

《Article》

## “Cernes urbem et promissa Lavini moenia.” City Walls as a Symbol of the City in Imperial Rome (Latin West)

Marek BABIC

### Summary

The city walls were distinctive and monumental building objects throughout Greek - Roman antiquity, which, in addition to their practical defensive function, implied several layers of meanings. Based on the historical interpretation of literary references, artistic objects, decoration, architectural disposition I argue, it is possible to identify these meanings as they were perceived during the period of Imperial Rome in the first five centuries AD. Various kinds of historical sources indicate that the walls in the socio-cultural environment of Imperial Rome represented the city as such. They symbolized its safety, culture, order, beauty, sanctity, wealth, monumentality, and civilizational superiority. In this study, the most expressive cases in the literature, art and architecture of the walls will be analyzed, leading to an understanding of the cultural perception of monumental defensive architecture in the first five centuries of the Roman Empire in the Imperial period, with an emphasis on the Latin West.

### 1. City Walls. A Theory

Semiotics. For several reasons, the perception of defensive architecture by the inhabitants of the Roman Empire is a complex theoretical issue with many levels of social correlations.

Within the interpretive theories of material culture, the city walls, despite all the semantic and phenomenological limitations, can be perceived as objects full of various meanings integrally linked to the lives of individuals and society. Classic disciplines that deal with the meaning aspects of public architecture are art history, classical archaeology, and history of architecture. The first two analyze and evaluate primarily the aesthetic and material side of building objects, while the textual component serves only to complement the research. The weakness of the approach of art history is that ancient defensive architecture is inherently functionalist and, secondly, artistic. Archeology seeks the so-called reading of the past, but the ideological concepts and social relations of those actors who were engaged in the processes of construction, maintenance and use of defensive structures remain outside its scope.<sup>1)</sup> The history of architecture can use its potential, which is based on the study of textual sources,

since they can provide the most information about the perception of city walls in antiquity in a social context. However, it should be remembered that even literary sources do not provide objective information about the meaning implications of material objects. Semiotic theories (Pellegrino, Saussure, Ricoeur, Eco, etc.) question the possibility of reading the message of historical texts in their original sense.<sup>2)</sup> Language as a system of signs does not have the ability to autonomously and objectively transfer pure meaning from the signifier to the signified. Meanings do not emerge from texts, but are introduced into them. In the case of Latin and Greek texts, which are related to building objects, the shift in meaning is even more striking due to the temporal, mental and cultural distance.<sup>3)</sup> In this article, the methods of all three disciplines will be used, with the emphasis on literary sources, in order to achieve a comprehensive picture of the cultural perception of the city walls in Latin antiquity.<sup>4)</sup> Therefore, the article is divided into three basic chapters – Written record, Visual arts, and Architecture.

Symbolism in architecture. In general, symbol is an image with a reference. A symbol can be also understood as a sign conveying a certain idea.<sup>5)</sup> Symbolism does not have a precise definition in the context of the theory of architecture. It occurs and is used in connection with other terms such as representation, association, metonymy, expression, signs, or metaphor.<sup>6)</sup> This article deals with all the concepts mentioned within not strictly defined boundaries. The city walls in Imperial Rome will be a symbol in the sense that as an image in different forms and contexts they refer to the city itself. The city walls were primarily a functional building objects, but in the cultural context they were sign conveying an idea of city with all its civilizational attributes.

General attributes of the city. Given that in this article the walls are associated with the city, it is necessary to define the general attributes of the city at least briefly, as they were perceived in the Imperial period of Rome. The city in the sociocultural environment of Greco-Roman antiquity was a fundamental civilizational unit with a whole complex of meanings, both obvious and hidden.<sup>7)</sup> At the end of the republic, one of the most persuasive intellectuals of his time, M. T. Cicero, eloquently named the general attributes of the city, in this case Rome at the height of its power:

*“Quae quidem ego neque mea prudentia neque humanis consiliis fretus polliceor vobis, Quirites, sed multis et non dubiis deorum immortalium significationibus, quibus ego ducibus in hanc spem sententiamque sum ingressus; qui iam non procul, ut quondam solebant, ab externo hoste atque*

*longinquo, sed hic praesentes suo numine atque auxilio sua templa atque urbis tecta defendunt. Quos vos, Quirites, precari, venerari, implorare debetis ut, quam urbem pulcherrimam florentissimamque potentissimamque esse voluerunt, hanc omnibus hostium copiis terra marique superatis a perditissimorum civium nefario scelere defendant.*" (Cic. Cat. 2.13.29).<sup>8)</sup>

Although Cicero refers to a particular city, at the given time the most powerful and the richest, it is possible to identify the general characteristics attributed to the city as such. First, Cicero highlights the sacredness of the city, which is protected by gods worshiped in temples. Then he emphasizes its power, wealth, beauty. Security is very important, from external and internal enemies. Of course, there are several other attributes of the city that Cicero did not mention in the given passage, such as order, legality, monumentality, or civilizational superiority but for our purposes, this is a sufficient characterization of the attributes of the city.<sup>9)</sup>

## 2. Written Record

Literary mentions of city walls and gates are quite frequent in the Greek and Latin literature of the Imperial period, but not a single ancient writing has been preserved that focuses primarily on this topic.<sup>10)</sup> In any case, the texts of both ancient authors and official documents give us a convincing picture of the walls as building objects, that implied many cultural meanings. In the following paragraphs, the most prominent literary allusions to the city walls will be discussed, suggesting that in the Imperial period, walls were perceived by contemporaries as synonymous with the city in a positive sense.<sup>11)</sup> Literary sources testify to the fact that the significant attributes that were associated with the city itself were also associated with the walls and *vice versa*.

