

## **THE THEATRE IN PARTHICOPOLIS: A POSSIBLE RECONSTRUCTION**

In the sphere of the visual arts, actors in costumes and masks can be seen on fine carvings of theatres, on sarcophagi and grave steles, on mosaics, on objects intended for everyday usage, on frescoes from Pompeii, etc. These examples show us the importance of the theatre for the Roman world.

The theatres were sacred object but also building in which the popular plays were quickly growing from tragedies and comedies, including dramas and ballet, musical and athletic festivals, gladiator fights, sometimes with wild beasts. In the Roman world the theatres predetermined the close relations between spectacles, religion, friendships and politics. In historical development, the construction of the theatre building had a strong influence on engineering and house construction method, which was known to a specific culture.

The way in which the performances and the other kinds of entertainment were created was an important factor. The choice of a location need for a play was completely different from the location which can be used for chariot races or in the modern days – the rock concerts.

The Greeks prefer the theatres to be built in the open area. They used construction methods for optimal space, which to be used for different types of performances, popular in their culture. That is why the big closed facilities weren't popular in that period, due to the underdeveloped construction methods in the period.

The Roman theatres, following the prototype of the Greek theatre, were essentially different from them nevertheless in both cases the spectacle could be performed.

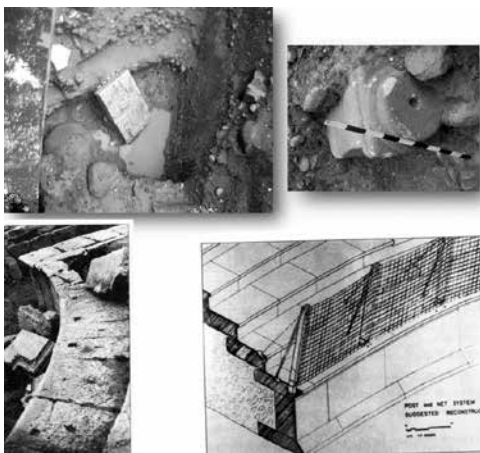
The Roman building development left its mark on the construction in the central urban space of Sandanski, Bulgaria. During the digging for a building in 2007, on an area of 400 square meters, during an archeological research under the leadership of doc. Svetla Petrova were found remains of a facility, which undoubtedly represents an urban theatre (**fig. 1**).

Considering the small area of the archeological survey and the meager architectural elements from the facility – theatre, by analysis of the entire terrain, the construction and movable building materials, conclusions were made with which were defined the measures and proportions of the theatre.



Fig. 1 Parts of the theatre.

Сл. 1 Делови театра

Fig. 2 *Orthostat in situ.*Сл. 2 Ортостаг *in situ.*

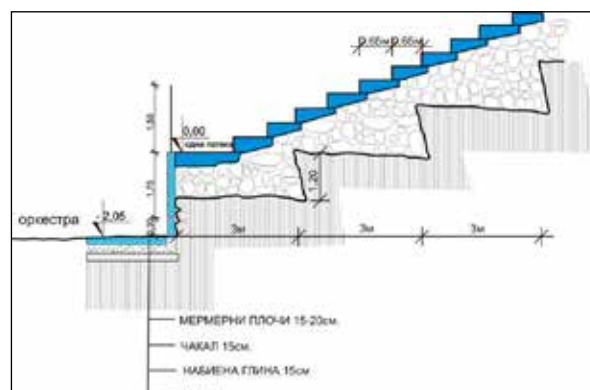
The comprehensive analysis and the analogies made with theater in the province of Macedonia and further, gave the result and the possibility for the reconstruction of the building schematics of the theatre of the ancient Parthicopolis. The most important element, which was also pointed out by Vitruvius, associated with the construction of theatres in the Roman period is the analysis of the terrain on which the theater was built; the chosen location for the construction, to be on a “solid spot”, with a certain tilt and southern exposition. In the design, also from technical aspect of great importance is the location of the

theatre, especially the *cavea*, with particular attention to acoustic and climatic aspects. The base of the design of theatres is the measuring point on which are superimposed all the other measures and proportions. By starting it the diameter and the perimeter is determined which forms the part of the orchestra and the beginning of *cavea (koilon)*.

Analyzing the terrain on which the theatre of Particopolis was built it is clear, that it was built on a gradually elevating hill, on which today houses are built, amphitheatrically following the curve of the hill. The composition of soil is solid and concise over a travertine rock. In this way the requirement of Vitruvius was fulfilled theatre to be built on “solid spots”.

Fig. 3 A cut along the *cavea* and *orchestra* with rings of the substructure.

Сл. 3 Усек дуж кавее и оркестре са прстеновима субструктуре



Huge part of the remains of the theatre were destroyed during the work with heavy machinery, digging the foundation of a new building: the seat rows and a big part of the main substructure were destroyed, but the remains of the earthen profile clearly define and highlight the cuts of the slope, which was prepared for the construction of the theatre. With a naked eye we can see clearly in the rock profile three cuts of the terrain 3m width and 1.20m height (see fig. 1- right). The horizontal surface has been excavated with an even profile and a bevel to the next ring for solid stability of the terrain and of the substructure of the theater. Above them there is masonry of river boulders bounded with mortar, which creates the substructure of the *coilon/cavea*. This substructure was made over the whole surface of the theatre and its margins in order to form its concave form.

