The Greek-Roman Theatre in the Mediterranean Area

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ABSTRACT

This paper, dealing with the Greek-Roman theatres, aims to focus on four main issues: 1) the origin and the evolution of the theatre and its social role within the Mediterranean area (Milizia); 2) the importance of the Greek and Roman cultures, which, while conquering new lands, spread their culture, too (Mazzarino); 3) how theatres evolved under the Greeks, and under the Roman Empire (Neppi Modona), and 4) to prove that war, not only destroys people, but, moreover, destroys the entire world. Piro considers war any behavior that tries to subdue people by negating their rights, their religion, and their culture. [1]

The fusion of the Greek and Roman cultures left their signs whenever and wherever they arrived. The Greek-Roman theatres are an example of the importance of fusing cultures; a fusion which enriches both the people conquered and the people conquering.
While talking about drama, as the expression of social aggregation, Milizia writes: "The Greeks and the Romans are the only people who really knew the very spirit of society." [2]

In order to follow its aim, this research wants to give a quick look at the first inhabitants of the Mediterranean coast, so as to understand how trade helped them to share both goods and culture.

History is a very important subject, not simply for acquiring information, but, moreover, for getting new experiences from past events. We say that grandparents are a great resource, because they provide children with advice which can help them when something new has to be solved. This is also the role of history, to judge the results of people's behaviour when facing political problems. For this reason, talking about the peoples who lived around the Mediterranean Sea, admiring their archaeological sites, and studying the history of their age will facilitate the understanding of the context in which those peoples lived and had to make important decisions. In so doing, it will be easier to judge the results of their actions, and acquire experience from them.

In brief, even though war had at first appeared a means to solve problems related to wellness, patriotism, motherland, goods exchange, religion, language, etc., at last, the great conquerors of the past understood that cooperation among peoples is the best way to achieve prosperity both economically and culturally. Nowadays, we are surrounded by wars in every angle of the world, as if it were the first time that a country refuses to share a land, or refuses to accept foreigners, or complains about either a political or religious creed.

So that, during this journey of mine, among the mediterranean peoples of the past, I learned a great lesson; a lesson I hope to transfer to you; a lesson I could understand while admiring the archaeological remains left all around the Mediterranean Sea. So, while looking at them, I realized that those wonders are the result

of cooperation and not of hate among peoples of different language, religion and culture; peoples, who at last, understood that war, as Pope Francesco says, is a defeat for everybody.

> "With war, a senseless and inconclusive venture, no one emerges a winner; everyone ends up defeated, because war, right from the beginning, is already a defeat, always. Let us listen to those who suffer its consequences, the victims and those who have lost everything. Let us hear the cry of the young, of ordinary individuals and peoples, who are weary of the rhetoric of war and the empty slogans that constantly put the blame on others, dividing the world into good and evil, weary of leaders who find it difficult to sit at a table, negotiate and find solutions." [3]

1. INTRODUCTION

The theory on which this research is based derives from the Anthropological-Semantic School founded by the Italian psychiatric Sergio Piro, who said that "life is a continuous, never stopping development, and within this evolution every single person should be considered part of the whole of human community; in other words what happens around us becomes a common problem to be solved in order to improve life from many different sides [4] In the book, *Negli Stessi Fiumi …*, Piro sums up the role of history: to understand that past as well as present events belong to everybody, so that those past events should teach us to proceed by taking care of their results in order to avoid terrible consequences.

I agree with Piro's idea of history, so, while talking about the Greek-Roman theatres, I will touch topics related to migration, multilingualism, multiculturalism, in order to focus on the importance of hospitality rather than hostility for the ones who, only apparently, seem different from us, because, as Piro says, "we all are in the same flowing river".

The first step of this paper, since we talk about archaeological sites, is to define the idea of Beauty as derived from the Greek word *Kalón*, which really means what is morally and physically perceptible; as to say, what we personally like. Umberto Eco adds that the notion of Beauty, includes the soul and the character of a human being, too. [5]

The second step, while quoting scholars like C. Anti, A. Neppi Modona, and C. W. Ceram, will describe the architecture of the theatres, reflecting the final accepted cooperation of peoples of different cultures. Those archaeologists not only give us detailed information about the architecture of the theatres but they also attest that there is evidence of theatres throughout the Mediterranean area even in the pre-Greek age.

