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# Nijmegen, from *Oppidum Batavorum* to *Vl pia Noviomagus*, civitas of the Batavi

## Two successive civitas-capitals

Harry VAN ENCKEVORT and Elly N. A. HEIRBAUT

**Keywords.** Roman times, vicus, town.

**Abstract.** *Nijmegen is the oldest city in the Netherlands. The modern name refers to its Roman origin. The history of Nijmegen during the first centuries of the Christian era mirrors events in the north-west of the Roman Empire. Around 19 BC, at the start of the third phase of conquest to the north with much military activity, the Oppidum Batavorum was founded in the centre of modern Nijmegen. Further growth of the town was cut short by increasing pressure on the local inhabitants, culminating in the Batavian Revolt of 69-70 AD, during which the Oppidum Batavorum was destroyed. A period of integration followed, resulting in the formation of the province of Germania inferior. During this period, the Batavian capital was moved westwards, to the low-lying western part of Nijmegen, where a new vicus was founded. In about 100 AD this settlement was granted municipal status and a new name (Vl pia Noviomagus), and grew into a town after the typical Roman model. After several generations of progress and prosperity, this settlement came to an abrupt end in the last quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.*

**Mots-clés.** Période romaine, vicus, ville.

**Résumé.** *Nimègue est la plus ancienne cité des Pays-Bas. Son nom moderne fait allusion à ses origines romaines. Durant les premiers siècles après J.-C., l'histoire de Nimègue reflète tous les événements advenus dans le nord-ouest de l'Empire romain. Au début de la troisième phase de conquête dans le Nord, qui entraîna une intense activité militaire, l'Oppidum Batavorum fut fondé autour de 19 av. J.-C., au centre de la ville actuelle. La croissance de la ville fut écourtée par la pression croissante exercée sur ses habitants, qui culmina dans la révolte batave de 69-70 apr. J.-C. et la destruction de l'Oppidum Batavorum. S'ensuivit une période d'intégration, qui aboutit à la formation de la province de Germanie Inférieure. Pendant ce temps, la capitale batave fut déplacée à l'ouest, dans la partie basse de Nimègue, où fut fondé un nouveau vicus. Autour de 100 apr. J.-C., l'agglomération reçut le statut municipal et un nouveau nom (Vl pia Noviomagus), et se développa en une cité de type romain. Après plusieurs générations de progrès et de prospérité, cette agglomération connut une fin brutale dans le dernier quart du 1<sup>er</sup> s. apr. J.-C.*

Translation: Cécile TUARZE

Nijmegen is situated at the transition of Pleistocene southern sandy soils of the Netherlands to the Holocene Dutch central river area. The highest point of the 250,000 to 130,000 old ice-formed ridge, east of the Kops Plateau in the eastern part of Nijmegen, rises almost 90 m above the lower river plain of the Waal, which itself is about 10 m above sea level. The steep northern edge of the ice-formed ridge, and the fan-shaped area of sand and gravel deposited by melt water originating on the ridge (sandr) consists of a number of plateaus (Kops Plateau, Hunerberg, Valkhof) separated by narrow, deep valleys. The strategic and elevated position of these plateaus along the river plain, and the good connections to the south via the river valleys of the Meuse and the Rhine, have contributed to the importance of the Nijmegen area for several millennia. Judging from the numerous finds, the originally densely wooded plateaus and slopes and the surrounding low soils began to attract human interest long ago. Special burials, river deposits and a cult place suggest that for an extended period during the Bronze and Iron Ages, Nijmegen and its environs served as place of residence for important people in the region (Van den Broeke, 2005).

## THE FIRST YEARS OF *OPPIDVM BATAVORVM*

Shortly before the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, Julius Caesar led his troops north from *Gallia Transalpina*. In the *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*, he reports on his campaigns between 58 and 51 BC. In 54 BC, he defeated and exterminated the *Eburones*, then living in the southern parts of the Netherlands and the north of Belgium. Within three years, Caesar claimed, all lands south of the river Rhine to the borders of the Mediterranean Sea were brought under Roman control. However, as yet no archaeological evidence for the presence of Caesar's troops in the Netherlands has been found.

Civil wars and revolts (45-30 BC), as well as the Cantabrian Wars of 29-19 BC, prevented the definitive establishment of Roman authority in large parts of Belgium and the southern part of the Netherlands. To curb internal unrest in Gaul and to counter the German threat from across the Rhine, the Emperor Augustus sent his trusted lieutenant, Marcus Vipsianus Agrippa, as governor to *Gallia Comata* (20-18 BC). To accomplish his mission, Agrippa ordered the construction of large-scale

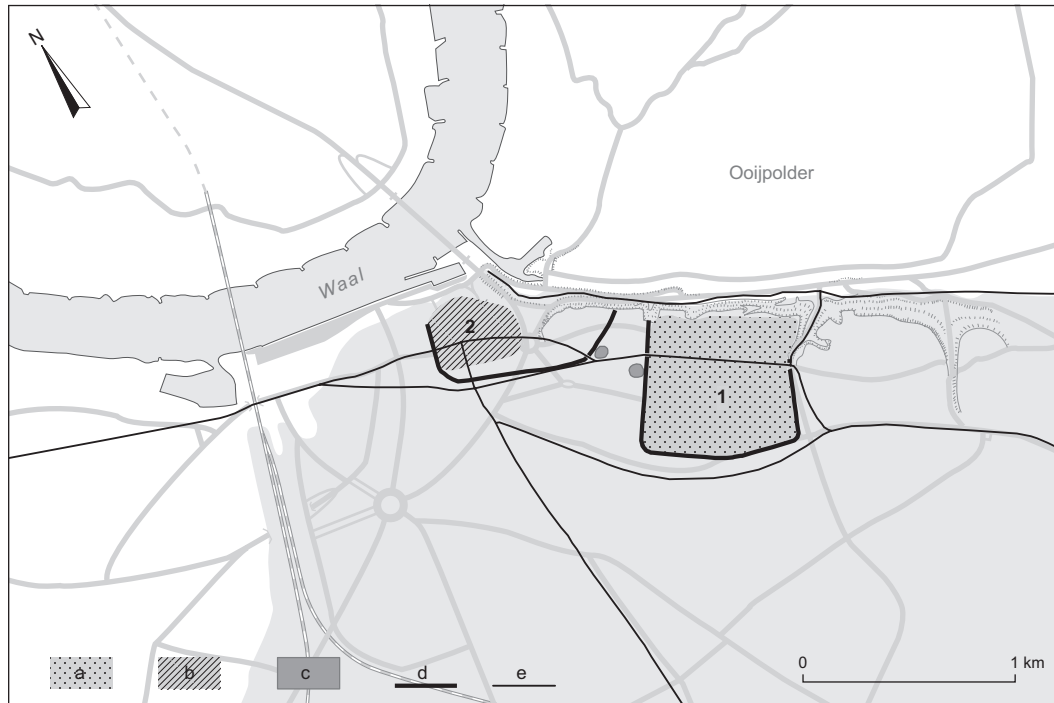


Fig. 1 - Overview of Nijmegen in 19-16 BC; the grey shaded area covers the ice-formed ridge and the sandr; a, military settlement; b, civil settlement; c, cemetery; d, ditch; e, road; 1, fortress on the Hunerberg; 2, Oppidum Batavorum (CAD: R. Mols, Bureau Archeologie en Monumenten gemeente Nijmegen).

infrastructural works, including the extension of the road network from Gaul to the north (Strabo, 4, 6, 11; Kemmers, 2007, p. 189-197; Kemmers, 2008, p. 169-170). It is quite possible that around this time, or even before, the tribes of the *Ubii*, *Cugerni*, *Batavi* and *Tungri* were settled in the area formerly inhabited by the *Eburones*, to serve as a buffer against the Germans (Heinrichs, 2003, p. 336-337; Bechert, 2007, p. 12). More than a century later, these *civitates* became the core of the province of *Germania inferior*.

