

Urban Transformations in the Late Antique West

Materials, Agents, and Models

A. Carneiro; N. Christie; P. Diarte-Blasco
(eds.)

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Breve nota curricular sobre os coordenadores do volume

André Carneiro is an assistant professor at the History Department of the University of Évora and an integrated researcher at CHAIA - Centre for Art History and Artistic Research of the University of Évora. He has worked on the themes of rural settlement and road network in Roman times in Alentejo and on the phenomena of transition to Late Antiquity.

Neil Christie is Professor of Medieval Archaeology at the University of Leicester in England. He is closely engaged with the Society for Medieval Archaeology (SMA) and is reviews editor for two UK-based journal. His research focus is on towns and rural development from late Roman to medieval times, especially in Italy, but within Britain also.

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URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE LATE ANTIQUE WEST: MATERIALS, AGENTS, AND MODELS

COORDENADORES EDITORS

A. Carneiro; N. Christie; P. Diarte-Blasco

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ABSTRACT

This volume is the fruit of a highly productive international research gathering of academic and professional (field- and museum) colleagues to discuss new results and approaches, recent finds and alternative theoretical assessments of the period of transition and transformation of classical towns in Late Antiquity. Experts from an array of modern countries attended and presented to help compare and contrast critically archaeologies of diverse regions and to debate the qualities of the archaeology and the current modes of study. While a number of papers inevitably focused on evidence available for both Spain and Portugal, contributions extended the picture to other territories in the Late Roman West and Mediterranean. The emphasis was very much on the images presented by archaeology (rescue and research works, recent and past), but textual data were also brought into play by various contributors.

KEYWORDS

Late Antiquity; Urban Archaeology; Agents; urban transformations.

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PREFACE

This volume is the fruit of a highly enjoyable and productive international research gathering held at the University of Évora, Portugal, from 22 to 23 June 2017 on the theme of *'Urban Transformations in the Late Antique West: From Materials to Models'* and numerous meetings and discussions that the editors have had with the authors who present their papers in this volume. This was a collaborative initiative between the Universidade de Évora (Portugal), the University of Leicester (UK) and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie MED-FARWEST Project (hosted at Leicester, but with partnerships in Rome and Madrid), designed to bring together academic and professional (field- and museum) colleagues to discuss new results and approaches, recent finds and alternative theoretical assessments of the period of transition and transformation of classical towns in Late Antiquity. Experts from an array of modern countries attended and presented to help compare and contrast critically archaeologies of diverse regions and to debate the qualities of the archaeology and the current modes of study. While a number of papers inevitably focussed on evidence available for both Spain and Portugal, we were delighted to have a spread of contributions that extended the picture to other territories in the Late Roman West and Mediterranean. The emphasis was very much on the images presented by archaeology (rescue and research works, recent and past), but textual data were also brought into play by various contributors. This volume publishes a majority of the papers presented and has offered scope for many of the talks to be extended in detail to explore facets of the designated research theme.

Évora University and the city of Évora were ideal venues for the event: the stunning architectural setting of the University is matched by the rich and relevant archaeological heritage of the city itself, showing in its very heart a transformation of a Roman monument to a late antique complex. Delegates much appreciated the city tour we undertook, and the reception held in the city hall. We thank warmly the city authorities and especially the University for hosting and supporting our event and this publication.

In particular, we gratefully acknowledge the financial contributions of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie MED-FARWEST Project (No 658045), funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, and of the Project CHAIA/UÉ (Ref. UID/EAT/00112/2013), financed through National Funds through the FCT/Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia; CHAIA funds enabled the translation of a number of Spanish and Portuguese papers.

In addition to the kind assistance of various student helpers during the research meetings and other investigation initiatives, we also must thank all contributors to this volume for their work on submitting papers, responding to editorial and peer reviewer comments (our thanks to those very helpful

reviewers too!), submitting revised texts and then being patient in the final, and slightly delayed process of passing all papers material to press. And a final word of acknowledgment goes to the Coimbra University Press for their patience and support.

Andre Carneiro, Neil Christie, Pilar Diarte-Blasco (May 2019)



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E INVESTIGAÇÃO ARTÍSTICA

INTRODUCTION

EXPLORING LATE ANTIQUE URBAN CHANGES FROM EPIRUS TO HISPANIA: MONUMENTS, AGENTS, METHODS AND MODELS

ANDRE CARNEIRO, NEIL CHRISTIE & PILAR DIARTE-BLASCO

CONTEXT

Few informed scholars would argue nowadays that we know little about towns and their forms and fortunes in the centuries of transition that mark the period of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (c. AD 300–650). While it is the case that some classical-oriented (historical and archaeological) studies may still dismiss the later Roman centuries as ones of ‘decline’ and ‘decay’, this ignores the crucial fact that these continued to be very much ‘Roman’ centres. For the most part, the cities and towns in question remained active as points of settlement, trade, law, politics and religion; where towns failed – and many instances are known – this was because of the failure of these focal roles at some stage in their history.

Late antique towns and questions of transformation of society are not new themes of study, and plenty of volumes, papers, conferences and workshops attest to a vibrant field which is active across many parts of the former Roman world. These works and events duly show that studying and understanding the changes in fabric, focus and content of urbanism in the post-classical period has generated debate, a debate which has been informed more and more by archaeology, both rescue- and research-based, and by developments in that archaeology through enhanced knowledge of ceramic types, through scientific endeavours such as stable isotope study or through environmental archaeological scrutiny of, for example, ‘dark earth’ deposits and cess.

But there remains a sense that some conferences simply add some new data to the pot, such as by drawing on recent excavations, refining sequences or basic trends of change, offering different readings of deposits or structures, noting new burial finds, and so on. Such new data are of course crucial in expanding our frame of understanding and better seeing trends, convergences and also differences, but extra effort should now also go into asking more or better defined questions of those data and sequences, in particular regarding the people involved in and impacted by the changes; after all, these were for the most part ‘living’ places.

In this context, the Evora gathering was one of a number of research activities developed under the framework ‘*Urban Transformations in the Late Antique West*’

undertaken between 2016 and 2018, which hoped to encourage participants to ask more about their towns or study zones not just in terms of the core data but also in terms of their approaches and their evidence types; to think about the monuments and the changes in their human dimension; to think in terms of agency – the agents who forced, encouraged, manufactured, contributed to or became part of the urban transformations; to see transformations as potentially both positive and negative – positive for continued engagement (albeit in diverse ways, including spoliation) by people in a place, but negative in terms of how sites and structures are ‘read’ or interpreted; and to consider ongoing problems in archaeological – and historical – legibility of late antique (and early medieval) urbanism.

The investigative focus of the Evora research meeting was deliberately on the western regions of the late Roman Empire, since change and transformation began earlier here and more archaeological attention has been given to the theme and materials, enabling elevated discussion. While, inevitably, a good proportion of the researchers came from Spain and Portugal and offered discussion centred on sites in the Hispanic Peninsula, their geographical coverage and the range of core themes – from planning to institutions, from Church and martyrs to economic and rural connections – generated important dialogue, especially in comparison with the other contributions which extended from France to Albania.

In brief, the volume is structured broadly into four parts. In the first, *‘Understanding Urban Transformations in Late Antiquity: From Epirus to Gallia’*, four papers explore not individual sites but rather trends and approaches in the archaeology – and in its form and publication also (**Gelichi**) – in three zones. In the absence of texts, **Bowden**’s exploration of late antique Epirus and primarily the city of Butrint emphasizes how we can extract images of change in both fabric and society from the archaeology of site and territory, and he likewise stresses how interpretations have evolved as research has expanded. For Italy, **Gelichi** considers the evolution of archaeological models of urban change for the northern and central regions, while **Volpe and Goffredo** question the ways we should now be considering southern Italian urban sequences. For Gaul, **Loseby** debates the internal make-up of late and post-Roman towns, notably their old civic core zones or *fora*, to show how far these towns remained (or became) busy places, how far they comprised scattered communities within walls – or outside these – and how they were controlled; here he looks at the correlation between textual and archaeological evidence.

The second section features five papers focused on specific urban/city case studies from Hispania and combined to examine *‘Socio-Religious and Material Urban Transformations’* in the peninsula; importantly, each contribution draws on recent, often illuminating archaeology from the diverse townscapes and their suburbs. We can compare, for example, the cases of *Tarraco* (**Remolá Vallverdú, Lasheras González and Pérez Martínez**) with *Carthago Nova* (**Ramallo and**

Quevedo), both of which reveal how urban decay (reduced economic roles, diminished habitations, public spaces compromised) comes into play already in the second half of the 2nd century, yet each sees renewal and a new role, each with differing physical reflections, in the later Empire, with *Carthago Nova* politically re-stimulated from the Tetrarchic period, while *Tarraco* plays a prominent imperial military role in the 5th century. Two contributions centre on the impact and presence of the Church in its different guises – from churches, shrines and burials, to martyr tombs and bishops (active and saintly-deceased). **Sánchez Velasco, Ordóñez Agulla and García-Dils de la Vega** explore the prominent site of *Hispalis*, while **Alba and Sastre de Diego** look to Christian-led reconfigurations at Merida. In each case a longer chronology is required, with the Church presence commencing from the 4th century, but with notable urban evolutions running through the Visigothic period. How far did civic space become remodelled – if that is a suited term – with Church impositions? Did bishops actively reconfigure urban space and how far was this an aggressive act against the ‘past’ (pagan or otherwise)? By contrast, **Carneiro** opens the debate to a wider urban panorama in a survey of late antique *Lusitania*, thereby showing a weak urban system, with towns much less ‘central’ than is often assumed; importantly, he asks also how we should be perceiving and understanding these places if they do not conform to expected urban models.

This leads neatly onto the third section, *‘Perceptions of Change in Late Antique Hispania: Exploring the Written Sources’* which offers three papers which address the ways that we can exploit the surviving textual – narrative (chronicles, saints’ lives) and epigraphic – evidence to understand change in the cities and more widely in the struggling Roman and then post-Roman peninsula. In that context, **Fernandez’s** paper provides a detailed treatment of civic and institutional change in the wake of Roman loss and Visigothic imposition – again, what continuities exist and why and in what ways did these endure and evolve? **Barata Dias** draws on contemporary chroniclers in particular to reveal the perceived and real damages and changes wrought by conflict (political, religious and military) and by new barbarian arrivals across the 5th century. Such images are important backdrops to archaeological studies of cities, since we must remember that internal changes were often mirrors to wider problems and upheavals and we must look especially to see continuities and discontinuities. **Teixeira and Carneiro** tackle expressions of power in the city territories of *Lusitania*, with special reference to the environs of Merida; here the authors debate how we should view the loss of villae, the changing nature of ownership and expressions of landholding, and how the Church, in diverse forms, inserts itself into the rural sphere.

This consideration of landscape usage and display feeds neatly into the final section, *‘People in the Transformed Late Antique Cities: Agency in Archaeology’*. This compact section is concerned very much with the inhabitants of (and some of the visitors to) the shrunk, reconfigured and far less classical cities, and

elevates the theoretical angle to our archaeology of monumental, material and social change, by seeking out the people engaged – actively as well as passively – in these transformations. Thus, **Diarte-Blasco** asks us to consider the potential agents of change, both ‘principal’ and ‘secondary’ in the towns of late antique Hispania by interrogating the types of loss and reuse that affect public spaces, from workshops to burials to spoliation. Meanwhile, **Christie**, drawing on examples first from the distant province of *Britannia* and then from Italy, is anxious to ask how much we really think out who were in these cities beyond the headline-grabbing bishops and ‘élites’; are we neglecting to think about the full range of people, from old people to children, who were active users of these towns and also of their ruins?

CORE ISSUES AND DIRECTIONS

While the above provides an outline of the volume’s scope and contents, below we would like to highlight some of the aspects that stand out from the various papers, and that serve to point to key areas of debate as well as areas requiring further evidence and discussion:

Monuments

When discussing towns and cities in Late Antiquity, there is often a sharp divide between historians and archaeologists: the former centre heavily on the State, whether its politicians or its Church, and question the vibrancy of, the challenges for and the conflicts between these, and look to question the inputs of individuals as documented by chroniclers, councils, laws or inscriptions. By contrast, the archaeological focus has long been on the public face of the cities, not in terms of the actual public themselves, but the monuments and spaces erected by the elite and the State for the civic population: the forum space, the theatres, the baths, the circus, etc. Here the archaeological data for transformation to and in the urban fabric are best (or are generally) pursued in charting the changes wrought on the monuments that were emblems of the ‘classical city’ and of ‘classical urban society’. Thus, as with many papers in this volume, archaeologists look to when the classical fabric struggles, which big structures fade first, when spoliation of these occurs, and what structures invade these former public spaces.

Often there is a sharp distinction drawn between this decaying classical fabric and the emergent Christian structures and spaces. Oddly, we still observe a tendency in some publications to see the former as indicating urban decay generally, and yet the effort to build churches speaks of ongoing people, resources, community – all reflections of *active* urbanism. Thus we need to better ‘read’ these intra-site archaeologies and their related socio-economic activities, and, at the same time, to accept a modified image of how urbanism looked – or came to look – in the late antique centuries. Indeed, this period is one which often

sees the active Christian urban space extending *beyond* the walls of the cities – and sometimes with a strong initial base here – to embrace various cemeteries through creation of funerary churches, martyrial shrines and also monasteries (these also cropping up within former *domus* inside cities). In effect, late Roman towns/cities became reconfigured in different ways, which did not conform to a uniform style (such as we consider when thinking of a Roman ‘colony’ foundation in the Western provinces in the late Republic and early Empire). There could, on occasion, therefore, be a patchwork of activity/activities in these sites – areas of weak activity and strong ones, areas becoming focused on churches and others given over to spoliation or for workshop usage – all giving rise to an altered articulation of movement. Archaeologists need to be open to recognizing and appreciating this ‘patchwork’ expression of altered urban life in Late Antiquity (and, in some case, even earlier), with monuments no longer core to this.

Agents

There is an interesting and, perhaps, challenging issue when we compare classical and post-classical towns. For the former, most scholars would admit that we look primarily to the monuments, infrastructure and large private houses and so ‘populate’ the cities with buildings, big to small, and join these up with roads, aqueducts and the urban boundaries. Arguably, while work is done on households and excavations busy themselves with recording and cataloguing ceramics and other material culture, these finds tend to be employed to inform us about general urban sequences and monumental phases.

In contrast, when we turn to towns from the 4th century onward, besides the close study of the churches (and sometimes burials), far more emphasis and questioning go into the finds, and what they show of ongoing trade, contacts, markets and ‘Romanitas’. Archaeological reports on late antique phases are often filled with commentaries on numbers of finds, their qualities, on transitions to more local wares, on the process of dumping waste locally, in pits, in disused houses or rooms, and on finds related to workshops and dumps. In sum, the late antique cities emerge as much more about the day-to-day and the material culture of people than the cities of the early Empire. This different, late antique focus should be embraced: the material culture and the close study of this in its various quantities and qualities mean that we have a significant potential to see people – in other words, to better visualize the lifeways and works of the actual actors and agents in these centres.

Methods

Despite this obvious change in focus, many archaeologists/scholars rather overlook the potential of these material expressions and continue to talk more of the churches and the loss/robbing/adaptation of the former urban monumentality. A key need, therefore, is to give the finds specialists more voice

in projects and site publications, and to shift away from listing and typologies to ask more questions of what the finds tell (or do not tell) us of the ways people lived and operated, what they consumed and discarded, the choices they made or were imposed on them in terms of materials. Such closer study and interrogation are the way forward to *understanding* these cities and towns as they evolve and to *recognising* the types of society that continued to occupy these places and to live out their lives.

While there are always issues for post-classical and pre-medieval contexts of finds residuality, more fragmentary traces of houses and building and related occupation layers/stratigraphy, these centuries do see a more 'intimate' urban living in the sense of people disposing of their waste close by, exploiting local resources in terms of stones/bricks for reuse in their houses, having work and living spaces in the same house, drawing on water from nearby wells, etc. Accordingly, a different type of 'household archaeology' should be applied to trace these occupants. It could indeed be argued that for a majority of late antique towns and cities we are not yet able to visualize rich/middle/poor zones, to map house types, to plot market spaces and to thus model the workings of these places. We currently remain too focused on where the churches were and how these might have changed/impacted on the urban space, rather than seeing all the *other* urban components in action.

Models

As argued above, there are ways that we might turn in modelling urbanism and the transformations to the urban fabric and role in the late antique period. We have highlighted the need to look more to the actual materials to extract better stories – human stories – of these cities (many of which were quite clearly no longer 'cities' but residues of cities); these materials will enable us to model *agency*, i.e. the activities and impacts of people, more clearly. But as we do this we need to respond to other facets or characteristics of the actors: for example, firstly, we might ask about the *attachment* or *belonging* of particular people to a place and whether this can be traced in the archaeological material; did families long remain attached to a city as somewhere where their ancestors always lived? Was this belonging perhaps heightened with the arrival of the Church as a new focus of worship and protection? By contrast, did the loss of temples and cults mean a detachment of some people from the urban scene?

Second, there is the question of *resilience*: is this question of 'attachment' to a place a key factor in how well certain places endure whereas others fade? It is easy to look to issues of political, economic or military change or upheaval to explain why some centres lose strength and become marginalised, whereas others endure through, for example, new strategic roles being given; but in each scenario there is an underlying population to offer resilience, since even in the

weakened centres, there is a level of continuity indicative of some of the 'old' population remaining tied to that place.