For this reason, I will briefly trace the origin of the Indo-Europeans, the Greeks, the Arabs, the Persians, the Phoenicians, the Macedonians, and the Romans.

his long discussion starts from Mazzarino's view point, which, by focusing on the discovery of democracy by the city-state, establishes a link between the Western and Eastern cultures, so that emphasizing that wars mean only destruction, while collaboration means improvement. The Greeks, claims Mazzarino, with their open behaviour, which did not impose membership limits, enlarged the notion of integration, and, as a consequence, they could be the founders of the Western culture. Greek culture enriched the Arabs, too. In fact, the Arab philosophers not only translated many Greek texts, but absorbed, within their language, many Greek terms specifically related to philosophy. Dimitri Gutas, traces a parallel between the Greek and the Arab culture, and points out how important for the Arabs was the knowledge of foreign languages in order to establish cultural contacts with the Greeks, so they were be able to translate, during the `Abb...sid age, many important Greek texts, then disappeared in their original language. [6]

2. THE NOTION OF BEAUTY

The Greeks before Pericle had not yet elaborated any idea of beauty, in fact, as previously said, *Kalón*, did not strictly mean aesthetical beauty. After the Persian wars, when they had to restore the destroyed temples, and when Athens became a political and economic power, the arts started to improve.

Socrates (470-399) divides beauty into three categories: 1) ideal, 2) spiritual, and 3) necessary. Plato, by following Aristotle, and by applying the proportions as dictated by geometry, says that a piece of art must be well-proportioned. Heraclites' idea of beauty was linked to the opposition between chaos and order. We find this anthesis on the west side of the temple in Delphi, in which Apollo, the symbol of the perfect beauty, always young, very well proportioned, is near Dionysios, the god coming from Asia, who is on the east side of the same pediment. Dionysius is the opposite of Apollos, because he stays for the one who goes further the simple outward appearance; an appearance which is linked to chaos, to inebriation, in other words to a real life.

The Greek tragedy, claims Friedrich Nietzsche, derives from the contrast between the Apollonian and Dionysian beauty. The contrast, the opposition are not viewed as separate features, rather they symbolize a cohesion between opposite entities. This cohesion between opposite elements, says Nietzsche, comes from the real, unique Greek way of considering the other, the foreigner, not as a stranger, but as a friend belonging to the same world. It stresses, Nietzsche insists, the highest notion of inclusion, typical of the Hellenic nature. The union of two worlds, the one belonging to the actual, not to the imaginary reality, and the one belonging to the dream, typical of Greek tragedy, should push us to accept everyone within our community, because the real world does not include only beautiful and perfect subjects, rather, it includes a large variety of people. Real beauty is made of contrasts, so that the perfect dream, says Nietzsche, should not completely cover the reality of our life: "reality should not be covered by a dream." [7]

"We will have achieved much for the study of aesthetics when we come, not merely to a logical understanding, but also to the immediately certain apprehension of the

fact that the further development of art is bound up with the duality of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, just as reproduction depends upon the duality of the sexes, their continuing strife and only periodically occurring reconciliation. We take these names from the Greeks who gave a clear voice to the profound secret teachings of their contemplative art, not in ideas, but in the powerfully clear forms of their divine world. … With those two gods of art, Apollo and Dionysus, we link our recognition that in the Greek world there exists a huge contrast, in origins and purposes, between visual (plastic) arts, the Apollonian, and the non-visual art of music, the Dionysian. Both very different drives go hand in hand, for the most part in open conflict with each other and simultaneously provoking each other all the time to new and more powerful offspring, in order to perpetuate for themselves the contest of opposites which the common word "Art" only seems to bridge, until they finally, through a marvellous metaphysical act, seem to pair up with each other and, as this pair, produce Attic tragedy, just as much a Dionysian as an Apollonian work of art." [idem]

3. EMIGRATION

Our recent problem related to migration, is really a very old one, because of the inborn human feeling to improve one's own life. In order to live more comfortably, people have always been pushed to go in search of new lands, in which it would be possible to find more food and better weather conditions.

The Indo-Europeans, who spoke Proto-Indo-European (neolithic age) were the first people who moved in search of a more comfortable place because of the changing climate that had made their lands too arid. There are various hypotheses (Kurgan, "revised Steppe" and many others) which try to establish exactly where the Indo-Europeans came from. Most probably they lived in the Pontic steppe (north of the Black Sea, Caucasus Mountains and Caspian Sea and including parts of eastern Ukraine, southern Russia and northwest Kazakhstan), and spanned from Eurasia, to the Indian subcontinent, the Iranian plateau up to Europe.

