Civitates Hispaniae : urbanisation on the Iberian peninsula during the High Empire
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CONCLUSIONS

The principal aim of the foregoing chapters has been to delineate the contours of the urban system of the Iberian Peninsula in the Roman period. As was explained at the beginning of this book, this is by no means an easy task, not only because the literature is vast but also because 'cities' or 'towns' can be defined in multiple ways. A variety of different sources has been used to locate these self-governing communities. We started with the *Historia Naturalis* by Pliny as it provides a list of self-governing communities with the privileges granted by the Roman state. However, Pliny's literary freedom in varying the terminology he uses poses a large problem. It makes it hard to differentiate between *populus*, *civitas* and *oppidum*; these are used interchangeably by Pliny within the section on the Hispaniae. To complicate matters further, he also uses these words to refer to *municipia* and *coloniae*, thereby making it impossible to differentiate clearly between the self-governing communities. Despite the problems posed by Pliny's lack of consistency regarding terminology, his work is a very useful source. In the *conventus* lists he uses the term *oppidum* to refer to the *urbs* of the *civitas*, and in his account of the province of *Citerior,* he mentions 293 *civitates,* of which 189 have *oppida*. It therefore follows that there were 114 *civitates* without *oppida.* In this monograph such communities without a central city are referred to as dispersed *civitates*.

When comparing the *populi* of Pliny to those found in the *Geographica* of Ptolemy, Detlefsen recognised that some were mentioned with a *polis* named *Aqua* or *Forum*. He argued that these were the central places of the *civitates* without *oppida*. The case studies conducted in this research have proven Detlefsen's interpretations to be correct. In some cases, we observe a territory with multiple town-like centres and in other cases there is a complete absence of an urban centre. We have to conclude that not all the *civitates* and not even all the *municipia* of Hispania were of the classical *urbs et territorium* model.

In terms of the self-governing communities, Ptolemy is only a subsidiary source. Not only do we find a multitude of hapaxes, sometimes due to translation and transliteration faults, but his lists also contain several *mansiones* and *mutationes*. Nonetheless, the information provided by Ptolemy does make it easier to understand some of the dispersed *civitates*, for example that of the *Limici* whose 'capital' appears in Ptolemy as *Forum Limicorum*.

In addition to these literary sources, the epigraphic record has been of great importance in understanding the urban network. Epigraphy adds evidence for the self-

governing nature of the *civitates*. As Galsterer had already shown, epigraphy and numismatics are especially useful for recognising the unnamed privileged communities referred to by Pliny.

The epigraphic evidence also allows us to identify several of the Flavian *municipia*. Pliny mentions that a grant of *ius Latii* was given to *universa Hispania*, but gives no further details. Several communities refer to themselves as *municipium Flavium*. Unfortunately, the exact juridical status of many *municipia* remains unclear. However, since the main goal of this research was to establish the number of self-governing communities and their locations, knowledge of the rights of these communities is of minor importance.

In addition to the self-governing communities, we find secondary agglomerations that played an important role in the settlement pattern. These agglomerations functioned as central places that helped to link the urban centres with their rural hinterlands. Within the literary sources and epigraphy, four forms of these secondary agglomerations can be recognised: *pagi*, *castella*, *vici* and contributed *civitates*. The latter group is of particular interest. In some cases, Rome decided that a *civitas* would be subordinated to another community. Several such cases are known from literary sources or epigraphy. Moreover, it seems that Ptolemy included this category in his lists, for example the case of the *Copori* with two *poleis*: *Lucus Augusti* and *Iria Flavia*. While the *conventus* capital of *Lucus Augusti* must have been the *civitas* capital, *Iria Flavia* may have been the central place of a contributed *civitas*. Unfortunately, contributed *civitates* remain heavily under-researched.

More in general, the secondary agglomerations of the Iberian Peninsula have received little attention. Based on the extensive literature on the 'small towns' of Roman Britain and the 'agglomérations secondaires' of Roman Gaul, a basic categorisation of these settlements was proposed. While some secondary agglomerations were 'town-like' settlements, we also find specialised settlements or agricultural settlements. The latter are not of interest for this research. The specialised settlements fulfilled various religious roles (spas, sanctuaries), or economic roles (mines, ports, market places) and functioned as central places for a larger region. Clear examples are *Archena*, *Portus Ilicitanus* and *Metallum Vipascense*. In addition, some *mansiones* and *mutationes* may have developed into central places due to their position along the main roads, such as *Iturissa* and possibly *Ildum*.

