

CHAPTER THREE

CONTEXT THE REPUBLICAN URBAN IMAGE

They have ordained this city to be most beautiful,
most flourishing, most powerful.

Cicero *In Catilinam* 2.13.29

In 182 B.C., courtiers of Philip V of Macedon spent hours belittling their rivals, the Romans. "Some would jeer at their habits and customs, others at Roman achievements, others at the appearance of the city itself, which was not yet beautified in either its public places or its private districts."¹ This was powerful propaganda. The Romans may have defeated Philip V in war, yet the Macedonians and other peoples in the eastern Mediterranean claimed cultural victory. Residents in Alexandria, Pergamon, Athens, and other Hellenistic cities considered themselves superior in many areas, including urban appearance. From opulent palaces, verdant public parks, and formally ordered districts, they exchanged derogatory descriptions of Rome. Visits to Italy only confirmed the negative image. Every walk through the narrow byways of Republican Rome revealed unsafe streets, poorly maintained public buildings, decaying private structures, and undirected planning. Who could consider the Romans serious contenders for political hegemony when their primary city projected an unimpressive image?

An urban image reflects both the physical and the conceptual status of a specific city. The urban images of allied cities taken together may reflect the status of the group. More commonly, however, the image of the dominant city represents the collective. During the early Republic, Rome was the locus of interaction for a federation of independent city-states. By the third century B.C., the Republic's influence extended beyond the Italian peninsula. Externally, rivals like the Macedonians directed their barbs at Rome, viewed by them as the enemy's capital. Internally, however, Latin members of the Roman alliance still considered the city on the Tiber not as a true capital city, but as the first among equals.

The two perceptions of Rome began to coalesce in the late Republic. By the first century B.C., the Romans were acknowledged players on the Mediterranean stage. The poor urban image of their premier city negatively affected the political aspirations of independent Republicans and of the State as a whole. As a result, ambitious citizens vied to place their own stamp on Rome; the greater their individual power, the greater the imprint. Simultaneously, external models sparked emulation. Interacting with other world powers, the Romans could not help but draw unfavorable comparisons between Rome and the strong urban images of contemporary eastern capitals. Faced with positive models and the derision of outside observers, they began to conceive of the city in a different light. Rome was not just the locus of Roman political strength, it was a tangible manifestation of individual and collective power.

Rome lies in an eroded volcanic plateau framed by the Albani Mountains to the south and the Sabatini Mountains to the north.² On the east, long fingers of land reach toward the Tiber River forming the Colles Quirinalis and Viminalis, and the Montes Esquilinus and Caelius. Between these projections and the river stand three solitary hills, the Montes Capitolinus, Palatinus, and Aventinus (fig. 19).³ To the west, the protective rise of the Janiculum and, farther north, the Mon Vaticanus define a plain cut by the meandering Tiber River. At a sharp bend in its course, a solitary island obstructs the brisk flow of water from the northern Apennine mountains to the sea.

By the ninth century B.C., villages appeared atop the protective high points east of the Tiber. Earliest were the settlements on the Palatine and Capitoline overlooking well-traveled communication routes: the pathways running east-west along the valleys crossing the river at the island, and along the Tiber flowing from the Apennines to the Tyrrhenian Sea approximately 26 km southwest of the site. Over the following centuries, these isolated settlements incorporated into a city girded by formidable fortifications.⁴ The central meeting point in the valley between the hills was drained by the sixth century B.C. and rapidly developed into the Forum Romanum, the locus of urban public life. To enhance the prestige of this civic center, select commercial undertakings were moved out to secondary fora along the river banks and major roads into the city.⁵ Atop the Capitoline hill rose Rome's most important religious buildings, the temples to Jupiter Optimus Maximus and Juno Moneta. Directly south, the Palatine evolved into a residential quarter for those rich enough to own servants and slaves to carry water and provisions up the hill.⁶ The valley between the Palatine and Aventine was a natural race track, formalized with construction of the Circus Maximus in the days of Etruscan rule.⁷ The Mons Aventinus stood within

the city wall, but outside the *pomerium*, Rome's ritualized border.⁸ Lacking prestige, the Aventine became a primarily plebeian quarter. In general, however, diversity was the norm in the cityscape, with rich and poor, foreigner and slave living and working in close proximity. Public open space was at a premium within the city walls, so many large civic events took place on the broad, flat plain dedicated to Mars northwest of the city center. Nestled in the curve of the Tiber River, the Campus Martius frequently flooded and thus was not encumbered with permanent structures. Here soldiers conducted maneuvers, assemblies voted, and celebrants gathered. Romans considered the area across the river as less desirable than the left bank; developing under a stigma, the right bank was occupied by workers' quarters, foreigners, and such noxious industries as tanning.

The physical form of Rome suffered significantly during the early decades of the first century B.C. Ever growing, the city on the Tiber had a population numbering several hundred thousand, with construction extending far beyond the confines of the Republican walls.⁹ Shanties, tombs, temples, workshops, and residences reached out along the major roads in every direction. Atop the plateaus to the northeast of the city center, the wealthy established large estates and pleasure gardens in overt rivalry with one another. Land costs escalated at a rapid rate. Building occurred haphazardly, with little consideration for the functioning and image of the overall city. Preoccupied with external issues and internecine conflicts, magistrates and private patrons alike ignored pragmatic urban concerns. Rome's sewers, aqueducts, and roads strained under the double burden of overuse and lack of maintenance. In 58 B.C., a sewer contractor feared his work could not support any unusual weight; he forced the patron Marcus Scaurus to post a security when moving heavy marble columns to his house on the Palatine (Pliny *HN*.36.6). Frequent fires and floods also wrecked havoc on the cityscape, devastating large urban tracts in a few hours (cf. Chart 2). Human actions were equally destructive. Agitated by crowding, unemployment, and famine, urban residents often rioted, damaging large segments of the urban fabric.¹⁰ Neglect, lack of planning and maintenance, along with civic unrest, resulted in an unattractive urban appearance.

