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THE SUBURBS OF *CORDUBA*

OS *SUBURBIA* DE CÓRDOVA
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ABSTRACT: Way and beyond ideological mandates that have at any moment in time distinguished legal differences between the area falling within or without the city walls, history shows that ever since it was founded, *Cordoba* has surpassed the strict limits imposed by its walls to make up a functional unit in which it is impossible to understand the city *sensu stricto* without its *extra moenia* area, its *suburbia*: an ever changing reality whose first sign of transition centers on the network of roads. This in turn becomes a guarantee

¹ Full Professor of Archaeology. Principal researcher for the *Sisifo* Research Group (University of *Cordoba*). This study falls within the Research Project: "PATTERN. (P)atrimonio (A)rqueológico, Nuevas (T)ecnologías, (T)urismo, (E)ducación y (R)entabilización social: un (n)exo necesario para la ciudad histórica, concedido para el periodo 2016-2019 por la Secretaría de Estado de Investigación, Desarrollo e Innovación del Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad, dentro del Programa Estatal de Investigación, Desarrollo e Innovación Orientada a los Retos de la Sociedad, enmarcado a su vez en el Plan Estatal de Investigación Científica y Técnica y de Innovación 2013-2016, convocatoria de 2015 (Ref. HAR2015-68059-C2-1-R)."

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for access to a second outlying strip (lacking in urban functions but easily accessible and the area favoured by its inhabitants for their daily activities), and finally to the land on which the city's economy, political power and prestige depended. The suburbs served as a mirror for the city.

KEYWORDS: *Corduba*, *Baetica*, *Hispania*, Roman Archaeology, Urbanism, Architecture, Suburbs.

RESUMEN: Más allá de los imperativos ideológicos que en cada momento han definido las diferencias jurídicas entre el espacio intramuros y el extramuros, la historia evidencia que Córdoba ha trascendido desde su fundación los límites estrictos impuestos por sus murallas para configurar una unidad funcional en la que no es posible entender a la ciudad *sensu stricto* sin su espacio *extra moenia*, sus *suburbia*: realidad cambiante que establece un primer ámbito de transición vertebrado por la red viaria. Ésta se erige a su vez en garantía de acceso a una segunda franja de carácter periurbano (carente de funciones urbanas, pero fácilmente accesible y marco preferente para la actividad cotidiana de sus habitantes), y, por fin, al territorio dependiente, en el que se cimentaba la base económica, el poder político y el prestigio de la urbe. Los suburbios funcionaron así, para bien y para mal, como espejos de la misma.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Corduba*, *Baetica*, *Hispania*, Arqueología romana, Urbanismo, Arquitectura, Suburbios

RESUMO: Muito para além dos imperativos ideológicos que em cada momento definiram as diferenças jurídicas entre os espaços intramuros e extramuros, a História mostra-nos que Córdoba, desde a sua fundação, ultrapassou os estritos limites impostos pelas suas muralhas para configurar uma unidade funcional na qual não se torna possível entender a cidade em sentido estrito sem o seu espaço *extra moenia*, os seus *suburbia*: uma realidade em mutação, estabelecida por um primeiro eixo vertebrador constituído pela rede viária. Por sua vez, esta funcionou como a garantia de acesso a uma segunda franja de carácter periurbano (ausente de funções urbanas, mas de acesso fácil e ponto preferencial para a actividade quotidiana dos seus habitantes) e, por fim, para o território dependente, no qual se sustentava a base económica, o poder político e

o prestígio da urbe. Os subúrbios funcionaram assim - para o bem e para o mal - como espelhos da mesma.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Corduba*, *Baetica*, *Hispania*, Arqueologia romana, Urbanismo, Arquitectura, *Suburbia*

THE SUBURBS OF *CORDUBA*

***Cordoba* in its territory: an indivisible reality (FIG. 1)**

Way and beyond ideological mandates that have at any moment in time distinguished legal differences between the area falling within or without the city walls, history shows that ever since it was founded, *Cordoba* has surpassed the strict limits imposed by its walls to make up a functional unit in which it is impossible to understand the city *sensu stricto* without its *extra moenia* area, its *suburbia*: an ever changing reality whose first sign of transition centres on the network of roads. This in turn becomes a guarantee for access to a second outlying strip (lacking in urban functions but easily accessible and the area favoured by its inhabitants for their daily activities), and finally to the land on which the city's economy, political power and prestige depended³. The suburbs served as a mirror for the city, for better or worse, breathing with it, giving rise to city and outskirts as a whole in which neither part could exist without the other⁴.

The founding of *Cordoba* on the site it still occupies today was mainly justified by its control of the river, at a point where the

³ Until the administrative reform by Javier de Burgos, "*Cordoba's* territory" or the land under the city's jurisdiction, shaped after the Christian conquest in 1236 (CARPIO 2000), covered an area much larger than today's municipal *Cordoba*, even though it is one of the largest in Spain. Bearing in mind how the settlement was articulated, everything seems to indicate that this dependent territory in early medieval and modern *Cordoba* could be similar to that of the *cora* (or *kura*) of its Islamic predecessor (MARTAGÓN 2010) and that of the *territorium* of the Roman city (VAQUERIZO 2014, earlier bibliography).

⁴ WITCHER 2005; GOODMAN 2007; ANNIBALETTO 2010. In this article we once more take up aspects covered, personally or collectively, in VAQUERIZO & MURILLO 2010, a and b, and VAQUERIZO 2010, a and b, 2011 and 2014, Works to be consulted for deeper insights.

landscape reflects a clear transition between two worlds: plain and Andalusia, hills and lowlands, barbarism against refinement, mining, cattle raising and hunting against the best land in *Hispania* for farming. In the times when the *Baetis* was still a wild river, with uncontrollable forces when it raged down, *Corduba* afforded perfect command over the only fords that allowed it to be crossed in times of low water and for many kilometres around, becoming a prototype of “bridge city” (VAQUERIZO 2006b); a situation that must have soon moved on from simple metaphoric expression to tangible reality. On the other hand, the city dominated the middle valley of the river at the exact point above which it was no longer navigable (ESTRABÓN, *Geogr.* III,2,3; PLINIO, *N.H.* III,3,4). This allowed it to enjoy its own port and wharves (LEÓN PASTOR 2009-2010), from which it could ship minerals from the hills and later oil, wine, cereals, wool, wax, honey, wood..., facilitating the entry of compensatory trade in exotic materials, luxury items, cultural influence of the most varied kinds, personalities from varied origin and especially troops, supplies and impedimenta.

All of these factors explain the privileged and dominant role that urban *Cordoba* played in the region’s geopolitical and territorial organisation from its remotest origins, as well as its cosmopolitan air, its multicultural character and its extraordinary strategic value, at a time when communications were a given for any initiative, and when having an ideal place at one’s disposal for billeting and supplying troops was a guarantee for conquest and sustainable power (VAQUERIZO & MURILLO 2010b; VAQUERIZO 2014).

Vetus urbs

After decades of coexistence with the former indigenous city (MURILLO *et al.* 2009, 57), the length and extent of which are uncertain, in the middle of the II century B.C. (archaeologically confirmed) Rome undertakes a new foundation, perhaps by then *colonia latina*⁵, to the north-east of the old Turdetan city, to which it gives the same name:

⁵ This would not have prevented it from taking on a *conventus civium Romanorum*; RODRÍGUEZ NEILA 1988, 214 ff., or 245 ff.; STYLOW 1990, 262; VENTURA 1996, 136. A revision of problems related to the Roman foundation and first phases of its development, in MURILLO 2006, and VENTURA 2008a, 87 ff.

Corduba (CARRILLO *et al.*, 1999, 40; Murillo & Vaquerizo 1996, 41 ff.; MURILLO & JIMÉNEZ 2002, 184). A spur is chosen that is well defended (except for the north) by steep hillsides and several streams, situated about 750 m. north-west of the original indigenous settlement, from where it controlled the fords across the river and also the adjacent land, truly a paradise for the Italic colonization.

With an area of 47.6 Ha (one of the largest among the contemporary Roman and Latin colonial foundations⁶), republican *Corduba* is equipped from the outset with a surrounding wall (MURILLO & VAQUERIZO 1996; VENTURA 1996, 138; CARRILLO *et al.* 1999, 42, FIG. 2; MURILLO & JIMÉNEZ 2002; MURILLO 2006) that will remain unchanged until, in Augustus' times, it is extended down towards the river, enlarging the urban space to 78 Ha. The route of the first ways (MELCHOR 1995) date to these times, and the mass exploitation of the mines in Sierra Morena -Rome needs silver to pay its troops-, that favour the enrichment of the first Cordobese family sagas (GARCÍA ROMERO 2002; VENTURA 2009), and undoubtedly the building of the first bridge, whose existence has been proved beyond doubt by its prominence in the defence of the city during the Civil Wars (*Bell. Hisp.* V, 3-5; *cfr.* RODRÍGUEZ NEILA 1988, 260 ff., and 274; MELCHOR 1995, 94-95).

As was usual in this type of foundations, the city was organised around an octagonal urban network, still without a sewage system, based on *insulae* of two *actus* (70 x 70 m; *cfr.* CARRILLO *et al.* 1999, 46-47), which, initially with a high degree of building modesty, would not be completed until well into the I century B.C. (MURILLO & JIMÉNEZ 2002, 189). The existence of a forum -and the role of *Corduba* as a provincial seat for the pretor- is documented in written sources at least since 113/112 B.C. (Cicero, *In Verr.*, 2, 4, 56; *Bell. Alex.*, LIII, 2), although the stratigraphic sequence seems to predate its construction to the middle of the II century B.C. (CARRASCO 2001, 205).

Important artistic activity has been detected in the architectural decoration as from the first half of I century B.C., perhaps on the part of native workshops that worked with hard local stone but who still showed a high degree of dependence on Italic masters (MÁRQUEZ 1998a, 203 ff, and 2008, 31).

⁶ MURILLO 2006. On the Roman colonial process in general, COARELLI 1992; BALDINI 2002, 112 ff.; LAFFI 2007, 18 ff.; BELTRÁN 2011.

We have hardly any information on religious architecture, although there is an important Tuscan-Doric style complex built from local sandstone which, in the opinion of its excavators, monumentalised the entrance to the city in the south, beside the access to the *cardo maximus* at the beginning of I century B.C.⁷ Placing it at this point, as well as highlighting the value of the *cardo maximus* as the city's main axis, would also be justified by the vital role that the river and its port must have played in everyday life and its very existence, not only from a political point of view, but economic, strategic and even ideological⁸. A religious interpretation has also been given⁹ to the drums of the columns with twenty flutes, worked in limestone and stuccoed, that were reused on the wall in the Augustan refoundation in the Maimonides Square, becoming one of the earliest examples of the use of *spolia (rediviva saxa)* in the city, which would later become so frequent in late Roman and Ancient times (MORENO ALMENARA & GUTIÉRREZ 2008).

During these first times, prior to the construction of the different aqueducts that would successively lead to *Corduba* becoming one of the best supplied cities in the Roman West, the houses still used water from wells (VENTURA 1993b and 1996, 27 ff. and 67 ff.; VENTURA *et al.* 1996, 95 ff.; JIMÉNEZ SALVADOR & RUIZ 1999, 88 ff., FIG. 6).

