

# Production Spaces and Commercial Spaces in Hispanorroman City of *Italica* (Seville, Spain): Economic Topography of the City<sup>1</sup>

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The city of *Italica* is well known in research for being the cradle of two of the Hispanic emperors, Trajan and Hadrian. This city, located in the meadows of the Guadalquivir river and 11 km from where Seville currently lies, was configured as an important urban centre of the *Baetica* Province. Although Apiano dates its foundation in 206 AD, we know of the existence of indigenous *Turdetani* remains on the site of what will later be the *Colonia Aelia Augusta Italicensium* (Pellicer Catalán 1999, 191–192). It was in Hadrian the Emperor's time when this title of *Colonia* was granted to the city. At this moment, its extension takes place with the creation of a residential district, directly propelled by the Emperor, that is known by the name of *Nova Urbs*. This extension presents an orthogonal layout with an extension of circa 40 hectares, gathering a total of 48 *insulae* (Rodríguez Hidalgo, Keay, Jordan *et al.* 1999, 93). This new city, which joined the old layout of the preexisting city (*Vetus Urbs*), seems to suffer from uneven development. Apparently, the northern zone would be abandoned soon, with population concentrated south of the extension during the late period (Hidalgo Prieto 2003, 122).

The *Nova Urbs* was born directly driven by the Emperor as an element of dynastic exaltation. In this new residential area, the aristocracy closest to the Emperor played an essential role as an agent of their own construction process. The new city was born, therefore, as an eminently residential space linked to the elites near Hadrian. However, this didn't imply, as we shall see below, the lack of an intense economic vocation in the city.

In this way, almost all the excavated domestic units show spaces related to the economic life of the city. In total, it is possible to see 40 commercial enclaves in the planned urban expansion in Hadrian the Emperor's time. Unfortunately, the early date of excavation of these spaces, together with the traditional lack of interest of the ancient historiography for the non-monumental archaeological realities, make us have limited information about them. In most cases we even lack of the description of these environments, which have also been deeply affected by the intense restorations developed over time in *Italica*. This determines our impossibility, in most cases, to define the economic nature of these *tabernae*.

In the plan of the *Casa de la Exedra*, 9 business facilities have been documented but with no apparent connection to it; 7 of them on the main facade of the house, open therefore to the *Maximus Cardo*, and two more on its southern flank, open to the North *Decumano* III. These are installations with a single room, with dimensions ranging from 28–35 m<sup>2</sup>, with the exception of the spaces CA4, apparently an installation formed by the union of two base modules, and CA9, with dimensions of 122.5 m<sup>2</sup>. All facilities have



Fig. 1: General plan of the *Vetus* and the *Nova Urbs*, indicating the layout of the Hadrian and late walls of *Italica*.

a single access, except for CA4, which has two. We do not have written or graphic information about the moment of excavation of these environments and we barely have structural evidence which allows their functional interpretation.

In the case of the *Casa de Los Pájaros*, this *domus* presents on its plan 5 artisanal or commercial installations without connection to the residential spaces, together with a staircase that apparently would give access to a second floor developed on these rooms. Four of these *tabernae* open to the *Maximus Cardo*, located on the facade of the house, and the other lead us to the North *Decumano* II. The environments which are present in the West part of the lobby have a module of circa 24 m<sup>2</sup>, with a double module installation (CP3). On the other hand, the spaces located in the eastern flank are smaller, barely 12 m<sup>2</sup>. All of them present a unique environment, with only one access to the street.



Fig. 2: Domestic spaces in *Italica* with indication of their productive/commercial zones.

Only in the CP3 space do we have structural data that allow us to make a functional interpretation.

In this space, of 42.4 m<sup>2</sup>, located next to the access to the *domus*, the remains of a furnace are located on its back. This structure is quite restored, without having graphic documentation prior to this restoration.

It is an oval furnace with direct heating, in which the combustion chamber seems to be located at a height with the circulation space of the room. This combustion structure has a dome as a cover which is made of brick with 1.80 by 2 m of internal diameter and 2.80 m of facade by 1.10 m of furnace mouth. The dimensions of this oven and its operation by direct heating allow us to interpret this environment as a possible *pristinum*, in which, given its dimensions and morphology, only the baking of the bread would take place, with the cereal being milled in another area. Despite this interpretation, we believe it is necessary to point out the absence of over-elevation of the cooking chamber that facilitates the work of the *pistorius*. In the case of the *Casa de los Pájaros* oven, baking takes place practically at ground level, a more common element of domestic ovens rather than industrial bakeries.