Observers walking through late Republican Rome were jostled by thousands of city dwellers and thousands of city images. Their primary emotions were fear and confusion. The Romans capably controlled vast holdings and ably negotiated complex treaties, yet their premier city did not reflect these skills or attainments. In fact, the cityscape impugned such achievements. Poorly maintained public spaces and buildings projected an impression of disorganization and decline, and a lack of collective pride. Monuments to individuals embellished the city, yet such self-serving works conveyed rivalry

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and thus did not foster a unified urban identity. As the Romans expanded their sphere of influence throughout the Mediterranean basin, the negative, unfocused image of their premier city-state became a liability. Simultaneously, the hegemony of strong individuals in Rome fanned the desire to improve the city and set the stage for the creation of an imperial urban experience.

THE URBAN IMAGE OF LATE REPUBLICAN ROME

The evolution of Rome's urban form can be traced in the physical remains; the evolution and impact of the urban image is more difficult to track. Writing in the first century B.C., Cicero repeatedly described the Republican city-state as supremely beautiful.¹¹ Yet anyone actually moving through Rome at that time had to acknowledge the city as a whole was not physically attractive (fig. 28). Though individual buildings and one or two urban spaces were impressive, the city as a whole did not please the eye, impress, or project a cohesive message. Furthermore, Rome was neither clean nor safe. The same authors who praised the city described the experience of Rome in decidedly negative terms. For example, Cicero portrays the dregs of humanity who occupied the city and Varro records the mugging and murder of a minor official in broad daylight.¹² In effect, late Republican authors sought a definition of urban beauty applicable to the existing condition. Minimizing the physical form as the primary indicator of urban attractiveness, they exploited nontangible characteristics and associations. Republican authors argued that the city's beauty resided not necessarily in the experience or appearance of its physical form, but in its stature, or rather, in the *idea* of Rome.¹³

Roman historians of the first century B.C. affirmed the greatness of the city-state through anachronistic divine associations. Looking to the heavens, they attributed Rome's growth and beauty to divine ordination. After all Romulus, son of a god, founded the city (fig. 24).¹⁴ Writing in the late first century B.C., Vitruvius explains, "It was, therefore, a divine intelligence that placed the city of the Roman people in an excellent and temperate country, so that she might acquire the right to rule over the whole world" (6.1). Imagining the divinely chosen site before development, late Republican authors listed its attributes: good springs, easily protected hills, and ready access to the sea along the Tiber (Livy 5.54.4; Strab.5.3.7; Cic.*Rep.*2.3, 5-6). In turn, this manufactured, idyllic image of early Rome informed ideas about the contemporary city. No matter that the original site was in fact not ideal, with brackish streams, an insalubrious climate, a flood-prone river, and easily assaulted hills, or that the city of the first century B.C. was severely lacking in amenities. Blessed by the gods, Rome had innate beauty.

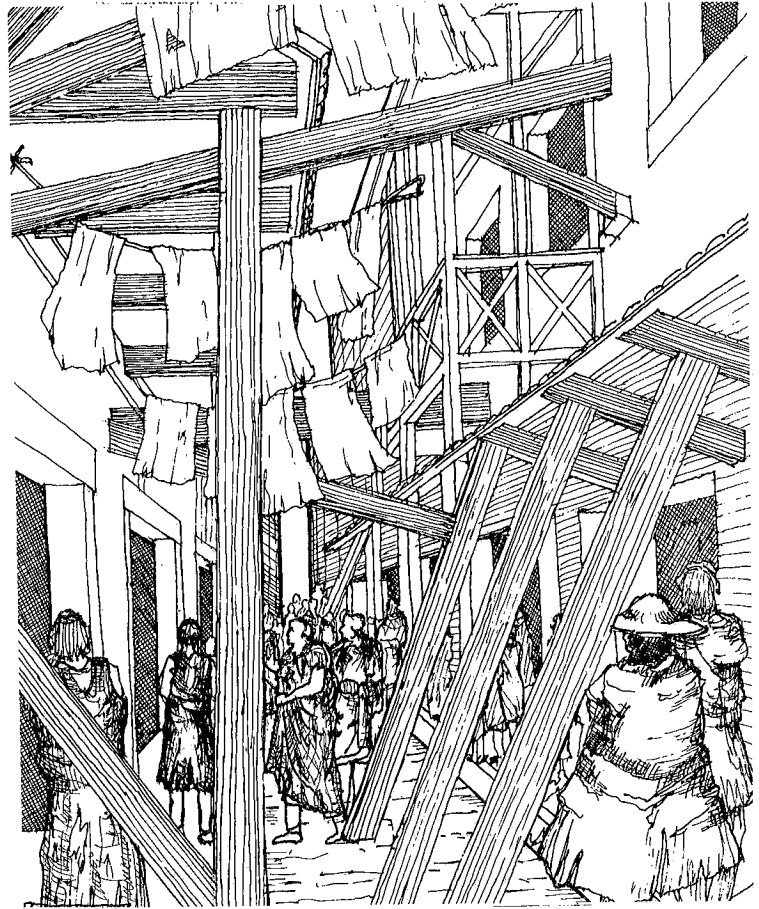


Figure 28. Reconstruction of a street in Rome. Drawing: Richard H. Abramson.

Discussions of urban aesthetics were limited in antiquity.¹⁵ City planning focused on issues of siting and fortifications on the pragmatic side, and social and moral concepts on the theoretical side. Much lauded works on cities such as the description of Atlantis by Plato or the theories of Hippodamus of Miletus gave primacy to the sociopolitical context; the depictions of urban form were secondary and largely metaphorical.¹⁶ Yet as the Romans came in direct contact with the great cities of the Hellenistic world – Alexandria, Ephesus, Antioch – they grudgingly acknowledged, “the Greeks had the repute of aiming most happily in the founding of cities, in that they aimed at beauty . . .” (Strab.5.3.8). In ancient art, beauty was equated with organization, or more specifically, with the strict adherence to rules and canons of perfection. Beauty was to be found in the relationships between elements and the whole, not in individual components. Buying

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wholesale into Greek ideas of abstract beauty, the Romans of the first century B.C. based their connoisseurship in large part on provenance.¹⁷ For his treatise on architecture written in the second half of the century, Vitruvius cited Greek sources to validate his ideas. He defines good architecture as based on order, arrangement, proportion, symmetry, propriety, and economy (1.2.1). Individual buildings in Rome satisfied these criteria for beauty; the city as a whole did not. Rome was unplanned, unordered, and certainly uneconomical in layout.

