

# The origin of the earliest Roman cities in Catalonia: An examination from the perspective of archaeology\*

Josep Guitart\*\*

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

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## ABSTRACT

In recent decades, the progress in archaeology applied to knowledge of the Roman cities in the Catalan-speaking lands has begun to furnish a new perspective on the question of the origins of these cities. In this article, which focuses on Catalonia, and in the one planned for the next issue focusing on Valencia, we shall examine this topic, which also provides valuable information on the Romans' earliest presence here. With just a handful of exceptions, the majority of Roman cities documented in Catalonia were newly founded by the Romans. With them, a network of new cities was built that had a profound influence on the process of Romanisation that had gotten underway during the Second Punic War and culminated at the end of the Republican period with the founding of Barcino, the predecessor of today's Barcelona. The archaeological information provided by the cities of Tarraco, Baetulo, Iluro, Iesso, Aeso, Gerunda and Roman Emporiae, among others, furnishes fragmentary yet highly significant information that enables us to fine-tune the chronologies of their starting dates and the characteristics of their earliest development with regard to the historical context of the time, which unquestionably marked the first steps in their formation as cities. The early years of the 1st century AD were particularly dynamic in terms of this urbanising activity, which was most likely not just inspired but also planned by the Roman authorities. The new cities, with their regular layouts in rigorously orthogonal grids and their fortified premises, brought to Catalonia the urban models that the Romans had developed during their years of expansion around the Italian peninsula. Along with the construction of the roadway network, they would lay the foundations for the structure of the country, which would mark the entire Roman period and largely remain in place in the subsequent centuries and even until today.

**KEY WORDS:** Romanisation, Roman Republican period, ancient topography, Roman urban planning, Hispania Citerior, Tarraco, Emporiae, Baetulo, Iluro, Iesso

Knowledge regarding the origins of the earliest Roman cities in the Catalan-speaking lands has made major strides in recent decades thanks to the information provided by developments in the archaeology applied at the sites, which potentially serve as the most important source of information for enriching this knowledge, in addition to being a valuable legacy from our cultural heritage.

A little over 30 years now, in 1978, Miquel Tarradell devoted a study to the Roman cities in the Catalan-speaking lands which served as the groundwork for the speech he delivered upon his investiture in the Royal Academy of Belles-Lettres of Barcelona.<sup>1</sup> Through his sweeping mas-

tery of the archaeological knowledge available at that time, he offered a brilliant synthesis, remarking on the importance of studying the ancient world for our history if we wish to understand the structure of the country. The overview that Tarradell provided enabled him to make numerous reflections in which he linked the issue of the Roman period to the historical process as a whole. In his desire to provide a global view of the subject matter, he stressed a variety of considerations, such as the territorially balanced distribution of the urban network forged during the Roman period and the patterns of its evolution until it linked up with the shape of the country in the mediaeval period. However, he placed the most emphasis on the issue of the origins of those cities and their role in transforming the pre-Roman world of the Iberian civilisation and its eventual remnants within the context of Romanisation. He tried to discern the continuities and the meaning of the newly founded cities, and he formulated fascinating working hypotheses, always with the caution of a scholar who is aware of the shortcomings of

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\*\* Contact address: Josep Guitart. Department of Ancient and Mediaeval Studies. Faculty of Philosophy and Letters. Autonomous University of Barcelona. University Campus. E-08193 Cerdanyola del Vallès, Barcelona, Catalonia, EU. Tel: +34 935813316. E-mail: josep.guitart@uab.cat



Figure 1. Map of Catalonia with the location of the main cities in the Roman period: Aeso (Isona), Ilerda (Lleida), Dertosa (Tortosa), Iesso (Guissona), Sigarra (Els Prats de Rei), Tarraco (Tarragona), Egara (Terrassa), Barcino (Barcelona), Baetulo (Badalona), Iluro (Mataró), Blandae (Blanes), Emporiae (Empúries), Gerunda (Girona), Auso (Vic), Aquis Voconis (Caldes de Malavella), Aquae Calidae (Caldes de Montbui) and Iulia Lybica (Llívia).

the documentation available. “Studies on cities, based primarily on archaeological documents,” he used to say, “are the outcome of many years and teams. Supporting or refuting aspects we have mentioned now entails years and years of work.”<sup>2</sup>

The three decades that have elapsed since then have been fruitful for archaeology, which has exponentially developed as Catalonia recovered the institutions and the social and political awareness of the value of its archaeological heritage, and as mechanisms were implemented that should enable them to be safeguarded and studied.

However, it is true, and we should acknowledge it, that despite the headway made, the archaeological information available to us is still quite fragmentary, and that the answers to many of the deductions we would like to draw from it must still be founded on evidence that is not always quite as solid as we would like for our conclusions to be. We should not forget that the majority of sites containing the main bulk of the archaeological documentation on those cities from the Roman period lie underneath the most important, dense and dynamic cities today. This partly explains why the majority of archaeological interventions that have been conducted in recent years have not been planned following scientific criteria to resolve previously identified interpretative issues. Rather they have been planned instead based on the needs of preventative archaeology, which first tries to combine today’s urban dynamics with the preservation of its archaeological heritage, and which often has to do so with actions that are too closely determined by day-to-day affairs.

In any event, the result is clear. The abundant new doc-

umentation provided by this intense archaeological activity provides us with a fresh glimpse into the process of how these earliest Roman cities were founded, as well as typological and chronological details that enable us to insert them much more clearly into these lands’ process of Romanisation. Likewise, an interest in the subject within the general context of classical archaeology has led to a multiplication in the number of interpretative and reflective studies. It has produced extensive literature and recent collections as significant as the ones published in the volume on Valencia and the earliest cities in Hispania,<sup>3</sup> which also includes seminal articles on certain Roman cities in Italy, and the even more recent publication devoted to the earliest Roman cities in “Hispania Tarraconensis”.<sup>4</sup>

For this reason, we believe that now is a good time to revisit this subject, spotlighting the issue of the origins of these cities and showing how the progress in archaeology, which Tarradell himself with his erudition contributed so much to modernizing, enables us to pinpoint and now considerably enrich that scene. The proliferation of information and the complexity of the documentation counsel us to focus this first article on the earliest Roman cities in Catalonia, although our aim is to complement it with another article focusing on the Roman cities in Valencia in the next issue of this publication (Fig. 1).

A first statement worth making is that the Roman cities that we are documenting in Catalonia are, with just a handful of exceptions, newly built cities that had a profound impact on the process of Romanisation which had gotten underway in the years of the Second Punic War. This city-building culminated when Caesar bestowed colonial law on Tarraco and when the colony of Barcino (Barcelona) was founded during Augustus’ reign. In Catalonia, this process led to a new urban habitat structure and the abandonment of the majority of pre-Roman Iberian settlements that had existed when this process got underway in the late 3rd century BC.

Back at the start of his military presence in Hispania, Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio had set up a small garrison in Tarraco (Tarragona) after the first battle with the Carthaginian army in 218 BC, at the beginning of the Punic War. The site chosen was the upper part of a seaside hill that visually dominated the bay, which was to serve as his port near the outlet of the Francolí River. Titus Livius tells us how in the following year, 217 BC, the Romans and their allies glimpsed from afar (*procul visa*) the reinforcement fleet commanded by Publius Cornelius Scipio with thirty war vessels and many transport ships heaped with supplies, which disembarked in that bay (*portum Tarraconis*, wrote Livius).<sup>5</sup> That first establishment soon became a fortress and a major base of operations, and the Romans never lost control of it during the war, not even at the most critical point, in 211 BC, when the two Scipio brothers lost their lives in combat in the southern part of the Iberian Peninsula.

**TARRACO, WHICH PLINY THE ELDER DESCRIBED YEARS LATER AS *SCIPIONUM OPUS***, became one of the most important strongholds after the war and played a prominent role in the consolidation and expansion of the Romans in Hispania. We have very little information on its characteristics in those early years; however, archaeology shows that construction on the first fortification in Tarraco with its imposing stone walls must have begun quite soon, and that the wall with its defence towers was already completed by the early 2nd century BC.

In the shelter of this powerful military complex, there emerged over the course of the 2nd century BC what we can regard as the first Roman city in Catalonia. It was the outcome of a process whose details are difficult to pinpoint, but there is no doubt that towards the 1st century BC the city was already a *fait accompli*.