The Latin term *moenia* appeared in literature as a synecdoche for the city. This metonymy appeared several times in the most influential poem of the Latin Imperial period, Virgil's Aeneid.<sup>12)</sup> In the 1st book, Venus, in fear, reproached Jupiter for the cruel fate of her son Aeneas, who, as a refugee from Troy, did not find favorable land in Italy. Jupiter assures her that Aeneas will defeat the wild inhabitants of Italy, build walls, and issue the laws to the people. In this case, the city walls represent the city and its victory, civilizational superiority over the barbarian world:

*"parce metu, Cytherea; manent immota tuorum  
fata tibi; cernes urbem et promissa Lavini  
moenia, sublimemque feres ad sidera caeli*

*magnanimum Aenean; neque me sententia vertit.  
 hic tibi (fabor enim, quando haec te cura remordet,  
 longius et volvens fatorum arcana movebo)  
 bellum ingens geret Italia, populosque feroces  
 contundet, moresque viris et moenia ponet,  
 tertia dum Latio regnantem viderit aestas,  
 ternaque transierint Rutulis hiberna subactis.*" (Verg. *Aen.* 1.257-266) <sup>13)</sup>

Another literary writing where the city and the walls appear several times as synonyms is found in the oration of the highly prominent Greek orator, Aelius Aristides. This sophist in his speech in praise of the city described the great fortifications of Rhodes (Aristid. *Or.* 25. 7-10). He associated the glorification of the city and the description of the walls. Of course, it is necessary to classify this speech in the category of panegyric literature and its specifics, however, the text of the speech provides an example of the perception of the walls in specific cultural contexts of the second half of the 2nd century AD.

Sanctity. Each ancient city had implied a distinctive element of sanctity, which was closely connected with the walls. This had been evident since the first beginnings of the city, from its foundation. In Greco-Roman culture, the city was founded by plowing the "first furrow" (*sulcus primigenius*) after the auspices were performed. The furrow marked the sacred border of the city, the so-called *pomerium*. At the same time, the furrow may or may not have meant the place where the walls were built. The city gates were also planned during the sacred act of laying out the *pomerium*. Where the ploughman lifted the ritual plow, the gate was raised, if he lifted more than once, there were more gates. The ritual ended by burying of the ceremonial basket with the first harvest in the ground.<sup>14)</sup>

The sanctity of the city walls had an official character, it was enshrined in the Roman law. The walls were named as *res sanctae* in the system of law (*Ulp. Dig.* 1.8.9.3; *Inst.* 2.1.11). This meant that they had the status of a sacred object, and their unauthorized crossing outside the city gates was punishable by the death penalty (*Pomp. Dig.* 1.8.11). The most famous violator of this law was Remus, who jumped over the walls of his brother Romulus (Liv. 1.7; Plut. *Rom.* 10.1). In the Imperial period, the sanctity of the walls was scrupulously preserved, except that Rome had a specific problem in relation to the walls and their crossing. The complication at that time consisted in the fact that the settlement of Rome had long gone beyond the Servian walls. In legal writing, a concept with the Latin name of *continentia aedificia urbis* was created, which tried to reconcile the contradiction between the idea of a city enclosed within the sacred

territory within the walls, and reality, in this case a settlement far beyond the Servian walls (*Dig.* 50.16 and 16.87). According to this concept, Rome was a continuous built-up area rather than a territory within the walls.<sup>15)</sup> But in any case, the walls symbolized the sacredness of the city as such. The association between the walls and the city is very clear and unambiguous in this regard. The sanctity of the walls was closely related to the sanctity of the city, even if the city grew beyond the walls.

Beauty. Throughout antiquity, both Greek and Latin authors wrote about the walls not only in connection with their defensive function, but also reflected on their many civilizational aspects. As a product of organized human activity, the city walls brought the beauty of human ingenuity to the landscape.<sup>16)</sup> Aristotle (*Arist. Pol.* 7) was convinced that the walls of the city were evidence of the triumph of art (*techné*) over nature (*physis*). Xenophon emphasized that the builders had to be in a great hurry to quickly repair the western wall of the walls of Corinth (early 4<sup>th</sup> century BC), but the result was still beautiful (*Xen. Hell.* 4.4.18). Several Greek authors looked at the walls from above and did not hesitate to use various metaphors when naming them. Walls and cities became synonymous. The city walls were referred to as the face or façade of the city within the country (*Men. Rhet.* 349.7-9; *Aristid. Or.* 17.14, 21.15).

In the first centuries of Imperial Rome, literary sources seldom reflect on the aesthetic aspect of city walls.<sup>17)</sup> One of the few cases in which an explicit mention of the beauty of the walls appears in literature is found in the epigrams of the poet Martial. Martial remembers with nostalgia his birthplace and natives in the city of *Bilbilis* in the province of *Hispania Tarraconensis*. He boasts that his hometown will be famous because of him. He reminds us that he has not been living in *Bilbilis* for 33 years, but among the beautiful walls of Rome.

