5 (b)
Urban Spaces and Central Places

The Roman World

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Introduction

Imperial Rome specialized in centrality. This chapter must tend the opposite way to its pendant piece. It does not so much explore fecund and responsive variety, unshaped by orthodox order, as describe the repeated patterns of the attempted organization and imposition of plan and system through reference to the imperial center.

Autocratic monarchies always focus intently on the person of the ruler. Emperors often have capitals: the despot and the city where he is enthroned reinforce each other's glory. Rome was no exception. As the emperor's base, Rome was enriched and embellished in proportion to the size of the empire. It acquired monuments which excelled all other cities of the Roman world, in their number, the conspicuous cost of building them, the technical virtuosity of their design and execution, and, above all, their vast dimensions.

The Roman state under the emperors also functioned in ways which allowed, indeed necessitated, symbolic emphasis on the center to counter the devolution of power unavoidable in so far-flung a polity. Ideology, supporting both military loyalty and the acquiescence in the system of the wealthy of the empire's hundreds of cities, needed strong, simple messages of unity. Regional government was relatively weak, to ensure that administrators would find it hard to think about rivalry with the center. The emperor needed monopolies of control over money, movement, status, religion, and attempting to manage these monopolies added to the standing of the center (Millar 1977). At the same time, this was a society in which levels of mobility were high, the economy diverse and vigorous, and a sense of opportunity

widespread—linked above all with the emperor and his power. The splendor of the emperor was not isolated. It was meant to be seen and admired, and floods of people were to be expected wherever he traveled. At Antioch in A.D. 115, when the emperor Trajan made the great city his base for war against the Parthians, "many soldiers and private individuals had come together there—for lawsuits, on missions to the emperor, for commerce, or sightseeing" (Dio 68.24). So, when a massive earthquake wrecked the place, "it was as if the whole world under Roman domination was stricken."

This city was the emperor's winter-quarters on campaign. The effect was much more marked with his regular capital. Constant movements in and out of all these types of traveler, and the maintenance of the capital as a setting for a huge and fluid population added still further to the sense of centrality experienced at Rome.

But the emperors were not the whole story of Roman urban centrality.

Centrality—Without Really Trying

"Where is the middle of things?," is a piece of elementary psychological geometry. Thinking of the world as a body—what other easy, physical metaphors are there for thinking about complex wholes?—the Greeks looked for the navel, the *omphalos*, and located it at Apollo's sanctuary at Delphi (among other places: a second-century orator also uses this expression of the Athenian acropolis, the harbor at Smyrna, Cyzicus, and the Roman province of Asia; Müller 1961). Thinking of the world geographically, as the assemblage of seas and continents which is more abstract, more geographical, and more familiar to us, does not mean abandoning the question "where's the middle?" Ways were found of going on answering the question with Delphi. But information poured in from all points of the compass, and the layout of the lands looked more complicated all the time. Halfway between north and south was quite an easy one to cope with: that meant half-way between hot and cold, and the inhabitants of the Mediterranean had some reason to think that their homes fitted that climatic definition. Halfway between east and west was more difficult, as the east reached ever further into Asia in the Hellenistic period. The Romans came up with a brilliant solution. Cut off the east, as generally alien and inferior, and take the Mediterranean world, the world of the "Sea near Us" as the Greeks called it, as what mattered. Then work out what is in the middle of the Mediterranean—dividing the eastern from the western basins of the Inland Sea—bingo, Italy! And what is in the middle of Italy, halfway down the more fertile, more accessible western coast? The Tiber mouth and the city of Rome.

> Since all other peoples are made diverse with uneven physical characteristics, it is in the true centre of the space of the whole circle of lands and of the layout of the physical world that the Roman people owns its territory . . . the Divine Intellect has established an outstanding city and a finely-balanced location for the Roman people, to enable it to assume the hegemony of the earth. (Vitruvius 6.1.10–11)

This account was written under and for the emperor Augustus, but while no doubt winning approval in the court circles, this is the thinking that reinforced imperial power through the specialness of Rome, and not the other way round (Nicolet 1991).

Now these grandiloquent visions are not as self-deluding as they might seem. Rome undoubtedly did owe a good deal to a practical centrality which was not its inhabitants' invention. Tyrrhenian Italy is a very well networked node within the Mediterranean, and the centrality of the Italian peninsula within the Mediterranean basin as a whole is an advantage which Italian communities have enjoyed at many periods. The Tiber, navigable in antiquity far above Rome, was a major route way within the Italian peninsula. Its crossing points were key to movements from the wealthy agricultural regions of the south to the flourishing cities of the Etruscan northwest. The earliest community on the site of Rome, indeed, can only have grown because of such advantages, as the immediate region of the city, until the end of the fifth century a political territory not much more than 20 kilometers across, is not especially fertile, and must from the first have been insufficient for supporting a city any larger than the numerous city-lets which dotted the Latin plain and hill country to the south. Rome did take off because of centrality. Confirmation of that is to be found in many places: in the Roman insistence on the importance of the ancient wooden bridge across the Tiber; in the oldest Roman road, the Salt Road, which carried this vital commodity for the upland pastoralists of central Italy inland from the lagoons of the Tiber delta; in the archaeological evidence of trade with far-flung parts of the Mediterranean in the river-harbor of Rome from the sixth century B.C.; and in the contacts of west-central Italy with Greeks and Carthaginians which are attested from the same period in inscriptions and in the literary tradition (Smith 1996).

