



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## **Civitates Hispaniae : urbanisation on the Iberian peninsula during the High Empire**

Houten, P.H.A.

### **Citation**

Houten, P. H. A. (2018, December 19). *Civitates Hispaniae : urbanisation on the Iberian peninsula during the High Empire*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/68032>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/68032>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/68032> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

**Author:** Houten, P.H.A.

**Title:** Civitates Hispaniae : urbanisation on the Iberian peninsula during the High Empire

**Issue Date:** 2018-12-19

## INTRODUCTION

Remains of the Roman cities of the Iberian Peninsula draw the attention of the general public. And why wouldn't they? The beautiful mosaics of *Italica* are more than worth a small detour from Seville. A stroll through the streets of the impressive site of *Baelo Claudia* (Bologna) on the Atlantic coast gives the impression you are walking with the Romans, and the aqueduct of *Segovia* is an impressive testimony of Roman architecture and construction. These well investigated sites tend to draw the attention not only of tourists but also that of investigators. As a result we know a lot about the icons of Roman urbanism.

Unfortunately, a study of all cities of the Iberian Peninsula in the High Empire of the Roman period is considered practically impossible by many scholars. Indeed it would be a Herculean task if we were to set out to study all cities in a similar way to those individually and comprehensively studied examples known by all. This is partly due to the number of sites; Pliny stated that there were 399 *oppida* in 513 *civitates* and Ptolemy lists 428 *poleis*. In addition, Roman urbanism is seldom investigated for the Iberian Peninsula as a whole. There are several reasons for this sparse integration of the three provinces of the peninsula.

First, we encounter the different political regions on the peninsula. Obviously, the national governments of Spain and Portugal tend to finance research within their own boundaries. This has led to a strange division of the peninsula in Roman Portugal and Roman Spain.<sup>1</sup> Roman Portugal comprises parts of the territories of the Roman provinces of *Hispania Citerior* and *Lusitania*, creating a unit that did not exist before 1249. To complicate matters further, the autonomous regions and provinces in Spain and Portugal only finance research within their own boundaries. This has led, for instance, to a lively debate on the Roman settlement pattern of Roman Catalonia and Roman Andalusia, the latter region often being referred to as the Roman province *Baetica* as the boundaries are almost the same.

As a result of these political divisions, we find only a few investigations into the peninsula as a whole. These supraregional and peninsular investigations have to combine the regional publications. At first sight this is not a problematic approach. However, these political divisions often go hand in hand with linguistic divisions. Research on the Iberian Peninsula can be published in Portuguese, Castilian, Catalan, Galician and Euskara, although the latter language is not often used within academia.

<sup>1</sup> For instance, the work by Alarcão (1988) *Roman Portugal*. Interestingly, Roman Spain is often used in the Anglophone debate and refers to the whole peninsula, ignoring the fact that this is a modern construct referring to a political unit which has nothing to do with Roman times.

This PhD dissertation sets out to study the self-governing communities and central places of the Iberian Peninsula during the High Empire. Due to the scale of the research area, the study does not permit a complete treatment of the discussions on the individual level of cities. Hence, those with a deep knowledge of specific cities might find the course taken too simple or rash, ignoring the finer points of discussion. For a complete discussion of the ancient sources, such as Pliny and Ptolemy, one has to turn to the research done by those with a sole focus on these sources, such as Galsterer, García Alonso and Urueña, whereas the evidence for the Flavian promotions is treated completely and thoroughly by Andreu.<sup>2</sup> The macroscale research that will be attempted in this monograph delineates the urban landscape of the Iberian Peninsula as it appeared in the period of the High Empire. The research also aims at understanding the impact of the pre-Roman urban landscape on Roman urbanisation. In addition, the relationship between the status of the cities and their development, in terms of their monumentality and size, will be explored. Furthermore, the urban network will be looked at from a Network Analysis perspective, in an attempt to understand which cities had control over the network.