When he took up his governorship, Agrippa also assumed command of the Roman forces in the north-west of Spain, and in 19 BC he finally subdued the rebellious *Cantabri* and *Astures* (García-Bellido, 2002, p. 24). Immediately afterwards, Augustus and Agrippa focused for the second time their attention on the north.<sup>1</sup> On the Hunerberg in Nijmegen, close to the river Waal (*Vahalis*), at around 19 BC, a 42 ha fortress was established, accommodating at least 15,000 soldiers (fig. 1, n° 1). The building of the fortress seems to have been an answer to the threat posed by the Germans, but it was also in preparation of Augustus's plans to conquer *Germania*. However, these plans were thwarted when a coalition of the *Sugambri*, *Usipetes* and *Tencteri* crossed the Rhine in 16 BC and defeated Marcus Lollius, the governor of *Gallia Comata*. Adding insult to injury, the Germans also took the eagle of the Fifth Legion (Lehmann, 2012, p. 282). Shortly after these events, the fortress at Nijmegen was abandoned.<sup>2</sup>

More or less simultaneously with the building of the fortress, the new capital for the Batavians was founded directly

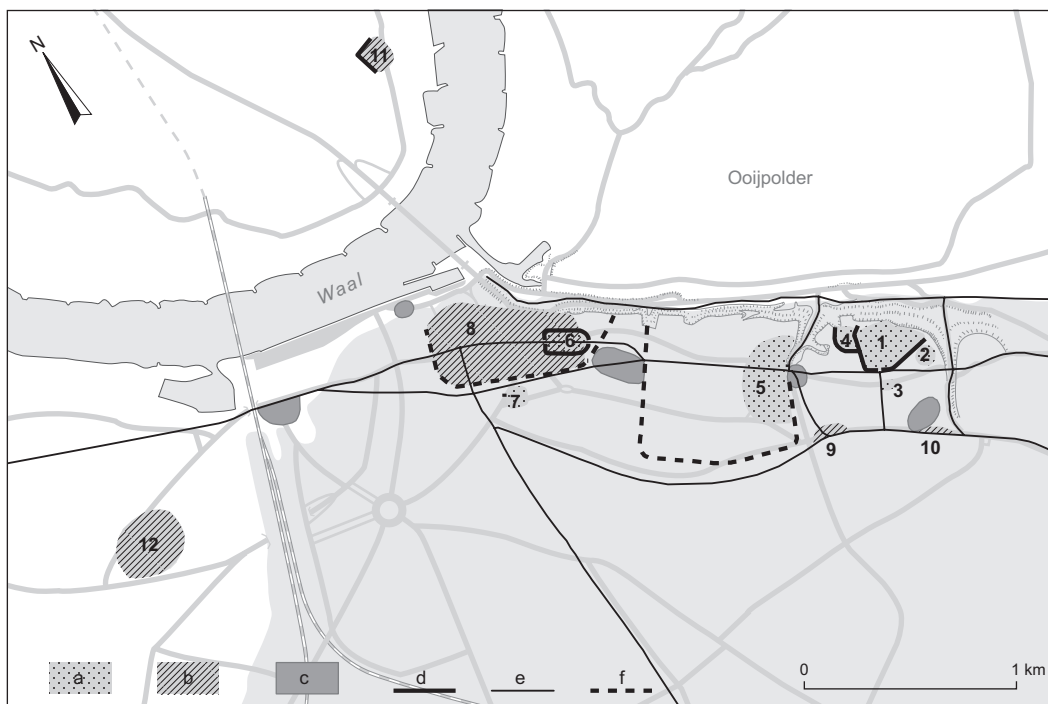
to the west of it (fig. 1, n° 2).<sup>3</sup> The 22 ha settlement was surrounded by a V-shaped ditch; no traces of an embankment or wall have been found. In this respect Nijmegen resembles the small fortified town in Lahnu-Waldgirmes in Germany, which can be equated with the so-called *πόλεις* (towns), as Cassius Dio called them, in *Germania* (Becker, 2003; Schnurbein, 2002 et 2003; Rasbach, 2007, p. 254). However, due to the fact that nothing is known about the buildings in the settlement, little can be said about the civil or semi-military character of the Batavian capital. The few finds from this period are concentrated in the western part of the area within the ditch (Visser, 2010, p. 63-64); the excavations have shown that at this time the eastern part had not yet been built on. However, near the eastern entrance of the capital, along the road leading to the *porta sinistra* of the fortress, several graves have been found from this early period. Doubtless, this was where the cremated remains of the first deceased inhabitants of the Batavian capital were put to rest. Across the road a comparable group of graves have been found, but because of their location, these seem more likely to have been related to the fortress (Van Enckevort, 2011, p. 33-35 and 61-64; Van Enckevort, Heirbaut 2013). Whether the Batavian capital was also abandoned after Lollius' defeat is unknown, but this seems likely.

In the sources, the Batavian capital is known by two different names. The Greek scholar Ptolemaeus mentions *Batavodurum* as a town in the center of the Batavian area in his *Geographica* (II, 9, 8). Two place names, *Batavodurum* and *Oppidum Batavorum*, are used shortly after each other by Tacitus in his *Historiae*. First, he reports that at the end of the Batavian Revolt in 70 AD, the leader of the rebels, Gaius Julius Civilis, ordered

1. The first time was in 30-29 BC.

2. Both the beginning and the end of the fortress have been dated on the basis of the coins found (Kemmers, 2007, p. 189-197; Kemmers, 2008, p. 170) as well as on pottery (Haalebos, 2002a). See Willems and Van Enckevort (2009, p. 29-35) for a brief description of the fortress.

3. Cf. Van Enckevort (2014, p. 43-75) for the decennia-long debate on the precise location of the Batavian capital in Nijmegen.



**Fig. 2** - Overview of Nijmegen between 12 BC and 70 AD; the grey-shaded area covers the ice-formed ridge and the sand; **a**, military settlement; **b**, civil settlement; **c**, cemetery; **d**, ditch; **e**, road; **f**, former ditch; **1**, fort on the Kops Plateau; **2-7**, encampments for auxiliary troops; **8**, Oppidum Batavorum; **9-10**, elongated habitations; **11-12**, indigenous settlements (CAD: R. Mols, Bureau Archeologie en Monumenten gemeente Nijmegen).

to set fire to *Oppidum Batavorum*, since he was unsure about the possibility to defend it. Then, in the next section, he mentions that *Legio II Adiutrix* was stationed in *Batavodurum* and had commenced the construction of a bridge there. In September of the year 70 AD, Civilis deployed his troops to reconquer a number of Batavian centers, including *Batavodurum*, from the Romans, but he failed (Tacitus, *Historiae* V, 19-20). According to Jules Bogaers, both names – which mean town or strength of the Batavians, respectively – refer to one and the same location: an Early Roman settlement in the land of the Batavians that was probably situated in the center of Nijmegen (Bogaers, 1960-1961, p. 274 and 312). Excavations in 2005 confirmed that the Batavian capital had indeed been destroyed by fire (Van Enckevort, 2012, p. 140-142). Moreover, on the burnt remains of the houses have been discovered the foundations of a large building that can be attributed to the fortress of the Second Legion (Van Enckevort, 2010).

### *OPPIDVM BATAVORVM*: “TOWN” FOR THE BATAVIANS

After the *clades Lolliana*, Augustus moved to set matters straight in Gaul. Both in Gaul and the Iberian Peninsula new provinces were created, which enabled him to redeploy the troops stationed there. In the same period the Alpine region was subdued as far as the Rhine, which closed the ‘gap’ between Italy and Gaul, already conquered by Caesar. Thus, the entire Rhine valley came under the influence of Rome, enabling the Romans to protect the Gallic hinterland by a well-established defensive zone along the river (Gechter, 2003, p. 149). In the summer of

13 BC, Augustus transferred command of the Rhine army to his stepson Drusus, and returned to Rome. That same year, at least five legions and numerous auxiliary units were redeployed to the Rhine frontier from central Gaul, *Aquitania* and northern Spain (Eck, 2004, p. 63-65; Lehmann, 2012, p. 282-284). The legions were stationed where important routes entered *Germania*: Xanten, Neuss and Mainz. Other units were deployed at Bonn (?), Moers-Asberg, and on the Kops Plateau in Nijmegen (fig. 2, n° 1) (Willems, Van Enckevort, 2009, p. 35-41). This chain of defensive positions along the Rhine enabled a quick and relatively easy reaction to a German incursion in the late summer of 12 BC.

