

SECTION 3

THE CORNELII BALBI AND THE NEAPOLIS.

A BRILLIANT ERA FOR CADIZ

Gades in Antiquity, an archipelago...

Cádiz was an insular environment in Phoenician and Roman times, with the joining of the islands beginning in the Middle Ages. It is not easy to grasp, since nowadays the islands are no longer separate. The reconstruction of the ancient landscape is what we call *paleotopography*.

The term *Gádira*, in the plural, as the city is usually referred to in Greco-Latin sources, reflects how it was understood in the eyes of the ancient Romans: a multiple entity.

The two main islands, Erytheia and Cotinusa, were separated by a natural channel several hundred meters wide. It was similar to modern-day Venice or Istanbul, since moving between them required traveling by boat.

Illustrious figures of Cádiz in Rome

Lucius Cornelius Balbus the Elder was an advisor to Caesar and financed part of his campaigns. His nephew, Balbus the Younger, was the last general to celebrate a triumph after defeating the Garamantes—an achievement recorded in an inscription now kept in the Capitoline Museums (*Fasti Triumphales*).

Senators and politicians from Cádiz pursued their careers in various parts of the Empire, such as Lucius Cornelius Pusio, during the



VRBS IVLIA GADITANA

Desempolvando su pasado

reigns of Claudius and Vespasian. Even the mother of Emperor Hadrian, Domitia Paulina, was from Cádiz. A Cadiz-born Roman agronomist, Lucius Junius Moderatus Columella, wrote the most important treatise on agriculture, animal husbandry, and veterinary medicine that Antiquity has bequeathed to us (*De Re Rustica*).

Also noteworthy were the philosopher Moderatus, who taught Pythagoreanism in Nero's Rome, and the poet Canius Rufus, cited by Martial. This explains why, in the famous Flavian Amphitheater of Rome (the Colosseum), seats were reserved for the notables of Gades who lived in the *Urbs* or were merely passing through the city.

A new city for the capital of the

Conventus Gaditanus

Cádiz was responsible for one of the four divisions into which Augustus organized the province of Baetica. With its new legal status in Caesarian times (49 BC), the *municipium Gaditanum* gradually adapted to Italic customs.

Lucius Cornelius Balbus the Younger, a very prominent figure in the Rome of Augustus, gifted Gades with a “new city” or *Neapolis*, reshaping the “old” Phoenician town to suit contemporary tastes. Especially significant was the construction of the *Theatrum Balbi* at the end of the 1st century BC—one of the largest in Hispania, and the first to import Italian marble from the quarries of Luni (modern Carrara).

In Rome, this distinguished Gaditanian built the third theater of the *Urbs*, which we know from the *Forma Urbis* (the marble plan of Rome from the 3rd century).

