

ROMAN IMPERIALISM AND LOCAL IDENTITIES

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LIVING THE URBAN IDEAL

1.1 URBANISM AS IDEOLOGY

At Wroxeter, sometime around AD 160, a fire broke out damaging the forum and surrounding buildings. Excavation of the destruction layers revealed stacks of *mortaria*, nests of *terra sigillata* and a substantial pile of whetstones, all in the deep drain running along the front portico of the forum (Atkinson 1942: 63–4; see Figure 2.1). Grooves in the bases of some of the columns suggest that wooden stalls were set up here, and that the material in the drain represents the wares on sale at these stalls. Within the basilica, debris from the fire was also found in room 1 in the rear range, including lock plates, padlocks, bolts, keys and a *sigillata* inkpot, which, when taken together, suggest a number of lockable wooden chests or cupboards. This room may have been a *tabularium* or archive, and the people using this room may have been involved in keeping the town records and accounts (Hassall 2003); this would also account for the military diploma found in the same room (RIB 2.2401.8). This archive, taken with the census and payment of taxes, would have given the basilica a central role in the administration of the area. Here we can see how the ideal of Roman urbanism was more than an ephemeral concept for the people of the empire, but a fundamental part of their everyday existence. Each time someone visited one of the stalls in the front portico and bought a *mortarium* or a *sigillata* bowl, or paid their taxes in the basilica, they reproduced the idea that a town was the most appropriate place for such daily routines, thus actively reproducing the importance of the urban setting.

In contrast to this picture of mundane everyday living in the town, the more usual approach to urbanism is one of grand narrative. The starting point is the construction of an account of major episodes in the

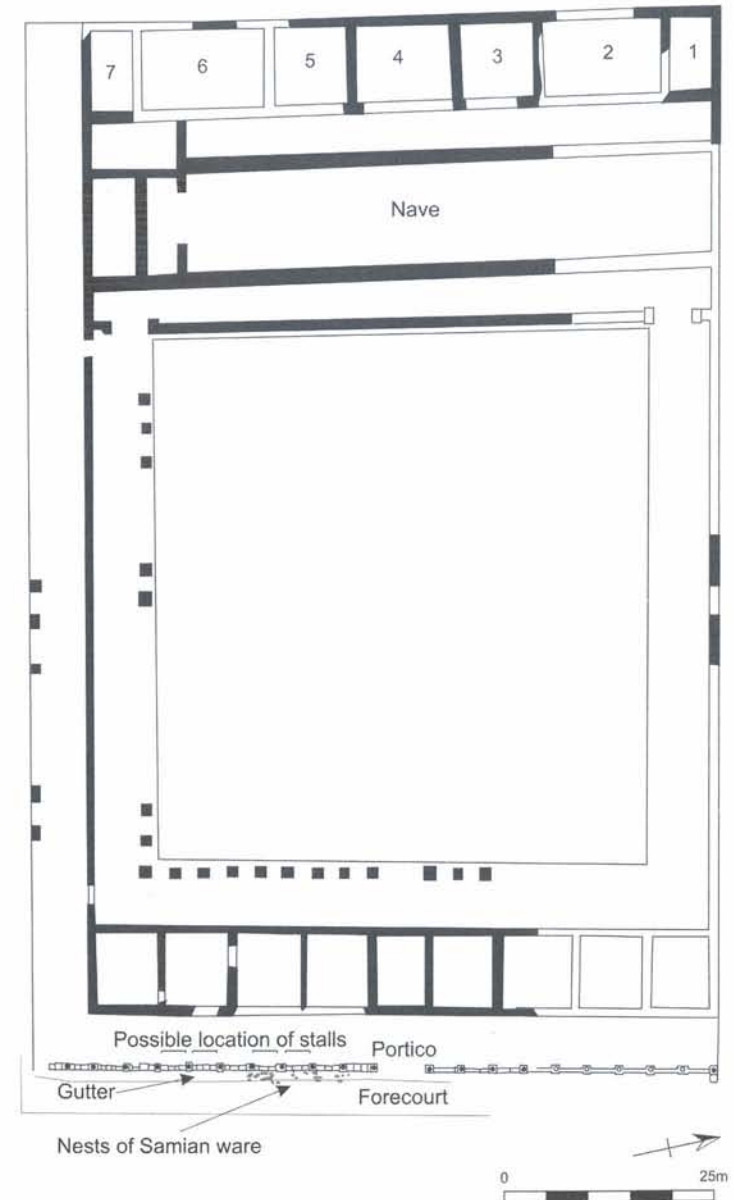


Figure 2.1. Wroxeter: plan of the forum showing the location of the fire deposits and the probable stalls.

development of a town, based upon historical sources, epigraphy, and dated major building phases. Where possible, this is tied into known wider historical events, such as the visits of Hadrian to Italica or Britain. At Wroxeter, for example, the forum dedication to Hadrian (RIB 228) has led various authors to assume that it was funded through his patronage, possibly at the time of his visit to Britain in AD 122 (for example Potter and Johns 1992: 82), and hypothesize that it was part of a grand plan for the stabilization of the frontier areas of the empire (Webster 1988: 140–3). These individual narratives then feed into wider discussions of long-term processes. The most influential of these has been the relationship between towns and Roman imperialism. Whether applied to Italy during the mid-Republic (Salmon 1969; Laurence 1999b: 11–26), or Dacia in the second century AD (Hayes and Hanson 2004: 15–18), the founding of towns has been seen (not incorrectly) in terms of an imperial strategy for the assimilation of conquered territories. This has been linked to the relationship between the towns and cultural change: the creation of towns where none had previously existed, or the reconfiguration of existing towns, is seen as signifying the process of Romanization. In the case of the tribal capitals of Roman Britain, this debate has concentrated on whether urbanism was a result of military imposition or local adoption (summarised in Creighton 2006: 71–4). This places an emphasis on the moment of, and the motivation for, their construction. One important proponent of the imposition view has been Frere, who argues that the appearance of towns was the result of a deliberate, pacifying policy begun by Frontinus and Agricola, which depended upon the use of military manpower and expertise (Frere 1987: 99–100, 229–30; Hanson 1997). The logical conclusion to this argument is that urbanism was only a superficial and minor part of Romano-British life, and soon died out in the third century to be replaced by small towns or villas (for example, Hingley 1997: 89–93). The counter argument is that towns were adopted by the peoples of Britain themselves, part of the indigenous elites' desire to participate in different lifestyles (e.g., Millett 1990b: 69–78, 99–101; Creighton 2006: chapters 4–7). Urbanization arose out of the pre-Roman social organization, as it adapted to the new imperial context.

A second area of debate has revolved around the function of Roman towns. Moses Finley developed the argument of the primacy of the economic role of the town, through his model of the consumer city, a parasite on the productivity of the countryside (Finley 1973; see also Morley 1996). More recent approaches to Roman towns have questioned the idea that Roman urbanism was primarily economic in character, and

instead concentrated more on a human engagement with the town using ideas of the experience of living and moving within a town (Favro 1994, 1996; Laurence 2007; Bayliss 1999). Similarly, following the work of Paul Zanker (1988) on Rome, the idea of the town as embedded in the negotiation and expression of political power has similarly offered new ways of thinking about urbanism (papers in Trillmich and Zanker 1990). The argument I shall present here fits within these approaches, but specifically I want to think about how the idea of the town formed a shared discourse or ideology. As Paul Zanker argues, “[a townscape] not only shapes the inhabitants but is shaped by them, for the buildings and spaces, having been constructed to embody certain messages and values, continue to communicate these same messages to succeeding generations” (Zanker 1998: 3; see also Zanker 2000). The archaeological evidence from the Wroxeter forum provides an insight into some of the ways in which it was used by the people of the area in their everyday lives, how they encountered these ‘messages and values’. Their reproduction of Roman urban ideology lies not only in them building the forum, but in their continuing practice of visiting it and using it, making it part of their mental maps. This illustrates the shift in approach advocated in Chapter 1, to the idea of Roman society as reproduced by the people of the empire, their daily activities, and their understanding of how to function effectively in a Roman context.

From this standpoint, questions of imposition or voluntary adoption form only one part of a more complex narrative which, for such buildings, includes their extended histories of use and alteration throughout the Roman period. As the people of Wroxeter began to use the town on a repeated (although not necessarily frequent) basis, they began to participate in the shared culture which held the empire together (Hingley 2005: 51–4). Urbanism was an ideology about the correct way of living a life, and that ideology involved more than just building a town, but also locating daily activities within it, making it part of the unquestioned mental map of the people dwelling there (Keay 1997b: 203–4). It also moves us beyond the elite role in paying for the construction and refurbishment of the public architecture, and brings in the active participation of the wider community. Their level of engagement will have been different to that of the elite: they may have lacked the same level of discursive knowledge and the textual discourse of urbanism. Instead, their practical knowledge of what a Roman town should be like and how to act in the various buildings provided the conditions for their role in the reproduction of urbanism. Whether that town was adorned with

marble, reflecting the wealth of the empire, or its poor relation of stucco walls and *opus signinum* floors is less important than the way in which the architecture enabled certain activities to be located within the town and emphasized the relative importance of certain buildings.

In the remainder of this chapter, I shall explore the ideology of urbanism as a preferred form of dwelling. In this, I shall demonstrate how it was both the frame for and the product of the lived experiences of members of the Roman empire, carried in their knowledge of how to act on an everyday level within that social context. However, if we are to view the ideology of urbanism as an embedded structure, we require a framework through which to investigate it. If it operated as a dialectic, conditioning the actions of both imperial authorities at Rome and the people in the provinces, then we must examine both sides of the coin. We need to define urbanism within Roman discourse, then explore how it formed part of the conceptual framework through which the empire was ruled and the response of those who were being ruled.

