

Plaza de Armas de Puente Tablas: New Contributions to the Knowledge of Iberian Town Planning in the Seventh to Fourth Centuries BC

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Puente Tablas and the chronological and geographical context of its foundation

THE PLAZA DE ARMAS OF PUENTE TABLAS was discovered in the early seventies and presented to the scientific community during the XIIth National Congress of Archaeology held in Jaén in 1971. In the following years, the Department of Prehistory of the Central University of Barcelona, directed by J. Maluquer, carried out a programme of excavation that persuaded the Administration of the need to acquire the site for its investigation, preservation and display. A new phase of work was initiated in 1982 by a research team from the Department of Prehistory and Archaeology of the then University College of Jaén, headed by A. Ruiz and M. Molinos and supported by the local administrative council (Diputación de Jaén); its task was to determine the settlement's chronological and cultural sequence. Since 1985 research at the site has been included in the broader project 'Iberian settlement in the countryside of Jaén', approved and funded by the Culture Department of the Regional Government (Junta de Andalucía). Both private and public institutions have collaborated in the research: Archaeotechnics have provided the palaeo-environmental expertise, while the Institute of Prehistory of the CSIC and the Department of Zooarchaeology of the Autonomous University of Madrid have undertaken the pollen and carpological analysis.

The settlement of Puente Tablas, occupying the hill of the Plaza de Armas, is a classic Iberian 'oppidum' of the type mentioned by the Greek and Roman literary sources (Figure 1). However, the site today, with its

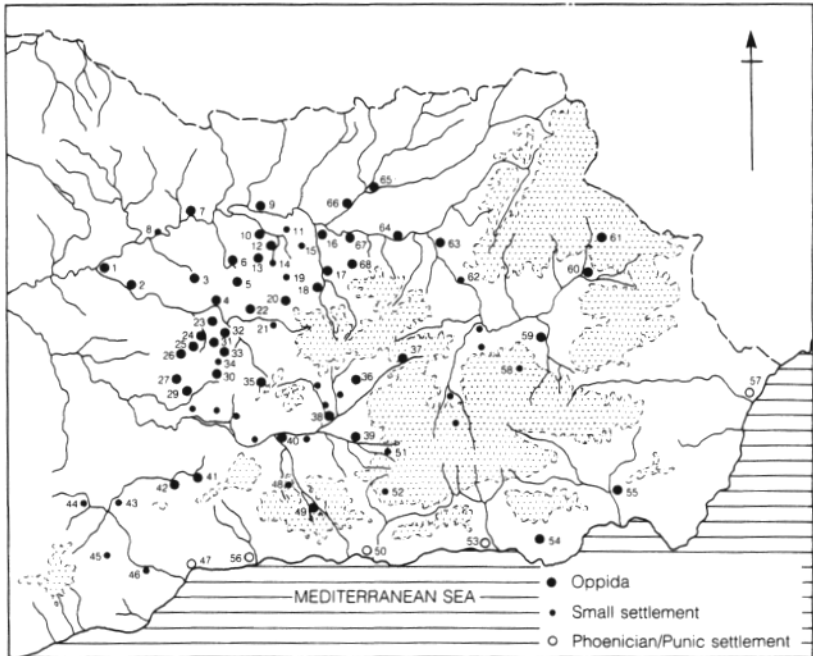


Figure 1. Location of the principal sites in eastern Andalucía in the sixth century BC.

Key: 1. Colina de los Quemados; 2. Ategua; 3. Torreparedones; 4. Molinillos; 5. Boyero; 6. Alcores de Porcuna; 7. Montoro; 8. Villafranca; 9. Los Villares de Andújar; 10. Arjona; 11. Coronilla de Cazalilla; 12. Villargordo; 13. Torrebenzalá; 14. Torrejón; 15. Atalayuelas; 16. Maquiz; 17. Plaza de Armas de Puente Tablas; 18. La Guardia; 19. Miguelico; 20. Martos; 21. S. Cristóbal de las Casillas; 22. Bobadilla; 23. Torre Morana; 24. Minguillar; 25. Vistillas; 26. Plaza de Armas de Nueva Carteya; 27. Santa María; 28. Villavieja; 29. Almedinilla; 30. Salobrar; 31. Almanzora; 32. Las Cabezas; 33. Camino del Tarajal; 34. La Mesa; 35. Cantarero; 36. Ayozas o Ayuso; 37. Los Infantes; 38. Granada; 39. Mora; 40. Archidona; 41. Antequera; 42. Valle Abdelaji; 43. Teba; 44. Coin; 45. Cártama; 46. Acinipo; 47. Guadalhorce; 48. Alhama; 49. Bermejales; 50. Almuñécar; 51. Cuesta de los Chinos; 52. Lecrín; 53. Adra; 54. Castellón de Dalías; 55. Chuche; 56. Torre del Mar; 57. Villaricos; 58. Gor; 59. Baza; 60. Galera; 61. Molasa; 62. Castellones, de Ceal; 63. Toya; 64. Ubeda la Vieja; 65. Giribaile; 66. Cástulo; 67. Puente del Obispo; 68. Cerro Alcalá.

strong outer defences and the urban development within presents evidence of a long period of occupation (Ruiz and Molinos 1985) dating back to the end of the ninth century BC, when a small Late Bronze Age community settled in the valley between two calcareous spurs formed by the Guadalbullón river. A group of sunken round huts was built from mud and organic materials. The community showed no interest in fortifying the settlement, although the site itself was naturally well-protected by virtue of its elevation. The community imported foreign products via the Guadalquivir valley by way of the coastal Phoenician colonies.