At the same time when the fort (command-post) on the Kops Plateau was built, or possibly shortly after, the area formerly occupied by *Oppidum Batavorum*, but (probably) abandoned four years before, was reclaimed (fig. 2, n° 8).<sup>4</sup> The foundation and further development of *Oppidum Batavorum* as the capital for the Batavians is very closely connected to the Roman army and the Roman policy of integrating the border area into the Empire. The intention was always to allow this pre-urban settlement to grow into a full-fledged town so that, following the example of Roman towns in the Mediterranean area, it could manifest itself as a central place in the Batavian area. Thus, the development and growth of *Oppidum Batavorum* sprang from the Roman authorities’ attempts to subject the Batavians to the central authority by imposing a Roman model of government. To achieve this, the Batavian tribal area had to be converted into a *civitas*, a regional body of authority with a capital town. In broad outline, the *civitas Batavorum* comprised the area

4. See Visser (2010, p. 60-64) for the dating of the stamps on *terra sigillata*.





Fig. 3 - Part of a large limestone pillar, consisting of blocks of 90 by 80 cm, originally c. 7.5 m high. On the front is shown the emperor Tiberius, with Victoria holding a wreath over his head (CAD: R. Mols, Bureau Archeologie en Monumenten gemeente Nijmegen).

between the Meuse and Rhine rivers and the northeastern part of the modern Dutch province of North Brabant. This *civitas* would have to be ruled from a new 'urban' center; which is why the Romans designed and built *Oppidum Batavorum*. It clearly symbolizes the conversion of the tribal area of the Batavians into a municipal administrative unit, the *civitas*. Bogaers dated this conversion to the last quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD, when the new province of *Germania inferior* was formed (Bogaers, 1960-1961, p. 265-266).

The first decades of *Oppidum Batavorum* were a period characterized by an offensive Roman policy towards the Germanic tribes east of the Rhine. This, however, changed dramatically after the disastrous defeat suffered by Varus in the Teutoburg forest (near the village of Kalkriese in the area of Osnabrück) in AD 9. In the years AD 14-16 Germanicus, commander of the forces in *Germania*, conducted a number of punitive

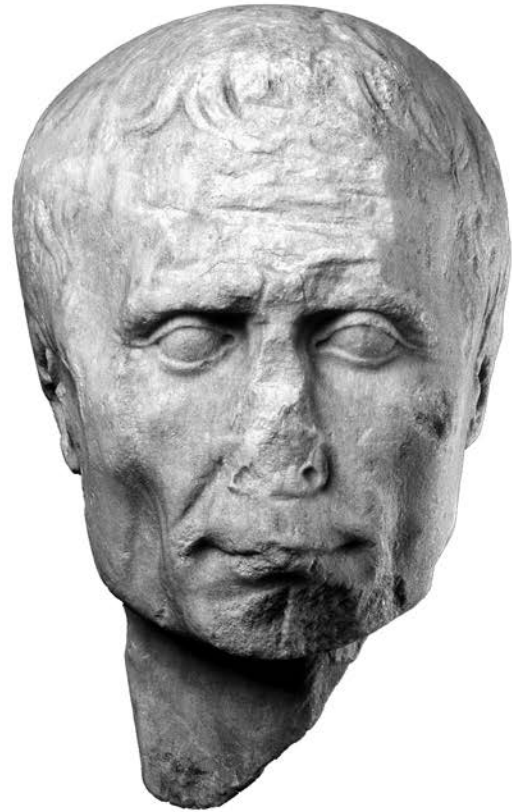


Fig. 4 - Life-size marble head of Caesar (picture: National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden).

campaigns against the Germans on the other side of the Rhine. He succeeded in reclaiming the legionary standards that Varus had lost, for which both he and the later emperor Tiberius were highly praised. In Nijmegen a pillar was erected to commemorate the victory of Tiberius over the Germans. The remains of this pillar consist of two tuff stone blocks and a number of smaller fragments that must originally have been about 7.5 m high (fig. 3). This pillar may be regarded as the earliest example of Roman sculpture in the Netherlands. According to Titus Panhuysen, the pillar must have been erected in the years 17-19 AD in the center of the new *civitas Batavorum*, the capital *Oppidum Batavorum* (Panhuysen, 2001. See also Raepsaet-Charlier, 1999, p. 279). This clearly places the conversion of the tribal area of the Batavians into a municipal administrative unit, the *civitas*, at an earlier date than Bogaers thought. Apart from the pillar of Tiberius, the streets of the Batavian capital were decorated with life-size statues in limestone and bronze, probably including one of Julius Caesar (fig. 4) (Swinkels, 2008; Van Enckevort, Heirbaut, 2010, p. 48, fig. 32).

The central axis of the settlement is likely to have been the main road from the west to the east, more or less on the modern Burchtstraat-St. Jorisstraat-Ubbergseveldweg route (fig. 2 and 4 road). As a result of intensive building activities in the Middle Ages and later, only few traces of the original buildings have been left. One of the more completely investigated floor plans of a building (*domus*?) constructed of wattle and daub, lying north of the axis, was published in 1990, although some aspects of this interpretation are now being questioned (Bloemers, 1990, p. 77). South of the axis, the outlook of *Oppidum Batavorum* was determined by long wooden strip



Fig. 5 - Houses and other buildings (dark shade) in Oppidum Batavorum during the Augustan-Tiberian (left) and the Claudian-Neronian period (right) (CAD: R. Mols, Bureau Archeologie en Monumenten gemeente Nijmegen).

houses (*tabernae*) whose narrow fronts were oriented towards the axis (fig. 5, left). In 2005-2006, parts of several houses were excavated. The width of these houses, completely built from wattle and daub, varied between 5 and 9 m; their depth was invariably *c.* 48 m. A long, narrow corridor connected the rooms, all placed one behind the other (fig. 6, n° 1). Of one room, we know that the loam walls were decorated with red paint, other were either heated or used as kitchen, as is proven by the hearths discovered. In several rooms, cesspits were found, indicating that they were used as toilets. Behind these houses, there were yards or gardens stretching back for 100 m, and separated from each other by loam walls; some had barns or stables. Long, narrow alleys between the plots provided access to the road south of *Oppidum Batavorum*. The similar depth and internal layout of the houses suggests that they were built at the same time. The large number of graffiti found on the Arretine ware suggests that the residents were mainly veterans and their families (Visser, 2010, p. 57-58), and that the Roman army was involved in the development of the site.

Around 40 AD the defensive system along the Lower Rhine was completed.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, the fort on the Kops Plateau was transformed into a basis for a mounted unit, probably the *ala Batavorum* (Willems, Van Enckevort, 2009, p. 38-39). Some of the cavalymen stationed on the plateau placed their most valuable possession, their helmet, in pits along with food as a sacrifice to a deity (Van Enckevort, Willems, 1996; Van Enckevort, 2007). In the same period, most of the strip houses in *Oppidum Batavorum* were modified, and some were extended to a maximum depth of 60 m (fig. 5, right). The lavatories were moved from the inside of the houses to small toilet buildings in the backyards (fig. 7) (Heirbaut, 2010). A new

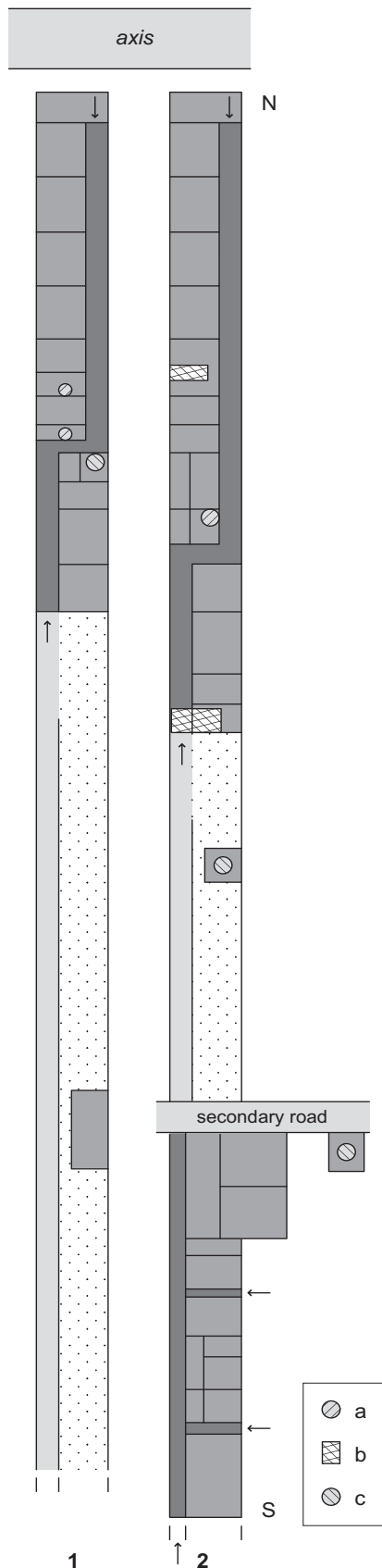
architectural element were the cellars constructed under some of the houses (fig. 6, n° 2, north). Moreover, the loam walls were now plastered, and decorated by specialists with wall paintings according to the latest fashion in Cologne (and Rome?) (Laken, 2010). Since the South-Gaulish *terra sigillata* from this period hardly shows any graffiti, it seems clear that the number of veterans among the population of *Oppidum Batavorum* in the Claudian-Neronian period was significantly less than before.

