



The most important Roman cities in Valencian Land until the 3rd century

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ABSTRACT

The region of Valencia is the geographic link between southern and northern Mediterranean Iberia, between the Betis Valley and the islands of Ibiza and Formentera. Its strategic location is the reason behind the early Romanisation of *Saguntum*, *Valentia* and *Ilici*. They were neither large cities nor had costly monuments compared to Hispania as a whole; however, their interest lies in the fact that they display a model of integration into Roman lifestyles that preserves some traits from the local past, as can be gleaned from their reputation (see Sagunt) or their epithets (*Valentia Edetanorum*).

KEYWORDS: Roman cities, romanisation, Valencia 2nd century BC/3rd century AD

INTRODUCTION

Lying between the south of the *conventus Tarraconensis* and the north of the *conventus Carthaginensis*, the cities in the region of Valencia had gradually been gestating since proto-history via different processes. The Xúquer River served as the dividing line between a southern area that was more heavily affected by the Phoenician-Punic culture and a northern area where less contact was recorded and which instead had closer ties with the region around the Ebro River.

When Rome created Hispania Citerior, the entire central sector of the Mediterranean side already had an organisation: the *oppida* had a clearly defined radius of action, there were roadway systems with the Via Heraclia as the main artery, which eased transport from the Mediterranean corridor to Upper Andalusia, and some settlements even had simple port infrastructures.¹

Under these circumstances, early Romanisation focused on functional considerations, such as improvements in communications (Fig. 1), accompanied by a symbolic action, the construction of temples wherever there was a ritual area or sanctuary where people were likely to congregate.

The start of the transformation engineered by Rome has earned preferential treatment in research into a geographic area that had no large Roman cities but that

joined the new system at an early date and efficiently adapted the exploitation of its resources.

ROMANISED CITIES IN THE REPUBLICAN PERIOD

Saguntum (Sagunt)

After the Second Punic War (218–202 BC), *Saguntum* (Liv. 21.8.10) underwent an intervention that is acknowledged as being the prime example of Roman urban planning in the region of Valencia. Its proponents had enough city planning clout to suggest that a contingent of *publicani* be settled in the *civitas foederata* (Cic. *Pro Balbo*, 23), the focal point of the early Romanisation south of *Tarraco*.

Recent excavations on the northern slope of Plaça d'Estudiants in the castle (177 metres over sea level) have revealed the irregularly-shaped foundations joined with soil of a stone building that consists of a double wall 1.1/1.2 metres thick with at least one powerful square tower. Next to its western flank is a 1.5 metre wide postern. This is the Republican wall of Saguntum (Fig. 2), which expanded the area of the Iberian *oppidum* of *Arse* towards the western peaks of the current castle until it covered an area measuring around 20 hectares. The new wall was built by carving up previous structures from the *opus africanum* with paving stones separated by drainage canals located at first northeast of the *oppidum*, quite possibly outside the walls. The areas that stand out here have a cistern *a la bagnarola* inside; however, its dates are uncertain, as the study on the cultural attribution of the complex under the wall has not been conclusively finished.

Back in that time, the castle's Plaça d'Armes (Weapons Courtyard) was entered by going by a *sacellum* where

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Figure 1. Roman road network, according to F. Arasa and P.P. Ripollès.

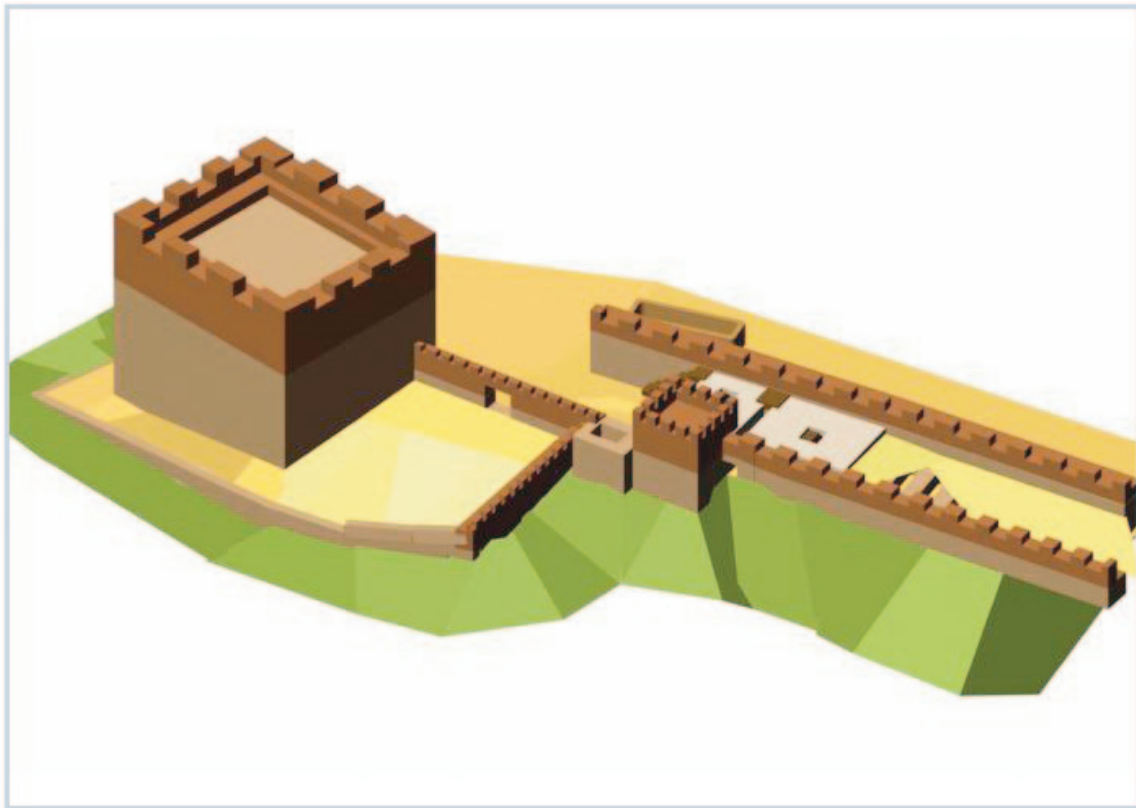


Figure 2. Computer graphic of the excavated sector of the Republican wall of *Saguntum* (drawing: Museum of Sagunt).

bronze statuettes have been recovered, some of them in the Italian style. Between this sector and Plaça de la Conillera an important religious complex was built at around the same time as the wall; it dominated an area open to the sea which was delimited to the south by a ramp entrance that housed a cistern. Its northern side was presided over by a small temple (14.28 m × 11.90 m) with a tripartite *cella* and a *pronaos* with a cistern. The module used to build it was based on an Italian-influenced foot measuring 0.2975 metres, as confirmed by noting that not only did it remain in use but it also determined the orientation of the subsequent municipal forum dating from the reign of Augustus (Fig. 3).

