

## Chapter 3

### Continuity and change in the urban landscapes of Trier and Cologne: Topography and the use of space

#### Introduction

We have seen how, during the fourth century, the demographic profiles of Trier and Cologne were shaped by the cities' respective roles in the imperial system, and how both cities benefited from the emperors' consistent efforts to defend the Rhine frontier. From the end of the fourth century, however, the withdrawal of imperial power from the Rhineland was followed by a series of destructive barbarian invasions and incursions, and these events, when taken together, dramatically altered the political circumstances and leadership of the cities. By the second half of the fifth century, they had long since forfeited their respective roles as an imperial capital and an important military command centre, and were instead governed by leaders whose dominions apparently did not extend far beyond the cities' own *civitas* territories. The more local character of episcopal authority and the general stagnation of the process of Christianisation identified in Chapter Two suggest that the effects of these barbarian attacks and changes in political leadership were felt in all aspects of urban life. On the other hand, there is no denying that the cities' churches and saint cults altered the townscapes over the course of the fourth to sixth centuries, receiving upgrades and repairs, and ensuring that Trier and Cologne retained their relevance as central places within their *civitates*, despite the collapse of the imperial system.

We have, therefore, uncovered two different tendencies in the context of late antique urban change in the Rhineland: one towards an unravelling of the fabric of urban life, as Trier and Cologne suffered from barbarian attacks and their roles as

imperial political and administrative centres were lost as a result of the collapse of the imperial system; and the other towards a redefinition of the importance of the cities through the growth of Christianity and the emergence of new political structures. In terms of understanding how these processes of political and religious change affected Trier and Cologne in general terms, it is important to recognise that a handful of churches does not make for a thriving city, and the continued enhancement and maintenance of these churches certainly does not preclude the cities otherwise having become smaller, simpler, or of lesser significance. In order for us to fully appreciate how Trier and Cologne changed over the course of the fourth and fifth centuries, we must, therefore, seek to establish what else was going on within them. One promising way in which we might go about this is through study of how their urban space was configured, used, and maintained, since a townscape may be considered an ‘argument in stone’, and a visible marker of a city’s condition and its importance to the society that maintained it.<sup>1</sup>

Insofar as the fourth century is concerned, Krautheimer’s study of *Three Christian Capitals* – Rome, Constantinople, and Milan – and, in particular, his coining of the term ‘political topography’ will provide a useful basis for our discussion. The term ‘political topography’, as Krautheimer explains it, is not intended to denote structures that were directly associated with the implementation of imperial rule, but rather refers to buildings in Late Antiquity, particularly churches, that frequently did not serve explicitly political functions, but that were nevertheless located or designed on the basis of decisions underpinned by specific local political circumstances.<sup>2</sup> It is, therefore, an important reminder that spatial organisation in cities was always the result of an

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<sup>1</sup>The phrase is borrowed from the title of Carver’s book: M. O. H. Carver, *Arguments in Stone: Archaeological Research and the European Town in the First Millennium* (Oxford, 1994).

<sup>2</sup>R. Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals: Topography and Politics* (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 2-5.

amalgamation of Roman ideals and local factors, and an invitation to consider more carefully the specific conditions that underpinned urban planning. However, it is my contention that the concept of a ‘political topography’ has significant potential for wider application, especially in the context of this study of two very different Roman cities. It can serve as an effective category of analysis for a range of buildings that owed their existence, architecture, or location to their city’s specific role or status within the wider imperial system, as well as to local political considerations. With cities as different in terms of their imperial political roles as Trier and Cologne, this broader definition, which facilitates meaningful comparison yet leaves room to take careful account of each city’s unique circumstances, is invaluable. Moreover, by seeking to determine how far the cities possessed distinctive ‘political topographies’, that is, townscapes that clearly reflected their roles as respectively an imperial capital and a frontier military command centre, we will not only achieve an understanding of how the townscapes of Trier and Cologne changed, but will also be able to establish how important a factor the priorities of the central imperial authorities were in driving that change. This will in turn help us to better understand how and why the cities then altered in particular ways in the wake of imperial collapse.

As we turn our attention to the question of how the townscapes of Trier and Cologne developed in the fifth century, the major debate concerning whether cities should be said to have declined or been transformed in Late Antiquity is obviously an important framework upon which to hang our analysis, for all that it has been hotly contested in the past, and remains somewhat polarised. The term ‘decline’ is frequently used to denote the dilapidation and abandonment of monumental public buildings, and the collapse of traditional civic munificence. It is, however, best avoided when discussing general patterns of change, since it continues to be seen as overtly pejorative.

‘Transformation’ and ‘transition’, on the other hand, are often intended to be value-neutral terms, which recognise that concurrent developments could be very different in respect of their implications for our overall understanding of urban change. In other cases, ‘transformation’ serves to minimise evidence of deterioration of urban structures, and to expressly indicate that certain developments, particularly in the Christian sphere, were not to the detriment of the city in question.<sup>3</sup>

A recent dispute concerning Metz, which lies around one hundred kilometres to the south-west of Trier, provides us with a promising set of additional research questions for the fifth century. Like Trier and Cologne, Metz was a *civitas* capital of the Roman Empire, and a thriving urban centre in the fourth century.<sup>4</sup> Its inhabitants appear to have encountered the Vandals, Alans, and Sueves in 407 and the Huns in 451, but in the sixth century, probably during the 560s, the city displaced Reims as the principal seat of the Merovingian kings.<sup>5</sup> This much is relatively clear. With regard to the period of the fifth and early sixth centuries, however, Halsall and Bachrach have engaged in a heated exchange concerning whether Metz became something of a ‘ghost town’, or a ‘flourishing late Roman Christian *Urbs*’.<sup>6</sup> Their dispute highlights, in the first place, the problematic nature of the evidence used to reconstruct the cities of the Belgic and Germanic provinces in Late Antiquity, and the potential for this to skew our interpretation. Although we have some textual sources at our disposal, particularly regarding the barbarian attacks of the fifth century, as well as a reasonable amount of

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<sup>3</sup>For a fuller discussion of this debate, with examples, see above, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Halsall, *Settlement*, pp. 219-23; G. Halsall, ‘Towns, Societies and Ideas: The Not-so-Strange Case of Late Roman and Early Merovingian Metz’, in Christie and Loseby (eds), *Towns in Transition*, p. 241; B. S. Bachrach, ‘Fifth-century Metz: Late Roman Christian *Urbs* or Ghost Town?’, *Antiquité Tardive* 10 (2003), p. 368.

<sup>5</sup>Halsall, *Settlement*, pp. 7-8, 12.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 167-239; Halsall, ‘Towns’, p. 248, for the ‘ghost town’ description; Bachrach, ‘Metz’, pp. 363-80; p. 365 for the quotation. Their rivalry continued in G. Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West, 450-900* (London, 2003), and in Bachrach’s review thereof, published in *The American Historical Review* 109, No. 3 (June 2004), p. 959.

archaeological data, we often have reason to doubt the claims of late antique writers, whilst the results of excavations are often inconclusive. Moreover, it is not uncommon for archaeological and textual evidence to point in very different directions. This means that the methodological approaches adopted by modern scholars can produce startlingly dissimilar interpretations, as is the case with Halsall and Bachrach. Halsall generally accepts the accounts of late antique writers, seeking, for example, to reconcile Hydatius' claim that Metz was attacked in 451 with his own conviction that the city had already been largely abandoned by this time, by postulating that the Huns stormed a small settlement straddling the walls to the south-east of the city.<sup>7</sup> Generally, however, he gives precedence to the archaeological evidence, concluding that Metz must have been largely uninhabited in the fifth century, since excavations have yielded very few physical traces of occupation.<sup>8</sup> Bachrach, on the other hand, pays little heed to this shortage of fifth-century finds, and dismisses Fredegar's account of the Vandals' attack in 407 and Hydatius and Gregory of Tours' descriptions of the Huns' assault in 451, on the general grounds that the authors were too far removed from the events they describe by time or distance to be reliable, and the specific language they used does not necessarily point to destruction.<sup>9</sup> Instead, he emphasises the construction of the grand church of St Stephen as the strongest indication of a large and prosperous society. The building work, he stresses, relied not only upon the initiative of bishop and his clergy, but also upon the willing donation of funds by local aristocrats, the presence or bringing in of skilled tradesmen, the availability of a large unskilled workforce, and the existence of an extensive supply chain to provide material resources and services to those involved in the project.<sup>10</sup> By accentuating or downplaying various types of evidence

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<sup>7</sup>Halsall, *Settlement*, p. 230; Halsall, 'Towns', pp. 248-9.

<sup>8</sup>Halsall, *Settlement*, p. 228; Halsall, 'Towns', p. 241.

<sup>9</sup>Bachrach, 'Metz', pp. 369-71.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 372-4.

according to their perceptions of its reliability and their personal inclinations, therefore, Halsall and Bachrach have produced radically different interpretations of the same city, in the same period.

The evidence from Trier and Cologne is similarly problematic. Insofar as Trier is concerned, extensive excavations have been carried out at all of the known monumental buildings, and their construction periods and architecture are relatively well understood. However, there are a number of major buildings for which documentary evidence exists, but of which no trace has been identified on the ground. These include an arsenal, at least one textile factory, and the mint, all of which are known from the *Notitia Dignitatum*, as well as the seat of the praetorian prefect.<sup>11</sup> Trier's continuous history from the Roman period onwards means that later redevelopments on sites throughout the city have destroyed late antique remains or prevent excavations, meaning that there is limited hope of identifying these buildings, or of significantly enhancing our vastly incomplete understanding of the city's residential housing. In Cologne, meanwhile, the location of the theatre and possibly an amphitheatre remain to be discovered, whilst the bathing complex and forum are only partially understood. Moreover, as Schütte has emphasised, much of the area of Roman Cologne, like Trier, does not lend itself to archaeological investigation: one third of it is now too densely built-up to permit extensive excavation, while the relevant archaeological strata have been destroyed by later activity in another third. To compound this difficulty, the remaining third has not yet been subjected to any thoroughgoing archaeological work.<sup>12</sup> In both cities, very few traces of occupation of possible later fifth-century date have been identified, yet this is in marked contrast to the

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<sup>11</sup>*Notitia Dignitatum* IX, p. 29; XI, pp. 31-2.

<sup>12</sup>S. Schütte, 'Continuity problems and authority structures in Cologne', in G. Ausenda (ed.), *After Empire* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 167-8.

impression provided by our few textual references to the cities, which suggest that they remained of real importance.<sup>13</sup> These references include the letters to and about Arbogast and Bishop Jamblychus in Trier, and Gregory of Tour's mention of the Frankish king, Sigibert the Lambe, who 'departed from the city of Cologne', which appears to have been his main residence, before being killed by his son, Cloderic.<sup>14</sup> These evidential issues mean that much of the interpretation offered here of urban change in fourth- and, especially, fifth-century Trier and Cologne must be regarded as hypothetical. Nonetheless, it is hoped that by recognising the value and limitations of our evidence, we will avoid some of the pitfalls into which Bachrach and Halsall fell, and will develop an understanding of Trier and Cologne that may help to mediate between the conflicting accounts of nearby Metz.

Finally, the debate between Halsall and Bachrach also encourages us to consider what elements we think were required to constitute a city in Late Antiquity. The criteria used by Halsall include: permanent occupation; a larger population than other types of settlement; an economic base that is not dependent upon subsistence, or voluntary or compulsory supply; the provision of high-level services not available elsewhere; and a high degree of social differentiation. On the basis of these markers, Halsall concludes that fifth-century Metz was no longer urban.<sup>15</sup> Conversely, Bachrach obviously believes that the infrastructure required to build the church is confirmation enough that we should still think of Metz as a city in the fifth century, even if it was not one that continued to adhere to the model of the classical city.<sup>16</sup> The issue of what constitutes a city in Late Antiquity has become unhelpfully contentious, but a workable, neutral set

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<sup>13</sup>Very little material 'diagnostic' of a fifth-century date has been discovered: see below, pp. 263-4, 269-70.

<sup>14</sup>See above, pp. 96-9, 127-8. The quotation comes from Gregory of Tours, *History*, II, 40, p. 90.

<sup>15</sup>Halsall, *Settlement*, p. 173; Halsall, 'Towns', pp. 236-7.

<sup>16</sup>Bachrach, 'Metz', p. 380.

of criteria are offered by Wickham, and will be adopted here. A relatively large population, a market, and economic activities different to those of the countryside are essential, whilst functions as political, institutional, and social centres for the surrounding hinterland are of marginally subordinate importance.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.1 The Fourth Century

#### 3.1.1 Monumental buildings

In evaluating the townscapes of fourth-century Trier and Cologne, we have two aims. The first is simply to ascertain what identifiable buildings existed in the cities and how the urban space was organised, in order that we might explore how these features altered in the fifth century. The second aim is more important, and potentially more complex: to determine how far the changes to the cities reflected their respective roles within the imperial system, and the dynamics of local power politics; in other words, how far they might be understood in terms of changes in their ‘political topographies’. In Trier, one would expect this political topography to mirror the city’s status as an imperial capital, and its unusually high proportion of resident high-ranking imperial officials. In Cologne, it might be assumed to relate to the city’s importance as a base for army generals and a centre for military personnel stationed at the Rhine frontier. In seeking to achieve these aims, we must consider not only the architecture of the cities’ most important monumental buildings, but also their locations within the townscape. In both Trier and Cologne, as in all Roman cities, the most important and monumental buildings occupied prominent positions on the major thoroughfares, the *Cardo Maximus* (running north-south) and the *Decumanus Maximus* (running east-

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<sup>17</sup>Wickham, *Framing*, pp. 593-4.



west). Beyond this basic framework, spatial organisation was the result of each city's specific topographical conditions, which had to be taken into account by benefactors, be they local or provincial officials, or even the emperors themselves. Additionally, in order to understand fully the relationship between topographical change and political circumstances, it is necessary to establish the temporal contexts in which the various key buildings were constructed and renovated.

Turning our attention first to Trier, a good place to begin is with the following quotation, which comes from a panegyric delivered in the city before the court of Constantine in 310 AD:

‘I see a Circus Maximus to rival, in my opinion, that at Rome, I see basilicas and a forum, palatial buildings and a seat of justice raised to such a height that they promise to be worthy of the stars and the sky’.<sup>18</sup>

When the panegyrist praised the monumental architecture of the city in which he found himself, he not only conveyed some sense of the awe-inspiring impression Trier's townscape made on its visitors, but also provided us with an important indication of the scale of the building boom that accompanied the city's elevation to the status of an imperial capital. Yet his description does not do full justice to the programme of works undertaken at Constantine's behest. Alongside the forum and the circus, the amphitheatre was also renovated and maintained, whilst the newly-rebuilt palace with its massive basilica was complemented by an enormous bathing complex to the south and the cathedral to the north, which, it will be argued here, epitomised the contemporary representation of imperial power, as well as being symbolic of the growing influence of the Church. In the final third of the fourth century, a renewed

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<sup>18</sup>Panegyric VI, 22, 5, in *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors*, trans. Nixon and Rodgers, p. 252. On the role of panegyrics in imperial ceremony, specifically in the *Basilika* in Trier, see S. MacCormack, 'Latin Prose Panegyrics: Tradition and Discontinuity in the Later Roman Empire', *Revue d'Études Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 22 (1976), pp. 42-3.

wave of building took place under Valentinian (364 – 375) and Gratian (375 – 383), during which many abandoned Constantinian projects were restarted, and other measures were undertaken to improve Trier’s visual appeal. The significance of this remodelling must not be underestimated, since the projects undertaken throughout the fourth century in Trier were of a type and scale no longer being carried out in more ‘ordinary’ provincial capitals.<sup>19</sup>

(Image removed for copyright reasons)

Figure 3.1: Plan of Roman Trier. Adapted from H. Ament, ‘Die Franken in den Römerstädten der Rheinzone’, in *Die Franken. Roms Erben und Wegbereiter Europas*, ed. R. Kaiser (Mannheim, 1996), p. 135

The palace complex in fourth-century Trier occupied the same site as the earlier palace, which had probably belonged to the Gallic *Legatus Augusti pro Praetore*, the

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<sup>19</sup>Liebeschuetz, ‘Ancient City’, p. 8; Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity*, p. 14.

emperor's representative in the Gallic provinces until the time of the Gallic Empire.<sup>20</sup> This allowed the emperor to make the most of the long-recognised governmental centre of the city, and of the pre-existing topographical relationship between this seat of government and the other earlier buildings designed to reflect and represent imperial power, the circus and the amphitheatre.<sup>21</sup> The complex was, moreover, only one block away from the *Cardo Maximus*, and in the north-eastern quarter of the city, across town from the Mosel bridge and the south gate, the main entrances through which visitors from Gaul and the Mediterranean regions would enter the city. To get to it, therefore, one would have to pass along Trier's *Cardo* and *Decumanus*; an appropriate route for an *adventus* procession. Additionally, and rather less glamorously, the continuity of site encouraged a pragmatic approach to building, facilitating the incorporation of existing structures, foundations, and *spolia*.



Figure 3.2: Modern-day Trier, viewed from cliff-top on the opposite bank of the Mosel. The *Basilika* and cathedral clearly dominate the townscape. Copyright author.

<sup>20</sup>K.-P. Goethert and M. Kiessel, 'Trier – Residenz in der Spätantike', in Demandt and Engemann (eds), *Konstantin der Grosse: Ausstellungskatalog*, p. 304.

<sup>21</sup>This proximity between the various buildings associated with imperial power is seen in numerous other imperial capitals, including Rome and Constantinople: G. Clemens and L. Clemens, *Geschichte der Stadt Trier* (Munich, 2007), pp. 49-50; Riemer, 'Konstantinopel – Ravenna – Trier', p. 15; Bolognesi and Franceschini, 'Der kaiserliche Bezirk', p. 126.