Here we should mention that since the late 1970s, archaeology has been providing information that proves the presence of a pre-Roman Iberian settlement on the lower part of Tarragona, between the southwest end of the coastal hill and the bay next to the river.<sup>6</sup> However, it should also be said that this part of the site has been studied very little and not very systematically, and that the information we have on this settlement is still quite sketchy today. We can only document remains scattered about at different points; some are the remnants of architectural structures that have been interpreted as dwellings, but they have not been excavated enough to properly define them.<sup>7</sup> The materials that have been found furnish evidence as far back as the 6th century BC, and the remains from the 5th and 4th centuries BC are extremely eloquent. The information from the 3rd century BC is more uneven; however, it seems that we can deduce continuity and therefore that the first Roman establishment had been located next to this pre-existing habitat. Ascertaining the role that this indigenous nucleus played in the development of the Roman city is still quite difficult today due to the flimsiness and sketchiness of the information we have at our disposal, and this, obviously, renders the interpretation quite open-ended.

It should be said that the implications of this issue have been extremely interesting for both scholars of Roman archaeology and proto-historians, and they have generated a variety of interpretations which touch on aspects of interest related to the issue we are concerned with here. The Iberian archaeologists in particular have tended to conclude that it is a rather large-sized Iberian *oppidum* (fortified settlement) which might have played a highly prominent geopolitical role in *Cessetania* and all the Iberian settlements in Catalonia.<sup>8</sup> There is no doubt that the derivations resulting from the development of these hypotheses are stimulating and have been useful for sketching a tentative interpretative model of the last phases of the Iberian world on the Catalan coast; however, this model must be proven and debated from the perspective of Roman archaeology as well. Meantime, however, it also seems appropriate to call for caution with regard to the

Tarragona site until archaeology has provided further documentation, as for the time being there is a clear disproportion between the territorial importance attributed to this site and the archaeological remains that we have. Furthermore, Tarraco's geopolitical importance in the Late Roman Republic may have influenced the historical assessment of the Iberian nucleus that predated it.<sup>9</sup> What is more, the proposal to identify this nucleus as the *Cesse* on Late Roman Republican coins is only one possible hypothesis; however, it does not necessarily result from a strict interpretation of the textual sources.<sup>10</sup>

Besides Tarraco, which we shall discuss later in its evolution during the Late Roman Republic, we have no evidence of any other urban colonisation initiative in what is today Catalonia in the entire 2nd century BC. The Roman Republic used the Tarraco fortress to ensure its political and military domination of the country during the first century of its presence, most likely with the corresponding deployment of garrisons located at strategic points as well.

In order to find the two closest Roman cities founded in those years, we have to head south to Valentia (Valencia), founded in 138 BC, and north to Narbo Martius (Narbonne), founded in 118 BC. Both are quite exceptional with regard to the patterns of Roman action at that time in the faraway western lands, but they are valuable as symptoms of the changing trends that would develop soon afterward.

Today we know that this change took place in the early years of the 1st century BC. But in neither the literary sources nor in epigraphs, nor in any other of the textual sources that remain, is there any reference to prove it. Only the archaeology conducted in Catalonia in recent decades has enabled us to deduce that in around 100 BC there was a change in the Romans' ways and means of settling the land. The archaeological proof that the coastal cities of Iluro (Mataró), Baetulo (Badalona) and Roman Emporiae, as well as the inland cities of Iesso (Guissona) and Aeso (Isona), were newly built cities founded around that time has demonstrated that by then, a new model of Roman city created in Italy during the previous centuries was being forcefully implemented in these lands.

These advances in archaeology enable us to rescue from the shadows of oblivion an important time in the history of our country when its urban network began to take shape, a network that has lasted until today. However, this progress is not bereft of uncertainties and methodological problems still awaiting resolution. Let us briefly survey to what extent archaeology has provided us with crucial information for interpreting the origins and initial phases of some of these cities. By doing so, we shall reveal how this poses new questions in our eagerness to adjust their interpretation. We will see how the efforts to get archaeology to pinpoint the initial dates of these cities as accurately as possible are particularly significant, because, as always, the timeline is the crux for being able to connect archaeology with history.

### LET US BEGIN AT *ILURO*, ON THE COAST OF LAIETANIA.

In recent years, the subsoil of the old quarter of the city of Mataró has yielded new vestiges that have enabled us to make major inroads in our knowledge of both its urban reality and the archaeological context of its surroundings when it was founded.

Archaeology shows us a city located on a slight hill around 400 metres from the current coastline and arranged based on a regular rectangular-shaped urban scheme oriented southeast to northwest, with a 21-degree deviation from the magnetic north. Despite the scant vestiges that would help us to ascertain its size, it has been realistically hypothesised at around 310 metres by 230 metres, and this would lead to a maximum area of a little over seven hectares.<sup>11</sup>

Its urban structure was organised based on an orthogonal division into *insulae* through a module measuring one *actus* (120 feet) wide. One of the resulting streets has been thoroughly documented at several points along its extension thanks to preventative excavations; this street has been interpreted as the city's *cardo maximus* or main artery (running north-south). At the point where the excavation has enabled us to determine its width, it was nine

metres. Its pavement was made of compacted clayey soil, and it had pavements on both sides measuring 1.7-1.8 metres wide. Several stretches of sewer have also been documented, along with the remains of a monumental fountain that occupied the centre of the street on one of the stretches excavated.<sup>12</sup> This street's width of nine metres was probably the result of a rectification of the initial plan, which most likely called for a more modest width that was later broadened at the expense of the contiguous *insulae*.

With regard to the *decumani* (streets running east-west), the remains are much less explicit, and consequently the model of the length of the *insulae* is difficult to accurately determine. The interpretations published have proposed the scheme of square *insulae*, but archaeology has to corroborate this in the future.

With regard to the layout of urban space, the environs of what is today the basilica of Santa Maria have been pinpointed as the possible site of the city forum, and on the southeast corner of this area remains of baths have been found dating from the imperial period, which were most likely built in the area set aside for this purpose back in the initial plans.<sup>13</sup>



Figure 2. Urban planning layout of the Roman town of *Iluro* (Mataró). Inside the black box are the sites that we have been able to date from the early years of the 1st century BC (from Garcia *et al.*, op. cit., note 14, p. 42).

