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THE ROMAN THEATRE IN PAROICOPOLIS/ PARTHICOPOLIS AND ITS HISTORICAL FORTUNE

The ancient city under Sandanski

The modern town of Sandanski is built amphitheatrically on the extreme south-western slopes of the mountain Pirin, from the top of the hills down to the river of Sandanska Bistritza. Then, following its stream to the south, the houses reach almost to the river Struma, Strymon in antiquity. The town is famous with its good geographic and climate data and with many thermal sources and spa.

The ancient city under Sandanski is situated in the ultimate north-eastern part of the Roman province Macedonia, formed in 148 BC, with the possible successive names Desudaba, Alexandropolis and Paroicopolis¹, the last name known up to the third quarter of 1st century AD. The dynasty of the Flavians had a special interest towards the Balkan provinces and particularly Thrace and Macedonia². The new colony Scupi (today Skopie) in Upper Moesia was founded during the time of Domitian, probably immediately accompanied by creation of the urban plan and the building of the theatre³. The presence of the VIIth Claudian legion, camping there, in our opinion helped in a definite way this building. The citizens there needed entertainments too at the time when in Rome the biggest amphitheatre, the Colosseum, was erected by the Flavians.

¹ Liv. XLV, 18, 3 –5; XLV, 29, 1; Diod. XXXI 8, 5-8; Г. Митрев, *Долината на Струма през античността. Племена и селища*. Асеновград 2012, 136-143.

² The first colony Flavia Pacis Deultensium in Thrace was created in June, 71 (See: S. Petrova. *The capital of roman-Ionic order from Deultum*. In: The roman and late roman city. The International Conference (Veliko Turnovo 26-30 July 2000). Sofia 2002, 361). In the same period was given the Roman citizenship to Flavius Dizalas, who ruled over at least 8 strategies and was the governor of Nicopolis (ad Nestum) in Thrace, situated not far, east of Paroicopolis.

³ T. H. Watkins. *Roman Legionary Fortresses and the Cities of Modern Europe*. In: Military Affairs, Vol. 47, No. 1 (Feb., 1983), 22 and note 37. R. Syme, A. R. Birley. *The provincial at Rome: and Rome and the Balkans*. University of Exeter Press, 1999, 130; A. Mócsy. *Pannonia and Upper Moesia*. History of the provinces of the Roman Empire. Vol. 4, Routledge & K. Paul, 1974, 115-118.

It was a general building policy of this dynasty to create new cities, with adequately new urban plans, including as well theatres. During the same period, probably at Domitian, the theatre in Philippopolis was built⁴. Concerning the ancient city under Sandanski, Marcus Petronius Pudes is one of the first veterans, settled in the environment of Paroicopolis in the same period between 70 and 79⁵.

It is generally accepted that the city got the new name Parthicopolis in the first decades of 2nd century⁶, because this name is to be met for the first time in the sources at the emperor Hadrian. It probably originates from the title „Parthicus”⁷ of Trajan, given to him in honor of his victories over the Parthians

⁴ И. Топалилов. *Римският Филипопол. Топография, градоустройство и архитектура*. Т. I, В. Търново 2012, 133.

⁵ See: В. Герасимова-Томова. *Паметник на преторианец от района на Средна Струма*. – In: Музеи и паметници на културата № 4, 1973, 9–11.

⁶ For more details see: S. Petrova. *On Early Christianity and Early Christian Basilicas of Parthicopolis*. – In: Studi sull’Oriente Cristiano. Accademia Angelica’ Constantiniiana di lettere arti e scienze. Roma 161, 2012, 93-139; S. Petrova, V. Petkov. *Παροικοπολις–Пар-θикополиς*. S. Petrova. II. Name of the City and Literary Sources. – In: Thracian, Greek, Roman and Medieval Cities, Residences and Fortresses (ed. R. Ivanov), Sofia, 2015, 345-354 and the cited there literature.

⁷ The other possibilities of connecting the title „Parthicus maximus” with some of the next emperors, victors in other Parthian wars (see: D. Kienast. *Römische Keisertabelle*. Darmstadt 1990, 123, 137, 139, 156, 163, 216, 228, 232), should be omitted since all they are later than the first appearing of the name in the sources. Three inscriptions are giving important data for the development of the city. The first one is the letter-answer from 158 of Antoninus Pius, pointing to the increased number of the boule’s members and to a well built system of its governing. On their turn they suppose an organized city with an agora and public buildings around. While Trajan has given the new name and has begun the urbanization, Hadrian continued and strengthened this process and later it was not difficult for Antoninus Pius to allow the increasing the number of the city council’s members. The second inscription is dated to the time of Caracalla. The whole *titulature* is preserved, but too little from the text remained, addressed to a *koinon*, probably the Macedonian one, whose seat at that time was Beroe (today Vereia). In another inscription of the same time the *boule* was called “the most mighty” („κράτιστη Βουλῆ”), similarly to Beroe, Thessalonica and Stobi. Prof. V. Velkov supposes in the case of the inscription of Caracalla, that maybe the emperor answers a question put by the *koinon*, concerning all the cities-members of it, or only Parthicopolis. The author also considers that the inscription deals with the building of a new *agora* in the city (see: В. Велков, *Нови епиграфски данни за античната история на град Сандански*. – In: Известия на Археологическия Институт, София 24, 1961, 257). The third inscription supports to some extent the hypothesis of V. Velkov for building a new *agora*, speaking of the erecting of a new *stoa*. But in our opinion it may concern a new additional *stoa* to the already existing one at the *agora*. According to the first publisher this inscription is either from the time of Caracalla or Elagabal (А. Димитрова, *Епиграфски данни за стоата на античния град при Сандански (III в.на н.е.)*. – In: Археология 1982, 1, 53-57). Prof. B. Gerov also considers that the site under the modern town of Sandanski cannot be defied as a *politia* of Greek type before the age of Trajan (Б. Геров. *Проучвания върху западнотракийските земи през римско време*. – In: Годишник на Софийския Университет, Факултет по западни филологии, 54, 3, 1961, 193-194). Having in mind the urbanization policy of Trajan, who has founded many new cities on the Balkans and has renamed the old existing Thracian ones, the hypothesis of giving the name Parthicopolis namely by him is more logical. The problem of appearing of the new name Parthicopolis will be categorically confirmed

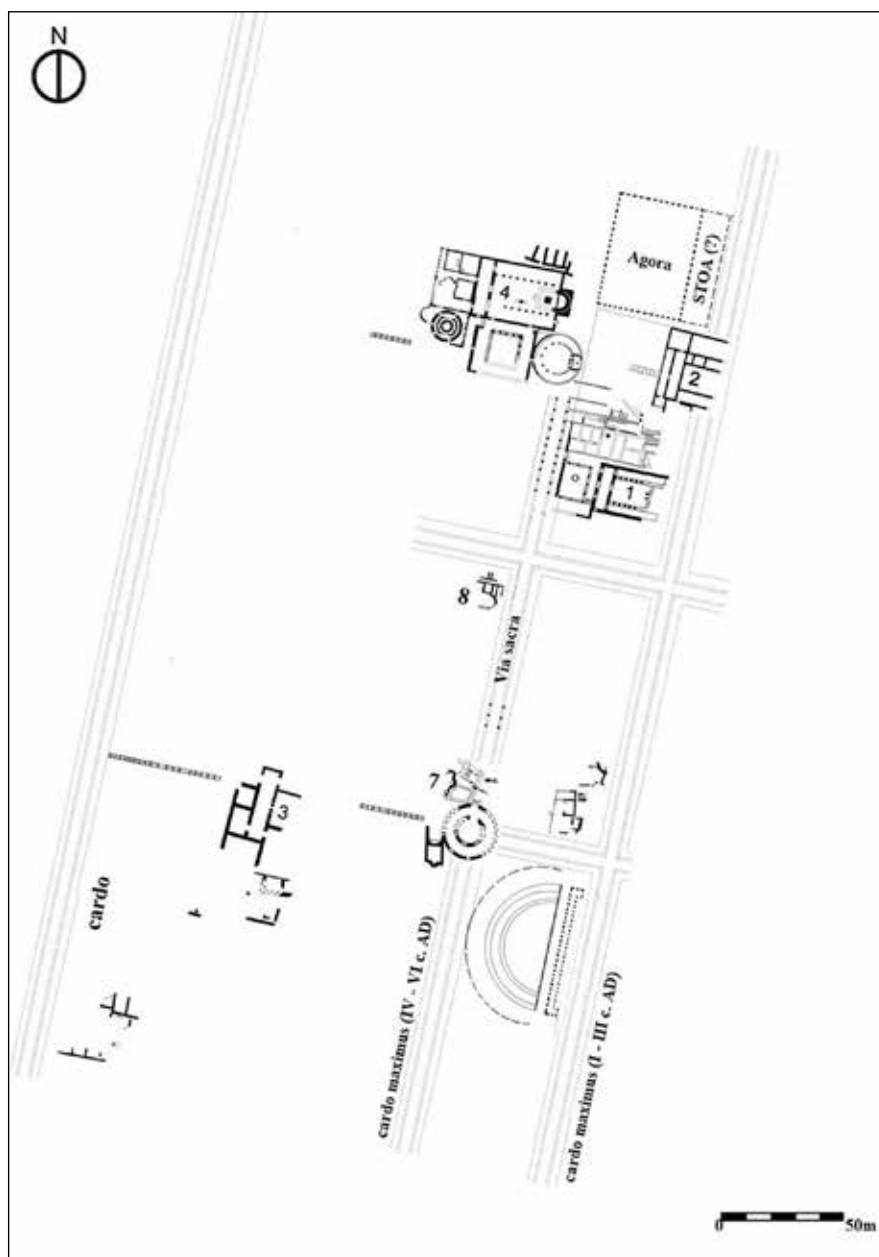


Fig. 1. Plan of Parthicopolis in 1st–6th century according the archaeological data (after S. Petrova).