The construction of a strong and solid substructure of the *cavea* once more confirms the characteristics of the construction of Roman theatres. The open 1m high wall which smoothly and semi-circularly curves at the base marks the begging of the *cavea*. Above that wall in the rock profile the first cut for the first row of seats can be seen.

On the solid substructure above the rings the seats were formed with river boulders and different lengths, covered with marble and width of the curve about 0.75 m, and the length about 0.30m. From the bottom side the seats shortened, with the purpose of better traction with the terrain. In one ring 4 rows with seats were situated in height. One such example of shaped marble seat was discovered on the surface of the *cavea*.

Next to the masonry of the first row of the *cavea* on the terrain a processed marble slab with dimensions 120x175x30sm was discovered, which according to its size matches with the marble slabs, forming the border wall between the *cavea* and orchestra (*orthostats*) (fig. 2). On the narrow side this marble slab has four square holes which were used for mounting a protective net. This shows us that on the area of the orchestra there were gladiator fights with wild animals. Also on the terrain of the *cavea* a marble slab was discovered, profiled on one side as well, as a marble pedestal, ending in its upper part with a profiled base of a column which suggests the presence of a tribunal (central lodge) in the central part of the *cavea*.

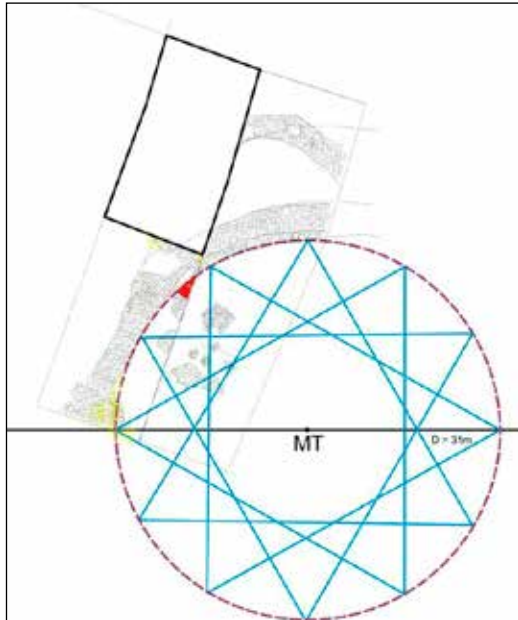


Fig. 4 Defining the center point of a circle with a diameter of 31 meters

Сл. 4 Дефинисање централне тачке круга са пречником од 31 метар

In the southern part of the orchestra two processed marble slabs were discovered in situ, built in the floor, which represent a part of the flooring of the orchestra. The substructure of the floor of the orchestra consists of layer of tramped clay, on which there is a layer of gravel with the marble slabs forming the floor (fig. 3).

All these discovered elements are enough for a reconstruction of the open part of the theatre to be made.

At first the main measure point was defined (fig. 4). A circle is drawn from that point with a diameter of 31m. In that circle are imported four equilateral triangles, which at equal distance touch the arc of the circle. The points of the angles of the triangles define the direction of the stairs in the *cavea*, which split the *cavea* in six *cunei* (fig. 5-6).

That is how the semi-circular form of the *cavea* was made, which together with the diameter of the orchestra forms a total length of the diameter of 48m. These dimensions show the size of the first *ima cavea* of the theatre. We judge for the presence of *media* and *summa cavea* by the remains of the theater in height, where