Coevally, the Grau Vell, the port area of the ancient city, was equipped with the best infrastructures, including a watchtower built over more ancient layers which served as a beacon in this settlement until it was abandoned in around the 6th century.

In the meantime, the mint of *Arse* with its Iberian inscriptions gradually adopted monetary styles and designs that came to resemble those of the Romans, as can particularly be seen in the series dating from the last third of the 2nd century BC.²

***Dianium* (Dénia), *Lucentum* (Tossal de Manises), *Ilici* (L'Alcúdia d'Elx)³**

The toponym *Dianium* (Str. 3.4.6) evokes an ancient port area protected by Artemis-Diana whose first settlement, however, is unknown. In *Dénia*, the excavations

at the intersection of Temple de Sant Telm and Pont Streets revealed human occupation on the eastern side of the castle dating back to the 2nd century BC. This area was protected by a wall and had simple devices to facilitate naval transport as a result of its strength compared to the productivity of its hinterland. All of this was probably the result of an early intervention in the town by Rome, despite its legal status as a *civitas stipendiaria*.

El Tossal de Manises is a small hillock perched on the northeast of the bay of L'Albufereta, whose pre-Roman occupation included the Iberian settlement in El Tossal de les Basses to the southwest, as well as the corresponding necropolis areas. Therefore, it is one of the inhabited areas (three hectares) of that coastal landscape whose interest lies in having housed a Barcid fortress (Liv. 23.2.6) with room for *ballistae*, cisterns and barbicans built over poorly documented earlier levels perhaps dating from the 4th century BC. Towards the end of the Second Punic War, this fortified site was destroyed, and the wall only began to be reconstructed on Roman initiative in the late 2nd or early 1st century BC (Fig. 4). This new area was given rectangular ledges (7 m × 3 m) enclosed in walls made of ashlars and adobe, including the so-called "torre del brau" (bull tower), so named after the relief that appears at the centre of the outer facade (tower III). The eastern doorway, which underwent successive reconstructions and served as the main access to *Lucentum*, has been thoroughly documented.

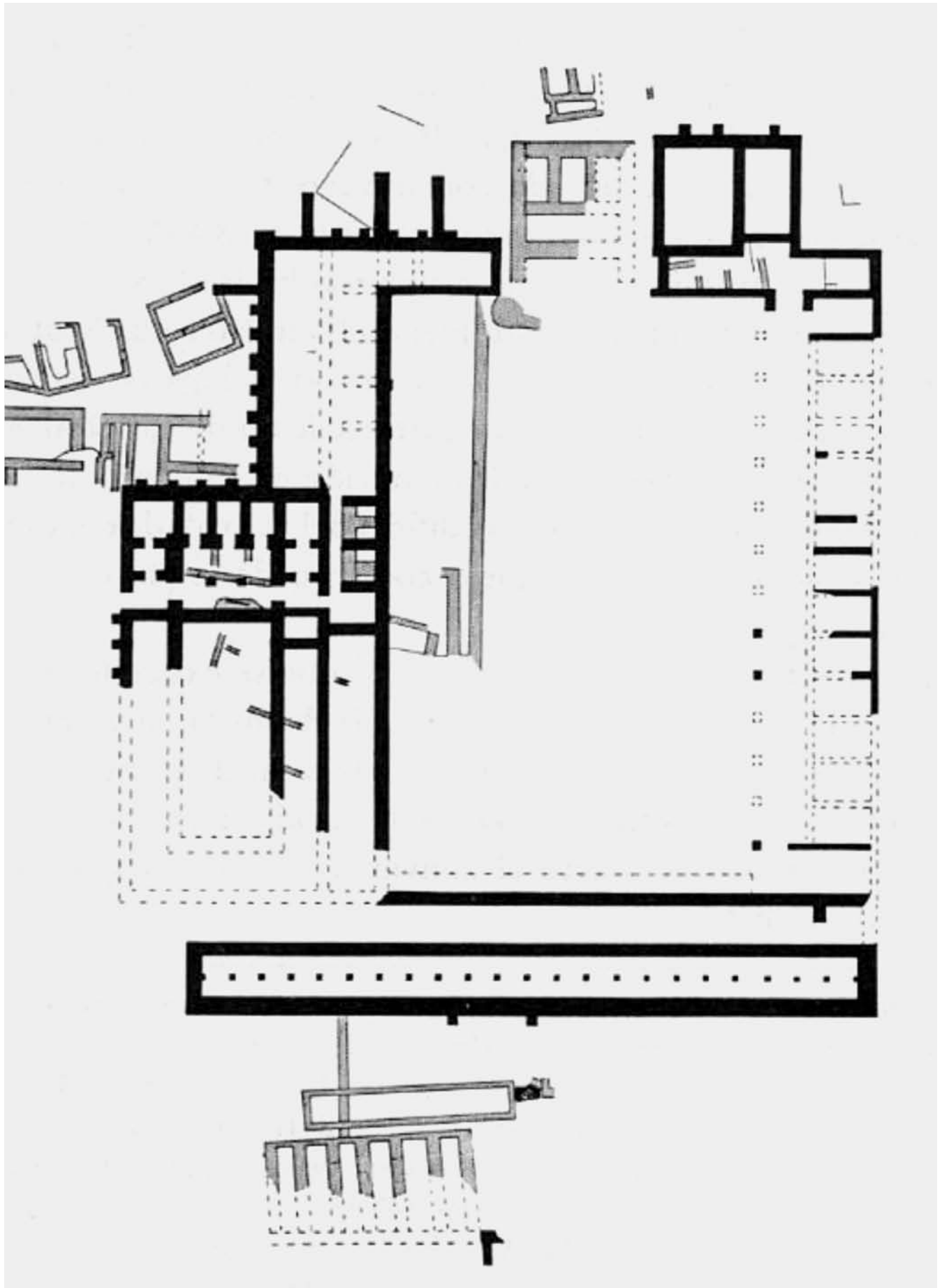


Figure 3. Stratigraphic superimposition in the Weapons Courtyard of the Castle of Sagunt.