There are two further signs that Rome had early grown out of being a largely self-supporting market-center and secure residence for the laborers of a productive countryside. The Romans told a story of their origins which was heavily concerned with wanderers, outsiders, and the gathering of a vagabond population—an unusually self-effacing foundation-saga, on the face of it. And the early open spaces of Rome were rather different from those of Greek cities in being concerned more explicitly with economic activities. The center of the city was a public square like an agora, the Forum Romanum, and it is overwhelmingly likely, given the rapid development at the same time of the nearby river-harbor, that a principal function of the early Forum was economic. Later tradition provides echoes of that in the Etruscan Street, and a Potter's Quarter, suggesting craft specialization of the sort found in the Kerameikos of contemporary Athens. There were from a quite early date specialized retail outlets, secure *tabernae* or shops, on both sides of the Forum piazza. Nearer the river though, and of equal venerability, were two more Fora, known as Vegetable and Cattle Markets. In later years Rome counted its citizens with care. It is not very likely that the figures alleged for the end of the Archaic period (the sixth century B.C.) are based on real evidence, but they indicate a population for Rome and its territory considerably larger than Athens at the same date, while the physical extent of the city nucleus at Rome was also rather greater.

It is likely in both cases that we are witnessing states which grew rapidly through attracting immigration of many different kinds, and which supported populations much larger than the average carrying capacity of the region through the earnings of specialized economic activities.

Centrality—Thinking Very Hard About It

So Romans experienced a practical, organic centrality from archaic times—the Greek community of that age which was most comparable was Corinth, with its unrivalled topographical centrality in the Greek peninsula. The Romans were certainly in close contact with the Corinthians overseas, as with other mobile peoples in the archaic Mediterranean, and they were fully familiar with contemporary developments in the world of the *polis*.

From the same period come the first signs that the Romans consciously built on, adapted, and enhanced their centrality as an ideology, that—it is scarcely too strong a word—they theorized it.

The first sign was the development of a focal public space, closely analogous to the first agoras which are known from seventh- and sixth-century B.C. Greek cities. The Forum was an open space, ritually delimited, at the meeting of carefully laid out major streets, equipped with numerous sacred sites and shrines (but not, before the end of the sixth century, actual temples in the familiar architectural sense) on to which faced buildings of public significance, including the homes of the first citizens (Tagliamonte 1995). This space was integral enough to Roman self-consciousness to be referred to with the people's name, obvious though that might be thought to be: it was the Forum Romanum, not just the public space at the heart of Rome, but much more distinctive and special with regard to the non-Roman peoples around. This space was paved already by the end of the seventh century B.C., and was the site of important new cult-places at the beginning of the fifth, when the Temples of Saturn and the very substantial Temple of Castor and Pollux were built on the south side, traditionally in the first years of the Republican state (founded in 509 B.C.).

The Romans thought of this as originally a marketplace, as we have seen, but alongside the commercial function there was from an early date an elaborate symbolic centrality. This also took forms familiar from elsewhere in the Mediterranean world: the city had a hearth here, the shrine of Vesta, goddess of the hearth-fire, as well as a house (known as the Regia) which was described as the abode of a first citizen, the emblematic primary house of the city. The Romans linked this structure with an extended period of political kingship in their early history (753–509 B.C.) which is not especially unlikely but hardly demonstrable. At the other end of the Forum was a place for political assemblies and what would have been called in a Greek town of the time a *bouleuterion*, a meeting-place for the council of elders of the community. The third great function of early agoras, spectacle and competition, was a feature of the Forum in later times, and it is not unreasonable to retroject that to the Archaic period. Certainly the two religious spectacles which the Romans

themselves regarded as immemorially ancient both used the Forum as part of their stage (Purcell 1995).

These spectacles were: the *Ludi Romani*, the Roman Games, the festival which was, like the Forum, called by the name of the people; and the triumph, the commemoration of Victory in war. This pair of public occasions introduces us to two other foci of the Roman theory of centrality (and at the same time to a characteristic feature of Roman ideology—overkill. If centrality is good, it is worth over-specifying it, with multiple, repeated, overlapping centers.)

