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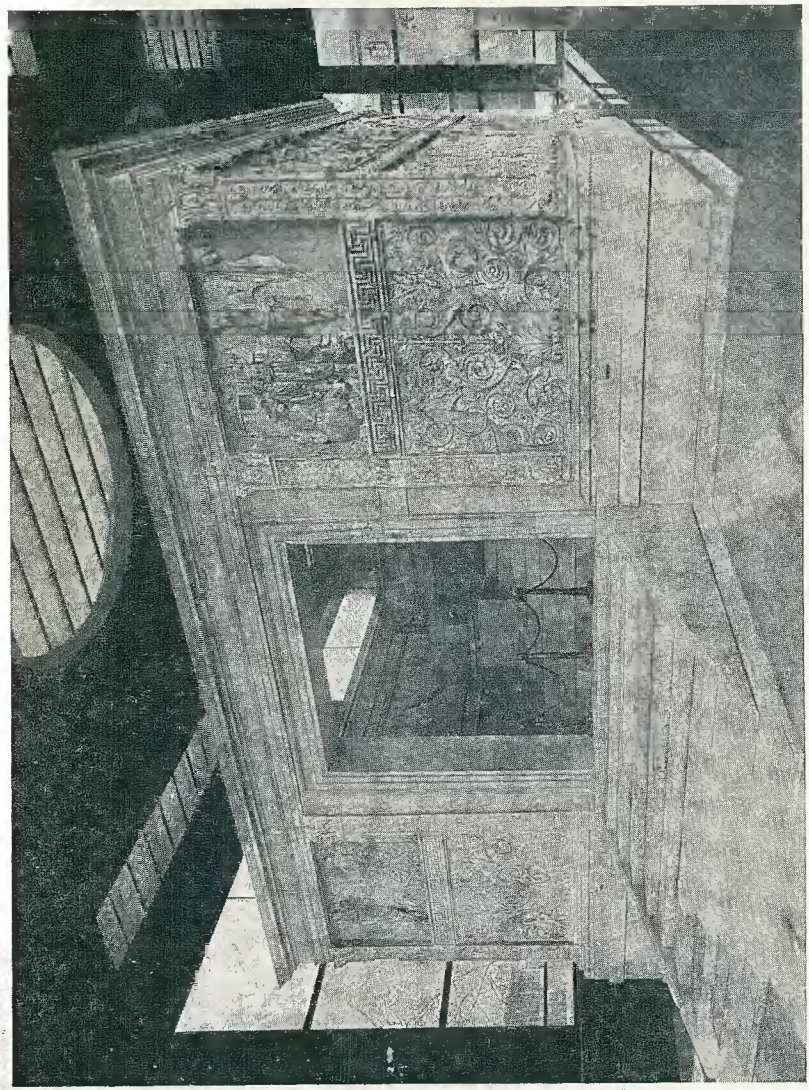
THE MONUMENTS OF ANCIENT ROME

1950
"L'ERMA" DI BRETSCHNEIDER – ROMA
VIA CASSIODORO, 19

ON THE JACKET: FRAGMENT OF THE « FORMA URBIS »
(Photo Comune di Roma)

Officine Grafiche Fratelli Stianti, Sancasciano Val di Pesa (Firenze)
— Luglio 1950 —

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE BASILICA OF MAXENTIUS
(From the Film « La Rome ai Cesari »)
IN THE BACKGROUND, THE TEMPLE OF VENUS AND ROME



ARA PACIS AUGUSTAE. (*Anderson*)

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Before we start our detailed study of the topography and monuments of ancient Rome, let us pause to consider how we know what we know about the appearance of the city in antiquity. Of primary importance in reconstructing its past are, of course, the remains of ancient monuments themselves, of which an incredibly large number have miraculously escaped annihilation through the centuries. The trained archaeologist is continually throwing new light upon our knowledge of the ancient city by means of scientific methods of excavation.

Among the other sources of information there may be mentioned first the ancient authors, some of whom give us unconscious glimpses of the city they knew so well; while others are writers on specialized subjects closely related to topography. In the former group we may recall the historians, Livy and Tacitus; writers with antiquarian interests, such as Varro, Pliny the Elder, and Ovid. Among the latter we think of Vitruvius, who wrote about architecture, and Frontinus, the author of a treatise on aqueducts. Supplementing these literary sources are the collections of coins, inscriptions, wall paintings, and sculptural reliefs which have survived from antiquity.