The repeated redevelopment of the site of the palace complex over subsequent centuries means that little is known of the design or decoration of its residential parts.<sup>22</sup> However, the standing remains of the *Kaiserthermen* and *Basilika* provide a good sense of the impressive scale and elaborate architecture we should associate with the imperial quarter. The *Basilika* was the imperial audience hall, and is referred to here by its modern German name, since its late antique designation remains unclear.<sup>23</sup> It appears to have been located roughly in the centre of the imperial palace complex, and is securely dated to the reign of Constantine (306 – 337). The tiles used in its construction bear the same stamp as those used in the building of Deutz at Cologne, whilst a coin of Flavius Valerius Severus, dated to 305 and still in good condition, was found embedded in the mortar of one of the walls of its atrium.<sup>24</sup>

(Image removed for copyright reasons)

Figure 3.3: *Basilika* in Trier. Adapted from K. Goethert and K. –P. Goethert, ‘Palastbezirk’, in *Rettet das archäologische Erbe in Trier* (Trier, 2005), pp. 70-1

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<sup>22</sup>For a recent account of what is known, see M. Kiessel, ‘Die Architektur des spätantiken Palastareals nordöstlich und östlich der spätantiken Aula in Trier’, in J. Drauschke et al (eds), *Untergang und Neuanfang: Tagungsbeiträge der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Spätantike und Frühmittelalter 3 und 4* (Hamburg, 2011), pp. 77-106.

<sup>23</sup>K.-P. Goethert, ‘Basilika’, in K. –P. Goethert and W. Weber (eds), *Römerbauten in Trier: Porta Nigra, Amphitheater, Barbarathermen, Thermen am Viehmarkt, Kaiserthermen* (Regensburg, 2010), p. 149.

<sup>24</sup>Goethert, ‘Basilika’, in *Römerbauten in Trier*, pp. 150-1; H. –P. Kuhnen, ‘Die Palastaula (so genannte Basilika) des spätantiken Kaiserpalastes’, in H. –P. Kuhnen (ed.), *Das römische Trier* (Stuttgart, 2001), p. 141; Wightman, *Trier*, p. 103.

Everything about the *Basilika* - its topographical location, its unembellished exterior, and its elaborate interior - was carefully and deliberately designed to enhance and convey the prestige, glory, and majesty of the emperor. Architecturally, the building was without parallel north of the Alps, but, at approximately seventy metres long, thirty metres wide, and thirty metres tall, its sheer size was arguably its most impressive feature.<sup>25</sup> Even today, the *Basilika* dominates the townscape. Externally, the red tiles used to construct the building were covered in greyish-white plaster, which was largely left plain. The only detailing could be found in the window embrasures, where vines and putti were painted in yellow on a dark red background.<sup>26</sup> Although the vertical impact of the building would have been lessened by the presence of an exterior ledge below the level of windows, intended to allow access to the windows and to the hypocaust's outlet flues, the starkness of the undecorated whitish-grey walls would have accentuated the *Basilika*'s physical dimensions and its prominence within the townscape.<sup>27</sup>



Figure 3.4: *Basilika* in Trier, viewed from the West. Copyright Author.

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<sup>25</sup>Kuhnen, 'Die Palastaula', pp. 135-6; W. Reusch, *Die Basilika in Trier: Festschrift zur Wiederherstellung 9. Dezember 1956* (Trier, 1956) pp. 12, 21; Goethert and Kiessel, 'Trier – Residenz in der Spätantike', p. 307.

<sup>26</sup>The construction of the *Kurfürstliches Palais* directly up against the wall of the *Basilika* means that some of the plaster survives on the tower of the north-eastern staircase, close to the apse: Kuhnen, 'Die Palastaula', p. 138; Reusch, *Basilika*, p. 22; Wightman, *Trier*, p. 104; Goethert and Kiessel, 'Trier – Residenz in der Spätantike', p. 309.

<sup>27</sup>Kuhnen, 'Die Palastaula', pp. 138-9; Wightman, *Trier*, p. 105.

In contrast to its austere exterior, the *Basilika*'s interior was designed to provide a magnificent architectural setting for the majesty of the emperor.<sup>28</sup> At least part of the floor of the building was covered by black and white marble forming a geometric design, whilst a significant area of the walls was also marble-clad. Evidence of more elaborate decoration, in the form of a mosaic in shades of blue, green, and gold, has been found in one of the niches of the apse, where the emperor would have been seated.<sup>29</sup> The windows were arranged on two levels, with nine windows in each row along the sides and four in each row in the apse. In order to make the apse appear both larger and more distant from the entrance, its windows were smaller and set deeper than those elsewhere, and those in the upper row were positioned slightly lower down.<sup>30</sup> Here we can envisage the emperor, clad in purple, gold, and precious stones, sitting enthroned, a stately figure to whom the eye of the visitor was drawn by means of the colourful mosaics, the subtle gradation of the windows, and, one might presume, carefully stage-managed lighting.<sup>31</sup> In terms of buildings representative of Trier's status as an imperial capital, there is probably no better example than the *Basilika*. However, the interior of the building does not appear to have been entirely completed in the Constantinian period; the heated floor seems to have been installed sometime later.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Kolb, 'Das kaiserliche Zeremoniell', in Demandt and Engemann (eds), *Konstantin der Grosse: Ausstellungskatalog*, p. 174.

<sup>29</sup>Kuhnen, 'Die Palastaula', p. 136; Reusch, *Basilika*, pp. 33-34; Wightman, *Trier*, p. 104; Goethert and Kiessel, 'Trier – Residenz in der Spätantike', p. 309.

<sup>30</sup>Kuhnen, 'Die Palastaula', p. 137; Reusch, *Basilika*, p. 34, Wightman, *Trier*, p. 104.

<sup>31</sup>Kolb, 'Das kaiserliche Zeremoniell', pp. 273-4.

<sup>32</sup>Clemens and Clemens, *Trier*, p. 45; K. Goethert and K. -P. Goethert, 'Palastbezirk', in *Rettet das archäologische Erbe in Trier* (Trier, 2005), p. 71.



Figure 3.5: *Basilika* in Trier; interior as it appears today. Copyright author.

The *Kaiserthermen*, meanwhile, constituted the southernmost part of the imperial quarter of Trier, and were situated axially on the *Decumanus*, between the forum and the amphitheatre, with their impressive western façade enhancing the monumental and representational character of the road leading to the imperial palace. Like the second-century *Barbarathermen* before them, the *Kaiserthermen* were one of the largest bathing complexes outside Rome, covering an area of 250 metres by 145 metres.<sup>33</sup> Their construction probably began as part of the building boom initiated by Constantine and continued until around 316, before grinding to a halt around the time when the emperor's presence in Trier became less frequent.<sup>34</sup> Although the complex

<sup>33</sup>The *Barbarathermen* covered an area of 172m x 240m, or 4.2 hectares: T. H. M. Fontaine, 'Die Barbarathermen', in Kuhnen (ed.), *Das römische Trier*, p. 104; K.-P. Goethert, 'Die Kaiserthermen', in Goethert and Weber (eds), *Römerbauten in Trier*, p. 123.

<sup>34</sup>For dating evidence, a bronze coin of Diocletian, minted in Trier no earlier than 293 and still in good condition, was found sealed below construction layers, whilst another coin issued in 314-317 was found in a foundation trench: Wightman, *Trier*, p. 101. 316 is the date usually given for the halt in construction: K. -P. Goethert, 'Kaiserthermen', in *Rettet das archäologische Erbe*, p. 81; Goethert, 'Die Kaiserthermen', in *Römerbauten in Trier*, p. 125; T. H. M. Fontaine, 'Die Kaiserthermen', in Kuhnen (ed.), *Das römische Trier*, p. 123.

was never completed as a bathing facility, its scale and design embraced the latest architectural trends and epitomised the spirit of imperial ambition and evergetism that prevailed in early fourth-century Trier. The *Kaiserthermen* were ‘in essence a prestige project’; since the *Barbarathermen* remained in use, there was no practical need to build another complex of such immense proportions.<sup>35</sup> One might assume that the new complex was intended to serve a more exclusive clientele, including the emperor himself, since this would explain its remarkable size; the emperor could not be seen to have built for himself a smaller bathing complex than one which already existed in the city.<sup>36</sup> In contrast to the elaborate internal and external decoration of the *Barbarathermen*, the *Kaiserthermen* were notable primarily for their architecture, which emphasised circular forms and was stark and uncompromising, in a style comparable to that of other new buildings of the Tetrarchic period, not least the nearby *Basilika*.<sup>37</sup> The complex’s western façade was of monumental proportions, and appears to have resembled a triumphal arch or city gate.<sup>38</sup>



Figure 3.6: *Kaiserthermen* in Trier as they appear today, viewed from the north-eastern corner of the *palaestra*. Copyright author.

<sup>35</sup>Wightman, *Trier*, p. 101; D. Krencker et al, *Die Trierer Kaiserthermen, Abteilung I: Ausgrabungsbericht und grundsätzliche Untersuchungen römischer Thermen* (Augsburg, 1929), p. 5.

<sup>36</sup>Heinen, *Trevererland*, p. 277; Wightman, *Trier*, p. 98.

<sup>37</sup>Wightman, *Trier*, p. 100; Krencker et al, *Die Trierer Kaiserthermen*, p. 45.

<sup>38</sup>Fontaine, ‘Die Kaiserthermen’, p. 126; Krencker et al, *Die Trierer Kaiserthermen*, p. 47; Wightman, *Trier*, p. 101; Heinen, *Trevererland*, p. 277.



(Image removed for copyright reasons)

Figure 3.7: *Kaiserthermen* in Trier. Adapted from K. –P. Goethert, ‘Kaiserthermen’, in *Rettet das archäologische Erbe in Trier* (Trier, 2005), p. 81

Work at the *Kaiserthermen* had halted in 316 with the shell of the building and some of the internal areas completed, and was not resumed until sometime later; probably during the reigns of Valentinian (364-375) and Gratian (375-383), both of

whom spent lengthy periods in residence in Trier.<sup>39</sup> By then, the complex was no longer intended to function as a bathing facility, since although the monumental entrance was retained, the *frigidarium* and some of the auxiliary rooms to the west were sacrificed to extend the courtyard, and, significantly, the provisions for the heating and water supply needed by an enormous bathing complex were removed. A small bath house was, moreover, built beside the original complex. On the basis of the reduced dimensions of the newly-created rooms and the new bath house, it is widely assumed that the *Kaiserthermen*, which, we should remember, had begun first and foremost as a Constantinian prestige project, designed to complement the other buildings of the imperial palace quarter, were now adapted to serve as barracks for the imperial bodyguards.<sup>40</sup> Although resources were still available for large-scale construction periods in Trier by the later fourth century, therefore, the priorities of the emperors who sponsored such projects had clearly changed. Insofar as the *Kaiserthermen* are concerned, the original emphasis on prestige and monumentalisation had unmistakably given way to a more utilitarian and pragmatic conception, apparently after a lengthy period in which the building had been left unfinished.

The opposite end of the imperial palatial quarter to the *Kaiserthermen* was occupied by the cathedral church. We have seen how this ostentatious building was an integral part of Trier's early Christian topography, but in a fourth-century context, it should also be viewed, alongside the *Basilika* and the *Kaiserthermen*, as part of Constantine's programme of works designed to reflect his power and values, and to

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<sup>39</sup>Wightman, *Trier*, p. 113; Witschel, 'Trier', p. 233; Goethert, 'Kaiserthermen', in *Rettet das archäologische Erbe*, p. 81; Goethert, 'Die Kaiserthermen', in *Römerbauten in Trier*, pp. 127-30. The abandonment of work is indicated by the discovery in the western part of the site of unused building materials, including bricks, lime, and fragments of brick and stone used to bind mortar, as well as by the identification of a centimetre-thick layer of detritus, which had accumulated on top of the half-built structures: Fontaine, 'Die Kaiserthermen', p. 131.

<sup>40</sup>Goethert, 'Die Kaiserthermen', in *Römerbauten in Trier*, pp. 126-8; Goethert, 'Kaiserthermen', in *Rettet das archäologische Erbe*, p. 81; Fontaine, 'Die Kaiserthermen', pp. 130-3; Krencker et al, *Die Trierer Kaiserthermen*, pp. 161-73; Clemens and Clemens, *Trier*, p. 49.

revamp Trier's townscape to fulfil his requirements. Confirmation of the cathedral's significance in the context of Constantine's plans for Trier as an imperial residence is provided by the erection of the complex on land which had previously belonged to the palace's residential part, and the fact that it was built over the important north-south road one block north of the *Cardo Maximus*, which passed by the west façade of the *Kaiserthermen* and ran alongside the imperial palace complex.<sup>41</sup> As we have seen in Chapter Two, the cathedral, like the *Kaiserthermen*, saw a renewed phase of building activity under the dynasty of Valentinian, which completed the unfinished works at the north-eastern basilica.<sup>42</sup>

Among further elements of the building programme of the early fourth century were three substantial granaries, built around eighty metres inside the city wall to the north-east of Trier. Two of these were constructed around the beginning of the fourth century, whilst the third was added slightly later. All three appear to have remained in use until at least the second half of the fourth century.<sup>43</sup> Although less glamorous than the *Basilika*, the *Kaiserthermen*, or the cathedral, these granaries were essential in practical terms, facilitating the storage of foodstuffs required to provision the army and to feed the inflated population of the imperial capital, which could not be sustained by local resources alone.<sup>44</sup> It is possible that other buildings associated with Trier's role in the imperial economy, including, for example, the textile factory mentioned in the

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<sup>41</sup>See above, p. 137.

<sup>42</sup>See above, p. 137.

<sup>43</sup>L. Clemens, 'Sankt Irminen: Römisches Wohnquartier, spätantike Speicheranlage (*horrea*) und frühmittelalterliche Klostersiedlung', in Kuhn (ed.), *Das römische Trier*, pp. 169-73; L. Clemens, 'Speicherbauten (*horrea*) und Kloster St Irminen-Oeren', in *Rettet das archäologische Erbe*, pp. 112-3.

<sup>44</sup>J. K. Knight, *The End of Antiquity: Archaeology, Society and Religion, AD 235-700* (Stroud, 1999), p. 34.

*Notitia Dignitatum*, were also to be found in this part of town, which provided convenient access to the river bank for the transportation of goods.<sup>45</sup>

To complement these new additions to Trier's townscape, several existing monumental buildings appear to have been renovated in the early fourth century. Foremost among these was the circus, which became a crucial component of the redesigned imperial palace quarter. It would appear that Constantine had building work carried out here in the early part of his reign, since the anonymous panegyrist who delivered his speech in Trier in 310 put the circus first in his list of the buildings for which the city owed thanks to the emperor.<sup>46</sup> These measures cannot, however, be confirmed archaeologically, since few remains of the circus have been uncovered, and no finds are datable to the period in question.<sup>47</sup> Even so, Constantine's renewal of the circus would make sense both in the context of his other building endeavours, and within the framework of fourth-century imperial ceremonial, where the holding of circus games was a particularly favoured vehicle for emperors to bolster their popularity and to cultivate their image by appearing before their subjects. The circus in Trier evidently retained this importance in the later fourth century, since Augustine of Hippo wrote in his *Confessions* of how his acquaintance, Ponticianus, had been walking in gardens near the circus in Trier whilst the emperor was at the games, when he came across a written *Life of St Antony* in a cottage (*casa*) occupied by Christians.<sup>48</sup> It is not clear exactly which emperor Ponticianus had in mind when recounting his tale, but it

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<sup>45</sup>See above, p. 204.

<sup>46</sup>Panegyric VI, 22, 5, in *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors*, trans. Nixon and Rodgers, p. 252.

<sup>47</sup>The site's modern-day use as a densely built-up residential area has prevented extensive excavations. The most comprehensive account remains W. von Massow's article, 'Der Circus des römischen Trier', *Trierer Zeitschrift* 18 (1949), pp. 149-69. Among the discovered remains are the limestone wall of its curved end, and a small piece of the *spina*: K. Goethert, 'Circus und Wagenrennen', in Demandt and Engemann (eds), *Konstantin der Grosse: Ausstellungskatalog*, p. 345; L. Clemens and J. Hupe, 'Circus', in *Rettet das archäologische Erbe*, p. 100; Wightman, *Trier*, pp. 102-3.

<sup>48</sup>Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII, 6, pp. 432-4; see above, pp. 17, 149-50.

was almost certainly either Valentinian I or Gratian, the only emperors known to have spent lengthy periods in Trier in the second half of the fourth century.

(Image removed for copyright reasons)

Figure 3.8: Amphitheatre in Trier. Adapted from K. –P. Goethert, ‘Amphitheater’, in *Rettet das archäologische Erbe in Trier* (Trier, 2005) p. 98

The amphitheatre was similarly a vehicle of imperial self-representation, although, as is reflected in our written sources from Trier, which make no mention of it after Constantine’s reign, its importance was increasingly diminished by comparison with the circus. It too appears to have undergone renovations around the turn of the fourth century. Dendrochronological dating of well-preserved timbers, together with the discovery of approximately twelve hundred coins, has revealed that large mechanisms were installed in a basement below the arena sometime around the beginning of the fourth century, probably to operate a moveable stage that could elevate actors or animals into the middle of the arena during performances. This improvement was accompanied by the building of numerous small cages into the walls of the structure, in

which captives or wild animals could be held.<sup>49</sup> Constantine certainly appears to have made some use of his refurbished amphitheatre; it is widely believed that it was here that he set wild beasts upon the captured Frankish kings, Ascarius and Merogaisus, resulting in their death.<sup>50</sup>



Figure 3.9: Amphitheatre in Trier as it appears today. The entrances for the cages built into the walls of the arena are visible. Copyright author.