The first of these other foci is a very early spectacle-facility which the Romans called Circus Maximus—the "Very Big Round." Essentially the valley between two hills, this was another center of early shrines and commemorations, and another major focus of the city's space (Humphrey 1986:60–67). Beyond the two festival processions, the Circus also housed horse-races and chariot races in the Greek manner. Apart from this open ground and that of the Forum, the city had no purpose-built permanent structures for watching festival competitions before 55 B.C.—an absence which the Romans regarded with puritan pride. The Circus was linked to the Forum by the processional route followed by the images of the Gods at the Ludi Romani, and by the victorious troops at the triumph. But these pomps started and finished at the most important Roman center of all—the Capitolium.

The rocky crag at the western end of the valley of the Forum Romanum, the Capitoline Hill or the Capitol, was a sanctuary and a stronghold from very early in Rome's urban history. This routine centrality was overwhelmed in new significance when the community decided to invest in a gigantic temple on its highest point. Tradition ascribed the decision to two of the last kings; archaeology (especially new excavations since 1995: Mura Sommella 2000 and 2003) confirms the approximate date of the second half of the sixth century B.C. It also leaves no doubt as to the scale of the original plan, for which a huge platform of tufa blocks was built, an investment of manpower and of wealth which can hardly not at some level represent awareness of and competition with the very large temples which certain Greek communities (Ephesus, Samos, Athens, and nearer at hand, Selinous and Akragas in Sicily) were building at this time (Figure 5.4). The cult was grandiose, ambitious and original. The sixth-century Romans adapted the most popular city-protecting deities of the contemporary Greek world, pairing Athena (Minerva) and Hera (Juno), and adding to them the overarching authority of Zeus (Jupiter), to form the Capitoline Triad. Rome's city gods combined the best patrons of powerful Greek cities with the supreme ruler of Gods and men, whose domain was the whole Hellenic world. Olympian authority—the authority of Olympos and of Olympia—was invoked at Rome from then on, and the Ludi Romani, the festival of the deities of the Capitol, at some point came to draw on the Olympic Games for its imagery and reputation.

It is hard to imagine what can have been going on at Rome at the time this cult was established, but what matters for this survey is that the result was a "reading" of many contemporary ways of establishing hierarchical order with reference to symbolic centrality. The huge temple, the Capitolium, was one; the daring modification of the hilltop with the enormous platform was another. The theology of Zeus

Figure 5.4 Plastico di Roma, showing the Capitol above the Forum. This model of imperial Rome shows the rebuilding of the Capitoline Temple by the emperor Domitian, but its dominant central role in the city's landscape went back to the sixth century B.C. Sansaini. Photograph courtesy of Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Rom, Neg. D-DAI-Rom 1954.0993.

and the Olympian theme already suggested a cosmic imagining of the significance of the cult. But the centrality was not only of the mind. Topographical centrality is most frequently articulated through human action and especially movement. The great shrine of the Capitol was the setting for *rites de passage* such as coming of age, as well as some of the most solemn religious ceremonial of the year—it was, as befitted Jupiter, especially concerned with the calibration of passing time. The open porch at the front of the temple was a political space itself, used for meetings of the Senate. But the open space in front of the Capitoline temple, the Area Capitolina, was highly important too as the site of political assemblies and of the military levy, while the opening of the new, gently sloping paved road up the side of the hill from the Forum made possible the great processions which we have already mentioned. Just as the architectural and landscape works were intended to astonish, so the carrying of heavy images of the gods on ponderous vehicles which were almost— but not quite—too heavy to be hauled up the slope onto the hill was a demonstration of capability, sophistication and power.

There are parallels for this management of civic space at various points in the Greek world, including the sixth-century developments at the pan-hellenic sanctu-

aries of Delphi and Olympia, but the closest point of reference is Athens. The transformation of the Acropolis from fortress to civic sanctuary, and its opening up with an access road which made possible both the building of the great monuments of the hilltop, and the processions which punctuated the festival year, uniting the acropolis with the lower civic assembly-place, are close enough parallels on the physical plane: but the novel way in which the Athenians expressed a new Athenian identity in their political and religious institutions, and especially in the idea of a Panathenaia, may help us understand the political and social project of the late Archaic Capitol too (Hurwit 1999). An important difference, however, is that the Romans practiced their public and religious life hand-in-hand on the Capitol and in the Forum—there was no separation of sacred and secular spaces whatsoever. Just as the Acropolis forms the inevitable backdrop to the Athenian agora, so the Capitol does for the Forum. But the Capitoline temple dominated the precinct below in a way that the Acropolis temples never did, and the visual pairing of Capitol and temple high above and forming the unavoidable focus of the public square is one which the Romans reproduced in scores of their cities.