During the same period, the depth of the parcels was decreased to about 90 m (fig. 5, right). Behind the shortened plots, and parallel to the main road, a new secondary road was constructed. On the parts of the older plots formerly used as yards or gardens, new houses were built. These, too, were originally constructed from wattle and daub, but between 60 and 70 AD they were replaced by a new house with stone foundations, made of grauwacke from the German Eifel (Horn, 1987, p. 157, fig. 92), and a tiled roof (fig. 6, n° 2). Thus, this is the oldest building in the Roman Netherlands for which stone and brick were used. A tuff base rested on the wide grauwacke foundations, upon which the walls were then built, probably in rammed earth technique (*pisé*). The layout of this house differs remarkably from the layout of the strip houses, and reminds of a military barrack. The use of antefixes to decorate the base of the roof stands out. The closest parallels to these stone foundations, tiled roof and antefixes, were found in the *Steinlager* on the Fürstenberg (*Vetera I*) in Xanten, where *Legio V Alaudae* and *Legio XV Primigenia* were stationed.<sup>6</sup> The similarities in the construction materials used suggest a connection between the inhabitants of this house in *Oppidum Batavorum* and these legions.

The excavations have shown that *Oppidum Batavorum* was of decidedly Roman nature, different both in its planned layout

5. See Graafstal (2002) for an initial summary of the results. Additional data, in particular for the period before the year 70, may be found in Kok, Vogelzang dir., 2007.

6. On a limited scale, these building materials were also used in the predecessor of the *Steinlager*, built after 46 AD: Gechter, 1987; Hanel, 1995, p. 306-314. See, for the *antefixes*, Hanel, 1995, p. 162, plate G 1334-1336, 1338 and 1351.



**Fig. 6** - Reconstructed floor plans of houses in Oppidum Batavorum during: **1**, the Augustan-Tiberian and **2**, the Claudian-Neronian period; **a**, fire place; **b**, cellar; **c**, cesspit (CAD: R. Mols, Bureau Archeologie en Monumenten gemeente Nijmegen).

and in the finds from the indigenous settlements in the Batavian area that have been discovered. Hardly any Batavians lived here: rather, the area housed Roman or Gallo-Roman soldiers or veterans, craftsmen, officials, inn-keepers and other immigrants (Bloemers, 1990, p. 75-76; Willems, 1990, p. 31-35). The archaeological evidence in the Batavian hinterland indicates that the integration of the Batavians in the pre-Flavian period may have remained limited mainly to the most aristocratic family among the Batavians, the Julii. A powerful indication of their status, for example, is the fact that they were granted Roman citizenship in the pre-Neronian period (Roymans, 1996, p. 24-28). Thus, the main indigenous leaders succeeded in giving new substance to their traditional positions of power by fulfilling functions in the military and governmental system set up by the Romans in the Batavian *civitas*. They also used their residences in the countryside to do this, emphasizing their positions of power there too. We need only refer to the Batavian Fla(v)us, who dedicated an altar found at Ruimel, in the municipality of St. Michielsgestel. He was *summus magistratus* of the *civitas Batavorum* in the first half of the first century (fig. 8) (Bogaers, 1960-1961, p. 268-271).

Archaeological research has shown that Nijmegen did have an urban character in the pre-Flavian period; whether it could really be called a town remains doubtful, however. One indication in that direction is the regular layout, with its ditches separating the various lots, and the parallel roads, thereby giving *Oppidum Batavorum* its distinctive shape. A second indication is provided by the remains of the pillar of Tiberius and the life-size statues. Finally, a third indication is the increased use of brick and stone construction material from c. 60 AD onwards, which must have constituted an important element in the quality and durability of the buildings. However, based on the absence of urban public buildings (Kunow, 1992, p. 143-147), *Oppidum Batavorum* should not be termed an urban centre, even if the defective information we have about the settlement may be affecting our judgment in this respect. It is better to speak of a proto-urban settlement or *vicus*.

## THE BATAVIAN REVOLT

The further building-up of the Batavian capital in stone and brick was cut short by the Batavian Revolt in 69-70 AD, when the Batavians set fire to it. The revolt was aimed mainly against the impairment of the indigenous social structures and the position of the indigenous leaders. Traces of the fire were indeed found in the course of excavations in the centre. Two small wooden cellars yielded a very special find: large bronze kettles that may have been used for the preparation of food or for the large-scale production of other domestic or craft products. Both kettles, and some other bronze kitchenware found in one of these kettles (fig. 9), ended up in the cellars during or shortly before the revolt, and became buried under the burnt loam of the house's walls. Another cellar which may have contained a merchant's wine store, or that of an inn (Bloemers, 1990, p. 75; Willems, 1990, p. 32), yielded fragments of some twenty wine amphorae.

After the Batavian Revolt had been quashed with the help of *Legio II Adiutrix*, the occupational pattern at Nijmegen



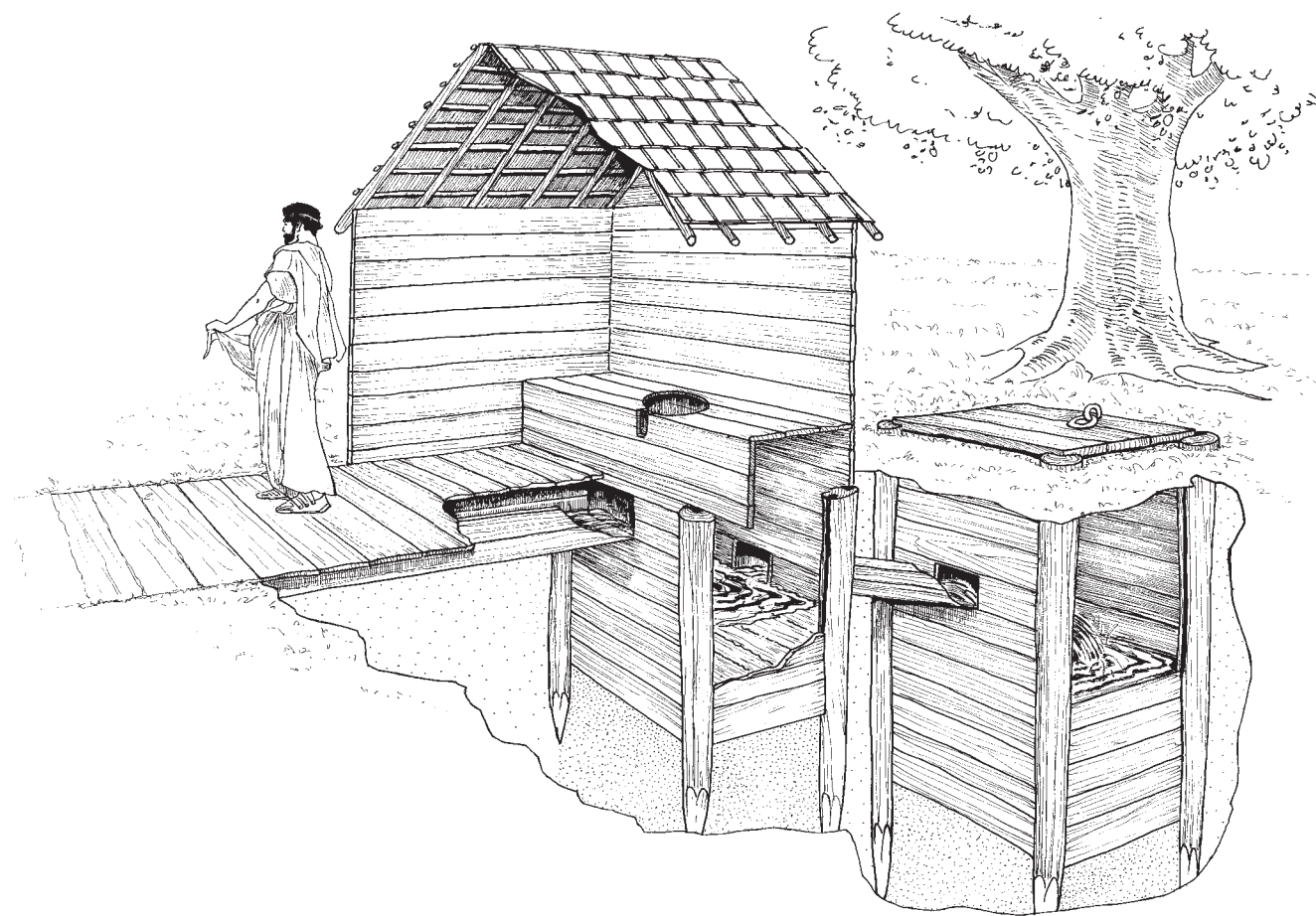


Fig. 7 - Reconstruction of a toilet in the backyard of a house in Oppidum Batavorum (drawing: R. Reijnen).

changed thoroughly. To replace the fort on the Kops Plateau, and the fortress of *Legio II Adiutrix* in the centre of Nijmegen, soldiers of *Legio X Gemina* built new quarters on the Hunerberg in or shortly after 71-72 AD. Around this fortress, the *canabae legionis* sprang up during the Flavian period (Willems, Van Enckevort, 2009, p. 59-64). There are no indications that the burnt-down *Oppidum Batavorum* in the centre of modern Nijmegen was rebuilt. The main focus of civil occupation in Nijmegen after the revolt shifted *c.* 1500 m to the west, in the low-lying Waterkwartier district (fig. 10, n° 5).

## A NEW BATAVIAN CAPITAL

After the revolt had been quashed, the Batavians managed to retain their status of a friendly tribe. The policy of integration was given a new dimension in which existing tribal structures underwent rapid change. At the same time, the indigenous military elite seems to have been side-lined, replaced by a new elite of landowners, merchants and shipping-agents (Roymans, 1996, p. 40-41). The Romans did take into account the interests of this new and not exclusively Batavian elite. Like the old elite from the period before the revolt, it did not have to pay tax, though soldiers had to be provided to the army.

As yet, the origins of the new Batavian capital are still unclear. Judging by the landscape, it may be assumed that a Roman road ran westwards from *Oppidum Batavorum* before 70 AD, following the natural landscape relief along a terrace formed by the river Waal. Locations like these had always been

used as paths and footways, and the Roman road may even have had a prehistoric predecessor. Shortly after 70 AD, this Roman road was incorporated into the road system of the new capital, becoming the main east-west road or *decumanus maximus*.

Were there already buildings along this road during the 1<sup>st</sup> c., i.e., are there any indications that a forerunner of the new capital existed even before the Batavian Revolt, possibly in the form of a ribbon development settlement? This is a difficult question to answer, because most of the excavations conducted along the road have not yet been analysed. When looking at the finds from an excavation in the south-western corner of the new capital (the Rijn-Lekstraat site, fig. 11e) (Heirbaut dir., 2014), however, and in particular those useable for dating purposes, such as *terra sigillata* stamps and coins, there seems to be little evidence for a positive answer. Among the stamped sherds of *terra sigillata*, six have been found with names of potters known to be working before the presumed founding date of the new capital after 70 AD, but all are known to be still working beyond it, so that their presence need not mean that a forerunner of the capital existed. Moreover, three quarters of these stamps are known from around 65 AD onwards. That means that the assemblage of *terra sigillata* does not provide any definitive evidence on the existence of a forerunner, but it does confirm the estimated founding date of the capital shortly after 70 AD. This is also the period from which the number of tile stamps found peaks. This can easily be explained by the presence of the *Legio X Gemina*, which had its quarters on the Hunerberg (between 71-72 and 104-105, fig. 10, n° 1) but had obvious and numerous relations with the newly founded town.





**Fig. 8** - Altar from Ruimel near St. Michielsgestel. Text: MAGVSA / NO HERCVL(i) / SACRV(m) FLAVS / VIHIRMATVS FIL(ius) / [S]VMMVS MAGISTRA(tus) / [C]IVITATVS BATAVOR(um) / V(otum) S(olvit) L(ibens) M(erito): “Consecrated to Magusanus Hercules. Flavius, son of Vihirmas, upper magistrate of the civitas of the Batavians, has (herewith) fulfilled his vow, willingly and deservedly” (picture: Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, Amersfoort).

A few coins have been found from the Augustan period, but they are very worn. This suggests that they only came out of circulation after a long period of use. Other coins distinctive of the early 1<sup>st</sup> c., such as Republican Roman coinage, *copia* coins from the transitional period, early Augustan coins from Nîmes, or Celtic coins, have not been found in any numbers. For the period after the second decade of the 1<sup>st</sup> c., too, the number of coins found is low, and where a small peak is visible (such as in the coins dating to the reign of Caligula) this may be explained by long-term circulation (as indicated by the worn condition of the coins). Even though it has not been studied thoroughly, the overall picture emerging from the coin and *terra sigillata* finds, and the lack of features from the pre-Flavian period is that up until the Batavian Revolt there were no or hardly any activities in this area, and that the founding of the new capital after the revolt was the start of a gradual development of a previously almost empty area (Heirbaut dir., 2014). Still, it has been suggested that a cult place may have existed in the – as yet unexamined – northern part of the settlement (Willems, Van Enckevort *et al.*, 2009a, p. 69-70).

In the last quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> c., on the southern fringes of the new capital, residential and craft activities were combined on relatively narrow (7-12 m in width, 80-90 m in length) plots at

right angles to the road. The old east-west road remained in use, but was reconstructed to accommodate the needs of the growing proto-urban settlement. It is unknown whether it had only been a track or a gravel path before, but after the founding of the new capital, it became a wide road topped by a thick layer of gravel and supported by a wooden framework of vertical and horizontal wooden beams, covered by boarding to hold the gravel in place. Moreover, a sewer was constructed underneath the middle axis of the *decumanus maximus* (Heirbaut dir., 2014, p. 41-45).