While the first colonies were being built along the Mediterranean coast, at such places as Morro de Mezquitilla, and Phoenician cultural and economical activity began to develop (Aubet 1987), a process of change was taking place amongst the native population of the hinterland. This

was characterized principally by the development of large nucleated settlements following the social and economic developments of the full Bronze Age and later symptoms of crisis. This was apparent both close to the coast, at Acinipo, near Ronda (Aguayo *et al.* 1986), and inland, deep within the Guadalquivir valley, as at the settlement of the Plaza de Armas of Puente Tablas near Jaén. Here a radiocarbon sample from the construction of a hut (Ruiz and Molinos 1993) suggests that nucleation must have taken place at around 820 BC. At this time the settlement comprised circular or sub-quadrangular huts with no internal divisions. Similar structures are found outside Andalucía in the eastern areas of the peninsula, at such sites as Peña Negra, near Crevillente and along the Vinalopó river. Radiocarbon dating indicates that the end of the first stage occurred around 740 BC (González Prats 1985).

For Torelli (1992) this type of settlement sowed the seeds of the inequality that was to germinate a few years later. Social practices that the aristocracy would later develop in their own interests were already evident: the feast, the aristocratic family group, war, etc. The early settlement social model was based upon the interrelationship of four units. The family was structured upon aristocratic values which bound individuals together through a common ancestor. The village community — the 'vicus' in ancient literary sources — was defined in terms of *curias* with military and religious motivation. Supra-village institutions, like the 'pagus', a geographical expression of the 'civitas', were reflected in the sharing of water-resources and common religious practices related to agrarian production. Finally, there was the tribe that could amount territorially to one or several 'pagi'. Of all of these social levels, the family was the weakest part of the system, even though it was the basis of the parental system. This was because its relative autonomy meant that it was the only institution capable of creating inequalities. By contrast, the tribe could become a focus of the old communal model by virtue of embodying a single ethnic identity.

The landscape surrounding the settlement of Puente Tablas in the ninth and eighth centuries BC was markedly different from that visible today. To the south-west, the mountain range in the vicinity of Santa Catalina, where the Castle of Jaén now stands, was probably covered by a Mediterranean forest. This would have spread downwards over the site of the modern city of Jaén as far as the river, with clearings as it reached the lowlands of the Guadalbullón river. These would have supported small cereal fields among the holm-oaks. The presence of pigs and sheep would have created a typical dry-land agrarian landscape. There is no sign of scattered farms in the lowlands of the Guadalbullón river either during the Late Bronze Age or during the historical period of the Iron Age characterized by the Iberian Culture. The extensive forest would have

included such trees as poplar, willow, elm, alder and ash (the latter two species being non-existent today), as well as tamarisk, blackberry and wild olive or, perhaps, already by this time, the domesticated olive tree. The forest would have been more widespread than the thin line of trees skirting the river today. Nevertheless there would already have existed clearances amongst these woods for cattle and the new fields, which would have bordered the villages.

To the east, dominated by the Sierra Mágina, the situation was very different. In contrast to the western countryside, which is today green with olive groves, an area of sub-desert can be observed, where olive groves have failed to establish themselves. The geology here is characterized by the oxides and gypsum, typical of Triassic Keuper series, which inhibited the growth of forest as well as agricultural exploitation and farming, with the possible exception of pasture and grazing land for flocks of sheep and goat. Palaeo-environmental data confirm the limitations of this kind of geology and show that by the end of the ninth century BC the landscape was similar to that of today, except for the present olive plantations.

To the south the horizon is blocked by the Sierras of Jaén and Mágina, commanding an important route into the present province of Granada. La Guardia is located here. Archaeological data confirm that during this period a village similar to that discussed in this paper was located here.

To the north, the three classes of landscape discussed above would have continued, separated by the forest, but would have ended near the Guadalquivir river in the vicinity of Mengibar. It is worth noting an especially significant site to the north-west, which nowadays dominates the horizon. This is the Cerro de las Atalayuelas y el Morrón in the district of Fuerte del Rey: it became an Iberian 'oppidum', in the same way as La Guardia, following a period of Late Bronze Age development.

The fortification of Puente Tablas, and the fortification of the countryside of Jaén: seventh-sixth centuries BC

The remains which today constitute the fortification of Puente Tablas (Figure 2) are the result of the different constructional phases dating to between the seventh and third centuries BC. On some occasions the wall was restored after deterioration caused by weathering, while on others temporary abandonment followed, as must have happened about the middle of the fourth century BC (Ruiz and Molinos 1986). In practice these fortifications, which consisted of a mudbrick section on top of stone footings, were essentially weak. The collapse of its sun-dried brick structure created a build-up of sediment at the foot of the outer face of the fortifi-



Figure 2. View of the 'oppidum' of the Cerro de la Plaza de Armas at Puente Tablas (Jaén).

