

SECTION 5

EVERYDAY LIFE IN GADES.

NEW TIMES, NEW CUSTOMS

The 1st and 2nd centuries CE were moments of splendor for the Roman Empire, and so it was in Gades. Large *domus* in the Santa María neighborhood, and great recreational *villae* in Eritía and Cotinusa, decorated with mosaics, wall paintings, and all kinds of comforts: stone sundials, sculptures in the gardens (*hermata*), and fountains everywhere.

One of the main objectives in Gades was to ensure daily access to water, and so the famous aqueduct—the *Aqua Gaditana*—was built. It brought water from the springs of Tempul, more than 70 km away, guaranteeing the water supply for centuries through large terminal reservoirs installed in the Puerta de Tierra area, using an extensive network of channels, lead pipes, and cisterns.

All kinds of services were available, such as bars and restaurants (*cauponae*, *thermopolia*), shops (*tabernae*), or the famous bath complexes, both public and private, technically improved in Rome with innovative underfloor and wall-heating systems for the *caldaria* and *tepidaria*.

Remains of all this, much altered by later constructions, have been documented in excavations, although they are not always easy to interpret due to their fragmentary nature.



Roman bakeries (*pistrina*) in Gades

No complete remains of a *pistrinum* have yet appeared —with its milling area, ovens for baking bread, and sales points— like those in Italica or Emerita Augusta.

Nevertheless, we have multiple indications both in the Neapolis and in the suburban area of Cotinusa: rotary flour mills (Calle Suárez de Salazar), a mold for decorating bread or biscuits with marine motifs (Portillo Pavilion), or a matrix decorated with a *venatio militaris* scene (a soldier fighting a leopard) used to make *crustulla* — hemispherical cakes— (Casa del Obispo).

Trades in Gades

All kinds of professions existed in the city. Many are documented epigraphically, and we even know the names of artisans, such as Publius Rutilius Syntrophus, the marble worker (*marmorarivs*), Troilus, the rhetoric teacher (*rhetor*), Quintus Valerius Littera, the “notary” (*testamentarivs*), Turpa Thyce, the “adornress” —what we would call a hairdresser/makeup artist today— (*ornatrix*), or Baebia Veneria, possibly a dyer or connected with the purple-dye or spice trade (*purpuraria/piperaria*).

Many other professional groups are identified thanks to the archaeological record, whether through iconographic representations, tools related to their work, or the remains left behind by their activity.



VRBS IVLIA GADITANA

Desempolvando su pasado

Everyday life

With regard to accessories and personal care, the use of certain products became democratized, such as perfumes, with ceramic and glass ointment jars being very common, along with bronze mirrors (usually circular), cosmetic boxes (*pyxides*), hairpins, brooches (*fibulae*), and protective amulets (*bullae*) or fertility charms (*figa, fascinum*). Even piggy banks have been found, like modern ones, to encourage saving —the one from Gades being one of the very few known in all of Hispania.

In the kitchen, utensils became increasingly specialized: graters, strainers, large mortars imported from Italy, large pans for frying or cooking food (initially Italic, later African), some of which were repaired with lead staples since they suffered greatly from fire damage.

On the table, liquid containers and jugs accompanied plates, cups, and glasses made of thin-walled ceramics or *sigillata* for drinking, while metal vessels were reserved for the upper classes. Storage jars, canteens, and flasks were used to transport and store liquids and solids.

Houses were decorated with polychrome wall paintings executed in fresco, fragments of which appear in archaeological excavations. This was part of a widespread fashion, not limited to spaces of medium or high social level.



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Desempolvando su pasado

In search of the amphitheater of Gades

Today, fewer than thirty buildings of this type are known in Hispania (18 certain and 9 probable, including that of Cádiz).

The amphitheater of Gades would be the only one in the present province of Cádiz. Thanks to engravings such as the mid-16th-century one by the Dutch painter Anton Van der Wyngaerde, preserved in the National Library of Vienna, we know there was a large hollow space inside the walls just beyond Puerta de Tierra, called the *Huerta del Hoyo*.

Its existence is highly probable due to evidence of gladiators in the city during the High Empire and other indirect archaeological indications (numerous terracotta figurines or oil lamps, and the cake mold from Casa del Obispo decorated with scenes of man-versus-beast combat —*venationes*).

To confirm its location next to the walls, a systematic archaeological project will be necessary in the future.



Roman frescoes in Gades

So far, only a few large pictorial ensembles have been documented in Cádiz. One comes from the Caleta Nautical Club, from a preventive excavation near the inter-island strait. It belonged to a building of undetermined function with several rooms around a colonnaded portico, which has been interpreted as a possible fish-salting factory.

It is evident that either this was not its original function (since *cetariae* did not have decorated walls) or that domestic areas coexisted alongside the salting workshops, as the studied remains seem to correspond to the lower, middle, and upper sections of the wall of a reception space in a *domus*.

Alongside some older remains of the Second Style, showing that the walls were decorated at various times, all of the preserved frescoes correspond to phases IC–IIA of the Third Pompeian Style, dated from the first quarter of the 1st century AD onward.

After a detailed descriptive and stylistic study, a first hypothetical reconstruction of one of the painted walls has been proposed, executed both in fresco and in secco.

Close parallels to these paintings from Gades have been documented in the Vesuvian area. Considering the careful execution of the motifs and the use of marble dust in the finishing layer of the mortar, we may be looking at the work of Italian workshop painters employed for the home of a wealthy owner in the city of Gades.