Сл. 1. План Партикополиса од 1. до 6. в. према археолошким подацима (по: С. Петрова)

(113- 116) or in 117, following his death and deification as „Divus Trajanus Parthicus”. This emperor is famous not only with his constant urbanization policy on an extremely large scale of the Balkan lands.

The epigraphic monuments reveal the polis type of the site: it has a *boule*, *politarchs*, *demos* and the typical for the period groups of population – citizens of the city itself, veterans, who were citizen of the Roman empery, slaves and foreigners⁸. Their existence is an argument for the city structure even since the 70-es - 80-es of 1st century AD. In this way the site possessed the status of a city during almost all the Roman period. It was organized similarly to the other Roman cities in the province of Macedonia⁹. The archaeological research and the epigraphic monuments display, that the beginning of the intense city life and of its flourishing period should be related to Hadrian, successor of Trajan both in time and in continuing his urban policy. The peak can be observed in the period from Antoninus Pius to Gordian III¹⁰. In Late Antiquity the city becomes a bishop center in the Eparchy of Thessalonica.

The History of the excavations

The archaeological research revealed a fortified Roman city with a rich architecture. Its *cardo maximus* is under the modern Macedonia Street, the central one in Sandanski. Many buildings, unearthed partially or entirely, formed the outlook of the city during the Roman and the Early Byzantine times (**Fig. 1**). Parts of the Roman theatre, namely that of the *cavea* and of the orchestra, were found in the middle of Macedonia street, at its western side, under the house № 41, the next house behind it and the third one on № 39¹¹. Another partially excavated building, considered as *thermae*/bath by its excavator¹², is situated at the same side of Macedonia str., 20 m north of the theatre. The foundations of all the three flimsy houses from the 19th-20th centuries were not solid and not deep, in some places being directly superimposed on the stone seats of the theatre. The theatre was generally destroyed in Late Antiquity, when it became a quarry for the Early Christian buildings in the city. The second and final destroy of what have been left from the theatre happened in 2007-2008, when the old houses were demolished and the baggers began digging in preparation the two plots for new buildings. The excavated part is 25 m long in direction East-West and 16 m

only by a sure epigraphic monument, expected to be found in the future.

⁸ IGBulg. 1966, IV, №№ 2264-2267.

⁹ IGBulg. 1966, IV, № 2263; IGBulg. 1997, V, №5895; Б. Геров, *Проучвания върху западнотракийските земи през римско време*. – In: Годишник на Софийския Университет, Факултет по западни филологии, 54, 3, 1961, 91-195 sqq.; М. Манов, *Селищният живот в долината на Средна Струма според античните епиграфски паметници*. – In: Разкопки и Проучвания, XXXVIII, София 2008, 23 sqq.

¹⁰ Б. Геров, *Op.cit.*, 193-194.

¹¹ The rescue excavations in 2007-2008 were led by Dr. S. Petrova from the Archaeological Institute with Museum in Sofia and with Deputy V. Petkov, Director of the Archaeological Museum in Sandanski.

¹² Excavations of Tsanka Slavcheva-Ribarova in the 70^{es} of 20th century, unpublished.

Fig. 2. The cut in the rock space with dimensions 8x13 м. In the profile the rings of the theatre can be seen: the spot on Macedonia str. 39 (top); the next spot on No 41, a ring with a part of the south brick pillar of the *tribunalia* (?) (bottom), (photo by S. Petrova).



Сл. 2. Усек на делу стене димензија 8x13 м. Из профила се виде „прстенасти“ делови театра: место на Македонија улици 39 (на врху); следећа тачка на броју 41, прстен са делом јужног ступца трибуналије (?) (доле), (фото: С. Петрова).

wide in direction north-south (the total width of both plots). The total surface of the examined part is 400 м², and the destroyed by the bagger part at the bottom is about 100 м². Few possibilities for opening the eventually preserved parts of the theatre remain in west direction on the upper part of the slope, but modern houses do not allow for the moment enlarging the space of research.

The bagger scraped out under the demolished house on № 39 a deep rectangular pit with dimensions 8x13m in direction East-West. As a result were destroyed the *substitutio*, the rows with seats, the *cavea* with its constructive elements, etc. They could be seen and traced very distinctively in the side north and side south profile of the spot, formed by the bagger in the rock: the cut step-like foundations, the *substitutio*; the 3m wide ring of the *ima cavea*, being 1.20m high with a beveling towards inside (**Fig. 2**). The west profile revealed the travertine rock, the destroyed *substitutio* and the extension of the *cavea* on the slope of the hill, namely the boulders, forming the rows with the seats.

The Finds and the Technique of Building

In our research and documentation the remnants of the theatre, left after both severe destructions in 4th century and in 2007 in both spots, each of them wide 8 m, were gathered together and combined on the general plan. Some of the marble architectonic elements, pavement slabs, revetment of the seats and also several granite steps from the staircases of the theatre were taken out by the owners of the houses after their demolishing and the digging of the bagger and we found them just put on the sidewalk. Other parts and elements of the theatre's plan and structures were badly damaged or scattered around and only

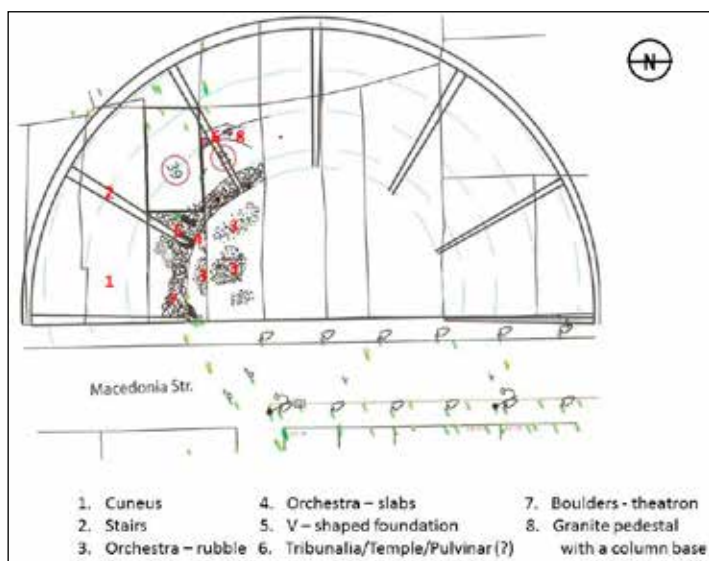


Fig. 3. The computer reconstruction of the *cavea/koilon* and the *orchestra* of the theatre according to the geodetic taking. 1-8: places of artifacts (after S. Petrova).

Сл. 3. Компјутерска реконструкција кавее/коилона и оркестре пронађеног театра према геодетским снимцима. 1-8: места налаза (по С. Петровој).



Fig. 4. Part of the *cavea* and the *orchestra* on the spot of No 41. The *orchestra's* substructure is 4.70 m lower than the modern sidewalk (photo by S. Petrova).

Сл. 4. Део кавее и оркестре на месту број 41. Субструктура оркестре је за 4.70 m нижа од савременог тротоара (по С. Петровој).

few were *in situ*. Generally we have discovered *in situ* or scattered the following structures, separate architectonic elements and few other finds:

1. The curve of the strongly destroyed *orchestra*, which was traced in both lots (of No 39 and 41), with restored diameter of the *orchestra* 31 m (Fig. 3). The *orchestra* was built in the following way: on rammed clay, then gravel and top lined rectangular marble slabs of different sizes. The lowest level of the *orchestra's* substructure, unearthed *in situ*, was 4, 70 m lower than the level of the modern sidewalk (Fig. 4).

The thickness of the rectangular marble plates with different dimensions is about 0, 20 m. Most of them were removed from their initial places by the work of the bagger. Only two of the slabs were *in situ* and on one of them had a penstock for gathering and draining the rainwater, etc. from the *orchestra* (Fig. 5).

2. Marble slab (*orthostat*), with dimensions 1.20 x 1.80 x 0.20/0.22 m was excavated *in situ* on the *orchestra*, leaned to the first row of the *koilon*. The slab is a part of the protecting wall between the *koilon/theatron* and the *orchestra*



Fig. 5. The rectangular marble plates – pavement of the orchestra with a penstock for gathering and draining the rainwater, etc. – *in situ*. Left – “V”-like base for building the rings of the *cavea/koilon*) (photo by S. Petrova).