In the mid-1st century BC, a public square was built in the central area, delimited by an inverted L-shaped wall with a columned enclosure over limestone pavement in the centre, as indicated by the archaeological layers excavated under the municipal forum from the age of Augustus. This public space, perhaps religious in nature, contributes to dating the Romanisation of the city to the 1st century BC.⁴

Ilici (L'Alcúdia d'Elx) (Ptol. *Geog.* 2.6.14) was an important city in Contestania with close ties to *Kart Hadast* (Cartagena), and probably to *Lucentum* (Tossal de Manises) as well, which encompasses an area measuring ten hectares. It was also furnished with a wall in around the 1st century BC, while it simultaneously adopted Roman housing models, as deduced from a mosaic floor with a towered border and Iberian names written in Latin. The series of local coins of Q. Terentius Montanus with *simpulum* on the back suggests that it was a *colonia immune* (CCIA) in 42 BC, although its legal status would later change.

From the Republican period, *Portus Ilicitanus* (Santa Pola) was the marina and fishing area in that city, from which remains have been found under the fisheries that were active until the late empire.

SETTLEMENTS FOUNDED DURING THE REPUBLICAN PERIOD

Valentia (Valencia)⁵

Inclusion in a maritime and terrestrial communications network, a water supply, drainage of the urban land, the centuriation of the farming area needed for subsistence in accordance with the local settlements and military security must have been the prerequisites for the founding of the Latin colony of *Valentia* (138 BC) (Liv. *Perioch.* 55) in a swampy area through which, however, the Turia River could be forded. Archaeological interventions have revealed the vestiges of wooden stakes driven into the riverbed of the site under the Roman buildings in Plaça del Cronista Chabret and next to Plaça de Nules. Even though the Romans commonly used wood to stabilise the clayey subsoil, in *Valentia* those stakes might have been part of pile dwellings, huts and shacks for the ranks of operators who built the colony, perhaps Iberians housed in provisional dwellings at the service of the Roman magistrates who, judging from the names that appear on the local coins, were related to *Latium* and *Samnium* and who performed these jobs from the start. Under the city, it is common to find tiny holes with ram horns or the remains of young animals, or rows of buried vessels, such as the ones documented under the Parliament building. They are most likely the remnants of propitiatory ceremonies for the new city and its inhabitants.

Archaeology has certainly supplied new developments⁶ since Tarradell confirmed the founding date of 138 BC based on the ceramics from the Campanian region of Italy found in the 1958 and 1959 excavations near the cathe-

dral. The excavations performed at different points (gardens of the Palace of the Generalitat, car park in Plaça de Saragossa, Avellanes and El Salvador Streets) have documented an *opus caementicium* wall with towers preceded by a trench whose hypothetical outline enables us to estimate the area occupied during the Republican period as being a dozen hectares and the number of early colonists at two thousand. There are topographical reasons for situating the main northern gateway near Torres dels Serrens, where there used to be a river port next to a service area near the entrance to the city along Via Heraclea. The western gateway was located at the beginning of Cavallers Street and the southern exit was halfway down Avellanes Street across from Cabillers Street, considering that the main axes of the urban layout would have the *decumanus maximus* on the Bailia-Almodí axis and the first *cardo maximus* aligned with the western facade of the mediaeval granary.

The stone used to build *Valentia* came from Alcublas and Godella, with a selective use of stone from Sagunt. All the quarries near the city must have been run by the Roman authorities when the grid of the colony was laid out, given that it is both an indispensable material and one that is nonexistent in the subsoil of the capital. The consequent transport must have also required the support of the Roman army, which was expert in organising public works. In *Valentia*, many of the architectural elements, such as the columns, capitals, corbels and friezes, were clad with coloured stucco to mimic the more highly prized marble, which was archeologically absent in the early stage of the colony. Therefore, *Valentia's* programme was based on regional building materials, which entailed an average level of investment.

Not a single complete house layout from early *Valentia* remains, although we are aware of several porticoed streets. The oldest *domus* are built of stone, adobe and tiles, the major new development in sloped roofs on Roman buildings compared to the Iberian tradition. The tiled roofs could be decorated with acroteria and antefixes (Roc Chabàs Street). Some walls were clad with terra cotta plaques decorated with ornamental motifs (L'Herba Street). The most carefully tended floors were the *signinum*, occasionally with ornaments made with *tesellae* (in L'Almoína, in the Courts of Valencia, on Almirall Street and in Plaça de Cisneros). In other cases, the floors were made of *crustae*. The inner walls must have been stuccoed and painted.

The colony's forum was always between Plaça de la Mare de Déu and the land of L'Almoína, and virtually nothing is known about its beginnings, when the ground was made of packed dirt (Fig. 5). Such important features as the temple (perhaps under the western side of Plaça de la Mare de Déu) are still undefined. Nor have the curia for the meetings of public leaders, the juridical basilica and the *tabernae* been reliably identified, so the lack of knowledge of the porticoed square that housed these civic buildings detracts from the research.



Figure 4. General layout of the architectural complex of *Lucentum* (drawing: MARQ).

