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## ASCENDING FROM BLOOD: EARLY CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE, ANCIENT THEATRE AND THE CULT OF THE MARTYRS

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**Abstract:** *The coexistence and conditionality between the evolution of the cult of the martyrs and the stage in which it took place is very interesting: the crucial moment in the development of the cult of martyrs, as well as in the later development of early Christian architecture, was the ancient theatre, or an amphitheatre, where the public execution was a mass spectacle and admired the martyrs as apostates of Roman society. Namely, at the time of the persecution of Nero (and his successors), it became an arena for fighting Christians with wild animals, that is, a central object for the public torture of Christians. Knowing this, it is not surprising that entire basilica complexes were erected nearby or directly onto ancient theatres. The first early Christian basilica in Stobi (the Old Episcopal Basilica) was erected right up to the theatre, on the relics and graves of the martyrs who suffered in the fighting in the theatre; in Scupi, at the foot of the theatre itself a basilica with a double apse on the east side was discovered and an out-of-court ambulance around the grave of the martyr; at the foot of the theatre in Heraclea Lynkestis a complex of early Christian basilicas erected on foundations from older buildings was discovered.*

**Key words:** Early Christian, architecture, theatre, martyrs

*“Semen est sanguis Christianorum”*

*Tertullian, Apologeticum 50.13 (CCSL 1.171)*

The more we look at religious options in the early centuries, the harder it is to answer the great historical question: Why did Christianity survive and succeed in Roman society? The claims that Judaism, although ethically and religiously superior to the Roman religion, was closed in its exclusivity; or that the Roman religion was a system of traditional cults with no moral or spiritual content, carried by the early Christians, must be carefully considered. Many Jewish communities were not so closed to accepting new believers in their ranks, leaving the possibility that more Roman citizens would be converted into Judaism in search of deeper spiritual clarifications. However, this did not happen. Instead, in the first centuries after the death of

Jesus, these Roman citizens increasingly chose a religion that could have brought them to execution because of subversiveness. Why? We will be guided by the claims of the early Christians that just martyrdom generated new believers, i.e., in the words of the rigid Carthaginian Christian father, Tertullian: “*Your cruelties, each more refined than the last, achieve nothing. They attract others to our school. Each time you mow us down, you increase our number: the blood of Christians is seed. Many of you preach endurance of pain and death: Cicero in the Tusculans, Seneca in Chance, Diogenes, Pyrrho, Callinicus. But their words do not find as many followers as the Christians do in teaching by actions.*” (Tertullian, Apol. 50.13-14, 197 CE)

The term martyr comes from Μάρτυρ which means a witness, but in the early Christianity it gets the meaning of a Christian saint who died because of his belief. The Christian use of the term is new, in view of the expressed security in the reward after death<sup>1</sup> but they were not the only ones who died because of their beliefs: according to Plato, Socrates was executed for perseverance in the pursuit of essential knowledge; and the Jewish heroes, the Maccabees, were tortured and killed because of their disobedience. All of this helped in shaping the martyr's archetype array facing the judges and peacefully sustaining his own death.<sup>2</sup>

Almost all sources that give us data on martyrs, their *acts* (i.e. official records of their martyrdom) or their *passio/-ones*, are Christian. Eusebius, Tertullian, Justin and Origen provide detailed information on the suffering of Christians and the established institution of torture.<sup>3</sup> The narrative focuses on hearing and torture, condemnation, preaching, and death.<sup>4</sup>

The official record of the trial had to prove that the defendant was / was appropriately questioned, warned of the consequences, that it was time to re-examine and change the statement, and finally, convicted under the law.<sup>5</sup> The first question, name and social status, determined the following procedure and the penalties that could have been imposed, different for slaves and free, Roman citizens and others, but the same for men and women, except in the case of pregnancy, with delayed execution for the mother.<sup>6</sup> In this context, some of the acts state that the question of the name and status was answered by Christians simply: “I am a Christian”. Such a strongly expressed sense of belonging, so simply shifted, on the one hand can be taken as an authentic display, but it can also be considered a rhetorical technique of expressing of the skillful narrator (as the pioneer in the study of the martyrs' lives,

<sup>1</sup> G. Bowersock, 1995, 5-16.

<sup>2</sup> T. Rajak, 1997; L. Alexander, 2002

<sup>3</sup> J. Поповић, 1912, 279-301; Eusebius, Hist. Eccles. I. III, p. I.