Following chapters on fundamental architectural principles, Vitruvius delves into urban issues. Rather than general principles of city planning or urban beauty, he focuses on siting, fortifications, and orientation to the winds.¹⁸ According to these criteria, the city on the Tiber again did not fare well. Some authors attempted to explain or excuse Rome's formal inadequacies. Livy writing in the second half of the first century B.C. describes the events following the sack of the city by the Gauls in 390 B.C. Looking at the decimated cityscape, some citizens put forth a bill to relocate to the more attractive and safe Etruscan city of Veii. After a persuasive speech by Camillus emphasizing the powerful *genius loci* of Rome and a favorable omen, the residents agreed to rebuild on the same site. The State offered incentives to promote rapid rebuilding, but provided no comprehensive urban plan or guidelines for implementation.¹⁹ Instead, Livy records the people of Rome "began to rebuild the city without plan of any kind. . . . Such was their haste that they did not take care to lay out the streets since all the boundary distinctions had been lost and they were building *in vacuo*. This is the reason why . . . the appearance of the city resembles one that has been occupied rather than being properly planned" (5.55.1-5). According to this story, circumstances, not planning, shaped the city's form.²⁰

An emphasis on events and achievements, rather than formal aesthetics, proved especially useful in exalting Rome. Though they admired Greek art and city planning, the Romans put forth distinctly different criteria for beauty and fame. Vergil, in the late first century B.C., explains:

Let others fashion from bronze more lifelike, breathing images, for so they shall, and evoke living faces from marble. . . . But, Romans, never forget that government is your medium! Be this your art: to practice men in the habit of peace, generosity to the conquered, and firmness against aggressors.²¹

The Romans admired tangible results. They had not set out to conquer the world. Beginning with low expectations, the citizens of the central Italian state were amazed by their own attainments.²² In the middle of the second century B.C., the Greek historian Polybius marveled, "the Romans in less than fifty-three years have succeeded in subjecting nearly the whole inhabited

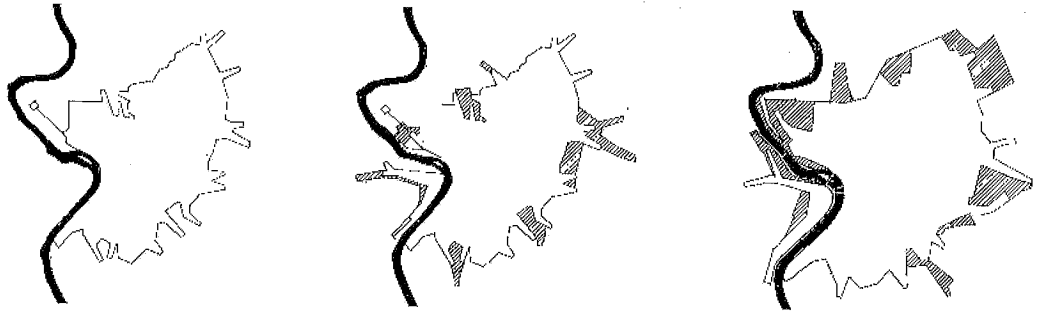


Figure 29. Diagram, three thumbnail maps showing the growth of Rome. Left: Republic, late second century B.C. Middle: Late Republic, mid-first century B.C. Right: Augustan Age, early first century A.D.

world to their sole government – a thing unique in history” (1.1). Having achieved great things, both Rome and the Republic deserved to be described as “most beautiful, most flourishing, most powerful” (Cic. *Cat.* 2.13.29). Similarly, the transformation of a cluster of rural huts into the seat of an expansive Republic, though slow by modern standards, seemed phenomenal in antiquity (fig. 29).²³ When citizens focused attention on the premier city-state, they saw not just an urbs with crowded streets and scattered monuments, but a significant urban development. The very existence of a huge metropolis on the banks of the Tiber was a notable achievement; thus, it followed that the city itself had to be considered inherently beautiful.

Rome's own glorious history elevated her stature. The achievements of all famous Romans informed the city's appearance. By the first century B.C., almost every urban corner evoked memories of significant events.²⁴ The urban fabric served as an historical ledger. With each step, the pedestrian encountered documentation of the city's great residents. Inscriptions, sculptures, paintings, reliefs, and building names all conveyed information about the past. Memories about Romulus or Scipio, or even about contemporaries such as Sulla, stimulated both the intellect and feelings. Cicero has Piso explain, “Whether it is a natural instinct or a mere illusion, I can't say; but one's emotions are more strongly aroused by seeing the places that tradition records to have been the favorite resort of men of note in former days, than by hearing about their deeds or reading their writings.”²⁵ The urban experience was thus highly charged. The power of the place drew upon all past events and past lives; the cumulative effect was conceptually, if not necessarily tangibly, beautiful.

By the second century B.C., artists and philosophers had begun to consider the lay viewers' reception of artworks.²⁶ This trend resulted in the association of moral characteristics with aesthetic criteria. In a beautiful

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work, the physical form reflects the moral characteristics appropriate for the subject depicted. Accordingly, the statue of a great man should reveal *decorum* (propriety), *dignitas* (esteem), and *auctoritas* (authority). Likewise, an architectural environment should evoke the associations appropriate for the particular divine or human occupants. Vitruvius directly associates the use, size, decoration, and form of a house with the status of the resident. For example, he argues, “persons of high rank . . . should be provided princely vestibules, lofty halls . . . libraries and basilicas” (6.5.2). Ethical standards for architecture, however, were not adhered to in Rome of the first century B.C. Throughout the city, important deities resided in shabby temples and minor political figures lived in great houses.²⁷ Furthermore, the overall urban form did not elicit an elevated moral response. Rome had earned *auctoritas* through her illustrious history, yet her indecorous plan and disheveled appearance signaled a lack of propriety.