Сл. 5. Правоугаоне мермерне плоче – таваница оркестре са хидрантом за сакупљање кишнице и сл.– *in situ*. Лево– база у облику слова “V”-која је коришћена за изградњу кавее/коилона) (по С. Петровој).

Fig. 6. Marble slab-barrier (*orthostat*) with holes for installation of railing during the “bloody entertainments” (photo by S. Petrova).

Сл.6. Мермерна плоча (*orthostat*) са отворима за ограду током „крвавих игара (по С. Петровој).



(Fig. 6). Four rectangular holes¹³ are made by pairs in a special way, with a ferrule in the upper part of one of the slab’s short side (see fig. 6 – left). Their function was to help the establishing of a set, protecting the sitting ahead elite from the gladiators and the wild beasts. This slab is an argument that the theatre had at least an arena with sand/*conistra*, therefore double functions: as a place for theatric performances and as an arena for gladiatorial games and *bestiarii/venationes*.

¹³ Similar to the theater in Maroneia. (Ch. Karadima. *The Ancient Theatre of Maroneia: the Historical Phases and the Restoration Work*. A report at the LIV National Archaeological Conference – Gotse Delchev, 26.05-30.05.2015).



Fig. 7. Marble peels and fragments of architectural elements scattered over the surface on the spot No 41 and marble peels from both spots NoNo 39 and 41 (detail upper right) (photo by S. Petrova).

Сл. 7. Мермерни делови и остаци архитектонских елемената накупљених на површини број 41 и мермерни остаци са места број 39 и 41 (деталъ горе десно, по С. Петровој)



Fig. 8. Parts of the marble slabs over the orchestra; the architectural marble slabs from the seats; the granite stairs of the theatre (photo by S. Petrova).

Сл. 8. Делови мермерних плоча изнад оркестре; архитектонске мермерне плоче седишта; гранитно ступениште театра (фото С. Петрова).

3. The *theatron* was built by boulders on the base of the cut in the travertine rock rings, wide 3 m and high 1.20 m, beveled towards inside at the angle of 120° , which prevents their collapse. On some places the *cavea* could be traced only by the rings in the travertine rock (see fig. 2 down).

4. These rings were built step-like in height with the help of “V”-like boulders foundations (see Fig. 5 left).

5. We found in situ in the *κοίλον/theatron* over these foundations a huge amount of mortar and a lot of small marble peels. They

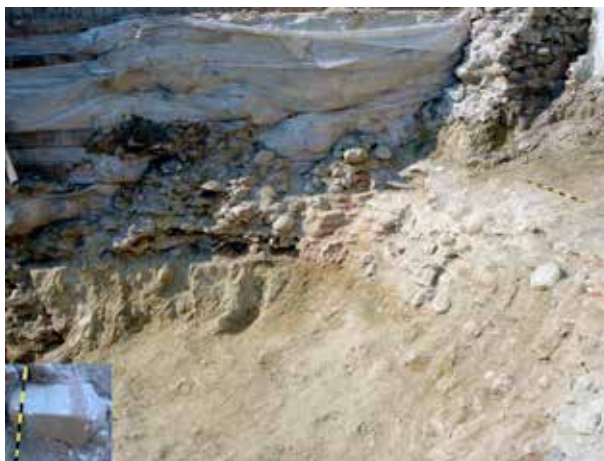


Fig. 9. Parts of the granite stairs with graphic reconstruction (photo by S. Petrova).

Сл. 9. Делови гранитног степеништа са графичком реконструкцијом (фото С. Петрова).

Fig. 10. Two brick pillars, with a distance between 3.50 m, and a granite *postament* for a column (detail bottom left), probably from the *tribunalia* (photo S. Petrova).

Сл. 10. Два ступца од опеке удаљена око 3.50 м и гранитни постамент за стуб (детал доле лево), вероватно припало трибуналији (фото С. Петрова).



were left during the extraction of the boulders and their cleaning from the mortar and also after the marble revetment and other marble architectonic pieces have been taken out for reusing (**Fig. 7**).

6. The rows with seats were 0.75 m wide, according to the revetment slabs and according to the steps of the staircases. The last slabs forming the steps were found scattered, made from granite and wide 0.70 m (**Fig. 8, 9**).

7. In each *maenianium* (of *ima*, *media* and *summa* (?) *cavea*) there are 3 rings with 4 rows with seats in each ring. The same should be repeated in *ima cavea* and in the next *media cavea* (the second one existed surely and the last one is possible).

8. Two massive brick pillars, each wide 1.50 m and the distance between them 3.50, were found, very much destroyed, with preserved only their lower part (**Fig. 10 and fig. 7**). Each brick is wide 4 – 4, 5 sm. The pillars support a structure, probably the lower part of a *tribunalia*, or of a small temple/shrine or of a *pulvinar*. Every opening of games in the province should be announced by a high rank magistrate, usually the praetor, sitting namely in the *tribunalia*.



Fig. 11. A part of fragmented square marble plinth (photo by S. Petrova).

Сл. 11. Део оштећене четвртасте мермерне (фото С. Петрова).

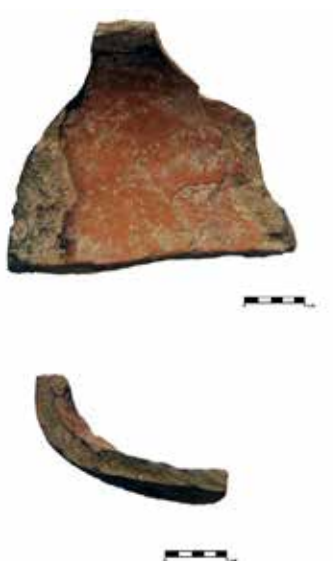


Fig. 12. The pottery fragment (photo by S. Petrova)

Сл. 12. Фрагмент керамике (фото С. Петрова).

The *pulvinar*, the box for the emperor himself, his family and the consul, was as well the place for some mobile cult effigies at a lower level¹⁴.

9. Granite *postament* with a base for a column was found near to the brick pillars (Fig. 10, 7). It may be connected either with the *tribunalia*, or with the *analemata*.

10. A part of fragmented square marble plinth was found with a hammered base on the first lines of the theatron (*ima cavea*) (fig. 11).

11. The only pottery fragment is a part of a bowl, found in the level of sterile soil, 2 m over the *orchestra* (Fig. 12).

12. A lead object was found.

13. Black sterile soil, covering all the *cavea/theatron* and the *orchestra*.

14. No coins have been found during the excavations.

The technique of building of the theatre is not the usual one. The difference is in the usage of marble and granite boulders on a large scale. About 10 granite quarries are situated not far from Parthicopolis, in the upper stream of Sandanska Bistritsa, offering to the city unlimited access to this building material¹⁵. The city also had no problems with the marble architectonic elements and revetment, because several marble quarries were at display to the northwest from Parthicopolis, in the area of Neine/Tristolos(?) (to the north of the modern

¹⁴ F. Sear. *Roman Theatres. An Architectural Study*. Oxford University Press 2006:5, 419 (Stobi).

¹⁵ For example, multiple columns, pedestals with profiled bases for columns, slabs, reused as intended in the early Christian buildings: the basilica, the colonnade of Via sacra and others. (see: S. Petrova. *The Early Christian basilicas in the urban planning of Parthicopolis*. – In: Ниш и Византија. Ниш 2015, 163-176.

village of Ilindentsi) and to the south, nearby the village of Petrovo¹⁶. We don't know if the theatre had marble revetment from the very beginning or it was later "marmorized" similarly to the theatre of Philippopolis in Thrace¹⁷. Also brick was used in the pillars of the supposed *tribunalia/pulvinar*. The color and the texture combinations, predominantly of greenish granite; porphyry granite with feldspar mixtures in pink and white patterned marble and (in combination of scarce bricks or just marble revetment over the pillars?) create unusual coloristic effect. This usage of boulders in *opus incertum*, applied in the theatre with boulders, is to be met since now only in the two closely situated cities of Parthicopolis and Nicopolis ad Nestum.

The Chronology of the theatre's existence and the changes in its plan and function

At the moment it is problematic to establish the precise date of erecting the theatre in Paroicopolis/Parthicopolis. From one side it could be connected with the renaming by Trajan, with the new official status of the city and with the realization of the new urban plan. But from the other side is possible an earlier data for Paroicopolis, during the Flavians and especially at Domitian, based on the parallels with some theatres in Macedonia and Thrace, built namely at that time, generally in the last quarter of 1st century. Nevertheless this was only the beginning of a long process of gradual realization, of tracing the main arteries and the places of the main cult and civic buildings, including the theatre. At the time of Trajan and Hadrian the urban ideas were practically developed to the end and the new Roman city appeared in its full beauty.