The Capitol matters, not just because of its curious but spectacular precocious appearance in a generally obscure phase of western Mediterranean history, but because of its continuing, always refreshed and reinterpreted significance to the invented centrality in which ancient Rome ever afterwards specialized. It has to be admitted that there is a gap. There can now be no doubt about the date of the centralizing transformation of late archaic Rome. But little else can be said for 150 years about the centrality which it must have been intended to promulgate.

## Effects of the Center on Its Periphery: Territoriality and Space

In the fourth century B.C., however, further impressive landscape architecture projects enhanced the Capitoline Hill, at the beginning of a period in which the Roman state first developed a number of political behaviors which were to become characteristic. One of these was the establishment of daughter-settlements (Salmon 1969). It was a feature of Roman new towns from the first that they were more dependent on the mother-city than was normal with the offshoots of Greek *poleis*, and a variety of institutional and symbolic means was elaborated to express their participation in a larger polity—and their subordination to Rome. The rhetoric of centrality was a natural addition to this portfolio of aggressive interventions—since we must not lose sight of the fact that any civilizing aspects of these transformations were very secondary indeed to the demonstration of the implacable will and overwhelming superiority of the Roman state.

There were several different types of dependent settlement which expressed their allegiance to Rome in different ways. There seems to have been a regularity of spatial organization, and an architectural homage to the layout of the capital; cults echoed those of the center, and monuments replicated those of the Forum in Rome; on a perhaps less formal level toponyms within the city were often echoes or memories

of features of the capital. A difficulty in assessing all this for the phases of Roman settlement which go back to the fourth century is that many of these themes were recognized with enthusiasm by later Romans and deliberately propagated in later phases of the relationship between Rome and the daughter-towns, especially after the beginning of the principate. We should probably not read too much system and too highly organized a plan into the first phases. But the effect is a real one, and enhanced by interventions which certainly do go back to the middle Republican period (von Hesberg 1985).

Of these the most striking is the invention of the Roman road. The Appian Way was built in 311 B.C. to link Rome and Capua, and exhibits much that is characteristic of the Roman Republican road (Humm 1996). First, it is—as the Capitol had been two centuries before—a virtuoso display of engineering and technical expertise. One section ran straight for more than 60 kilometers; the general direction as far as Tarracina was a close approximation to the shortest possible route; the project was conceived as a statement of Roman superiority in relation to the independent but potentially troublesome Campanians; and it was explicitly linked with the allocation to Roman agriculturalists of large tracts of high-quality land along its route. And these tracts of land were surveyed and measured and distributed with the same showy technical ability that went into the building of the road (Figure 5.5; Campbell 2000). The land was also improved through the management of water-resources, and nearer Rome it was in the same period that the same benefactors saw to the provisioning of the city with its first long-distance water conduits, or aqueducts.

The land-divisions were carried out in a characteristically Roman way. From the distant past, Roman religious expertise seems to have been a source of pride. One technique which seemed to later Romans to be especially arcane and archaic was
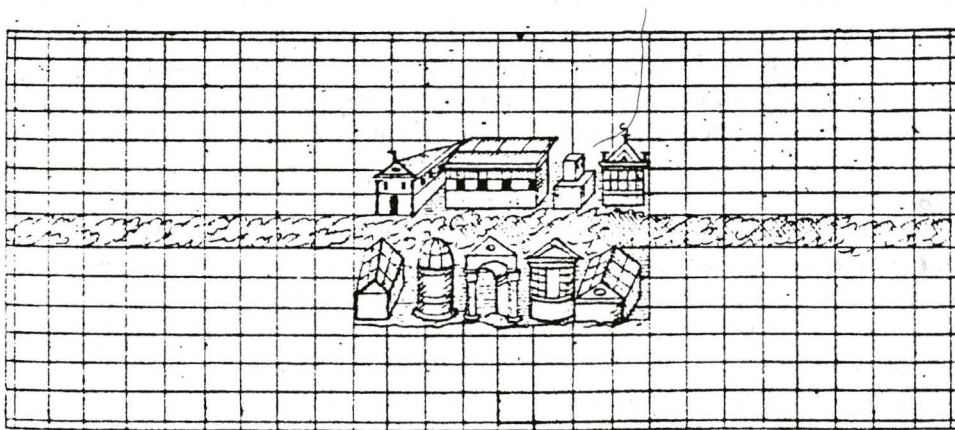
Figure 5.5 Agennius Urbicus' treatise, Illustration 37. After Campbell 2000:285. This original illustration from a Roman treatise on how to allot land shows a stylized Roman city on a road bisecting a completely regular planned landscape

Figure 5.6 The allotted landscape of the *ager Campanus*. Notice how the grid is highly centralized, but avoids a focus on the ancient city of Capua, in disgrace when this grid was laid out. Since this map was drawn it has been demonstrated that the grid also extended north of the River Volturnus seen in the upper left of this image

the science of augury, in which trained experts divided the sky into conceptual zones so as to assess the meaning of the behavior of birds. The land beneath was also schematized in this way, and it is clear that the layout of both towns and agrarian landscapes was conducted according to this lore. The second-century land divisions of the extremely fertile territory of Capua, for instance, are aligned precisely on the cardinal points (Figure 5.6). The position of the observer, in such a system, was pivotal, and the land-allotments created centers—where the main axes crossed—as much as the roads, joining central places as they did (Torelli 1966). Implicit behind the whole system was naturally the centrality of Rome itself, where the augurs' principal lookout was on the Capitol (of course); and a revealing and related story came to be told about the building of the great temple just described.

