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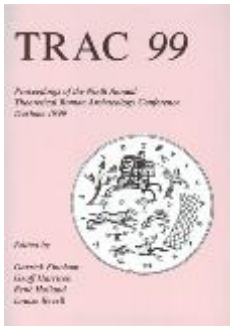

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The creation of multiple identities in Roman Italica

by Louise Revell

The idea of social identity, its construction and display, has been an important development in archaeology in recent times. It arose as part of a movement away from the examination of long term processes as reified forces with an independent existence, towards the view that past societies are the product of the actions of the individuals and social groups inhabiting them. This has led to the problematization of identity and its construction. We can no longer see the self-definition of peoples as unproblematic descriptions such as woman, man, adult, child, elite, non-elite, each with an inherent meaning outside of its contextual restraints. Rather, identity is the product of interaction between the individual and the community, as created through repeated, significant practice. The concepts of agency and intentionality are central to this. Knowledgeable human actors use material culture as a means of negotiating their position within the hierarchical relationships of that society. The relationship between that past society and the archaeological artefact then becomes problematic: the artefact does not have any intrinsic meaning, but many meanings, which are created through social practice. To describe a certain area of a building as elite or masculine space, for example, is not necessarily inaccurate. Rather it misses a step in the intellectual process: that the space is a resource used by a member of the elite or by a man in a repetitive and appropriate way. Furthermore, the simple equation of artefact and identity sets up a direct one-to-one relationship and obscures the possibility of one artefact being used to express multiple facets of identity. Instead, the artefact is given a contextual meaning through use in the repetitive rituals of daily life, the same rituals used by the social actor to recreate their identity.

Central to this view of identity is the idea of personal performance, which originated in Erving Goffman's report *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Goffman 1956). In this, he explored the way an individual or a team present a self-conscious image of their own personna in the presence of other social groups. Goffman analysed the techniques used by the performance team in order to control any social situation: the information they present about themselves and the impression the audience holds of them. Settings and props are used to contribute to the display, and situations of co-presence are events which must be worked at by all the participants, with varying degrees of self-monitoring. The performance is regulated by a set of values held by that society: each person acts with the expectation that others will value and treat them in a way appropriate to that performance. These theories were initially developed and applied by those with direct access to the performance itself, where reproductive practice can be observed and recorded in its entirety at the moment of the performance. However, in archaeology, we are left with the differential preservation of the staging and the props in the material record, and it is very rare that we have access to the performance itself. Thus we are left to infer how individuals used material culture to create identity and what those identities might be from the incomplete record of the performance act.

Social identity is not something inherent to the individual, but rather must be created and reproduced through moments of co-presence using the artefacts which constitute our archaeological record. However, one of the main points I wish to explore in this paper is that identity is not a single element, but a matrix consisting of numerous elements, any of which

might be dominant in differing social situations. Thus an individual not only has to create their ethnicity, but also their age, gender and status; any individual social identity represents the continual negotiation of these multiple elements. The concept of identity within Roman archaeology has been largely used to shed new light on the Romanization debate and the exploration of ethnicity has tended to dominate current literature (for example Jones 1997; Berry and Laurence 1998). Far less work has been carried out on issues such as status, gender or age. This is not to deny that the reaffirmation of ethnic identities is an on-going process. Although the society I am dealing with might be described as romanized, identity is not something which once acquired, no longer needs reaffirming. In the routines I shall explore, the social actors are continuously renewing their ethnic identities. However, in this paper I want to discuss how other elements of identity are differentiated and how power hierarchies are established through them.

