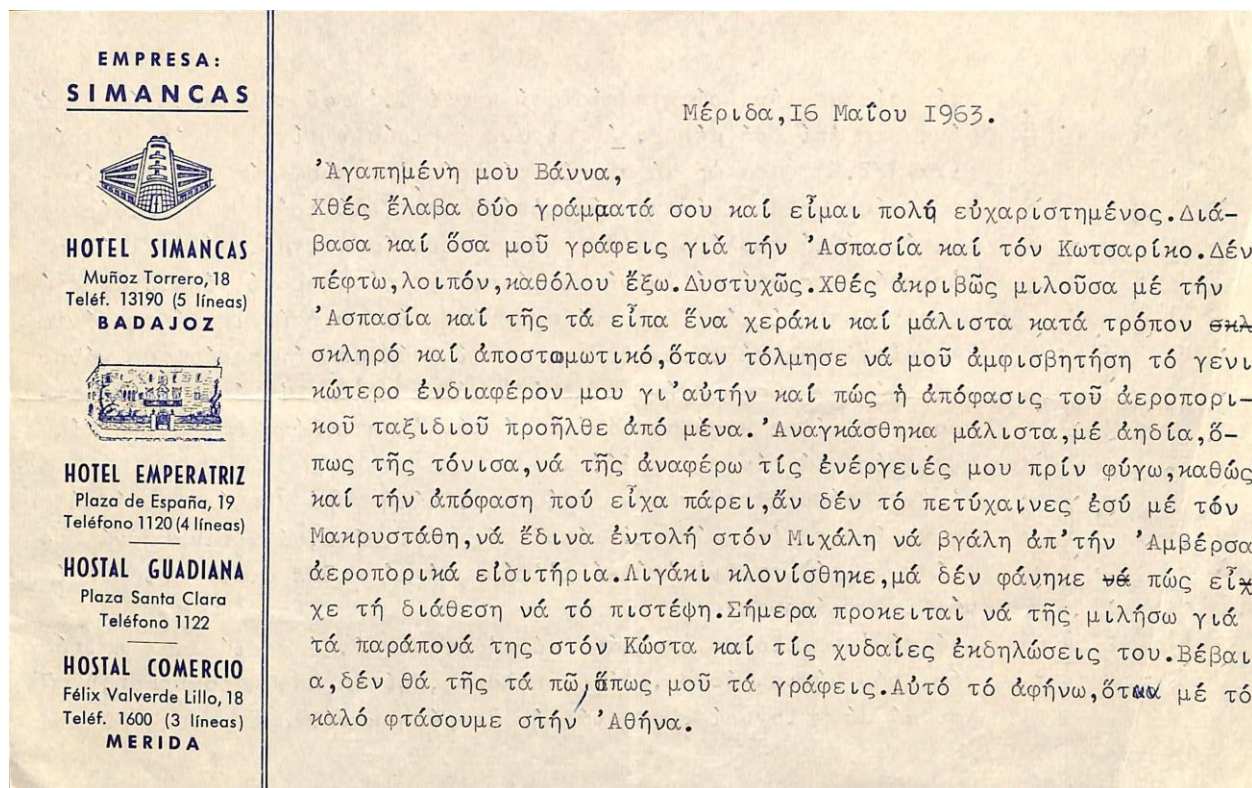


Figure 19. Letter sent by Dimitris Rondiris to his wife, Vanna Rondiri, from Merida, expressing his disappointment about the organization and facilities. Dimitris Rondiris Archive, Municipality of Piraeus.

anyone, nor is it something easy to overcome in the future'.⁴⁰²

Despite the international success, Rondiris was met with disapproval in Greece. The exportation of tragedy as a national good in collaboration with a professional impresario provoked criticism for avarice and commercial opportunism (*Nitsos* 1966, 99–100). The international tour was part of an ambitious project that Rondiris initiated after he departed from the National Theatre. His vision was to create a European Institute of Ancient Drama that would depend on the Central European Cultural Foundation.⁴⁰³ The Institute would collaborate with Greek and European intellectuals, such as Prince Peter, who had accepted Rondiris' invitation.⁴⁰⁴ However, soon after the initial operations, the project was abandoned.

The President of the *Festivales de España*, Pio Cabanillas Gallas, wished to see Rondiris return to Spain for another performance the following year, and formally invited him in December 1963.⁴⁰⁵ Even though Kritas had planned to participate in the Festival of Merida with *Hippolytus*,⁴⁰⁶ the busy programme of the company in Italy permitted Rondiris to perform *Medea* only at the El Retiro (*Pueblo* 25 August 1964) and the Teatre Grec (*Noticiero Universal* 17 August 1964, 2; *El Correo Catalan* 18 August 1964, 22).

The National Theatre of London was also invited to the Festival of Merida⁴⁰⁷ to commemorate Shakespeare's 400th anniversary in Spain in 1964.⁴⁰⁸ However, after its official decline, the anniversary of Shakespeare was finally celebrated with a performance of *Julius Caesar*

⁴⁰² 'Μέ τίς παραστάσεις αὐτές [...] [Ὁ Ροντήρης] θά ἔχη ἐπιτύχη κάτι τό πρωτοφανές, ἕνα κατόρθωμα ἐντός τῆς "γραμμῆς" καί τῶν σκοπῶν τῆς πνευματικῆς καί μορφωτικῆς ἐπικοινωνίας μεταξύ τῶν Εὐρωπαϊκῶν Λαῶν, ἡ ὁποῖα οὔτε ξεπεράσθηκε ποτέ ἀπό κανένα, ἀλλά οὔτε εἶναι κάτι εὐκολο γιά νά ξεπερασθῇ εἰς τό μέλλον' (DRA/MLP, Letters, Correspondences 1963, Letter from Theodoros Kritas to Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark, 30 April 1963). Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark, anthropologist, frequenter at the Festival of Epidaurus and supporter of the theatrical matters in Greece (*I Vradyni* 7 August 1961, 7).

⁴⁰³ DRA/MLP, Letters, Correspondences 1963, Letter from Theodoros Kritas to George Thompson, 15 July 1963.

⁴⁰⁴ DRA/MLP, Letters, Correspondences 1963, Letter from Theodoros Kritas to Polys Modinos, 8 July 1963.

⁴⁰⁵ DRA/MLP, Letters, Correspondences 1963, Letter from Pio Cabanillas Gallas to Rondiris, 1 December 1963.

⁴⁰⁶ DRA/MLP, Letters, Correspondences 1964, Letter from Theodoros Kritas to anonymous, 20 April 1964.

⁴⁰⁷ GAA, Box 49.12, 44136 (1964), Folder Teatro Fomento-Badajoz, Badajoz.

⁴⁰⁸ GAA, Box 49.12, 44136 (1964), Folder Teatro Fomento-Badajoz, Badajoz; DAPDB/BA, Session 15 April 1964, 29vt.

JA/SC



Ministerio de Información y Turismo
Subdirección General de Cultura Popular
Sección de Campañas y Festivales
Programación

Madrid, 3 -6-63

Mr. Dimitrios Rondiris
3, Menippis St.
Glypada - Athens (Grecia)

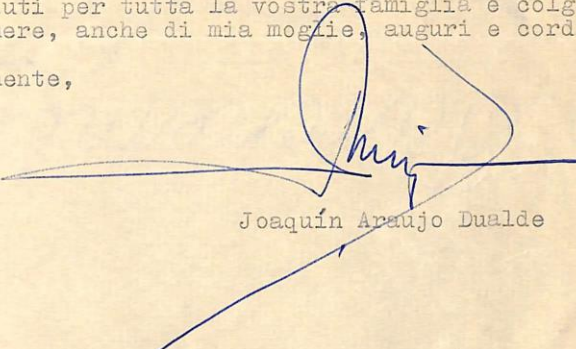
Eg. Sig.:

Non avendo avuto la fortuna di ritrovarLa a Merida nei giorni delle recite del "Pirakon Theatron", perche il mio lavoro mi riteneva altrove, oggi La scrivo per farLa arrivare la fotographia ricordo della nostra gita di preparazione.

I miei piu cordiali auguri per il successo di queste recite, e aspetto vi avremmo per l'anno venturo altra volta tra noi.

Cari saluti per tutta la vostra famiglia e colgo l'occasione per esprimere, anche di mia moglie, auguri e cordialita.

Sinceramente,



Joaquín Araujo Dualde

Figure 20. Letter sent by the General Sub-director of Popular Culture of Ministry of Information and Tourism, Joaquín Araujo Dualde, to Dimitris Rondiris thanking him for the performance in Merida and inviting him to return in the following season (1963). Dimitris Rondiris Archive, Municipality of Piraeus.

directed by Tamayo (*Hoja del Lunes Madrid* 15 June 1964, 2). The selection of the play corresponded to the Roman character of the theatre (*ABC Sevilla* 12 June 1964, 60) and the Spanish version was written by Pemán in clear prose, exclusively for the celebration of the English author. The translation of *Julius Caesar* in 1964 contrasted with Pemán's poetic reworkings and was more easily comprehended by the public (*ABC Madrid* 17 June 1964, 93; *La Vanguardia* 18 June, 12). In particular, Pemán reinterpreted the psychological aspect of human nature (*ABC Sevilla* 12 June 1964, 60; *Diario de Burgos* 14 June 1964, 15); yet the historical reality of the period made many spectators contemplate the political message of the performance. Although Pemán denied that his translation of *Julius Caesar* was a statement about modern Spanish politics,⁴⁰⁹ his monarchical conviction had already distanced him – at least intellectually – from Franco's regime. In any case, his diplomatic agility secured him high-rank positions until the end of the dictatorship (*ABC Madrid* 17 June 1964, 93).

In that year, the festival changed its official name to *Teatro Clásico Universal*.⁴¹⁰ In addition, the General Sub-directorate of Popular Culture demanded that the performances of the *Festivales de España* commemorate the national celebration of the 'XXV AÑOS DE PAZ ESPAÑOLA' (25 YEARS OF SPANISH PEACE),⁴¹¹ as a tribute for the establishment of Franco's regime. The authorities also requested that every festival commenced by projecting the propagandistic movie *Sinfonía Española* directed by Samuel Bronston.⁴¹²

4.7. Classical revival in the countryside

4.7.1. Performing in peripheral theatres

While the major festivals of classical drama consolidated their position as national spectacles in the 1950s, peripheral authorities discovered an opportunity to attract tourism and produce cultural

⁴⁰⁹ He graphically claimed that 'My work only reproduces what Shakespeare created' ('Mi obra no quiere más que reproducir lo que hizo Shakespeare', *Diario de Burgos* 14 June 1964, 15).

⁴¹⁰ GAA, Box 49.12, 44166 (1964), folder Teatro Fomento-Badajoz, Mérida, Citaciones Junta Coordinadora.

⁴¹¹ In a letter sent to the Delegado Provincial en Badajoz (GAA, Box 49.12, 44136 (1964), Teatro Fomento-Badajoz, Ministerio de Información y Turismo, Subfolder Mérida).

⁴¹² GAA, Box 49.12, 44136 (1964), folder Teatro Fomento-Badajoz, Subfolder Mérida.

spectacles at their classical venues by inviting renowned companies to perform. Similarly, smaller theatrical companies considered these venues suitable for their productions and systematically attempted to reuse them. This sociocultural development corresponded to the *festivalization* of culture and increase in leisure time in Europe.

In Spain, the discovery of the Roman theatre of Malaga in 1951 and the restoration of the theatre of Sagunto permitted a regional production of classical drama that challenged the famous Festival of Merida. Classical drama was also performed in Tarragona and the archaeological site of Empúries. The Roman heritage of Tarragona offered the ideal scenery for authentic performances even though no ancient theatre was unearthed. In particular, the Camp de Mart was periodically used for theatre performances,⁴¹³ such as *The Trojan Women* in 1955 (*ABC Sevilla* 20 August 1955, 25), and the *Oresteia* and *Julius Caesar* in 1960 (*La Vanguardia* 7 August 1960, 24; *La Vanguardia* 13 August 1960, 24), while Empúries epitomized the symbolic argument of the Mediterranean Games of Barcelona in 1955. In the opening ceremony, a copy of a classical amphora was filled with water in the sea of Empúries, next to the archaeological site, before it was carried and poured to a large fountain at the Montjuïc Stadium in Barcelona (now Olympic Stadium Lluís Companys).⁴¹⁴ The event inspired the local authorities to reuse the monuments of Empúries as a theatrical venue for ancient drama performances some years later (*La Vanguardia* 10 July 1959, 9).

In the Greek case, the existence of more classical theatres that could host performances created greater opportunities for an extensive theatrical tradition, even though many of them were not appropriately restored. The GNTTO usually collaborated with companies, local authorities, or tourist agents on the production of such performances because ‘the organization of artistic events in the Greek countryside is an important factor in increasing [...] tourist traffic’.⁴¹⁵ Although after the intervention of the Archaeological Council performances at certain theatres were prohibited,

⁴¹³ The Camp de Mart is an archaeological site in Tarragona that contains Roman walls, an 18th-century fortification, and a neo-antique theatre, where the Festival of Tarragona took place.

⁴¹⁴ For audiovisual documentation, see RTVE, <https://www.rtve.es/filmoteca/no-do/not-655/1479255/>.

⁴¹⁵ ‘ὀργάνωσις καλλιτεχνικῶν ἐκδηλώσεων εἰς τὴν Ἑλληνικὴν ἐπαρχίαν ἀποτελεῖ σημαντικὸν συντελεστὴν διὰ τὴν αὖξησιν τῆς [...] τουριστικῆς κινήσεως’ (DAHAAR, Box 605 E Folder D (1955), Subfolder 3/7).

theatrical fervour indicated that ancient material culture was a unique opportunity to develop modern tourism in the countryside.

This development broadened the process of *festivalization* of culture and reconfirmed the post-war tourism image that Greece pursued. In particular, it was the companies of Karzis and Kostis Leivadeas that extensively performed at peripheral theatres (Spiliopoulos 1962). For example, Karzis staged ancient drama in 1962 and 1963 at the ancient Greek theatres of Messini and Nikopoli, two monuments that were not yet adequately adapted for modern spectacles (*Periigitiki* September 1962, 46–7; *Periigitiki* October 1963, 25). Similarly, the company Omilos Archaïas Tragodias (Ομίλος Αρχαίας Τραγωδίας, Ancient Tragedy Company) that belonged to director Kostis Leivadeas created a brief yet significant tradition. Leivadeas contacted local authorities from around Greece and requested to perform at multiple ancient theatres,⁴¹⁶ such as in Megalopolis,⁴¹⁷ Gytheio, Eretria,⁴¹⁸ the theatre of Zea in Piraeus, and the archaeological site of Eleusis.⁴¹⁹ Eventually, he put on performances at the ancient theatres of Delphi, Argos, Sicyon, and Rhodes⁴²⁰ (Dermatis and Manthos 2010, 119). Although he abandoned this endeavour shortly after, he proved that the expansion of ancient drama productions in the Greek periphery was possible.