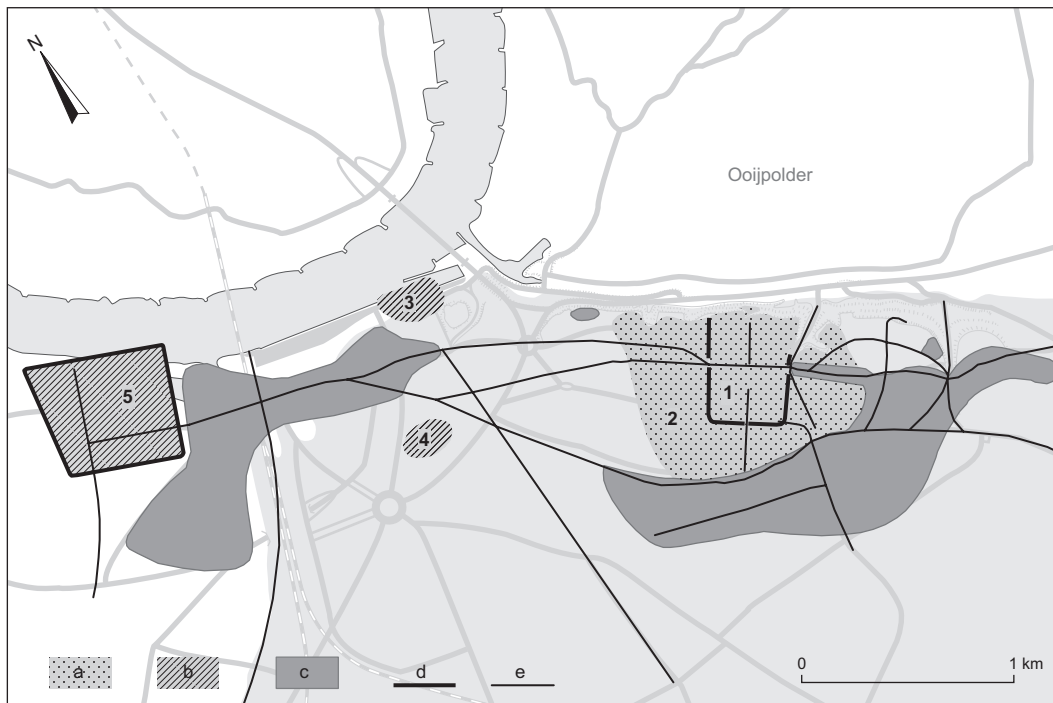
At the same time, wooden strip houses with wattle and daub walls were parcelled out directly beside the road (the Maasplein and Weurtseweg sites, fig. 11g-f) and further developed in a way resembling that used in *Oppidum Batavorum* (fig. 6) and in the *vicus* of Cuijk (*Ceuclum*), which was founded c. 40 AD (Van Enckevort, Thijssen, 2002; Van Enckevort, 2012, p. 180-186). Thick cultivated soil behind the houses shows that the backyards were used as kitchen gardens. On most of the plots that were investigated, much craft activity must have taken place. Beside many remains of metalworking, the presence of pottery kilns in several backyards and inside one house is striking (Van Enckevort, Thijssen, 2003). Large quantities of pottery must have been produced in these kilns, judging by the tens of thousands of shards of waster pots, flagons and cups found in their surroundings. The potters sold their products mainly on the local market. A part was for domestic use, but the majority was intended as packaging for foodstuffs. This production seems to be connected to the provisioning of *Legio X Gemina* in the fortress on the Hunerberg, but it could also indicate an economic relationship with the town’s hinterland. In this period, in the investigated part of the *vicus* (and not only on the potters’ plots) imported pottery (with the exception of tableware and amphorae) seems largely to be lacking.

In the south-western corner of the *vicus* (the Rijn-Lekstraat and Maasplein sites, fig. 11e-f) however, the area had not yet been completely parcelled out at this time (Heirbaut dir., 2014, p. 47-85 and 127). There does seem to have been some activity by potters during this period; for at and near the Maasplein site several pottery kilns have been found (Zee, 2009). In these kilns, only two of which have been excavated but more of which may have been located outside the excavated areas, a wide range of pottery was produced. Remains have been found of tablewares (cups, plates, flagons), jars, *mortaria*, pitchers, as well as utilitarian pottery (lids, honey pots, bowls, pans, *dolia*). Based on the different types of fabric produced, it may be assumed that the pottery workshops here were highly specialized, each manufacturing their own range of products using a distinctive fabric (Zee, 2009, p. 37; Hendriks, 2014). These workshops were accessed via an unpaved road, identified during the excavation by wheel tracks. It seems probable that at some moment this road shifted place, since one of the workshops was extended across it.

To the west of this path, another pottery workshop was discovered along the *decumanus maximus* (Heirbaut dir., 2014, p. 85-88 and 127). No kilns were found here, but several clay deposits were discovered. The kilns were probably located just beyond the excavation area. The clay deposits (pits) contained clean, untempered clay, and were situated among lumps of both unburnt and burnt loam. Part of these may be related to pottery activities or to the buildings in which the different phases of the production process, such as drying the products, took place. A



**Fig. 9** - Left, large bronze kettle (high c. 50); right, bronze kitchenware which was stored in another large kettle (picture: R. Mols, Bureau Archeologie en Monumenten gemeente Nijmegen).



**Fig. 10** - Overview of Nijmegen c. 71-270 AD; the grey shaded area covers the ice-formed ridge and the sand; **a**, military settlement; **b**, civil settlement; **c**, cemetery; **d**, ditch; **e**, road; **1**, fortress on the Hunerberg; **2**, canabae legionis; **3-4**, civil settlements, **5**, Ulpia Noviomagus (CAD: R. Mols, Bureau Archeologie en Monumenten gemeente Nijmegen).

large cesspit, found more to the back of the plot, was related to this workshop. Its size suggests that it was used as a public toilet, probably servicing the artisans employed in the workshops. Whether these were the sole users of the facility, or whether it was also available to workers from the other side of the path, is not clear.<sup>7</sup>

Due to the lack of excavations, relatively little can be said about the topography of the rest of the *vicus* north of the *decumanus maximus*. The public buildings (if there were any)

and the housing blocks of wealthier citizens should be sought in the centre or northern part of the capital. The development of the limits of the *vicus* is anything but clear, partly because the settlement must have had a fairly open character until shortly after the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. Possibly, the borders up to this period consisted of a system of irregular and roughly parallel ditches that would largely be lost in the fortification of the capital in the third quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c.

### VLPIA NOVIOMAGVS

Several measures taken by the Emperor Marcus Ulpius Traianus around the year 100 AD seem to have greatly influenced the development of the Batavian capital. Generally, it is

7. At the St Josephof site (*Oppidum Batavorum*), it has been found that in some cases the inhabitants used the facilities on their neighbours' plot (Heirbaut, 2010). Thus, it is not impossible that workmen from another workshop were allowed to use the workshop lavatories.



**Fig. 11** - Overview of the excavations in Ulpia Noviomagus (white). The black lines are the boundaries between the plots in the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. The dotted lines indicate the location of the ditch of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c.; a, bathhouse; b, temples at the Maasplein; c, villa-like building; d, temple at the Winseling; e, Rijn-Lekstraat site; f, Maasplein site; g, Weurtseweg site (CAD: R. Mols, Bureau Archeologie en Monumenten gemeente Nijmegen).

assumed that at this time the *vicus* was granted town privileges, including the right to hold markets (Haalebos, 2000a, p. 35-39). The granting of town privileges fits with the process of integrating the Batavians' tribal area into the Empire, and would have meant a reinforcement of the economic strength of the *civitas*. Subsequently, the Tenth Legion was withdrawn in 104-105 and directed to Budapest (*Aquincum*).

An indication for the granting of town privileges may also be derived from a fragment of a bronze *tabella* with at least four times the name M. Ulpius (fig. 12a). Based on the consul names (L. Lulius Usus) SER(vianus II) and (L. Licinius) SV(ra II) on the back, this inscription may be dated to January or February of the year AD 102. The document was signed by a number of Batavian men from the upper layer of the urban society, who apparently received citizenship from the emperor in the year 98 or a little later, together with the *tria nomina* (Van Enckevort, Thijssen 2001, p. 109; *ibid.*, 2003, p. 68-69; Eck, 2008, p. 249). The changes brought about by the grant of market rights are clearly mirrored in the pottery spectrum. Before this, much of

the pottery was produced locally; but from the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c., pottery (and its contents) were more often imported from the Rhineland, Belgium, the northwest and the southeast of France, and Spain. This may indicate that the town slowly transformed from a producer to a consumer town (Willems, Van Enckevort *et al.*, 2009a, p. 77).

At around this time, the town received the name *Ulpia Noviomagus*. The name is not mentioned by any classical authors and known only from a handful of inscriptions and the mention of *Noviomagi* on the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (Bogaers, 1960-1961, p. 278-288). In full, the town may have been named *Municipium Ulpia Noviomagus Batavorum*, the 'New Ulpian Market in the Land of the Batavians'. Quite possibly, the epithet 'new' was used to distinguish it from the 'old' market, the *forum* lying to the east of the Hunerberg fortress (Van Enckevort, 2002).

In the same period, the Tenth Legion started rebuilding its fortress on the Hunerberg in stone, using tuff from the Eifel, *grauwacke* from the region north of Koblenz, and *tegulae* produced at its own pottery facilities on De Holdeurn (Holwerda,





a



b

Fig. 12 - a, front and back of a fragment of a bronze tabella (54 by 47 cm) that was found during the excavations of Ulpia Noviomagus on the Weurtseweg site (CAD: A. Simons, Bureau Archeologie en Monumenten gemeente Nijmegen); b, reconstruction of an inscription found at Cuijk in 1937, the largest fragment measuring 70 by 40 cm (drawing from Goudswaard, Kroes et al., 2000-2001, p. 475).