A third issue is to model late antique urban change in terms of *modified populations*: as noted above, a town's role could alter in the late Roman period through changed political, economic, military or even religious contexts. In many of these circumstances it is likely that we should see new actors/agents enter the urban scene: soldiers – whether standing garrisons or billeted troops; administrators and entourages; clerical and even monastic groups, perhaps pilgrims; groups of artisans attracted to these new groupings of authority; and so on. Archaeology should be asking how far we can trace such incomers: how far, for instance, does the spoliation of buildings and the creation of workshops signify a few economic output tied to Church and State works? Did these mark permanent or occasional new residents? Where soldiers are recorded, how can we find their barracks and stations? Can we see physical imprints of new groups in city plans? We can sometimes find and explore episcopal complexes, but we tend to think just of church and palace, and think much less about ancillary buildings, habitations for staff and other workers, stores, and the like. Were these accommodated close by and can the archaeological finds attest reconfigurations of space and people?

In summary, many questions remain unanswered – and many questions also need to be asked – and many avenues need to be explored before a more rounded knowledge of towns and urbanism in Late Antiquity (as well as in the Early Middle Ages) can be reached. The papers in this volume are another layer of research and questioning of both the archaeology and history for the period but we are sure that much more remains to be uncovered and interrogated; those new stories will, no doubt, be both enriching and exciting.

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**UNDERSTANDING URBAN
TRANSFORMATIONS IN LATE ANTIQUITY:
FROM EPIRUS TO GALLIA**

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APPROACHES TO LATE ANTIQUE URBAN TRANSFORMATION: LOOKING BEYOND THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF PUBLIC SPACE

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ABSTRACT: The sub-discipline of late antique archaeology developed as a critique of earlier research which viewed the late Roman Empire in negative terms. In relation to the towns of Late Antiquity, archaeologists (including the author) have often focused on reassessing interpretations of earlier excavations that were often carried out on a scale that is now seldom possible. Because these early excavations focused on the monumental and on public and political space, challenges to the “decline” model of late Roman urbanism derived from such excavations have also focused on public space. This paper argues that by challenging “decline” late antique archaeologists remain trapped within the same intellectual paradigm. With reference to recent excavations at the Triconch Palace in Butrint, the author argues that archaeologists must explicitly reject these approaches and adopt questions and methodologies that seek to recover the experiences of people rather than continuing to further refine our understanding of urban space.

KEYWORDS: Butrint, Triconch Palace, late antique urbanism, public space, health, mortality, belief.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper will look at archaeological approaches to the transformation of late Roman urban centres with reference to the town of Butrint in southern Albania. I will examine how we approach towns in terms of the debate on late antique urbanism that has developed over the last 30 years and existing models of late antique urban transformation. I will highlight what I consider to be some problems with our existing approaches and suggest some reasons as to why they have developed in the ways that they have. Butrint was the site where I first became interested in questions of urban change, and the town and the surrounding region of Epirus have formed the background to my work on some of these issues. After 20 years I have come to the conclusion that we need to change the questions that we are asking, or at least question our motivations for asking them. I will focus particularly on the excavations of the so-called Triconch Palace because it is the post-excavation work on this project that has crystallised my thinking on some of these issues.¹

¹ I am very grateful to Neil Christie, Pilar Diarte-Blasco and Andre Carneiro for the opportunity to present an earlier version of these ideas in the wonderful surroundings of Evora.

2. MODELS OF LATE ANTIQUE URBAN TRANSFORMATION AND THEIR PROBLEMS

As is widely recognised, late antique archaeology, indeed late antique studies as a sub-discipline, developed as a reaction against the overtly negative perceptions of the late empire that have been prevalent from Gibbon onward. However, following the publication of Brown's *World of Late Antiquity* (1971), two generations of scholars have devoted considerable energy to demonstrating that the Roman Empire did not decline and fall in the manner that their predecessors suggested, but did something altogether more nuanced and interesting. During the 1980s and 1990s, decline and fall was steadily replaced by “transformation” and “transition”, exemplified in particular through the European Science Foundation's *Transformation of the Roman World* project which charted the roots of medieval Europe in the changes that occurred in the late Empire. Although the new millennium saw a reaction by a number of scholars (e.g. Liebeschuetz, 2001; Ward-Perkins, 2005) who argued that the end of the Roman Empire had considerable negative effects for those who lived through it, the idea of “transformation” has become canonical (reflected indeed in the title of this volume and the conference that inspired it).

The study of Late Antiquity thus developed as a critique of earlier theoretical and practical approaches to the later Roman period. The late empire of Gibbon, with its corrupt bureaucrats, policies of accommodation of barbarians and short-lived soldier emperors acted as an essential Other, against which this new and youthful branch of Roman studies could align itself. The study of late antiquity also formed a means by which a new generation of scholars could establish a disciplinary identity for themselves. Ultimately, however, by positioning itself in opposition to decline and fall, late antique archaeology has arguably been constrained by aspects of this earlier framework. This is particularly evident in the study of towns, which have formed a key arena for this rethinking of Late Antiquity by scholars influenced by an academic tradition that originated in northwest Europe, an area that to all intents and purposes did not have towns before the Romans and which saw a dramatic contraction or total eclipse of classical urban life at the end of the Roman period. The Graeco-Roman Mediterranean, meanwhile, which had a much longer history of urbanism than northwest Europe, also saw its towns decline to vanishing point by the 7th century. Consequently towns have formed an ideal medium through which to debate and investigate the end of the Roman Empire; see Grig (2013) for a recent overview of this debate.

A cornerstone of this discussion has been the criticism levelled at the urban excavators of earlier times, who focused on the monumental town centres of the late Republican and early Imperial periods to the detriment of the more ephemeral remains relating to later periods (Lavan, 2015; Ward-Perkins, 1996, pp. 8-9).

The focus on public architecture reflected an interest in a historical narrative derived from textual sources that emphasised political and institutional history. In addition the art-historical methodologies of Classical archaeology sought material that could be classified and studied within this historical framework without altering its central tenets (Allison, 2001). This resulted in a focus on a narrow canon dominated by monumental architecture, statuary, epigraphy, mosaics and wall painting. For the late Roman period (when it was considered at all), the main components of this canon were churches, which were constructed in a way that could withstand the excavation techniques employed and which often contained spectacular mosaics that could comfortably be accommodated within the art-historical methodologies of Classical archaeology.

Although the excavation methods employed in earlier (and indeed current) excavations have been roundly criticised (e.g. Lavan, 2015), late antique archaeologists have done relatively little to challenge their underlying research focus. Instead, broadly speaking, the same excavated material has been employed to argue for a different interpretation of the late Roman town (noted by Ward-Perkins, 1997; see also Lavan, 2009, p. 805). When some of the less imposing structures of Late Antiquity, such as earth bonded walls between porticos, or structures made of *spolia*, were encountered and recorded in the past, they were often viewed by their excavators in pejorative terms as having “encroached” upon or invaded the public areas of the town in ways that were detrimental to the monumental aspect of the Roman town. Late antique archaeologists, however, argued that such features were not objectively worse than the monumental *fora* and theatres that preceded them but simply represented a use of urban space that was more appropriate to the aspirations and mores of the population (e.g. La Rocca, 1991). If people in the 5th century had no particular use for *fora*, who were we to criticise (Carver, 1993, pp. 46-50)?

Over the last 20 years this work of reinterpretation has led to a new orthodoxy among those of us who study late antique towns (summarised in Grig, 2013 and Saradi, 2006). This model sees urban change as reflecting the decline of the social system that shaped the monumental townscape of the late Republic and early Empire, in which a limited number of wealthy residents competed for prestige and political influence through the medium of augmenting and maintaining the monumental townscape. They recorded their contributions in epigraphic form and it is this epigraphic material that provides much of our data on the political structure of the Roman town. According to our dominant model (and there is little reason to doubt it), this system went into decline in the central Mediterranean and the West around AD 250 (Liebeschuetz, 2001), although the timing and extent of the change were subject to considerable localised variation.

The roots of this transformation are usually suggested to be the decrease in opportunities for influence and personal enrichment afforded by participation in local civic life. Power and status were increasingly expressed within the private

domestic sphere (expressed through town houses of stupendous scale) and personal patronage networks and connections to the imperial power became ever more important. The declining interest in participation in local civic life impacted upon the monumental fabric of the town (Lavan, 2003; Liebeschuetz, 2001, pp. 121-136; Osland, 2016, p. 74). The rich ceased to maintain and enhance the public areas of the cities and parts of these public buildings were increasingly 'borrowed' to be used in other contexts. Former monumental porticoes were taken over by artisans who used them for small scale industry, blocking the colonnades off with rough walls made of timber, rubble and *spolia* (Saradi, 2006, pp. 1186-1196; Zanini, 2006, pp. 398-399), or for the expansion of domestic buildings (Osland, 2016, pp. 72-73). In some grand town houses, former reception rooms were subdivided with rubble walls or wooden partitions (Uytteroeven, 2007, pp. 45-46 with references). At a slightly later date the monumental aspect of the town was taken over by churches, largely erected by the surviving elements of the wealthy aristocracy. Finally, many towns disappeared or shrank to smaller, usually fortified, nuclei (Haldon, 1999; Christie & Herold, 2016).

There is nothing fundamentally wrong with this model, apart from the fact that it works better for the central and western Mediterranean than it does for the East, but it has to be said that it is a limited way of looking at towns, reducing the study of urbanism to little more than the study of the different ways in which a very small number of people spent (or didn't spend) their money and consideration of their changing motivations for doing so. This was the essence of Martin Carver's *Arguments in Stone* (1993) in which he argued that towns (and their disappearance) must be viewed primarily as expressions of elite values and political and religious power. The topic is not without interest, and certainly it is one which is much easier to approach in the current state of archaeological evidence. It is a model that favours the more robust elements of the late antique townscape that the clearance archaeologists of previous generations left in place and consequently our evidence base is much broader than it is for say changing diet in late antiquity. Ultimately, however, it is a model whose parameters are defined by the art historical interests of Classical archaeology on the one hand and by the interests of political historians on the other. Urban change is defined against a baseline of elite values (which are also the values reflected in contemporary textual descriptions of late antique towns). We have to ask whether the changing nature of monumentality in towns would have really been of consuming interest to the majority of people who lived in them, and whether this change would have had a noticeable effect on their daily lives.

In relation to this issue, in recent years I have carried out an (unscientific) experiment on my students at Nottingham during a class in which we discuss some of the core tenets of the model discussed above, such as the decline in civic participation on the part of urban grandees and the manifestation of this decline in the epigraphic record. Like any British industrial town, the landscape

of Nottingham was shaped by civic building and public benefactions, particularly in the 19th and early 20th centuries and so I ask the students to name some of the individuals responsible and note any buildings associated with them. After an embarrassed silence, someone usually manages to come up with the name of Brian Clough, the football manager who steered the normally unremarkable Nottingham Forest to consecutive European cups in 1979 and 1980. Clough is commemorated with a bronze statue in the market and with the renaming of a stretch of the A52 road as Brian Clough Way. I then ask them to name the individual who is commemorated in a huge lapidary inscription on the clock tower of the University's main building (in which the class is often held). In the last three years, only one student has managed to name Jesse Boot, the University of Nottingham's founding benefactor.

I would not suggest that my students are particularly unobservant or atypical in this regard. Indeed I wouldn't expect a different response from any other group of people. It does, however, suggest that some of the things that interest archaeologists who study late antique towns receive a level of attention that is entirely disproportionate to their level of importance in the lives of the people who lived in those towns. The emphasis on public buildings and urban space indicates that the questions that are being asked of towns still reflect far more the interests of earlier archaeologists interested in Gibbon's golden age than any new and emergent paradigm. In this sense late antique archaeology as a discipline has failed. By defining itself in opposition to a traditional "decline and fall" model, it has remained trapped within that model.

It could also be argued that there are other disciplinary reasons for this continued tendency to focus on public monumentality. Lavan (2015), in a commendably frank paper, noted the theoretical stasis endemic in many archaeological traditions in Europe and the Mediterranean caused by the rigid hierarchies present, whereby students risked loss of patronage and attendant opportunities for career advancement if they attempted to tread a path that differed to that of their professor. He also noted the ways in which such traditions actively militated against the adoption of more robust field techniques, bemoaning the often poor quality of excavations on the classical sites of the Mediterranean. Lavan's criticisms, however, focused on poor excavation that focused on uncovering more buildings rather than understanding those already excavated; he was not questioning the rationale of studying urban space *per se*. Similarly the use of large-scale remote sensing rather than excavation (see examples in Roskams, 2015 and Johnson & Millett, 2013), also encourages scholars to focus on questions that revolve around the structuring of urban space. Geophysical survey used in isolation remains a blunt instrument that in Roman urban contexts tends to favour the recovery of large masonry buildings. Given the low cost of such techniques against that of excavation (and the fact that they are non-destructive), it is not surprising that such techniques have proved popular but again it has

helped maintain the focus on space rather than on the people who occupied that space. My argument is that we should actively question why we continue to look at buildings to the exclusion of those who lived within them.

3. BUTRINT AND APPROACHES TO LATE ANTIQUE URBANISM

How can we change our frame of reference, should we wish to? I want to turn now to the Butrint project in Albania, which started in 1994 under the direction of Richard Hodges. I do not for a moment suggest that Butrint should be held up as an exemplar of good practice. In many respects the project reflects the mores of the model described above, and if we were going to start again I have no doubt that we would do some aspects of it differently. However, there are some points regarding the Butrint project that are worth making.

By the standards of British academic projects, the excavation was well-resourced and we were working within a disciplinary context that favoured large-scale excavation. Albanian archaeologists had previously worked within a tightly defined nationalist paradigm that emphasised the autochthonous development of Albanian society from the pre-Roman Illyrian population. This nationalist archaeology had been wedded rather awkwardly to an evolutionary view of history derived from Marx and Engels (Bowden, 2003, pp. 30-31; Bowden & Hodges, 2004). At the same time many of its key practitioners had been trained in the milieu of French Classical archaeology (France being one of the only European countries to maintain diplomatic ties with communist Albania), and thus favoured an approach that involved large-scale clearance excavation using workmen and the recovery of statues, epigraphy and monumental building. Indeed during the early years of the project our Albanian colleagues were baffled by the small scale of our endeavours, given the resources at our disposal. Why would one spend two weeks excavating a succession of ephemeral trampled surfaces in a single room with trowels, when you could recover an entire building plan in the same time using workmen? With colonial arrogance we assumed the superiority of our methods and results was self-evident, but in truth they were simply not appropriate to the research interests of our collaborators (Hodges, 2017, pp. 81-87). However, the Albanian archaeologists' enthusiasm for large-scale excavation gave us the freedom to adopt a strategy that could ultimately encompass substantial trenches. The combined area of the project's excavation trenches covers approximately 8,250 m², involving six separate areas together with a number of smaller trenches elsewhere in the town and its surrounding area (Fig. 1).

As we have noted elsewhere (Bowden & Hodges, 2012, p. 212), like many archaeologists we were interested in questions of understanding changing urban topography and initially adopted the use of targeted small excavations to answer specific questions, particularly relating to the nature of occupation in the Early



Fig. 1. Plan of the excavated monuments at Butrint (Butrint Foundation).

Middle Ages. This was not enormously successful. The amount of re-deposited material meant that the conclusions from small trenches were at best ambiguous and at worst wholly misleading. Furthermore the discovery of some of the most important deposits on the site, a late 8th-century Pompeii-like destruction deposit in one of the towers of the defences, was wholly fortuitous (Bowden & Hodges, 2012; Kamani, 2013).

In many ways the excavation results at Butrint reflected the prevailing tropes of late antique urbanism discussed above, charting the changing nature of the public spaces, the change in topography caused by construction of fortifications and the presence of Christian buildings as manifestations of high-status expenditure in the 6th century, followed by the dramatic diminishment of activity in the 7th century (Hodges *et al.*, 2004; Bowden & Hodges, 2012). As the post-excavation process has continued, however, some of the results have suggested new research directions and have caused me to question the dominant approaches to late antique townscapes.

One of the main areas of the excavations was that of the so-called Triconch Palace, a large late Roman *domus*, that was investigated between 1994 and 2003 (Bowden & Hodges, 2011). The excavations revealed a multi-phase building spread across two seemingly separate building plots along the frontage of the Vivari Channel, a waterway that ran from the Straits of Corfu to the large Butrint lake. The main *domus* had reached its greatest size around AD 420 before construction was abandoned and the site turned over to less high status living. A series of small, yet coherent dwellings, gave way to a sequence of small scale industrial activity, burials, quarrying, rubbish disposal and mussel fishing, before the site was seemingly abandoned in the 7th century. There were clearly significant changes in building style, with the appearance of two-storey structures and post-built construction. The construction of the city wall in the early 6th century clearly also had an impact on the nature of activity at the site, as did the issues of rising ground water caused by the gradual sinking of the Butrint peninsula and the rising sea level.

The activity at the Triconch Palace thus recalls many of the changes recognised at other late antique towns and indicated the ways that parts of Butrint were clearly becoming home to the types of activities that had previously occurred in more peripheral areas or zones considered to be outside the town or on its fringes. However, this interpretation remains focused on the question of the changing nature of urban space rather than the experiences of those who actually lived within it. Conversely, aspects of the post-excavation findings have allowed us to consider some different facets of urban life. While space does not permit a detailed analysis of these issues, I want to touch upon three areas, namely the material culture and diet of the site's occupants from c. 425-450, health and infant mortality in the 6th century, and the evidence for belief and superstition in both the Triconch Palace and its later phases.

