

The Crisis of the Third Century as seen through the Planning and Energetics of the Aurelian Wall

This paper aims to further work on the energetics of Roman construction, applying the methods and variables of DeLaine 1997 and Bernard 2018 to the preeminent fortification program of the third century CE, that of the city of Rome itself. In the years since the creation of the Servian Walls, Rome had long grown accustomed to security. The Romans had demolished large portions of their defensive fortifications and had expanded the city far beyond its ancestral borders. During the Third Century Crisis, however, the traditional explanation has been that the growing permeability of Roman *limes* and the subsequent invasions of the Italian peninsula by barbarian tribes provided an impetus for a renewed fortification effort. Recently, it has been argued that in addition to providing a defense from without, the massive Aurelian Wall also created a garrison aimed at quashing threats from within (Dey 2011). This rethinking of Rome's fortifications coincides with other new perspectives, some of which have questioned the long-held orthodoxy of an empire-wide boom in urban fortification during the third century (e.g. De Staebler 2007), while others have questioned the strategic utility of the known third century examples of such fortification (e.g. De Man 2017).

The time is ripe, therefore, for further in-depth analyses of the fortifications at hand, as these provide us with enormous sources of archaeological evidence regarding the social, economic, and political organization of the Roman Empire during the era known as the Third Century Crisis. The concerns recently raised against the traditional narrative give us food for thought as we examine the labor, costs, and organization

required to create the Aurelian Wall and compare these to the limited agency often assumed for emperors of this period.

Bibliography

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