

**AA309\_2   Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman Empire**

**Exploring a Romano-African city: Thugga**

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The Open University Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA

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978-1-4730-0650-8 (.epub)  
978-1-4730-1418-3 (.kdl)

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## Introduction

This course focuses on a detailed investigation into the archaelogy and history of a Roman North African city. You will watch the video sequence ‘Exploring Thugga’ and undertake activities identifying Roman and indigenous elements in the city. You then investigate Roman and indigenous cultural elements in the archaeology of Africa; here you will watch two brief video sequences on mosaics, continue your study of the ‘Exploring Thugga’ video, and view ‘Culture and identity in the houses of the Roman élite’.

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## Learning outcomes

After studying this course, you should be able to:

* practise identification of ‘indigenous’ identity and culture
* practise identification of ‘Roman’ identity and culture
* study the development of Romano-African culture.

## 1 Thugga

The ancient city of Thugga is often known by its modern name, Dougga. In this course we will be using the ancient name, Thugga. We are going to start by watching a video sequence, taking occasional notes: it should form about an hour of study time. The next section follows on from the video and introduces further evidence from Thugga.

As you watch, think about how the city compares with other cities you have encountered. Look out for how the buildings and streets are arranged, for buildings such as temples or arches, for architectural decoration and also the language of the inscriptions. Also look out for things that seem different. You will find it useful to refer to the plan of Thugga (Plate 1a and 1b) as you watch the video. Use the pause button and jot down some notes: the first activity is a detailed examination of the buildings in the city. Now watch the first video sequence, ‘Exploring Thugga’.

Please click to view [Plate 1a: Plan of Thugga](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/olinkremote.php?website=AA309_2&targetdoc=Plate%201a:%20Plan%20of%20Thugga). (Adapted from Poinssot, C. (1983) Les Ruines de Dougga, Tunis, Ministere des Affaires Culturelles, Institut National d'Archeologie et d'Arts) (PDF, 1 page, 1MB)

Please click to view [Plate 1b: Plan of Thugga continued](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/olinkremote.php?website=AA309_2&targetdoc=Plate%201b:%20Plan%20of%20Thugga%20continued). (PDF, 1 page, 1MB)

Exploring Thugga (part 1, 8 minutes)

Start of Media Content

Video content is not available in this format.

Exploring Thugga - Part One

[View transcript - Exploring Thugga - Part One](" \l "Session1_Transcript1)

End of Media Content

Exploring Thugga (part 2, 8 minutes)

Start of Media Content

Video content is not available in this format.

Exploring Thugga - Part Two

[View transcript - Exploring Thugga - Part Two](" \l "Session1_Transcript2)

End of Media Content

Exploring Thugga (part 3, 8 minutes)

Start of Media Content

Video content is not available in this format.

Exploring Thugga - Part Three

[View transcript - Exploring Thugga - Part Three](" \l "Session1_Transcript3)

End of Media Content

## 2 Investigating Roman and indigenous cultural elements in the archaeology of Africa

## 2.1 Looking in detail at Thugga

In this section you will be looking in more detail at the city of Thugga and working with the video and further evidence. This study of a city will then broaden out to consider other forms of material and visual evidence from different parts of Africa; you will also watch more video sequences. This section focuses upon one aspect of Romano-African culture: the interplay between Roman culture and indigenous African culture. This theme is one of a range of ‘binary oppositions’ which may be set up as a vehicle for investigating this part of the Roman empire. Other approaches could take the opposition of ‘soldier’ and ‘civilian’, or ‘emperor’ and ‘subject’, or ‘pastoralist’ and ‘agriculturalist’, or ‘desert’ and ‘sown’ areas, using these as avenues of approach to the study of Africa. Here you will be investigating a meeting of cultures: African and Roman. African culture has left none of its own literature, and its achievements have not been as highly valued as other cultures, such as the Greek culture, in the subsequent centuries. Because of this your study will start with material remains and monuments.

The first task is to try to tease out what can be seen as African characteristics in Roman Africa. To do this you will now be working in more detail on the city of Thugga. Thugga lies near the eastern boundaries of Numidia, which was an independent kingdom until 46 BC when it was annexed and became part of the Roman provinces of Africa and Numidia. The kingdom had urban centres such as Thugga, Bulla Regia and Simitthus, and was open to influences from the wider Mediterranean world. There was also a developed culture which had been exposed to Hellenistic influences. A good example of this is the Punic royal funerary monument at Thugga, which combines Punic and Hellenistic features (see Figures 1 and 2). When Numidia became a part of the Roman empire, we might assume that Roman cultural influence would have become more pronounced and that perhaps a Roman identity might begin to emerge. But how might this be identified, and what kinds of things should we look for? Is it possible to see a distinct Roman culture and identity which might be compared and contrasted with a Numidian, or more generally an African, culture and identity?

Start of Figure



Figure 1 Tomb of Ateban, son of Ypmatat (Punic mausoleum), early second century BC, Thugga. (Photo: P. Perkins)

[View description - Figure 1 Tomb of Ateban, son of Ypmatat (Punic mausoleum), early second century ...](" \l "Session2_Description1)

End of Figure

Start of Figure



Figure 2 The Punic mausoleum in Thugga before reconstruction in 1908–10. The reconstruction (as seen in Figure 1) was based on drawings made before partial demolition in 1842. DAI neg. no. 55.1314. (Photo: Mosdoni/German Archaeological Institute, Rome)

[View description - Figure 2 The Punic mausoleum in Thugga before reconstruction in 1908–10. The reconstruction ...](" \l "Session2_Description2)

End of Figure

Start of Activity

**Activity 1**

Start of Question

Using your knowledge of parts of the Roman world, and what you have seen in the ‘Exploring Thugga’ video, in the following list of features mark those which you think can be described as Roman in inspiration and which African or at least non-Roman. Also write a few words giving reasons for your choice. In some cases you may come to the opinion that some elements are both Roman and African; if so mark both boxes. You may like to watch ‘Exploring Thugga’ again to help you answer the questions, pausing the video at suitable points.

Exploring Thugga (part 1, 8 minutes)

Start of Media Content

Video content is not available in this format.

Exploring Thugga - Part One

[View transcript - Exploring Thugga - Part One](" \l "Session2_Transcript1)

End of Media Content

Exploring Thugga (part 2, 8 minutes)

Start of Media Content

Video content is not available in this format.

Exploring Thugga - Part Two

[View transcript - Exploring Thugga - Part Two](" \l "Session2_Transcript2)

End of Media Content

Exploring Thugga (part 3, 8 minutes)

Start of Media Content

Video content is not available in this format.

Exploring Thugga - Part Three

[View transcript - Exploring Thugga - Part Three](" \l "Session2_Transcript3)

End of Media Content

Start of Table

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Feature** | **Roman?** | **African?** | **Reason** |
| City walls |  |  |  |
| Street plan |  |  |  |
| Temple of Mercury |  |  |  |
| Temple of Augustan Piety |  |  |  |
| Capitol |  |  |  |
| Forum |  |  |  |
| Theatre |  |  |  |
| Political organisation |  |  |  |
| Arch of Alexander Severus |  |  |  |
| Temple of Caelestis |  |  |  |
| Temple of Saturn |  |  |  |
| Saturn the god |  |  |  |
| Circus |  |  |  |
| Baths |  |  |  |
| Construction techniques |  |  |  |
| People |  |  |  |
| Language |  |  |  |

End of Table

End of Question

[View discussion - Activity 1](" \l "Session2_Discussion1)

End of Activity

The point of this activity is to make you focus upon what can be conceived of as Roman and to think about whether or not some of the things you have met so far in Africa are familiar because you have already encountered similar things in Rome or elsewhere in the empire. Some of the cases above are fairly clear cut. Something like a capitol is obviously typical of Roman cities. Its precise form may vary (indeed, at Thugga the temple is set side-on rather than end-on to the forum), but the configuration of a high temple with steps up the front and classical columns supporting a pediment with a cella behind dominating a forum fits the typical Roman model, as at Ostia or Pompeii. And we can get this far even before reading the dedication to the Capitoline Triad in the inscription above the door. Similar means can be used to suggest that the forum, theatre, circus, baths, and arch display features that we can recognise as distinctively Roman.

Other features, such as the temples of Saturn or Mercury, are harder to define as Roman: they may well use the same kinds of architecture but the ground plan is different, being like a rectangular courtyard or peristyle with three chambers set across a short end (see Plate 2). This is unlike the typical Roman temple: a building in an enclosure on a high podium with steps up the front and columns and a pediment on the facade. This style of temple has only ever been found in Africa, Mauretania and in the previously Punic Sardinia, and it does seem to be typical of African temples.

Please click to view [Plate 2: Plan of the temple of Saturn, Thugga](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/olinkremote.php?website=AA309_2&targetdoc=Plate%202:%20Plan%20of%20the%20temple%20of%20Saturn,%20Thugga). (Adapted from Poinssot, C. (1983) Les Ruines de Dougga, Tunis, Ministere des Affaires Culturelles, Institut National d'Archelogie et d'Arts) (PDF, 1 page, 0.4 MB).

We can see that the construction techniques are different; they employ a style known as opus Africanum (literally ‘African work’) that is characteristic of North Africa with origins that pre-date the Roman conquest. With this construction technique the wall is built incorporating vertical blocks of squared stones (orthostats), and the spaces between are filled with smaller blocks. Buildings you have seen elsewhere are built using different masonry techniques: brick-faced concrete (common in Ostia), small diamonds (common in Pompeii), small blocks of stone or larger squared blocks, for example.

We can also observe that the political organisation and some of the names of the people are different to those you may have encountered (see [Figure 3](#fig005_003)). We can begin to suspect that these differences may be related to something we might be able to identify as an African cultural identity and cultural expression, which we might contrast with a Roman identity and culture.

Start of Figure



Figure 3 Inscription from the temple of Mercury naming the donors, Q. Pacuvius Saturus F.L. and Nahania Victoria, mid second century AD, Thugga. (Photo: P. Perkins)

[View description - Figure 3 Inscription from the temple of Mercury naming the donors, Q. Pacuvius Saturus ...](" \l "Session2_Description3)

End of Figure

If, then, we can perceive different influences that we may call African and Roman (we must remember these terms are a shorthand for complex cultures that are not monolithic or clearly defined), we may also consider what may have happened when these two ‘cultures’ met in Africa following the political conquest of the region.