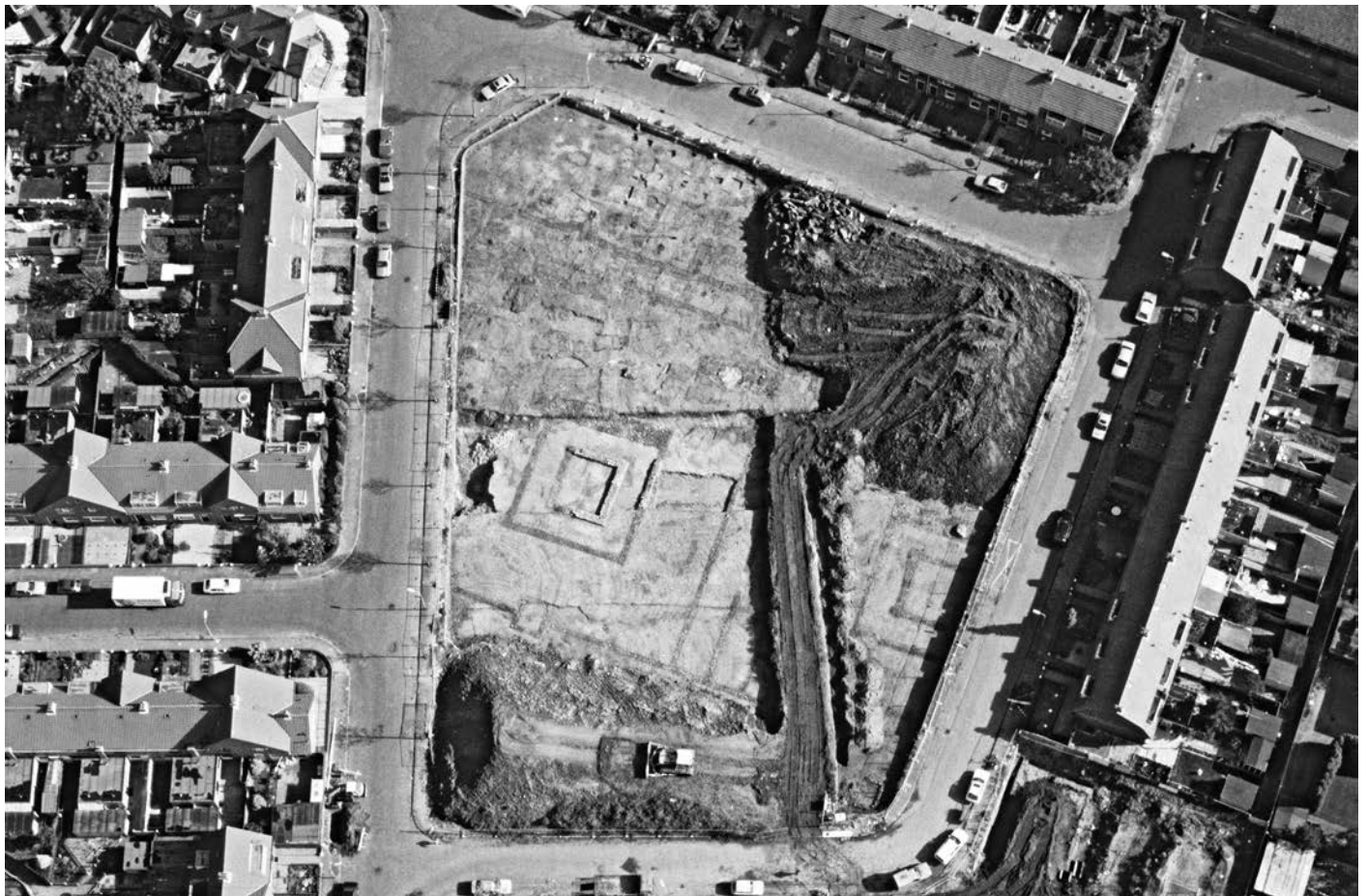


Fig. 13 - Air photo (1994) of the Maasplein site and environs with, in the center of the excavation area, the outlines (robber trenches) of the two Roman temples (picture: B. van Haren, Bureau Archeologie en Monumenten gemeente Nijmegen).

Braat, 1946), near Nijmegen. Following the departure of the Tenth Legion, this task was taken over by the *vexillatio Britannica* and a detachment from the Ninth Legion. These three units were also involved in the conversion of the existing urban settlement into a full-fledged administrative *civitas* centre, fashioned after the Roman model at the first two decades

of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. For this purpose, several public buildings were erected, though, with the exception of the bath-house (fig. 11a) and the temples on the Maasplein (fig. 11b and 13), they evade us. As demonstrated by roof-tile stamps, *Legio X Gemina* was involved in the construction of the bath-house in the northern part of the town before its departure (Van Enckevort, Thijssen,



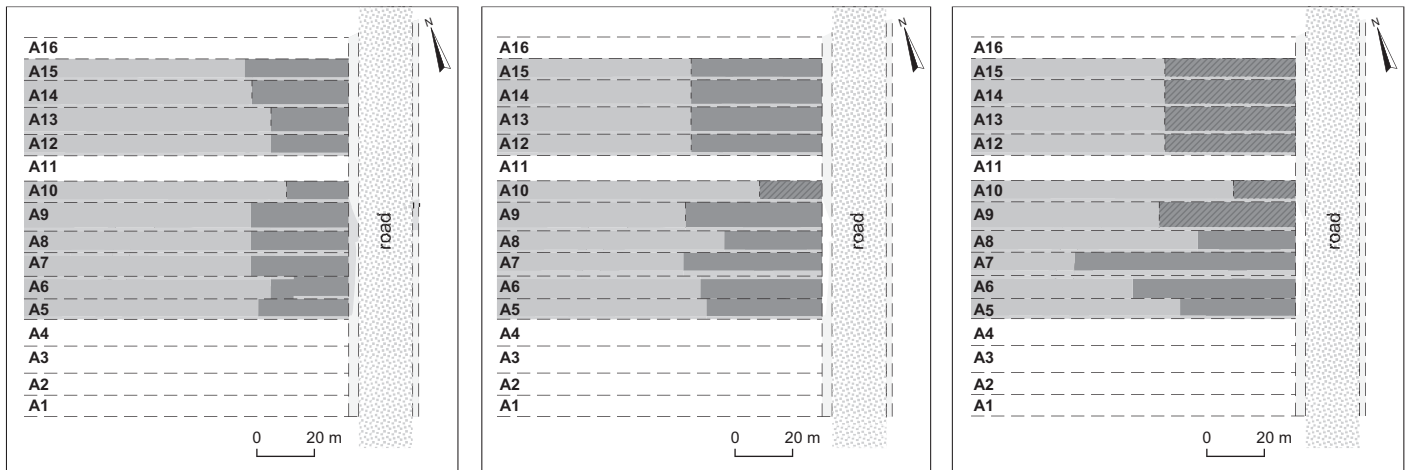


Fig. 14 - Reconstruction of the houses (dark shade) at the Rijn-Lekstraat site during different phases (CAD: R. Mols, Bureau Archeologie en Monumenten gemeente Nijmegen).

2003). Simultaneously, the pottery activities disappeared from the south-western part of the town (Heirbaut dir., 2014, p. 85-88 and 127). The pottery workshops and the existing land division were cleared to make room for the construction of a temple complex and a *villa*-like building behind it (Maasplein site, fig. 11c). Again, stamps on roof tiles and the use of grauwacke show that the Tenth Legion was also involved in the construction of these temples. A small votive altar shows that Fortune was worshipped in the southern temple, a bronze statuette shows that Mercury, among other deities, was worshipped in the northern temple. Both deities have to do with well-being, good luck and wealth. The most striking finds from the temple area include a deposit of small lamps and a few deposit of food. Apart from seeds and fruit (dates, figs, pine-tree seeds), sacrificial offerings included meat from chicken, beef, mutton or goat, and fish (herring, melt, and carp-like species) (Thijssen, Vermeeren, 1996; Zeiler, 1997; Van Enckevort, Thijssen, 2003).

The army was also involved in the improvement of the civil infrastructure in the countryside of the *civitas Batavorum*. The more or less simultaneous construction of four temples (Elst-Grote Kerk, Elst-Westeraam, Empel and Kessel) around 100 AD seems to have been part of a larger scheme to integrate the *civitas Batavorum* into the Empire (Van Enckevort, 2012, p. 273-275). Moreover, during the same period several *castella* along the lower Rhine *limes* were reconstructed, milestones were erected, and the *limes* road was renovated (Hessing, 1999; Haalebos, 2000b, p. 33-34; Graafstal, 2002). A clear signal of the building activities of this period is an inscription from *Ceuclum*, around 15 km to the south of Nijmegen (fig. 12b) (Haalebos, 2002b).