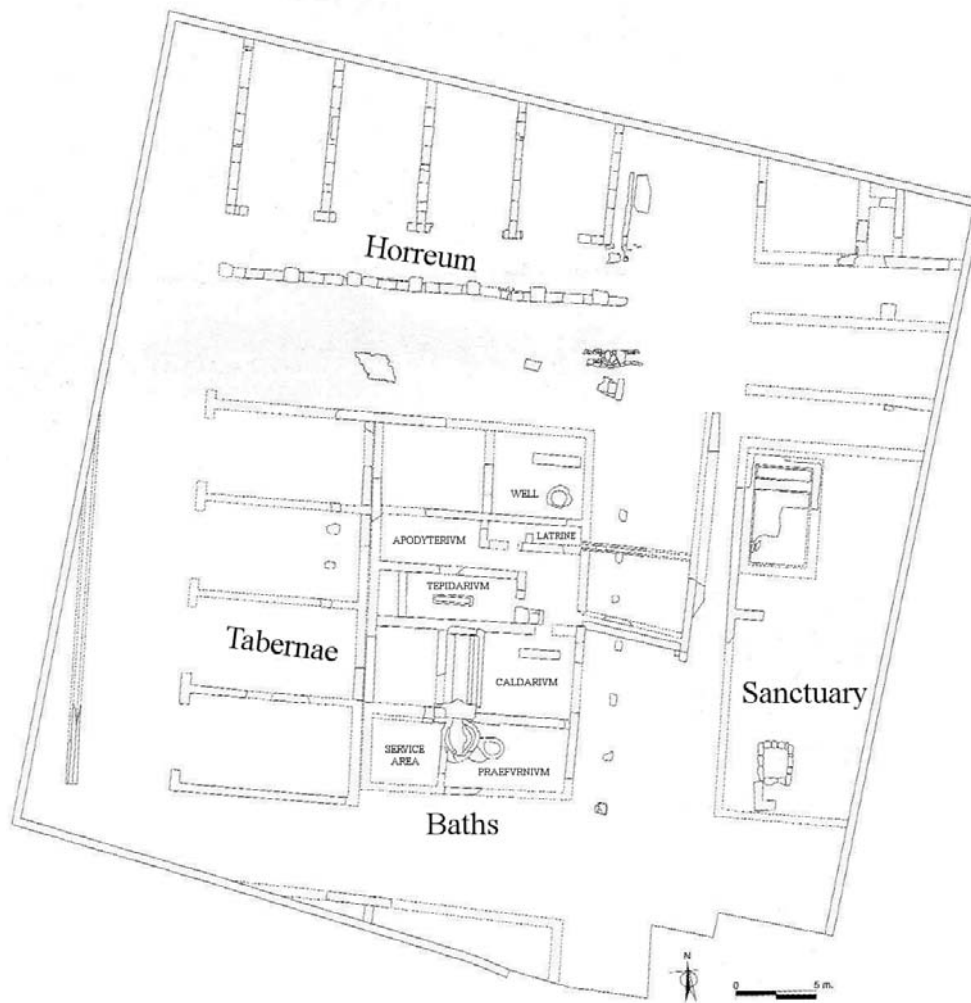


Figure 5. Buildings from the Republican period in L'Almoina, *Valentia* (drawing: SIAM).

From the start diverse water-related buildings were concentrated in the eastern part of the archaeological site in L'Almoina (2,500 m²), perhaps due to the existence of a spring there. A large well that suggests ritual use aimed at fostering the successful settlement of the new inhabitants is of enormous interest, as ceramic vessels and objects were deposited there. Near the well is a sanctuary with a large pond,⁷ possibly dedicated to Asclepius, the deity for whom votive dedications dating from after the change in era have been found. These sanctuaries tended to house water reservoirs and pools for the curative ablutions of those who frequented them. However, right now the clearest building in the city from the late 2nd century BC is the baths in L'Almoina, which are highly characteristic of the time in which they were built in terms of both their type and construction. They have parallels in *Iluro* (Cabrera de Mar, Mataró) and La Cabañeta (El Burgo de Ebro). They are modest public baths, accessible from a *kardo*. The rooms are not overly large, nor do they have complete built-in heating systems (*hypocausta*) or air conduits embedded in the walls, which are common in later years. Running from south to north, the four sites contain the furnace (*praefurnium*), which heated up a water deposit that poured into a reservoir; the hot room (*caldarium*), with the pool (*alveus*) over the *hypocaustum*;

the warm room (*tepidarium*), with a bench in the middle; and a changing room (*apodyterium*) with hypothetical latrines next to it, as was common. All of this was abandoned after the destruction of *Valentia* by Pompey's forces in 75 BC.

On the northern part of this site, coeval with the baths, was the city granary, whose powerful, solid shape built with ashlar contained four parallel rooms measuring approximately 6 × 12 metres, preceded by a porticoed facade. Built with technical guarantees of ventilation and thermal insulation, it endowed the central sector of *Valentia* with a certain degree of monumentality. This is the oldest granary in Hispania Citerior, although we are aware of other examples dating from the Republican period (Botorrita and La Cabañeta, both in the province of Zaragoza).

Current research underscores the decisive importance of the interaction among locals and foreigners in the process of colonisation. From the modern perspective, no colony would be able to thrive without this cooperation. This forces us to see the founding of *Valentia* as the culmination of an earlier policy, which would therefore imply a consensus with the closest Iberian cities (such as Paterna, Montcada, *Saguntum* and *Edeta*). This, in turn, probably required some adjustments that were not neces-

sarily peaceful; indeed, 30 years before the colony was built, there had been traumatic destruction all over the region of *Edeta*.

Earliest necropolises

The oldest burial sites in *Valentia* were discovered between 1992 and 2000 (Cañete and Quart Streets) around 750 metres west of L'Almoina, therefore in a sector of the large western necropolis that reached as far as the southern shore of the river. These burial sites are probably the ones used by the Romans the longest. The excavations have revealed a topography which is common to funerary alleys: delimited areas with numerous graves inside, with ways across and water channels used for the agapes or to maintain the gardens and cremation areas. There is proof of cremation coexisting alongside inhumation, although neither of these practices entailed ethnically differentiated rituals.

Over time, layers of tombs were gradually superimposed on each other, sometimes with a vertical stratification that attests to the fact that the streams from the Túria River system ran through at least part of the cemetery and that later new funeral deposits were made over the layer of flood mud, to which gravel was added. These floods might have destroyed the architecture that indicated the layout of the burial sites, as archaeologists have only unearthed structures excavated under ground level and we are unaware of any epitaph from the earliest period. Both circumstances limit our ability to study these sites.

The largest examples of burials from the late 2nd century BC include five trenches (2.45 m × 1.1 m) whose long sides show a slightly higher ledge where the shrouded corpse rested, accompanied by offerings. These offerings (including bronze strigiles, glass vessels, unguentaria and Italian amphorae) clearly stood apart from the Iberian traditions. Particularly noteworthy is the discovery of sectioned boar heads near the deceased, as this denotes the ritual of the *porca praesentanea* (Cic. *De Leg.* 2). This ritual consisted of sacrificing a boar in honour of Ceres to purify both the deceased and his or her family, given that death was viewed as a contamination that could be spread and thus had to be warded off.

For the period between 75 BC and the rule of Augustus, a group of six cremations are worth note because the human remains were deposited in urns whose typology and painted decoration are considered to fall within the Iberian tradition. There have been attempts to relate this fact to the arrival of Iberians in *Valentia* after the war with Pompey's forces, which had such dire consequences for the city. Even though some paintings are Iberian-Edetan in style (ivy leaves, tri-petal flowers, etc.), the continuity of their use should be sought either in more distant settlements coeval with this phase of the necropolis on Quart Street, or in workshops with relations with *Valentia*, indeterminate until now because the traditional pottery workshops from Camp de Túria were not yet operating at that time.

Finally, it should be borne in mind that it is risky to posit a person's origin based on one component in his or her tomb. The New Archaeology from the 1960s and 1980s advocated deducing from burial sites what the individual had been in life: their profession or their family lineage. Despite this, the Archaeology of Death soon met with serious detractors, including Humphrey, Schnapp and Vernant, as they noted that today it is impossible to objectively determine the direct relationship between the funerary goods and their cultural significance, as the structure of the social system is what imposes the principles that govern the symbolic realm, which is determined at burial sites by the high emotional charge of the moment.

