

Recent Work at Italica

JOSÉ MANUEL RODRÍGUEZ HIDALGO &
SIMON KEAY

Introduction

ITALICA NEEDS LITTLE INTRODUCTION in a symposium dealing with ancient urbanism in Iberia. This town, which lies on a tributary of the river Guadalquivir, a few kilometres from Seville was the first permanent Roman settlement in Hispania and the *patria* of the Roman Emperors Trajan and Hadrian. It has long been a source of interest to historians and archaeologists. The visible ruins at the site were recognized as corresponding to ancient Italica in the seventeenth century. The earliest scientific excavations took place towards the middle of the eighteenth century by Demetrios De Los Ríos, although they were not undertaken on a systematic basis until 1912. Much of the excavation of what is now visible in the Hadrianic *nova urbs* was undertaken for the occasion of the Ibero-American Exhibition in 1929 (García y Bellido 1960). Occasional excavations have been undertaken subsequently at different points in the *vetus* and *nova urbs* until the 1980's by Luzón, Canto, Pellicer, León and Corzo amongst others.

A more recent phase of work at the site began following the establishment of Italica as a separate administrative entity (*Conjunto Arqueológico*) within the newly established (1985) Andalusian cultural heritage management framework (*Consejería de Cultura de la Junta de Andalucía*). The work took place under the aegis of the '*Proyecto Italica*' (Rodríguez Hidalgo 1989) and has had two main aims. Firstly it has taken in hand the conservation, restoration and preservation of the standing structures excavated up until the late 1980's. Secondly it has sought to measure the archaeological potential of the site by undertaking a combined systematic surface and geophysical survey of the site. The results of this have allowed the understanding of earlier work to be rationalized and for medium- and long-term research priorities for the site as a whole to be developed.

The aim of this paper is to provide a synthesis of the archaeological work that has been undertaken at Italica over the last 10 or 15 years.

Much of this has been published in Spain but is not yet widely known in Britain, while publication of work carried out by the *Proyecto Italica* is in preparation. The importance of all of this is two-fold. In the first instance it sheds new light upon the Hadrianic town, for which it is best known. In the second instance it tells us more about the earlier and later phases of the town's life, which are less often a subject of enquiry but which have important implications for the development of urbanism in Andalucía.

The early town (Figure 1)

The Turdetanian settlement

Scholars investigating the pre-Roman period in southern Iberia suggest that the later stages of Turdetanian and Iberian centres such as Tejada La Vieja, Cerro Macareno and Puente Tablas be identified as towns. Alternatively, others feel safer equating the emergence of towns with the

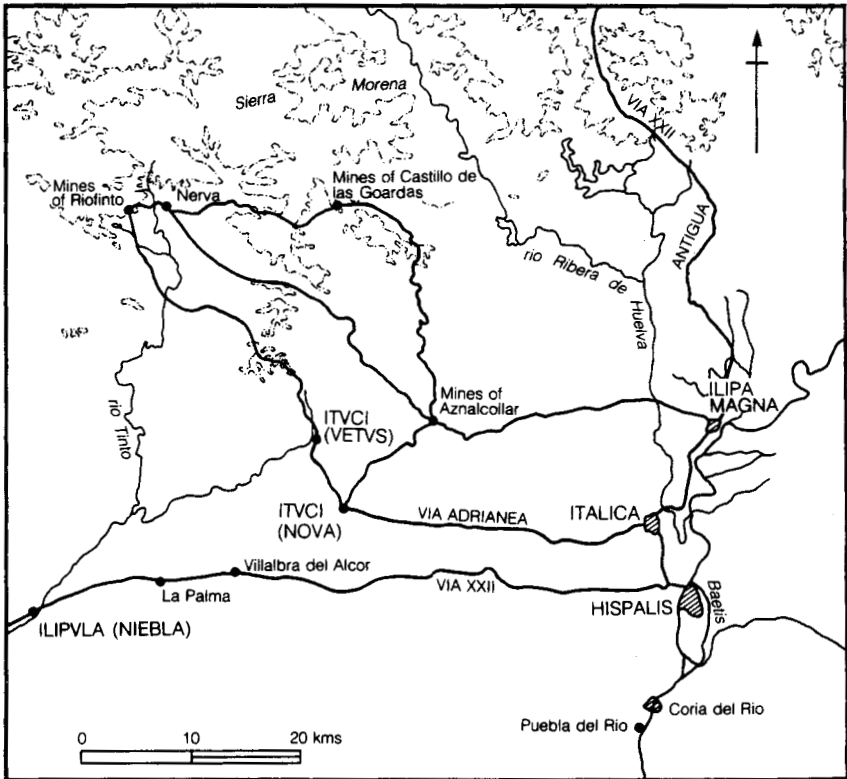


Figure 1. Location of Italica (after Canto 1985a).

appearance of Roman towns. Recent work at the site of the *vetus urbs* of Italica sheds some light on the issue.

The identification of the historically attested town of Italica with the ruins at Santiponce goes back to the sixteenth century. The early settlement lay on a large hill which is now covered by the village of Santiponce, which is defined by the river Huelva to the east and the arroyo del Cernicalo to the south¹. Today the hill appears relatively low in respect of the surrounding country. However it should be remembered that the land to the east has been subject to considerable alluviation by the Huelva and that there is good reason to believe that this was originally a hilltop site akin to many others in the region.

The historical evidence makes it clear that Scipio Africanus settled a contingent of wounded soldiers here in 205 BC (Appian, *Iber.* 38), after the battle of Ilipa in 206 BC. This *propugnaculum imperii* was strategically located with respect to the Sierra Morena and may have helped to play a strategic role in the course of the Lusitanian Wars of Sertorius and the Civil Wars of Pompey and Caesar in the first century BC. In economic terms it was well located to act as an important centre for the re-distribution of metals mined at Rio Tinto and Aznalcollar in the Sierra Morena. Until relatively recently it was not clear whether this was a settlement *de novo* or on a pre-existing native Turdetanian settlement (García y Bellido 1960, 14–17). However, recent excavations have begun to shed light on this and the nature of the early phases of occupation at Italica.

It seems that the earliest occupation at the site was restricted to the north side of the site, in a small area overlooking the river Huelva. Excavations at the Pajar de Artillo and the Casa de la Venus on the hill of San Antonio and at the Avenida de Extremadura no. 56 have revealed occupation between approximately the mid and late fourth century BC onwards (Luzón 1973; Pellicer *et al.* 1982; Escacena 1987; Amores and Rodríguez Hidalgo 1987). At the highest point of the settlement at Los Palacios to the west the earliest levels of occupation were later, dating to some time before the middle of the second century BC (Bendala 1982).²

This has been interpreted as evidence for a growth in the area of the settlement, from east to west, prior to the Roman occupation at the end of the third century BC. Little is known about the spatial organization of the Turdetanian settlement since the excavations were sondages and covered very limited areas. The earliest levels provided evidence for the smelting of ores and the manufacture of pottery. Nevertheless it is clear that pre-Roman Italica covered a small area (13 ha), and comprised small stone-built structures with narrow mud-brick walls with stone footings and fine clay floors, similar to other Turdetanian settlements in the lower Guadalquivir valley. It may have resembled the better understood site at

Tejada La Vieja (Huelva), which lies a short distance to the south of the mining areas in the Sierra Morena.

