

THE DOOR OF THE SEA AND THE DOCKSIDE THERMAL BATHS OF BARCINO

BARCINO, A COASTAL CITY

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Barcino was founded by Emperor Augustus around the year 10 BC. It was a small city of approximately ten hectares enclosed by a wall. It had an irregular ground plan, forming a rectangle with cut angles in order to adapt to the topography of the terrain.

The *forum* or public square was located on the crossroads of the two main streets, the *cardo maximus* and the *decumanus maximus*, and housed the most important administrative and religious buildings. In the first century AD the city was much closer to the sea than it is today, barely 150 meters separated the wall from the coast.

Production spaces such as ceramic and metallurgic workshops were located outside of the city in the *suburbium*, as were dwelling structures such as suburban *villae* and *domus*. Flanking the entrance door on the side of the sea were two thermal bath complexes, probably designed for men and women separately.

Fig. 1. Ground plan of the roman city in the third to fourth centuries AD. Hypothesis by Júlia Beltrán de Heredia and drawing by Emili Revilla.

THE SUBURBIAN DOCKSIDE THERMAL BATHS

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Outside the city, flanking the entrance door to the colony on the side of the sea, two public thermal baths were built between the mid-first century and the early second century AD. The two thermal centers we are discussing were probably built to house men and woman separately, as was customary in other parts of the empire, where, when two thermal structures were not feasible, two different timetables were established. In other facilities men and women would be allowed to bathe together.

Being located by the sea meant that some of the pools would occasionally fill up with salt water. The *thermae* in which we now stand were abandoned in the fourth century, when the second walled enclosure was completed.

The thermal baths stood next to other buildings that in all probability were a *horreum*, a huge underground warehouse connected to the docks. The large portico that gave access to this significant complex located outside the city also monumentalized the entrance to Barcino through the Door of the Sea, which was the most important of the four that the city had.

Fig. 2. Hypothetical view of Barcino at the beginning of the second century AD, where one can see the situation of the coastline, the Door of the Sea and the two suburban thermal complexes. Design by Francesc Riart.

The thermal route

The operation of the Roman baths was based on a route that consisted of a succession of spaces with different characteristics and temperatures. In addition there could also be massage rooms and gyms.

Only the pool in the cold room and the remains of a few other chambers are left of the *thermae* we are examining, although their original area was over 1500 m², which proves the importance of shipping activity and trade in the period. Suburban baths were visited for the most part by sailors, travelling salesmen and merchants, who used them as a meeting point for their commercial activity. Brothels were usually located on docksides.

Fig. 3. Ground plan of the suburban dockside thermal baths around the second half of the first century and early second century AD, signaling the various chambers. Hypothesis by Carme Miró and drawing by Miquel Gea. 1 *Apodyterium* (changing room); 2 *Frigidarium* (cold room); 3 *Tepidarium* (lukewarm room); 4. Warm room; 5 *Caldarium* (heated room); A Cold water pool; B Hot water pool; C *Alveus* (bath).

Fig. 4. *Acus crinalis*, bone needles of the second half of the third century AD, which were used to support the complicated female hairstyles. They were found in the floor of the conserved pool, so it is believed that this area was reserved for women.

THE WALL OF BARCINO: DEFENCE AND PRESTIGE

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A new wall

In the fourth century AD a new wall was built in Barcino that had seventy-six towers and was attached to the existing wall, thereby considerably reinforcing the defensive precinct. This task required a significant economic investment and proves that the city at the time was thriving.

A defensive feature, the wall was a symbol of prestige for the town and her inhabitants. As well as being the image of the city, it delimited the space in which people lived and the space that welcomed the main administrative buildings.

Fig. 5. Drawing of the late roman wall of Barcino. Drawing by Marià Ribas, 1943.

The Door of the Sea

The city had four entrance doors, with a central passage for vehicular traffic, horses and goods, and two side passages for pedestrians.

The eastern *decumana* door, also known as Door of the Sea, was the door used by merchants and goods that arrived from all over the Mediterranean. The door was flanked by circular towers that reinforced its defenses and granted it a monumental quality. Only one of the side doors used by pedestrians still stands.

The construction of the maritime *castellum* in the fourth century altered the door's initial structure, and one of the side passages for pedestrians was totally blocked off.

Fig. 6. Drawing of the eastern *decumana* door, or Door of the Sea, in the city wall in the first century AD. Drawing by Francesc Riart.

Fig. 7. Drawing of the eastern *decumana* door, or Door of the Sea, in the city wall in the fourth century AD. Drawing by Francesc Riart.

Trade and the Door of the Sea: a tax for entering the city

The taxes on goods shipped by land or sea and by people entering ports and crossing borders were known as *portoria*.

Beside Barcino's Door of the Sea, where a guard corps stood, one hundred coins which had probably gone astray when this tax was collected, upon entering the city, were discovered. Coins from the mints in Rome, *Arelate* (Arles) and *Lugdunum* (Lyon), *Siscia* (Sisak, Croatia), *Nicomedia* and *Cyzicus* (Izmit and Kapu Dagh, Turkey) and *Treverorum* (Treves, Germany) have been identified.

The fact that the thermal baths and storage spaces were located along the city's seafront stresses the importance of trade, as the docks were a key element in the economy of the colony.