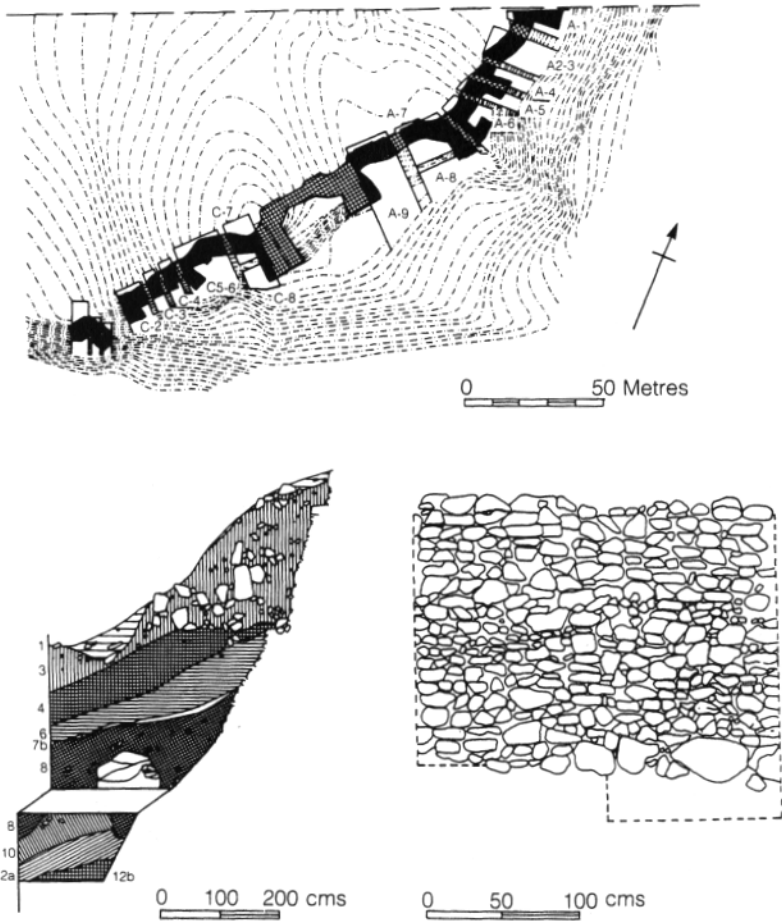


Figure 3. Plan, section and elevation of the fortifications of the 'oppidum' of the Plaza de Armas at Puente Tablas (Jaén).

cation, thus necessitating a continual heightening, first of the stone footings and then of the mudbrick wall itself.

To evaluate the history of the fortifications it is worth considering the sequence of the inter-bastions nos. 4-5 and 5-6, where the oldest system of construction can be observed (Figures 3 and 4). The structure was built directly on the ground surface and comprised two parallel faces built of masonry. The technique involved stones bonded with mud and with smaller stones acting as wedges. The space between the two walls was filled with stones and earth, thus creating a platform upon which the overlying mudbrick wall stood. Since no foundation had been dug, and therefore internal pressure could cause the collapse of some sections of the fortifi-

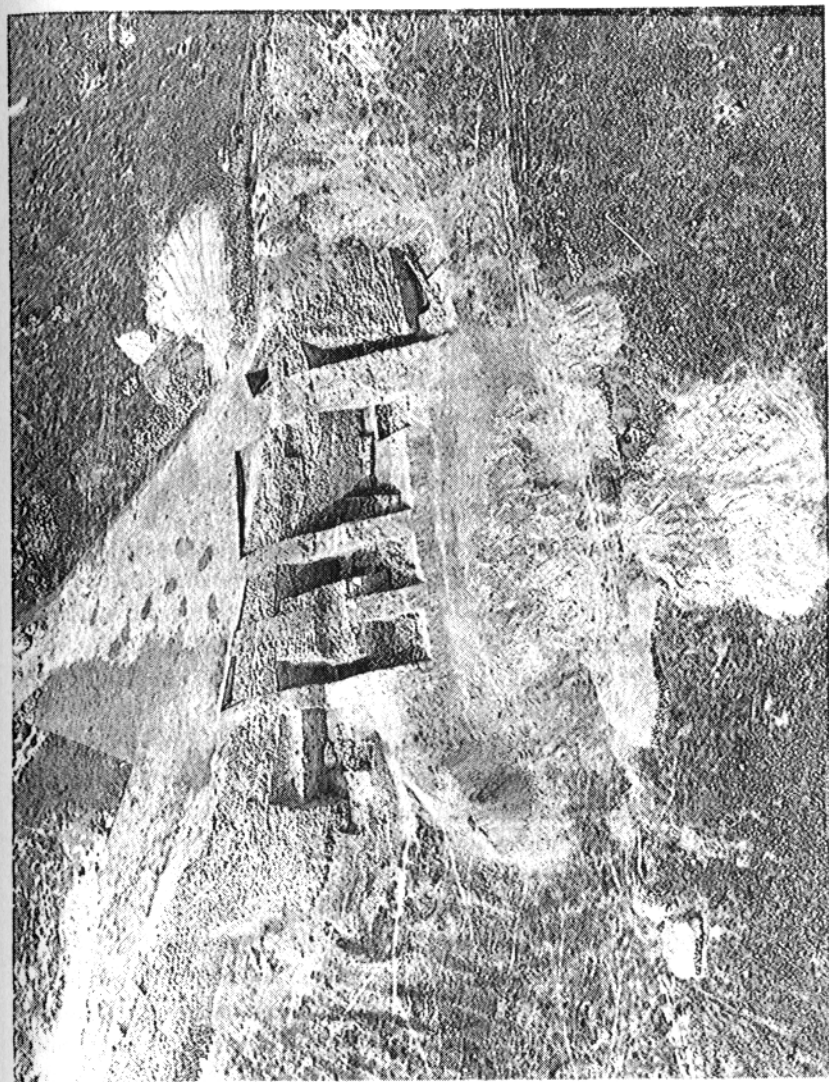


Figure 4. General view of the zone to the east of the fortifications of the Plaza de Armas at Puente Tablas (Jaén).

cation, a new stone wall had to be built on the outside. This was a metre from the outer wall and by leaning against it formed a bank. Both the wall and the mudbrick section were plastered with mud and covered with a layer of lime that is today still preserved at some points (although conservation of the wall has required it to be screened from view). The function of this plaster was twofold: on the one hand, it helped hold together the outer stones of the wall, and on the other it smoothed over the irregular faces of the stones, making it difficult to climb. In this way a structure built relatively coarsely was consolidated and, in the military context, was made more difficult to capture. The same can be said of the towers that periodically projected from the line of fortification. These towers performed a defensive function because their design incorporated advanced positions for defending the wall against attackers. At the same time they acted as buttresses to the wall.

Advancing to the west along the line of fortification, the interior of the settlement is reached through one of the gates. They comprise two bastions that converge from the two sides of the fortification, thus forming a funnel-like space with its narrower part facing outwards. The upper part of bastion no. 2 forming the right side of the gate, was largely destroyed in the early seventies. Nevertheless, some of its lowest courses still remain. Bastion no. 1, on the left of the entrance, is at a somewhat lower level, because of the slope of the hill. A transverse wall, cutting both bastions, can be seen between them in one of the stratigraphic sections. This must have made entry more complex, even though it may have been built at a later date in the life of the town.