2.2 THE IDEOLOGY OF URBANISM

Just as ideology must be seen as specific to any society, so urbanism as an ideology took differing forms within different societies. The ideology of Roman urbanism is somewhat problematic. That of the Greek *πολις* was explicitly explored at length by the ancient writers and philosophers; however for the Roman period, such attitudes are at best implicit in the texts, and are more complex and ambiguous. From this has arisen the assumption that Roman urban ideology was a pale imitation of its Greek predecessor and that, rather than a statement of ideology, the increase in the number of towns under the empire was merely a response to the administrative imperative of ruling an empire (for example, Garnsey and Saller 1987: 26). This view is coloured by modern attitudes about the inevitability of urbanism and the evolutionary connection between civilization and urban dwelling, itself ironically the result of the influence of Graeco-Roman culture on western thought. Such assumptions reduce Roman urbanism to a pragmatic solution rather than an embedded ideological statement. That the Roman town was the setting for the reproduction of other forms of ideology has been demonstrated beyond question (for example, Zanker 1988), but we should go further and ask whether the Roman commitment to urbanism was itself a form of ideology. Whilst as an ideology it lacked the apparent unity of the Greek discourse of the *πολις*, the discourse of urbanism and its changing

nature demonstrates how the city became a subject of contention and debate, bound up within wider debates of social immorality and perceived decline (Juvenal *Satires* 3, Tacitus *Agricola* 21; see also Braund 1989). It became a discursive location for the expression of dissent to imperial society, but rather than undermining the importance of the town as an idea to the Romans, it actually reinforced its potency as a symbol of social and political idealism.

In his work on oratory, *de Inventione Rhetorica*, Cicero describes the role oratory played in the way Romans conducted their lives, and recounts a story of cultural evolution from savagery to civilization, of how at one time humans lived their lives in the fields, with no ordered communal institutions:

For there was a time when men wandered at large in the fields like animals and lived on wild fare; they did nothing by the guidance of reason, but relied chiefly on physical strength; there was as yet no ordered system of religious worship nor of social duties; no one had seen legitimate marriage nor had anyone looked upon children whom he knew to be his own; nor had they learnt the advantages of an fair code of law. (Cicero, *de Inventione Rhetorica*. 2.1)

In time, a single man gathered them together and introduced them to the advantages of urban living (2.1–2). Cicero continues with the point that once the people had been brought together in cities, oratory was the means through which they lived harmoniously together and justice was administered (2.3). Whilst the main aim of this morality tale is to demonstrate the role of oratory on civilized life, the underlying narrative is that of country dwellers as rough savages, lacking the necessary social institutions (law, religion and marriage) for civilized life; these only arrive with the introduction of towns and communal living. The *Aeneid* is based on the same mindset: when driven out of Troy, Aeneas does not seek a secluded spot where his followers might live a rural life. His goal is to found a city in which to pursue an urban lifestyle, and the reader is seduced by the inevitability and the correctness of that ideal.

This ideology of urbanism as the civilized form of living can most clearly be seen in the way Roman authors viewed other peoples, and how they used towns as a way to define themselves. It is possible to see Roman identity being explored in geographical and historical works through the description of so-called barbarous peoples (Stewart 1995). The ideology of dwelling plays an important part in this: the more barbarous (non-Roman) a people, the fewer trappings of an urban lifestyle they display.

In Strabo's account of the Britons, the description of their culture is set against the ideal of Roman civilization (Strabo 4.5.1; Braund 1996: 83–4): the Britons' barbarism rested in their inability to live in an urban settlement. Similarly, in the *Germania*, Tacitus portrays the Germans as the anti-Romans. Throughout the first half of the work, his account of their culture and society must be set against the Roman ideal of living; without this knowledge, his description is meaningless. Thus the Germans practise human sacrifice (ch. 9), reckon time by night (ch. 10), carry out public business armed (ch. 10 and 13), and follow different patterns of slave labour (ch. 25). Predictably, part of their lack of civilization was their inability to live in the proper way:

It is well known that none of the German tribes live in cities, that even individually they do not permit houses to touch each other: they live separated and scattered, according as spring-water, meadow or grove appeals to each man: they lay out their villages not, after our fashion, with buildings contiguous and connected... They have not even learned to use quarry-stone or tiles: the timber they use for all purposes is unshaped and stops short of all ornament or attraction.

(Tacitus *Germania* 16)

The otherness of the Germans goes beyond the fact that they do not live in cities, but includes the idea that they dwell apart, as opposed to the ideal of living as a communal group. Furthermore, they choose a site according to their own desires, rather than consulting the gods through elaborate rites to ascertain which is the most propitious. The settlement is not organised, nor are the buildings constructed from the correct materials. The Roman way of living is here presented as the normal expectation through the counterpoint of the barbarian lifestyle. But it is more than where they dwell: it incorporates ideas of how to dwell, how to structure both the settlement and the surrounding area. The Germans not only live in the wrong type of settlement, they also fail to organise it according to Roman ideas of civilization.

As with all ideologies, urbanism in the Roman world was a means of legitimating one particular form of discourse, obscuring the validity of other forms of dwelling. This was in part achieved by the projection of the image of Rome (and by extension other towns) as having a moral or religious rightness. In addition, the rituals required to found a town reinforced the ideology of urbanism through the idea of divine sanction for the town. Rykwert (1988: 41–71) has reconstructed the elaborate rituals involved in the founding of a town. The site was revealed through

augury, observing the flight of birds and other omens, and the day and site of the actual foundation were deemed favourable by taking the auspices, consulting the entrails, primarily the liver and intestines, of a sacrificial victim. Once the site was cleared, a ritual offering of the first fruits was deposited in a pit, the *mundus*. The town boundary was sanctified through the ploughing of the *pomerium*, cutting the first furrow with a plough yoked to an ox and cow, with the plough carried across the line of the gates, making these the only points where the boundary could be crossed. In legend, as Romulus ploughed the *pomerium* of Rome, his head was covered by his toga, in the manner of a priest officiating at a sacrifice, thus reinforcing the religious significance of the boundary. These ceremonies (taking the auspices and ploughing the *pomerium*) were enhanced through the authority of tradition: they were tied into the foundation of Rome and the Romulus and Remus stories, thus legitimating the ideology through their connection to the most significant figures in Roman mythology. The potency of the rituals can be seen in the iconographic representations of the ploughing of the *pomerium*, on coinage and on relief sculpture, and there is evidence for *mundus*-style foundation deposits on the Arx at Cosa, and at a number of towns in Britain including Dorchester and Silchester (Brown 1980: 16–7; Woodward and Woodward 2004). Such rituals reinforced the sanctity of the town and reified it as an independent entity, conceptually divorced from and elevated above the rest of its landscape.

Even the language of urbanism subtly negated the validity of competing ideologies as it was not value-free, but bound up in a series of associations. The concepts of *urbanus* and *rusticus* each had implications beyond their simplest meanings of dwelling. *Urbanus*, on the one hand, incorporated the positive qualities of elegance, refinement and intelligence; on the other hand, *rusticus* included the negative qualities of roughness, simpleness and boorishness (Lomas 1997: 22–3). Similarly, in order to be *urbanus* it was not enough to live in a city: it was necessary to adopt the correct manner of living (Richardson 1995). The polarity of *urbs* and *nus* was highly complex, forming the extremes of possibility within a single discourse, with neither possessing a meaning independent of the other. As Purcell (1995) has argued, the villa needs to be understood as an extension of the city: it formed part of the discourse of elite power, with political status dependant upon a particular ideology of production (see also Wallace-Hadrill 1998). The ideological relationship between *urbs* and *nus* existed on a number of different planes, at times contradictory, but always dependent upon their juxtaposition. The meaning of each was

located in the meaning of the other, and thus, the ideology of urbanism incorporated the idea of dwelling within the Roman style town, but at the same time, extended far beyond it. This ambiguity is problematic for the Roman archaeologist. For the urban form to be truly reproductive of Roman society and ideology, the presence or absence of towns with Roman architecture is not enough in itself (Richardson 1995: 348). This poses the challenge of what we mean by a Roman ideology of urbanism, and how we recognise its existence archaeologically. The approach used must go beyond the unquestioned correlation between the towns and urban ideology; a more careful investigation is needed, examining how the town came to define and be defined by its inhabitants' real and metaphorical conceptions of their worlds.

It is clear that the Romans did possess an ideology of the town and urban living. This encompassed the physicality of the town: a nucleated settlement with a range of public buildings which would form its showpiece, and into which a considerable amount of energy would be expended (Pausanias 10.4.1; Tacitus *Agricola* 21; Lomas 1997; Ortiz de Urbina 2000: 72–3). From the time of Augustus onwards, there was the assumption that the town would reflect the wealth of the community (Ovid *Ars Amatoria* 3.11.3–4; this also underlies Augustus *Res Gestae* 19–21). The political and religious structures would be interconnected, with an overlap between the space and the personnel for the two activities (Zanker 1998: 6–7). Furthermore, the town was not merely a physical reality, but possessed a metaphysical identity: as a personified deity (Roma as the personification of Rome) or as a genius, a quasi-divine entity. This was reinforced by the ritual sanctions surrounding its siting, construction and maintenance (Rykwert 1988). However, as demonstrated above, urbanism encompassed more than the idea of a place to dwell: it also incorporated the ideology of the correct way of living a life. For a Roman, that involved an independent political existence, albeit within a broader network of provincial and empire-wide structures (Fear 1996: 6–7). Politics relied upon the active participation of the citizens of that town, with power acquired and expressed through public display and acts of munificence towards the community (Lomas 1997; Zanker 1998: 7; Ortiz de Urbina 2000: 59–60). This structure should be seen as broader than the narrow political field of the modern world, conceptually divorced from other areas of life: instead, urban participation incorporated activities such as religion and public spectacles (Fear 1996: 6–7). The citizens of the town (whether *coloni*, *municipes*, or *cives*) formed a communal body at a basic level, whose group interests were synonymous

with those of the town, and this urban community was a fundamental part of self-identification through that citizenship.

Taking this as a broad definition of Roman ideology of urbanism, I shall now discuss how it was reproduced as a dialectic between the rulers at Rome and the inhabitants of the provincial towns. It is designed to counteract the idea of an imposed urbanism: the ideology was reproduced on two levels, as the framing conditions and as a lived experience. My purpose here is to explore some of the ways in which these might be detected archaeologically.