While the temple's foundations were being laid, a bleeding human head was discovered deep in the excavations. Ambassadors were sent to the wisest seer of the time, an Etruscan who lived in Veii. They drew a sketch plan in the dust to show where the head had turned up. The clever sage pointed to the ground and asked: "Did you say it was found here?" The Roman team was ahead of him. "No, it was found at Rome, on the Capitol." What the sage had been attempting to transfer to

Veii was the sign and demonstration of nothing less than "throne and headship of all the lands" (Florus 1.1).

Such stories and their articulation in monument and institution were a gradual process of deposition. By the second century B.C. the effect had become regular and developed. The innovative politician Gaius Gracchus made a particular point of improving access to Rome with better quality roads, marked with milestones expressing precise distances to the center (Plutarch, *Lives of the Gracchi* 28; Laurence 2004). Augustus made a point of road-building explicitly "so that Rome could be reached easily from every direction." He took on personal responsibility for the re-working of the all-important highway to the north, the Via Flaminia (Figure 5.7). The distances were measured from a central feature where the Forum abutted the Capitol, the Golden Milestone (Mari 1996).

City foundation and land allotment proceeded at a faster rate than ever before. As Roman political and military power in the Mediterranean expanded, Greek theorists were quickly found who were eager to enrich the store of symbolic messages which the Romans had been accumulating, and express the centrality of the victorious city in ever more grandiloquent terms—terms which continued to draw on and to elaborate the ancient themes which we have mentioned. "She dwells upon earth upon holy Olympus, ever unshaken," said Melinno in her *Hymn to Rome*; "shut the Gates of Olympus, Zeus, and mount guard over the holy acropolis of the aether," says another poet—sea and land are under the sway of Rome and only Heaven is still unapproached (Alpheus of Mitylene, *Anthologia Palatina* 9.526). Significantly, this Republican age saw the first attempts to imitate Rome, a flattery and a homage, but one which is telling. Rome came to be understood as template and model, in a way which Greek cities had not been.

Centrality and the Ideology of the Roman Town

To the modern observer, this expression of the dominance of the Roman core is most apparent in the cities of the Roman world founded in the late Republic and the early empire. The Greek historian Polybius (6.26.10) had noted the regularity of Roman military planning. The Romans themselves would not have thought that the military sphere was unusual in that respect. Template-thinking was apparent in law and in administration in the civilian world too, as was hardly surprising in a society in which the military was still an aspect of the citizen ideology. The truth of Polybius' observations is apparent in the archaeology of the siege works of Numantia (133 B.C.) in northern Spain (Johnson 1983:224–227), but becomes a celebrated feature of Roman culture under the empire, when the regular forms of a centralized military culture can be studied through an abundant archaeological record from Egypt, Syria and Romania to Morocco, and Britain. Soldiers were citizens (or potential citizens) under arms and the regularity of their bases was reflected in the regularity of the cities in which they were settled when they were discharged from active service. Drawing on the long history of daughter-settlements, these new towns became ever more faithful to a model, in the institutional charters with which

Figure 5.7 Augustus' arch at Rimini. The great Italian highway, the Via Flaminia, was like a huge building or public space, with one end at the gate of Rome, the Porta Fontinalis on the slopes of the Capitol, and the other at the *colonia* of Ariminum. The monumental entry to this road survives at Rimini. The inscription (*ILS* 84) says "The Senate and People of Rome dedicated this to the emperor Augustus when he had rebuilt the Via Flaminia and all the busiest roads of Italy according to his own plans and at his own expense." Photograph courtesy of Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rom. Felbermeyer, Neg. D-DAI-Rom 1938.0358.

they were set up, and in the architecture with which they were equipped. The design of the headquarters building was a calque on the design of a forum, or vice versa. But Polybius perhaps did not see how much the architecture which the Romans made into a system was an adaptation of city-forms which were current in the Greek kingdoms of the eastern Mediterranean. The towns of Italy, Roman and non-Roman alike, became thoroughly Hellenistic during the second century B.C.