Only two years after the revival of the theatre of Epidauros in 1954, the Touring Club of Lavrion and the Lavreotiki city council revived the local ancient theatre of Thorikos with a performance of *Orestes*. The play was staged in July 1956 by Leivadeas, who inaugurated the modern use of the theatre (Dermatis and Manthos 2010, 119). About 2.000 spectators attended the play, most of whom were locals from the surrounding villages. After the performance, the local

⁴¹⁶ DAHAAR, Box 605 E Folder D (1955), Subfolder 3/7.

⁴¹⁷ The local society of Megalopolis organized performances in 1955 and 1956 and donated the earnings from tickets to the Archaeological Directorate of the Ministry of Education for the restoration of the monument (DAHAAR, BOX 598 A, Folder C, Subfolder 3/6). For the events in Megalopolis, see also *I Vradyni* 15 May 1956 and *Nea tis Megalopoleos* 16 June 1956.

⁴¹⁸ DAHAAR, Box 598 A, Folder C, Subfolder 3/6; DANAM Box 598 A, Folder C, Subfolder 3/10.

⁴¹⁹ DAHAAR, Box 598 A, Folder C, Subfolder 3/12.

⁴²⁰ At the classical theatre of the island of Rhodes, Leivadeas performed *The Persians* to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Dodecanese independence (*Eleutheria* 15 July 1958, 2).

Touring Club issued a project for tourist development and protection of the site,⁴²¹ which contained an excursionist tour to Sounion and performances at the theatre. This project would benefit both locals and tourists, as it would protect the theatre against spoliation and would produce periodic artistic spectacles.⁴²² Sporadic performances were also organized the following years and regularly claimed the need for restoration of the monument, which was assigned to the Belgian School at Athens in 1963 (Dermatis and Manthos 2010, 121). Local authorities used the performances to reclaim the cultural value of the monument that could become an international landmark and permanent theatrical venue. However, the transportation of modern equipment and public access to the theatre was problematic due to the lack of appropriate road network; thus, local infrastructure limited tourist development in the area (*Periigiti*, June 1959, 15).

In addition to the local character of these revivals, regional authorities systematically invited the National Theatre and other renowned companies to perform at ancient venues. The Municipal authorities and intellectual circles in Patras, for instance, envisioned the possibilities for periodic spectacles at the Odeon of Patras and pursued its conservation, restoration, and reuse (Vasileiou 1961). However, the National Theatre had to repeatedly reject the invitations to perform there,⁴²³ due to its heavy schedule in Epidauros and Athens.⁴²⁴

Similarly, the National Theatre had to decline the invitations from tourist societies in Macedonia and Northern Greece, such as the theatres of Thassos and Philippi.⁴²⁵ To resolve the increased demand for spectacles in the area, in 1961, the Greek government (principally Karamanlis and Tsatsos, along with Theotokas) founded the National Theatre of Northern Greece with Sokratis Karantinos as general director. The decision to create an institution in Northern Greece corresponded to the process of nationalization of the area through an ethnogenetic mechanism.⁴²⁶ The fact that the National Theatre of Northern Greece was under the supervision of

⁴²¹ DAHAAR, Box 598 A, Folder C, Subfolder 3/16.

⁴²² DAHAAR, Box 598 A, Folder C, Subfolder 3/16.

⁴²³ ANTG/BAAC, Session 24 July 1962, 9; Session 5 March 1963, 3; Session 28 May 1963, 9; Session 30 October 1964, 3; Session 12 April 1967, 2.

⁴²⁴ ANTG/BAAC, Session 31 March 1960, 1–2; Session 26 April 1960, 85–6 (2–3).

⁴²⁵ ANTG/BAAC, Session 17 March 1959, 1–2; Session 30 June 1959, 3.

⁴²⁶ Kotsakis defines this ethnogenetic mechanism as a national project that integrated these territories (especially Macedonia and Thrace) into the cultural framework of classical Greece (1998).

the Minister of Northern Greece indicates the powerful ideological connection with the national narrative, which attempted to culturally unify the Greek territories. In addition, such an endeavour attempted to create another nucleus of national culture with the participation of renowned intellectuals.⁴²⁷

The same year, performances at the ancient theatres of Philippi and Thassos inaugurated the Festival of Philippi and Thassos, which integrated the National Theatre of Northern Greece into classical culture. As a fierce electoral period had just begun and would culminate in the notorious national election of 1961, Tsatsos presided over the spectacles and determined their national character. He made a grandiloquent speech that alluded to the national significance of the revival of ancient drama, the territorial value of Northern Greece, and the governmental patronage of classical tradition.⁴²⁸ From that year onwards, the annual Festival of Philippi and Thassos represented a national performance of ancient drama that escaped the strict classicism of the National Theatre and adopted a more stylish, music-oriented approach.⁴²⁹

While many of these events reproduced a national expression of culture, others did not manage to create a theatrical tradition. Three particular cases in Greece and Spain created an influential cultural identity that dominated the regional artistic production during the period and powerfully engaged local populations. In particular, the Roman theatre of Malaga, the Roman theatre of Sagunto and the ancient Greek theatre of Dodona created unique traditions that shaped the cultural life of their communities and balanced between national and regional identification. These case studies indicate that *festivalization* was successful in producing lasting effects on local communities.

4.7.2. The discovery and revival of the Roman theatre of Malaga (1951–1974)

The local authorities of Malaga officially discovered the Roman theatre of the city in 1951, during the construction of gardens outside the newly built Municipal Cultural Centre (*Casa de la Cultura*) (Casamar Pérez 1963). According to the official report, the authorities had previously failed to

⁴²⁷ AKT/ASCSA, Section III, Folder 63.1, 16.1–19, <https://www.ascsa.edu.gr/archives/cit-box-63-f-1>.

⁴²⁸ Archive of Konstantinos Tsatsos, ASCSA, Section III, Folder 57.5, 35–7, <https://www.ascsa.edu.gr/archives/cit-box-57-f-5>; *Acropolis* 8 August 1961; *Acropolis* 20 August 1961.

⁴²⁹ AKT/ASCSA, Section III, Folder 63.1, <https://www.ascsa.edu.gr/archives/cit-box-63-f-1> 18.1–18.8. See also *Periigitiki* August 1962, 16–7; Antonakatou 1962; Kontodimos 1963; Anonymous 1964.

recognize the findings as the Roman theatre.⁴³⁰ The news of the discovery spread around Spain, causing great excitement (*Diario Sur* 2 September 1951; *La Provincia* 12 September 1951, 6). Besides, following the revival of the theatre of Merida in 1953, local intellectuals advocated the reconstruction and consolidation of the theatre, intending to reuse it (*La Tarde* 31 January 1954; *Hoja del Lunes Malaga* 25 November 1957; García de Dueñas 2004, 165–6 and 463).

Its revival as a theatrical venue soon began to be discussed in the local press (*Diario Sur* 22 February 1958; *Diario Sur* 10 October 1958), at a time when theatrical companies in Malaga represented an amateur community that put on sporadic performances. In these terms, the prospect of an annual festival was an enticing opportunity for a local theatrical tradition (García de Dueñas 2004, 240–3). Three successive projects, financed by the Malaga city council, unearthed part of the cavea (Óscar Romero 2001, 98), and partial interventions took place near the theatre until 1962. Expressing his enthusiasm in front of the tourist and cultural possibilities that the monument offered, the Mayor celebrated that

‘everyone knows about the excavations at Alcazabilla and Alcazaba streets, due to the discovery of the Roman Theater, as well as the growing importance of these works, whose successful completion would place our City among the most interesting archaeological sites in the Country’.⁴³¹

The first play staged in the theatre was Aristophanes’ *Clouds* in July 1959 (*Ideal* 21 July 1959; *ABC Madrid* 25 July 1959, 11), with the *Casa de la Cultura* still covering part of the stage (Figure 21).⁴³² Responsible for organizing the Festival of Malaga was the local aristocrat Ángeles Rubio-Argüelles, who appropriated the Roman theatre to create annual productions with amateur actors

⁴³⁰ MAM, Box 8703, Folder 6 (1959–1960), Proyecto de exploración de la zona de influencia del Teatro Romano. See also Santa-Olalla 1951; Ministerio de la Vivienda 1959.

⁴³¹ ‘de todos son conocidas las excavaciones realizadas en la zona de calle Alcazabilla y Alcazaba, con motivo del descubrimiento del Teatro Romano, así como de la importancia cada día mayor que van tomando estos trabajos, cuyo feliz término, colocarían a nuestra Ciudad, entre los lugares arqueológicos más interesantes del País’, MAM, Box 8703, Folder 6 (1959–1960), document 2. Around the same period, a study about the Roman theatre of Acinipo, located about 100 kilometres from the city of Malaga, put in perspective the emerging tourist movement that preserved a Romantic attitude towards the materiality of the classical monuments (Palomeque Torres 1963).

⁴³² The building provoked arduous disputes and marked the identity of the festivals until its demolition in the 1990s (*Diario Sur* 5 February 1960).



Figure 21. Photograph of the Roman theatre of Malaga during restoration works (1964). On the right side, the wall of the Casa de la Cultura. Municipal Archive of Malaga.

and actresses of her company ARA.⁴³³ Although Rubio-Argüelles was the main sponsor, the Malaga city council also collaborated financially and was involved in production logistics.⁴³⁴ With few exceptions, in the celebration of the Festival of Malaga from 1959 to 1984, ARA was the only company that participated and put on many national premieres of classical drama (*ABC Sevilla* 16 July 1966, 66). This cultural reality turned the use of public space into an exclusive privilege of one company that systematically appropriated it (Torán Marín 2016, 53–5). Although Rubio-Argüelles' project presented an alternative to the national spectacle of Merida, her political and ideological stance offered a conservative local spectacle for the high society that was directed at a local cultural elite (Torán Marín 2016, 51–2).

⁴³³ The performances took place on the remaining space of the stage, especially on its southern side (*Diario Sur* 24 July 1959, 4; García de Dueñas 2004, 122 and 125–33).

⁴³⁴ MAM/LGM/BA/PG, Session 17 July 1959, 316v.

The lack of professional ambition permitted the staging of many adaptations of classical drama by ARA. Until 1963 all the performances were versions written by Alfredo Marquerie. Classical comedy dominated the festival until 1965;⁴³⁵ Terence's *Phormio* and Menander's *Dyskolos* were represented for the first time in Spain (*Diario Sur* 16 July 1960, 4; *Diario Sur* 2 July 1961, 4),⁴³⁶ while the first tragedy was Euripides' *Medea* in 1962, along with Plautus' *Menaechmi* (*ABC Madrid* 6 July 1962, 9). The gradual revelation of the theatre – it was being excavated until the mid-1960s – increased the seating capacity, but technical difficulties and the noise from the opposite central city road conditioned the quality of the spectacles (*Diario Sur* 21 July 1963, 5).

In 1964 the festival was cosponsored by the General Sub-Directorate of Popular Culture and the Provincial Delegation of Information and Tourism in Malaga, as it was included for the first time in the *Festivales de España*. Despite its local character, the festival aligned with the national political rhetoric and celebrated the commemoration of the '25 years of peace' (*Diario Sur* 12 July 1964, 5; See also section 4.6.3). To meet the new requirements, the ARA adopted a more professional profile (*Diario Sur* 15 July 1964, 18 and 20; Palomo Tobio 2016, 167).

Significant developments marked the Festival of Malaga in 1967. Rubio-Argüelles' dispute with the new Mayor, Antonio Gutiérrez Mata, resulted in the sabotage of the performances by the Municipal authorities (*Diario Sur* 7 July 1967, 4). In addition, a new theatrical company interrupted the exclusive use of the theatre by ARA and extended the repertoire of the Festival, which included classical and modern dramas (*Diario Sur* 7 July 1967, 4; *Diario Sur* 21 July 1968, 25).

Even though the festivals produced a powerful artistic activity that engaged the local population, sociopolitical issues provoked complications with the celebration of the festivals (*La*

⁴³⁵ Photographic material of the performances in 1963 and 1965 can be found in *ABC Madrid* 23 July 1963, 9 and *ABC Madrid* 23 July 1965, 12.

⁴³⁶ Carlos Cobo Medina was a theatrical critic of the local newspaper *Diario Sur*, who followed the course of the festival and regularly expressed his natural sympathy for Rubio-Argüelles. However, his articles were often limited to simplistic dithyrambs on the performances and lacked quality analysis (*Diario Sur* 20 July 1966, 10).

Tarde 6 May 1971).⁴³⁷ The principal factors were the deteriorated condition of the monument and the disputes among the Ministry of Education, the Municipal authorities, and ARA over its conservation and reuse. These disputes were occasionally transferred to the stage as well; although the festival officially enjoyed the city council's authorization,⁴³⁸ one of the selected plays in 1970, *Lex Flavia Malacitana*, written by Rubio-Arguelles, caused a major conflict between the ARA and the Mayor. The comedy was presented a satiric reality of the city and revolved around the discovery of a bronze tablet (*Lex Flavia Malacitana*) found in Malaga during the excavations of the theatre. Its caustic criticism of the city councilors and their attitude towards the *Casa de la Cultura* irritated the local authorities (Óscar Romero 2001, 96; García de Dueñas 2004, 170–1). Despite the ongoing dispute, in 1971, Pemán's *Thyestes* became one of the biggest successes of the festival, while the other play of the season, *Amphitryon 38* suffered censorship, because the director added parts that had been censored in the original book (Óscar Romero 2001, 100).

The dispute continued the following years and determined the course of the festivals. For instance, in 1972, the city council prohibited electricity for the productions, and the performances had to be put on with candles (Óscar Romero 2001, 101). Similarly, the appearance of a phallus in one of the plays in 1973 and the eventful last performance of *La Arquitectura de Silencio* in 1974 systematically challenged the professional and artistic ambitions of the festival (Óscar Romero 2001, 101–2 and 255–7). These incidents reflected the degree of censorship and repression in the late Franco period (García de Dueñas 2004, 72–4; Sánchez-Biosca 2007).

4.7.3. The theatrical tradition at the Roman theatre of Sagunto (1961–1974)

The theatrical tradition of Sagunto was often compared with the Festival of Merida in post-war Spain (*La Esfera* 15 March 1959). However, it lacked Merida's national prestige (Lara Ortega 1991, 60–4)⁴³⁹ and often hosted the plays premiered there or in Madrid. For instance, in 1961, *The*

⁴³⁷ The locals often expressed their indignation over the reluctance of the authorities to demolish the *Casa de la Cultura* (*El Sol de España* 16 November 1975). As the building covered a large part of the stage, the ARA often used it as a decorative element of the performances. For instance, in 1980, it was converted into the rock where Prometheus was tortured in *Prometheus Bound* (García de Dueñas 2004, 114).

⁴³⁸ MAM/LGM/BA/PG, Session 10 July 1959, 262v–3.

⁴³⁹ Lara claims that Mérida and the architect José Pijoan systematically gave precedence to Merida over Sagunto (See, for instance, Mérida Alinari 1915).