## 2.2 Modelling cultural interaction

To study this mixing of cultures in a systematic way I would like to propose four models of cultural interaction which might provide a framework for scenarios of what could have happened when the Roman met the African. First, it is worth briefly explaining what is meant by ‘model’ here. ‘Model’ is used to mean an explanation of a process of change. Once a model has been suggested, it can be held up for examination. If it is found not to fit the evidence or to explain observations, it may be discarded; if it does fit the evidence, it may help to build an understanding of the past. The theoretical models proposed here suggest what might have happened when two cultures – African and Roman – interacted. From our observed and contextualised evidence we can construct models exploring various ways that evidence may be interpreted. These models can then be used to reassess the evidence and so help both to frame questions about that evidence and to assess the appropriateness of the interpretation.

So in the case of Africa we can construct models of what might have been the result of the interaction of African and Roman cultural forms:

1. African meeting Roman leads to Roman dominance and an end of African traits: this may be called **assimilation**.
2. African meeting Roman leads to African traits continuing to dominate and Roman traits failing to become established, which amounts to **rejection**.
3. African meeting Roman leads to African persistence and no evidence of Roman traits dominating, in effect a **separation** of cultures.
4. African meeting Roman leads to Afro-Roman cultural mixing, which may be termed **fusion**.

These four models are gross simplifications, but I would like to comment upon each in turn and suggest some areas in the cultural, historical and archaeological record where we might hope to find indications of one or other of the models being fulfilled. The rest of the course will introduce some new forms of evidence, and you will be invited to consider how they compare to each of the models.

### 2.2.1 Model 1: African + Roman = Roman dominance and end of African traits (assimilation)

This model proposes that following the Roman conquest Roman culture is introduced and dominates the previous African culture, which gradually dies out. In other words, the culture of the people of Africa was assimilated to Roman culture. In this model an African would in effect become a Roman and be so similar to a Roman that we might as well dispense with the term African and call everyone Roman. In this scenario we might imagine the importation of Roman political systems, religion, building types, city forms, art, language, social organisation, etc. We should be able to see ‘things Roman’ appearing in Africa and ‘things African’ disappearing.

### 2.2.2 Model 2: African + Roman= African traits continue to dominate and Roman traits fail to become established (rejection)

This model is more or less the opposite of the first, and the political domination of Rome has little or no effect upon the African people and their culture. Here we might expect to find evidence for politico-military control but little or no evidence for Roman culture or the acceptance of a Roman identity. This is perhaps the model we might expect to encounter in frontier zones at the limits of the Roman empire. It might also prevail in a scenario where a traditional society chose to reinforce its own traditions by explicitly rejecting ‘things Roman’ and consciously promoting its own cultural identity as a counter to Roman influence.

### 2.2.3 Model 3: African + Roman = African persistence and no evidence of Roman traits dominating (separation)

This scenario sees African culture surviving following the Roman conquest, and where Roman culture is visible it does not replace preexisting practice. Here we might imagine a laissez-faire attitude on the part of the Roman state, allowing the conquered people to carry on in their previous ways and the African people not needing to, or wanting to, adopt Roman customs, practices, forms of representation and cultural identity. In this model we might expect to find Roman and African traits remaining separate but co-existing (peacefully or otherwise) without significant alteration.

### 2.2.4 Model 4: African + Roman = Afro-Roman cultural mixing (fusion)

This model proposes that the combination of a Roman conquest and an African context led to the creation of a new and vital mixture, a cultural fusion of African and Roman traits. In this scenario we might expect to find cultural elements which may be originally Roman but are reworked in the African context to produce something new and different. Perhaps we need a new term for the result – something like Afro-Roman or Romano-African culture. In the previous activity the temples of Saturn, Mercury and Caelestis were all marked as having both Roman and African characteristics, both in the deities worshipped and in the form of the temples, suggesting that there has been a mixing of cultures. This combining of deities is known as syncretism.

We will now move on to consider a set of studies from Africa. Each will use different forms of evidence to demonstrate that our theoretical approach may be applied in a variety of circumstances. In each of these you should be thinking about which of the four models outlined above seems to fit the evidence best.

## 2.3 The building of Thugga

So far we have been considering aspects of Thugga without taking into account the chronology of the site and its monuments. The following table lists the public buildings and monuments of Thugga which are securely dated by inscriptions and gives the date (as near as possible) of construction along with an assessment of how African or Roman they are.

Start of Table

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date (AD)** | **Building** | **Roman?** | **African?** | **Reason** |
| late Tiberius (14–37) | Temple of Caesar | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Imperial cult |
| 36–7 | Forum and square in front of the temple to the emperor | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Forum is typically Roman |
| 36–7 | Shrine of Saturn | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | Saturn is Roman and Punic god |
| 36–7 | Arch | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Typically Roman monument |
| 30s | Temple and statues | ? | ? | No details |
| 30s | Temple of Ceres (square plus stone columns) | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | Ceres is Roman and Punic goddess |
| 30s | Temple of Concordia | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Concordia is Roman goddess |
| Caligula? (37–41) | Arch | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Typically Roman monument |
| Claudius (41–54) | Small shrine of Jupiter | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Jupiter is Roman god |
| 48 | Statue of Augustus | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Augustus was Roman |
| 54 | Market | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Typically Roman building |
| 54 | Small temple | ? | ? | No details |
| Hadrian (117–38) | Two temples of Concordia | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Concordia is Roman goddess |
| Hadrian (117–38) | Temple of Fortuna | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Fortuna is Roman goddess |
| Hadrian? (117–38) | Small apsidal temple to Augustan Piety | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | Augustan Piety is a Roman cult but temple is not Roman style |
| Antoninus Pius (138–61) | Portico round forum | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Forum is typically Roman |
| Antoninus Pius (138–61) | Temple of Minerva | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Minerva is Roman goddess |
| Marcus Aurelius (161–80) | Capitol | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Capitol is typically Roman |
| Marcus Aurelius (161–80) | Theatre | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Theatre is typically Roman |
| Marcus Aurelius (161–80) | Substantial temple | ? | ? | No details |
| Commodus (180–92) | Square and portico by forum | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Forum is typically Roman |
| Commodus (180–92) | Temple of Mercury by capitol | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | Temple is African style and god is Roman |
| Commodus (180–92) | Shrine | ? | ? | No details |
| mid 180s | Aqueduct attached to southern baths | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Aqueduct is typically Roman |
| Septimius Severus (193–211) | Large temple of Saturn | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | Temple is African style and god is Roman and African |
| Septimius Severus (193–211) | Arch to emperors | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Typically Roman monument |
| Caracalla (211–17) | Temple | ? | ? | No details |
| Alexander Severus (222–35) | Circus or race-track | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Typically Roman building |
| Alexander Severus (222–35) | Temple of Caelestis (semi-circular) | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | Temple is Roman and African style and goddess is African |
| Alexander Severus (222–35) | Triumphal arch to emperor for libertas or tax privileges | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Typically Roman monument |
| Alexander Severus (222–35) | Temple | ? | ? | No details |
| Alexander Severus (222–35) | Temple of Fortuna | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Fortuna is Roman goddess |
| Gallienus (261–8?) | Licinian baths | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Baths are typically Roman and copy the ground plan of baths in Rome |
| mid third century | Temple of Tellus | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | Temple is African style and goddess is African and Roman |
| 264 | Portico | ? | ? | No details |
| Diocletian (284–305) | Temple of Genius Patriae | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Cult is typically Roman |
| Diocletian (284–305) | Portico of temple of Mater Deum | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Cult is typically Roman |

End of Table

Some of these buildings have survived and been excavated, while others have not. You have seen some of them in the video sequence ‘Exploring Thugga’. The construction of these public and religious buildings is itself one aspect of the Romanisation of the pre-Roman city of Thugga, and we must also remember that the practice of commemorating the dedication of a building with an inscription is itself a very Roman tradition. Therefore, we should perhaps expect this collection of evidence to favour more Roman aspects of the cultural milieu.

Plate 3 illustrates when the main periods of building activity took place. The impression given by the graph is of a high degree of activity in the first half of the first century AD, which drops off rapidly and then rises to a second peak in the second half of the second century before gradually reducing again. This observed pattern roughly corresponds with the broader pattern of building dedications derived from North Africa as a whole (Jacques, 1989, pp. 242–3), although the peak in the first half of the first century is more pronounced at Thugga. This suggests that the pattern at Thugga is not exceptional but part of a wider pattern of development common to Africa, although not necessarily other parts of the empire where similar evidence has been gathered (Duncan-Jones, 1990, pp. 57–67).

Please click to view [Plate 3: Graph of building activity in Africa](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/olinkremote.php?website=AA309_2&targetdoc=Plate%203:%20Graph%20of%20building%20activity%20in%20Africa). (PDF, 1 page, 0.1 MB).

An attractive possibility in interpreting this evidence is to see the pattern as a first wave of Romanising building dedications in the early first century, establishing a Roman character for the city, and then later a second peak of building dedications as the city flourishes in the later second century along with the rest of Africa. Does this suggestion hold up? We can investigate further by considering two factors: the types of building dedicated and the identity and status of the person(s) who were the dedicants (see Plate 4) (Duncan-Jones, 1990, pp. 178–82).

Please click to view [Plate 4: Statue of an unknown patron of the city of Thugga wearing a toga and a mural crown, third century. Bardo Museum, Tunis](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/olinkremote.php?website=AA309_2&targetdoc=Plate%204:%20Statue%20of%20an%20unknown%20patron). (PDF, 1 page, 1.8 MB).

If we look first at the buildings from the first half of the first century, we see that most of them were temples. The earliest is a ‘temple of Caesar’; we know no more, but it was probably a temple dedicated to Julius Caesar or Augustus: a more Roman and politically laden monument would be hard to imagine. The following three monuments – the forum and square in front of the temple to the emperor, a shrine of Saturn, and an arch – were all dedicated by one Postumius Chius. We have little to go on, but his name does not rule out the possibility that he was a Roman citizen or a freedman. The forum and arch at least are clearly in the Roman urban tradition; the former is of major importance to city life and represents the formal creation of a Roman-style town centre. The third building, the shrine of Saturn, is slightly more ambivalent because Saturn was both a Punic and a Roman deity.