Capital cities bear a dual charge. They house the state government and at the same time preserve and convey collective memories and aspirations. In several modern capitals, these associations coalesce in a single building or complex. The urban image of Washington, D.C., is embodied in the Mall with its surrounding buildings, the import of London in the Houses of Parliament.²⁸ Rome harbored the collective memories of the Roman peoples, but was not technically a national capital. Rather, it stood as the premier city among allied city-states. The patrician Senate and various assemblies of the people governed the Republic. The Senate had its own meeting hall, the Curia, but it also met frequently in other buildings throughout the large city. Similarly, the assemblies congregated at different locales; they had no permanent, monumental structure. The heart of the city, the venerated Forum

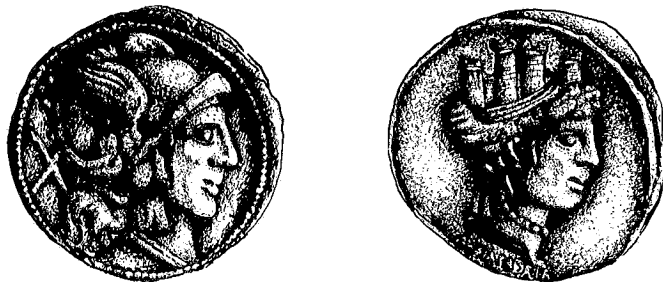


Figure 30. Helmeted Roma on a South Italian coin from the early second century B.C. (left); Alexandria with turreted crown (Tyche) on a coin of the first-century B.C. Drawing: author.

Romanum, possessed a strong power of place, yet in the Republican period, its collection of buildings did not readily compose a unified portrait (fig. 13). Republican Rome had neither a singular visual symbol nor a cohesive overall program precisely because the Republic itself was multivalent.²⁹

The belief in place-specific spirits furthered the heterogeneous image of Rome. The Romans embodied each independent being and place with a *genius*, or guardian spirit, who determined and reflected its unique character.³⁰ By definition, every spirit of a place, *genius loci*, in the city was particularized. Thus, the city had almost as many *genii locorum* as people, all vying for attention and stature within the cityscape. Rome had its own, all-encompassing city *genius*, yet even this spirit of the city was not singular.³¹ The *genius* of Rome represented the collective, and thus reflected the Republic and Roman society rather than the city itself (fig. 30).³²

A group anxiety pervades the unfocused, often contradictory contemporary urban descriptions of Rome. Attempts to reframe the criteria for urban greatness to favor Rome had limited impact on the world's perception of the city. By the early first century B.C., the Romans wielded control over the whole inhabited world. Their capital had a commanding role on the world stage, but it was not dressed for the part. The inappropriateness of the city's appearance and overall image in relation to its stature was against the perceived order of things. Furthermore, it reflected badly upon the powerful individuals who resided there. Gradually, this disparity became too overt to ignore and a call arose for patrons to fund buildings as, "the renown of our empire demand" (Cic. *Verr.*2.4.68).

→ CONTEXT FOR CHANGE

Intimate contact with Greek cities affected Roman ideas about urban appearance. As early as the fourth century B.C., the Romans had carried artworks and even architectural elements as booty from Greek cities back to Rome. Though they could not literally transport urban environments, the Romans did transfer concepts of urban imagery. Many had first-hand familiarity with the grand cities of the east.³³ In the second and first centuries B.C., thousands of soldiers, sailors, and merchants traveled widely throughout the Mediterranean. More sedentary Romans knew of great Hellenistic capitals and cities from literary and pictorial descriptions.³⁴ Even the most uneducated had heard of the lush gardens of Antioch, the grand palaces of Alexandria, and the beautiful siting of Syracuse.³⁵ Cicero records that when Marcellus captured Syracuse in 211 B.C., he left the city intact believing "it would not tend to the credit of Rome that he should blot out and destroy all this beauty" (*Verr.*2.4.120).

The contrast with Rome was palpable. In 195 B.C., Livy has Cato lament that many Romans praised the ornaments of Corinth and Athens while belittling the terra-cotta antefixes on temples in Rome (34.4.3). Beyond the admirable proportions, decorations, and rich materials of Greek buildings, Roman observers commented on the large scale of eastern projects. Aristotle and other Hellenistic authors had equated largeness with superiority.³⁶ The Temple of Apollo at Didyma measured approximately 5,668 sq. meters; the largest temple in Rome, that of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, measured approximately 3,339 sq. meters (fig. 31). Equally obvious, Hellenistic cities displayed formal planning, with regularized districts or plans imposed by powerful patrons.

In control for decades, Hellenistic rulers (or dynasties) had the time, motivation, and resources to rebuild entire urban regions and lay out new cities. The Hellenistic city was a vehicle for not only individual or dynastic fame, but also for state propaganda, acculturation, and control. Dynasts viewed opulent capital cities and grand public facilities as a means to unite the diverse populations under their control.³⁷ The comparative unity of patronage focused the image of these cities. For example, the Ionian city of Pergamon developed over many years, yet the continuing patronage by a primary family, the Attalids, resulted in a scheme notable for its stylistic coherency and directed message (fig. 32). Rome, with her wood and stucco temples embellished with terra-cottas, her confusing skein of streets, and buildings by diverse patrons, could not compare to the unified urban image created by the directed vision of a single dynasty.