3.1. SUB-DIVISION AND MATERIAL CULTURE

Around AD 420, the Triconch Palace was abandoned as a high status residence, apparently prior to the completion of its final phase of construction. During the period AD 425-500 there was small-scale but coherent occupation in the west wing and possibly the south wing of the Triconch Palace and in the north-east of the so-called Merchant's House area. (Bowden, 2011, pp. 304-306) (Fig. 2). Although this activity lacked the architectural grandeur of the *domus* and Triconch Palace, it is clear that this was not makeshift occupation or temporary "squatting". The west wing was still roofed with tiles and included a probable kitchen or working area with a large *pithos* in the corner and an oven or furnace (Bowden *et al.*, 2011, pp. 60-63) (Room 26). A further room (27) containing an extraordinary circular structure in the second half of the 6th century. Partition walls were inserted into other rooms but all the rooms in the west wing remained interconnected. The peristyle courtyard remained largely free of deposition during this period as did the apsidal reception room (24) suggesting that the latter may have retained this function in the new divided dwelling. Room 37 of the Merchant's House also seems to have formed the focus of a similar dwelling from c. AD 450, with two *pithoi* found in situ and evidence of a floor of reused fragments of marble veneers (Bowden, 2011, p. 304).

This picture recalls that encountered in numerous other late antique *domus*, for example the House of the Marbles in Mérida (Alba Calzado, 1997), and reflects a process often termed "sub-division" first highlighted by Simon Ellis (1988) and subsequently becoming commonplace in the discussion of late antique housing (Uytterhoeven, 2007, pp. 45-46). However, examination of the material from this phase suggests something more complex than changes in urban space. The character of the assemblage has much more in common with that associated with the earlier *domus* and Triconch Palace occupation than it does with the assemblage that is characteristic of the period after AD 500, suggesting a recognisably urban lifestyle of relative prosperity in terms of diet and material culture. The faunal assemblage prior to 450 reflects that of earlier periods and is "urban" in character with a strong presence of pig (an animal that has no value other than meat) and fewer caprines by comparison with contemporary sites excavated outside Butrint. There is evidence also of a greater variety of meat consumption with a higher proportion of birds and wild species present than there is during the later 5th and 6th centuries (Bowden *et al.*, forthcoming). The range of material culture in use at the site also presents some intriguing aspects. Personal effects made of bone and ivory, although small in number, are heavily weighted towards this earlier period and include quite high status items including the fragment of a very fine carved glass bowl, a possible ivory gaming piece, decorated with Coptic motifs and a splendid bone handle in the form of an arm with a hand holding a shell that was probably part of a woman's mirror or other toiletry item (Fig. 3) (Mitchell,

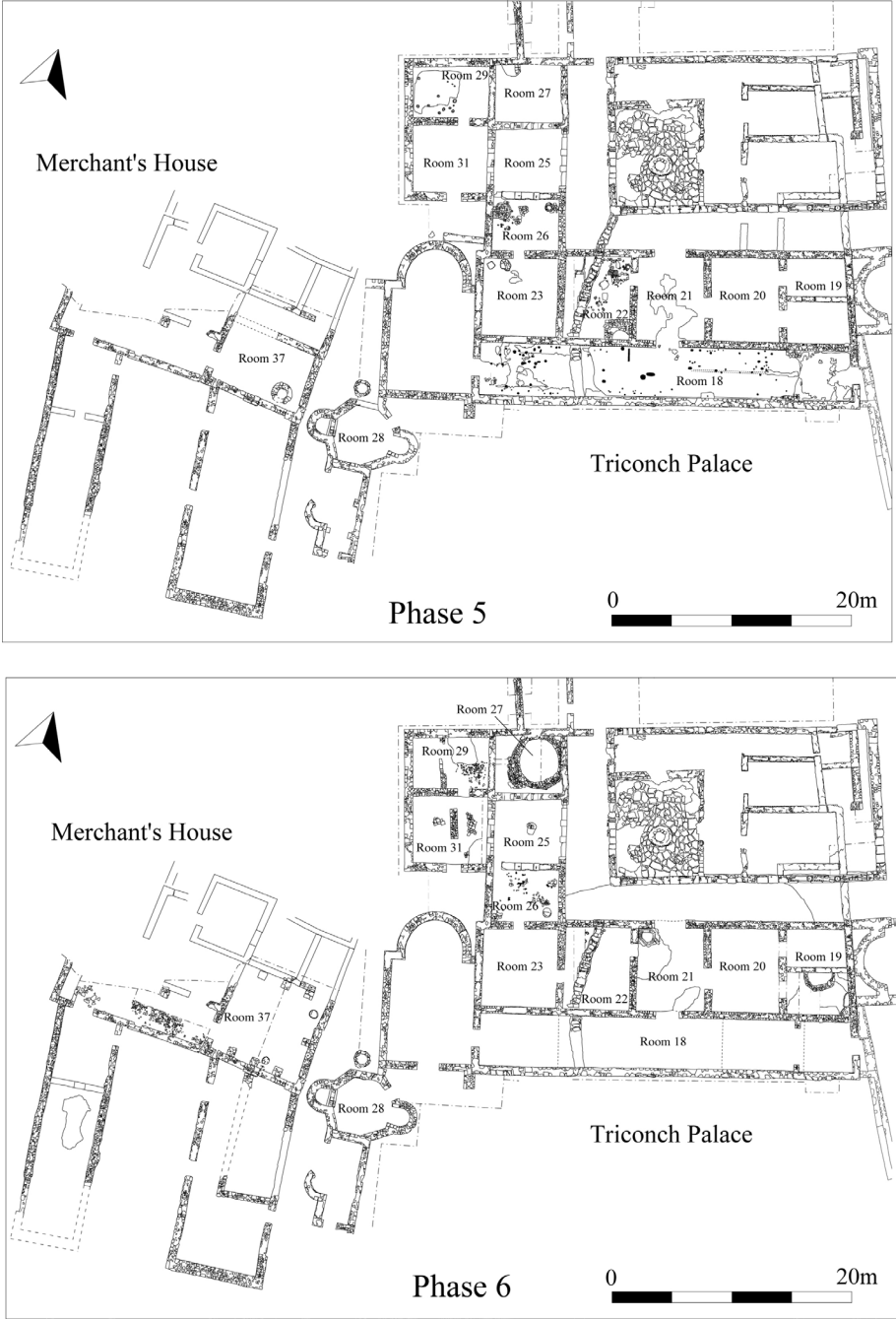


Fig. 2. The Triconch Palace showing areas of 5th-century dwellings (William Bowden).



Fig. 3. Bone handle, probably of toilet instrument or mirror from 5th-century post-*domus* dwellings (Butrint Foundation).

forthcoming). The occupants of this “sub-divided” phase also continued to use other glass vessels and have apparent access to imported wine and oil (Bowden forthcoming).

Although it would be going too far to term this as representing an urban “middle class”, it is clear that this the occupants of the Triconch area up to the

mid-5th century were not obviously impoverished or transient. They lived in coherent residences and apparently had access to a range of food stuffs and possessions that was broadly similar to those who lived in the earlier *domus* and Triconch Palace.

3.2. HEALTH AND MORTALITY AT THE TRICONCH PALACE

From c. AD 575 onwards, the most striking feature of the Triconch area was the number of child and infant burials that were present (Beatrice *et al.*, 2019; Bowden *et al.*, 2011, pp. 105-117; Bowden, 2011, pp. 312-314) (Fig. 4).

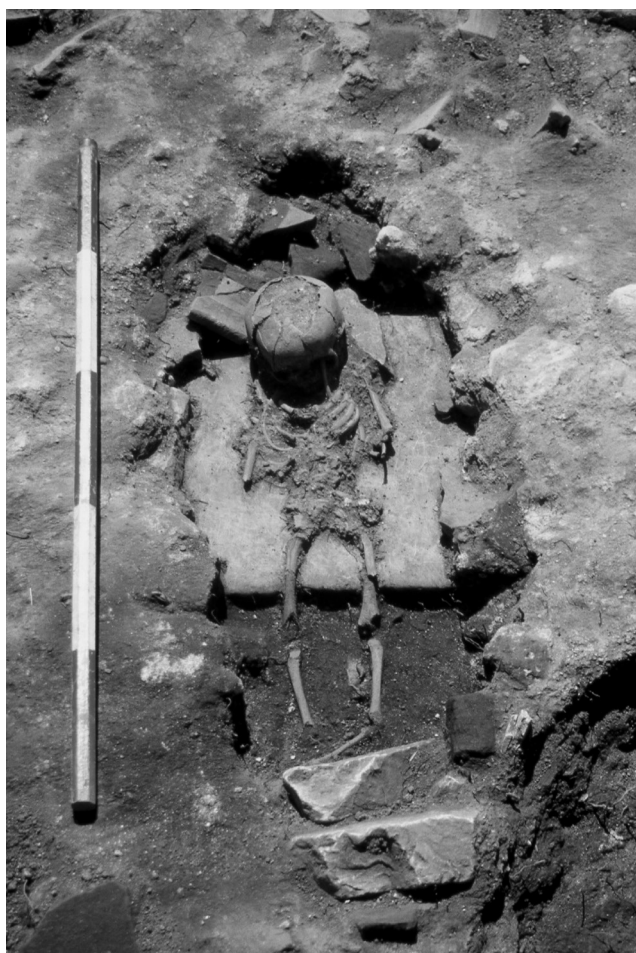


Fig. 4. 6th-century child burial at the Triconch Palace, under excavation (Butrint Foundation).

These were particularly apparent in the southern wing of the Triconch Palace, although slightly earlier burials were also present in the west wing around AD 550. Only one of the 16 individuals recovered was an adult, while 13 out of 15 of the remainder were in the foetal or infant categories, with the remaining two having estimated ages of 4-5 and 4-6 years. This could suggest that the Triconch was a specialised infant cemetery. Alternatively, the relatively small number of burials inserted over a relatively lengthy period (of up to 75 years) could indicate that they represent intermittent and more *ad hoc* interments over an extended period. This is also indicated by the fact that the area used for burials was also used for the dumping of rubbish and mussel shell remains, suggesting that the locations of the burials were lost over time.

The rise of *intra-mural* burial, with interments appearing within houses or former public spaces is a common trope in discussions of the changing nature of space in the late antique town and need not detain us here. Instead I want to focus on two aspects of the burials. The first is the apparent genetic diversity of the group. Thirteen of the late antique burials were sampled for mitochondrial DNA and were assigned haplotypes (combinations of MtDNA sequences that are inherited together) on the basis of the results. Four of the burials demonstrated unique haplotypes indicating no maternal relatedness with any other burial on the site. This suggests that an unusually diverse group of individuals were present. In combination with the apparently intermittent use of the cemetery this leads to the possibility that after AD 550 the inhabitants were transitory and only used the site periodically, therefore leading to a situation where only a small sample of the population were present in the grave assemblage. The second striking characteristic of the burials is the poor health of the infants and children present in the cemetery, which showed signs of physiological stress *in utero* or in the first year of life, including irregular growths of new bone develop in response to trauma, stress or infection. Lesions in the eye orbits and/or the cranial vaults were consistent with scurvy caused by vitamin C deficiency or anaemia, although the causes may well relate to multiple complex underlying conditions. These could include malaria or parasitic infections combined with diarrhoeal disease, common in children weaned on nutrient-poor foods in a highly pathogenic and unsanitary environment.

A combination of factors may have caused the poor health of the individuals at the Triconch Palace, with resulting significant levels of infant and childhood mortality. Interestingly, such poor skeletal health was not apparent in the predominantly adult burials at Diaporit (the villa/church on the eastern side of Lake Butrint), although these date to slightly earlier in the 6th century. Similarly, the limited number of late antique skeletons excavated at the Vrina Plain (three adult males and two sub-adults) show what Soler *et al.* (2019) describe as a striking lack of indicators of paleopathology or physiological stressors, suggesting that the individuals at the Triconch Palace had a poor quality of life by local standards.

3.3. BATTLING THE SUPERNATURAL – EVIDENCE OF BELIEF

Christian imagery was a continuous presence on the site from the period of the *domus* onwards, argued by Mitchell (2011, p. 275) to be implicit in the use of cruciform imagery in the mosaics of c. AD 400 (where crosses also served a more broadly apotropaic function) and then explicit in the Chi-Rho monogrammes within the lunettes of the windows of the triconch *triclinium*. In the later less grandiose domestic phases of the site, Christian imagery was present on day-to-day household items such as lamps and fine wares that featured crosses and Chi-Rho designs. However, the Christian imagery present in the Triconch was only one aspect of a formidable arsenal of apotropaic devices employed in what was apparently a complex ongoing struggle against supernatural powers by both the owners of the building and those who used the site later. These devices included a range of amulets in the form of rings, pendants and buckles that occurred in deposits dating from the early 5th until the late 6th century (Mitchell, 2007).

Such amulets, which included complex graphic devices and textual messages with which to baffle evil spirits (Fig. 5) are present throughout the late antique assemblage and it is clear that such magical devices could be readily accommodated alongside apparently Christian items in this day-to-day spiritual struggle and moreover that Christian imagery could be actively deployed to this end. The two Chi-Rho windows of the *triclinium*, for example, were accompanied by two windows featuring six-pointed stars within the lunettes, the star being a symbol widely employed in amuletic gemstones (Mitchell, 2007, p. 289). Doors and windows were particularly vulnerable to supernatural intrusion and the leering theatrical masks that greeted the visitor to the 3rd-century *domus* (Mitchell, 2011, pp. 231-238) may well have performed a similar apotropaic function. Also of interest in this regard is the predominance of older cockerels among the late antique domestic fowl population. Multiple older cockerels perform no useful economic function, spending their time in displays of masculinity and crowing. It seems possible therefore that their function was social and symbolic, with their noise and aggression performing a useful role in warding off unwanted supernatural attention (Bowden *et al.*, forthcoming).

The consistent use of apotropaic objects and imagery give an intriguing insight into the belief systems operating at the Triconch and the ways in which Christian symbols could be employed within a more wide-ranging symbolic vocabulary to protect its inhabitants from supernatural interference. Such assemblages are unusual in archaeological contexts, but as Mitchell (2007) points out, the quantity of similar unprovenanced items in museum collections points to a much wider phenomenon, demonstrating the possibilities for archaeology to shed light on the complex belief systems that impacted on daily life.

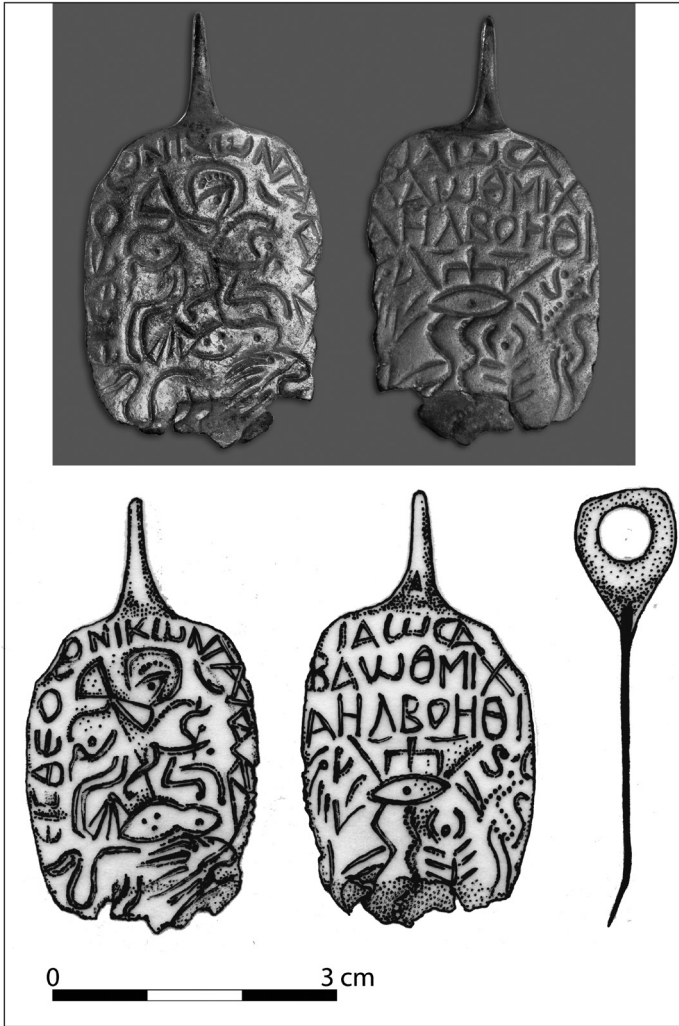


Fig. 5. Apotropaic copper alloy amulet from an early 6th-century context from the Triconch Palace (Butrint Foundation).

4. CONCLUSION – A NEED TO CHANGE DISCIPLINARY PRIORITIES?

To suggest that archaeologists utilize all aspects of excavated assemblages is a point so banal, it scarcely seems worth making. However, these small examples from our interpretation of the Butrint Triconch Palace sequence highlight areas that often seem to be absent from the debates surrounding the changing nature of late antique towns and raises some wider points about the publication and reporting

of archaeological discoveries relating to Late Antiquity, and indeed the Graeco-Roman world in general.

Archaeological material is frequently published (if at all) in reports divided by subject specialism. Such reports are often relegated to the back pages of an excavation volume or (as in the case of the Triconch Palace), placed in a second volume published some years after the first one, or indeed never published or produced at all, the latter practice particularly prevalent in Classical archaeology in the Mediterranean. The reasons for this are varied. The history of archaeology in the Mediterranean (and elsewhere) is a litany of excavations that remain wholly or partly unpublished because Dr X failed to produce his or her report thus delaying the final publication of a site until most of the participants are dead or the results are entirely superseded by more recent discoveries. The persistent failure of archaeologists to prevent such occurrences, however, suggests that such reports are undervalued by many practitioners and that this lack of appreciation is a factor in the recalcitrance of some materials specialists to actually write them. One suspects that materials specialists grow tired of producing reports that only a small number of their peers are likely to read.