The next monument, a temple and statues, was restored by Licinius Tyrannus, who also built the temple of Ceres (a popular goddess introduced to Carthage in 396 BC), and his wife built the temple of Concordia (the goddess of Peace). Licinius Tyrannus was a freedman of Marcus Licinius Marcius, and the temple of Ceres was dedicated to the health of Marcus Licinius Rufus, his patron. The small shrine of Jupiter dedicated in the reign of Claudius bore an informative inscription. The shrine was built and jointly paid for by L. Iulius L.F. Crassus, a name suggesting that his family may have gained citizenship under Julius Caesar. Part of his career is listed, and he was military tribune in the Twenty-first Legion Rapacis, as well as a duovir and a duovir quinquennalis – the most senior civic position. He is also described as patronus pagi: that is, patron of the community of Roman citizens at Thugga. The shrine was also paid for by another citizen, C. Pomponius L.F. Restitutus. Thus we have a distinguished soldier and leader of the Roman community donating a shrine to the most important of Roman gods, Jupiter. So far all the donors seem to have been freedmen or Roman citizens, but in AD 48 one Iulius Venustus dedicated a statue of Augustus. Not an extraordinary act in itself, but we also know that Iulius Venustus was the son of one Thinoba, an office holder in the civitas of non-Roman citizens in Thugga. We do not know the hows and whys of this, but it clearly demonstrates a beginning of Africans performing typically Roman civic acts. It also demonstrates the adoption of a Roman form of name by Iulius Venustus, as opposed to the traditional African form of ‘X son of Y’, as on the Punic mausoleum. Despite these clearly Roman traits, we know from other inscriptions that the political organisation of the civitas survived, and it was governed by officials with the Punic title of suffete rather than the Roman magistrate.

In AD 54 we again encounter M. Licinius Rufus – this time donating the market – and he is described as patronus pagi and also as a cavalry commander in Syria. In the reign of Hadrian (117–38) a pair of temples was dedicated to the deities Concordia and Frugifer and Liber Patus by the brothers M. and A. Gabinius. They are further described as sons of the manager of imperial estates around Thugga and also as patronus pagi et civitatis, meaning patrons of both the Roman citizen pagus and the ‘indigenous’ civitas. So by the second century we begin to see the same individuals playing a leading role in both the citizen and non-citizen communities. Later donations are by members of some of the families we have already encountered – the Licinii and the Gabini – but monuments are also dedicated by other families (particularly the Marcii) and individuals. The temple of Mercury by the capitol, which seems to have some elements of an African temple plan, was built in the reign of Commodus (180–92) by Q. Pacuvius Saturus and his wife Nahania Victoria, according to the will of their son M. Paccuvius Felix Victorianus ([see Figure 3](#fig005_003)). Here we have a couple, one with an apparently Roman name and the other with a clearly non-Roman praenomen. This suggests the possibility of a marriage between citizens of whom one (at least) has an African name. By AD 205 in the reign of Septimius Severus the city of Thugga had received the status of a municipium liberum, which would have ended the division between the pagus and the civitas and so united the people of the city and given them the same civic and legal rights.

Start of Activity

**Activity 2**

Start of Question

Which of the four models of cultural interaction do you think best fits the evidence you have encountered in Thugga? Write down your choice (or choices), and note down the evidence which supports your choice.

End of Question

[View discussion -](" \l "Session2_Discussion2) **[Activity 2](" \l "Session2_Discussion2)**

End of Activity

## 2.4 African Red Slip ware

Between about 30 BC and AD 75 the most common type of ceramic tableware in the empire was terra sigillata (often known as Samian ware). This was a shiny red-surfaced ceramic which was first made in Arezzo in Tuscany, Italy and then widely imitated in many areas such as Campania, Rome, southern and eastern Gaul, and Asia Minor. The forms of this pottery were typically cups, bowls, plates and dishes. Beyond the areas where it was produced, the pottery was widely traded and it has been found on countless sites, including North African sites from the Atlantic to the Nile. In many of the areas where the terra sigillata was imitated by local potters, the original Italian prototypes were closely copied and there was little or no innovation in the shapes or forms of decoration. However, in the region of Carthage workshops were established before the middle of the first century AD which produced pottery that initially copied the shapes of the Italian wares, even though its colour and texture were slightly different (see Plate 5). Later a range of new shapes and forms were developed that broke free from the Italian originals and began a tradition of tableware manufacture which continued until the latter part of the seventh century AD. No ancient name for this pottery has survived, but it is known to archaeologists as African Red Slip ware because of its distinctive bright orange glossy surface created by the application of a slip to the vessels. In the second century African Red Slip ware became the most common tableware in the Mediterranean area, and in most places replaced the Italian terra sigillata and its other imitators (see Plate 6). Although originally Italian in inspiration and function, the fine ware developed a range of original shapes and decoration, and new forms, particularly large shallow dishes, became common. How much this spread of African material culture was due to technological superiority, economic production, changes in eating practices or simply changes in fashion is still the subject of study.

Please click to view [Plate 5: (a) Italian terra sigillata](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/olinkremote.php?website=AA309_2&targetdoc=Plate%205:%20(a)%20Italian%20terra%20sigillata). (John, C. (1971) Arretine and Samian Pottery, London, British Museum Press: © British Museum) (b) African Red slip ware. (Hayes, J.W. (1997) Handbook of Mediterranean Roman Pottery, London, British Museum Press, p. 58; © British Museum) (PDF, 1 page, 0.9 MB)

Please click to view [Plate 6: African Red Slip ware jugs](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/olinkremote.php?website=AA309_2&targetdoc=Plate%206:%20African%20Red%20Slip%20ware%20jugs), third century. Bardo Museum, Tunis. (Photo: Musee National du Bardo, Tunis), (PDF, 1 page, 1.8MB)

Start of Activity

**Activity 3**

Start of Question

Consider which of our four models best fits the case of African Red Slip ware. Write down your choice (or choices), and note down the evidence which supports your choice in your Learning Journal.

End of Question

[View discussion - Activity 3](" \l "Session2_Discussion3)

End of Activity

## 2.5 African mosaics: things Roman and things African?

Between the second and the fifth centuries a thriving tradition of mosaic floor decoration developed in North Africa (see [Figure 4](#fig005_004)). There is only limited evidence for the dating of African mosaics, but the earliest seem to be closely influenced by Italian interior design, particularly stucco wall plaster, wall painting and monochrome mosaic floors. We can investigate this by looking at examples from the early second and third centuries. Look now at Colour Plates 1–4 and watch the two brief video sequences, ‘Mosaic from Acholla’ and ‘Mosaic from La Chebba’.

Start of Figure



Figure 4 Excavation of a mosaic floor, Chott Meriem near Sousse, Tunisia. DAI neg. no.55.1314. (Photo: Sichtermann/German Archaeological Institute, Rome)

[View description - Figure 4 Excavation of a mosaic floor, Chott Meriem near Sousse, Tunisia. DAI neg. ...](" \l "Session2_Description4)

End of Figure

Please click to view [Colour Plate 1: Mosaic from the 'Baths of Trajan](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/olinkremote.php?website=AA309_2&targetdoc=Colour%20Plate%202:%20Dionysus%20in%20a%20chariot%20pulled%20by%20two%20centaurs)', Acholla, AD 120–30. In the centre Dionysus is in a chariot pulled by two centaurs; in roundels to either side are personifications of Winter (right) and and Spring (left) supported by grotesque elements with animals and plants. Around these is a frieze of sea nymphs, sea animals and sea monsters. Around the edge are friezes of grotesque figures and plants similar to stucco and painted work in Rome and Campania. Bardo Museum, Tunis. (PDF, 1 page, 0.4 MB)

Please clickto view [Colour Plate 2: Dionysus in a chariot pulled by two centaurs](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/olinkremote.php?website=AA309_2&targetdoc=Colour%20Plate%202:%20Dionysus%20in%20a%20chariot%20pulled%20by%20two%20centaurs), detail of Colour Plate 1 (PDF, 1 page, 0.4 MB)

Please click to view [Colour Plate 3: Personification of Winter](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/olinkremote.php?website=AA309_2&targetdoc=Colour%20Plate%203:%20Personification%20of%20Winter); detail of Colour Plate 1. (PDF, 1 page, 0.5 MB).

Please clickto view [Colour Plate 4: Personification of Spring](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/olinkremote.php?website=AA309_2&targetdoc=Colour%20Plate%204:%20Personification%20of%20Spring), detail of Colour Plate 1. (PDF, 1 page, 0.5 MB).

Mosaic from Acholla (2.5 minutes)

Start of Media Content

Video content is not available in this format.

Mosaic from Acholla

[View transcript - Mosaic from Acholla](" \l "Session2_Transcript4)

End of Media Content

Mosaic from La Chebba (2.5 minutes)

Start of Media Content

Video content is not available in this format.

Mosaic from La Chebba

[View transcript - Mosaic from La Chebba](" \l "Session2_Transcript5)

End of Media Content

Start of Figure



Figure 5 Border with grotesque head from the ‘Baths of Trajan’, early second century AD, Acholla. Bardo Museum, Tunis. (Photo: P. Perkins)

[View description - Figure 5 Border with grotesque head from the ‘Baths of Trajan’, early second century ...](" \l "Session2_Description5)

End of Figure

As you have just heard on the video, these kinds of compositions (see [Figure 5](#fig005_005)) are very similar to the details found in Italian interior decoration, for example in the buildings of Pompeii just before its destruction or in the Domus Aurea, the palace built by Nero in Rome (see Plate 7). So in this case the African mosaics seem to be reproducing motifs and styles of composition which were current in Italy at the time. Through the second and third centuries African mosaics developed their own repertoire of motifs and styles, and the prevalent types of mosaics diverged from their Italian counterparts. So, for example, the mosaic in Colour Plate 5, with its use of colour and vegetal motifs in a geometric pattern, displays a set of characteristics not found elsewhere.

Please click to view [Plate 7: View of the cryptoporticus with illusionistic candelabra and figures from the Domus Aurea](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/olinkremote.php?website=AA309_2&targetdoc=Plate%207:%20View%20of%20the%20cryptoporticus%20with%20illusionistic%20candelabra) (Golden House of Nero), Rome. (German Archaeological Institute, Rome, DAI 846497) (PDF, 1 page, 2.5 MB).

Please click to view [Colour Plate 5: Mosaic from Thuburbo Maius with geometric plant motifs](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/olinkremote.php?website=AA309_2&targetdoc=Colour%20Plate%205:%20Mosaic%20from%20Thuburbo%20Maius%20with%20geometric%20plant%20motifs) and a panel in the centre featuring a playwright reading a scroll in front of a plinth supporting Greek stage masks, late second century AD. Bardo Museum, Tunis. (Photo: Gilles Mermet) (PDF, 1 page, 1MB)

The mosaic may be showing new decorative styles but the central panel, which sits awkwardly slightly off-centre in the mosaic, shows a very traditional Hellenistic figure of a poet or playwright reading a scroll in front of theatre masks. Alongside the popularity of geometric patterning, a major development in African mosaics was the use of figured compositions on a white background – see, for example, the mosaic of Neptune and the four seasons in Colour Plate 6.