The population reflected in the first necropolis of *Valentia* is barely old enough to be considered war veterans, judging from the anatomical indications provided by the skeletons. Therefore, it is not logical to consider these discoveries representative of the main targets of the newly-founded city; rather they are more likely other settlers who moved to *Valentia* with the former, some of whom, however, were purified by a rite well-known in Rome. Likewise, the Iberian urns containing the remains of cremations, accompanied by Italian pottery and amphorae and unguentaria from a later date, may either suggest a reinvention of the Iberian roots by the Roman community in the city, to help their integration into the region, or the availability of those objects for burials at a certain echelon, as there are also painted urns at the burials sites in Torre la Sal (Cabanès), Parc de les Nacions (L'Albufereta, Alicante) and Torre Cega (Cartagena). This constant flow between the foreign and the local is what confers special interest on the study of the Republican phase in places like early *Valentia*, when the willingness to accept and adopt alien cultural practices was an enriching strategy for Roman culture.

AUGUSTUS AND THE JULIO-CLAUDIAN ERA⁸

Colonia *Iulia Ilici Augusta* (L'Alcúdia d'Elx)

In 26 BC, *Ilici* was re-founded, leading to a new contingent of Roman citizens, war veterans. A bronze tablet⁹ provides points to the division of land to ten beneficiaries from Italy, the Balearic Islands, Baetica and Mauritania. The newly minted coins from the local mint from that period were stamped with CHIA.

In terms of urban planning, there is still no reliable information on the building programme from this period (Fig. 6), although the major axes along which the colony was laid out are known. A fragment of a bronze inscription with letters dating from around 50 BC makes express reference to the paving of the forum; on the first line it mentions the name most likely of one of the local magistrates while on the second line the word 'forum' can be clearly read. The location of the baths and a domus area came into clearer focus compared to earlier erroneous identifications thanks to the projects supervised by Abad.



Figure 6. General layout of the architectural complex of Ilici.

Municipalities

*Lesera (La Moleta dels Frares, Forcall)*¹⁰

Lesera (Ptol. *Geog.* 2.6.63) is the only Roman settlement with privileged status located in Castellón. It is located in the inland county of Els Ports and earned the status of municipality during the reign of Augustus. It is a city whose maximum size was over three hectares, distributed among different terraces, with residential areas, a necropolis and public buildings which bear many Latin inscriptions, including the dedication to Jupiter for asking for the indemnification of Caracalla (*CIL* II² 14, 770). This inscription is preserved in Morella, and it played a key role in Alföldy's identification of the *res publica Leserensis* in 1977. Since 2001, this city has profited from the studies conducted by Arasa.

Saguntum, oppidum civium romanorum

It is no coincidence that Augustus granted *Saguntum* the category of town of Roman citizens (Plin. *Nat.* III, 4,20) when he also granted the same status to *Emporiae*, *Roses* and *Gades*, ancient colonial towns, along with other indigenous cities on the Iberian Peninsula (*Baetulo*, *Ilerda*, *Oscá*, *Calagurris*, *Olissipo*), even though neither *Edeta* nor any other city in the region of Valencia was included. This is because Sagunt was handpicked because of its history. The urban renewal it underwent when it became a privileged city stands out not for the sumptuousness of the buildings but for the concepts and symbolism, which must have turned it into one of the ancient Iberian nuclei that was the most recognisable as a Romanised city in the landscape of Tarragona.

The declaration of Sagunt as a *municipium*, according to the local epigraphy (*CIL* II² 14/305), was complete in

4/3 BC, the outcome of the policy established by Augustus in his second sojourn in *Tarraco* in around 15-12 BC. It led to a radical transformation in the urban area.

Given the fact that the town was laid out on sloping land (Fig. 7), the urban planning model followed a succession of descending terraces that reached *Udiva* (today Palància River), the same design that was applied on a larger scale in Tarragona, the provincial capital.

The town forum

The leading monumental complex in Sagunt was the town forum in Plaça d'Armes, which was built over the religious area dating from the Republican period and kept the old temple as its anchor and prime building. However, the new project required a larger flat expanse, so a retaining wall was built that would level the watercourse separating the eastern crests of the castle, which were visible on the northern and western perimeter of the base of the forum.

In this way, the public square extended south of the temple, encompassing an area measuring 54 metres long and 36 wide in compliance with the 3:2 proportions set forth by Vitruvius. With the exception of the temple's facade, it is a porticoed square onto which official buildings of the curia, which were taller here, opened, along with the juridical basilica and the smaller areas of the taverns. It was closed off by a *porticus duplex* whose foundations housed a splendid cistern (Fig. 8).

From the forum area, there still survives a sculpture of a young man wearing a toga missing both head and arms, made of marble from Luni-Carrara. It dates from the Julio-Claudian era, and he is wearing a golden *bullá* that denotes his youth and noble family line. This work perhaps portrays Caius or Lucius, Augustus' sons who died pre-



Figure 7. The peak of the Castle of Sagunt and its division into squares.