The construction date of the oldest stretch of fortification must have been about the first half of the seventh century BC, since hand-made pottery was still predominant, while in the subsequent phase, 'royal' hand-made pottery as well as hand-painted and the first wheel-thrown pottery, probably of a foreign origin, have been found.

In the sixth century BC, the same construction technique continued to be used, even though the walls were no longer raised above the bank. This was because the accumulation that had been produced upon burying a large part of the seventh century BC fortification provided an adequate foundation. Nevertheless, the outer face was still plastered, although with local reddish clay.

The landscape and the settlement of the region of Puente Tablas during the sixth century BC did not differ significantly from that already described. Nevertheless, in the first years of the century, a new settlement developed half way up the side of the hill of Santa Catalina, above modern Jaén. Similarly, strategic sites were built at other points in the region, although very little remains of these. However, they provide some indi-

cation of the fortifications developing in the Guadalbullón valley during this phase, in the period prior to the disappearance of Tartessos. The point is emphasized by the appearance of many towers throughout the countryside, the purpose of which must have been to defend it from a supposed threat from upstream of the Guadalquivir. This 'land seizure' model does not continue as late as the fifth century BC: it was abandoned once the threat posed to the '*mastienii*' by expansion had ceased. Nevertheless the 'oppida' of Puente Tablas, Atalayuelas (Castro *et al.* 1987) and La Guardia (Molinos 1987) were maintained.

The colonization of the Guadalquivir and the Salado river of Porcuna (Ruiz and Molinos 1989) by a series of small agrarian enclaves must be linked to changes which took place in the second half of the seventh century BC over much of the south of the Iberian Peninsula. The situation may have had two very different causes. First, the agrarian settlement was the result of a process of general change in which Tartessian expansionism was a significant factor: it was also the consequence of the spread of the practice of the new aristocratic institution of clientship from Torreparedones or another dominant centre. Secondly, it was the only possible solution for a population excluded from the new system of social relationships and which retained its old familiar patriarchal relationships intact. Family units in the Campiña de Marmolejo are representative of these.

In any event, the frontier, or that zone which lay beyond the line of towers running from the west to the east near the Cerro Maquííz, suggests that there was a latent danger for the rural population of the Jaén region focused in the lowlands of the Guadalquivir river. In addition rapid development has been observed in the hinterland of Cástulo. This allows us to postulate that the Torreparedones-Cástulo axis played a pivotal role in exchanges between the Middle Guadalquivir and Guadalimar rivers. It is evident that there was a strong desire to open an exchange route between one extreme of the Guadalquivir and the other. This was probably due to interest in the mining environment around Cástulo, possibly by, or on behalf of, Tartessos. On the other hand, the small scale of the agrarian settlement may either reflect the spearhead of the social system already mentioned, or the effect of the changes that this geopolitical reorganization was imposing.

The strategic settlement model of the '*mastienii*' of the early sixth century BC, the period when the frontier was built, is known from the excavation of the settlement at the Cerro de la Coronilla de Cazalilla (Ruiz *et al.* 1983). This is a small centre fortified with the same system of construction as at Torreparedones or Puente Tablas. It is characterized by an interior enclosure and a strong bastion on its west side, the weakest in

its defences. The site was built in the early sixth century BC and lasted until at least the middle of the fifth century BC.

A second example of fortified settlement dating to the same period is that recorded at Las Atalayuelas. This was a more important centre covering an area of up to 4 ha during the sixth century BC. However, in contrast to Puente Tablas, it had not been fortified during the earlier proto-Iberian stage of the seventh century BC (Castro *et al.* 1987). At the end of the seventh or beginning of the sixth century BC, a fortification similar to that at Puente Tablas was constructed. At the eastern extremity of the town the hill of the Norias abruptly turns towards the Cerro de las Atalayuelas where, on higher ground, a complex fortification of towers, buttresses, banks, pits and interior corridors was built. Characteristically, there were no domestic areas within the town. It seems that this was a depopulated acropolis which, if necessary, could hold the besieged population if the lower-lying fortifications were taken.

The consequences of this situation affected the subsequent history of the frontier since it undoubtedly compelled the agrarian settlements to be abandoned. The populations were dispersed and returned to their original locations or to other centres in the Guadalquivir valley such as Santa Cecilia or La Aragonesa. This encouraged the development of orientaling tendencies and of the aristocratic institution of clientele both in colonizing 'oppida' and in those of the Jaén countryside. In their response to the development of the east-west route towards Cástulo and to the agrarian settlement, they defined their own territory comprising a huge area of Miocene lands potentially suitable for the development of intense dry farming production. The construction of the frontier in the early sixth century BC, the fortification of the 'oppida' and other changes in town planning and technology reveal how far they had assumed the control of their territory and were able to offer a coordinated response. To this situation must be added the development of an economic system based upon the intensive cultivation of cereal, the breeding of cattle, and, on lands unsuitable for herbaceous crops, the running of goats and pigs and the intensification of other kinds of production such as olives and vines. The development, which was born out of the crisis among the agrarian settlements, opened the way to the dominance of 'oppida', or polynuclearized settlement, in the upper and middle valley of the Guadalquivir.