<sup>4</sup> T.D. Barnes, 1985, 143-86 analyses the variations in the practice and narration.

<sup>5</sup> J.D. Harries, *Law and Empire* 1999, 110.

<sup>6</sup> C. Jones, 1993.

Delehayé, pointed out long ago.)<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, most acts follow a certain formula and stratification in the presentation of events from the hearing to judgment and execution,<sup>8</sup> except the rare ones written in the first person, such as *Passio Perpetuae*,<sup>9</sup> the life of the young woman and the mother of Cartagena, whose uniqueness lies in the fact that it is almost entirely written by the martyr, and even more that is included in the exclusive ancient texts written by women.

The period of more than two centuries of persecution in Rome and all parts of the Empire (from 64 to 313, i.e. 380) was more than sufficient to establish and strengthen the martyr cult. Roman laws and regulations ensured the inviolability of the body of the deceased, a regulation without which an object of lasting cult could not be created. Religious concern of Christians for dead bodies, for bits of dust and ash, was a departure from Greek and Roman tradition. People were naturally concerned to show respect for their own dead, and for the spirits of the dead, but the divide between mortal humans and immortal gods was marked by purity rules: in Greek tradition all aspects of the mortal condition, including birth, caused religious pollution. Philosophers interpreted this religious tradition as expressing a truth about the mortal body in relation to the immortal soul, which escaped when the body died. Christian teaching on the resurrection of the body was especially hard for Romans to take.<sup>10</sup> It was widely believed that the soul survived the death of the body, but why should it need the body, that so obviously did not survive? But authoritative Christian texts taught that Jesus Christ had died on the cross and had risen from the dead, not as a ghost or as a disembodied soul, but as a physical human being who could be touched and who ate ordinary food. ‘Doubting Thomas’ (John 20.24–9) would not believe that Jesus was alive unless he could actually touch his wounds: he was convinced. Paul argued (1 Corinthians 15.12–28) that the resurrection of Christ implied the resurrection of all Christians. The burial-places of Christian dead were called *koimētēria* (hence ‘cemetery’), the Greek for ‘sleeping-places’: the sleepers would wake again in the general resurrection (Latin *resurrexi*, ‘I have arisen’). Martyrs were thought to be early evidence for resurrection. The faithful believed that even the smallest fragment of a martyr’s body, dust and ash, had the power to heal

<sup>7</sup> H. Delehayé, 1905.

<sup>8</sup> J.D. Harries, *Constructing the Judge* 1999.

<sup>9</sup> B. Shaw, 1993; P. Miller, 1994; J. Salisbury, 1998. Perpetua (III c.) was a young educated woman of a respected family, but even the influence of her father was not enough to be released. In her dreams, she receives more spiritual power from the hierarchy of her church; and finally dreams of physically becoming a man to compete with the opponent in the arena. Another author ends her act after her death, saying that Perpetua, along with her slave, Felicia, who also recently gave birth, were stripped and released to fight a wild cow. The crowd protested, not because of their execution, but because of their nudity, so both were returned to dress. Perpetua was eventually killed by a nervous gladiator, who clumsily missed the first attempt.

<sup>10</sup> C.W. Bynum, 1995.

and protect. This power was taken as proof of continuing life: the martyrs were united with Christ in the love of God that had caused them to accept death, and were therefore united with Christ in his victory over death. Roman law usually allowed the bodies of condemned criminals to be removed for burial, or the bones and ashes to be removed if the execution had been by burning (D.48.24.1), and these remains of martyrs were placed in memorial shrines.<sup>11</sup>

In general, the eastern churches saw no problem in moving martyrs and distributing their relics, for when a relic was divided, the donor lost nothing, and the gift united those who shared it. But Roman law on burial was another matter. In the year 357 the relics of Andrew the apostle and Luke the evangelist were transferred to Constantinople, presumably with the consent of the emperor Constantius II.<sup>12</sup> The same year, a law of Constantius reaffirmed the principle that the bodies of the dead must not be disturbed. He had on several previous occasions threatened heavy fines for anyone who removed building or decorative material from tombs: in 357 he added, again reaffirming tradition that the same penalty applied to those who disturbed buried bodies or remains (*corpora sepulta aut reliquias*, Codex Theodosianus 9.17.4). It is not certain that he (or his legal advisors) intended also to restrict the movement of relics, but by the early 380s, Roman law explicitly connected martyr-cult with rules on burial. A law of 383, addressed to the prefect of Rome, restated the principle that bodies in sarcophagi or urns must be placed outside the city boundary, and added that apostles and martyrs were no exception. A law of 386, restated the principle that it was not lawful to move bodies, and added that no one was to dissect or market the bodies of martyrs. But it was lawful to build a shrine at the tomb of a martyr, provided the tomb was undisturbed (C. Th. 9.17.7-8).