Republican Italica

Republican Italica is poorly understood. It is not known whether the Turdetanian or initial Republican settlement was enclosed within walls (*contra* Jiménez 1977), although it seems that it possessed gates, and therefore a wall, by the 40's BC (Caesar BC II. 20.6). The most substantial archaeological evidence comprises a building discovered on the hill of Los Palacios in 1973. This consisted of at least two large rooms (8.80 x 4.85 m and 8.80 x 2.50 m) and was identified as the *capitolium* of the early Roman town, essentially on the basis of its plan³. The early date suggested would have made it unique in Hispania, although recent research has revealed other examples at Carteia (early second century BC) Emporiae (late second century BC), and possibly at Saguntum (?second century BC).⁴ Corzo (1982) used this fixed point as the basis of an attempt to reconstruct the topography of Republican Italica. He conceived of the early town as a *dipolis*. On the one hand the *capitolium* would have been at the heart of the town founded by Scipio Africanus in 205 BC, which would have lain below the north-western side of modern Santiponce. On the other, the clearly indigenous structures uncovered to the north-east at the Pajar de Artillo and Casa de la Venus would have formed part of an adjacent Turdetanian settlement.

The identification of this building with the *capitolium* now seems uncertain on chronological grounds, and presents some architectural and topographical difficulties. Unusually for Italic *capitolia* it has no podium, while the absence of any archaeological deposits to the west of the structure suggests that it was situated at the western end of the settlement. It is also unlikely on historical grounds. While a *capitolium* might be expected at a *colonia latina* like Carteia, Scipio's settlement was never a formal *colonia* (Pena 1984) and despite the Italic origin of the veterans settled here the construction of such a building in a settlement at this time and in this region seems inappropriate. Other evidence for the early phases of Italica is hard to come by, although some archaeologists have noted the advent of wider walls and the use of mortar bonding towards the end of the second and beginning of the first centuries BC (Bendala 1982; Luzón 1975). There is certainly no evidence for any culturally Roman residential or public buildings prior to the later second century BC, as is true for other parts of the lower Guadalquivir valley (Keay 1992). Nevertheless its important strategic position and historical association with Scipio Africanus must have guaranteed it a certain prestige during the second and

earlier first centuries BC. This was probably enhanced by acts of personal benefaction by individual governors. One example of this is provided by a second century copy of an inscription dating to some time after 168 BC. If its interpretation is correct it suggests that the governor, Lucius Aemilius Paullus Macedonicus, adorned Italica with trophies from the sack of Zakynthus in the 3rd Macedonian war.⁵

In the absence of evidence to the contrary it seems best to assume that following its foundation, Italica remained an essentially Turdetanian settlement within which lived a growing community of Italians and Roman citizens. Indeed it should be remembered that in strict terms, the town did not have urban status until it was granted municipal status under Augustus. Nevertheless, some of its non-indigenous elite like Caius Marcius (Appian, *Iber.* 66), L. Munatius Flaccus, Titus Vasius and Lucius Marcellus (Caesar, *Bell. Alex.* 52, 4) played important roles in some of the major historical episodes of the second and first centuries BC.

Italica under Augustus and Tiberius

The Caesarian and Augustan period was formative in the emergence of the urban structure of Hispania Ulterior Baetica. In the course of the later Republic Italica must have come to symbolize Roman power in the southwest, not least because of its important historical associations with Scipio Africanus. These may have been influential in the town finally acquiring urban status in Roman terms, either as a *municipium iuris latini* or a *municipium civium romanorum*. It is still not clear which of these statuses the town acquired (Fear 1992). Nor is the date of its grant free from dispute. Some scholars have suggested a date of 47 BC (Galsterer 1971, 12; Brunt 1971, 602), while others have opted for that of 15/14 BC coinciding with Augustus' visit to the Hispaniae (Cassius Dio 54.23; Grant 1946, 173; González 1984). To date the epigraphic evidence has been equivocal (Caballos 1994, 2–4). Contemporary opinion seems to favour the latter date, and that with the acquisition of municipal status the town minted a limited issue of low denomination bronze coins (Chaves 1973; Burnett *et al.* 1991, 77–9). Like those of other towns in the Hispaniae these had a strong propagandist message. The obverses bore the head of Augustus, whilst some reverses bore types alluding to the municipal status of the town, personal symbols of Augustus. Others, however, bore the image of Romulus and Remus and the goddess Roma, alluding to the Roman origin of the town.

What is not yet altogether clear is how far this was a reflection of, or provided the impulse for transformation of the earlier urban topography along 'Roman' lines. The archaeological evidence is equivocal. The princi-

pal problem is that those traces of the Augustan town which survived the later Roman and Arab periods were either obliterated by the construction of the village of Santiponce in 1603, or by downcutting of the Avenida de Extremadura and related activities.⁶ However, recent work would seem to suggest that the transformation of the town may have taken place gradually over the Augustan and Tiberian periods.

Until recently the accepted wisdom was that the modern street plan embodied traces of the original Roman town plan (Canto 1985a). In this schema the forum would have lain at the centre of the town in an area lying roughly between the Avenida de Extremadura and the main square of the modern village (120 x 100 m) with the line of the Decumanus Maximus and the Cardo Maximus probably running along the the line of the the major modern east-west and north-south streets.⁷ In 1985 excavations in a cellar at no. 58 Avenida de Extremadura revealed part of a large room probably belonging to a public building. This was floored by an opus signinum mosaic (minimum of 3 x 4 m) with white tessera decoration and inscription (Figure 2). This records that the praefect or praetor Marcus Trahius took charge of the construction of a (?) temple to Apollo financed through public subscription and a personal contribution (Caballeros 1987-8; González 1991, 169-70 no. 578). It has been dated to the Augustan period on stylistic grounds (Amores Carredano and Rodríguez Hidalgo 1987, 384). The Trahius mentioned in the mosaic has been tentatively identified as the great-grandfather of the future Emperor Trajan. It has been suggested that this mosaic was housed within the temple of Apollo to which it refers. Another possibility is that it was in a room which formed part of the forum of Augustan Italica. In the same area were inscriptions which would have been posted in a public area, such as the *oratio de pretiis gladiatorum* and the bronze fragment of the *lex municipii* (González 1991). Similarly the lower part of an anthropomorphic sculpture, identified as portraying the *Divus Iulius* was also found here and might have formed part of the adornment of the forum (León 1990). If this room did form part of the forum of Augustan Italica, then it lies a short distance to the west of the forum area suggested by Canto (1985a, Abb.1). Although it is clear that the temple of Apollo was built through private and public subscription, there is evidence that the State may also have been involved in the funding of building activity. Tegulae bearing the stamp *M. Petrucidius M. f. Alexander* have been found at Italica. The former name may be that of a *legatus augusti* dating to some time after Augustus' second visit to Hispania (González 1991), while Alexander might have been a *conductor operarum*, responsible for coordinating State-sponsored building programmes. The same Legatus associated with different individuals has been noted on tegulae found at Siarum, Hasta Regia and Carteia (González 1989).