In historical archaeology in the Mediterranean this problem is exacerbated by the fact that many archaeologists are simply not very interested in much of the material that they excavate. As noted at the start of this paper, those trained in the text-dominated classical tradition of archaeology are often principally focused on a fairly narrow canon of material encompassing architectural remains, epigraphy, mosaics, sculpture and wall painting. Many are frankly puzzled by the idea of looking at animal bones at all or otherwise indulge such behaviour as something that they recognise that they should be involved with, but aren't entirely sure why. Other finds are selected for study because they are aesthetically pleasing or lend themselves to typological analyses. Although some may dismiss such argument as facetious, the very limited number of fully published archaeological assemblages from the Roman Mediterranean tends to support the point.

This is partly a result of the issue noted at the start of this paper, whereby Mediterranean Roman archaeologists continue to ask questions generated from the study of textual and epigraphic sources that predominantly (although not exclusively) privilege the activities of a relatively small section of ancient society, a point also noted by Grig (2013, p. 564). It is thus unsurprising that Mediterranean archaeology of the period from approximately the 5th century BC to the 6th century AD remains overwhelmingly concerned with manifestations of elite display in the built environment and material culture and the related spatial configuration of settlements and buildings. Even coins and pottery are often seen primarily as dating material (or employed within broader debates on the Mediterranean economy), rather than as representations of economic behaviour and consumption by individuals. Given that one of the obvious advantages that archaeological material has over textual sources is that it relates to the activities of

all sections of society, it is unfortunate that such resources are often not exploited to their full potential.

In conclusion I would suggest that if we want to advance our understanding of the late antique town, we must change the questions that we are asking and the types of evidence that we look for. We must actively aim to recover the experience of people rather than mosaics, *spolia* and inscriptions. If we continue to re-evaluate earlier excavations, crawling over public spaces looking for the traces of Late Antiquity left by earlier excavations, we cannot hope to escape the decline and fall paradigm in which those earlier excavators were working. We will not advance our knowledge by continuing to simply refine and nuance our explanations within a framework of which the underlying ideology is deeply flawed. We must use the archaeological techniques which are widely available to expand the questions we are asking. Maybe then we can start to draw some conclusions about the changing nature of the Roman Empire as it was experienced by the vast majority of its inhabitants. Surely burying a child after it has succumbed to infection caused by poor nutrition and insanitary conditions will have been of far greater relevance to the child's family than a decline in the numbers of statues on the forum. Archaeology's greatest asset is its ability to give voice to the mute in history and if we are to truly understand the late antique town we would do well to remember that.

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FROM THE LATE ANTIQUE CITY TO THE EARLY MEDIEVAL TOWN IN CENTRAL AND NORTHERN ITALY. MODELS AND NARRATIVES FROM DEBATES OVER THE LAST THIRTY YEARS

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ABSTRACT: The debate on the late-antique city and the Early Middle Ages that developed in Italy in the last thirty years has been the consequence of a different archaeological approach over time, but has produced some important interpretative models. In some cases these models have proved unsatisfactory, in others they have become stereotypes that are often applied mechanically and a priori, regardless of the characteristics of the stratifications investigated. A series of examples, which concern the main categories of cities documented in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (the surviving cities, the disappeared cities, the new foundations) can reveal the varied complexity of the solutions, highlighting the obvious tendency to simplify the models identified at the time. Between individual narratives and generalizations, it indicates the need to overcome the biological concept of the history of the city and is invited to introduce the most flexible concept of life cycles (of a place, rather than a city). In doing so, however, it is suggested to broaden the spectrum of available archaeological sources, giving more space, for example, to palaeo-environmental components.

KEYWORDS: Late Antiquity, Early Medieval Ages, Italy, Towns

1. TOWNS IN LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES: PAST TO CURRENT STUDIES

An analysis of the (ongoing) debate on late ancient/early medieval urbanism in central and northern Italy over the last thirty years is roughly like analysing the same theme on a national level (Christie, 2006, pp. 183-280) (Fig. 1). There has been plenty of research also in the south of the peninsula (e.g. Naples: Arthur, 2002; Otranto: Michaelides & Wilkinson, 1992; D'Andria & Whitehouse, 1992; and, more recently, Bari: Dapalo, Disantarosa & Nuzzo, 2015); however, it is still primarily the large-scale excavations in northern Italy in the 1980s and 1990s that have produced many of the generalising patterns and interpretations. These models have been collected in papers and published in the proceedings of congresses and seminars (for example: Francovich & Noyé, 1994; Augenti, 2006) and, in particular, have seen articulation in two monographs published by myself and Gian Pietro Brogiolo in 1998 and, more recently, by Brogiolo in 2011. In the first

book, moreover, two main interpretative models formulated in that years (above all deriving from the excavations in Brescia and Verona) are discussed (Brogiolo & Gelichi, 1998, pp. 29-37, with bibliography) - models that became opposing interpretative paradigms, which using the same archaeological data delineated two different ways to interpret the transition (Continuitists vs Catastrophists) (for a critical approach to this debate see Ward Perkins, 1997).

In this debate, essentially two types of towns have been analysed: ancient towns that endured (from Roman or even pre-Roman times) into medieval and modern times; and those that became abandoned and so no longer correspond to a modern town or city. These two categories of cities have, of course, been studied using different archaeological approaches. The first category (the surviving towns) has benefitted substantially from recent developments in urban archaeology – that is, archaeology within surviving towns and cities. As elsewhere, many Italian cities were damaged during the Second World War and saw rebuilding shortly afterwards, in the 1950s and 1960s, but in those years work was undertaken without much attention paid to the archaeological value – and depth – of the deposits beneath and exposed in the rebuilding; similar losses – in between rare recognition of important finds – occurred across Europe, such as in England (see Schofiels & Vince, 1994, pp. 1-12).

A major difference came in the 1970s. This is when planned stratigraphic urban excavations began, replacing the less demanding archaeological checks during construction works (Gelichi, 1999). Such excavations generated a mass of new data, mainly regarding structures and artefacts, sometimes burials, and revealed for the first time the multi-layering of urban activity. Only now – often, but not everywhere – was the medieval heritage of these sites starting to be recorded. A new debate started as a result, especially in northern Italy, where some sizeable and extended excavation projects took place. The new debate had the merit of shifting attention from the written sources to the material sources and to looking to the mechanics and minutiae of urban life; all this prompted the reformulating of some of the older interpretative paradigms.

Perhaps surprisingly, deserted towns, by contrast, have enjoyed less fortune. Precisely because they no longer exist as modern towns, their archaeology has almost always been the result of a planned – i.e. research-led – archaeology. Generally speaking, however, the main purpose of such archaeology was to uncover the ancient – i.e. classical – city; as a result, sadly in many cases, this has caused the (near) total erasure of late antique, post-classical and medieval deposits. Some exceptions exist, with projects (once again from the 1970s) seeking also to analyse the fates of these sites during Late Antiquity and even the Middle Ages, with the processes of abandonment considered of historical interest. Thus, a change in project design can be recognised in work conducted at the town of Luni (ancient *Luna*) in south-eastern Liguria (Fig. 1), where notable early medieval contexts began to appear, such as burials, wells and timber houses,



Fig. 1. Italy and the main towns discussed in the text.

these often cut into classical deposits, as well as the prominent remains of the cathedral church (Ward Perkins, 1977, 1978 and 1981; Lusuardi Siena, 1976; and, more recently, Durante, 2010) (Fig. 2). Similarly, the recent excavations by

the American Academy of Rome in *Cosa*, in southern Tuscany, have produced significant data related to the city's decline and defensive change from the middle Empire (Fentress, 2004) (Figs. 1 and 3). In Piedmont in north-west Italy, the abandoned town of *Pollentia* has been the subject of important research that has likewise highlighted the longer term evolution of the settlement (Micheletto, 2004 and 2006). Finally, and more recently, a project on the abandoned town of *Claterna* in Emilia-Romagna has paid special attention to the late-classical phases (Ortalli, 1996 and 2003; Desantis, Molinari & Negrelli, 2010) (Figs. 4-5). Nevertheless, despite these and a few other examples/exceptions, it can be claimed that the archaeology of abandoned Roman towns is still lacking in quality.

Post-Roman towns were for long less attractive to researchers. The phenomenon of the founding of new towns was not unknown in the Middle Ages, but generally were of modest significance. And yet one of these new foundations was Venice, whose emergence reflected a particular demo-settlement vitality along the entire north Adriatic coast. We will return to this site and context later.

Arguably, in the current situation there has not been any substantial change in strategy: active towns and cities continue to receive the most interest and investigation – for the obvious reasons of ongoing (albeit sometimes infrequent) urban redevelopment – but intensive excavation does not always correspond to a prompt and full publication of the findings of such research; this means that much of what has been done is not scientifically accessible and thus usable.



Fig. 2. Luni (La Spezia), aerial photo, focussed on the partially exposed ancient forum.

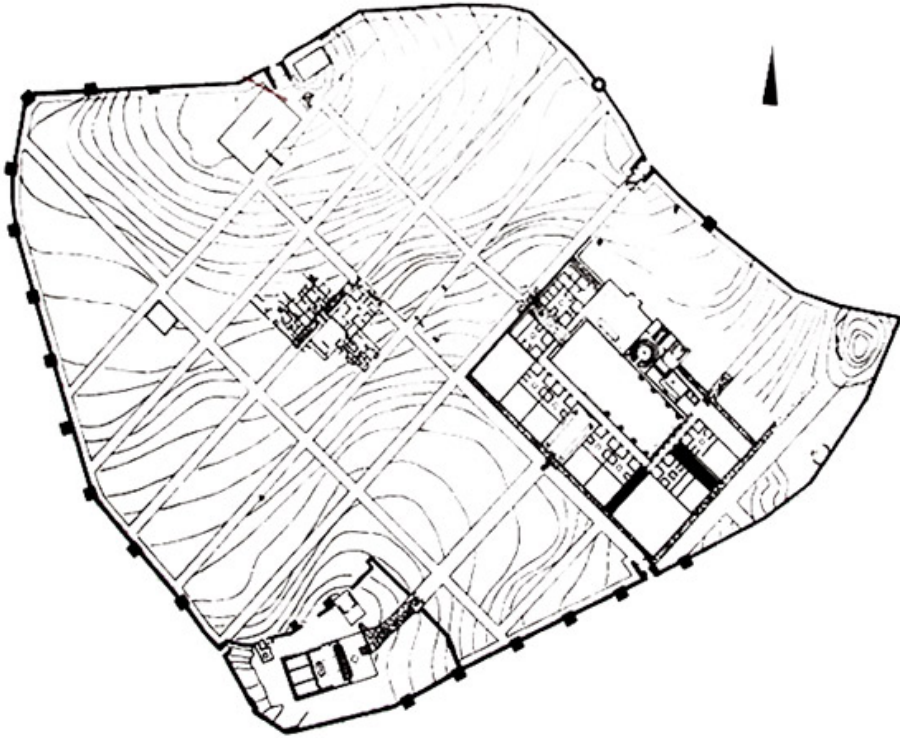


Fig. 3. Cosa (GR), plan of the Roman town.

In this paper I would like to discuss the state of the research very briefly and, above all, to indicate the strengths and weaknesses of the current epistemological models used to study the phenomenon of early-medieval urbanism.

2. MODELS?

Research into the post-ancient city has, however, generated some models based on archaeological evidence. In brief, two key aspects have emerged with great clarity. The first is that any distinction between the ancient city and the early medieval one is a simplification: the late antique town should be recognised as a separate entity, with its own evidence types and identity, worthy of independent scrutiny. Moreover, the early medieval town was not always the product of a subtraction, i.e. a removal of much of the classical form; it, too, could sometimes adopt original solutions. Certainly it is not scientifically correct or even useful for researchers to reconstruct its physiognomy by comparing it to the Roman past;

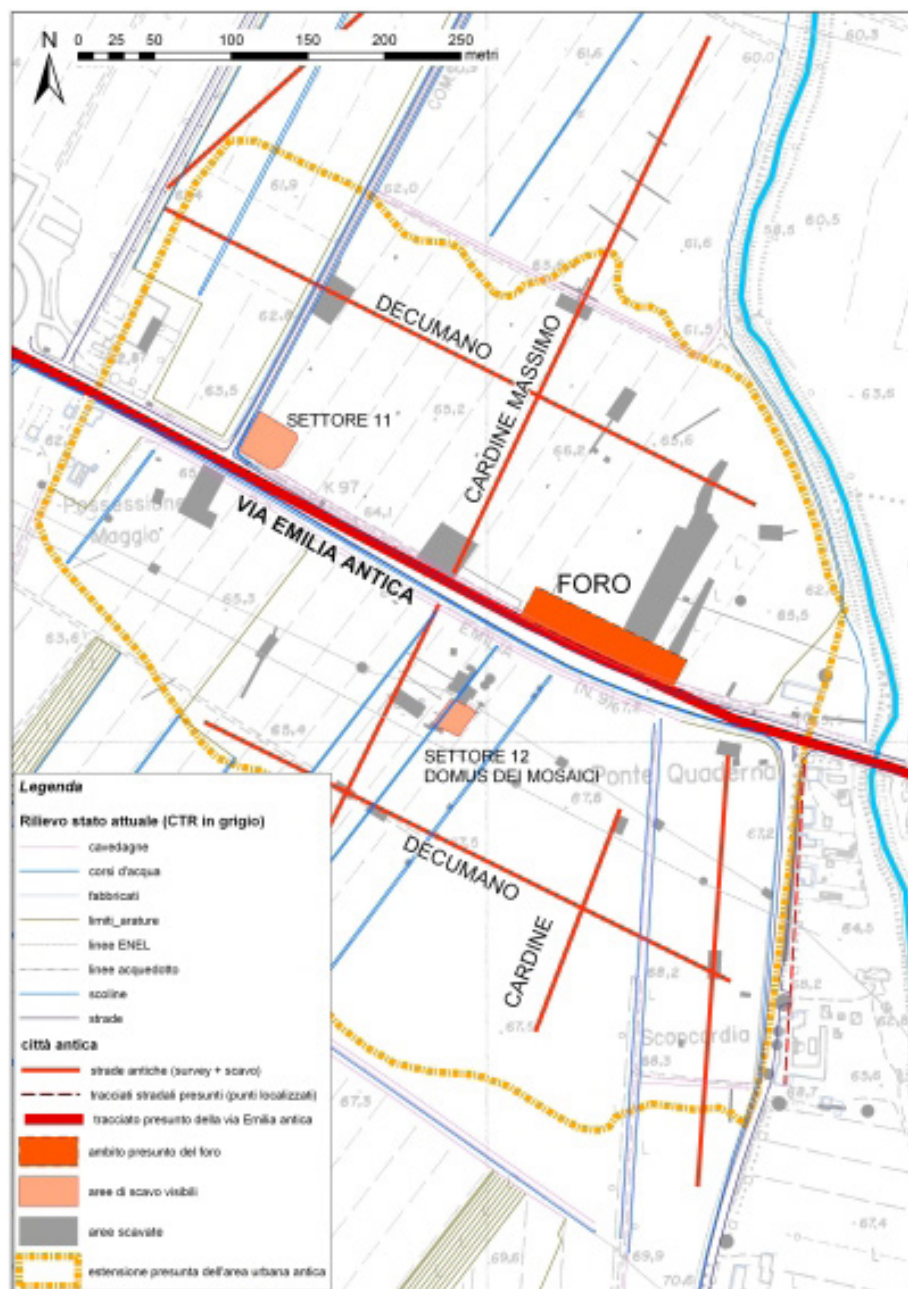


Fig. 4. Claterna (BO), plan of the Roman town.



Fig. 5. Claterna (BO), aerial photo.

early medieval urbanism should be studied first and, foremost, as a subject in its own right, without recourse to classical 'expectations'.

Secondly, archaeological research has helped focus on some paradigms, which can be used to reformulate our idea of the urban form and role and to explain the causes of its transformation; these causes can be conjunctural or structural. Among the conjunctural causes, the devastating impact of the 'barbarian' invasions and takeovers has come to be reduced: this is not to deny their existence, but to make these play a different role. Climate change and hydro-geological disasters meanwhile play less of a role in the narrative, although recent – and some quite notable – scientific findings and analyses have elevated some aspects, such as likely climate change between the fifth and seventh centuries; however, caution is needed in seeking to link it climate change directly to the collapse of the ancient world and urban transformation.

Social changes are recognised as having had a strong impact, particularly the dissolution of the imperial civic structure and apparatus, and the failing of private evergetism. Economic factors are also relevant: these are linked to fragmentation, changes in taxation and a concentration of land ownership.

Finally, we must consider cultural changes, such as the advent of Christianity and all its consequences. The spread of this new religion is often used to explain substantial changes in the topographical structuring of cities, with many scholars applying – not always accurately – the concept of the ‘Christianization of spaces’ to both towns and local territories.

These (albeit legitimate) social/cultural explanations have quickly become as commonplace as the economic explanations just mentioned, but these must be re-assessed, especially as they essentially arose from processual theoretical approaches, in order to progress further in our understanding of post-classical urbanism.

3. SINGLE NARRATIVES

We need also consider single narratives. The histories of some towns have developed not only within, but also outside, these paradigms; they have proved to be particularly performative and have introduced a certain complexity to the outcomes, making generalisations inadequate.

