

Rome, archéologie et histoire urbaine is a valuable book that not only provides a good overview of the research conducted on the city of Rome during the last thirty years, but also indicates paths to follow in the future.

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PIETER HOUTEN, *URBANISATION IN ROMAN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL: CIVITATES HISPANIAE OF THE EARLY EMPIRE* (Studies in Roman space and urbanism). London and New York: Routledge, 2021. Pp. xix + 460, illus, maps. ISBN 9780367900779 (hbk); 9780367708672 (pbk); 9781003022800 (ebook). £130.00.

With an estimated 10–20 per cent of the population living in urban centres, cities were the backbone of the social, administrative, political and economic life of Roman society. Traditionally, Roman urbanisation was seen as a top-down process. The Roman state, it was believed, systematically established uniform cities in conquered territories, which served as administrative outposts and instruments of cultural assimilation. Cities were tools through which Roman culture was spread. Recent research, however, paints a more nuanced picture. Rather than a rigid, uniform and state-directed imposition — a view rooted in the colonialist and imperialist ideologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries — Roman urbanisation is now seen as a dynamic process characterised by regional variation and local interaction. Pre-existing settlements, indigenous traditions and economic circumstances played a role in how and why cities and urban systems developed.

This shift in perspective is exemplified by the ERC-funded project ‘An Empire of 2000 Cities: Urban Networks and Economic Integration in the Roman Empire’ (2013–2018), led by L. de Ligt (Leiden University), of which this monograph is one of the outcomes. This 460-page volume, divided into six main chapters, a conclusion, a comprehensive bibliography, an index for reference and two extensive appendices, meticulously covers key themes in the current debate on the nature of the Roman urban settlement system and the urbanisation history of the Iberian Peninsula, with a chronological focus on the early Empire.

Ch. 1 introduces the concepts of urbanism and the ancient city and deals with the defining elements of a Roman city, thus laying the foundation for the study in this book. Ch. 2 highlights the importance of pre-Roman indigenous (proto-)urban frameworks and the role of the environmental context in the establishment of the Roman administrative and economic system in the Iberian Peninsula. Rather than focusing on the simplistic Mediterranean/Atlantic distinction, Houten examines the origins of Roman urbanisation in the Iberian peninsula against the background of pre-existing settlement models, such as the city-state and tribal-state model, to evaluate the nature of the Roman urban system. Using literary sources and epigraphic evidence, ch. 3 lists the known self-governing communities of the peninsula. The chapter stresses the regional diversity of the peninsula’s urban organisation within the broader Roman administrative system, focusing on the so-called ‘dispersed civitas’ or ‘civitas without urban centre’, a concept particularly relevant to the northwest of the peninsula. Ch. 4 examines smaller subordinate or secondary settlements and analyses their economic and social role within the larger urban network. This chapter highlights the importance of these smaller settlements in supporting the economic functions of the primary urban centres, detailing their contribution to the local economy and their integration into the Roman urban system. Using basic network analysis, the chapter further explores the interconnectedness of these settlements and their significance in the overall urban landscape of Roman Hispania. Ch. 5 examines the relationship between monumental architecture, urban lifestyle, city status and social competition. Regrettably, H. centres his analysis almost exclusively on the original construction of monumental architecture, overlooking the importance of renovations, adaptations and other acts of monumentalisation as part of a continuous process of urban development and civic engagement. Finally, ch. 6 effectively synthesises the information from the previous chapters and employs quantitative and spatial analyses to examine the urban network

of Roman Hispania. Techniques such as rank-size analysis, least-cost path analysis and carrying capacity analysis help to explain the observed urban patterns, providing insights into the underlying principles of urban development in the Iberian peninsula. While the broad lines of interpretation of the analyses are not to be doubted, a more critical engagement with the strengths and limitations of the techniques and data would be a valuable consideration for future research, for example on the topic of carrying capacity and the use of modern climate data.

Overall, this monograph offers one of the first macro-scale, data-driven and in-depth analyses of the urbanisation of Roman Spain and Portugal. Through meticulous research and innovative approaches, it convincingly sketches a detailed reconstruction of the mechanisms and processes that characterised the Roman urban systems in the Iberian peninsula. The book clearly illustrates the need to move away from the traditional view of Roman urbanisation as a uniform, exclusively state-directed process. Instead, H. proposes a more nuanced view in which multiple urban settlement systems co-existed, at least in part conditioned by pre-existing indigenous systems. Given the extensive amount of data and the range of topics covered in the book, chapter-level conclusions would have been helpful to enhance understanding and highlight key findings. This would also have allowed the results to be placed in a broader perspective, for example through comparison with Gaul, North Africa or Italy.

In conclusion, this monograph is a significant contribution to the current state of art on Roman urbanism. It offers a new perspective on the urban development of Roman Spain and Portugal and fills an important gap in the literature on the history of the region. The book is highly recommended as a reference work for academic libraries and scholars of Roman urban studies and the Roman history of the Iberian peninsula.

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CAROLINE BERGEN, 'WEGEN DER SCHÖNHEIT Eurer HÄFEN...' HAFENANLAGEN DER FRÜHEN KAISERZEIT – SPIEGEL STÄDTISCHER SELBSTDARSTELLUNG? (Pharos. Studien zur griechisch-römischen Antike 49). Rahden/Westf.: Verlag Marie Leidorf GmbH, 2022. Pp. 551, illus., maps, plans. ISBN 9783867572774. €59.80.

For many cities in the Roman Empire, their ports were much more than trading places and gateways to the surrounding world — they were also sources of local pride. The advanced infrastructure of the port facilities and the monumental architecture there demonstrated the importance and wealth of the city to which the port belonged. Portus, as the port of imperial Rome, is the grandest example of this with its imposing structures including warehouses, quays and ship sheds as well as temples and the famous *Palazzo Imperiale*. Similarly, other major ports in the Empire were embellished and monumentalised, thus reflecting the way in which the cities saw themselves. This phenomenon, monumentalisation as a tool for political communication and self-portrayal of a city, is the topic of the book by Caroline Bergen here reviewed. The quote in the title is taken from Dio Chrysostom's discourse to the people of Alexandria in which he praises the beauty of their city's harbours (32.36).

The book is a revised version of B.'s 2018 doctoral thesis, which is reflected in the bibliography since it includes only a few titles published later than that. The structure pretty much follows that of a thesis. It has two short introductory chapters (in total 19 pages), a massive central chapter containing the analysis of the case studies (400 pages), and a short final chapter (12 pages) wrapping it all up. The study is above all based on literary sources which then are discussed together with relevant inscriptions and coins. Results from archaeological excavations are referred to and the monumental architecture in or around the ports is described.

In the introduction, B. observes that, given the representations of monumentalised ports in ancient art, such as wall paintings from Stabiae, coins and the so-called Torlonia relief from the imperial palace at Portus, we can probably assume that it was common for important port cities in the