Finally, as the panegyric of 310 suggests, the forum, the traditional centre of public life in the city, was also upgraded around this time. The work seems to have centred upon the forum basilica, which appears to have been demolished early in the fourth century, presumably with a view to its rebuilding on a grander scale or in accordance with more up-to-date architectural trends.<sup>51</sup> The project had not proceeded very far, however, before it was put on hold; in the by now familiar pattern, it remained

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<sup>49</sup>The dates suggested by dendrochronological analysis are of 294 and soon thereafter: H. –P. Kuhn, ‘Das Amphitheater’, in Kuhn (ed.), *Das römische Trier*, pp. 96-8; S. Bauer and E. Goddard, ‘Amphitheater Trier: Bestandsaufnahme der archäologischen Befunde in der Arena und im Arenakeller seit 1816’, *Funde und Ausgrabungen im Bezirk Trier* 29 (1997), pp. 34-5.

<sup>50</sup>Panegyrics VI, 11-12; XII, 23; and IV, 16, in *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors*, trans. Nixon and Rodgers, pp. 233-5, 329, 361; see above, p. 28.

<sup>51</sup>Goethert and Kiessel, ‘Trier: Residenz in der Spätantike’, p. 306; Brühl, *Palatium*, p. 72, Wightman, *Belgica*, p. 237. The dating of this work derives predominantly from the mention of the forum in the panegyric of 310.

incomplete until, once again, it was revived by Valentinian and Gratian.<sup>52</sup> This is important, since it demonstrates that the similar halting of operations at the *Basilika* and *Kaiserthermen* cannot simply be ascribed to the particularly ambitious nature of the projects. Instead, it appears to have been part of an across-the-board halt in construction, which left several buildings incomplete, and which can only have resulted from a change in Trier's political circumstances. The only building at which work continued for some time was the cathedral, where the growth of the new religion and episcopal promotion probably helped to ensure that building efforts persisted longer, before finally stopping in the 340s.<sup>53</sup>

Evidently, then, Trier's elevation to the status of an imperial capital resulted, particularly during the reign of Constantine, in an imperially-sponsored building boom, designed primarily to enhance the monumental aspect of the townscape and to create a range of amenities fulfilling the emperor's requirements. All of these projects should be seen to belong to a specific 'political topography' of the fourth century, regardless of whether the buildings themselves were used for entertainment or religious worship, since they directly owed their existence or their renovation to Trier's new-found political importance. This is substantiated by the clear correlation of the active periods of construction with the reigns of emperors who spent lengthy spells in residence in the city. The extensive programme of works began by Constantine continued apace until around 316, when the emperor turned his attention and his resources away from Trier and towards other regions of the empire, and, in particular, to the foundation of his new capital, Constantinople. Under Constantine's sons, Constantine II (337 – 340) and

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<sup>52</sup>Goethert and Kiessel, 'Trier: Residenz in der Spätantike', p. 306; G. Breitner and M. Weidner, 'Neue Forschungen zur Entwicklung spätrömischer Wohnbebauung in Trier', *Archäologisches Nachrichtenblatt* 13, issue 3 (2008), p. 273. The dating of this phase is derived from Ausonius' oration thanking Gratian for making him consul in 379, in which he refers to works Gratian carried out at the forum and basilicas: Ausonius, Book XX, *The Thanksgiving of Ausonius of Bordeaux for his Consulship, Addressed to the Emperor Gratian*, I, p. 220.

<sup>53</sup>See above, p. 137.

Constans (337 – 350), only the cathedral appears to have undergone any extensive changes, although it is unclear why they did not also resume the unfinished projects begun by their father. It was only in the later fourth century, when Valentinian and Gratian made Trier their residence, that the abandoned projects were revived, and the overhaul of the townscape resumed in earnest.<sup>54</sup>

Trier's political status was also reflected in its spatial organisation in the fourth century, in that the city came to be very much dominated by the 'palatial enclave', with its imposing buildings associated with imperial power: the palace with its *Basilika*, the circus, the *Kaiserthermen*, and the cathedral complex.<sup>55</sup> There can be little doubt that this effect was entirely deliberate, since the concentration of such buildings in one part of town was paralleled in other late antique imperial residence cities, including Milan, Aquileia, and Constantinople, and an extensive policy of site clearance had to be implemented in Trier to provide the building plots selected for the *Kaiserthermen* and cathedral.<sup>56</sup> It was probably intended, on one hand, to facilitate the emperor's movement between venues. On the other hand, it was highly symbolic. By concentrating the various monumental buildings most associated with the presence and the glory of the emperor in the same part of town, the representational quality of each was reinforced by the presence of the others, and the overall sense of imperial splendour was enhanced.<sup>57</sup> Trier's fourth-century spatial organisation was, therefore, as much a product of the city's specific role in the imperial political system as was its architecture. The older buildings associated with local civic initiatives, notably the forum and the *Barbarathermen*, came to be very much overshadowed by the indubitably impressive palatial quarter.

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<sup>54</sup>Clemens and Clemens, *Trier*, p. 45, p. 48.

<sup>55</sup>Wightman, *Belgica*, p. 235.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup>Krencker et al, *Die Trierer Kaiserthermen*, p. 5.



Interestingly, however, a subtle change had taken place by the second half of the fourth century, under Valentinian and Gratian, which appears to suggest that topographical developments reflected even slight shifts in political circumstances. It seems that once the dynamism and energy that had accompanied Trier's initial elevation to imperial capital status had died away, and the Rhineland had been exposed in the mid-fourth century to a series of barbarian attacks, the desire to construct and renovate buildings aimed at displaying the glory of the empire was tempered by a heightened awareness of practical considerations. Moreover, the projects concerned became less ambitious, since they were generally confined to the completion of aborted Constantinian schemes. Thus, when work resumed at the *Kaiserthermen*, the complex retained its visual impact but was converted into barracks, presumably solving the problem of finding somewhere to accommodate the imperial guard in proximity to the palace. Nonetheless, it is important to note that this did not mean that monumental and aesthetic ideals had in any way been given up, since elsewhere in Trier smaller-scale measures were being implemented in the later fourth century to make the townscape more visually pleasing. In particular, very many of the streets in the vicinity of the palace were paved for the first time under Gratian, and a number were lined with porticos.<sup>58</sup>

Having seen how the remodelling of Trier's townscape in the fourth century was the direct result of the city's new-found status as an imperial capital, it should hardly surprise us to discover that the architectural and topographical changes that took place in Cologne during that period were considerably less dramatic. Nonetheless, as a

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<sup>58</sup>In excess of sixty of these paving slabs have been discovered: R. Schindler, 'Das Strassennetz des roemischen Trier', *Festschrift 100 Jahre Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier: Beiträge zur Archäologie und Kunst des Trierer Landes*, Trierer Grabungen und Forschungen 14 (Mainz, 1979), p. 136; L. Schwinden, 'Das römische Trier seit der Mitte des 4. Jahrhunderts', in *Kaiserresidenz und Bischofssitz*, p. 44; N. Gauthier et al, *Topographie chrétienne des cités de la Gaule: des origines au milieu du VIIIe siècle*, 12. Province ecclésiastique de Cologne (*Germania Secunda*) (Paris, 2002), p. 20; Wightman, *Belgica*, p. 238.

provincial capital, a temporary residence of Maximian and Constantine, a centre for locally-stationed military personnel, and a primary base for military commanders at the Rhine frontier, the city was vitally important to the empire's defensive strategy, and this ensured that some major alterations were made and new structures were added on the initiative of the emperors.

(Image removed for copyright reasons)

Figure 3.10: Plan of Roman Cologne. Adapted from B. Päffgen and S. Ristow, 'Die Römerstadt Köln zur Merowingerzeit', in R. Kaiser (ed.), *Die Franken: Roms Erben und Wegbereiter Europas* (Mainz, 1996), p. 146

Aside from the cathedral and the mausoleum that came to be St Gereon's church, discussed in the previous chapter, the only major new building constructed in fourth-century Cologne was the fortress of *Divitia*, now known as Deutz, which was situated directly across the Rhine from the city, and was Constantine's answer to the

damaging third-century incursions, and a symbol of the city's strategic importance.<sup>59</sup> It was built, according to a lost inscription, by the twenty-second legion of the Roman army in the presence of Constantine himself.<sup>60</sup> It was certainly built in the early fourth century, possibly c. 310 – 315, and was obviously intended to be directly provisioned from Cologne, since the commencement of work on a bridge over the Rhine is highlighted in the aforementioned panegyric to Constantine of 310.<sup>61</sup> However, the bridge evidently suffered similar delays to the *Kaiserthermen* and other projects in Trier, since dendrochronological tests on four oak stakes from the pillar foundations have determined that the trees were felled only in around 336.<sup>62</sup> This suggests that the effects of Constantine's diminishing interest in the Rhineland were felt significantly beyond the city in which he resided, and reverberated throughout the region as a whole.

The new bridge and fortress, once complete, may be described as crucial elements of Cologne's political topography, not least because they were self-evidently military in function. They offered immediate protection to Cologne and the surrounding part of the frontier, gave the Roman army a new stronghold on the eastern bank of the river, and, as the panegyrist suggested, intimidated the Franks. No doubt they also

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<sup>59</sup>H. Steuer, 'Stadtarchäologie in Köln', *Lübecker Schriften zur Archäologie und Kulturgeschichte* 14 (1988), p. 58; see above, pp. 144-7, 162-6 for the building history of the cathedral and St Gereon.

<sup>60</sup>The inscription was found in 1128 by the Benedictine abbot Rupert of Deutz as he cleared up following a fire, and was recorded in his description of the fire: Rupert of Deutz, *De Incendio Oppidi Tuitii sua Aetate Viso Liber Aureos*, VIII, ed. J -P. Migne, *PL* 170 (Paris, 1854), column 40. It is also contained in some manuscript editions of Rupert of Deutz's *Vita Heriberti*, and has therefore been associated with that text in some modern scholarship: Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne*, pp. 260, 283. However, Dinter argues convincingly that the text of the inscription was added to the *Vita Heriberti* later, by someone other than Rupert: P. Dinter (ed.), 'Rupert von Deutz, *Vita Heriberti*. Kritische Edition mit Kommentar und Untersuchungen', *Veröffentlichungen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 13 (1976), pp. 20-1. For the text of the inscription, see: *Römische Inschriften Datenbank* 24: www.rid24.de, I.D. no. 250K [accessed 19 March 2013]; *CIL* XIII, no. 8502. It reads: 'Virtute domini Constantini Maximi / Pii Felicissimi Invicti Augusti / suppressis domitisque Francis / in eorum terris castrum Divitensium / sub praesentia principis sui / devoti numini maiestatique / duoetvicensimani vota fecerunt'.

<sup>61</sup>'So far are [the Franks] from endeavouring to cross that river that they are rather in despair at the bridge you have begun': Panegyric VI, 11, in *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors*, trans. Nixon and Rodgers, p. 234; Eck, *Köln*, pp. 605-10. Further dating evidence is provided by coins of fourth-century date and brick stamps of the twenty-second legion: M. Carroll-Spillecke, 'Das römische Militärlager *Divitia* in Köln-Deutz', *Kölner Jahrbuch* 26 (1993), pp. 323, 330.

<sup>62</sup>Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne*, p. 263. Steuer has suggested a less precise date on the basis of dendrochronology, of c. 327-338: 'Stadtarchäologie in Köln', p. 58.

reassured the city's inhabitants, for whom the most recent barbarian incursions were within living memory.<sup>63</sup> They were, however, also quite clearly Constantinian prestige projects, intended to serve as statements of imperial power and munificence, striking additions to Cologne's townscape, and monuments to Roman control of the Rhine. The panegyrist ranked the bridge alongside Constantine's prestige projects in Trier, including the *Basilika* and circus, whilst the production of the commemorative inscription for *Divitia* offered an explicit reminder that the fortress was intended to be regarded as a generous bestowal from the emperor.

(Image removed for copyright reasons)

Figure 3.11: *Praetorium*, beginning of fourth century. Adapted from G. Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne* (Cologne, 2003), p. 186

Figure 3.12: *Praetorium*, following both phases of fourth-century restoration. Adapted from G. Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne* (Cologne, 2003), p. 188

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<sup>63</sup>These incursions took place in the 270s: see above, p.15.

Constantine's residence in Cologne is likely to have been the *Praetorium*, which lay adjacent to the city wall and immediately alongside the eastern gate, where resident military commanders presumably enjoyed an outlook across the Rhine from the upper floors, and easy access to the waterfront, should an expedition be deemed necessary.<sup>64</sup> Throughout the fourth century, its importance as a seat of government was matched by its architecture, since it was one of the largest and most ostentatious complexes in Cologne, and its various phases of redevelopment served only to enhance its footprint and its grandeur.<sup>65</sup> At the turn of the fourth century, the complex consisted of a long gallery running the entire length of its Rhine façade, with arcades opening on to the city wall on its ground floor. Behind this uniform frontage, numerous rooms of unknown function existed to the north, whilst an *aula regia* was located to the south. A separate building, perhaps a house, and a pillared hall stood between the *Praetorium* at its northern end and the city wall. Much of this late second-century complex, including the gallery, was destroyed by fire sometime before Constantine's renovations began.<sup>66</sup> Under Constantine, the pillared hall was extended by two bays and the gallery was rebuilt using many of its old walls, but its arcades on the ground level were walled up, as revealed by a coin of the emperor, minted between 309 and 313 and found in rubble behind these walls. The *aula regia* seems to have remained in use.<sup>67</sup> Whilst the building in itself was an established seat of government, Constantine's decision to renovate and reconstruct the *Praetorium* was almost certainly the result of contemporary strategic

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<sup>64</sup>Eck, *Köln*, pp. 367-8.

<sup>65</sup>L. Lavan, 'The *Praetoria* of Civil Governors in Late Antiquity', in L. Lavan (ed.), *Recent Research in Late Antique Urbanism* (Portsmouth, Rhode Island, 2001), p. 43, emphasises that *praetoria* were conceived of as monumental public buildings as well as private residences.

<sup>66</sup>This building is dated to the late second century on the basis of tiles bearing the stamp of Didius Julianus, governor of Lower Germany in the 180s, found in rubble in the lower level of the gallery, which was given up during Constantine's reign: Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne*, pp. 185-9.

<sup>67</sup>Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne*, pp. 187-9. This phase has elsewhere been dated to the period following the mid-fourth century Frankish attacks, but it seems more plausible to see it as a Constantinian project, given his visit to the city: H. Hellenkemper, 'Köln – Prätorium', in Horn (ed.), *Nordrhein-Westfalen*, archaeological section, p. 480.

considerations. The emperor had himself recently fought against the Franks, and the prioritisation of the Rhine frontier made it eminently sensible for him to establish a base in Cologne, to complement the new fortress and the bridge, in case future pre-emptive strikes or reprisals should be required. His decision to retain the same site for the *Praetorium*, as well as to construct the new bridge and fortress, may be interpreted as an important sign of imperial confidence in the face of the barbarian groups across the river; the emperor evidently felt that direct access from Cologne to *Barbaricum* was more an advantage than a danger to security.

Following Constantine's departure from Gaul, the continued emphasis on defending the Rhine frontier ensured that the *Praetorium* retained its importance, acting as the headquarters for the highest ranking military generals in the region. It was the setting for Silvanus' usurpation in 355, and was probably used later in the fourth century by Arbogast and his puppet emperor Eugenius, when they came to the Rhine to shore up frontier defences.<sup>68</sup> The next extensive building phase to be identified here is assigned to the second half of the fourth century, and took place after a significant proportion of the complex had been demolished, leaving only the *aula regia* and the southern part of the gallery intact. During this phase, a rectangular apsidal hall was built directly to the north of the surviving structures, and an extensive gallery was added to the north of that. Finally, an octagonal central building was erected, with large halls to either side. A coin minted between 364 and 378, which was found embedded in the foundations of the final phase of the gallery, provides a broad *terminus post quem* for the later works.<sup>69</sup> Their dating to Valentinian or Gratian's reign would indeed make most sense contextually, since it would coincide with the second phase of renovation

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<sup>68</sup>See above, pp. 20, 27-8, 42.

<sup>69</sup>Work halted for a few years, only to be resumed, as is revealed by the visible join between the first and second phases of building of the gallery: Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne*, pp. 189-190; Hellenkemper, 'Köln – Prätorium', in Horn (ed.), *Nordrhein-Westfalen*, archaeological section, pp. 480-4.

and renewal in fourth-century Trier, and since we know that both emperors engaged in efforts to defend the Rhine frontier, and would therefore have understood the strategic importance of Cologne as a base from which to command military campaigns.<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, coins could remain in circulation for long periods, so the whole of the second phase may be attributable to the end of the fourth century, whilst a date any later than that is unlikely on account of Roman withdrawal from the Rhineland. If the *Praetorium* were restored at the end of the fourth century, the work should probably be associated with Arbogast and Eugenius. This interpretation receives possible support from an inscription found in Cologne, which describes how Arbogast, bearing the honorary titles of *comes* and *vir clarissimus*, had an unspecified collapsed building reconstructed.<sup>71</sup> Whatever its precise date, the second phase of building at the *Praetorium* is confirmation that in the second half of the fourth century, the region was still considered a crucial part of the Western Roman Empire, and the subsequent abandonment of frontier defence was as yet entirely unforeseen.

Despite the clear political significance of these new buildings, it would be wrong to assume that fourth-century Cologne was important only because of its role in military strategy. It was also a vibrant provincial capital, with all of the amenities one would expect to find in a major Roman city, including, of course, a bathing complex and a forum. Additionally, its role as a key trading centre probably ensured the maintenance of four granaries or warehouses, which had been built close to the riverbank in the

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<sup>70</sup>See above, pp. 36, 40.