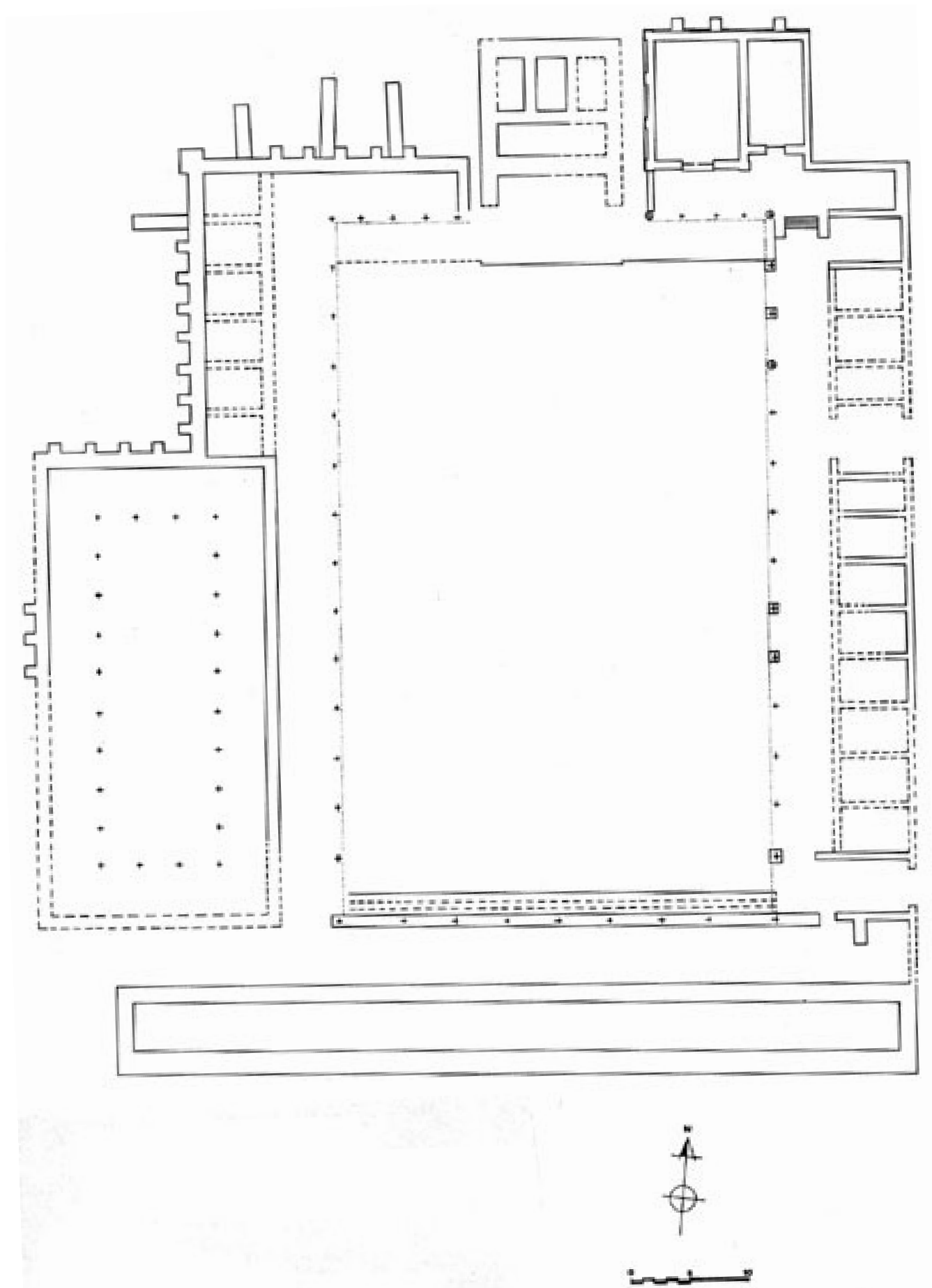


Figure 8. The municipal forum of *Saguntum*.



Figure 9. The rehabilitated Sagunt theatre.

maturely, and it bears stylistic parallels with the sculptures found in the theatres of Tarragona and Cartagena, which might be attributed to a workshop in the provincial capital that worked with marble imported from Italy. The other toga wearer, also incomplete and made of marble from the same provenance, shows stylistic features from the Flavian period and resemblances with some of the ones in *Baello Claudia* (Bologna). However, surely the most spectacular piece is the larger than life-sized imperial portrait, now reduced to fragments of the head and body, made of marble from Paros. The civic crown made of holm oak leaves ensures that this is an emperor, perhaps Tiberius, who was paid tribute after his death, or perhaps Caligula. The sculptures on pedestals fared better, probably because they were made of local calcareous rock. Several come from the basilica, although there is a base in the square of the forum which merits attention for the text it displays, a compendium of the city's historical memory:¹¹ "P(ublio) Scipioni co(n)s(uli) / imp(eratori) ob restitu/tam Saguntum ex s(enatus) c(onsulto) bello punico secundo" (*CIL* II², 14/237), alluding to the event described thus in the sources (Liv. 18.39.18). In 1987, we identified several slabs measuring five feet high and 2.48

metres long laid out east to west with alternating joints as the pavement from the square of the forum. We also noticed the existence of a channel to help rainwater drain along the western flank of that plot of land, and we adjudicated a known previously inscription to that pavement. The text was originally written crosswise in gilt-bronze letters one foot tall over the northern third of the square, from which the negative imprint of the letters on the stone and the orifices for the lead that attached them to the ground remain. We are fortunate that the inscription has been studied by Alföldy based on twelve fragments preserved (*CIL* II², 14/374): "Cn. Baebius Cn. F. G(al). (Ge)min(us) Testam(ento) Foru(m) (de su pecun)ia D(onavit Cn. Baebius Cn. F. Gal...) ...ni Fra(ter heres dedicavit)." Thus, it stands as proof of a local case of euergetism. Cn. Baebius Geminus belonged to one of the most important families in Sagunt and its environs, where, in Augustus' reign, he held posts as pontifex, magistrate and *salii*. Likewise, it is fascinating that his brother and heir was the author of the dedication, as it illustrates how taxes were paid on inheritances, leading to improvements in the public heritage, a practice that was accepted by Roman tax law.

The theatre

Moving along the urbanisation of the town towards the northern side of the castle, the theatre was laid out on the northwest side of the forum, presiding over the middle terrace of the Julio-Claudian city (Fig. 9).

The central sector of the *cavea* used the slope to build the stands, but the rest of the building shows a variety of foundation system with radial substructions where it had to negotiate a steep slope, as well as a broad corridor for reaching the different vomitoria in the *cavea*. The stage covers a considerable slope until becoming embedded in the rock. The theatre successfully resolved the problem of sewers to drain rainwater, and they are still perfectly conserved today.

Nonetheless, more striking than the building technique is the proportionality of its architecture, through a play of proportions that is the best example of the harmony sought by Roman architecture as clearly expressed in Vitruvius' treatise. The 22-metre diameter of the orchestra is the measurement around which the building is organised: the entrances, the succession of the *cavea* and therefore the number of stands in the *ima*, *media* and *summa moeniana*, as well as the height, which dovetails with the superimposition of the three orders of *scaenae frons*. The refurbishment of the monument following the Grassi and Portaceli project respects the original typology while also facilitating a variety of cultural uses at this point in Sagunt's historical heritage.

There are no sculptural remains that might indicate which magistrates, emperors, gods or muses, among other possibilities, appeared in the theatre. Therefore, through architecture, the central rectangular space that crowns the *cavea*, which serves a religious function, is regarded as unique. The semicircular layout of the *exedrae* at the front of the stage is a choice common to many theatres, while the structure for the curtain or *aulaeum* that the 1993 excavations documented in the *hyposcaenium* is less frequent. They consist of two parallel walls with a space between them and perpendicular subdivisions for installing the pulleys and machinery that would enable a decorated backdrop to be hoisted onto the front of the stage to hide the actors, who recited or chanted sight unseen.

The area corresponding to an expansion of the theatre quite a bit later than its creation exceeds the dimensions cited above, including the outer ring added to the *cavea* to improve the audience's circulation towards the higher seats and the rectangular rooms on either side of the stage, called basilicas.

Just as the 1984 excavations provided a chronological context of AD 50 for the construction of the theatre, the 1993 digs confirmed something that the measurements of the building hinted at: the remodelling of the theatre, which might date from the mid-3rd century. Elements from the architectural decoration wrought in local limestone and stone from Viver-Sogorb were recovered in a trench under the eastern stage, including several Corinthian capitals with smooth leaves that appeared on the

front of the stage with a stucco finish that enriched their appearance.