The process of a theatre building is expensive, advancing one by one and taking usually not less than 5 years or even more. So it is expected that the layout of the theatre has been put at the time of Domitian, but the structures and the elements of architectonic decoration probably finished completely not earlier than Late Trajanic - Early Hadrianic time. Mixed funding can be expected – private donations, subscriptions and other taxes. Donations, made by different types of benefactors, are witnessed among the epigraphic monuments from the city. Some of them, called chores, probably granted the building of the theatre itself. Others, like Flaviana Filokratia¹⁸, granted a significant sum for the oil of the athletes (the so-called donation "gymnasium"). It should be included in the wider frame of games and entertainments in the city on certain official holidays, followed by a feast (*epulum*) and by giving of money to the plebs (*missilia*)¹⁹. Thus the theatre was one of the significant elements of the religious life and the official holidays and entertainments in the city, which could last three and more days. The performances in the theatre of Paroicopolis/Parthicopolis up to the second half – end of 2nd century were different dramas and comedies, played

¹⁶ S. Petrova. *Quarries and Workshops in the territory of Parthicopolis (1st to 6th centuries)*, in print.

¹⁷ И. Топалилов. *Op. cit.*, 134.

¹⁸ See: IGBulg. 1966, IV, No 2265; М. Манов. *Op. cit.* 86-87.

¹⁹ F. Sear. *Op. cit.*, 23.



Fig. 13. Fragments of the marble placard for gladiatorial battles (photo by V. Petkov).

Сл. 13. Фрагмент мермерног рељефа за гладијаторске борбе (фото В. Петков).



Fig. 13-a. Fragments of the marble placard, detail.

Сл. 13-а. Фрагменти мермерног рељефа, детаљ.

probably in Greek, as the official written and spoken language in the city was the Greek one and the Latin inscriptions are rare. This is also the reason to believe, that the names of the theatre's parts were known and pronounced in Greek, not in Latin.

The next important period in the history of the theatre in Paroicopolis/Parthicopolis was probably its transformation by enlarging the orchestra in order to serve as an arena, covered in sand, and by supplying the old *κοίλον/theatron* with more seats at the sides, the so-called *half-amphitheatre*²⁰. Unfortunately we have no sure data for the plan neither of the newly made arena, nor of the possible entire transformation into a full amphitheatre. The reason is that the *scaenae frons*, the *pulpit* and the theatre's marginal parts are outside the spot of excavations, now covered by the modern main street and houses.

From the other hand we have at disposal an extremely interesting and eloquent monument, found in the *baptisterium* of basilica No4. It proves that bloody entertainments were performed in the theatre (**Fig. 13**). This is a two-sided plate²¹ of a very fine marble, thick 2.2 cm, unfortunately broken into many pieces, some of them missing. The one side has an Early Christian text in Greek, speaking of the donation of

²⁰ L. Vagalinski. *Arenas of Roman Thrace*. – In: The Roman and Late Roman City. The International Conference (Veliko Tarnovo 26-30 July 2000), Sofia 2002, 282-283.

²¹ В. Герасимова, *Два надписа от базилика № 4 в Сандански (предварително съобщение)*. – In: Нумизматика, сфрагистика и епиграфика, 6, София 2010, 191-206. The plate was 1.30 m long; the text occupying a place between 0.59 and 0.63 m.

a certain Christian Antim, probably from the second half-end of 4th century. The opposite side of the plate is a placard for a concrete gladiatorial game and *bestiaria*, with schematically shown and sometimes damaged images of fighting gladiators and a *venator* against an animal. All these images are either flat, two-dimensional in a very low relief, or painted with red color. The equipment of the fighters and their appearance are shown in the same schematic way. All participants, including the animal, have their names and the number of their victories incised and filled with red color. The inviting text for the games, now missing, was placed in the upper part and the illustrations – in the lower part of the plate.

The time supposed by the publisher is from the second half of 2nd century up to the first decades of the 3rd century, namely in the period 161-211 or 161-238²². In my opinion a date in the first half of the third century is more convenient for several reasons. First of all Septimius Severus with his family and after his death Caracalla as a sole emperor have visited the Balkans and games of different types have been organized in many cities in expectation or during these visits. From the sources we know that such theatres were built for Caracalla at every place he was visiting²³. On the second place is the too schematic treatment of all images on the placard from Parthicopolis, not to be met earlier than 3rd century in the Roman sculpture from Bulgaria.

The standard for rebuilding in that sense is the theatre in Tauromenium (nowadays Taormina, Sicily), transformed in the first decades of 3rd century; the same happened with the theatre in Stobi, where the *sceane* was rebuilt in a way to make place for a half-amphitheatre²⁴. Similar changes can be observed in a lot of other theatres, especially in the Eastern Mediterranean²⁵. They either have got an additional space for the arena or underwent a total change into a real amphitheatre, generally at the end of the 2nd – first half of 3rd – the end of 3rd centuries. Because of the severe destructions in the excavated plots in Sandanski, no traces have been found of subterranean entrances, corridors and rooms for the gladiators, venators and the animals and their cages, known from Philippopolis, Aphrodisias, Ephesus, Taoromenium, etc.²⁶.

In the Roman provinces on the territory of Bulgaria gladiatorial games and *bestiarii* have been performed in Marcianopolis, Philippopolis, Diocletianopolis, Augusta Trajana and Serdica²⁷. Marcianopolis has a typical amphitheatre, with

²² *Ibidem*, 191 sqq. These could be the emperors Marcus Aurelius (161-180), Lucius Verus (161-169), Septimius Severus (193-211), Macrinus (217-218), Severus Alexander (222-235) and Maximianus Thrax (235-238).

²³ Dio Cassius 78.9.7

²⁴ F. Sear, *Op. cit.*, 43.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, 43-44.

²⁶ L. Vagalinski. *Op. cit.*, 281; И. Топалилов. *Римският Филиппол. Топография градоустройство и архитектура*. В. Търново, Фабер 2012, 135; F. Sear. *Op. cit.*, 328-330, 334-335.

²⁷ Т. Петров. *Амфитеатърът на римския град Марцианополис*. В: Музеи и паметници на културата, 1967, 1, 7-10; G. Tonceva. *L'amphitheatre de Marcianopolis*. – In: Spartacus. Symposium rebus Spartaci gestis. Dedicatum 2050 a. (Blagoevgrad, 20-24. IX.1977), Sofia 1981, 138-142; Л. Вагалински. *Кръв и зрелища. Спортни и гладиаторски*

a *martyrion* built in later time. In the case of Philippopolis it is suggested that in the late 2nd century the building here has been also transformed for bloody entertainments and concretely in 214 г. gladiatorial games have been performed in connection with the visit of Caracalla. The amphitheatre in Diocletianopolis is small and built probably in the period of the Tetrarchy. In Augusta Trajana²⁸ a small piazza (not the forum) at the West Gate was formed by building an auditorium erected on the foundations of the city's thermae. Thus the space was used as an amphitheatre at the open. Here are found obvious traces of a protecting set and several sculptural monuments of gladiators. A coin of Diocletian was unearthed under the very solid stone pavement of the piazza, around the equestrian statue of an emperor. In Serdica the amphitheatre was built over the old theatre also at the very end of 3rd century²⁹.

Parthicopolis is a middle-sized city, about 20 hectares. Having in mind the disposition of the city on three main levels on the hillsides, there isn't enough space for an amphitheatre additionally to the theatre. That's why it is possible only theoretically that it has obtained both of them. The slab found in situ on the orchestra for the arrangement of protecting net shows, that the theatre at a definite time had already a double function. According to the analogies the orchestra was at least transformed to an arena in sand/*conistra* by demolishing some of the first rows with seats and by changing the volume and the plan of the *sceane*. After the transformation of the theatre it could continue its theatric function and of *venationes*. But the bloody games during this last period of the theatre's existence probably occupied it much more, than the theatric performances, gaining all the interest of the society from the Late Antonines on. The changes of the theatre in Parthicopolis have t.a.q. the first half of 3rd century, judging by the date of the "Roman side" of the placard. Nevertheless the change may be done earlier, with t.p.q. the second half - end of 2nd century, having in mind the popularity of these games in the Balkan provinces at the end of the Antonines and especially at the time of the Early Severs, visiting the lands here several times.

The end of the theatre was put most probably according to one our hypothesis after 315 and 325, when Constantine I prohibited the bloody gladiatorial entertainments (*munera*), including the death of children on the arena and of the criminals, instead the latter should be sent to the mines³⁰. According to D.

игри в елинистическа и римска Тракия. София 2009; К. Калчев. *Спасителни разкопки на обект „Форум и терми на Августа Траяна“ през 2000 г.* – In: Археологически открития и разкопки през 1999/2000. София 2001, 110; К. Д. Маджаров. *Диоклецианополис. Топография, укрепителна система, градоустройство и архитектура*. т. I, София 1981, 121-124; Zh. Velichkov. *The antique theatre and the amphitheatre of Serdica*. – In: V. Vachkova, D. Dimitrov (eds). *Serdica Edict (311 AD): Concepts and Realizations of the Idea of Religious Toleration*. Sofia 2014, 195-217.

²⁸ V. Popova-Moroz. *Cult Aspects of Roman Portraiture in Bulgaria*. – In: Хелис III, 1, София 1994, 273-274; Р. Иванов, М. Мартинова-Кютова, В. Коларова, Ж. Величков, К. Калчев. *Сгради и съоръжения за културни прояви и зрелища през II-IV в.* – In: Археология на българските земи, 2, София 2006, 80-96 and cit. lit.