Town planning in Puente Tablas; the polynuclear model of the 'oppida' of the Jaén countryside

At some point in the course of the fifth century BC (in archaeological terms the period immediately prior to the appearance of the Cástulo Cup)

there is evidence for significant change. This is reflected in the destruction of the sculpture of Porcuna and the abandonment and reorganization of numerous settlements in the area of the Upper Guadalquivir. The frontier towers were abandoned (Ruiz *et al.* 1983; Ruiz and Molinos 1989) as well as the more scattered lesser settlements that characterized the countryside of Jaén. Among the towns, some large centres, such as the hill of Santa Catalina of Jaén or Los Villares de Andújar, were abandoned (no material of the middle of the fifth century BC has been recorded in surface surveys from any of them). Others, like the Cerro de las Atalayuelas de Fuerte del Rey, reduced their inhabited area by abandoning the fortified acropolis on the hill of the Norias (Castro *et al.* 1987). A third group, like the 'oppidum' of the Plaza de Armas of Puente Tablas, halted the internal expansion which had begun at the end of the sixth century BC with a wholesale reorganization of the settlement and its fortifications.

This complex process was the effect of a crisis in growth which began as a consequence of the definition of the frontier. I will select two representative cases of the polynuclearization of the 'oppida' in the Jaén countryside: they represent the disintegration of concentrated aristocratic power along the lines of the classic orientaling system.

The great size of the Cerro de Villargordo and the reduction in that of the Cerro de las Atalayuelas by the middle of the fifth century BC was the subject of an analysis some years ago (Ruiz 1988). The Cerro de Villargordo is shown to have been the highest-ranked centre in the Salado river region of Los Villares (Ruiz and Molinos 1984). If it was the political and economic axis of an aristocratic system with tributary settlements, or, in other words, if the aristocratic elite in this 'oppidum' had managed to dominate the region with the institution of clientele and to impose it upon others, its potential area of direct influence on its own territory should have remained the same or have been even smaller. This is because its dominant role would have allowed the élite to sustain a larger settlement with a small territory and to extract the necessary surplus from the local population (the clients of the 'oppida') for the benefit of the aristocratic group. On the contrary, however, if the political influence of its aristocratic élite had been limited to the area of its settlement, its greater size would have compelled them to seize a larger expanse of agriculturally rich land. The average distance of 4 km between oppida and the average potential of lesser sites was constant at different scales. This kind of analysis showed that the Cerro de Villargordo was forced to reduce the area of the neighbouring medium-sized Cerro de las Atalayuelas in the sixth century BC in order to achieve the lower scale. Corroboration of this by excavation, together with the loss of the fortified area of the Norias Hill confirmed the hypothesis that throughout the fifth century BC

the position of the local aristocracies with respect to the power of supra-territorial aristocrats became stronger. This means that the conquest of supra-curial communal structures had not taken place even though the construction of the frontier in the course of the sixth century BC suggested that this may have been the case.

Further corroboration comes from the excavation of the 'oppidum' of Puente Tablas. In the sixth century BC the planning of the town may have been organized around the distribution of the houses within the walls, in as much as they formed two groups at the centre of the town. One of these, a large building with portico and central courtyard, stood out from the others, and in a later period may possibly have housed an aristocratic family. Much of the town remained unbuilt-up during this period. The reorganization in the middle of the fifth century BC produced a very different kind of planning: most of the houses within the town were abandoned, leaving the inner face of the fortification free. On the other hand, building within lots in the town centre continued and extended as far as the possible aristocratic area.

Both cases are the result of the imposition of the system of clientele. To trace the transformation of the family group into an aristocratic unit, it is worth pointing out that both institutions were based on the principle of the common forefather, even though there were variations. The cohesion of the aristocratic group around the common forefathers of each family lost significance with the appearance of the orientaling princes, because higher-level organization, perhaps that of the village community, was the new frame of reference. The new system involved replacing the ancestor cult with a system of one ancestor for the whole village — the curia. Thus, once the familiar level of descent was abandoned, the ancestor of the prince and his family would be the only one recognized. Consequently, the functioning of old aristocratic cults based on consanguinity was replaced by a new institution — client servitude or a form of patronage that allowed community members to be recognized in the forebears of the aristocrat. This was an agreement '*in fides*' that created a link based on the protection of the patron, the aristocrat, and on the obedience of the client.

Returning to the case of Puente Tablas, in the middle and late fifth century BC some meaningful changes can be observed in the fortification. The stone structure was raised and, as in some cases like that of bastion no. 4, the old tower was surrounded by a new one built of larger and more carefully selected stones. Inside the town, the inhabited area was enlarged. In order to preserve the slope of the plateau visible in the east-west gradient of the streets, the houses were spaced out in pairs. In this way

entrance to the first house on each level was achieved by descending several steps, unlike the second house, which remained at street level.

The new buildings of the fourth century BC, constructed of stone footings and mudbrick walls, were rectilinear (Figures 5 and 6). The rooms and houses, comprising one block, have yet to be completely excavated. It was located between two east-west streets, 2 m wide and with a gentle westward slope. Street 1, which was cobbled in some places, dates to the fourth century BC, although it may have been already in existence in the sixth century BC. Running northwards from this street, at a distance that varies between 13 and 14 m, is a wall parallel to the street and which acted as the dividing wall of the block. This separated the houses facing onto street 1 from those which opened up northwards onto street 2, much of which has still to be excavated. We will begin by describing one of the simplest cases: house 1 located in the middle of street 1. It is a structure 14 m long by 5 m wide. Upon entry from the street there was a wide space which recent archaeological research suggests may have been a courtyard whose east wing was covered. This was the focus of much of the family life of the house. During its excavation, a thick layer of ashes was found to the left-hand side of the threshold. This must have been the hearth where food was prepared. All over the courtyard were also found large fragments of amphora that once contained food, as well as remains of a continuous bench where those preparing the food would have sat, and where they would have eaten it. The space at the end of the house was roofed and divided into two areas by a wall perpendicular to the partition wall. That on the right is paved for half its length, and the absence of remains on its surface suggests that this part of the room was covered with some kind of organic material which does not survive. In all likelihood this was a bedroom. The space on the left also has a continuous bench, but its function is as yet unclear.