*"moenia dum colimus dominae pulcherrima Romae:*

*mutavere meas Italia regna comas."* (*Mart. Ep.* 10.103).<sup>18)</sup>

The only author who primarily focused on the functional side of the city walls, and secondarily and hypothetically on the aesthetic side, was Vitruvius. In the fifth chapter of the first book, he describes the correct parameters of the city walls in order to withstand an enemy attack. In the last paragraph of the chapter, he deals with the material of the walls and in this connection names the concept of a wall, perfect and without defects, for eternity:

*"De ipso autem muro, e qua materia struatur aut perficiatur, ideo non est praefiniendum, quod in omnibus locis, quas optamus copias, eas non possumus habere. Sed ubi sunt saxa quadrata sive*

*silex seu caementum aut coctus later sive crudus, his erit utendum. Non enim, uti Babylone abundantes liquido bitumine pro calce et harena ex cocto latere factum habent murum, sic item possunt omnes regiones seu locorum proprietates habere tantas eiusdem generis utilitatis, uti ex his comparationibus ad aeternitatem perfectus habeatur sine vitio murus*" (Vitr. *De arch.* 1.5.8)<sup>19)</sup>

In this case, Vitruvius did not address the aesthetic aspect of the walls, but it is interesting that he voiced the idea of a perfect wall, without defects, that would last forever (*ad aeternitatem perfectus*). I assume this could be understood as a literary reference, which testifies not only to the idea of the perfect functionality of the walls, but also to its perfect appearance and in the transferred semiotic consequences it is about its beauty.

In the last centuries of the late Roman Empire, literary references appear that directly draw attention to the beauty of the walls. In this context, the mention from Rutilius Namatianus, who made the journey from Rome to Gaul in 416, stands out. In his notes, known by the name of *De reditu suo*, he describes the shining walls (*candentia moenia*), which he apparently saw from afar from his boat:

*"sed deverticulo fuimus fortasse loquaces:  
carmine propositum iam repetamus iter.  
advehimur celeri candentia moenia lapsu:  
nominis est auctor Sole corusca soror.  
indigenis superat ridentia lilia saxis,  
et levi radiat picta nitore silex.  
dives marmoribus tellus, quae luce coloris  
provocat intactas luxuriosa nives."* (Rut. *Nam.* 2.63)<sup>20)</sup>

The traveler was probably captivated by the white walls of the port city of Luni, in the province of Liguria, in the northwest of Italy. The walls of the city, which was founded in 177 BC, were constructed of stone, limestone, and slate. After the city and the walls were destroyed by an earthquake at the end of the 4th century, pieces of marble from the city were used to repair the walls.<sup>21)</sup> It cannot be excluded that not only the previously used marble was used in the reconstruction of the walls, but also new pieces of white or gray-blue marble, which was mined nearby, near the city of Carrara.

### 3. Visual Arts

Statues of *Tyche* / *Fortuna*. Mural crown. Greco-Roman art provides many examples of depictions of city walls that served as a synecdoche for a city. Most often, such artistic depictions of the walls occur in a mythological context, in connection with the goddess *Tyche*, Latin *Fortuna*. The daughter of Aphrodite and Hermes (or Zeus), who identified herself with Fortuna in the Roman pantheon, represented the wealth and fickle happiness of the city in times when disasters such as famine, epidemics, wars, and others were not rare.<sup>22)</sup> Both Greek and Latin cities had their own *tychai* with specific attributes.<sup>23)</sup> A mural crown, *corona muralis*, in many instances appeared on the head of the goddess.<sup>24)</sup> In this case, the connection between the goddess and the city is very obvious. *Corona muralis* clearly serves here as an allegorical metonymy for the city. The best-preserved iconographic representations with this symbolism are on sculptures and coins. Statues representing the goddess have a crown on their heads in the form of city walls with towers. Such, for example, is the marble head of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD goddess Tyche, which was found during excavations in the port of Classe.<sup>25)</sup>



Fig. 1: Marble head of the goddess Tyche/ Fortuna (2<sup>nd</sup> cent. AD)

The poet Lucretius, in his poem *De rerum natura*, suggests what is the meaning of *corona muralis* on the head of a goddess, in this case the *Cybele/Magna Mater*. According to him, the goddess adorned with a crown from the walls represents the protection of the city. In this case, the walls are a symbol of the city's safety and protection, as well as a symbol of the city as such:

*“muralique caput summum cinxere corona,  
eximiis munita locis quia sustinet urbes;  
quo nunc insigni per magnas praedita terras  
horrifice fertur divinae Matris imago.”* (Lucr. 2.606-9) <sup>26)</sup>

The symbol of the city, represented by a crown from the walls on the statue of the goddess, the protector of the city, has manifested its viability for centuries in different parts of the Roman Empire.<sup>27)</sup> In some cases, on the head of the goddess there is only a tower instead of walls.<sup>28)</sup> In the Imperial period, Fortuna on the head with a mural crown became a frequently occurring phenomenon, especially in the West.<sup>29)</sup> The Trajanic Arch of Beneventum can serve as an example, with a number of mentioned depictions.<sup>30)</sup> The goddess adorned with a mural crown also appeared in a cameo in an eagle-drawn chariot, of, probably emperor Hadrian.<sup>31)</sup>