²⁹ Zh. Velichkov. *Op. cit.*, 201 sqq.

³⁰ Constantine: 9.18.1; 15.12.1); more in: C. Edwards. *Death in Ancient Rome*. New

Potter in 328 in Antiochia still were performed gladiatorial games and the last known are in 529; probably this was the reason in 395 and 399 other two Edicts of Arcadius and Honorius to be issued, which banned the games and the sacrifices on Sunday, except those on their birthdays³¹. That's why several decades after the edicts in 4th century theatric performances and venations continued their existence. But such a long theatric and *bestiarii* tradition was not alive in Parthicopolis, because the *spolia* from the theatre were used in the earliest basilica No1, built already in the middle of 4th century, and the placard for the *ludi latini* was hang with the new Christian text in the second half - end of 4th century. The total destruction of the theatre and the erection of the new Early Christian city's center happened quickly in Parthicopolis and at the end of 4th-beginning of 5th century the theatre already disappeared. First it was in ruins serving only for quarrying, after that it was covered with black sterile soil, leveled and vanished topographically and visually.

We can ask a question why the changes with the theatre happened so quickly and decisively in comparison to many other Late Antique cities. The explanation could be connected with a second hypothesis about a very possible strong earthquake³², often met in this area since Antiquity and up to now, which destroyed at once and mortally the building. The city had no possibility at that moment to rebuild the theatre and it was left in ruins. In this case the later edicts were only additional reasons to leave it in this state of condition.

The theatre and the Christians in Parthicopolis in 4th-6th century

In support of our thesis that the Early Christian building has destroyed finally the theatre are the witnesses of the Church historians. Tertullian (about 155-230) in his "About the performances" (*De spectaculis*, 2, 3, 8-14, etc.) condemns the theatric performances as contradictive to the Christian morality; spares for the victims of the Christians in defend of their faith. Saint Augustine of Hippo condemned the youth penchant of his friend Alypius, later a bishop, to the *numera* as an unfavourable to the Christian life and Salvation (*St. Augustine Confessionum*:6.8.).

There could be another reason too for the unhappy fortune of the theatre. We can suppose that initially the marble placard for *ludi latini* was attached to the façade of the theatre itself, or on the agora or elsewhere in the public space,

Haven: Yale University Press. 2007, 215; K. Bowes, J. Mitchell. *The main chapel of the Durrës amphitheater*. – In: *MEFRA* 121/2, 2009, 569-595, note 13- 15.

³¹ D. Potter. *Constantine and the gladiators*. – In: *Classical Quarterly* 60.2, 2010, 599-604; R. F. Devoe. *Christianity and the Roman Games. The Paganization of Christians by Gladiators, Chariotees, Actors and Actresses. From the 1th through the 5th centuries AD*. Xlibris Corporation, USA 2002, 136.

³² In the period between Severus Alexander and Valens there happened a series of mighty earthquakes on the Balkans, in the Eastern part of the Mediterranean or more global ones, including Italy, Pannonia, Dalmacia, Macedonia, Africa and Asia. See the literature of special geological and interdisciplinary research in: А. Орачев. *Земетресенията и последиците им по Добруджанското крайбрежие през III-IV в. (Предварителни наблюдения)*. – In: Сборник в чест на Александър Минчев. Варна, 2011, 120, 123 -127.

then stripped off, its back covered in the second half-end of 4th century with the Christian text and hang namely with this side up on the walls of the *baptisterium* of basilica No4. Thus the “Roman” side was “defeated”, hidden on purpose and lost for observing, while the “Christian” one was now the only visible and readable one. The act of reusing of the placard for *ludi latini* in a Christian building is a typical symbol of the triumph of Christianity over the pagan games, rites, way of life and religious beliefs. We know another example from Parthicopolis of such a demonstrative victory of Christianity over paganism, namely the tomb stele of the veteran Marcus Herenius Rufus. It was put again with the Greek inscription downwards in the path, leading from the round piazza in front of the bishop basilica to the *exonarthex* of the basilica of bishop Ioannes (basilica No 2)³³. In such a way the Christians now were treading the pagan Roman tomb stele.

Maybe there exists even a more concrete tie between the hanging of the placard and the erecting of basilica No 7. The pagan arena of the theatre could be the place of martyrdom of anonymous saints, similar to the case in the theatre of Marcianopolis and to many other examples from 2nd c. till 311-313. This hypothesis could explain the presence of basilica No7, probably a *memoria* (?), north-west of the theatre, on the west side of Via sacra and immediately next to the Rotunda over the theatre. The latter was probably the City Fountain and the first to be built in the center of the street, followed by the basilica. The *memoria* could not be erected in the theatre itself, since it was covered and impenetrable. Now the theatre’s remnants were already “buried” and couldn’t be reached and reopened for building a *martyrion*. Similar memorial basilicas are known for instance in Stobi and Heraclea Lynkestis³⁴.

The theatre of Parthicopolis not only stopped functioning, it disappeared visually. Probably only the highest parts were projecting over at the beginning, but they were soon demolished or collapsed. We already supposed that some of the architectonic elements, reused in the basilicas and in the street colonnade of the new Via sacra, have been striped namely from the theatre’s interior and exterior. The same was done even with the boulders from the theatre, having left after their extraction and cleaning an enormous heap of mortar. Probably the poor state of the theatre was in strong contrast with the new arising Early Byzantine city and the bishop not only ended its existence in this way, but also had hidden the ugly ruins, reminding of the awful bloody pagan entertainments. The earthquake could be interpreted by the Christians as the God’s punishment for the bloody death of innocent people and martyrs on the arena. Further no mediaeval materials or buildings have been found on that place, life stopped there, as if the place was cursed or more correctly, overlaid to anathema. In this way the City Fountain and the memorial basilica interrupted any access and connection with the theatre from the west side, where the new Via sacra was formed in the period mainly from the middle - second part of 4th century, with additions up to the end of 5th century.

³³ Т. Иванов, Д. Серафимова, Н. Николов. *Разкопки в центъра на Сандански през 1960 г.* – In: Известия на Археологическия Институт, 31, 1969, 105-209.

³⁴ See: Т. Јанакиевски. *Антички театри и споменици со театарска тематика во Република Македонија*. Битола 1998, 44-48 and cit. lit.



Fig. 14. Lion paws, found during the excavations of basilica No1 and the bishop basilica (basilica No4 (Archive of the Archaeological museum of Sandanski)

Fig. 14. Лавље шапе, нађене током ископавања базилике бр.1 и епископске базилике; базилика бр.4 (Архив Археолошког музеја Сандански)

The erecting of the *memoria* explains why there are 5 more basilicas in the same street. It was used for processions with crosses and icons, beginning from the round piazza in front of the bishop basilica No4 with the end point the memorial basilica No 7. After that the participants were turning back to the bishop basilica. As it has been already underlined, in pagan Roman times the main street south of the theatre, the *cardo maximus* (modern Macedonia str.) was the main official artery and therefore the official exits/*parodoses* were not suitable for carrying away the dead bodies of gladiators, *venators*, criminals and martyrs for burial to some of the necropolises of the city. This role was played by the secondary street, the *cardines* west of the theatre. In Christian times, probably from the middle of 4th century to the end of 6th century the same *cardines* became the main axis of the city religious life and for the glorification of Christ and his saints and martyrs.

The Reconstruction of the theatre's plan and space.

The geodetic survey with taken heights was introduced in the computer program and the computer drew those parts of the theatre which at this moment can not be excavated because of the still standing modern houses over it. Unfortunately the *scaenae frons* building is not excavated since it is under the main modern street Macedonia and its west sidewalk. Most likely the *skene*, if preserved, is not in its original plan after the additional enlarging and rebuilding of the orchestra into an arena, which is also typical for many Roman theatres.

In our reconstruction of the theatre of Parthicopolis (**Fig. 16**) we are guided by the found structures, architectonic elements and their dimensions; by the canon for theatres of Vitruvius (nevertheless having in mind that it was not fol-

lowed exactly neither in every case, nor in every place and time); by the drawing made by the computer program, following the geodetic survey; and finally by the data drawn from the excavated up to now Roman theatres.

The monument in Paroicopolis/Parthicopolis is a typical Graeco-Roman theatre (or of the Asia Minor type), combining features from the Greek and the Roman theatre³⁵. Similarly to the majority of monuments in the province of Macedonia – Dion, Philippi; Heracleia Lynkestis and Lychnidus (province of Upper Moesia), the example from Sandanski is influenced strongly by the architecture of the Greek theatre³⁶. It is built against the hillside like a Greek theatre, but has a semicircular orchestra and built seats of the Roman theatre. The Roman spectators in Parthicopolis could attend theatric performances, mime and pantomime (*ludi scaenici*) and gladiatorial and animal battles, among the animals themselves and among the fighters and the animals (all of them *ludi latini*). The theatre spectacles and the arena combats were significant part of the general official and the local cult life in Roman times, including too the cirrus in vertice and other athlete competitions, usually performed in the palestra or in the stadium. Still we have only indirect proofs for them, namely the “gymnasium” of Flaviana Filokratia³⁷, partly intent for the athlete’s oil. The existence of the Greek games is natural in a city with a Greek speaking population and under the influence of the Greek culture at least since Late Hellenistic times.

