



6

Rome

Urban Life and Imperial Majesty



THINKING AHEAD

Who were the Etruscans?

How did Rome conduct itself as a republic?

What was Imperial Rome?

Why did Rome decline?

Thamugādi, modern Timgad, Algeria, is one of the few totally excavated towns in the Roman Empire, and its ruins tell us as much or more about Roman civilization as any other Roman city, including Rome itself. It was founded during the reign of Trajan in about 100 CE as a colony for retired soldiers of the Roman legions who had served the Empire as it constantly expanded its borders in Africa. Whereas Rome had grown haphazardly over hundreds of years and under many rulers, Thamugadi [tham-uh-GAY-dee] was an entirely new city and a model, if not of Rome itself, then of the Roman sense of order. It was based on the rigid grid of a Roman military camp and was divided into four quarters defined by east-west and north-south arteries, broad avenues lined with columns (Fig. 6.1), with a forum, or public square, at their crossing. The town had 111 *insulae* blocks, and all the amenities of Roman life were available: 14 public baths, a library, a theater, and several markets, including one that sold only clothes (Fig. 6.2).

Thamugadi is the product of the conscious Roman decision to “Romanize” the world, a symbol of empire itself. By the middle of the third century BCE, it had begun to seek control of the entire Mediterranean basin and its attendant wealth. The Roman military campaigns led to the building

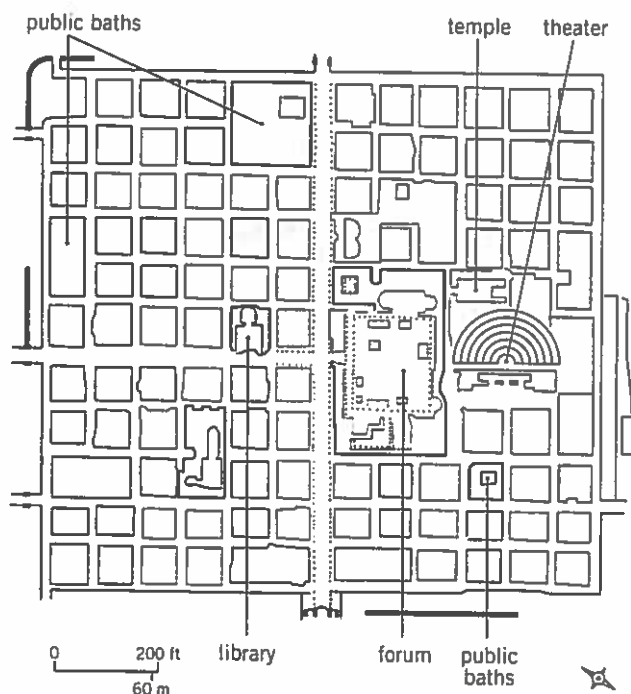


Fig. 6.2 City plan of Thamugadi, ca. 200 CE. The layout of Thamugadi is a symbol of Roman reason and planning—efficient and highly organized.

Fig. 6.1 Colonnaded street in Thamugadi, North Africa. View toward the Arch of Trajan. Late second century CE. Thamugadi was established in about 100 CE as a colony for retired soldiers of the Roman Third Legion. It represents the deep imprint Rome left upon its entire empire.

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