One of the main challenges is the definition of what can be considered urban. The chapter on *The Ancient City on the Iberian Peninsula* will introduce the historical debate of the urban settlements on the Iberian Peninsula. First, the juridical definition will be taken into account. This is the most common approach for the study of the urban settlements of the Hispaniae, as many privileged communities are to be expected since Vespasian gave *ius Latii* to *universa Hispania*.<sup>3</sup> The problems of the evidence used for this juridical definition (ancient sources, epigraphy, and numismatics) will be discussed.<sup>4</sup> Thereafter, we turn to the cities defined as such by their socio-economic function. These places are to be considered urban based on their function as a central place. Within this category various types of central places can be distinguished, such as ports and mining cities, or the local market places. In addition, the presence of sanctuaries and mansiones will be looked at to determine whether these made a settlement into a focal point for the community.<sup>5</sup> Lastly, we will turn to the

<sup>2</sup> For ancient sources: Galsterer (1971) *Untersuchungen zum römischen Städtewesen auf der iberischen Halbinsel*; García Alonso (2003) *La Península Ibérica en la Geografía de Claudio Ptolomeo*; Urueña Alonso (2010) *La descripción geográfica de Hispania en la Naturalis Historia de Plinio*. on the Flavian promotions: Andreu Pintado (2004c) *Edictum, municipium y lex: Hispania en época flavia (69-96 d.C.)*.

<sup>3</sup> Plin. *NH* III 30.

<sup>4</sup> Galsterer (1971); Le Roux (1990) 'Les villes de statut municipal en Lusitanie Romaine.' In: Gorges (ed.), *Les villes de Lusitanie Romaine: Hiérarchies et territoires*, 35-49; Le Roux (2014c) 'La ville romaine en Hispania.' In: Le Roux (ed.), *Espagnes romaines: L'empire dans ses provinces*, 173-88; Alarcão (1998) 'As cidades capitais do norte de Portugal na época romana.' In: Rodríguez Colmenero (ed.), *Los Orígenes de la Ciudad en el Noroeste Hispánico*, 429-37; Andreu Pintado (2004c).

<sup>5</sup> Petit and Mangin (eds.) (1994) *Les agglomérations secondaires: La Gaule Belgique, les Germanies et l'Occident romain: actes du colloque Bliesbruck-Reinheim/Bitche (Moselle) 21, 22, 23 et 24 octobre 1992*; Leveau (1993) 'Agglomérations secondaires et territoires en Gaule Narbonnaise.' *Revue archéologique de Narbonnaise* Vol. 26, 227-99; Rust (2006) *Architecture, Economics, and Identity in Romano-British 'Small Towns'*; Alarcão (1996) 'Agglomerados urbanos secundários romanos de Entre-Douro e Minho.' In: Reboreda

criterion of settlement size, a definition used frequently based on the idea that cities in general are large.

One of the major questions regards the distribution of the urban settlements. Part of the solution to this question is located in the pre-Roman urban network. The chapter on *The origins of urbanisation on the Iberian Peninsula* will take a step back into the prehistory of the Iberian Peninsula before the start of the Roman conquest in 218 BCE. This chapter will introduce the geography of the region and its impact on the early settlement patterns. Thereafter, the different settlement types within the urban landscape of the third century BCE will be examined. The pre-Roman settlement types will be looked at according to their geographical locations: the coastal zones, where we find the continuation of the early Phoenician and Greek colonies; the River basins of the Guadalquivir and Ebro, which acted as corridors connecting the inner Meseta plain with the coastal region; lastly, the proto-urbanisation of the *oppida* of the Meseta Central and the *castros* of the north-west will be taken into account.<sup>6</sup> As a next step, the early patterns of Roman urbanism will be considered. This period of two hundred years will be divided into three broad periods of colonisation and municipalisation: pre-Caesarean; Caesarean-Augustan and Imperial colonisation and municipalisation.