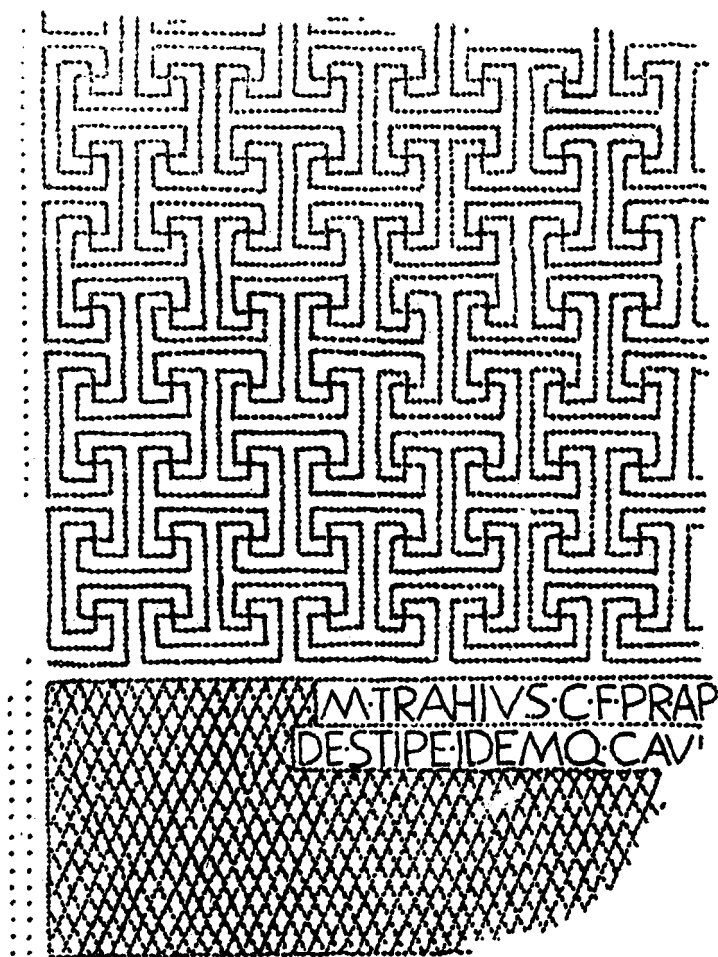


Figure 2. Mosaic mentioning the name *TRAHIUS* discovered in the *vetus urbs* and dating to the Augustan period.

One of the most significant features of the '*vetus urbs*' of Italica has always been the walls, short stretches of which survive at the south and south-eastern corners of Santiponce. These enclose an area of some 2.7 ha and were built from *opus caementicium* faced with a form of *opus africanum* and, possibly, *opus incertum* in some stretches. In addition at least one circular-plan tower is known. An early study (Jiménez 1977) suggested that they may have been built in the second century BC, a date which would fit well with the suggestion that the town was walled in the mid first century BC (*supra*). However, recent work in the area behind the theatre on the west side of the town clearly

indicates that they date to the late Augustan, or more probably Tiberian, period.⁸

A Tiberian date can also be ascribed to the most extensive surviving monument in the *vetus urbs*, the theatre and adjacent portico. The earliest excavations here took place between 1971 and 1975 (Jiménez 1982), and were followed by a programme of restoration between 1976 and 1987 (Figure 3). This has continued with the excavation of the porticoed enclosure up until 1993. It now seems clear that both theatre and porticoed enclosure were conceived as a single project. The theatre was sculpted out of the north-east corner of the hill of San Antonio, with the *cavea* having a radius of c.30 m and the *scaenae frons* a width of c.48 m. Recent excavations suggest that it was built *de novo* in the reign of Tiberius. Moreover a monumental inscription in bronze letters records that *Lucius Blattius Traiano Pollio* and *Caius Traius Pollio*, who had been *duumviri* designates twice and priests for the newly instituted cult of Augustus (*pontifices augusti*), paid for the *orchestra*, *prosaenium*, and adjacent roads as well as statues to adorn the theatre (González 1991, 55 no. 383). Unusually for the time, the building was profusely decorated with marble from the quarries of Macael in Almería, which may have been intended to imitate the more exotic and costly Euboean cipollino (Canto 1977–78, 165–88). In a similar fashion to the Augustan theatre at Emerita Augusta the stage building delimited the western side of a large porticoed square (44.5 x 39.5 m). The enclosed area was defined by a double colonnade of the Tuscan order and a monumental pool was located at the centre. A surviving inscription records that part of this was built from his personal expenses by Lucius Herius, who had been twice *duumvir* and a *pontifex augusti*. It has been suggested that this refers to the western portico alone and the remainder of the square may have been built during the second century AD (Corzo 1991, 27). It is hoped that excavations in progress will clarify this.

The available archaeological, epigraphic and numismatic evidence thus suggests that while the programme of monumentalizing Italica may have begun in the Augustan period, it was not completed until the reign of Tiberius. The personal contributions from holders of the newly established priesthood of the *pontifices augusti* towards the theatre complex underlines the ideological role of these monuments. The broader acceptance of the urban elite of the new imperial ideology is indicated by the obverses and reverses of the bronze coins minted at Italica during the reign of Tiberius. Probably issued in greater quantity than before, they honour Tiberius, the deified Augustus, other members of the Imperial family and portray other imperial symbols including an altar inscribed *PROVIDENTIAE AUGUSTI* (Burnett *et al.* 1992). Little more is known about the development of

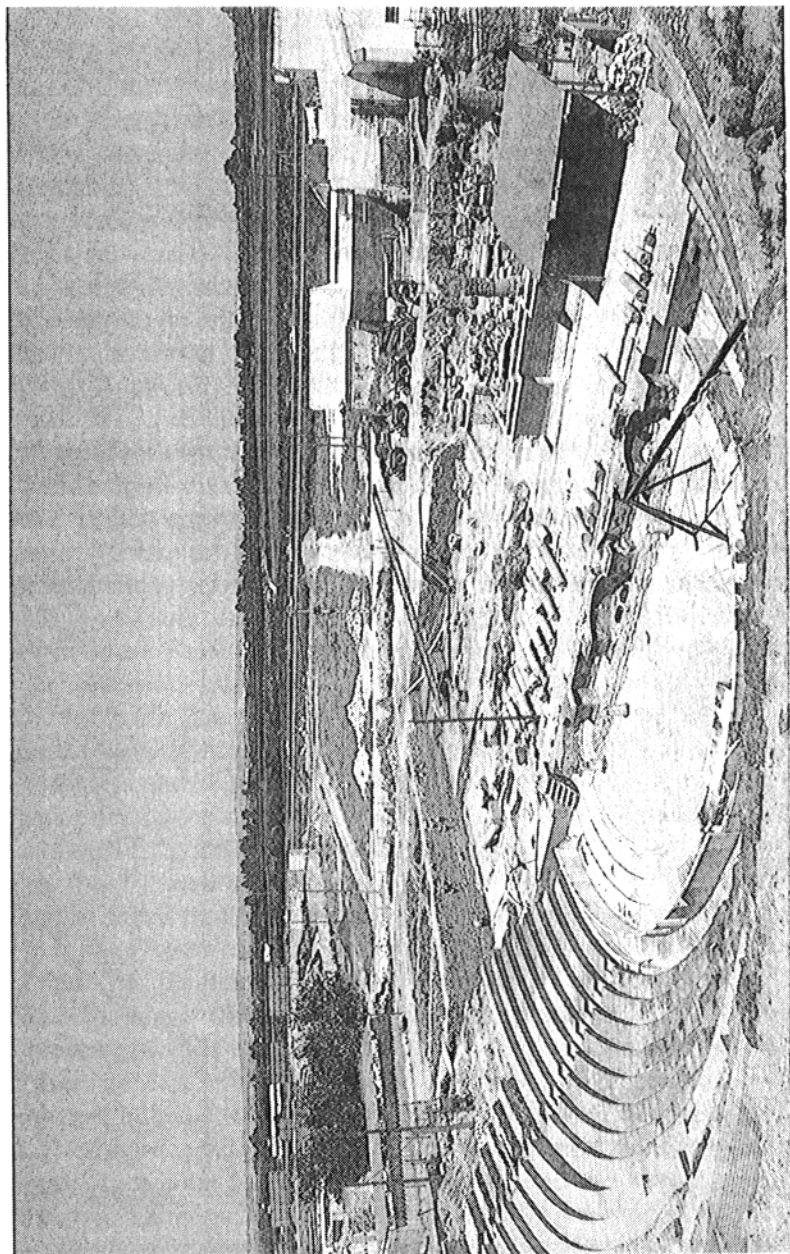


Figure 3. General view of the theatre at Italica. The *Isaeum* is at the bottom left of the picture.

the *vetus urbs* until the reign of Trajan, when a large set of public baths was built on the hill of Los Palacios on the south-western side of the town (García y Bellido 1960).