<sup>71</sup>*Römische Inschriften Datenbank 24*: www.rid24.de, I.D. no. 251K [accessed 19 March 2013]; *CIL XIII*, no. 8262; Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne*, p. 116; Doppelfeld, 'Köln von der Spätantike', p. 119. The text of the inscription reads: '[.....]s et imperatoribus nost(ris) / [...Theodo]sio Fl(avio) Arcadio et Fl(avio) Eugenio / [.....] et conlabsam ussu viri cl(arissimi) / [...Arboga]stis comitis et instantia V(iri) C(larissimi) / [.....Co]mitis Domesticorum ei(us) / [.....]s ex integro opere faciun / [dum cura]vit magister pr(imus) Aelius'.

second century.<sup>72</sup> However, continued redevelopment of the sites down the centuries means that we know relatively little of these buildings. Little is also known of the bathing complex, which was probably built in the second or third century, and remained in use in the fourth century, although floor and wall remains of the semi-circular *caldarium*, its associated furnace room, the *praefurnium*, the *palaestra*, and the *frigidarium* and its accompanying sewer have all been located.<sup>73</sup> These remains are certainly sufficient to indicate that the complex was of monumental proportions, even if comparisons in terms of scale with Trier's *Barbarathermen*, which covered an area in excess of four hectares, are probably over-optimistic.<sup>74</sup>

The forum, meanwhile, which covered the area of six *insulae*, appears to have been slightly eastwards, and therefore riverwards, of the city's geographical centre, possibly reflecting the importance of the Rhine as a natural frontier and a facilitator of economic exchange. Accordingly, the *Cardo Maximus* lay only a couple of blocks from the eastern city wall, and the privileged quarter of the city clearly lay between the *Cardo* and the river. Although our knowledge of the forum is incomplete, archaeological findings allow a partial reconstruction of its form. It was closed to the west by an unusual semi-circular hall with a diameter in excess of 100 metres, consisting of two parallel walls spaced 10 metres apart with a row of columns between them. Below this hall was a *cryptoporticus*. The Capitoline temple has been identified in the south-eastern corner of the town, but the hall has nonetheless been held to be associated with the religious functions of the forum, whereas the eastern part of the forum is claimed to

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<sup>72</sup>H. Hellenkemper, 'Köln – CCAA, Rheinhafen, Rheininsel', in Horn (ed.), *Nordrhein-Westfalen*, archaeological section, p. 468. On Cologne's economic importance, see especially Riedel, *Köln: Ein römisches Wirtschaftszentrum*.

<sup>73</sup>Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne*, p. 231; Eck, *Köln*, p. 372-3. Modern accounts of the baths reflect the paucity of information: G. Binding and B. Löhr, *Kleine Kölner Baugeschichte* (Cologne, 1978), p. 8; J. Piekalski, *Von Köln nach Krakau: Der Topographische Wandel früher Städte* (Bonn, 2001), p. 52; Carroll, *Romans*, pp. 49-50; J. von Elbe, *Roman Germany: A Guide to Sites and Museums* (Mainz, 1977), pp. 186-7.

<sup>74</sup>Fontaine, 'Die Barbarathermen', p. 104; Brühl, *Palatium*, pp. 11-12.



have housed its basilica and commercial area. A visitor to the city approaching along the Cologne-Bavay road, entering through the west gate, and proceeding along the *Decumanus* would arrive at precisely the mid-point of the hall, which, one might therefore assume, must have featured an archway permitting entry to the forum.<sup>75</sup> Unlike at Trier, however, no major building projects are known to have taken place at either the baths or the forum in the fourth century, although this may simply be a reflection of our limited understanding of the sites.

(Image removed for copyright reasons)

Figure 3.13: The semi-circular hall of the forum, Cologne.  
Adapted from G. Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne*  
(Cologne, 2003), p. 256

During the second half of the fourth century, Cologne's intra-mural topography came to be complemented by an extra-mural building, which is magnificent and puzzling in equal measure. This building, which later became the church of St Gereon, was architecturally unique in a Gallic context, and we must look to Rome for echoes of

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<sup>75</sup>H. Hellenkemper, 'Köln – Forum', in Horn (ed.), *Nordrhein-Westfalen*, archaeological section, p. 469; Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne*, pp. 256-257; Carroll, *Romans*, p. 46. Eck has doubted that this was the forum, given the location of the Capitoline temple, and the relatively small size of the site. There is, however, no more plausible alternative location: Eck, *Köln*, pp. 369-71.

its design.<sup>76</sup> Although the identities of the individuals responsible for or commemorated by this monument are unknown, its lavish internal decoration indicates that it was produced for an exceptionally wealthy individual at the very pinnacle of the social scale, perhaps one of the highest ranking military officials or even a member of the imperial family.<sup>77</sup> The first of these suggestions is especially plausible, given Cologne's strategic significance, and the fact that all inscriptions of fourth-century date for military personnel have been found in this area.<sup>78</sup> Despite the uncertainties, the building is an important indication that there were families or individuals in Cologne in the second half of the fourth century with the wherewithal to conceive such a complex, and craftsmen who could realise it.<sup>79</sup> One might reasonably speculate that the building's commissioner most likely came from the upper echelons of the military hierarchy, and found himself in Cologne because of the importance assigned to defending the Rhine frontier.

Our knowledge of the monumental buildings within Cologne's fourth-century townscape is incomplete, but nonetheless suggests that the city had certain noteworthy elements of what we might describe as a political topography. The rebuilt *Praetorium*, Deutz, and the bridge provided new topographical foci, and were all connected in some way with the imperial priority of maintaining control of the Rhine frontier. These projects took place against the backdrop of relatively limited investment in major building initiatives elsewhere in the Empire, as traditional civic munificence deteriorated, and ambitious projects were funded almost exclusively by the emperors or,

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<sup>76</sup>Brühl, *Palatium*, p. 31. For a full discussion of the architecture and date of this building, see above, pp. 165-6.

<sup>77</sup>The former suggestion is made by Deckers, 'St Gereon', pp. 128-30, and Versteegen, 'Spätantike Grabbau', p. 148. The latter suggestion has been put forward by Ristow, who suggests Constans, Magnentius, Decentius, Constantius II, and Julian as possibilities: *Frühes Christentum*, pp. 120-1.

<sup>78</sup>See above, pp. 18-19.

<sup>79</sup>Ristow, *Frühes Christentum*, p. 121.

occasionally, provincial governors.<sup>80</sup> Trier was an exceptional case because of its status as an imperial capital, and, as such, received improvements to its public amenities and appearance, the likes of which do not appear to have been carried out in Cologne. Nonetheless, fourth-century Cologne appears to have been a vibrant Roman provincial and military centre, in which ambitious building projects were being undertaken.

### 3.1.2 City walls

The urban centres of Trier and Cologne were not open to the countryside, but rather were surrounded and defined by a walled circuit. Wherever they existed, such city walls were an important component of the townscape in visual, practical, and also symbolic terms. Their sheer scale made them one of the most dominant structures within a city, as well as one of the first monumental constructions a visitor would see. They created a visual as well as conceptual boundary between inside and outside, protected and exposed, and urban and suburban or rural, and therefore helped to define and give meaning to the intra-mural space.<sup>81</sup> Their practical importance, as the cities' primary means of protection in the event of attack, was heightened in Late Antiquity, resulting in the construction of new circuits around many cities, particularly in northern and central Gaul, often creating fortress-like enclosures around only fractions of the existing urban areas.<sup>82</sup> They were also intended to be iconic, and symbolised the majesty, power, and generosity of their sponsors, usually the central imperial

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<sup>80</sup>Liebeschuetz, 'Ancient City', p. 8; La Rocca, 'Public Buildings', p. 164; Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity*, pp. 35, 38.

<sup>81</sup>M. Parker-Pearson and C. Richards, 'Ordering the World: Perceptions of Architecture, Space and Time', in M. Parker-Pearson and C. Richards (eds), *Architecture and Order: Approaches to Social Space* (London, 1994), p. 24; La Rocca, 'Public Buildings', pp. 164-5.

<sup>82</sup>Loseby, 'Decline and Change', pp. 68, 76; Wightman, *Belgica*, pp. 221-3; H. Dey, *The Aurelian Wall and the Refashioning of Imperial Rome* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 129.

authorities.<sup>83</sup> In short, as the sixth-century Italian Cassiodorus succinctly summarised, walls were ‘an adornment in times of peace, a precaution in times of war’.<sup>84</sup>

Unsurprisingly, given many contemporary writers’ emphasis upon political events, it is the walls’ defensive role that is most prominent in our sources concerning fourth-century Trier and Cologne. In Trier, our clearest example comes in 353, in the context of Magnentius’ usurpation, when, as the usurpation attempt began to falter, local dignitaries in the city withdrew their support for the usurper, switched their allegiance to the Eastern emperor, Constantius, and shut the gates of the city to Magnentius’ brother and general, Decentius.<sup>85</sup> As well as protecting the city’s inhabitants from Magnentius and Decentius’ troops, this gesture had the benefits of denying Decentius access to the seat of government, and sending a clear message of Trier’s revised political standpoint to Constantius. With regard to Cologne, Ammianus’ description of how the city withstood an ‘obstinate siege’ before eventually being raided by the Franks in the 350s almost certainly refers to the storming and eventual breaching of the city walls.<sup>86</sup> We should probably envisage that the penetrability of Cologne’s walls was caused by a depletion in frontier personnel following Magnentius’ usurpation, since, as we saw in Chapter One, the Franks primarily operated in relatively small groups, and their military skill lay in hand-to-hand combat, rather than in prolonged siege warfare.<sup>87</sup>

In addition to this clear evidence of the walls’ defensive importance in the fourth century, Dey has suggested that a specific group of cities in Gaul received new walls in the late third century for predominantly symbolic reasons. He argues that this relatively

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<sup>83</sup>Loseby, ‘Decline and Change’, p. 76.

<sup>84</sup>Cassiodorus, *Variae*, I, 28, ed. T. Mommsen, *MGH AA XII* (Berlin, 1894), pp. 29-30.

<sup>85</sup>Ammianus Marcellinus, XV, 6, 4, p. 158; see above, pp. 91-2.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*, XV, 8, 19, p. 174; see above, p. 25.

<sup>87</sup>See above, pp. 35-7.

small group included Le Mans, Rennes, Nantes, Sens, Senlis, Angers, Orléans, and, importantly for us, Cologne, and asserts that the elaborate patterned brick- and stonework in the facings of the walls of these cities indicates that they were intended to be symbols of the revised ideology of imperial rulership. They were inspired by court ceremonial, art, literature, and, specifically, the *adventus* ceremony, all of which were intended to proclaim the majesty of the emperors. It is surely significant, he suggests, that the emperors and their local representatives, the provincial governors, were making more entrances than ever before into provincial cities in the late third century. As the emperors reached the climactic moment of crossing the threshold into the city, the highly patterned brick- and stonework of the walls provided a fitting visual backdrop.<sup>88</sup>



Figure 3.14: *Römerturm* in Cologne. Copyright author.

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<sup>88</sup>H. Dey, 'Art, Ceremony, and City Walls: The Aesthetics of Imperial Resurgence in the Late Roman West', *Journal of Late Antiquity* 3, 1 (Spring 2010), pp. 6-27; Dey, *Aurelian Wall*, pp. 124-30. The comparison he draws between Cologne and Le Mans echoes Ganz's study of Cologne's walls: U. –W. Ganz, 'Zur Datierung der römischen Stadtmauer von Köln und zu den farbigen Steinornamenten in Gallien und Germanien', *Jahrbuch des römisch-germanischen Zentralmuseums Mainz* 52 (2005), p. 223.

There can be little disputing that the walls Dey describes were costly investments at a time of relatively subdued levels of civic or imperial spending, or that they were of sufficiently high technical standard that one would not imagine them to have been the product of hurried or purely pragmatic measures. Meanwhile, the patterned brickwork of Cologne's *Römerturm*, the surviving north-west corner tower of the Roman city-wall, confirms that there are certainly some grounds for Dey's inclusion of Cologne as an outlier among his group of cities with similarly designed enceintes. Throughout Dey's article, however, Cologne stands out as an anomaly in several respects, and there are various reasons to doubt that the city really does belong with the otherwise convincing group Dey describes. In the first place, the results of dendrochronological tests on a strut place the construction of Cologne's city walls around the last decade of the first century AD, not the third century.<sup>89</sup> To explain this away, Dey suggests that the circuit may have been repaired and the corner towers replaced in the third century, perhaps during the reign of Gallienus, since a votive inscription in his name and that of his son, Saloninus, was found in the facing of a tower demolished in 1890.<sup>90</sup> A related inscription, reading '*C(olonia) C(laudia) A(ra) A(grippinensium) / [Valeria]na Gallieniana*', was once embedded in the middle archway of the north gate.<sup>91</sup> In light of this epigraphic evidence, and the stylistic similarities between Cologne's *Römerturm* and the other walls elsewhere with patterned

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<sup>89</sup>Hellenkemper, 'Köln 260-355 AD. Ein unruhiges Jahrhundert kölnischer Stadtgeschichte', in A. Rieche et al (eds), *Grabung, Forschung, Präsentation: Festschrift Gundolf Precht* (Mainz, 2002), p. 48. This dating is supported by pottery dated to the first century, discovered during excavations in 1948 and 1979 of the walls either side of the main western gate: Ganz, 'Zur Datierung der römischen Stadtmauer', p. 216.

<sup>90</sup>Dey, 'Art, Ceremony', p. 15. The text of the inscription reads: *Deo sancto N[eptuno pro] / salute dd(ominorum) nn(ostrorum) Va[leriani et] / Gallieni AA(ugustorum) [et Salo]nini Valeri[ani nob(ilissimi)] / Caes(aris) et Co[rneliae Saloninae] / Matri dd(ominorum) nn(ostrorum) - - -mi]/lites o[- - -] / ad...: Römische Inschriften Datenbank 24: www.rid24.de, I.D. no. 781K [accessed 19 February 2013].*

<sup>91</sup>H. Hellenkemper, 'The Roman Defences of Cologne – Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium', in J. Maloney and B. Hobley (eds), *Roman Urban Defences in the West* (London, 1983), p. 28; *Römische Inschriften Datenbank 24: www.rid24.de, I.D. no. 110K* [accessed 19 February 2013]; *CIL XIII*, no. 8261.

brick- and stonework, Dey's theory seems plausible. It is, moreover, lent some credence by recently-discovered archaeological evidence that some sections of the city walls were indeed built or – more likely – rebuilt in the third century.<sup>92</sup> However, there is no suggestion that these sections included the patterned towers, and Hellenkemper has previously emphasised that most of the available archaeological findings point to a single building campaign for the foundations and superstructure of Cologne's entire enceinte, with no noticeable variations in building technique, and no visible joins to indicate different construction phases.<sup>93</sup> The only exceptions to this, he reported, were the foundations of some of the gates and the south-east corner tower, known today as the *Ubierrmonument*, which were of earlier date than the rest of the circuit.<sup>94</sup> Meanwhile, the two inscriptions are likely to be later additions.<sup>95</sup> As such, whilst we should accept that a limited campaign to repair or upgrade Cologne's city walls did take place in the third century, Dey's hypothesis that the corner towers were replaced at this time remains unsubstantiated.

A second problem is one that Dey himself acknowledges, but does not really confront. If several of Cologne's towers were rebuilt with patterned brick and stone facings under Gallienus and his son – which, as we have seen, is by no means proven – then these towers are interesting forerunners to the comparable circuits elsewhere in Gaul, but were built in a very different context and can hardly be considered part of the same programme of works. According to Dey, all of the circuits he discusses, except Cologne's, were built in the last quarter of the third century, as a means of reasserting imperial control once the territorial integrity of the Roman Empire had been restored.

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<sup>92</sup>Excavations of a 22.5m stretch of the city wall under the modern cathedral sacristy discovered that foundation stones were placed on top of a backfilled pit, which contained potsherds of black Firnis ware and Mayen ware: Ganz, 'Zur Datierung der römischen Stadtmauer', p. 217.

<sup>93</sup>Hellenkemper, 'Roman Defences', pp. 27-8.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 27; Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne*, pp. 168-9.

<sup>95</sup>Hellenkemper, 'Roman Defences', p. 28.

By contrast, the aforementioned inscription in the names of Gallienus and Saloninus indicates that the works carried out in Cologne can only have taken place before 260, when the usurper Postumus killed Saloninus, whom Gallienus had left in charge at the Rhine, and established the Gallic Empire. It is obvious that we cannot overlook this distinction between Cologne and the other cities, not least because to do so would ignore Dey's own insistence upon a rigorous historical approach, which takes account of the fact that the building of walls was a response to specific spatial, socio-political, and ideological conditions, in a given place, at a certain time.<sup>96</sup>

A further difficulty lies within Dey's interpretation of the symbolic intent behind the construction of the elaborate new walls at several cities and the supposed new towers at Cologne. He suggests that we should see these measures as an attempt to garner prestige and to provide a fitting backdrop to increasingly frequent *adventus* ceremonies.<sup>97</sup> If this were a major motivation in Cologne, however, we might wonder why the sponsor of the project chose to replace the towers rather than the gates. It was, after all, through one of the gates that the emperor or other dignitary would arrive, while many of the towers, including the surviving *Römerturm*, were at least a couple of hundred metres from the nearest gateway into the city; too far for the decoration to make any contribution to the visual spectacle of *adventus*, or for it to be fully appreciated by a visitor to the city. Dey's explanation that the measures were associated with the *adventus* ceremony therefore will not suffice insofar as Cologne is concerned, and the city's towers seem to be related to the new patterned walls constructed elsewhere in Gaul only insofar as they drew upon the same architectural fashion.

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<sup>96</sup>Dey, 'Art, Ceremony', pp. 6-30; D. S. Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay: AD 180-395* (London, 2004), p. 257.

<sup>97</sup>Dey, 'Art, Ceremony', pp. 19-27.