Siege of Numantia was performed in Sagunto after its premiere at the theatre of Merida (*ABC Madrid* 16 June 1961, 77–8), while in 1964, *Julius Caesar* followed the same course, as part of the *Festivales de España* (*ABC Madrid* 6 June 1964, 100).

In addition, the Sagunto city council periodically financed or produced dramas with local or regional scope. Local community participation in the revival of the ancient theatre created an ideological attachment to the classical venue, a relationship that was based on the Mediterranean identity of the Valencian province (Sanchez-Castañer 1959). Similarly, the theatrical activity in the theatre of Sagunto was inspired by classical spectacles in Greece, France, and Italy (Blanco Ximenez 1959). Small-scale events, such as floral games, were also produced and increased the social encounters in the monument. The locals' engagement and emotional entanglement with the classical revival were evidenced by their enthusiastic implication in the production of many performances.

Following the first post-war productions, the tourist movement that began expanding in Spain also reached Sagunto. Local intellectuals claimed the need for tourist infrastructure, green scenery, parks, and modern facilities around the theatre, which would pave the way for periodic festivals, tourist development, and economic growth (Roca 1959). Therefore, the architect Alejandro Ferrant redacted an initial project and directed the restoration works that concentrated on the cavea, proscenium, and stage (Fletcher Valls 1959; Fletcher Valls 1963). Meanwhile, improvement in the tourist infrastructure in 1961 facilitated the reuse of the theatre for artistic spectacles.⁴⁴⁰ However, although archaeological interventions intended to restore and consolidate the theatre until 1974,⁴⁴¹ they finally distorted the original structure of the monument (González Simancas 1929; Lara Ortega 1991, 121–45). In particular, protests were sparked when the cavea was divided into two parts and a platform was constructed to function as part of the stage (Lara Ortega 1991, 125–6).

In 1954, Tamayo put on the tragedy *The Destruction of Sagunto*, written by Pemán and Sánchez-Castañer.⁴⁴² The drama was not based on an ancient play but on the historical seize of

⁴⁴⁰ MAS/LGS/BA/P, Session 11 July 1961, 30; See also *ABC Madrid* 24 June 1959, 77.

⁴⁴¹ After an unsuccessful attempt in 1917, experts consolidated the architectural structure of the monument in 1930 (Tortosa and Mora 1996).

⁴⁴² MAS/LGS/BA/P, Session 24 June 1954, 153. See also Duplá Ansuátegui 2018.

Saguntum. In fact, it was Cervantes' *The Siege of Numantia* that inspired Pemán to reconstruct the national struggle of Saguntum in its authentic setting (*ABC Madrid* 6 June 1954, 67). A few years later, he would exalt Sagunto's precedence over Numantia because the former battle defended the European identity that the Roman Hispania forged and imparted to the Spanish territory (Pemán 1959, 19; See section 1.4.1). In this spirit, Pemán reproduced the discourse of Franco's historiography, according to which the Spanish peninsula imposed its cultural tradition to the Romans and provoked the *hispanization* of Rome (Duplá Ansuátegui 2002, 182).

The organizers' decision to perform the play at the Roman theatre and the involvement of the local community in the event not only denoted its authentic character but also became an ideological statement of local identity (*ABC Madrid* 19 February 1954, 27). The participation of 500 local youngsters as extras furtherly enhanced this collective identification with the play. At the same time, the performances reproduced the theatrical style of the Festival of Merida, where a national-Catholic approach combined classical monumentality with the Christian ideal of sacrifice. Engaging the local community was the ultimate objective as we read in the newspaper *ABC*:

‘Hundreds of Saguntines were willing to rehearse and perform for free, representing their ancestors [...] Tamayo cheered the up through the microphone: “Think -he said - that your ancestors did much more; that you are descendants of one of the most heroic peoples in Spain, that Homeland and History contemplate you”’.⁴⁴³

The production adequately adapted the Roman theatre to host 2.000 spectators (*ABC Madrid* 2 June 1954, 29), and due to the enormous success, Tamayo repeated it the following year (*ABC Madrid* 9 June 1954, 43; *ABC Madrid* 28 June 1955, 7; *Informaciones* 30 June 1955). The celebration of floral games in 1956 offered a suitable occasion to strengthen the local entanglement with the monument. The local intellectual Blanco Soler presided over the event and alluded to the Latin and Mediterranean character of Sagunto (1959). These Mediterranean values, he claimed, shaped the European moral and philosophical history and forged the idealist perception of classical tradition in southern Europe (*ABC Sevilla* 4 August 1956, 20). Similarly, when the *Oresteia* was

⁴⁴³ ‘Centenares de saguntinos se prestaron a ensayar y a actuar gratuitamente, representando a sus antepasados [...] Tamayo les arengaba por el micrófono: “Pensad - decía - que mucho más hicieron vuestros antepasados; que sois descendientes de uno de los pueblos más heroicos de España, que la Patria y la Historia os contemplan”’ (*ABC Madrid* 10 June 1954, 9–13).

put on at the theatre of Sagunto in 1959 (after it was premiered in Merida), the national press attempted to appropriate it and compared it with the monumental sacrifice of Numantia.⁴⁴⁴

Such confluence of regional and national values was graphically celebrated in 1972, when the Sagunto city council, the Ministry of Information and Tourism, and the Provincial Deputation of Valencia produced the tragedy *Minotauro* written by José Camón Aznar, as part of the *Festivales de España*.⁴⁴⁵ The play was met with unprecedented success and was acclaimed by the national press (*ABC Madrid* 1 July 1972, 67). *Minotauro* evoked the Greek myth of Theseus and identified the killing of the Minotaur as the victory of civilization and reason against barbarity and primitivism. However, the spectacle was perceived as a national performance that revived the ancient myth and invoked the notorious spectacle of bullfighting. Theseus was reimagined as a renowned Spanish bullfighter who re-established the order by killing the ferocious beast (*ABC Madrid* 1 July 1972, 67). This popular device appropriated the local heritage and demonstrated the opportunity of the Roman monument to challenge classical tradition and create national spectacles. To achieve that, the organizers used a frivolous yet ideologically powerful symbol of a national hero that pleased the Saguntine public.

4.7.4. Society of Epirot Studies and Festival of Dodona (1960–1977)

The revival of the ancient theatre of Dodona in Greece presents strong similarities with the cases of Malaga and Sagunto. Its architectural particularities and its regional theatrical tradition showcased how *festivalization* dominated the Greek cultural expression. The excavation and consolidation of the theatre finished in 1959, but the prospect of periodic productions required further restoration that converted the monument into a regional venue for large scale performances.⁴⁴⁶ The architectural feature that marked the particular character of the theatre of Dodona was the Roman wall in front of the stage, a posterior addition that had converted the theatre into a Roman arena. During the restoration work, a moral dilemma about whether to preserve it or

⁴⁴⁴ MAS/LGS/BA/P, Session 9 June 1959 62. See also *ABC Madrid* 15 April 1959, 39.

⁴⁴⁵ MAS/LGS/BA/P, Session 2 June 1972, 19vt.

⁴⁴⁶ Restoration works were assigned to archaeologist Sotiris Dakaris and architect Vasilis Charisis (Katsoudas 2014, 88). See also Charisis 2010, 85–7.

not indicated the ideological engagement of the local populace with the site. The architect of the restoration in the 1960s declared that:

‘Then, it became obvious that it was “unnatural” for actors to perform ancient tragedy in a space designed for beast fights [...] [the wall], turns it into a field of gruesome battle between men and beasts, to satisfy Roman barbarity’.⁴⁴⁷

The principal responsible for the revival and regular reuse of the theatre of Dodona was Konstantinos Frontzos, a national deputy with Karamanlis’ right-wing party and president of the local *Society of Epirot Studies*. He intervened to accelerate the restorations and claimed that the revival of the theatre was an ‘attraction to the roots. And our roots are here, in Dodona’.⁴⁴⁸ Meanwhile, he reprised populist rhetoric evoking the virtue of the Epirot soul and gave a folkloric aspect to the production of the Festivals (Figure 22).⁴⁴⁹ In addition, the annual spectacles served Frontzos’ political interests and increased his popularity in Epirus (*Eleutheria* 8 September 1961, 4; *Eleutheria* 26 September 1961, 6).

The first Festival of Dodona took place in August 1960. Rondiris and the Piraikon Theatron staged *Electra* and *Eumenides-Libation Bearers*, inaugurating the modern revival of the regional theatre. The press reflected the success of the performances and the local engagement with the classical venue, while attendance exceeded expectations.⁴⁵⁰

The following year, the GNTO included the festival in its official productions and invited the National Theatre to participate (*Éos* 1962, 61/62, 100–1); yet it was Frontzos’ initiative to meet Hourmouzios that secured the performances of the National Theatre. Frontzos was certain about the popular success of the performances and committed to cover travel expenses and to award a

⁴⁴⁷ ‘Τότε, έγινε ολοφάνερο ότι ήταν «αφύσικο» οι ηθοποιοί να παίζουν αρχαία τραγωδία σε χώρο μορφωμένο για θηριομαχίες [...] [ο τοίχος] το μεταβάλλει σε πεδίο αποτρόπαιας μάχης ανθρώπων και θηρίων, για να ικανοποιηθεί ο Ρωμαϊκός βαρβαρισμός’ (Charisis 2010, 92–3).

⁴⁴⁸ ‘ή έλξη πρὸς τὶς ρίζες. Καὶ οἱ ρίζες μας εἶν’ ἐδῶ, στὴ Δωδώνη’ (Programme of the Festival of Dodona 1960).

⁴⁴⁹ See, for instance, the programme of the festival of 1960 and 1961, DANTG, www.nt-archive.gr/viewfiles1.aspx?webSpeech=&playID=723&programID=992&gotoPage=1 and www.nt-archive.gr/viewfiles1.aspx?playID=823&programID=999&programFileDisk=Y1962MPL20-21PR1PG004_sc.jpg.

⁴⁵⁰ Charisis narrates that the enthusiastic public engagement with the festivals forced them to take further measures to restore the koilon and increase its seating capacity (2010, 87). See also *Eleutheria* 9 August 1960, 5.

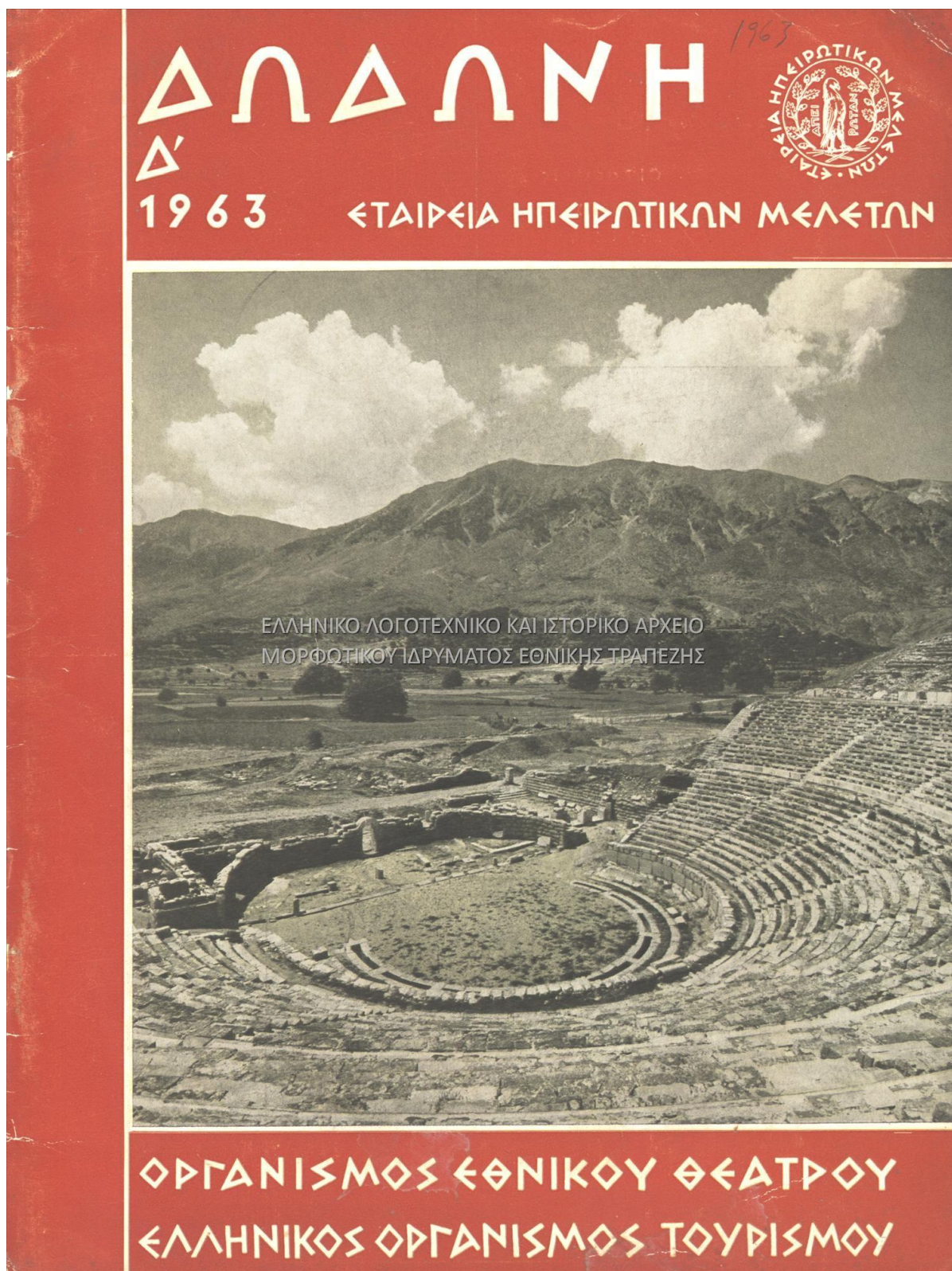


Figure 22. Cover of the playbill of the Festival of Dodona (1963). The Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (ELIA/MIET), Performing Arts Department, Box 604 ST, folder E, Subfolder 3/7.

bonus payment to the institution.⁴⁵¹ Due to the peripheral character of the venue, the National Theatre often repeated plays that had staged in Epidaurus, and their selection depended on the availability of the casts.⁴⁵² In the first participation of the National Theatre, the performance was enthusiastically received by critics and the public (*Ipeirotikos Agonas Ioanninon* 22 August 1961, 1–2). In contrast, *Antigone* in 1962 was criticized for not actively engaging with the spectators (*Proinos Logos Ioanninon* 12 August 1962).