Columns. One of the most convincing proofs of the perception of the city walls as a synecdoche for the city is their artistic representation on public objects. The reliefs on the victory columns of the emperors Trajan and Marcus Aurelius have a special historical value. Both objects represent the official version of the presentation of the power and achievements of the Roman rulers. Here, artists produced themes and forms so that they absolutely corresponded to the emperors' ideas about the world order and the official state demonstration of the Roman element, (*romanitas*) in relation to the barbarian world. The Column of Trajan is to this day undoubtedly the best-preserved iconographic complex of Roman antiquity. The walls here are depicted in several contexts, whether military or sacral. For the most part, they stand in the background of military actions as a backdrop. Roman cities are depicted by walls of larger sizes, Dacian cities by smaller walls. <sup>32)</sup> The artistic synecdoche was obvious here. The walls here represented the civilizational superiority of Roman cities over barbarian ones, and at the same time military superiority and Roman domination.<sup>33)</sup>



Fig. 2: Trajan's column, scene 87

Coins. Coins were an effective medium of official iconography throughout antiquity. Thanks to their availability, the rulers could rely on the delivery of a political and ideological message to the common people. Therefore, coins can be considered the most numerous and accessible medium for the stylized depiction of city walls and gates in the sense of *pars pro toto*. The stylized walls on the coins provide a sufficiently convincing and unquestionable representation of entire cities.

A very popular way of depicting the walls in the Imperial period was representation from a bird's eye view. In that case, moneyer presented the wall from a frontal view and at the same time its full circuit. This style can be seen in the silver denarius of Emperor Augustus, where the circuit of the city walls is stylized, with a large two-headed gate in the foreground and the inscription *EMERITA* (*Emeritus Augusta*, today Merida). A similar motif appeared on a number of copper and bronze coins in the area, minted under Augustus and his successor Tiberius. A very precise representation of the city walls with turrets and gate can be found on a gold aureus struck for the emperor Augustus from 13 BC. There is a priest or an emperor in front of the walls who has yoked oxen and ploughed, and field in the foreground. In this case, the walls are a symbol of the city and the civilization that the Romans brought to the newly annexed provinces of Raetia and Noricum.<sup>34)</sup>

The motif of the city walls and gates was more frequently found on coins and medallions in the

third and fourth centuries, when the defensive function of the walls grew due to the military-political situation in the Roman Empire. In some cases, the city walls served as a backdrop for propaganda scenery. On a silver coin from 295, four tetrarchs sacrifice on a tripod in front of the city walls. The city represented by the walls here was a symbol of the power and unity of the tetrarchs, their devotion to the gods and, most importantly, a symbol of defensive security of the entire empire.<sup>35)</sup>

The silver *argenteus*, which began to be minted under emperor Diocletian, took various forms. One of the most numerous motifs was the so-called Camp gate. On the reverse, a city or camp gate was depicted in various variants, with an open or closed gate, with a different number of towers or rows of bricks.<sup>36)</sup> The very abundance of these coins with this motif testifies to the great power of the symbolism of gates and walls.<sup>37)</sup>

In all cases, the city walls were an allegorical metonymy of the city.

#### 4. Architecture

Vitruvius, the author of the only ancient work dedicated to architecture, was convinced that when designing a building object, the architect must adhere to three central themes (Vitr. *De arch.* 1.3.2): *firmitas* (strength), *utilitas* (functionality), and *venustas* (beauty). All these attributes can be seen in the architecture of the walls.

The architectural layout of the walls, their size, decoration, and political-military context at the time of their construction testify to their intense association with the city as such. The process of their construction, from planning, gathering material and human resources to their completion and then maintenance and eventual extension, required sophisticated and long-term planned activity of the city's inhabitants. The walls used to be the largest building object of the city. Their final form depended on an entire complex of material possibilities and was affected by a system of cultural and religious traditions.

From an architectural point of view, the walls are a defensive structure that was supposed to protect a compact inhabited territory, mostly a city or a palace, from the attacks of enemies. A part of the walls were gates that allowed controlled passage through the walls. The gates used to be the weakest part and at the same time the most representative element of the fortification system. Their number, distribution and quality also indicated the purpose and cultural significance of the walls.<sup>38)</sup>

Since the walls were the largest and first structure that a visitor to the city saw, it is natural that they were associated with the city as such. The walls *in situ* symbolized the privileges of the city, its power, wealth, and safety.

Magnitude and monumentality are among the basic attributes of a city in the ancient world. The walls corresponded to such a perception of the city. They symbolized the power and privileged status of the city. The symbolism is most obvious in the cases when investments were made in the construction and reconstruction of the walls in times of peace and military stability, when there was no immediate danger of enemy attacks.<sup>39)</sup> Within the history of Imperial Rome, it primarily concerned the period of the reign of Emperor Augustus (*pax Augusta*), and those provinces that lay far from possible military conflicts. The representative function of the walls prevailed over the defensive function. During this period, large funds were invested in the construction and repair of city walls and gates in Italy, Hispania and southern Gaul.<sup>40)</sup>