At the time of the small interruptions of organized persecutions, Christians continue to maintain religious rites in certain places that gradually receive certain architectural forms. These were the graves of martyrs called μαρτύριον at the time of Eusebius, a term signifying a place of testimony.<sup>13</sup> At the graves of martyrs, the first martyria (monuments to mark the graves) were erected: with rectangular or circular tombstones of different dimensions and an opening for the liberation of wine and oil (*mensae martyrium*), adapted for use in the funeral ritual; or built chapels and mausoleums.<sup>14</sup> By linking several such graves, space was created for burial solely of Christians or the so-called *areae martyrium*. The first architectural endeavor of

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<sup>11</sup> G. Clark, 2004, 53-55.

<sup>12</sup> C. Mango, 1990.

<sup>13</sup> H. Leclercq, 1926, 95-96; J. Поповић, 1912, 240-263. The persecutions began after the great fire in Rome in 64 year, when a large part of the old city was burnt, an event for which Christians were blamed; and lasted with some interruptions until the Council in Constantinople in 381.

<sup>14</sup> A. Grabar, 1946, 167.

the maintenance of the rituals and a certain architectural construction that would protect and cover the tomb or relics.<sup>15</sup>

Archaeological research provides an opportunity to monitor the development of the architectural form of buildings over the graves of martyrs and their transformation into churches with the martyr's grave or his relics. Enlarged, altered and adapted for the needs of a common cult, during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries this type of commemorative buildings turn into churches of a basilica or central type.

These temples were located in the city where the martyr died. The cult of relics slowly replaced the body of the martyrdom in all the provinces of the Empire, both in the East and in the West and in Rome itself, so that by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the relics of the martyrs and their remains circulate throughout the Empire (these are usually relics of prominent martyrs declared for saints).

At the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, practice to sanctify the altar with depot for relics was established, placed in special built-in crypts-relics, locks and enkainons placed under or at the honourable table in the altar of the church; a custom applied in churches that did not possess the tomb of a saint. As Delahaye<sup>16</sup> suggests, the laying of relics in the sanctification of temples sometimes meant a complete dedication of the martyr's object whose remains were laid, as well as the celebration of the anniversary of his death and the weekly commemoration of his sacrifice.

However, the coexistence and conditionality between the evolution of the cult of the martyrs and the stage in which it took place: the key moment in the development of the cult of martyrs, as well as in the later development of early Christian architecture, was the antique theatre, or amphitheatre, where the public executions were a mass spectacle and denounced martyrs as apostates of Roman society. Namely, at the time of the persecution of Nero (and his successors), it becomes an arena for fighting Christians with wild animals, that is, a central object for the public torture of Christians. The theatre was an important location where honour was defended and power negotiated. In this setting, Rome demonstrated what justice was and what criminals and traitors deserved.

Roman administrators were very much present in the (amphi)theatre, exercising their power among the audience in a symbolical and real way by deciding the fate of the gladiators. Christians transferred the virtues of the gladiators to the martyrs. The martyrs demonstrated their braveness and heroism in line with Roman ideals. They even showed that they were able to withstand the power of the Roman authorities until the very end, thus demonstrating their superiority in this way.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 403.

<sup>16</sup> H. Delahaye, 1930.

Knowing this, the emergence of entire basilica complexes erected nearby or directly on ancient theatres is not surprising. The first Early Christian basilica in Stobi (the Old Episcopal Basilica) was erected right up to the theatre, on the relics and graves of the martyrs who suffered in the fighting in the theatre; in Scupi, at the foot of the theatre, a basilica with a double apse on the east side and an out-of-court ambulatorium around the grave of the martyr was discovered; at the foot of the theatre in Heraclea Lynkestis, a complex of early Christian basilicas erected on foundations from older buildings was discovered.<sup>17</sup>

The building of the theatre is an autonomous architectural object erected in a naturally high place with a special defence position. They were usually built in the central city area and fitted into the city's urban plan, with a dominant position that made them favourites among the gathering places. Although originally intended to portray tragedies and comedies, from the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, more and more theatres have gradually been re-adapted for gladiatorial and venation fights. Such a fate was experienced by all the discovered theatres on the territory of Macedonia.<sup>18</sup>