Examples can be found for all the categories noted above: those of the abandoned city; the ‘surviving’ city; and the new city. For example, in the case of deserted or ‘lost’ towns, recent archaeologies signify a diversity of sequences, both in terms of when they were abandoned, at what pace and how (Christie & Augenti, 2015). An analytical approach to the local territory, and not just to the city, means that we can now trace better the story and fate of Populonia, a town in ancient *Tuscia* (Bianchi & Gelichi, 2017) (Fig. 1): a highly important town under the Etruscans, Populonia was no longer classed as a town in the 1st century AD. By then trends in settlements had changed: the sparsely populated settlement became the norm (villas and farms), while ports, mining and other activities (e.g. fishing) continued to play an important role for the zone. Despite its limited form and scale, Populonia became a bishopric (a seat of a rural diocese) in the 5th century, probably linked, once again, to the exploitation and control of local resources (e.g. iron) and not simply due to the will of a spontaneous community of Christian people. Populonia would remain an episcopal see until the 9th century; in the same century, the Adobrandeschi family chose this place as the temporary seat of their comital power (Fig. 6). And so the story continues.

Even surviving centres – Roman towns that endured – show signs of internal development, where the paradigms do not always coincide with those already mentioned. For example, the excavation of a sizeable area within the historic centre of Rimini in Italy’s ancient *Regio VIII* (Negrelli, 2006 and 2008) has provided evidence of a complex, articulated transformation that took place over a few centuries and which is hard to explain as mere simplification, reduction or impoverishment. In fact, the story of this urban sector is best understood when seen in the context of land ownership. Here, in the imperial Roman period,

the zone was occupied by a large aristocratic *domus* (perhaps belonging to a surgeon?) endowed with many fine floor mosaics. While this elite house was destroyed during the 3rd century, in the period between the 5th and 8th century (a span generally described as one of 'prolonged abandonment'), there was a flurry of construction activity, of structures with a range of different purposes. Most prominently, between the 5th and 6th centuries, the ancient *domus* was rebuilt according to the dictates of 'aulica' construction with new mosaic floors and brick construction. There was then a short period of inactivity and, later in the 6th century, at least part of this house area was taken over by a cemetery (Fig. 7). But this was no parasitic or spontaneous use; rather it was an organized move, as new parcels of land were specifically acquired for this purpose. It is more than likely that this phase coincides with a change in site ownership: in fact, the whole area became the property of the important monastery of St. Andrew and St. Thomas. Finally, during the 7th century, the cemeterial role was quitted and the zone once more became residential, albeit with a focus on the road with outbuildings built behind, constructed using poorer quality materials. Nevertheless, an important lead seal survives from this period, bearing the name

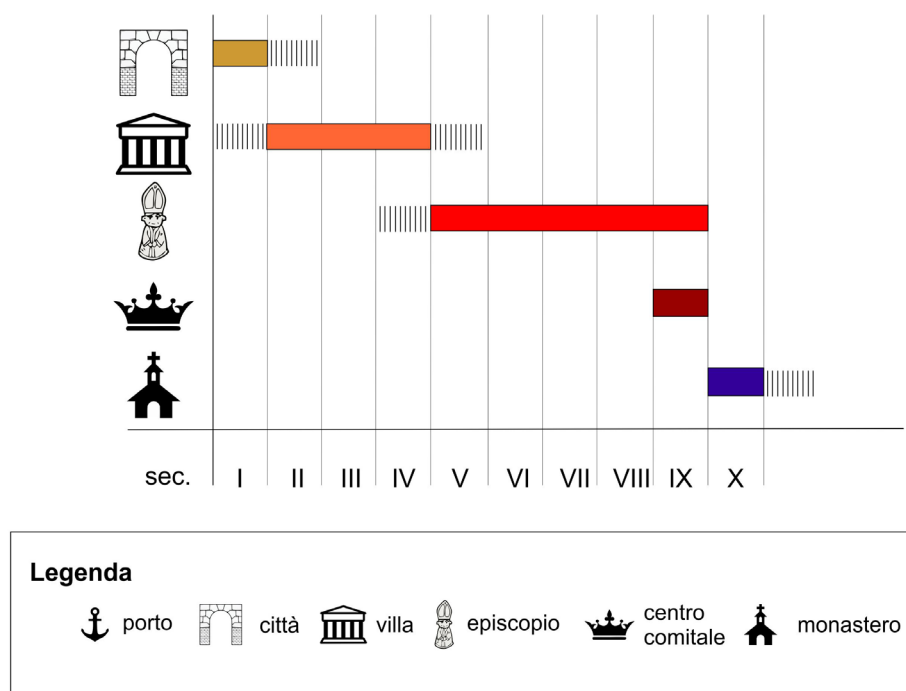


Fig. 6. Populonia (LI): the projected lifecycle of the place.

of *Iohannes*; this *Iohannes* might relate to the *Iohannes vicarius ariminensium numeri* who had the right to claim a *domocella* (small *domus*) at the monastery of St. Andrews and St. Thomas. The document in question dates back to the late 7th/early 8th century (AD 689-705).

However, the entire settlement process did not flow smoothly from rich Roman *domus* to rich late antique *domus*, followed by abandonment plus cemetery and then poor or 'functional' occupation. In other words, there was no irreversible decline in fortune: in fact, there were several abrupt changes, linked to ownership which, in this case at least, can be partially reconstructed through written documentation. And the case of Rimini should not be considered an exception, but does reflect to one of the many possible variables that a less distracted archaeology can reasonably try to recognise and interpret.

Finally, new towns are an equally valuable field of research. These are settlements established in previously uninhabited spaces, or where no true cities existed, meaning that any analysis of the process of colonisation is extremely useful. The cases of Comacchio (Fig. 8) and Venice, both foci of archaeological projects in recent years, are very instructive in this regard.

The birth of Venice can only be explained by being set in a broader context (Gelichi, 2015a and 2015b; Gelichi & Moine, 2012; and Gelichi, Ferri & Moine, 2017). Some stages in its history are clear-cut: thus, archaeological surveys clearly show that the lagoon saw settlement activity and was used economically in the Roman period (at least since the early Imperial era), although the area was overall sparsely populated; in the 5th-6th centuries, more centralised lagoon-based or oriented settlements developed; then rivalry between elites (secular and religious)



Fig. 7. Rimini: burials cut into the mosaic floors of the "*domus del chirurgo*".



Fig. 8. Comacchio (FE): a reconstruction view of the town during the Early Middle Ages.

was reflected in how sites were chosen and for what purpose. By the 9th century the duchy was established and, with it, Venice came into being. The beginning of this new period was inaugurated by an episode whose considerable impact on the later history of the lagoon requires some explanation: namely the transfer of the Duchy's headquarters to the Rialto archipelago, sited at the end of an old river delta and in what was clearly a strategic position for naval communication – in other words, near the '*bocca di porto*', at the access to the lagoon. This is probably why a station belonging to the *cursus publicus* was moved to the island of Olivolo (i.e. Rialto) in the first place (Gelichi, 2015a, pp. 72-78). Church authorities then gained control in the 7th century, turning the nascent Venice into the home port of the Byzantine fleet and its powerbase. The transfer of the headquarters of the new ducal power in the Rialto (early 9th century) had to be another decisive political step. It was destined to consolidate the centrality, with the already existing episcopal seat in Olivolo, of the Rialto archipelago towards the other settlements of the Venetian lagoon: a centrality not only geographical but also, and above all, political and social. Subsequent developments are, of course, equally interesting, but they are beyond the assumption of this intervention.

4. FUTURE RESEARCH

Can individual narratives such as these help us to create new, more applicable paradigms? Are they important anthropological models in themselves?

To date, the paradigms have been generally used to explain processes that analyse what we might term the 'biological life' of towns, from the perspective of their birth/ growth/ decline/ death or, where successful, persistence. Perhaps it would be more interesting to read these processes from the perspective of the lifecycle of a place. Thus, a city, before becoming a city, is a place, a geographical location, a physical space. A city statute might be only one of the legal formats given to a physical space assumed over time... and status may disappear, continue or even return.

The paradigms provided over the course of the last century to explain late antique and early medieval towns/urbanism have mainly focused on the topographical/urban aspects (namely what structures were built and where, how the spaces were settled and used, including churches and burials) and the material aspects (the types and forms of the roads, infrastructures and homes, the material debris). In essence, archaeology has long followed the historiographical debate, trying to provide answers to the following questions: Did cities survive? If they did, how/why so? What were they like? How far did they resemble or differ from ancient/ Roman cities? What were the foci of these places and who controlled them?

If, however, we consider the physical location (which just happens also to be the site of a town), we can develop some new, less typical approaches: for example, we might want to reconstruct more clearly the environment of the site (how the environment acted upon the site and how communities responded); we may consider the ecological aspects (the relationship between communities and the colonisation of places); and we could also analyse the local economy better and look at various aspects of society, of all levels, not just the elites.

All these approaches seem, I would argue, rather different from what we see in general archaeological research and, more specifically, in archaeological studies concerned with urban centres. However, two things are needed to alter our overall approach: the first concerns the *type* of archaeology we want to develop; the second concerns archaeological projects *per se*. We are in control of the former, in the sense that we often decide how best, archaeologically, to deal with a topic (and site). The second, however, concerns another key aspect of modern urbanism, namely the public management and use of our archaeological heritage, its accessibility and what strategies are available or desired to protect it. This second aspect does not depend on us, but on how a national state organises, legally and scientifically, the protection of its rich and varied urban heritage. But perhaps it is best to stop here and not write anything more on this matter, especially when it comes to Italy...

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REFLECTIONS ON LATE ANTIQUE CITIES IN APULIA ET CALABRIA AND IN SOUTHERN ITALY

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ABSTRACT: This paper presents some reflections on the new identity acquired by Southern Italian cities between the 4th and the middle of the 6th century AD. The roman towns, that knew continuity of life during the Late Antique period, responded with a resilient behaviour to the effects of long-running processes such as the contraction of public and private financial resources; the drastic limitation of the role and decision-making power of the ancient urban *curiae*; the progressive concentration of the peripheral power management functions in a few selected centres.

KEYWORDS: Apulia et Calabria; Southern Italy; Settlement Hierarchy; Ruralisation and Villagisation; Christianization; Resilient Cities.

1. RECENT RESEARCHES ON LATE ANTIQUE CITIES IN SOUTHERN ITALY

In the past years, I had the chance to discuss and propose some reflections about Late Antique towns in Southern Italy and, in particular, in *Apulia et Calabria* (Volpe, 2010; *id.*, 2012; *id.*, 2014; *id.*, 2016; Volpe & Goffredo, 2015, Fig. 1): therefore, this paper focus just on few aspects, necessary for the understanding what changes affected urban settlements between the 4th and the 6th century AD.

As a premise, it is appropriate to mention some important, previous studies, which still stand as a reference point for the debate on this theme. The conference held at Taranto in 1998, concerning Southern Italy during Late Antiquity (*L'Italia meridionale in età tardoantica*), introduced for the first time the topic of Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages into the agenda of the archaeology of *Magna Graecia*. In Southern Italy, as well as in Sicily, studies have been traditionally oriented to pre-Roman phases and to Greek and indigenous settlements; furthermore, Late Antique transformations in towns were almost exclusively seen through the lens of the continuity-discontinuity paradigm in comparison with the “classical” city. This prolonged disinterest delayed the emergence of new approaches aimed at detecting indicators of Late Antique urban development. At

the Taranto conference, Paul Arthur proposed a new approach, moving away from the analysis of ancient cities, with their public buildings and spaces, inscriptions, coins and material culture (Arthur, 1999). He analysed the phenomena of “ruralisation”, “villagisation” and Christianisation and, following John Bintliff’s model (Bintliff, 1997), he argued for the different fate of Southern Italian towns, applying a distinction between “successful” and “unsuccessful” cities in relation to their continuity of occupation or abandonment (Arthur & Patterson, 1994; Arthur, 1999).

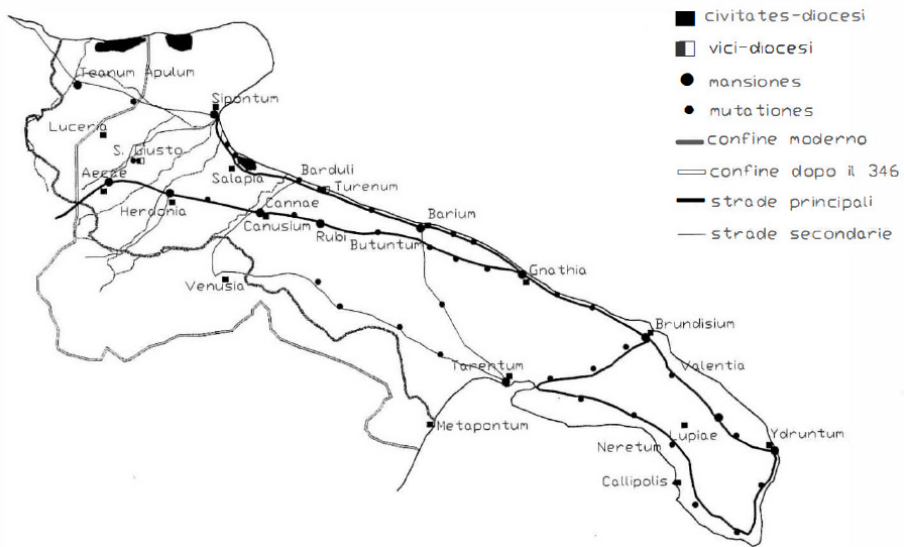


Fig. 1. Map of the province of *Apulia et Calabria* (post 346 A.D.) with road network and towns.

Arthur’s approach is still fascinating and stimulating but it is difficult to accept that the success or the failure of an urban center may be established only on the basis of its material evidence, without considering other indicators that are archeologically less visible. For instance, should the presence of a bishop in a ruralised city be considered a symptom of success or failure?

Many other studies, conference proceedings, local and regional syntheses are now available for scholars who are interested in researching on urban development within this area of the late Western Roman Empire (Volpe, 1996; Volpe & Giuliani, 2010; Savino, 2005; Vitolo, 2005; Augenti, 2006; Iasiello, 2007; Brogiolo & Gelichi, 1998; Brogiolo, 2010; *id.*, 2011).

However there are still many gaps (Pani Ermini, 1994), since very few cities have been extensively excavated and studied in depth: we are very far from

having an overview on Late Antique urban patterns. Areas, buildings and spaces, that had been the core of the traditional roman town, sometimes were heavily transformed, giving us an impression of deconstruction and crisis; conversely, other areas, buildings and spaces experienced a notable development, such as the *episcopia* complexes, which became the new “central places” of Late Antique cities.

Recently, the authors have been collating new data on details and patterns in urban contexts and identifying more reliable trends in urban transformations.

Thus, looking at the Late Antique towns of Southern Italy, we can frame the following chronological periodization:

1) **3rd – end of the 4th century AD.** As it has been pointed out by Francesco Grelle and Andrea Giardina, the administrative and institutional reorganisation of the Empire, promoted by Diocletian and Constantine, had a long-term impact on local economy, society and settlement patterns (Grelle, 1993; *id.*, 1999; Grelle & Volpe, 1994; *id.*, 1999; Giardina, 1986; *id.*, 1993; *id.*, 1999). The “administrative earthquake” affected also the Southern part of the Italian peninsula and its consequences, especially in provinces like *Apulia et Calabria* or *Lucania et Bruttii*, have been already well emphasized (Volpe, 1996). The institutional re-arrangement fostered a strong hierarchisation of urban centres (Grelle, 1999; Giardina, 1999) and promoted a functional specialisation of cities and significant changes in the relationship between cities and their territories.

In general, this was a phase of stability and, in some cases, of growth. Through written and archaeological sources, we are informed about maintenance, restoration or construction of public buildings and infrastructures (aqueducts, roads, sewers). In some centres, more precocious, the birth of a diocesan organization favored the formation of a new Christian topography, the construction of buildings for worship and the presence of a bishop with his clergy. The framework of private housing seems to be more heterogeneous but, overall, new requirements and changes in the local social structures caused the progressive overcoming of the traditional model of urban *domus*. However, some significant examples of monumental and luxurious urban dwellings are indicative of the persistence of élite lifestyles and huge financial resources (Baldini Lippolis, 2010, pp. 52-58; see below).

2) **5th – mid 6th century AD.** During this period, it is possible to recognize a more marked differentiation between towns. Some centres, for their political-economic role or for the benefits induced by the presence of an active local church, maintained a significant *status* and vitality, with direct consequences on the urban built-landscape. Other centres, more marginal, underwent forms of generalized deconstruction. Despite the different fate of each town, some common features can be identified: the general abandonment – with or without

reuse – of pre-existing public buildings and spaces; the widespread phenomenon of “urban countryside”; the diffusion of workshops and artisanal sectors inside and outside private houses.

3) **Late 6th- 7th century AD.** The city as a legacy of Roman culture no longer existed. In the centres with continuity of life, few data can be collected to understand how buildings and places were organised during this period. However some general traits can be identified in: a) the formation of a meta-urban landscape, with no clear boundaries between urban and nonurban-rural space; b) the presence of thick layers of decay, clearance and collapse which covered pre-existing architectures and floors; c) the development of inhabited agglomerates, with huts, fences, functional annexes in perishable material (clay, wood, branches), separated by wide “open” areas and scattered ruins.