This emigration caused a long cultural and linguistic process which gave birth to many related languages. There were three stages of migration:1) (2000 b. C.) one group, the Kurgans, went to Asia Minor, Balkan peninsula and Aegean Islands, establishing new populations: The Hittites, and the Greeks; 2) another group went to India and Persia generating the Indians, the Medes and the Persians, and 3) the last group went to Western and Southern Europe generating the Latins, the Oscans, the Umbrians, the Celts, the Illyrians. During this huge migration movements, the Indo-Europeans, while spreading their culture (agriculture and sheep-farming, the work of bronze and copper), assimilated other peoples' ways of life, too.

The linguistic results of this migration/assimilation phase were two groups of languages: 1) the *satam* (Sanskrit and the Persian languages), coming from the eastern group of Indo-Europeans (the Aryans), who landed in Iran and in the north western India, and 2) the *centum* (Latin, Greek, Celtic and the German languages) coming from the western group of Indo-Europeans. The Cassites established in Iran towards the western mountains around 1500 b. C.; they conquered the towns in Babilonia, mostly assimilating the culture of the population living there. The

Mitanni, around 1600 b. C., conquered some lands in Assyria (Iraq) up to the river Euphrates, but, even though the names of their kings and gods belonged to the Aryan race, they absorbed the culture of the people living there: the Semites and the Hurrians. Then, around 2500 b. C., the Luwies, another group of Indo-Europeans, went to Asia Minor and established the Arzawa reign.

The main feature of this huge process of migration was the spread of the Indo-Europeans' ways of life, but more importantly was the assimilation of the traditions of the new lands. The cooperation between the Indo-Europeans and the people already living in the lands invaded did not destroy either the culture or the language of these peoples, rather it enriched them with new traditions. [8]

4. THE NOTION OF NATIONALISM

It is important to focus, within our topic, on the notion of nationalism/patriotism, as viewed by Anderson and Garfinkel. Nationalism/patriotism should not be so strong a feeling to prevent people from acquiring and accepting other ways of life, other languages, and other religions.

Nationalism, as Anderson [9] says in *Imagined communities*, should not be too strict, so to impede either the acquisition of other languages, or of other cultures, or even pushing to sacrifice one's own life in the name of the mother country. Patriotism should never achieve the level of racism, that is to say, the hate of *the Other*.

Language is the first item that focuses on patriotism, since "the nation was conceived in language first, not in blood." National anthems are strong examples, because when sung "people wholly unknown to each other, no matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes are, utter the same verses to the same melody providing occasions for unison." [10] Beyond language, also religious creed contributes to instil a sense of community because of the ceremonies which facilitate the assembling process. In brief, Anderson defines nationalism as a feeling restricting the boundaries of a nation, which is imagined "as *limited* because it has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations." (idem).

The problem, I add, is that the people living outside the boundaries are often considered different, enemies, and, even worse, inferior. That impedes the enrichment of both our own self and our own nation:

This idea of nationalism has the taste of a drug, Harold Garfinkel claims, when in his essay, he refers to that person who tries to justify his corrupted actions in the name of nationalism/patriotism. The "cultural dope" of Garfinkel should not limit our way of thinking and behaving, rather it should stimulate us not to consider someone out of our community as a stranger, but simply as a foreigner who needs our help. [11].

In order to improve our own world, we should abandon the "social heritage" of Malinowski, [12] on the contrary, we should take the example of the great historical characters we will encounter during this journey around the Greek-Roman theatres spread on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

5. THE PHOENICIANS

While language defines a sense of nationalism, the development of the writing system, seems, according to Roebuck, to enhance a feeling of a larger community among the Mediterranean peoples. In his book, *The world of ancient times*, Roebuck surveys the history of the Near East, of Greece, and of Rome from the New Stone Age to the fourth century after Christ. He aims to tell us that cooperation among peoples contributes more than wars to form new civilizations; civilizations which, in that context, could lay the foundations of the Western tradition. "The historical experience" of these peoples (Near East, Hellenic period, and the Roman Empire), so rich in developing their own as well as other culture, should teach us that their wars were turned at last into pacific collaboration, viewed as the only solution to improve their life.