Please click to view [Colour Plate 6: Neptune and the four seasons personified as female figures](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/olinkremote.php?website=AA309_2&targetdoc=Colour%20Plate%206:%20Neptune%20and%20the%20four%20seasons%20personified%20as%20female%20figures), from La Chebba, mid second century AD. Lower right: Spring with roses; upper right: Summer with wheat; upper left: Autumn with grapes; lower left: Winter with ducks and olives. Neptune in the centre is on a chariot pulled by sea monsters, half-horse and half-fish, with a Triton and a sea nymph in support. Bardo Museum, Tunis. (Photo: Bardo Museum) (PDF, 1 page, 0.5 MB)

A very popular theme in these mosaics is the illustration of hunting scenes, as for example the mosaic from El Djem in Colour Plate 7. Within its geometric border the mosaic may be divided into three sections forming a narrative of a hare hunt. At the top two horsemen and a hunter with a spear are moving through a wood. In the middle the hounds and their handler are approaching a hare hiding in a bush. In the lower part of the scene the horsemen and hounds are pursuing the hare. The overall composition is very different to the earlier mosaics. The mosaic has a narrative of the progress of the hunt. There is a vitality and sense of movement which is lacking in the earlier mosaics: the figures are not as meticulously moulded and less detail is seen in the drapery and plants, for example. The very schematic shadows are used to provide a ground level for the figures.

Please click to view [Colour Plate 7: Hare hunt from El Djem](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/olinkremote.php?website=AA309_2&targetdoc=Colour%20Plate%207:%20Hare%20hunt%20from%20El%20Djem), mid third century AD. Bardo Museum, Tunis. (Photo: Bardo Museum) (PDF, 1 page, 0.4 MB)

Please click to view [Colour Plate 8: Chariot race in the circus from Gafsa](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/olinkremote.php?website=AA309_2&targetdoc=Colour%20Plate%208:%20Chariot%20race%20in%20the%20circus%20from%20Gafsa), Tunisia, sixth century AD. Bardo Museum, Tunis. (Photo: Bardo Museum) (PDF, 1 page, 0.3 MB)

Another theme which became popular in African mosaics was the circus (see Plate 8). The circus had its origins in Rome at the Circus Maximus, but the popularity of the chariot races spread and in Africa they were particularly popular throughout the Roman period and even later into the Byzantine period (see Colour Plate 8). Even small towns such as Thugga had a circus. Elsewhere in the empire only the largest towns and provincial capitals had a circus. The mosaic in Plate 8 (and seen in the ‘Exploring Thugga’ video segment below) shows both the exterior and the interior of a circus. Three sides of the circus are shaded by an awning and empty rows of seats are shown on the fourth. Four chariots are shown, although there are eight starting gates on the right of the circus. The charioteer at the top right is carrying the palm of victory, as is the charioteer Eros from Thugga shown in the video. In the mosaic from Gafsa (Colour Plate 8) emphasis is placed upon the spectators as well as the circus action.

Please click to view [Plate 8: Mosaic of a circus from Carthage](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/olinkremote.php?website=AA309_2&targetdoc=Plate%208:%20Mosaic%20of%20a%20circus%20from%20Carthage), late second to early third century. Bardo Museum, Tunis. (Photo: Musee National de Bardo, Tunis) (PDF, 1 page, 2.9 MB)

The circus (1 minute)

Start of Media Content

Video content is not available in this format.

The circus

[View transcript - The circus](" \l "Session2_Transcript6)

End of Media Content

Start of Activity

**Activity 4**

Start of Question

Consider which of our four models of cultural interaction best fits the evidence of the African mosaics sketched out here. Write down your choice (or choices), and note down the evidence which supports your choice in your Learning Journal.

End of Question

[View discussion - Activity 4](" \l "Session2_Discussion4)

End of Activity

## 2.6 Houses at Carthage, Bulla Regia and Thugga

Your next activity is to watch a video on houses of the Roman élite. The video presents houses from different parts of the empire.

Houses of the Roman élite (part 1 (Intro); 2 minutes)

Start of Media Content

Video content is not available in this format.

Houses of the Roman élite - Part One (Intro)

[View transcript - Houses of the Roman élite - Part One (Intro)](" \l "Session2_Transcript7)

End of Media Content

Houses of the Roman élite (part 2 (Pompeii); 7.5 minutes)

Start of Media Content

Video content is not available in this format.

Houses of the Roman élite - Part Two (Pompeii)

[View transcript - Houses of the Roman élite - Part Two (Pompeii)](" \l "Session2_Transcript8)

End of Media Content

Houses of the Roman élite (part 3 (Pompeii continued); 7.5 minutes)

Start of Media Content

Video content is not available in this format.

Houses of the Roman élite - Part Three (Pompeii continued)

[View transcript - Houses of the Roman élite - Part Three (Pompeii continued)](" \l "Session2_Transcript9)

End of Media Content

Houses of the Roman élite (part 4 (Ephesus); 8.5 minutes)

Start of Media Content

Video content is not available in this format.

Houses of the Roman élite - Part Four (Ephesus)

[View transcript - Houses of the Roman élite - Part Four (Ephesus)](" \l "Session2_Transcript10)

End of Media Content

Houses of the Roman élite (part 5 (Africa); 8 minutes)

Start of Media Content

Video content is not available in this format.

Houses of the Roman élite - Part Five (Africa)

[View transcript - Houses of the Roman élite - Part Five (Africa)](" \l "Session2_Transcript11)

End of Media Content

Lisa Nevett has presented a wide-ranging investigation of houses in several parts of the empire and shown how they can provide evidence for expressions of culture and identity. Overall the video provides a broad context for the houses you have seen at Thugga and Bulla Regia. They can be seen as having connections with different aspects of the culture of the Roman empire. Some elements are shared, such as the use of the house as a location for display of status and access to Greek culture, or the use of courtyards and axial arrangements, or characteristic styles of decoration. From the evidence presented in the video we can consider the houses in a number of ways. Are the building materials and their decoration the same in all parts of the empire? Is the arrangement of rooms and their sizes and relationships to one another similar in these different places? Did similar parts of the houses have similar functions? Are there the possibilities for the same social interpretations of the houses in different areas? Can we contrast a ‘Roman’ house with an ‘African’ house? We can ask how much they are African or Roman or Afro-Roman.

Start of Activity

**Activity 5**

Start of Question

Consider which of our four models of cultural interaction best fits the evidence from studying the houses in Africa and elsewhere. Write down your choice (or choices), and note down the evidence which supports your choice in your Learning Journal.

End of Question

[View discussion - Activity 5](" \l "Session2_Discussion5)

End of Activity

## 2.7 Reconsideration of the models and their suitability

Now that we have studied a variety of sources of evidence from Africa, it is possible to reconsider how well our four models of cultural interaction fit the evidence.

### 2.7.1 The building of Thugga

In summary, most of the buildings we have dedications for in Thugga are of a Roman type. The exceptions are temples to gods or goddesses who were also worshipped in pre-Roman Africa or at least had strict equivalents, such as Baal and Saturn and Juno and Caelestis. This evidence would seem to suggest that this African city was very receptive of Roman models for building types, therefore fitting best into model 1. Nevertheless the adoption of Roman-style buildings seems to have been gradual, and with the exception of the forum the main Roman-style buildings – the capitol, theatre, baths and circus – were not built until the later second century and the third century. So it would seem that if model 1 fits best, it was a gradual transition rather than an abrupt change.

However, we must remember that we know extremely little about the urban form and building of the pre-Roman city of Thugga. There does seem to have been some survival of the earlier urban form of the city, since to the north-west the city remained largely confined within the Punic city walls and the street plan of the centre of the city may also be a Punic survival. There is also excavated evidence to suggest that a temple to Baal preceded the Severan temple of Saturn. This would seem to suggest that there was some survival of pre-Roman urban forms and buildings, which would fit best with model 2 or 3 suggesting either rejection of Roman forms such as regular grids of streets or co-existence of Roman and pre-Roman urban structures.

The identification of two sectors in the people of Thugga, the Roman pagus and the African civitas, fits well with the third model – separation of indigenous and Roman peoples. However, through time this division disappears as the town grows in status and becomes first a munitipium by AD 205 and then a colonia, suggesting that model 4 – fusion – might be more appropriate. This gradual merging of the communities in the city and their governments runs in parallel with a shifting identity of the donors of the buildings. It is just about possible to discern a shift from Roman donors to a combination of donors where some are Roman and some individuals have African names or descent. This too best fits model 4 – fusion as the result of cultural interaction. Fusion can also be seen in the developed city of Thugga, which by the time it became a colonia combined both African, Roman and Greek cultural influences.

This discussion illustrates the fact that no one model has the power to explain all of our observations. Different models may fit different parts of the evidence, and different models might fit the evidence at different periods of the progress of cultural interaction, so dominance may be followed by separatism and then fusion. This observation underlines the fact that cultural interaction is an ongoing dynamic process.

### 2.7.2 African Red Slip ware

The African Red Slip ware provides a clear case of an Italian range of artefacts being first imported to Africa and used, but then being copied and produced in Africa. The African production then develops its own characteristics and identity as an African product. This fits model 4 best, where the Italian prototype is taken over to produce something new, original and Afro-Roman.

### 2.7.3 Mosaics

The question of the mosaics can be considered at various levels. As a flooring technique its origin lies in the Hellenistic east, but in the Punic world plaster floors inset with small squared stones, sometimes in geometric patterns, are also known, as you have seen in the video of the houses at Carthage. So it's not possible simply to see mosaic floors as a part of Roman culture which came to be dominant in Africa, because mosaics themselves are not a purely Roman tradition. Nevertheless, it is not possible to see them just as an African phenomonen either, because what is represented on the mosaics often has a recognisable Roman component. The earlier mosaics from Acholla have compositional and stylistic similarities to painting and stucco in central Italy. Likewise many of the themes in figured mosaics can be related to Graeco-Roman mythology or Roman cultural practices such as the circus or amphitheatre (see [Figure 7](#fig005_007)).