The first new cities to form a patterned sequence of this kind, however, were the veteran settlements of Italy of the very end of the Republican period, and in the north the remains of Aosta and Turin show vividly how close to military planning the foundations of the emperor Augustus could be. But the regularity was somewhat older. Gaius Gracchus tried to build a Roman city in the ruins of Carthage, and wanted to appropriate the great protecting goddess of the Carthaginians, Tanit, for his new foundation—but in the form she was worshipped on the Capitol at Rome, as Juno. Julius Caesar had given new titles to the Roman communities which were chartered all over Rome's dominion in Spain, and the point is constantly to echo the institutions, and especially the sacred institutions, of the ancient heartland of the Roman people. Thus, we hear of Obulco of the High Priest; Sacili of the People of Mars; Hispal the city of Romulus; Lucurgentum "Divine Spirit of Julius"; Venus' own Nabrissa; Hasta of the Kings; Urso of the Family Tradition, city of people from the City (Pliny, *Natural History* 4.6–17). It is no surprise that it is in this age that we first certainly hear of the setting up in towns like these of temples which actually replicated the core of Roman centrality, religion, the Capitolium. In Roman daughter-settlements, cults characteristic of Rome had long been practiced, but now there was an attempt to produce a literal imitation of the distant capital—a reflection evoked also in the names of the districts of some of the cities. An imperial writer referred to *coloniae* as "miniature Romes" (Aulus Gellius 16.13.9).

This was the symbolic language which Augustus found ready for use when he came to shape Rome's public institutions around his own power. He made his mark emphatically on all the focal monuments and spaces of the capital—Capitol, Forum, Circus, all became stages for the expression of his messages. He also developed an architectural language suitable for the claim to centrality which he so enhanced. The initiatives which he took at Rome were zealously picked up by benefactors in Roman cities of Italy and the provinces, who had often benefited from imperial patronage through service of the state in military or civilian posts, and who could now be relied on to spread Augustan messages in their home communities (Zanker 1988).

The Forum with which Augustus extended the Forum Romanum was thus copied at faraway Mérida, Emerita Augusta, a *colonia* in western Spain. The portico which his wife Livia built in the elite residential quarter of Rome was copied for a public building by a lady benefactor of Pompeii, Eumachia. Inscriptions show a rash of buildings called Augustan (or Julian) Aqueduct, Augustan Law court, Augustan Council house, in towns like these across the empire. One vivid example is what the Romans did to the ancient city of Corinth. Razed to the ground in a display of Roman might in 146 B.C., Corinth was re-founded by Julius Caesar. Its central feature, where the agora of the Greek city had stood, was an unmistakably Roman Forum. It was dominated at one end by Roman-style temples on an elevated terrace (Schowalter and Friesen 2005). Around it were porticoes with *tabernae*. Behind these there were purpose-built structures called Basilicae, like the buildings which housed the law courts in Rome itself. The colonia at Corinth was laid out on a strict grid-plan like the military camps of Rome, and it came to include

a building for the distinctively Roman spectacle of gladiatorial combat, the amphitheater.

Corinth was a typical foundation of the late Republic or early empire. The status of citizen colony changed over the imperial period, and the homage of imitation now became possible for many rich and important cities which could not claim the Roman credentials of the chartered towns. It was still the great imperial benefactions of the center which acted as the prototypes, but these were now the awe-inspiring amphitheaters, as at Corinth, or imperial bath-complexes. The distribution of the distinctive plan of metropolitan bath complexes, a huge block of buildings in a great precinct, all arranged in a deliberately prodigal way on a symmetrical plan, tracks the aspirations of cities to be a local capital like Ephesus or Carthage—or the process of devolution by which emperors moved for long or short periods to a provincial center. That was how Trier acquired the "Kaiserthermen," one of the most lavish bath complexes outside Rome (Ward-Perkins 1980:442–449). In this age, moreover, Capitolia (temples dedicated to the Capitoline Triad) too become part of the common currency of an imperial architecture which never ceased to recognize the imperial center—they turn up in towns which had little or no claim to be Roman in any special sense. Finally, when Hadrian added a further term to Rome's theological pushiness in building his remarkable temple of All Gods, the Pantheon, this wonder of Rome too became something which could be imitated on a deferentially smaller scale, across the empire: in the sanctuary of Asclepios at Pergamum, for instance.

Rome under the empire extended the application of its centralizing templates far beyond the citizen community. In the west, each non-Roman community recognized by the institutional planners was encouraged to develop its own Roman form, so that Britain and Gaul were dotted with centralized local capitals such as Cirencester or Paris, often the result of the forced replacement of a secure hilltop fortification with a new settlement on the Roman communications network of roads and rivers. In the older cities of the east, monumental styles derived from Roman cities and expressing pride in Roman-guaranteed communications flourished. The acropolis at Pergamum and the agora at Ephesus were dominated by Roman-style monuments, while harbors, gates, colonnaded streets, and fountains at the end of aqueducts, all identified with an essentially Roman set of urban expectations.