In the *Casa del Patio Rodio* we only located a possible commercial space open to the East *Cardo* I, without clear evidence of its connection with the street. This room has

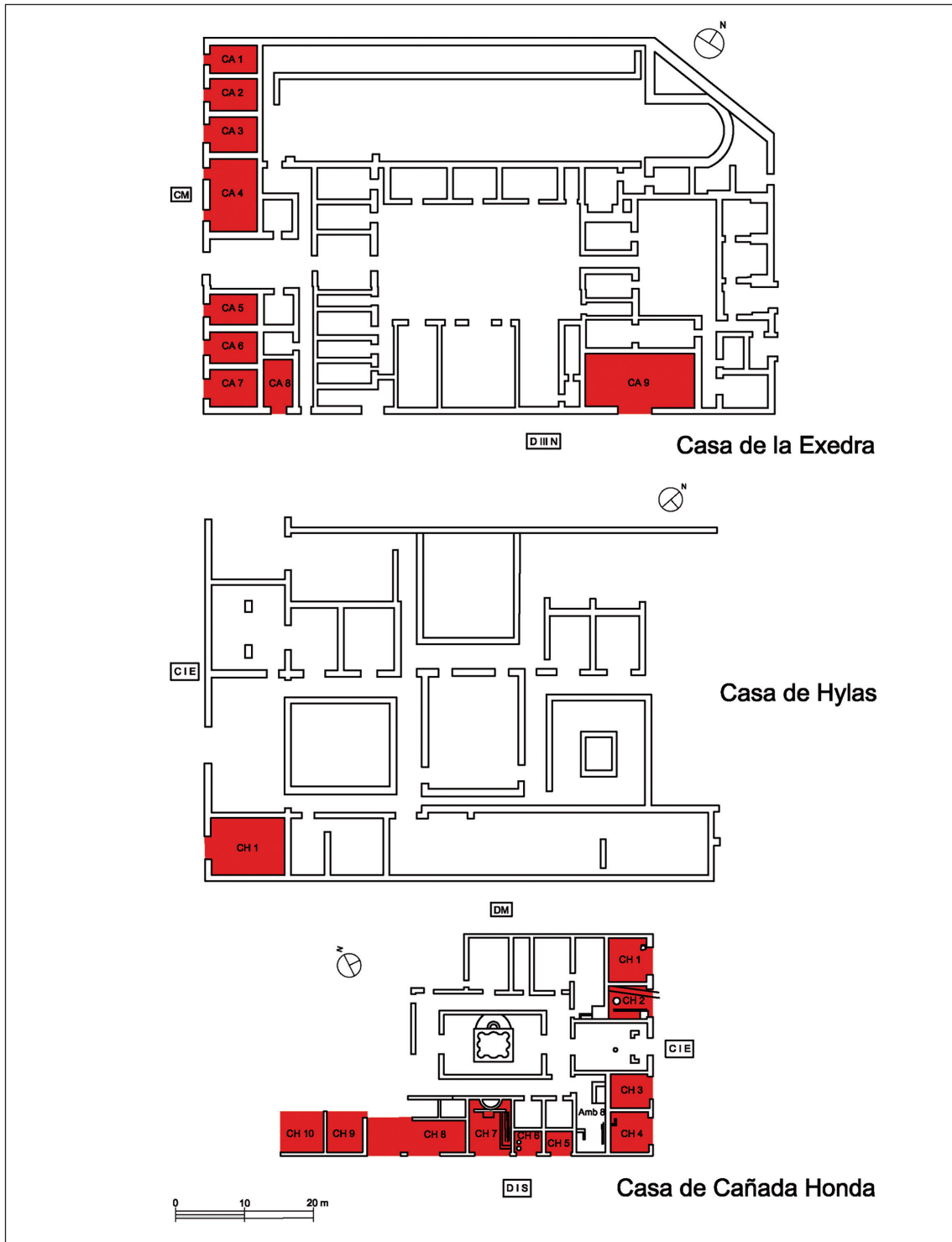


Fig. 3: Planimetry of the *Casa de la Exedra*, *Casa de Hylas* and *Casa de la Cañada Honda*, with indication of its commercial and productive spaces.

an area of 40.73 m<sup>2</sup> and lacks structural or furniture elements that allow its functional interpretation.