The Romans did not hide their envy. They admired both the appearance of Hellenistic cities and the political advantages of focused urban patronage. Cicero tells that earlier Romans decided only three cities in the world could support the dignity and name of an imperial city: Carthage, Corinth, and Capua (*Leg.*2.32.87). With great determination, they destroyed the first two both politically and physically. By the end of the second century B.C., hardly a vestige of Carthage or Corinth remained to be seen. The Romans chose an alternative solution for Capua, located closer to home in Campania on the Italian coast south of Rome. Rather than razing this Greek-founded city, they deprived the Capuans of their territories and the right to govern. In 63 B.C., Cicero argued against a proposed resettlement; with derision, he stressed the Campanians' arrogance, based in part on pride of the city's arrangement and beauty. Cicero invited his listeners to imagine the Capuans' reaction if their city were augmented: "They will laugh at and despise Rome, planted in mountains and deep valleys, its garrets hanging up aloft, its roads none of the best, by-ways of the narrowest, in comparison with their own Capua" (*Leg.*2.35.95-6). Cicero's arguments were persua-

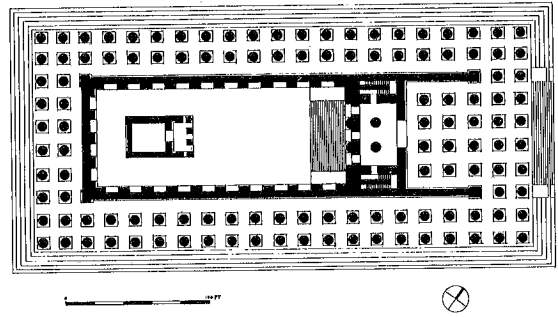


Figure 31. Scale comparison of plans for the temples of Apollo at Didyma (top) and Jupiter Optimus Maximus at Rome. Drawing: Rodica Reif.

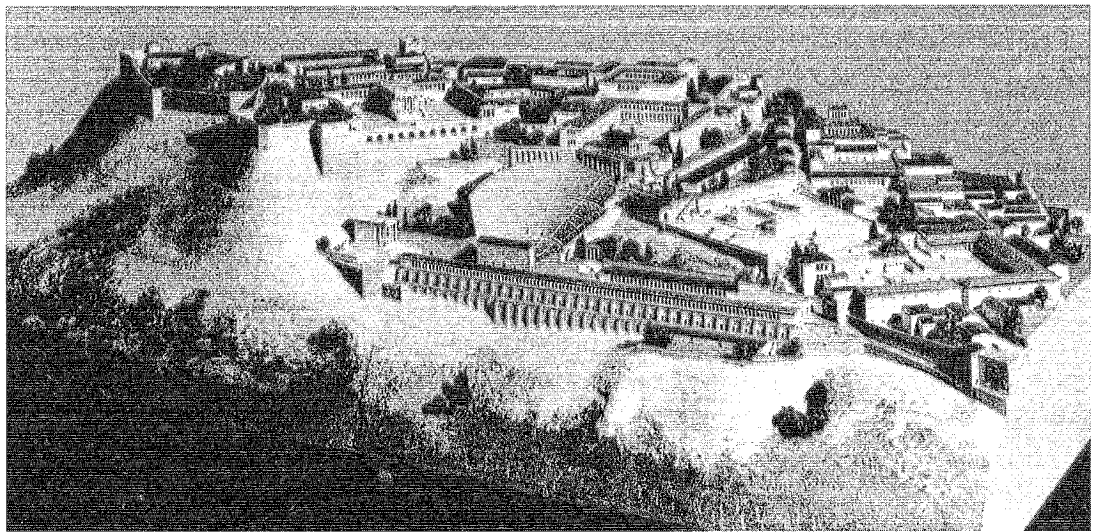
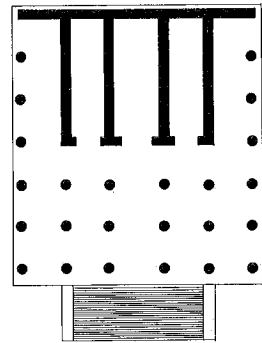


Figure 32. Model of ancient Pergamon. Model by H. Schleif, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antiken-Sammlung.37.

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sive; Capua was not resettled. However, this city remained a constant visual reminder of Greek superiority in urban aesthetics.

Efforts to improve Rome's urban image coincided with a redirection and intensification of private architectural patronage. The writings of Cicero reflect both the yearning for a less opportunistic climate and the competitive pressures of his own day. He idealizes the past, venerating citizens of the early Republic who exhibited modesty in all things.³⁸ Such men resided in simple structures and erected buildings for the collective good, not for personal gain. Cicero claims, "The Roman people hate private luxury, they love public magnificence."³⁹ He explains how private citizens assumed responsibility for impressive public structures in Rome, while erecting modest homes for themselves. In particular, the *mos maiorum*, the customs of the ancestors, exhorted victorious generals to "employ their booty and spoils on monuments to the immortal gods . . . or for the embellishment of Rome."⁴⁰ Triumphators dutifully erected numerous victory monuments, primarily in the southwestern Campus Martius near the Porta Triumphalis (cf. fig. 45). By their very nature, however, such works were not primarily for the public's benefit. Victory monuments in Rome were blatant self-promotions championing a general's achievement. Similarly, triumphal parades were both important urban events and the means for generals to advertise their distant achievements (Polyb.6.15.8). Cicero gives a vivid, moralizing description of a triumph:

What . . . is the use of yon chariot, of the generals that walk in chains before it, of the models of [captured] towns, of the gold and the silver, of the lieutenants and the tribunes on horseback, of the shouting of the troops, and of all the pageantry of the show? Vanity, mere vanity I tell you . . . to hunt applause, to drive through the city, to wish to be a gazing-stock. (Cic.Pis.60; cf. Livy 37.59.3-5)

Given such evidence in his own day, Cicero acknowledges that the Roman people "have ever been, beyond all nations, seekers after glory and greedy of praise" (*Leg.Man.*19-21). In the hierarchical society of Rome, the desire for glory (*cupido gloriae*) motivated many actions.⁴¹ Military glory and other achievements brought a citizen *auctoritas* and the concomitant elevation in social and political standing.⁴²

By the first century B.C., the individual quest for fame dominated and was made possible by the city.⁴³ Building in Rome brought personal celebrity and prestige.⁴⁴ There was a direct positive correlation between individuals who patronized architecture in the city and political success, and a negative correlation between those who did not make notable additions to the city's physical form.⁴⁵ A great building project in Rome brought the patron votes, prestige, and enduring remembrance. Conversely, damage to extant struc-

tures or neglect brought disrepute.⁴⁶ When Gaius Verres misappropriated funds for repairs to the Temple of Castor and Pollux, Cicero ranked the severity of the crime in relation to the building's significance; the temple was not only an historical monument, it stood in the most revered of public places, the Forum Romanum. Cicero exhorted the jury, "think of the Temple of Castor, that famous and glorious memorial of the past, that sanctuary which stands where the eyes of the nation may rest upon it every day" (*Verr.*2.1.129).