We have even less data concerning the suburbs (FIGURE 2). The *Bellum Alexandrinum* (LIX, 2, and LX, 1) mentions that when *Casius Longinus* returns to the city to face the troops commanded by *M. Claudius Marcellus Aeserninus* in 48 B.C. he demolishes the *nobilissimae carissimaeque possessiones Cordubensium* that existed on its outskirts, which seems to confirm the existence of important agricultural

⁷ Cfr. LEÓN ALONSO 1996, 20-21 and VENTURA *et al.* 1996, 88-89. In this same zone epigraphy and remains of architectural decoration document the existence, years later, of an *aedes Dianae* (MÁRQUEZ 1998b, 123 ff., FIGS. 19-20; GARRIGUET 2003, 102 ff-. N° 41b, Plate XVIII, 2), in which Apollo was probably worshipped (GARRIGUET 2003, 125 ff.); without forgetting its possible relationship with paying homage to the Emperor, analysed in detail by the latter author (122 ff.).

⁸ On the only silver coin minted by Cneo Pompeyo attributed to *Corduba* (Crawford n° 370, from 46-45 B.C.) the Roman general arrives by boat, and is received by a local armed divinity (*Corduba*?; or more likely, *Hispania, Citerior* or *Ulterior*). So it is questionable to identify the scene with the *porticus cordubensis* (AMELA 1990).

⁹ Cfr. MÁRQUEZ 1998b, 122, and 1999, 155 ff. The same author does not reject the possible relationship with the temple in the republican forum (MÁRQUEZ 1998b, 121 ff., FIG. 18).

or recreational concerns in the suburbs or outskirts, in spite of the lack of any clear archaeological data. However, the first suburban *villa* of which we have archaeological evidence is Cercadilla, from I century A.D. (MORENO ALMENARA 1997). The lack of evidence is common for the republican period throughout the whole of the *Uterior* –but not for certain areas in the North-east¹⁰–, for the moment without unanimous agreement to explain the causes (RODRÍGUEZ NEILA 1988, 241 ff.; MURILLO & JIMÉNEZ 2002, 193).

As far as funerary questions are concerned, we underline the almost complete absence of burials assignable to this period; surprising, but once again, not exclusive to *Corduba*. Maybe the necropolis corresponding to the republican city –situated on the highest part of the hill– was set on its southern flank, between the wall and the river; after Augustus' *deductio* this area would be absorbed into the new urban precinct, which would mean that its use as a cemetery would then be entirely annulled. This seems to be confirmed by the existence of a possible funerary monument of unconfirmed type (built of ashlar, clad in limestone slabs and probably stuccoed and painted), found beside a way leading from a non-located gate on the southern wall and finally dismantled for the construction of the colony's theatre (15 B.C.-5 A.D.). Not far from here a fragment of *titulus sepulcralis* was recovered –a block of micritic limestone for embedding– dedicated to *Bucca*, servant to the *Murria* family in the late-republican era (MONTERROSO 2002, 135 ff.; RUIZ OSUNA 2007, 98-99 and 125; Plan 9.1; plates 53-54; VAQUERIZO 2008, 6 ff). The first phase of the funerary precincts could be dated back to the beginning of I century B.C., on which decades later the Puerta de Gallegos burial mounds would be erected, in the western necropolis (MURILLO *et al.*, 2002, 251 ff.; VAQUERIZO 2008 and 2010a).

¹⁰ The transition from indigenous systems of working the land to the Roman model based on the *villa* is today subject to renewed interest, not only in *Hispania* (ARIÑO & GIL 1999; PREVOSTI, LÓPEZ & GUITART 2010) but also in *Gallia* (FAVORY & FICHES 1994) or *Italia* (BECKER 2012). These studies are showing that, as well as the necessary conceptual and methodological refining, the patterns of settlement should be approached on a wide time scale to permit correct contextualisation within the framework of the organisational and exchange systems articulated by the urban centres (FERNÁNDEZ OCHOA, SALIDO & ZARZALEJOS 2014).

Nova urbs (FIG. 3)

Half-way through I century B.C., in the Civil Wars between Caesar and Pompey's sons that would signal the end of the Roman Republic, *Corduba* took the side of the Pompeians, thereby provoking its destruction by Caesar's army. After this, it went into a logical period of decline which ended when it gained favour with Augustus, who, certainly before 14 B.C. refounded the city by way of a *deductio* of war veterans from the Cantabrian wars. These are ascribed to a new tribe: the *Galeria* (earlier ones belonged to the *Sergia*), it is raised to the category of *colonia* and is assigned the patronymic of *Patricia* (perhaps alluding to its return to the *patres*), seeking to condemn the Turdetan name to oblivion¹¹.

In the opinion of A. Ventura (2008a), however, this new *Colonia Patricia* (perhaps *Julia*?) might have taken its *cognomen* from Caesar himself, and its refounding *deductio* in 44 B.C. may have been the work of *C. Asinius Pollio*, proconsul in the Ulterior, which would include its new inhabitants in the *t. Sergia*, maintaining for several decades the members of the *t. Arnensis* of its initial founder (*M.C. Marcellus*) within a different administrative reality (the *Corduba latina* prior to 45 B.C.), to which the Cordobese quoted in *sortitio Ilicitana*¹² might belong. In support of his interpretation he uses the alleged location of the *auguraculum* (decorated with stone slabs in bell-like tradition) used by Asinius Pollio for his work of *auspicatio* and *inauguratio* in the western suburb, following the pattern used in palatial Rome. However, excavations carried out at various points along the *Nova Urbs* wall lead us to place its chronology between the eras of Tiberius and Nero, seeming at first sight to be an unreasonable *decalage* to take such an ingenious hypothesis into consideration (MURILLO 2010; LEÓN MUÑOZ & MURILLO 2009, 406).

¹¹ A *desideratum* that would not materialise, as *Corduba* as *origo* and name-place always continued to be used, reappearing on official inscriptions as from III century A.D. and later becoming consolidated up until today.

¹² *Caius Marius*, son of *Caius*, Corduban, from the "tribu *Veturia*" (CHAO; MESA & SERRANO 1999). This epigraphical document is usually dated around 43 B.C., although chronological divergence varies between this datum and the triumvirate era, Augustan and even Flavian (*cf.* OLESTI & MAYER 2001, 114-115 and 128 ff.).

Even when defeated and destroyed, what would be a *Colonia Patricia* for only a few centuries continued to play a directing role in official politics in the *provincia*. Here the imperial mint is situated, possibly founded by *Agrippa* in 19 B.C.¹³, from which came an enormous quantity of coins¹⁴ in bronze, gold and silver during several years, to pay the troops and the conquest of *Hispania*, showing once more the city's extraordinary economic capacity, associated to the mineral riches from *Mons Marianus* and the activities of its *argentarii* (GARCÍA-BELLIDO 2006; VENTURA 1999 and 2009). Thus, in just a couple of generations the new colony rises from its ashes and, now conscious of the unprecedented political order represented by Augustus' principality, casts aside its republican ideals, widens its precinct, provides itself with the most important elements of any Roman city (*simulacrum Urbis*) and turns them into an active element of self assertion, propaganda and prestige before the rest of the Empire and the world¹⁵.

From the very first times of Augustus, the city started to equip itself with various aqueducts that absorbed the liquid element from some of the springs and fastest flowing and cleanest streams in the hills, responding to the precepts gleaned from tradition and treaties on hydraulic engineering. Of the three already identified (VENTURA 1993b, 1996, 2002, 2004 and 2008b; MORENO ALMENARA *et al.* 1997; BORREGO 2008; CARMONA, MORENO & GONZÁLEZ 2008; PIZARRO 2014) we know the names of two of them from the epigraphy (FIG. 4): *Aqua Augusta* (later, *Vetus Augusta*), and *Aqua Nova Domitiana Augusta*, constructed at the beginning and end of I century A.D. respectively. The third one, perhaps identifiable with the name *Fontis aureae* in certain late

¹³ M. P. GARCÍA BELLIDO (2006, 257) assigns to this same date and Agrippa himself the second *deductio* of veterans (belonging to the *Legio XVI Gallica* and, most specifically, to the *Prima Augusta*, degraded for cowardice in action, which according to this author would have prevented the city receiving the *cognomen Iulia* or *Augusta*), that would have ended up by being assigned to the *Galeria* tribe. Á. VENTURA (2008a, 101) agrees partly with this hypothesis, adding that 19 B.C. would be the date to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of the city by Marco Claudio Marcelo.

¹⁴ At least until *Lugdunum* is opened in 15 B.C. and the armies mostly abandon *Hispania* after the provincial reorganisation in 13 B.C.

¹⁵ Here, we do not go into questions relating to the space within the city walls, which can be consulted more deeply and perfectly updated in recent works such as VAQUERIZO & MURILLO 2010a, or BAENA, MÁRQUEZ & VAQUERIZO 2011.

sources (VENTURA 2008b, 292 ff), as between II and III centuries A.D. The first two supplied about fifty thousand cubic metres daily, a figure taken globally and perhaps exaggerated, and this ensured the citizens' private consumption, a permanent supply to the thermal baths and to the fountains dotted around the city; many of these, like the aqueducts themselves, the work of great local sponsors (the case of the duumvirate *Lucius Cornelius*), who dedicated part of their enormous wealth to city services and resources, thereby guaranteeing their place in the collective memory, and at the same time ensuring they occupied public posts (MELCHOR 1994; VENTURA 1999 and 2009; STYLOW, VENTURA 2006).

The *via Augusta*, soon bordered with funerary monuments of different kinds which always sought the busiest stretches, but also the prestige lent to any construction of these characteristics on an artery of communication with the added value of connecting directly with Rome, entered the city in the East, following the right hand bank of the *Baetis*. Its original route had to be redirected about thirty metres to the North to allow for an important remodelling of the zone that included the re-organisation of the necropolis, the creating of a new residential district, the construction of a second aqueduct and the carrying out of a well designed architectural landscape, conceived in *Claudio's* era¹⁶ and set up on three large terraces reached by way of the city's two *decumani maximi* (MURILLO *et al.* 2003; GARRIGUET 2010; MURILLO 2010): the upper one, a square with porticos ; in the middle, an open space dedicated to grand ceremonies and circulation, and the lower one, occupied by the largest building for spectacles in the city: the circus¹⁷ (FIG. 5).

¹⁶ A. PEÑA (2009, 576), based once again on such a controversial element as architectural decoration, and following the arguments expressed earlier by C. MÁRQUEZ (2004, 121 ff.), the parallels of the *Augusta Emerita* forum, the *considetto* "Flavian style" and the epigraph that refers to the construction of the *Aqua Nova Domitiana*, pushes the chronology of the group to the Flavian era, making it its contemporary. However, stratigraphic reality, not only of the temple but also of the circus and the rest of the elements that form part of the complex point to the beginning of this colossal work to a late Julio-Claudian context, coinciding with that of the amphitheatre. This does not deny that, because of the long drawn out duration of this type of projects required to conclude them in the Roman world, certain works were finalised in the Flavian era, nor that the aqueduct to supply the Eastern suburban area was finally inaugurated in Domitian's time (*cf.* MURILLO 2010).