2.3 AN EMPIRE OF TOWNS

From the earliest period of conquest, towns were seen as an essential part of imperial and military strategy. The Roman authorities used urban centres, ranging in size from *fora* to *coloniae*, as a means of holding and controlling territory, transforming the political landscape of an area (Cicero *Orationes de lege Agraria* 2.73; Salmon 1969: 13–28; Laurence 1999b: 27–38). By the imperial era, the institutions through which the empire was administrated were primarily located in the towns, reinforcing their importance. It has often been remarked that the Roman empire involved government without bureaucracy: handing power and responsibility back to the local elites through the urban system. It was through the towns that taxes were collected, the law administered and soldiers recruited (Garnsey and Saller 1987: 32). Its efficiency relied upon the liturgical system, with the wealthy elite donating time and money for the benefit of the community as part of their service as local magistrates (ibid. 33). The administrative measures formalised by Augustus set in place a system for the control of the empire as a single entity, with towns a necessary part of its conceptualization (Nicolet 1991). The underlying assumption of these reforms was that an urban community, whatever its size, would form the basic unit through which these measures operated. To take the census as an example, this was used as a regular method of ordering the resources of the empire, and was organized through the urban network: people registered in their own towns and the urban magistrates were ultimately responsible for its success (ibid. 126–33, f/n 22; *Tab. Her.* 1.142ff). Similarly, the physical space of the empire was controlled through surveying, measuring and laying out the landscape in relation to the towns, with the urban magistrates responsible for the maintenance of records for taxation purposes (Nicolet 1991: 149–63). In all such measures, the authorities at Rome held the assumption that the

people of the empire would be grouped in towns, and devised administrative procedures accordingly. In this, their decisions were influenced by their own ideological beliefs, and in turn, promoted a distinctly Roman form of urbanism within the provinces.

We can trace the way this Roman urban ideology dictated the legal and social formation of the towns through the charters of the *coloniae* and *municipia*. With such legal evidence, there is always the problem of how far these laws were followed in reality. However, they were enacted in accordance with the views and mores of those in power at Rome. Consequently, rather than using them as proof of how people lived their lives within provincial towns, deconstructing these documents provides an insight into how the ruling administration thought the peoples within the empire should organise their communities, and the political and social institutions considered necessary for orderly living. Some of the best evidence we have is from Spain, with the partial remains of one colonial charter, the *lex coloniae Genetivae* and the Flavian municipal charter. The former was the charter of a Caesarean *colonia* in Baetica, founded on the site of an earlier Roman town. The extant copy has been dated to the Flavian era on the style of the writing, with certain additions made after its original composition. The extant remains consist of five bronze tablets and 12 fragments found in 1870–71 and 1925 (Crawford 1996: 393–4). The text and translation used here is that prepared by Michael Crawford in collaboration with Armin Stylow (ibid. 393–454). In contrast, the *lex Flavia* appears to have been a single master charter following the grant of *ius Latini* to the Spanish by Vespasian, later confirmed as law by Domitian (Fear 1996: 131–50). Over 20 fragments have been discovered, ranging in size from large sections to small fragments which add more to our knowledge of its distribution than its actual wording. The most substantial versions are the Irnitana, Malacitana and Salpensana, and together these provide the most complete reconstruction, although there are still considerable lacunae. The text used here is the version published in the *Journal of Roman Studies* (González 1986; for the sake of simplicity, the *lex coloniae Genetivae* is cited as *lex col.* and the municipal charter as *lex Flav.*).

It is clear from these charters that for both a *colonia* and a *municipium*, the town acted as the centre for judicial and financial organization, forming the setting for communal institutions. The *duoviri* and their prefects were responsible for the administration of justice (*lex col.* 94), with provisions for appointing further judges (*lex Flav.* 86). Similarly, the town had its own funds which were administered by the elected magistrates and the

decurions within the guidelines of the statute. Whilst these handed the administration of the empire back to the local elites and removed the need for an extensive bureaucratic system, they also reflected an ideology of each semi-autonomous community responsible for its own affairs. Furthermore, this ethos of the town having its own interests separate from those of its neighbours can be seen in the adoption of ambassadors and patrons. The municipal law states that ambassadors might be sent out to represent the common business of the *municipium* (*lex Flav.* G; see also *lex col.* 92). Similarly, the decurions could vote to co-opt a patron to act on behalf of the town (*lex Flav.* 61; *lex col.* 97). However, whilst the town was independent in some matters, it also operated as part of a broader network of political relationships. The patron is assumed to be from outside it, and to act in dealings with Rome itself or other communities, tying the town into the wider social and political system.

The ideal of public participation within political life, encompassing a sense of duty towards the community, formed an underlying theme throughout both charters, reinforcing the ideology of a publicly lived life. The election of the magistracies was organised in such a way that, whatever the reality, the underlying assumption was that of political power and activity shared amongst an extended section of the community, with no explicit reference to an automatic, inherited position (which was most likely the *de facto* situation). Nor was supreme authority granted for an extended period of time: the tenure of office was short lived, and authority was then passed on to the next man. The system of annual elections and the role of the *ordo* of decurions in theory distributed power throughout a number of eligible people. The municipal charter set out the procedure for the election and swearing in of magistrates. González argues that eligibility to stand was confined to the members of the decurion class (González 1986: 215), and it is clear that there was some form of wealth qualification (*lex Flav.* 60; this was also the case for judges, *lex Flav.* 86). Nevertheless, the citizen body as a whole had the right to vote, extending political activity beyond the elite (*lex Flav.* 55), and elaborate measures were laid down to ensure a fair election. Prior to the election, the names of the candidates were to be published with the stipulation that they should be readable from ground level (*lex Flav.* 51). The election was supervised by the elder of the two serving *duoviri* (*lex Flav.* 52), who first administered an oath to the three *municipes* who supervised each voting enclosure. He then summoned all the voting groups (the *curiae*) to cast their votes, each in a separate enclosure (*lex Flav.* 55). As each magistrate was elected, that person immediately swore

an oath in the name of Jupiter, the members of the imperial family and the Penates that he would carry out his duties as laid down in the charter, and that he had never done anything contrary to it (*lex Flav.* 59). Within these precepts, there is the underlying ideology of the election of the magistrates as a highly public event, located within the public spaces of the town, involving the active participation of the *municipes* as a group, and with the new official being placed under a moral constraint to act for the good of the urban community.

Once elected, the magistrates had a continuing responsibility towards the citizen body in the form of magisterial *munera*. In the *colonia*, the *duoviri* were charged with holding a show or dramatic spectacle lasting four days. Each man was to spend no less than two thousand sesterces, to be supplemented by an equal amount of public money (*lex col.* 70). Similarly, the aediles were to organize three days of shows, again using a combination of private and public funds (*lex col.* 71). The idea of public service extended further down the social scale, although without the same opportunities for public renown. Each adult man (over 14 and under 60 years of age) could be called upon to work for up to five days, and to provide a pair of draught animals for up to three days of construction work (*lex col.* 98). We have already seen that the charters contained the idea of public events involving a large part of the community in the elections and shows and spectacles, and this also applied to religious festivals. One of the clauses of the *lex coloniae* states that at the foundation of the colony, the *duoviri* and decurions were to agree which days were to be religious festivals, and on which days public sacrifices would be held (*lex col.* 64). Public money was to be set aside for sacrifices performed in the town and also for those undertaken at other locations in the name of the whole community (*lex col.* 65; see also 69). These clauses all reflect the ideology of an urban lifestyle involving shared activities, specific occasions when the people gathered together as a community, and acted together.

This idea of the community as the basic unit underlies many of the more mundane clauses of the charters. Certain activities were carried out on behalf of the citizen body, and goods could be held in their collective name. Lands, woods and buildings are described as assigned or attributed to the colonists of *Colonia Genetiva* (*lex col.* 82). In the same way, slaves were owned by the *municipium*, and their manumission required the authorisation of the decurions; significantly, on manumission, the slave became a *municeps* of the *municipium* (*lex Flav.* 72; see also 78 for allotting of tasks to public slaves). Public servants were required to swear an oath in public that they would act for the good of the town. The scribes of

the *colonia* swore that they would guard its finances and keep accurate accounts (*lex col.* 81), whilst the municipal scribes swore the oath that they would write the common records of the *municipes* (*lex Flav.* 73). In both of these instances, to carry out the task incorrectly or in bad faith was to harm the community as a whole, and these oaths carried with them a sense of responsibility towards it. This idea is also found in the repetitious phrasing which continually grouped together the town and its inhabitants as two halves of a single entity. In the *lex Coloniae Genetivae*, the community is repeatedly described as the *coloni coloniae Genetivae Iuliae*, that is the colonists of the *colonia*; for example, the public land around the *colonia* was assigned to the colonists of the *colonia* (*lex col.* 82). Similarly, in the municipal law, financial and judicial matters were carried out in the name of the people: for example, the quaestors were charged with looking after the common funds of the *municipes* of the *municipium* (*lex Flav.* 20). Thus, the town was perceived to be the free citizens as a collective social body, with, conversely, citizenship defined through membership of the urban centre. Moreover, it was not enough to live within the confines of the town to qualify as a member, and throughout there was a distinction between those included within the body politic, and those who merely dwelt there. A person's allegiance was defined by the place in which they were born (their *origo*), and if they moved, they became an *incola*: subject to the laws of, and with certain responsibilities towards, their adopted town, but with few privileges and only limited political rights (Mackie 1983: 44–6). In both charters, there is a dichotomy between the *coloni* or *municipes* and the *incolae* as mutually exclusive groups (*lex col.* 126). In the municipal law, a chapter with the rubric *de incolis* specifies that *incolae* were subject to the laws of the *municipium* in the same way as the *municipes* (*lex Flav.* 94). However, they could be elected as decurions (Curchin 1990: 24–5), suggesting that there was a certain amount of inconsistency.