The theatre in Stobi, according to its architectural and stylistic features, is a combination of the eastern theatres of Asia Minor and the Roman type. Subsequent additions and barriers indicate adaptation to the popular animal battles that Christians were thrown at during the persecution. The building dates back to the 2<sup>nd</sup>, with some additions from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, and functioned until the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>19</sup>

Near the theatre there were more eclectic buildings, conditioned by the role that these side corridors received, connected with the suffering of many believers and one of the strong points for creating a cult of the martyrs. With the formation of graves and the construction of tombstones, an *area martyrium* was created in this part, which with its primitive buildings later served as a basis for the first Christian basilicas to be erected.<sup>20</sup>

From the ancient theatre of Zajčev Rid in Scupi there are architectural remains of its substructures that mark the foundations of the building, the theatre and the orchestra. In its general plan, this is a theatre built according to the Roman type, unlike the one in Stobi built under Greek influence, which is quite logical according to the geographical and historical circumstances. According to the first researcher N. Vulić, this theatre was erected in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century,<sup>21</sup> and in it as in the theatre in Stobi, the standard repertoires of that time could be performed. Subsequent small-scale research involving D. Rendić-Miocević did not contribute to specifying

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<sup>17</sup> Б. Алексова, 1995, 57-60.

<sup>18</sup> Д. Рнјак, 1979, 33-34.

<sup>19</sup> J. Wiseman and Dj. Mano-Zissi, 1970, 402; С, Саржоски, 1965, 129.

<sup>20</sup> Б. Алексова, 1995, 59.

<sup>21</sup> Н. Вулић, 1961, 3-23; Н. Вулић, 1981, 38-43.

the dating of this unique architectural object from ancient times.<sup>22</sup> The latest archaeological researches (2013 - 2017) shed more light on this massive building. The location of the building, points to a conclusion that the construction of the theatre was part of the initial urban concept of the city from the time of foundation and initial rise of Colonia Scupi. However, the low level of preservation and excavated data does not allow a precise determination of the time of construction, the dynamics of realization and the opening of the theatre. The date of the construction is determined by the analysis of the chronologically sensitive moveable finds, especially the numismatic material, the architectural decoration and the different types of fine pottery. The architectural design and the elements of the building, as well as the style of the elaborate decoration of the *scaenae frons* suggest that the theatre was already in use in the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, which is usually related to the activities of Emperor Hadrian in the Balkans. The analysis of the style of the numerous fragments of architectural decoration from the *scaenae frons* (marble columns, capitals, bases, architraves, door frames, cornices and other elements) found in the past and the new excavations, confirm this chronological determination.<sup>23</sup>

In view of our interest and the connection between the ancient theatre and the Early-Christian buildings, here we note that at the base of the theatre, a basilica with a double apse on the east side, erected on stone sarcophagi, was again identified as a region of *martyrum*.<sup>24</sup>

At Heraclea, a theatre was also discovered from which the auditorium, the horseshoe orchestra, a walled orthostatic wall and a cage for beasts from its west side, survived. Built in the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, this theatre was later re-assigned for fights in the arena.<sup>25</sup> At its base, a complex of early Christian basilicas and buildings laid on the foundations of older ancient buildings was discovered on the shores of the coast.

We have an almost identical situation in the ancient Lychnidos, where in the immediate vicinity of the imposing construction of the ancient theatre, remains of an early Christian basilica were discovered.<sup>26</sup>

These examples only confirm that the blood of the martyrs shed in the arches of ancient theatres was indeed a seed for the development and spread of Christianity, as well as a rich base upon which the monumental churches emanated, commemorating the sacrifice of Christ, but also of his devoted followers.

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<sup>22</sup> D. Rendič-Miočević, 1981, 45-50.

<sup>23</sup> Н. Вулић, 1961, 20; Т. Јанакиевски, 1998, 150; И. Микулчић, 1982, 42; В. Лилчић, 2001, 151-163.

<sup>24</sup> Д. Корачевић, 1977, 143-180; Д. Корачевић, 1986.

<sup>25</sup> Т. Јанакиевски, 1975, 165-172; Т. Јанакиевски, 1973, 57-63; Т. Јанакиевски, 1987, 6-58.

<sup>26</sup> В. Маленко, 1981, 12-28.