Start of Figure



Figure 7 Mosaic and marble floor from a large town house, third century AD, Carthage. (Photo: P. Perkins)

[View description - Figure 7 Mosaic and marble floor from a large town house, third century AD, Carthage. ...](" \l "Session2_Description7)

End of Figure

Taken as a whole the mosaics from Africa can be seen as distinct from those elsewhere, and together form a group which can be distinguished from mosaics common elsewhere. This suggests model 4, cultural fusion, is perhaps most appropriate.

### 2.7.4 Houses

In the case of the houses it is more difficult to differentiate clearly between ‘Roman’ and ‘African’ if we accept that the atrium-peristyle house is not the only form of dwelling we can identify as typically Roman. Nevertheless, it seems that the houses in Africa do represent a fusion of elements – African, Roman and Hellenistic – suggesting that model 4 might be most appropriate in the case of the houses at Bulla Regia. They combine a Roman symmetry with a Hellenistic peristyle and an African sunken court decorated with mosaics. Overall it seems very much as if we are studying a fusion of cultural elements which came together to create a vibrant culture. Furthermore, the houses seem to function in a similar social way as a setting for the display of wealth, education and status.

There are other areas of cultural interaction which we have not considered, and various of the models may be appropriate in different cases. So, for example, Latin became the official language of administration and commemoration on stone, suggesting that model 1 would fit best, whereas sporadic rebellions indicate that some aspects of Roman culture were actively rejected, suggesting model 2 might be more appropriate in some areas. The evidence we have just considered can be interpreted with reference to our four models of cultural interaction, but it should be clear that in individual cases and all the cases together the models do not fit exactly nor do they fully explain the evidence. What is more they are not necessarily mutually exclusive: that is to say, more than one of them may be seen to apply to the same evidence, either at the same time or following from each other. This is due partly to the simplicity of the models but also to the fact that the original premise – that there is something we can identify as African and something we can identify as Roman which we can compare and contrast – was itself a polarisation of the issues. The Roman world was very diverse and contained a broad range of experiences. Just as the concept of ‘Roman’ is multi-faceted and variable, so is the concept of ‘African’. When the two come together it is perhaps not surprising that the resulting cultural mix is rich and complex.

## Conclusion

This free course provided an introduction to studying the arts and humanities. It took you through a series of exercises designed to develop your approach to study and learning at a distance and helped to improve your confidence as an independent learner.

## Keep on learning

Start of Figure

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End of Figure

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End of Box

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## Acknowledgements

This course was written by Dr Phil Perkins

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Plate 1 adapted from Poinsett, C. (1983) ‘Les Ruines de Dougga’, Tunis, Ministers des Affaires Culturelles, Institute National d’Archeolgie et d’Arts

Plate 2 adapted from Poinsett, C. (1983) ‘Les Ruines de Dougga’, Tunis, Ministers des Affaires Culturelles, Institute National d’Archeolgie et d’Arts

Plate 4 Photo © Musée National du Bardo, Tunis

Plate 5(a) Johns, C. (1971) ‘Arretine and Samian Pottery’, London, British Museum Press, © British Museum

Plate 5(b) Hayes, J.J.V. (1997) ‘Handbook of Mediterranean Roman Pottery’, London, British Museum Press, ©British Museum

Plate 6 Photos © Musée National du Bardo, Tunis

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## Solutions

## Activity 1

#### Discussion

To answer the questions thoroughly would require detailed definitions of what was African and what was Roman, but even with such definitions the questions would not be easy to answer definitively and there is some subjectivity involved in the identifications. My answers (below) may differ slightly from yours. If they do, have a look at the reasons you and I have given and see if they explain why our opinions differ.

Start of Table

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Feature** | **Roman?** | **African?** | **Reason** |
| City walls | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | These don't surround the whole Roman city and they pre-date most of it, so they are African, even if their construction is not very different to Roman walls. |
| Street plan | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | The street plan is not like a regular Roman city grid as, for example, in Aosta or parts of Pompeii. |
| Temple of Mercury | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | The god is Roman but the building doesn't look much like a typical Roman temple. |
| Temple of Augustan Piety | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | The temple is to a Roman imperial cult, even if the building doesn't look like a typical Roman temple. |
| Capitol | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | It is typical of Roman cities, e.g. Pompeii or Ostia, and mimics the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline hill in Rome, even if it has a different relationship to the forum. |
| Forum | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | It is the typical centre of a Roman city, an open square with columns around it. |
| Theatre | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | The theatre is Roman in style, similar to those at Pompeii, Ostia and elsewhere. |
| Political organisation | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | The city seems to be divided into a pagus and a tivitas: these are both Roman terms (and so it is a Roman element) but it is not typical of a Roman city where the ordo of decurions was the governing body (and so it may be African). |
| Arch of Alexander Severus | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | The arch is a typical Roman monument to commemorate a triumph or other honour. |
| Temple of Caelestis | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | The goddess is not originally Roman and the whole building doesn't look much like a typical Roman temple enclosure; nevertheless the actual temple has a podium and columns much like a Roman temple. |
| Temple of Saturn | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | The form of the temple is not like a typical Roman temple so perhaps it is African, even though there was a Roman Saturn. |
| Saturn the god | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | He (and his name) is originally Roman, but he took over the attributes of the pre-Roman god Baal in Africa, so he can be called African. |
| Circus | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | This is Roman because it repeats the form of the Circus Maximus race-track in Rome and other chariot race-tracks elsewhere. |
| Baths | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | The baths are similar to bath buildings in Rome and elsewhere. |
| Construction techniques | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | Most of the walls are not built in typical Roman styles of masonry. |
| People | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | They have both Roman and non-Roman names. |
| Language | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_6ab4600586c9fab3218c1575ce4017a442eccf90_tick.gif | D:\AaaF\OUT\httpswwwopeneduopenlearnocw_cmid1894_2021-03-08_15-27-28_js34827\word\assets\_c391b2d06cdad566379353896daa5e983d1839d1_x.gif | Latin seems to be the language used in inscriptions, but we don't know what was spoken in everyday conversations. |

End of Table

[Back to - Activity 1](" \l "Session2_Activity1)

## ****Activity 2****

#### Discussion

You may have found that one or more of the models fitted the evidence, or that some parts of the evidence fitted one model but others fitted a different model. Don't be surprised by this because our models are just that – models. They are not full-blown explanations or exhaustive interpretations. They are intended to be aids to interpretation, to stimulate thought, open possibilities and debates. I am not going to provide a detailed discussion here of how the evidence from Thugga fits the models. There is, though, more discussion later in this section when the models are reviewed in the light of the further evidence you are now going to look at.

[Back to - Activity 2](" \l "Session2_Activity2)

## Activity 3

#### Discussion

Although you only have limited evidence to go on, this case study is more clear cut than the previous ones. It is discussed further when the models are reassessed.

[Back to - Activity 3](" \l "Session2_Activity3)

## Activity 4

#### Discussion

The mosaics display a variety of influences, and it is possible to identify Roman and Hellenistic traits. Uniquely African traits are harder to identify, but this style of mosaic with coloured figures on a white ground can clearly be seen as developing in Africa and neighbouring areas; it can be contrasted with different styles which were common in Asia Minor, Italy, Gaul or Britain. The mosaics are discussed further below.

[Back to - Activity 4](" \l "Session2_Activity4)

## Activity 5

#### Discussion

It's easy enough to see which houses we might call African – either those similar to the Punic houses in Carthage or the later houses in Africa, allowing the geographical location to be the defining factor (see [Figure 6](#fig005_006)). However, what about the houses that might be ‘Roman’? Do we take the houses in Pompeii as typically Roman? And if so, where does that leave the houses in Ephesus? The question is complex because the houses share some features but in other ways they are distinct from one another. We also need to remember that there are chronological differences to consider. The Punic houses were abandoned following the Roman conquest; all the houses in Pompeii were destroyed in AD 79; and the rest of those in Africa date from the second century onwards, with later alterations and reorganisations. It is also important to consider whether the houses are comparable as the homes of élite members of society in different parts of the empire, or whether each is the home of a different class or kind of person. There is more discussion below.

Start of Figure



Figure 6 Punic house on Byrsa hill, early second century BC, Carthage. (Photo: P. Perkins)

[View description - Figure 6 Punic house on Byrsa hill, early second century BC, Carthage. (Photo: P. ...](" \l "Session2_Description6)

End of Figure

[Back to - Activity 5](" \l "Session2_Activity5)

# Figure 1 Tomb of Ateban, son of Ypmatat (Punic mausoleum), early second century BC, Thugga. (Photo: P. Perkins)

## Description

Figure 1

[Back to - Figure 1 Tomb of Ateban, son of Ypmatat (Punic mausoleum), early second century BC, Thugga. (Photo: P. Perkins)](" \l "Session2_Figure1)

# Figure 2 The Punic mausoleum in Thugga before reconstruction in 1908–10. The reconstruction (as seen in Figure 1) was based on drawings made before partial demolition in 1842. DAI neg. no. 55.1314. (Photo: Mosdoni/German Archaeological Institute, Rome)

## Description

Figure 2

[Back to - Figure 2 The Punic mausoleum in Thugga before reconstruction in 1908–10. The reconstruction (as seen in Figure 1) was based on drawings made before partial demolition in 1842. DAI neg. no. 55.1314. (Photo: Mosdoni/German Archaeological Institute, Rome)](" \l "Session2_Figure2)

# Figure 3 Inscription from the temple of Mercury naming the donors, Q. Pacuvius Saturus F.L. and Nahania Victoria, mid second century AD, Thugga. (Photo: P. Perkins)

## Description

Figure 3

[Back to - Figure 3 Inscription from the temple of Mercury naming the donors, Q. Pacuvius Saturus F.L. and Nahania Victoria, mid second century AD, Thugga. (Photo: P. Perkins)](" \l "Session2_Figure3)

# Figure 4 Excavation of a mosaic floor, Chott Meriem near Sousse, Tunisia. DAI neg. no.55.1314. (Photo: Sichtermann/German Archaeological Institute, Rome)

## Description

Figure 4

[Back to - Figure 4 Excavation of a mosaic floor, Chott Meriem near Sousse, Tunisia. DAI neg. no.55.1314. (Photo: Sichtermann/German Archaeological Institute, Rome)](" \l "Session2_Figure4)

# Figure 5 Border with grotesque head from the ‘Baths of Trajan’, early second century AD, Acholla. Bardo Museum, Tunis. (Photo: P. Perkins)

## Description

Figure 5

[Back to - Figure 5 Border with grotesque head from the ‘Baths of Trajan’, early second century AD, Acholla. Bardo Museum, Tunis. (Photo: P. Perkins)](" \l "Session2_Figure5)

# Figure 6 Punic house on Byrsa hill, early second century BC, Carthage. (Photo: P. Perkins)

## Description

Figure 6

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# Figure 7 Mosaic and marble floor from a large town house, third century AD, Carthage. (Photo: P. Perkins)

## Description

Figure 7

[Back to - Figure 7 Mosaic and marble floor from a large town house, third century AD, Carthage. (Photo: P. Perkins)](" \l "Session2_Figure7)

# Exploring Thugga - Part One

## Transcript

PHIL PERKINS:

This is the city of Thugga, in the ancient kingdom and Roman Province of Numidia. It lies on the slopes of the valley of the Oued Khalled, in a fertile landscape of olives and grain.