¹⁷ MURILLO *et al.* 2001; MURILLO *et al.* 2003; NOGALES 2008; MURILLO *et al.* 2009, 63 ff.; VAQUERIZO, MURILLO & GARRIGUET 2010. This extensive complex is

These three spaces, joined together, made up one more ideological expression¹⁸, related to models well known in the metropolis (Augustus' house, temple to Apollo Palatino and *Circus Maximus*) or *Tarraco*, and once again –although unanimity does not exist with regard to this hypothesis– directly related to official State worship, in this case with the *provincia* as protagonist, wishing just like the city to express submission and fidelity to the Imperial idea. In full *aurea aetas*, characterised also by an extraordinary economic boom, the peoples of *Cordoba* decided that their dedication to the Imperial cause needed a more explicit manifestation of *publica magnificentia*, and to this end did not hesitate to undertake one of the most ambitious building projects known until then in the urban complex, which affected 10 hectares of its eastern sector, led to dismantling a stretch of almost 100 metres of the Eastern wall and forced streams and torrents to be diverted, with the consequent infrastructure and drainage works. Nobody throughout history has ever had such a clear idea as Rome regarding the ideological importance of the urban image, and its role at the service of politics.

The upper square stands above the wall with the idea of making the most of the height afforded by the hill, and reinforces its stability with a line of digital foundations in the shape of *anterides*, in Vitruvian style. In the central section (receding towards the western *porticus* in order to free up space in front of the facade) it houses a hexastyle, pseudoperipteral, Corinthian temple, built of local stone and clad in marble, possibly from Carrara. It faced an ample sector of ground to the east (which it adjoins), turning the temple with its bearing and height into the first noble, immutable, magnificent view of the city that any travellers arriving from Rome would see. The square, somewhat irregular, eighty-five metres long on its main axis, framed by a triple *porticus* that left the eastern side free, was adorned with numerous marble and bronze statues, some of them equestrian.

today the subject of a monographic study carried out by a large team of researchers led by J.F. Murillo & J. L. Jiménez Salvador.

¹⁸ It is the “*décor de la fête*”, justified solely by the function it carries out: «*la construction en tant que telle compte moins que l'aire qu'elle englobe, et celle-ci ne prend son sens que lorsqu'elle accueille les foules ordonnées dans des procédures cérémonielles*» (GROS 2009, 335).

The circus, of more than considerable dimensions, flanked the east-west way, on an axis somewhat different to the temple. We only have evidence of a limited sector of the sustaining walls of its northern stands. Its construction would last until Nero's times (perhaps even Flavian), and it would be used for little more than a century, as it would cease to be used as from an undefined moment in the last quarter of II century for not very clear reasons that would lead to the abandonment of the middle square and the displacement of worship to the Emperor (quite weakened since the end of the previous century), with all its paraphernalia, to another place that has yet to be identified¹⁹. The circus would never be rebuilt; however, epigraphy (*CIL* II²/7, 221) explicitly confirms the celebration of *ludi circenses* in the city in the first half of III century A.D., so we cannot rule out the possibility that after being dismantled it was reconstructed elsewhere in the city (perhaps made of wood and only for temporary use?) on a site that has still to be identified²⁰.

¹⁹ MURILLO *et al.* 2001; MURILLO *et al.* 2003; MURILLO *et al.* 2009, 68 ff. We have not detected any structural problems in the design and construction of the circus that could have caused its falling into ruin from to a certain extent « natural » causes (MURILLO *et al.* 2010b, 505, note 294). Nor do the *mauri* razzias in the last quarter of the century (ARCE 1981; GOZALBES 2002, 478 ff.) seem to have been important enough. What does seem to be relevant, on the other hand, is the political instability, derived precisely from the *mauri* crises, from rebellions and usurpation attempts started by *Cornelius Priscianus* in 145 and continued by *Maternus* in 187, and, fundamentally, the civil war that devastated *Gallia* and *Hispania* as a consequence of the conflict from 195 to 197 between Clodio Albino and Septimio Severo after Comodo was assassinated in 192. The support of Clodio Albino by Hispania and the later repression of his followers by Septimo Severo, with numerous executions and systematic confiscations (PÉREZ CENTENO 1990) would have a profound repercussion in the provinces of Hispania, as epigraphic documentation begins to reflect in Tarraco and in the *Colonia Patricia* archaeology. In the latter context, in repression of the provincial elites in Baetica, it fully explains the dismantling of its seat and the transfer of all its signs of dynastic worship to the neighbourhood of the colonial forum and its annex in the Moreria Street.

²⁰ Given the complex political and ideological changes taking place throughout III century, to which the transformation of Imperial worship and the setting of the sun on civic patronage are not indifferent, it is quite possible that the costly circus and gladiatorial games (*cfr.* MURILLO *et al.* 2010a, 277 ff.) became rare events. In this case, to celebrate those funded by *L. Iunius Paulinus* a race track, tribunal and provisional stands would suffice.

The conceiving of the eastern urban facade with its grand monumental arrangement, opening as we have said onto the *via Augusta*, should not be separated from what took place more or less at the same time in the western *vicus* with the building of the amphitheatre, which also compelled alterations to be made in the *via Corduba-Hispalis* route and is accompanied by fresh urban design in the zone (in this respect, VAQUERIZO & MURILLO 2010a). Here we must underline the construction of a colossal avenue, sixteen metres wide with a double portico, under whose pavement ran three large sewers: the centre one designed to drain the amphitheatre itself, and the ones on each side to collect water from the porticoes (CASTILLO; GUTIÉRREZ & MURILLO 2010) (FIG. 6); all three spilling into the stream of what would later be called Arroyo del Moro, which emptied into the Guadalquivir after serving as a natural ditch for the city on its western flank and would periodically cause flooding in the zone, well evidenced until it was channelled once and for all in XX century. Such an important urban undertaking would be directly linked with the reinforcement of the city's East-West axis by way of its *decumani* and its greatest and most representative civic and religious spaces that began to be interpreted as *via sacra*, conceived perhaps as a "cosmography" of the Empire (GROS 2009, 334 ff.; GARRIGUET 2010, 474 ff).

With an axis of over 178 metres (we still work with provisional data), the patrician coliseum falls within the series prior to the canonical definition of its kind that would lead to the construction of the Flavian amphitheatre in Rome. The former has a solid ground plan, with large *substructiones* of ashlar entirely filled with construction materials and on which the stands are built (FIG. 7). The first excavations have yielded already the remains of architectural decoration in marble, which undoubtedly embellished the complex, and also of reserved seating in the same material (FIG. 8)²¹. The patrician amphitheatre was in use from the late Julio-Claudian era until the end of III century or beginning of IV A.D., and according to all the signs would eventually be Christianised, as in the case of *Tarraco*, after several Cordobese martyrs had been executed (*vid. infra*). However, to date

²¹ The existence of *loca* reserved for groups or for prominent figures favoured with a seat in the building is demonstrated by a marble plaque from the end of II or beginning of III centuries, which indicates the said honour for a certain *Philippianus*, public slave *de Colonia Patricia* (MURILLO *et al.* 2010a, 267, FIGURE 108).

we only know for sure that it was subject to continuous pillaging for centuries, and on top of which an arrabal (suburb) would be built in the Islamic era which fossilised its ground plan. Nearby there must have been a *ludus gladiatorius hispanus*, which specialists seem to agree on situating in the *Colonia Patricia* (CEBALLOS 2002; SÁNCHEZ MADRID & VAQUERIZO 2010). All of these aspects are dealt with in detail by several authors elsewhere, so we will not go any deeper here (VAQUERIZO & MURILLO 2010a).

With its enlargement, the city extends the perimeter of its walls down to the *Baetis* (the construction of which will last until Nero's times), and they become the main urban defence against its floodwaters; in a clearly explicit alliance between both, as in so many expressions of Roman culture, they merge purely functional questions with characteristic monumentality, symbolic aspects and the city's declarations of self importance. The gate, the bridge and *via Augusta* (formerly *via Heraklea*, of enormous value in the conquest of *Hispania*) make up a third scenario that in this case ennoble the meridian flank of the *Colonia Patricia* fronting its most emblematic and defining element: the river.

With respect to the way, restored by Augustus himself, we have scarcely any information, but the bridge, which must have been around three hundred metres long, is today the object of revision and study, so it is possible that shortly it will reveal something more about its construction in Roman times. Finally, the gate, which would not be finalised until Claudius's era, had three openings, the centre one aligned with the bridge, and the ones on either side with gateways to a large square (minimum 40 x 35 metres) which ennoble the Access to the inner city, also joining up with the *cardo maximo* (CARRASCO *et al.* 2003). From the gateway one could also descend directly to the river: this is shown by the steps documented on the eastern opening, upstream, which would have connected with a dock or jetty designed also, right by the wall, to protect the city's southern flank against the enormous floodwaters of the *Baetis* (MURILLO *et al.* 2009, 62 ff., FIG. 14) (FIG. 9).

In the neighbourhood of the bridge, there were factory zones of different kinds, such as potteries (VARGAS & CARRILLO 2004) or installations for putting into containers and exporting oil (MORENA 1997), and nearby must have been the river port (LEÓN PASTOR 2009-2010), probable boasting its own forum to bring together warehouses and mills (laid out on either side, within and perhaps without the walls), seats of

different commercial *societates*, *tabernae* of every kind and temples or sanctuaries dedicated to exotic divinities, to judge by the odd inscription recovered in the zone that shows clearly the city's degree of cosmopolitanism²²; unless all of these activities were carried out in the square itself that monumentalised the entrance from the Gateway to the Bridge, referred to earlier. This entire zone underwent its first transformation in the course of II to III centuries, when the eastern gateway to the square was occupied by *tabernae*, and would see an increase in its commercial character, suffering an important process of urban degradation as from IV century, without being abandoned, as happened with the colonial and provincial forums. This probably explains its severe transformation in late-ancient times (CARRASCO *et al.* 2003; LEÓN MUÑOZ & MURILLO 2009; *vid. infra*).

Finally as from *Claudius* and Nero's eras, dwellings had spilt outside the walled precinct around almost all its perimeter, greedily extending themselves in the form of suburban districts around the city (MURILLO *et al.* 2009; VAQUERIZO, MURILLO y GARRIGUET 2010; CÁNOVAS 2010; VAQUERIZO 2014), until they annulled to a certain degree the industrial and funerary uses of the *suburbia*²³, some of whose funerary monuments were dismantled, covered up or absorbed into the new buildings²⁴. If anything characterises the suburban areas it is to have traditionally served for funerary deposits, thereby establishing a clear separation, with a limiting characteristic, between the world of the living and that of the dead (FIG. 10).

The latter are aspects well known in *Cordoba* thanks to numerous recent studies²⁵, that have for the first time drawn a topography

²² We refer to the so-called "altar to eastern gods", an exceptional epigraphic document in the Iberian Peninsula found in 1921 in Torrijos Street, opposite the Mosque-Cathedral (PEREA 1997).