After three years, the festival had become one of the most multitudinous spectacles in Greece and second only to Epidaurus (*Eleutheria* 8 December 1963, 1; *Mesimbrini* 11 August 1964).⁴⁵³ The fact that performances such as Euripides' *Andromache* premiered in Dodona indicates emerging popularity of the festivals (*Ethnikos Agonas Ioanninon* 10 August 1963). A source of classical tradition alleges that *Andromache* was originally performed in Dodona;⁴⁵⁴ thus, it was selected as proof of cultural authenticity. A large number of volunteers, usually from the surrounding villages, also contributed to the popular character of the performances.⁴⁵⁵ According to journalist Iro Lambrou, what made Dodona special, compared to the Athenian venues and Epidaurus, was its authentic character (*To Vima* 17 August 1963) and the lack of superfluous verbosity. In this spirit, the Festival of Dodona was a portrayal of Epirot heritage that displayed its regional self-determination. We read that in Dodona 'creation keeps its classical face unscathed. It is Greece of prehistoric memory and classical harmony.'⁴⁵⁶ Dodona was described as a site that preserved its original roots and identity and could become an alternative to Epidaurus' tourist fervour. However, by 1964, financial difficulties appeared to obstruct the regular celebration of the festival and deteriorated the relationship between the National Theatre and Frontzos until the

⁴⁵¹ ANTG/BAAC, Session 6 June 1961, 1–3.

⁴⁵² ANTG/BAAC, Session 6 June 1961, 1.

⁴⁵³ Frontzos' desire to compare the Festival of Dodona with Epidaurus soon became apparent (DANTG, www.nt-archive.gr/viewfiles1.aspx?playID=710&programID=492&programFileDisk=Y1964MPL09-13PR1PG005_sc.jpg).

⁴⁵⁴ However, scholars have disputed this version and have also proposed alternative venues (for more on the issue, see Hall 2000b, 30).

⁴⁵⁵ In 1963 the number of volunteers was 300, most of them from the *Society of Epirot Studies* (*Proinos Logos Ioanninon* 12 August 1962).

⁴⁵⁶ 'η πλάση διατηρεί αμόλυντο το κλασσικό πρόσωπο της. Είναι η Ελλάδα της προϊστορικής μνήμης και της κλασσικής αρμονίας' (*Eleutheria* 23 August 1964).

celebration of the last festival in 1977.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁷ ANTG/BAAC, Session 11 September 1962 2–3; 30 April 1963, 4–5.

Chapter 5 Reinvention of the Festivals: National Spectacles and the End of the Dictatorships (1965–1975)

5.1. Cultural politics and renovation of the festivals

When the centrist government of the *Centre Union* was formed in 1964 in Greece, demands for democratization gradually renovated the social discourse on cultural issues (Lampropoulou 2008), even though the adhesion to *ethnikofrosyni* continued to dominate the social reality (Kazamias 2014). In the meantime, the confrontation between the two major political parties intensified, and the Cyprus struggle destabilized the political scene in Greece (Clogg 2021, 147–9 and 155–7). Instability, the interventionism of the king, *Iouliana*, and the political disarray culminated in the military putsch of April 1967 (Close 2002, 103–7; Seferiadis and Hatzivasileiou 2008, 17–23). Greek military officers seized power and asserted their authority by alleging a state of emergency against possible communist sublimation (Clogg 2021, 158–60). In so doing, they restricted civil liberties, imposed state censorship, and persecuted dissidents by drawing on the mechanisms of the national-minded post-war state and Metaxas’ authoritarian precepts (Voglis 2002, 63–75). They also imposed an ultra-nationalist perception of classical culture, which became a dogmatic instrument of the regime’s sociopolitical agenda (Van Steen 2015a, 2–25).

In contrast, the progressive liberalization of Franco’s dictatorship renovated the perception of arts and culture in Spain.⁴⁵⁸ Representatives of the regime realized that their political future depended on their dialogue with the democratic opposition (Palomares 2007). Gradual liberalization of the cultural expression did not produce radical spectacles but reshaped the social rhetoric and created the illusion of belonging to a European liberal circle (Sánchez-Biosca 2007). From the mid-1960s onwards, Spanish intellectuals attempted to re-establish their links with the international community despite Franco’s authoritarian administration, while in the Greek case,

⁴⁵⁸ The new press legislation that was issued in 1966 broke the monopoly of the state-controlled media and contributed to the pluralization of public space (Pedreira Souto and Davara Torrego 2009). In addition, the university and workers’ strikes of the 1960s obliged the dictator to adopt a more tolerant policy towards arts and culture.

the dictatorship fiercely and desperately exploited the discourse of *ethnikofrosyni* to legitimize its anticommunist rhetoric.

As regards the classical theatre, the individuals who determined the course of the major spectacles were replaced by 1964, and the commercial character of the festivals prevailed. While the change of the director and Council of the National Theatre of Greece took place in 1964, Tamayo's productions in Merida reduced, and multiple companies participated in the annual festivals from 1965 onwards. At the same time, the recreation of emblematic performances in both countries, such as Rondiris' *Hippolytus*, Sikelianos' *Prometheus Bound*, Pemán's *Antigone*, and Unamuno's *Medea*, represented the need for establishing a symbolic connection with the recent past. These productions also suggest that theatrical agents of the period relied heavily on earlier successful plays to reattract public engagement and justify the artistic continuity of the festivals (Brown 1965).

The two countries experienced similar developments in terms of their social structure, delayed industrialization, growing consumerism trends, and mass culture (Kornetis 2008). In addition, the tourist phenomenon of the 1960s turned them into fashionable summer destinations, improved tourist and hostelry facilities, and modernized cultural offerings. The Greek and Spanish political regimes systematically focused on the tourist aspect of artistic production to establish a national particularity. For instance, between 1965 and 1967, the Festival of Merida attracted international attention and turned into a commercial spectacle that delighted both the Spanish high society, the national populace, and tourists. Similarly, the Greek dictatorship imposed its authoritarian policy on cultural production and turned the theatrical performance of ancient drama into a frivolous tourist attraction for the masses.

This approach created the need for productions that illustrated the exceptionality of national culture. In the Spanish case it was emphatically exemplified by Manuel Fraga Iribarne's notorious tourist slogan 'Spain is different' (Pack 2006, 139–53).⁴⁵⁹ Similarly, the singular character that the Greek intellectuals had diachronically attributed to classical culture as an organic part of the modern Greek identity became a milestone in the growth of tourist activity. (*I Avgi* 5 December 1965; Hamilakis 2007, ch. 2). To legitimate such claims, Spain and Greece had to

⁴⁵⁹ Manuel Fraga Iribarne was Minister of Information and Tourism.

intensify cultural production and increase the performances at ancient venues (Martha and Kotsaki 2014). Since classical drama successfully attracted national and international tourism, it acted as a vehicle for the self-determination of a distinguished national culture.

However, the industrialization of classical drama production in Greece and the repetitive repertoire of the National Theatre resulted in cultural stagnation in the 1960s. While the National Theatre initially attempted to modernize its productions (Ioannidis 2011, 253–8), its staging of ancient drama was outmoded because it preserved the traditional ritualistic nature that was standardized in the mid-1950s (Stamatopoulou 2017, 728). Also, the involvement of the Greek dictatorship with the mechanics of the theatrical production, in terms of its intervention in the monumental staging and display of an archaeolatric discourse, contributed to this stagnation (Van Steen 2015a, 165–6). MacCannell describes this condition as *saturation* of a spectacle (1992, 243–53). *Saturation* involves the repertoire, repetitive style of direction, and acting. Below, I extend MacCannell's discussion on the social contingencies that destabilized artistic expression by considering the cause and effect of *saturation* in the festivals of ancient drama during the 1960s and 1970s.

To overcome this cultural stagnation in Spain, artistic and tourist institutions enriched the offering performances and renovated their theatrical tradition. The Festival of Merida avoided *saturation* because it was obliged to include new companies and genres that re-attracted the attention of the national populace (Sánchez Matas 1991, 131). This policy created a successful international spectacle that, despite its conservative character, renovated the Spanish theatrical tradition. In contrast, in Greece, this demand appeared after the popularization of other companies that coexisted with the National Theatre but were not granted permission to participate in the emblematic Festival of Epidauros until 1975. However, since the 1960s, the Ministry of Education and the GNTTO methodized the reuse of multiple ancient venues and the inclusion of other companies in popular spectacles, such as the Festival of Athens. Although this development challenged the exclusivity of the National Theatre, we read in *Eleutheria* that 'there is, therefore, a growing number of voices demanding that Epidauros should cease to be a monopoly of the National Theatre and that other companies should be able to participate with performances of

ancient drama’.⁴⁶⁰ The National Theatre retained its dominant role until the 1970s and reproduced its conservative approach to ancient drama for the thousands of tourists that attended the performances every summer. However, despite the artistic precedence of the national organization over other companies, Koun’s Theatro Technis established its successful theatrical tradition by adopting an alternative approach of staging classical theatre.

5.2. Staging ancient Greek drama in Greece (1964–1967)

5.2.1. National Theatre, Repertoire, and Comedy

Following Hourmouzios’ replacement in 1964, the governmental reform divided the direction of the National Theatre into Administrative and Artistic, which were assigned to Ilias Venezis and Alexis Minotis, respectively. However, Minotis overshadowed the Council, became the de facto leader of the National Theatre, and determined its theatrical activity until 1967 (Legislative Decree 4370, FEK 163, 24 September 1964. See also Meynaud 2004, 21–60; Stamatopoulou 2017, footnote 1049).⁴⁶¹ The Artistic Direction had increased responsibilities and extensively negotiated the repertoire of the National Theatre. Minotis often had the final say on the proposed dramas, but Takis Mouzenidis and Eleni Ourani, the other two members of the Artistic Direction, had a considerable influence on the decision making. Political tensions among members of the Council were frequent, such as the dispute between Minotis and the governmental commissioner, Evangelos Papanoutsos, which ended only when Minotis reported the issue to the press. The situation exacerbated to such a degree that Papanoutsos was expelled by the National Theatre and the Minister of National Education had to intervene to demand that they kept internal issues within the Council.⁴⁶²

At first, the programme was based on the popularity of the plays and aimed to renovate

⁴⁶⁰ ‘Αρχίζουν λοιπόν να αυξάνονται οι φωνές εκείνες που απαιτούν να πάψει η Επίδαυρος να αποτελεί μονοπώλιο του Εθνικού Θεάτρου και να μπορούν να μετάσχουν και άλλοι θίασοι με παραστάσεις αρχαίου δράματος’ (*Eleutheria* 16 December 1966, 2).

⁴⁶¹ Political interventionism and bureaucracy interrupted the regular operation of the institution (*Nitsos* 1964, 5).

⁴⁶² ANTG/BAAC, Session 10 September 1965, 1–2.

classical tradition.⁴⁶³ The Council contemplated producing comedies and tragedies that had been rarely staged in Greece, such as *The Knights*, *Ploutos*, *Clouds*, and *Ion*.⁴⁶⁴ Attempting to regulate the repertoire, the President of the Council, Ioannis Kakridis, also suggested that the National Theatre put on all the Greek classical dramas in the following ten years by producing about three new dramas each season.⁴⁶⁵ Minotis believed instead that the theatricality of plays such as *Oedipus at Colonus* was the backbone for the festival's success.⁴⁶⁶ However, due to his persistence in repeating performances, especially in the Festival of Athens, the National Theatre produced only two new tragedies in 1966 and 1967 (Euripides' *The Suppliants* and Sophocles' *Philoctetes*).

In addition, the lasting imprint that Sikelianos' Delphic Festivals had left to the Greek stage determined the theatrical history of *Prometheus Bound*. Although the play was successfully staged in Epidauros in 1963,⁴⁶⁷ the new Council rejected it in 1965 and 1967 because it considered that only the theatre of Delphi could properly host it.⁴⁶⁸ In 1966, Minotis proposed to produce an ancient tragedy there in honour of the European Centre of Delphi that celebrated the construction of the International Foundation, an institution that Sikelianos had envisioned.⁴⁶⁹ Therefore, thirty years after the Delphic Festivals, Delphi became the heterotopic space where Sikelianos' international vision took its final form (Ioannidou 2010/2011). As the theatre of Delphi retained such symbolism, the National Theatre suggested adopting an Amphictyonic approach to the event, which was to be performed for representatives of the European Parliament.⁴⁷⁰ Minotis finally had to choose *Agamemnon*, as it was the only play that did not obstruct the production of other

⁴⁶³ ANTG/BAAD, Session 5 December 1964, 1.

⁴⁶⁴ ANTG/BAAD, Session 5 December 1964, 1. The availability of appropriate actors, actresses, and choruses was also crucial. In particular, the chorus required many interpreters and often determined the selection of the play (ANTG/BAAC, Session 10 November 1964, 3).

⁴⁶⁵ ANTG/BAAC, Session 10 December 1965, 15–6. The Council assumed that reworkings of ancient drama did not attract the public unless they were a resounding success in their last staging (ANTG/BAACO, Session 17 December 1965, 2).

⁴⁶⁶ ANTG/BAAC, Session 10 December 1965, 16.

⁴⁶⁷ Thylos seized the opportunity to compare it with Sikelianos' performance (1963).

⁴⁶⁸ ANTG/BAAD, Session 26 October 1964, 1–3; Session 12 December 1966, 2; Session ANTG/BAAC, Session 20 November 1964, 3; Session 27 November 1964, 6.

⁴⁶⁹ ANTG/BAAD, Session 3 May 1965, 1.

⁴⁷⁰ ANTG/BAAC, Session 16 April 1965, 12.

spectacles in the summer season. However, despite Minotis' enthusiasm, *Agamemnon* had to be cancelled due to the company's busy programme.⁴⁷¹

Meanwhile, after Solomos' resignation (see section 4.4.3), the National Theatre was left without a theatrical director for classical comedies. Initially, Minotis was reluctant and decided to exclude comedies from the programme of 1965 by alluding to their high cost compared to tragedies.⁴⁷² However, the Administrative Council proposed the staging of *Ploutos* for the Festival of Athens and invited the theatrical director Leonidas Trivizas to replace Solomos.⁴⁷³ When *Ploutos* was confirmed in 1965, the Council imposed an internal control on the direction of ancient drama to 'chime with the overall view that the Administration of the National Theatre has elaborated'.⁴⁷⁴ Indicative of the ideological constraint of the period was that *Ploutos* was the only ancient comedy that was produced under Minotis' and Venezis' direction; yet, to avoid exposure to the inflexible public of Epidauros, the play was only staged at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus in 1965, 1966, and 1967 (Diamantakou-Agathou 2007, 9).

Even when in December 1966 the Council contemplated producing *The Knights*, Minotis considered that it was too daring and proposed *Clouds* instead.⁴⁷⁵ During the rehearsals, the Council intervened in the direction of the play. In particular, Trivizas had invited the composer Stavros Xarchakos to write the music, but the Council regarded his connection with the Greek popular repertoire (*laika*) as incompatible with the classical drama and rejected him.⁴⁷⁶ Commenting on these decisions, Hourmouzios condemned the lack of Aristophanes and remarked that *Ploutos* was staged at the end of the Festival of Athens when the attendance was considerably lower (*I Kathimerini* 18 September 1965; Stamatopoulou 2017, 726–7).