The best examples of cities that built monumental city walls during the peace period are *Augusta Praetoria Salassorum* (Aosta) and *Julia Augusta Taurinorum* (Turin). It is known that both cities were building their walls for more than half a century, from which it can be concluded that the defensive function of the walls was not a priority. In Aosta, for example, the walls had dimensions of 724 x 572 m and were 6.4 m high. The proof that these were not subtle walls is also the number of towers, a total of 20. Each of the towers had two or three rows of arched windows on all four sides.<sup>41)</sup>

In the 2nd century, several massive defensive structures were also built, the primary function of which was representative and symbolic. In this context, the magnificent gate, *the Porta Nigra*, built in 170 in *Augusta Treverorum* (Trier), stands out. This monumental structure is the best preserved ancient Roman monument of defensive character to the north of the Alps. The city walls, of which *Porta Nigra* was a part, began to be built in the middle of the 2nd century and were completed in its last quarter. The architectural layout of the defensive structure was remarkable from several points of view. First of all, it was an unusual ratio of the length of the walls in relation to the size of the city and the population density. The ramparts were 6.5 km long, which in consequence meant that the defensive function was not the most important during their construction.<sup>42)</sup> It is possible that the walls were supposed to create the impression of a larger city than it really was. The architectural location of the largest gate, *Porta Nigra*, also testifies to its use in religious festivals and processions. It was located in the north, and just behind it led one of the two main streets of the city, the *cardo maximus*, which was lined with shrines on both sides and with a portico. On the opposite side stood *Porta Media*, which has not been preserved.<sup>43)</sup> *Porta Nigra* could evoke a residential building in the city. Its façade was decorated with three floors of arcade windows. One of the two towers is up

to 29.3m high, the whole gate is 36m wide. I believe that, despite the lack of literary evidence, it cannot be ruled out that the appearance of the gate was supposed to represent the city in its beauty, sanctity, and power.

One of the possible explanations for the unprecedented increase of the construction and repair of the city walls during the reign of Emperor Augustus is that the provincial cities wanted to join the monumental building of Rome. These cities looked up to Rome as their model. The emperor himself presented himself as a great builder who took over Rome wooden and handed it over to marble (Suet. *Aug.* 28.3). The cities followed the example of Rome in the building activity of Emperor Augustus, and the walls fit very well into the concept of imitating world-ruling Rome. In this light, it is possible to see the walls of colonies and provincial cities as a synecdoche for “monumental cities”.

The location of the gate in the system of city walls could serve religious purposes, sometimes at the expense of a defensive or economic function. In such cases, the architecture of the city gates and walls symbolized the sanctity of the city. One of the best examples of a gate constructed for religious purposes is the *Porta Venere* in the city of *Hispellum* (Spello). *Hispellum* was a colony founded by Emperor Augustus (*Colonia Iulia Hispellum*). This gate is well preserved to this day, although it has undergone several modifications over the centuries. The last reconstructions date back to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is clear that it was originally built to connect the sacred road (*via triumphalis*) between the city and the ancient shrine of the goddess Venus (*Venus Genetrix*), from the 5th century BC.<sup>44)</sup> Within the walls, its orientation and disposition were subordinate to religious purposes. If practical economic purposes were to be respected, it would have to be oriented towards the busy road that connected *Hispellum* to the nearest town.<sup>45)</sup> A similar case, when the walls and some gates were completely adapted to ritual purposes, was the defensive structure in the city of *Saepinum* (Altilia) in southern Italy. According to the preserved inscription, the walls were erected between the years 2 and 4, under emperor Augustus.<sup>46)</sup> The new city center rebuilt under Augustus and at least one city gate became part of the ancient Roman road, which led to the ancient Samnite sanctuary in a length of 6 km.<sup>47)</sup>

## 5. Conclusions

Various kinds of historical sources clearly prove that the city walls in the Imperial period were not only functional defensive structures, but carried many civilizational meanings, with varying

degrees of legibility and comprehensibility.

Several instances from Latin literature indicate that city walls were closely associated with the general attributes of the city. The walls symbolized the civilizational superiority of the city over the uninhabited surroundings or over the barbarian element. Legal documents prove that the walls were very intensively associated with the element of sanctity. The walls were a symbol of the founding of the city and the sanctity of its territory. The very close and unambiguous connection between the sanctity of the city and its walls persisted even when the inhabited area expanded beyond the walls. Rare but convincing references to the perceived beauty of the city walls have been preserved in Latin poetry. Superlative adjectives, "*pulcherrima moenia*" or "*candentia moenia*" were attributed to them. On the other hand, not a single literary work paid concentrated attention to the walls. The only author who systematically dealt with the functionality of the architecture of the walls was Vitruvius. Among other aspects, he expressed the hypothetical concept of a perfect wall that would last for ages, "*ad aeternitatem perfectus (murus)*". I believe that the idea of beauty is implicit in this concept.

Visual arts provide more numerous and convincing evidence of the symbolism of defensive constructions in the Imperial period. In works of art, it is possible to better identify the possible intention of the authors to assign a meaningful message to the walls. City walls were depicted in various forms of art as a synecdoche for a city. This can best be seen in the iconography of the goddess Tyché / Fortuna. On her head, she had a mural crown, which was an allegorical metonymy of the city. Statues and coins with this symbolism were widespread in all parts of the Roman Empire; they were especially popular in the West during the Imperial period. There are not many cases in historical sources where the symbolism of the walls would be clearer and more unambiguous. Mural crown was associated here with the concept of happiness and prosperity of the city. A special case was the iconography on the victory columns, which represented the official version of the presentation of Roman art. On victory columns, artists depicted scenes in the greatest possible harmony with the emperors' ideas about order in the state. The walls here again served as a synecdoche for a city. Larger walls represented Roman cities; smaller ones symbolized subordinate barbarian towns. The walls symbolized, among other things, Roman domination over the barbarian world. City walls are quite often depicted in the iconography of coins, the most accessible artistic medium. The walls here symbolize the city in its simplest and most direct form.