The third chapter will deal with the evidence on urbanism in the High Empire. In this chapter my focus will be on the self-governing communities of the Iberian Peninsula. After compiling the list of self-governing communities, we turn to the settlements that could have functioned as central places and as such could be considered 'town-like'. These settlements are often considered 'small towns' or secondary agglomerations. Since the debate on secondary agglomerations in Portuguese and Spanish research is practically non-existent the debates from France and Britain will be used to get a hold on this settlement type. In the case of the Iberian Peninsula, the

Morillo and López Barja de Quiroga (eds.) *A cidade e o mundo: Romanización e cambio social*, Xinzó de Limia: Excmo. Concello de Xinzó de Limia, 169-80; Pérez Losada (2002) *Entre a cidade e a aldea: estudio arqueohistórico dos "aglomerados secundarios" romanos en Galicia*; Oller Guzmán (2011) 'La ciudad sin ciudad: la ciuitas sine urbe como elemento de control territorial.' *Estrat Critic* Vol. 5, Nº 1, 190-203; Mangin and Tassaux (1992) 'Les agglomérations secondaires de l'Aquitaine romaine.' *Villes et agglomérations urbaines antiques du sud-ouest de la Gaule: histoire et archéologie: 2e Colloque Aquitania*, Bordeaux Fédération Aquitania, 461-96.

<sup>6</sup> Mira (2011) 'Landscape dynamics, political processes, and social strategies in the Eastern Iberian Iron Age.' In: Moore and Armada (eds.), *Atlantic Europe in the First Millennium BC*, 153-70; (1995) *Social Complexity and the Development of Towns in Iberia: From the Copper Age to the Second Century AD*. London, 1994; Álvarez Sanchis (2000) 'The Iron Age in Western Spain (800 BC-AD 50): an overview.' *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* Vol. 19, Nº 1, 65-89; Guitart i Duran (2010) 'The origin of the earliest Roman cities in Catalonia: An examination from the perspective of archaeology.' *Catalan Historical Review* Vol. 3, 9-30. Ruiz (1988) 'Ciudad y territorio en el poblamiento ibérico del Alto Guadalquivir.' In: Archivos (ed.) *Los Asentamientos Ibéricos ante la Romanización*, Casa de Velazquez; (1994); Burillo Mozota (2001) 'Etnias y poblamiento en el área Ibérica del Valle medio del Ebro: Sedetanos y Edetanos.' In: Berrocal-Rangel and Gardes (eds.), *Entre Celtas e Iberos: Las poblaciones protohistóricas de las Galias e Hispania*, 187-200; Almagro-Gorbea (1995) 'From Hill Forts to *Oppida* in 'Celtic Iberia'.' In: Cunliffe and Keay (eds.), *Diversity in the Landscape: The Geographical Background to Urbanism in Iberia*, 175-207.

category of secondary agglomerations comprises a wide variety of settlements, such as civitates *contributae*, port settlements, mining settlements and the spas. The *man-siones* and *mutationes* mentioned in the itineraries will also be considered. In order to understand the relations of all these settlement types, a network analysis will be made. In the chapter on *Monuments for Urban Lifestyle* the relationship between monumentality, juridical status and size and monumentality will be analysed.

The final chapter, *Quantifying the Urban Network*, will focus on settlement size. One of the techniques that will be used is Rank-Size Analysis.<sup>7</sup> We will analyse the three provinces, *Baetica*, *Lusitania* and *Citerior*, separately in order to obtain a better understanding of region-specific settlement size distributions. In this final chapter we will turn to the geographical distribution of the sizes of settlements. This geographical distribution will grant us insight into the factors behind the development of the different size tiers. Moreover, we will be able to observe areas with low or even no urbanism. These areas will be further analysed by regarding geographical and climatological conditions, precipitation, altitude, terrain ruggedness and cultivable land, unfavourable to urbanism. Based on this analysis we can locate the lacunas in our own settlement system and point out the areas that need future research to establish the nature of the settlement system in these regions.

<sup>7</sup> Zipf (1949) *Human behavior and the principle of least effort: an introduction to human ecology*; Krugman (1996) 'Confronting the Mystery of Urban Hierarchy.' *Journal of Japanese and International Economies* Vol. 10, 399-418; Marzano (2011) 'Rank-Size Analysis and the Roman Cities of the Iberian Peninsula and Britain.' In: Bowman and Wilson (eds.), *Settlement, Urbanization and Population*, 196-228.