Italica under Hadrian

Italica is best known for the great extension to the town which probably took place under the reign of the Emperor Hadrian (Figure 4). This coincided with the granting of colonial status to the town (Aulus Gellius 16, 13). The enlarged area took in some 38 ha over hilly ground to the west of the early town. The amphitheatre has been known since at least the sixteenth century, while the urban area itself has been the focus of largely piecemeal activity since the mid to late nineteenth century until the 1980's. This has given us only a partial picture of the *nova urbs*, focusing largely upon defining the street plan of the northern part of the site, the central area of a large set of public baths (*Termas Mayores*), a range of sumptuous private houses with mosaic floors and, most recently, a temple complex. Valid as this work has been, it has only provided a partial picture of the town. Under the aegis of the '*Proyecto Italica*' an ambitious survey was undertaken in 1992 and 1994 to map out the unexcavated part of the *nova urbs*. This aimed to correct the 'partial' vision of the town in an attempt to better understand the scope of the Hadrianic

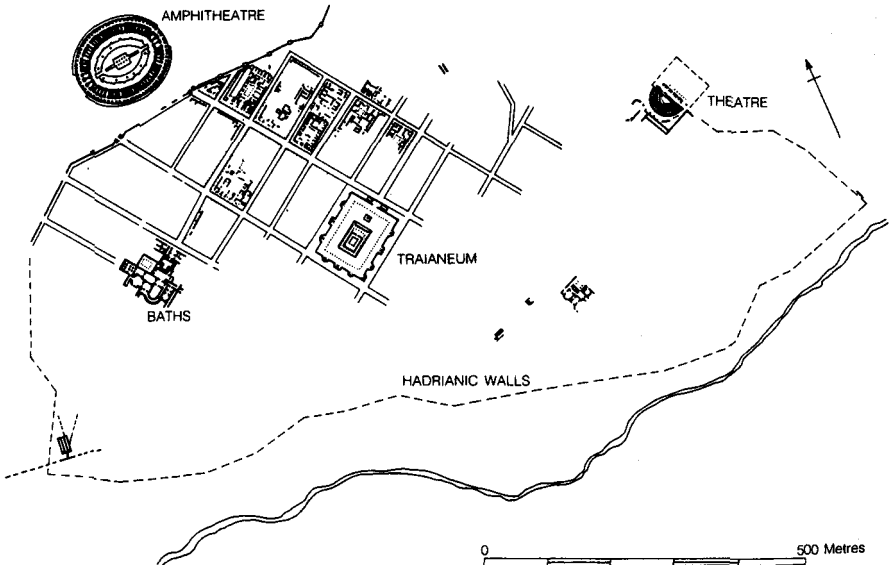


Figure 4. General plan of Italica showing the extent of the *nova urbs* (after Hauschild 1993).

project, both for academics and for the casual visitor. Attention was focused particularly upon the rising land to south-east of the *Termas Mayores* and the dipping terrain to the south-east of the *Traianeum* (*infra*) and Casa de la Cañada Honda. The work was also intended to form the framework for developing a medium-term research strategy at the site. This was a collaborative effort between the *Conjunto Arqueológico de Italica* and a foreign team coordinated by Simon Keay, with David Jordan and John Creighton.⁹ The team carried out the work by means of an integrated programme of systematic surface survey and geophysics. These techniques respectively allowed the buried buildings to be mapped and for construction debris (brick, marble, etc.) and chronologically sensitive pottery to be collected. In this way the layout and chronology of the buried parts of the town could be recovered and integrated with what was already known.

The nova urbs

It is now clear that the walled area of the *nova urbs* was rather less than was previously thought. The Hadrianic wall ran past the amphitheatre up to the *castellum aquae*, turning sharply eastwards towards the *Traianeum* (*infra*) and then veering towards the western edge of the *vetus urbs*. All of the enclosed space seems to have been demarcated for building except for the land gently rising westwards from the *Termas Mayores* to the *castellum aquae*. Rectangular building lots (*areae*) run north-west to south-east across most of this area and were separated by broad (*plateae*) north-west to south-east and narrow (*angiporti*) north-east to south-west streets. As Luzón noted (1978, 84–5) the breadth of these could vary quite widely (Casa del Planetario: 115.70 x 57.20 m; Casa de los Pajaros: 113.90 x 39.10 m; Casa del mosaico de Venus: 114.50 x 75.20 m). It is now clear that the *areae* to the south of the north-west to south-east road delimiting the south side of the *Traianeum* were closer to being square than rectangular. In addition it seems that those square *areae* to the north-west of the *Termas Mayores* were never completed although the drainage infra-structure had been laid. The planning of the lower-lying area between the Casa de la Cañada Honda and the *vetus urbs* is less distinct since the depth of deposit was greater and did not respond as clearly to the resistivity meter. Moreover there appears to have been a more complex structural sequence here (*infra*) than in areas to the north-west. Within this framework most *areae* were given over to residential buildings constructed from *opus testaceum*, some of which were large domus (Figure 5) like the already excavated Casa de los Pajaros, while others seem to have larger semi-public buildings like the already excavated Casa de la Exedra. Noticeable by their absence,

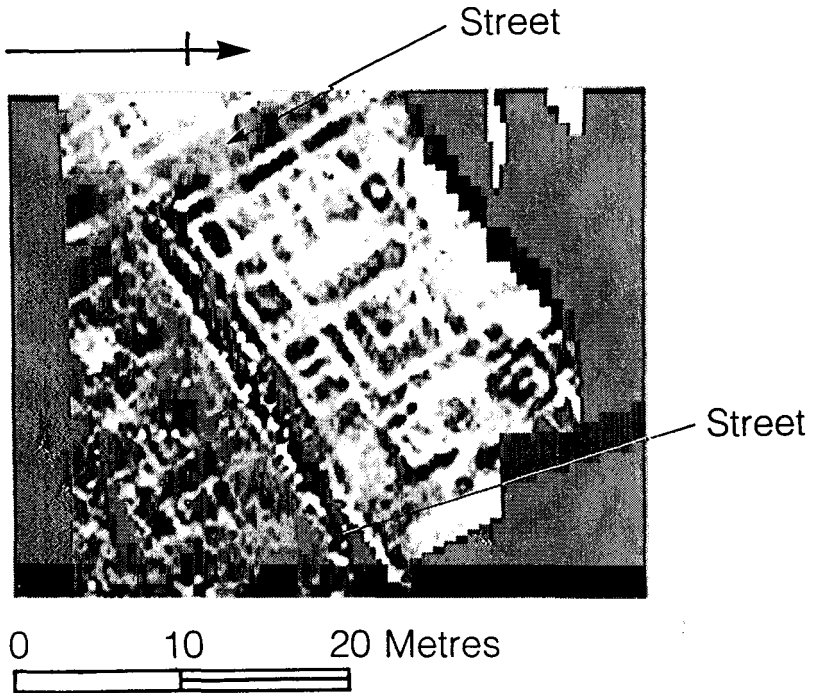


Figure 5. Resistivity plot within the *nova urbs* of Italica revealing the plan of large private *domus*. Source: D. Jordan (*Terra Nova*).