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## ВОЗВИШУВАЊЕ НИЗ КРВ: РАНОХРИСТИЈАНСКАТА АРХИТЕКТУРА, АНТИЧКИОТ ТЕАТАР И КУЛТОТ НА МАРТИРИТЕ

### Резиме

Колку повеќе ги разгледуваме религиозните опции во раните векови, толку потешко е да дадеме одговор на големото историско прашање: Зошто христијанството преживеало и успеало во римското општество? Тврдењата дека јудаизмот, иако етички и религиозно супериорен над римската религија, бил затворен во својот ексклузивитет; или дека римската религија била систем од традиционални култови без морална или духовна содржина, ги изнесуваат токму раните христијани, но мора повнимателно да се разгледаат. Многу еврејски заедници не биле толку затворени за прифаќање на нови верници во своите редови, што ја остава можноста повеќе римски граѓани да се конвертираат во јудаизам во потрага по подлабоки духовни појаснувања. Сепак, тоа не се случило. Наместо тоа, во првите векови по смртта на Исус, овие римски граѓани, сè помасовно ја одбирале религијата што можела да им донесе егzekуција заради субверзивност. *Зошто?* Ќе се водиме од тврдењата на раните христијани дека токму мачеништвото генерирало нови верници, т.е. кажано со зборовите на строгиот картагински христијански отец, Тертулијан: „*крвта на христјаниите е семе.*“

Терминот *martyr* доаѓа од *Μάρτυρ* што значи сведок, но во раното христијанство добива значење на христијански светител загинает заради своето верување. Речиси сите извори кои ни даваат податоци за мартирите, нивните *акти* (т.е. официјалните записи од нивното мачеништво) или нивните *passio/-ones*, се христијански. Евзебиј, Тертулијан, Јустин и Ориген даваат детални податоци за страдањата на христијаните и востонавената институција на мачење. Наративот е фокусиран на сослушувањето и тортурата, осудата, притворот и смртта. Официјалниот записник од судењето морал да докаже дека обвинетиот/-тата бил/-а соодветно испрашан/-а, предупреден/-а за последиците, дека било дадено време за преиспитување и промена во исказот, и на крај, осуден/-а според законот. Првото прашање, името и социјалниот статус, ја детерминирало процедурата што следи и казните што можеле да бидат изречени, различни за робови и слободни, римски граѓани и други, но исти за мажи и жени, освен во случај на бременост, со одложена егzekуција за мајката. Во овој контекст, интересно е не-



кои од *активите* на мартирите наведуваат дека на прашањето за името и статусот, христијаните одговарале едноставно: „*Јас сум христијанин*“. Ваквото силно изразено чувство за припадност, толку едноставно срочено, од една страна може да се земе како автентичен приказ, но може да се смета и за реторичка техника на изразување на вештиот наратор. Понатаму, повеќето акти следат одредена формула и стереотипизација во прикажувањето на настаните од сослушувањето до пресудата и погубувањето, освен ретките пишувани во прво лице, како што е *Passio Perpetuae*, житието на младата жена и мајка од Картагена, чија уникатност лежи во фактот што е речиси целосно напишано од маченикот, а уште повеќе што спаѓа во ексклузивните антички текстови напишани од жени.

Периодот на повеќе од два века прогони во Рим и низ сите делови на империјата (од 64 до 313, т.е. 380 година) бил и повеќе од доволен за воспоставување и јакнење на култот на мартирите. Римските закони и прописи осигурувале неповредливост на телото на починатиот, пропис без кој не би можел да се создаде објект на траен култ. Уште во времето на малите прекини на организираниите прогони, христијаните продолжуваат да ги одржуваат верските обреди на одредени места кои постепено добиваат одредени архитектонски форми. Тоа биле гробовите на мачениците наречени *μαρτύριον* во времето на Евзебиј, термин што означувал место на сведоштво. На гробовите на мартирите се подигаат првите *martyria* (споменици за означување на гробовите): со правоаголни или кружни надгробни плочи со различни димензии и отвор за либација на вино и масло (*mensae martyrium*), приспособени за употреба во фунерарниот обред; или изградени капели и мавзолеи. Со поврзување на неколку вакви гробови, се создавал простор за закопување исклучиво на христијани или т.н. *areae martyrium*. Првиот архитектонски потфат на овие светилишта бил да се формира самиот гроб, а потоа и да се обезбеди сала или просторија за одржување на обредите и извесна архитектонска конструкција што ќе ги штити и покрива гробот или реликвиите.