The site that I propose to deal with is Italica in the Spanish province of Baetica. There was a Turdetanian settlement here prior to the Roman conquest, with evidence of activity from the fourth century onwards. The historical sources suggest that Scipio Africanus settled a contingent of Roman soldiers on the site in 205BC. However, due to its location under the modern village of Santiponce, the Republican and early imperial settlement are poorly understood, and very little can be said with any certainty about this period (Keay 1997 provides a critical survey of this evidence). In the early second century Hadrian granted his native town colonial status, with the new title of Colonia Aelia Augusta Italica, and a thirty-eight hectare extension was built incorporating temple, amphitheatre, baths and opulent domestic residences (Rodriguez Hidalgo and Keay 1995:404-13). At the same time, the theatre in the old town was refurbished and a large podium temple was constructed overlooking it. As a heuristic tool, I shall use an inscription found in the large monumental temple at the heart of the Nova Urbs. This dedication to Apollo was set up by Marcus Sentius Maurianus, one of the urban magistrates. I shall investigate how Maurianus might have used the architecture as a way of expressing certain things about himself and his own identity, and how that might have differed from the experience of other members of the community. In doing so, I make no claims to be accurately reconstructing his personal experiences; rather I am using the information he has given about himself as a way of exploring these issues.

First, I wish to deal with the inscription itself as an act of dedication. The inscription was found during excavations at the so-called Traianeum, the large monumental temple at the heart of the Nova Urbs, believed to be connected to the imperial cult (León 1988). It was found in the plaza, where there were also remains of four rows of statue bases, two to the north and south of the temple (*ibid.* 41-2). It seems a reasonable assumption that this inscription came from one of these bases, possibly as a dedication for a statue. The inscription itself reads:

APOLLINI AVG SACR
M SENTIVS M F SERG MAURIANUS
ITALIC AEDIL IIVIR AUGUR PERPETVVS
COLON AEL AVG ITAL EX ARG P C D

To Apollo Augustus, Marcus Sentius Maurianus, son of Marcus, of the voting tribe Sergia, and resident of Italica, aedile, duovir, augur perpetuus of Colonia Aelia Augusta Italica, set up this dedication from silver weighing 100 pounds

(*ibid.* 110)

Here Maurianus is using a very public and highly prestigious area to demonstrate his own status through the erection of the dedication. As was typical Roman practice, he also used the inscription as a means of publicly establishing his own authority through the reiteration of his official titles, of aedile, duovir and augur. As power was both acquired and manifested through the urban magistracies, Maurianus is demonstrating to the rest of the community his position within the local hierarchies. As these offices were restricted to men who had reached a certain age and possessed a degree of wealth, they also provided one means of differentiating certain groups within the society by criteria of gender, age and wealth. And in carrying out the daily routines associated with these positions, Maurianus also publicly reaffirms these separate elements of his own identity.

Secondly, I wish to look at the use of the buildings within Italica and how Maurianus might have experienced them. Roman architecture provided the setting for the face-to-face encounters which served to differentiate social groups. The criteria might be connected with the buildings themselves, such as access to privileged areas and different means of moving through the building, or to the different activities, clothing or gestures deemed appropriate for the ceremonies taking place within them. Within this, there is the recurrent theme of inequalities being expressed. As the various social groups were formed, some are privileged as of higher status and greater access to power than others. In the rest of this paper, I propose to examine two specific buildings from Italica and the rituals associated: the Traianeum and the amphitheatre.

The Traianeum is a fairly typical large Roman temple complex. It lies at the junction of the *cardo maximus* and the *decumanus*, and at the highest point of the city (León 1988). It consists of a monumental front facade, a rectangular courtyard surrounded by porticoes and a large podium temple at the centre with an altar in front. The large quantities of architectural marble found during the excavation point to an opulent, polychrome decoration. In terms of the ceremonies associated with the temple, there were two distinct roles for Maurianus: the first as augur, and the second as a magistrate during the sacrificial act. Urban priesthoods were one of the key methods of establishing high status within Roman society, and the ceremonies surrounding them manifested that status and power to other members of that society (Gordon 1990: 224-31). At Rome itself, the first step a young man might expect to take on the *cursus honorum* was to become an augur (Szemler 1986: 2328-30). As it was bound by qualifications of age and gender, it was a way of differentiating between men and women, and of marking the transition from child to adult. It was a responsible position, involving the public rites of taking the auspices at the *inauguratio* of any event, including the inauguration of persons, ceremonies and places (Linderski 1986: 2190-225). The augur wore a specific costume, the *toga praetexta*, with his head covered during the actual sacrifice, and he carried the *lituus*, the curved staff of the augur (*ibid.* f/n 411). Thus his distinctive clothing set him apart from others, acting as a visible testimony to his powerful position. This authority was reinforced by his access to specific knowledge: the augural laws and the books of pronouncements (*ibid.* 2241-56). These books traditionally included the inauguration rites, ceremonial procedure and the rules for taking the auspices from the birds and the sky. Whether they would have existed in the same form in Italica as in Rome is unclear, but the augur's responsibility for pronouncing on the validity and the meaning of signs from the gods and for officiating at ceremonies would have demonstrated his access to such knowledge in the presence of an audience without the same authority.

