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978-0-521-70140-2 - The City in the Roman West, c. 250 BC-c. AD 250

Ray Laurence, Simon Esmonde Cleary and Gareth Sears

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The City in the Roman West, c. 250 BC – c. AD 250

The city is widely regarded as the most characteristic expression of the social, cultural and economic formations of the Roman Empire. This was especially true in the Latin-speaking West, where urbanism was much less deeply ingrained than in the Greek-speaking East but where networks of cities grew up during the centuries following conquest and occupation. This up-to-date and well-illustrated synthesis provides students and specialists alike with an overview of the development of the city in Italy, Gaul, Britain, Germany, Spain and North Africa, whether their interests lie in ancient history, Roman archaeology or the wider history of urbanism. It accounts not only for the city's geographical and temporal spread and its associated monuments (such as amphitheatres and baths), but also for its importance to the rulers of the Empire as well as the provincials and locals.

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521701402

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First published 2011

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Laurence, Ray, 1963–

The city in the Roman West, c.250 BCc–c.AD 250 / Ray Laurence,
Simon Esmonde Cleary, Gareth Sears.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-521-70140-2 (pbk.)

1. Cities and towns – Rome. 2. Urbanization – Rome. 3. Sociology, Urban – Rome.

4. City planning – Rome. I. Esmonde Cleary, A. S. (A. Simon) II. Sears, Gareth,
1977– III. Title.

DG70.A1L38 2011

307.760937–dc22

2010053225

ISBN 978-0-521-87750-3 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-70140-2 Paperback

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Preface

The city is widely regarded as the most characteristic expression of the social, cultural and economic formations of the Roman empire, perhaps especially in the Latin-speaking areas of the empire where urbanism was much less deeply engrained than in the Greek East. Yet there is no textbook (or book for that matter) that provides students with an overview of the city in the western Roman Empire. There are numerous reasons for this, one being that most academics focus on the study of the city in a single province or within a limited geographical region. We took a step to overcome this limitation to our understanding of the Roman city and began a dialogue that shared our expertise on the Roman city in North Africa (Sears); in Italy (Laurence) and in the North-West provinces (Esmonde Cleary). This three-way discussion produced some unexpected results that altered the way we conceived of the Roman city: certainly all of us gained from the experience. What it showed was that any single region could not encapsulate the variation in form, time and space associated with the Roman city. The results of our discussion are presented here.

We have used standard conventions and abbreviations for referring to ancient authors; these can be found in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (2nd edition edited by S. Hornblower and A.J. Spawforth) and for abbreviations of journals see *L'Année Epigraphique*. Although we have included numerous plans and illustrations etc., we refer readers to *The Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (edited by R. J. A. Talbert) for locations of cities mentioned in the text.

We wish to acknowledge the support of colleagues in the Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity at the University of Birmingham, in particular Henry Buglass and Graham Norrie who went beyond the call of duty in the production of the line drawings and photographs respectively and deserve our warmest thanks. Michael Sharp at Cambridge University Press has consistently provided support for this project. The comments of the five anonymous referees, three who reported on the original proposal and two

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who reported on the text, have our warmest thanks for raising a number of issues that we had not foreseen. Sections of the book have been read by students at Birmingham, who offered further comments on the ease of use of the volume from their perspective. It has not been possible to take account of publications appearing since May 2009.