The city is well preserved and extensively excavated. We’ll be exploring the remains to investigate how the town developed and what impact Roman occupation had on the city. Thugga was already a flourishing city the 4th century BC. Well before the kingdom of Numidia was added to the Roman Empire, it was a centre of Numidian power.

This is the royal mausoleum of Ateban son of Ypmatat son of Palu, constructed around the beginning of the 2nd century BC by his son Zumar, with Abaris son of Abdastart and Mangi son of Warsacan and the inscription naming them which was torn from the building in 1842 and now lies in the British Museum was written in two languages, Libycan and Punic.

The mausoleum stands on five steps and the lower part is like a house with a window on each side. And pilasters at the corners with lotus flower scrolled capitals.

Above this three further steps rise to a central section with a series of embedded ionic columns around it and surmounted with an Egyptian style moulding.

The upper section, like the lower has lotus flower pilasters at the corners. Above the pilasters is another Egyptian moulding and a pyramid to crown the building.

At each of the four corners stood a winged female figure. And at the top sat a lion. Similar monuments have been found in other parts of North Africa but its details illustrate a fusion of Greek and Egyptian cultural elements which came together in Africa and influenced local expressions of culture.

Clearly Numidia was participating in the culture of the Eastern Mediterranean well before the Roman conquest of Carthage.

Other parts of the city also reveal glimpses of the pre-Roman town - the city walls built of roughly squared blocks with square towers probably date to the late 2nd century BC.

Outside the city walls lay the pre-Roman cemeteries - where bodies were placed, with pottery, in rough stone block chambers, covered by earth mounds.

Within the city itself the irregular plan of the streets goes back to the Numidian city.

Even the Roman period shows no signs of the formal grid layout typical of so many Roman cities. These then are the clearest remains of pre-Roman Thugga. However the city did not suddenly change when the Romans took over Numidia and we can trace the gradual development of the Roman city by studying the surviving buildings and also a remarkable collection / of inscriptions which have been found here.

These inscriptions help us to both identify and date the buildings of the city.

So here we have the Temple of Mercury, which was built in the late second century AD. A long inscription identifies the temple, with its rooms, portico and statues - built by Quintius Pacuvius Saturus, a leading citizen, and his wife Nahania Victoria, an important priestess, according to the will of their son Marcus Pacuvius Felix

Victorianus, at a total cost of 145,000 sestertii. This small temple, dedicated to Augustan Piety, was erected in the first half of the second century AD by Pompeius Rogatus, at a cost of 30,000 sestertii.

These temples surround a square. Engraved on the paving is a wind rose, which marks the points of the compass and the names of the winds, so for example we have the south south – east wind Leuconotus, the south wind, Auster and the south west wind Africus.

The Augustan author Vitruvius describes how to accurately lay out a wind rose and suggests that ideally streets and buildings should be set out to avoid directly facing the North, South, East or West winds.

The wind rose at Thugga matches the description but the layout of the city does not follow the instructions. For example, on the fourth side of the square, the Capitol is aligned to face the south wind.

The Temple is dedicated to the protectors of Rome: Jupiter, Juno and Minerva. In the back wall of the cella are three niches, one for each of the divinities. Above the cella doorway an inscription tells us that Lucius Marcius Simplex Regillianus built the temple.

In the pediment is a mutilated relief of the apotheosis of the emperor Antoninus Pius: he is shown being taken aloft by an eagle.

[Back to - Exploring Thugga - Part One](" \l "Session1_MediaContent1)

# Exploring Thugga - Part Two

## Transcript

PHIL PERKINS:

The temple decoration is very Roman - a well preserved example of the Corinthian order. However, the style of stonework is typically North African -with large vertical blocks supporting smaller horizontals forming a framework infilled with smaller stones.

The Capitol towers above the forum to which it is directly connected by two flights of steps. But here it lies across the end of the forum rather than the usual arrangement with the temple facing the forum, as at Ostia or Pompeii.

The porticoes around the forum were given to the city by another of the leading families of Thugga - the Gabinii.

Macellum The macellum or market buildings, around the square to the side of the forum, were built in AD54 by Marcus Licinius Rufus. Little remains of this, and the basilica and other buildings of the forum have not survived because they were demolished and their stones re-used to build a Byzantine fortress over the forum in the sixth and seventh centuries AD.

On the east side of the city lies the heavily restored theatre of Thugga. It gives a good impression of a theatre building, both the stage and the seating. The seating was divided into different areas by barriers and stairways and could be entered from the top or the sides.

The stage was separated from the seating by a low wall with alternating semi-circular and square niches and two sets of stairs.

The stage had the traditional five entrances, one on either side and three in the back wall.

It was richly decorated with marble columns and articulated with a deep central semi-circular niche and square niches to either side.

Written across the frieze of the stage building a long inscription commemorates the donation of the theatre by Publius Marcius Quadratus in 168-9 AD. A member of the same family who gave the city its Capitol temple.

The inscription tells that he built the theatre with curtains and decorations on the occasion of his becoming Flamen for life, one of the most important city priest hoods.

He paid for these with his own money. He also arranged theatrical games and provided gifts and celebrations for the people.

Overall the inscription above the stage celebrates Publius Marcius’ status and honours and records his generosity towards the city. The theatre has his identity stamped upon it and it serves as an indication of his wealth and power.

Not only was the theatre a place for dramatic productions and spectacles but it was also a venue for display by the elite of Thugga for the theatre itself was used as a setting for statues of prominent citizens.

The statues would have been placed within the seating of the theatre, as this surviving fragment of statue base shows. This base has been repositioned to the side of the stage. It honours Marcus Paccius Silvanus. And again we find a reference to the family Gabini - responsible for building the forum portico.

Amongst other things such inscriptions also tell us about the social and political organisation - here we have a ‘pagus’ of Roman citizens and a native ‘civitas’, in the city of Thugga.

These two groups lived together in the city but had different legal rights and forms of local government with the traditions of the Civitas persisting from the pre-Roman period.

These two communities were united in AD205 when the city was granted the title of municipium. They set up this arch to honour the Emperor Septimius Severus.

Later in the same century another arch was set up on the other side of the city to thank the Emperor Severus Alexander for granting tax privileges. In 261 AD the city received the status of colony.

Beyond the arch is a large temple complex dedicated to Caelestis, the Roman goddess who had the attributes and powers of the pre-Roman Punic goddess Tanit.

At the entrance to the temple complex is a bath for ritual purification before entering.

The temple sits on a high podium and has plain columns with Corinthian Capitals running around all four sides and originally enclosing the cella of the temple.

It’s a common design but the semi-circular enclosure is unique, perhaps connected with the symbol of Caelestis, a crescent moon.

Inscription Around this enclosure ran a colonnade, upon which was an inscription commemorating the dedication of the temple to the goddess Caelistis.

It cost 30,000 sestertii, and was paid for by Quintius Gabinius Felix Beatianus.

There are numerous other temples in the city. This ruined temple on a high podium, set in a rectangular colonnaded enclosure, was dedicated to the goddess Minerva.

And this temple - dedicated to the Roman god Saturn, has a similar enclosure with three cult rooms set across a short side.

Set on the hillside at the outer limits of the city, it’s built over the African temple of Baal and is an example of Roman cults taking over the features of original African religions.

[Back to - Exploring Thugga - Part Two](" \l "Session1_MediaContent2)

# Exploring Thugga - Part Three

## Transcript

PHIL PERKINS:

This collection of votive stones from near Thugga, provide further evidence of this process. At the top of this stone is the figure of Baal, the punic god of the sun, surrounded by sun, moon and stars. But he’s also holding a thunder bolt - the symbol of Jupiter, the Roman god of the heavens. Below him is African Tanit.

Below her are Dionysus and Venus. So overall we have a thorough mixing of Roman and African motifs. In the centre is a representation of a temple with the dedicant - who’s named in the inscription below as Bellicus son of Maximus.

So far we’ve seen mainly religious and civic buildings but there were also other public buildings. Outside the city walls on this plateau, was Thugga’s circus. Little remains now but the building type is well known from other cities and / mosaic representations.

/ From Thugga itself we have this mosaic of the victorious charioteer Eros, who has just left the starting gate. The writing says he’ll do his best for you along with his horses ‘Amiable’ and ‘Jovial’.

/ The chariot races in the circus were particularly popular in North African cities and were a focus of spectacle, gambling and rivalry. Prizes were awarded in a bronze trophy.

/ An amphitheatre has not yet been located in Thugga, and so the Circus remains the only public building for entertainment apart from the Theatre.

Thugga appears to have had at least three public bath buildings.

A small suite of baths in the lower part of the city include a typical small latrine.

Although small, the baths were highly decorated - / including this mosaic of three cyclopes making the thunderbolts of Jupiter in the cave of Vulcan - as described by Virgil in The Aeniad - when the shield of Aeneas is being made.

The baths needed a constant water supply, brought to the city via aqueducts and stored in cisterns. These cisterns also served this bath complex, built in the AD 260s.

This large complex is a symmetrical building with two matching sets of bath rooms arranged around a large cold bath room. This form of bath building allows two separate, but simultaneous routes through the bathing process, one for men and another for women. The plan was modelled on earlier buildings in the city of Rome, such as the baths of Trajan, near the Colosseum.

The complex at Thugga was built by the Licinii family. Tucked down the side of the Punic mausoleum is a tombstone of this once great family of Thugga.

Such families would have lived in houses like this one - the House of the Trifolium.

Many houses were decorated with mosaics, / showing hospitality scenes. / /

This was a means of creating an / image of status and prestige. / So guests would be surrounded by abundance / and luxury. /

/ Here servants pour wine from two amphorae - labelled in Greek PIE - drink! And ZHCHC – good health!