In a class by itself as a source of topographical information is the great marble map of the city, the *Forma Urbis*.

It is known that in the Augustan Age, Agrippa, the emperor's able councillor, had such a map made and exhibited in a public place, probably in the Campus Martius. At various times subsequently as the city grew, a new map was made to supplant the old one. For example, after the fire of 64 A.D., Vespasian and Titus had to revise the plan of the city. The last map to be set up was constructed in the early part of the third century (between 203-211) in the reign of Septimius Severus. Pieces of this important document first came to light in the sixteenth century and since then more than a thousand pieces have been found. They are now assembled in a room of the little Antiquarium below the Caelian Hill, where patient fingers have undertaken the task of fitting together the bits of this huge jigsaw puzzle. A replica of the map hangs on one of the walls in the garden of the Conservatori Museum. It is not known whether this last edition was merely a revision of the Flavian (and Augustan) version or whether its form was original.

Of value in extending our knowledge of Rome in antiquity are the Regionary Catalogues, which give a list of buildings found in each of the Fourteen Regions established by Augustus. The problems involved in a study of these documents are too complex to be considered here. Eminent scholars differ as to their purpose, chronology, relation to each other and to their common archetype, which was probably compiled between 312 and 315 A. D. It has been pointed out that they contain startling lacunae in their list of important buildings in each region. The most interesting of recent theories considers that their purpose originally was purely statistical, perhaps concerned with the distribution of grain. The regions were, therefore, indicated merely by landmarks that would make the boundaries clear, with no attempt to be inclusive. Later this compilation was used as a basis for a guidebook and other monuments were added as it passed through various editions.

From early mediaeval times has come down to us an eigh-century guidebook, known as the Einsiedeln Itinerary, written by a Swiss monk when he visited the Eternal City. Another description of Rome drawn up in the twelfth century and known as the *Mirabilia Romae* is also of interest. Drawings, engravings, and paintings from the Renaissance play their parts in revealing to us the steps whereby Rome was transformed into the city that we see today.

INTRODUCTION

It is a commonplace to point out that Rome's rapid rise to power in the ancient world resulted in great measure from its position in the Italian peninsula. Surrounded by mountains on all sides except on the south the Urbs is situated in the midst of a plain of volcanic origin, known as the Campagna. The Tiber flows through the city from north to south on its way to Ostia, the ancient seaport, where it empties into the ocean. Although the seven traditional hills upon which the city was built still retain their ancient names and may still be traced, in some cases their elevation is so slight as to be disappointing to those who visit Rome for the first time.

What then has caused the changes in ground level which have taken place since the ancient period? It seems clear that many of the elaborate buildings of the Empire were superimposed upon the foundations of earlier structures which had not been completely demolished. Then too, as parts of ancient Rome fell into ruin during the Middle Ages, the débris was not cleared away, but structures of the Renaissance period were build upon the accumulated rubbish. Views of the Roman Forum dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries show the columns of the ancient temples buried deep in the earth, a clear indication of the extent to which the ground level had risen.

In seeking to ferret out the secrets buried beneath the

soil of the modern city, the archaeologist finds clues of utmost importance in the materials out of which the buildings were constructed. A mere listing of names of such materials or even a description of their appearance is not very enlightening unless one has the opportunity to examine them on the spot. We shall, therefore, touch very briefly upon this subject and limit ourselves to mention of only a few of the materials which were used in antiquity. The only stone employed during the first centuries of Rome's existence was a volcanic product known as the native *tufa.* In color this varies from reddish-brown to light yellow. Since it does not " stand up " when exposed to the atmosphere, it was sometimes covered with a layer of stucco. A kind of dark gray tufa known by the popular term " cappellaccio " continued to be used long after it made its initial appearance in the sixth century B.C. Similar to the native tufa but harder was the stone known as *peperino* because its appearance suggested a liberal sprinkling of pepper corn. Also of volcanic origin this was found in the Alban Hills south of Rome and came into general use in the second century B.C. In the same century there was introduced into the city the finest building material, known as *travertine*, a limestone deposit, found to the south of Rome. Both its durability and its mellow golden color recommended it for constructing such monuments as the Colosseum in antiquity or St. Peter's in more recent times.