however, are public tenement blocks like those built by Hadrian in the City of Rome (Boatright 1987, 63–4 and fig. 10), except possibly in the south-east corner of the *nova urbs*. In overall terms, the layout of the town as a whole and the scale and architectural sophistication of individual houses are without parallel in the Iberian Peninsula. This is underlined by the range of exotic marble found scattered across the town. The most common varieties collected during the survey included Carrara from Luni (Italy), Porta Santa from Chios (Greece) and Giallo Antico from Chemtou (Numidia), as well as from the newly refurbished quarries at Almadén de la Plata 50 km to the north.¹⁰ The range and quality of these is exceptional outside the provincial capitals of Emerita, Corduba and Tarraco, given that many of these quarries were imperial property, and that there would have been restricted access to them. A proportion of this marble would have derived from public buildings robbed in late antiquity. Some undoubtedly would have come from the houses, which were clearly decorated sumptuously.

It now seems as if there were at least *three* public buildings within the *nova urbs*:

The Traianeum (Figure 6)

The focus of the new town was a rectangular precinct 93 x 120 m which covered the space of two *areae*. It was situated at the highest point of the town, with a spectacular view down towards the amphitheatre to the north-west, the *vetus urbs* to the south-east and towards neighbouring Hispalis to the east. It was approached by means of a *tetrapylon* at the intersection of the principal north-west/south-east and south-west/north-east roads. The complex was excavated by Pilar León between 1980 and 1983 (León 1982; 1988) and found to have been heavily robbed down to its foundations, although sufficient remained to provide some idea of the scale of the enterprise. The building was built from large ashlar blocks and *opus caementicium*. It was arranged longitudinally and faced north-east. The entrance was provided by a porch decorated in Chian coloured marble (Porta Santa). The interior space was defined by a colonnade of Carystian cipollino marble which masked alternating apsidal and square niches. It was dominated by an octastyle temple (28 x 42 m) on a high podium and frontal altar, both decorated in Carrara marble. The intervening area was populated by two rows of statues.

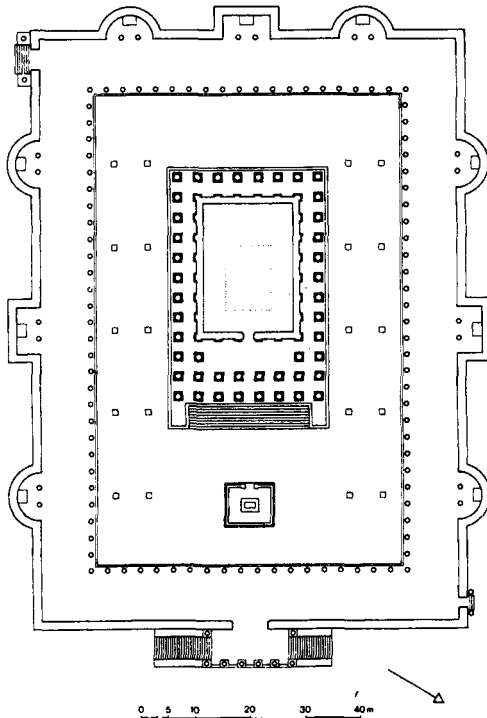


Figure 6. Plan of the *Traianeum* of Italica (after Hauschild 1993).

In architectural terms this complex probably has its origins in the symbolically important Temple of Peace which was built by Vespasian in Rome. However it is quite closely paralleled by the Library of Hadrian at Athens (AD 132/133: Sisson 1929), and the precinct of the temple of Rome and Augustus on the upper terrace at Tarraco, which was rebuilt under Hadrian. Its closest architectural and stylistic parallels are to be found at Hadrianic monuments in Rome, Ostia, Ephesus and Pergamum (Boatright forthcoming). Recent work has made clear that this was not the forum of the town, as its excavator originally thought (León 1982): this must have remained at its original site in the *vetus urbs* (*supra*). Instead this complex seems to have a dynastic character, in some ways similar to the forum of Augustus at Rome. An inscription was discovered at the site recording a donation made by a *flamen perpetuus divi traiani* (*Marcus Cassius Caecilianus*: González 1991, no. 343, 18–20), suggesting that it may have been a *Traianeum* or centre for the veneration of Trajan, similar in concept to that at Pergamum in Asia Minor. Although fragments of a large acrolithic sculpture were found in the excavation, the person represented could not be identified. It has also been suggested that some of the statues within the precinct may have represented illustrious figures from Italic's past, divinities and, presumably, other members of the Imperial family.

Termas Mayores and palaestra

These were first excavated by Demetrios De Los Ríos in the 1850's, who provided a plan of the central area alone. The resistivity survey has completed the plan, showing that they covered 4 *areae* and that they were probably the largest set of public baths in the Hispaniae. The complex consisted of two main elements. The most northerly comprised a square bath block, built from *opus caementicium*, within which lie the *natatio* and associated rooms excavated by De Los Ríos. This was linked to the *castellum aquae* by a subterranean aqueduct. Background disturbance in the resistivity readings make it difficult to attempt completing his plan within the confines of the bath block. The block to the south may have been separated from the baths by a narrow road. It covers gently rising ground to the south-east and terminates abruptly on the side of the hill dominated by the *Traianeum*. There seems little doubt that this was a gymnasium, with the overall arrangement of baths-gymnasium finding ready parallels in the second century baths of Vedius at Ephesus and at Aizanoi (Nielsen 1990, figs 219 and 226) in the province of Asia. However, it is distinguished by having an architectural plan in some ways similar to the *Traianeum*. The retaining wall is pierced by alternating apsidal and square niches, while the central space of the interior was probably delimited by a portico

or porticoes. It seems unlikely that there was any structure at the centre of the square. The similarity of the plan of the gymnasium to the *Traianeum* alone suggests that it too may have been commissioned by Hadrian. This is reinforced by the discovery of a lead fistula in the baths which carried the abbreviation *Imp(erator) C(aesar) H(adrianus) A(ugustus)* (Nierhaus 1966), pointing to some kind of connection between the emperor and the building.

Macellum, Odeion or small Baths

This large building was cut away into the high ground to the south-west of the *Traianeum* and overlooked the southern part of the *nova urbs* down to the ribera Huelva. The resistivity plot for this is masked by disturbance caused by surface rubble. The building appears to have covered one large *area* and to have had an apse at its western end. In plan it superficially resembles a *macellum*, similar to the market of Sertius outside the west gate of Timgad (Ward-Perkins 1981, 396 fig. 264.c). However, the topographic situation of the buildings would seem to rule this out. Instead it might suggest that it be identified with a small *odeion*: this would be more in keeping with the Hellenistic interests of Hadrian. Nevertheless it has been reported that *suspensurae* tiles were discovered during an abortive sondage at the site in the 1980's, which might point to the complex being identified as a set of public baths. This seems unlikely in view of the building's location and the proximity of the Greater Baths and the 'Baths of Trajan' at Los Palacios in the *vetus urbs*.