⁴⁷¹ ANTG/BAAC, Session 25 February 1966, 8. During the same year, the European Centre of Delphi organized Euripides' *Rhesus*. It was performed by the Centre of Theatrical Studies of the University of California to celebrate the 2500-year anniversary of the ancient theatre (*Eleutheria* 3 September 1966, 2).

⁴⁷² ANTG/BAAD, Session 26 October 1964, 1.

⁴⁷³ For audiovisual documentation, see DANTG, <http://www.nt-archive.gr/playDetails.aspx?playID=822>. See also *Eleutheria* 28 August 1965, 2.

⁴⁷⁴ 'συνάδην οὗτος μέ την καθόλου περί αὐτῆς ἀντίληψιν ἣν ἔχει μορφώσει ἡ Διοίκησις τοῦ Ἑθνικοῦ Θεάτρου' (Archive of the National Theatre of Greece, Book of Acts of the Council, Session 15 December 1964, 3).

⁴⁷⁵ ANTG/BAAD, Session 12 December 1966, 2–3.

⁴⁷⁶ Terzakis suggested an austere, classical style (ANTG/BAAD, Session 17 April 1967, 1–2).

5.2.2. Challenging the National Theatre's Exclusivity

As the National Theatre disregarded the GNTO's recommendations for a rich repertoire, the latter soon turned to other companies that could renovate the theatrical stage in Greece. In particular, since 1964, the GNTO challenged the exclusivity of the National Theatre in Epidauros⁴⁷⁷ and attempted to fill the need for new productions by turning to Piraikon Theatron and Theatro Technis, companies that had built up an international reputation and exported ancient drama as a Greek cultural asset (Roilou-Panagodimitrakopoulou 2003, 254–6). These companies participated in numerous festivals at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus and peripheral ancient venues.⁴⁷⁸ In addition, HTC advocated the participation of more companies (Greek and foreign) in an Ecumenical Festival at the theatre of Epidauros (*Periigitiki* July 1962, 14–8),⁴⁷⁹ where they could perform ancient drama and compete for prizes (Valavanis 1964). These proposals provoked the reaction of the National Theatre that strongly disapproved of the possibility of sharing Epidauros with other companies, claiming that such a decision would ruin the festival.⁴⁸⁰

The inclusion of new companies in the major festivals of ancient drama was supported by many individuals who began to view the exclusive rights of the National Theatre as abusive and unproductive (Rafailidis 1966). For instance, composer Dionysios Giatras condemned the privileges of the National Theatre in an article in *Nea Estia* (Giatras 1965, 741–4). Giatras believed that the main reason for the National Theatre's insistence on Epidauros was its economic importance. He also denounced the unconditional tourist and artistic appropriation of ancient monuments as dangerous for their integrity. Finally, he opposed the rigid focus on ancient Greek

⁴⁷⁷ ANTG/BAAC, Session 30 October 1964, 2.

⁴⁷⁸ For instance, in 1964, Mouzenidis proposed to replace *Women of Trachis* with *The Trojan Women*, not only because he considered it more meaningful but also because another company would perform *Women of Trachis* at the Festival of Athens (ANTG/BAAD, Session 26 October 1964, 2). In general, if another Greek company had recently performed a play, the National Theatre avoided staging it for five years (ANTG/BAAD, Session 12 December 1966, 2).

⁴⁷⁹ ANTG/BAAC, Session 10 November 1964, 2–3. Despite their undisputed collaboration on the organization of numerous festivals, *Periigitiki* significantly reduced the articles about festivals of ancient drama and called for a renovation of the classical tradition (*Periigitiki* June 1963, 15; *Periigitiki* July 1963, 15; *Periigitiki* July 1964, 12). It was not the first time that HTC made such a proposal. In 1962, the President of the Club, Choidas, proposed to enrich the Festival of Epidauros with other types of events such as music performances and dances.

⁴⁸⁰ ANTG/BAAC, Session 30 October 1964, 2; 10 November 1964, 3.

dramas and the exclusion of melodramas, modern historical dramas, and other quality spectacles that could be staged in the site. Similarly, periodical publications echoed this development and ventured to publish their theatrical analyses on the history of ancient drama in modern Greece, its chronological limits, and its principal cultural representatives (see for instance Rotas 1962, 64–6; Sideris 1963b, 31–3; Anonymous 1964, 9–63).

The participation of other companies in the Festival of Athens in 1965 officially challenged the cultural domination of the National Theatre. The frontpages and theatrical columns of the most popular newspapers were filled with advertisements for the performances of Piraikon Theatron and Theatro Technis (*Eleutheria* 27 August 1965, 2; *Eleutheria* 28 August 1965, 2). The GNTTO enriched the quality of the festival with dramas produced by Rondiris and Koun (four and two performances respectively) and reduced the performances of the National Theatre (Antoniou 2017).⁴⁸¹ In addition, the presence of the Japanese *Theatre Noh* and other renowned national and international companies was a resounding success (*Eleutheria* 4 September 1965, 2; *Eleutheria* 5 September 1965, 2). For instance, Koun's staging of *The Persians* avoided the National Theatre's conservative approach to ancient drama and presented a progressive anti-war message (Roilou-Panagodimitrakopoulou 2003, 269). Adopting a politicized stance on the play, Koun condemned the sociopolitical crisis that Greece and the world faced during the period. He focused on tragic passion, showcased the eastern features of the Persians, and avoided the stylized chorus of the National Theatre's tradition (*Eleutheria* 24 August 1965, 2). When, the following year, the festival retained a pluralist scheme, Minotis graphically expressed his disappointment by claiming that the National Theatre used to be the backbone of the Festival of Athens.⁴⁸²

At the same time, Rondiris' staging of *Hippolytus* at the theatre of Epidauros interrupted the exclusivity of the National Theatre (*Eleutheria* 27 August 1965, 2). The Piraikon Theatron produced *Electra* and *Hippolytus* in honour of the musician Dimitris Mitropoulos, whose compositions contributed to the revival of ancient drama in the 1930s (*Periigitiki* October 1965,

⁴⁸¹ ANTG/BAAD, Session 2 December 1964, 1. In addition, the National Theatre cancelled *Prometheus Bound* at the theatre of Delphi because the GNTTO assigned two performances to Rondiris (*Eleutheria* 30 June 1965, 2; ANTG/BAAC, Session 30 October 1964, 2). However, due to a misunderstanding about the production, Rondiris eventually cancelled the performances in Athens and Delphi as well (*Acropolis* 30 June 1965, 2).

⁴⁸² ANTG/BAAC, Session 7 December 1966, 1–3.

34).⁴⁸³ The plays were scheduled to be staged only a few days before the company's departure to its international tour (*Eleutheria* 10 September 1965, 2) and weather conditions disrupted the performances of *Electra*. The company put on only *Hippolytus* on 5 September 1965 and won critical acclaim (*Eleutheria* 29 August 1965, 12; *Eleutheria* 1 September 1965, 2; *Eleutheria* 5 September 1965, 2). Also, during the GNTTO summer cultural events around the country, Epidauros was used for a performance of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra (*Eleutheria* 5 September 1965, 2).

In December 1966, the theatrical tradition of the National Theatre in the Festival of Epidauros was at stake. The GNTTO publicly announced its decision to include other companies in the summer festival and neglected to inform the National Theatre.⁴⁸⁴ The Council expressed its disappointment and threatened to abandon the spectacle if other companies participated.⁴⁸⁵ It claimed that the Festival of Epidauros belonged to the National Theatre and that its commercialization would ruin the theatrical tradition in Greece.⁴⁸⁶ Even though it retained its initial position, a few weeks later, the Council decided to renegotiate and requested the final decision of the GNTTO.⁴⁸⁷

The governmental commissioner Kournoutos attempted to mediate the dispute and addressed some of the principal arguments.⁴⁸⁸ He noted that the public had the right to know why former actors and directors of the National Theatre (such as Rondiris and Synodinou) could not perform in Epidauros anymore and criticized the exclusion of companies from a venue that should be considered as a national capital. Finally, he advocated the use of other ancient theatres, such as Megalopolis and Argos, for new large-scale theatrical endeavours. Despite the attempts to create a pluralist festival, the National Theatre imposed its will on the national authorities, the project

⁴⁸³ At the opening of the performance, Rondiris gave an emotional speech on Mitropoulos' contribution to the revival of ancient drama in Greece.

⁴⁸⁴ ANTG/BAAC, Session 7 December 1966, 2–3.

⁴⁸⁵ ANTG/BAAC, Session 7 December 1966, 2–3. Also, *Eleutheria* 16 December 1966, 2.

⁴⁸⁶ ANTG/BAAC, Session 7 December 1966, 2–3. The press extensively covered the dispute (*Epoches* February 1967, 46, 156; *Eleutheria* 17 January 1967, 2; *Eleutheria* 3 February 1967, 2).

⁴⁸⁷ ANTG/BAAC, Session 11 January 1967, 2–7.

⁴⁸⁸ ANTG/BAAC, Session 11 January 1967, 2–7.

was abandoned, and no other company staged in Epidauros until 1975.

5.2.3. The Greek Festival and the Theatre of Dionysus

As Kournoutos anticipated, performances at ancient sites multiplied, and new venues were used for artistic performances. In particular, the GNTTO President, Ioannis Georgakis, introduced a new cultural endeavour that involved the celebration of 150 productions at multiple archaeological sites in Athens and historical places around Greece in 1967 (*Eleutheria* 7 February 1967, 2). This ambitious project, which shared common features with the *Festivales de España* in terms of its national scope, was named *Greek Festival*. It encompassed older productions and incorporated new ones into a unified summer festival that coined the slogan ‘You too were born in Greece’ (Καί ἐσύ ἐγενήθης εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα).⁴⁸⁹ By organizing such an event, the GNTTO aimed to exhibit a unified perception of classical aesthetics and to increase tourist attraction. International and Greek companies, including the National Theatre, Theatro Technis, and Synodinou’s Elliniki Skini, were invited to participate.⁴⁹⁰

One of the venues that Georgakis proposed was the theatre of Dionysus in the centre of Athens. Since it was considered the cradle of ancient Greek drama,⁴⁹¹ the GNTTO planned to invite renowned international personalities to attend *Agamemnon* for a single performance by the National Theatre.⁴⁹² The rest of the performances would be staged at the nearby Odeon. While the National Theatre eagerly accepted the invitation, the Archaeological Service prohibited any intervention in the theatre of Dionysus due to its fragile condition.⁴⁹³ Ioannis Travlos, a member of the Council of the National Theatre, architect, and archaeologist, informed Minotis and the Council that the Archaeological Service could not authorize the installation of electric facilities, sets, or any technical equipment.⁴⁹⁴ In addition, the authorities’ plan to completely reconstruct the

⁴⁸⁹ AAH/ELIA-MIET, Folder 1.5.

⁴⁹⁰ In Athens, the venues were the Odeon, the Tower of the Winds, the Hadrian’s Library, and the Stoa of Attalus (AKPAM/ELIA-MIET, Folder 1.5, General Table of the Spectacles; *Eleutheria* 7 February 1967, 2).

⁴⁹¹ ANTG/BAAC, Session 7 December 1966, 2.

⁴⁹² ANTG/BAAC, Session 7 December 1966, 2.

⁴⁹³ ANTG/BAAC, Session 1 February 1967, 2.

⁴⁹⁴ ANTG/BAAC, Session 1 February 1967, 3.

theatre was rejected by Orlandos, who proposed a partial restoration that would preserve the multiple historical phases of the monument (Academy of Athens 1978).

Miliadis published a detailed report on the issue and strongly opposed the reuse of the site (*Epoches* March 1967, 47, 222–5). He viewed the project as a technocrat plot to convert the theatre into a new tourist attraction and accused the authorities of disguising their intentions to economically exploit it by initially displaying a respectful plan. Miliadis predicted that the ancient theatres would eventually lose their ‘authentic’ qualities and be transformed into modern venues made of concrete. As regards authenticity, he accused the authorities of exploiting the symbolic quality of the monument, despite the fact that nothing of its original classical Greek aspect was preserved:

‘You do not have the right to construct an eclectic pastiche by displaying, for example, a 5th century orchestra, a 4th century *koilon*, a Hellenistic stage, and a Roman *logeion*, because then you do not obtain an authentic theatre, but the projection of your modern barbaric soul’.⁴⁹⁵

Overall, intellectuals and cultural circles in Greece rejected the idea of endangering the fragile monument (*Epoches* February 1967, 46, 156). Despite the strong political support to the project, the emblematic revival of the theatre of Dionysus was cancelled, as the National Theatre refused to perform without the necessary facilities (*Eleutheria* 7 February 1967).

5.3. National Theatre under Dictatorship (1967–1974)

Following the establishment of the dictatorship in April 1967, the new regime severely restricted free artistic expression (Nitsos 1974, 107) and imposed a system of preventive censorship. The programme of the Festival of Epidauros suffered modifications, included reworkings of past spectacles, and staged a new production of *Philoctetes*. This resulted in the cancellation of the

⁴⁹⁵ ‘Δεν έχετε δικαίωμα να κατασκευάσετε ένα εκλεκτικό παστίτσιο παραθέτοντας π.χ. μιά ορχήστρα του 5ου αι., ένα κοίλο του 4ου, μιά σκηνή ελληνιστική κι ένα ρωμαϊκό λογείο, γιατί τότε πετυχαίνετε, όχι το αυθεντικό θέατρο, αλλά την προβολή της βάρβαρης σύγχρονης ψυχής σας’ (*Epoches* March 1967, 47, 223).

*Clouds*⁴⁹⁶ and the replacement of *Ajax* with *Ion*. The modifications of the programme was the first act of state censorship of the new regime (Arvaniti 2015, 359). They had a preventive character and aimed to ban the leftist composer Mikis Theodorakis, who had composed the music for some of the plays (Van Steen 2015a, 113–4). Such a decision reflected the politicization of culture under the dictatorship and the strict artistic policy (Kornetis 2008, 257).

The replacement of Venezis and Minotis by the philologist Evangelos Fotiadis took place after the summer season.⁴⁹⁷ Fotiadis was appointed general director and led the Organization during the first years of the dictatorship. In addition, while all the members of the Council resigned, Minotis remained a member of the company until later in 1967 because he participated in the International and Universal Exposition (Expo 67) in Montreal, Canada. Minotis officially resigned some months later, but not before receiving a salary raise.⁴⁹⁸ Soon after his resignation, the National Theatre rehired Solomos after coercing him to express loyalty to the state (*nomimofrosyni*).⁴⁹⁹

The Emergency Law 98 (FEK 140, 11 August 1967) designed the centralized policy of the dictatorship on theatrical production. In particular, it permitted the new Council and President of the National Theatre to ‘take any necessary measure’ for the effective administration of the organization.⁵⁰⁰ Although such policy seemed to repeat some of the responsibilities of the

⁴⁹⁶ *Clouds* was allegedly still part of the programme after the military coup in 1967 (ANTG/BAAC, Session 16 May 1967, 1–2). However, when the State Orchestra of Los Angeles refused to perform at the Tower of the Winds (as it was scheduled), the authorities forced the National Theatre to postpone the performances of *Clouds* at the Odeon. However, due to bad weather conditions during the alternative dates, the Council decided to cancel it. Indicative of the Council’s inability to oppose the dictatorship’s decisions was Venezis’ declaration that ‘the National Theatre cannot refuse to satisfy the government’s desire regardless of the economic and artistic issues that may arise’ (‘τό Κρατικόν Θέατρον δέν δύναται να ἀρνηθῇ να ικανοποιήσῃ τήν ἐπιθυμίαν τῆς Κυβερνήσεως, ἀνεξαρτήτως ἂν δημιουργοῦνται, οὕτω ζητήματα τόσον οἰκονομικά ὅσον καί καλλιτεχνικά’, ANTG/BAAC, Session 20 May 1967, 2).