2. PARALLEL LIVES OF CITIES

Many scholars have already observed how the processes of “change”, “transformation” or (according to others) “decline” and “crisis”, which gave a new and well recognizable Late Antique identity to the urban centres of Roman tradition within the different regions of Southern Italy, present substantial affinities, both for characteristics and timing (see Volpe, 2010, for an overview).

The more new archaeological data are added to the previous ones, the stronger is the perception that the Late Antique urban form is the non-sudden outcome of long-term macro-changes, such as the drastic contraction of the economic resources in support of the pre-existing hypertrophic apparatus of cities; the limitation of the decision-making and financial autonomy of local *curiae*; the progressive concentration in few and selected sites of the functions of coordination and peripheral management of civil and administrative power (Marazzi, 2010, pp. 656-657).

The consequences of these phenomena, which deeply affected the local social, economic and settlement structures, were not likely to be immediate. Between the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century, numerous cities in the Southern part of the peninsula still benefit from the euergetic initiatives of the local élites, the representatives *in loco* of the imperial administration and, sometimes, the emperors themselves.

At *Herdonia*, during the first decades of the 4th century, the governor of *Apulia et Calabria* *Ulpius Alenus* dedicated a statue to *Valerius Maximinus* while, a few decades later, at *Luceria, civitas Costantiniana* (CIL, IX, 801), the provincial government financed the construction of a *tribunal* and a *secretarium*, perhaps located near the *forum* (Volpe, 1996, pp. 114-116). Two inscriptions from *Venusia* document a building intervention by Constantine for the restoration of the public baths and a *consacratio* made in *honorem splendidae civitatis Venusinorum* by the

governor *Aelius Restitutus* (Marchi, 2010, pp. 201-202). Widening the look, the available epigraphy for centres such as *Teanum Apulum*, *Aeclanum*, *Paestum*, *Allifae*, *Avella*, *Neapolis*, *Puteoli*, just to mention a few, highlights a persistent urban dynamism which, at least until the mid-4th century AD, often expressed itself through the maintenance or the restoring of public buildings.

However, these widespread and late displays of municipal life and urban planning did not have a long duration. The well-known imperial directive dated to AD 363, that forbade provincial governors to embellish provincial metropolises and other *clariores urbes* with statues, marbles and columns in "minor" cities, stimulates some reflexions (*Cod. Theod.* 15.114).

On the one hand, it reveals both the theoretical and operative existence of a clear hierarchical differentiation between towns. On the other hand, it attributes to the provincial governors the responsibility of having chosen which centres to promote and which ones to abandon to their fate; indirectly, it also identifies the governors as responsible for the mortification of the public urban *decus* of the cities evidently considered as non-strategic. This law, for its prescriptions, is similar to numerous other edicts that, during all the 4th century and again in the 5th century, were repeatedly sent to the provincial governors and the other figures of the imperial administration to stem the movement of artworks, marbles, architectural elements from one city to another, without care for the maintenance and restoration of pre-existing public buildings (see Baldini Lippolis, 2007).

These repeated prohibitions, induced by some evidently common behaviour practices, allow us to understand what was changing in the management strategy of the past urban heritage. From this point of view, it may be significant to look at what happened in some of the cities that were hit by the earthquake dated to AD 346 (Guidoboni, Comastri & Traina, 1994, pp. 252-254). On the event's impact and the extent of the caused damage, we have many indications that help us to understand the resultant interventions.

The first emerging aspect is represented by the mobilisation of the bureaucratic apparatus of the Empire, both at central and peripheral level, for managing the post-earthquake phase. If suggestive but not verifiable is the hypothesis about the foundation of the province of *Samnium* as a result of an administrative reorganization aimed at facilitating the reconstruction of the Italic region most affected by the earthquake (Iasiello, 2007, p. 39), certain are the actions taken first by the *rector Fabius Maximus* and then by the governor *Autonius Iustinianus* in favour of the towns of *Allifae*, *Telesia*, *Aesernia*, *Saepinum*, *Iuvianum*, *Histonium* (Iasiello, 2007, pp. 40-42). Reconstructions did not concern all the urban body nor they involved public buildings as a whole; only few architectural and functional complexes were interested by a planned recovery activity: the urban walls at *Telesia*; the urban walls and the judicial buildings at *Iuvianum*; the *macella* at *Aesernia* and *Saepinum*; the *capitolium* at *Histonium*. In the case of *Allifae*, *Fabius*

Maximus took care of the restoration of the *moenia publica* and the thermal baths of Ercole, neglecting to intervene in other parts of the city that, once abandoned, were used as waste landfills by the local community (Marazzi & Stanco, 2010, pp. 330-331).

Within the available written sources for *Aeclanum* and *Venusia*, both among the damaged cities, there is no trace of similar initiatives promoted by the central power. Concerning *Aeclanum*, the earthquake caused a generalized disarticulation of the urban fabric and the formation of wide abandoned spaces, not to be longer resettled (Lo Pilato, 2010). Something similar happened to *Venusia*, which experienced the progressive abandonment of its eastern periphery but also the obliteration of extensive portions of the still vital northern part of the city (Marchi, 2010).

Even at *Herdonia*, the damage caused by the earthquake was impressive and, above all, affected all the most representative and symbolic places that the city had from the age of municipalisation onwards. The collapses concerned the civil basilica, the temple A, the *palestra*, the *macellum*, perhaps the amphitheatre: none of these buildings was reconstructed nor the whole complex of the *forum* experienced significant forms of monumental redevelopment (Volpe, 2006). However, the area was not abandoned (Fig. 2): some small rooms with the function of warehouses or houses/shops were built re-using the surviving walls of the basilica and its portico, the *palaestra* and the *tabernae* of the *forum* (Giuliani, 2010, pp. 137-138).

Unlike what J. Mertens hypothesised at the time of his excavations, these episodes of re-functionalising, although isolated, are probably not to be interpreted as forms of degraded, abusive or squatter reoccupation of the city's main public buildings: they can hardly be read as uncoordinated initiatives "from the bottom". The already mentioned Late Antique legislation, in several acts promulgated up to the full 5th century AD, underlined the unavoidability of the intervention of the imperial authorities in authorising restoration, re-functionalisation, alienation or, where necessary, the complete spoliation of the public real estate assets. So a "central" initiative could also have been responsible for the construction of *Herdonia*'s commercial or storage spaces and for the necessary measures to guarantee their accessibility, such as the removal of the rubble and the restoration of access routes.

By contrast, with considerable resources and specialised workers, the public baths of the town were consolidated and restored (Leone, Rocco & Buglione, 2009): the entire complex was affected by maintenance interventions; the pre-existing mosaic floors were restored; new valuable polychrome mosaics were put in place; new rooms were added to the pre-existing ones. Even the group of workshops, that during the Roman imperial period had developed in front of the *balneum* and along the *via Traiana*, was rebuilt and continued to live as an integral part of this renewed pole of attraction within the city.

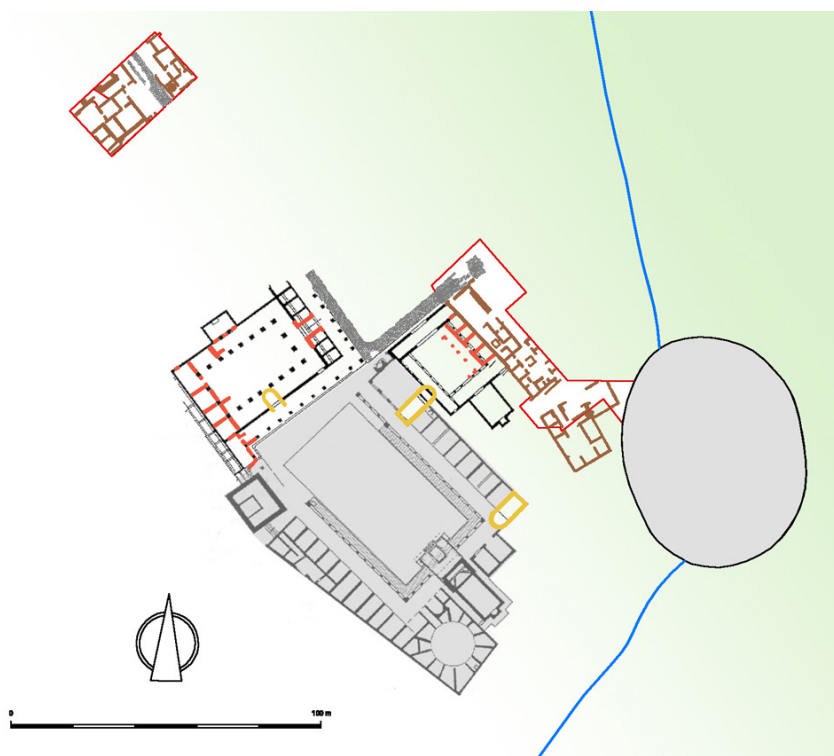


Fig. 2. *Herdonia* (Ortona, Foggia): the *forum* and its public buildings between the late 4th and the 5th century AD.

On a wider scale, it is significant that the same abandonment/refunctionalisation/restoration phenomena can be observed, in this period, also in many other Southern Italian centres that were not peripheral knots of power management, nor they knew the earthquake damages.

For example, *Grumentum* whose *forum*, starting from the mid 4th century, assumed the characteristics of a large artisanal area for dismantling and recycling the disused public buildings (Mastrocinque, 2006; Mastrocinque *et al.*, 2010). Recent excavations have identified, in the south-east corner of the square, a workshop for fusing bronze and lead artifacts, which came from the ruins of nearby monuments. A large limestone was built near the *Capitolium* substructures while specialized workers in removing marble coatings were employed in the area of the so-called *Tempio rotondo*. Also in this case, as at *Herdonia*, it is difficult not to recognize a planned and "centralised" management of the recovery and recycling activities of what could have been offered by the disused public buildings.

Similarly, at *Cuma*, while the public thermal complex was the object of restorations, which preserved its functionality, a different fate fell to the *forum*

and the *Capitolium*: they were, in part, abandoned to decay, in part reoccupied by artisanal workshop and small houses (Malpede, 2005).

In conclusion, the parallel lives of the different cities so far mentioned tell a single story: the epilogue of the way of being a city and living in a city that was proposed/imposed by Rome from the early construction phases of its Mediterranean empire and, then, was assimilated/ interpreted by the various local communities.

On the one hand, the widespread abandonments, the deserted public buildings, the not removed collapses tell us about what became obsolete, non-functional, devoid of real importance in the context of the new political, administrative and economic framework of the Empire. On the other hand, the documented restorations and the widespread episodes of use-conversion offer us the possibility to understand what spaces, buildings, places were really functional to the continuation of urban life.

From this point of view, urban private housing provides us with a privileged reading-key to focus on how the socio-economic structure and the living habits of settled population were changing. In a recent study, R. Giuliani reviewed all the archaeological data available on Late Antique private housing for *Apulia et Calabria* and *Lucania* (Giuliani, 2010; *id.*, 2014): this analysis has provided results and trends of great interest, which may also be extended to other regions of Southern Italy.

Between the 3rd and the 5th centuries AD, the abandonment of republican and/or imperial *domus* is one of the best documented phenomena and it sheds light on the irreversible decline of a model of urban dwelling strongly connoted in a social and ideological-cultural sense. Likewise, a tendency to subdivide pre-existing *domus* and to parcel them with rough walls, is well documented: smaller and more modest houses, with a few multi-functional rooms, lacking of decorations or representative spaces, were created within previous high-ranking residences and they were often used also for commercial and artisanal activities. The decline of a prestigious residential architecture (with some relevant exceptions: see below), the extreme simplification of daily life places, the accentuated permeability between residential and productive uses within the same domestic spaces, describe well the composition, the economic profile, the living conditions of a large part of urban population already from the full 4th century AD.

G.V.

3. BEING A “DIFFERENT” CITY, WITH A “DIFFERENT” FATE: PERIPHERAL SEATS OF POWER

There are numerous affinities that link *Canusium* with the town of *Capua*. Both centres boasted an important long-lasting settlement tradition; both had a complex and well-organised urban structure and were served by strategic road

routes for *intra* and *extra* regional connections. *Canusium* was crossed by the *via Traiana* and counted on a network of secondary connections between the Adriatic coast and the interior (Melfese, Irpinia). *Capua* was at the junction between the *via Appia* and the *via Latina* but, above all, it was at the start of the *via Popilia* which, through Southern *Campania*, *Lucania* and the Tyrrhenian coast of *Bruttii*, reached *Rhegium* (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Aerial view of Santa Maria Capua Vetere (*Capua*) noting the Roman and late antique sites mentioned within the paper.

Finally, both centres were chosen as seats to host the governors of the newly established provinces of *Apulia et Calabria* and *Campania* (Volpe, 1996, pp. 95-107; Grelle, 1999, pp. 125-127; Savino, 2005, p. 18; Sirano, 2016, pp. 131-132): their “hierarchical promotion” underlined the strategic role played by the two cities in relations with the other towns and the different rural contexts of their territories. Indirectly, it also remarked the vitality of local communities and the persistent political and social strength of urban élites.

We do not know what it might mean being a peripheral seat of power for a provincial town and, in particular, what might be the direct repercussions of this new *status* on urban landscape. It is possible to hypothesise that the governor's

officium needed suitable places to perform his administrative and institutional functions, to exercise justice, to control tax levies, i.e. spaces for representation and audience, public warehouse and archives, service buildings. On a wider scale, moving away from the very few available archaeological data, it is easy to perceive that being peripheral nodes of the central government acted as a factor of further growth and development for those cities that could benefit from this condition, at least until the early 6th century AD.

At *Canusium* (Grelle, 1993), the epigraphic sources recall that, between 317 and 333 AD, the governor *Volusius Venustus* dedicated a sculptural group to the emperor Constantine and his two sons; this monument was placed within a portico whose location is still unknown (ERC, I, n. 16; Goffredo, 2011, p. 171). Another fragmentary inscription mentions Costantine's intervention in the construction or restoration of an unidentified public building (Volpe, 1996, p. 105). Restorations of the urban baths were started by the governor *Caesidius Proculus* and were completed with the economic support of the *res publica Canusinorum* (ERC, Add. 16; Volpe, 1996, p. 105); still during the 5th century, awidespread renovation of the city (*omni ex parte*) was promoted by *Cassius Ruferius* who, for this reason, was celebrated with a statue (ERC, I, n. 26; Goffredo, 2011, p. 171 and note 44). A clear archaeological trace of the maintenance and embellishment of the public urban landscape of *Canusium* could be identified in the restorations that, between the 4th and 5th centuries, invested the so-called Ferrara baths, identified as a large public *balineum* (Cassano & Bianchini, 1992).

Even in the case of *Capua*, epigraphic sources are a precious document to understand how the public euergetism contributed to give the centre an urban *facies* suitable for the new acquired functions (Camodeca, 2010). Some honorary inscriptions come both from the area of the ancient *forum* (*forodei Nobili*) and from the amphitheatre of the city (Camodeca, 2010, pp. 288-290; see also Busino, 2015, p. 95 about the existence of a second *forum*). On the one hand, they prove the continuity of use of these spaces during the 4th and 5th centuries AD, as places of representation and public celebrations; on the other hand, they document the actions of reconstruction or decorative restoration that were taken by local governors and patrons. More generally, the historical and epigraphic documentation available for this centre, at least for the period between Diocletian and Theodosius, outlines the image of a populous, cosmopolitan city, variegated by social and cultural profiles: a liveliness that sheds light on the encomiastic words used by *Ausonius* with regard to the city (*Ordo urb. nob.*, 8, vv. 1-18).

Unlike *Canusium*, in this case the indications provided by written documentation find evidence in a more abundant dossier of archaeological features. The public baths and the *macellum* of the so-called “second *forum*” of the city, located in the southern portion of the town, saw prolonged use until the 5th century AD (Sampaolo & Rescigno, 2009, pp. 9-10). Recent excavations in the central and public sector of the ancient city, located on the northern side

of the *decumanus maximus*, have shown that the road surface was object of careful maintenance while some buildings, built during the imperial period and probably destined for public use, were affected by important restorations (Sirano, 2016, pp. 141-142). This is the case of the monumental partially excavated baths, such as the pavilion known as *Catabulum* and a grandiose semicircular exedra. This architectural complex, built between the 2nd and 3rd century AD, remained in use until the end of the 5th century.

In line with the strategic role played by the two centres in the political and administrative management of their provincial territories, *Canusium* and *Capua* were also precocious and influential seats of dioceses. The first record of the diocese at *Capua* is given by the participation of *Proterius* at the councils of Rome in 313 and Arles in 314 (Otranto, 2010, p. 43). Only a few years later, the bishop of *Capua Vincentius* and the first documented bishop from *Canusium*, *Stercorius*, took part at the council of Serdica in 343 (Otranto, 2010, p. 153). Between the 4th and 6th centuries, the episcopal chronotaxis of the two cities, among the richest in Southern Italy, offers the names of many other bishops. They were often engaged in councils and synods of great importance for the life and the organization of the Church; sometimes they were active also as promoters of wide-scale and wide-impact urban planning.

The formation of a Christian topography, within the urban organism of the two centres, dates back to the 4th century AD. At *Capua*, according to the *Liber Pontificalis*, Constantine built a basilica dedicated to the Apostles and adorned it with precious furnishings (LP, I, pp. 80-81): the identification of this complex (*basilica Apostolorum*) with the structures incorporated inside and below the current church of Holy Mary of Grace is debated (see Sirano, 2016, p. 135 for a synthesis about this *vexataquaestio*). The hypothesis is not yet supported by the results of investigations aimed at clarifying the chronologies of edification and life of the building. In contrast, the specific chronologies of the first cathedral of *Canusium*, dedicated to the Virgin Mary and recently discovered, are more reliable: the church was built during the second half of the 4th – early 5th century AD in the northern sector of the city gravitating along the axis of the *via Traiana* (Giuliani, Leone & Volpe, 2013).