²³ Well documented for prior moments (*vid. e.g.* VENTURA & CARMONA 1992, for outside the meridional city walls, VENTURA 1993a for the north, or MURILLO *et al.* 2009, 53 ff., FIGS. 7-9, for *suburbium* to the east).

²⁴ This revaluation of the *suburbia* occurs when the necropolis had barely started to occupy these zones, so the new districts occupied as far as possible space left free of tombs, avoiding the moral (and legal) problem that would rise from the destruction of burials sites belonging to almost immediate forbears (REMESAL 2002).

²⁵ Among them, VAQUERIZO 2001b, 2002b, 2002c, 2004, 2008, 2010a and 2013; RUIZ OSUNA 2007, 2010 and 2014. Also the late-ancient and Islamic eras have been studied by other researchers: SÁNCHEZ RAMOS 2002, 2003, 2006 and 2007; CASAL

for the Cordobese necropolis for the Roman era guided by sepulchral, monumental and well planned *viae* (in spite of the fact that in time this primitive planning would fade), that were similar in every sense to the ones in the most Romanised cities in the Empire²⁶. However, the tombs did not spread in a continuous and uniform manner in the areas dedicated to necropolis²⁷, but, apart from existing hand in hand with other kinds of structures and activities: traffic, religious, domestic, entertainment, manufacturing, hydraulic, agricultural, fluvial²⁸, unhealthy etc. (FERNÁNDEZ VEGA 1994, 144 ff), must have occupied zones that were more or less limited, perhaps taking up free space left by the former, or according to some kind of criteria such as that of social classes and/or specific type of economies, family groups, or even *collegia funeraticia*. Thus it can be seen for example that in latter time, in the Santa Rosa district, where more than two hundred burials (MORENA & BOTELLA 2003, 408) were found in one plot whilst in the adjacent one there were none (in this respect, *cfr.* VAQUERIZO 2008 and 2010a). These are circumstances to be found throughout the whole of the Roman era, giving rise to a funerary topography with absolute mobility whose landscape evolves hand in hand with urban development (on this problem, as far as statues are concerned, *vid.* GARRIGUET 2006, 201 ff.).

2003; CASTRO, PIZARRO & SÁNCHEZ 2006; LEÓN MUÑOZ 2008-2009; VAQUERIZO, GARRIGUET & LEÓN 2006, or VAQUERIZO & MURILLO 2010a.

²⁶ This is the case of *Altinum*, where the existence has been assumed of a public programme of topographical regulation of funerary spaces, the object of private initiatives that would have given rise to precincts, *monumenta*, and tombs of different kinds, set out according to lots of differing sizes, apparently predefined (ANTICO GALLINA 1997, 216-17; TIRELLI 2005, 254; CIPRIANO 2005, 278 ff.; BUONOPANE & MAZZER 2005, 331).

²⁷ That is to say, they do not make up a facade, nor what has so repeatedly been called a “funerary belt”; at least not until the second half of II century or perhaps even the beginning of III century, when the need for new terrain for funerary deposits through saturation of those already in use led to the enlarging of the traditional necropolis, which meant they practically adjoined each other.

²⁸ Streams were very frequent around *Cordoba*, which conditioned suburban topography at every moment in time; particularly funerary topography. The density of its network, well confirmed by archaeology in recent years, is explained by the city’s site on the foothills of Sierra Morena and its proximity to the river Guadalquivir, into which they flowed directly or indirectly.

Workshops and guilds

In *Cordoba* as from late Republican times intervention seems clear on the part of workshops and guilds brought from the Metropolis, perhaps even itinerant ones that would have been responsible for the rapid establishment in the city of new official parameters in urbanisation and public architecture; somewhat later, as is logical, in the private sector, especially the funerary one, although they used the same language. Even so, judging by the archaeological information, and at least up until the Augustan refoundation, we can also assume an important role in public and private monumentalisation on the part of native workshops, not familiar at first with the new techniques and models, that would work as tradition demanded, progressively and inexorably adapting to clients' demands, fashions, materials and architectural and sculptural patterns, until they merged in their own right with the artisans who had come from afar (LEÓN ALONSO 2001). This full integration would become tangible from the very moment at which it would no longer be possible to distinguish traces of localisms in provincial artistic works; even though certain details of casticism would survive for centuries in portraits (MURILLO *et al.* 2009; VAQUERIZO 2014, with earlier bibliography).

In fact, a profound turning point is observed as from the construction *boom* in the city after its status is raised to that of *Colonia Patricia*, coinciding with a process of unprecedented ideological reconversion that would end up by catching on in all walks of life, including the funerary sector. The latter especially favourable to grand shows of *privata luxuria*, embodied particularly in the form of large *domus* outside the city walls²⁹, and *monumenta* that rivalled in location, size, luxury and originality. The people who ordered them (members of the urban elite, either through social importance or purchasing power³⁰ who must have found in the funerary world one of the best ways to express ideological dedication to the new culture, to the new idea of State, to the new political regime and to the Emperor in person), did not hesitate to bring master craftsmen and artisans from the *Urbs*; in reproducing and

²⁹ Also, enriched freed slaves, who turned the funeral world into a privileged showcase for social vindication.

³⁰ Reflected also in portrait-statues, of which not many examples have reached us (LÓPEZ LÓPEZ 1998; GARRIGUET 2006; RUIZ OSUNA 2007), but undoubtedly must have proliferated; some of them *in formam deorum*.

sometimes elaborating fresh prototypes; in trying out sophisticated and unprecedented hard stone (*marmora*) as active elements of a hitherto unheard of symbolic and prestigious language³¹, destined to reach the very highest level of adaptation to fashions and the new ideology; or what is the same, to self presentation and also, as a last resort, to perpetuate their *memoria*.

As in the rest of the Empire, this panorama underwent a determining transformation with the Christianisation of the Hispano-Baetic society, which would gradually lead to new ways of understanding funerary spaces. Already before this, in many of the cities in the south of the peninsula burials had invaded space inside the walls, clearly showing the change they suffered from an economic, social, cultural and urban point of view in the final stages of Rome's power (GARCÍA-DILS *et al.* 2005). This practice intensified over time until the dead occupied former urban spaces of relevance (PÉREZ RODRÍGUEZ-ARAGÓN 1997, 629 ff., n° 11-13, fig. 4, 9-10; CORRALES & MORA 2005, 133, FIGS. 112 and 113; CORRALES 2005, 128, FIG. 7), as happened in *Astigi* with the forum and its surroundings; in *Malaca* with the theatre (ROLDÁN *et al.* 2006, Vol. I, 423 ff); in *Carteia* with the forum and thermal baths (RUIZ BUENO 2013), or in *Corduba* at the back of the grand public square centred on the temple in Claudio Marcelo Street (COSTANTINI 2010). This process began to be detected towards the end of the Empire, coinciding with an intense shrinkage of the city's role as umbrella to public and economic life that probably led to a change in how it conceived itself; to the beginning of a period of transformations that would culminate in its conversion into a mediaeval town.

In short, with the end of the Empire, the suburbs seem to invade the old urban area (of course, not only in *Hispania*)³² and, as is logical, this brings death. These are times of change that finish off the ancient city, so the old precepts that maintained it lose all value. Even so, the dead seem to remain faithful to tradition and only penetrate areas and

³¹ The same practice can be observed in many other cities in *Hispania*, e.g. the case of *Ilici* (LORENZO SAN ROMÁN 2007). We refer to this work as it is one of the most recent revisions on this subject (also, on the continuation in time of certain cemetery precincts) and includes the most interesting aspects of prior bibliography. *Vid.* For the case of *Cordoba*, SÁNCHEZ RAMOS 2006.

³² To this respect, see the latest work by VAQUERIZO, GARRIGUET & LEÓN 2014, containing the most recent update on this topic.

buildings abandoned earlier, thus maintaining their frontier spirit, a certain respect for the people who live *in urbe*, who eventually may share the same space but as a general rule mostly distance themselves, congregating to live –or scratch a living– in smaller nuclei.

A city in transition³³

The image of *Corduba*, with her main public works fully completed by the beginning of the Flavian dynasty (MURILLO 2010), was to remain the same until the last decades of the II century, when the first changes became perceptible. Later on, by the middle of the third century, the city's monumental splendour during the previous two centuries began to wane: public buildings ceased to be erected, and the imported materials lacked their customary quality and quantity³⁴; the workshops that produced sculptures and architectural decoration became less affluent; century-old houses were still inhabited, and the use of *spolia* as well as the recycling of some public and private spaces became common practice. This was the case indeed with a large number of funerary monuments (*cfr.* MORENO ALMENARA & GUTIÉRREZ 2008, 78 ff. about the burial mounds of Puerta de Gallegos), the thermal baths, the circus, the colonial and provincial forum (including the temple on Claudio Marcelo Street, which appears to have been re-consecrated), or the amphitheatre. However, each of these places underwent a different transformation process: while the first was razed to its foundations to allow for quick and easy storage of materials, the latter was Christianised.

³³ To this respect, see VAQUERIZO & MURILLO 2010b; VAQUERIZO, GARRIGUET & LEÓN 2014, and ALORS, R.M. *et al.* 2014.

³⁴ From Flavian times and until the triumph of *Septimius Severus* in 197, the altruism of the Cordovan elites had accelerated its urban transformation, mainly focusing on keeping and decorating public buildings and spaces, or infrastructures such as roads, bridges and aqueducts, as well as financing spectacles such as the ones sponsored by *Lucius Iunius Paulinus*, pontiff, perpetual *flamen* and colonial *duovir*, as well as provincial *flamen*, towards the end of the second and beginning of the third century (CIL II²/7 221), in the last great altruistic act documented in Cordova before civic patronage all but disappeared. With gladiator *munera*, scenic *ludi* and circus games, the patron commissioned statues for the astronomic sum of 400,000 sesterces, nearly ten times the annual amount spent on philanthropic enterprises by the local curia in a North-African city of average size (see DUNCAN-JONES 1974, 107-110 and 215-217).

Many Roman streets were still used, but the pavements tended to be generally neglected and were repaired with gravel and even recycled architectural decorations, for example the *Via Augusta* near Saint Andrew's church. Similarly, some cesspits began to fill up, while the *lacus* that used to distribute fresh water at the crossroads of the old *Colonia Patricia* stopped working³⁵, and the stream of the western pit that served as a main collector for several drains under the *decumani* of the westernmost section of the "*vetus urbs*" was repeatedly filled in and sealed throughout the fourth century.

The first important change to the urban image of *Colonia Patricia* since the beginning of the last third of I century A.D. took place precisely outside the city walls, on the eastern side of the great monumental axis formed by the double *decumanus maximus* (FIG. 11): in the last quarter of II century, the circus was abandoned and turned into a quarry (and consequently pillaged and razed to the ground). At the same time, the paving of the central terrace of the architectonic complex devoted in the *prouincia Baetica* to imperial worship was taken down, and a wall was erected to close off the eastern side of the square on its highest terrace, which had so far remained open (MURILLO *et al.* 2003 and 2009a).