⁴⁹⁷ ANTG/BAAC, Session 4 September 1967, 1–2; Arvaniti 2015. Konstantinos Kafkas, President of the Supreme Civil and Criminal Court of Greece, was appointed President of the National Theatre (ANTG/BAAC, Session 20 June 1967, 1–2).

⁴⁹⁸ ANTG/BAAC, Session 22 September 1967, 1; Session 5 January 1968, 1–2.

⁴⁹⁹ ANTG/BAAC, Session 12 January 1968, 1; Session 19 January 1968, 7–8; Session 29 January 1968, 1; Session 29 March 1968, 5. See also Delipetrou 2016.

⁵⁰⁰ ‘νὰ λάβῃ παῖν πρόσφορον μέτρον’ (Emergency Law 98, FEK 140, 11 August 1967, 904).

Administrative Council, it implicitly established a first-stage censorship, according to which theatrical directors were deprived of freedom of expression. In fact, in contrast to Arvaniti's claim that the regime did not impose deliberate and systematic censorship,⁵⁰¹ two crucial mechanisms of control prevented misconducts without the need for direct intervention. These were the newly established Administrative Council and the legislative reform.

Following the summer season of 1967, the new Administrative Council was invited to elect the re-established Artistic Committee (Emergency Law 98, FEK 140, 11 August 1967). Under the new regulations, theatrical directors had to follow the original translation of the ancient plays without modifying any detail unless they communicated it to the general director.⁵⁰² Once the script was selected, the director submitted it to the state censorship board for inspection (Nitsos 1974, 107; Van Steen 2000, 181–5). Artistic productions were thoroughly controlled, and the theatrical directors had limited involvement in their ideological interpretation. In addition, the censorship of film and theatre was rigorously formalized by Emergency Law 394 (FEK 95, 4 May 1968), which specified the procedures for control of artistic production.

Under these circumstances, the theatrical directors often exercised self-censorship before the official control by the censorship committee (Van Steen 2015a, 116–20). During this period the performances adopted a conservative stance that protected the political legitimacy of the regime. For instance, even tragedies such as *Antigone* (1969), which could become a threat to the dictators' reputation, presented a cynical approach that vindicated Creon (Arvaniti 2015). At the same time, the major festivals of ancient drama were transformed into tourist celebrations that lacked theatrical determination. They also reproduced the kitsch perception of Greek antiquity that the dictatorship promulgated (Van Steen 2015b; Kourniakti 2017).

The increasing mechanization of the productions and the focus on the technical aspect of production (such as the monumental sets and sensationalist tricks), contributed to the *saturation* of the artistic performance (*Apogeumatini* 10 July 1969; MacCannell 1992, 243–53). In addition, superficial understanding of classical drama and grandiose performances were the principal

⁵⁰¹ Arvaniti (2015) incorrectly claims that the dictators' attempt to censor artistic expression was not systematically employed on the festivals of ancient drama because they did not wish to dispute with the directors of the National Theatre. She argues instead that preventive censorship was widely employed during the seven years of the dictatorship.

⁵⁰² ANTG/BAAC, Session 27 December 1967, 1–2.

features of the theatrical production in the dictatorship. During the organization of the summer season of 1968, the new Artistic Committee along with the theatrical directors agreed to put on plays that were never produced by the National Theatre or that many years had passed since their last staging.⁵⁰³ However, it rejected Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* for the Festival of Athens due to its political nature. To satisfy cultural demand, Mouzenidis suggested increasing the number of performances at the Odeon.⁵⁰⁴ Terzakis, who was serving as repertoire director at the time, organized the summer programme according to the practical needs and availability of the actors, actresses, chorus, and theatrical tradition of the play.⁵⁰⁵ Also, he thoroughly examined the compatibility of the selected dramas with the architectural features of the theatre of Epidauros and the Odeon of Herodes Atticus.

The most notorious case of ancient drama censorship under Papadopoulos' regime was the production of *Electra* under the direction of Mouzenidis in 1969. The authorities intervened because the costumes that Pavlos Mantoudis had designed diverged from the national aesthetics and theatrical tradition of classical drama. As they allegedly resembled matadors' costumes or traditional Balkan clothing, the general director and members of the Council, such as the archaeologist Foivos Stavropoulos, considered them inappropriate and requested to be redesigned. When Mantoudis refused to replace them with more 'appropriate' ones,⁵⁰⁶ Fotiadis assigned them to Klonis and later to Antonis Fokas.⁵⁰⁷ To adhere to the theatrical tradition of the National Theatre, the Council appealed to the legislation put forward by the regime. In particular, according to the Emergency Law 98 (FEK 140, 11 August 1967), if the Council noted 'any divergence from the established and respected principles, it had the right to demand compliance with them'.⁵⁰⁸ After

⁵⁰³ The debate was held in two sessions on 15 and 22 November (ANTG/BAACO, Session 15 November 1967, 1–6; Session 22 November 1967, 1–5).

⁵⁰⁴ ANTG/BAACO, Session 15 November 1967, 1–6.

⁵⁰⁵ ANTG/BAACO, Session 22 November 1967 1–5; Session 28 December 1967, 1.

⁵⁰⁶ To defend his position, Mantoudis dispatched an extrajudicial notice to the Council (*O Eleutheros Kosmos* 27 July 1969; Arvaniti 2015). Mouzenidis supported Mantoudis' costumes and his decision not to redesign them.

⁵⁰⁷ ANTG/BAAC, Session 30 July 1969, 2–3; *Makedonia* 7 August 1969, 2; *Empros* 9 August 1969, 2; *To Vima* 9 August 1969. For an insightful analysis of the incident, see also Arvaniti 2015.

⁵⁰⁸ 'τυχόν αποκλίσεις από τὰς καθιερωμένας καί παραδεδεγμένας ἀρχὰς δύναται νά ἀξιοῖ τήν συμμόρφωσιν τούτων πρὸς αὐτάς' (ANTG/BAAC, Session 30 July 1969, 2–3). Note that the Council paraphrased the law, but did not use it precisely.

the negotiations between the Council and the vice-minister of the Presidency, even though *Electra* was initially canceled,⁵⁰⁹ it was finally staged with new costumes that followed the traditional style of the National Theatre.

To prevent similar incidents, the dictatorial regime created a new unified mechanism of surveillance that controlled the artistic production of the national companies (National Theatre, National Opera, and National Theatre of Northern Greece). The Organization of State Theatres of Greece (Οργανισμός Κρατικών Θεάτρων Ελλάδος) was founded in February 1970 (Legislative Decree 447, FEK 41, 18 February 1970)⁵¹⁰ and reflected the centralization of power during the dictatorship. It depended on the Ministry of State,⁵¹¹ while the military officer Vasileios Paxinos was entrusted with its direction.⁵¹² This endeavour aimed at unifying theatrical expression by claiming the national continuity of Greek theatre from antiquity to modern times.⁵¹³ It also sought to homogenize the theatrical production of the major national companies and to create a national spectacle that fitted the ideological profile of the dictatorship.⁵¹⁴ Following the creation of the Organization, Vasileios Fraggos was appointed general director of the National Theatre.

⁵⁰⁹ *Electra* was initially replaced by Solomos' *Lysistrata* (ANTG/BAAC, Session 5 August 1969, 13–4).

⁵¹⁰ ANTG/BAAC, Session 17 December 1970, 84 (19) and 87 (22).

⁵¹¹ After its dissolution in 1973, the Organization came under the newly founded Ministry of Culture and Sciences (Legislative Decree 135, FEK 221, 21 September 1973).

⁵¹² Before assigning the position to Paxinos, Bastias was also a strong candidate for the direction of the Organization (See also Karaoglou 2009, 24–8).

⁵¹³ Meanwhile, the authorities resumed Bastias' prewar project at the Philopappos Hill; the theatre that Doxiadis began to construct in the 1930s and was abandoned soon later. Stikas proposed using its marble pieces for the restoration of the Odeon of Herodes Atticus in 1948 (DAHAAR, Box 605 C, Folder A (1954), Subfolder 3/36). It was fenced and remodeled in 1971 (ANTG/BAAC, Session 17 December 1970, 85 (20) and 92–3 (27–8)). Paxinos, Doxiadis, and the General Secretary of the GNTD, Michail Mpalopoulos (Philippidis 2015), agreed to complete the theatre and name it Open-Air Stage of the Koili Hill (Υπαίθρια Σκηνή του Λόφου Κοΐλης) (ANTG/BAAC, Session 8 January 1971, 117 (3); Session 14 January 1971, 149 (11)). However, the project was never completed.

⁵¹⁴ The Organization of State Theatres of Greece also planned to create a Centre of Ancient Drama Studies that would conduct theoretical and practical research (Karaoglou 2009, 24–8). The Centre would adopt the conservative and conformist stance of the National Theatre, and would reproduce a nationalized approach to ancient drama. Although the Organization of State Theatres of Greece produced an initial draft of the new institution, the project was abandoned principally due to the sociopolitical turmoil of 1973 (ANTG/BAAC, Session 6 February 1973, 190–3 (3–6)).

During this period, Mouzenidis' position was strengthened, and he gained the trust of the authorities, despite his leftist convictions (Arvaniti 2015, 393–4). However, the lack of artistic freedom became apparent in the case of Solomos in 1971. A conflict erupted when Solomos did not comply with the regulations during the preparations for the staging of the *Oresteia*. In particular, Fraggos filed a complaint against him, claiming that Solomos failed to provide the necessary information about the cast and avoided collaborating with him.⁵¹⁵ As the theatrical directors had to be carefully controlled, they had to work closely with the general director. Solomos' attempt to avoid it failed and Fraggos obliged him to apologize for his behavior by dispatching an apology letter to the Administrative Council.⁵¹⁶

The focus on the tourist character of the productions contributed to their low ideological impact. The number of performances increased significantly, and the principal theatrical directors contributed to the commercialization of the Festivals that were converted into fashionable tourist products (*To Vima* 22 July 1973; Arvaniti 2015, 367). Thus, they ceased aiming for intellectual stimulation and artistic quality, and focused on tourist attraction and pretentious grandiosity (Van Steen 2015a, 165–6; Kourniakti 2017).

In autumn 1973, when major cracks in the oppressive regime had already begun to show (Clogg 2021, 162), the National Theatre attempted to regain national prestige and reinstate some of its more valuable members, such as Synodinou⁵¹⁷ and Minotis. However, the most resounding production of the last years of the dictatorship was *Prometheus Bound*, under the direction of Mouzenidis. The censors underestimated the powerful parallelism of Prometheus' myth and the Greek sociopolitical reality (Van Steen 2015a, 125–33). Mouzenidis and the protagonist Manos Katrakis marked an emblematic performance that, according to Van Steen, 'symbolized renewed leftist dissidence' (2015a, 128). Katrakis converted the opening night into a call for freedom that empowered the impassioned audience. Thus, *Prometheus Bound* became the closing act for the dictatorial regime that united the Greek populace against its arbitrary power.

⁵¹⁵ ANTG/BAAC, Session 9 April 1971, 378–80 (9–11).

⁵¹⁶ ANTG/BAAC, Session 6 May 1971, 3–4.

⁵¹⁷ ANTG/BAAC, Session 23 October 1973, 61–2 (3–4). Synodinou's company Elliniki Skini was severely censored by the regime when a censor banned the production of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* in 1967 (Van Steen 2015a, 120–5).

Meanwhile, in June 1974, a draft of a new statute of the Organization of State Theatres of Greece was submitted to the dictatorial government.⁵¹⁸ However, following the overthrow of the regime in July, a legislative reform reinstated the autonomy of the National Theatre, the National Opera, and the National Theatre of Northern Greece. Also, the Administrative Councils and directors of the national organizations, including the National Theatre, were replaced (Legislative Decree 3, FEK 219, 9 August 1974).⁵¹⁹ During this period of democratic transition, Panagiotis Kamarineas was appointed provisional director of the National Theatre and officially terminated the dictatorial administration.⁵²⁰

The new Administrative Council of the National Theatre was appointed by the Minister of Education of Karamanlis' National Unity Government⁵²¹ and met for the first time on 24 September 1974.⁵²² In the first official sessions, the new Council set its objectives, decided to reinstate artists that were dismissed during the dictatorship,⁵²³ and agreed to collaborate with Solomos and Rondiris.⁵²⁴ In addition, the Minister of Education marked the course of the cultural expression in Greece, as he requested that the national organizations exchange personnel and collaborate closely.⁵²⁵ Koun's Theatro Technis would also put an end to the exclusivity of the National Theatre in Epidauros with an emblematic performance of *Birds* in 1975. In these terms, the conservative theatrical establishment that dominated the festivals of classical drama for decades began to exhibit a more pluralist character that reshaped the artistic production in post-1974 Greece and permitted different approaches and experiments.

⁵¹⁸ ANTG/BAAC, Session 11 June 1974, 9–38 (1–29).

⁵¹⁹ ANTG/BAAC, Session 14 August 1974, 187–90 (2–5).

⁵²⁰ ANTG/BAAC, Session 27 August 1974, 192–4 (1–3); Session 31 August 1974, 197–8 (2–3).

⁵²¹ The Organization of State Theatres of Greece was dissolved after the restoration of democracy (Legislative Decree 48, FEK 249, 17 September 1974).

⁵²² ANTG/BAAC, Session 24 September 1974, 2–3 (1–2). In the following session (26 September 1974) Alexis Minotis was elected general director. During this transitional period, Koun was temporarily appointed member of the Council (ANTG/BAAC, Session 26 September 1974, 4–5 (1–2)).

⁵²³ ANTG/BAAC, Session 7 October 1974, 6–7 (1–2).

⁵²⁴ ANTG/BAAC, Session 2 December 1974, 94–5 (2–3).

⁵²⁵ ANTG/BAAC, Session 9 December 1974, 110–1 (3–4).