Everyone in Rome with the means vied for recognition through increasingly extravagant building projects.⁴⁷ The fierce competition compelled patrons to make their structures ever larger and more opulent. Exotic imported materials appeared more and more frequently.⁴⁸ In the 70s B.C., Marcus Lepidus used luscious giallo antico for his door sills and Lucullus introduced a black marble to Rome called Lucullean in his honor. When aedile in 58 B.C., Marcus Scaurus imported 360 marble columns to ornament the stage of a temporary theater; after the performances, he moved the columns to his own house (*Pliny HN.*36.4-8). The standards for architectural magnificence constantly escalated. Pliny records that a house considered beautiful in 78 B.C. was not even rated in the top 100 residences 35 years later.⁴⁹ Caught up in the frenzy of competition, patrons did not always benefit from such urban investments in fame. They created extravagances that shocked and alienated the public and often overextended themselves financially. Looking back at the excesses of this period, Pliny wondered why sumptuary laws never curbed the use of extravagant marbles (*HN.*36.4-6).

Not surprisingly, reliance on architecture as an indicator of stature soon led to misapplication and devaluation. Patrons increasingly used magnificent buildings to acquire fame, rather than ennobling modest structures by their own renown or achievements. Cicero argues, "a man's dignity may be enhanced by the house he lives in, but not wholly secured by it; the owner should bring honor to his house, not the house to its owner." Yet in the same passage, he describes an imposing house in Rome: "Everyone went to see it, and it was thought to have gained votes for the owner" (*Off.*1.39). The situation extended even outside the city on the Tiber. Cicero tells that the consul Lucius Lucullus was criticized for constructing an ostentatious villa at Tusculum, but he justified his excess by pointing to the showy structures of his two neighbors of lower standing, an equestrian and a freedman; "as their villas also were most luxurious, he thought that he ought to have the same privilege" (*Leg.*3.13).

Buildings in Rome stood as enduring texts, read by generations of urban observers. Blatant advertisements underscored the direct connection between patrons and structures throughout the city. Inscriptions, project

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names, and programmatic artwork all promoted the donor responsible for each major public building.⁵⁰ Among the most explicit were the dedicatory inscriptions on temples, important works in every Roman city. Religious and State restrictions tightly regulated religious patronage. According to tradition, only a magistrate with *imperium* could dedicate a public temple.⁵¹ State projects authorized by the Senate bore the inscription *S.P.Q.R.* (*Senatus Populusque Romanus*), yet frequently also carried the name of the officiating magistrate. For example, the two censors of 179 B.C. contracted for the erection of a large structure in the Forum Romanum. The project came to be called the Basilica Aemilia in honor of the more prominent censor, M. Aemilius Lepidus.⁵² Through the original patron, a projects' fame accrued to the donors, descendants, or, more broadly, to the entire family or *gens*. As a result, the condition of a donated structure became an overt barometer of a family's economic and political health. To maintain their prestige, descendants were obliged to keep up the maintenance of "family" buildings virtually in perpetuity. Thus, over the decades, the Aemilii continually repaired the basilica that bore their name, even when doing so strained their resources.

By the first century B.C., Rome's urban fabric showed obvious signs of wear and tear. Private and public custodianship of urban buildings dwindled. Following the internal crises of the Gracchan period (132–121 B.C.), the State increasingly was preoccupied with calamities ranging from internecine conflicts to famine, from external wars to fires. As a result, the government paid little attention to the regular maintenance of the urban infrastructure and public buildings, or even to preserving public holdings. When famine threatened in 93 B.C., the government raised funds to purchase grain by selling valuable properties around the Capitoline (Oros. 5.18). With funds limited, both magistrates and private patrons selectively intervened in the built environment. Lowest priority was given to projects with limited prestige value such as road or sewer repairs. Private maintenance of existing public buildings also declined. In some cases, donor families had died out, leaving no one responsible; in others, they lacked the funds or desire to restore crumbling public structures. Wealthy patrons and magistrates continued to fund new projects, primarily for personal glory, not the betterment of the *res publica*.

The situation was exacerbated by the hegemony of powerful generals who wielded oversized power and nurtured a global vision from campaigns abroad. In 88 B.C., the general Sulla boldly marched on Rome. Following a bloody civil war, he became dictator in 81 B.C. With a private treasury filled from wars and proscriptions, he planned architectural works appropriate to his elevated status. Sulla's projects in Rome reveal a grandeur of conception

and overt urban monumentality lacking in earlier Republican works. After a fire in 83 B.C. destroyed the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline, Sulla began an extensive rebuilding. He planned to replace the Etruscan-style structure with a towering marble temple like the Hellenistic Greek examples he had seen in the east. For this purpose, he imported gigantic columns from the Olympieion temple at Athens.⁵³ Because sacrosanct parts of the structure could not be altered, the renovation appeared awkward (fig. 22). After Sulla's death, work on the temple fell to the proconsul Catulus (Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.69). He dedicated the temple in 69 B.C., keeping the height envisioned by Sulla, but placing his own name on the building for all to see (Val. Max. 4.4.11).