/ In this mosaic Dionysus, the god of wine and fruitfulness - is surrounded by the four seasons - representing the creative energy of nature and its cyclical renewal throughout the year.

/ Here the young Dionysus rides a tiger surrounded by his satyrs and baccantes in a circular procession. Around these is a border composed of scallop shells, tridents and dolphins.

/ Sea motifs are also abundant in this series of mosaics - showing scenes from Homer. For example the legend of Ulysses and the Sirens. From the same floor, another panel shows a scene from the seventh Homeric Hymn, where the young Dionysus drives away Tyrhennian pirates, turned into dolphins as they were cast into the sea. These mosaics come from the centre of the peristyle of a house in Thugga - the House of Ulysses, and illustrate the fusion of cultural elements, which we’ve seen in the development of the city as a whole.

Although some buildings remained distinctly African, while others developed as typically Roman, and some aspects of city life remained separate, such as administration, the overall picture is a rich combination of both African and Roman.

[Back to - Exploring Thugga - Part Three](" \l "Session1_MediaContent3)

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## Transcript

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[Back to - Exploring Thugga - Part Two](" \l "Session2_MediaContent2)

# Exploring Thugga - Part Three

## Transcript

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[Back to - Exploring Thugga - Part Three](" \l "Session2_MediaContent3)

# Mosaic from Acholla

## Transcript

PHIL PERKINS:

This mosaic comes from the baths of Acholla. In the centre the god Dionysus on a chariot drawn by two centaurs.

To either side are roundels with busts of a personification of two of the seasons.

Running around these is a frieze of sea nymphs and sea monsters.

But here our interest lies in the minor decorative motifs which run around the central rectangular panels.

On three sides this is an alternating pattern of half-plant half-human figures or grotesques, plant motifs, with a grotesque head in the centre. On the fourth side is a complex band of figures, grotesques, animals and plants leading to a central rosette.

These kinds of compositions are very similar to the details found in Italian interior decoration, for example at Pompeii, or in the Domus Aurea in Rome.

Another feature which links it to wall painting is the use of colour, particularly yellows, for the friezes.

So in this case the African mosaics seem to be reproducing motifs and styles of composition which were current in Italy at the time.

[Back to - Mosaic from Acholla](" \l "Session2_MediaContent4)

# Mosaic from La Chebba

## Transcript

PHIL PERKINS:

This mosaic of Neptune and the Four Seasons comes from La Chebba, in Tunisia. The figures are drawn from classical mythology. In the roundel at the centre is Neptune, god of the waters, riding on a sea-chariot.

Unusually this image is combined with the four seasons - the daughters of Saturn and Ops. The figures of the four seasons and the plants around them are laid out in a geometric formation at the four corners of the mosiac.

Each season is represented by standard iconography:

Spring with roses,

Summer with corn,

Autumn with grapes and wine and Winter with olives and ducks.

Along the edges of the geometric border are smaller figures of men occupied with seasonal work, and animals.

All the figures are reasonably naturalistic with well modelled bodies but their shadows are rather schematic.

This figured style develops into a recognisable African style of mosaics which became common throughout the southern part of the central Mediterranean.

[Back to - Mosaic from La Chebba](" \l "Session2_MediaContent5)

# The circus

## Transcript

Narration

Outside the city walls on this plateau, was Thugga’s circus. Little remains now but the building type is well known from other cities and / mosaic representations.

/ From Thugga itself we have this mosaic of the victorious charioteer Eros, who has just left the starting gate. The writing says he’ll do his best for you along with his horses ‘Amiable’ and ‘Jovial’.

[Back to - The circus](" \l "Session2_MediaContent6)

# Houses of the Roman élite - Part One (Intro)

## Transcript

LISA NEVETT:

Much of our evidence about the Roman Empire tells us how culture and identity were constructed in the public sphere. But what about evidence from the private world?

In this video, we’ll be looking at the housing belonging to wealthy families from several different cities in the Empire.

The organisation and decoration of these houses provides evidence for some of the ways individuals created and displayed their own private identities and cultural affiliations.

Within Roman culture, it seems that the house had considerable symbolic value: its image is one which recurs again and again in art and literature. One of the ways non-Roman peoples are represented is through their dwellings, which are sometimes shown as round and constructed of ephemeral materials. These structures contrast markedly with the distinctive manner in which Roman houses are portrayed, with their square shapes, brick walls and tiled rooves.

But the form of a house had a lot more to say about the identity of its occupants than just whether they were in some sense “Roman”:

Today our picture of the Roman house is dominated by Pompeii. The eruption of Vesuvius in AD79 not only preserved public buildings but also many private houses.

These reveal some architectural similarities. But they also show how individuals adapted layout and decoration to suit their personal circumstances. Vitruvius, writing in Italy in the first century BC, described, in remarkable detail, how a man’s social standing was related to the size and facilities of his house.

“Magnificent vestibules and alcoves and halls are not necessary for people of low status, he wrote

because they pay their respects by visiting and are not visited themselves.

Advocates and professors of rhetoric should be housed with distinction, and with enough space to accommodate their audiences.

Men of high rank who hold office and magistracies… [should have] princely vestibules, lofty halls and spacious peristyles…

Although centuries of excavation have left many of the buildings themselves empty of their original furnishings, Vitruvius comments suggest that houses of the Roman elite had to accommodate the demands of public life as well as the needs of the household. From the street, there was sometimes a hint of the rich interior which lay beyond.

Through the open door a visitor could take in much of the interior at a glance, although sometimes screens or curtains were used to divide the space. Many houses had images at the entrance, which today may seem more threatening than welcoming. But these images were placed at the threshold to ward off evil or to bring good fortune to the household, like the guardian deity Priapus.

From the entrance the various architectural elements combined to create a monumental impression, as here in the House of the Vettii.

At the centre of the house is a large hall, or atrium, rising to an opening in the roof.

The House of the Ceii has a columned atrium. The opening in the roof or compluvium, let in light, ventilation and rainwater, which was collected in the pool below, the impluvium.

The water was then channelled into a tank beneath the floor and drawn, when needed, from a well head. This house and the house of the Vettii have well preserved atria.

This area was the focal point of the house. The poet Ovid mentions anxious clients waiting here to see their patron, the master, at the customary hour. Whereas the front part of the house was organised around the atrium, the rear centred on a second space - a garden open to the sky.

In the House of the Vettii this was a regular peristyle garden - a roofed colonnade, surrounding the central area of plants.

Socially the garden was a more informal area, decorated with small fountains and sculptures. Although some of this furniture is not original to this garden, it helps us imagine how the space might have been laid out.

In the House of the Vettii rooms off the peristyle include this dining room.

This is a more private space, where invited guests could be received informally or for dinner parties. The walls are decorated with a frieze, depicting cupids undertaking various tasks - gold smithing, wine selling

cloth making and fulling.

It also provides useful evidence for the furnishings which might have been placed in the house itself. Similar examples of furnishings are on display in museums, as here in the Museum of Civilisation in Rome.

A few also survive in situ, like this chest in the atrium of the House of the Vettii.

In the House of Marcus Lucretius Fronto, beyond the atrium is an additional room - the tablinum. This room was used for greeting guests and holding formal meetings, and the rich decoration, was positioned to impress.

Screen doors which could be open or closed lead out to the garden.

This isn’t a peristyle, but a walled garden with columns only on one side and an elaborate painting creating the illusion of wilderness beyond.

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# Houses of the Roman élite - Part Two (Pompeii)

## Transcript

Narration

Today our picture of the Roman house is dominated by Pompeii. The eruption of Vesuvius in AD79 not only preserved public buildings but also many private houses.

These reveal some architectural similarities. But they also show how individuals adapted layout and decoration to suit their personal circumstances. Vitruvius, writing in Italy in the first century BC, described, in remarkable detail, how a man’s social standing was related to the size and facilities of his house.

“Magnificent vestibules and alcoves and halls are not necessary for people of low status,

he wrote

because they pay their respects by visiting and are not visited themselves.

Advocates and professors of rhetoric should be housed with distinction, and with enough space to accommodate their audiences.

Men of high rank who hold office and magistracies… [should have] princely vestibules, lofty halls and spacious peristyles…

Although centuries of excavation have left many of the buildings themselves empty of their original furnishings, Vitruvius comments suggest that houses of the Roman elite had to accommodate the demands of public life as well as the needs of the household. From the street, there was sometimes a hint of the rich interior which lay beyond.

Through the open door a visitor could take in much of the interior at a glance, although sometimes screens or curtains were used to divide the space. Many houses had images at the entrance, which today may seem more threatening than welcoming. But these images were placed at the threshold to ward off evil or to bring good fortune to the household, like the guardian deity Priapus.

From the entrance the various architectural elements combined to create a monumental impression, as here in the House of the Vettii.

At the centre of the house is a large hall, or atrium, rising to an opening in the roof.

The House of the Ceii has a columned atrium. The opening in the roof or compluvium, let in light, ventilation and rainwater, which was collected in the pool below, the impluvium.

The water was then channelled into a tank beneath the floor and drawn, when needed, from a well head. This house and the house of the Vettii have well preserved atria.

This area was the focal point of the house. The poet Ovid mentions anxious clients waiting here to see their patron, the master, at the customary hour. Whereas the front part of the house was organised around the atrium, the rear centred on a second space - a garden open to the sky.

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This room was used for greeting guests and holding formal meetings, and the rich decoration, was positioned to impress.

Screen doors which could be open or closed lead out to the garden.

This isn’t a peristyle, but a walled garden with columns only on one side and an elaborate painting creating the illusion of wilderness beyond.

[Back to - Houses of the Roman élite - Part Two (Pompeii)](" \l "Session2_MediaContent8)

# Houses of the Roman élite - Part Three (Pompeii continued)

## Transcript

Narration

Along the border are painted statues and plants, mirroring the real ones in the garden.

Hunt scenes were a popular motif, also used to decorate the small interior garden in the House of the Ceii.

So the decoration on the walls and floors in the main public quarters would have served not only to create a pleasant living environment but also to impress visitors.

Visitors seem to have been present in most areas of the house. Many of the small rooms off the atrium are traditionally referred to as cubicula or bedrooms. But literary sources suggest they had a wider range of uses, including greeting guests or conducting small business meetings.

Further rooms were often situated in an upper storey, like this one, which is still preserved in The House of the Lovers, although we don’t know what the rooms were used for.