Most of the ancient ruins to be seen today in the city of Rome, are however, of brick, the size and color of which are signposts to the expert in the dating of monuments. Down to the time of Augustus, bricks dried in the sun were used almost exclusively, but no examples of such construction have survived. Kiln-baked bricks and tiles, which were used extensively in the Empire, frequently are stamped with a seal which gives us information about the owner of the kiln, the man who made the brick or tile, the person who sold the product, and, sometimes, the names of the consul for the

year or of the emperor. This material is, therefore, very valuable for establishing the chronology of many of the ancient buildings.

Suetonius, the biographer of the Caesars, tells us that Augustus boasted that he had found a city of brick and was leaving one of marble. Since practically all the marble used in Rome was imported, except that found at Luna, near the modern Carrara, it is not surprising that this material did not come into general use until the early part of the first century B.C. After this time it became very popular, though it was used chiefly in slabs to face walls made of other materials. The holes made by the clamps with which this marble facing was attached may be seen on many an ancient façade. The University of Rome possesses a collection of over six hundred varieties of marbles that were used in the city in antiquity, while Oxford, England, has over a thousand different specimens.

So much for the materials which we may be able to visualize without actually having seen them! Other varieties we may wait to identify until we become acquainted with them on the spot. Of the methods used in building, our description will also be limited to a very few technical terms with which even the student who is just beginning the study of topography should be familiar. *Opus quadratum* was the term applied to rectangular blocks of stone (whether of tufa or travertine) laid in regular courses, usually with one course running lengthwise, and the next one laid endwise, a system known as " headers and stretchers ". Although the dimensions of the blocks vary, the best examples show the length twice that of the height.

Opus incertum and *opus reticulatum* are two different arrangements of concrete faced with stone. In the former technique, which was in general use during the second and first centuries B.C., little irregular lumps of tufa were combined with the concrete backing. Similar to it, except that the

small stones were cut regularly into diamond-shaped lozenges, so as to present an even appearance, was the reticulate work. This came into use at the end of the Republic and from the time of Domitian was used in combination with courses of brick.

The method of construction most extensively employed during the imperial period, however, was concrete with kiln-baked brick, known as *opus testaceum* or *latericium.* Toward the end of the third century there was adopted a combination of this brickwork with alternating courses of small blocks of tufa, a method of construction which has been called by the modern term *opus mixtum.* We have spoken of the use of concrete as a backing for some of the methods of facing that have been described. This cohesive material, which was made by mixing a native volcanic product (*pozzolana*) with lime or mud or clay produced a cement which has rarely been equalled in modern times.

CHAPTER I.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY

Archaeological investigation has confirmed the testimony of ancient writers that the Palatine Hill was the first part of the city to be settled by the ancestors of the Romans, for the earliest traces of human habitation on this hill date from about 900 B.C. A glance at the map will show that the situation of the Palatine close to the Tiber and yet easily isolated for defensive purposes made its choice a natural one. The hill was divided by a natural depression into two distinct parts and it is generally believed that the word *Palatium* (the exact derivation of which is uncertain) was first applied to the eastern summit, that is, to the one facing the Caelian and the Circus Maximus, while the western spur was known as the *Cermalus*. Later when the elevation was thought of as a unit rather than as two distinct parts, the name *Palatium* was given to the whole hill. A ridge or spur, stretching from the middle of the north side, toward the Oppius of the Esquiline, is known as the *Velia*.

In our chapter on the Palatine Hill we shall consider what vestiges of its early history are still to be found. Let us now turn to the second stage in Rome's development, which is commonly known as the City of the Seven Hills (*Septimontium*) a designation which is confusing, since the seven hills

or parts of hills are not the same as the better-known list which was later to make up The Eternal City. Since the Velia connected the Palatine with the Esquiline, it was natural that the expansion of the city should take place in an easterly direction. Besides the Palatium, Cermalus, and Velia, which we have already located, the new city included the Cispius, Oppius, Carinae, and Fagutal of the Esquiline. While the subjects of Romulus, the legendary first king of Rome, were ensconced on these hills, the Sabines under Titus Tatius may have controlled the Quirinal and Capitoline.

In the third phase of the city's development, to which the name of City of the Four Regions is given, the added territory lay to the north and south. This included besides the Capitoline, the Viminal and Quirinal (which alone were called *colles* instead of *montes*) and, in the opposite direction, the Caelian. The Capitolium, although a part of the city, was not included within any of the regions. The fact that this hill was the citadel and the center of religious observances probably accounted for its unique position among the hills of the city.