Casa de la Exedra (Figure 7)

While the houses in many of the excavated insula blocks are relatively simple *opus latericium* mansions (Casa de los Pajaros, Casa de Hylas, Casa de la Cañada Honda), the Casa de la Exedra stands out as exceptional in terms of size and scope. It was originally excavated in 1924–1925 and was recently subjected to a re-analysis (Rodríguez Hidalgo 1991) as part of a conservation and restoration programme at Italica. The ground-plan of the complex covered some 3000 sq m (compared to only 1700 sq m in the Casa de los Pajaros) and comprised six functional areas which were terraced onto the hillside lot. These were largely built from *opus caementicium* like the public buildings. Within the complex, there was a central 'domestic' area with central peristyle and collective latrine, an apsed gymnasium and lower service corridor and at the highest point, a bath complex. The entrance was on the western side of the building. Flanking this were a number of *tabernae* which were largely independent of the main complex.

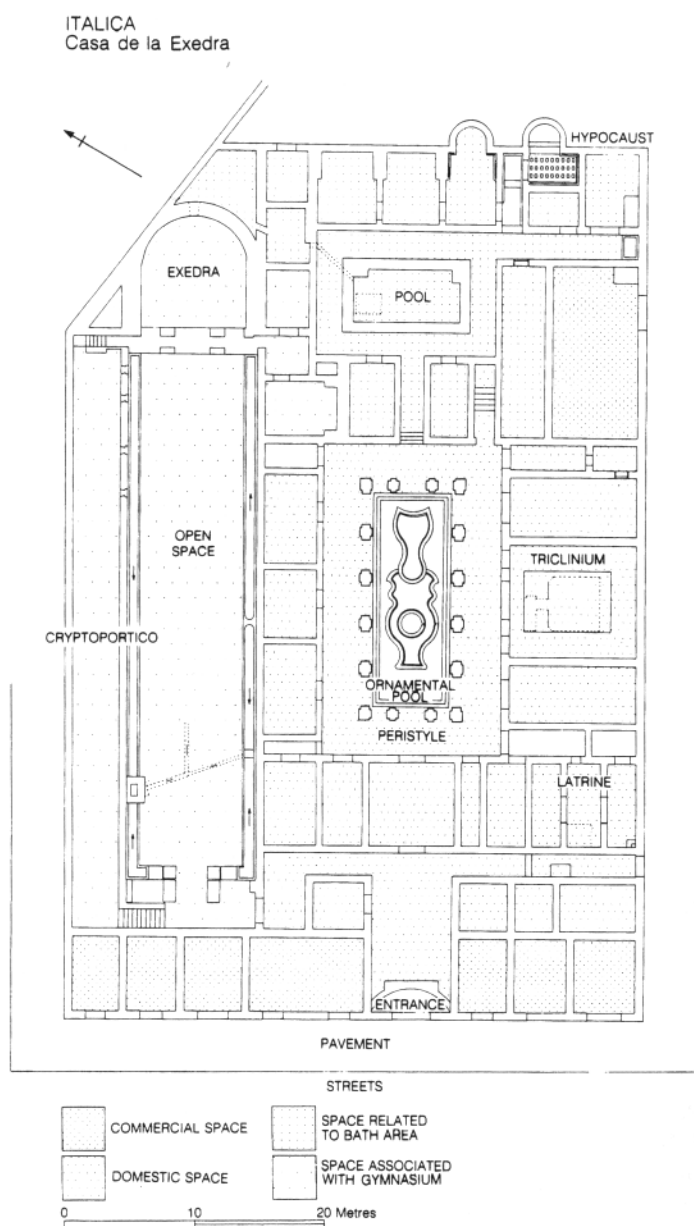


Figure 7. Plan of the 'semi-public building' of the Casa de la Exedra in the *nova urbs* of Italica showing the spatial distribution of 'domestic' space, baths, gymnasium, service area and commercial premises.

In addition to all this there are grounds for believing that the complex may have had up to three stories. As a result of the above considerations it has been suggested that this may have been the seat of a *collegium*, possibly a *collegium iuvenorum*. The adjacent Casa del Neptuno may have had a similar function.

The vetus urbs

The Hadrianic period also saw substantial embellishment of the *vetus urbs*. In particular the theatre seems to have become the focus of an ambitious building programme, of which only traces have survived. The *scaenae frons* of the theatre itself was rebuilt, or at least redecorated with composite Corinthian capitals of Hadrianic date. To the north-east, the Hadrianic period seems to mark the extension of the Tiberian portico defining the rear wall of the *scaenae frons* around three sides to enclose a large square (44.50 × 39.5 m), with central tank. Shortly after this was completed a small shrine to Isis was built (Figure 8) at the central point of the north-western colonnade (Corzo 1991). The back wall of the portico formed the rear wall of the cella and the *Isaeum* extended forward just beyond the interior colonnade to a width of three intercolumnnar bays (16 m wide). Four ex-voto marble inscriptions to Isis with the characteristic foot-prints were placed at the entrance to the cella in the central bay. One of these inscriptions mentions the deity Bubastis, possibly to be identified with the Egyptian goddess Bastet (Corzo 1991 no. 3 and 142–3). The four corresponding columns of the outer portico formed the entrance to the

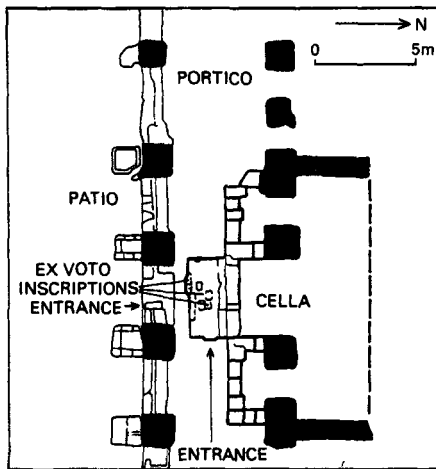


Figure 8. Plan of the *Isaeum* located in the theatre portico at Italica.

Isaeum and each was fronted by a statue, whose bases survive. To the south-west the hillside overlooking the theatre was levelled and a large concrete podium was constructed. It seems likely that this was the foundation for a temple and it dates to the early second century AD (Pellicer *et al.* 1982). Building work here in 1900, 1901 and 1940 uncovered several marble statues, including representation of Venus (García y Bellido 1960, 148 and Lám. XXXVIII), Diana the Huntress (García y Bellido 1960, 149 and Lám. XL), Hermes Dionysopohorus (García y Bellido 1960, 146 and Lám. XXXIV) and some nymphs (in a private collection at Madrid). These were executed in the second century AD and presumably formed part of the decorative scheme of the temple which stood here.

The Cemetery

A significant recent discovery has been that of the second century AD cemetery of Italica, which has been shown to lie on the Italica to Emerita road immediately to the north-west of the line of the Hadrianic wall. Work to widen the Avenida de Extremadura revealed several cupa burials, one of which was removed to the Museo Arqueológico de Sevilla.