At the southern end of the house, several buckets have been interpreted as the remains of a *fullonica*<sup>2</sup> without evidence of its connection with the exterior and without the structural data preserved being conclusive. In the published plan, a single tank with dimensions of 2.5 by 4.6 is collected, equipped with three access steps. This deposit is located in the central area of a rear space, which is accessed from the peristyle through a narrow corridor.

In the case of the *Casa de Hylas*, we have a practical absence of productive or commercial spaces, but we must emphasize that the excavation of the perimeter zones of the *insula*, located in the *Maximus Decumano*, has not been addressed. In this way, we have located a single possible commercial space open to the East *Cardo* I, without clear evidence of its connection to the street. It is a room, with an area of 87.46 m<sup>2</sup> which does not present structural elements that allow its functional interpretation.

Also, in the case of the *Casa del Emparrado* we do not know an essential part of its economic activity due to its partial excavation. We do not have its southern angle either which can be found at the intersection of the North *Decumano* I and the East *Cardo* I, for which we lack data on the economic activity that would develop on the eastern facade open to the *Maximus Decumano*. The four artisanal or commercial spaces have been located, with an extension comprised between 34 and 44 m<sup>2</sup>, located in the main facade of the *domus* open to the East *Cardo* I. The CE 1 establishment is the only one equipped with a back room or warehouse, a space at a lower level which is accessed through three access steps. In this establishment we detect in the plan some structural elements that for now we have not been able to identify.

In the CE3 field, a support structure appears that has been linked to a restoration establishment, interpreted as *thermopolium*<sup>3</sup>. Two of these areas have been related to a bone shop and a shoe store<sup>4</sup> due to the abundant presence of materials and tools made of bone and ivory.

The *insula* of the *Casa del Planetario* is the one which presents the greatest commercial/craft dedication of those excavated so far, since the productive/commercial spaces occupy the three fronts of the house open to the street. The commercial space reserved on the eastern and western sides of the house presents practically similar dimensions, configuring two bays of circa 5.3 m wide. In the front that gives access to the *domus* a wider bay of 6.75 m is configured.

In the western area of the *insula*, open to North *Decumano* III, we find two large areas (CPI 1 and CPI 2), of which we do not know if they had internal compartments given the limited volume of information available. They consist of spaces of 87.75 and 104.88 m<sup>2</sup>, equipped with two accesses to the street each one of them. On the other hand, the eastern facade of the house, which is open to North *Decumano* II, appears completely occupied by commercial establishments, presenting five rooms open to the street. Four