Up to now in Paroicopolis/Parthicopolis are discovered only parts of the orchestra and of the part of the *κοῖλον/theatron* – *ima cavea* with 12 supposed rows (according to the reconstruction of architect S. Taseva³⁸). The height of the slope has enough space for three or even 4 horizontal levels/zones form *ima cavea* (which is very obviously present), *media cavea* and *summa cavea* (both are supposed) and finally the ring of the portico. Each level with its *maenianum* (*cavea*) plus the first rows at the *orchestra* are intent for the representatives of different classes and groups in the Roman society and for individuals of high ranks, priests and benefactors of the theatre. If we accept that there existed also *media* and *summa cavea* further in height, with at least 12 rows more, their total number will be 36. The longitude of the lower curve of the *κοῖλον/theatron* at the orchestra should be counted by the formula of Forni: half longitude of the whole circle and that is 48, 67 m. The upper curve should be then 133, 45 m long³⁹. The surface of the ring, formed by the *theatron*, can be found by the formula $S=\pi \cdot (R^2-r^2)$, where R is the longitude of the outer radius and r – of the inner one. The surface of the *theatron* then is 2458, 62 m². The most upper part

³⁵ F. Sear. *Op. cit.*, 88 sqq.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, 112-115; 255-259; 385-424

³⁷ IGBulg IV, 1966 No 2265, (Largitio); M. Манов. *Op. cit.*, 86-87.

³⁸ All the documentation of the theatre was given to architect Slavica Taseva, to whom we express our gratitude for the reconstruction.

³⁹ We count by the formula for the length of a circle $2\pi r$, the radius is that of the orchestra (15, 5 m). The upper outer radius is the sum of the rings in *ima cavea* (3 rings, each 3 m long, so *ima cavea* is 9 m). If we accept that the *media* and the *summa cavea* are equal in width, then the distance to the *analemma* is $3 \times 9 = 27$ m. Next should be added the radius of the orchestra and the result is the radius in the upper point = 42, 5 m (15,5+27=42,5 m). In that case the longitude of the most upper curve is 133, 45 m.

of the *cavea* (either the possible *media cavea* or the possible *summa cavea*) is outlined by the scattered boulders and by the marble and the granite fragments, reaching the level of the modern street Gotse Delchev. If the *κοίλον* had all three levels (each with three rings and width 3m (3x3=9m), it should continue more to the north and south with 27 m at least. In such a case the distance from the center of the orchestra to the extreme north part of the theatre's curve should be 42, 5 m or the total length of the theatre should be around 85-90 m (?). But if there existed only two levels, similar to the Greek theatres, then its length (following the line the diameter - the *orchestra* – the *cavea*) was possibly circa 67-70 m, from them 31 m for the *orchestra* and plus 19-20 m from both sides, namely for the length of the *κοίλον/theatron (ima cavea)*.

According to Vitruvius the theatre should have 6 *cunei/κερκίδες* in *ima cavea* and 7 radial staircases/*κλίμακες*. Each *cuneus* should have then three radial “V”-like foundations, probably with cylindrical vaults, similar to the theatre in Verona and the theatres in Macedonia (Heraclea Lyncestis, Scupi and Stobi)⁴⁰. Most of the theatres in the West part of the Roman empery possess 6 *cunei* in the *ima cavea*; the *cunei* are doubled in the *media* and in the *summa cavea*. Here also can be met *ima cavea*, divided into 4, 5 or 6 *cunei*. Usually the theatres in the Eastern part have *ima cavea* with 5, 7, 9, 11, sometimes even 13 *cunei*⁴¹. In the case with the theatre of Sandanski, it should have 6 *cunei* and 7 staircases.

In Asia Minor the seats in *ima cavea* from the west type are found almost in all excavated up to now monuments. They are influenced by the Hellenistic architecture and their “*κοίλον*” is cut into the hills (Aspendos, Ephesus, Hierapolis, Myra, etc.)⁴². The theatre in Pollentia⁴³ in Italy from the time of the Julio-Claudian dynasty is analogical by its construction and plan with the theatre of Paroicopolis/Parthicopolis. Other parallels are: the theatre south of the forum in Timgad, also with 6 *cunei*; the Hellenistic theatre with 6 *cunei* in Paphos on the island of Cyprus, existing in Roman times too; the theatre in Heraclea Lyncestis (Bitola, Republic of Macedonia); the theatre in Philippopolis in Thrace, etc.⁴⁴. In Parthicopolis the rows with seats/locuses, deep 0, 70 m, are done in the same way.

Following the building canon of Vitruvius, each *maenianum*⁴⁵ should have four rows with seats and the same is repeated in the next level. The presence of all these four levels with 12 rows of seats (up to the top? *tribunalia*,

⁴⁰ F. Sear. *Op. cit.*, 180 sqq; T. Јанакиевски, *Op. cit.*, 41-48, 50, 58-60, 63, 73-75 sqq.

⁴¹ F. Sear. *Op. cit.*, 2.

⁴² F. Sear. *Op. cit.*, 110 sqq, 333, 338, 370, and cit.lit.

⁴³ F. Sear. *Op.cit.*, 174.

⁴⁴ F. Sear. *Op. cit.*, 274 and cit. lit., 382, Plan 409 and cit. lit., 442 and cit. lit.; И. Топалилов, *Op. cit.*, 133.

⁴⁵ *Menianum=cavea*. This term is typical for the amphitheaters, where were held gladiatorial fights. Very often the first *maenianum* was intended for the senators, whose seats were supplied with cushions (*pulvillis*), while the seats on the second *maenianum* were called *popularia*, the name depending on the magistrate to whom the seats were assigned, while *populus* were the seats on the third *maenianum (summa cavea)* – see: Juv. *Sat.* III. 154; Dion, LIX.7; Suet. *Domitian* 4; *Octav.* 44.

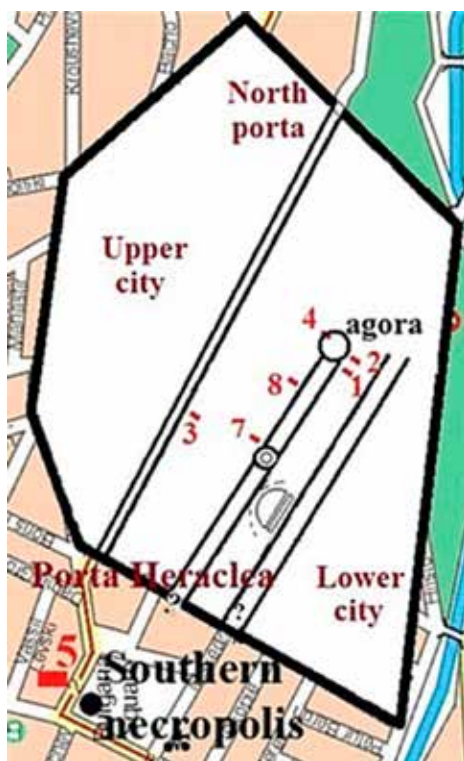


Fig. 15. Plan of the supposed fortification system of the Roman and the Early Byzantine city with the „Porta Heraclea“ and both *cardo maximus* (the earlier Roman one, passing alongside the theatre, and the later one, the *Via Sacra* during the Early Christian period) (Reconstruction of S. Petrova).

Сл. 15. План претпостављеног фортификацијског система римског и рановизантијског града са Порта Хераклеја и кардо максимус (претходни римски период пролазио је поред театра - потом био је део *Via Sacra* у рановизантијском периоду), реконструкција по С. Петровој

temple, pulvinar?) confirms the existence of *ima cavea*. In Philippopolis the *ima cavea* has 14 rows with seats and the capacity of 3500 – 4000 visitors. According to the reconstruction of architect S. Taseva the partly discovered *orchestra* and *cavea* in Parthicopolis should have 12 hypothetical rows. If we accept that there existed in the height the *media* and the *summa cavea* with at least 12 rows more, their total number will be 36.

The *postament* for a column in the theatre of Parthicopolis may belong also to the *ανάλημματα*/portico of the theatre, but its discovering near to both brick pillars supports rather the hypothesis either of a *tribunalia*, or a *temple* or even a *pulvinar*⁴⁶. No data for other similar brick structures have been found, supporting the existence of *psalideses/vomitoria* (vaulted entrances for the different *cavea* (*maenianum*)).

No traces of the *parodoses* (*aditus maximi*) are discovered. Theoretically the entrances could be from three sides. The west one (according the orientation in our case) should be situated at the *analemmata* of the *summa cavea*, if the

⁴⁶ According to F. Sear (Pl. 78, 104, 145, 155, 169, 213, 250, 280, 301, 312, 334, 349, 352) the place of the *tribunalia* is usually over the north *parodos*, with one exception in the center of the *cavea*; the temple/the shrine is usually at the top of the *cavea* or formed like a recess of the *orchestra*. In this way the *pulvinar* is the most possible explanation for the brick piers, supporting it.

portico is on the level of the tangential cardines analogically to other examples, for instance (Lugdunum (Lyon) and Corinth (Roman period), in the latter the entrance is on the second theatre's level⁴⁷.