It is clear that writing played a crucial part in the smooth running of the town, with the duties of the town scribes set out as keeping the records, books and accounts of each town (*lex col.* 81; *lex Flav.* 73). Furthermore, there was an emphasis on the public display of written records concerned with the political processes. As we have already seen, the names of the candidates in magisterial elections were to be prominently displayed prior to the election, and similarly, the names and details of the judges were to be displayed in the vicinity of the tribunal, at the political centre of the town (*lex Flav.* 86: *cognomina in tabulis scripta apud tribunal suum*). The municipal charter stipulates that its text was to be inscribed on bronze

and affixed in the most prominent position, so that it could be read from ground level (*lex Flav.* 95). The physical remains of the *lex Irnitana* suggest that it would have comprised 10 tablets, and that when displayed, would have occupied a stretch of wall approximately nine metres long (González 1986: 145–6). Furthermore, Williamson has argued that such charters also had a symbolic role, ‘witnessing’ the enacting of these laws (Williamson 1987). They were considered sacred objects: belonging to and therefore protected by the gods, and at Rome they were displayed in public spaces ritually consecrated. The public and permanent display of these charters and other similar legal documents demonstrates how the materiality of the written script formed part of the ideology of urbanism, which considered the public display of writing as necessary for the smooth running of the social and political institutions.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the idea of the town as a physical and meta-physical structure is less well represented in the statutes; nevertheless, there are some indications. There is an underlying idea of the sanctity of the *pomerium*, with a prohibition on building a tomb or funeral pyre within it or bringing a corpse inside it (*lex col.* 73). No one was to build a place for the cremation of corpses (an *ustrinum*) within 500 paces of the town, or a tile works within the town (*lex col.* 74, 76). It also required decurions, augurs and pontiffs to dwell within a mile radius of the town for five years before taking office (*lex col.* 91). There is little explicit provision for the public buildings themselves, although in some places their presence is assumed. The chapter of the colonial law dealing with offerings brought to temples presupposes that there would be such buildings within the town (*lex col.* 72), and similarly, in the municipal charter, it is set down that the full name of the judge should be displayed by the tribunal (*lex Flav.* 86), again assuming that such an area existed and that it was a public area.

In both examples, we see how these urban charters reflected a particular ideology of urbanism. Whoever drafted them was influenced by this view of urbanism: that it was the natural way to live, and that it was morally superior to other options. The charters also demonstrate how Roman urbanism involved more than living in a town, but presupposed that certain social and political practices would be located there. However, within the provinces the reproduction of urbanism should be seen as a dialectic: these charters provided a frame through which certain social and political activities might be conducted, but the other side of the duality was the active reproduction of this ideology through the daily lives of the inhabitants of provincial towns.

2.4 LOOKING AT TOWNS: THE BUILT EVIDENCE

We have seen that the ideology of urbanism formed an important factor in how the ruling authorities at Rome dealt with the administration of their subject communities. However, to understand its role in Roman imperialism, we also need to explore how it was recreated through the daily activities of the inhabitants of those communities. Urbanism should not be regarded as a single event: a town is built and an urban ideology unproblematically adopted, but rather as a continuous and repetitive process, reproduced by people as they situate the town at the heart of their daily routines. If the urban charters provide one side of the dialogue, we need to examine the reproduction of urbanism in the everyday lives of the town-dwellers. In this instance, Roman power was recreated through their acceptance of an urban lifestyle and the ways in which they situated the town within their routines. However, we are also looking for the elements of a specially Roman ideology which adheres to similar principles as we saw in the case of the town charters in the previous section.

In essence, I am looking for two factors. The first is how far we can detect an investment in the elaboration of the public buildings. By the imperial era a certain level of opulence was expected in the political and religious buildings, and so we should expect to see this reflected in the form and the style of the buildings themselves. Secondly, the public buildings provided the setting for an urban lifestyle, with an emphasis on politics and communal activities, and the inter-twining of politics and religion. However, we should bear in mind MacDonald’s caveat about looking past the ostentatious display and the duplication of buildings:

... neither quantity nor quality is the issue. In addition to the forum with its temple and basilica, a simple arch over the main street, a decent, up-to-date bath building, and a theatre, perhaps of wood and built to double as a small amphitheatre, would do. Such towns may have been poor relations architecturally, but schematically and symbolically they were in close touch with grander places. (MacDonald 1986: 272)

Too often, the extent of urbanization (and by extension, Romanization) has been seen as directly proportionate to the number or the decoration of the public buildings, without considering whether their use fulfilled the essential requirements of an urban lifestyle. We know, for example, that it was not necessary to have a permanent amphitheatre in order to hold gladiatorial shows (Wiedemann 1992: 18–23). Nevertheless, public architecture was bound up with Roman urbanism, and from the

time of Augustus, this was a relationship which was evident within the western provinces (Ward-Perkins 1970). Therefore, the monumentality of the towns formed part of the reproduction of an urban ideology, and without it, the people of the provinces were recreating different styles of living, and interacting with Roman power in a different way. In the same way, it is easy to adopt a quantitative approach to the epigraphic record, with the number related to the degree of urbanization. Yet ultimately it tells us little more than whether a particular community has adopted the practice of inscribing on stone, particularly when comparing numbers of inscriptions between case-studies. In contrast, a close reading of the texts can indicate whether certain aspects of urban ideology were adopted, such as public participation, the personification of the town and the wider links between towns. Many of the inscriptions record elite activity, but they were also read by a non-elite audience who would understand the significance of these actions and their commemoration.

There is a certain temptation, when analysing Roman towns, to focus on the activities of the elites as a result of their visible impact upon the physical fabric of the town. In general, they were more likely to be responsible for paying for the construction of the public buildings and their upkeep, or to have either commissioned or been the subject of the inscriptions and statues which adorned them. Thus, it becomes very easy to reconstruct their roles as active agents in an ideology of urbanism. The roles of the rest of the townspeople are less obvious: the people who were involved in the mundane activities of living and working in a town. Even less obvious is the role of someone living in the countryside, who might only come into the town occasionally to sell goods at market or to pay taxes. Nevertheless, all these groups were involved in the project of urbanism, although at different levels. As the non-elites moved through the town, internalising the symbolic messages of the physical setting through their ability 'read' the buildings, the inscriptions and the statues, they took an equal role in the maintenance of Roman urbanism through their practical knowledge of how to incorporate the town and its routines into their conceptual landscapes.

The four case studies presented here represent the commonality and variability within the urban experience. They are from different provinces (Baetica, Tarraconensis and Britannia), they played different roles in the administrative system, and they display different physical characteristics in terms of size, numbers of public buildings, elaboration, and so on. In doing so, this crosses categories or boundaries imposed upon the data, both in the past and the present. For instance, during the Roman period

there was some debate over the significance of the constitutional status of a town. Aulus Gellius wrote of Hadrian expressing surprise when the townspeople of Italica and other *municipia* including Utica petitioned to have the rights of *coloniae* (Aulus Gellius *Noct. Att.* 16.13). Clearly there was some disagreement between the emperor and his subjects over the meaning of the constitutional categories of towns, and their relative merits. It demonstrates the problems for the modern viewer in trying to understand how constitutional status impacted on the lives of the people living within these towns (Millett 1999). We know something of their significance to ancient authors, but can we be sure of their meaning to the people of these communities? Similar difficulties occur when we try to categorise towns by other variables: by size, by quantity of buildings, by province. Instead, we need to interrogate such categories and the boundaries between them, and begin with a fundamental questioning of what urbanism meant to the people of the provinces, those who inhabited these towns. Which elements of urban experience were shared? Which differed? And how far did they impact upon the integration of the inhabitants into the structures of imperialism and a perceived Roman identity?

2.5 ITALICA: AN IMPERIAL SHOWPIECE

The Baetican town of Italica probably reflects most people's assumptions about the physical form of Roman urbanism. Its owes its significance to its association with the family of Hadrian, having previously been a rather unremarkable *municipium* without an apparent major administrative role. The transformation of the city in the early second century was almost certainly due to the favour and patronage of the emperor, with the substantial construction of public buildings and domestic residences, and the change in legal status to *colonia* (Boatwright 2000: 162–7). Within this building programme, whether instigated by Hadrian himself or not, there was a deliberate investment in the public buildings: both in their quantity and in the quality of their decoration. The imperial character of Italica has resulted in a somewhat atypical town, with the building of the Nova Urbs transforming it from a small Baetican town to one with an unexpected quantity (and quality) of public architecture.

It is likely that the forum lay under modern Santiponce, and so it is impossible to reconstruct the relationship between the political centre and the rest of the town. Pilar León has argued that it was located in the Los Palacios area, and this was the area where antiquarian excavations

revealed a series of structures consistent with a public space, and finds including imperial inscriptions and sculpture (León 1995: 18–20). In spite of this lack of information concerning the forum, it is clear that other aspects of public participation were well catered for. Temples occupied prominent locations within the town; the Traianeum lay at the centre of the Nova Urbs, at the highest point in the city, with a possible *quadrifons* or monumental arch further accentuating this area (León 1988: 19–22). There was a clear investment of wealth in the complex as a whole: it was elaborately decorated with extensive use of marble throughout, including polychrome columns with green cipollino shafts and white bases, floors of *opus sectile* and a rich decorative scheme of acanthus leaves, volutes, flutings and mouldings in white Luni marble (*ibid.*). The courtyard, within which the temple was set, offered the opportunity for large communal religious festivals, as well as the possibility that the space, with its shady porticoes, might be used on a more informal basis. This was not the only temple, and there is evidence for other religious structures located within the town. The Republican temple at Cerro de los Palacios seems to have been enlarged during the imperial era, and there was probably another temple on the hillside above the theatre dating to the early second century AD (Bendala Galán 1982; Rodríguez Hidalgo and Keay 1995: 412).

We can also see the importance of public gatherings in the provision of buildings for spectacles and shows. The theatre complex was constructed during the Tiberian era incorporating the theatre itself, a rear portico and an upper portico (see Figure 2.2); this scheme was then frequently modified and rebuilt (Rodríguez Gutiérrez 2004). Again, the theatre shows substantial investment, decorated with marble and painted stucco from a very early date (Roldán Gómez 1993: 81–2; Rodríguez Hidalgo and Keay 1995: 402). By the Hadrianic era, it was an elaborate structure, with marble decorating the *orchestra* floor, the *balteus* and the seating in the lowest part of the *media cavea* and the *ima cavea*. The original *scaenae frons* was replaced by a more elaborate one of polychrome marble, probably with a second order of columns (Rodríguez Gutiérrez 2004: 190–219, figures 60–3). The seating capacity has been estimated at almost 3,000, so the theatrical *ludi* would have been large, communal events (*ibid.* 83, table 3). The rear portico was also extended to form a four-sided portico, with a shallow pool at the centre, and the number of inscriptions and statue bases in this area suggests that it was an important part of the overall complex (Corzo Sánchez 1993: 168). The five *tabulae lusoriae* or gaming squares discovered in the area of the theatre (Bendala Galán 1973), point



Figure 2.2. Italica: the theatre.

to these areas being used on a more informal basis, outside of the festival days.