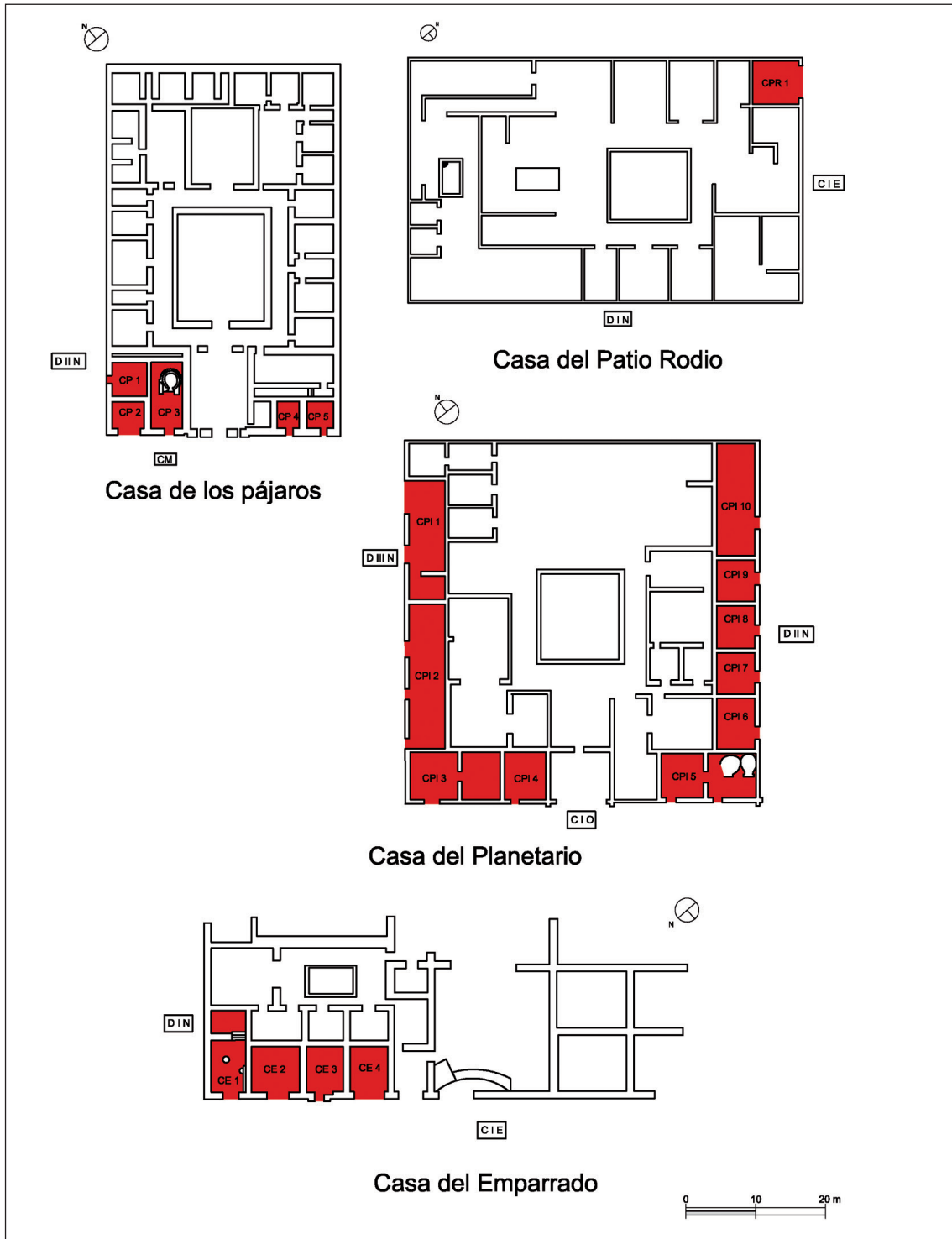


Fig. 4: *Casa de los Pájaros*, *Casa del Patio Rodio*, *Casa del Planetario* and *Casa del Emparrado* with an indication of its commercial and productive spaces.

of these areas exhibit more or less homogeneous measures with surfaces slightly above 30 m<sup>2</sup>, while the northernmost area doubles this module, reaching 87.5 m<sup>2</sup>.

To the south, open to West *Cardo* I, we find three commercial units: the first one with two rooms, as well as the one located in the SE corner of the block. These facilities, with two spaces, have *opus latericium* pavements.

We can only define with certainty the functionality of CPI 5, located at the junction of West *Cardo* with North *Decumano*. It is a *pristinum* as evidenced by the presence of two direct heating ovens with attached oval cooking chambers. This establishment presents two connected environments, both apparently open to the street. The pavement of both rooms shows bricks alternated with *tegulae* (Conde 1987: 279), which may indicate successive resurfacing.

The furnaces are built in brick and are located in the NE corner of the eastern room. Today they are completely masked after their reconstruction, although we have been able to access their original plan. These combustion structures have an oval shape with dimensions of 2.8 by 2.6 and 2.1 by 2.8 m respectively. The opening of both annexed structures appears open to the street and have an opening of 1.3 and 1.5 m respectively. The alignment of the mouths of the two kilns, as well as the boundary of the pavement, seem to suggest an angular exterior development, similar to the one that has been reconstructed.

In this case the dimensions of the *pristinum*, much higher than the *Casa de los Pájaros* one, does not rule out the grinding of the cereal within the same establishment, as it is usual in other urban bakeries. The presence of a room prior to the baking room can be interpreted as a space destined to the grinding of the cereal, as it happens in abundant examples of the Pompeian area and of Ostia Antica. The dimensions of the room and the footprint of its paving seem to suggest the use of a human traction mill, known as biconical *Morgantina* type.