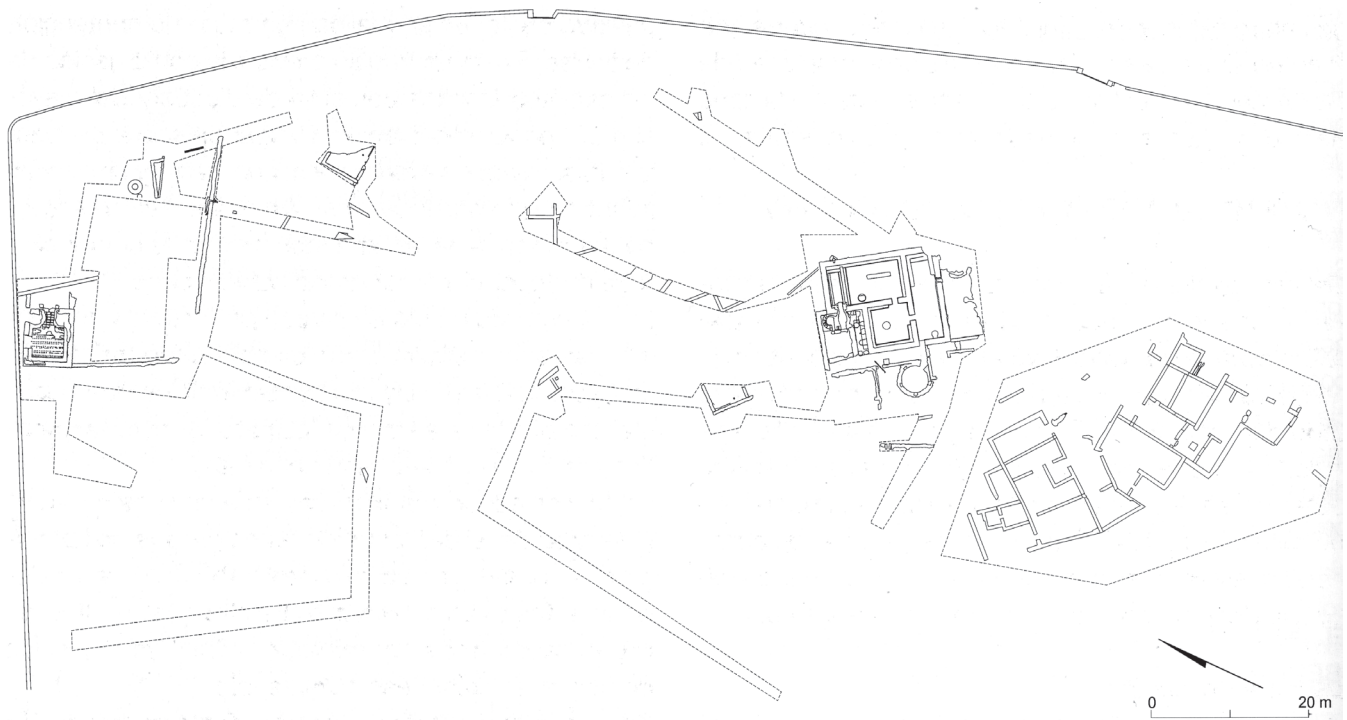


Figure 3. General layout with the baths from the 2nd century BC and the other structures documented at Ca l'Arnau (Cabrera de Mar) (from Garcia *et al.*, *op. cit.*, note 14, p. 34).

We can posit the founding of this city in the first half of the 1st century BC without any qualms. In fact, the stratigraphic dates that are clearly supported by sewers and other constructions reveal that the city's urbanisation was quite advanced by the middle of this century. However, when we ask archaeology for a more precise date for the founding of the city itself, the conclusion is a bit thornier and open to divergent interpretations owing to the scarcity of archaeological documents that shed light on the older phases. Nonetheless, several preventative excavations performed in recent years have enabled us to detect stratigraphic structures and contexts that clearly date from the early years of the 1st century BC and that are unquestionably the earliest remnants of occupation of this site.<sup>14</sup> These finds confirm the opinion that Iluro was a newly built city dating from the early years of the century. However, as is logical, at first it must have been somewhat structurally precarious and only later took shape until becoming fully consolidated by mid-century. Another interpretation, which states that these vestiges from the early 1st century BC should be considered the remains of a small agricultural or commercial settlement and therefore a non-urban predecessor of the subsequent city, does not seem convincing to me (Fig. 2).<sup>15</sup>

The recent important archaeological finds in the valley of Cabrera de Mar, at the foot of one of the most important indigenous settlements in the region of Laietania which dates back to the 6th century BC – the Burriac *oppidum* – are highly illustrative of the context in which this newly built city emerged. The excavations that got underway in 1997 at the Ca l'Arnau site, next to what is today the town of Cabrera, have revealed the remains of a

settlement with a complex structure that unquestionably dates from the second half of the 2nd century BC, although its origins might date back to the first half of the same century. The settlement lasted until the early years of the 1st century BC.<sup>16</sup>

Among the structures documented at this site, the most prominent are the very well-conserved remains of baths almost 300 square metres large. Their layout reproduces the model of Roman baths from the Late Republican period that has been so amply documented in both Italy and Hispania. This model had the three essential areas: the *apodyterium* (dressing room), the *tepidarium* (warm bath) and the *caldarium* (hot bath), the latter equipped with an oven to heat the water and with a hypocaust used solely for the pavement of the *alveus* (bathtub). The remains of spindle-shaped *tubuli* recovered in the excavation of the *caldarium* and the *tepidarium* enable us to reconstruct the vaults that must have covered these areas. Because of both its timeline, which might date back to the mid-2nd century BC, and its model and building technique, which are clearly Italian, and the presence of construction materials (*tegulae* and *imbrices*, or tiles) that might come from the area around the Gulf of Naples, this building is notably unique. Furthermore, it seems to be located in the middle of the constructions around it: just a bit further to the south of these baths an area measuring around 600 square metres has been documented with rooms laid out in a radial pattern around the area occupied by the baths (Fig. 3). Around 100 metres further south, in the site called Can Benet next to what is today the Cabrera de Mar sports facilities, new remains have been discovered, including seven *opus signinum* mosaics

decorated with mainly white and a few black *tesselae* featuring lush geometric decorations. These finds have not yet been either studied or published, but apparently they may date from the same period as the previous ones, and they probably come from a residential area that must have been part of the same complex.<sup>18</sup>

This fascinating site is still waiting to be thoroughly excavated, but its interpretation as a settlement with direct Roman affiliation does not seem off the mark; it was probably a seat of military, political and administrative power and a point for controlling the entire region. Its location at the foot of the Burriac *oppidum* speaks to us about complicity and collaboration between Roman powers and the indigenous society, an attitude that was surely common in this zone since the years of the Second Punic War.<sup>19</sup>

The timeline of this site's abandonment in the early years of the 1st century BC strongly suggests that it dovetailed with the founding of the city of Iluro. The archaeological problems, as yet unresolved, involved in attempting to fine-tune the timeline of this coincidence does not enable us to posit this date with as much authority as we

would like. However, it is quite likely that the new urban centre of Iluro, established following the parameters and models common to Roman cities, replaced this previous settlement and was built on the seaside 4.5 kilometres further northeast to become the hub of the Roman presence in this part of the region of Laietania. Years later, in his description of Hispani Citerior, Pliny described Iluro as the *oppidum civium Romanorum*, that is, literally as a fortified city of Roman citizens.<sup>20</sup>

We could also wonder how the indigenous element participated in this newly founded city, but the answer is not facile.<sup>21</sup> The Burriac *oppidum* seems to have thrived, showing signs of vitality until the mid-1st century BC, despite the fact that we have to admit that we still know very little and only have highly fragmentary knowledge of the archaeology of this great settlement, counter to what might be assumed based on its fame and strong presence in our bibliography in the past 100 years.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, the small size of the new city of Iluro rather suggests the image of a fortified town in which the main contingent was Roman or Italian, although this in no way excludes the presence of a local population.<sup>23</sup>

**LET US NOW FOCUS ON ANOTHER OF THESE NEW CITIES: BAETULO**, another *oppidum civium Romanorum* according to Pliny<sup>24</sup> also located on the Laietania coast 20 kilometres south of Iluro, under what is today the city of Badalona. Archaeology has enabled us to put forth a fairly approximate hypothesis of what must have been the fundamental scheme of the city, which had a walled, rectangular area measuring around 413 by 261 metres, that is, an area around eleven hectares large (Fig. 4).

There are quite a few archaeological remains documented in some areas of the city, despite the superimposition of today's populous city. They vaguely indicate that both the constructions and the roadways were laid out in an orthogonal fashion, forming a grid nine by seven insulae large with the crosswise roads running parallel to the coastline.

The city, located very close to the sea, rose up on the side on a slight elevation with a gentle slope facing southeast but an abrupt drop-off at the start of the beach. This topography determined the structure of the *oppidum*, which was naturally divided into a lower part with no possibility of directly connecting with the beach, and an upper part built on this slope. The forum, located in the centre, must have been in the upper part near this drop-off, probably seeking a dramatic effect and taking on the role of articulating the different zones in the city. The upper part appears to be a residential area where most of the houses documented to date are located. In contrast, the lower part seems to have been set aside for more communal purposes: bath buildings located on the far southeast of the premises, just like in Iluro, several *tabernae* (shops) and the remains of other buildings which should probably be interpreted as markets or warehouses have all been documented. The coastal



Figure 4. General layout of the archaeological remains documented in the Roman city of *Baetulo* (Badalona), with the interpretative hypothesis of its urban layout.

roadway (Via Augusta in imperial times) passed by this part of the city and entered through the gateway near the eastern corner of the walled premises. This roadway was probably the heart of the city's commercial and craft activities.<sup>25</sup>

One notable archaeological element in Baetulo is the remains of its walled premises which were built in the early days of the city. Part of its northeast facade was unearthed by the excavation performed between 1934 and 1936: 24 metres of wall, a tower and a gateway leading into the city which, because of its construction layout, we can deduce used to be framed by a semicircular arch.<sup>26</sup> The base of this fortification was built using Lugli's second modality of polygonal masonry<sup>27</sup> except for the gateway, where the fourth modality was used with trapezoidal blocks.

In 1956, part of the southeast facade of the fortification, the side facing the beach, was also excavated, in which 23 metres of wall and two semicircular towers were uncovered. The construction conserved up to 3.2 metres of height, 2.25 metres of which were the foundations. Here the building technique is quite different, as *opus caementicium* was used, clad with polygonal masonry on the exposed parts. This technique was adopted because this stretch of the wall lay over sandy land which required a deep, solid foundation. That is, the Roman builders skilfully adapted their techniques to the lay of the land where they were to build.<sup>28</sup>

The initial image of the city, then, would have been characterised by these elements: the wall protecting and delimiting it, the urban planning that organised it and marked the pattern of its future development, and probably also a temple located in the place set aside for the forum, which presided over the entire complex.

However, for the first few decades after it was founded, we have scarce information that would enable us to document the other components of the city, such as domestic architecture, public buildings and infrastructures. We should bear in mind that the first installations must have been quite austere, even temporary, and that only later were they gradually consolidated. However, archaeology does not yet enable us to precisely state the timeline of the different phases in this evolution.

The fact that the details of these oldest phases in Baetulo are still largely unpublished despite the extensive excavations that have been conducted might be due to the characteristics of the topography on which the city was built, which required a major levelling effort in order to carve out terraces as its structures consolidated. As a result, possible sediments that might have shed light on the initial stages were upset, hindering us from precisely pinpointing the time it was founded with any certainty. However, it also helps to explain the discoveries of residual materials from the early 1st century BC at archaeological levels from later dates. Thus, although the oldest archaeological strata documented so far in rigorous stratigraphic excavations may be dated from around 80 or

70 BC, they contain some ceramic remains which date back to at least the first decade of the century.<sup>29</sup>

For all of these reasons, and with reservations grounded upon the frailty of the kind of documentation we have at our disposal, it is also possible to uphold the proposed founding date of Baetulo as the start of the 1st century BC.

In any case, in the mid-1st century BC, the city's urban development was clearly consolidated. That was when the baths were built at the back of the city's lower terrace, which was most likely prepared and systematised at the same time. They are a splendid, very well-conserved example of public baths. They measured around 350 square metres all told, with a layout and building technique that rigorously adopted the architectural and functional model established and documented in the cities of Italy during the last century of the Roman Republic.<sup>30</sup>

The characteristics of the wall, the remains of the baths, which can be visited today in the basement of the Badalona Museum, and the remains of the houses with atriums documented in the upper part of the city, are elements that confirm our perception of Baetulo as a truly Roman city.

Here, too, just as in Iluro, the traditional interpretation that viewed the new city as a mere resettlement for the indigenous population does not seem very convincing, and we continue to believe that it is more accurate to interpret it as a newly founded city to initially settle a new population of Roman-Italian extraction.

The new city was not far from the site of the Iberian settlement of Mas Boscà, located on a hill that is one of the highest elevations in the coastal mountain range, perched 2.4 kilometres from the sea. The archaeology at this settlement documents a gradual abandonment that started in the mid-2nd century BC and culminated in the last quarter of the same century.<sup>31</sup> It dovetailed and must unquestionably be associated with the appearance of small rural settlements located a certain distance from the coast at the foot of the first hills in this range.

Nor in this case can archaeology very explicitly illustrate the relationship between the indigenous element and the founders of the new city; however, we can assume that the integration must have been quick and peaceful. The recent discovery of two Iberian funeral stelae bearing names that are clearly indigenous in the archaeological excavations performed in the Roman city, which must certainly date from the first half of the 1st century BC, stands as eloquent proof that quite probably reflects one aspect of this process of integration.<sup>32</sup>

The recent discovery of the Can Tacó site in the Vallès Oriental province between the towns of Montmeló and Montornès del Vallès, which is currently being excavated, even further reinforces this stance. It is a site of representation and likely residence as well: 2,200 square metres built in a clearly Roman style at some time in the second half of the 2nd century BC, ensconced on a hill located at the point formed by the Besòs River from the confluence of the Mogent and the Congost Rivers, a strategic cross-



Figure 5. View of the Can Tacó site (Montornès del Vallès) dating from the 2nd century BC, currently in the process of excavation.

roads. The main part of the building was a quadrangular body measuring 750 square metres, and the entire complex was surrounded by a perimeter wall with an entrance gateway flanked by a tower. Inside, in addition to this main body, there was also an open area, several service areas that might have housed a small garrison, and a large cistern built with the most advanced Roman technology of the day (Fig. 5).

The excavation has yielded important remains of the mural decorations of the rooms in the main part, rendered quite painstakingly following the canons of the early Pompeian style. This is an exceptional find on the Iberian Peninsula, where documented examples of this decorative style are extremely few and far between, although they have been found in Italy and especially in Pompeii, where they were used to decorate luxurious houses in the 2nd century BC. This element makes Can Tacó a settlement whose uniqueness is on par with that of Ca l'Arnau in Cabrera de Mar, at the foot of Burriac, which we discussed above. Just like the Ca l'Arnau settlement, the one in Can Tacó seems to also have been abandoned in the early years of the 1st century BC, that is, at the same time that the cities of Baetulo and Iluro were springing up along the Laietanian coast.<sup>33</sup>

The excavations of Can Tacó in the Vallès Oriental and

Ca l'Arnau-Can Benet in the Maresme must be continued and concluded; however, all evidence leads us to believe that both sites will also yield proof of a phase prior to the founding of these cities. During this purported earlier phase, Roman power was exerted and represented from these exceptional settlements, which lost their purpose and were abandoned when the two new *oppida* were founded.

**LET US NOW HEAD TO INLAND CATALONIA, TO IESSO, THE CITY OF THE IESSONIENSES**, classified by Pliny as among the *populi latinorum* of the *conventus tarraconensis*.<sup>34</sup> The location of this city has been clearly verified by both archaeology and the epigraphy in the site of what is today Guissona, in the county of La Segarra, 15 kilometres north of Cervera and a little more than 100 kilometres from the coast.

Despite the fact that our archaeological knowledge of this city is still much less mature than the two coastal cities described above, the excavations conducted in recent years have enabled us to make major headway in conclusions with regard to its urban characteristics and its timeline.

The archaeological topography of the city has gradually been defined, and the information available, though still scant, is sufficient to suggest a tentative interpretive





Figure 6. *Iesso* (Guissona): Interpretative scheme of the wall and the urban layout of the city drawn up from the information available on its archaeological topography, and superimposed on the layout of the town of Guissona today.

hypothesis about the general features of its urban layout. The northern boundary of the urban perimeter has been established with confidence thanks to the fact that part of the wall was uncovered through the excavation. For the western and southern boundaries, an analysis of aerial photographs and plot maps combined with the information provided by the archaeological remains documented have enabled us to sketch a proposed layout, as it seems

clear that the wall's ancient layout has been partially fossilised in some partitions of modern estates. Thus, despite the fact that the eastern boundary is still largely undefined today, it seems that we can deduce that the city had an irregular polygonal perimeter and a total area of almost 18 hectares.<sup>35</sup>

With regard to its urban structure, all the vestiges indicate that the city had a regular layout based on a grid of streets and insulae. The construction remains that archaeologists have been documenting in the entire site almost always show the same orientation, very close to the cardinal points with a slight deviation to the west with respect to the magnetic north. This is the same orientation found in the segments of streets that have been unearthed to date. We are familiar with several stretches of the north-south artery, which must have been the city's *cardo maximus* leading to the northern gateway of the walled premises. Based on the size of the grid, we have evidence of the remains of another street, a *cardo minor*, in the northern zone of the city, which runs one *actus* long (35.48 metres). It lies to the west of what might have been the *cardo maximus* and thus sheds light on the possible width of the insulae. In the same area, there is evidence of the vestiges of two more streets, two *decumani*, which indicate that the length of the insulae was 1.3 *actus*.

By combining this information with the possible perimeter, a hypothetical general schema was proposed that



Figure 7. Overall view of the Archaeology Park of Guissona in the process of excavation, with the remains of the north wall, the public baths and numerous houses and streets from the Roman city of *Iesso* (Guissona).

would have defined the city's urban development.<sup>36</sup> The subsequent archaeological studies, both the preventative excavations at different points in the city and the more extensive digs that have been conducted in the northern zone, have generally confirmed the validity of this hypothesis (Fig. 6).

It is precisely on the northern end of the city where we have the most archaeological finds. In this sector, an archaeology park almost two hectares large was set up in 1999. This has made it possible to embark on detailed archaeological analyses in this part of the site, and it will make it feasible to open the remains that have already been excavated to the public (Fig. 7).

One of the urban elements from the ancient city present in this zone is the remains of a long stretch of the northern facade of the wall. Its presence was detected during the probe campaign carried out in 1984, and even back then an initial archaeological assessment of it was rendered.<sup>37</sup> Extensive excavation has gotten underway recently, which has already uncovered around 40 metres of wall, in addition to the northern gateway to the city and a powerful defence tower that flanked this gateway. The thickness of the wall fluctuates between 3.5 and 3.8 metres; its base is solid and built with large stones that were only slightly smoothed and laid out without any lime mortar. Two walls were erected over this base; where they are still conserved they show a building technique that involves the fourth modality of polygonal masonry with extremely elongated rectangular ashlar that are slightly dressed, some of which are more than 2.5 metres long. Between the two walls is a compact filling made of small irregularly-shaped stones and soil. The gateway of the wall, of which only the base remains, must have had a semicircular arch around 3.8 metres wide. The tower that flanked the gateway measured around 8.5 metres wide and jutted out 5.75 metres. It was built using the same technique as the wall, and its walls measure 1.8 metres thick. This excavation has also shown the 4.5-metre wide street or *intervallum* that ran behind the wall and separated it from the first buildings of the city.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to the wall, archaeologists have begun to also document other elements of great interest in the northern zone of the city, such as the remains of several modest houses in a neighbourhood built during the first half of the 1st century BC; the remains of a large *domus* (house) built later in the imperial period by tearing down some of these older houses; and the vestiges of public baths which, despite the fact that they are still being excavated, we can see were remodelled and enlarged in the mid-1st century BC and had a first phase that might be coeval with the baths in Baetulo.

With regard to the genesis of this city, we believe we can confidently state that it was founded as a new city in the latter years of the 2nd century BC or in the early 1st century BC. In addition to regional strategic reasons, the existence of a bountifully flowing spring that was enclosed within the walled premises must have been a key factor in

the choice of site.<sup>39</sup> Next to this fountain, in the Late Bronze Age and ancient Iberian periods, and surely since the 7th century BC, there must have been a tiny but somewhat extensive settlement. It most likely resembled the settlement in Els Vilars (Arbeca, Les Garrigues), which has been extensively excavated in recent years and today is a wonderful example of a plains settlement from those remote periods in the proto-history of the lands of Lleida.<sup>40</sup>

With regard to the proto-historic settlement in Guissona, archaeology has documented it only partly, but enough to state that it developed over several centuries yet was abandoned at the height of the Iberian period in around the 4th and 3rd centuries BC. There must have been a population contraction in the early 4th century BC, just like in other points around the country, when people tended to enclose themselves on high ground, which was easier to defend. The Puig Castellar Iberian settlement in Talteüll, located six kilometres northeast of Guissona on a hill next to the Llobregós River within the township of Biosca, was quite probably the point where the inhabitants of this zone concentrated at the peak of the Iberian period. On the land of what is today Guissona, the fountain might still have been frequented between the 4th and 2nd centuries BC, and there might have been some shack or small, modest home, but not an Iberian settlement per se. The city of Iesso was founded in the



Figure 8. Sample of amphorae found inside the graves that can be dated from the start of the city of Iesso (Guissona).

same place where that Late Bronze Age and ancient Iberian settlement had been built, but at a point in time three centuries later when nothing visible remained of the former settlement, neither its vestiges nor most likely any recollection of it.

In order to pinpoint the date when the Roman city was founded, we have valuable clues provided by archaeological activity in recent years. Based on both its building technique and the stratigraphic observations conducted so far, the wall might be initially dated at around 100 BC. We also have remains of the aforementioned neighbourhood of modest houses, which have been accurately dated as originating at the start of the second quarter of the 1st century BC. However, we have also proven that the building made use of the remains of other buildings, which evidences an early phase prior to this one.<sup>41</sup>

However, more importantly we have the archaeological material found within the three circular pits measuring almost 2.5 metres in diameter and more than a metre deep, excavated in the natural soil and located above the remains of that same residential neighbourhood around 25 metres from the wall. These pits unquestionably hark back to the earliest days that zone was occupied, and they might be related to a ritual-style activity conducted in the early days of this new city. They contain the remains of at least 44 amphorae hailing from the Italian peninsula. Based on their shapes and material, these amphorae can be divided into four clearly distinct groups. Three of them correspond to the Dressel 1A shape, while the most numerous group – containing at least 22 specimens – most certainly comes from the Campagna region. The fourth group is made up of at least 11 shards of amphorae from Brindisi, the ancient *Brundisium*, on the Adriatic coast. On the neck of one of the Dressel 1A amphorae there is a *titulus pictus* with a consular date of 121 BC (Fig. 8).<sup>42</sup>

Both the amphorae and the fine imported ceramic, scant yet present at the site, are chronologically quite homogeneous materials, which places the activity that we can relate to the filler found in the pits at sometime prior to 95/90 BC. The aforementioned consular date, which unquestionably indicated the year in which the wine that the amphora originally contained was harvested, gives us a *terminus post quem* that we can even further reduce in years if we subtract a period for the probable ageing of the wine. Such an important set of products from the Italian peninsula at an inland location like Iesso at such an early date suggests that some unit of the Roman army, with its corresponding provisions, took part in the founding of the city, meaning that these archaeological deposits confirm a date quite close to around 100 BC.<sup>43</sup>

**IF WE ADD EMPORIAE AND AESO TO THESE THREE CITIES**, we will have the best documented examples of the urbanising efforts being conducted in Catalonia at that time. In fact, Roman Emporiae provides us with the most emblematic example of the urban layout used, as it is the one we know the best.

The Greek city of Emporion, allied with Rome in the war against Hannibal, had been the bridgehead where Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio disembarked in the summer of 218 BC at the helm of two legions. It also served as the initial base from which Romans began their strategy of damaging the rearguard of the Carthaginian army on the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>44</sup>

After the war was over and during the 2nd century BC, Greek Emporion experienced a period of considerable prosperity which archaeology has documented particularly based on the public works built over the course of that century. The city expanded to the south, where a new wall was built that not only monumentalised the entrance to the city with an extraordinarily prestigious construction but also enabled the sanctuaries that had presided over the southwest side of the walled premises since the 5th century BC to be expanded. Another noteworthy endeavour was the remodelling of the agora and the construction of a large stoa used for commercial and civic activities; this building opened onto the agora through a large colonnaded walkway which ran along the 52 metres of the facade.<sup>45</sup>

This series of major urban development actions which seem to have been conducted after the second half of the 2nd century BC went a long way to promoting the modernisation of the old Neapolis. The continuity and flourishing of the Greek settlement of Emporion is a good example of how in this early period the Romans generally must not have meddled with the existing centres and organisations, despite their military dominance of the zone.

The newly built Roman city was set up next to the Neapolis over the hill that rises up slightly west of the Greek settlement, and it encompassed the small settlement dating from the early 2nd century BC, which has been interpreted as a possible military *praesidium* set up during Cato's campaign or shortly thereafter.

The new city was developed inside a walled area with an extremely elongated rectangular perimeter measuring 700 by 300 metres, although the shape was not totally regular as the southern side is slightly slanted. The wall, which has also been accurately dated from around 100 BC thanks to the study of materials provided by the stratigraphy attached to it,<sup>46</sup> encircled an area almost 21 hectares large that was arranged in a rigorously orthogonal grid that made elongated insulae measuring around two by one *actus* (70.96 by 35.48 metres), a size often used in newly founded Roman colonies.

In contrast, we should also point to the presence of a highly atypical element in the city's archaeological topography: a wall running east to west that divided the premises into two parts of unequal sizes: the southern part (around 14 hectares) and the northern part (around 7 hectares). At some point in the city's evolution, this wall was torn down, at least partly, and new buildings were constructed over its remains. This has been interpreted in several different ways. First, shortly after it was discovered under Roman house number one, it was deemed the

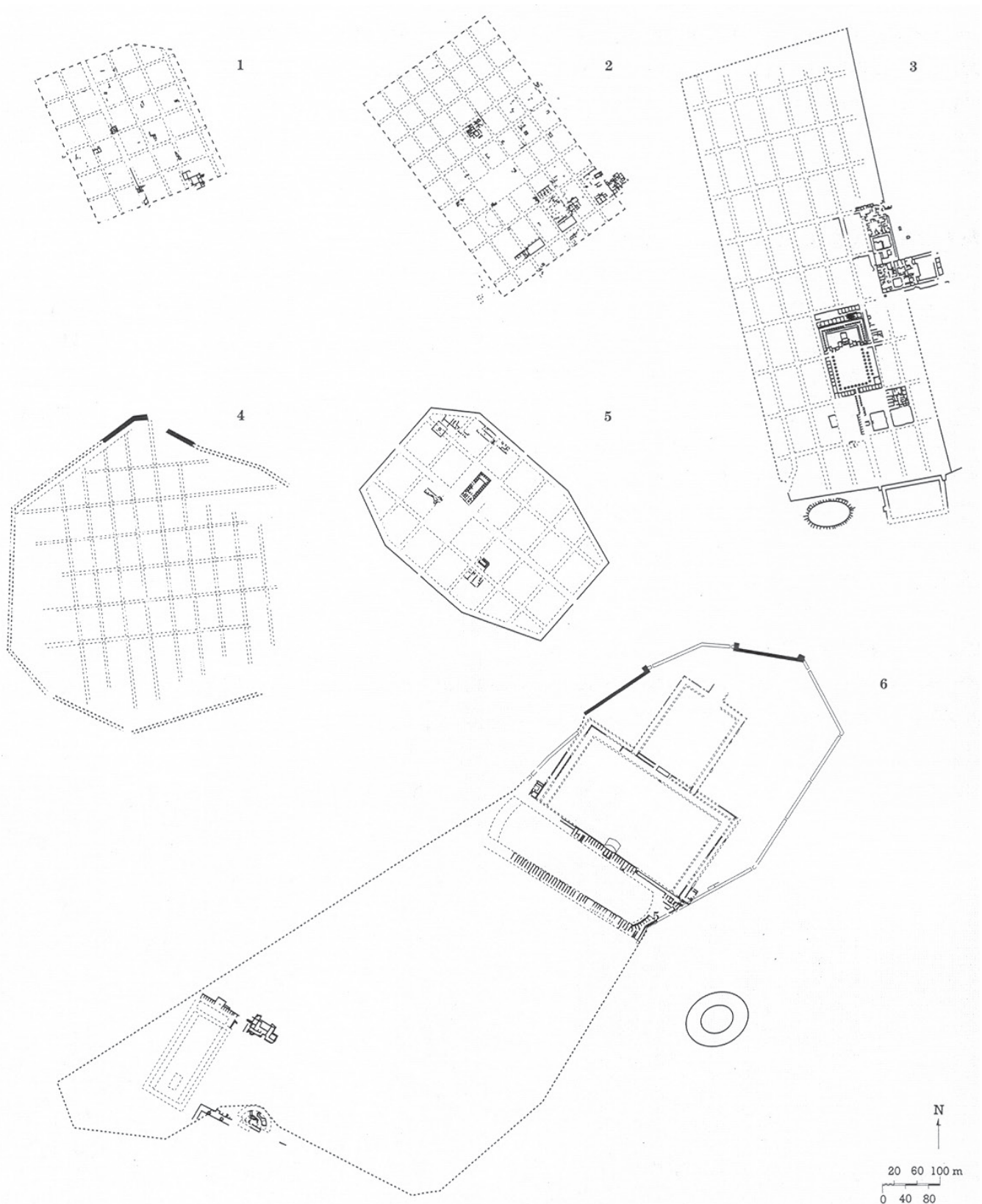


Figure 9. Interpreted layouts of some of the Roman cities in Catalonia on the same scale: 1. *Iluro* (Mataró); 2. *Baetulo* (Badalona); 3. Roman settlement of Emporiae; 4. *Iesso* (Guissona); 5. *Barcino* (Barcelona); 6. *Tarraco* (Tarragona).

northern boundary of the original city, which would later have been enlarged by extending the rectangle northward. Another interpretation based on the testimony of Titus Livius,<sup>47</sup> which is difficult to interpret, states that the

founding nucleus was a double city, and points to the hypothesis of a split settlement of Romans (in the south) and indigenous peoples (in the north) separated by this transversal wall.<sup>48</sup> We must wait for further archaeologi-

cal study and inquiry into the issue of the date of this wall before drawing a definitive conclusion.

The nerve centre of the city was the forum, a quadrangular public square that occupied an area of two insulae. It was presided over by a temple, most likely devoted to the Capitoline Triad, aligned with the axis of the forum and over part of an area also two insulae large. It seems that from the start there had been a row of *tabernae* open to the forum in front of the temple but on the other side of the square. Between the square and the temple was a crosswise street running east to west, which must have been the city's main *decumanus*. The *cardo maximus* dovetailed with the line of the temple and the forum, and it directly connected with the southern gateway of the walls. The location of the forum in the middle of the southern part of the city also fits in well with the traditional location of these areas within coeval Roman urban planning, and it even further proves the major significance of this crosswise wall, regardless of how it is ultimately interpreted.<sup>49</sup>

The most recent excavations in the forum of Emporiae have provided fascinating details. First, the forum was monumentalised not in the early days of the new city but quite a few years later, probably in the time of Augustus. Secondly, part of the area set aside for serving as the forum in the urban planning scheme that must have regulated the city at the time it was founded was also used as a grain warehouse for much of the 1st century BC. Evidence for this is the numerous large silos (holding two to four tonnes of grain each) excavated on the eastern and especially western sides of the forum, where the basilica, curia and one of the wings of the cryptoporticus that marked the boundary of the temple's *temenos*, the sacred ground around it, were later built. We should probably interpret this central space in the city as serving both purposes, a forum and public grain warehouse administered by the city, during those years in the 1st century BC.<sup>50</sup> Yet we are left with the uncertainty of knowing whether in these early years, as is logical to assume, there was already an early temple in the same site where later the one that left remains we can still see today was built.

Likewise, the excavation that got underway in 2000 on insula 30 has revealed the remains of public baths built in the 1st century AD, which quite probably replaced an earlier bathhouse that might date from the Republican and Augustinian period, similar to the ones we have seen in the other cities described.<sup>51</sup>

In Isona, a town at the foothills of the Pyrenees, the studies underway confirm the vast archaeological interest and potential of the *oppidum* of Aeso. To date, they have enabled us to identify and study a stretch of the wall 60 metres long, which we have been able to precisely date from the turn of the 2nd to 1st centuries BC. Furthermore, because of the characteristics of its build, we can deduce a certain similarity with the walled premises of Iesso.<sup>52</sup> The *aesonenses* are mentioned by Pliny on the list of stipendiary towns,<sup>53</sup> and based on the epigraphy we can

deduce that by the 2nd century AD Aeso had achieved the category of municipality.<sup>54</sup>

Attempting to interpret all of this archaeological information and determine its relationship with the corresponding historical context is complex and can admit multiple points of view and many nuances. In order to stay within the necessarily limited space of this article, we shall return to our main theme, some of the interpretative reflections that I posited a few years ago, and contrast them with the new information now available and with the diverse observations that have taken shape with the inroads on the research.

First of all, we must consider the possibility that all these cities founded *ex novo* were part of the same programme designed to make a decisive contribution to organising a large territory through the creation of new urban centres with their corresponding fortifications.<sup>55</sup> The chronological details provided by archaeology, though not yet totally conclusive as we have seen, do not contradict but rather tend to confirm the coevality of their founding dates.

If we focus on the characteristics of the urban topography of these cities, the affinities among the three located on the coast, Emporiae, Iluro and Baetulo, become clear: regular urban planning that develops a rigorously orthogonal grid and a walled area with a rectangular perimeter that reproduces the most typical model of Roman colony of the day, despite their more modest sizes. Some clear typological differences between the coastal cities and the other two located inland, Iesso and Aeso, also emerge. The insulae and streets of the latter are also laid out on a regular orthogonal pattern, but their walled premises are irregularly shaped, unlike the rectangular perimeter so characteristic of the other three. Furthermore, the dimensions of Iesso, which might be as large as eight hectares, stand in stark contrast to the much more modest size of Baetulo and Iluro (Fig. 9).

It seems logical to assume that if there had been a single programme to found new cities, the differences between the coastal and inland cities would reflect the conception and functions that each city was attributed when founded.

We have compared these differences with the twofold model for new cities that Rome used in its colonisation of central Italy until the early decades of the 2nd century BC.<sup>56</sup> This model distinguished between the *coloniae maritimae* of Roman cities, founded on the coast of both the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic Seas, and the *coloniae Latinae* scattered about the entire land. This is merely a comparison of urban typologies, as our cities on the coast never reached the legal category of *coloniae civium Romanorum*, nor were the inland cities Latin colonies. Examined carefully, things could surely not have been otherwise given both the place where they were founded and the socio-political atmosphere of the Roman Republic in early 1st century BC. The comparison would be valid and fruitful



Figure 10. *Tarraco* (Tarragona): Interpreted layouts of the remains of a possible Capitoline temple and its immediate environs (from Macias *et al.*, *Planimetria...* op. cit. plate 10).

only if formulated from a functional standpoint: the territory and the political and military situation in which the programme must have been applied were quite different to the atmosphere in which that ancient model emerged. However, adaptation to the needs and peculiarities of the setting in which they acted must have led to the adoption of some similar solutions. Furthermore, we cannot discard the possibility that the memory of the old model still survived.

It seems clear that our small cities of Iluro and Baetulo, as well as Roman Emporiae, were basically built to fortify the coast. They were situated over the roadway that followed the coastline, and their strategic value was surely enhanced by the significant influence that military initiative probably had in their founding. This would justify their small sizes, as their first inhabitants were most likely a rather small group of Roman citizens who went to live

there as a result of the historical circumstances that led this programme of newly founded cities to be put into practice.

With regard to Iesso, and probably Aeso as well, they appear to be cities founded with other purposes in mind. With their walls, they contributed to strategically strengthen the country, but their functions undoubtedly also included introducing structure to the territory by settling not just a greater or lesser number of Roman, Latin or Italian citizens but also the elites of the indigenous peoples living the area, in an effort to thus articulate a political community that, based in the new urban nucleus, would potentially encompass a much larger region and its inhabitants. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that this kind of newly founded city should cover larger ground, that its area would not form a small rectangular perimeter and, in short, that it would bear some formal

similarity to the ancient Latin colonies that had initially served similar purposes. We should recall that, as mentioned above, the *iessonienses* appeared on Pliny's lists of the towns that enjoyed the privileges of Latin law, unlike the three coastal cities, which Pliny himself described as *oppida civium Romanorum*.

To pinpoint the moment in history when this programme to found cities might have been generated, we have already examined the chronological inaccuracies that archaeology leaves open-ended. However, if our hypothesis that we can pinpoint it in the early years of the 1st century BC is confirmed, which, as we have seen, is a rather clearly established date for some of our cities, this programme might have dovetailed with the period after the victory of General and Consul Gaius Marius over the Cimbrians and Teutons as part of the demobilisation of his legions. This took place between 100 and 98 BC, after the laws approved by the Senate, proposed by Appuleius Saturninus, entered into effect, not without triggering deep-seated tensions in Rome during the sixth consulate of Marius in 100 BC.

The Cimbrians' incursion into Hispania Citerior had revealed the province's strategic weakness. This would explain why it was precisely after this painful warring episode when a programme to found new cities was designed. This programme would probably have also served to settle veterans of the demobilised army and to fortify and articulate a territory which, like Transalpine Gaul, had been excessively vulnerable to incursions by these Nordic peoples. The geographic location of Iesso and Aeso at the southern foot of the Pyrenees near the thoroughfares that enabled this mountain range to be crossed with some ease is certainly yet another indicator that it was precisely to the north where the potential danger that these fortifications protected against was located.

Despite the fact that these hypotheses enable us to connect the archaeological evidence with specific historical facts, we must also acknowledge that at this interpretative level we still have very few absolute certainties that cover all our needs for accuracy. Only future studies will enable us to prove, or partly or totally rectify, the conclusions to which the evidence available today leads us.

It is true, for example, as pointed out recently, that assuming a colonisation programme in a provincial setting with no direct reference to it in the ancient textual sources entails an undeniable difficulty.<sup>57</sup> However, we should bear in mind first the scarcity of references to these lands at that time in the textual sources still preserved, and secondly the fact that it would not be a programme promulgated by the Senate to found cities with colonial status, rather establishments created by the military authority (*cum imperio*) at a specific point in time which would take years to earn official legal status.

Fortunately, despite this paucity in the ancient literary sources and epigraphic sources referring to these decades, archaeological activity continues to yield new finds that

enable us to enrich the documentation and help our interpretations mature.

We can return to Tarragona to prove this and to simultaneously finish what we mentioned at the beginning of this article about Tarraco during the Late Republican period. The latest excavations in the forum in the Tarraco colony have documented the remains of a large three-celled temple (its podium is 29.79 metres wide). Building it entailed tearing down a previous building, four contiguous rooms of which are conserved paved with *opus signinum*, some of them tiled, which were enclosed inside the foundations of the temple. It all falls within a complex stratigraphic and construction sequence which, despite the difficulties in interpreting it, has enabled its excavators to advance a tentative date for the construction of the temple in the late 2nd century BC. It has been interpreted as a possible Capitoline temple devoted to the maximum Roman deities, which must have presided over the public space in Tarraco from then on (Fig. 10).<sup>58</sup>

This significant find is added to and smoothly dovetails with the proposed interpretations put forth since 1999 which have enabled us to make headway in understanding the urban configuration of the city in the Late Roman Republic. In the second half of the 2nd century BC, the construction of the second walled area in Tarraco considerably expanded what had been the first fortification on the uppermost part of the hill. The new wall made use of part of the old one, it adapted to the lay of the land occupying the entire slope of the hill as far as the cliffs that looked out over the port, and it used the slopes in the land as elements to reinforce the fortification. The southwest corner of this wall encompassed the eastern end of the zone where pre-Roman Iberian remains have been documented.

Studies of some of the archaeological elements documented in several preventative excavations conducted on the lower part of this new walled-in area have enabled us to propose a restitution of the possible urban development planning model based on a roadway network with insulae that would reflect a size two *actus* long by one *actus* wide. The orientation of this urban layout would have marked the orientation and perhaps the location of the subsequent monumental architecture, such as the basilica, the theatre and the circus. The implementation of this urban plan has been dated at around 100 BC as well based on the stratigraphic dates of diverse remains that can be chronologically situated at this point in time, including several important infrastructures, such as the main drain collector which ran around the middle of the hill.<sup>59</sup>

The even more recent development and publication of the archaeological planimetry of Tarraco, which has compiled and depicted all the information available at suitable scales, has generally enabled us to corroborate these conclusions, although it was necessary to introduce nuances, corrections and new observations. For example, the belief that the urbanisation performed in around 100 BC using



Figure 11. *Tarraco* (Tarragona): Layout with remains from the Late Republican period with an interpretation of the urban layout of the southern part of the walled premises (from Macias *et al.*, *Planimetria...* op. cit. p. 27).

this scheme was only conducted on the southern part of the walled premises, south of today's Rambla Nova, is quite provocative. In the area located between Rambla Nova and the upper part, a regular urban planning model would not have been applied until a later date, perhaps in the second half of the 1st century BC. However, this does not mean that before then it was a construction-free zone, as archaeology has documented Late Republican structures that seem to predate the urban remodelling of this

zone.<sup>60</sup> Likewise, it seems quite plausible to link the construction of the possible Capitoline temple and the implementation of the first urban development plan, which might have also called for the construction of a public space, a forum, across from the temple (Fig. 11).<sup>61</sup>

We shall not comment extensively on these important deductions made by the teams of archaeologists working in Tarragona today, many aspects of which will no doubt have to be adjusted and fine-tuned, especially the time-



line. Rather, we shall only mention that in around 100 BC, the archaeological vestiges were gradually joined by signs of change and urbanising activity in Catalonia. Now we could add Tarragona to the other cities on the coast, in this case not as an *ex novo* city yet without discarding the fact that the new urban planning indicates a permanent settlement of Romans and Italians, like in Emporiae and probably the other newly founded cities on the coast. The coincidence with Emporiae in the size of the insulae might also be meaningful. Furthermore, in Tarraco, the evidence of a religious initiative, one so symbolic as the construction of a Capitoline temple, if this description is confirmed, would leave few doubts as to the new residents' Roman affiliation, and for us it would further solidify our interpretation of the other cities on the Catalan coastline examined above.

However, it should be said that precisely this aspect of the composition of these settlements and the responsibility for their initiative is precisely where the interpretations fluctuate in the most divergent positions. This divergence has been skilfully formulated recently by S. Keay in revisiting an old discussion from our historiography, when he points out that while the fortifications in Iesso, Baetulo and Iluro are clearly Roman in appearance, it is more difficult to discern who was truly behind their construction, whether it was the Romans, the indigenous communities under the supervision of Roman engineers or the indigenous communities on their own initiative.<sup>62</sup> It is obvious that the question starts with the assumption that we cannot expect a single, indisputable answer that would close the subject.

In our line of interpretation, Baetulo and Iluro, just like the Roman city of Emporiae and this new urban planning scheme in Tarraco, would have been Roman initiatives for settling mainly immigrants from the Italian peninsula. However, this does not rule out possible participation by the Iberian communities in the area, nor agreements and accommodations between the new residents and these communities and their elites, who had also been allied with the Romans since before the Punic War. We would see Iesso, as we have mentioned above, as a Roman initiative with major participation by the indigenous peoples, with a strategic purpose and as a means to articulate policy.

However, there is another possible response, one with quite a few proponents as well, which deems it fairly likely that the Romans were only indirectly involved in the initiative to create these new cities with fortifications by fostering the initiatives, but that the leaders of the indigenous communities must have been the true driving forces and the ones who actually created the new settlements. A more radical interpretation views these cities as purely indigenous endeavours, in response and adaptation to the new geopolitical circumstances. In both assumptions, the architectural and urban planning models that these indigenous initiatives used would have been the nearby centres of Emporiae and Tarraco, whose Roman affiliation would not, in theory, be questioned.

It seems clear that underlying these interpretative divergences, the prior perception of several questions that the ancient textual sources, because of their scantiness, leave open weighs heavily, especially for these most ancient periods. The first issue is the assessment of the volume and timeframe of immigrants from the Italian peninsula that willingly settled permanently in these lands of Hispania, regardless of whether they were Romans, Latins or Italians, and army veterans or not. The sources are clear when they document these migrations in the second half of the 1st century BC; however, for the preceding decades, they are much sketchier and less explicit. The criterion applied on this point when trying to link and explain all the archaeological documentation available will most certainly affect the result.<sup>63</sup> Secondly, another weighty consideration is the perception of the role that one thinks should be granted to the indigenous communities and their elites in all sorts of major changes taking place during these decades. Unquestionably here, too, choosing to minimise or maximise this role, sometimes even instinctually, leads to widely divergent results.

Let us merely say that we should avoid generalisations. Every place and time in history had its own dynamics and specific conditioning factors, and consequently they each generated their own pace of integration. On the other hand, migrations and indigenous initiative are not necessarily two antithetical factors of change; rather they are probably often interlinked and mutually spurred each other.

One example of this diversification can be seen in the rich panorama of new urban settlements from the period between the Numantine War and the time of Sertorius, which archaeologists are currently documenting in the area in the mid-Ebro River valley. The archaeological studies being conducted in sites like the ones in La Caridad (Caminreal, Teruel), La Corona (Fuentes de Ebro, Zaragoza), La Cabañeta (El Burgo de Ebro, Zaragoza) and Segeda II (Zaragoza) are beginning to yield another fascinating sample of this diversity of models, with examples that show the power of indigenous and other initiatives that enable us to spotlight the role of exogenous elements. One extremely telling case is the establishment in La Cabañeta, where an epigraphic inscription, exceptional for its day and age, reveals to us how groups of Italian immigrants, in this case apparently members of a *conventus civium Romanorum*, must have played a key role.<sup>64</sup>

Returning to Catalonia and the recent developments in archaeology, we can also examine the origins of Girona, the ancient Gerunda, for which we now have an interpretation based on the important excavations of the Iberian *oppidum* in Sant Julià de Ramis. This settlement not only lasted until the early decades of the 1st century BC, rather it was even enlarged and large-scale public works were undertaken there in around 100 BC. At that time, new walls were built and the entrance was modified in order to improve the defensive effectiveness of the fortification. Shortly thereafter, following the Italian models, a large

temple was built occupying the centre of the *oppidum*. However, despite this vital building campaign, the settlement was suddenly abandoned with no indications of violence somewhere around 80/70 BC, at the same time when archaeology begins to document the first evidence of occupation of the site of the city of Gerunda. We could interpret this new archaeological information as meaning that in around 100 BC, when the foundations of the new coastal cities of Emporiae, Iluro and Baetulo might have been being laid, Rome must have chosen to situate the *oppidum* of Sant Julià de Ramis as a point to keep watch over the strategic thoroughfares that followed the Ter River valley there. However, several years later, this might have been rectified by founding Gerunda, whose position was even better poised to exercise the same role of direct control of the roadways and the plain.<sup>65</sup> The classification that Pliny provides us of the *gerundenses* as peoples who enjoyed Latin law just provides consistency to this interpretation of close collaboration between Romans and indigenous peoples at this time when the future Girona was founded.

To these first Roman cities in Catalonia we may well have to add several others because of their origins, including Ilerda (Lleida), Dertosa (Tortosa) or Blandae (Blanes), although the sketchiness of the archaeological documentation requires us to leave this determination pending for now. With regard to Ilerda, despite the lack of definitive archaeological proof, we can apparently continue to logically assume that the Iberian *oppidum* of Iltirta would have been located on the hill of Lleida's Seu Vella cathedral. No doubt is cast on this interpretation; even though the first archaeological levels documented up to now are dated at around the late 2nd century BC, there are more ancient materials present found on the surface or residually at lower strata. The Roman city, which in the time of Augustus was documented on the coins as *municipium Ilerda*, must have been the outcome of the evolution and transformation of the ancient pre-Roman settlement through a process of continuity and expansion down the hillside to the river. The form and timeframe of this process still need to be pinpointed, but the archaeologists in the archaeology department of La Paeria, who have efficiently tracked the day-to-day developments of preventative archaeology in Lleida in recent years, point to diverse clues that enable us to assume a hypothetical re-founding of the city on the lower part during the first third of the 1st century BC with direct Roman intervention. This would provide a significant forerunner for the city's subsequent legal evolution.<sup>66</sup>

Before closing this article, I must make a virtually obligatory reference to the origins of the city of Barcino (Barcelona). Founded in the late 1st century BC, in around 10 BC, as part of the political and administrative reorganisation of the provinces of Hispania undertaken during the time of Augustus, it pretty much culminated the urban structuring of the territory of what is today Catalonia. It was founded with the privileges of a *coloniae*

*civium Romanorum*, and as such it sought the official title of *Colonia Iulia Augusta Faventia Paterna Barcino*, the second one in Catalonia after Tarraco had been granted the category of colony during the reign of Caesar.

The early Barcino was a newly built city with a walled-in area and a regular urban layout which has readily identifiable parallels in the other colonies founded during Augustus' rule. However, despite this, Barcino is a highly peculiar Augustine colony, as its size was far below the usual size of the majority of its counterparts, which further contrasts with the size and monumentality of its public buildings. This has led us to interpret, along the same lines followed in this article, that the newly founded city must have also reflected the purpose of using the colonial legal framework to administratively regulate the numerous Romans already living in the more ancient cities founded in Laetania years earlier, rather than the desire to establish a sizeable group of new colonists. Barcino must have been designed especially to serve as the religious, political and administrative centre of a colony whose territory would most likely encompass the pre-existing urban nuclei of Iluro and Baetulo.<sup>67</sup>

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Josep Guitart (Badalona, 1946) is a full professor of Archaeology at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, a scholarly member of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans and a member of the Sant Jordi Royal Fine Arts Academy. He was the first director of the Catalan Institute of Classical Archaeology, founded in Tarragona in 2002, and he has supervised and participated in numerous excavations at sites dating from the Roman period both on the Iberian Peninsula and in Italy. His recent avenues of research include classical archaeology, the archaeology of the city and the territory of ancient Rome and Roman Hispania.