5.4. New horizons for the Festival of Merida (1965–1975)

In 1965, the *Festivales de España* organized more than 500 festivals and 4.200 performances around Spain (*Hoja del Lunes Madrid* 7 June 1965, 6; *La Vanguardia* 11 July 1965, 51). Following this substantial increase in the number of events, the Festival of Merida renovated its repertoire and continued the artistic experimentation. This decision served two principal sociocultural purposes. First, in contrast to the dispute over the monopoly of the National Theatre's conservative repertoire in the major ancient venues in Greece (Chardas 2019), the Spanish cultural authorities systematically attempted to fuse music (opera) and theatre into monumental productions. Secondly, as Spain attempted to attract foreign tourism, it pursued a cultural dialogue with international artistic expressions after decades of isolation (Pack 2006, 139–53). For example, the musicologist Federico Sopena claimed that the Spanish festivals intended to

‘combine an interest in music and an interest in theatre [...] The restoration or the revival of the taste for opera must be inseparable from scenic refinement [...] The theatrical productions within the concept of the “Festival” have been always characterized by this scenic and musical duality’.⁵²⁶

Therefore, unlike the Festival of Epidauros that maintained a rigid strategy concerning the staging of classical theatre, the Spanish renovation of the festivals of ancient drama reattracted public interest. In particular, a concert by the Spanish Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra and Friedrich Dürrenmatt's comedy *Romulus the Great*, directed by José Osuna,⁵²⁷ marked the new horizons for the theatrical tradition of Merida in 1965 (*La Vanguardia* 17 June 1965, 9). *Romulus the Great* enjoyed international popularity and exhibited universal values, as it depicted the human side of political leaders in a humorous way (*La Vanguardia* 11 July 1965, 51). At the same time, Merida continued to attract political representatives; Minister Fraga Iribarne attended the performance and inspected the tourist facilities of the city, such as the *Parador Nacional* (*Diario de Burgos* 20 June 1965, 1; *La Vanguardia* 20 June 1965, 7).

⁵²⁶ ‘conjugar el interés por la música y el interés por el teatro [...] la restauración o la renovación del gusto por la ópera debe ser inseparable de un refinamiento escénico [...] Los montajes teatrales dentro del concepto del “festival” se han caracterizado siempre por esta doble escénica y musical’ (*ABC Madrid* 24 June 1966, 122).

⁵²⁷ Osuna worked in Tamayo's company, Compañía Lope de Vega, at the time.

The following year, the authorities retained the same orientation, while Tamayo's Compañía Lope de Vega did not participate for the first time after 1958. The Spanish Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra executed the Catalan cantata *Atlántida* (Figure 23), while the Italian Opera Company performed Haendel's *Julius Caesar* (*ABC Madrid* 18 June 1966, 120; Compañía Lope de Vega, 1966; *La Vanguardia* 26 June 1966, 65). Intellectuals, artists, and socialites attended the glamorous events, which attracted a lot of media attention (*Arriba* 18 June 1966; *ABC Madrid* 22 June 1966, 121) and sparked the authorities' enthusiasm.⁵²⁸

One of the characteristics that the performances of Mérida never abandoned was the appropriation of the site as a national capital. The selection of *Atlántida* exemplifies such a national approach and echoes the Spanish sociopolitical history of the first half of the 20th century. The



Figure 23. Photograph of the Spanish Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra performing Manuel de Falla's and Ernesto Halffter's cantata *Atlántida* (1966). Francisco Padilla, Roman Art National Museum (Archivo Fotográfico MNAR), 55-XIX-23.

⁵²⁸ GAA, Box 52.20, 62279 (1966), Folder Badajoz, Subfolder 'Festivales de España', 1966 Mérida.

Catalan poem *L' Atlántida*, written by Jacint Verdaguer in 1877, was converted into the opera *Atlántida* by Manuel de Falla and his disciple, Ernesto Halffter. The play contained a Hispanic pastiche of mythological elements and historical events that included the battle between Hercules and Geryon, the Garden of the Hesperides, the Atlantes, and the Titans. The plot connected these mythical elements with Queen Elizabeth's dream, Cristobal Columbus, and the European colonization of the Americas, in a monumental scene that identified the Americas with the mythical Atlantis (*ABC Madrid* 23 June 1966, 121; Weber 2014).

Although Pemán did not participate in the festival, he had a close relationship with de Falla and had converted him into the 'national musician' of Franco's regime. Despite the composer's feeble resistance, Pemán had constructed Falla's public persona and had identified him as a fierce defender of Franco's military coup. Since Pemán had served as Minister of Culture in Franco's illegitimate government during the Civil War, he had forced de Falla to publish the military anthem *Himno Marcial* and had intervened in its redaction. Pemán had a profound knowledge of *Atlántida*, as he accompanied de Falla in its composition (Pemán 1998, 179–81). De Falla had become a national composer whose artistic production was exploited by the dictatorial regime (Moreda-Rodríguez 2013). On this basis, the staging of his *Atlántida* in Merida reflected a nationalized perception of culture and indicated the powerful ideological influence of the dictatorship on theatre.

Tamayo returned to Merida for the summer season of 1967 and staged *Retablo Jovial*, a humorous Spanish play. The production offered the opportunity to experiment with a modern play written by Alejandro Casona (*La Vanguardia* 6 June 1967, 53). Although theatre critics initially praised the spectacle (*Hoja del Lunes Madrid* 29 May 1967, 5), considering the low attendance, the public did not appreciate it (*ABC Madrid* 26 July 1967, 75).

The Festival of Merida was cancelled for three consecutive summer seasons (1968, 1969, and 1970) because of restoration works at the theatre.⁵²⁹ Architect José Menéndez-Pidal Álvarez was in charge of the extensive intervention that involved the reconstruction of the second line of

⁵²⁹ The initial project was submitted in 1963 and, after preliminary classification of the original material, the restoration works began in 1967 (Morán Sánchez 2018, 235–6). The Provincial Deputation momentarily contemplated celebrating the festival at the amphitheatre in 1967 (DAPDB/BA, Session 17 March 1967, 21vt; 25 April 1967, 40).

pillars on top of the first story of the proscenium (Morán Sánchez 2018, 234–40).⁵³⁰ However, despite the restoration, the Provincial Deputation and the Ministry of Information and Tourism initiated a project that involved the live national broadcasting of the performances using audiovisual equipment of the *Televisión Española* (Spanish Television) in 1968.⁵³¹ This endeavour would not only increase revenues but would also convert the classical theatre into a site of national reach. However, the central authorities finally had to suspend it due to the restoration and rejected requests to perform at the theatre. In particular, in a surprising decision, the Provincial Deputation rejected Guillén de Castro's *Las Mocedades del Cid* and Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, claiming that ancient Greek drama corresponded better with the classical theatre.⁵³² The same occurred in 1970 when the ongoing works obliged to cancel the emblematic revival of Unamuno's *Medea*.⁵³³

Following a long period of bureaucratic disputes between the Ministry and the regional authorities, which momentarily seemed to suspend the festival for another year,⁵³⁴ the company of María Guerrero put on Pemán's *Antigone* at the restored theatre in 1971.⁵³⁵ The tragedy was performed under the direction of José Luis Alonso Mañes (*Diario de Burgos* 27 July 1971, 17)⁵³⁶ and the municipal authorities were in charge of the logistics.⁵³⁷ The extraordinary success of the performances, which captivated theatre critics and the public, inspired Spanish intellectuals to call for a reorientation of the festival towards an international scope (*ABC Madrid* 21 July 1971, 17; *ABC Madrid* 14 August 1971, 3). For instance, Pemán exalted the symbolic nature of Merida as a

⁵³⁰ DAPDB/BA, Session 29 May 1964, 38vt; Session 27 October 1967, 94.

⁵³¹ DAPDB/BA, Session 27 February 1968, 12vt.

⁵³² DAPDB/BA, Session 29 November 1968, 98vt; Session 31 March 1969, 25vt; Session 28 April 1969, 47vt–48.

⁵³³ DAPDB/BA, Session 19 December 1970, 140vt.

⁵³⁴ MHAM/LGM/BA/P, Session 24 March 1971, 18v; 15 April 1971, 31v; MHAM/LGM/BA/PG, Session 11 May 1971, 35.

⁵³⁵ MHAM/LGM/BA/PG, Session 6 July 1971, 69.

⁵³⁶ Alonso was the director of the Theatre María Guerrero from 1960 to 1975. His productions challenged the limits of the theatrical freedom in Franco's Spain since his republican past and controversial dramas (Ionesco, Camus, Brecht) often attracted the attention of the censors.

⁵³⁷ MHAM/LGM/BA/PG, Session 25 August 1971, 86.

site of eternal value and proposed the increase of annual performances (*ABC Madrid* 21 July 1971, 3).

Despite the media success, Alonso commented on the abuse of power that his *Antigone* represented: ‘it is terrible that after 24 centuries we continue to speak about tyranny and abuse of power’.⁵³⁸ Alonso used the tragic confrontation of Antigone and Creon to refer to the censorship mechanisms of Franco’s dictatorship, as one of his productions was censored some months before. The play was Brecht’s *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, which Alonso attempted to put on at various venues around Spain. When Pemán discussed the incident, he proudly claimed:

‘I held the opinion that Brecht is a highly intellectual author whose “communism” has its dangers [...] Brecht could not go out into the provinces as a comedy writer. I always respect the governmental approaches, and I assume that our rectors are much better informed than I am about the degrees of social danger’.⁵³⁹

Although conservative cultural authorities such as Pemán continued to participate in the festivals, directors and companies that belonged to a new generation began to push the limits of the regime and express their liberal artistic approach.

Modern operas and concerts were integral parts of the Festival of Merida in 1972 and 1973. They dominated the festival with ballet and music spectacles performed by the companies *Perú Negro*, *Ballets Félix Blaska*, and *Sofia Opera*. Their performances at the Roman theatre corresponded to the international character that the authorities pursued. However, the experimentation with the theatrical repertoire that began in the 1960s ended in 1974. The ancient drama returned to Merida and re-established a classical orientation during the 1970s. In particular,

⁵³⁸ ‘es terrible que al cabo de veinticuatro siglos se siga hablando de tiranía y de abuso del poder’ (*Diario de Burgos* 12 September 1971, 22).

⁵³⁹ ‘sostuve la opinión de que Brecht es un autor intelectualísimo cuyo “comunismo” tiene su peligrosidad [...] No pudo salir Brecht a provincias como comediógrafo. Yo siempre respeto los planteamientos gubernativos, y supongo que nuestros rectores auscultan con mucha mejor información que yo los grados del peligro social’ (*ABC Madrid* 14 August 1971, 3).

the company Angel Guimerá of the National Theatre of Barcelona put on Euripides' *The Trojan Women*⁵⁴⁰ under the direction of Esteban Polls (*La Vanguardia* 8 June 1974, 52).

Tamayo returned to Merida in 1975, after another long period of absence, and repeated the *Oresteia* in Pemán's adaptation (*Hoja del Lunes Madrid* 23 June 1975, 11). It was an emblematic production that reworked the successful spectacles of 1959–1960⁵⁴¹ and commemorated the 2000-year anniversary of the foundation of the Roman city of Merida.⁵⁴² The performance took place at the theatre and amphitheatre, and Tamayo used over 100 extras (*La Vanguardia* 20 June 1975, 59; *ABC Madrid* 24 June 1975, 79). The Minister of Housing, Luis Rodriguez Miguel attended the premiere and participated in the official festive illumination of the monuments, accompanied by national and regional officials (*ABC Madrid* 22 June 1975 20; *Hoja del Lunes Barcelona* 23 June 1975, 8).

By 1975, public perception of classical theatre in Spain had shifted. A few years after the restoration of the theatre of Merida, and despite the fact that Tamayo continued to produce new performances (*ABC Sevilla* 10 June 1975, 90), the public had begun to reject his repetitive staging of ancient drama. Only Pemán continued to advocate the authentic character and national significance of classical theatre (*ABC Madrid* 26 June 1975, 5). The transition to democracy after Franco's death in November 1975 offered a unique opportunity for organizing a pluralist spectacle that captivated the Spanish and international public.

⁵⁴⁰ A free adaptation by Oscar Saenz.

⁵⁴¹ For audiovisual documentation, see RTVE <https://www.rtve.es/filmoteca/no-do/not-1696/1469403/>; *ABC Madrid* 24 June 1975, 81; *ABC Madrid* 19 June 1975, 7.

⁵⁴² DAPDB/BA, Session 27 September 1974, 246vt; MHAM/LGM/BA/PG Session 21 January 1975, 160v.

Conclusions

My initial aim was to revisit the artistic, ideological, and social factors that determined how the revival of classical theatre was interwoven with sociopolitical powerhouses. To this end, I have explored a selected body of theatrical performances that paralleled the sociopolitical realities of European modernity from the late 19th century up to the 1970s. As has been demonstrated, institutional and political power lay at the heart of these theatrical productions.

The main contribution of this thesis to performance reception in the 20th century is the use of archival material to conduct a comparative analysis of the revival of classical theatre. I suggest that theatrical traditions of classical drama across the Mediterranean depended on interconnections and social or artistic influences. These interconnections created multiple theatrical endeavours that coexisted within an international milieu. Thus, I have re-evaluated the production of classical drama in Spain and Greece, considering the Italian example as a model for their theatrical tradition in the early decades of the 20th century. In particular, I have demonstrated that the Spanish and Greek cases developed in parallel and addressed similar sociopolitical concerns. At the same time, the predominance of institutional archaeology over local experiential engagement with heritage greatly affected public reception of these productions and their transformation into national heritage. When annual classical drama festivals were created in the 1950s, these theatrical traditions mirrored the historical realities of each country and shaped the staging of classical drama.

Performances in Greece and Spain transformed ancient theatres into spaces of sociopolitical powerhouses that generate collective narratives and gestures, and reinforce pre-established truth regimes about the nation, its past and its present. This thesis commenced by looking at the modern use of ancient venues in the late 19th century. During this period, national ideals began to be consolidated and classical culture became a fundamental component of European modernity. The emergence of institutional archaeology played a decisive role in this relationship, as archaeologists systematically excavated and restored these historical monuments in the second half of the 19th century. I suggest that these practices ascribed *auratic* qualities and

heterotopic dimensions to ancient theatres, transforming them into authentic monuments to a collective past.

The theatrical production of classical drama in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was sporadic and multifaceted. The emergence of a Romantic theatrical tradition of classical drama in Germany and France became a model for similar endeavours throughout Europe. However, it was the Italian example of Syracuse that profoundly influenced the theatrical revival in Greece and Spain from 1914 onwards. From a comparative viewpoint, it could be argued that Syracuse's regional focus and international reach were systematically appropriated by both countries.

Theatre companies in Greece inaugurated a theatrical tradition following these European examples and regarded classical culture as national heritage and proof of ancestral glory. Christomanos' intellectual initiative, Mistriotis' archaeolatric staging, and the newly founded Royal Theatre of Greece introduced classical drama to the Greek public. A little later, Marika Kotopouli began to forge international contacts with representatives of the Festival of Syracuse and contributed to the systematic staging of classical drama in Greece. Most theatrical endeavours of the period viewed ancient theatres as authentic venues where ancient drama should be staged since they represented symbolic continuity from classical antiquity to the modern Greek state.