Another result from the latest excavations of the theatre is an incomplete Iberian inscription (“...ku.e ba...”) with part of a personal name that must have marked a place in the stands. Yet it is not this difficult-to-date piece but the characteristics of the Corinthian capitals which, along with the ceramics and the construction information, provide an archaeological *facies* that is not Julio-Claudian but confirm a later intervention in the monument. This intervention included improvements in the access to the stands along with a small extension of the seating capacity and the stage quarters. This came at a critical juncture for Roman civilisation, when we might posit what in colloquial terms we could call aquatic diversions and combats among gladiators, common in the late Empire. In Sagunt, the eastern basilica from the extension of the stage is waterproofed inside with a cladding of *opus signinum* to build a water reservoir which might have held enough to flood the semicircle of the *orchestra* and turn it into a lake (*colimbeta*) for comical performances. However, this kind of performance was banned by Christianity, so the reconstruction of the theatre inadvertently revealed the scarce influence of the religion that became official in the life of Sagunt residents during the reign of Constantine (AD 313).

The circus and its environs

On the banks of the Udiva, the circus is the predominant building on the lower terrace of the city. It was planned at the same time as the other monumental complexes but concluded in the late 1st century. The documentation on this circus starts with the scholarly descriptions from the 18th century, even though it was never declared an historic monument. As a result, it remained exempt from the legal measures to protect the heritage that would have required it to be conserved that were handed down when the area it occupied was declared buildable in the 1960s.

The first person to conduct archaeological excavations of the circus was Chabret. In the late 19th century, he documented the *porta triumphalis* 2.84 metres tall on the extreme eastern end of the building and noted that the ruts etched into the stone pavement came from wagons with wheel spans of 1.70 metres. He also discovered the *spina* with the *euripus*, as well as several hydraulic conduits which must have belonged to the feeding system, even though the chronicler imagined that they were used to stage naumachies. However, this would have exceeded their capacity, and today this theory has been discredited. Yet there is no question that the greatest contribution to our knowledge of the circus in Sagunt comes from Bru i Vidal (1922-2000). The latest urban excavations performed in conjunction with the city's Archaeology Museum have enabled us to verify, specify and rectify the status of this question. They have provided technical data on the building, chronostratigraphy and especially a platform

uncovered in the 1997 excavations which expands our knowledge of this monument.

The circus in Sagunt extends over 354 metres from east to west along the southern bank of the Palància River, and it measures 73 metres wide. It is a small building of its kind, with an estimated capacity of around 15,000 or 20,000 spectators depending on the area occupied by the boxes and platforms. It is similar to the one in *Valentia* which, since it is only 25 kilometres away, entails a case of unusual geographic proximity between two Roman circuses, which might explain their respective sizes.

The construction has a foundation of *opus caementicium* over the river terrace, which was reinforced by a deposit of river pebbles laid out on the banks. The elevations are clad with *vittatum*, except in some of the most noble areas which have ashlar (*opus quadratum*), like the northern wall, which is the closest to the river, and the southern doorway, among the parts documented, because only the foundations of this building are preserved and little information remains about its elevation. However, we do know that the perimeter walls were raised by superimposing rows of decreasing thickness, and that the rectilinear sides were made of two walls separated by 3.4 metres, with perpendicular partition walls joining them, rendering the foundation compartmentalised. The wall closest to the arena served as the podium that separated the spectators from the race tracks. In this way, we know the layout of the area where the seats were, but not the elevation. The *spina* measured 190 metres long, and the channel that housed it was 4.5 metres wide; the *metae* was 4.8 metres in diameter. Next to the southern doorway on the eastern side of the circus we have identified the platform at the finish line of the races (*alba linea*) which was connected to the arena via staircases as in other Roman circuses. From there, the race was monitored and the winner's finish was certified by a professional referee.

The only part of the southern doorway (1.2 metres tall) remaining today is a secondary element of the circus built with large ashlar. Over the door, there are two bases with *cyma reversa*-shaped moulding associated with the height of the facade. Recent excavations not only revealed the aforementioned *tribunal iudicum* next to the door, they also revealed the fact that this monument was built by altering the lines and purpose of a sector that had been previously occupied. According to the dating of the ceramics recovered, this would have been the mid-2nd century, a time when the forum on the upper part of the city was no longer in use and other sectors of *Saguntum* were becoming more prominent.

Of all the Roman remains that converge in the circus area, the most important is the Roman bridge over which Via Augusta presumably crossed the river. Therefore, this roadway was oriented towards the theatre, the forum and the castle through a scenic constructive play. Some of the most important funerary monuments in the city lie on both sides of this artery, either as elements from the public necropolis or, as seems more likely, linked to the sub-

urban villas where the owners built their own mausoleums, which as a whole formed an area in which private mansions alternated with landscaped grounds.

The circus was built on this landscape at a very well-connected point, albeit one that was exposed to the flooding of the river, which displays the usual functional characteristics of a circus (distance from the urban centre, accessibility and spaciousness for the circulation of carts and horses). However, it amortised the area's previous uses and interrupted the exit from the bridge, which has been archaeologically documented. Therefore, it might have been displaced to the east in order to not hinder the traffic on Via Augusta.

In effect, the surroundings of the circus were gradually urbanised as the city grew downwards. Thus, what were initially villas and vegetable gardens turned into streets, an indication of the beginnings of a compact form of urban planning in the sector. These are symptoms of Sagunt's adaptation to the middle and late Imperial period. Regarding chariot races, we have information from a fragment of engraved marble (*CIL* II², 14/376) which commemorates a donation to sponsor the stage and circus games; this document was found in the Tres Pouets zone of the castle next to the former entrance to the Iberian *oppidum*, where there is a late Roman settlement to which the inscription corresponds, dated from around the 3rd century AD.

Grau Vell (The Old Port)

Around the change in era, the large tower still stood; next to it, a row of long, narrow (3 × 6.5 m) structures were built by the sea, some of them with a line of column or pilaster supports along the central axis. They were built over stone plinths using a technique called *opus africanum* and had adobe walls covered in stucco with roofs made of *imbrex* and *tegula*. The lower storey of these buildings was probably used as storage, judging from their extremely simple floors (packed dirt, brick, gravel), while the upper floors were reserved for other uses.

Some zones in the site show deposits of amphora rubble to elevate and drain the foundations, which easily flooded from the waves or storms. It is through this ceramic filling that we have documented the predominance of Hispanic products in the commercial trade during the late empire, as well as the importance of Sagunt-made wine in this traffic. This wine was packaged in Dressel 2-4 amphorae. During this period, the port of Sagunt was still a stopping point in the traffic of Dressel 7-11 salt fish amphorae and lead ingots.