In this house the service quarters were grouped along one side of the peristyle. The more functional rooms of the house were usually separated in some way from the more public living quarters.

How this was achieved varies from house to house. Here the service quarters consist of storerooms - some with internal windows on to the court - and probably used for storing food stuffs to be consumed by the household.

Next door is a kitchen with a raised work surface where the food was prepared.

And in the far corner of the peristyle, a lavatory, with a narrow window to the outside.

In the House of the Vettii a service court leads off the atrium. The first room is a smaller atrium and may originally have been part of a separate house. Overlooking the impluvium is a lararium or shrine.

Beyond the second atrium are the kitchen and storeroom.

There is little decoration in these functional rooms, apart from the shrine, a focus for domestic worship by the household.

This shrine displays symbols of cult worship; a snake - here associated with the genius or spirit of the household, who is shown here flanked by household gods or lares.

Images on other shrines reveal an Egyptian influence - this one in the House of the Golden Cupids shows the goddess Isis with the gods Serapis and, on the left, Anubis. These decorative themes reflect the breadth of cultural influences on the household. Also in the House of the Golden Cupids is this more traditional lararium. Its design reflects the architecture of public buildings.

The use of columns, pediments and monumental facades is also seen in wall paintings. The illusion possibly evoked in the visitor the feeling that this space is more than just a private house.

In a room off the peristyle in the House of the Vettii, this illusionist painting is juxtaposed with panels showing scenes from Greek mythology and literature.

The infant Hercules wrestling with snakes; Dirce and the bull; and Pentheus ripped apart by the Bacchae.

In order to understand the scenes depicted, a viewer would have to know the stories and this is a statement about the educated status of the householder, or the image he wished to project. It’s often difficult to identify the actual householders at Pompeii, but it’s believed that this man - Pacquius Proculus - owned this house. It’s interesting to speculate on what he was like, by looking at the architectural features.

Here we have a richly decorated entrance, a large open atrium with views through tablinum to peristyle.

Stairs to an upper storey, an apparent lack of cubicula and an elaborate, predominantly black and white mosaic floor.

Around the impluvium the mosaic creates the illusion of arches, framing nautical images, such as anchors and dolphins, as well as depicting exotic wildlife.

Beyond are two tablina, each with a decorative hearth, leading to a grand peristyle garden, decorated with fountains. All these suggest that Pacquius Proculus was a man of wealth and status.

In the context of Pompeii the houses of the elite were used to create and display personal identity.

But what about houses in other areas of the Empire? To what extent were they also used to create personal identities? And how did those identities differ from those being created by the inhabitants of Pompeii? To address these questions we’ll be looking at housing from four different cities in Asia and the Roman province of Africa.

[Back to - Houses of the Roman élite - Part Three (Pompeii continued)](" \l "Session2_MediaContent9)

# Houses of the Roman élite - Part Four (Ephesus)

## Transcript

Narration

The houses at Ephesus are terraced into the hillside. Conserved under reconstructed roofing are two houses - A and B - excavated and studied in detail. These houses have a history of occupation covering some six centuries and a series of different building phases.

As at Pompeii, the house has a narrow entrance. But here the space is organised somewhat differently - the entrance leads down into a central area; in place of the large atrium with its axial view through the house there’s an enclosed court, although rooms still radiate off here.

At the centre of the court extensive use is made of marble for paving and for facing of low enclosure walls. A marble fountain once played here. There was another fountain in this arched niche by the main entrance.

Diagonally across the court are stairs leading to an upper storey.

Once again decoration is rich and varied. Geometric mosaics paved the floors of the surrounding colonnade and rooms facing the court. The walls are decorated with images of birds and cupids.

Once again characters from Greek theatre and myth feature in the wall paintings: including a tragic mask and Orestes, from the famous trilogy by Aeschylus. As with the Classical images at Pompeii, the allusions can only be appreciated fully by someone with a good knowledge of Greek literature, so the use of these motifs makes a statement about the educated nature of the householder.

But in the context of the Greek world, such themes may also have an additional resonance –evoking the Greek heritage of the area, perhaps making a deliberate statement about cultural affiliation. Once again we have examples of furnishing from the houses, now on display in Selcuk Museum. These, and the artefacts found in the houses, suggest further cultural influences.

This figurine shows an Egyptian priest; Busts of the Roman Emperor, Tiberius, and his mother, Livia, were found together in a niche along with a bronze snake. These could either have had a secular significance or have been related to the Emperor cult.

The house is also drawn into the secular world of the Empire, through the decorative scheme on this ivory frieze, which once adorned a wall or a piece of furniture. The scene depicts the Emperor Trajan amongst his troops.

The frieze was found in a room which was originally part of house A, but which was later taken over by its neighbour, House B. Here, too, the rooms are organised around a large central peristyle.

The rooms on the north side are large and richly decorated like the court itself.

On the south side, the mosaic floor depicts the sea goddess Amphitrite riding a hippokamp or mythical sea horse, being led by another sea god - Triton. On the wall, painted decoration mimics the dappled effect of marble border panels, imitating rich finishes in poorer materials.

Through this door in the west wall of the peristyle is a service area - a room for food preparation. The amphorae displayed here, once contained foodstuffs from different parts of the Empire.

The paintings on the walls are appropriate to an area used for cookery, although they date to an earlier phase when this area was part of the court. Behind the kitchen is a latrine. Although this is a functional space, located away from the main living apartments, the walls of this latrine have painted decoration.

Among the other facilities afforded by these houses was an under-floor heating system – a hypocaust – a design widely used across the empire. The floor would have been supported on the brick stacks, with hot air circulating underneath and up through pipes in the wall.

At Ephesus, then, as at Pompeii, the facilities and decoration of a house offered the owner a chance to demonstrate his wealth and “urbanitas” – his urban sophistication.

But here domestic space is organised in a more irregular fashion: there are no axial plans and symmetrical vistas.

This evidence suggests that, in contrast with the atrium houses at Pompeii, the Ephesian houses did not serve as formal settings for the reception of clients. Instead they were probably used to receive friends of the family.

So the design and layout of these houses reflects a contrast in the way social relationships were conducted.

This may have resulted from the continued influence of the traditional Greek culture of Asia Minor, in which official public life was conducted outside the home, in the public spaces of the city.

The importance of traditional, pre-Roman patterns of domestic life can be explored further in relation to our final examples, housing from three cities in the Roman province of Africa.

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# Houses of the Roman élite - Part Five (Africa)

## Transcript

Narration

This is the ancient port of Carthage - the largest city in the Punic world. The name Punic comes from the Latin word for “Phoenician” - a people originally from modern Lebanon, who founded Carthage.

Following the Roman conquest in 146 BC, the Punic city was destroyed and buried under the foundations of the new Roman city. In recent years a number of Punic houses have been excavated.

The houses themselves are modest in size compared with those of Pompeii and Ephesus. The building plots are long and narrow, separated by alleys which give access to the apartments at the rear.

The front entrance leads into a rectangular room, once again the point of water collection - here into underground cisterns. The cisterns were originally covered and the water channelled from the closed roof by down pipes.

The positioning of the rooms and doorways suggests that some attempt was made to follow principles of symmetry and axiality, and the large, central room may have performed some of the domestic functions of a court or an atrium.

Already a form of mosaic floor - composed of small cubes or tesserae, is being used, prior to the Roman conquest.

But how far did houses like these influence the ones built in the area in the Roman period. The city of Thugga is terraced into a steep hillside. As at Ephesus, the entrances to the houses lead off narrow, cobbled streets. As with some of the elite residences at Pompeii, here imposing entrances give some indication of grand interiors within.

Outside the House of the Trifolium, a pair of columns flank the door itself. But the symmetrical vista into the opulent interior of the house, which you saw at Pompeii, would not have been used here.

Instead, a staircase lead from just inside the front door, down to a basement level, and it seems that this was where some of the most elaborate rooms were located.

A central peristyle may have been planted as a garden. Light and air from here filtered through the surrounding porticoes and into the rooms behind.

These rooms would have been offered protection from the hot African summer by the ground floor above – which is no longer well preserved. Although today the houses of Thugga appear quite stark, they would originally have been elaborately decorated.

From the centre of the courtyard of this smaller neighbour of the House of the Trifolium comes an intricately detailed picture of Odysseus withstanding the lure of the Sirens, now displayed in the Bardo Museum.

This use of a theme from Greek literature echoes the use of similar themes in the painted decoration of houses both at Ephesus and at Pompeii. In this African context such representations are evidence of the way in which elements of Greek culture, adopted by the Italian elite, had also reached other geographical areas. Among the other popular motifs are fishermen and fish. The fish are depicted in such detail that it’s possible to identify individual species. In a world without refrigeration these would have been one of the most prized and expensive foods. The fish also symbolise the natural abundance of the sea.

The mosaic decoration from Thugga also includes more distinctively Roman, as opposed to Greek elements, like this motto, from another house near the House of the Trifolium, which reads omnia tibi felicia: all happiness to you.

The mosaic was originally positioned in the entrance of the house , which also has a small peristyle courtyard.

The houses in Bulla Regia reveal more about local patterns of house design.

The House of the Hunt occupies most of an insula or housing block and shows some attempt to conform to the principles of symmetry and axiality.

The rooms at ground level are not well preserved, although there are the remains of a large peristyle. It seems that ground level was where the functional areas lay.

Once again entered from narrow paved streets, it appears the outer rooms were shops and workshops: a large, circular millstone can still be seen in a room near the street corner.

On the third side lay amenities for the use of the householder, including a lavatory with seating for two people, and a bath.

This is stripped of its decoration but a nearby bath gives an impression of what it might have been like.

The latin motto reads: VENANTIORUM BAIAE – the baths of the hunters.

But as at Thugga, some of the most comfortable living apartments lay downstairs in a basement area.

This lower level opens off a small court. The columns of the colonnade are decorated in the Corinthian order, used for buildings across the Empire.

Here, though, the large curling leaves of the capitals give a distinctive local flavour. Attention is drawn to the entrance of the main room by the pilasters, also in Corinthian style. The window at the far end would have provided a through draft in the hot summer months, while a well to one side gave access to fresh water. At the centre is an elaborate rectangular mosaic, known as a “carpet”, with geometric patterns, which would have contributed to the atmosphere of comfort and elegance.

Beyond the threshold mosaic, the plain mosaic floor marks the location of couches, showing that this was once a dining room. The room’s location below the level of the main house would have meant that it was relatively cool and peaceful.

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