

The physical form of a city is determined by the thoughts, beliefs and expectations of city-dwellers, in the first place the leading elite. Even though in Late Antiquity the level of elite-competition, and consequently also patronage benefiting the city, declined in comparison with previous centuries, the Imperial Court and central administration, governors and high officials, civic elite and bishops still saw reasons to initiate construction. The identity of initiators influenced the funds available, thus also the materials used, the composition of the workforce, and as a result the final appearance of the project. Vice versa, through the study of the monument proper, a comparison with other constructions within the same town, province and the Empire, and confrontation with epigraphic and literary testimonies, a reconstruction of the organisation behind the monument's construction is possible.

This research can be applied to all kinds of monuments, but this presentation will focus on fortifications. By the early 6th c. AD, almost every city in the eastern Mediterranean received a new fortification wall. Most settlements were themselves responsible for gathering the necessary money and workforce (*CTh* 15.1.34). Smaller cities only had reduced civic funds at their disposal and therefore they assumingly limited the extent of the circuit, saved on building materials and labour costs, e.g., by involving inhabitants in the construction process in the context of *munera*. In provincial capitals, larger resources were concentrated in the hands of the governor. In addition, the provincial elite was also more closely involved in the central government, and their personal contacts could ensure imperial contributions. Finally, non-archaeological sources show that, when a site was sponsored by the central administration, this could take on the form of financial support, but could also involve the dispatch of high-class *mechanikoi* and/or the provision of labour forces and even materials.

As Imperial support was only sparsely granted, these fortifications clearly stand out, e.g. in size and complexity, rational course, building technique and/or presence of non-functional features. For instance, the fortified settlements of Zenobia and Resafa, constructed in the early 6th c. at the eastern border of the Empire, were the result of Imperial patronage. The involvement of Imperial architects at Zenobia was attested in literary sources, their presence at Resafa is suggested by similarities in building technique and overall theoretical design (Zanini 2003: 217), expressed in their rational circuits. Both walls were provided with towers at regular intervals and a neat wall finish. However, in comparison to the mainly military settlement of Zenobia, the circuit of Resafa possessed some imaginative details, such as decorative pilasters on the halfround towers at its corners and heavily decorated gates with three passages. This luxury can be connected to the final important player in Late Roman society, the Church. Even in "ordinary" cities, the presence of a major sanctuary influenced the care with which adjoining wall sections and gates were constructed. In addition, from the 5th c. onwards, streets and squares that were dominated by church buildings were provided with new decorative features - such as fountains, colonnades with pedestal bases, even statuary -, undoubtedly because bishops by now were able to redirect civic funds.