We also know that Maurianus served as both aedile and duovir. As such he had the authority to carry out sacrifices on behalf of the community, a privilege limited to those

possessing *auctoritas* such as the *paterfamilias*, the magistrates and the priests (Hornblower and Spawforth 1996: 1345-6). The sacrifice as a ceremony became a way of establishing that authority and of denoting gender, as with a few exceptions women were banned from sacrificing (Schied 1992: 378-80, 406). The altar in the Traianeum lies at a focal point within the precinct, directly aligned with the front entrance and the temple itself (León 1988: 44). Its prominence supports the idea that sacrifice would have formed an important part of the ritual activity within the temple. By virtue of his authority as a magistrate, a man such as Maurianus would have carried out such ceremonies in the Traianeum itself. As presiding magistrate, his duties involved pouring wine over the victim's brow, sprinkling its back with salted flour and passing the sacrificial knife over its spine to symbolise the transfer of the offering from human to divine possession (Hornblower and Spawforth 1996: 1345). After the killing and the opening of the corpse, he then inspected the entrails to decide whether the victim was acceptable to the gods. Through his central role in the performance of these rites, Maurianus was both demonstrating and reaffirming his identity as a man, as an adult, and as a person of high status.

However, we should not merely make the equation of temple equals elite, adult, male, as the picture can be complicated in two ways. The first is the ritual of the sacrificial banquet. After the entrails were offered to the gods, the rest of the meat was prepared for human consumption. The procedures for this are poorly understood, but participation in the banquet could provide the means for differentiating between different social groups, such as members of a *collegium*, citizens and non-citizens, men and women (Hornblower and Spawforth 1996: 1345). Furthermore, the sacrificial beasts were provided by a donor who would use the occasion to mark their status in the community, possibly commemorating the event with an inscription. The epigraphic record indicates that in Spain, this was not confined to elite men, but was one way open to other groups such as women or freed slaves to express their own position within the community. The second aspect is indicated by the discovery of another inscription in the Traianeum, set up by Vibia Modesta (León 1988: 110-3). It celebrates her donation of a statue and a crown and has been dated to the late 3rd century AD. In the inscription, she describes herself as *bis flaminica*, that is flaminate priestess for the second time. Here we see one of the few ways a woman of status might acquire and demonstrate political authority. The priesthood was the only public office a woman might hold, but Delgado Delgado's work on the religious offices of Baetica indicates that here it was fully exploited by certain women as a way of establishing their own elite identity. The criteria for eligibility are unknown: at Rome the qualification for flaminica was being married to a flamen and the status of the woman was dependent upon that of her husband (Schied 1992: 384). However, it has been argued that the evidence for the imperial cult demonstrates that a woman could hold office in her own right (Mackie 1983: 63). Regardless of this debate, it is clear that the flaminate was usually held by women of high status. The duties of priestesses are also unclear given the Roman taboo concerning women butchering sacrificial meat. Nevertheless, we see here that some of the rituals associated with a temple - setting up inscriptions, acting with authority and acts of munificence towards the community - provided a means for an elite women to establish her status in a public setting which we might normally consider to be the preserve of the male.