It is Servius Tullius, the traditional sixth king of Rome, however, who has given his name to what was probably the most important period in the early history of the city. During this fourth stage there were added the Aventine, together with the low ground between it and the Palatine, as well as the space along the Tiber as far north as the Capitol. Further expansion at this time included the northern parts of the Quirinal, Viminal, and Esquiline. With the name of Servius Tullius is associated the construction of the first city wall. Fragments of ancient walls which have come to light in various parts of the city have until very recently been indiscriminately called " Servian ". In the last twenty years, however, careful study of existing remnants established the fact that most of the so-called " Servian " structure cannot antedate the fourth century and it is, therefore, two hundred years

later than the traditional reign of Servius Tullius. We know from historical sources that this line of fortifications was constructed after the Gallic invasion of 390, when the need for more adequate defense was felt.

At certain points in the city, however, there have come to light traces of older walls which are assigned to the sixth century and must, therefore, be the true "Servian" fortifications. These remains are, however, very scanty and do not include all the walls of small blocks of dark tufa, which it is sometimes asserted antedate by two centuries the structures composed of the large blocks of lighter-colored material. The question as to whether the city was completely enclosed at this early period is one upon which scholars do not agree. It seems likely, however, that until the period after the Gallic invasion there was no continuous city-wall but that each hill had its natural fortifications, which were strengthened by artificial means at certain weak points. When these separate units amalgamated into a city-state, any exposed stretches between the hills were protected by defensive ramparts. These are the earliest remains of which traces have been found on the Palatine, Capitoline, Quirinal and Viminal. On the other hand, tradition assigns to Tarquinius Priscus, the predecessor of Servius Tullius, the completion of the first city-wall and the construction of the famous *agger.*

Whether or not the city of the sixth century B.C. had a wall that completely enclosed it, we may trace from existing remains the walls of the fourth century, which, according to one theory, included approximately the same area as that which was bounded by the fortifications under the kings. Fragments which are still exposed to the gaze of the public are to be found in a fine stretch of construction within the confines of the main railroad station, which has recently been augmented by the discovery of additional pieces; in the nearby Piazza dei Cinquecento, which represents a continuation of the same stretch; in the Via delle Finanze, where a modern street

has cut in half parts of the ancient wall; and on the Capitoline, in the little park between the Capitoline Museum and the steps leading down to the Forum. An impressive remnant on the Aventine which is still to be seen on the Viale Aventino, is believed by some authorities to be later than the fourth century and has even been assigned to the period of the Punic Wars. The arch which surmounts the wall is an even later addition, which was used for military purposes probably during the Social War (87 B.C.).

Not only did the wall of the fourth century differ from the structure which preceded it, but the methods of construction varied in different parts of the city depending upon the terrain. Similar to the technique employed in the sixth-century walls was the construction on the slopes of the hills. Between the Porta Collina and the Porta Esquilina, however, where the wall followed a level stretch of ground, there was built a distinctive type of fortification known as the *agger.* Ancient historians tell us that a trench was dug measuring 30 Roman feet deep and 100 feet wide and that the earth which was thus removed was used to form an embankment supported on each side by walls built of tufa blocks. We know too that it provided a place for the populace to stroll. The description of its construction has been verified in large measure by recent excavations, although it is clear that the structure was by no means uniform either in dimensions or in method of construction but that the figures given above represent the average proportions. Investigation has also revealed that beneath the remains of the fourth-century *agger* in certain places there have been found traces of two earlier structures of the same nature.

While we may assert without question that the open stretches to the east of the Viminal and Esquiline were protected by the specialized method of construction which we have just noted, there is less certainty about the way in which the low-lying land along the river was treated. It was formerly be-

lieved that some sort of stone parapet had been built along the river for protection. Current opinion, however, supports the view that the city-wall ran back from the river, skirting the bases of the Capitoline and Palatine, and again, connecting the Palatine with the Aventine. The low-lying Forum Boarium and the valley of the Circus Maximus, according to this theory, were not included within the Republican circuit.