Yet the elaborate patterned brickwork of the standing Roman tower in Cologne leaves us in little doubt of its intentional aesthetic appeal, and this must be explained somehow. The most likely explanation lies in the city's specific geo-political circumstances within the Roman Empire, which went some considerable way to determining the design not only of the towers, but of the entire enceinte. Cologne's walls were almost four kilometres in length, and enclosed an area of just under 97 hectares.<sup>98</sup> The city's frontier location, the date of its elevation to the status of a Roman colony, and the tidy building technique mean that the circuit has traditionally been dated to c. 50 AD, but, as previously noted, recent dendrochronological evidence now places its construction in the last decade of the first century.<sup>99</sup> In accordance with Cologne's dual functionality as a *civitas* and provincial capital on one hand and a military centre on the other, and indeed as per Cassiodorus' description, its walls appear to have been the result of a marrying of defensive and aesthetic considerations. They are thought to have incorporated nine gates and twenty-one towers, and had foundations three metres deep and dimensions above ground of around two-and-a-half metres in width and eight metres in height. They were surrounded by a moat, which was between nine and twelve metres wide, and three or four metres deep.<sup>100</sup> Clearly, then, they would have been both visually striking, and very difficult to breach. The main gates on the *Cardo* and *Decumanus*, meanwhile, although imperfectly understood, appear to have been of massive proportions, to judge by the extant side arch of the north gate, which would

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<sup>98</sup>Hellenkemper, 'Roman Defences', p. 23; Binding and Löhr, *Baugeschichte*, p. 13; H. Hellenkemper, 'Köln – CCAA, Stadtmauer', in Horn (ed.), *Nordrhein-Westfalen*, archaeological section, p. 463; Brühl, *Palatium*, p. 11; Eck, *Köln*, pp. 355-6.

<sup>99</sup>U. Süßenbach, *Die Stadtmauer des römischen Köln*, pp. 16-19; Binding and Löhr, *Baugeschichte*, p. 13; Brühl, *Palatium*, p. 11; von Elbe, *Roman Germany*, p. 186; Hellenkemper, 'Köln – CCAA, Stadtmauer', in Horn (ed.), *Nordrhein-Westfalen*, archaeological section, p. 466; H. Hellenkemper, 'Archäologische Forschungen in Köln seit 1980', in H. Hellenkemper (ed.), *Archäologie in Nordrhein-Westfalen: Geschichte im Herzen Europas* (Cologne, 1990), p. 77; Hellenkemper, 'Köln 260-355 AD', p. 48.

<sup>100</sup>Hellenkemper, 'Roman Defences', p. 26; Binding and Löhr, *Baugeschichte*, p. 13; Brühl, *Palatium*, p. 11; Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne*, p. 144.

have been one of two such arches flanking a much larger central arch. This not only gave them an impressively monumental appearance, but was also practical from the perspective of facilitating the movement of troops and goods.<sup>101</sup> When viewed in the context of this overall scheme, which combined the defensibility and practicality required by Cologne's frontier location with the aesthetic appeal expected of a prominent Roman city, the decision to construct the towers with elaborate patterned brickwork seems far less peculiar a phenomenon, whatever their time of construction.

Trier's wall-circuit, meanwhile, was the longest of all Gallic *civitates*, at approximately six kilometres, enclosing an area of 285 hectares.<sup>102</sup> Unfortunately, the date at which it was built remains unclear, since the *terminus post quem*, provided by finds from a graveyard overlaid by the *Porta Nigra*, is the second half of the second century, whilst the *terminus ante quem* falls strictly only two centuries later, when it was mentioned by Ammianus in his account of Magnentius' usurpation.<sup>103</sup> Other clues that might help us narrow down this timeframe suggest contradictory dates. The regularly-coursed building work, lack of *spolia*, and extent of the circuit suggest, for example, that the walls were built at a fairly early date, perhaps during the second half of the second century.<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, excavations between 1996 and 1999 in the area of Bergstrasse and Schützenstrasse, not far north of the amphitheatre, uncovered part of the city wall and the Ruwer valley aqueduct, which is generally seen to have been built in association with the construction of the *Kaiserthermen* in the early fourth century. Importantly, the excavators established that the builders of the wall had worked around the aqueduct, which must, therefore, have been built first, so this section of the

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<sup>101</sup>Eck, *Köln*, p. 357. The gates on more minor roads into Cologne were considerably smaller: Hellenkemper, 'Roman Defences', p. 23. For a reconstruction of the north gate, see Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne*, pp. 146-7.

<sup>102</sup>Brühl, *Palatium*, p. 71; Wightman, *Trier*, p. 93.

<sup>103</sup>Ammianus Marcellinus, XV, 6, 4, p. 158; Wightman, *Trier*, p. 92.

<sup>104</sup>Brühl, *Palatium*, p. 71; Wightman, *Trier*, pp. 95-6.

walls is extremely unlikely to be of earlier date than the fourth century.<sup>105</sup> The most reasonable explanation for this conflicting evidence is that Trier's walls were built in the second century, but further work was carried out in the fourth century to embellish them or repair damage. It certainly seems likely that upgrades to the city walls, one of the most prominent elements of the city's monumental architecture, would have been included in the programme of works Constantine implemented in Trier, whilst it is also plausible that the walls required some restoration after more than a century.

At three metres thick and probably six metres in height, Trier's walls would have been difficult for an enemy force to breach, but aesthetic considerations appear to have been prioritised over defensive concerns in their design.<sup>106</sup> The immense circuit, which enclosed an area far larger than that which was occupied even during Trier's fourth-century heyday, was certainly an impressive marker of civic or, more likely, imperial munificence, but its tremendous length rendered it virtually indefensible in practical terms.<sup>107</sup> This was evidently not a major concern at the time of construction, since the primary aim of the project was obviously to create a new monument to the city's prosperity and its status within the imperial system. It is also possible that the large intra-mural space was intended to allow the city to grow without spreading beyond its walls, although it is difficult to see why this would have been a particular consideration, given that other cities, including Cologne, had substantial extra-mural suburban settlements.<sup>108</sup> It is easy to understand why Trier's vast wall-circuit was retained in the fourth century, since it was already an impressive structure befitting an imperial capital, and, as the example of the *Barbarathermen* shows, there was no

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<sup>105</sup>H. –P. Kuhnen, 'Stadtmauer und römische Ruwertal-Wasserleitung im archäologischen Fenster Schützenstrasse/Bergstrasse', in Kuhnen (ed.), *Das römische Trier*, pp. 221-2.

<sup>106</sup>This estimation of their height is based on the position of a door in the *Porta Nigra*, which presumably would have led to a parapet: Wightman, *Trier*, p. 93.

<sup>107</sup>Wightman, *Belgica*, p. 87.

<sup>108</sup>See below, p. 248.

ideological imperative to pull down or replace existing monumental structures that were still in good condition. The extent of the circuit, and the practical difficulty in defending it, would have given little cause for concern, since the emperors who periodically resided in Trier in the fourth century had every reason to be confident that the defensive situation was under control.<sup>109</sup>

However, we might reasonably expect that the extent of Trier's walls would have become a problem at the end of the fourth century, when other ordinary *civitas* capitals were receiving new, smaller circuits, frontier troops had been depleted, and Trier and the Rhineland no longer enjoyed the security provided by the emperors' presence.<sup>110</sup> We therefore need to consider why Trier's walls were never replaced with new ones that were more easily defended. The most plausible explanation lies in the rapidly-changing political circumstances of the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth century, discussed in Chapter One. We have seen how the withdrawal of the imperial court from Trier around 380 paved the way for the usurpation of Magnus Maximus, which, in turn, led to a spate of barbarian incursions across the Rhine frontier. Thereafter, in c. 395, the Gallic praetorian prefecture was transferred to Arles. The situation at the Rhine frontier then remained stable for over a decade, but the Emperor Honorius' general, Stilicho, was preoccupied in Italy in dealing with the Gothic leaders, Alaric and Radagaisus. From 406, the invasion of the Vandals, Alans, and Sueves, the usurpations of Constantine III and Jovinus, and the Frankish incursions dramatically altered the political situation in the Rhineland.<sup>111</sup> This series of events, and the speed with which they unfolded, created a context in which a major imperial building project was simply inconceivable. Thus, one might argue that by the

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<sup>109</sup>See above, pp. 21-33.

<sup>110</sup>La Rocca, 'Public Buildings', pp. 164-5; Loseby, 'Decline and change', p. 68; Wightman, *Belgica*, pp. 221-3; Dey, 'Art, Ceremony', pp. 11-14.

<sup>111</sup>See above, pp. 52-81.

time it may have been recognised that Trier needed new walls, it was already too late to build them.

To summarise, the wall-circuits of both Trier and Cologne were essential components of the cities' fourth-century topographies in visual, practical, and symbolic terms, despite undergoing only relatively minor changes during that period. They created an image of a unified townscape, represented the prestige and power of the emperors, and were the cities' main form of protection in the event of an attack, even if Trier's enceinte was not easily defended. Additionally, their aesthetically-pleasing characteristics and early construction dates ensured that they gave Trier and Cologne something of a head-start, at a time when walls were being built in other cities throughout Gaul and were becoming increasingly prominent in contemporary conceptions of urbanism.

### 3.1.3 Residential space

The townscapes of Trier and Cologne were, of course, made up of more than just monumental public buildings, Christian churches, and the complexes associated with imperial government and administration. The cities were also home to thousands of people, and, as such, contained very many private residential dwellings. As one might expect, archaeological findings to date suggest that the residential architecture in both cities in the fourth century complemented their monumental buildings, reflecting the presence in the city of prosperous individuals connected with the cities' respective governmental and military functions.<sup>112</sup> However, the extent of comparability between private residential architecture and representational imperial architecture remains

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<sup>112</sup>Goethert and Kiessel, 'Trier – Residenz in der Spätantike', p. 304.

unclear, since very few complete houses have been excavated, and we are at present heavily reliant on stylistic differences in decoration, rather than upon typology of structures, as a means of dating building phases.<sup>113</sup> A significant amount of further archaeological work is also required if we are to uncover and reconstruct the humbler residential dwellings within either Trier or Cologne, although it appears that both cities lacked the large multi-storey residential blocks found in Mediterranean cities.<sup>114</sup>

In the first to third centuries, the most popular residential areas of Trier, particularly amongst the city's wealthiest inhabitants, were to the north and east of the city centre. A further hub of settlement activity existed to the south, but was less sought-after because of its proximity to industrial enterprises.<sup>115</sup> Within these popular residential areas, the function of a street within the grid seems to have determined how many building frontages it possessed, and what sort of buildings these were.<sup>116</sup> Extensive excavations in 2006 in the area of Fleischstrasse, not far from the cathedral, for example, uncovered an entire *insula*, bordered by parallel streets running north-south. The eastern street was a major axis leading to the forum, and was therefore occupied by multi-storey residential and commercial buildings, which made the most of the available space and the volume of passing traffic, and probably housed lower-status families. The western one, on the other hand, was a quiet back street, and, as such, its frontage was occupied only by two large peristyle houses.<sup>117</sup> The contrast between these two streets suggests that Trier's wealthy inhabitants sought to monopolise prestigious central locations, but were less keen to tolerate the noise, dirt, and smells of the main thoroughfares.

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<sup>113</sup>K. Goethert, 'Die Wohnbebauung', in *Rettet das archäologische Erbe*, pp. 35-6; Breitner and Weidner, 'Neue Forschungen', p. 269; p. 273.

<sup>114</sup>Clemens and Clemens, *Trier*, p. 53; Eck, *Köln*, p. 384.

<sup>115</sup>Wightman, *Trier*, p. 91.

<sup>116</sup>Laurence has shown that this was also the case in Roman Pompeii: *Roman Pompeii: Space and Society* (Oxford, 2007), p. 103.

<sup>117</sup>Breitner and Weidner, 'Neue Forschungen', p. 269.

From approximately the mid-third century, when Trier was the residence of the Gallic legate, the vicinity of the palace complex, which had probably long since been a desirable neighbourhood, became the preferred location for more elaborate residential dwellings. Unsurprisingly, this continued when the city became an imperial capital, and home to a resident upper class associated with the imperial court and the praetorian prefecture.<sup>118</sup> At this time, many houses in the vicinity of the palace complex were rebuilt or upgraded, and the architectural techniques employed in these works corresponded to those which were prevalent in Tetrarchic architecture, both in Trier and elsewhere. In particular, the universal use of limestone and sandstone was given up in favour of more mixed construction materials and a greater use of tile courses.<sup>119</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, the decision of a local factory owner to build a new villa on Südallee in Trier, immediately south of the *Kaiserthermen*, provided the opportunity to excavate one such late Roman élite residence. Here, an existing grandiose house had been extensively remodelled, with its more representative rooms given new mosaics and perhaps extended, although the building's façade remained unchanged; this refashioning is thought to have occurred in the early fourth century, on the basis of the style of the mosaics, although further excavations would be required to firm up the dating evidence.<sup>120</sup> The prestigious location of this residence was probably further enhanced by the proximity of the new *Kaiserthermen*, which extended the imperial palatial quarter into its immediate vicinity. A similar development took place immediately south of Südallee on Gilbertstrasse, where a second-century house with intricate wall paintings was taken down and replaced with an extensive new dwelling.<sup>121</sup> More interestingly, the

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<sup>118</sup>G. Breitner, 'Wohnen im spätantiken Trier: Eine Standortbestimmung', in Drauschke et al (eds), *Untergang und Neuanfang*, p. 279.

<sup>119</sup>Breitner and Weidner, 'Neue Forschungen', p. 272; Breitner, 'Wohnen im spätantiken Trier', p. 277.

<sup>120</sup>Goethert, 'Die Wohnbebauung', p. 35; Goethert and Kiessel, 'Trier – Residenz in der Spätantike', p. 305.

<sup>121</sup>Goethert and Kiessel, 'Trier – Residenz in der Spätantike', p. 305.

aforementioned residential and commercial structures on the main Roman street in the area of Fleischstrasse were also demolished at the end of the third century, to be replaced by upmarket houses with baths, extensive hypocaust systems, and decorated walls and floors.<sup>122</sup> It would appear that the hindrance of being located on what was still a busy main road was now subordinated to the prestige of having one's house in close proximity to the imperial palace. In addition to these grand urban residences, there existed a number of large, well-equipped villas in the hinterland of fourth-century Trier, including one at Pfalzel, which, on the basis of its size and decoration, is thought to have belonged to the emperors themselves, and others at Konz, Trier-Zewen, and Trier-Euren.<sup>123</sup> The primary focus of this thesis is, however, on the urban centres of Trier and Cologne, so there is neither time nor space available to discuss these buildings further.

As we have seen, the boom-time of the early fourth century in Trier was not to last, and some of the subsequent developments in residential housing seem to reflect the more troubled decades of the mid-fourth century. Particularly around the fringes of the settled area, individual houses or sometimes entire *insulae* were abandoned. In some instances, the courtyards of these properties were now used as gardens, stables, or, in very rare cases, for burials.<sup>124</sup> One such burial, dated approximately to the mid-fourth century, was discovered in 2007, during excavations of a house in the area of Friedrich-Wilhelm Strasse, to the south of the *Barbarathermen*. The decoration of the house and other finds within it suggest that people continued to live here alongside the burial until around the first decade of the fifth century.<sup>125</sup> It is not clear how widespread this practice of intra-mural burial became in fourth-century Trier, but it is known to have

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<sup>122</sup>Breitner and Weidner, 'Neue Forschungen', p. 272.

<sup>123</sup>Goethert and Kiessel, 'Trier – Residenz in der Spätantike', p. 306; Heinen, *Trevererland*, p. 267; H. Cüppers, 'Die spätantike Stadt – Kaiserresidenz und Bischofssitz', in *Kaiserresidenz und Bischofssitz*, p. 74.

<sup>124</sup>Breitner and Weidner, 'Neue Forschungen', p. 273; Breitner, 'Wohnen im spätantiken Trier', pp. 279-80.

<sup>125</sup>Breitner and Weidner, 'Neue Forschungen', pp. 273-4.



been repeated at a handful of other sites within the city, and is, therefore, an indication not only of the breaking down of the barrier between the world of the living and the world of the dead, as was promoted by the growth of saint cults, but also of a disregard of the social norms governing the use of space in the Roman city.<sup>126</sup> Further archaeological work is required if we are to discover whether and to what extent Valentinian and Gratian's revival of public building projects was replicated in the private residential sphere, but the evidence available so far, particularly from the site around Friedrich-Wilhelm Strasse, suggests that the enthusiasm that had driven projects in the early fourth century had largely run out, and work was generally limited to changes within single rooms of existing buildings.<sup>127</sup>

In several important ways, therefore, the use of residential space in Trier mirrored the city's position within the imperial system. Alterations and redevelopments were carried out with gusto in the early fourth century, contemporary with Constantine's public building projects, but appear to have stopped during the tumultuous middle decades, when some buildings and areas were abandoned. In the Valentinianic period, just as the emperors revived Constantinian schemes and carried out comparatively modest works of their own, so Trier's grand residential houses seem to have undergone renewed, but rather less ambitious, renovation programmes.

The zoning of residential housing in Cologne, meanwhile, remains imperfectly understood, since the heavily built-up centre of the modern city has prevented extensive excavations in many areas, meaning that most of our evidence is confined to the north-

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<sup>126</sup>Breitner and Weidner, 'Neue Forschungen', p. 273.

<sup>127</sup>*Ibid.*; Breitner, 'Wohnen im spätantiken Trier', pp. 279-80.

eastern corner of the Roman city.<sup>128</sup> This limited evidence suggests that residential space may have been organised in a similar fashion as in Trier, in that the area immediately south and east of the north gate, where residents had convenient access to the *Praetorium* and the forum, but were somewhat removed from the busy and noisy major routes through the city, always seems to have been occupied by lavish and prestigious houses. In making this claim, however, we must remain mindful that traces of grand residences, in the form of mosaics and murals, have also been discovered in other parts of town.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, it is clear that following Cologne's foundation, its population grew quickly, to the extent that by the fourth century, relatively dense extra-mural settlement also existed to the north, south, and west.<sup>130</sup> This was not the case in Trier, where the vast size of the intra-mural area helped to ensure that the area immediately outside the city walls was never densely occupied.