The architectural layout of the walls had a great influence on their perception by contemporaries. The walls and city gates were the first and largest structure that a visitor to the city saw. Their size, material, decoration, number, and orientation of the city gates indicate their importance in wider cultural contexts. The most important and first political message that

was implied in the walls was their massiveness and monumentality. The architectural parameters of the city walls symbolized the power and privileges of the city. This is most evident during the reign of Emperor Augustus, when a lot was invested in the construction and reconstruction of walls in those cities that were far from borders and possible military conflicts. It is quite possible that in these cases the symbolism of the walls was more important than their defensive function.

## 注

- 1) The functions of ancient defensive buildings are categorized in: MÜTH-SOKOLICEK-JANSEN-LAUFERS (2016, 21).
- 2) PELLEGRINO (2006, 212-216); RICOEUR (1975); ECO (1983); DE SAUSSURE (1961).
- 3) GRAHAME (1999, 49-51).
- 4) On the differences between the three disciplines see: WHYTE (2006, 157-160); PAYNE (1999, 292-299).
- 5) CIRLOT (2001).
- 6) BAUMBERGER (2010, 161-262).
- 7) About the concept of a city in Greco-Roman antiquity see: ZUIDERHOEK (2016). To the interpretation of the Imperial Rome as a city with cultural meanings see: FAVRO (1996).
- 8) *"When I make this promise, citizens, I do not rely upon my own good sense or upon any human wisdom, but upon the many clear omens from the immortal gods under whose guidance I entertained these hopes and embarked upon this policy. No longer, as was once their practice, do they guard us from afar against a foreign and distant enemy, but here at our side they defend their temples and the city's buildings with the protection of their divine power. These gods, citizens, have ordained that this city be the most beautiful, the most prosperous, the most powerful in the world, and now that all the forces of her foreign foes have been defeated on land and sea, you ought to pray to them, to worship them, to implore them to defend her from criminal attack by traitors among own citizens."* (transl. by C. Macdonald).
- 9) For monumentality see: THOMAS (2007, 107-126).
- 10) For a comprehensive treatment on written sources, Greek and Latin, see: FREDERIKSEN-LAUFER-MÜTHS (2016, 174-184).
- 11) In Latin literature, the walls exceptionally appeared even in negative connotations, as a symbol of slavery and greed: *"muros coloniae munimenta servitii"*, (Tac. *Hist.* 4.64).
- 12) Verg. *Aen.* 4.220: *"Talibus orantem dictis arasque tenentem, audit omnipotens, oculisque ad moenia torsit, regia et oblitos famae melioris amantis."* A linguistic analysis of this passage can be found in the study: ESTEVEZ (1982, 22-34).
- 13) *"Spare your fears, Lady of Cytherea; your children's fate abide unmoved. You will see Lavinium's city and its promised walls; and great-souled Aeneas you will raise on high to the starry heaven. No thought has turned me. This your son – for, since this care gnaws at your heart, I will speak and, further unrolling the scroll of fate, will disclose its secrets – shall wage a great war in Italy, shall crush proud nations, and for his people shall set up laws and city walls, till the third summer has seen him reigning in Latium and three winters have passed in camp since the Rutulians were laid low."* (transl. by H. R. Fairclough).
- 14) Great attention to the sacred process of founding the city Rome is paid in Latin literature, for example: Liv. 1.24, 2.26, 2.52; Tac. *Ann.* 12.23, 24; Cic. *Div.* 2.35, Varro, *Ling.* 5.33.
- 15) The relationship between the pomeria and the walls was not unambiguous. Over time, as the urban development went beyond the walls, as happened in the case of Rome, the pomerium could extend outwards, even beyond the walls: CIL 6.31537a-d (Claudius) and CIL 6.31538a-c (Vespasianus and