As part of the construction of the Nova Urbs, a monumental amphitheatre was built on the outskirts of the town, extending the opportunities for public gatherings (Corzo Sánchez 1994). More *tabulae lusoriae* have been found in the entrance area, again suggesting more frequent use of the building. Resistivity survey carried out in the Nova Urbs has located another probable public building to the south west of the Traianeum, tentatively identified as an odeion due to its elliptical shape (Rodríguez Hidalgo and Keay 1995: 409). Thus, we can see that from the early imperial era, the townspeople of Italica met for public gatherings, with the facilities substantially extended during the Hadrianic period. Whilst to a modern eye these theatrical and gladiatorial entertainments may seem frivolous, the evidence from the urban charters warns against such assumptions. Within Roman culture, such public spectacles played an important role within the political calendar: the political elite were responsible for putting on these entertainments as part of their magisterial duties, occupying privileged positions in the rituals surrounding them (Revell 2000). Furthermore, the interlinking of the theatres and the imperial cult would have reinforced the political overtones of these spectacles, again locating imperial political power at the heart of the urban experience (Gros 1990).

The final group of public buildings from Italica are the two bathing establishments: Termas de los Palacios in the Vetus Urbs and Termas Mayores in the Nova Urbs. The larger of the two was the Termas Mayores. The complex was divided into a main bath block, with a *palaestra* and a possible school to the south (Rodríguez Hidalgo 1997: 106). The entrance lay on a main thoroughfare, near the focal area of the Traianeum. Again, the importance of the building is indicated through the building materials, with more columns of cipollino marble, and slabs of polychrome marble lining the walls and floor, and the *piscina* (Roldán Gómez 1993: 120; Rodá 1997: 169). The monumental size of these baths (over 32,400m²), the large areas suitable for congregation (such as the *palaestra*), as well as the reduplication of the earlier bathing complex all point to the importance of public areas. Whilst Termas de los Palacios were less spectacular, their remains nevertheless show that they were an important part of the urban fabric, with some of the decorative elements carved from marble (García y Bellido 1960: 107). Here again, an urban life was one lived in public spaces; not just in terms of formal political and religious events, but in more mundane daily activities.

This architectural evidence is reinforced by the epigraphic record. Perhaps the most obvious point is that there is a substantial corpus of inscriptions from Italica, many from the public buildings, demonstrating that writing was an important and visible component of urbanism. Bronze plaques such as the gladiatorial edict and the probable municipal *lex* would presumably have been prominently displayed in the town (CILA 2.339–40), and inscriptions found in the Traianeum (CILA 2.342–4 and 348) and the theatre (CILA 2.397, 2.383 and 2.392) point to the relationship between public space and the display of inscriptions. Publicly written texts became one way in which the inhabitants of the town ordered their place within the world, with their fellow townspeople and with the wider Roman world. The inscriptions also demonstrate how for the townspeople of Italica, the colony was more than a physical structure: it was also a semi-religious entity encompassed within the idea of a Genius and to whom it was appropriate to dedicate offerings. Two dedications were set up to the Genius Coloniae Splendidissimae Italicensis, one recording the dedication of four statues in its honour (CILA 2.343–4). At the same time, the town was seen as the uniting principle for the inhabitants: the structure forming the basis of their social and political grouping. During the third century, a series of inscriptions was set up to a succession of emperors in the name of the *res publica Italicensium* (CILA 2.370–3), and the *res publica* also set up inscriptions to prominent imperial

officials (CILA 2.378–9, see below for details). Finally, Marcus Cocceius Iulianus, his wife Iunia Africa and son Quirinus, set up a hexagonal altar in the theatre to the *res publica Italicensium* itself (CILA 2.392). In all these cases, we see the Roman concept of the *res publica* forming the core of the group identity of the townspeople.

As in all constituted towns, the political system of Italica was run according to the Roman ideology of communal participation: popular election, elite magistracies and euergetism towards the community as a whole. The participation of the non-elite in the political structures is the most difficult to trace, with no epigraphic evidence for elections and the only hint of collective organization being a reference to a funerary *collegium* (CILA 2.455). However, this is not atypical due to the role of inscriptions in maintaining distinctions in social rank (Revell in press). Over a dozen inscriptions mention magistracies, such as Lucius Herius who served as *duovir* at least three times, as well as being one of the first *pontifices* in the town (CILA 2.382). With these offices came the responsibility of providing *munera* for the community, and Herius set up this inscription in the theatre to commemorate the dedication of an arch and portico. Similarly, Lucius Caelius Saturninus, to celebrate becoming *sevir*, provided games for the community (CILA 2.345), and Lucius Blattius Traianus Pollio and Gaius Traius Pollio jointly refurbished the theatre with work on the orchestra, proscaenicum and itinera, as well as the dedication of altars and statues (CILA 2.383). For men of their rank, part of urban living was holding magisterial office: their social power within the community was derived and expressed through the political offices of the town. Furthermore, this power was re-enacted on the urban stage with gifts of largesse to the community, permanently commemorated through these inscriptions.

We can reconstruct something of the way in which the town interacted with the wider structures of the imperial system. There was a certain level of autonomy in terms of day-to-day decisions. The *ordo* authorised the sites for the tomb of Aelia Licinia Valeriana (CILA 2.389) and for the dedication of statues (CILA 2.358). The townspeople also formed relationships with prominent officials, placing them in wider networks of influence and obligation, cementing these relationships through honorific dedication. Dedications of this type have been found to Gaius Vallius Maximianus, Procurator of the provinces of Macedonia, Lusitania and Mauritania Tingitana in the late second century (CILA 2.378), and to Marcus Lucretius Iulianus, the Procurator of Baetica, in the early third century (CILA 2.379). Further afield, the townspeople were responsible

for a dedication set up at Vienne in Narbonensis to C. Iulius Pacatianus, an imperial procurator (ILN V.1.65). These demonstrate how the quasi-independent urban community relied upon broader networks of influence and obligation, and the mechanisms through which such relationships were reproduced and situated within the localised daily activities of the people through their commemoration in stone. In contrast, a group of four imperial dedications were set up by the *curator rei publicae* (CIL 2.370–1, 378–9) showing how their autonomy was tempered by the authority of officials appointed by the emperor, and how the community reacted to these more powerful individuals (Garnsey and Saller 1987: 22, 34).

Overall, the evidence of the public architecture and the inscriptions suggests that in going about their daily routines, the inhabitants of Italica recreated an ideology which placed the town at the centre of their religious and social activities. The monumental scale of these buildings and the liberal use of imported marble indicate a massive investment in the physical appearance of the town and its public buildings, and their size demonstrates the expectation that they would be used by large groups of the population. The inscriptions point to the political workings of the town, and its relationship with the wider networks of imperial power. Regardless of who was responsible for this expansion, these structures framed the daily activities of the inhabitants of Italica, forming part of how they joined in the discourse of urbanism.

2.6 CLUNIA: A *CONVENTUS* CAPITAL

Whilst it is tempting to take Italica as a paradigm for urbanism in the provinces of the Iberian peninsula, if we turn to the evidence from Clunia we can immediately see the subtle variability between case studies. Clunia had a different historical trajectory, gaining municipal status by the time of Tiberius, and colonial status possibly during the second half of the first century (Palol 1991c). It also had a different role in the administrative system as a consequence of its status as *conventus* capital (Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 3.18; RIT 27). Moreover, the form of dispersed urbanism seen here is very different from the nucleated settlement at Italica: the town appears to have occupied the whole of a 130 ha platform, with remains of buildings and ceramics found throughout the area (Palol 1991c: 361–2). The layout and density of the settlement are uncertain, but the forum area seems to have provided a focus. The provision of public areas is

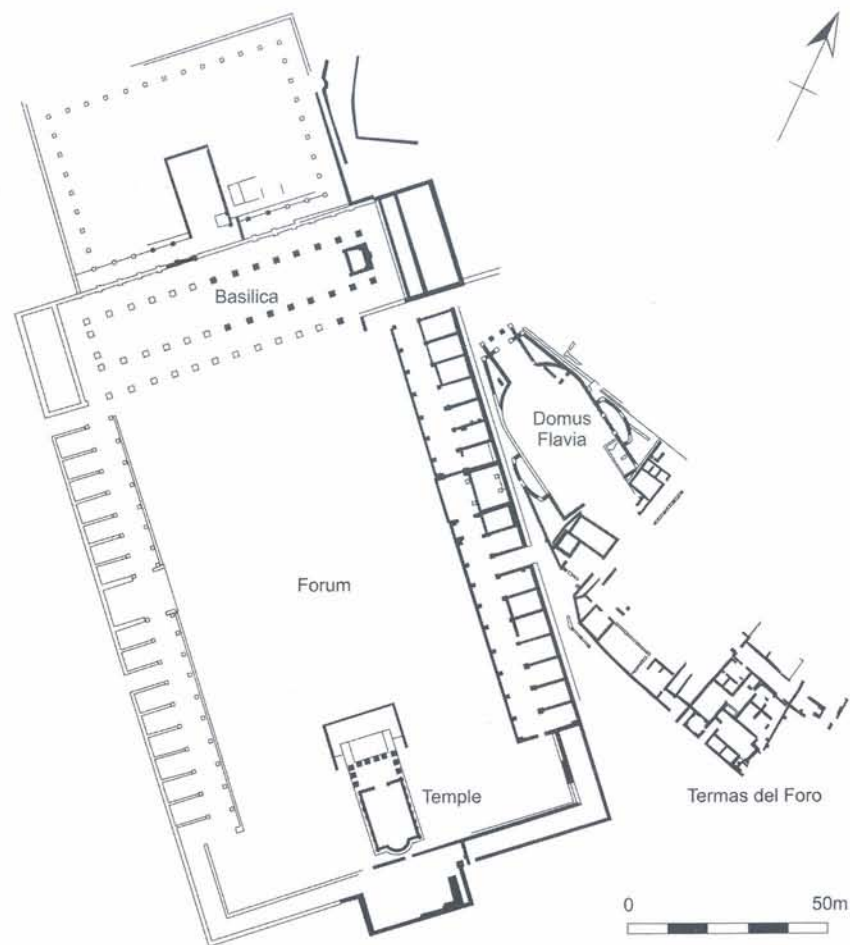


Figure 2.3. Clunia: plan of the forum and Domus Flavia.

somewhat similar to Italica, but the difference is that here at Clunia we have definite architectural evidence for the town as a political centre.