The III century also witnessed a gradual pattern of neglect of the western *vicus* on the other side of the city. This began before the amphitheatre's abandonment during the first decades of IV century, to be precise after 303-304, the years that saw the execution of Saint Acisclus, the most important of the five local martyrs³⁶. Shortly thereafter, *Cordoba's* coliseum underwent a hasty and thorough dismantlement caused by the increased demand for building materials. After extensive consideration of the city's general archaeological and historical context, we can venture three different explanations for this:

³⁵ As we can see, for instance, on Ramírez de las Casas Deza street (HIDALGO 1993) and at St. Victoria's school (CASTRO & CARRILLO 2005). This situation does not, however, seem to be due to the collapse of the city's water supply, since at least two of the three aqueducts well documented today (*Aqua Vetus* and St. Anne of Albaida, or Bus Station) continued to be used until the middle years of the Islamic period. The channels were probably redistributed to meet the new needs and, perhaps, the new sharing criteria established by the city's fund management and the gradual loss of interest on the part of the patrons.

³⁶ See a contextualised development of this matter in VAQUERIZO & MURILLO 2010b, 486 ff.

- An almost complete reconstruction of the bridge, a possible hypothesis (although highly improbable and as yet unproved).
- A general and extensive *refectio* of the city walls, a little out of keeping with its constant maintenance requirements.
- The erection of the monumental complex of Cercadilla, in our opinion the most likely hypothesis due to the proximity of both buildings and the existence of archaeologically documented mine-waste tips, containing *spolia* from the amphitheatre destined to the construction of the above-mentioned complex, and lying between the two (FUERTES, RODERO & ARIZA, 2007).

In our view, the general interpretation of the building of Cercadilla is correct except for a couple of details: the very short time frame proposed for its construction (296-297), and its consideration as imperial palace for Maximian Herculus in the context of his North African campaign³⁷. In fact, after the martyrdom of Saint Acisclus, *Cordoba*'s coliseum was stripped down to its foundations, including facade and *cavea*, whereby the pillaging was especially evident in its north-eastern section, the one closest to Cercadilla. Thus, it became a veritable "mine" for the construction of the new architectonic complex, clear proof of which we find in the "refuse tip" containing *spolia* recovered a mere couple of years ago at the former army quarters of Saint Raphael (TORRERAS 2009; FUERTES, RODERO & ARIZA, 2007), located halfway between both buildings and including several seamed voussoirs from the vault of the *ambulacrum*, as well as some pieces carved in grey micritic limestone with a very peculiar physiognomy, and perhaps formerly part of the enclosed seats of honour of the *proedia* (MURILLO *et al.* 2010a, 262-284, FIG. 106, 107 and 109).

Due to the distinctive construction technique employed at Cercadilla, most of the amphitheatre's seating must have been frag-

³⁷ The archaeological excavation carried out at Cercadilla, a model of expertise in many respects, has however been burdened by the circumstances that accompanied its "rediscovery" and first destruction in early 1991 (HIDALGO 1996, 141); by the excavations performed under time pressure, that culminated in the destruction of most of the archaeological complex at the end of 1992; by interferences at the hands of many non-archaeological agents during this period; and by the deep wounds inflicted upon it by the never-ending disagreements between archaeology and society (about this, see VAQUERIZO & MURILLO 2010b, 493 ff. and footnote 88).

mented with the aim of either adding it to the *caementicium* or re-carving it to produce the tiny *vittatum* that frames it. Even then, great calcrenate ashlar were obviously hauled and situated, for instance, near the skylights of the *crypto-porticus*, in many cases bearing the typical *anathyrosis* so characteristic of the coliseum's building style (HIDALGO *et al.* 1996, 22, figs. 16-18. MURILLO *et al.* 2010a, 252 ff, figs. 90, 91, 96 and 98). Final evidence is provided by one such piece near the foundations of the monumental door that provides access to the complex (HIDALGO, 2007), consisting of grey micritic limestone and identical to the ones found at the army quarters of Saint Raphael. The excavators agree as to its being repurposed (FUERTES, RODERO & ARIZA, 2007, 177).

If the date of construction of Cercadilla could be set approximately within the first decades of IV century, instead of being placed rigidly to match the hypothetical stay in *Cordoba* of Maximilian Herculus, we would gain a new perspective to tackle many of the open questions posed by Arce (1997 and 2010) in a more ample historical context, not only free from the limiting boundaries of the Tetrarchy, but also in direct connection with the dynamics of the *suburbium* itself. In fact, we would situate ourselves in a time frame ranging from the announced and voluntary renunciation of Diocletian's and Maximian's imperial functions in 305³⁸ to the obtainment of individual and personal power by Constantine in 323, an event charged with unique significance. Indeed, during the first two thirds of his rule Constantine was just another tetrarch, but the events that he endeavoured -or was forced- to set in motion were to change everything.

We are inclined to believe that Constantine built Cercadilla to serve as *praetorium* - from 307 or 308 - for the *vicarius Hispaniarum* and to ensure the correct administration of the Hispanic provinces. His aim was to reorganise his territories and mobilise the resources that, in the long run, would enable him to beat his rivals (first *Maxentius* and, later

³⁸ Maximian's renunciation was rather less "voluntary" than officially claimed, as later events will show. In order to place this in the right context, we have based ourselves mainly on Arce's view (1982) regarding Hispania; CAMERON, GARNSEY (1998) have provided us with a view of the greater Empire, and we have used works by BARNES (1973 and 1982), KOLB (1987), CAMERON & HALL (1999), CORCORAN (2002), BRANDT (2007), and VEYNE (2008) to deal specifically with the Constantine years.

on, *Licinius*)³⁹. However, we endorse Hidalgo's hypothesis (HIDALGO, 2002, 344 ff) which links the later years of Cercadilla to the figure of *Ossius*, bishop of *Cordova*, counsellor to the emperor and prestigious personality in the wider Empire, a hypothesis that gives substantial unity to the whole *suburbium*. Accordingly, all Constantine did was follow the Roman example of the transformation of the complex of Saint John in the Lateran into the main seat of the bishop of Rome.

Ossius, who witnessed Maximian's persecution leading up to the death of the five martyrs of *Cordova* and who, at this moment (second quarter of IV century), was perfectly able to detect the first signs of the martyrdom cult born in Rome, Jerusalem and other imperial cities (in many cases encouraged by Constantine and his closest circle (*cfr.* DEICHMANN 1993; KRAUTHEIMER 1993; TESTINI 1980) evidently must have welcomed the imperial *donativum* with the intention of transforming the architectural complex into a symbol of the triumphant Church and his own personal success, maximising his propagandistic discourse with the erection on the ruins of the amphitheatre of a (possible) martyrdom complex, whose characteristics are yet to be unveiled by our archaeological work. Indeed, although the excavations of the amphitheatre are not complete, we can already hypothesize that the architectonic complex built upon its ruins after its dismantlement, facing Cercadilla and bearing a construction technique inspired by the *opus vittatum* employed there⁴⁰, is connected to the conversion of Cercadilla

³⁹ For a detailed exposition of this hypothesis, please see VAQUERIZO & MURILLO 2010b, 497-506 (more arguments regarding this topic are found in ALORS *et al.* 2014, who in general terms subscribe to our view). We will address in a separate article the disagreeable reaction that our hypotheses have elicited in R. HIDALGO (2012), since the topic is beyond the scope of our present work. However, in order to place this disagreement in its right context (of an exclusively academic nature, at least for us), we urge the reader to keep in mind that our hypothesis was introduced during the course of an international meeting about the suburban areas of the Western Empire (VAQUERIZO 2010b) in which we presented, along with contributions to the topic by some thirty Hispanic and European researchers, the results of our work in the western suburb of *Colonia Patricia*. Not only was the question of Cercadilla essential to the meeting, but it constituted the reason why J. Arce, P. Marfil and R. Hidalgo were expressly invited. Only the latter declined the invitation.

⁴⁰ The only difference resides in the substitution of vertical "heaps" of masonry in a radial alignment (apsidal structures) or at the corners (sand constructions) for the horizontal stone layers. See MURILLO *et al.* 2010a, 285-295.

from *praetorium* to residence of the bishop *Ossius*, in accordance with an idea already put forward by MARFIL (2000a, 2000b and 2006) and HIDALGO (2002) –although according to the latter, *Ossius* took possession of the *palatium* built by Maximian, while the former claims that the bishop built the complex himself from the second quarter of IV century.

In other words, we encounter one of the first instances of the project which both Constantine and *Ossius* had started to sketch, each from his own perspective but undoubtedly in a coordinated effort: a discourse based on the communion of Church and Empire (always with Constantine as its visible leader), which was to serve as one of the ideological pillars of the new regime. Soon, however, theological disputes would throw a shadow on this (VEYNE, 2008). Let us not forget how the hundred-year-old bishop of *Cordova* was cast into oblivion by the whole of western Christianity (NIETO, 2003, 20 ff), including his own diocese (almost a *dannatio memoriae*), following the confusing events that surrounded his move to *Mediolanum* and his consequent detention by *Constantius* II in 356; his presumed fall into Arian heresy (to which he had been opposed half of his life), and his immediate death in *Sirmium*, probably towards the end of 357 (*cfr.* CLERQ 1954 and, more recently, VENTURA 2014).

If *Ossius* had indeed managed to establish his Episcopal seat in Cercadilla⁴¹, the above-mentioned events must have played a role in his rapid loss of prestige and perhaps caused his successors to move the seat to Saint Vincent at the end of V century or the beginning of VI, at a time when the urban network inherited from the Romans was not yet too fragmented⁴². This would enable them to create a unitary and extensive establishment, as we have claimed before (LEÓN & MURILLO 2009), in accordance with the definite disintegration of the Roman provincial

⁴¹ For a discussion of this, *cfr.* ARBEITER 2010, or CHAVARRÍA 2010.

⁴² At that moment, with the old Turdetan name reinstated, *Corduba* moves her nucleus of power to the southern quarter, where the Episcopal complex of Saint Vincent was to be erected, as well as a *castellum* for defending the bridge and the river –reassessed as a privileged channel of communication due, to some extent, to the general decay of the road network–, which will probably establish the foundations of the future residence of the Visigoth governor and, centuries later, of the Andalusian fortress (LEÓN & MURILLO, 2009; MURILLO *et al.* 2009, 98 ff; MURILLO *et al.* 2010b; MORENO ALMENARA & GUTIÉRREZ 2008, 74-75).

administration and the configuration of the bishop and a small urban and largely ecclesiastical oligarchy as the city's new social, political, and economic (but also religious) leaders. This happened just before the fragmentation of *Hispania* in 409 at the hands of Suebi, Alans and Vandals, summoned by the emperor himself in the context of the umpteenth usurpation and its consequent civil war (*cfr.* ARCE, 1982). From then on, the mists of oblivion that had obliterated *Ossius'* memory extended to Cercadilla, and the *suburbium* metamorphosed into a building with a largely martyrdom and funerary character, closely related to its martyr par excellence, Saint Acisclus, who continues to be associated with many of the events that took place within its walls⁴³.