The north-eastern area of Cologne appears to have retained its prestige in the late Roman period, although, in contrast to Trier, there seems to have been no significant upsurge in building activity in the fourth century, and excavations have instead revealed periodic upgrades to houses from the third century onwards. One clear example of this is the enormous peristyle residence that stood on the site now occupied by Cologne's *Römisch-Germanisches Museum*, in the north-eastern corner of the Roman city. This house, built in the second half of the first century, was redesigned and lavishly redecorated during the second quarter of the third century, whilst essentially retaining its original footprint and layout. It was at this time that a mosaic depicting

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<sup>128</sup>Steuer, 'Stadtarchäologie in Köln', p. 58; H. Hellenkemper, 'Köln – Wohnviertel', in Horn (ed.), *Nordrhein-Westfalen*, archaeological section, p. 470. Hellenkemper suggests that, based on limited data from other areas, this north-eastern part of the city seems to be representative of developments throughout the city as a whole.

<sup>129</sup>Eck, *Köln*, pp. 380-1; Hellenkemper, 'Archäologische Forschungen', p. 77.

<sup>130</sup>Steuer, 'Stadtarchäologie in Köln', p. 58; Hellenkemper, 'Köln – CCAA, Stadtmauer', in Horn (ed.), *Nordrhein-Westfalen*, archaeological section, p. 466; Hellenkemper, 'Archäologische Forschungen', p. 78.

Dionysos was installed, which is still preserved *in situ* in the museum. The house appears to have been occupied until the mid-fourth century, when it was destroyed by fire and never restored.<sup>131</sup> This seems somewhat peculiar, given its prestigious location close to the *Praetorium*, but it is not reflective of a pattern of abandonment; pottery and other evidence suggest continued occupation and remodelling of the surrounding houses in the fourth century. A well dated to the fourth or fifth century was installed in the *insula* in the north-eastern corner of the city, for example, whilst a room apparently belonging to a residential dwelling had coins dated as late as the reign of Valens under its floor surface.<sup>132</sup> Other fourth-century homeowners seem to have been trying to extend their frontages further into the street, although not far enough to prevent the flow of traffic.<sup>133</sup>

This gradual evolution from the third century onwards can probably be explained by Cologne's political circumstances, which, as we have seen, were markedly different from those of Trier. In the first place, Cologne's status as capital of the Gallic Empire in the 260s would have ensured that important personnel and resources were concentrated in the city at that time, so the redevelopment of grand residential housing is unsurprising. Thereafter, its importance as a military command centre and provincial capital would have guaranteed the continued presence of numerous high-ranking military and civilian officials, who would have continued to periodically update their residences, without there being any dramatic influx of imperial aristocrats such as accompanied the arrival of the imperial court and praetorian prefecture in Trier.

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<sup>131</sup>Horn, 'Das Leben im römischen Rheinland', in Horn (ed.), *Nordrhein-Westfalen*, p. 205; Hellenkemper, 'Köln – Wohnviertel', in Horn (ed.), *Nordrhein-Westfalen*, archaeological section, p. 472; Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne*, pp. 136-7; Eck, *Köln*, pp. 379-80. Both Eck and Wolff associate the destruction of the house with the Frankish incursions of the mid-fourth century, but it could just as easily have been destroyed by an accidental fire.

<sup>132</sup>M. Dodt, 'Römische Bauten in den nördlichen Insulae F1 und G1 der Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium', *Kölner Jahrbuch* 35 (2002), pp. 635-9.

<sup>133</sup>Eck, *Köln*, p. 378.

#### 3.1.4 Summary

At the beginning of this chapter, Krautheimer's term 'political topography' was introduced as a promising framework within which we might attempt to reconstruct and understand the townscapes of Trier and Cologne in the fourth century. This concept is, however, defined more broadly here than in Krautheimer's own work, to serve as a useful means of referring to buildings and areas that owed their form and location to their city's role within the imperial system, as well as to purely local political considerations. According to this broader definition, Trier and Cologne certainly had extensive political topographies in the fourth century, since their townscapes were very much shaped by their different roles in the imperial system.

In Trier, the *Decumanus* had always been the most important thoroughfare with the most enhanced monumental aspect, since it was the route by which the majority of visitors from other regions of the empire would arrive. In the fourth century, however, the city's townscape came to be dominated not by the buildings along this road, but by the imperial palatial quarter, which was formed by the residential, ceremonial, political, and social venues required by and associated with the emperor. It was in this area that major building efforts were concentrated, and the resulting new structures, including the *Kaiserthermen*, *Basilika*, and cathedral, complemented the existing circus, which appears to have been modernised. The city's political status was also reflected in the residential sphere, as previously humble dwellings were demolished to be replaced by grander houses, and older residences were renovated to suit the tastes and expectations of the many wealthy members of the élite who came to Trier as a result of its new-found political importance. In order to avoid diminishing the visual aspect of the townscape, the city retained its enormous, somewhat impractical circuit of walls.

Cologne, meanwhile, developed in ways that reflected its role as a military command centre more than its significance as a provincial capital. Its new buildings included the fortress of Deutz on the opposite bank of the Rhine, and the bridge that connected the two banks of the river. These additions not only offered protection to the strategically important city, but also gave the Roman army a new base from which to campaign against the Franks. The rebuilding of the *Praetorium* was a further reflection of Cologne's military role, whilst the construction of the building that became St Gereon's church is a powerful indication of the type of affluent individual, perhaps a general in the Roman army, who could be found there. Little is known of the development of any other buildings in the city in the fourth century, including in the residential sphere, but the evidence we do possess suggests that extensive changes are unlikely to have taken place.

The fact that the townscapes of Trier and Cologne became, in some ways, more politicised in the fourth century than ever before may prove significant as we turn our attention to the fifth century. We saw in Chapter One how the imperial authorities all but completely withdrew from the Rhineland at the end of the fourth century, so it would come as little surprise if we were to discover that, in the fifth century, it became difficult for the inhabitants of both cities, but especially those of Trier, to maintain their monumental public buildings and highly structured townscapes. On the other hand, we should not expect wholesale abandonment of the intra-mural area or displacement of the cities' populations; our evidence from the previous two chapters is confirmation enough that the cities were not immediately deserted.

## 3.2 The fifth century

### 3.2.1 Monumental buildings

For our understanding of the characteristics and extent of urban change in the fifth-century Rhineland, we are largely reliant on archaeological data, since written evidence is essentially limited to Salvian of Marseille's *On the Government of God*, which, although crucially important, is fraught with interpretative difficulties because of its fragmentary, summary, and sensationalist nature.<sup>134</sup> The archaeological information is no less problematic, however, in that fifth-century artefacts are often extremely difficult to distinguish from those of the fourth and sixth centuries, whilst traces of settlement are frequently too scant and too scattered for us to extract any significant information from them concerning the duration, type, or extent of occupation. The interpretations offered here are, therefore, tentative, and may require revision as new archaeological evidence or more precise dating methods come to light.

Working within these evidential constraints, the initial premise of this section is to establish the extent to which the townscapes of Trier and Cologne, with their monumental buildings and residential areas, continued to be used, maintained, and developed in the fifth century. The account presented will seek to engage with the arguments of Halsall and Bachrach concerning nearby Metz, whilst endeavouring to avoid the interpretative pitfalls that have led to the sharp difference in their views. We will attempt to determine how far Trier and Cologne remained urban environments, according to the criteria suggested by Wickham, and, if they cannot be said to have done so, an alternative characterisation of the settlements must be offered instead. Finally, we will seek to place the architectural, spatial, and topographical changes of the

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<sup>134</sup>Heinen, 'Reichstreue *nobiles*', p. 271; see above, pp. 71-3.

fifth century in the political and religious contexts outlined in Chapter One and Chapter Two, in the hope of understanding the circumstances that drove the changes.

Salvian of Marseille's account of the barbarian incursions provides an interesting starting-point for discussion of Trier's fifth-century topography, since he suggests both how the townscape was affected by the attacks, and how the city's population responded. He describes, on one hand, how 'the whole city had been burnt to the ground'; 'burned and destroyed'; and reduced to 'pyres and ashes'. On the other hand, if we read between the lines, it seems that not a great deal had changed: the city was still home to aristocrats, who wished to establish a connection between their city and the emperor at Ravenna, and the circus was still usable, or at least reparable. Salvian laments those nobles who, amid the destruction, 'demanded of the emperors circuses as the sovereign remedy for a ruined city'.<sup>135</sup> It is precisely this type of contradiction within the evidence that has led to the wide divergence in modern scholarly opinions regarding the fate of cities in the late and post-Roman period, but in this case the inconsistency in Salvian's claims can perhaps be relatively straightforwardly resolved. There can be little denying that Trier had suffered real damage, since this is borne out by archaeological evidence from various sites, including the interior of the cathedral complex.<sup>136</sup> However, the spatial organisation and local conceptualisation of the importance of the city evidently remained largely unchanged in the first decades of the fifth century; local aristocrats continued to conceive of themselves and their city as part of the Roman Empire, and probably implored the emperor to provide circus games because this would reassure them of his commitment to Trier, and might even draw the man himself to the city. This is reflected by Salvian's

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<sup>135</sup>Salvian of Marseilles, *On the Government of God*, VI, 14, pp. 183-4; Heinen, 'Reichstreue *nobiles*', pp. 275-6.

<sup>136</sup>See above, p. 140.

explanation that the requested games were considered a ‘remedy’ for the ‘ruined city’; the spectacle was intended to heal psychological wounds and boost morale, not simply to provide entertainment.<sup>137</sup> In the event, however, the circus probably found only limited further use, since the emperor is not known to have heeded the nobles’ request, and, in any case, it is difficult to envisage imperially-sponsored public spectacles taking place amid the tumultuous political circumstances of the fifth century in Trier. It is possible that the city’s civic leaders may have ventured to take on responsibility for organising entertainments themselves, but this is equally doubtful, given that many of the city’s most affluent residents would have left when the institutions of the imperial administration were transferred, leaving behind only locally-based aristocrats, who must have seen much of their wealth wiped out during the successive barbarian attacks.

Aside from Salvian’s account, which offers only a general claim of widespread burning and destruction, we are reliant exclusively on archaeological evidence for our understanding of the fate of Trier’s monumental public buildings in the fifth century. The enormous *Barbarathermen*, which covered an area in excess of four hectares, appear to have ceased to function as a bathing facility early in the fifth century, as the series of barbarian incursions removed the economic and social conditions that made its maintenance feasible.<sup>138</sup> The significance of this should not be underestimated, since the demise of the bathing complex deprived the city’s inhabitants of one of its most important amenities, which had been in use for centuries, and exposed a substantial and prominently positioned site in the heart of the city to the risk of ruin. The

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<sup>137</sup>Salvian of Marseilles, *On the Government of God*, VI, 14, p. 183; Heinen, *Trevererland*, p. 373; Heinen, ‘Reichstreue *nobiles*’, p. 275.

<sup>138</sup>Heinen, *Trevererland*, p. 116; K. –P. Goethert, ‘Barbarathermen’, in *Rettet das archäologische Erbe*, p. 84. The evidence for this takes the form of material dated to the first half of the fifth century, found in silt deposits in waste water canals: L. Clemens, ‘Archäologische Beobachtungen zu frühmittelalterlichen Siedlungsstrukturen in Trier’, in S. Felgenhauer-Schmiedt et al (eds), *Zwischen Römersiedlung und mittelalterlicher Stadt: Archäologische Aspekte zur Kontinuitätsfrage: Beiträge zur Mittelalterarchäologie in Österreich* 17 (2001), p. 56.



*Barbarathermen* appear, however, to have acquired an alternative function relatively soon after they fell from use, since the discovery of distinctive *Knickwand* pottery indicates occupation and possibly domestic-scale production in the fifth century.<sup>139</sup>

The *Kaiserthermen* are generally believed to have retained their function as a military barracks until sometime between 430 and 440.<sup>140</sup> This interpretation is supported by the discovery of potsherds dated to the first half of the fifth century in fill layers of the complex's service cellar.<sup>141</sup> On the basis of our understanding of the political and military situation in Trier in the first half of the fifth century, however, it seems likely that the complex found only limited use during that period. In the first place, the creation of the garrison in Trier during the second half of the fourth century undoubtedly resulted from the need to accommodate the troops guarding the emperor, who was regularly present in the city. These units are hardly likely to have remained in Trier once the imperial court was transferred to Italy in 380, so it seems reasonable to assume that by the end of the fourth century, the *Kaiserthermen* were no longer occupied by the personnel for whom they were originally converted. Moreover, the events of the first half of the fifth century, including the possible removal of troops from the frontier by Stilicho to participate in conflicts in Italy, the limited extent of imperial military intervention in northern Gaul, and the multiple attacks on Trier described by Salvian, suggest that it is unlikely that the barracks were routinely occupied by other field or frontier units.<sup>142</sup> Instead, it seems more plausible that they were used only occasionally, perhaps during the campaign of 420, carried out by the *comes domesticorum*, Castinus, and those of 428 and 432, when Aetius fought the Franks or

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<sup>139</sup>K. –P. Goethert, 'Barbarathermen', in Goethert and Weber (eds), *Römerbauten in Trier*, p. 78; Clemens, 'Archäologische Beobachtungen', p. 43; Clemens and Clemens, *Trier*, p. 61; Schindler, 'Trier im Merowingischer Zeit', p. 133.

<sup>140</sup>Heinen, *Trevererland*, p. 372; Goethert, 'Die Kaiserthermen', in *Römerbauten in Trier*, p. 128.

<sup>141</sup>Clemens, 'Archäologische Beobachtungen', p. 56.

<sup>142</sup>See above, pp. 53-65, 69-80.

Alamanni.<sup>143</sup> Thereafter, the absence of finds from the late fifth, sixth and seventh centuries, despite extensive excavations, demonstrates that following its abandonment in the fifth century, the complex remained empty for some considerable time.<sup>144</sup>

Trier's amphitheatre, meanwhile, is likely to have fallen out of use as an entertainment venue from the end of the fourth century, when imperial withdrawal deprived the city of its key patrons, the emperor and his affluent courtiers and officials. However, the venue's incorporation into the city's circuit of walls appears to have given it renewed importance as a defensive stronghold. If we are to believe Fredegar's chronicle, an important but not unproblematic source of information for late antique and early medieval Gaul, the arena must have received lockable gates on its town side by the early fifth century, enabling the population either to barricade themselves or to trap opponents therein. Fredegar claimed that during the invasion of 406, 'the Treverans were indeed released into the arena of this city, which had been fortified'.<sup>145</sup> This defensive function probably ensured that the amphitheatre was maintained throughout the first half of the fifth century, but its fate in the later decades of the century remains unclear.

The continued use of Trier's other major monumental buildings - the *Basilika* and the forum - cannot be proven on the basis of archaeological evidence, since no finds datable to the fifth century have been uncovered within the structures.<sup>146</sup> The forum conceivably retained its function as the city's largest marketplace, but it is impossible at

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<sup>143</sup>See above, pp. 80-1.

<sup>144</sup>Clemens, 'Archäologische Beobachtungen', pp. 43-4.

<sup>145</sup>Fredegar, II, 60, *MGH SSRM* II, p. 84; Heinen, *Trevererland*, p. 372; H. -P. Kuhnen, 'Zwischen Reichs- und Stadtgeschichte - Trier in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter' in Kaiser (ed.), *Die Franken*, p. 140. For an overview of the inherent difficulties with Fredegar's chronicle, see Goffart, 'The Fredegar Problem Reconsidered', pp. 206-41; Collins, 'Fredegar', pp. 1-138. At this point, Fredegar's chronicle is based on Gregory of Tours, *History*, II, 2-3, pp. 39-40, although it also contains independent data, such as this story of the amphitheatre.

<sup>146</sup>Clemens, 'Archäologische Beobachtungen', p. 43.

present to confirm that this was the case. It seems reasonable to conjecture, meanwhile, that the *Basilika* remained the seat of government, since Gregory of Tours implies that King Theudebert (533 – 548) had a palace (*palatium regis*) in the city, and on the basis of the available archaeological evidence, none of the other major buildings appear likely to have served this purpose.<sup>147</sup>

In summary, it would appear that Trier's cathedral, which, as we saw in the previous chapter, remained the seat of a succession of bishops, stood in relative isolation in the fifth century insofar as major public buildings are concerned. Whereas it remained an integral functional component of the urban landscape, many of the city's other monumental buildings fell from use. Whilst the forum and the *Basilika* may have demonstrated a significant degree of functional continuity, the *Barbarathermen* remained in use only because of their adaptation to fulfil residential purposes, and ceased to be a public space. The *Kaiserthermen* and circus seem likely to have been abandoned. On this basis, Trier seems very different from the flourishing Metz conceived by Bachrach, and more similar to the largely deserted environment depicted by Halsall. It is, however, important to reserve final judgement until the extent of settlement has been established, since it is conceivable that post-Roman Trier could have remained a thriving urban environment, but one which was no longer organised around the monumental buildings classically associated with city life.

Turning our attention to Cologne, even less is known of the fate of its monumental buildings than those of Trier. The only building for which a relatively convincing argument for continuity can be made is the *Praetorium*, where there are various circumstantial indications that the complex might have become a Frankish royal

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<sup>147</sup>Gregory of Tours, *History*, X, 29, p. 522; Kuhnen, 'Zwischen Reichs- und Stadtgeschichte', p. 140; Reusch, *Basilika*, p. 13.

residence in the mid-fifth century.<sup>148</sup> In the first place, we know that Cologne was the seat of government of the Ripuarian Franks from around this time, and it is therefore likely that their kings maintained a residence in the city.<sup>149</sup> The *Praetorium* immediately seems the most plausible contender to have become this residence, since it had been refurbished towards the end of the fourth century, and does not appear to have been ravaged or burnt out during the series of barbarian incursions of the early fifth century. Moreover, Gregory of Tours confirms the existence of an *aula regia* in Cologne by the early sixth century, since it was there that Gallus sought refuge with King Theuderic I (511 – 533/4), having set fire to a temple in the city.<sup>150</sup> Given that no other reasonable alternative has been identified, this *aula regia* was most plausibly the one already standing at the beginning of the fourth century as part of the *Praetorium* complex.