To the west of house 1 was house 3, whose large central courtyard and attached series of inaccessible rooms suggest a special function. It could have been a large granary, given that the pollen samples taken at its entrance yielded the highest cereal count in the town, and that the door itself is the only one of all the excavated houses that is wide enough to permit the entry of carts. West of the courtyard is house 4, which must have been part of the granary group.

To the north, on the other side of the partition wall which shuts off houses 3-4, lies house 2, which faces on to street 2. Its features are very special in comparison with other houses in the block. Firstly, there is a patch of cobblestone in front of the door and a space for an outside bench. Above all, however, there is a wide space in front of the door that must have been a square, emphasizing the position of this house. Secondly, the

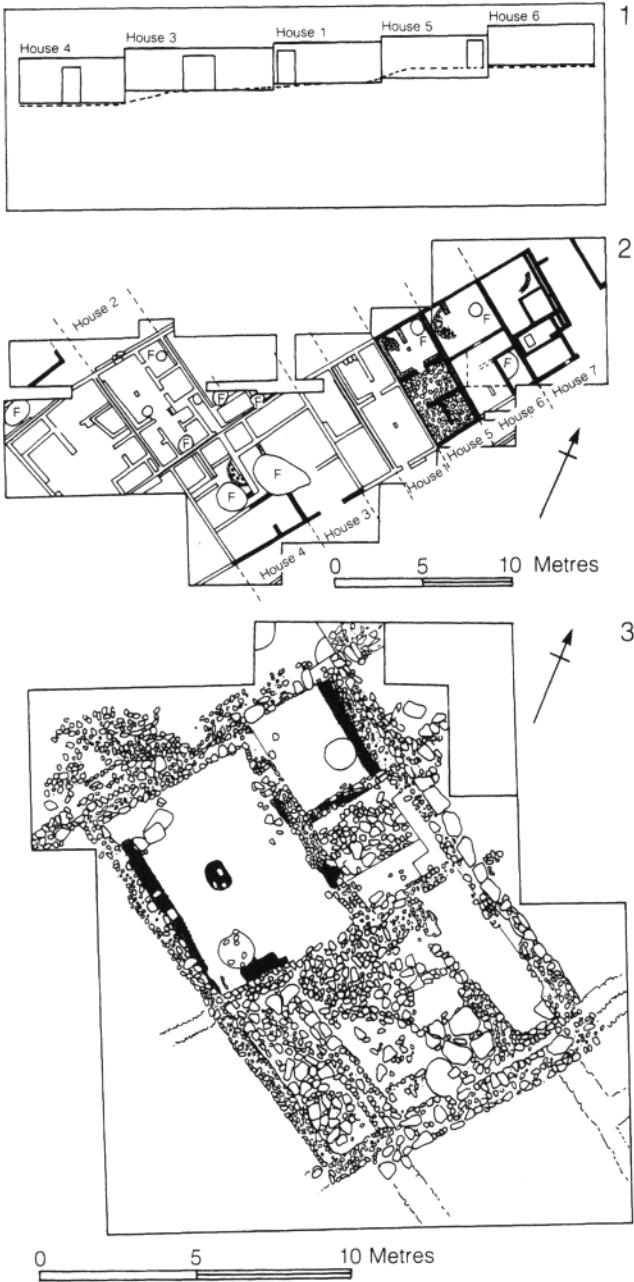


Figure 5. 1. Possible reconstruction of street 1 of the 'oppidum' of the Plaza de Armas at Puente Tablas (Jaén); 2. Plan of the building lot or central quarter; 3. Plan of house 2.

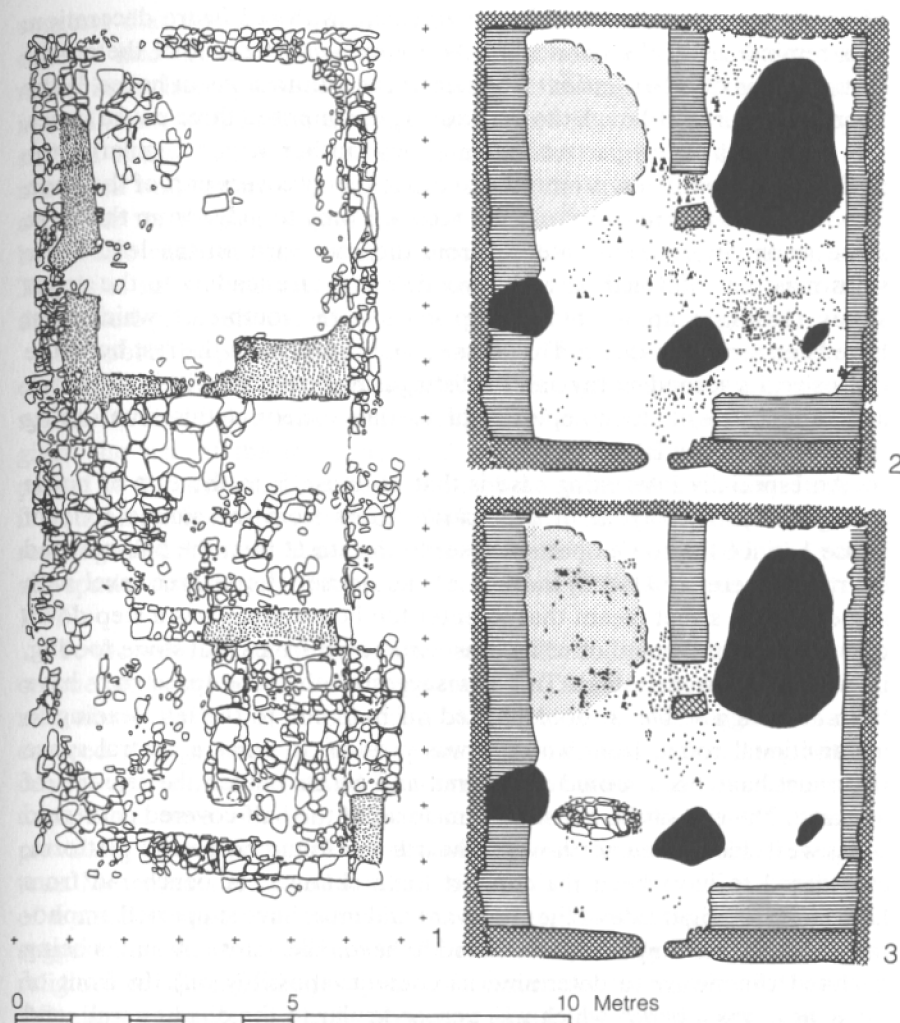


Figure 6. 1. Plan of house 5 at the Plaza de Armas at Puente Tablas (Jaén); 2. Plan showing the patterning of the archaeological remains in the post-depositional phase of the patio area; 3. Plan showing the distribution of the archaeological remains in the depositional phase of the patio area.