The construction of the forum (see Figure 2.3), now dated to the later Julio-Claudian period, required the demolition of parts of the surrounding houses (Palol 1991c: 362, Palol and Guitart 2000: 234), demonstrating how public architecture within the town took preference over the domestic. It took the typical form of a large piazza, with *tabernae* and possibly shrines along the two long sides, and a basilica and podium temple facing each other on the shorter sides. The rich decoration enhanced its

importance, with copious use of marble (Palol and Guitart 2000: 26–35). The basilica façade was decorated with pilasters and a succession of large door jambs of polychrome marble (Palol 1991d: 387–9). The triple-naved interior was marked by Corinthian columns and at the eastern end stood the tribunal, decorated with *opus sectile* in geometric or floral forms (Palol 1991f: 170). In addition to the tribunal, a probable *curia* spanned the complete width of the basilica (Palol 1991d: 389). Within this complex, the religious and the political structures existed side by side: a podium temple lay at the south end of the piazza, and there appears to have been a triple-roomed shrine in the east portico (rooms 7–9). This shrine was richly decorated with pilasters, a paved floor and marble skirting; pedestal bases and marble bases for the columns were added later (Palol 1991c: 366, 1991d: 388, 1991g: 287). A second courtyard adjoins the site, and although only partially excavated, the layout and location suggest that it was a public area, possibly a temple set within a precinct. Here we can see that there was no distinction in space allocated for politics and religion: the buildings for both were located in the same complex. Furthermore, these activities occurred in very open, public areas, reinforcing the ideology of wider participation, its central position, monumentality and rich decoration emphasising its importance. The various alterations over its history, such as the construction of additional rooms, demonstrate its ongoing adaptation to meet changing requirements (Palol and Guitart 2000: 35).

The town provided the setting for other public events. A theatre lay just outside the city walls, built into the slope of the plateau (see Figure 2.4). The *scaena* was decorated with two superimposed tiers of columns, traces of which survive in situ, and excavation has produced fragments of grooved shafts and Corinthian capitals of limestone (Palol 1991e). Three sets of baths have been uncovered, Los Arcos I and II, and the forum baths, all dating to the first century AD. Los Arcos I consisted of a rectangular precinct with a façade approximately 50 m long. This split into a double complex grouped around a central area which may have been a piscina or garden, each wing comprising a basilica or porticoed courtyard, apodyterium, frigidarium and tepidarium, and culminating in a single, shared caldarium (Palol 1991c: 371–2). The complex was richly decorated: the floors of the apodyteria were covered with polychrome, geometric mosaics whilst those in the frigidaria were of marble *opus sectile*. The smaller Los Arcos II had a linear arrangement with a palaestra or patio leading into an octagonal apodyterium and so into the suite of hot and cold rooms (*ibid.*). As at Italica, they adhere to the ideology of



Figure 2.4. Clunia: the theatre.

elaborate decoration, multiple facilities and public areas, the duplication of facilities emphasising the importance of these activities in the lives of the inhabitants of Clunia.

Again, the epigraphic evidence can be used to flesh out this picture. Whilst many of the surviving inscriptions are too fragmentary to read fully, enough have been found to demonstrate that the epigraphic habit, and the public display of such texts, formed a visible part of the urban landscape. Fragments from two inscriptions on bronze plaques were found in the north-eastern part of the forum (Palol and Arias Bonet 1991; Clunia II 113, 115). These are just two of the numerous inscriptions found within the forum complex: one almost complete inscription and ten fragments were found in the temple; one partial example and 30 fragments in the basilica; thirteen fragments in the shrine; one complete example and six fragments in the tabernae; and finally six fragments in the north-east entrance (all locations taken from Clunia II). Others were clearly meant for public display, such as the *tabula hospitalis*, whose context is unknown, but which has holes in the corners, presumably to attach it to a wall (Clunia II 116).

As at Italica, there is evidence for the personification of the *colonia*: a marble plaque was dedicated to the Tutela Coloniae Cluniensium, or guardian deity of the town (Clunia II 22). This extended to the

personification of specific parts of the town, with dedications to the Lares Viales (Clunia II 11), and the divine spirit of the theatre, the Numen Theatri (Clunia II 21). The latter possibly supports Wiedemann's argument that at least some theatres were consecrated as *templa*, sacred places belonging to the gods (Wiedemann 1992: 3). The town also became a way of defining communal identity: the dedication to the Numen Theatri was set up by a *servus rei publicae Cluniensium*, a communally owned slave (Clunia II 21). However, the evidence for the way in which individuals identified themselves is more ambiguous. There are no inscriptions in which anyone identifies themselves as a Clunian, although this was typical practice: usually only those from outside the community ever explicitly state their origin. But here, we see self-identification by urban community; for instance, Tulleia Araucia describes herself as from Caesaraugusta (Clunia II 35), and Marcus Aemilius Murrianus describes himself as from Uxama (Clunia II 37). There are references to elite participation within the local political organization, although these are limited. The *flamen Romae et Augusti* is attested twice (Clunia II 18 and 28), and also a possible aedile, although the inscription is corrupted at this point (Clunia II 30). One of the priests was also a *magister*, suggesting the presence of a *collegium* within the town (Clunia II 28), and the dedication to him acknowledged his donation of corn to the people, the kind of euergetism expected from someone of his rank. The inscriptions on stone are supported by the coin evidence, where the legends bear the names of the Clunian *quattuorviri* and aediles (Palol 1991c: 15).

Again, there is some indication of the autonomy of the town, and for its wider social links. The *tabula hospitalis* shows the *colonia* acting as an independent unit, but within the context of a wider network of political influence and obligation (Clunia II 116). Such relationships of hospitality, like relationships of patronage, provided a means of connecting local towns into the broader networks of empire (Nicols 2001; Beltrán Lloris 2003). This was a formal relationship, initiated through the political institutions of the town, established by official ambassadors, and enshrined through religious sanction. They were typically commemorated through a formulaic text on some form of written marker, or *tessera*, of which a number survive. This example from Clunia is typical, with consular dates and the name of those sent to establish the link; the holes in the corners indicate how it would have been affixed to a wall, often in a public place (Cicero refers to one example displayed "*in curia*", *In Verr.* 2.12.112). These relationships of *hospitium* seem to have been predominantly between unequal parties (Badian 1958: 154–5, although Nicols

argues that the evidence is more ambiguous, Nicols 2001: 99–100), and involved the provision of hospitality and influence on both sides. The agreement commemorated here was between an individual equestrian and the town as a whole, demonstrating that these networks operated at least nominally on behalf of the community as a whole. The *conventus* system imposed an intermediate layer of political networks, but many of these features were repeated: as *conventus* capital, Clunia would have been the setting for the *concilium conventus Cluniensis*, and when in AD 222 it adopted as patron the legionary legate Gaius Marius Pudens Cornelianus, the envoy negotiating the agreement was an inhabitant of Clunia, and the *conventus* set up a bronze tablet at Clunia to commemorate the event (Clunia II 117).

At first glance, Clunia appears a somewhat unusual urban form given the dispersed nature of the settlement and the lack of a formal urban plan. However, the inhabitants of the town were reproducing a recognisable form of Roman urban ideology through their daily activities. Their use of the public buildings firmly located the urban centre in their understanding of how to go about their daily lives, with a clear connection between religion and politics seen in the layout of the forum. The numerous inscriptions and the details of the texts demonstrate the working of the political institutions and how, through setting them up and viewing them, the members of the community internalized these political structures.

2.7 LONDINIUM: A PROVINCIAL CENTRE

Although there were some differences, the people of Italica and Clunia clearly shared a broadly similar experience of urban living. However, when we turn to Britain, the picture becomes more complicated. The Mediterranean area was in general more urbanised than the north-western provinces, with a higher density of towns which in turn contained more public buildings. From this it is easy to see towns in Britain as the poor relation of their Iberian counterparts, and to conclude that the province was less 'Roman'. Towns in Britain were more widely dispersed than in Italy or Baetica, with each controlling a larger territory. The question of density impacts upon how often people were able to visit the town, how much effort it required, and what kinds of activities were shared by the whole community. The so-called 'small towns' may have featured more prominently than the constituted towns for those who lived within the countryside, fulfilling requirements for markets or

religious centres (Millett 1990b: 143–51; Hingley 1997: 91–3 for an alternative reading). However, with the exception of temples and associated ritual structures, these lacked the monumental public buildings which formed a key element of the urban experience, and most significantly the political architecture deemed such a necessary part of urban life. Although, their constitutional status is unclear, it is unlikely that they fulfilled the same judicial and administrative role (Mann 1965). Nevertheless, whilst comparisons of distribution, size and decoration between provinces are not meaningless, I have argued that this was not the only aspect of Roman urbanism, and we need to explore whether these towns enabled certain ways of acting and internalising wider meanings of urbanism.

Although London was the largest Roman town in Britain, defining its relationship with Rome and its place in the Roman administrative system is somewhat problematic. The most immediate question is the legal status of the town: the textual evidence suggests that it was not a *civitas* capital, but a town of the *Cantiaci* (Ptolemy *Geog.* 3.2.12, Millett 1996: 35; for the opposing argument, Perring 1991: 44–8). During the early second century it may not have been formally chartered as a *colonia* or *municipium*, with strong arguments for it being a *conventus civium Romanorum* (Wilkes 1996; Millett 1998: 8). It has long been assumed that it replaced Colchester as provincial capital following the Boudiccan revolt, even if the provincial cult and possibly the provincial council remained at Colchester. One consequence of London's administrative role has been the assumption that the governor had a permanent residence within the town. In the 1970s, Peter Marsden argued that this was the monumental complex at Cannon Street, which apparently incorporated an audience chamber and courtyard with substantial water feature (Marsden 1975). However, based in part upon recent excavations, Milne has suggested that rather than a single complex, this was in fact a series of buildings, which may not all have had a public function (Milne 1996). Furthermore, given that the governor was necessarily peripatetic, spending much of his time either with the military forces in Wales and northern England, or in other towns of the province, it is not clear whether we should expect an identifiable palace (Birley, A. 2005: 11–2). Other officials are more likely to have been permanently installed in a single location. The tombstone of Classicianus (RIB 12; Birley, A. 2005: 303–4) found within the town suggests that the procurator and his staff were located there, and there is epigraphic evidence for imperial slaves, presumably connected with the provincial administration (Tomlin 2003).