There is no doubt that the topography of Italica changed beyond recognition in the early second century. Its relatively modest urban area was greatly expanded in area and almost formed a separate town. One might be tempted into thinking of Hadrianic Italica as a *dipolis*. However, it should be pointed out that the forum of the town as a whole seems to have remained in the *vetus urbs*. There is at once an air of artificiality and symbolism about the town. The *Traianeum* clearly sets the tone for this. The scale of the whole enterprise, the quality of the technical expertise lavished upon individual buildings, the range of public and semi-public buildings, and the wide variety of exotic marble used on the town were exceptional for towns in the Hispaniae outside a provincial capital. Imperial patronage must have played an important role in the execution of this. In this sense there are parallels to be found at such towns as the Iol Caesaraea of Juba II in Mauretania and the Leptis Magna of Septimius Severus in Tripolitania. However, Italica may have had a more overtly political and dynastic purpose.

There now seems little doubt that this took place during the reign of Hadrian, coinciding with the town achieving colonial status as the *Colonia Aelia Augusta Italica*.¹¹ It is well known that Italica was the *patria* of both Trajan and Hadrian. They were descendants of families who had emigrated to the town at some time during the Republic from Tuder in Umbria and Hadria in Picenum respectively. It is thus suggested that Hadrian lavished

'many and splendid gifts' (Cassius Dio 69.10.1) upon Italica as a way of expressing his fondness for his home town.

However Hadrian had been born at Rome and his recorded relations with the Italicenses were more marked by friction than warmth. It is possible that Hadrian's generosity towards Italica marks a colder and more political calculation. The uncertainties surrounding Hadrian's bedside adoption by the dying Emperor Trajan are well known (Syme 1958). The new emperor was thus at pains to consolidate his position in Rome and in the provinces by making extravagant gestures in honour of his adopted father Trajan. The completion of the forum of Trajan at Rome is a case in point (Boatright 1987). It is possible that the *nova urbs* at Italica may have been a '*Traianopolis*' (Rodríguez Hidalgo 1989) or monumental city built at once to honour the memory of Trajan and at the same time 'legitimize' his own position in the eyes of the provincials in Baetica. Its date of construction is not known although it would have run over several years. However, Hadrian's visit to Hispania in 122 would have been an opportune moment to begin or supervise the enterprise, even though there is no evidence that Hadrian ever visited Italica during his reign (Dio Cassius 69, 10, 1). The *Traianeum* seems to emerge clearly as a dynastic centre for perpetuating the memory of the *divus Traianus*. In this sense, the great embellishment of Italica was distinct to that lavished upon Leptis Magna by Septimius Severus.

The concept of the *nova urbs* and its public buildings are consistent with what is known about Hadrian's philo-hellenism. The very act of personally founding a town was rooted in Hellenistic tradition, and Hadrian is known to have founded others in the eastern Mediterranean (Jones 1984). The evident difference between the *vetus* and *nova urbes* recalls Hadrian's public distinction between the City of Theseus and the new Hadrianic quarter of Athens (Boatright forthcoming). The *Traianeum* and the Baths-Gymnasium complex both show strong similarities to buildings commissioned or connected with Hadrian at Rome and in the east. If Hadrian is to be credited with this degree of involvement, it is difficult to know whether Hadrian underwrote the whole cost for the new town, or whether it was a 'partnership' between the elites of Italica and the emperor (León 1988). In any event the 'unbuilt' areas revealed by geophysical survey raise the possibility that the complex was not finished as originally conceived.

The town after Hadrian

The decline of the nova urbs,

Excavations at the Casa del Neptuno and the Casa del Planetario have provided evidence which has been interpreted as signs of poor quality repairs not long after the houses were built (Luzón 1982). On the basis of this it has been suggested that occupation of the *nova urbs* did not continue beyond the middle of the third century AD. The principal cause has been identified as unstable soil conditions which led to widespread subsidence (*bugeo*).

The systematic field survey has confirmed that much of the *nova urbs* between the *Traianeum* and the northern walls was abandoned in the course of the third century AD. The nature of the archaeological evidence does not permit one to chart the process of abandonment more closely, or to establish whether this was sudden or gradual. However the cause may be different from that which has been suggested. Firstly, while subsidence does take place on the site of the *nova urbs*, it would also have occurred in the *vetus urbs* since this shared the same geology and soil types. The *vetus urbs*, however, continues to be occupied in some form until at least the twelfth century. Given the politico-religious symbolism of the *nova urbs*, a different kind of explanation, or explanations seem more appropriate. Firstly, this kind of town would have been especially vulnerable to a change in the political climate. The transition from the Antonine to Severan dynasties might have brought about a public need to shun symbols of earlier regimes, or at least a need to express solidarity with symbols of the new regime. The adornment of the theatre in the *vetus urbs* with votive altars (González 1991, 62–5 no. 392), may be symptomatic of a re-focusing of euergetism away from the *nova urbs* during the Severan period. It is also possible that the fact that there was a *collegium* of imperial quarry workers (*statio serrariorum*: González 1991, 61 nos. 390 and 391) at Italica during the Severan period may reflect supplies of marble, possibly from Almadén, for new projects in the *vetus urbs*.

Another reading of the evidence could be that the Hadrianic enterprise was simply too costly for the inhabitants of Italica to maintain with their own resources alone: indeed, as mentioned above, it is even possible that it was never completed quite as planned. A final possibility is that with the growing inflation of the third century AD, the *nova urbs* fell victim to the devaluation of the private monetary foundations which would have played an important role in maintaining such unnecessary grandiose monuments as the Great Baths.

Late Roman Italica

One of the most outstanding features of the resistivity survey was a large wall which clearly post-dates the Hadrianic *nova urbs* (Figure 9). It includes within its area the south-eastern part of the *nova urbs*, including the *Traianeum* and the *odeion*/baths and probably rejoined the line of the old Tiberian wall at the foot of the hills of San Antonio and Los Palacios. The *Termas Mayores*, the amphitheatre and most of the excavated houses were excluded. On the north-eastern side of the *nova urbs* the wall can be clearly seen cutting through earlier houses. The wall itself was about 3 m thick, built largely of rubble with ?reused ashlar facing,¹² and interspersed with rectangular bastions. The date of this is impossible to establish without excavation. However the area enclosed by the wall is consistent with the spread of late African Red Slip ware pottery dating to between the later third and early to mid fifth centuries AD. Late Roman wall circuits are quite common in the Hispaniae and seem to represent a redefinition of Roman administrative control in the late third to early fourth centuries AD (Keay 1982). This seems to be the first known example from Baetica and may point to a growth in the region of Italica in the fourth and fifth centuries AD. Structural superposition of the kind recorded in the Casa de las Columnas (Abad 1982) within the late Roman town made it difficult to define buildings. Needless to say they were characterized by the reuse of earlier materials and many would have stood in sharp contrast to the Hadrianic buildings they succeeded. Others, however, were clearly residences of considerable wealth. Excavations in the early 1970's (Canto 1976) suggested that a mansion of third century date was demolished and replaced by a new building in the fourth century AD. This new *domus* was decorated with at least four mosaics, three of which were geometric and one of which depicted Venus. Public buildings seem to have been largely in a state of decay. The *Traianeum* (in whichever guise it now functioned), and the theatre and adjacent portico were used as quarries for building materials (León 1988; Corzo 1991) or abandoned during the fourth or earlier fifth centuries AD.

This enlarged late Roman town was ringed by small cemeteries with modest burials to the north and south of the *vetus urbs* and by occasional burials within some of the old Hadrianic mansions. The largest known cemetery at El Pradillo had some 100 burials (Canto 1982).