"By the eighth century the first important ties between the western and eastern basins of the Mediterranean were being forged and in the Near East renewed prosperity was apparent. … Sources of supply were sought out, particularly in Asia Minor, and the techniques of smelting and working were developed. … Population increased and the standard of living for ordinary men improved." [13]

The first example of peaceful communication among peoples comes from the Phoenician sailors and merchants, from about 1100 b. C. until the late eighth century. They carried on most of the sea trade of the Mediterranean, and reached Sicily, Malta, the Balearic Islands, the north coast of Africa west of Carthage, southern Spain up to Cornwall. Their aim was to trade copper and silver (from Spain) and tin (from Cornwall) using their sophisticated ships and their expert navigators. Since they had only a few resources, they bought row materials, and then sold them in double transactions for their greater profit. The purple dye (from the shell-fish *murex*), and the wool (from their flocks of sheep) were their only resources, so that they were expert craftsmen in manufacturing fine furniture, jewellery, ivories, myrrh and spices (from Arabia) and metalware, exported by the carrying trade through the desert, too. They had an important colony in Kition for their commerce with Cyprus in order to exchange metals and small luxury articles as well as olive oil, grain and hides. "The most important fact is that the western Mediterranean was brought into connection with the older centers of the East in the eighth and seventh centuries." (Roebuck: 122).

In essence, the cultural and economic contacts among the ancient people living around the Mediterranean were first established by the Phoenicians, whose skilled merchants and sailors had the only aim to trade timber, metals, and textiles across Egypt, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Greece, and Africa. In so doing, they enriched their own culture and spread it to other countries in a peaceful way.

Going back to the mother tongue, viewed as one of the main factors responsible for the feeling of nationalism, we have to consider the writing system as the principal means that enlarged the feeling of nationalism. [14] The Phoenicians, in fact, transferred their alphabet to the Greeks, who used it to develop their writing system. I emphasize that in this case, a skill of the language – writing, turned nationalism into cosmopolitism, because that alphabet gave birth to the western alphabet. The shared knowledge among all the peoples living around the Mediterranean Sea produced the most important linguistic item

to spread ideas and knowledge all around the world.

> "During the eighth century, judging by the earliest preserved inscriptions, the Greeks began to write in a new alphabetic script, which had evidently been learned from the Phoenicians or at some of the Greek trading posts in northern Syria, such as Al Mina, for the letter forms were derived from those of north-western Semitic. Alphabetic writing already had a long history, coming into use in Palestine and Syria in the Late Bronze Age. The Phoenician characters were modified for the sounds of the Greek language by the invention of signs for vowels. … Perhaps the Romans learned it in Cumae, and in time the letter forms were further modified for the Latin language, thus becoming the prototypes for subsequent writing in the languages of Western Europe." (Roebuck: 230).

The writing system gave the occasion to enlarge communication, since poetry, poems, philosophy and the whole of the other disciplines were recorded in a written form on tablets of stone or bronze, or on parchment made from sheepskin, or on papyrus, once the trade with Phoenicia and Egypt had been established. A mixture of cultures coming from the West as well as from Babilonia, Egypt, and Middle East, contributed to improve the Greek knowledge of medicine, physics, mathematics, astronomy, besides poems and literature. This knowledge travelled all around the world, in fact, some fragments of Sappho's poetry, found in Egypt on papyri, are evidence of the close cultural relationship established among peoples living in different countries, who, while trading, improved their economy by exchanging knowledge.

6. THE MEDITERRANEAN PEOPLE

While going through the history of theatres, we will find examples of peoples who, after crude wars understood that the best way to conquer foreign lands would be to welcome foreign people, accept and respect their traditions. The long history of the Mediterranean basin, attested that, since the stone age, this sea has been used as the central highway of transport, trade and cultural exchange. In so doing, many different peoples from the West and from the Middle East (Western Asia, North Africa, Southern Europe) came into a close fruitful contact. [15]

The Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Canaanite, Phoenician, Hebrew, Minoan and Mycenaean, Persian, Macedonian, Etruscan, Arab, Roman, Christian and Islamic cultures, all derive from the strong and deep contacts among their peoples.