From the late 4th century until at least the mid-6th century, places of worship and cemetery complexes arose in different areas of both the towns and the immediate suburbs.

In the early 5th century, the bishop of *Capua Symmachus* consecrated a basilica with five naves dedicated to the *Theotokos*, later known as Saint Mary *Suricorum* or Saint Mary Major (Episcopo, 2009, p. 87). Between the 5th and the 6th centuries a small oratory was set up in the basement of the amphitheatre (Pagano, 2008, p. 34); possibly during the same period, the church of Saint Paul was built on the southern side of the *decumanus maximus*. Finally, in the first decades of the 6th century, a church was built for the cult of the martyrs

Agatha and *Stephanus*: this complex was commissioned by the bishop *Germanus* immediately after his return from Constantinople where, in 519, he conducted a delicate mission on behalf of Pope Ormisda with the aim of recomposing the schism of *Acacius* (Episcopo, 2007, pp. 1021-1028).

The figure of *Germanus* active, esteemed, “politically” engaged bishop, once again brings us to *Canusium* and directly recalls the role and the commitment of *Savinus episcopus* for his church and the church of Rome during the first half of the 6th century (Carcione, 1999; Campione, 2001; Volpe, 2007). A prominent figure in the Christian landscape of south Italy, *Savinus* also was a skilled mediator in delicate missions carried out in Constantinople on behalf of the popes. For instance, according to the *Vita Sabini*, the bishop of *Canusium* and *Germanus* from *Capua* were bound by a close friendship, reasonably favored by their common knowledge of the Byzantine world and the Roman ecclesiastical circles (Campione, 2001, pp. 32-33). Like *Germanus*, and perhaps more than him, *Savinus* was the promoter of an intense program of construction and renovation of churches, as documented by the hagiographic *Vita* and, above all, the archaeological data. His ambitious project of renewal of the *civitas christiana* led to the construction of the basilica complex of Saint Peter in the immediate southern periphery of the city (Volpe, Favia, Giuliani & Nuzzo 2007), where he was later buried (Fig. 4); the erection of the monumental baptistery of Saint John, adjacent to the pre-existing cathedral of the Virgin Mary (Giuliani, Leone & Volpe, 2013); the building of the church of the martyrs Cosmas and Damian (later dedicated to Saint *Leucius*) in the Eastern suburb (Volpe, Favia & Giuliani, 2003, pp. 68-70; Pensabene & D'Alessio, 2009, pp. 147-154). A further, recent and unsuspected discovery has enriched the already long list of material testimonies of the bishop's building policy. Even the current cathedral of Canosa, dedicated to Saint *Savinus*, below its Romanesque architectural appearance, hides an original and almost intact building of the Justinian age (Falla Castelfranchi, 2011; Bertelli & Attolico, 2011; Volpe, 2014). The wide use of bricks marked with the *Savinus'* monogram in the walls and in the vaults could allow us to attribute to the bishop also the construction of this church with three naves and a transept, which was covered by domes in axis like the central nave.

On a wider and more comprehensive scale, through the topographic distribution of the Late Antique churches spread within the urban landscape of the two cities, it is possible to observe what places/sectors of the pre-existing urban organisms still functioned as settling attraction poles and what places/sectors were generated *ex novo* or revitalised as a consequence of the construction of new attraction poles. In other words, the question is to reflect on the relationship that, in this period, was established with the urban structure inherited from the past, also in terms of hierarchies between places, buildings, roads. With the only exception of the Early Christian church incorporated in the current cathedral, if we compare the locations of all the worship buildings known in *Canusium* with

the position of the core places of the city during the full imperial period, it is clear how “peripheral” the former were; nevertheless, these peripheries were strategic areas for their proximity to some important roads that crossed *Canusium* and connected it to the surrounding territory (Fig. 5). Also at *Capua* none of the three Early Christian churches already mentioned was built in correspondence with the “central” or “emblematic” places of the pre-existing urban plan: the church of Saint Mary Major was built on the south-western strip of the ancient city, while those of Saint Peter and Holy Mary of Grace were built in the northern sector of the city, close to the urban route of the *via Appia*, on land previously occupied by private houses or public complexes.



Fig. 4. Plan and aerial photograph of the Canosa di Puglia: the basilica complex of San Pietro in the immediate southern periphery of the town (Volpe, Favia, Giuliani & Nuzzo 2007).

The contexts so far examined illustrate how the direct involvement of the two cities in the system of peripheral management of political and administrative power allowed them not only to maintain their urban *status*, a certain social and economic dynamism, the functionality of part of their own public and representation wrap; but also to propose themselves as strong and influential centres of religious power.



Fig. 5. Canosa di Puglia: location of all the worship buildings known in *Canusium* between the 4th and 6th century AD.

The available archaeological data allow us to open a window also on the composition of the local urban society and on the lifestyles that still characterised both the centres. Interesting attestations of remarkable *domus* come from the eastern area of *Capua* (e.g. *domus* di via degli Orti; *domus* di piazza Padre Pio; *domus* di proprietà Garofalo): between the 4th and 5th centuries, these buildings saw important phases of restoration and embellishment (Busino, 2015, pp. 94-95). Another sector with a marked residential connotation has been also intercepted in the northern part of the urban layout, not far from the *Catabulum* complex and the Christian basilica of Holy Mary of Grace. Here, recent excavations uncovered remains of a monumental 5th century *domus*, created by the union of two houses of the Roman Republican period (Sirano, 2016, pp. 141-146). The new building not only maintained the pre-existing spaces

and architectural volumes, but it was also affected by renovations of floors and interior decorations. A particular emphasis was also given to an exedra with a reception/representation function: the room was paved with a fine polychrome mosaic with a central *emblema*, which enclosed the bust of a man with a draped tunic within a *corona gemmata*. It has been hypothesised that the represented figure was the portrait of a prominent member of the family but also of the entire local community.

The widespread attestations of articulated dwellings, restored with the aim of being not only private spaces but also places of ostentation and self-representation, testify to the persistent presence of an urban aristocracy, which was still deeply rooted in the city and engaged in the promotion of itself. At least until the end of the 4th century AD, the local epigraphy offers the names of numerous personalities and families who held prestigious positions in the life of the province or had brilliant careers in Rome or within the imperial court: also *Quintus Aurelius Symmachus* was the owner of a *praetorium* and other houses in *Capua* (Busino, 2015, pp. 93).

Similar examples of prestigious private residential architecture are not available for *Canusium* where, at the current state of research, the only two episodes of good-quality residential architecture so far known are both connected to the ecclesiastical commissioning and, not surprisingly, they date precisely to the phase of full growth of the socio-political role of the *Canusina* Church within the urban structure (mid-6th century AD). In this regard, as pointed out by R. Giuliani (2010, p. 159), the apparent absence of urban high status residential complexes could perhaps reinforce the hypothesis of a preference by the local élite for rural dwellings.

R.G.

4. THE 5TH CENTURY AD: NEW URBAN IDENTITIES

If the identity of the Late Antique city is the result of a long-lasting evolution, as effectively affirmed by F. Marazzi (2010, p. 659), it is difficult not to recognise the period between the full 5th and at least the first half of the 6th century as the arrival point of this process. Limiting our analysis to the cities of Southern Italy, during this phase, new forms of urbanisation overlapped the skeleton of roman pre-existences, giving rise to settlement agglomerations that cannot be read with the same parameters of Roman urbanism.

Still existing urban roads, easily accessible squares, suburbs connected to surrounding rural territories, port infrastructures still in use, acted as catalysts for houses, commercial shops, artisanal workshops which often arose *ex novo* widely reusing walls, structures and rooms of pre-existing private buildings or, even more widely, of abandoned public complexes.

Even cathedrals and churches, built in most of the Southern Italian cities during the late 4-5th centuries AD, flanked other gravitational poles of the urban fabric and soon became places of strong aggregation, especially as a consequence of the progressive weakening of the Imperial institutions. From this point of view, the case of *Cuma* neatly reveals the morphogenetic strength of a church: with the transformation of the ancient “upper” temple into a Christian cathedral, probably between the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th century, the gravity centre of the city moved towards the area of the ancient acropolis which, during the Greek-Gothic war, also hosted the Byzantine *castrum* (De Rossi, 2012).

Complex and well-articulated examples of “*medinisation*” (Marazzi, 2010, p. 671) of urban space are represented by the cities of *Neapolis* and *Egnatia*, whose polycentric urban organizations developed by adapting the pre-existing Roman topography to the needs and the economic vocation of the two settled communities. In particular, at *Egnatia* (Fig. 6), the port infrastructures, the urban stretch of the *via Traiana*, the two Christian basilicas located south of the *via Traiana*, the wide porticoed area around the ancient sanctuary on the acropolis, were centres of attraction for the local urban population predominantly made up of artisans, merchants, fishermen who built their own shop-houses behind or inside these places (Mastrocinque, 2014; Cassano & Mastrocinque, 2016). As noted by R. Giuliani (2010, p. 160), the “ordered” insertion of the shop-houses of *Egnatia* inside the disused public buildings seems to suggest, once again, the intervention of a public authority for managing the reuse of these spaces; a similar “controlled privatization” could have also concerned the baths of *Herdonia* where a private occupation of some still accessible rooms took place respecting the original volumes of the architectural complex.

Despite their “new” role and prerogatives, even *Canusium* and *Capua* were hit, during the full 5th century AD, by the same deconstruction processes of their “roman” urban assets that are documented in numerous other centres of Southern Italy during Late Antiquity. I refer to the abandonment of more or less wide sectors of the pre-existing urban fabric, the contraction of the settled areas and the progressive emergence of attraction poles for urban and residential aggregation.

At *Canusium*, generalised downgradings and robbing of private houses have been documented close to the eastern and southern peripheries of the town, while an overall obliteration also affected the residential district immediately extended to the south of the ancient temple of Giove Toro and the “Ferrara” public baths (Giuliani, 2010, p. 132). Also for *Capua*, archaeology sketch well the image of a polycentric city, with empty spaces that coexisted with still populated and active areas (see *supra*).

The presence of ever larger “empty” areas, wedged between inhabited spaces, is among the distinctive features of the urban landscape of this period: abandoned *insulae*, obliterated streets, collapsed buildings, accumulations of

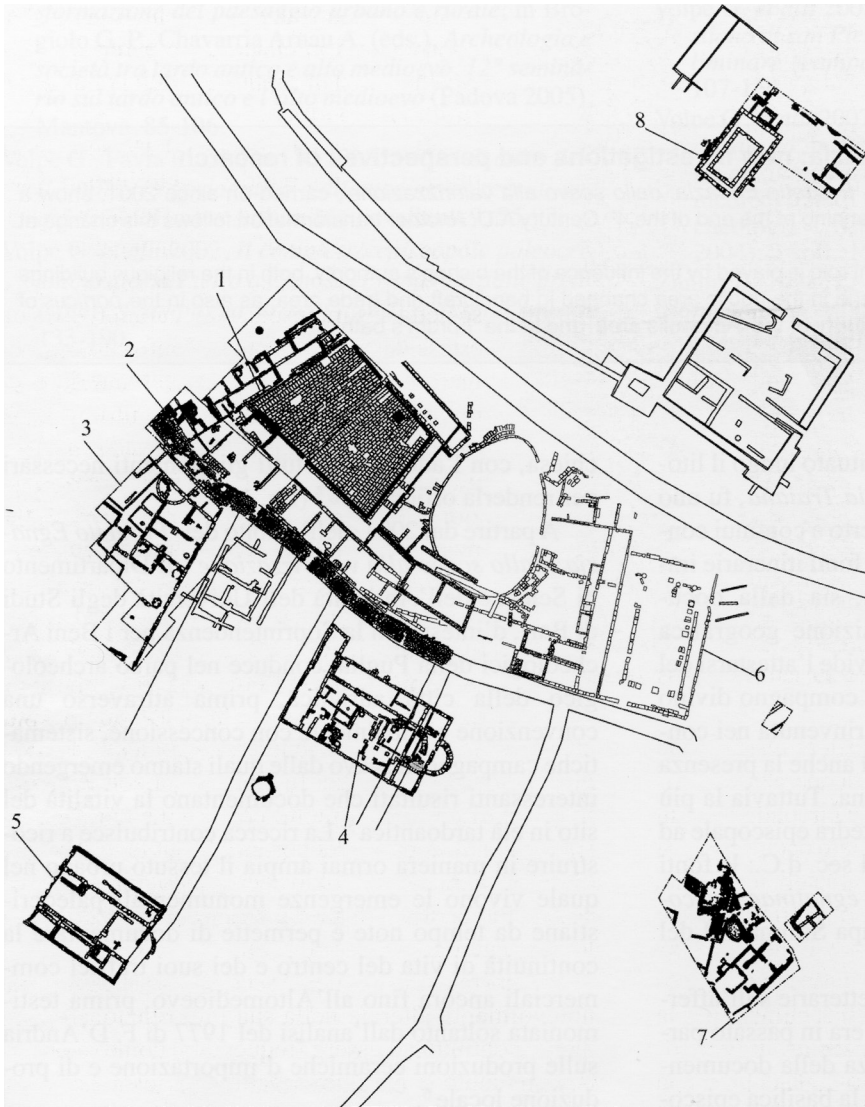


Fig. 6. *Egnatia* (Fasano, Brindisi): plan of the archaeological area. 1. Portico and market square. 2. *Via Traiana*. 3. Residential and productive sector south of the *via Traiana*. 4. Episcopal Basilica. 5. Southern Basilica. 6. Civil Basilica. 7. Public baths near the *forum*. 8. Temple of the Acropolis.

earth and rubble, marked the articulation of cities, in close contact with life and work places of life. During the 5th century, the *crypto porticus* of *Allifae* (Marazzi & Olivieri 2009), the public buildings around the *forum* at *Suessula* (Camardo & Rossi, 2005), the theatre and the Carminiello ai Mannesi residential complex

at Naples (Arthur, 1994; Baldassarre, 2010), after careful spoliation, were reused as rubbish dumps; in these as in other cities, moreover, some archaeological indicators testify to the presence *in urbe* of vegetable gardens and cultivated fields or spaces reserved for animal housing.

"Ruralisation" or "villagisation" are the terms usually used to define this peculiar phenomenon of dissolution of the material and ideological boundaries between the countryside and the city; in particular, both terms well describe the complex osmosis of lifestyles, housing modes, habits in using spaces, materials and constructive techniques, between the two entities.

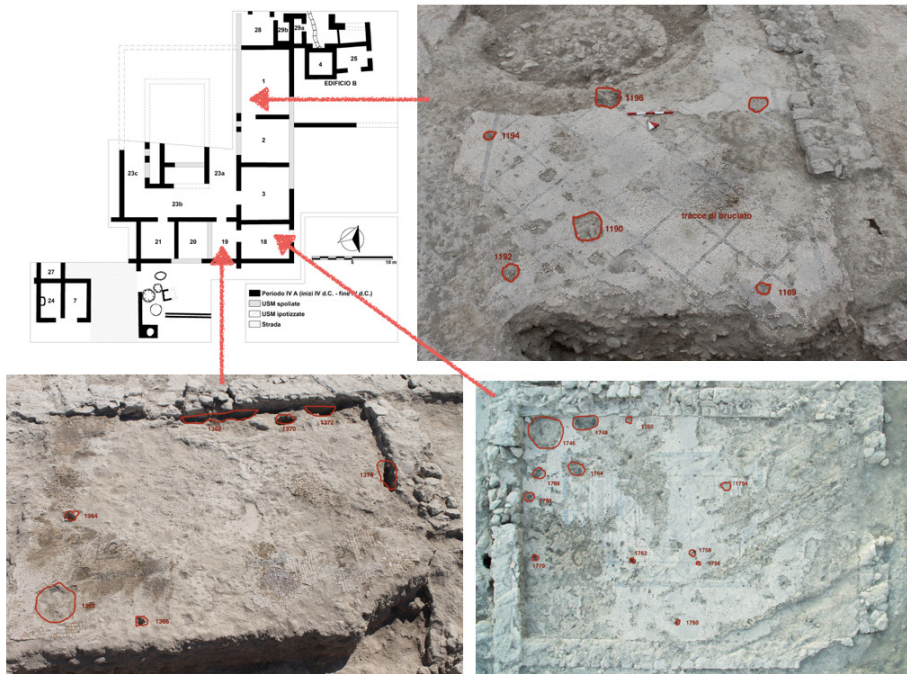
So, during the 5th century, while the *vicus* of San Giusto (Fig. 7) used urban architectural models to present itself as the seat of a rural diocese and the



Fig. 7. San Giusto (Lucera): plan of the Late Antique rural settlement. On the left, the basilican complex; on the right, the articulated 'craft centre' with spaces for pottery production, metalworking, wool-treating and manufacture.

management centre of an extensive imperial estate (Volpe, Romano & Turchiano, 2013), in the same period many cities acquired a rural-townscape which gives substance to the well-known expression "*civitas ruralis*" by Cassiodorus (Var. 12.15.5).