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⁴³ HIDALGO 2002, pp. 358 ff. For the subsequent evolution of the western suburb and the remaining suburban areas of *Corduba* between V and VIII centuries, see MURILLO *et al.* 2010b.

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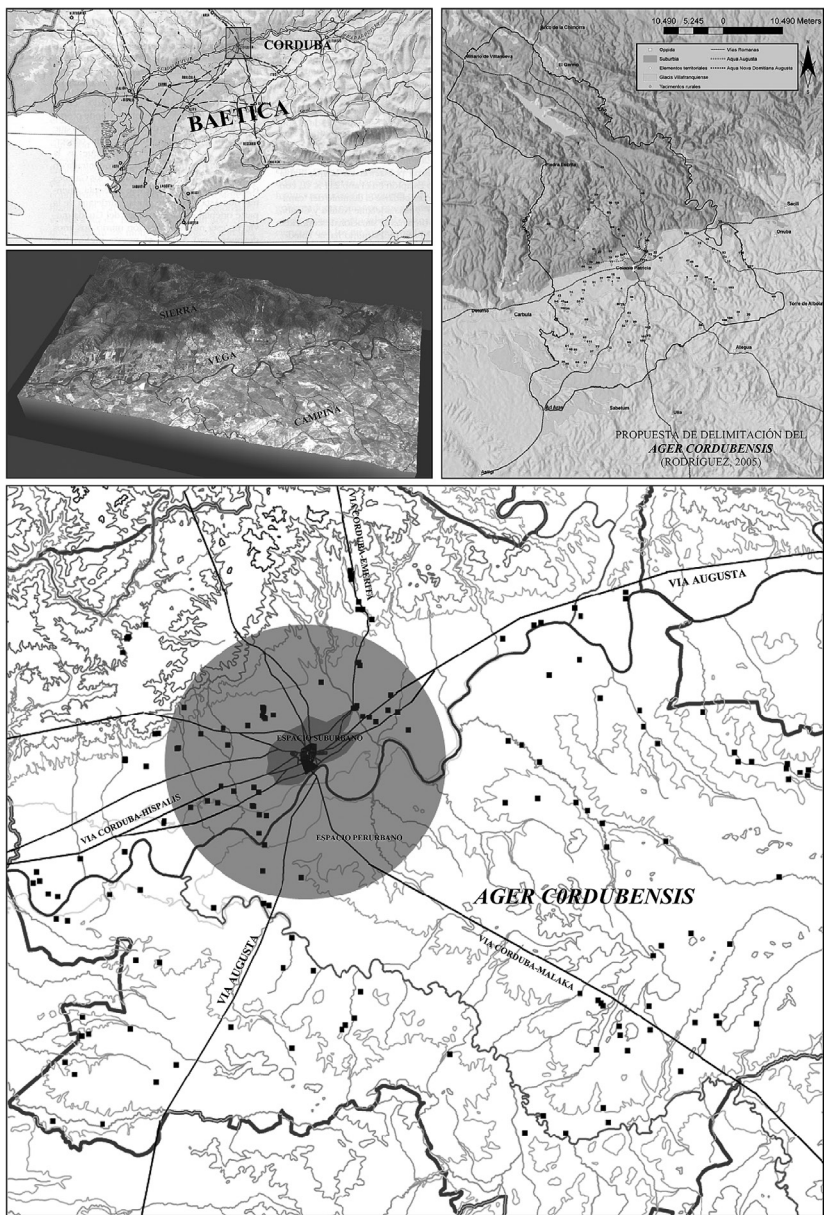


FIG. 1 – Location of Corduba, capital of the Hispania Ulterior Baetica province, and hypothesis of the limits of Ager Cordubensis, with urban, suburban, periurban and rural areas.
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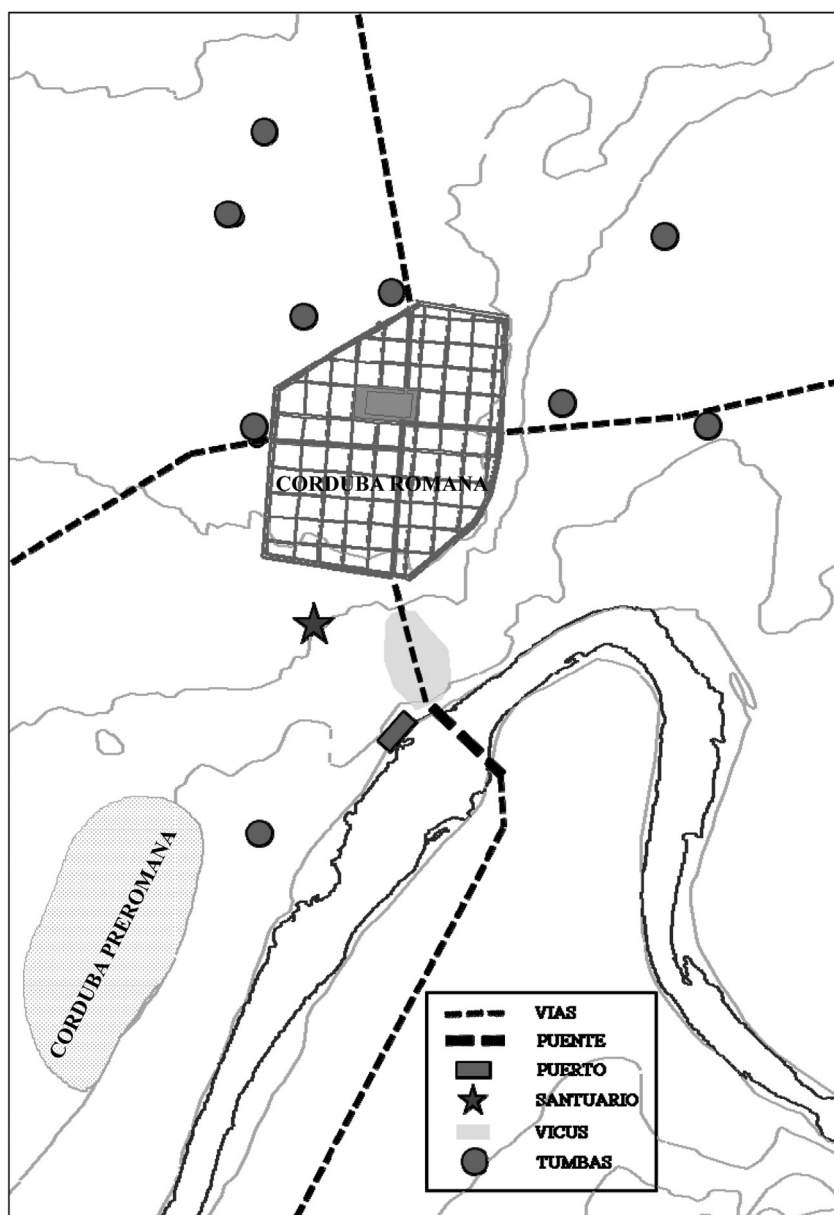


FIG. 2 – The suburban area of Corduba in the first half of I century b.C.

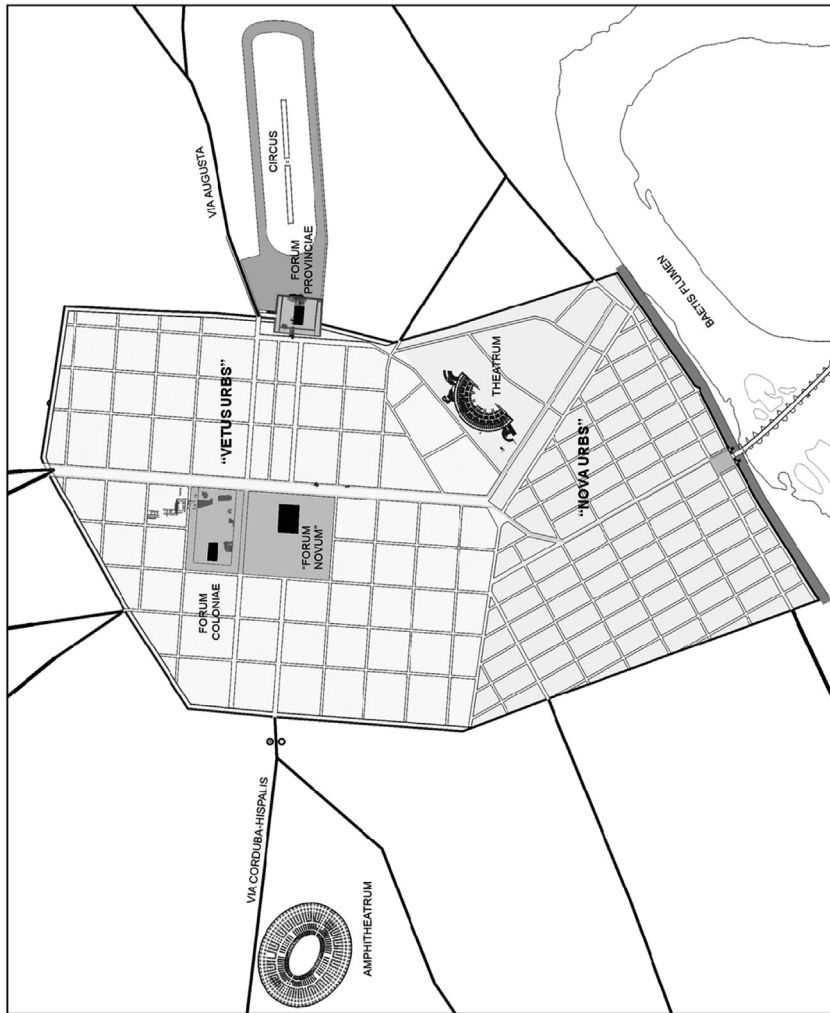


Fig. 3 – Colonia Patricia Corduba at the end of 1 century a.D. © Convenio GMU-UCO.