In the *Casa de la Cañada Honda* we found the presence of four commercial/artisan establishments open to the East *Cardo* I, along with six others open to the South *Decumano* I. These *tabernae* were totally or partially excavated by José María Luzón, which interprets them as workshops of bone, glass, marble and terracotta, without in many cases the argumentation and documentation provided allow us to corroborate this functional interpretation. These facilities will be intervened again within our project, using a modern methodology of excavation and the implementation of biochemical and carpological analysis to try to unravel its functionality.

The installations located on the western flank of the house (on the front of the house's access and open to the East *Cardo* I) have dimensions ranging from 26 to 34 m<sup>2</sup>, with wide access openings, which allow to rebuild sliding doors of planks. In the field CH1 we find remains of a hydraulic structure, while in the zone CH2 we can see the construction of a counter in a space equipped with a small furnace. Also, a combustion structure, possibly linked to the work of glass, has been located in the CH4 area.

On the other hand, on the southern side of the *insula*, 6 commercial installations are detected, endowed with a single environment but with very variable dimensions. We found small *tabernae*, as well the CH5 with 11.61 m<sup>2</sup>, next to large spaces, like the CH8 with more than 66 m<sup>2</sup>. It is worth highlighting the CH7 productive area equipped with a counter and a hearth, which uses the blind spaces left by the construction of the apse of the *nymphaeum* of the *domus* as warehouses. The finding of a combustion structure, only partially excavated, in the CH9 field is also noteworthy.

Along with these rooms open to the street, there is a space, with no apparent connection to the outside, and access from the *ambulacrum* of the peristyle that seems to have a productive functionality. In this room, which will also be excavated within the incoming months, we have detected up to three construction phases, all marked by the appearance of hydraulic deposits and pavements of *opus testaceum*.

### Conclusions

In spite of the fact that the expansion of the city of *Italica* which occurred in the Hadrian period shows noticeable residential purpose, spaces for production and commercial use are common. In this way, practically all of the excavated domestic units present spaces linked to the economic life of the city.

The lack of structural elements and the early date of excavations prevent us, in many cases as we have seen, from determining the functionality of the commercial and productive spaces of *Italica*. We can establish with certainty the existence of at least two *pristina* and we hope that the intervention that we are currently carrying out in the “Casa de la Cañada Honda” allows us to specify the functionality of the economic spaces of this *domus*.

The excavation of the domestic structures has focused on the *insulae* located immediately to the East of the *Maximus Cardo*, with the exception of the “Casa del Planetario”. This data determines our possibilities for analysing the artisanal and commercial topography of the *Nova Urbs*. We can anticipate, however, a great commercial activity in the *Maximus Cardo*, something which we have not been able to find in the one defined as *Maximus Decumano*. Also, we can locate an important commercial axis in the South *Decumano* I, and an intense concentration of artisanal activity is as well detected in the block defined by the “Casa del Planetario”, located in the surroundings of the Major Baths. If we analyse the location of industries in relation to the N-S or E-W axes, we find a slight commercial advantage for the *decumani* of the city.

To sum up we believe it is interesting to highlight the absence of connection between commercial and productive establishments with purely residential spaces. The connection between both environments is common in urban areas, interpreting this fact as a result of the direct or indirect exploitation of these productive enclaves by the owner of the house. The lack of this connection in the *Nova Urbs* of *Italica* could imply an evi-



dent lack of management, at least direct, of these establishments by the owners of these spectacular *domus*.

The fact of being an imperial project supported by the elites close to Hadrian the Emperor, determines a social position of the homogeneous *possesores*, for whom the exploitation of the commercial environments of their *domus* does not seem to constitute a relevant economic activity. In this way, these spaces do not appear connected to residential environments, and indirect management of them can be inferred through leasing.

### Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Caballos – Marín – Rodríguez Hidalgo 1999, 82.

<sup>3</sup> Conde 1987, 323.

<sup>4</sup> Gil and Pérez 2005, 150.

### Image Credits

Fig. 1: Rodríguez Hidalgo 1997, 110. – Fig. 2–4: By the authors.

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