On Roman Imperial Space

The cities of the Roman empire were therefore shaped by a tradition which reached back to the age of the Roman conquest of Italy. That age, as we saw, was also one in which the territories of cities were transformed, with allotment schemes, and with the building of more and more permanent and spectacular roads and aqueducts (even harder to survey and engineer than roads and allotted landscapes because of the problems of relief and gradient: Hodges 1992:171–214). Both these reinforced centrality—an ideological centrality through reference to the source of

the expertise and the wealth, and a topographical one, in that both planned land-scapes and linear features led to the neighboring city whose power and status they expressed.

Roman authorities were well aware of this effect, and ensured that the cities whose status they wished to recognize in the order of the provinces were reflected by planned territories as redolent of Roman power as the monuments of the city centers. Two cities of the Roman west may serve as examples. Carthage, whose history had been close to that of Corinth, became the capital of Africa after its re-foundation by Caesar and Augustus. Its giant territory, the *pertica*, was divided up into geometrical lots, crossed by roads joining Carthage to the other cities of the province. And an aqueduct of more than 80 kilometers brought water across the plain from the magnificent nymphaeum at Zaghouan. Almost contemporary, Lugdunum (Lyon), the seat of the governor of most of Gaul, again a colonia, was also supplied by spectacular aqueducts. But Lugdunum illustrates also a further kind of centrality which was to be important in Roman imperial behavior.

In 10 B.C., Augustus' step-son Drusus set up in the plain below Lugdunum an altar dedicated to the goddess Rome and to Julius Caesar, on whose orders the city above had been established. The cult involved a festival in which all the constituent peoples of the province of Gaul were to participate. Its priesthood was held in rota-tion by the magnates of these Gallic subject peoples, at considerable expense. The festival involved games for which an amphitheater was provided alongside the sanc-tuary. The setting was not just beside the residence of the governor—the plain below Lugdunum was the confluence of two of the great rivers of the region, the Saône and the Rhône, both major arteries of communication—but summed up the centrality of the Roman capital city in a geographical language of the rivers and mountains, the physical features of the earth's surface, which is how the Romans had come to conceptualize their power in the world (compare Vitruvius' remarks on the Divine Intellect, above p. 183; Purcell 1990). When Drusus himself died, his cenotaph was built beside a great Roman legionary base in Germany, which it was still hoped at that date would be the center of a new Roman province. The peoples of the area were commanded to participate in an annual religious festival in honor of their conqueror, and a Roman-style spectacle building was provided. The location echoed Lugdunum: the cenotaph was high on a hill overlooking the confluence of the Rhine and the Main, or Moguntia to the Romans, after which the place was called Moguntiacum, today Mainz.

A template was thus set up for the centralization of Roman provinces, which we can see in action in other areas too. In Spain, milestones along the road from Cordoba to Lisbon record their distances as "between the Arch of Augustus on the River Baetis and the Ocean" (*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* 102: the arch must have resembled that of Augustus at Ariminum, see Figure 5.7). Cordoba, *Colonia Julia Patricia*, its Caesarian title evoking the dictator's patrician family and the status system of the old Republic, was the capital of Baetica, the province named for the River Baetis, today the Guadalquivir. Roman power now joined that great geo-graphical feature to the river of Ocean which marked the outer boundary of the world. In Lycia, when Claudius added the region to the provincial empire, a monu-

ment was set up at the capital and principal port Patara, in which Claudius' great contribution to peace and security in annexing the province was proclaimed—and the distances to all the towns of the province by road given in long columns of names and figures (Jones 2001). Similar ways of thinking about the space of the region were to be found all over the Roman empire.

Rome in Context: The City to Which All Roads Lead

We began with the movements generated by the Roman emperor. Although those movements helped make Rome of the imperial period more conspicuously central than it had ever been before, the emperors were themselves mobile, and indeed, during the second and still more the third centuries A.D., resided more and more in subsidiary capitals across the empire: Trier, Milan, Thessalonica, Nicomedia, and eventually Byzantium, which was to be the New Rome. And this roving centrality had a long tradition behind it. Much in Roman imperial monarchy descended from the paradigmatic royalty of west Asia from the second half of the second millennium B.C. on, the kingdoms which we call Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian, and the Persian state which followed. These kings had also formed the living heart of the gigantic polities, and they had moved their bases, converting ancient cities into their own capitals, founding monumental cities with (deliberately) prodigal careless-ness, and abandoning them within decades. What is so conspicuous about imperial Rome against this background, then, is that it acted as an imperial capital for so long, and that even when the emperors were seldom there, it retained so much of the charisma of a political capital. That must be attributed to the liveliness and potency of a constantly re-invigorated and ever more venerable historical tradition, and to the efficacy of the symbolic centrality with which the city had equipped itself even before Augustus created the imperial monarchy.