The **Persian Empire** (or Achaemenid Empire) dominated the Mediterranean from the 6th century b. C. up to the first half of the 4th century b. C. **Cyrus** (from *Kūruš* – the sun) **the Great**, expanded his empire by conquering most of West Asia and much of Central Asia, the Median Empire, Lydia, and the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Notwithstanding the many wars under his direction, Cyrus II is still renowned as a person respecting the culture, the religion, and the political institutions of the peoples conquered. The Edict of Restoration, issued after the conquest of Babylon, in fact, authorized the return of the Jewish people to the Kingdom of Judah, officially ending the Babylonian captivity. Jewish people could then rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, destroyed during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. In the Bible, Isaiah 45:1, we read: "This is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before

him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut." He is also appreciated for having spread the ideals of Zorostrianism even to China. His tomb, at Pasargadae in Iran, is still visited to remind people that collaboration and respect for others are more important than using guns and ferocity.

Alexander the Great, the King of Macedonia, is another famous military commander, whose cultural diffusion, the foundation of more than twenty cities (Alexandria in Egypt), syncretism (Greco-Buddhism and Hellenistic Judaism), and the spread of Greek culture, remain, rather than wars, his main masterpieces. In 334 b. C. he invaded the Achaemenid Persian Empire, and started conquering Asia Minor, India (326), Egypt, the Phoenician lands, Greece, and the main basin regions of the Mediterranean Sea. His death in 323 b. C., at the age of 32, marked the end of the **Classical Greek era** (5th to 4th century b. C. perfect proportions in art) and the start of the **Hellenistic** (Hellazein =to speak Greek or identify with the Greeks, realistic forms in art) **period** (Alexander's death-323- to the establishment of the Roman Empire 31 b. C. or the death of Cleopatra VII in 30 b. C.). This age, characterized by a huge movement of people as well as of goods (gold, ebony, pearls, cotton, spices, sugar, wine, papyrus, glass, olive oil, dates, silver, etc.), touched many foreign countries from India to Babylon, from Damascus to Spain, from Cyprus to Cornwall. It is marked by a huge diffusion of Greek culture and of a kind of colloquial Greek called *koine* (the Attic language simplified). The Hellenic culture and its richness were able to sponsor the famous libraries at Pergamun and at Alexandria, and in addition its university, too. Most countries accepted to speak both their mother tongue and Greek, so establishing a kind of bilingualism. [16]

The Greek theatre, which started in the 6th century b. C. in Athens with the performance of tragedy plays during religious festivals, and, in turn, inspired the genre of Greek comedy plays, became popular all around the Mediterranean Sea, not only in the form of plays, but further in building the location for these performances. Greek theatres were built in many different countries, and each country adapted the theatre to its own architectural style. [17]

The Hellenistic era finished when the Romans conquered the last of the territories that the Macedonian king had once ruled. In 31 b. C., during the Battle at Actium, the Roman Octavian defeated Mark Antony's Ptolemaic fleet. (The Ptolemaic kingdom was an Ancient Greek polity based in Egypt during the Hellenistic period and it was founded in 305 b. C by the Macedonian general Ptolemy I Soter). Octavian took the name Augustus and became the first Roman emperor.

7. THE ROMAN EMPIRE

When Augustus founded the Roman Empire, the Mediterranean Sea was called *Mare Nostrum*. Their empire was centered on this sea and all the area was interested in commerce and naval development. During that time, the Mediterranean was free of piracy. The Roman Empire ruled the Western Asia, North Africa and much of Europe. It was divided into 1) Western (until 476 A. D.), and 2) Eastern Empire (until 1453 A. D.).

By 435 A.C. the Empire had lost southern France and all of Iberia to the Visigoths, and much of North Africa to the Vandal, thus ending its monopoly over the Mediterranean coast. The first two centuries was a period of great stability and prosperity known as the Pax Romana. (27 b. C. -180 A. D.). It started when

Augustus defeated Mark Antony and Cleopatra in the battle of Actium, and became emperor. He persuaded the Romans that prosperity could be achieved in the absence of warfare, and not during wars. The Roman Empire extended not only in the Mediterranean and in the Near East, but in Europe, too, from the Atlantic Ocean to the North Sea and to the Black Sea. The Latin culture mixed with the Greek and Near East traditions, so establishing a kind of multiculturalism and multilingualism. In fact, the Greek language, already used in Italy (Magna Graecia) during the Greek migration, was joined by Latin, while in Greece, Latin was joined by Greek. In the other countries Latin became the language of the elite. During that period there was a significant cultural exchange of scholars between Greece and Italy, so that the two systems enriched one another. [18]

The Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire began its domination of the Levant during its wars with neighboring Sassanid Persia (395-1453). It had its centre in Constantinople, and continued to exist until the fall of this city under the Ottoman Empire. It included: Anatolia, the Eastern Mediterranean, Africa, and most of the Balkan peninsula lands. Its Emperor Justinian I, in 528 A. D., compiled a new legislative code, *Corpus Juris Civilis*, in order to establish new norms for the Byzantine law. The Empire ended when Muhammed II turned Constantinople into the capital city of the Ottoman Empire. During the Byzantine time, in those lands, the Greek language and culture had been assimilated more than Latin, so that the Arabs, as previously said, had the opportunity to come into contact with the Greek philosophical texts and could translate them. In brief, the Latin and Greek languages and cultures became so familiar for the Mediterranean peoples, that theatres were built all around the eastern as well western countries, and drama flourished all around the Mediterranean area. [19]

8. THEATRES AND AMPHITHEATRES

In this section I am going to describe the architecture of both theatres and amphitheatres in general, and, then, in particular according to the place in which they were located, so we can understand their development, as well as how those theatres changed to conform to the culture of the place in which they were built.

The representations played in the theatres derived from the religious festivals (one in spring and one in winter) organized to honour the god Dionysus. The Greek tragedy flourished in Athens in 532 b. C., and it represents the main Greek cultural and philosophical thought, not only considering the content of its dramas, but, moreover, the architecture of the theatres. [20] In fact, by following their philosophers, and the whole of the cultural fields they developed (physics, mathematics, astronomy, art, etc.), the structure of the theatres reflects these sciences. [21] In other words, mathematics and physics influenced the building of these theatres, because a lot of attention was paid by the designers in order to supply a good viewing and a perfect acoustics. [22] Then, in 490 b. C. came the comedy and the satyr play (about mythological topics). The three dramatic genres belonging to the Greek theatre were soon exported to the numerous colonies of the Greek civilization, because of the importance the Greeks gave to the sound of the voice. Thespis (5th century b. C.) was its first actor.

The architecture of the theatre was very accurate, ensuring good viewing and good listening. For this reason, most ancient theatres lay on hills which permitted to arrange the seats in a circular descending form, producing a perfect viewing from any side. This area was called *theatron*; at its foot we find a flattened, circular area of about 78 feet known as the *orchestra* (dancing place), where a chorus (12 to 15 people) performed plays in verse accompanied by music; the entrance was called *paradoi*, and it often had arches through which the actors and the chorus entered and exited; finally, behind the *orchestra*, there was a scenic wall, called the *skené*. [23]; [24], [25].

At the beginning, the seats were in wood, and later in stone; the reserved seats were called *prohedria*, separated by the *diazoma*, the seats for low-class people.

The *skené* also evolved, in fact, the simple curtain became a stone wall, called *paraskenia*, with doors; behind the *paraskenia* there was the *proskenion* (in front of the scene). When the theatres evolved, they added the *logeion* (a raised speaking place) on the *orchestra*, and after the Peloponnesian War two stores were added to the *skené*.

The *orchestra* was a circular space where the chorus sang, and the actors played. At first, it was on the same level of the ground, then, it was raised in order to offer a better viewing. The *coryphaeus* was the head of the *chorus*, and he could enter the story as well as interact with the actors. Each drama started in the morning and finished in the evening. [26]
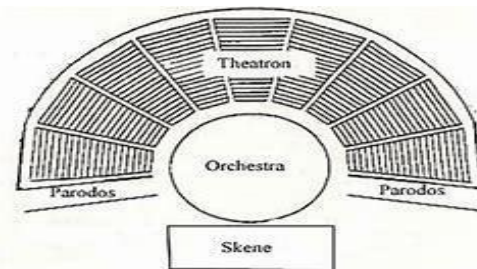

Fig. 1 A Theatre

There are Greek theatres all around the Mediterranean lands, so that we find them not only all over Greece, but also in: Magna Graecia (Metapontum-Basilicata, Sicily-Taormina, Syracuse, Catania), in Asia Minor and Turkey (Aigai-Aeolis ancient Greek and later Roman city; Pergamon-Izmir dated from the Hellenistic period; Side-Antalya a Greek town, Hierapolis a Greek and then a Roman town in Turkey, famous for its hot thermal waters), and many others. [27]

Fig. 2 Theatre of Dionysos Eleuthereus in Athens

Amphitheatres (ἀμφιθέατρον – both sides all around)