Catulus also completed the nearby record office, the Tabularium (fig. 27). No ancient sources connect the Tabularium specifically with Sulla, yet its scale, prominence, proximity to other Sullan projects, and the involvement of Catulus all point toward his involvement.⁵⁴ The construction of the Tabularium replaced the irregular profile of the saddle on the southeast edge of the Capitoline hill with a monumental, balanced silhouette. From a rough tufa base rose several floors with evenly spaced arched openings flanked by engaged columns.⁵⁵ The Tabularium's towering elevation served as a formal curtain wall defining the northwestern edge of the Forum Romanum. Thus, the project reflects a concern with the staging of new and existing structures into a cohesive scheme. Such urban choreography was well known in Hellenistic cities where, as in this instance, it was made possible through individual effort.⁵⁶

In conjunction with the projects on the Capitoline, Sulla began to rework the Forum Romanum. He rejected the orientation to the cardinal points followed by earlier buildings and positioned his projects northeast/southwest loosely aligned to the temples of Saturn, Castor and Pollux, and the Basilica Aemilia. This arrangement placed greater emphasis on the imposing wall of the Tabularium rising above the Forum.⁵⁷ A new paving of Monte Verde tufa elevated the central open area of the Forum nearly a meter, with the edges defined by polygonal blocks of selce. In effect, the materials coded different areas, with selce for road surfaces and tufa for area pavements. The change in level necessitated the reworking of virtually every structure in the Forum, as well as the roads leading up to the Palatine and Capitoline hills.⁵⁸ The most dramatic alteration was the rebuilding of the Curia Hostilia. Having doubled the number of senators, Sulla of necessity had to enlarge the Senate house (Pliny *HN*.34.26). Although the reworking of the Curia overtly expressed oligarchic power, Sulla's cumulative actions confirmed the possibility of near-absolute individual control. Looking at the rebuilt senate house, Piso remarked, "[it] seemed smaller since its enlargement," because

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the new building could not draw upon the rich power of place developed by the former structure (Cic.*Fin.*5.2). From atop the realigned speaker's platform or Rostra, a sculpted representation of Sulla on horseback oversaw all actions in the Forum.⁵⁹

In addition to transforming the Capitoline and Forum, Sulla funded two temples to Hercules and made improvements in the roads throughout the city.⁶⁰ He also enlarged the *pomerium*. A sacred urban border determined by augurs, the *pomerium* imposed religious restrictions against building along its line. By extending the *pomerium*, Sulla released land from this prohibition, thereby transforming undeveloped property near the urban core into marketable real estate.⁶¹

Collectively, the range and extent of Sullan alterations were made possible by a change in the scale and conceptualization of individual patronage. As Dictator, Sulla was able to make his own expansive interventions at Rome and direct those of others. Holding dictatorial powers in perpetuity, he began to look beyond individual projects to urban environments as conveyors of his elevated personal stature. Such a reconceptualization of urban patronage was directly in line with the examples of Hellenistic dynasts. Despite such changes, Sulla remains in many ways a transitional figure. He gradually restored constitutional government and, following the model of Cincinnatus who set aside the dictatorship in 458 B.C., retired to the countryside in 79 B.C. Ailing health may have prompted his withdrawal; equally possible, the general was not yet willing to threaten the Republic. Sulla's expanded interventions in the cityscape reflect his expanded personal powers and quest for fame, yet simultaneously are in the tradition of earlier magistrates who funded urban projects to enhance the public realm.

Pompey, a precocious general under Sulla, further strained Roman conventions regarding fame and architectural patronage. Whereas Sulla honored the traditional Roman framework for acquiring glory, Pompey simultaneously exploited an eastern Hellenistic model.⁶² He took Alexander the Great as his ideal, even adding *magnus* (the Great) to his name when still in his twenties (Plut.*Vit.Pomp.*13). Throughout his career, Pompey flaunted extraordinary commands and powers.⁶³ Similarly, he spent his booty on architectural projects in Rome notable for their size and form.⁶⁴ Conceptually, the general's buildings teetered at the edge of Roman propriety.

Where Sulla focused his attention on the long-venerated *loci* of central Rome, Pompey in contrast located his greatest project in the Campus Martius. This relatively open flood plain north of the city center accommodated large-scale public gatherings outside the *pomerium*. Activities took place on the grassy plain itself or in rickety temporary structures of wood. During his travels in the east, Pompey saw many Greek stone theaters; he was

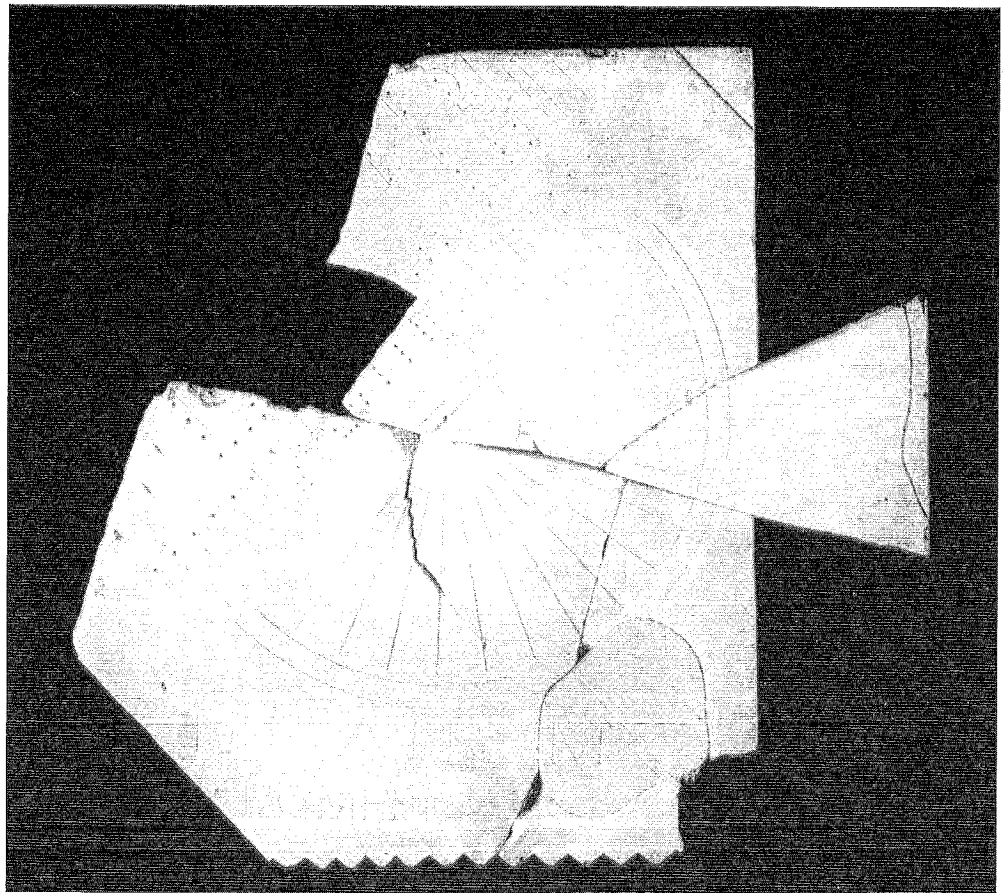


Figure 33. Fragments of the Severan map, the *Forma Urbis Romae*, showing the Theater of Pompey. Photo: Negativo Archivio Fotografico dei Musei Capitolini #X G/31.