The presence of military personnel at London is well attested, with a permanent contingent of troops within the city (Hassall 1973). The fort at Cripplegate points to their presence (Howe and Lakin 2004; see also Grimes 1968), and a military detachment is attested epigraphically at the Winchester Palace site (Brit. 16.1; Yule and Rankov 1998; Yule 2005: 75–6). Other troops may have been seconded to London temporarily from other garrisons, such as the centurion from Vindolanda (Bowman and Thomas 1994 number 154). Although the dating is difficult to pin down, it seems to have been extended throughout the second half of the second century AD (Yule 2005), raising the possibility that it assumed the function previously fulfilled by the Cripplegate fort, which the most recent excavations suggest went out of use in the second half of the second century AD (Howe and Lakin 2004, although firm conclusions await the republication of Grimes' excavations). In the absence of an official staff, governors of the imperial provinces relied upon officials from the army, the so-called *officium consularis* (Rankov 1999; Birley, A. 2005: 11), and epigraphic evidence for *spectatores* from legio II Augusta Antoniniana (RIB 19) suggests that more specialised military personnel were stationed within the town. Cumulatively, this evidence points to London as a centre for the administration of the province, incorporating a permanent personnel and infrastructure, whether or not that included the physical presence of the governor on anything more than an occasional basis.

Turning to the physical fabric of the city, the earliest structures date to the AD 50s, with two major phases of public buildings dating to the Flavian period and the early second century AD (see Creighton 2006 for a discussion of the development of the town incorporating the most recent publications). The town was spread across the north and south banks of the Thames, but it is possible that each had a different function or status: there was a more formal street grid to the north, and the third century town wall seems to have excluded the area to the south of the river. Both sides of the river appear to have been used for the very visible placement of monumental buildings, with both the possible temple complex on the Salvation Army site to the north and the Winchester Palace site to the south occupying waterfront locations (Williams 1993 fig. 6; Yule and Rankov 1998 fig. 15). Lying at the intersection of the road from the Roman bridge across the Thames and one of the main east-west through-routes, the forum-basilica placed communal political activity at the centre of the town. It was rebuilt in the early second century, making it the largest forum in Britain, and this construction work was phased,

with the new structure built around the existing complex to allow the building to continue in use (Brigham 1992: 81–3, fig. 31). It consisted of a large open courtyard with central walkway, surrounded by wings on three sides with internal ranges of rooms. Statues may have been displayed in the inner portico of the southern range: it is wider than the others, with remains of the foundations for their bases. The basilica was on the northern side and comprised a central nave with side aisles and an apsidal chamber at the east end, presumably the tribunal (Marsden 1987: 43–52). The building's decoration accentuated this area, with multi-coloured wall painting, and possibly marble plaques (Brigham 1992 and Crowley 1992: 101–4, figs. 37 and 38). The northern end of the basilica consisted of a range of rooms, presumably connected with its political function, and an external row of shops indicating more everyday uses. Compared to the forum at Clunia, there is a notable lack of religious space: during the first phase, there was a small classical temple alongside it, but this was demolished as part of the rebuilding process and there is no evidence for its reconstruction. Nor is there any evidence for a shrine within the basilica, suggesting a separation of political and religious activity at the site.

Other public buildings in London include the amphitheatre and the Huggin Hill baths. The former was initially a timber structure, and appears to have been at least partially reconstructed in masonry at about AD 125: the arena wall and the entrances were constructed of brick and ragstone, whilst the seating remained a timber superstructure (Bateman 1997: 56–9). The excavated remains consist of the eastern entranceway leading to the arena, with two rooms on either side, both with doorways onto the entrance and the arena itself (*ibid.* 56–8). The southern one was probably used for holding animals; the function of the northern one is unclear. Unlike the amphitheatre at Italica, there is no suggestion that the public were able to use to these rooms, thus reducing the available areas for social display. Whilst the plan is incomplete, the minimum and maximum possible sizes give a seating capacity of between 6,800 and 11,000 spectators, suggesting it could hold a substantial proportion of the local population during a single spectacle (*ibid.* 73). This undermines suggestions that the amphitheatre was mainly for the use of the soldiers from the Cripplegate fort. A substantial part of the Huggin Hill baths has been excavated, and it is clear that it was a monumental complex, with the addition of a second bathing suite in the early second century increasing the available facilities (see Figure 2.5). There was considerable investment in the decoration of the building, with mosaic floors in the

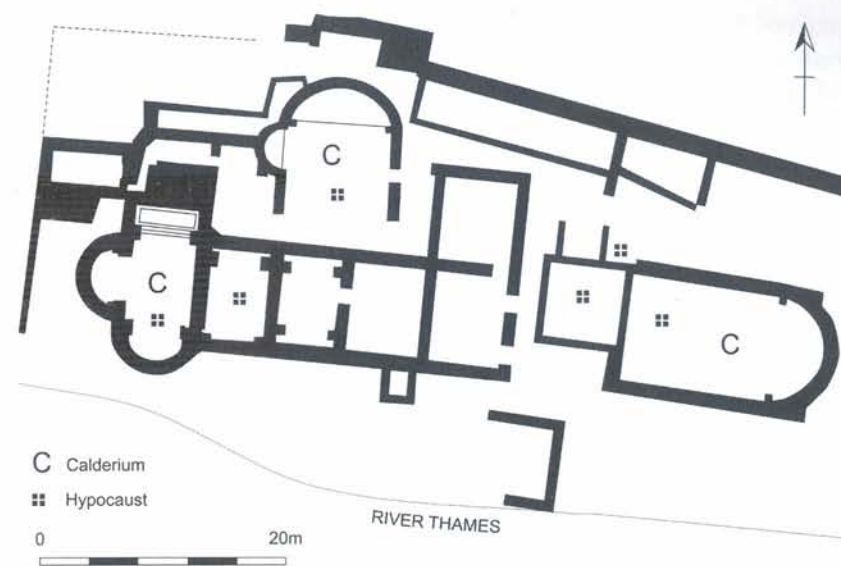


Figure 2.5. London: plan of the Huggin Hill baths, period 2 dating to second century.

original *caldarium* and the *frigidarium* (Orton 1989), and fragments of Purbeck and Italian marbles in other rooms (Marsden 1976: 59, nos. 35–41).

There is some suggestion for a large temple on the north bank of the Thames, although the evidence from the excavations is not completely conclusive. At the Salvation Army Headquarters site, monumental foundations have been uncovered which seem to have formed a portico and some form of podium (Williams 1993: 7–12 and figure 9). Re-used building material in the area includes *tesserae* and marble veneers, as well as decorative sculpture with religious themes, for which this complex is the most likely source. The most plausible interpretation is that this was some form of monumental religious area, probably consisting of a podium temple surrounded by porticos and richly decorated with imported marbles. It occupied a prominent waterfront location, and was subject to continued elaboration, for example with the Screen of the Gods and Monumental Arch. Further religious structures have been more securely identified through recent excavations south of the river at Southwark, which have produced a series of Romano-Celtic temples (Burnham et al. 2003: 345; 2004: 301). Taking the city as a whole, we can see an investment in the public spaces of the town, in their monumentality and their decoration. Whatever the origins or constitutional

status of Roman London, the townspeople through their daily routines were creating a form of urban ideology not dissimilar to the people in Italica and Clunia.

It is in the epigraphic evidence that we see the suggestion that the urban experience in Britain differed to other parts of the empire. I shall deal with the question of the inscriptions in Roman Britain as a whole in more detail in Chapter 5. Here it is sufficient to mention that outside of the military areas, there are fewer inscriptions than in other provinces. The small number from urban contexts suggests that the inhabitants rejected the idea that public inscriptions were a necessary requirement for the smooth running of a town. However, it is important not to overstate this rejection, as a careful examination shows that the fora at least were decorated with inscriptions and sculpture (Revell 2007; also Isserlin 1998 figure 9.1). Whether the rejection of the epigraphic habit can be taken as a rejection of urban ideology is problematic and the evidence from London is ambiguous. There are no urban magistracies attested, and the two inscriptions mentioning acts of munificence are from people from outside of the province: an imperial freedman (presumably engaged in an administrative role) and a governor of one of the third-century British provinces (Brit. 7.1–2). Instead, more refer to the role of London as the administrative centre of the province: in addition to the two imperial officials, an inscription was set up to the Numen of the emperor in the name of the province of Britannia (RIB 5) and a second inscription mentions the *legatus Augusti iuridicus provinciae Britanniae* (RIB 8; Birley, A. 2005: 206, 336 for an alternative reading). The only evidence for the local political organisation is in the form of a religious dedication in the name of a district (*vicinia*; RIB 2) which might mean that there was some internal political organization, with townspeople acting through these. Overall the epigraphic evidence suggests that London became a place for the negotiation of the province's role within the imperial structures, reflecting its role as provincial capital.

The public buildings from London suggest that, whilst at first appearance they are not as opulent as those in Italica or Clunia, their role in the reproduction of urban ideology is very similar. The range and the investment in the public buildings points to the town becoming the centre for a range of activities: politics, entertainment, religion and bathing. This points to the ways in which the inhabitants of the town came to adopt the urban setting as part of the everyday environment. However, the evidence from the inscriptions must make us question the level at which political activity in particular took place: the emphasis on the provincial

rather than local personnel and links suggests a different level of political participation. Furthermore, the divorce of religion and politics suggests that a different understanding of urbanism as an ideology. Overall, the evidence from London demonstrates the reproduction of an urban ideology which incorporated some elements which have been seen in the previous two case studies, but which differed in other areas.