They had an oval shape with sloping seats on all sides (*cavea* seating area); a central *arena* (meaning sand) to absorb the blood during the fights between gladiators and wild beasts, and a *vomitarium* the passage to reach the seats. [28]

When the Roman Empire achieved its greatest extent (from the British Aisles to Egypt and Iraq) their theatres, amphitheatres, aqueducts, and temples enriched these lands. Their only role was to spread Roman culture while maintaining peace and improving the prosperity of the whole of the Empire. Like the Greeks, the Romans, too, loved drama as well as watching sport competitions. In the amphitheatres, which had an architecture different from the theatre, they organized horse or chariot racing events as well as gladiators' fights. There are about 230 amphitheatres across the lands conquered by the Romans (Durres-Albania; Lambèse-Algeria; Leibnitz-Austria; Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, England, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, of course, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, The Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Tunisia, Turkey and Wales). Some of the most important amphitheatres in Italy are now used to perform musical, or drama or lyrical events, as for instance the one in Verona. [29]; [30]

Fig. 3 Capua's Amphitheatre

9. CONCLUSIONS

After the discussion about: 1) the prehistoric Indo-Europeans' migration, their distribution around Western and Eastern lands; 2) the inhabitants of the Mediterranean Sea (Phoenicians, Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, Macedonians; 3) the Greeks, and 4) the Romans, we should have learned the lesson, namely, that war should never be the main means to achieve welfare either economic or political or cultural.

The Greeks, with their inborn predisposition for hospitality, in my opinion, have been the ones who were able to spread their culture as well as their language to as many peoples as possible. Their scientific and philosophical knowledge has been a valuable source for many cultures; their language has spread over different linguistic families, which have enriched their semantic field by incorporating new words. Their art, either in the Classical or Hellenistic period, either Dionysian or Apollonian, has left us a large artistic heritage.

The Romans also had a large Empire; an empire in which their culture and their language established either civil and penal code or economic rules, and art, too.

Cyrus the Great, Alexander the Great, and the Pax Romana (Augustus, 27 b. C. up to Marcus Aurelius) are good examples to be followed, especially nowadays, in a world destroyed by wars, which kill people, culture and economy. As Mazzarino claims, pre-archaic Greeks did not distinguish among different bloodlines, so that the Greek constitutional evolution reflects an Ionic as well as a Doric behaviour. [31] The architectural evolution of the theatres emphasizes this sense of social hospitality, not only for their shape but also because we find theatres all over the Mediterranean countries, each reflecting the specific culture of its place. The people conquered by the Greeks first, and then by the Romans, adapted the theatre to their traditions, and spoke Greek and Latin beside their mother tongue. So that, we find theatres all around the Mediterranean area as it was in the pre-Greek era.

I need to underline that there has always been a cultural interaction between the Greeks and the Romans. In the 8th and 7th centuries b. C, because of a rapidly increasing population many Greeks emigrated and founded colonies in Southern Italy and Sicily (Magna Graecia), Asia Minor up to the Black Sea. Talking about the Greek-Roman theatres will be the starting point to focus on peace and aggregation in order to establish a civil tolerant behaviour among peoples following different creeds because of their ethnicity.

In brief, the theatres and the amphitheatres, as well as the ancient Roman and Greek temples, scattered throughout the world, confirm that peace is the only means to achieve prosperity.

From my own point of view, archaeological sites have a double role; they do not only enrich the soul of the observers by enlarging their mind, but moreover, they stimulate the production of further pieces of art, in this case, of contemporary art. This contemporary art has the role not only to re-evaluate the places in which we find old temples and old theatres, but to produce new forms of arts, too, as it happened to me. I have painted the underneath canvas, first of all, because I was inspired by those archaeological sites, but also to enhance travelling abroad, so to enrich our own culture, and to enlarge our own soul, brain, and behaviour; in a word, our cognition, so to stimulate and improve cognition in children, and furthermore to slow down the damage of ageing.