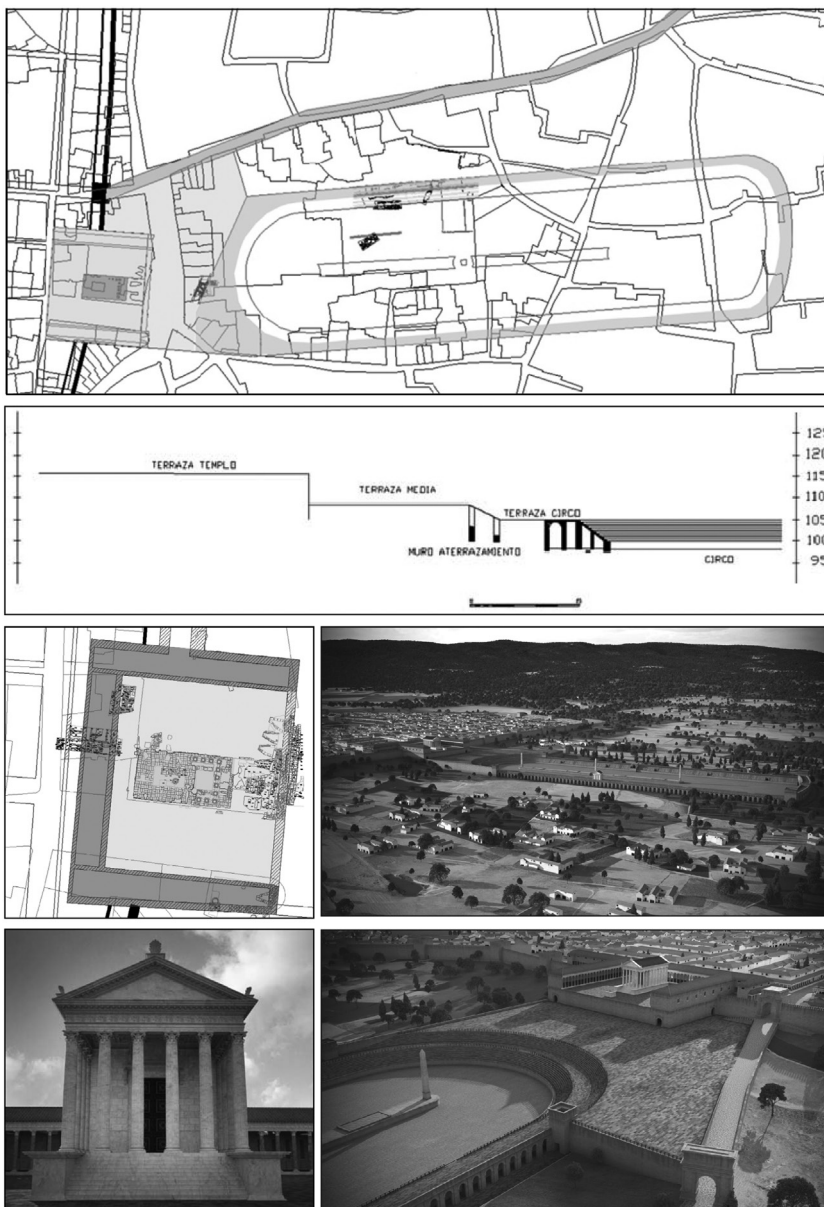


FIG. 5 – Imperial worship complex in Colonia Patricia. © Convenio GMU-UCO.

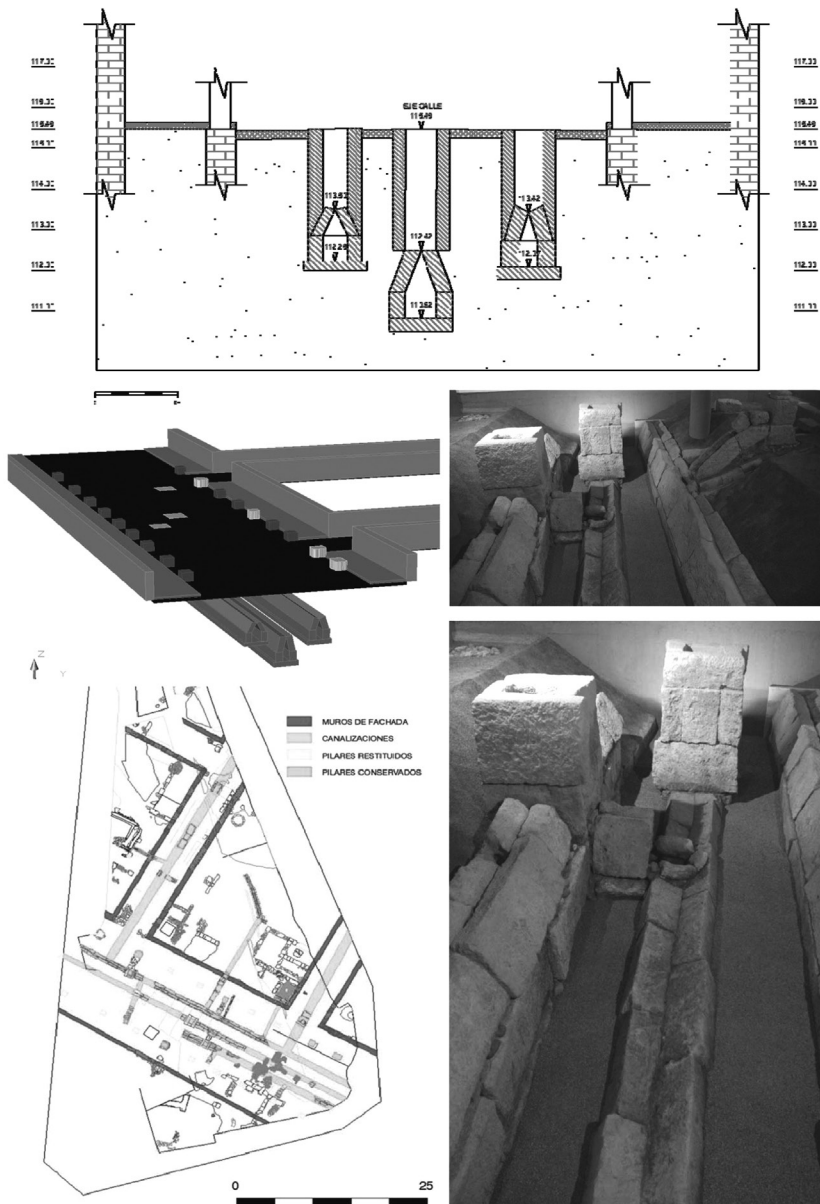


FIG. 6 – Drainage infrastructures beneath one of the streets in the western suburb of Colonia Patricia, in the proximity of the amphitheatre. © Convenio GMU-UCO.

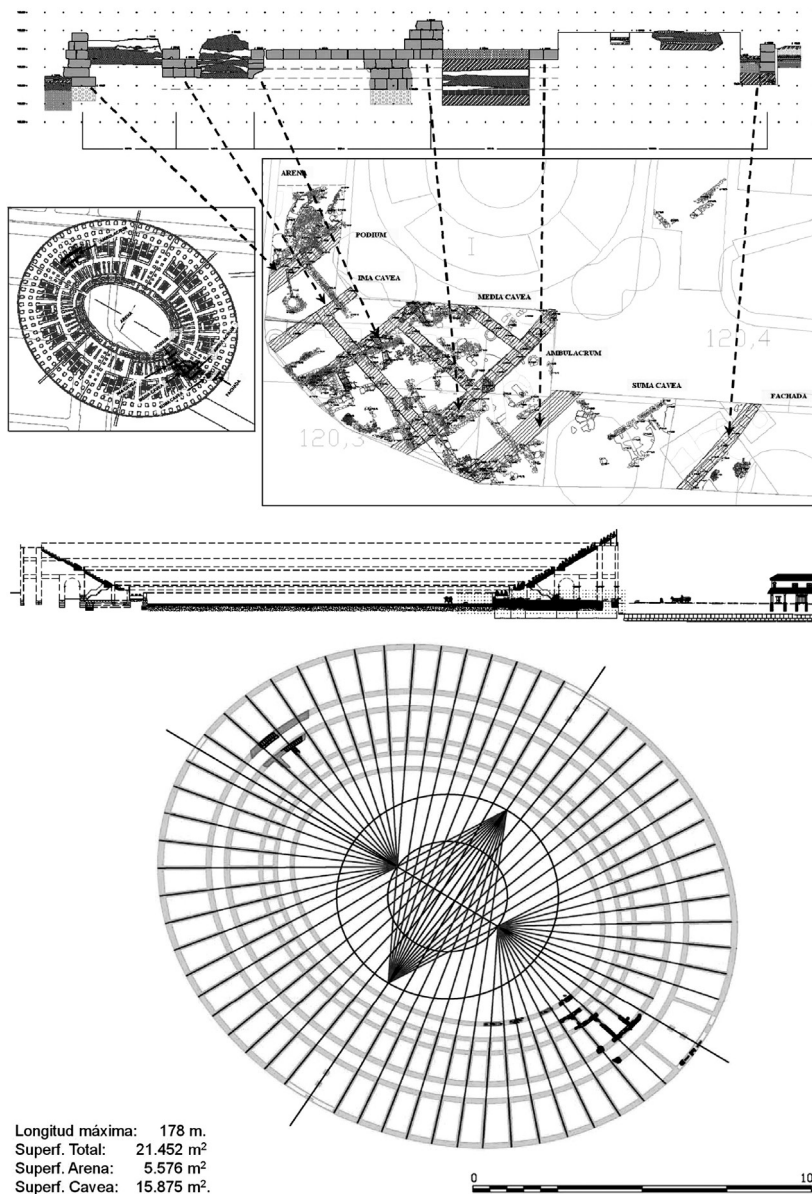


FIG. 7 – Amphitheatre in Colonia Patricia. © Convenio GMU-UCO.