This was the entrance for the plebs and from here the dead bodies of gladiators, venators, criminals and Christians, condemned to death, have been pulled out on the way to some of the city's necropolis. At the same time the two other entrances/parodoses, judging by the often practice, should be at the north and the south sides, with short decumani or even staircases (?) in front of them at the outside, because of the strong declension here. Both these entrances served the elite and the prominent citizens and persons – equities, veterans, magistrates, priests, benefactors and important guests. The loggia, usually placed over the parodos (the tribunalia in Philippopolis is placed over the west parodos), was intent for the emperor or for the provincial praetor and is rarely established in the center of the cavea⁴⁸.

During the excavations of basilicas NoNo 1 and 4 in Sandanski there were unearthed three marble lions legs, different in dimensions and form, probably extracted from the theatre and reused as building material. (**Fig. 17**). An elaborate seating without back, but with side feet supports in the form of animal legs (*prohedroi* or *bisselia*, with the length of two seats, but occupied only by one person) has been set up for the decurions and other magistrates and important persons. According to F. Sear, the legs are placed at the end side of the row facing the staircase⁴⁹. Similar "*bisselia*" and lion's legs next to staircases has also the stadium of Philipopolis⁵⁰. The main priest of Parthicopolis should occupy the *prohedria* (honourable seats) at the first row/gradus in the middle of the *orchestra*, sitting on a beautifully decorated throne with back and also having animal's (lion's) legs as supports. The third marble leg from Sandanski, very artistically rendered and bigger than the other two, may belong to such a throne.

Probably many of the architectonic elements of the theatre were later used as *spoliae*, when the ruins were exploited as a quarry for the Early Christian basilicas and the colonnade of *cardo maximus* (Via sacra). These *spoliae* differ strongly from the elements, made especially for the Christian buildings⁵¹. The Dorian order is represented predominantly by capitals made from marble and reused in the atrium's porticus of the bishop basilica (basilica No 4). The Roman-Dorian capitals belong to type II, variant "B"⁵². The Roman-Ionian cap-

⁴⁷ F. Sear. *Op. cit.*, 235-236 and cit. lit., 392, Pl. 419 and cit. lit.

⁴⁸ И. Топалилов. *Op. cit.*, 132.

⁴⁹ F. Sear. *Op. cit.*, Pl. 334, 342, 352. The theatres in Italy: Pompeii, 132; Roma – Tibur (Tivoli, Hadrianus villa, latin theatre), Pl. 32, 138; in Asia Minor: Aezani, 325; Blaundus, 330; Hierapolis, 338; Iassus, 339; Magnesia ad Meandrum, 342; Metropolis and Miletus, 343; Teus (one of *prohedria* seats found with lion's leg), 354; Rhodiapolis, 374 and cit. lit.

⁵⁰ И. Топалилов. *Op. cit.*, 120-128, Fig. 21 and 25..

⁵¹ See: С. Петрова. *Архитектонична скулптура от Епископската базилика, гр. Сандански*. – In: Spartacus II. 2075 години от въстанието на Спартак. Тракоримско наследство. 2000 години християнство. София 2006, 251-257.

⁵² С. Петрова. *Типология и особености на римско-дорийския капител в Мизия и в Тракия*. – In: Археология, 1990, 3, 10-11. The tongues of the cannelures, (with a represented ovula at their base) are coming out of the listel, replacing the echinus of the capital. The abacus

itals of the earliest Christian basilica No 1 from 4th century belong to the local production, influenced by the ateliers on the island of Thasos⁵³. The Corinthian capitals in the colonnades, dividing the *naos* of basilica No 4 into three aisles, are from 1st-3rd century and some of them could too originate from the theatre⁵⁴. All the mentioned capitals in different orders can be related to the last decades of 1st and the first half of 2nd century. If they really have been extracted from to the theatre, they support its date from the end of 1st and beginning of 2nd century. We can suppose that all these capitals also have been taken from the interior and the exterior of the theatre.

Most of the columns in the atrium of the same basilica step over *postaments* with a base, very similar to the discovered one *in situ* near the brick pillars in the theatre. The *postaments* analogical to the found near the brick pillars of the theatre are used in the colonnade of Via sacra.

On the base of the reused capitals and *postsaments* (and columns) we can only suppose that all the three orders have been arranged in the theatre. The parallels can be found in the theatres from Italy, Asia Minor, the Balkans, etc.⁵⁵. In all of them according to the canon the lowest level was occupied by the Dorian order, followed in height by the Ionian and the Corinthian order. The architectural decoration of *scaenae frons* of Philippopolis consists of Ionian and Corinthian order. By analogy with the cited monuments, the type and the date of the capitals from Roman times reused in the basilicas of Sandanski it can be supposed that its Roman theatre has been decorated in the same way with capitals, columns and bases of these three orders.

Capacity and Cost.

The theatres with longitude between 65 – 87 m or near to them are⁵⁶: Scupi (*orchestra* 28 m and *cavea* 98 m); Nicopolis in Epirus (*orchestra* 29 m and *cavea* about 92 m); Byllis (Gradisht, Albania), the south-western theatre (*orchestra* 20 m, *cavea* 80.50 and capacity of 7 000 spectators, the *scaene* in Dorian order; the Large theatre in Larissa, from the end of 2nd century, later transformed to an arena (*orchestra* about 30 m); the Small theatre of Larissa (diameter of the *orchestra* 29.70 m) and Stobi (*orchestra* 29, 78 and *cavea* 90 m) with 7 664 spectators.

F. Sear gives in his book the value and the way of counting the building of several theatres, when there are enough data for it (the mentioned from Vitruvius and that in the ancient inscriptions)⁵⁷. Principally the theatre is one of the biggest buildings and its cost is always significant. We have already men-

of most capitals is complexly profiled with a decoration of stems, forming different figures.

⁵³ С. Петрова, *Римско-йонийски капители от Мизия и Тракия (I-IV в.)*, София 1996, Кат. NoNo: 24, 40, 41.

⁵⁴ С. Петрова, *Коринтски капители от епископската базилика в Сандански*. – In: Археология 2007, 122-130.

⁵⁵ F. Sear. *Op. cit.*, 32 sqq., 48 sqq., 54 sqq.; chapters: 3-8 and cit. lit.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, See: Catalogue.

⁵⁷ F. Sear. *Op. cit.*, 19 sqq.

tioned that in Parthicopolis are known personal donations of wealthy citizens on the occasions of important events and erecting of significant city buildings like the *stoa*, etc. The funding was also from the taxes, from the income of the city lands and quite possible from the quarries, situated not far from the city. At that time they most probably were an imperial domain and therefore the city could have the emperor's permission for extracting the necessary material, a kind of an imperial donation⁵⁸. Mentioned also are rare cases, when free citizens had been called up to work without compensation⁵⁹.

Naturally it is difficult to fix the necessary funding for a theatre. In literature there are used special methods of counting the costs. First of all the sum depended on the circumstance of building the *theatron* on a hill. In such a case the cost was much lower in comparison to the free-standing theatre, because in the second case the materials needed are several times more and therefore more expensive. The *sceane* building is in all cases free standing and its cost should be counted for every built m². The next examples are cited by the data of Sear: the theatre in Madaurus has a *cavea* with diameter 33 m, 8 rows with seats and calculated general surface 622.35 m². Its value is HS 375 000, paid according to an inscription by M. Gabinius Sabin⁶⁰. We can compare also with the theatre in Herculaneum, which has D 54 m, surface of 1898 m² and cost of HS 1 544 713; the theatre in Iguvium with D 70,37 m, surface 3 021 m² and cost of HS 3 325 120. Then only the *theatron/cavea* of Parthicopolis with D 31 m would cost to the city about HS 2 500 000. The calculated surface of this *theatron* could be useful also for the definition of its capacity, e. s. the approximate number of spectators. According to the formula of G. Forni, accepted by Sear⁶¹, the capacity should be counted in the following way: $\frac{\pi(D^2 - O^2)K}{8 \times 0,333} =$ capacity of theatre, where "D" is the length of the most outer curve; "O" is the length of the orchestra; "K" is the surface for one's spectator's seat, equal to 0.8 m². In such a way the capacity of the theatre of Parthicopolis should be divided to 2.664 and the number of spectators is 5795. Although the method of G. Forni is not accepted as a canon, the capacity of about 5800-6000 spectators is completely acceptable for a town with the size of Parthicopolis with a fortified area of about 20 hectares. For comparison the theatre of Stobi has the capacity of 7 664 spectators.

The theatre in the initial urban plan and its Fortune in Late Antiquity

Although partial, the archaeological investigations in Sandanski are giving the possibility of studying the topography, the elements of the fortress system and the urban plan of Parthicopolis/Parthicopolis. Since now the research revealed predominantly the Late Antique city (the Late Roman and the Early

⁵⁸ For such donations see: R. Duncan-Jones, *Structure and Scale in the Roman Economy*. Cambridge, 1990, 174–177.

