

Integrating survey data for studying the townscape of *Contributa Iulia Ugultunia* (Medina de las Torres)

Pedro Mateos Cruz, Antonio Pizzo and Victorino Mayoral Herrera

There has been an increasing amount of work characterizing Roman towns in the SW part of the Iberian peninsula¹ but excavation still remains the primary approach, with only limited implementation of non-destructive methods. Those methods, however, are opening a robust path for understanding large archaeological sites,² while also allowing an optimization of resources in planning research. Extensive survey is injecting a new energy into sites as cultural resources, and this benefits local and regional conditions which are in need of alternative development policies.

The above considerations informed the design of a specific research program within the framework of the RITECA II Project (Red de Investigación transfronteriza Extremadura-Centro-Alentejo, part of an EU-initiative for Spanish-Portuguese cooperation that encourages links between the technology and research centers of the two countries). The main point here is the potential of non-invasive archaeological methods to contribute to a global analysis of complex sites,³ which eventually can become a foundation for reconstructing sites for both scholars and the general public. In the present case, previous work by the Institute of Archaeology at Mérida provided a suitable case for study: the Roman town of *Contributa Iulia Ugultunia*, in the present-day municipality of Medina de las Torres (Bada-joz) (fig. 1).

Archaeological work at “Los Cercos” and its identification as *Contributa Iulia*.

Until recently, scholarship on the town of *Contributa Iulia* focused on its possible location and the lack of archaeological remains that could be clearly linked to it. The lack of material confirmation of its location focused most of the research on questions of toponymy and status. The Elder Pliny (*NH* 3.13-14) placed *Contributa Iulia* in *Baeturia Celtica*, between the *Baetis* (Guadalquivir) and *Anas* (Guadiana) rivers, within the province of *Baetica* and the *conventus* of *Hispalis* (Seville). In 1634, Rodrigo Caro identified remains of the town in the village of Fuente de Cantos.⁴ In 1845, a local scholar, J. A. Barrientos, began the first excavation in a place called “Los Cercos” in the municipality of Medina de las Torres.⁵

1 J. M. Álvarez and P. Mateos (edd.), *Actas del Congreso Int. 1910-2010: El yacimiento emeritense* (Mérida 2011); T. Nogales, *Ciudad y foro en Lusitania romana* (Mérida 2010); C. Corsi, P. Johnson and F. Vermeulen, “A geomagnetic survey of Ammaia: a contribution to understanding Roman urbanism in Lusitania,” *JRA* 25 (2012) 121-45; C. Corsi and F. Vermeulen (edd.), *A Romano-Lusitanian townscape revealed* (Gent 2013).

2 C. Gaffney *et al.*, “Large-scale systematic fluxgate gradiometry at the Roman city of Wroxeter,” *Archaeological Prospection* 7 (2000) 81-99; S. Hay, P. Johnson, S. Keay and M. Millett, “Falerii Novi: further survey of the northern extramural area,” *PBSR* 78 (2010) 1-38; P. Johnson and M. Millett (edd.), *Archaeological survey and the city* (Oxford 2012); F. Vermeulen *et al.* (edd.), *Urban landscape survey in Italy and the Mediterranean* (Oxford 2012).

3 V. Mayoral *et al.*, “Mirando mas allá del suelo: la arqueología de mínima invasión como herramienta para la revalorización del patrimonio histórico,” *Riteca* 2 (2013) 15-20. (<http://riteca.gobex.es/revista/2>).

4 R. Caro, *Antigüedades y principado de la ilustrísima ciudad de Sevilla y corografía de su convento jurídico o antigua chancillería* (Sevilla 1634; repr. 1982).

5 P. Ortiz Romero, *Investigaciones arqueológicas en Medina de las Torres durante el s. XIX. Las*