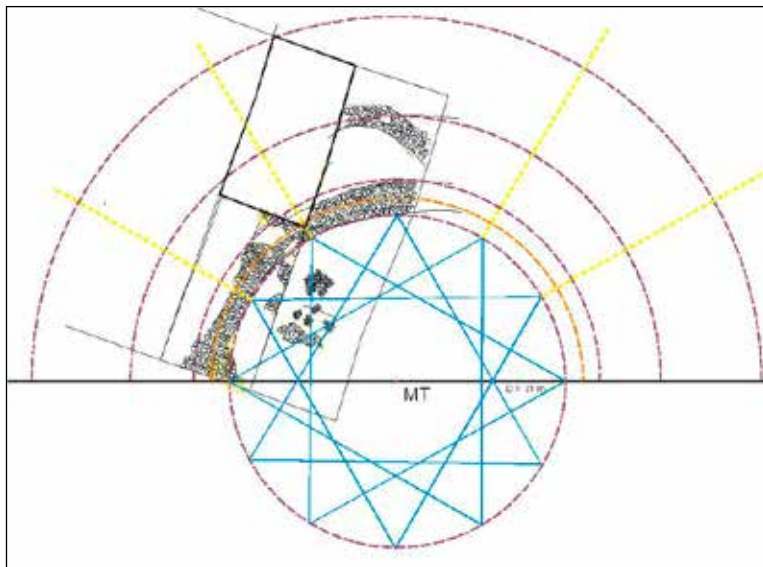
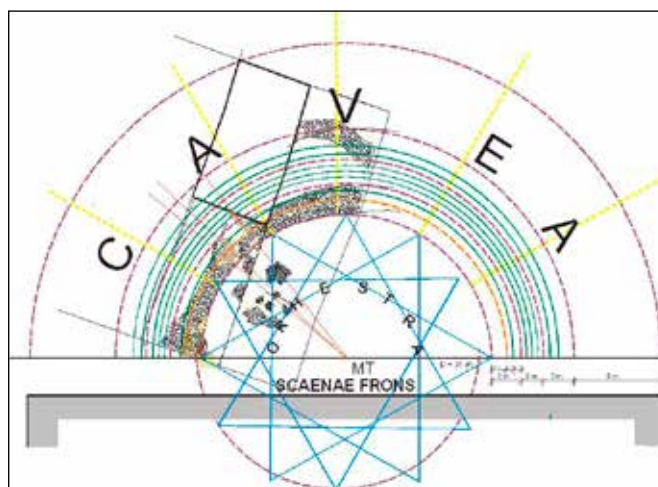


Fig. 5 Base of the theater with definite rows of the seats in the *cavea*, the radial lines of the construction of the substructure and length of *scene*.

Сл. 5 Основа театра са дефинисаним редовима кавее, радијалне линије конструкције субструктуре и дужина сцене

Fig. 6 The base theater with defined lines *cavea*, radial line and the length of the scene

Сл. 6 Основа театра са дефинисаним редовима кавее, радијалне линије и дужина сцене



are noticed rock clusters on the profile of the hill. The remains of the radial walls show construction of river boulders, bounded with mortar and pieces of marble, obtained probably as remains from the marble slabs for the seats or from other elements of the *cavea* produced in the nearby quarries. 10 rows wide 75m are defined, which form the *ima cavea* of the theater and a path in front of the first row 1.5m wide. The data shows that above the *cavea* another path existed for the viewers allowing their access to the seats. The remains of the marble slabs, which were put aside and outside the site show us that those are the probable blocks which formed the stairs in the *cavea*. Comparing the levels of the floor of the orchestra, the slabs discovered in situ and the level of the path of the *cavea*, the last one was 2.05m high above the floor of the orchestra. The entrances to the orchestra, the *parodoses*, were probably the sides of the *cavea*.

The surface of the orchestra was covered with marble slabs and to the curve of the *cavea* the slabs had a formed furrow for gathering the rain water. These furrows also served for cleaning the orchestra after the bloody fights. The size and probable the *proscenia* which was used as a decoration of the orchestra were not found due to the fact that the letter should be under the modern street.

From the drawn graphic reconstruction of the ancient theater in Parthicopolis we can define its orientation, with directions southeast, which also meet the requirement set by Vitruvius. The probable year in which the theater was deserted was after 325, due to its redevelopment into a construction depot for building materials supply for the construction of the Early Christian buildings and became a stone cutting facility for refining marble slabs like other theatres in the Roman Empire. With this graphic reconstruction of a part of the ancient theatre in Parthicopolis we proved its existence, location, construction, form and architectural characteristics – seats, *cavea*, *orchestra*, *tribunalia*. Unfortunately, on top of it at the moment are built modern building which sealed and hid the remains of the theatre and will probably remain that way for a long time, until the proper conditions for its complete discovery are created.

Славица Тасева  
ПОЗОРИШТЕ У ПАРТИКОПОЛИСУ: МОГУЋА РЕКОНСТРУКЦИЈА

Анализа и реконструкција позоришта начињена је на основу података који су записани код Витрувија и литературе која се бави проучавањем римског позоришта. Откривени елементи позоришта довољни су да се начини његова реконструкција.

Искоришћено је геодетско снимање позоришта, обављено у периоду археолошких ископавања. Прво је одређена основна тачка, која у уписаном кругу прати линију оркестре повучена од њеног краја, тако да се одређује дијаметар оркестре у дужини од 31м. У тај круг су уписана четири једакостранична троугла који опредељују правац степеница кавеа и дели га на 6 *cunei*. На тај начин се дефинише полукружна форма кавее, која заједно са дијаметром оркестре има укупну дужину од 48м, што је у суштини дужина прве кавее (*ima cavea*) позоришта. Да је постојало више кавеа - *media* и *summa cavea*, указују остаци на терену по његовој висини, где су откривени остаци обрушеног камена која је била подлога за кавее и то до улице Гоце Делчев, која се налази на западу. Препознају се 10 реда ширине од око 0,75м, који образују *ima cavea* позоришта.

На тај начин је могућа реконструкција, првенствено на основу откривених делова театра у Партикополису, доказали смо његово постојање, место где се простире, конструкцију, форму и архитектонске карактеристике: седишта, кавеа, оркестра, трибунали.