Of the other major buildings in Cologne, it would appear that Deutz remained in use in the first decades of the fifth century, perhaps serving as a base for the few remaining frontier troops, since pottery and other finds dated to that period have been identified.<sup>151</sup> Thereafter, we know that it, rather like the *Barbarathermen* in Trier, was given over to residential use. Here, one longhouse and a few *Grübenhäuser* have been identified, though they cannot be dated with any precision, and nor would it be valid to assume on the basis of their simple form that they were necessarily the homes of Franks.<sup>152</sup> This parallel between the settlements inside Deutz in Cologne and the *Barbarathermen* in Trier is significant, since it suggests that some disused monumental buildings, specifically those best suited to conversion into fortified or enclosed

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<sup>148</sup>Päffgen and Ristow, 'Die Römerstadt Köln', p. 148.

<sup>149</sup>See above, pp. 94-7.

<sup>150</sup>Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, VI, 2, pp. 34-5.

<sup>151</sup>Carroll-Spillecke, 'Das römische Militärlager', pp. 334, 339, 343.

<sup>152</sup>Steuer, 'Stadtarchäologie in Köln', p. 59. The early medieval date of the buildings is suggested by potsherds found in the bottom of post-holes: Carroll-Spillecke, 'Das römische Militärlager', pp. 330, 335.

settlements, proved attractive to some inhabitants of both cities when they decided on a location in which to settle.

The forum in Cologne may have remained an important marketplace and focal point in the fifth century, meanwhile, since it was neither demolished and built over, nor occupied by simple wooden structures in the centuries following the collapse of Roman rule. Instead, what Schütte describes as ‘big layers’ were found underneath the collapsed Roman vaults, containing not Frankish material, but tenth-century Pingsdorf pottery, proving that the Roman structure had stood until at least that time. Schütte interprets this absence of Frankish finds as an indication of continuity of use in the Merovingian period, since the building was obviously maintained and kept clean, preventing the accumulation of layers of rubbish and dirt, in which we would expect to find such Frankish material.<sup>153</sup> We have no archaeological evidence to suggest the fate of the bathing complex, but it is likely that it, like its counterpart in Trier, must have closed down in the first decades of the fifth century at the latest, as the economic and social conditions that facilitated the upkeep of its water-supply and heating systems ceased to exist.

In terms of the fate of its monumental buildings, therefore, fifth-century Cologne seems closely comparable with Trier, and with the bleak vision of Metz offered by Halsall. Deutz, like the *Barbarathermen*, appears to have become the focus of a small settlement, whilst the city’s other monumental buildings cannot be proven to have remained in use in any capacity. Unlike Trier and Metz, however, there is no good evidence from Cologne to indicate that the cathedral church remained in use, nor that there were any holders of the episcopal office in the fifth century. This may suggest that Cologne was abandoned in a more comprehensive manner than was the case in either of

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<sup>153</sup>Schütte, ‘Continuity problems’, p. 164.

the other two cities. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that our grounds for concluding that Cologne's monumental buildings stood empty are not entirely secure, since it is possible that the forum and *Praetorium* remained in use during the fifth century, without excavations having so far detected any evidence to this effect. Once again, therefore, the more general extent of settlement within the city needs to be considered in order to determine how far it continued to be a functioning urban environment in the fifth century.

In light of the clear connection we established earlier between the maintenance and construction of monumental buildings and the specific roles of Trier and Cologne within the imperial political system, it should not be entirely unexpected that many such buildings in both cities fell from use following the withdrawal of imperial impetus and funding in the fifth century, whilst a handful were adapted or privatised to suit radically different purposes within a much-changed socio-political environment. This can only have had dramatic consequences for the use and organisation of urban space in both cities, even if the buildings remained prominent features within the townscapes in visual terms. Once the various amenities that had previously given the urban centres their importance ceased to be available, we might envisage that people's attention shifted away from the carefully-assembled city centres, and towards the city's churches, both intra- and extra-mural, especially in Trier, where the extent of continuity of Christian life was considerable. This is borne out by the continued development of those churches in architectural terms during the fifth and sixth centuries, frequently in order to convert them to liturgical use, at a time when finances were almost certainly stretched and other public buildings were deserted and neglected.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>154</sup>See above, pp. 140, 146-7, 150-1, 160-1, 163, 167.

It is tempting to see the changes Trier and Cologne experienced as consequences of imperial withdrawal from the Rhineland, and of the series of barbarian attacks. However, it is important to recognise that the processes of urban change that these Rhineland cities underwent in the fifth century were in many ways comparable with those experienced by other cities throughout Gaul and the Western Empire, irrespective of their political circumstances and the frequency with which they suffered from barbarian raids. The dilapidation of monumental buildings associated with the classical conception of the city is, for example, a widely identifiable phenomenon.<sup>155</sup> The appropriation of previously public space for private use is similarly common throughout the post-Roman West; parallels can be seen, for example, in Arles, where small private dwellings were constructed up against the exterior walls of the circus, and in Carthage, where private housing came to partially occupy the sites of the forum, theatre, and odeon.<sup>156</sup> The circumstances under which such appropriation of public space by private individuals took place remain obscure, but it was certainly not the case that there was simply nobody to prevent it, since we know that Cologne was controlled by the kings of the Ripuarian Franks from the mid-fifth century, whilst Trier was governed by Arbogast, bearing the Roman title of *comes*, as late as the 470s.<sup>157</sup> We can only assume, therefore, that it was either independently formally sanctioned in both cities, perhaps as a means of preventing buildings becoming dangerously dilapidated, or else the priorities of the respective authorities lay elsewhere.

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<sup>155</sup>On Gaul: Loseby, 'Decline and Change', p. 72; Harries, 'Christianity and the City', pp. 79-80. On northern Italy: La Rocca, 'Public Buildings', pp. 164-5; Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity*, pp. 35-9.

<sup>156</sup>S. T. Loseby, 'Arles in Late Antiquity: Gallula Roma Arelas and urbs Genesii', in Christie and Loseby (eds), *Towns in Transition*, p. 52; A. Leone, 'Change or no Change? Revised Perceptions of Urban Transformation in Late Antiquity', in P. Barker et al (eds), *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference 98* (Oxford, 1998), p. 125.

<sup>157</sup>See above, pp. 94-9.

### 3.2.2 Residential space

If our knowledge of the residential areas of Trier and Cologne in the fourth century is hazy, it is fair to say that by the fifth century, a virtually impenetrable fog has descended. Archaeological excavations in both cities have revealed precious few finds potentially datable to that period, and even fewer diagnostic finds, such as potsherds from known fifth-century wares, that would allow us to be confident in our dating. Of the artefacts that have been uncovered, meanwhile, very few are everyday items, which raises the question of whether such items may have been accidentally overlooked by excavators, or else mistakenly assigned to the fourth or sixth century. Hardly any traces of post-Roman residential buildings have come to light. It is, therefore, extremely difficult to discuss how extensively the cities and their immediate environs were occupied in the fifth century, and what the implications of this settlement pattern, insofar as it can be reconstructed, might have been for the continued use and importance of the intra-mural areas. In light of this absence of workable evidence of occupation from the intra-mural areas of Trier and Cologne, it will be necessary to extend the geographical scope of our study beyond its usual parameters, and to turn our attention briefly to the cities' immediate hinterlands, where at least some sites appear to have continued to be inhabited.

Beginning with Trier, Salvian's *On the Government of God* reveals that in the 440s, the city was frequented by a number of local notables, who had survived the series of barbarian invasions and incursions, and who are unlikely to have taken flight from their home region, in which their landholdings were located, in the less turbulent decades that followed.<sup>158</sup> Epigraphic and archaeological evidence, meanwhile, attests the continued use of the graveyards associated with the churches of Sts Eucharius,

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<sup>158</sup>See above, pp. 75-6.



Maximinus, and Paulinus throughout the fifth century, albeit on a lesser scale than in the fourth century.<sup>159</sup> We can also confirm that there was an urban population in the sixth century, since, during his account of the bubonic plague that struck Trier, which we encountered in the previous chapter, Gregory of Tours explicitly referred to ‘the population within the walls of the city’.<sup>160</sup> Wholesale abandonment of the city is, therefore, to be ruled out.

Nonetheless, the diminishing importance of the city centre over the course of the fifth century, as monumental buildings fell from use, is reflected more generally by the archaeological evidence, which suggests that people were no longer keen to settle in the areas surrounding the palace quarter, which had been the most prestigious residential district in the fourth century, or indeed anywhere else inside the walls.<sup>161</sup> Instead, many areas within the city were apparently deserted in the course of the first half of the fifth century, with one estimate suggesting that only ten to fifteen percent of the previously occupied intra-mural area remained in use.<sup>162</sup> Indeed, in 1973, Schindler could identify only six artefacts dated to the period from 450 to 525, including: an axe and a *Franziska* found in the Mosel, near the bridge; a *Knickwand* pot unearthed at the *Barbarathermen*; the tip of a lance, discovered at Albana-Strasse, near St Eucharius’ church; building remains in the temple area of Altbachtal; a decorative belt fitting and hook, uncovered at *Herrenbrünnchen*, close to the city wall; and an ivory pyx with Old Testament imagery, which came out of excavations at the amphitheatre.<sup>163</sup> Subsequent discoveries

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<sup>159</sup>See above, pp. 187-8.

<sup>160</sup>Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, XVII, 4, pp. 110-11; see above, pp. 174-5.

<sup>161</sup>With regard to the archaeological evidence, K. Böhner, *Die fränkischen Altertümer des Trierer Landes* (Berlin, 1958) and Schindler, ‘Trier im Merowingischer Zeit’, remain essential.

<sup>162</sup>Schindler, ‘Trier im Merowingischer Zeit’, pp. 139, 141; L. Clemens, ‘Die Archäologie des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit in Trier’, in *Rettet das archäologische Erbe*, p. 41.

<sup>163</sup>Schindler, ‘Trier im Merowingischer Zeit’, p. 133.

have done precious little to increase the haul Schindler described.<sup>164</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that most of these objects are extremely distinctive, so we cannot discount the possibility that more mundane remnants of the fifth century may have been overlooked. Moreover, the finds stretch in a band across the city centre, from the bridge to the amphitheatre, via the slightly more southerly Altbachtal and *Herrenbrünnchen*. This could suggest that this area was the most densely occupied in the late fifth and sixth centuries, but this would be odd, given the northerly location of the cathedral and the greater popularity of the northern graveyard. It seems quite likely, therefore, that the concentration of finds is a reflection of where late antique material best survives or where most excavations have been carried out, than of where late antique people were actually living.

The only place in Trier where we can be reasonably confident that people lived in the fifth century is the *Barbarathermen*, where, as we have seen, the presence of *Knickwand* pottery suggests that settlement and perhaps even domestic-scale production took place within its solidly-built walls.<sup>165</sup> Local scholarship commonly proposes that those who set up home here may have sought to exploit the protection offered by these walls, given the barbarian attacks and political uncertainty of the fifth century.<sup>166</sup> This is possible, but we should bear in mind that, as noted earlier, such appropriation of public buildings for private use was a relatively widespread pattern of change in fifth-century Gaul, even in cities like Arles, which were comparatively untroubled by barbarian

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<sup>164</sup>Clemens, 'Archäologische Beobachtungen', p. 43. Excavations in the area of the Altbachtal sanctuary, to the east of Trier, have uncovered pottery and buildings dated to the Merovingian and Carolingian periods. However, there is a gap in finds for the fifth and sixth centuries: Clemens, 'Archäologische Beobachtungen', pp. 46-8.

<sup>165</sup>See above, pp. 254-5.

<sup>166</sup>Goethert, 'Barbarathermen', in *Römerbauten in Trier*, p. 78; Clemens, 'Archäologische Beobachtungen', p. 43; Clemens and Clemens, *Trier*, p. 61; Schindler, 'Trier im Merowingischer Zeit', p. 133.

attacks.<sup>167</sup> As such, it would be a mistake to simply assume that this was the only, or even the most important, reason that the *Barbarathermen* became a residential area. It is equally conceivable that other practical considerations were foremost in the settlers' minds. In particular, occupying a pre-existing monumental building offered ready access to supplies of building material, and the opportunity to incorporate sturdy walls or foundations into new structures.<sup>168</sup>

(Image removed for copyright reasons)

Figure 3.15: Extra-mural areas in which traces of fifth- and sixth-century occupation have been discovered: © Google maps 2013

The extreme scarcity of evidence for fifth-century – or indeed sixth-century – occupation from Trier's intra-mural area is somewhat surprising and difficult to understand, since we have seen that the graveyards of Sts Eucharius, Maximinus, and

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<sup>167</sup>See above, p. 261.

<sup>168</sup>S. Eismann, 'Siedeln in römischen Ruinen – Formen und Motive im Wandel der Zeit', in Drauschke et al (eds), *Untergang und Neuanfang*, p. 125; Schindler, 'Trier im Merowingischer Zeit', p. 142.

Paulinus continued to be used in the fifth century.<sup>169</sup> It is possible, as noted earlier, that it is largely explained by the difficulties in identifying and accurately dating fifth-century objects, and by the fact that large areas of the city have not yet been subject to extensive excavation. We should also consider the possibility, however, that people may have moved out of the city to live in the surrounding countryside, since outside Trier's walls, scant traces of possible fifth-century occupation, together with some burials, have been found in areas not far from the urban centre, including Ehrang, Trier-West, Euren, Konz, and St Medard.<sup>170</sup> An interesting correlation exists between these sites, in that they are all in the vicinity of late Roman villas, and are located along the Mosel valley. Some of them, including Ehrang, Euren, and St Medard, had churches built over them in the Merovingian period.<sup>171</sup>

The evidence from these areas is little more substantial and no more straightforward than that from the city itself, but the sites are nonetheless interesting for two reasons. First, they suggest that the Trier region bucked the prevailing trend in northern Gaul towards an abandonment of villas, widely acknowledged by modern scholarship, and that some of those Ausonius described in the fourth century, with their 'trim roofs and countless pillars', continued in some form into the fifth century.<sup>172</sup> We might even envisage that they remained in the hands of the same families as had owned them in the fourth century, since it is increasingly recognised that such complexes were not abandoned wholesale nor taken over by 'squatters' in the fifth century, even if the altered political circumstances ensured that their owners were increasingly prioritising

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<sup>169</sup>See above, pp. 187-8.

<sup>170</sup>Clemens, 'Archäologische Beobachtungen', p. 59; Clemens, 'Die Archäologie des Mittelalters', p. 41.

<sup>171</sup>Wightman, *Belgica*, p. 295.

<sup>172</sup>Ausonius, *Mosella*, line 335-6, p. 250; B. Ward-Perkins, 'Land, Labour and Settlement', in Cameron et al (eds), *CAH XIV*, pp. 333-5; J. Percival, *The Roman Villa* (London, 2976), p. 79; C. R. Whittaker and P. Garnsey, 'Rural Life in the Later Roman Empire', in Cameron and Garnsey (eds), *CAH XIII*, p. 302; N. Christie, 'Landscapes of Change in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Themes, Directions and Problems', in N. Christie (ed.), *Landscapes of Change: Rural Evolutions in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 15.

practical considerations over aesthetic appeal.<sup>173</sup> Secondly, it is possible that we can identify at some of these villa sites traces of a general shift towards a more rural settlement pattern in Trier and its hinterland, and of a growing tendency for clusters of occupation to develop around rural villas. The specific evidence to this effect is, however, limited in volume and problematic. It takes the form, on one hand, of a cemetery at Ehrang, which was in use throughout Late Antiquity, in which no less than 108 graves of third- to seventh-century date had been identified by 1973. Among these graves were forty-four without grave goods, which have been assigned to the fifth and sixth centuries on the basis of the typology of the graves themselves. This number of burials may suggest a greater density of occupation than we would expect to find at an isolated villa, and therefore may indicate that other people were living in the immediate vicinity.<sup>174</sup> In the absence of diagnostic material of fifth- and sixth-century date, however, we should avoid assigning too much significance to this evidence. On the other hand, corroborating textual evidence is provided by Gregory of Tours, who appears to have been thinking of precisely such clusters of subsidiary settlements, when, in his account of the miracles of St Maximinus, he mentioned that King Theudebert visited the local shrines, which ‘were in the villages of the city’.<sup>175</sup> The story makes clear that one of these shrines was over the tomb of St Maximinus, immediately to the north of Trier, so we can reasonably assume that a settlement existed somewhere in this vicinity by the sixth century. We may hypothesise that the church of St Eucharius similarly became the focus of a small settlement. However, we might also consider whether, when he wrote of Trier’s ‘shrines’ and ‘villages’, Gregory may perhaps have intended to refer not only to the *memoriae* of Sts Eucharius, Maximinus, and Paulinus,

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<sup>173</sup>Lewit, “‘Vanishing Villas’: What Happened to Elite Rural Habitation in the West in the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> C?”, *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 16 (2003), p. 268; Christie, ‘Landscapes’, pp. 21-3.

<sup>174</sup>Schindler, ‘Trier im Merowingischer Zeit’, p. 136.

<sup>175</sup>Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, 91, p. 95.

but also to shrines belonging to churches built at villas and settlements that existed elsewhere in the city's immediate hinterland by the sixth century.