Of the sixteen gates in the Servian Wall, which are mentioned in literary sources, the sites of all but two have been fixed with a fair degree of certainty. They are: Porta Flumentana, Carmentalis, Sanqualis, Salutaris, Quirinalis, Collina, Viminalis, Esquilina, Caelimontana, Capena, Naevia, Raudusculana, Lavernalis, Trigemina. Somewhat more doubtful are the sites of the Porta Fontinalis at the northeastern extremity of the Capitoline and of the Querquetulana, probably on the Caelian. Although the only trace of any of these gates visible today is a piece of the Porta Sanqualis in the center of the Piazza Magnanapoli, we note that the Arch of Gallienus on the Esquiline stands on the site formerly occupied by the Porta Esquilina, and that the position of the Porta Capena is recorded on columns near the entrance to the Passeggiata Archeologica. Of interest is a fine arch of tufa on the Quirinal in the courtyard of the Palazzo Antonelli, which was once believed to be the Porta Sanqualis. Instead this structure is thought to have been erected later than the wall itself to provide an opening for military operations. We may then compare it with a similar arch which has already been mentioned on the Aventine.

From these gates in the Servian Wall issued roads which were started as early as the fourth century B.C. with a view to linking the different parts of the peninsula with Rome. So successful was their method of construction that pieces of these ancient highways are still to be seen today, although in the city of Rome itself they are usually buried beneath modern streets. Beneath the polygonal blocks of lava which character-

ize the surface of ancient roads was a layer of cement, which, in turn, rested upon a layer of stones mixed with lime. Below this there was sometimes another layer of broken stones, at other times there was merely the bedrock.

The principal roads leading out of Rome during the Republic were the following. Beginning at the Porta Fontinalis was the great northern highway, the Via Flaminia, constructed by C. Flaminius, consul in 223 B.C., and leading to Ariminum on the Adriatic. The first part of this road, within the city, was called Via Lata, " Broadway ", and corresponded with the modern Via del Corso. In the modern town of Rimini may be seen an arch, dating from the time of Augustus, marking the terminus of the road that started at the Capitol in Rome. Continuing around toward the East, the Via Salaria (deriving its name from the fact that it was the artery by which salt was carried to the Sabine country) probably left the city by one of the gates on the Quirinal, and is marked by the modern Via di Porta Pinciana. Continuing in the same direction we find next the Via Nomentana, which began at the Porta Collina and extended to Nomentum in the Sabine territory. Just beyond this thoroughfare the Via Tiburtina, starting at the Porta Esquilina, ran to the town of Tibur, where many Romans had their summer homes. The Via Praenestina, which started from the same gate as the Tiburtina, turned southeast to the town of Praeneste. From the Porta Caelimontana on the Caelian issued the Via Asinaria, the destination of which is uncertain. Further south, however, at the Porta Capena, we find the best-known of Roman roads, the Via Appia, which was built in 312 by Appius Claudius, the Censor. The great highway linking Rome with the sea-coast at Ostia began at the Porta Trigemina and, at a later period, was known as the Via Ostiensis. Other roads which began at the Tiber were the Via Aurelia, leading west and north to the coast towns of Etruria, and the Via Cornelia, which ran northwest into southern Etruria.

We shall have occasion to follow these same highways together with some additional ones when we study the gates in the Aurelian Wall of the third century A.D.

As Roman engineers have been noted for their indestructible highways, so they have gained renown for the construction of aqueducts which have through the ages assured the Urbs of an adequate water supply. As early as 312 B.C. the same Appius Claudius who gave his name to the Via Appia, when he was censor along with C. Plautius Venox, brought water by a subterranean channel from a spot near the Anio river between the sixth and seventh milestones east of Rome. Its terminus was the Porta Trigemina on the Aventine. Forty years later spoils from the war with Pyrrhus provided the money for the censors to construct a second aqueduct. Since its source was the Anio (some distance from the town of Tibur), this aqueduct has been known as the Anio Vetus. Its destination was the Porta Esquilina. In 144 B.C. the Senate, feeling that the water supply was inadequate, empowered the praetor, Q. Marcius Rex, to repair the Appia and the Anio and to build a third aqueduct, which was called the Aqua Marcia. The task of bringing water from springs of the Anio near the thirty-sixth milestone of the Via Valeria to the top of the Capitoline took five years to complete. The Aqua Marcia, which was considered the best water in ancient Rome, still supplies a part of the city today. The name of the next aqueduct suggests a contrast to the preceding in the temperature of its water. The Aqua Tepula was built in 125 B.C. by the censors Cn. Servilius Caepio and L. Cassius Longinus. Its source was in the Alban Hills beyond the tenth milestone on the Via Latina and it seems to have supplied the Quirinal district of Rome. Such were the sources of the water supply during the Republic. We shall take up the story of the aqueducts again when we consider the Augustan City of the Fourteen Regions.