A second building where we can clearly trace group interaction is the amphitheatre. Placed just outside the city walls, it exploited a natural valley, closing it to the east and west with monumental facades. These facades consisted of a series of rooms and galleries which in turn provided different access routes to the three tiers of seating (Corzo Sánchez 1994). The layout of the entrance and these galleries clearly differentiates the various groups of people using the building. Those who sat in the front rows had easier access via the two gates to the side of the

main entrance, with the use of the major and minor side-rooms; the perimeter gallery accessing the first rows was wider, with proportionately more access stairways. Those sitting further up did not have the same access to these rooms, and they were largely segregated in the passageways and stairways. The service personnel and all those involved in the business of presenting the displays had a completely separate set of entrances and access passageways to the service areas. Those sitting in the two tribunals had exclusive use of the vestibules below, with vaulted niches provided presumably for depositing clothes. These rooms preserve clear traces of stuccoing and painting, and two staircases led from each to the tribunals, giving them an uncrowded passage to their seats. Rawson's work on the lex Julia theatralis demonstrates that the seating in theatres and amphitheatres was divided according to the strict divisions within Roman society (Rawson 1987). Thus women were segregated from men with their own section of the seating near the back. Similarly, the slaves were separated from the free, and boys from adult men. Further forward, the equestrian order had its own reserved area, traditionally 14 rows, and the most privileged sat in the front rows. In this way, the different social groups were publicly marked out by their seating and their means of access to those seats.

It is clear that as a man of high status within the community, as magistrate and as augur, Maurianus would have had a different experience of attending the games to other members of the population. As augur, one of his privileges was that of watching such spectacles from the prestigious seats, allowing him access to the entrance rooms and as well as giving him a seat in the fist tier, which he may have reserved by inscribing his name (for inscriptions reserving seats from the amphitheatre at Italica, see CIL II 5102-16). Furthermore, we also know that Maurianus served as duovir and aedile. The Lex Coloniae Genetivae stipulates that both magistracies were responsible for producing shows or dramatic spectacles, and that the aediles in particular should produce one day of gladiatorial combats or games in the circus (Crawford 1996: chapters LXX, LXXI). It is likely that the colonial charter for Italica would have included similar duties, and so in the course of his career Maurianus would have produced a set of games in the amphitheatre. During this event, his powerful position may have been marked by a central role in the *pompa*, the ceremonial procession proceeding such spectacles, accompanied by lictors and *fasces* as symbols of his office (Wiedemann 1992: 93-4. figure 14). He would have been able to use the elaborately decorated, private vestibule, and to watch from the comfort of the tribunal. In this way, a member of the elite such as Maurianus routinely reaffirmed his identity in the presence of the other members of the community.

One final area of the amphitheatre which appears to have been used by those of high status was one of the large side rooms adjoining the entrance. Here a number of votive stones have been found, the so-called *plantae pedum* (Canto 1984). These show one or two pairs of feet, with a dedication to Dea Caelestis and the name of the dedicator. The names show that most of the dedicators were persons of standing - free men with *tria nomina*, including a *sacerdos coloniae* and a possible *patronus*. Thus this area seems to have been used predominantly by those of rank, presumably incorporating some form of rituals that we can only guess at, although Canto has suggested that it might be connected with their duties as magistrates. As in the Traianeum, there is one inscription by a woman, demonstrating again that religious practices might provide a means for women to express elite identity.

In this paper I have demonstrated how the architectural layout of two buildings and the public ceremonies which took place in them provided a way for certain members of one community to routinely recreate their own social identities through routinized encounters of co-presence. Differential experiences of these encounters provided the means for distinguishing social groupings by age, status and gender. We should not treat these identities as static, but as

continual negotiations. The material culture of our archaeological record provides the setting and the props for the encounters of group interaction. Integral to these identities are the ideas of hierarchy and unequal access to power. Within these groups some were considered ideologically superior to others: men superior to women, adults to children, and the rich to the poor. Furthermore, the activities which distinguished between these groups also symbolised and perpetuated these hierarchies. Whilst I have concentrated on how the more powerful identities were formed, it must be remembered that this involved the participation and the acquiescence of the rest of the community, who were similarly establishing their own position within that society. However, we should not look for strict dichotomies, as one element of any identity might contradict the norms expected from another, thus blurring the picture. It is the combination of these multiple elements which led to the discrepant experiences within any single society.

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