impressed. While at Mytilene on Lesbos in 62 B.C., Plutarch tells us the general “was very pleased with the theater . . . and had sketches and plans of it made for him, with the intention of building one like it in Rome, only larger and more magnificent” (*Vit. Pomp.*42). On his return to Rome, Pompey began a stone theater in the central Campus Martius (fig. 33).⁶⁵

Before Pompey, Roman conservatism had prevented the construction of permanent, Greek-style theaters. In 154 B.C., the Senate had objected to construction of a stone auditorium in Rome arguing that such a structure would encourage the people to squander their time at performances and foster sedition.⁶⁶ To circumvent conservative reaction, Pompey attached a temple to Venus Victrix atop the theater’s cavea, calling the curving seats mere “steps” up to the shrine.⁶⁷ Before the battle of Pharsalus, he dreamed of entering his theater to great applause and offering the spoils of war to Venus

Victrix (Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 68; *Vit. Caes.* 42). Although much has been made of Pompey's subservient respect for traditional scruples, more should be made of his simple and familiar solution to a problem of individual and urban decorum. Other Italian cities had had permanent theaters for generations.⁶⁸ In the Mediterranean basin, civic competition for fame required a city to have facilities for great performances. By playing the champion of conservative communal beliefs Rome had restrained her own *gloria*, and thus that of her great men. Pompey broke these bonds. Although some criticized his transparent justification for construction of a permanent theater, others celebrated Pompey's solution. The large and magnificent structure affirmed the extended scope of Rome's fame and that of the theater's patron.

Like Pompey, the impressive stone theater was called "the great" (Pliny *HN.* 7.158). The title was deserved. Seating over 11,000 and elaborately decorated, the theater remained the most important in Rome for centuries.⁶⁹ Adjoining the structure stood a spacious, fully enclosed quadriportico with ornamental plantings, displays of art and booty, and a curia for Senate meetings (Prop. 2.32.11-16; Pliny *HN.* 35.59). The complex provided the general with appropriate environments for both literary and political performances, and highlighted his achievements. For the dedication in 55 B.C., Pompey arranged unprecedented spectacles.⁷⁰ The complex brought Pompey renown; simultaneously, the theater basked in the glory of its patron. Among the rich artwork stood statues of the fourteen nations subdued by the military prowess of Pompey.⁷¹

The reciprocal aggrandizement of building and individual was furthered by Pompey's personal relocation to the Campus Martius. Plutarch tells us that during the construction of "the beautiful and famous theater which is called after him, [Pompey] constructed close by it, like a small boat attached to a big ship, a house for himself which was grander than the one he had before" (*Vit. Pomp.* 40-1). Also in the area, the general developed expansive gardens, or *horti*.⁷² Though not Rome's first private pleasure park modeled after lush, Hellenistic examples, the large Horti of Pompey were strategically sited. Near to the voting place of the tribal assemblies, these gardens provided the manipulative general with an excellent location for bribery (Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 44). Furthermore, the loose grouping of the *horti*, grand theater, portico, and residence of Pompey evoked memories of Hellenistic palace complexes with their pleasure gardens, opulent residences, sculpture-laden porticos, and nearby theaters all honoring one individual or, rather, one family.⁷³

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The allusion to a royal enclave reflected the enlarged world view of Romans in the late Republic. Pompey stressed that he alone in Roman history had triumphed over three continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa

(Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 45–6). Yet neither he nor other Romans were quite sure how such achievement fit in the existing Roman context for personal fame. As Leo Braudy has pointed out, “Pompey had the imperialist sensibility before there was an actual Roman Empire,” and, indeed, before he knew all the ramifications of such a sensibility.⁷⁴ He stood in the awkward position of a man receiving acknowledgment from an audience far broader than that which had established the Roman criteria for success. The uncertainty of this position is reflected in Pompey’s approach to architectural patronage. He used his ample booty to build projects in Rome. Following the example of other triumphators, he focused on the Campus Martius, yet built an enclave of unparalleled splendor securely linked to his private residence.

By interrelating public and private projects, Pompey intuitively broadened the relationship between the city and individual patron. In first-century Rome, projects got larger and larger to accommodate the greater and greater status of individuals. As the political framework realigned to handle autocratic power, individual patronage responded in harmony. Generals vying for control made increasingly expansive gestures in the cityscape, internalizing projects to distill the potency of their architectural messages. The groundwork was laid for one individual to take the entire cityscape as a memorial to his fame and mold it into a directed image.

JULIUS CAESAR AND ROME

In comparison to Sulla, Gaius Julius Caesar had a far clearer idea of himself and the propagandistic possibilities of architectural patronage. At first he did not seek, as had Pompey, “extraordinary” advancement through the *cursus honorum*.⁷⁵ Working loosely within the system, Caesar honed his political skills. After victories in Spain, the Senate awarded Caesar a triumph in 60 B.C. Anxious to run for the consulship, he declined the honor, for a triumph would have required him to make preparations outside the *pomerium* during the crucial election period.⁷⁶ His strategy paid off; Caesar held his first consulship in 59 B.C. When his opponents threw up constitutional obstructions to his proposed land act, he used force to secure passage. With good reason, the Senate feared Caesar’s military strength and moved to block his proconsular appointment in the following year. Caesar was prepared. He had forged alliances with the powerful men of his day: Pompey, Crassus, and Cicero. With the first two, he formed a political *amicitia*, the so-called “First Triumvirate.” Through this unofficial agreement, Pompey got approval for his settlement of the Near East and support for his veterans; Crassus received financial advantages; and Caesar gained the proconsulship in Cisalpine Gaul and Illyricum for 5 years.

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