interior of the house is similar to house 1, even though it is more complex. As soon as we enter the door and pass into the courtyard, one of the door lintels revealed a large flat stone over a metre long on the ground. Within was a partially roofed courtyard the east side of which must have had a hearth, and the characteristic amphorae in the consumption areas. Unlike house 1, there was a two-room module to the east of the courtyard in one

of which was found an Attic krater fragment with red figure decoration. This reminds us of the richness of the rooms (*androecium*) of the aristocratic houses of other ancient Mediterranean cultures. As in house 1, the floor was covered although the partition here comprised three paved naves, the two aisles being partitioned into two further naves. Similarly, the paving in the south-east sector of one of them only covers part of the floor. The whole module must have had a second storey to judge from the three stone steps visible upon entering from the courtyard on the left. These steps must have formed part of a wooden structure leading to the upper storey, turning in upon a blocked-up space to the south-east, which must have been a rubbish-dump. This house stands apart from the rest by virtue of its size, its second storey and its distinguished position within the block and reminds us of the complexity of Iberian society at this time during the fourth century BC.

An especially interesting case is that of house 5, to the east of house 1 (Figure 6). The layout of the house differs from the simple style of house 1, since the roofed part is closer to the street than the half-covered courtyard, here situated at the end of the house. The uneven level with respect to the street meant that to enter the house there was a step down to a tiled room, the end of which was marked off by a small stone footing, in which oats were found. This has suggested that the space may have been used as a stable. A door opened off here and to the left, leading to a transitional room, from which it was possible to enter a central space that must have been roofed and paved and which yielded the remains of a hearth. The end of the house was made up of the half-covered courtyard on its west side. To the north-west a hearth was found on a stone platform, considered to have been the support for a chimney. A bench ran from here along the right side of the courtyard and must have supported amphorae. One of these amphorae was found to have fallen close by and is being analysed chemically to determine its contents (possibly oil). In front of the hearth was a bench which was perpendicular to the dividing wall, and which ran along the middle of the courtyard to its centre. Here an adobe platform points to the existence of a post that would have supported the perishable roof of the courtyard's protected zone.

In addition to all of this, the excavation of the house (Molinos *et al.* 1993) has allowed one to conclude that the family group that inhabited it performed most of its activity in the half-covered area of the courtyard, where they prepared and consumed cereals (mainly *triticum aestivum*). The wall facing the hearth was the source of most of the retrieved remains and chemical analysis (phosphorus and fatty acids) reveals noticeable activity. By comparison, the unroofed part of the courtyard on the east side was largely free of all this. Coinciding medieval and Iberian ditches

suggests that this area collected run-off from the roofs and which then drained into the ditch. The weight:size relationship of the ceramic fragments in the latest phase of occupation of the covered area of the courtyard is significant, with higher averages than those documented in post-depositional strata. In the destruction phase of the courtyard, the fall of the mudbrick wall towards the unroofed zone of the courtyard not only yields a smaller weight:size relationship and with a smaller standard deviation, but is also characterized by an absence of the phosphates on its surface. That is to say that activity and the concentration of materials shift to this area (most probably the ceramics were contained in the mud wall).

If it could be proved that other lots still to be studied in the town were organized along these lines, it suggests that it was symptomatic of a social system focused on an aristocratic group based on patronage. Nevertheless, given the size of the town, house 2 is unlikely to have been the main palace of the 'oppidum', or the palace of the principal aristocrat. Instead it would have been the residence of a lesser aristocrat, with his own clients residing in each block. This social structure has been recorded in the ritual and spatial distribution of the cemetery of Baza (Ruiz, Risquez and Hornos 1992).

To the west, an exceptional construction was built on part of the plateau on one of the calcareous rises frequented by Late Bronze Age inhabitants and above early hut foundations. Available evidence suggests that it covered a large area, 12 m wide and approximately 30 m long with a central courtyard surrounded by rooms. But it is not only the size that is exceptional here, but also its situation within the town. It interrupts the prevailing orientation of the streets and houses across the rest of the plateau. Moreover, the curved southern side of the structure and the existence of a small portico with two columns of organic material, possibly wood, suggest that this area had a specific function, possibly being a palace or religious building. In the last phase of occupation during the third century BC a second structure was built nearby. This had a central courtyard, with peristyle and surrounding rooms, recalling a simple version of a Hellenistic house.

The polynuclear aristocratic system of the fifth century BC did not imply a rejection of the system of the orientalizing aristocracy (Figure 7). However, it did question a large part of its strategy towards wealth accumulation since it minimized the ability to express power and largely reduced the 'distance' factor. Furthermore, the decentralization of aristocratic power in this period prevented the aristocracy itself from conquering the supra-village structures until such time as there was a new concentration of the aristocratic power, similar to that noted in the construction of the frontier early in the sixth century BC.