⁵⁹ F. Sear, *Op.cit.*, 19 and note 175.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, 20.

⁶¹ F. Sear, *Op.cit.*, 26 and the cited there lit. See and: G. Forni. *L'intensita della popolazione nella regione augustea del Sannio*. – In: *Rivista Abruzzo*, 7/1, 1968, 59 sqq.

Byzantine one⁶²). The Early Roman period, witnessed so richly in epigraphy, remains still unclear archaeologically and only small elements of the urban plan have been found. The place for the theatre in Parthicopolis was probably chosen at the very moment the urban plan was created. We suppose that this happened before Trajan, because the urban structure already existed in the city of Paroicopolis in the previous century. As it was stressed at the beginning, the urban plan could be prepared as early as the time of the Flavians, most probably at Domitian. The plan of our theatre is very near to the theatres in Macedonia and Thracia. But the decoration and the “marmorizing” in the theatre of Parthicopolis probably took place during the reign of the Nerva-Antonine dynasty (96-180), like in many other theatres on the Balkans.

It was already established that the city was planned according to the principles of the ancient orthogonal system, with straight streets in direction north-south (*cardines*) and east-west (*decumani*), the latter probably short or replaced by staircases because of the strong inclination. The *cardo maximus* as usual should begin from the main gate (the Southern one, leading to Heracleia Syntica) and it should cross the city to the north up to the Agora (**Fig. 18 and Fig. 1**)⁶³. The place of the theatre, occupying probably one insula, was situated inside the city in proximity of other important buildings, thus illustrating a part of the plan of the ancient Paroicopolis/Parthicopolis according to the Roman requirements. Vitruvius describes the theatre immediately after the forum and this is symptomatic for the theatre’s importance in the urban planning. The *theatron* in Parthicopolis answers the demands of Vitruvius the theatre to be built inside the city itself and to be set apart as an independent architectural ensemble, tangential a street. In our case the theatre is tangential the Roman *cardo maximus*. Not far from the theatre, diagonally to it, was situated the west facade of a large building, probably of residential character (under the modern GUM – the town’s Universal Shop or Mall)⁶⁴. Namely its west facade is the boundary with this *cardo maximus* from the East. But we have no sureness for this eastern boundary, because the area is not excavated and we don’t know the dimensions and the forms of the *scaenae frons*. Immediately after the south end (both of the ancient *cardo* and of the modern street) the terrain is with a strong inclination. These two facts suppose that the ancient *cardo* was occupying only the eastern part under the modern street. More concrete, although approximate figures for the width of the *cardo* can be drawn from the comparison with the width of Via sacra, especially in front of basilica No1. The sidewalks are 1, 20 m wide and the street itself – 2.40 m. To the north the *cardo maximus* passed by the so-called ancient *thermen* and reached the agora, situated at the same west side of the street. The last level of the *cavea* on the opposite west side most probably was tangential the Roman *cardines* here. Like the later Via sacra (4th-6th century) the initial *cardo maximus* was paved too with big granite slabs and

⁶² For the periodization see: В. Динчев. „Света София” и Сердика. София 2014, 6, and note 2.

⁶³ S. Petrova. *The Early Christian basilicas in the urban planning of Parthicopolis*. – In: Ниш и Византија XIII, Ниш 2015, 161-184, fig. 16 and 20.

⁶⁴ The excavations unpublished. On the city’s plan marked only as GUM.

the sidewalks surely covered with colonnade and porticoes. The complex of the theatre was situated in such a way as to tangent with its east façade of the *scaenae frons* the *cardo maximus*, creating with it one unit in the urban plan, like in many other Roman cities.

The announcement of Christianity as an official religion in 313 and the foundation of a bishopric in the first quarter of 4th century in Parthicopolis were among the reasons for the destruction of the theatre and maybe of many other pagan buildings, still not excavated. The period after 313 in Parthicopolis was full with many changes in the urban plan. The Roman *cardo maximus* stopped its existence because to the north and not far from the theatre the apse of basilica No1 (the earliest Christian one in the city) and a part of the *naos* and the whole apse of basilica No 2 (from 5th century) were built on the street itself. The theatre and its *scaenae frons* were in ruins and the *cardo* probably looked at that time rather like a path, with end point basilica No1. The previous *cardines* west of the theatre now became the main street, or *Via sacra* for processions, with the new round piazza to the north end (in front of the bishop basilica No 4) and with the round City Fountain and the basilica-memoria at the south end. The new urban plan began its realization with the building of a new Christian center, replacing the agora. This was the bishop basilica No 4 with residence, to which the new *cardo maximus* was leading, covered with porticoes (partly with *spoliae* from the Roman city, including that from the theatre). Thus the main street was moved to the west, on to the upper topographic level (level 2 or the middle one) and it became the heart of the new Christian city. The new religion and its buildings and rituals replaced the pagan buildings and rites and destroyed their main representatives, among them the theatre with arena. Probably the city's territory now was diminished at the beginning, but it became more concentrated alongside the new center and *Via sacra*. The theatre not only lost entirely its previous importance, it was destroyed, its materials reused and it disappeared even visually after being covered with soil⁶⁵ and its surface leveled. Nevertheless even the remnants show its previous majesty and splendor.

Светла Петрова

РИМСКО ПОЗОРИШТЕ ПАРОЙКОПОЛИС/ПАРТИКОПОЛИС И ЊЕГОВА
ИСТОРИЈСКА СУДБИНА

Током 2007-2008 пронађени су делови кавее и оркестре античког театра у оквиру првобитно вишеспратне зграде близу западног дела улице Македонија (бројеви 39 и 41), укупне површине приближно 400м².

Оркестра је оријентисана у правцу кардо максимус, што данас одговара главној улици Македонија према страни Сандански. Театрон је уклопљен у природну стену

⁶⁵ Similar to the theater in Maroneia which was covered with soil and became an early Christian cemetery. (Ch. Karadima. The Ancient Theatre of Maroneia: the Historical Phases and the Restoration Work. A report at the LIV National Archaeological Conference – Gotse Delchev, 26.05 – 30.05.2015).

оријентисану према западу. Оркестра је висине 4.70м и нивелисана је у складу са модерним улицама. Основа кавее је усечена у стени, док је театрон изграђен степенастим смицањем прстенова 3м ширине и 1,20 висине. Прстенови који дефинишу театрон постављени су под углом од 120 степени и на тај начин спречено је урушавање. Редови са седиштима су налик латиничном слову V. Теоријска реконструкција кавее састоји се такође од 7 радијално поређаних степеника (*κλίμακες*). Првобитно је било постављено по 4 седишта у једном реду са седиштима, потом је следио следећи прстен. Театар је такође постављен тако да је у оси данашње улице Гоце Делчев где се врло вероватно и налазио првобитни улаз/излаз. Нажалост тај део није могуће испитати будући да је реч о савременом стамбеном насељу.

Две масивне опеке пронађене код театра и гранитни постамент са базом стуба указују да је близу била или трибуналија или храм малих димензија. *In situ* су пронађене плоче које су припадале првобитно припадале оркестри, велика мермерна плоча и део првог реда кавее, део преграде између кавее и оркестре.

На свакој страни ортостата су четири отвора са металним полугама за повлачење металне оградe током гладијаторских игара. Да су се гладијаторске игре одигравале у овом театру показује такође и мермерна плоча пронађена као сполја у крстионици базилике са четири позивнице за оваква извођења. У том случају театар је имао улогу амфитеатра/полу амфитеатра. Делимично очуван натпис указује да би се могло говорити о периоду владавине Севера (193 -235). Друге сполје су пронађене у базиликама број 1 и број 4. Обе базилике су војеврсна потпора посебним местима са скулптованим лављим шапама; две су врло вероватно припадале трибуналији или бисалији. Трећа припада декорацији која се првобитно налазила на крају сваког реда степеништа.

Мишљења смо да је театар изграђен за време Веспасијана и Домицијана. Декорација и мраморна оплата су по свим приликама изведени за време династије Нерва и Антонина (96-180). Према прорачунима, као и поређењем са осталим сачуваним театрима, изградња је износила 2 500 000 сестерција. Број гледалаца које је театрон могао да прими је приближно 5 800 - 6 000. Оштећења су се врло вероватно догодила након 313.године и оснивања епископије Партикополис у првој половини четвртог века. Ипак, у неким местима и даље су се одржавале гладијаторске игре; то је разлог зашто је 392.године Аркадијевим новим едиктом дошло до потпуног укидања гладијаторских игара. Тада су и званично угашене све активности тог типа у Партикополису. Значајан део декорације је секундарно коришћен.

Нови градски центар је формиран у ранохришћанском периоду на нешто вишем нивоу према западној страни са новим оријентацијама улица. То је тзв. *Via Sacra* са новим кружним тргом, повезани базиликама бр4, бр1 и бр.2. Концентрација шест базилика је таква да су распоређене у два правца (базилике број 7 и 4). Главне грађевине нове градске зоне биле су концентрисане у централном делу и вишим, западним зонама.