Visigothic Italica

This period of Italica's history has been almost as imperfectly known as the Republican period. In common with other towns in the lower Guadalquivir

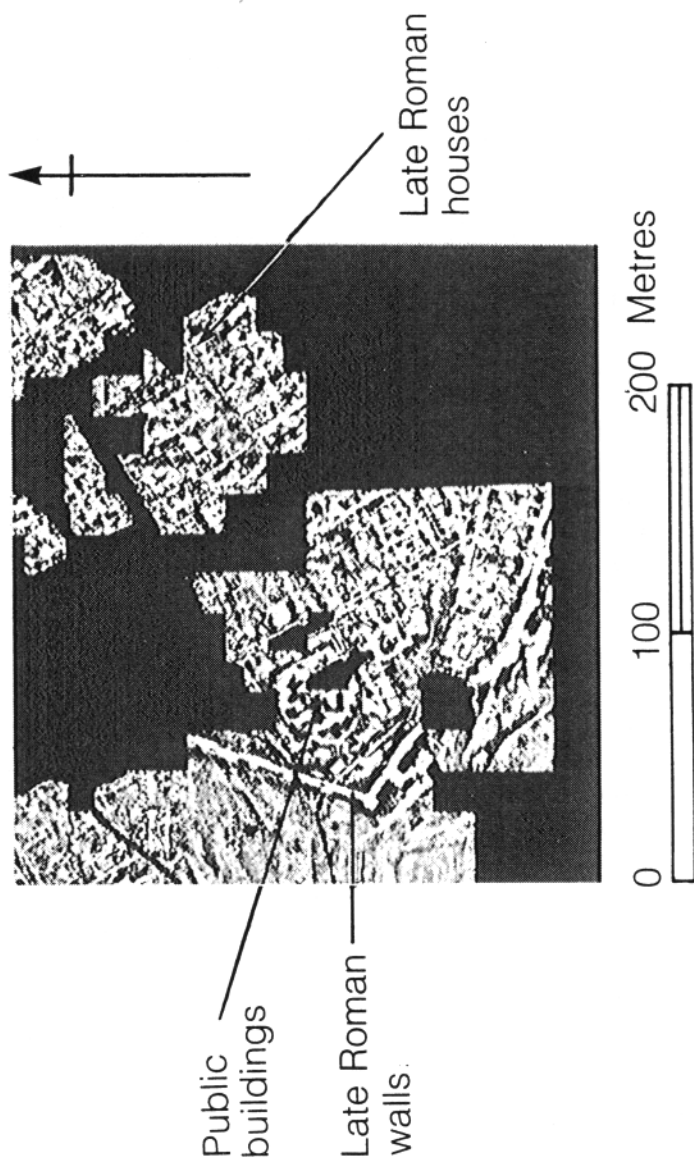


Figure 9. Resistivity plot within the *nova urbs* of Italicca showing part of the town enclosed within the late Roman walls. Source: D. Jordan (*Terra Nova*).

valley, the sixth and seventh centuries AD are difficult to document at Italica archaeologically owing to the rarity of datable imported African Red Slip after the middle of the fifth century AD. Thus although the focus of sixth and seventh century occupation must have lain within the newly defined walls of Italica the survey has not yielded any material of this date. It is similarly absent from the *Traianeum* or in excavations within the core of the late Roman city in the latest levels of the Casa de las Columnas (Abad 1982, Nivel 2 Sector 1). Nevertheless it was the scene of considerable activity in the Visigothic period. It was the strategic base of King Leovigild in his campaigns against the secessionist movement of his son Hermenegild who was based at nearby Hispalis. It is recorded that the former rebuilt the, presumably late Roman, walls of Italica (John Bicar.Chron.a.584.1) in AD 584 and also issued trientes with the legend *CUM DEO ITALICA*. From the late sixth century AD onwards, Italica reappears as a substantial Christian community, sending Bishops to a number of the Church Councils at Toletum (Vives 1963).

NOTES

1. Today this appears as two separate hills (San Antonio and Los Palacios). These are artificial in the sense that they were created by continual downcutting along the line of the Avenida de Extremadura from the eighteenth century to the present-day. This activity has also removed archaeological deposits post-dating the early first century AD in adjacent areas in much of the centre of Santiponce and at the north and south ends of the village.

2. There was however residual earlier Greek pottery.

3. In the opinion of some scholars this identification is bolstered by the discovery of an Italic antefix decorated with the Etrusco-Italic Potnia Theron, which is datable in stylistic terms to the second century BC (García y Bellido 1960, 19 fig. 11). It should be noted that this piece derives from the collection of the Condessa de Lebrija and its archaeological context is unknown.

4. For references see the article by Keay elsewhere in this volume.

5. CIL II.1119; Canto 1985b.

6. See the comments in endnote 1.

7. Given the post-Roman disturbance that parts of the Roman town suffered (see endnote 1) this kind of reconstruction seems unreliable.

8. A sondage excavated in the 1980s uncovered a deposit pre-dating the construction of the wall which contained Italian Sigillata of typically late Augustan or Tiberian date (Ettliger *et al.* 1990 Forms 18, 21, 22, 24, 26, 32, 33, 36).

9. Drawing upon the experience of survey at the neighbouring site of Peñaflor: Keay *et al.* 1991.

10. Identified by Dra Isabel Rodà, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

11. González 1991, no. 342; contra arguments that Italica might have gained colonial status under Trajan expounded by Canto 1981.

12. An observation based upon a visible section in Cardo VII.

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JOSÉ MANUEL RODRÍGUEZ HIDALGO¹ & SIMON KEAY²

¹*Conjunto Arqueológico de Itálica, Avenida de Extremadura 2, 41970 Santiponce, Sevilla*

²*Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton, Highfields, Southampton, SO17 1BJ*

Recent work at Itálica

Itálica is one of the most emblematic Roman towns in Iberia. It was founded by Scipio Africanus in 206 BC, and was the birth-place of the Emperor Trajan and the patria of the Emperor Hadrian. Most of what is known of the site comes from excavations undertaken in the *nova urbs* in the late nineteenth century and sporadically in the twentieth century. A survey of the unexplored part of the *nova urbs* in 1991 by the Dirección General De Bienes Culturales and the Conjunto Arqueológico de Itálica directed by Rodríguez Hidalgo provides a framework in which to review archaeological work throughout the Roman town since the early 1980's. Of particular note are discoveries in the theatre and possible forum of the *vetus urbs*, a much clearer image of the Hadrianic architectural scheme for the *nova urbs* and the definition of the limits of late Roman and Visigothic Itálica.

Investigación reciente en Itálica

Itálica es una de las ciudades romanas más emblemáticas en Iberia, fundada por Escipión el Africano en el 206 a.C., y que fue el lugar de nacimiento del emperador Trajano y origen del emperador Adriano. La parte que mejor se conoce del yacimiento proviene de las excavaciones llevadas a cabo en la *nova urbs* a finales del siglo XIX y esporádicamente en el siglo XX. Una prospección de la parte no explorada de la *nova urbs* en 1991, por parte de la Dirección General de Bienes Culturales y el Conjunto Arqueológico de Itálica, dirigida por J.Rodríguez Hidalgo, proporciona un marco para revisar el trabajo arqueológico realizado en toda la ciudad romana desde principios de los años 80. Se deben destacar los descubrimientos del teatro y posible forum de la *vetus urbs*, que proporcionan una imagen más clara del esquema urbanístico y arquitectónico de Adriano para la *nova urbs* y la definición de los límites de Itálica en el Bajo Imperio y época visigótica.