The centrality of Rome continued to be expressed in a unique legal and institu-tional position, in which it was universally recognized that the city which had conquered the world deserved to reap the benefits of victory in an unrivalled supply of all the necessities of life and of every kind of luxury and wonder too. This unques-tioned centrality combined with the continuation of the economic functions, which Rome as a central place had fulfilled for a millennium, to allow the accumulation and maintenance of a very substantial population, normally comprising several hundred thousand people, despite the appalling living conditions which were the inevitable accompaniment (Morley 1996; Purcell 1996; 2000). Rome became a precocious and spectacular example of a certain sort of "giant city," a swollen center with over-developed centrality, which is familiar from other phases of pre-modern Mediterranean history (Pleket 1993; Nicolet et al. 2000).

The remarkable status of the city continued to be a given long after the emperors had ceased to reside there. The spoils of empire, the records of conquest, and the architectural heritage of 1200 years of urban history helped under-score this posi-tion. On the late Roman road map, the Peutinger Table, Rome's centrality to the
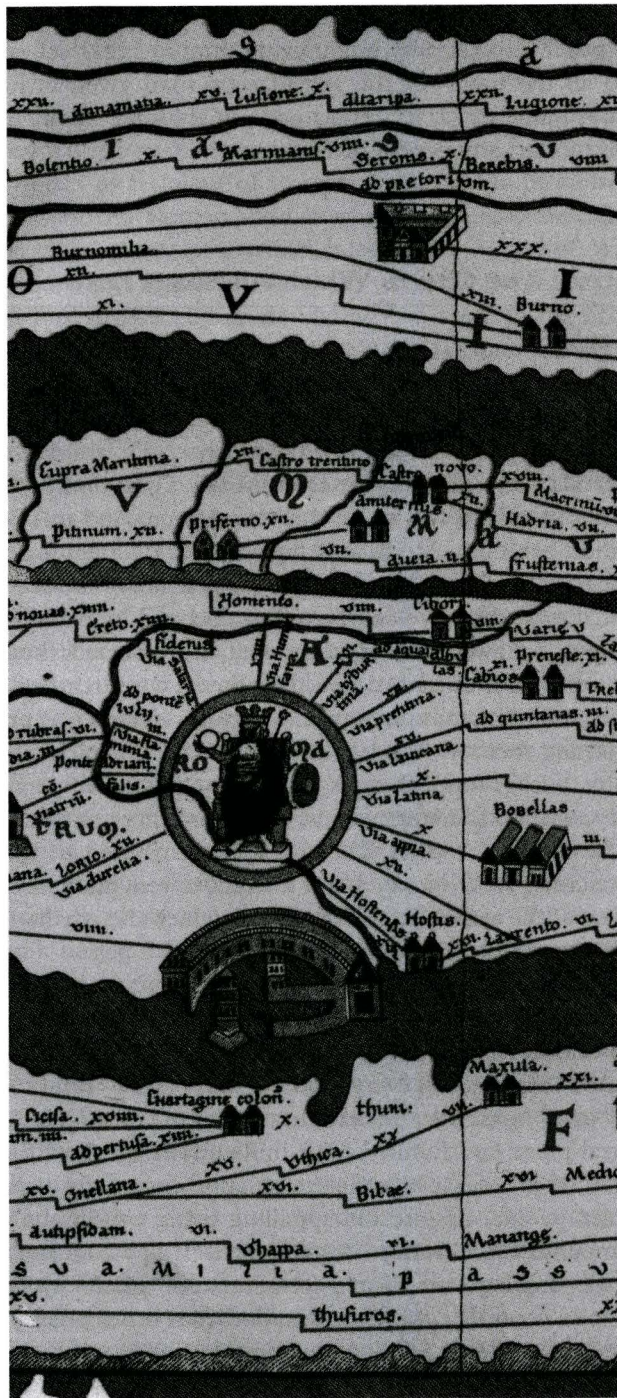
road network is vividly visible (Figure 5.8). Rome was the Cosmopolis, in which all the nations of the world could be found (Edwards and Woolf 2003).

But just as it had been religion which first articulated the centrality of the city, so it was in religion that Rome's centrality went on being proclaimed longest. The authority and charisma of the emperors were passed to Rome's Christian bishops, and the centrality of their see to Christian topography was expressed in forms which were directly continuous with the symbolic language of the Roman past. Constantine renounced the ancient cults of the Roman Capitolium during his first triumph: but he did not demote the city which it had represented. And when he created his own new Mediterranean super-city, Constantinople, to be the center of the East for another millennium, even though he did not dedicate it to Jupiter, he made sure to build a Capitol.

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Figure 5.8 Rome on the Peutinger Table. ÖNB/Wien Image ID Cod. 324.

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