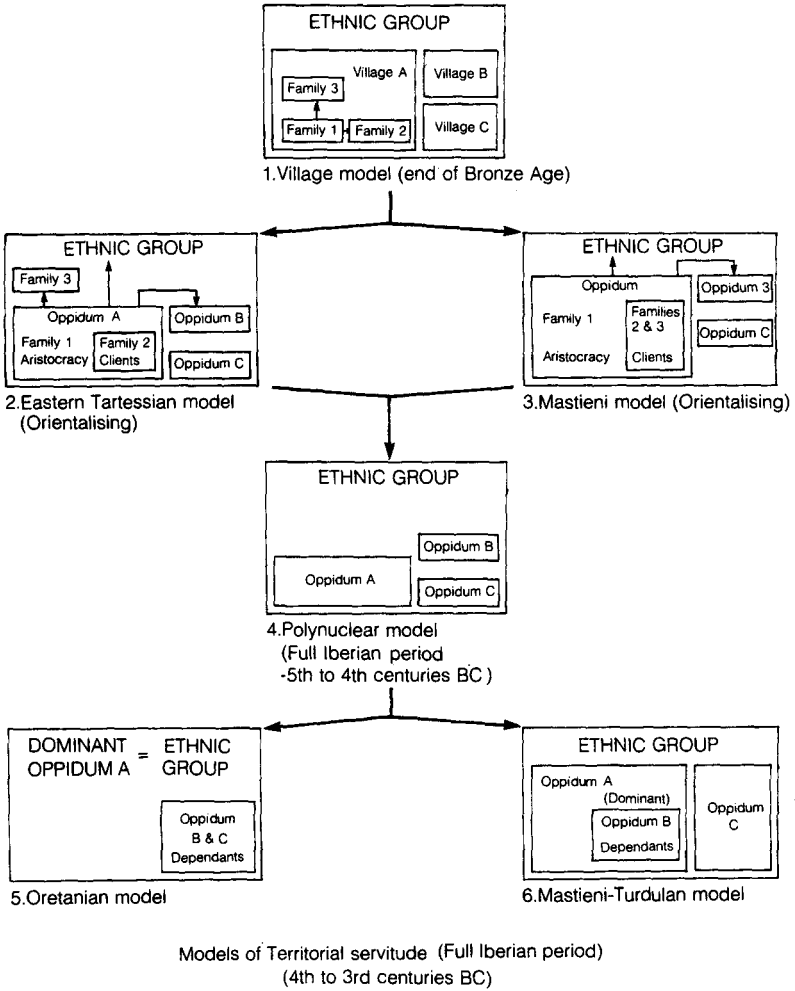


Figure 7. Diagram illustrating the evolution of aristocratic societies.

Considering all this, one might conclude that the phase which began in the mid fifth century BC and lasted until the great crisis of the middle of the fourth century BC, saw the disintegration of a socio-economic system which had emerged during the orientaling period. In fact this system continued in direct contradiction to the new means of land seizure, in such a way that there emerged a very rigid control of the territory (as the peasant client was compelled to live in the 'oppidum' and possibly denied ownership of his means of production) and an exploitation of land based on the old expansionist schemes of the orientaling period discussed earlier: cereal production was the dominant agricultural activity, and cattle

was the main class of livestock. All of this has to be understood in the context of the network of relationships which involved access to property, in the clientship system. However, it became increasingly costly for an aristocrat whose surplus base was limited to the 'oppidum' and its surroundings, but who had allowed his clientele access to exotic products that would never have circulated beyond the aristocratic group in the orientaling system. Yet the apparent equality of the aristocracy did not prevent the emergence of a qualitative hierarchy for access to these 'rich' products. The cart, the krater and the so-called 'little bronze braziers' ('braserillos') from Baza only appear in the burial area of the principal aristocrat; the cart is the only one of those which is excluded from the second aristocratic level. Clients only had access to black glaze ceramics without red figure decoration and among these, only the kylix painter of Vienna 116 is represented.

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Plaza de Armas de Puente Tablas: new contributions to the knowledge of Iberian town planning in the seventh to fourth centuries BC

Since 1982 the Iberian settlement at Puente Tablas (Jaén) has been at the centre of a major research programme to investigate the development of Iberian settlement in the Upper Guadalquivir valley during the Iberian period. Settlement at the site began in the ninth century BC, during which time the community was structured around the family, the village community, the *pagus* and the tribe. Excavations at the site have revealed the sequence of fortification and residential housing from the first half of the seventh to the third centuries BC. These have been analysed in conjunction with work at other sites like Atalayuelas and the Cerro de la Coronilla de Cazalilla to provide a model for articulation of political and economic space for the region. Several phases were distinguished, the most important of which stretched between the mid fifth and mid fourth centuries BC. This saw the disintegration of the socio-economic system which had emerged during the orientalizing period and the development of a polynuclear settlement pattern based at *oppida*.

Plaza de Armas de Puente Tablas: nuevas aportaciones al conocimiento de urbanismo ibérico entre los siglos 7 y 4 a.C.

Desde 1982, el asentamiento de Puente Tablas (Jaén) ha sido el centro de un gran proyecto de investigación destinado al estudio del desarrollo del poblamiento ibérico en el valle del Alto Guadalquivir en época ibérica. El asentamiento se estableció en este lugar en el siglo IX a.C., en este momento inicial se estructuró a partir de la familia, la comunidad, el *pagus* y la tribu. Las excavaciones del lugar han revelado la existencia de una secuencia de fortificaciones y lugares de residencia, desde principios del siglo VII a.C. hasta el III a.C. Estos se han analizado conjuntamente con el trabajo realizado en otros lugares como Atalayuelas y el Cerro de la Coronilla de Cazalilla para proporcionar un modelo para la articulación del espacio político y económico en la región. Se han distinguido una serie de fases, las más importantes de las cuales son las que van desde mediados del siglo V a.C. hasta mediados del siglo IV a.C. Este periodo testimonia la desintegración del sistema sociocultural que había emergido durante el periodo orientalizante y el desarrollo del modelo de asentamiento polinuclear basado en los *oppida*.