The development of the settlement system cannot be fully understood without examining the pre-Roman settlement system. Basically, two different settlement patterns can be distinguished in Roman times. On the one hand, we observe that the regular settlement system as recognised by Bonet, or the city state model as proposed by Collis, is found in the eastern coastal areas of the Iberian Peninsula. A clear urban settlement pattern and hierarchy developed particularly in the Mediterranean façade, facilitating the rapid conquest of this region. The high pre-Roman urbanisation

rate in the Guadalquivir valley prefigured the dense urban pattern of the Roman pe-
riod. In this region, all urban settlements were located within three-hour walking dis-
tances of their nearest neighbours.

In the inland regions, we find the tribal state organisation, as recognised by Col-
lins, or Bonet's dispersed settlement system. The tribes converged on one central for-
tified urban or proto-urban place with subordinate *castros*. This pattern can be rec-
ognised for the regions of the Central Meseta. However, as argued by Pereira, the
pre-Roman settlement systems of these tribal areas may well have been heterarchical
rather than hierarchical. Regardless of which of these interpretations is correct, the
multitude of tribes and *castros* created a divided landscape, forcing the Romans to
deal with each of these tribes and *castros* separately. This can be derived from the
Bronze de El Bierzo, from which it appears that the *Paemeiobrigensis* were rewarded
with *immunitas* for siding with the Romans while the tribe to which they belonged
opposed the Romans.

The differences in urbanism on the Iberian Peninsula and the different instances
of conquest had a significant impact on the later development of the Roman settle-
ment system. It appears that communities incorporated in the earlier period had re-
lations with Rome that led to a later granting of privileges, such as immunity from
taxes, Latin rights and Roman citizenship. Most of the pre-Flavian privileged com-
munities were located within the region that had been conquered before 133 BCE.
These communities aided Rome in the period of conquest after 133 BCE and during
the civil wars fought in the first century BCE.

Communities with the old Latin rights of the Republican *coloniae* seem to have
been promoted by Caesar or Augustus to *municipia civium Romanorum,* as can be
observed for *Palma* and *Pollentia*. That the *municipium c.R.* was a status granted to
the friends of Rome is especially clear under Caesar, who only promotes his allies to
municipia c.R. Various cities that had opposed him lost large tracts of land and be-
came *coloniae*. This purgative use of colonial foundations helps to explain Hadrian's
surprise when *Italica* asked to become a *colonia*. At the same time we observe that
coloniae tended to be larger than other cities, had larger territories and more often
had more monuments.

Unlike other cities, a large proportion of the *coloniae* and *municipia c.R.* had mul-
tiple spectacle buildings. Moreover, those *municipia c.R.* and *coloniae* where no spec-
tacle buildings have been detected are often those that have not been thoroughly in-
vestigated. These monumentalised communities were also important nodes within
the road network. This relation between a higher connectivity and monumentality
may be the result of the important economic roles some of these settlements played.
Obviously, the provincial capitals drew many of the élite that provided for these
buildings and the games and plays staged there. Other places such as *Segobriga* and

Castulo were important mining centres, which were well connected to the road network. The mineral resources of their territory yielded income that could be used to erect spectacle buildings.

Another explanation for the higher monumentalisation of the well-connected centres can be found in civic rivalry or *campanilismo*. Those places that could easily be reached were in contact with other settlements, some of which had beautiful monuments. Civic pride may have prompted the local élites of such towns to pay for spectacle buildings or games. One can imagine a magistrate from *Contributa Iulia Ugultunia* with a provincial office in *Augusta Emerita* being willing to provide his hometown with games or even (partially or fully) funding the construction of an amphitheatre or circus, as this would enhance the prestige of his home town.

The *fora* as the political and religious centres of a community are most probably the centres for smaller form of euergetism and civic pride. Further research into other forms of monumentality is needed to create a clearer picture of the relationships between juridical status, connectivity and monumentality.