The connections from the old port were now extended towards Rome through the Strait of Bonifacio or by following the coastline up to *Emporiae*, from which the trade continued on towards Narbonne and could even reach the Atlantic by crossing the corridor in Aquitaine. The dispersion of discoveries from Sagunt around the geography of the late empire points to these routes. Sigillate earthen pottery from Italy and southern France and the

common and cooking ceramics from Italy, among other products, were introduced in Sagunt and its area of influence through this port.

MUNICIPIUM EDETANORUM

The extensive Iberian centre in *Edeta* was Sant Miquel de Lliria hillock until 175 BC, when it underwent destruction that can be attributed to the socio-political readjustments of those days. The population documented in the 1st century and afterward is located under today's Lliria, the site of constant archaeological discoveries today. We are not totally certain that it earned the rank of *municipium* during the reign of Augustus. Nevertheless, a Latin inscription found in the past mentions a temple devoted to the nymphs of the former *Edeta* (Ptol. *Geog.* 2.6.62) next to a spring that supplied the city with water, according to a recent proposal. This discovery ensconces the city in the vein of water worship that found such an avid following in the Roman cities in the region of Valencia.

One important feature in this city is the bath complex in the Mura area dating from the midyears of the Empire. It is comprised of two complete baths; the largest has a heating system under the floor and in the walls of the warm rooms, while the smaller has a sophisticated reservoir for hot water. Both of them are on the outskirts of the city next to a small temple with a crypt that might predate the baths. This entire complex is relatively well preserved. It is the most complex spa known in Hispania, possibly a pilgrimage site if we take into account its size and its purported healthful effects. Today this archaeological complex is open to the public, as are the mausoleums on Duc de Lliria Street and the Iberian settlement in Tossal de Sant Miquel, which is currently being restored.

Saetabis Augustanorum, municipium romanum¹²

During the reign of Augustus, the city regarded as one of the most important in Iberian Contestania, the site of a coin mint that was prominent between the 3rd and 1st centuries BC, today Xàtiva, became a *municipium romanum* (Plin. *Nat.* 3.2.25) that could be reached along Via Augusta. The urban planning was designed as far as the coast of El Castell, the site of the hermitage of Sant Feliu, from which many of the Latin inscriptions come since they were reused in late Roman or mediaeval buildings. From these inscriptions, we know that *Saetabis* erected a statue to the Genius of the town, a custom that enshrined the memory of the local genealogy or identity. A fragment still remains of the inscribed pedestal, carved from pink stone from Buixcarró, the stone that most closely resembles the marble from the Valencia quarries which was commercially mined by the Romans, who transported it to many other towns. However, *Saetabis* mainly extended along the western half of the mediaeval town inside the walls, as far as Argenteria Street and Camí de la Bola. In this sector (Sariers Street), an urgent inter-

vention performed in 2002 revealed part of a public Roman pool that most likely belonged to a sanctuary that had a nymphaeum. It consists of a semicircular apse with quadrangular spaces on either side, very similar to the typology of the Sanctuary of Fortune in Murcia, which was Italian in inspiration. Some local spring (the one that bubbles in the fountain of the Vint-i-cinc Canelles) must have fed this facility, which once again associates water with urban prestige.

BETWEEN THE FLAVIANS AND THE ANTONIANS

Valentia

After the city's destruction by Pompey's forces, *Valentia* lacked much public investment until the mid-1st century. It regained prominence primarily in the Flavian period (Mela 2.92) and underwent an expansive period that led it to occupy an area measuring 20 hectares (Fig. 10), with improvements in the sewer system and water conduits.¹³ The citizenry had to be reinforced by settling a second round of Roman colonists there; this gave rise to the advent of a double senate – an infrequent occurrence – made up of the representatives of the old and new guard in *Valentia*, as recalled in the inscriptions that cite the *Valentini Veterani et Veteres* (CIL II, 3733, 3734, 3735, 3736, 3737, 3739 and 3741) in reference to a duality that echoed the original contrast between natives of Italy and *Edeta*.

In around AD 100, the porticoed square of a renovated forum was paved with stone from Alcubleas. A double curia converged there on the southeast along with a basilica with an *Aedes Augusti* associated with a lintel inscribed in the form of a *tabula ansata* on the southern flank, which is only partly documented.

The city abounded with public baths (there was one under the Palace of Benicarló, the headquarters of the regional parliament, on Cabillers Street, in the Palace of the Admiral and in more sites). However, the most important facility was the circus (350 m × 70 m), unearthed between Trinquet de Cavallers Street and Plaça del Palau in the course of recent urban excavations that have revealed the end and the parts of the stands, the *spina*, the arena and the *carceres*. This circus was in use until the 5th century.

Allon (La Vila Joiosa)¹⁴

After a debate that was both prolix and extended, the latest research situates the Flavian municipality of *Allon* under the urban nucleus of La Vila Joiosa, the site of an important settlement in the Iberian period. This claim is supported by reliable arguments derived from the urban excavations that provide a context for both the inscription engraved on the *mensa* of a *macellum* upon the occasion of its reconstruction (CIL II, 3570), common to urban areas, and the mausoleum of Torre de Sant Josep outside the town, known since ancient times. Wiegels' reinterpretation of the pedestal of the duumvir Q. Manlius



Figure 10. General layout of Valentia (SIAM).



Figure 11. Baths of Allon (La Vila Joiosa) (Photo: A. Espinosa).

Celsinus from the Quirina tribe (*CIL* II, 3571) was decisive, as Alicante thus pinpoints the location of a city between *Dianium* and *Lucentum* which both Benidorm and Santa Pola, further south, had previously claimed.

The baths excavated on Canalejas Street (Fig. 11) suggest a city with sound infrastructures, and the port warehouses in Plaça de Sant Josep indicate that it channelled the redistribution of production from a territory that different towns (Sant Josep, Barberes Sud, Plans, Ribetes, Jovada II, Xauxelles) defined as entrepreneurial.

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Carmen Aranegui has been a full professor at the Universitat de València since 1986. She has researched the Mediterranean contacts that can be seen in Iberian culture (ceramics, necropolises and sanctuaries) and was the curator of the international exhibition entitled "Los Iberos" (The Iberians) (1997-1998, Paris, Barcelona and Bonn). The transition of Roman civilisation is another key point in her studies based on the case of Sagunt (Valencia), analysed in its facets of urban design (port, forum, theatre) and economy (amphorae, wine production). Since 1995, she has been the co-director of an archaeological project in *Lixus* (Larache, Morocco), a settlement founded by the Phoenicians; the project is studying the effects of the Eastern colonisation of peoples in the Strait of Gibraltar and the historical significance of Mauritanian culture from a post-colonialist standpoint.