> " … brain resilience may be increased through cognitive training and socialization even in late adulthood. Indeed, it has been shown that cognitive activities over the whole lifespan, including leisure activities in late life, may delay the onset of cognitive decline independent of early life education. Moreover, factors linked to cognitive reserve, such as bilingualism and leisure-time cognitive activities in late life, are associated with cognitive function independently of brain volume. In particular, it seems that bilingualism may act as a proxy of cognitive reserve, delaying dementia onset compared to monolingualism." [32]

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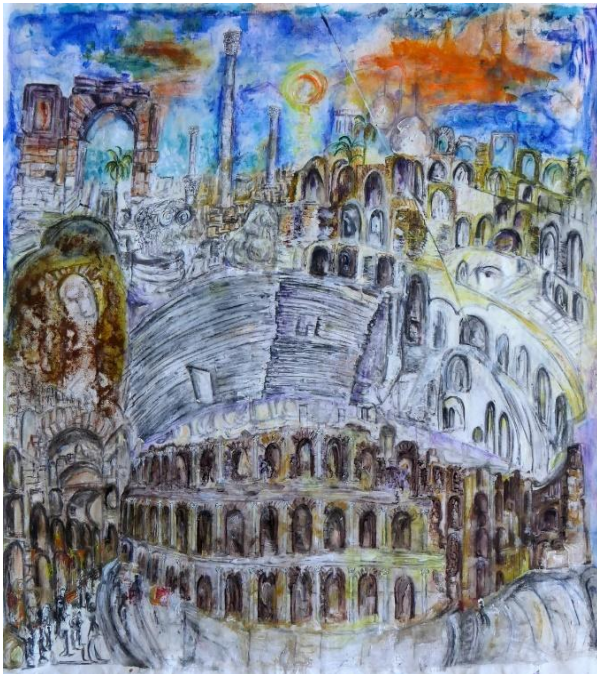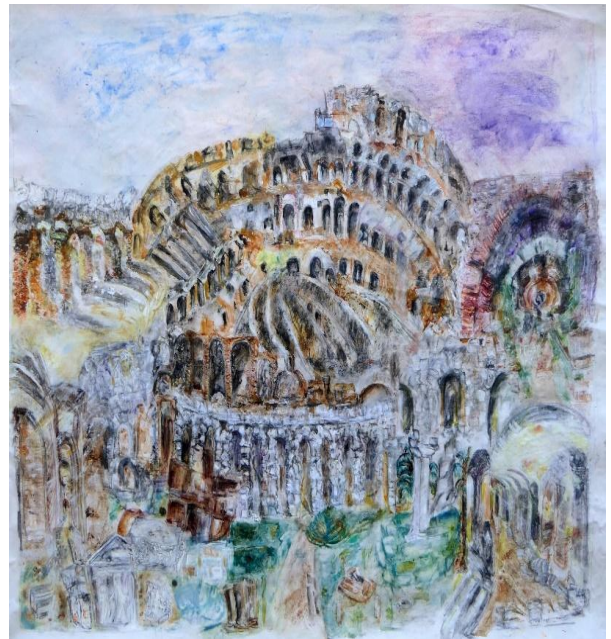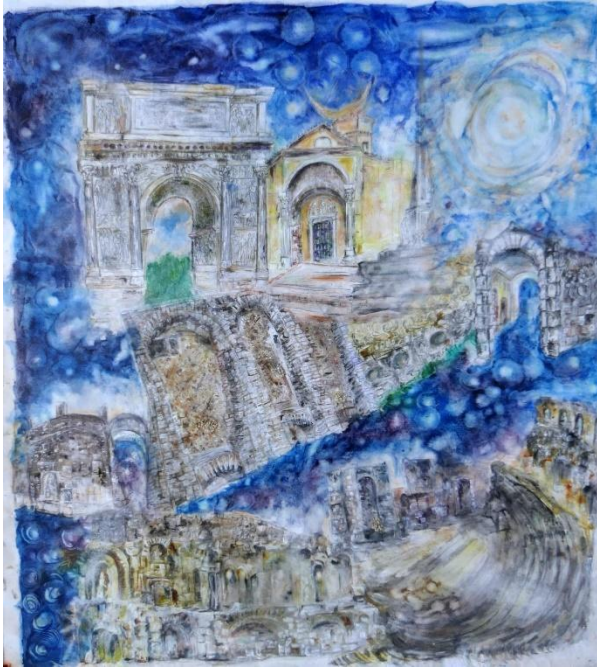
These are my paintings

Lyndos Rodos

Petra

Yerapolis

Pozzuoli

Karthago

Capua

Benevento

Paestum

This is my book: Maria Rosaria D'Acierno Canonici Cammino, **Teatri e Anfiteatri Greco-Romani**, L'Orientale Editrice, Napoli, 2024.