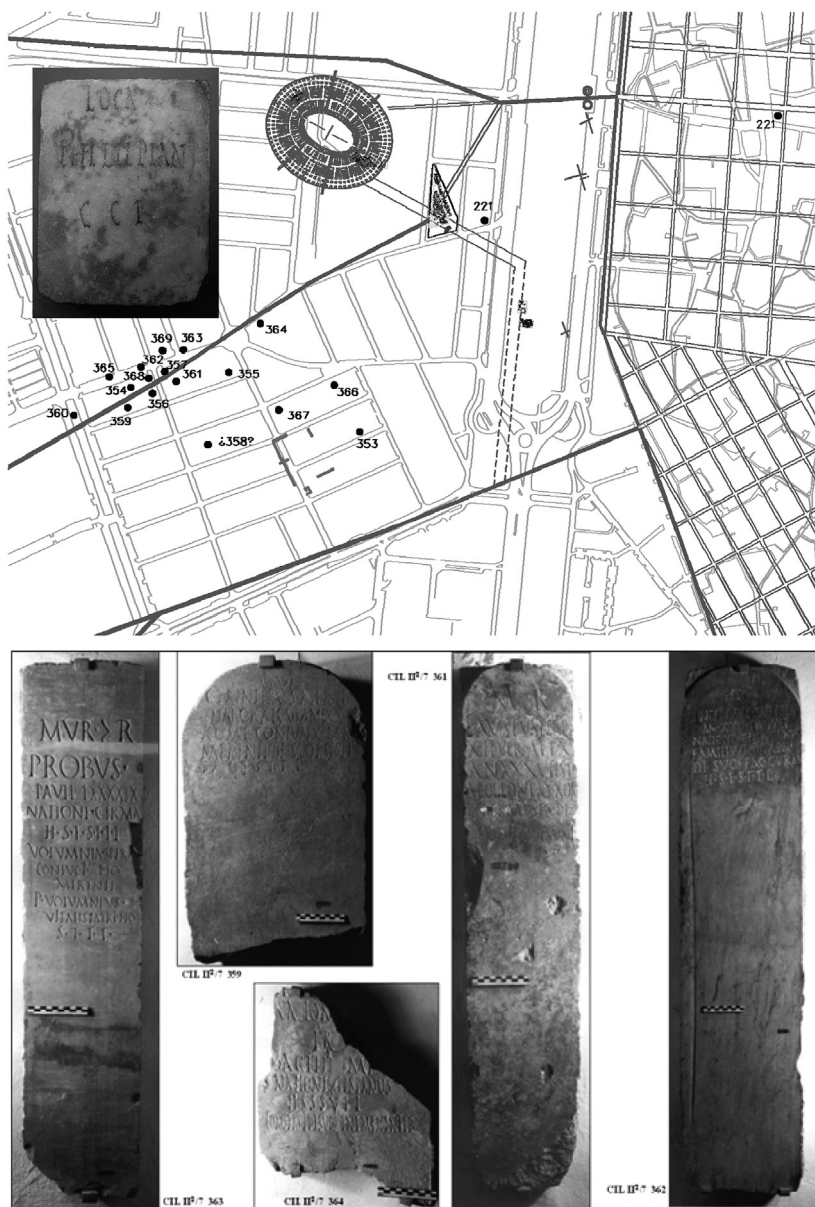


FIG. 8 – Funerary epigraph from the Camino Viejo de Almodovar necropolis and seat reservation in favour of a public slave in Colonia Patricia, from excavations in the amphitheatre.
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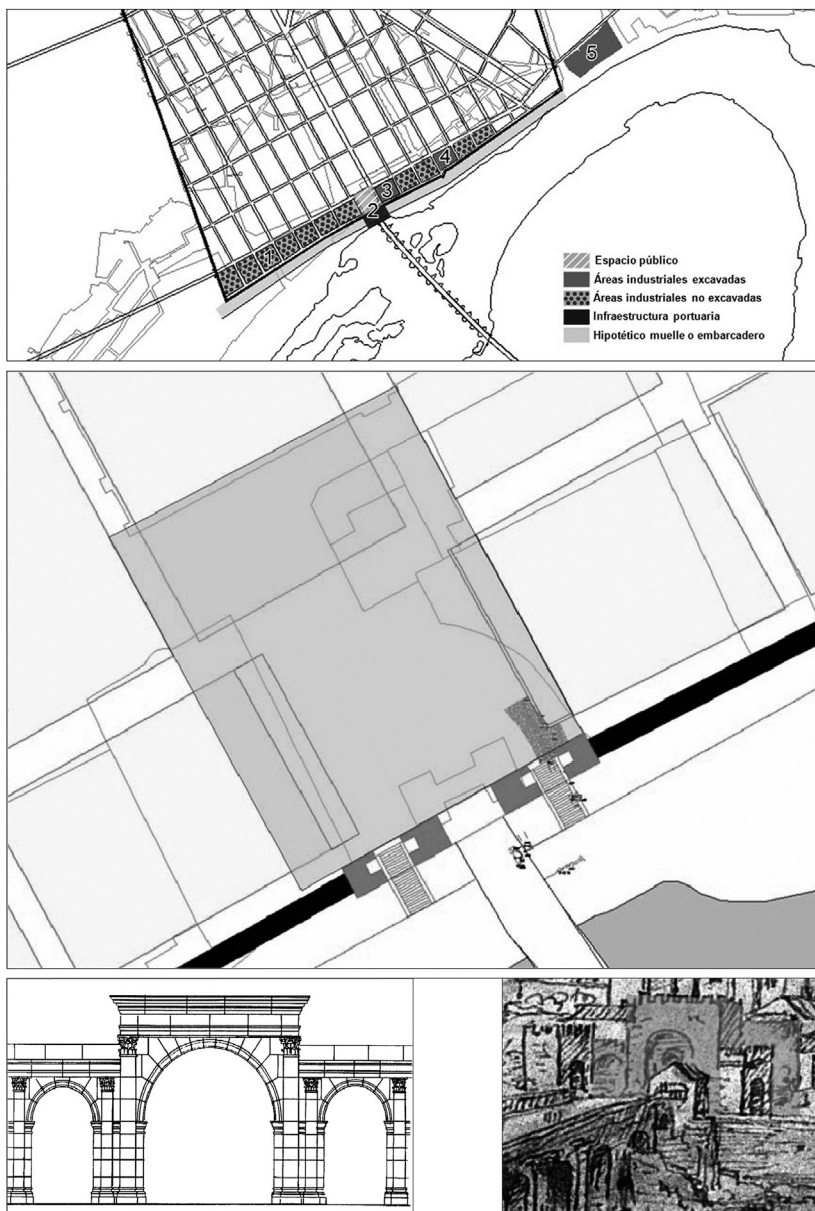


FIG. 9 – Gate to the Bridge and adjacent Square, in the area of the docks in Colonia Patricia.
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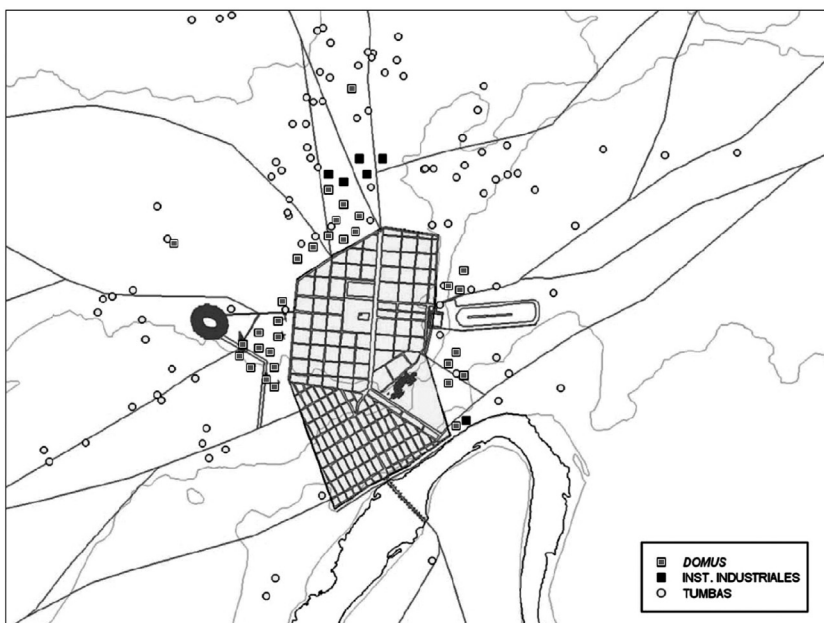


FIG. 10 – *The suburbia of Colonia Patricia in II century a.D.* © Convenio GMU-UCO.

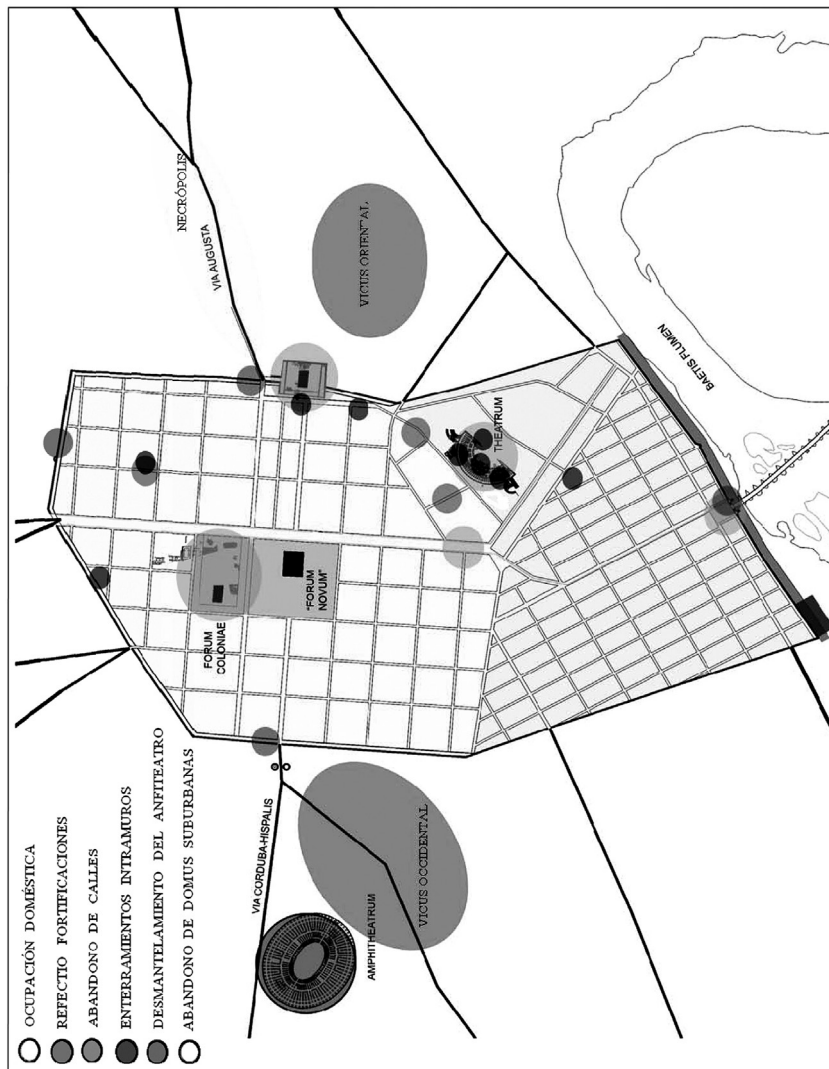


Fig. 11 – Principal urban and suburban transformations throughout III and IV centuries a.D.
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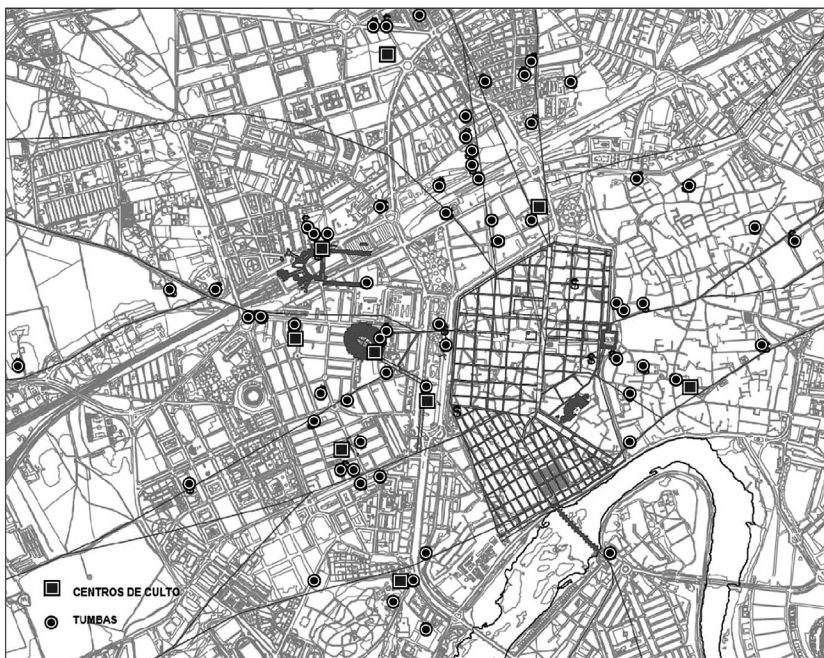


FIG. 12 – *Christianisation of the suburban areas in Corduba (IV-VI centuries a.D.).*
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DA FACULDADE DE LETRAS DA UNIVERSIDADE DE COIMBRA