The grant of a municipal charter to the settlement at Nijmegen and the introduction of a civil system of self-governance around 100 AD heralded the end of the old tribal senate of elders. From then on, the *civitas Batavorum* was ruled by a Roman-style civil elite of municipal magistrates and an *ordo decurionum*. Only freeborn citizens of local birth and unquestioned behaviour were part of this elite. They lived mostly urban lives. They were expected to invest their money in public buildings and to finance games during religious festivals, which meant that they had to be rich. Apart from some merchants and shipping-agents, most of the officials in

the *civitas Batavorum* probably were large landowners, just like their Italian counterparts. They owned one or more large estates (*villae*), the yields of which contributed greatly to their wealth. At the same time, these estates provided an easy escape from the busy town life (Derks, 2011). Thus, it is not surprising that, at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c., in a short period a number of *villae* were constructed for the new urban elite from *Ulpia Noviomagus*. Here, too, the building materials used suggest the involvement of the military units stationed at Nijmegen (Van Enckevort, 2012, p. 277-281).

Changes are also becoming apparent in a different way. For example, in the 1980s a number of graves in the *Ulpia Noviomagus* cemetery were studied. Some of these graves, dated to around the year 100, were exceptionally rich and situated inside walled burial gardens. One of the graves distinguished itself mainly through the presence of a few spearheads and a shield, which might indicate that an important Batavian or German, rather than a Roman, was buried here. This idea is corroborated by the presence of a so-called Germanic trumpet *fibula* in another grave (Koster, 2013). The other grave goods, which included typically Roman items such as *strigiles*, make clear that this person (a member of the *ordo decurionum* in *Ulpia Noviomagus*?) and his family had already become quite Romanised. This is likely to be one of the latest graves with weapons in the Batavian area (Roymans, 1996, p. 34-35). By the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> c. it was no longer common practice to sacrifice *militaria* in the graves of indigenous warriors, a sign that Roman culture had permeated at least the upper layers of the indigenous population. The martial ideal disappeared from the Rhineland at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> c.

The south-eastern *insulae* of *Ulpia Noviomagus* were already completely developed at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> c. Excavations in these areas have shown that, in the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c., few buildings were constructed from stone and brick; most were built from wattle and daub. In a number of the houses investigated, an increased use of stone during the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. was found. An attempt to limit possible fire hazards as much as possible, this process seems to have taken place on all plots, but to a different degree. On one plot immediately to the west of the temples on the Maasplein, this development could easily be traced. Around the year 100, a relatively small house (c. 8 × 10 m) was built of



Fig. 15 - Artist impression of Ulpia Noviomagus c. 170 AD (drawing: P. Nuyten).

wattle and daub. Demolition waste from the abandoned Flavian pottery kilns was used in the foundations. After a fire, the house was rebuilt in almost exactly the same location but with a different layout. In the new foundations, tile fragments were used occasionally, on which probably walls of rammed earth (*pisé*) or adobe were constructed. At a certain moment, a room in stone was added to the back of this house and provided with a hypocaust. The walls of this house were decorated with fine paintings, one depicting a blooming plant. Along with a number of nearby houses and the temples, this house went up in flames at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. On the neighbouring plot, a similar development probably took place, with a hypocaust constructed of loam rather than stone.

In all probability the land to the west of the *cardo maximus* was not parcelled out immediately at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> c. (Heirbaut *dir.*, 2014, p. 127-135). Presumably, this part of the town grew organically, with the *insula* gradually being completed. The irregular width of the plots suggests that they were progressively parcelled out during the first years of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. During the course of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c., the buildings on the plots were gradually extended towards the back. Several building phases can be distinguished, but as the front parts of the buildings are situated outside the excavated areas, it remains uncertain how these houses looked like completely. A total of three building phases were distinguished; however, because of the lack of information on the front part of the houses, it is not certain whether the first visible building phase is in fact the first building phase in time.

The rear of some houses is situated at a distance of 30-37 m behind the reconstructed *porticus* (fig. 14, left). A remarkable feature of the ground plans of these buildings is the location of the hallway, generally on the southern side of the houses and continuing into an alley in the backyard, comparable to

the houses in *Oppidum Batavorum*. Even so, there are several noticeable exceptions. During the second building phase, houses on several plots were extended (fig. 14, middle). To enable these extensions, the lavatories in the backyards had to be removed. The existing cesspits were filled up and the toilet buildings, of which only few traces have been found, were either torn down or relocated to newly dug cesspits. New rooms were added and a new floor was constructed over the old cesspits and holes. In only two plots further building activities were visible (fig. 14, right). On one plot a cellar was found at the rear of the building. It had been partly filled up with slates, and since the slates were still more or less in a regular pattern, they were most probably from the roof. This is remarkable, since it is generally assumed that most often some form of ceramic roof covering was used. However, the fact that roof slates have been found on at least two plots on this *insula* suggests that this type of roof covering may not have been as unusual as is often supposed. Another plot is noticeable for the stone foundations discovered at the rear of the building. Among these were foundations for several rooms, as well as the remains of a *hypocaustum* heating at least two of them. These must have been the most luxurious rooms in the building, but since the foundations were used as a quarry during later periods (4<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> c.), and were heavily damaged in the process, with the exception of some small fragments of wall decoration, no hard evidence of this has been found.

It is almost impossible to assign a clear date to the building stages outlined above. Moreover, not all building stages were contemporaneous on all plots. Since it has been established that not all plots were parcelled off at the same time, it is also quite possible that the decision to extend a building was taken by the family living in it, and, thus, primarily influenced by financial considerations. The extent to which buildings were

enlarged and the types of rooms built are possible indications of the wealth (or lack of it) of the inhabitants. Consequently, one would expect that those plots with larger or more luxurious buildings yield finds supporting that distinction. However, the distribution pattern of finds does not, in fact, reflect the sizes of the buildings on the plots. The distribution patterns for (luxury) pottery, metal objects, coins or other items do not show any significant anomalies. The finds attributable to this period of slow and steady growth in this part of the town provide no indications for any form of artisanal activities.

During the greater part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c., the inhabitants of the small towns and rural settlements in this part of the Roman Empire seemed to have prospered (Heirbaut dir., 2014, p. 135). The last quarter of the century, however, was a rather turbulent period: a pandemic outbreak of smallpox in 166 AD was followed by raids of the Germanic tribe of the *Chauci* in 172-174 AD, widespread desertions of soldiers and the ensuing social unrest in Gaul and the German provinces in 185-186 AD, and a struggle for power between Clodius Albinus and Septimius Severus in 196-197 AD. During this troublesome period, *Ulpia Noviomagus* also suffered (Willems, Van Enckevort *et al.*, 2009a, p. 79; Heirbaut dir., 2014, p. 135-142 and 157-161). A large part of the city went up in flames. The south-western part of the town seems to have been entirely

destroyed, with the temple complex on the Maasplein being completely ruined and the buildings opposite burnt down and demolished. In reaction to external threats, a defensive system was constructed around the city (fig. 15).<sup>8</sup> At the same time as the city defences acquired their definitive shape, the *insulae* in this part of the town were redeveloped. First, a new section of the *cardo maximus* was constructed, which differed from the course of the *cardo maximus* during the previous period. Perpendicular to this new road, new plots were marked out. These all seem to have had the same width, 6 m, which suggests that the area was parcelled out all at once. It seems that, during the first decades of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c., the city recovered from the preceding period of unrest. *Ulpia Noviomagus*, like other parts of the lower Rhine area, was abandoned around 280 AD under pressure of the approaching German tribes. Under Diocletian, the Romans once again showed their presence in Nijmegen, building a fort in the centre of the former settlement of *Oppidum Batavorum*, on the Valkhof (Willems, Van Enckevort *et al.*, 2009b ; Van Enckevort, Thijssen, 2014, p. 31-41).

8. For a detailed reconstruction of the defensive system: Van der Weyden, 2014, p. 93-115 (reconstruction); Heirbaut, 2014, p. 135-142 and 157-161.