Despite Spain's belated commitment to the classical ideal, intellectuals, artists, and classicists began to actively engage with classical drama in the late 19th century. Following European models of interpretation and translation, they hesitantly started staging performances of classical drama in an academic context. Translations of Plautus and Sophocles created a limited theatrical corpus, while intellectual engagement with Seneca forged a national landmark. In the meantime, classical antiquity was symbolically appropriated to create national myths such as the sieges of Numantia and Saguntum.

This cultural development turned public attention to ancient theatres, many of which were situated in peripheral locations. In the following decades, the response of local communities engendered a distinctive use of classical culture in Greece and Spain, where performances of ancient drama eventually shaped regional perceptions of heritage. In the initial stages of this tradition, the presence of local archaeologies through everyday use of archaeological sites by local communities was at odds with the staging of national or symbolic productions that sought to present national heritage sites as proof of the countries' commitment to modernity. The Delphic

Festivals introduced a spiritual approach to ancient Greek tragedy that adopted native features and shaped the legacy of classical drama performances for decades. In Greece, ideological motives generated dynamic relationships between locals and the festivals, and expectations of development ensured their enthusiastic reception.

Meanwhile, following a long tradition of regional productions at the theatre of Merida in Spain that began with Mérida's conference in 1914, intellectuals systematically called for a theatrical revival of classical drama in emulation of the examples of Syracuse and Delphi. Staging Greco-Roman drama at the theatre of Merida offered an opportunity for artistic development in the country and had the potential to create a regional landmark. The Republican revival of 1933 in Merida clearly alluded to an ancient intellectual past, and the theatre's long history of redeployment had already established it as a venue for national cultural expression. These events transformed Merida into a peripheral town of archaeological attraction, and despite the practical difficulties posed by its remoteness, it became a destination for the Spanish intellectual bourgeoisie of the early 20th century. Thus, even though public response and collective identification did not always synchronize with national expectations, the theatre's connection with European modernity was acclaimed by the liberal bourgeoisie, whose identification with classical antiquities was based on Romantic nostalgia.

The ultimate failure to classify productions staged at Merida as national projects for the general populace reflects the lack of an uncontested, centralized power promoting classical antiquities in Spain. Rather, productions reflected limited, intermittent cultural interests together with certain ideological values. This explains why only particular ancient dramas were selected to represent national aspirations and political values. For example, Seneca's *Medea* and Hofmannsthal's *Elektra* became representatives of a desired national past, their selection determined by a fusion of contemporary, social, and theatrical interests. The political orientation of classical drama as republican theatre shaped its public reception and legacy. The fundamental significance of these performances lies in the social and cultural interconnections that were balanced between regional and national celebrations and the theatrical expression of Spanish modernity.

When Ioannis Metaxas established a dictatorial regime in Greece, a new authoritarian perception of arts and culture standardized national productions at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus

and Epidaurus, at the initiative of director Kostis Bastias. In particular, in the case of Epidaurus, Bastias organized a national event that introduced Rondiris as the principal Greek theatrical director of classical drama in 1938. International success not only led to aggressive modernization of the theatre's physical surroundings in the following decades but also shaped the everyday life and occupation of the surrounding communities.

In the cases of Epidaurus and Merida, national claims included a politicized perception of collective identity that revolved around historical sites in a quest for national unity in the 1930s. These claims subordinated the locals' involvement in the productions, suppressing alternative perspectives. Nevertheless, despite the ideological aims of the producers, the locals considered the reuse of the theatres a unique opportunity for modern development in their remote villages and proudly identified themselves as the natural caretakers of these historical monuments.

After the Spanish Civil War and during the Second World War, theatrical production in occupied Greece and under Franco's dictatorship in Spain implied not only an artistic statement but also a political demonstration of the interconnection between power and aesthetics. Classical culture provided enlightening insights into the ideological appropriation of ancient monuments during this period. Following a series of legislative reforms affecting the management and administration of cultural institutions, classical theatre in Greece and Spain served the ideological interests of a totalitarian view of culture, projecting the authority of the Axis powers and Franco's regime, respectively.

For instance, the collaborationist director of the National Theatre of Greece, Nikolaos Giokarinis, systematically promoted a fascist aesthetic expression. Even though the National Theatre continued to hold its summer season festivals, Axis micro-management and vigilance had destroyed free artistic expression. German sociocultural authority during the war sought to disseminate the symbolic nature of Greek heritage among German citizens. While the Axis powers conquered Greece through war and culture, reuse of the Odeon of Herodes Atticus helped to achieve yet another goal. Nazi intellectuals aspired to present Germany as the true successor of Greek antiquity and sole heir to its classical aesthetics. In so doing, they hoped to legitimize occupation of the mythical Aryan homelands and the demand for living space – *Lebensraum* – in the immediate present and the future.

Under the fascist rule in Italy, appropriation of Roman antiquity by the *Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico* yielded notorious productions that showcased fascist identification with power. The aestheticization of politics dominated all aspects of civil life and became a crucial factor in control of the masses. Similarly, in Spain, the Falange political party became the principal fascist representative of Franco's regime. It emulated Mussolini's totalitarian perception of the classical past and appropriated the idea of a powerful empire. Although theatrical activity of the period was scarce in Spain, Roman antiquity played a central role in the Falange's cultural politics until 1942 and became a source of militaristic authority. In particular, classical monuments – especially the theatre of Merida – acquired a powerful symbolic nature in productions organized by fascist institutions. Classical theatre and public events that took place there in the early years of the regime were related to the totalitarian authority of the Falange and the fascist perception of *romanità*.

I contend that after the Second World War, the political authorities in Greece and Spain employed classical tradition to create national myths and legends. Emblematic performances echoed a nationalist, anti-communist perception of classical drama that dominated early post-war theatrical activity of the early post-war period. This authoritarian appropriation of classical culture engendered thanatopolitical strategies that determined who had the right to belong to the national body. In addition, internal disputes, confrontations, and power relations standardized the national approach to classical theatre and its principal representatives in the two countries. The National Theatre of Greece and the Compañía Lope de Vega in Spain dominated the theatrical tradition and shaped conservative artistic production in the 1950s and 1960s.

An argument that permeates my entire thesis is that in the 20th century, classical theatres were transformed from ancient monuments into modern venues with a tourism infrastructure. Further archaeological intervention in Greco-Roman theatres completed this transformation and consolidated their cosmopolitan nature. Thus, institutional policies standardized the theatrical tradition of classical drama in the post-war period; the close relationship between tourism and the need for a national culture spurred the creation modern facilities at the major ancient theatres. When American economic aid to Europe provided the conditions for sociocultural development in the Mediterranean, ancient theatres began to be reconceptualized.

While mass culture appeared at the point of intersection between generic fascism and modernism from the 1920s onward, in post-war theatre it was re-established as a manifestation and democratization of modern public space. In this context, the *festivalization* of culture created bourgeois festivals with international appeal that also engaged the general public in Greece and Spain. In particular, these festivals not only encapsulated the idea of mass culture but also fostered a stardom system that reinforced the cosmopolitan façade of classical theatre. While artistic and (inter)national developments interconnected to create landmark productions, their nature was conditioned by social conservatism and political constraints.

Aimilios Hourmouzios' position as director of the National Theatre marked a period of moderate theatrical production that involved new productions, venues, and collaborations. Furthermore, the repertoire of the 1950s and early 1960s exhibited the particularities of each classical theatre. The theatre of Epidauros retained its prominent position in the theatrical tradition of the National Theatre, while the theatres of Dodona, Thorikos, and Argos adopted a local or regional vocation. At the same time, the theatre of Delphi preserved the ritualistic nature attributed to it by Eva Palmer and Angelos Sikelianos.

The same occurred in Spain, where Merida hosted national productions at the Roman theatre and amphitheatre. In contrast, the theatres of Sagunto and Malaga exhibited a regional vocation in keeping with their architectural constraints. José Tamayo and José María Pemán inaugurated a mass event that focused on monumentalization, grandiosity, and poetic pomp. Despite the conservative style of these endeavours, the participation of renowned actors and actresses in Merida popularized the festival, while the national press extolled it as a major tourist event. When, in 1963, the Festival of Merida was included among the *Festivales de España*, the aim was to extend its reach to the European public.

The repetitive theatrical style that the National Theatre of Greece and the Compañía Lope de Vega standardized in the 1950s started to become outmoded in the early 1960s. The festivals needed to renovate the productions they stage by finding new ways to engage with ancient venues and classical culture. The artistic response to this theatrical *saturation* focused on music, an alternative repertoire, and the inclusion of new companies. While the National Theatre of Greece continued to monopolize the Festival of Epidauros and the other major festivals, the Greek National Tourism Organization gradually introduced new features into artistic expression.

Companies such as Theatro Technis and Piraikon Theatron increased their presence at important festivals and took part in popular theatrical productions in Greece. In Spain, the break with the previous period was more drastic as new artistic approaches challenged Tamayo's and Pemán's leading role in classical drama festivals. The staging of modern dramas or musical productions served to renovate the Spanish stage in Merida and Sagunto, while the participation of new theatrical directors in emblematic productions introduced new approaches to classical theatre.

I have also explored the authoritarian intervention of the dictatorial regimes of Greece and Spain in the staging of classical theatre. The dictatorial coup of April 1967 inaugurated a period of ideological constraint, authoritarianism, and political intervention in theatrical expression in Greece, and performances at the Festival of Epidauros were systematically censored. In contrast, the Spanish dictatorship had by this time entered a period of gradual liberalization. This did not mean that censorship and centralized control ceased; rather, the companies that had dominated the theatrical stage in the 1950s gradually gave way to new directors who introduced new productions and theatrical styles.

Overall, I have demonstrated that the staging of Greco-Roman drama in the 20th century closely mirrored the sociopolitical shifts and historical realities of each country. An examination of the relationship among theatrical companies, political agents, and national institutions reveals that the modern use of ancient venues was highly politicized. This political nature fundamentally affected repertoire, style, and public engagement with the Greco-Roman monuments. The perception of classical theatre as symbolic capital in pre-World War Two Europe gave way to conservative productions conceived in response to the demands of tourism and sociopolitical constraints in Greece and Spain. In theatrical terms, the repertoire and orientation of classical drama festivals also depended on international trends, while power relationships between national companies and institutions determined the course of these theatrical traditions.

An exhaustive account of the classical theatre revival in the selected countries is beyond the scope of this thesis. Although I examine 20th century theatrical production as a whole, I have focused on emblematic performances and projects that exemplify the sociopolitical circumstances underpinning this revival. In doing so, I have had to omit, summarize, or only briefly address events that had enjoyed a significant afterlife. Such is the case of the Festival of Athens, which I have only fragmentarily analyzed, and the theatrical productions by directors such as Karolos

Koun, Marika Kotopouli, Anna Synodinou, Linos Karzis, Maria Guerrero, and Margarita Xirgu, who greatly contributed to the staging of classical theatre. In addition, it has not been possible to discuss the productions in theatres other than Syracuse in Italy in any depth. My geographical framework has excluded countries such as Portugal, Turkey, Jordan, Bulgaria, where ancient theatres also began to be systematically reused in the 20th century, and in the case of France, Germany, and Britain, I have only occasionally addressed significant productions, artistic movements, and sociopolitical influences. Lastly, although the archival evidence that I consulted is extensive and multifaceted, it is by no means exhaustive. New material may reveal fascinating unexplored areas of the reception of Greco-Roman theatre in the 20th century and provide novel engaging narratives.

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AAH/ELIA-MIET	Archive of Aimilios Hourmouzos, Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive - National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (Ελληνικό Λογοτεχνικό και Ιστορικό Αρχείο - Μορφωτικό Ίδρυμα Εθνικής Τραπέζης), Performing Arts Department.
AEFA	Archive of the École Française d' Athènes.
AID/GSAG	Archive of Ioannis Damvergis, General State Archives of Greece.
AIL	Archive of the Istituto Luce – https://www.archivioluce.com/ .
AKK/ASCSA	Archive of Konstantinos Karavidas, American School of Classical Studies at Athens.
AKPAM/ELIA-MIET	Archive of Katina Paxinou and Alexis Minotis, Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive - National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (Ελληνικό Λογοτεχνικό και Ιστορικό Αρχείο - Μορφωτικό Ίδρυμα Εθνικής Τραπέζης), Performing Arts Department.
AKT/ASCSA	Archive of Konstantinos Tsatsos, American School of Classical Studies at Athens – https://www.ascsa.edu.gr/archives/cit-box-63-f-1 .
ANTG/BAAC	Archive of the National Theatre of Greece, Book of Acts of the Administrative Council.
ANTG/BAACO	Archive of the National Theatre of Greece, Book of Acts of the Artistic Committee.

ANTG/BAAD	Archive of the National Theatre of Greece, Book of Acts of the Artistic Direction.
CDAEM	Centre for the Documentation of the Performing Arts and Music (Centro de Documentación de las Artes Escénicas y de la Música) – http://cdaem.mcu.es/ .
DAHAAR/DANAM	Department for the Administration of the Historical Archive of Antiquities and Restorations, Directorate for the Administration of the National Archive of Monuments - Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports.
DANTG	Digital Archive of the National Theatre of Greece – http://www.nt-archive.gr/ .
DAPDB/BA	Digital Archive of the Provincial Deputation of Badajoz, Book of Acts – https://www.dip-badajoz.es/cultura/archivo/index.php?seleccion=digital .
DCRAHM	Directorate of Conservation and Restoration of Ancient and Historic Monuments - Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports.
DLMG	Digital Library Miguel de Cervantes – http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/ .
DRA/MLP	Dimitris Rondiris Archive, Municipal Library of Piraeus – https://rondiris.piraeus.gov.gr .
ESA/BM	Eva Sikelianos Archive, Benaki Museum.
GAA	General Archive of the Administration, State Archives - Spanish Ministry of Culture and Sport
HANBG	Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece.

HNAA	Hellenic National AudioVisual Archive – http://www.avarchive.gr .
MAM	Municipal Archive of Malaga.
MAM/LGM/BA/PG	Municipal Archive of Malaga, Local Government of Malaga, Book of Acts, Permanent Government Commission.
MAS/LGS/BA/P	Municipal Archive of Sagunto, Local Government of Sagunto, Book of Acts, Plenary – http://www.aytosagunto.es .
MHAM/LGM/BA/P	Municipal Historical Archive of Merida, Local Government of Merida, Book of Acts, Plenary.
MHAM/LGM/BA/PG	Municipal Historical Archive of Merida, Local Government of Merida, Book of Acts, Permanent Government Commission.
RTVE	Spanish Radio and Television Corporation (Radiotelevisión Española) – http://www.rtve.es/filmoteca/ and https://www.rtve.es/play .
VA	Digital Archive of the National Research Foundation ‘Eleftherios K. Venizelos’ – http://www.venizelosarchives.gr .

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