In many publications, including the *UN Demographic Yearbook*, cities are defined as large settlements. However, based on the evidence regarding the size of the central places of the self-governing communities of the Iberian Peninsula, we have to conclude that the vast majority of its cities were rather small. Even the largest cities, such as *Tarraco*, *Augusta Emerita*, *Carthago Nova* and *Gades,* are thought to have occupied 80 to 90 hectares. They are far outstripped by other famous centres, such as *Carthago*, *Antiochia*, *Alexandria*, and even by many less famous Roman cities, such as *Mogontiacum*, *Lugdunum* and *Londinium*. Viewed in this light, Strabo's claim that *Gades* was the largest city in the west is interesting. He was referring to a period when *Carthago* had not yet been re-established and when *Mogontiacum*, *Lugdunum* and *Londinium* remained outside the Roman sphere. In any case, most cities of the Iberian Peninsula are small or very small. The *municipium Munigua* with its built-up area of only three hectares is one of many examples that show we cannot define the city on the Iberian Peninsula based on size.

As was demonstrated in chapter six, the largest cities of the Iberian Peninsula could depend on their own territories to sustain them. The extent and resources of a territory were thus a limiting factor. As a general rule, the population size of the largest cities did not exceed the carrying capacity of their territories. Urban growth may also have been inhibited by the fact that the Roman Empire drew necessary resources from these provinces. However, cities in other provinces would have had similar problems.

The urban patterns of the Iberian Peninsula were not only prefigured by the pre-Roman pattern, but also by geographical factors. The more densely populated and smaller territories are found in the Mediterranean façade and at the Iberian Levant where the city-state model developed at an earlier date. The five largest centres in these areas controlled larger territories granted to them by the Roman state.

The intermediate centres were located along major arteries of the network, for example the cities along the 'Via del Norte', the road connecting the mines of the northwest with *Tarraco*. Alternatively, we find large settlements at intersections of rivers and roads, for example in the Guadalquivir basin. These centres were able to develop further due to their position along the network and could also draw from their trade with other places.

A remarkable concentration of self-governing communities can be observed in the Guadalquivir basin. Here, the outlying territories of the communities are always within a three-hour walking radius from the centre. A similar observation can be made for the central Ebro valley. The remainder of the Iberian Peninsula also had pockets of self-governing communities creating clusters, but there were still vast empty areas. An examination of geographically and climatologically unfavourable conditions shows that some of these areas are less optimal for urban centres. Although areas completely hostile for urbanism are rare, it is clear that disadvantageous areas are avoided. Given the low overall population density, there was no need to occupy these inopportune areas. Interestingly, some areas, seemingly favourable to urbanism do not seem to have had urban centres. However, we have to take into account that we only identified 430 self-governing communities, of which about 30 were not located. In addition, Pliny states that there were 513 *civitates*. It follows that there were about 110 unlocated self-governing communities, which would occupy the less densely inhabited areas.

Still, when considering *Lusitania*, we have to conclude that the low urbanisation rate is a reality. We even found more *civitates* in this province than the 45 *populi* mentioned by Pliny. As a result, we have to accept either that a considerable proportion of the rural population lived beyond the three-hour radius, or that secondary agglomerations fulfilled various central place functions, allowing the territories of the self-governing communities to be larger than this three-hour walking radius.

The existence of a secondary level of settlements functioning as central places has indeed been established. We can, therefore, assume that areas without direct contact with a self-governing centre were provided with economic, religious and possibly even administrative functions. These secondary agglomerations warrant greater attention in the debates on the Iberian Peninsula.

Defining Roman urbanism on the Iberian Peninsula based on one clear definition is impossible. The plethora of different forms of urban settlements and self-governing communities that have developed through history created a mosaic of settlements.

The Roman Empire incorporated a myriad of cultures each with their own settlement system. Rather than forcing all these communities to follow the strict model of the city-state, the Roman state incorporated different systems. On the Iberian Peninsula, one can observe the classical city-state model, but we also encounter the dis-

persed *civitates* with their multiple smaller centres each taking up a part of the eco-
nomic, administrative and religious functions that we normally find centred in the
urbs of a *civitas*.