Fig. 8. Side passage for pedestrians at the Door of the Sea, conserved in the interior of the Pati d'en Llimona courtyard.

Fig. 9. Coins that were in circulation in the fourth and fifth centuries AD, found in the lateral passage.

The maritime castellum

The maritime *castellum* was an advanced bulwark that extended past the line of the wall towards the coast. Its function was probably connected to the port and maritime trade, standing as it did at a strategic point of

control for the entry of merchants and merchandise. The interior of the *castellum* was thought to house a number of official buildings.

The construction of the maritime *castellum* and of the new city wall in the fourth century AD had an impact on the suburban dockside thermal baths, and one part of the bathing complex remained open although it was considerably altered.

Fig. 10. Aerial view of Barcino in the fourth century with the new wall, the Door of the Sea, and the *castellum*

. In the interior of the *castellum* the thermal complex still worked. Drawing by Francesc Riart.

Barcino was at the center of the most important commercial route of the western Mediterranean. This circumstance favored relations with North Africa, but also with other regions of the Eastern Mediterranean, the south of the Italic Peninsula, southern Hispania and Lusitania. The preserved amphorae speak of this maritime trade and the role that Barcino had between the fourth and seventh centuries AD.

A. African Amphora of the western Cartago from the end of the fourth century, beginning of the fifth century AD. Museu d'Història de Barcelona.

B. Amphora of Gaza, from the Eastern Mediterranean. Centuries V-VIII AD. It contained wine from the Gaza area. Museu d'Història de Barcelona.

C. African amphora constructed in Sahel and Nabeul, century VI. It is believed that it was used to transport wine or salted fish. Museu d'Història de Barcelona

THE WALL AND THE DOOR OF THE SEA IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The Porta Regumiro

In the tenth century the wall that had protected and defined the city since the Roman age began to change. Private homes were built, especially by noble families, that were attached to the wall and included defensive towers. In 975 the Door of the Sea was mentioned in documents as the Porta Regumiro.

In the eleventh century the doors of the city actually became urban castles controlled by viscounts and the bishop. The *Castrum Regumirum* –Castle of Regomir– was under episcopal administration.

The expansion of the city and the loss of its defensive function led to a progressive presence of houses within and without the wall. Growth accelerated towards the end of the twelfth century and one hundred years later a new wall to surround the city was built.

Fig. 11. Plan that shows the growth of the city outside the walls in the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries. Surveying MUHBA.

The Casa Marc

In the thirteenth century the Marc family, linked to the royal curia, set up residence next to Regomir Castle. The noble house consisted of three floors and some of its chambers still conserve the family coat of arms.

In 1387 Galceran Marc sold the stately home to Ponç de Gualba, great man of the city who had made his fortune through maritime trading and banking activities. When Ponç de Gualba died the house was divided between his son Ferrer de Gualba and his grandson Nicolau. The Gualba family owned the mansion until the eighteenth century, when it was bequeathed to the presbyteral community of Saints Just and Pastor. In 1779 the building was purchased by Tomàs Llimona, a merchant trader of printed calicos, from whom the name of the house comes.

Fig. 12. The Casa Marc.

Fig. 12. Brackets of the medieval house decorated with the coats of arms of the two owners' families, the Marcs and the Gualbas.

FROM THE DEMOLITION TO THE RECOVERY OF THE WALL

The transformations of the modern city

The increased use of public space in a city that had begun a process of industrialization in the eighteenth century, still surrounded by the last of its fortifications, entailed notable changes in the area under discussion. Part of the Roman Door of Regomir and of the structures annexed to the *castellum* disappeared in the nineteenth century when new buildings were erected.

Fig. 14. Drawing of the street Regomir of the year 1861, by Lluís Rigalt. The street maintains the Roman layout of the *decumanus maximus*. The Roman round tower can still be clearly seen.

Fig. 15. Drawing of Buenaventura Hernández Sanahuja showing the beginning of the demolition, in the year 1862, of a fourth century's circular tower that belonged to the *castellum*. Behind you can see the top of two arches of the first century AD portico.

Fig. 16. Drawing published by Josep Puiggarí showing the same sequence of the demolition of the tower in 1862. Two arches of the portico are visible, already practically freed from the structure of the tower that hid them. This was the portico that led to the suburban thermal baths and to the side door of the wall.

Fig. 17. Facade of the house that Pelegrí Guash asked for permission to build on Regomir 7 and 9 in 1862, which corresponds to the current building. The tower on the other side of Regomir and the vault that passed over the street had just been demolished. The chapel of Sant Cristòfol was incorporated into the building, smaller and with a new facade.

The monumentalization of the ancient quartier

During the twentieth century the desire of monumentalize the historical quarter of the city would bring about a number of changes. The demolition of buildings, particularly of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, granted visibility to the Roman wall that had been partly concealed by the buildings erected and attached to it over the course of history. Mention should also be made of the existence beside the door of Regomir of a small chapel dedicated to St Christopher that was built inside the Roman tower in 1503. The interior of the chapel was totally refurbished in the Neo-Gothic style in 1899.

Fig. 18. The Roman wall, with the signs of the buildings that were attached on it over time.

D. Cornice with the representation of a lion's head. Sandstone from Montjuïc. Loan from the Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya.

E. Capital with acanthus sheets. Sandstone from Montjuïc. Loan from the Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya.