# Cities, culture, and change. Provincial diversity within the Roman Empire

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# Cities, culture, and change

## Provincial diversity within the Roman Empire

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**Abstract**

Roman urbanism and spectacles have been important themes within scholarship on ancient history for decades. Traditionally, research has been focused on Rome, but in recent years research into the rest of the Roman Empire has become more prominent. One central issue within modern historiography has to do with the supposed uniformity of urbanism and spectacle in the Roman world. Were these parts of ancient life similar throughout the empire, or is diversity the norm?

This thesis contributes to the historiographical debate in two ways. First, it will investigate urbanism and spectacles in three Roman provinces instead of in Rome. Second, this thesis will focus on *venationes*, or animal hunts, because this spectacle type has not gotten much attention in existing scholarship on spectacles. By comparing different Roman provinces to one another, it will become clear that while some consistencies can be found in the urbanism, spectacle culture and *venationes*, they underwent profound changes due to the specific provincial contexts in which they manifested themselves. This adaptation resulted in significant urban and cultural diversity within the Roman world.

# List of Abbreviations

CIL          Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum

AE           L'Année Épigraphique

RIC          Roman Imperial Coinage

*ILAfr*        Inscriptiones Latines d'Afrique

*ILAlg-1*     Inscriptiones Latines de l'Algérie

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# Introduction

A trip to modern-day Italy is not complete without visiting one of the sites where ancient Roman cities have been excavated. While walking through these cities, you gaze upon many types of buildings and monuments, often in a relatively intact state: one might see houses and walls, but also bathhouses, temples and amphitheaters. Many scholars deem these cities and the buildings which they contained to be inseparably connected to Roman culture and the functioning of the Roman Empire.[1] The empire was a city-state by its very nature, but its provinces were also filled with urban centers, brimming with life and activity. At its peak, the Roman Empire stretched over 3.5 million square kilometers, wherein more than 1300 different urban sites have been found.[2]

Roman cities are commonly believed to have performed a variety of functions: they were all supposed to be hubs of trade[3], political centers[4] and places where entertainment could be found[5]. This supposed uniformity of Roman urban sites has become a prevalent point of discussion within modern historiography, as some scholars rather view these cities as diverse entities. According to these latter academics, cities differed from one another in a multitude of ways: not only did the layout of the city and its function vary, but cities also hosted variable types of activities. One type of activity performed in a city which could be inspected to further research the diversity of Roman urban sites are spectacles in the theaters and amphitheaters of the Roman Empire. These spectacles were held in most, if not all the empire's provinces[6] and are commonly thought to be an indispensable part of Roman culture and society.[7]

One might wonder: what exactly happened within these spectacle buildings? Perhaps the most well-known spectacle in current times is gladiatorial combat, where two professional fighters battle each other, sometimes to the death. Though this spectacle is familiar to many, it was certainly not the only activity that could take place in the amphitheaters. For one, Cassius Dio remarks that amphitheater games featured all kinds of warfare, including naval combat,

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[1] Ray Laurence, Simon Esmonde Cleary and Gareth Sears, *The City in the Roman West, c. 250 BC – c. AD 250* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 2.
[2] John William Hanson, *An urban geography of the Roman world, 100 BC to AD 300* (Oxford, 2016), p. 94.
[3] Helen Parkins and Christopher John Smith, *Trade, traders and the ancient city* (London, 1998).
[4] Arjan Zuiderhoek, *The Ancient City* (Cambridge, 2016), p. 78-92.
[5] Claire Holleran, *The Development of Public Entertainment venues in Rome and Italy* (Oxfordshire, 2005).
[6] For the presence of spectacle monumentality throughout the Roman Empire: Paul Christesen and Donald G. Kyle, *A companion to sport and spectacle in Greek and Roman antiquity* (Chichester, 2014), p. 543-577.
[7] For the importance of spectacle in Roman society: Kyle Christesen, *A companion to sport and spectacle in Greek and Roman antiquity*, p. 377-616.

infantry combat and fights with animals.[8] The importance of these Roman spectacles for both the spectators and its organizers is evident: some of these spectacles contained battles with thousands of people and animals, they could go on for as long as a hundred days[9] and are an extremely common appearance in Roman iconography. The apparent importance of spectacle has attracted scholars to extensively research theater and amphitheater games, asking questions such as: why was spectacle so important within Roman culture? Why did Romans enjoy spectacles in the first place? And what function did the cultural phenomenon have in ancient Roman society?

One part of amphitheater games which is perhaps less well-known than others is the spectacle of *venatio*, which is a hunting spectacle with animals. *Venationes* were a common part of amphitheater games, often organized in combination with others types of games. During a *venatio* a beast-fighter, fittingly named a *venator*, would fight or hunt wild animals. This type of spectacle was also of importance to spectators and organizers: for example, Trajan supposedly once used more than ten thousand wild animals in a single show.[10]

*Venationes*, along with spectacles and urbanism, are all deemed to have been a typically Roman practice and of importance within Roman society. This being the case, an interesting phenomenon occurs when Rome conquered new regions: cultural aspects seem to be adopted by the newly conquered regions and become a regularity within the provincial societies. This is of importance within the forementioned discussion on Roman uniformity versus diversity. This thesis sets out to add to this debate by inspecting the differences and similarities in the urbanization, spectacle culture and *venationes* of select Roman provinces.

*Historiography*

Some research has been done on what *venationes*, spectacles and urbanism suggest about diversity within the Roman Empire. Though no modern academic argues that cities within the Roman Empire were completely identical, some do plead for a model of a Roman city which many urban sites adhered to. One of these scholars is Arjen Zuiderhoek. In his book *The Ancient City*[11], he argues that Graeco-Roman cities showed some similarities which seemed to regularly define them.[12] Though Zuiderhoek does recognize provincial variation, he believes

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[8] Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana*, LXVI 25.
[9] Dio, *Historia Romana*, LXVI 25.
[10] Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana* 68.15. Though the exact number of animals used is disputed, it certainly reached into the thousands.
[11] Zuiderhoek, *The Ancient City*.
[12] Idem, p. 2.

that the similarities in Graeco-Roman cities outweigh the differences, and thus argues that they adhere to a certain model.[13]

Three scholars who seem to disagree with Zuiderhoek are Ray Laurence, Simon Cleary and Gareth Sears. In their work *The City in the Roman West*[14] they try to argue against singular models of the Roman city by highlighting provincial variations of urbanism. These differences are explained by underlining factors such as politics, economic situations and socio-cultural circumstances.[15] They also dive a little deeper into one aspect of Roman urbanism which will be vital to this thesis: the amphitheaters within cities. They notice an uneven distribution of amphitheaters across the empire, and argue that in some provinces, amphitheaters were more important than others due to societal differences.[16] The dichotomy between models of cities and variation between provinces will play an important role in this thesis' research on Roman diversity.

The spectacles which were held within these amphitheaters have been studied quite extensively, especially within the Italian Peninsula. Though scholars generally agree that spectacles were important within the Roman Empire, their exact content, degree of popularity and cultural and social significances are often disputed. One theoretical approach to understanding the significance of spectacles was first introduced by Jonathan Edmondson in his article *Dynamic Arenas*[17] and later expanded upon by Donald G Kyle in his books *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome*[18] and *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World*[19]. Kyle and Edmondson both seem to regard Roman spectacles as 'cultural performances'. In amphitheater games, values and virtues which are traditionally deemed to be Roman were conveyed to the audience[20]. One example of this theory in practice can be found in the reenactment of important historical battles, meant to reaffirm the dominance and power of the empire and Emperor.[21]

Though their theoretical approach certainly has value, Edmondson and Kyle's work almost exclusively focuses on ancient Rome. Kyle does mention that local variations of spectacle culture likely existed, but nonetheless integrates provincial evidence into his research

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[13] Ibidem.
[14] Laurence et al., *The City in the Roman West*.
[15] *Idem*, p. 3-6.
[16] *Idem*, p. 280-281.
[17] Jonathan Edmondson, "Dynamic arenas: gladiatorial presentations in the city of Rome and the construction of Roman society during the early Empire", *Roman theater and society* (Ann Arbor, 1996), p. 69-112.
[18] Donald G Kyle, *Spectacles of death in ancient Rome* (London, 2012).
[19] Donald G Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World* (Chicester, 2014).
[20] Kyle, *Spectacles of death in ancient Rome*, p. 16.
[21] *Idem*, p. 44.

on the Roman capital.[22] One direct response to Kyle and Edmondson's performance model comes from Michael J. Carter, who researched the cultural impact of the Roman gladiatorial fights on a typical Greek spectator.[23] He finds that while spectacles certainly were a performance of Roman values, Greek spectators found values which were at the heart of their own culture, such as heroism and athleticism.[24] So, according to Carter, cultural significances of gladiatorial fights could change as a result of the context in which they were performed. Provincial changes in the cultural significance of spectacles are an indicator of variation in the Roman Empire and thus argue against uniformity.

Historical research on *venationes* is scarcer than is the case with more popular spectacles within historiography such as gladiatorial fights. Early scholarship that does mention *venationes* often denounces the spectacle because of personal convictions; this is sometimes still seen in contemporary literature.[25] Nevertheless, most contemporary scholars stay away from condemning ancient animal spectacles because of their own beliefs and instead research the practice with respect to its historical context. Donald G Kyle, besides his previously discussed work on amphitheater games, has also specifically done research on *venationes* in Rome. His primary argument is that the spectacle affirmed the power of the empire and emperor over both nature and the conquered regions from which the captured animals came from.[26] Furthermore, *venationes* were used for the 'suppression of threats, provision of security, and protection from uncivilized chaos and social disorder'.[27] Another scholar, Garrett Fagan, agreed with Kyle's remarks on power over nature[28], but also tried to understand the spectators of *venationes* through a psychological approach.[29] He believed that these hunting spectacles were attractive to Romans because they were fascinated with exotic animals. Furthermore, the fear and excitement during the hunting spectacle was an important reason for them to visit amphitheater games.

Though studies on *venationes* do exist, those which focus on Roman provinces outside of the Italian Peninsula are few in number. Anna Sparreboom is one of the only scholars to do extensive research on hunting spectacles in a Roman province, in this case Roman North

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[22] Idem, p. 12.
[23] Michael J. Carter, "Gladiators and Monomachoi: Greek Attitudes to a Roman 'Cultural Performance'", *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 26 (London, 2009) 2, p. 298-332.
[24] Carter, "Gladiators and Monomachoi", p. 314.
[25] Jo-Ann Shelton's article "Spectacles of Animal Abuse" has quite the revealing title.
[26] Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World*, p. 257.
[27] Ibidem.
[28] Garrett Fagan, *The Lure of the Arena. Social Psychology and the Crowd at the Roman Games* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 247-252.
[29] Fagan, *The Lure of the Arena. Social Psychology and the Crowd at the Roman Games*.

Africa.[30] Sparreboom noticed that *venationes* were a much more popular theme in the mosaics and terracotta iconography of Roman North Africa than gladiatorial fights, and tried to gain a better understanding of the cultural and social significance of hunting spectacles in the Roman province.[31] She recognizes some distinct differences between the cultural significance and social function of *venationes* in Italy and Roman North Africa. Her main argument is that beast hunts appropriated themselves to the provincial context in which it functioned. For example, the presence of wild beasts in North Africa changed the exact cultural implications that *venationes* had for the spectators of the amphitheater game.[32] As with spectacle culture in general, provincial variations in *venationes* argue against the uniformity of the Roman Empire.

*Aims of this thesis*

The goal of this thesis is to explore the diversity of the Roman Empire through a comparison of urbanization, spectacle culture and the spectacle of *venationes* in a variety of regions within the Roman world. Roman provinces, and the spectacle of *venationes* in particular, have not gotten the amount of attention within historiography that they deserve. By comparing Roman provinces and focusing on an undervalued part of ancient history, this thesis will try to be a valuable addition to the existing historiography. This thesis addresses the question of what insight a comparison of urbanization, spectacle culture and *venationes* in different Roman provinces gives into diversity within the Roman Empire.

In order to effectively compare the urbanism within the discussed Roman provinces, three urban aspects will be focused on: the general archaeological data of the province's cities, such as the number of cities and their layout, the monumentality of urban sites and the prominence of amphitheaters and theaters within the province's cities. As for spectacle culture and *venationes*, the popularity, content and eventual cultural significances will be researched. By repeating this process for every province, we can effectively compare them to one another.

The thesis will be divided in three chapters, which will each dive into one of the Roman provinces: Chapter 1 will focus on the Latium et Campania, Chapter 2 on Africa Proconsularis and Chapter 3 on Hispania Baetica. The reasoning behind the choice for these three provinces is multifaceted. Latium et Campania, Roman North Africa and Hispania Baetica are provinces

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[30] Anna Sparreboom, *Venationes Africanae: Hunting spectacles in Roman North Africa: cultural significance and social function* (Amsterdam, 2016).
[31] Sparreboom, *Venationes Africanae*, p. 1.
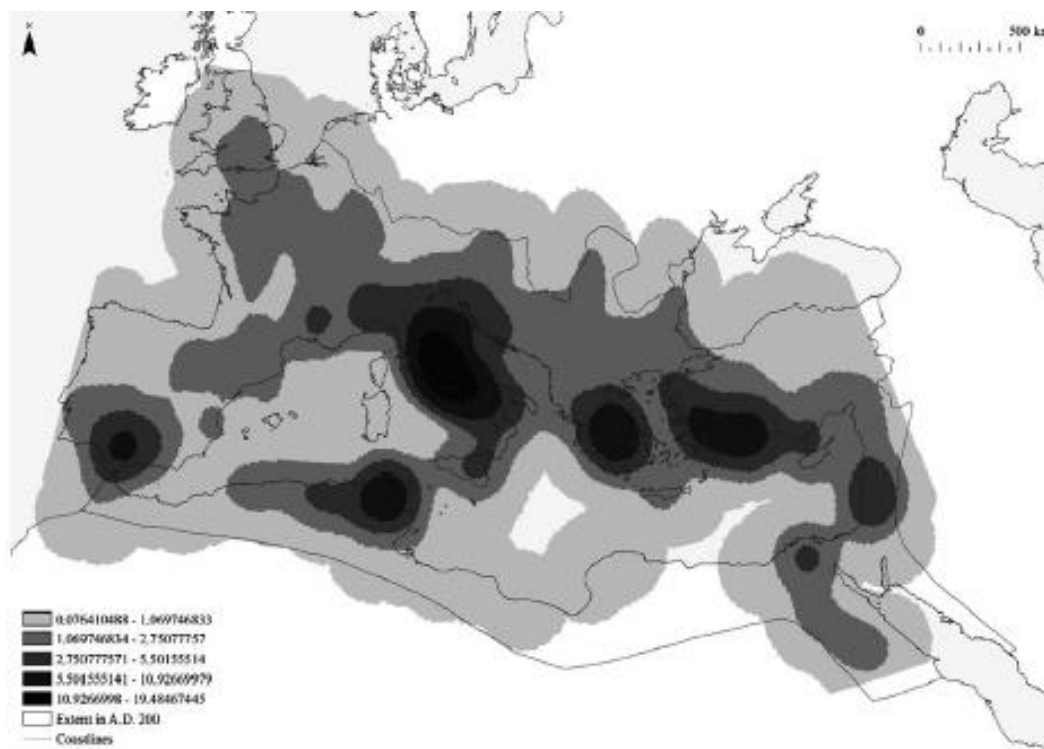[32] Idem, p. 146-147.

*Figure 1 Degree of urbanization in the Roman Empire*

which were urbanized to a substantial degree (Fig. 1).[33] Furthermore, these three provinces were wealthy and had connections with the empire's capital, Rome's elite and, at times, with one another. Latium et Campania lay at the heart of the Roman Empire and was the province in which Rome was located. Therefore, this province is the perfect starting point for research into the supposed 'Roman' urbanism and culture. The popularity of spectacle games in Roman North Africa, and particularly *venationes*, makes this region a perfect candidate in this thesis' comparison as well. As for Hispania, the prosperity of the province might have had interesting implications for their cities and for spectacles.[34]

The provinces seem to contain enough source material to research and compare them to one another. This thesis will also limit itself on a temporal basis, to the imperial age: the incorporation and the urbanization of the discussed provinces had already reached a developed phase during this time and source material on spectacles from this period seems to be more extensive than in Republic times. Furthermore, the popularity, regularity and magnificence of spectacles seems to be at its highest during imperial times.

A variety of sources will be used within this thesis. Most important for the research on spectacle culture and *venationes* is the epigraphic material found within the provinces. These

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[33] Laurence et al., *The City in the Roman West,* p. 261 & 280.
[34] On the prosperity of Hispania: Evan W. Haley, *Baetica felix: people and prosperity in southern Spain from Caesar to Septimus Severus* (Austin, 2003).

give us a unique, unparalleled insight into the Roman world and are of vital importance when researching spectacles. For example, honorary inscriptions of the organizers and sponsors of spectacles can reveal who played important roles and might point out some of the motives for organizing a spectacle. Written historical accounts will also play a role. It is true that these sources inherently bring certain unavoidable problems to research, such as the personal agenda of the author. One can only attempt to identify this subjectivity as accurately as possible and take the shortcomings of these written sources into account within the research. Furthermore, archaeological evidence will be integral when discussing both urbanism and spectacles. Some examples of physical remains are the remnants of the ancient theaters, amphitheaters and iconographic material such as mosaics, wall paintings and pottery.

Finally, research done by J.W. Hanson is of vital importance when discussing urbanism in the Roman Empire. His book *An Urban Geography of the Roman World* contains a database of all Roman urban sites which existed, including information on their monumentality. It also contains other useful facts and figures, such as an overview of Roman urbanism throughout the centuries, information on Roman monumentality and much more. This database is a comprehensive overview of urbanism in the Roman world and makes it possible to effectively compare the urbanization of different provinces with one another. It is important to not solely rely on Hanson's database, since his focus lies on a macro scale. It is possible that the data on specific provinces might not be completely accurate. Therefore, whenever possible other databases will be used to either support or reject Hanson's findings.

# Chapter 1

## Latium et Campania: urbanism, spectacle culture and *venationes*

*Urbanism in Latium et Campania*

In this chapter, the state of urbanism, spectacle culture and *venationes* in Latium et Campania will be discussed. To properly review and analyze source material on early Roman urbanism we first need some understanding of the context from which it originated.[35] In the sixth century B.C., Rome was a relatively small city-state, still in competition with other states existent in the Italian region. By the third century B.C., Rome had conquered the entirety of the Italian Peninsula.[36] Approximately two centuries later, Augustus divided present-day Italy into eleven different provinces; Latium et Campania was the first of these provinces.[37] A substantial part of the province's environment was made up of wide agricultural plains, which were extraordinarily fertile.[38] A plethora of different foodstuffs could be produced on these plains. This fact, along with its position in the heart of the Roman Empire, made Latium et Campania one of, if not the wealthiest Roman province.

After Rome's conquest of Italy, the urbanization of the Italian region sped up dramatically. City building was a fundamental part of the Roman notion of civilization: in essence, the creation of cities simultaneously created civilized life.[39] But while city building was important within Roman thought, urbanism itself was not a Roman invention. In fact, the opposite is true: cultural standards and practices of the Italian city-states often survived because Rome assimilated them into its own culture. The same is true for urbanism. This becomes especially evident when comparing Rome to early Etruscan settlements. In the fourth century B.C., Rome was still built irregularly, with little regard to a logical or specific planning in the layout of the city.[40] However, Etruscan settlements were already logically structured 400 years earlier, in the eighth century B.C.[41] These settlements had many urban features which were very similar to later Roman urban centers, such as walls, public meeting places and street grids.[42] As is the case with many parts of Roman society, recent literature suggests that the

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[35] William E. Dunstan, *Ancient Rome* (Maryland, 2011), p. 40.
[36] Dunstan, *Ancient Rome*, p. 62.
[37] Plinius, *Naturalis Historia*. 3.7.
[38] Tymon de Haas and Gijs Willem Tol, *The economic integration of Roman Italy: rural communities in a globalizing world* (Leiden, 2017), p. 75.
[39] Yegül Fikret and Diane Favro, *Roman Architecture and Urbanism* (Cambridge, 2019), p. 2.
[40] Livius, *Ab urbe condita*, 5.55.3–5.
[41] Stephan Steingräber, "The Process of Urbanization of Etruscan Settlements from the Late Villanovan to the Late Archaic Period.", *Etruscan Studies* 8 (Detroit, 2001) 1, p. 7-34, 19-20.
[42] Vedia Izzet, *The Archaeology of Etruscan Society* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 176, 179, 182.

Roman Republic, and later the empire, had a tendency of copying the urban features of conquered states and peoples and subsequently integrated them into their own society.[43] In this way, Roman urbanism finds its origins in the urban trends of a variety of societies.

Still, despite the foreign origins of some parts of Roman urbanism, the changes in the urban landscape of ancient Italy after Roman conquest cannot be underestimated. In the first century B.C. alone, 377 new cities emerged in the Roman world: more than three cities per year.[44] These urban centers were highly attractive living places for the Italian population; during Augustus' time, over 40% of all people within Italy lived in a city.[45] Though the emergence of new cities stagnated over time, it thus cannot be disputed that rapid urbanization was one of the most substantial changes that Roman conquest brought with it, not only in Italy but also in the rest of the Roman world.[46]

As was noted in this thesis' introduction, the work done by John William Hanson is indispensable when doing research on Roman urbanism. He has compiled a comprehensive database of the urban sites of the imperial Roman world, including the rough layout of individual cities, their civic status and their monumentality.[47] In the region of Italy, Hanson's catalog records over 400 cities. For the province of Latium et Campania, 78 urban sites have been identified.[48] A study by Luuk de Ligt, which focuses exclusively on Italy, can be used to check the accuracy of Hanson's findings.[49] De Ligt's number of urban sites is similar; he describes 80 cities in the province.[50] The number given by Hanson therefore seems relatively reliable and will be used for the remainder of this chapter.

The degree of urbanization in this province was very high. In fact, the province contains the most ancient urban sites of not only the Italian provinces, but all the Roman provinces throughout Europe and the Mediterranean territory.[51] Though it is important to note that the borders of provinces were continually changing[52], Latium et Campania's size was approximately 15.000 square kilometers.[53] City density was therefore very high within Latium

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[43] One work which suggests this: Jamie Sewell, *The Formation of Roman Urbanism, 338-200 B.C.: Between Contemporary Foreign Influence and Roman Tradition* (Portsmouth, 2011).
[44] Hanson, *An urban geography of the Roman world,* p. 507-543.
[45] Joanne Berry, "Urbanism", *A companion to Roman Italy* (Hoboken, 2016), p. 293-307, 293.
[46] Berry, "Urbanism", p. 293.
[47] Idem.
[48] Idem, p. 507-543.
[49] Luuk de Ligt, *Peasants, citizens and soldiers: studies in the demographic history of Roman Italy, 225 BC-AD 100* (Cambridge, 2012).
[50] De Ligt, *Peasants, citizens and soldiers*, p. 304-312.
[51] Idem, p. 139.
[52] K. Da Costa, "Drawing The Line: An Archaeological Methodology For Detecting Roman Provincial Borders.", *Frontiers in the Roman World* 13 (Leiden, 2011), p. 49-60, 50.
[53] Area approximation tool used: https://www.daftlogic.com/projects-google-maps-area-calculator-tool.htm.

et Campania: the province contained 1 city per 192 square kilometers. There is a particularly high density of cities around Rome, likely due to the economic dominance of the empire's
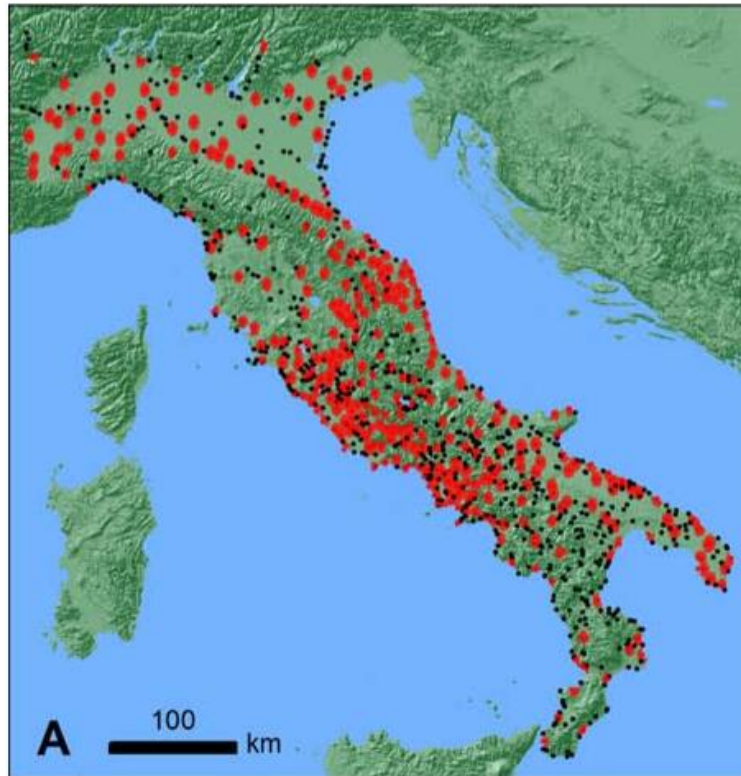


*Figure 2 Ancient urban sites within the Italian Peninsula*

capital. As we move further away from Rome, city density gradually decreases.[54] Still, it remains high in comparison to the city density of other Italian provinces (Fig. 2).[55]

Further inspection of the urban sites in Latium et Campania reveals a few things about their layout and monumentality. Many of the cities within Latium et Campania had a structured and planned layout. This is seen especially often in cities which were founded after the Roman conquest of Italy. These cities had a distinctive chessboard-like street planning, which is one of the most typical Roman urban features.[56] The city walls encircling cities such as Circeii and Setia were commonplace within the province's cities.[57] These walls helped define a city's borders and typically encircled the street grid.[58] This street grid was then used to differentiate parts of the city from one another. For example, there were suburban districts, and important buildings and sites such as the *forum* were placed on logical, central positions within the city.[59]

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[54] Idem, p. 59-62.
[55] De Haas, *The economic integration of Roman Italy*, p. 64.
[56] Zuiderhoek, *The Ancient City*, p. 59.
[57] Hanson, *An urban geography of the Roman world*, p. 519, 535.
[58] Idem, p. 507-543.
[59] Laurence et al., *The City in the Roman West,* p. 115.

Still, regardless of their supposed importance within Roman urbanism, the cities of Latium et Campania were certainly not copies of one another. The chessboard-like street grid, for example, is not found in all of the province's cities. Smaller urban centers such as Sora, but also some large cities like Ostia contained no street grid.[60] A few urban centers, such as Pontecagnano, lacked city walls.[61] Still, while not all cities contained these urban features, they certainly were common enough to be considered a typicality of cities within the province.

Latium et Campania's cities also introduce us to some of the most important Roman monumentality. Especially in the time of the late Republic, the construction of public buildings seemed to have been of the utmost importance to Roman magistrates and the cities within Italy. Some public buildings, specifically religious buildings and bathhouses, seem to have been especially fundamental. For example, religious buildings, most obviously temples, are found in 44 of the 78 urban sites in Latium et Campania, 1 in every 1.8 cities.[62] A similar commonality is found in bathhouses; public bathing was an activity which defined Roman culture, and many bathhouses could be used by any Roman.[63] Hanson records that 33 of the province's cities show traces of baths, or 1 in every 2.4 urban sites.[64] One thing to keep in mind is that it is possible that some cities contained baths or religious buildings, but that we are unaware of this because of a lack of archaeological source material.

Analysis of the general monumentality of the cities in Latium et Campania shows that they were by no means an absolute necessity within the cities of the province. Temples and baths are found in approximately half of the province's cities. Whether these types of monuments can be seen as fundamental to urbanism in Latium et Campania is in the eye of the beholder. What can at least be stated is that they were quite a common sight in the province's cities and the activities which these buildings made possible were of importance to the societies within Latium et Campania and the people who lived there.

One reason for the commonality of monumentality within Latium et Campania's cities has to do with the economic situation of the province and the Roman Empire in its entirety. Monuments were often built by the province's elite, as acts of so-called euergetism.[65] Euergetism is an ancient practice where high-status individuals give a gift of some sort to a city

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[60] Idem, p. 530, 536.
[61] Idem, p. 531.
[62] Hanson, *An urban geography of the Roman world,* p. 507-543.
[63] John R. Patterson, *Landscapes and Cities: Rural Settlement and Civic Transformation in Early Imperial Italy* (Oxford, 2006), p. 148-149.
[64] Hanson, *An urban geography of the Roman world*, p. 507-543.
[65] Kathryn Lomas and Tim Cornell, *'Bread and Circuses': euergetism and municipal patronage in Roman Italy* (London, 2003), p. 28.

or its people. In return, they would often receive honorary titles or a public inscription.[66] Expensive forms of euergetism, such as monument building, were only possible if large amounts of wealth were accumulated by individuals. Latium et Campania had plenty of these individuals: the province was very wealthy due to both their own agricultural output. Furthermore, that the cashflow of the entirety of the Roman Empire predominantly moved towards the Italian Peninsula and specifically towards Rome, due to both commerce and taxes.[67] This economic situation profited the elite of Latium et Campania, who were therefore able to finance acts of euergetism, one of these being monument building.

*Spectacle monumentality and culture in Latium et Campania*

Two monument building types are vital to our research due to their link to Roman spectacles: the theater and the amphitheater. These were the two buildings in which most of what we regard as Roman spectacle occurred, though it must be noted that many of the spectacles originally occurred on the forum.[68] A third type of spectacle monument, the Circus, can also not be forgotten. This building was primarily used for chariot and horse races. However, this thesis will focus on theaters and amphitheaters, mostly because the archaeological remains of circuses are somewhat lacking. Furthermore, most spectacles occurred within theaters and amphitheaters.

The theater finds its origin in the fifth century B.C.[69] This was hundreds of years before the monument type became of significance within Roman architecture. The imperial form of the monument became an element of Roman urbanism at a relatively late moment: while wooden theaters already existed in the third century B.C., the imperial stone types were only being built about 150 years later.[70] Despite the relatively late origin of the stone form of the monument, it became a very common sight in the cities of Latium et Campania: 39 of the province's cities contained theaters, which is 1 in every 2 cities.[71] For this thesis, we will adhere to Hanson's data, the most recent catalogue we have. It must be noted that differences exist between Hanson's database and other works when it comes to the exact amounts of monuments found in provinces. Still, Hanson's database gives us the most comprehensive catalogue of city

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[66] Lomas et al., *'Bread and Circuses'*, p. 1.
[67] Keith Hopkins, "Rome, Taxes, Rents and Trade", *The Ancient Economy* (Hoboken, 2002), p. 190-230, 224-225, 228-230.
[68] Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, 5.1.
[69] Rune Frederiksen, Elizabeth R Gebhard and Alexander Sokolicek, *The Architecture of the Ancient Greek Theatre* (Aarhus, 2015), p. 39.
[70] Laurence et al., *The City in the Roman West,* p. 231.
[71] Hanson, *An urban geography of the Roman world*, p. 507-543.

monumentality.[72] As for the location of theaters within cities, they were mostly located within the confines of the cities' walls and streets. Religious sites such as temples would frequently be close to the theater, likely because of the religious nature of many of the activities within the monument.[73]

Different types of events were held within the theater, including dramatic plays, comedies and performances of dancing and singing.[74] Theaters and the spectacles within them were an important and popular part of Roman culture: the commonality of theaters within Latium et Campania's cities is a testament to this. Theaters in the province could hold thousands, sometimes even tens of thousands of people at a time, containing seats which were most likely rarely empty.[75] Adding to that, there is a plethora of inscriptions dedicated to the builders and rebuilders of theaters, honoring them for their additions to the city.[76] Epigraphy from the province is sometimes also dedicated to performers: one such example mentions a first-time pantomimist, Agilius Septentrio.[77]

The importance of theater in the province is confirmed again when reviewing epigraphy stating the benefactors and financial costs of theater spectacles. Theater shows were usually funded by benefactors, as an act of euergetism. One such inscription honors N. Plaetorius Onirus, who donated 10,000 sestertii, which was a substantial amount of money, to the city of Abella, so better plays in the theater could be provided.[78] Theater spectacles were important enough for wealthy individuals to fund them, and for cities and the common populace to grant them honors in the process.

Amphitheaters were about as common of a monument type as theaters in the province's cities: 41 out of the 78 urban sites contain remains of the monument type, which is approximately 1 in every 1.9 cities.[79] 29 cities contained both theaters and amphitheaters, which was 1 per 2.7 cities in Latium et Campania. Amphitheater building only became popular during the early imperial era, with most of them being built in the first and second century A.D.[80] Amphitheaters varied in size throughout the province, with larger cities normally also

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[72] Other monument databases are often outdated, resulting in lower numbers of monuments. For example, Frank Sear in *Roman Theatres: An Architectural Study* (Oxford, 2006) notes 35 theaters, while Hanson's catalogue contains 39.

[73] Laurence et al., *The City in the Roman West,* p. 266.

[74] Mark Griffith, "Telling the tale: a performing tradition from Homer to pantomime", *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 13-35, 26-33.

[75] Sear, *Roman Theatres: An Architectural Study,* p. 119-143.

[76] For examples, see: Sear, *Roman Theatres: An Architectural Study*, p. 119-142.

[77] CIL XIV, 2113.

[78] CIL X, 1217.

[79] Hanson, *An urban geography of the Roman world*, p. 507-543.

[80] Laurence et al., *The City in the Roman West*, p. 238, 265.

housing larger amphitheaters.[81] Because of these size differences, the number of spectators an amphitheater could hold was also variable: some could hold less than 10,000 spectators, while the Colosseum held up to 50,000 people at a time.[82]

The origins of Roman amphitheater spectacles are often still disputed, partly because of disagreement within ancient historiography. Ancient literature on gladiatorial games, for example, contributes a variety of origins to the spectacle game. While Nicolaus of Damascus, a Greek historian, writes that the games originated from Etruscan society[83], Livy states that the first games were held in Latium et Campania.[84] These ancient disagreements make finding the exact origins of amphitheater spectacles in the province difficult. Conversely, the popularity of the practice in Latium et Campania is quite clear. A few examples of criticism can be found, mainly due to their bloody nature.[85] However, these are only few in number, and amphitheater spectacles generally seem to have been viewed very positively within the province. This is confirmed by the high number of amphitheaters in Latium et Campania, as well as the many inscriptions which mention occurrences of these spectacles. Amphitheater games were not only a popular activity for the common populace: inscriptions found on the seats of some spectacle monuments reveal that these were hierarchically divided between social classes. While women and children could be found at the back of an amphitheater, while individuals of notable status would sit close to the action.[86] Amphitheater spectacles as an act of euergetism were often even larger and more expensive than theatrical spectacle: non-imperial amphitheater spectacles in Latium et Campania could run into the millions of sestertii, though tens of thousands were more common.[87]

The contents of amphitheater spectacles are discussed quite extensively within ancient literature and epigraphy. The general program of amphitheater spectacles was standardized by Augustus, who divided it into three parts: in the morning *venationes* occurred, at midday there were executions (*meridiani*) and later in the afternoon gladiatorial combat took place.[88] Literature regularly mentions amphitheater games and epigraphic material on spectacles can be found throughout the province: inscriptions have been found in almost 30 of Latium et

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[81] Idem, p. 263.
[82] Ibidem.
[83] Nicolaus of Damascus, *Athletica*, 4.153.
[84] Livius, *Historia Romana*, 9.40.
[85] Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad* Lucilium, 95.33.
[86] Edmondson, 'Dynamic arenas', p. 86; Suetonius, *Augustus*, 44.
[87] CIL XI, 6377; AE 1927, 124; CIL IX, 1703.
[88] Alison Futrell, *The Roman Games: Historical Sources in Translation* (Oxford, 2009), p. 84; Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, 8.7.

Campania's urban sites.[89] This epigraphic material reveals that while amphitheater games were standardized by Augustus, some parts still seem to have been more important or popular than others within Latium et Campania. Specifically, gladiatorial combat took the highest precedence. A survey of the inscriptions found in the province seems to confirm this: 129 inscriptions which contain *gladiator* or *munera* have been found in the province, 59 inscriptions contain *venator* or *venatio* and none contain *meridiani*.[90] Another source, nearly one hundred notices of upcoming amphitheater games which have been found in Pompeii, reaffirms our suspicions. These notices were advertisements for amphitheater spectacles in the surrounding area and customarily consisted of the program for the spectacle, where and when they occurred and who organized them. Notably, these inscriptions sometimes specifically stressed the gladiatorial part of their spectacles and only shortly mention other spectacle types. An advertisement for the games of D. Lucretius Satrius Valens provides an example[91]:

> 'Twenty pairs of gladiators of D(ecimus) Lucretius (Celer wrote this) Satrius Valens, perpetual *flamen* (priest) of Nero Caesar son of the emperor, and ten pairs of gladiators of D. Lucretius Valens, his son, will fight at Pompeii on 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 April. There will be a normal wild-beast hunt and awnings.'

It has become evident that theater and amphitheater spectacles were a popular activity within Latium et Campania. Amphitheaters and theaters were common in the cities of the province, exemplifying the important role spectacles played in the societies of the province. Not only did the common populace come to enjoy these events, but all social groups were present during spectacles. Furthermore, the sponsors of spectacles spent considerable amounts of money to organize these events as acts of euergetism, because they could gain honors and popularity in the process.

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[89] Concluded through searches in the digital EDCS: https://db.edcs.eu/epigr/hinweise/hinweis-en.html.
[90] Concluded through searches in the digital EDCS: https://db.edcs.eu/epigr/hinweise/hinweis-en.html.
[91] *CIL* IV, 3884.

*Venationes in Latium et Campania*

Livy states that the first Roman beast-hunt occurred in 186 BC in Rome, organized by M. Fulvius Nobilior.[92] This is not to say that Romans were completely unfamiliar with exotic animals before this time: a consul by the name of Curius Dentatus had already displayed African elephants after a victory in 275 B.C.[93] That being said, wild animal hunts were not exclusive to Roman culture. The first *venationes* was likely held with use of the expertise of African hunters.[94] Evidence of the usage of African knowledge on hunting is found in ancient literature: Plinius, for instance, notes that Numidian bears were fought by hunters from Ethiopia in the first century B.C.[95]

Though gladiatorial combat seems to have been the most popular form of spectacle, *venationes* were still a much-enjoyed part of amphitheater spectacles in Latium et Campania, as illustrated by the number of inscriptions found which describe the occurrence of a animal hunt. As the empire grew larger, the number of animals which were used in *venationes* increased, as well as the variation in species of animals. Though we have little source material that addresses the infrastructure behind wild animal trade, especially for *venationes* outside of Rome, it is most likely that sponsors of amphitheater games bought beasts from traders, who in turn procured these animals from provincial hunters.[96] These beasts were valuable: a price edict from Diocletian reveals that the animals used in a *venatio* could be very expensive, with a lion costing as much as 150,000 *denarii*.[97] Epigraphic material reveals that relatively costly animals appeared in Latium et Campania's *venationes*: for example, inscriptions describe wild boars and bears starring in animal hunts. Both these types of animals cost thousands of *denarii* to procure.[98] The lavish costs of wild animals, the amount of animals used and the struggle to obtain these animals exemplify the popularity and importance of *venationes* within the province.

As for the content of the spectacle type, *venationes* in Latium et Campania were certainly diverse. A *venatio* principally was a staged beast hunt, but the exact content of the spectacle could differ dramatically. Imperial *venationes* in Rome were likely the most diversified,

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[92] Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 39.22.2.
[93] Seneca, *De brevitate vitae*, 13.3.
[94] Sparreboom, *Venationes Africanae*, p. 47.
[95] Plinius, *Naturalis Historia*. 8.20.
[96] Futrell, Alison and Thomas F. Scanlon, *The Oxford Handbook Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World* (Oxford, 2021), p. 547-549.
[97] For the Price edict: Marta Giacchero, "Edictum Diocletiani et collegarum de pretiis rerum venalium: in integrum fere restitutum e latinis graecisque fragmentis", *Istituto di storia antica e scienze ausiliarie* 1 (Genoa, 1974).
[98] CIL X, 1074d; CIL IV, 1989.

especially when it came to the types of animals used: zoological evidence from the Colosseum shows remains of horses, bulls, boars and bears as well as more exotic animals such as lions, ostriches and leopards.[99] Individually sponsored *venationes* in the province were also diverse, although the epigraphic material found within the province doesn't reveal as much variance in the types of animals used as was the case within imperial animal hunts. An important reason for this would likely be a lack of finances to attain a wide variety of animal types, or perhaps the honors attained by hosting lavish *venationes* were not worth the financial strain.

Visual sources can give additional insight into the content and popularity of Latium et Campania's animal hunts. For one, mosaics are found abundantly in Latium et Campania. Next to geometrical mosaics, many also portray pictorial scenes, such as mythological scenes and battles.[100] Some mosaics portray animal hunting scenes. One floor mosaic found on the Via Casilina depicts a *venatio* scene where *venators* fights many different types of animals, including lions, bulls and deer (Fig. 3).[101] Another well-known floor mosaic which has been



*Figure 3 Venatio scene found on the Via Casilina*

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[99] Michael Mackinnon, "Supplying exotic animals for the Roman amphitheatre games: new reconstructions combining archaeological, ancient textual, historical and ethnographic data.", *Mouseion: Journal of the Classical Association of Canada* 6 (Calgary, 2006) 2, p. 137-161, aldaar 155-156.
[100] Katherine M.D. Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World* (1999, Cambridge), p. 63-65.
[101] Rome: Floor Mosaic from Via Casilina: scenes of the arena: det.: Venatio Rome (Consulted on 19-05-2022) https://library-artstor-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000585248

found near Neapolis depicts bears being driven into a net by three men with dogs (Fig. 4).[102] While this is not a scene which occurred within an amphitheater, it does reveal the importance of animal hunting for *venationes* to the individuals who had the financial capability to manufacture these types of art.
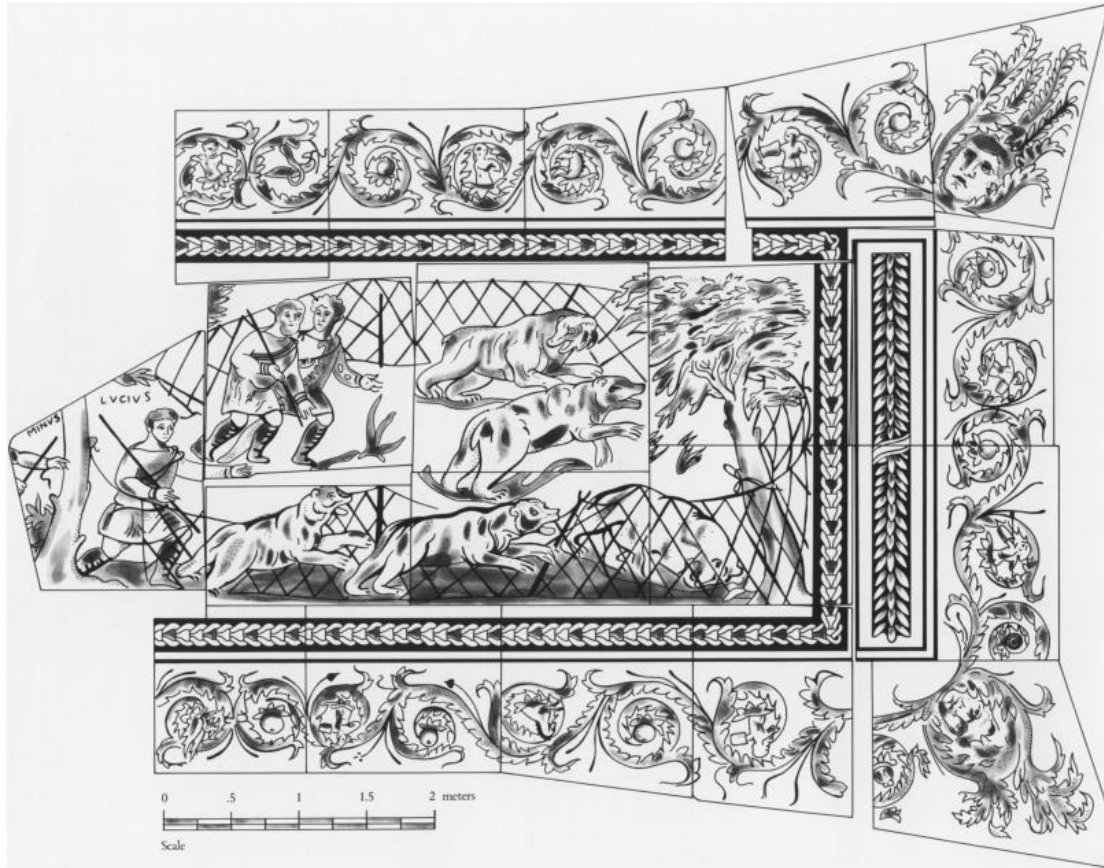


*Figure 4 Mosaic depicting a bear hunting scene, found near Neapolis*

When applying modern norms and values to animal hunts, the popularity of the spectacle type is hard to understand. It is important to understand that while *venationes* would be considered cruel in contemporary times, it fitted the bloodlust portrayed by the crowd during spectacle games.[103] Admiration for the skill of a *venator* and the dangerousness of the wild animals likely were the principle reasons for people to come and watch animal hunts.[104] But while the excitement of battle and the danger of slaying a wild beast might have brought Romans to the amphitheaters, there were some other cultural significances of *venationes* which were likely important to both the spectators and to the organizers of animal hunts in the province. These significances bring us back to Edmondson and Kyle's concept of 'cultural

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[102] Christine Kondoleon and Alexis Belis, *Roman Mosaics in the J. Paul Getty Museum* (2016). https://muse.jhu.edu/chapter/2600260
[103] Fagan, *The Lure of the Arena.*, p. 126-127.
[104] Ibidem.

performance'.[105] According to them, the spectacle of *venatio* could be seen as a means of reaffirming the empire's strength and power to the audience of the spectacle. Specifically, *venationes* were used to convey the notion of the empire's control over nature and the regions that Rome had conquered. Some accounts of the exhibition of animals in *venationes* argue for this social significance. Under Augustus, rhinoceroses and hippopotami were slain for the first time in the aftermath of the conquest of Egypt.[106] Suetonius also writes that Antoninus Pius displayed 'elephants … corocottae and tigers and rhinoceroses, even crocodiles and hippopotami, in short, all the animals of the whole earth…' during games in 148 A.D., which seems to be an example of the ancient author's awareness of this cultural significance.[107]

While the theory of cultural significance is explicitly applied to imperial *venationes* by both Edmondson and Kyle, it likely could also be applied to animal hunts in the province of Latium et Campania for a few reasons. While there is no direct evidence for the importance of this cultural significance in non-imperial animal hunts, some sources do suggest that *venationes* organized in the cities of Latium et Campania were closely linked to the emperor. Epigraphy found within the province links organized games with the reigning emperor and subsequently affirms his power. Some examples can be found in the epigraphic material found in Pompeii; one of these inscriptions dedicates gladiatorial combat and an animal hunt to Vespasianus.[108] In this way, cultural significances which are usually linked to imperial *venationes* might have played a role in the non-imperial animal hunts within Latium et Campania as well.

*Conclusion*

The main goal of this chapter has been to establish the state of urbanism, spectacle games and *venationes* in Latium et Campania. The province had a high rate of urbanism, and some urban features were shared by many of the province's cities. Two buildings which are inseparably connected to spectacle in the Roman city, the theater and the amphitheater, were prevalent in approximately half of the urban sites found. The spectacle games which occurred within these buildings were popular, with gladiatorial combat as the highlight of all spectacles. Sponsors of spectacles other than the emperor organized them for their own gain: euergetism often increased the popularity of these individuals and granted them honors. That being said, the spectacle of *venatio* was certainly popular as well. Spectators came to watch animal hunts for

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[105] Edmondson, "Dynamic arenas".; Kyle, *Spectacles of death in ancient Rome*.
[106] Suetonius, *Augustus*, 43.4; Dio, *Historia Romana*, 51.22.5.
[107] Suetonius, *Antoninus Pius*, 10.9.
[108] CIL 4.1180.

varying reasons, though they certainly enjoyed watching the danger involved in killing a wild beast. A *venatio* in Latium et Campania could also be seen as a cultural performance as it portrayed the power and control of the empire, especially over nature and the known world. The comparison of urbanism, spectacle culture and *venatio* in Latium et Campania with the two following provinces will further elucidate how these aspects of Roman society relate to diversity within the Roman Empire.

# Chapter 2
## Africa Proconsularis: urbanism, spectacle culture and *venationes*

*Urbanism in Africa Proconsularis*

In the following chapter, urbanism, spectacle culture and *venationes* in imperial Africa Proconsularis will be researched and analyzed. Before we do this, some historical context of the province's incorporation into the Roman Empire must be given. The Roman conquest of Africa was a gradual and sluggish endeavor, with some parts of the continent still being integrated into the empire as late as the third century A.D.[109] The discussed province, Africa Proconsularis, came to be under Roman control in the second century B.C. The conquest of the province goes back to the end of the Third Punic War, in which Carthage was definitively defeated by the Roman Republic and subsequently burned to the ground.[110] The first African Roman province, Africa Vetus, was created after Carthage's defeat. Later, this province would become part of what was known as Africa Proconsularis.[111]

Africa Proconsularis was a rather strange province, geographically speaking. When surveying the geography of the region, the vast majority seems to have been desert area. This area was largely uninhabited, sparing a few remote villages. As we get closer to the Mediterranean, we find mountainous areas. These mountains divide the desert and what could be considered as the province's 'civilization', which was the area near the sea where most human activity took place. Most cities could be found behind these mountains, and city density was especially high in Tunisia and parts of Algeria.[112] The province thus had a varying geographical layout, with a relatively small part of it sustaining ancient civilization.

One of the most drastic changes within the province after its incorporation into the Roman Republic occurred on an economic level and simultaneously had to do with the province's geography. Africa Proconsularis would become the wealthiest province in Africa throughout centuries of Roman dominance, for a large part due to three booming industries: agriculture and the manufacturing industry of both foodstuffs and ceramics.[113] The regions near the sea were fertile, which made them ideal for the cultivation of varying products, olives being

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[109] Gareth Sears, *Cities of Roman Africa* (Stroud, 2011), p. 31.
[110] Dunstan, *Ancient Rome*, p. 88-90.
[111] Duncan Fishwick, "On the origins of Africa Proconsularis, I [The amalgamation of Africa Vetus and Africa Nova]", *Antiquités africaines* 29 (Lyon, 1993) 1, p. 53-62, 53.
[112] Hanson, *An Urban Geography of the Roman World*, p. 134-135.
[113] Matthew S. Hobson, 'The African Boom: The Origins of Economic Growth in Roman North Africa', *Ownership and Exploitation of Land and Natural Resources in the Roman World* (Oxford, 2015), p. 207-233.

one example of this.[114] Furthermore, the location of the province's cities near the sea was ideal for trade of food and other manufactured products. These industries caused an economic boom in the province, which started around the middle of the second century A.D. Because of the agricultural and economic importance of the province, Africa Proconsularis' elite attained large amounts of wealth.[115] Furthermore, the province must have had close relations with Rome and the Italian provinces, especially on a commercial level.

Though Proconsularis could be considered wealthy, the vast majority of the populace seems to have lived in severe poverty. Only the local elite profited from the economic situation in the province and became extremely wealthy because of it.[116] Besides vast amounts of capital, these individuals also had close relations with Rome and the imperial elite because of the important role they played in the economy of the empire. Many of the African elite would attain imperial honors and status through these relations, with some of them even becoming senators.[117] Thus, the importance and wealth of Africa Proconsularis was very profitable for the upper class on both a political and an economic level, while the middle and lower class generally gained very little.

Besides its economic success, Africa Proconsularis was also the most urbanized Roman province of the continent.[118] When it comes to the emergence of urbanism in the non-Italian provinces, early scholars have suggested that Roman policy was the reason that cities existed in these regions.[119] While it cannot be denied that many aspects of provincial cities changed due to Roman presence, this notion has been rejected in almost all contemporary literature. Forms of urbanization already existed in many, if not all the Roman provinces before their integration into the Roman Empire. The same is true for Africa Proconsularis: some of its cities had already undergone extensive urban development before Rome's dominance. A site such as Lepcis Magna was already large and sophisticated before Roman conquest. The city even contained typically Roman urban features, such as street grids.[120]

While the province had a history of urbanization before their incorporation into the Roman Empire, Roman influence on cities cannot be denied. Most fundamentally, the number of cities seems to have increased dramatically after the second century A.D. If we consult the

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[114] Hobson, 'The African Boom', p. 208-210.
[115] Matthew S. Hobson, *The African Boom?: evaluating economic growth in the roman province of Africa proconsularis* (2012), p. 69.
[116] Hobson, 'The African Boom', p. 233.
[117] Ibidem.
[118] Sparreboom, *Venationes Africanae,* p. 51-52.
[119] One example: Francis Haverfield, *Ancient Town Planning* (Oxford, 1913).
[120] Idem, p. 160.

epigraphic record, we can conclude that most North African building inscriptions are found in the second century A.D. This indicates that both city and monument building was the most intense in this era.[121] In total, Hanson has identified 66 urban sites in the province of Africa Proconsularis.[122] Since there are no other databases available on African urbanism, we are forced to adhere solely to Hanson's data. The province was approximately 300.000 square kilometers large, resulting in 1 city per 4545 square kilometers.[123] While this seems relatively little, it must be remembered that most of these cities were situated very close to one another, with very large parts of the provinces being almost uninhabited. Therefore, the city density per square kilometer might not give us an accurate assessment of the urbanization of the province.

The layout of African cities differed dramatically from one another. Many urban centers lacked any type of street planning.[124] Often, these cities already existed in pre-Roman times and therefore had irregular or unplanned street plans. The urban expansions that occurred after Roman conquest were built on top of or around the existing infrastructure. New cities founded or rebuilt by Rome often did have street grids and were meant to have a standardized city plan. Nevertheless, newly founded cities deviated from standardized planning from time to time due to varying reasons.[125] One example is Sufetula, a city which was founded by Rome (Fig. 5).[126] Though Sufetula has a street grid, some of its monumentality has been placed outside of it, as seen in the north-western and eastern parts of the city. This likely happened because the city rapidly expanded and outgrew its original urban planning.[127]
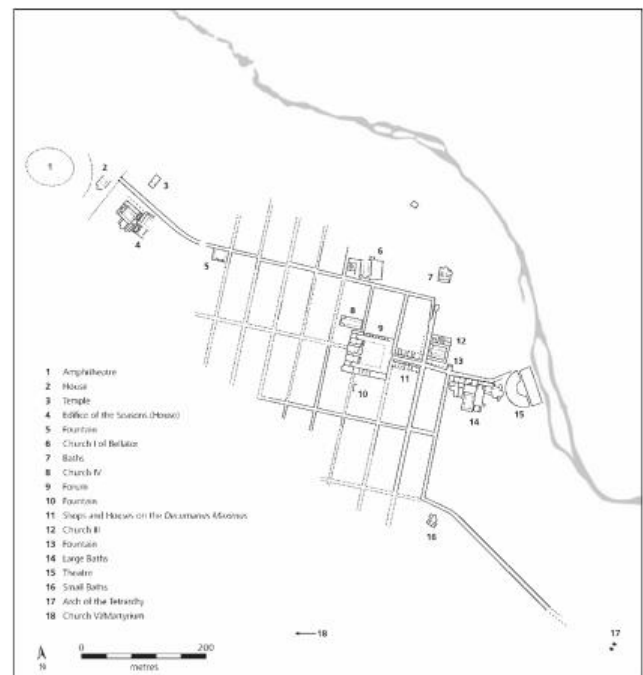


*Figure 5 Plan of the city of Sufetula.*

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[121] Idem, p. 65-66.
[122] Hanson, *An Urban Geography of the Roman World*, p. 261-290.
[123] Area approximation tool used: https://www.daftlogic.com/projects-google-maps-area-calculator-tool.htm. Other literature gives relatively similar approximations: David Vopřada, *Quodvultdeus: a Bishop Forming Christians in Vandal Africa: A Contextual Analysis of the Pre-baptismal Sermons attributed to Quodvultdeus of Carthage* (Leiden, 2020), p. 14.
[124] Hanson, *An Urban Geography of the Roman World*, p. 261-290.
[125] Laurence et al., *The City in the Roman West*, p. 160.
[126] Idem, p. 163.
[127] Sears, *Cities of Roman Africa*, p. 68.

When taking a further look at the cities of Africa Proconsularis, it becomes clear that most of the province's cities contained at least a few types of common urban features. Nevertheless, they were by no means omnipresent or similar throughout the province. The lack of a street grid within urban sites, or the construction of buildings outside of this grid, are two examples. Another urban feature which is notably missing in many of the cities in Proconsularis are city walls. In fact, only 18 of the 66 urban sites found in Africa Proconsularis seem to have had walls of some kind, which would have made them a less-than-common sighting in the province.[128]

As for the general monumentality of urban centers in Africa Proconsularis, there are some types which stand out in the commonality of their presence in the province's cities. Bathhouses are the most prevalent monument type, with remains being found in 34 of the 66 urban sites, or 1 in every 1.9 cities.[129] Depending on the size of the city, the number of baths in a city could also be high: some cities contained as many as six bathhouses.[130] It is also important to note that these baths were mostly built from the second century A.D. onwards, with there being little evidence for a bathing tradition before this time. So, the construction of bathhouses seems to have greatly intensified during Roman reign.[131] Religious buildings were also important within African cities and, as was the case with baths, were mostly built during and after the second century A.D. In Africa Proconsularis, 24 of the 66 urban sites contain temples, 1 in every 2.75 cities.[132] Keeping in mind the importance of religion in the ancient Roman world, this number seems to be relatively low. One thing to note is that while smaller sites had few or no temples, the larger cities had religious monuments for many different deities. Therefore, the importance of religion within a Roman province can likely not be determined by the number of cities which contained religious buildings.

The prominence of monuments in the cities of Africa Proconsularis can, for a large part, be ascribed to the economic and political success of the region's elite. The economic boom of the province and its close political conjunction with the empire are an important cause for the vast amount of monumentality we can find within Proconsularis' cities. As stated before, many of the local elite had attained large amounts of wealth because of the intensive commerce which occurred within the region. Also, they often had close relations or were even involved in the

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[128] Hanson, *An Urban Geography of the Roman World*, p. 261-290.
[129] Ibidem.
[130] Idem, p. 279.
[131] Idem, p. 261-290.
[132] Ibidem.

political landscape of Rome.[133] These wealthy individuals financed the construction of typically Roman monuments because the economy and politics of Africa Proconsularis were intertwined with Rome. By doing this, they tried to frame themselves as benefactors of the city, and simultaneously showed their close relations with and loyalty to Roman culture and society.[134]

*Spectacle monumentality and culture in Africa Proconsularis*

There are plentiful remains of spectacle monumentality in the cities of Africa Proconsularis. The oldest theaters in North Africa originate from the fifth century B.C. and are found in Greek settlements within the region.[135] That being said, practically all theaters in Proconsularis were built after Roman conquest (though a large theater at Ubica described by Caesar might be an exception)[136]. When consulting the province's earlier history this is unsurprising because early Greek settlements which could have contained theaters did not exist in Africa Proconsularis. It is thus likely that Rome introduced theater construction and theater spectacle in the region. To present knowledge, 26 out of the 66 urban sites seem to have contained a theater, or 1 in approximately 2.5 cities.[137] As is the case with other monument types, the larger cities sometimes contained multiple theaters, often a smaller and a larger one. Theaters with temples nearby or even attached to them are sometimes found in the cities of Proconsularis, such as a theater
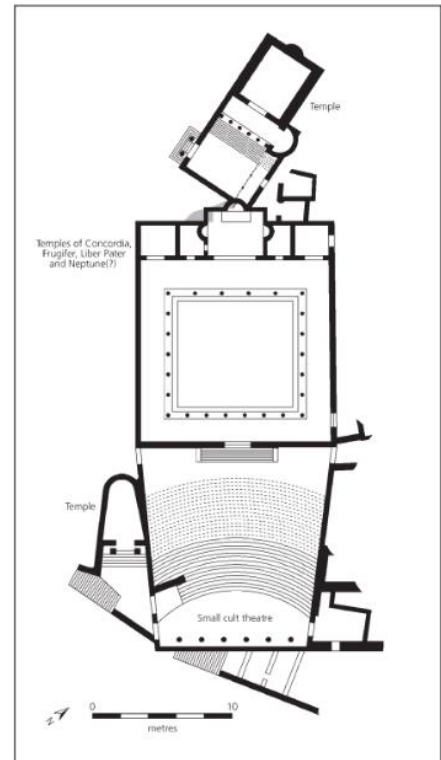


*Figure 6 Theater at Thugga, with multiple temples attached.*

found in Thugga (Fig. 6)[138], which would make it likely that spectacles in African theaters played some role in the religious activities of the province. Still, some African theaters lack any archaeological connection to one or multiple temples: the theaters of Sabratha and Sufetula are two examples of this.[139]

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[133] Yvon Thébert, *Thermes Romains d'Afrique du Nord* (Rome, 2013), p. 523-527.
[134] Josephine Crawley Quinn and Andrew Wilson, "Capitolia", *The Journal of Roman Studies* 103 (Cambridge, 2013), p. 117-173, 167-168.
[135] Sear, *Roman Theatres: An Architectural Study, p.* 104.
[136] Caesar, *De Bello Civili*, 2.25.1. Sear, *Roman Theatres: An Architectural Study,* p. 104.
[137] Hanson, *An Urban Geography of the Roman World*, p. 261-290.
[138] Laurence et al., *The City in the Roman West*, p. 249.
[139] Idem, p. 250.

The number of theaters in Proconsularis suggests that theater spectacles became a widely popular cultural practice. About 30 inscriptions found within 13 of the province's urban sites mention theater spectacles, or *ludi scaenici*.[140] This is a relatively substantial number which confirms that these spectacles were of importance within the province, at least to the social groups which had the means of creating these inscriptions. The existence of epigraphic remains describing theater spectacles reveal not only that these spectacles occurred, but that they were also deemed important enough to commemorate. Though the inscriptions found proves the occurrence of theater spectacles within the province, it clarifies very little about the exact contents of theater spectacles in Africa Proconsularis. It is likely that many of the types of events which are known to have been held in theaters throughout the Roman Empire would also be held in the theaters of Proconsularis. Still, not much can be definitively concluded about the exact implications of theater spectacles in the province.

The number of amphitheaters in Proconsularis is almost equal to the number of theaters found. 25 out of the 66 urban sites, or one in about every 2.6 cities, contained one or sometimes even multiple amphitheaters. This is a substantial amount, which speaks to the popularity of amphitheater spectacles in the province.[141] Amphitheaters in Proconsularis varied greatly in size. Some were known to be very large: besides the Colosseum in Rome, the two largest amphitheaters can be found in Carthage and Thysdrus, cities which both lay in the province.[142] Most of the known amphitheaters were built in the second century A.D., though some preceded this era. Furthermore, we can conclude that 17 cities contained both spectacle monument types, one in every 3.9 cities. While both spectacle monuments were clearly not a prerequisite for city monumentality within Africa Proconsularis, they were quite a common sight, at least in the larger cities of the province.

When diving deeper into the popularity of spectacles in the province, we encounter a peculiarity: relatively few epigraphic remains which discuss amphitheater spectacles have been found. Combining the results of the search words *munus, gladiator, venatio* and *meridiani* only yields approximately 50 inscriptions from 20 different urban sites.[143] At first glance, this might seem like a lot of epigraphic material in comparison to inscriptions on theater spectacles. However, it must be noted that in comparison to other provinces, there is a distinct lack in found inscriptions which discuss amphitheater spectacles.[144] Furthermore, the total amount of

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[140] Concluded through searches in the digital EDCS: https://db.edcs.eu/epigr/hinweise/hinweis-en.html.
[141] Ibidem.
[142] Hanson, *An Urban Geography of the Roman World*, p. 267, 285.
[143] Concluded through searches in the digital EDCS: https://db.edcs.eu/epigr/hinweise/hinweis-en.html.
[144] See chapter 1.

epigraphic material in Africa Proconsularis is second only to Latium et Campania. Some inscription types, such as funerary inscriptions, are even more abundant in Africa Proconsularis than they were in all other Roman provinces.[145] So, we have an enormous amount of epigraphic data from the region, yet relatively few of these discuss amphitheater spectacles.[146] The inscriptions that we do have are quite informative: many, if not most, discuss the organizers of amphitheater games and the contents of these spectacles. Another interesting epigraphic source are eight curse tablets found in the amphitheater of Carthage, which give us some of the names of *venators* and gladiators that lived in that time.[147] However, the lack of epigraphic material does suggest that amphitheater spectacles were relatively unimportant, in stark contrast to the number of urban sites containing amphitheaters in Africa Proconsularis.

It must be noted that the scarcity of epigraphy on amphitheater spectacles does not necessarily mean that they were an uncommon occurrence or an unpopular activity. The most obvious explanation for the lack of inscriptions is that most epigraphy has been lost to history. However, this seems unlikely because of the vast quantities of epigraphic data that has already been uncovered in Africa Proconsularis. The circumstances in which amphitheater games were organized are likely of importance as well. The reason we have so few inscriptions might be exactly because they were held so often. Magistrates in Proconsularis were required to organize games on a regular basis, but they were usually not honored for these in the form of an inscription.[148] Because of this, most amphitheater spectacles were not recorded in an epigraphic manner and thus were lost.


*Venationes in Africa Proconsularis*

Source types which Proconsularis contained in greater abundance might tell us more about spectacle games and their popularity. The most notable of these source types are floor mosaics, mostly found in the villas of the province. Dozens of floor mosaics have been found which portray amphitheater spectacles.[149] The picture that these mosaics paint aligns with what the number of amphitheaters found suggests: spectacles were popular in the African province after all. However, these mosaics also give us an insight into which spectacle type was most popular

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[145] Concluded through searches in the digital EDCS: https://db.edcs.eu/epigr/hinweise/hinweis-en.html. To our current knowledge, Africa Proconsularis contains approximately 5600 funerary inscriptions more than Latium et Campania.

[146] The EDCS lists over 30000 inscriptions found in Africa Proconsularis.

[147] Found in Audollent's collection of defixiones tabellae: Auguste Audollent, *Les 'Tabellae defixionum' d'Afrique, par M. Aug. Audollent, Extrait duc'Bulletin archéologique'* (Paris, 1905).

[148] Sparreboom, *Venationes Africanae*, p. 37.

[149] Christophe Hugoniot, *Les spectacles de l'Afrique romaine: une culture officielle municipale sous l'Empire romain* (Lille, 2003), p. 389-390. Its appendix, vol. III, 9-50 lists all African floor mosaics.

in the province. When surveying the themes found on floor mosaics, scenes of animal hunts are by far the most common. One database of third and fourth century floor mosaics in Roman North Africa lists 50 mosaics which portray *venationes*, while only 2 contained scenes of gladiatorial combat.[150] This imbalance clearly points towards a higher popularity of *venationes* in the province, at least under the elite who could afford to produce these mosaics.

Other visual sources which illustrate amphitheater games and show the popularity of these spectacles in the province are terracotta items such as pots and lamps. One example of the depiction of spectacles on terracotta items is a collection of African food platters and lamps, which solely depict venatio scenes (Fig. 7).[151] In the third and fourth century A.D., gladiatorial scenes all but disappeared from terracotta pottery. On the other hand, animal hunts became much more prominent, signifying the popularity of *venationes* not only under the wealthy elite, but also the lower social classes.[152]



*Figure 7 Pottery and Lamps displaying venatio scenes.*

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[150] See Hugoniot, *Les spectacles de l'Afrique romaine* for all African floor mosaics.

[151] Annewies van den Hoek and John Joseph Hermann, *Pottery, Pavements, and Paradise. Iconographic and Textual Studies on Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 2013), p. 420.

[152] Van den Hoek & Hermann, *Pottery, Pavements, and Paradise. Iconographic and Textual Studies on Late Antiquity*, p. 405-434.

*Venationes* did not take precedence over gladiatorial combat from the start of the Roman era. Instead, there seems to have been a gradual increase in the spectacle type's popularity over the centuries. The amphitheater spectacles which were organized shortly after the region's incorporation into the empire are relatively usual in their exact contents: gladiatorial combat, executions and *venationes* were combined with one another. A few inscriptions mention these composite arena games; one example is a building inscription on a Carthaginian shrine which mentions two counts of these combined spectacles, including a theater play interrupted by gladiator fights and a *venatio*.[153] A couple early floor mosaics also show gladiatorial combat in combination with animal hunts.[154] However, in the second and third century A.D., evidence of *venationes* being organized separately from other types of amphitheater spectacles starts to appear. The Magerius mosaic found in Smirat is one of the many mosaics which depicts scenes of animal hunts: for example, one scene shows four *venatores* fighting leopards.[155] The mosaic is accompanied by an inscription which elucidates that this is a *munus* consisting only of beast-fights. The little epigraphic material that we do have paints the same picture: as time progresses, mentions of gladiatorial combat reduce, while inscriptions on independent *venatio* spectacles increase.[156] Thus, over time, *venationes* became much more important than gladiatorial fights, a practice which all but disappeared in Africa Proconsularis during later antiquity.

A further insight into the geography and history of the province reveals that dealing with wild animals was commonly necessary, which might elucidate the increased popularity the spectacle type enjoyed. While it is true that Rome brought amphitheaters to Africa Proconsularis, and simultaneously institutionalized spectacles and staged animal hunting, a longstanding hunting tradition already existed in North Africa. After all, the early *venationes* in Rome were held with the help of African hunters.[157] The existence of this tradition in the African Provinces also made hunting spectacles in Proconsularis popular. The reason that this hunting tradition existed is practical in its nature: predator animals, mostly lions and leopards, were an actual danger in the African provinces.[158] Strabo mentions that the area around Carthage was 'full of wild beasts', also specifically mentioning lions and leopards.[159] One

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[153] *ILAfr* 400.
[154] Sparreboom, *Venationes Africanae*, p. 57.
[155] Idem, p. 73, 225-228.
[156] Guy Chamberland, *The Production of Shows in the Cities of the Roman Empire: A study of the Latin epigraphic evidence* (Hamilton, 2001), p. 69-72.
[157] Sparreboom, *Venationes Africanae*, p. 46-47.
[158] On the presence of wild animals in North Africa: Sparreboom, *Venationes Africanae*, p. 74-82, 200.
[159] Strabo, *Geographica* II 5.33.

literary fragment even describes the destruction of a tribe of people in Libya by a pack of lions:[160]

> 'It is said that in Libya there used to exist a race of men called the Nomaei. They continued generally prosperous in a territory where the pastures were good and land unquestionably rich, until finally they were wiped out when a vast herd of lions of the very largest size and of irresistible boldness attacked them. The whole race to a man was destroyed by the lions and perished utterly.'

Even in the 20th century, the mountainous regions of Africa Proconsularis still contained many of the predator animals killed during *venationes*. This another indication of their nearby presence to ancient civilization, as well as the danger this wildlife would have posed.[161] These predators, commonly named *ferae africanae* in some ancient sources[162], did not only kill people as described above, but also devoured cattle in the African regions, subsequently endangering people's livelihood.[163] So, the hunting tradition within Africa Proconsularis finds its origin in the danger that *ferae africanae* posed to the people who lived in the region.

As has become evident, *venationes* progressively gained popularity within Africa Proconsularis, until it became the most important spectacle type within the province. However, the exact contents of animal hunts in the province are still unclear. Again, visual art as a source type can reveal much about the content of animal hunts. One such source is a mosaic which portrays animal hunts, the Zliten mosaic (Fig. 8)[164]. It is a floor mosaic found in a Roman villa

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[160] Aelianus, *De Natura Animalium*, 17.27.
[161] Mohamed Azaza and Lídia Colominas "The Roman introduction and exportation of animals into Tunisia: Linking archaeozoology with textual and iconographic evidence", *Journal of Archaeolgical Science: Reports* 29 (Amsterdam, 2020), p. 1-9, 7.
[162] For example: Plinius, *Historia Naturalis*, 36.11.
[163] Sparreboom, *Venationes Africanae*, p. 27.
[164] http://www.utexas.edu/courses/romanciv/Doug's%20images/Flavian%20Amphitheater/Bestiarii.jpg (Consulted on 10/05/2022).

near Lepcis Magna.[165] While the exact dating of the mosaic has proven difficult, most scholars suggest that it finds its origin in the first or second century AD.[166] Although the Zliten Mosaic is one of the few known floor mosaics to also portray gladiatorial combat, scenes of *venationes* are much more common. Furthermore, it is a mosaic which shows the extensive variety within *venatio* shows. Many types of bloodshed between man and beast can be seen: a leopard attacks a convict bound to a chariot, a hunter hunts a deer, and a man fights multiple ostriches. But animals could also be made to fight one another during a *venatio*: a bear and a bull can be seen chained to one another, with another man spurring them on to fight. Also, we see a dog trying to catch a deer.
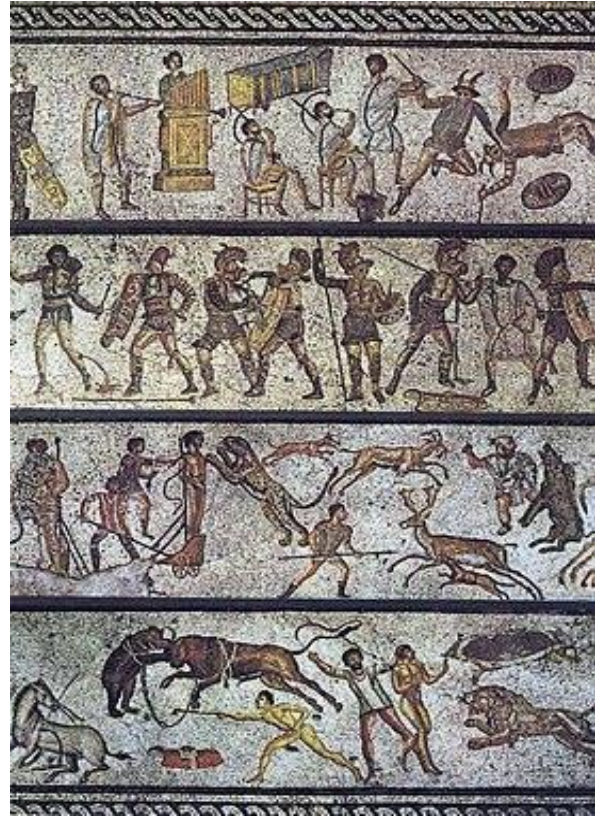


*Figure 8 Some of the amphitheater scenes on the Zliten Mosaic*

The diversity of activities found on this mosaic is confirmed by the little epigraphic evidence that has been found within the province. The Carthaginian curse tablets again are insightful: they mention a variety of animals in connection with *venationes*, namely lions, bulls, boars and bears.[167]

The Zliten mosaic shows us that animal spectacles in the amphitheaters of Africa Proconsularis were both very diverse and an important part of the lives of the province's elite. But while the African elite certainly spectated *venationes*, animal hunts were also sponsored and organized by them. The involvement of the region's elite with *venationes* introduces a new dimension to the mosaics found in the villas of the elite. Mosaics of animal spectacles were not merely placed in the elite's houses because they enjoyed them; they were sometimes also meant to convey that the villa's owner was actively involved with the *venationes* in the amphitheaters, thus granting status to the mosaic's possessor.[168] By organizing or funding *venationes*, the elite of Roman North Africa also attained public honors in the form of honorific titles and

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[165] Sparreboom, *Venationes Africanae*, p. 217-222.
[166] Idem, 122.
[167] Audollent, *Les 'Tabellae defixionum' d'Afrique* (Extract from the 'Arcaheological Bulletin', 1905).
[168] Sparreboom, *Venationes Africanae*, p. 34.

inscriptions. Inscriptions have been found on statues, and some have been found on different types of buildings.[169] Floor mosaics in Roman villas, honorary inscriptions and even pottery art could be used by the elite of the province to achieve a variety of things. Perhaps they wanted to show their interest in the game type, stress the African origin of many of the animals within these games or simply enjoyed *venationes* themselves.

Still, the question remains why these hunting spectacles were popular to such a degree that expensive floor mosaics were created portraying the spectacle type and it took precedence over all other spectacle types. Did the people of Africa Proconsularis simply enjoy the deaths of animals, or were there other reasons for the popularity of *venationes*? One practical reason for donors of spectacle games to organize beast-hunts has to do with their own economic situation. Individual donors of spectacle games, while often relatively wealthy, had to take care of their financial situations as well. Gladiator fights became more expensive to organize in later antiquity than *venationes*, especially in North Africa where procuring these animals was relatively cheap.[170] Animals were already being captured for trade with Rome and other parts of the Roman Empire, so it is likely that the infrastructure existed to capture these animals, lowering costs for attaining *ferae africanae*. So, financial considerations pushed organizers of spectacle games towards the organizing of *venationes* instead of other spectacle types.[171]

However, there was also a certain significance of the deaths of African predators which can be seen in the actions of organizers of spectacles, who emphasized the presence of *ferae africanae* when they used them in their hunting spectacles. Visual art is dominated by depictions of these African beasts. Furthermore, epigraphic material which discusses *venationes* distinctly underlines the presence of predatory animals.[172] This was likely done for two reasons: for one, these animals were the most expensive types of beasts, so they wanted to advertise the cost of the *venatio* they had organized. But the donors of spectacles in Africa Proconsularis likely also emphasized the presence of *ferae africanae* because their deaths would be meaningful to the populace of Africa Proconsularis, thus making their show memorable. It would be understandable and probable that spectators enjoyed watching these animals die in the amphitheaters of urban sites because of the danger they posed to their

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[169] For example: CIL VIII 7969 & *ILAlg-1*, 2055.
[170] Sparreboom, *Venationes Africanae*, p. 87.
[171] On the considerations of the organizers of spectacle games: Christina Kokkinia, "Games vs. buildings as euergetic choices", *L'Organisation des Spectacles dans le Monde Romain. Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique* (Geneve, 2012), p. 87-130, 104, 122-123.
[172] Idem, p. 97, 127-128.

livelihood and sometimes even to their own life. Therefore, *venationes* became more popular than other spectacles such as gladiatorial combat.

*Conclusion*

Africa Proconsularis was the earliest conquered region on the African continent, as well as the most urbanized province on the African continent. Certain forms of urbanization already existed before Roman conquest. Still, city and monument building greatly accelerated after the incorporation of Africa Proconsularis into the Roman Empire. While urban features were at times shared by different cities, variety seems to be the norm. Spectacle culture in Proconsularis seems to have been prominent: the relatively high number of theaters and amphitheaters attest to this. The epigraphy on theater and amphitheater spectacles is limited, but visual sources and the epigraphic material which we have found reveal that *venationes* were much more popular than any other type of spectacle, even being organized independently from gladiatorial combat and executions. While the reasons for this were likely diverse, an important factor was the actual danger wild animals posed in the African province, a factor which was likely picked up and used by the organizers of animal hunts to create the shows which were as exciting as possible. By doing this, donors received fame and honors, increasing their prestige and status.

# Chapter 3

# Hispania Baetica: urbanism, spectacle culture and *venationes*

*Urbanism in Hispania Baetica*

In this chapter, the state of urbanism, spectacle culture and *venationes* in Hispania Baetica will be researched after a brief overview of its political and urban history. The southern part of Spain became Roman at a relatively early stage; it was conquered from Carthage by the Roman Republic in 206 B.C, during the Second Punic War. Subsequently, it was divided into multiple provinces, one of these being Hispania Ulterior.[173] Some of the Spanish provinces were reorganized during Augustus' reign: Hispania Ulterior was split in two, with the most southwestern part becoming known as Hispania Baetica.[174]

Though Baetica was subjugated by Rome at an early stage, its history of urbanization goes back even further. Before Rome's conquest of the region in the late third century B.C., the region which encompassed Baetica was known as Turdetania: a large number of cities and settlements already existed in the region as early as the 6th century B.C.[175] The urban character of the region can mainly be ascribed to its geography: Hispania's inland was rugged terrain, consisting for a large part of uninhabitable mountainous areas. Many of the province's cities were therefore built along the coastline and the Guadalquivir River. The province's cities were predominantly found along the banks of this river.[176] Besides mountains and cities, large parts of the province were fertile meadows and marshes, ideal for the cultivation of various crops.[177]

In part because of the availability of fertile soil and its connection to Carthage, Baetica was already an extremely wealthy province before Roman conquest.[178] Some of the important industries included the production of refined foodstuffs such as olive oil and fish sauce, wine production and, perhaps above all, the mining and export of valuable metals which were existent in the region, the most important one being gold.[179] Baetica contained large amounts of precious materials which were likely one of the causes for the wealth that the province's people enjoyed. While under Carthaginian rule, these industries were used in the struggle

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[173] Jeronimo Sanchez Velasco, *The Christianization of Western Baetica* (Amsterdam, 2017), p. 37.
[174] Idem, p. 37.
[175] Simon J. Keay, "The 'Romanization' of Turdetania", *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 11 (Oxford, 1992) 3, p. 275-312, 276, 282.
[176] Evan W. Haley, *Baetica Felix: People and Prosperity in Southern Spain from Caesar to Septimius Severus* (Austin, 2003), p. 20-21, 71.
[177] Helen Woodhouse, *Epigraphy and Urban Communities in Early Roman Baetica* (Southampton, 2012), p. 18.
[178] Velasco, *The Christianization of Western Baetica*, p. 37.
[179] Haley, *Baetica Felix*, p. 25-27.

against the Roman Republic.[180] After Roman conquest, Baetica was still involved in these same industries and remained wealthy due to their new trade relations with Rome.

Baetica was the province within Hispania with the highest concentration of cities and became even more urbanized after Roman conquest, due to the arrival of colonists and construction of new Roman settlements. Alongside Hanson's database, a relatively recent study by Pieter Houten on the urbanization of the Iberian Peninsula will be used to research the urbanization of the province.[181] In total, Hanson describes 52 urban sites in Hispania Baetica.[182] As is the case with the other discussed provinces, this is a relatively substantial amount. As the approximate total surface area of Baetica was 75.000 square kilometers, the province contained 1 urban site per 1442 square kilometers.[183] Interestingly, Pieter Houten describes almost 120 additional 'self-governing communities' within the province.[184] This difference seems rather intriguing at first glance. However, if we dive deeper into the exact meaning of 'self-governing community', it becomes clear that Houten includes over 100 entities or tribes which pay tribute but are not classified as an urban center or city.[185] When we remove these from the comparison, Hanson and Houten's numbers are much closer to one another. Therefore, Hanson's count of the cities in Hispania Baetica seems to be relatively reliable.

The street layout of the cities within Hispania Baetica varied greatly, with only a few cities containing orthogonal grids.[186] This is likely due to the province's earlier history of urbanization: cities which had no street grid before Roman conquest did not restructure their city planning, as there was no desire or obligation to do this. Many cities which were founded during Roman rule in the region did contain street grids, such as Corduba, Hispalis and Italica.[187] This was likely because they could be planned from their first foundations. Some of the province's native cities, such as Baelo, constructed street grids when they underwent profound urban development.[188]

Walls were also absent in many of the province's cities, as only 13 urban sites contained them.[189] The lack of walls could have had various causes: for example, there might have been

[180] Velasco, *The Christianization of Western Baetica*, p. 37.
[181] Pieter Hubert Antoine Houten, *Civitates Hispaniae: urbanisation on the Iberian peninsula during the High Empire* (Leiden, 2018).
[182] Hanson, *An Urban Geography of the Roman World*, p. 335-354.
[183] Area approximation tool used: https://www.daftlogic.com/projects-google-maps-area-calculator-tool.htm.
[184] Houten, *Civitates Hispaniae*, p. 91.
[185] Idem, p. 73, 83.
[186] Hanson, *An Urban Geography of the Roman World*, p. 335-354.
[187] Hanson, *An Urban Geography of the Roman World*, p. 340, 342, 345.
[188] Andrew Fear, *Rome and Baetica: Urbanization in Southern Spain c. 50 B.C. – A.D. 150* (Oxford. 1996), p. 217.
[189] Hanson, *An Urban Geography of the Roman World*, p. 335-354.

a lack of practical use or perhaps there were some financial barriers which stopped a city from constructing a wall. The sporadic existence of both street grids and walls shows that the cities of Baetica could fundamentally differ from one another.

A further inspection of the monumentality of the province's cities yields some interesting results. The general monumentality of the cities within Baetica seems to be rather limited. For example, of the 52 urban sites found, only 7 contain bathhouses of some kind, 1 in every 7.4 cities.[190] Some cities contained multiple bathhouses, but no more than 3 in the same city. Religious buildings were not common, either: only 12 out of 52 urban sites contained temples of any kind, 1 in every 4.3 cities.[191] The majority of the monumentality within Baetica was built during the first and early second century A.D. and gradually declined after this era.[192] The lack of monumentality in the cities of Baetica is rather remarkable. Bathhouses and temples are the most found monumentality throughout the Roman Empire, yet in Baetica's urban sites not even 1 in every 4 cities contains the monument types. Furthermore, the importance of these monument types within Roman culture cannot be underestimated.

According to Pieter Houten, the lack of monumentality found within Hispania likely stems from a research bias: cities within Hispania have not been researched well enough yet, so not all monumentality has been found.[193] However, there are a few possible other reasons for the lack of monumentality in the province which can be found when further inspecting urbanization and society within Baetica. One of these reasons has to do with the size of cities and the division of monumentality within the province. Only 13 of the 52 urban sites contained more than 2 monument buildings.[194] This includes monument buildings of the same type, such as sites containing 3 different temples. Though the exact size of many of these cities is unknown, it does seem to suggest that there were distinct size differences between the urban sites of Baetica. These size differences influence the monumentality of these cities as well: large cities would generally contain more monumentality than smaller ones. It is thus plausible that the monumentality of the region nucleated to a few large cities, instead of being spread out over Baetica's smaller urban sites.

Another explanation for the lack of monumentality within the province's cities might be found by examining the province's elite, who were ultimately responsible for the funding of the construction of these monuments. Monument building by individuals can be seen as

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[190] Ibidem.
[191] Ibidem.
[192] Laurence et al., *The City in the Roman West,* p. 219.
[193] Houten, *Civitates Hispaniae*, p. 187.
[194] Hanson, *An Urban Geography of the Roman World*, p. 335-354.

expressions of loyalty to the Roman Empire.[195] A lack of monumentality does not necessarily mean that Baetica's elite were disloyal or rebellious against the Roman Empire, but it is still remarkable that they funded or constructed relatively little monumentality. Though some of Baetica's elite were heavily involved with Rome, occupying important political positions[196], this was likely not the case for all wealthy individuals throughout the province. An examination of the region's monumentality seems to confirm this: the cities within the region near the Guadalquivir valley, which seemed to have had the closest relations with the Italian Peninsula and Rome, show the highest degrees of monumentality, while the monumentality of the cities in other regions was more modest.[197]

One important study on cities, monumentality and wealth in Baetica has been done by Evan Haley and it provides us with a final cause for the lack of large monumentality in the province.[198] Meant as an insight into Baetica's economy and a model for wealth distribution within the province, Haley describes a certain 'middle stratum': a group of people with a medium to high income which encompassed a relatively large part of the province's population.[199] While these people were able to construct smaller forms of monumentality, such as statues, monument buildings which came at great expense would likely be out of their financial capabilities. A lack of individually accumulated wealth would therefore lead to a similar lack of large monuments.

*Spectacle monumentality and culture in Hispania Baetica*

When doing a survey of the theaters in Baetica's cities, we find that 17 out of the 52 urban sites contained theaters, approximately 1 in every 3 cities.[200] Baetica contains less theaters than might be expected in comparison to other Roman provinces, as is underlined by Pieter Houten as well.[201] Still, it is rather surprising that more urban sites contained theaters than temples, as the number of religious buildings in the entire Roman Empire was approximately three times as high as the amount of theaters.[202]

Other source types do not seem to point towards a popularity of theater spectacles in Hispania Baetica. The epigraphic material is quite lacking when it comes to spectacles held in

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[195] Josephine Crawley Quinn, Andrew Wilson, "Capitolia", *The Journal of Roman Studies* (2013), p. 117-173, 167-168.
[196] Haley, *Baetica Felix*, p. 13.
[197] Fear, *Rome and Baetica*, p. 270.
[198] Haley, *Baetica Felix*.
[199] Idem, p. 4-5.
[200] Hanson, *An Urban Geography of the Roman World*, p. 335-354.
[201] Houten, *Civitates Hispaniae*, p. 196. Also, see chapters 1 and 2.
[202] Hanson, *An Urban Geography of the Roman* World, p. 123.

theaters: 8 inscription mention *ludi scaenici*.[203] Though this obviously is a meager amount, inscriptions might not be the best source type through which we should draw conclusions on spectacles in Baetica. This is mainly because there is a general lack of epigraphic material found in the province. In total, 7340 inscriptions have been found in Baetica, a small amount in comparison to other Roman provinces.[204] Accordingly, it is logical that the number of inscriptions on theater spectacles is lower than it would be in other provinces.

The epigraphic evidence does not describe the kind of plays performed in Baetica's theaters but do mention their occurrence and who organized them. Sometimes, theater spectacles were meant to commemorate an event: for example, L. Caelius Saturnius put on *ludi scaenici* at the city of Italica to celebrate the attainment of a new political position[205], and an individual named Vetto commemorated a donation he made by organizing theater spectacle.[206] So, some evidence of *ludi scaenici* in the theaters of Baetica exists, but it is in rather short supply.

The amount of amphitheaters found in Baetica is even lower than the number of theaters in the province: 8 out of 52 cities had an amphitheaters, only 1 in every 6.5 cities.[207] This lack of amphitheaters is confirmed in Pieter Houten's research, though he mentions a few of which the existence is uncertain.[208] The amphitheaters of Baetica were generally large, often having a seating capacity for tens of thousands of spectators.[209] Five of the urban sites within Baetica contained both theaters and amphitheaters.[210] This means that more than half of the amphitheaters within the province were accompanied by theaters. This is another sign for the nucleation of monuments to the large cities of Baetica.

The province's early incorporation into the empire makes the lack of amphitheaters peculiar, since the cities of Baetica seem to have had ample time to construct the spectacle monument type. Some reasons for the lack of amphitheaters might be similar to the reasons for the lack of baths and temples: most urban sites were too small to justify an amphitheater and perhaps the province's elite were not so involved with Roman culture or simply did not seek Rome's admiration.

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[203] Concluded through searches in the digital EDCS: https://db.edcs.eu/epigr/hinweise/hinweis-en.html.
[204] Concluded through searches in the digital EDCS: https://db.edcs.eu/epigr/hinweise/hinweis-en.html. Also, see chapter 2.
[205] CIL II, 1108.
[206] CIL II, 1074.
[207] Hanson, *An Urban Geography of the Roman World*, p. 335-354.
[208] Houten, *Civitates Hispaniae*, p. 192.
[209] Fear, *Rome and Baetica*, p. 198.
[210] Hanson, *An Urban Geography of the Roman World*, p. 335-354.

The difference between the number of theaters and amphitheaters seems striking, though it must be noted that there were many more theaters than amphitheaters throughout the Roman Empire in the first place. When considering the data on both spectacle monuments, it can at least be concluded that both monument types were not essential buildings within Baetica's urban sites. Even when considering the possibility that some monuments may have been lost to us, there are too many cities that lack one or both spectacle monuments to regard it as a commonality in the province's cities.

But what do the other sources tell us about amphitheater games in Baetica? We know that the people on the Iberian Peninsula had been introduced to amphitheater games from the start of their incorporation into the Roman Republic. It was probably Scipio Africanus who gave the first *munus* in the ancient city of Carthago Nova as early as 206 B.C.[211] Furthermore, we know that the organization and presentation of amphitheater games was a political obligation. According to the municipal law of the Colonia Genetiva Iulia in Baetica, one of the key responsibilities of the province's magistrates was to provide public entertainment such as amphitheater spectacles, as was the case in at least some of the other Roman provinces outside of the Italian Peninsula.[212] Thus, amphitheater games were embedded into the societies of Baetica, at least on a political level.

Still, the early introduction of spectacle games and the magistrate's obligation to organize these games tells us little about the popularity of amphitheater *ludi* within the region. If we are to base our conclusions solely on the number of amphitheaters found, we can surmise that this type of spectacle was not very popular. When consulting the epigraphic record, this suspicion seems to be confirmed: there are only 11 inscriptions which contain *munus*, *gladiator*, *venatio* or *meridiani*, found in 8 different cities.[213] As was the case with theater spectacle, we must remember and consider the low total number of epigraphic evidence found in the province. Nevertheless, this amount is staggeringly low.

The few inscriptions which we do have describe amphitheater spectacles, who organized them, what occurred within these spectacles and the performers within these spectacles. Corduba, the large, monumentalized capital of Baetica which contained an amphitheater, gives us some inscriptions which deal with amphitheater spectacles. For example, one inscription from the early 3rd century A.D. describes a L. Iunius Paulinus who

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[211] Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 28.21. Valerius Maximus, *Facta et dicta memorabilia* 8.11.
[212] CIL II-V, 1022.
[213] Concluded through searches in the digital EDCS: https://db.edcs.eu/epigr/hinweise/hinweis-en.html.

organized gladiatorial games.[214] Another city, Gades, contains gladiatorial tombstones with inscriptions, mentioning specific gladiators and possibly the existence of a gladiator school.[215]

The evidence we have found seems to suggest that neither amphitheater games nor theater spectacles were a fundamental part of Baetica's societies or the lives of the province's people. The number of inscriptions is relatively similar to one another, though it must be noted that inscriptions on amphitheater games easily take precedence over theater spectacle when it comes to the entire Roman epigraphic record.[216] While we have found almost twice the number of theaters, this can partly be explained because of the fact that there were more theaters than amphitheaters throughout the entire Roman Empire.

*Venationes in Hispania Baetica*

As we have seen, primary source material on spectacles within Baetica is very limited. As can thus be expected, sources on animal hunting spectacles are also lacking, which immediately suggests that the spectacle type was not very popular within the province. Epigraphic material on *venationes* is extremely limited. Only two inscriptions have been found which mention *venatores*, and there are no inscriptions which directly describe the occurrence of a *venationes*.[217] These two descriptions do not give any useful information, except perhaps the name of the *venator*. The closest mention of practices which were likely connected to hunting spectacles come from the Roman author Columella, who describes wild beasts, such as rams, being imported from Roman African provinces and transported to Baetica.[218] Whether this was for a *venatio,* or these beasts were imported for another purpose, is uncertain.

Because the magistrates had an obligation to organize spectacles, which unquestionably included *venationes*, and these spectacles were not usually record in the form of inscriptions, we are almost certainly missing the occurrence of some *venatio*. Still, the epigraphic record is also lacking in honorary inscriptions for the organizers of *venationes*. It is difficult to say why no inscriptions of this type have been found and what this tells us about the euergetism of Baetica's elite. At the very least, it seems to be an indication that beast hunts were either not worth mentioning in epigraphy or occurred sporadically.

The visual sources which depict *venatio* scenes are even more limited than the epigraphic material found in the province. No mosaics have been found within Baetica which

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[214] CIL II, 5523.
[215] CIL II, 1739.
[216] Concluded through searches in the digital EDCS: https://db.edcs.eu/epigr/hinweise/hinweis-en.html.
[217] Concluded through searches in the digital EDCS: https://db.edcs.eu/epigr/hinweise/hinweis-en.html.
[218] Columella, *De re rustica*, 7.2.4.

depict *venatio* scenes. Other typical visual sources, such as pottery do not give us any examples of *venatio* scenes either. Still, the lack of visual sources is not necessarily an argument against the popularity of hunting spectacles. This makes one wonder whether mosaics and pottery were generally lacking in Baetica or perhaps not used as a medium of information altogether. However, further inspection into Baetica's visual sources makes this unlikely: the cities in the Guadalquivir region were notable producers of amphorae and other pottery, partly because of the oil production in the region.[219] Furthermore, mosaics were a regular sight in the villas of the province. For example, Villa Romana de Fuente Alamo, which could be found relatively near Ecija, contained a plethora of mosaics which contained a variety of scenes, but lacked any depiction of a beast hunt (Fig. 9).[220] So, the lack of both epigraphic material and visual sources on *venationes* within the province suggests that the ancient spectacle type was relatively unimportant in the societies of Baetica.
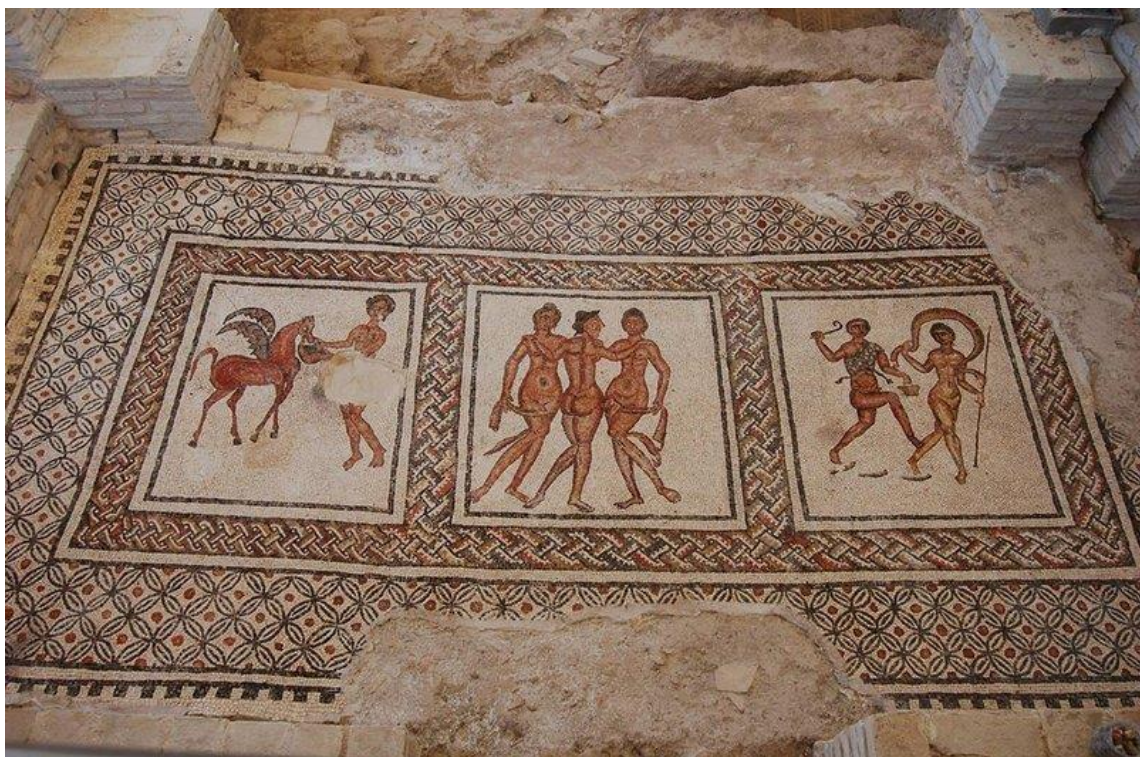


*Figure 9 A Mosaic from the Villa Romana de Fuente Alamo*

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[219] Ryan Hughes, *Distribution of Stamped Dressel 20 Amphorae Produced at Axati in Roman Baetica: A Quantitative Study of Olive Oil Consumption Levels at Military and Civilian Sites* (2011), p. 1-2.
[220] www.andalucia.org/en/puente-genil-cultural-tourism-villa-romana-de-fuente-alamo (Consulted on 12/05/22).

We must remember that a lack of source material does not necessarily mean that *venationes* did not exist or were not enjoyed. Since our source material is so limited, we can definitively conclude very little about the animal hunts within the province. The content was likely relatively similar to the content of *venationes* in other parts of the Roman Empire, but this can't be said with any certainty. The same is true for any possible social or cultural significances of beast hunts in Baetica; some deeper significances might have existed, but nothing can be deduced from the remaining sources. Because our source material is so limited, the conclusions we can draw on the practice are insubstantial at best.

*Conclusion*

Cities within Hispania Baetica have developed in quite a peculiar manner. While the province was certainly urbanized to a high degree, the differences in size between cities could be enormous. These size differences translated themselves into a nucleated division of monumentality within Baetica's cities: while the large cities had many monuments, most of the urban sites were small and lacked any significant and expensive monumentality. This can also be seen in the nucleation of important monumentality in the province, along with the relative scarcity of monuments within smaller cities. A possible second explanation for the scarcity of monumentality is a lack of impetus for the province's elite to construct these monuments.

This lack of enthusiasm for Roman culture is also seen in the popularity of spectacles. Epigraphic source material which describes theater and amphitheater games is lacking, though Baetica contains few inscriptions in general. For *venationes*, the situation is worse: though animal hunts certainly occurred in Baetica, there is little evidence to suggest that the spectacle type was popular or that the organization of animal hunts was important to the different social classes of Baetica. Epigraphy is barely existent and visual sources which portray spectacles involving animals lack altogether. Furthermore, little can be said about the contents or socio-cultural significances of *venationes* in the province. So, while the degree of urbanization in the province was relatively high, this did not result in enthusiastic construction of monumentality within the province's cities by Baetica's elite. The popularity of spectacle games and, specifically, of hunting spectacles also seems to have been lacking, despite the presence of a substantial number of cities.

# Conclusion

In the previous chapters, we have systematically analyzed parts of urban life in three Roman provinces: Latium et Campania, Africa Proconsularis and Hispania Baetica. In this closing chapter, we will review our findings and set these provinces side by side. Besides merely stating the differences we have found, attempts will be made to explain provincial variation with the use of the historical contexts of these regions. Finally, some concluding remarks will be made, principally on what a comparison of urbanization, spectacle culture and *venationes* in different Roman provinces reveals about diversity within the Roman Empire.

*Provincial similarities and variations*

On the most superficial level, urbanization in all the researched provinces was relatively similar. The number of urban centers found within all the provinces was high, especially when compared to other Roman provinces. However, when diving deeper into these cities, differences start to reveal themselves. The number of cities per square kilometer was by far the highest in Latium et Campania at 1 city per 192 square kilometers. The disparity between Latium et Campania's city density and the other provinces are very substantial. One thing must be taken in consideration when comparing city density: large, uninhabited parts of provinces such as the desert areas of Africa Proconsularis make our estimation of the urbanization of that region likely inaccurate. Therefore, we should not be too rigid in maintaining our conclusions on urbanization if they are based solely on city density.

     More variations between provincial cities can be found when analyzing their layout and monumentality. For example, while street grids and city walls were extremely common within the cities of Latium et Campania, they are found less often in Africa Proconsularis and even fewer urban centers in Baetica contained these urban features. Regarding monumentality, we can draw similar conclusions. In Latium et Campania and Africa Proconsularis, approximately half of their cities contained bathhouses or religious buildings. In Baetica, not even a quarter of the urban sites accommodated these monument types. So, even in the general urban layout and monumentality of urban sites, distinct differences can be found between the Roman provinces.

     The distinctions between the urban sites of the provinces persist and at times become more severe when discussing spectacle monumentality and culture. The number of theaters and amphitheaters differs tremendously between the researched provinces. Latium et

Campania contains the most spectacle monuments per city, about 1 in 2. Africa Proconsularis is a close second with about 1 in every 2.5 cities containing a theater of amphitheater. Again, Baetica is the odd one out: while the number of theaters found is relatively similar at 1 in every 3 cities, only 1 in every 6.5 urban sites contained an amphitheater.

The culture of and around spectacles reveals additional dissimilarities between the urban centers of Roman provinces. Also, provincial variety can be found in the way that these spectacles developed. One important difference is found within the content of spectacles, especially those that occurred in the amphitheater. While the three-part amphitheater game was likely the universal standard in early imperial times, this model changes in the following centuries. Though it is uncertain what the exact contents of amphitheater spectacles were in Baetica, gladiatorial combat was almost certainly the most important in Latium et Campania. Conversely, in Africa Proconsularis gladiatorial games all but disappeared in the third and fourth century A.D., while *venationes* took precedence. At times, animal hunts were even organized separately from the other types of amphitheater spectacle. As for theater spectacle, the relatively similar number of theaters suggests that at least the popularity of theater spectacles was more alike in the three provinces than was the case with amphitheater spectacles. In Latium et Campania and Africa Proconsularis, we find some theaters with temples attached to them, suggesting that theater spectacle played some role in Roman religion. In Baetica, we do not find these theater-temples, though their existence might have been lost to us. In general, less research has been done and fewer sources are available for theater spectacles than for amphitheater spectacles, which partly limits our possibilities to research its provincial variations.

Perhaps the most profound distinctions can be found within the animal hunting spectacles themselves. While gladiatorial combat was most popular in Latium et Campania, v*enationes* were well-liked as well. Large sums of money would be paid to bring the most exotic types of animals to the amphitheaters of Latium et Campania's cities. Within Africa Proconsularis, animal hunts seem to have been most popular. *Venationes* had a distinct cultural significance within the province which made the spectacle game have a heightened importance to the province's people. This can partly be explained by the fact that the animals hunted during a *venatio* had been real threats to people and their livelihood for centuries. Because of this, hunting traditions already existed before the Roman conquest of the region. The importance of these traditions can also be seen in the types of animals which were propagated most often. Typically, these were the animals which regularly dwelt within the province's mountainous regions, signifying that people responded most enthusiastically to the

hunting of these specific beasts. This is in contrast with Latium et Campania, where cultural significances seem to have focused more on the strength and power of the empire and the emperor. In Baetica, there is no evidence of animal hunts having a particular cultural significance connected to them.

Differences within the provinces' spectacle culture and *venationes* are also found while analyzing the remaining source material within the regions. The most important source type which gives us insight into ancient Roman life and civilization are inscriptions. In Latium et Campania and Africa Proconsularis we find an abundance of epigraphic material. While the number of inscriptions on amphitheater spectacles in Proconsularis is lacking, this can be explained through the socio-political context of the region. Baetica has a similar lack of inscriptions, though the epigraphic habit was not as prominent in the province to begin with. While we find visual art, most importantly mosaics, in Proconsularis and Latium et Campania which portray spectacles and specifically *venationes*, these types of sources are not found in Baetica. In short, we see a distinct lack of sources on amphitheater spectacles and *venationes* in Baetica, suggesting a lower importance or popularity of these cultural phenomena in the region. The other two provinces seem to contain one or multiple types of primary sources which refer to these topics in some abundance. However, these are not definitive conclusions since a lack of sources on *venationes* does not necessarily equate to a lack of popularity or occurrence of the spectacle type.

*Interpretations and explanations*
The question remains how the differences in the urbanization, spectacle culture and *venationes* of the three provinces can be explained. There is no single cause or explanation for differences between provinces: instead, multiple factors combined with one another instigated change and led to variety. One fundamental cause has to do with the economic situation of the regions in which urban sites and spectacles developed. The construction of cities and the monuments within them was an expensive undertaking, often built by wealthy individuals who sought to gain something from their expenditure. The same is true for the organization of spectacles. In certain provinces, the elite were wealthy enough to fund these things. Latium et Campania had plenty of rich individuals since the cashflow in the ancient Roman Empire typically moved towards the province, and more specifically towards Rome. Because of the close connection and trade between Proconsularis and the Italian Peninsula, the situation was similar in the African province. In Baetica, the situation is different: while it certainly was a rich province, connections with the Italian Peninsula were limited.

Additionally, wealth was distributed amongst a relatively large amount of people, resulting in a lack of abundant amounts of individually accumulated wealth. This is likely a principal reason for the absence of expensive monumentality and spectacles in the province, at least in the cities which did not have intense relations with the Italian Peninsula.

Besides granting wealth, the connection between the elite within the provinces and the heart of the Roman Empire also affected the cultural development of these rich individuals and of the province in which they resided. As the connection between these elite groups intensified, the province's upper class were influenced by typically Roman culture and adopted certain elements of this culture. Because of their financial capabilities, increased involvement with the heart of the Roman world would urge them to erect monuments, organize spectacles or create mosaics and inscriptions. In return, they gained fame and status in both their own province and likely also in the heart of the Roman Empire. Therefore, the differences in the intensity of the contact between the three province's elite groups and Rome did not only cause disparities in wealth, but also in the eagerness of the elite to produce lavish acts of euergetism.

A final cause for these differences has to do with where urbanism and culture developed, both in a geographical and a socio-cultural sense. Latium et Campania lay in the heart of the Roman Empire. It is therefore not surprising that most evidence of Roman urbanism and spectacle culture can be found here. Spectacle culture in Africa Proconsularis was heavily influenced by the social significance of the hunting of wild animals within the province. The danger that these animals posed to the people within Proconsularis are an important reason for the popularity of *venationes*. Beast hunts would become so popular that they would be organized individually, doing away with the traditional three-part spectacle. Amphitheater spectacles in Proconsularis changed so that they conformed to socio-cultural factors within the province. Baetica had many smaller cities, likely partly due to their early incorporation into the Roman Empire. Most wealth and commerce nucleated around the Guadalquivir River and the seaside, where some larger cities could be found. These cities contained less monumentality, including theaters and amphitheaters, because of their lack in both size and finances. Consequently, fewer spectacles would occur in these cities.

*Final remarks: uniformity or diversity?*

What can we conclude about cities, spectacle culture and *venationes* within the Roman Empire? To answer this, we return to the central questions of the historiography on diversity within the Roman Empire: does a 'model' for the Roman city exist? Are Roman cities

fundamentally similar, or is diversity the norm? And are spectacle culture and *venationes* in the three provinces dissimilar, or are they mostly uniform?

It has become obvious that there are fundamental differences between the cities and spectacles of Latium et Campania, Africa Proconsularis and Hispania Baetica. Therefore, we can definitively exclude the traditional notion of a uniform Roman Empire. Still, we cannot fully discredit all ideas of consistency within the Roman Empire. Two things which speak against absolute diversity can be concluded: first, while the exact monumentality of urban sites varies, the monument types found are recurrent in the cities of the discussed provinces. It is not coincidental that bathhouses and religious buildings, but also theaters and amphitheaters are regularly found within the urban sites of the Roman Empire. Second, recurrent themes and trends can be seen within spectacle culture and *venationes*. While it is true that certain parts of spectacles differed, they occurred within all three provinces, often with similar content. This speaks for some consistency or patterns in these cultural practices across different provinces. Ultimately, differences in aspects of urban life were mostly caused by the contexts in which they developed. Baetica's cities and culture were different than those of Africa Proconsularis because the provincial factors in which they developed were dissimilar. Nevertheless, we still find regularities and consistencies between Roman provinces. So, while the Roman Empire certainly was a diverse entity, it does show some indications of a malleable model which cities and culture throughout the Roman Empire adhered to.

The influence that external factors had on the urban and cultural development of the provinces also reveals much about the nature of the Roman Empire. Economic influences, social developments and culture did not operate on separate planes; instead, they are closely intertwined with one another and influence each other in profound ways. A lack of accumulated wealth in Baetica, for example, is part of the reason for the lack of monumentality and spectacle culture within the province. Furthermore, practical dangers such as the beasts found in Africa Proconsularis had a profound effect on cultural practices, popularizing the deaths of these dangers within the province's amphitheaters. Thus, aspects of ancient Roman life which at first glance seem unconnected could have great influence on one another.

There is one more conclusion which can be drawn from this research which elucidates a fundamental aspect of the functioning of an ever-expanding Roman Empire. The fact that urbanization, spectacle culture and *venationes* were so susceptible to diversification and change, albeit from economic and cultural factors or provincial popularity, reveals something

about the relationship between Roman culture and the regions in which this culture was introduced. Traditionally, it was thought that provinces adapted Roman culture without agency, thereby taking their place in the Roman system.[221] While this is true to a marginal degree, in this thesis a plethora of evidence for the opposite has been found. Instead of blindly accepting cultural aspects introduced into society by the Roman oppressor, provinces selected parts of Roman urbanism and spectacle culture which were suitable for their own provincial contexts. This is reminiscent of the origins of Roman urbanism and *venationes*: for a substantial part, these were not Roman inventions, but adaptations of non-Roman cultural aspects.

So, instead of a one-way street of indigenous adaptation, we see a type of cultural syncretism occur between Roman and native cultures. The fact that this provincial negotiation with Roman culture apparently was unproblematic for Rome and the political elite is fascinating; there is no evidence of attempts to forcefully revert the changes to Roman culture we have encountered within this thesis. In this way, the idea that Roman culture was dominant, and the Roman Empire was homogeneous and uniform starts to crumble. Instead, heterogony and diversity seem to have been the norm. While some model for urban centers and spectacles existed, adherence to this model does not seem to have been forcefully mandated. Instead, provincial societies took parts of these models and changed them to fit their needs and wishes.

Naturally, this thesis was not able to comprehensively discuss everything which is related to urbanization, spectacles or diversity in the Roman Empire. A variety of further research could be done: for example, provinces that with smaller amounts of cities could be compared to highly urbanized provinces to research whether the differences in urbanism, spectacle culture and *venationes* increase as well. Research could also focus on differences and similarities of different cultural phenomena. How does, for example, the cult of the Roman emperor function within provinces outside of Italy, in comparison to Italian provinces? Research into these topics can reveal a past which on face value seems homogeneous and alien, but upon closer inspection reveals I tself to be diverse, much like the world we know today.

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[221] For example: Francis J. Haverfield, *The Romanization of Roman Britain* (Oxford, 1905).

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