- Titus).
- 16) Already in Homer's poems, quite a lot of attention is paid to the walls in several contexts. The walls represented safety, monumentality, and beauty in the country. In several places in Iliad, the walls were perceived as substitute for a great hero. In both the Iliad and the Odyssey, there are several examples of the perception of city walls as synecdoche for the city. See: GARCIA (2013, 95-110); PACHE (2014, 278-296).
  - 17) Except for one mention, which does not relate directly to the walls, but to defensive structures, *castella*, by the Rhine River. An unknown author of panegyric said that *castella* beautifies the border more than they protect it (*Pan. Lat.* 6/7.11.5).
  - 18) "*while I have lived among the fair structures of imperial Rome. The realms of Italy have changed my hair.*" (transl. by D. R. Shackleton Bailey).
  - 19) "*Respecting the wall itself and the material of which it is built or finished, there must be laid down no rule beforehand; because we cannot have in all places the supplies which we desire. But where there are squared stones, or concrete or lava or baked brick or unburnt, we must use them. For whereas at Babylon, where they have plenty of liquid pitch instead of lime and sand, they can have their walls built of burnt brick; other regions or useful sites have their special advantages, so that with due preparation a wall can be built perfect for ever and unblemished.*" (transl. by F. Granger).
  - 20) "*But in this digression we have perhaps been garrulous: let us now resume in verse the voyage we had set ourselves. On swiftly gliding course we bear towards white glittering walls: the sister who draws her radiance from the Sun is the bestower of the city's name. In the color of its native rocks it surpasses smiling lilies, and the stone flashes bedecked in polished radiance. Rich in marble, it is a land which, reveling in its white light, challenges the virgin snows.*" (transl. by J. W. Duff).
  - 21) We do not know the year of the earthquake, and it is also not clear whether Rutilius Namatianus saw the walls restored after the earthquake, or those that had previously consisted of marble parts after repairs in the Imperial period, apparently in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, when massive investment was made in the construction and repair of walls throughout the empire. See: DURANTE (2001, 8-9).
  - 22) MATHESON (1994, 18-33).
  - 23) Standard attributes of Tyche: modius, cornucopia, patera, rudder, polos, mural crown.
  - 24) Mural crown is a typical attribute of the goddesses Cybele and Tyche. For Tyche see: VILLARD (1997, 115-125).
  - 25) MONTANARI (1975, 383-390).
  - 26) "*And they have surrounded the top of her head with a mural crown, because embattled in excellent positions she sustains cities; which emblem now adorns the divine Mother's image as she is carried over the great earth in awful state.*" (transl. by W.H.D. Rouse and M. F. Smith).
  - 27) THOMAS (2007, 113).
  - 28) The marble head of the goddess Fortuna, who originally adorned the square in Italica, a Roman colony in the province of Hispania Beatica. Today it is in the Archaeological Museum in Seville.
  - 29) For the list of ancient literary references to the *corona muralis*, see: PAWLAK (2022, 172-187).
  - 30) TORELLI (1997, 145-177).
  - 31) SMITH (1994, 86-105).
  - 32) In at least seven cases, depictions of the walls served as *pars pro toto*, walls for the whole city (scenes 3, 33, 35, 46, 47, 79, 88).
  - 33) FREDERIKSEN-LAUFER-MÜTHS (2016, 188).
  - 34) FREDERIKSEN-LAUFER-MÜTHS (2016, 191).
  - 35) RIC VI 16a. Silver denarius. Obv/ DIOCLETIANVS AVG. Rev/ VICTORIA SARMAT. [https://www.vcoins.com/en/stores/aegean\\_numismatics/1/product/roman\\_empire\\_diocletian\\_284305\\_argenteus/1074757/Default.aspx](https://www.vcoins.com/en/stores/aegean_numismatics/1/product/roman_empire_diocletian_284305_argenteus/1074757/Default.aspx) (17/1/2023)
  - 36) RIC VII 450 (4th cent). AE 3. Obv/ FL IVL CRISPVS NOB CAES, Rev/ PROVIDEN-TIAE AVGG.

- <https://www.campgatecoins.com/coin/0043a-crispus-a-d-317-326/> (17/1/2023).
- 37) ELKINS (2013, 283-302).
- 38) The functions of ancient defensive buildings are categorized in: MÜTH-SOKOLICEK-JANSEN-LAUFRERS (2016, 21).
- 39) Also, in the eastern part of the Roman Empire there were similar cases. An illustration of the unnecessary cost of the construction, even where it was not necessary for strategic defensive purposes, are the walls around *Heracleia* at Mount Latmos, built in the 4th century BC. The defensive structure, parts of which have survived to this day, stretched around the city and subsequently in the north through a rocky and steep hillside, where it was not at all expedient to build it, since the attackers could not be expected from that side: McNICOLL (1997, 80).
- 40) GROS (1996, 39).
- 41) BERTARIONE-MAGLI (2015, 2-4).
- 42) WIGHTMANN (1985, 87).
- 43) SCHWINDEN (2001, 143-157).
- 44) SISANI (2012, 409-464).
- 45) PINDER (2017, 39).
- 46) BERNECKER (1976, 185-192).
- 47) MATTEINI CHIARI (2015).