2.8 VENTA SILURUM: SCARCELY URBAN AT ALL?

This picture of different experiences of urbanism is reinforced at Caerwent, the smallest of the British *civitas* capitals. During the early second century, this was a small nucleated site, the stone forum-basilica and baths contrasting with the timber built domestic structures, such as the workshop and living quarters in insula IX (Brewer 1993: 58–9). The town was not walled until the late second century, and it seems that the even then, the area enclosed was not completely built upon (Guest 2002). The forum dominated the town, fronting onto the *decumanus maximus* and occupying the central insula in the urban grid. It had the typical structure of a basilica and courtyard with porticoes and shops. Fragments of a cornice, consoles and Corinthian capitals, all found in or around the basilica, show some investment in the decoration of the building (CSIR 1.5.82, 85–6); whilst these may appear rudimentary and of poor quality compared to the decoration from Italica or Clunia, it suggests that the people of the town would have internalised the idea that public buildings should be more elaborately decorated than domestic ones. Within the basilica, the areas associated with political and administrative activities were highlighted architecturally: the tribunal at the eastern end of the nave was raised and decorated with columns and wall paintings, making it the focus of the nave (Ashby et al 1909: 574; Frere 1991: 225). Within the rear range of rooms, room 3, which seems to have been the council chamber, had restricted access via an antechamber, and the walls were painted with an architectural scheme of pink dado, yellow columns and coloured panelling (Ashby 1906: 128, plate 19; Ashby et al. 1909: 570–7). The room behind the antechamber was probably an *aerarium* or strong room, as indicated by the thicker walls, again providing for the administrative needs of the town. The central room, room 4, also decorated with wall paintings, had a wide-arched entrance, possibly with a removable wooden screen, and seems to have served as a shrine. Thus, as at London, the forum situated political activity at the heart of the urban experience, emphasizing architecturally the areas connected with these

activities. However, it lacks the inscriptions and political statues which adorned the fora of other towns in Britain and further afield (P. Guest pers. comm.; Revell 2007). As in the forum at London, there is little emphasis on the religious role of the building, and it is difficult to see how the small shrine in the centre of the rear range of rooms could have been used for large-scale, ritual activities in the same way as a freestanding temple in a forum courtyard such as that at Clunia.

The only other public building in Caerwent at this time was the baths complex, which was demolished and rebuilt during the Hadrianic era. It lay opposite the forum, also fronting onto the *decumanus maximus*. The façade consisted of nine massive engaged columns and led to a triple-naved hall, either a *palaestra* or basilica (Nash-Williams 1930: 232–3). The architectural decoration may seem poor, but the half-domed apse in the plunge pool and the remains of a masonry frieze with floral decoration point to the resources being invested in the building. Again, we can see the urban experience extending beyond the political sphere, with a visit to these baths reproducing the ideology of the town, and with the provision of additional communal areas beyond the rooms of the bathing suite indicating that such a visit was seen as part of public life. However, these two buildings were the extent of public space within the town in the early second century. The circular feature which has been sometimes been described as an amphitheatre was probably some form of market, and the temple in the central area of town was not constructed until the fourth century. The lack of buildings for religious activities and public spectacles point to a very limited form of urban experience. Although these activities could take place within a temporary structure, they would have had less impact in framing the ongoing experience of urban living.

Overall, the public buildings from Caerwent indicate a different form of urban ideology being reproduced. The town was adopted as the political centre of the community, with the decoration of the basilica privileging the areas used for political activity. This impression of predominantly political activity is reinforced by the epigraphic evidence. Whilst there are very few inscriptions from Caerwent, there are suggestions of political organisation and alliances in the form of the dedication set up by the *res publica civitatis Silurum* to Tiberius Claudius Paulinus (RIB 311; see Figure 2.6). This was enacted by the decree of the *ordo* or town council, and so we see the community was expressing its identity through Roman forms, centred around its urban allegiance. The mention of the decree of the *ordo* reinforces the evidence from the forum for the town



Figure 2.6. Caerwent: dedication to Tiberius Claudius Paulinus (RIB 311).

as the setting for specifically Roman political institutions, with some form of communal participation. Paulinus was the former legate of the Second Legion at Caerleon, later a provincial official at Narbonne and Lugdunensis and governor of Britannia Inferior (Birley, A. 2005: 342–4), and it is possible that this inscription is a product of the sort of links of patronage and hospitality we have seen elsewhere. It demonstrates some knowledge of political structures and awareness that on certain occasions (here, to the audience of an imperial official) it was the correct form of self-expression, as well as the political knowledge of how to exploit the political links with imperial officials. Further evidence for political organisation in the town is provided through an inscription referring to immunity from the obligations of a *collegium*, usually a formal group with its own constitutions (RIB 309).

At Caerwent, there seems to be an acknowledgement of the town as the political centre of the community, with the emphasis on activities carried out in the basilica supported by the meagre epigraphic record. In addition to the political role of the town, the *tabernae* in the forum and the baths complex suggest other ways in which the local people incorporated the town into their daily activities, with the idea that these were buildings whose importance should be expressed through the investment in their decoration. However, as at London and elsewhere in the province, there is clearly a rejection of the connection between politics and religion, and that the urban setting was the natural place for religious buildings. The town formed part of the mental landscape of the local population as the appropriate place to carry out political activity, to bathe or to shop. However, the limited numbers of town houses suggests that the majority of the people forming the urban community actually lived outside of its walls. This raises the possibility that the town functioned as a focus for the organization of their lives, but in a different way to towns with a high density of elite and non-elite housing. Therefore, whilst still working within the same discourse of public architecture and political activity, Caerwent tests the limits of the ideology of urbanism.

2.9 URBAN IDEOLOGIES – SOME CONCLUSIONS

The physical remains of the Roman towns, their size and their perceived opulence, lead us to associate Roman urbanism with the architecture itself. This is not an erroneous association, as it was one the Romans themselves made. However, it can lead us to overlook the other aspects of urbanism, manifested within both literary texts and the archaeological record. Urbanism was more than the buildings: it was (and still is) an ideology about how to live, privileging one form of dwelling above any other, with a series of values attached to lessen the appeal of other alternatives. It was a discourse or debate through which the world was judged: levels of civilization were measured by how urban a people were, and for writers of the imperial period, the decadence of the city of Rome became a metaphor for the moral and political decline of the society as a whole. Urbanism as a concept encompassed not only dwelling, but also the correct way of inhabiting a town: political participation and responsibility, communal events in religion and public spectacles, and the wealth of the community being reflected in the magnificence of the physical structures. A town was a physical entity, a metaphysical personification, and the necessary condition for the correct way to live.

This particular idea of urbanism formed one of the structures which reproduced Roman power and imperial authority. Instead of approaching urbanism through an imposition/adoption dichotomy, we need to think of it as a two-way process. Urbanism as a social institution formed part of the mentality through which the imperial authorities ruled the empire: more immediate processes of political power and taxation rested on the assumption that the subjects lived in towns, and specifically towns within a particular model, as can be seen in the urban charters from Spain. The other side of this imperial ideology was the way in which the people of the empire came to participate in this discourse of urbanism. The town formed a backdrop for the repeated daily activities which constituted Roman life. Less frequent activities such as markets or the census also served to reinforce the idea of the town as the obvious and inevitable place for such occasions. These provincial towns can be seen as responding to a specific form of urbanism, with investment in public buildings, the importance of political activity and the provision of public space for communal events. The buildings framed the daily routines of the people of these communities: as they incorporated these buildings within their everyday experiences, they were both constrained by and reproduced this specific discourse, accepting a Roman urban ideology, thereby perpetuating the power of the imperial authorities.

It is clear from the examples discussed in this chapter that there are certain similarities between the towns in architecture and in praxis. There is investment in the public buildings, and political and communal activities are central to the daily activities carried out within these towns. However, there are also differences between them: obvious differences such as the limited role of writing in Britain, and the divorce of religion and politics within the urban setting, as well as more subtle differences, such as the apparent lack of political participation at a local level in London, and the apparent lack of a formal layout at Clunia. It is tempting to explain this by the stereotype of the Iberian examples being 'more Roman' due to their proximity to the centre of the empire, or their greater degree of 'Romanization'. Yet, the case studies demonstrate that even within single regions or provinces there were different urban experiences, and if we were to cast the net further, we would find that these differences would merely increase. Bilbilis, for example, contained some of the features usually regarded as typical of towns in the outer areas of the empire, such as no reduplication of public buildings, and a lack of inscriptions. An alternative to the centre-periphery model might be the chartered status of the town and its legal position in respect to Rome. Although much

has been written about these, it is still poorly understood what, if any, the relationship was between juridical status and urban morphology (Millett 1999). Towns could change status (Italica, Clunia and probably London), but again, it is unclear what effect this might have on the physical form of the town (Italica should here be taken as an exceptional oddity due to the patronage of Hadrian). Further explanations could rest on the presence of the army or the social organisation prior to conquest, that urbanism did not flourish in areas with a stronger and more warlike tribal organization. However, for all of these, there are counter arguments which rule out a simplistic monocausal explanation for the variability in urbanism throughout the empire.

Consequently, we should accept that the social structures which held the empire together allowed for regional variability. There were shared ideals within town life, but not a fixed paradigm; rather urbanism was a flexible discourse into which the people of the empire entered. If we were to transpose a person from each of Caerwent and Clunia, how much would be similar and how much different? Each would find certain elements familiar, other elements strange, but they would share the idea that a town was important for certain things: politics, imperial authority, possibly religion. However, Bath points to the limits of urbanism, and if our travellers visited it, they might have questioned its status. Again, it shared some features, such as the investment in public architecture, but in this case, a limited range confined mainly to its role as a thermal sanctuary. The lack of evidence for political activity, or even that it was a legally constituted town with a defined role in the administrative system, all point to a significant difference. On the other hand, the people living in or visiting Bath would have understood it through their wider experience of Roman monumental architecture, raising the possibility that, as in the case with Phocis (Pausanias 10.4.1), it proved an awkward place to classify.

This paradox of similarity and difference runs counter to the assumption that 'Roman' was a fixed entity, but accepting this paradox as inherent within the imperial system allows us to move beyond rigid dichotomies of acceptance and resistance, or judging whether a town possessed enough features to be described as Roman. The people of these communities were actively engaged in a discourse which encompassed variability between communities, and further produced different experiences at a local level as global and local identities intersected. Nevertheless, here we can see the townspeople as a whole engaged in the routines of urban living, making a town part of their practical knowledge

of how their world was organised. The differences within the towns meant that this knowledge differed in detail, as their experiences of urban living differed. However, this shared commitment to the idea of a town formed one part of a common Roman identity, and a communal experience of Roman power.