Despite its limitations, this evidence from Trier's surrounding countryside may suggest, therefore, that the rural settlement pattern proved more tenacious than the urban one, and it may have been the case that, as Clemens suggests, many people left the intra-mural area in order to settle in its immediate vicinity.<sup>176</sup> This would help to explain why we have been unable to uncover more than a handful of fifth-century finds in Trier itself, despite the fact that the suburban graveyards continued to be reasonably well-used. It is, moreover, worth noting that the idea of a 'flight to the villas' has long been mooted in modern scholarship,<sup>177</sup> and the nucleation of settlement around these villas is often said to have been a relatively common phenomenon in many areas during the tumultuous times of the fifth century, as people sought to place themselves and their interests under the protection of local magnates.<sup>178</sup> It should not surprise us that we have failed to identify many traces of such rural settlements, since trying to find them in the vast swathes of countryside surrounding the city of Trier would be akin to looking for a needle in a haystack.

Two developments therefore appear concurrently to have been affecting the settlement pattern in Trier, at least insofar as can be determined from the patchy evidence available. The first of these was towards a fragmentation of the residential areas within the city walls, as many houses and whole *insulae* were apparently given up,

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<sup>176</sup>Clemens, 'Die Archäologie des Mittelalters', p. 41.

<sup>177</sup>However, the argument that this led to an abandonment of cities has been downplayed in recent years: J. Arce, 'Otium et Negotium: The Great Estates, 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Century', in L. Webster and M. Brown (eds), *The Transformation of the Roman World: AD 400-900* (London, 1997), pp. 19-22; Percival, *Villa*, p. 159; A. C. Arnau, 'Interpreting the Transformation of the Late Roman Villas: The Case of *Hispania*', in Christie (ed.), *Landscapes of Change*, p. 71.

<sup>178</sup>Percival, *Villa*, p. 177; this finds confirmation in the Theodosian Code from as early as the reigns of Honorius and Arcadius, when the emperors decreed that 'if any person should be found to furnish protection to farmers or villagers who possess their own holdings, he shall be stripped of his own property': *Theodosian Code*, XI, 24, 5, p. 316.

and people began to relocate to the confines of monumental buildings or to the periphery of the city. The second development appears to have involved a growth in the importance of rural villas as alternative or additional settlement foci, perhaps attracting previous residents of the urban area.

Meanwhile, in Cologne, similarly minimal evidence of fifth-century habitation has been discovered from within and immediately outside the intra-mural area, although the city's graveyards seem to have remained in limited use.<sup>179</sup> Only a handful of fragments of Merovingian pottery have been found within the city walls, including two potsherds discovered in the area of Caecilianstrasse, near the cathedral, and these pale into insignificance when compared with the much larger assemblages of Roman and Carolingian wares.<sup>180</sup> Nonetheless, we can determine, on the basis of this ceramic evidence and other indicators, that intra-mural fifth-century settlement is most likely to have been concentrated in the area of the cathedral and the *Praetorium*, in the north-eastern corner of the walled area.<sup>181</sup> It is also in this part of town, in the vicinity of the church of Gross St Martin, that evidence of market and industrial activity of fifth-, sixth-, and seventh-century date has been unearthed. Here, the discovery of small amounts of copper and lead suggests metal was being produced, along with pottery and glass. These traces are drawn from only a 'keyhole view' of the site, but Schütte emphasises that there appears to have been 'no interruption and no crisis in production'.<sup>182</sup> Outside the city, we have already seen how several simple houses were built within the fortress of Deutz, whilst objects dating from the fifth century and the early sixth century have been found in a wide ring outside the walls and close to the

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<sup>179</sup>Steuer, *Die Franken*, p. 38; Hellenkemper, 'Archäologische Forschungen', p. 82. Burials dated to the mid-fifth century have been discovered in the church of St Severinus; see above, p. 161.

<sup>180</sup>Doppelfeld, 'Köln von der Spätantike', p. 118.

<sup>181</sup>Binding and Löhr, *Baugeschichte*, p. 8; Piekalski, *Von Köln nach Krakau*, p. 52.

<sup>182</sup>Schütte, 'Continuity Problems', p. 165.

extra-mural *memoriae*, suggesting that settlements may have existed in these areas.<sup>183</sup>

Additionally, burials and traces of occupation have been discovered around fifteen kilometres to the north of Cologne, in the area of Worringen. These include *Knickwand* and other types of pottery dated to the late fifth century and first half of the sixth century.<sup>184</sup> It appears, therefore, that areas of occupation existed in the hinterland of Cologne in the post-Roman period. Nevertheless, on the basis of the overall scarcity of finds, including burials, from the period between c.450 and c.500, and the fact that the major Frankish cemeteries in the area, Junkersdorf, Müngersdorf, Poll, and Langel, seem to have been established only after 500, we should probably imagine that the population of Cologne and its hinterland reached its lowest point in the second half of the fifth century.<sup>185</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the problematic evidence concerning the extent of settlement in fifth-century Cologne has given rise to a remarkable divergence in scholarly opinions. On one hand, Steuer has claimed that ‘Cologne lost its population, and it remained an empty enclosure’, with only a few individual residences and farmsteads dotted within and around the walled area.<sup>186</sup> On the other hand, and in complete contrast, Schütte has asserted that ‘the populace itself did not move’; ‘it was not a case of just a small settlement being left while all the rest was abandoned’. As justification for this, he points out that there were churches, a market, and a royal palace in the sixth century, and emphasises that ‘it would be quite astonishing if between these elements there should be nothing, or just fields where the Franks grew their cabbage’.<sup>187</sup>

At present, it is impossible to resolve this controversy on the evidence from Cologne

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<sup>183</sup> Steuer, ‘Stadtarchäologie in Köln’, p. 59; see above, pp. 258-9.

<sup>184</sup> M. Trier, ‘Zur frühmittelalterlichen Topographie von Worringen, Stadt Köln’, *Kölner Jahrbuch* 40 (2007), pp. 356, 364.

<sup>185</sup> Steuer, *Die Franken*, pp. 37-8, 63.

<sup>186</sup> Steuer, ‘Stadtarchäologie in Köln’, p. 58.

<sup>187</sup> Schütte, ‘Continuity problems’, p. 166.



itself. However, by comparing the city with Trier, we can assemble enough clues to create a plausible hypothesis. Such an approach seems reasonable, since such evidence as we do possess from Cologne does suggest that its topographical development in this period ran broadly in parallel to that in Trier, in that the monumental buildings fell out of use, whilst people continued to live within and outside the city, albeit no longer necessarily in the same houses or even the same areas. We might, therefore, imagine that Cologne too saw nucleated settlements emerge, dotted inside and outside the walls, with some late Roman villas, monumental buildings, and churches serving as major topographical foci. We should be wary of taking this parallel too far, however, since we have seen how the cities were different in important ways in the fifth century, and these differences – for example, the continuity of episcopal leadership in Trier but not in Cologne – may also have had a decisive effect on the extent and pattern of occupation.

To summarise, it was not the case that at some indeterminate point in the early fifth century, everyone departed from the intra-mural areas of Trier and Cologne, locking the city gates behind them. However, a distinct change in their built environments did occur, probably over the course of several decades. As the monumental buildings and amenities that had become synonymous with and symbolic of the Roman city fell out of use, the settlement pattern we identified in the fourth century ceased to prevail, and many people seem to have relocated to alternative sites within or without the city walls. A fairly significant drop in population in the areas in and around Trier and Cologne is likely to have accompanied the disintegration of their Roman townscapes, from thousands of inhabitants in the fourth century down perhaps to numbers in the hundreds. It is possible that these changes were connected with imperial withdrawal and the series of barbarian attacks of the first half of the fifth century, but this was not necessarily the case; many of the changes identified in Trier

and Cologne, from the dilapidation of monumental buildings to their appropriation for private residential use, were part of a normal pattern of fifth-century urban change, which affected cities throughout the Roman West, irrespective of their political circumstances.

### 3.2.3 Ghost Towns?

In light of the evidence discussed above, a number of observations can be made with regard to Halsall and Bachrach's conflicting accounts of Metz. In contrast to the methodology that underpinned Halsall's analysis, this study has not engaged in any thoroughgoing discussion of the burial evidence from either Trier or Cologne, not least because the present state of the evidence, with many cemeteries only partially excavated and many finds remaining uncatalogued, precludes such an endeavour. Nonetheless, it is readily apparent from the scarcity of finds indicative of continuing occupation that there were considerably fewer people in both Trier and Cologne in the fifth century than there had been in the fourth century. At the same time, many of the cities' major fourth-century monumental buildings have yielded no evidence that they remained in use in the fifth century, even if they continued to be prominent visual landmarks. In many respects, therefore, Halsall's analysis of depopulation and large-scale abandonment of the intra-mural area of Metz in the fifth century does appear to also fit the circumstances in Trier and Cologne. On the other hand, the absence of archaeological evidence, compelling as it is, should not be permitted to entirely overshadow other important signs of continuity, particularly because so much of the intra-mural areas of both cities remain insufficiently excavated. Trier had an unbroken succession of bishops in the fifth century and, both there and in Cologne, there is some evidence of continued use of the

graveyards. Moreover, the cities appear, according to our textual sources, to have remained significant in administrative terms, with Arbogast governing the *civitas* of Trier, and the Ripuarian Franks, including Sigibert the Lame, ruling from Cologne. In light of this wider context, we can reasonably conclude that Halsall's description of a ghost town is perhaps a little too pessimistic to be applicable to either Trier or Cologne, or, indeed, quite probably, to Metz. Even if much of the intra-mural area became uninhabited, the cities were nonetheless still recognised as crucial regional centres from which religious and governmental authority continued to be exercised.

All the same, Bachrach's account appears to significantly overstate the extent of urban continuity and vitality in the fifth century. Certainly, on the basis of the available evidence, it would be difficult to describe either Trier or Cologne as a 'flourishing late Roman Christian *urbs*', whilst it would be extremely peculiar for Metz to have thrived in this way, when the extent of continuity in nearby Trier, which had previously been the more prosperous and densely occupied city of the two cities, was clearly limited.<sup>188</sup> Moreover, although Bachrach rightly emphasises the construction of the new cathedral as an indication of the continued prosperity and vitality of the Church in Metz, a development to which Halsall pays comparatively little heed, the entire society he extrapolates from this development does not stand up to scrutiny. We should not necessarily assume, for example, as Bachrach does, that the craftsmen who were responsible for building the cathedral were locally-sourced. In sixth-century Trier, we have seen how Nicetius had to call upon Rufus of Turin to assist him in finding Italian craftsmen to restore the cathedral, and it is conceivable that workers similarly had to be brought in from elsewhere to fifth-century Metz.<sup>189</sup> Furthermore, we should not forget that, to quote Brown, 'churches were sermons in stone'; they were designed to be

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<sup>188</sup>Bachrach, 'Metz', p. 365.

<sup>189</sup>*Austrasian Letter* 21, pp. 133-4; see above, p. 140.

symbols of the power and prosperity of the Church and of Christianity, not merely to fulfil the practical requirement of providing a place of worship.<sup>190</sup> It would, therefore, be mistaken to suppose that their dimensions were necessarily reflective of the size of the congregation that the completed church would house, as opposed to the aspirations of their commissioners. Nonetheless, we should not dismiss the construction of the cathedral as unimportant; it does provide grounds to believe that fifth-century Metz must have been inhabited to some extent, since it would hardly have been built if there was nobody to use it or be impressed by it.

The evidence from Trier and Cologne has, therefore, served to highlight deficiencies in the methodological approaches and the arguments of both Halsall and Bachrach. A more balanced assessment of these cities is clearly required, which takes account of the modest degree of continuity that can be identified, particularly in the religious sphere in Trier, whilst acknowledging that the cohesive townscapes of the fourth century had fragmented, and both cities had lost much of their functional and symbolic significance. With this in mind, it should first be acknowledged that, on the basis of the information we possess, it is difficult to describe either Trier or Cologne as a fully-functioning city in the fifth century. To recap, Wickham suggests that a relatively large population, a market, and economic activities different to those of the countryside are key criteria, whilst political, institutional, and social roles are marginally less important.<sup>191</sup> With regard to the first of these criteria, the intra-mural areas of both Trier and Cologne are likely to have been more densely occupied in the fifth century than were the surrounding rural areas, but it is important to acknowledge that these populations nonetheless appear to have been small; certainly by comparison with the preceding centuries. The economic criteria are extremely difficult to assess for

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<sup>190</sup>Brown, *Christendom*, p. 77.

<sup>191</sup>See above, pp. 205-6.

both cities, since the volume of evidence pertaining to economic activity is extremely limited even for the fourth century. For the fifth century, virtually no information exists, although it has been suggested here that both cities' fora continued to function as marketplaces.<sup>192</sup> Both Trier and Cologne do seem to have retained their political and institutional importance, with Trier governed by the *comes* Arbogast in the 470s, and Cologne serving as the capital of the Ripuarian Frankish kings in the second half of the fifth century. In Trier, the unbroken succession of bishops throughout the fifth century ensured that the institutional leadership of the Christian Church also remained intact. It is impossible to tell how significant the cities were in social terms in the fifth century, although the closure of the baths in the first half of the fifth century meant the end of a classically important social amenity. The foundation of new Christian churches and the embellishment of existing ones already provided new social foci by the fourth century, but this development appears to have stagnated in the fifth century, before continuing in the sixth century.

Thus, Trier and Cologne were hardly vibrant Christian cities in the fifth century, and yet they were not abandoned ghost towns either. We therefore need to consider how we might wish to describe them. We might best describe them as semi-urban, since they were shadows of their prior selves in topographical as well as functional terms, yet continued to be readily distinguishable from their rural surroundings, and remained foci for their surrounding areas, particularly in governmental and religious terms, to a sufficient extent to ensure that they were reoccupied and redeveloped in subsequent centuries. This is not to say, however, that they were considered anything other than cities by contemporaries. In his account of Sigibert the Lambe's defeat by Clovis, Gregory of Tours referred to Cologne as '*Colonia civitate*', whilst in another anecdote,

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<sup>192</sup>See above, pp. 256-7, 259.

the location of the tomb of St Maximinus was given as ‘*apud urbem Trevericae*’.<sup>193</sup> To Gregory’s mind, they were as much cities in the fifth and sixth centuries as they had been in the fourth century.

The fragmentation of the unified and carefully constructed late Roman townscapes of Trier and Cologne into a series of small, nucleated settlements and comparatively isolated topographical foci marked a dramatic change, which probably began in the first decades of the fifth century. In light of this change, Liebeschuetz’s assertion that ‘the monumental and aesthetic ideal of the classical city was simply given up’ does not seem too far wide of the mark.<sup>194</sup> However, it is important to place this fragmentation in a wider context, since, as has been noted earlier, it was neither unique to the Rhineland, nor even to northern Gaul. Comparable processes of disintegration of the urban space have been identified by modern scholars in many other regions, including Italy, where the phenomenon of the ‘*città ad isole*’ is most closely associated with Brogiolo’s work on Brescia, but also applies to Rome, where, as Wickham puts it, a set of ‘urban villages’ formed.<sup>195</sup> According to Loseby, comparable processes of fragmentation of the coherent townscapes of the fourth century are identifiable throughout southern as much as northern Gaul.<sup>196</sup> Trier and Cologne were, therefore, neither extreme cases, nor part of a trend peculiar to the northernmost provinces of the Roman Empire. In light of this, we cannot plausibly attribute their disintegration to the effects of the barbarian attacks of the fifth century, discussed in Chapter One.

In Trier and Cologne, it is clear that this disintegration of urban life overshadowed the continuity offered by the Christian Church, even if the evidence from

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<sup>193</sup>Gregory of Tours, *History*, II, 40, p. 90; Gregory of Tours, *Libri in Gloria Confessorum*, 91, *MGH SSRM I*, 2, 8 (Hannover, 1885), p. 356.

<sup>194</sup>Liebeschuetz, ‘The End of the Ancient City’, pp. 8-9.

<sup>195</sup>G. P. Brogiolo, *Brescia Altomedievale: Urbanistica ed Edilizia dal IV al IX Secolo* (Mantua, 1993), pp. 85-96; Wickham, *Framing*, p. 653.

<sup>196</sup>Loseby, ‘Decline and Change’, p. 72.

Trier in particular suggests that the emerging Christian topography offered an important sense of permanence, since it remained based upon the framework established in the fourth century, of an intra-mural cathedral complex complemented by extra-mural saints' *memoriae*. The most reasonable explanation for the Church's ability to sustain itself in Trier lies in the depth of the roots the religion had been able to put down in the city in the fourth century, which gave the Church and its leadership the influence and resources to maintain and modify their buildings at a time when much of the townscape was otherwise left to fall into disrepair. Meanwhile, in Cologne, in the absence of any known bishops or any clear evidence of building endeavours, it is difficult to make the same confident claim for the importance of the city's Christian topography in the fifth century. Instead, we might envisage an environment in and around which people continued to govern, live, and bury their dead, but in which the churches may have temporarily suffered the same fate as the secular monumental buildings.

### Conclusion

Owing to the limitations of our evidence, we do not have a complete picture of the townscapes of either Trier or Cologne in the fourth or the fifth century, and, as such, many of the interpretations offered in this chapter must be considered to some degree hypothetical. Written sources make only brief and passing references to buildings and other topographical features, whilst the archaeological evidence, although invaluable, remains patchy, since later buildings have destroyed Roman and post-Roman layers in some areas, and prevent excavations in others. Nonetheless, it seems clear that the townscapes of both Trier and Cologne came to reflect and represent the cities' roles in the imperial system in the fourth century, only to deteriorate and fragment once the

Empire ceased to exert control over the cities, and the buildings associated with imperial power could no longer be maintained. This pattern of urban deterioration, was, however, by no means unique to the Rhineland, and was instead replicated throughout Gaul and Italy. Christianity nonetheless appears to have been an important source of continuity in the fifth century, particularly in Trier, where our body of evidence is considerably more substantial. Ultimately, however, the continued presence of a religious institution, with its associated hierarchy and range of buildings, was insufficient in itself to sustain anything approaching a coherent or densely-occupied urban environment. In the final analysis, we must conclude that in material and demographic terms, both Trier and Cologne deteriorated profoundly in the fifth century, and only show tentative signs of recovery in the sixth century.