Археолошките истражувања даваат можност да се следи развојот на архитектонската форма на градбите над гробовите на мартирите и нивната трансформација во цркви со гроб на маченикот или на неговите реликвии. Зголемени, преуредени и приспособени за потребите на еден општ култ, во текот на 5. и 6. век овој тип комеморативни градби се претвараат во цркви од базиликален или централен тип.

Овие храмови се наоѓале во самиот град каде маченикот загинал. Култот на реликвиите полека го заменува телото на маченикот во сите провинции на царството, како на исток така и на запад и во самиот Рим, така што до крајот на 4. век реликвиите на мачениците и нивните останки циркулираат низ целото царство (тоа обично се реликвии на видни маченици прогласени за светители).

На крајот на 5. век се востановува пракса да се осветува олтар со депо за реликвии, поставени во посебни изсидани крипти-реликвијари, локули и енкаинони, поставени под, или крај чесната трпеза во олтарот на црквата; обичај што е применет во цркви што не поседувале гроб на светител. Како што посочува De lahaue, полагањето на реликвиите при осветувањето на храмовите, понекогаш значело и целосна дедикација на објектот на мартирот, чии останки биле положени, како и празнување на годишнината од неговата смрт и седмична комеморација на неговата жртва.

Меѓутоа, интересна е спрегата и условеноста помеѓу еволуцијата на култот на мартирите и кулисата во која таа се одвивала: клучниот момент во развитокот на култот на мартирите, како и во подоцнежното развивање на ранохристијанската архитектура, бил античкиот театар, или амфитеатар, каде јавното погубување било масовен спектакл и ги жигосувало мачениците како отпадници од римското општество. Имено, во времето на прогоните на Нерон (и неговите наследници), тој се пренаменува и станува арена за борби на христијаните со диви животни, односно централен објект за јавно мачење на христијаните. Знаејќи го ова, нè изненадува појавата на цели базиликални комплекси подигнати во близина или директно врз античките театри. Првата ранохристијанска базилика во Стоби (старата епископска базилика) е подигната токму до театарот, врз реликвиите и гробовите на мартирите кои настрадале во борбите во театарот; во Скупи, во подножјето на самиот театар е откриена базилика со двојна апсида на источната страна и амбулаториум околу гробот на маченикот; во подножјето на театарот во Хераклеа Линкестис е откриен комплекс од ранохристијански базилики подигнат врз темели од постари објекти.

Самата градба на театарот претставува автономен архитектонски објект подигнат на природно високо место, со посебно одбрана позиција. Обично биле градени во централното градско подрачје и вклопени во урбанистичкиот план на градот, со доминантна позиција која ги правела омилените меѓу местата за собири. Иако првобитно наменети за прикажување на трагедии и комедии, од почетокот на 1. век од н. е. сè повеќе театри постепено се преадаптирани за гладијаторски и венакиски борби. Таква судбина доживеале сите откриени театри на територијата на Македонија.

Во овој амбиент, Рим покажал каква е правдата и што заслужуваат криминалците и предавниците. Римските администратори биле присутни во амфитеатарот, симулирајќи ја својата моќ меѓу публиката на симболичен и вистински начин со одлучување за судбината на гладијаторите. Христијаните ги пренеле доблестите на гладијаторите на мачениците, коишто ја покажале својата храброст и хероизмот во согласност со римските идеали. Тие дури покажале дека ус-

пеале да ја издржат моќта на римските власти до самиот крај, демонстрирајќи ја својата духовна супериорност.

Крај театарот никнувале повеќе еклезијастички градби, условени од улогата што ја добиле овие странични коридори, поврзана со страдањето на многу верници и еден од јаките пунктови за создавање на култ на мартирите. Со оформувањето на гробовите и изградбата на надгробни конструкции се создала агеа *martyrium* во овој дел, која со своите примитивни градби послужила подоцна на истото место да се подигнат првите христијански базилики. Сепак, не треба да се потценуваат и некои од нерелигиозните причини за изградба на нова христијанска базилика во близината, или на врвот на паганските остатоци, како што е достапноста на земјиштето, добро изградените темели и достапноста на градежни материјали.

Овие примери само потврдуваат дека крвта на мартирите пролеана во арените на античките театри, навистина била семе за развивање и ширење на христијанството, како и богата основа на која подоцна изникнале монументалните цркви, комеморирајќи ја жртвата на Христос, но и на неговите ревносни следбеници.

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