## Bibliography

- Ch. BAUMBERGER (2010), *Gebaute Zeichen: eine Symboltheorie der Architektur*, Frankfurt am Main, p. 161-262.
- A. BERNECKER (1976), "Zur Tiberius-Inschrift von Saepinum", *Chiron* 6, p. 185-192.
- S. V. BERTARIONE; G. MAGLI (2015), "Augustus' Power from the Stars and the Foundation of Augusta Praetoria Salassorum", *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 25, p.1-15.
- J. E. CIRLOT (2001), *Dictionary of symbols*, London.
- F. DE SAUSSURE (1961), *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, Lausanne.
- A. M. DURANTE (2001), *Città antica di Luna. (Lavori in corso)*, Genova, p. 8-9.
- U. ECO (1983), *Le Forme del Contenuto*, Milano.
- N. T. ELKINS (2013), "A Note on Late Roman Art: The Provincial Origins of Camp Gate and Baldachin Iconography on the Late Imperial Coinage", *American Journal of Numismatics* 25, p. 283-302.
- V. A. ESTEVEZ (1982), "Oculus ad Moenia Torsit: On Aeneid 4.220", *Classical Philology* 77, p. 22-34.
- D. FAVRO (1996), *The urban image of Augustan Rome*, Cambridge.
- R. FREDERIKSEN; E. LAUFER; S. MÜTHS (2016), "Source Criticism: Fortifications in Written Sources and the Visual Art", in S. Müth; P. Schneider; M. Schnelle; P.D. De Staebler (eds.), *Ancient fortifications: a compendium of theory and practice*, Oxford, p. 173-196.
- L. GARCIA (2013), "Homeric Durability: Telling Time in the Illiad", *Hellenic Studies* 58, p. 95-110.
- M. GRAHAME (1999), "Reading the Roman house: the social interpretation of spatial order", in A. Leslie (ed.), *Theoretical Roman Archaeology and Architecture*, Glasgow, p. 49-51.
- P. GROS (1996), *L'Architecture Romaine I. Les monuments publics*. Paris.
- S. B. MATHESON (1994), "The Goddess Tyche", in S. B. Matheson (ed.), *An Obsession with Fortune: Tyche in Greek and Roman Art*, New Haven, Conn, p. 19-33.
- M. MATTEINI CHIARI (2015), "Saepinum (Altilia). Introduzione, San Pietro di Cantoni di Sepino", in M. Picuti; S. Capini; P. Curci (eds.), *Fana, Templi, Delubra. Corpus dei luoghi di culto dell'Italia*, Roma, p. 65-77.
- A. MCNICOLL (1997), *Hellenistic Fortifications from the Aegean to the Euphrates*, Oxford.
- B. G. MONTANARI (1975), "Divinità con corona turrata da Ravenna", *Aquileia Nostra*, 45-46, p. 383-390.

- S. MÜTH; A. SOKOLICEK; B. JANSEN; E. LAUFERS (2016), "Methods of Interpretation", in S. Muth; P. Schneider; M. Schnelle; P.D. De Staebler (eds), *Ancient fortifications: a compendium of theory and practice*, Oxford, p. 21.
- C. PACHE (2014), "Theban Walls in Homeric Epic", *Trends in Classics* 6, p. 278–296.
- M. PAWLAK (2022), "Pauls's Escape from Damascus (2 Cor II.32-3) and the *corona muralis*", *New Testament Studies*, 68, p. 172-187.
- A. PAYNE (1999), "Architectural History and the History of Art", *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 58, p. 292-299.
- P. PELLEGRINO (2006), "Semiotics of Architecture", in K. Brown (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, Oxford, p. 212-216.
- I. PINDER (2017), "Form or function? Towards a typology of Augustan City Walls in Roman Italy", *Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology* 4, p. 30-45.
- P. RICOEUR (1975), *La métaphore vive*, Paris.
- L. SCHWINDEN (2001), "Trier. Porta Nigra", in H. P. Kuhn (ed.), *Das römische Trier. Herausgegeben vom West- und Süddeutschen Verband für Altertumsforschung. Führer zu archäologischen Denkmälern*. Stuttgart, p. 143-157.
- S. SISANI (2012), "I Rapporti tra Mevania e Hispellum nel Quadro del Paesaggio Sacro della Valle Umbra" in G. Fina (ed.), *Il fanum voltumnae e i santuari comunitari dell' Italia antica*. Orvieto, p. 409-464.
- A. C. SMITH (1994) "Queens and Empresses as Goddesses: The Public Role of the Personal Tyche in the Graeco-Roman World", in S. B. Matheson (ed.), *An Obsession with Fortune: Tyche in Greek and Roman Art*, New Haven, Conn, p. 86-105.
- E. THOMAS (2007), *Monumentality and the Roman Empire: Architecture in the Antonine Age*, Oxford.
- M. TORELLI (1997), "Ex his castra, ex his tribus replebuntur: The Marble Panegyric on the Arch of Trajan at Beneventum", in D. Buitron-Oliver (ed.), *The Interpretation of Architectural Sculpture in Greece and Rome, Studies in the History of Art* 49, Washington, D. C., p. 145-177.
- L. VILLARD (1997), "Tyche. Personnification de la chance ou de la fortune", *LIMC* 8, p. 115-125.
- W. WHYTE (2006), "How Do Buildings Mean? Some Issues of Interpretation in the History of Architecture", *History and Theory* 45, p. 157-160.
- E. M. WIGHTMANN (1985), *Gallia Belgica*. London.
- A. ZUIDERHOEK (2016), *The Ancient City*, Cambridge.
- M. T. CICERO (1977), *In Catilinam I-IV; Pro Murena; Pro Sulla; Pro Flacco*. Transl. C. Macdonald. Cambridge, Mass.
- LUCRETIUS (1992), *On the Nature of Things*. Transl. W.H.D. Rouse and M. F. Smith. Cambridge, Mass.
- MARTIAL (1993), *Epigrams, books 6-10*. Transl. D. R. Shackleton Bailey. Cambridge, Mass.
- MINOR LATIN POETS (1935), *Volume II*. Transl. J. W. Duff. Cambridge, Mass.
- VIRGIL (1999), *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid, books 1-6*. Transl. H. R. Fairclough. Cambridge, Mass.
- VITRUVIUS (1998), *On architecture, books 1-5*. Transl. F. Granger. Cambridge, Mass.