In the coastal town of *Salapia*, along the Adriatic coast of Northern Apulia, during the second half of the 5th century, profound structural changes invested a particularly valuable *domus* which, from the imperial period, stood in a central area of the city, near the *forum* (De Venuto *et al.*, 2017). The building was dismembered in autonomous parts and wooden poles were fixed in the mosaic floors to support new roofs, perhaps made of more organic materials: these parts shifted from being part of a large élite complex to perhaps the housing for discrete family units of non-élite individuals (Fig. 8). Above all, in the area of the ancient peristyle of the *domus*, the mosaic pavement was cut and its space was emptied out to create a sunken area perhaps dedicated to small animal penning. Close to these contexts, developed deposits to manage domestic waste: one of these dumps in fact contained the remains of at least 22 sheep/goats, 18 adult cattle (whose carcasses displayed clear signs of work stress), and 9 pigs. It has



been hypothesized that breeding and slaughtering activities took place near (or in any case not far away) the disposal area (De Venuto, 2018).

Even the small houses that were built on pre-existing private or public buildings at *Herdonia* and *Egnatia* were often provided with courtyards for housing small and large size animals; these areas usually flanked residential rooms and other spaces assigned to commercial activities, to storage of agricultural products, to artisanal practices (Giuliani, 2014).

The model of the small, rural productive-residential unit, completely independent and self-sufficient, though with some aspects of specialisation in manufacturing or in commercialising goods, established itself within the city, also in non-peripheral areas of the pre-existing roman urban fabric. A city population involved in agriculture, breeding, crafts, perhaps migrated from the suburbs or the surrounding countryside, took over the places abandoned by urban aristocracies, moulding them in completely new forms compared to the past.

R.G.

5. CONCLUSION: RESILIENT CITIES

In conclusion, it is difficult to avoid the temptation to define as “resilient” the cities and the urban communities that saw continuity of life through the centuries of Late Antiquity.

But what does it mean for a city to be resilient? The term “resilience”, examined first in the field of materials science, has long been used by Ecology studies to describe the transition process that leads an ecosystem, subjected to external changes, to assume a new equilibrium (Walker & Salt, 2006), while Social Sciences, in particular psychology and anthropology, define “resilience” the ability of a single individual or a community to face and manage stressful or sudden and traumatic events, such as political, social, economical, environmental changes (Redman, 2005).

In more recent times, “resilience” has become an *à la page* concept even among architects and urban planners who, via an ecological approach, consider the “city system” as an organism in continuous transformation to achieve acceptable levels of efficiency (Acierno, 2015).

In this theoretical framework, a resilient city (and consequently, a resilient community) is not simply a city capable of absorbing the impact of macro-structural changes, keeping unchanged its identity, its structure and its own functions. On the contrary, resilient is the city that modifies its social, cultural, economic and settlement structures to face the long-term solicitations of history.

So, returning to the core of this paper, each of the Late Antique towns so far mentioned, between the 4th and 6th centuries, faced great structural transformations, social and cultural changes, different economic conjunctures, reconfiguring completely themselves and their life places.

The available archaeological dossier shows how the crisis of the Roman urban organism, with its buildings, its functional topography and its identity spaces, was counterbalanced by the emergence of new places for housing, working, storing and exchanging local and imported products and for worship.

Likewise, the rise of new social groups, whose socio-economic profiles and lifestyles can be deduced from the analysis of their private houses, filled the void left by the progressive and general disappearance of the ancient and consolidated urban aristocracies.

From this point of view, moreover, contexts such as landfills and garbage dumps testify to the capacity of these renewed urban communities to take part, at least until the mid-6th century, in short- and long-range commercial flows.

Certainly not all the cities of Southern Italy were resilient to great epochal changes or economic conjunctures. Towns like *Sinuessa* or *Liternum*, for example, were perhaps abandoned during the 5th century; many others did not survive the definitive political, institutional and military collapse of the western part of the Empire and, between the second half of the 6th and the 7th centuries, they were overwhelmed as a result of the Greek-Gothic War and the Lombard/Longobard conquest.

In the case of *Salapia*, the cyclical dynamic “*equilibrium-caesura-resilience-equilibrium*” broke off only at the end of the 16th century, when the area occupied for centuries by the town was permanently abandoned and the local community migrated to the nearby villages of Trinità, Saline and to the city of Barletta. At Canosa, Naples and in many other Southern Italian cities, which are populated with continuity from Roman times until today, that dynamic is still ongoing.

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FORUM COMPLEXES AND *CITTÀ AD ISOLE* IN LATE ANTIQUE GAUL: POSSIBILITIES AND PROBLEMS

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores the utility of the concept of *città ad isole* in thinking about late antique and early medieval urbanism in Gaul. The introductory sections sketch the history of the term and discuss its recent use as a device for categorising Gallic cities, in conjunction with other criteria such as the persistence of forum complexes. Such complexes are shown, however, to have been widely dismantled during the 4th and 5th centuries, rendering them of limited cultural or spatial relevance in subsequent urban development. Settlement in most Gallic cities did spatially fragment, as reduced populations distributed themselves over extensive urban and suburban areas, but the formation of these *città ad isole* was determined by the interplay of walls, churches, and redundant classical monuments in any given city, and these various nuclei remained integrated into a single urban community. The term thus functions as a useful descriptor of post-Roman urbanism in Gaul, but in spatial rather than social terms, and is of dubious value in ranking Gallic cities.

KEYWORDS: Gaul, late antique, cities, early medieval, urbanism, urban space, urban fragmentation, urban decline, forum complexes, churches, suburbs, urban communities.

1. INTRODUCTION: HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

The idea of the *città ad isole* emerged in the early stages of the groundbreaking debate about the transition from the ancient to the medieval city that began in Italian scholarship of the 1980s. One early expression of it by Gian Pietro Brogiolo, inspired in particular by the important results of his excavations at Brescia, ran as follows:

‘La città altomedievale lombarda ci appare urbanisticamente distribuita ad isole di insediamento, ciascuna con la propria chiesa e annessa area cimiteriale, circondate da aree coltivate, un modello forse non troppo lontano da quello rurale’ (Brogiolo, 1984, p. 53).

(‘The early medieval Lombard city appears, in an urban sense, distributed in islands of settlement, each with its own church and associated cemetery, surrounded by cultivated land, a model perhaps not greatly distinct from a rural one’).

As this quotation suggests, these islands of settlement were initially conceived as communities that were not only spatially but socially independent, and so more akin to discrete villages than to fragments of a wider urban whole. Furthermore, as the direct comparison to the contemporary rural world implies, the idea was originally freighted with pejorative as well as purely descriptive overtones, because it was forged in the crucible of an ongoing debate about whether early medieval settlements in former Roman cities retained any meaningful urban reality. In particular, some archaeologists were seeking to emphasise the newly-emerging indications from urban sites of huts, fields, enigmatic dark earth deposits, and extensive dereliction and abandonment in order to counter more positive interpretations of early medieval urbanism grounded in textual references to resident lay and clerical elites, and to the vigorous building activity in which such persons were apparently engaged. This Italian urban debate could thus be schematised as pitting ‘catastrophists’ against ‘continuitists’, to adopt the terminology employed by Bryan Ward-Perkins (1997) in a very convenient summary for Anglophones of its parameters, the underlying assumptions of its main protagonists, and the loaded discourses with which they described the evidence at their disposal.

By the time Ward-Perkins summed it up, this debate had assumed sufficient importance to command such attention, but it also had lost something of its edge, as its leading lights came to agree on at least some of the fundamentals of the evidence, and to qualify their more uncompromising assertions into more nuanced syntheses. By the 1990s, for example, Brogiolo had adopted a position not unjustly characterised by Ward-Perkins as one of ‘modified gloom’. In the fine primer on early medieval Italian cities that he produced together with Sauro Gelichi in 1998 (which has since run to multiple editions), an account of his less cheerful *modello bresciano* was accordingly balanced by due consideration of the more upbeat *modello veronese*, as had been expounded, in particular, by Cristina La Rocca (1986). This overview of the Brescian sequence set out first the vertical changes visible in urban areas, and then the horizontal ones, which, in familiar but slightly-adjusted terms, were said to have led:

‘all’abbandono di interi quartieri, poi mutati in campi e orti, con la conseguente frammentazione dell’abitato urbano in isole di insediamento, secondo un modello non dissimile da quello rurale’ (Brogiolo & Gelichi, 1998, 32)

‘to the abandonment of whole quarters, or their transformation into fields and gardens, with the consequent fragmentation of urban occupation into islands of settlement, following a model not dissimilar from the rural one.’

While the overtones of ruralisation here remain largely unchanged, it is notable that the idea of social, as opposed to spatial, fragmentation has now

been dropped, through the omission of the original implication that these post-urban communities were now leading distinct liturgical, funerary, or agricultural existences. In effect, this dilution of the idea of the *città ad isole* by emphasising its impact on the physical integrity of urban space over its consequences for the social coherence of urban communities anticipated a tendency within late antique and early medieval urban historiography to neutralise it further by appropriating it to serve in a more straightforwardly descriptive sense, as a convenient shorthand for one of the key developments that came to distinguish post-Roman from classical urbanism. This detached the term from the original – and to some extent historiographically specific – context in which it had emerged, but facilitated its more general use as a heuristic device in debating urban change, as deployed systematically by Chris Wickham in the western sections of the ‘Cities’ chapter of his magisterial *Framing the Early Middle Ages* (2005, ch. 10). In Wickham’s analysis, the *città ad isole* became something of an ideal (or, as we shall see, less than ideal) subtype, applied not only in reference to Italian cities, but also to those of the various regions between which his discussion of the late and post-Roman west was divided: Africa, Spain, southern Gaul, and northern Gaul (cities in post-Roman Britain are – rightly – seen as defunct). More significantly, the concept was also specifically and comparatively invoked by Wickham in his overview of western urban change in order to lay out the two contrasting models for developments in post-Roman cities that he perceived to have followed on from the bypassing of the forum zone as the focus of civic life and government:

‘In the West, there seem to have been two models for what replaced it. One was a set of islands of monumental activity, focussed above all on church buildings, often on the edges of the classical town, which as time went on became more and more separate in terms of urban activity as well (the *città ad isole*). The other was a more focussed version of the same process, in which the new churches and the other monuments were closer together (thus sometimes making a new centre), or else closer to the old forum area (this meant the least topographical change), or else were linked together by a stronger urban fabric’ (Wickham, 2005, p. 669).

Picking up from his foregoing region-by-region analyses, and in line with the comparative approach of his study, Wickham went on to identify the first, fragmenting model as more common in Gaul and Africa, and its more focussed alternative as more characteristic of Spain and Italy (from what follows, this distinction seems to apply to the whole of Gaul, though the north was yet to be discussed). He was nevertheless at pains to emphasise that ‘each model was stable in itself, and, as in the East, did not represent an “inferior” form of urbanism to that of the early empire’ (p. 669). This conclusion proceeded logically from the fact that both models meet the minimal (and eminently sensible) criteria for a

settlement to qualify as urban that Wickham had set out earlier in his analysis: a relative density of population, a market, and economic activities distinct from those of the countryside (p. 593). It also remained true to the position he had previously staked out in his contributions to the Italian urban debate, in which he was accurately portrayed on Ward-Perkins' spectrum as standing firmly over to the side of the 'continuists' (1997, p. 161). Next, however, when Wickham turns his attention to northern Gaul, it becomes apparent that these two urban models should be further contrasted with the many former Roman cities in this region that were '*città ad isole* at best' (2005, p. 676), some of which had 'for a time at least, crossed the boundary between the urbanized and the deurbanized' (p. 673).

In effect, therefore, Wickham identifies three categories of Gallic city, and his analysis is creditably decisive in tending to discuss individual sites by explicit reference to them. He does so in particular through comparisons with three cities, Arles and Lyon in the south, and Tours for the north, which are presented as types of still-coherent, incoherent, or borderline urbanism. In the south, the resulting taxonomy runs as follows (as outlined on pp. 665-668):

- i) still coherent urban centres: Arles (and perhaps Marseille, Geneva, Toulouse)
- ii) incoherent urban centres – which are intermittently labelled *città ad isole*: Lyon (and perhaps Aix, Poitiers, Clermont)
- iii) less prosperous cities: these barely merit consideration, unless to note their reduction to small fortified areas, albeit a long side an acknowledgement of the generalized survival of urban networks in the region (p. 667).

The ensuing discussion of northern Gallic cities applies similar criteria, but describes them somewhat differently, with the following outcomes (pp. 674-678):

- i) 'more than fragmented': Paris and Cologne
- ii) incoherent (and compared to Lyon): probably Trier and Reims, perhaps Metz
- iii) borderline – the *città ad isole* at best: Tours, probably Bonn, Le Mans.

Below the many northern cities that fall into the latter category, meanwhile, lay those that were becoming ruralised: Arras is briefly singled out as an example.

In this region, however, the difficulties of assigning cities to one or other of these categories in the absence of sufficient evidence are explicitly recognised, and the boundaries between them are persistently more blurred. Paris and Cologne are highlighted as successful, but also as exceptional, and rather than being compared to Arles, they are said to maintain 'the polynuclear spatial pattern of the *città ad isole* of the rest of Gaul' (p. 678). The attribution of cities

to either side of the still-urban and scarcely-urban divide does, however, draw upon explicit comparison with Lyon and Tours, though its results are qualified as 'largely guesswork' (p. 677: such guesses tend to depend upon the number of magnates visible at a given centre in the texts, the measure with which Wickham sometimes supplements his minimal criteria for urban status, as outlined at pp. 602-609). Finally, the distinction between the *città ad isole* at best and the now ruralised former cities is presented as highly permeable. Indeed, the type-site of Tours, a city which, thanks to the work of Henri Galinié, occupies a pioneering position in the archaeological investigation of early medieval urbanism in Gaul akin to that held by Brescia and Verona in Italy, is itself characterised by Wickham as 'a *città ad isole* which, on the evidence of the excavations, had gone over the edge into deurbanization' (pp. 675-676).

The criterion through which this last boundary between the barely-urban and the ex-urban is policed is essentially economic, and leads back towards age-old debates about what constitutes a town. Rather than rehearsing such issues in this paper, my intention in what follows is to focus more upon Wickham's distinction between cities on the basis of their spatial coherence, central to which is a conception of the *città ad isole* that has been neutered of some of its original connotations. Essentially, Wickham boils the term down to a convenient descriptor for the fragmentation of occupation within an urban space, which becomes more or less synonymous with the notion of the 'polynuclear settlement' often used in northern European archaeology (as acknowledged on p. 676). As such, it can serve not simply to refer to occupation within former urban areas, as in its initial coinage by Brogiolo, but also to any similar pockets of settlement that might exist within the periurban periphery. Wickham also directly rejects the original implication that this spatial fragmentation was in some sense symptomatic of wider urban decline, tending to deploy the idea of the *città ad isole* in a positive sense, without any of its original ruralising connotations. Instead, it becomes explicitly an urban category, from which a settlement such as Tours might eventually find itself relegated: 'going over the edge into deurbanisation'. Even so, this newly-fragmented urban form is still clearly perceived as inferior to the more integrated equivalent said to be more characteristic of regions such as Spain and Italy, which in Gaul is implied to be rare, and confined to the south. Wickham's analysis thus privileges spatial coherence not simply as a different, but a stronger, more stable expression of urbanism, as implied by the passage quoted above: it is both 'more focussed' (presumably in spatial terms) and 'linked together by a stronger urban fabric' (whether in a social or material sense), whereas the perceived *città ad isole* tend over time to become 'more and more separate in terms of urban activity' (perhaps harking back towards the original connotations of the term in implying separate, village-like communities).

The aim in what follows is not to question Wickham's conclusion that many urban centres in Gaul, northern or southern, became *città ad isole* between 300

and 700, but rather to look more closely at how and why their fragmentation came about, perhaps to a greater extent than in other regions of the post-Roman west, and at how useful it is to distinguish between cities on the basis of their perceived spatial coherence. First, this requires a brisk outline of the principal factors that determined the development of late antique cities in Gaul, with specific reference to their impact upon urban space. Secondly, more specific attention will be paid to the demise of the forum complexes that formed the original centres of earlier imperial Gallic cities, partly to provide one illustration of social and topographical change, but particularly because the priority given to such ensembles in Wickham's comparative regional analyses of the transformation of urban landscapes. Finally, we will reconsider to what extent these various developments might have encouraged or inhibited the formation of the *città ad isole*, and how much – or how little – significance such changes held for contemporaries.

2. THE PARAMETERS OF URBAN CHANGE IN LATE ANTIQUE GAUL

The vast majority of the hundred and more *civitas*-capitals of Roman Gaul reached the peak of their spatial extent and monumental development around the later second century AD. Their impressive landscapes were the product of the efforts of several generations of municipal aristocrats who had embraced the city as the ideal venue in which to express their loyalty to imperial values and affirm their local standing by spending on public buildings and entertainments, while ensuring that their contributions to civic life were suitably commemorated in a wealth of inscriptions and honorific monuments (Woolf, 1998). By the Antonine era, as a result, every Gallic city had been equipped with the basic kit of urban public buildings, and many were continuing to acquire an abundance of temples, baths, and other prestige paraphernalia, and to see their existing monuments further enhanced in scale and sophistication.

In the decades around 200, nevertheless, archaeological indications start emerging from several cities to suggest that this prolonged period of urban expansion and embellishment was nearing its end, with a slowdown in new urban building projects, a regression in the extent of some centres, and the first hints of a failure to maintain the existing public landscape in its entirety; these trends all became increasingly prevalent as the third century progressed. While it has become less fashionable in recent years to think in terms of an all-consuming 'third-century crisis' (for a balanced view, Witschel, 1999, esp. pp. 375-376; Esmonde Cleary, 2013, ch. 1 is more revisionist), it is hard not to regard this as the tipping point in the trajectory of Gallo-Roman urbanism. In the third quarter of the century, in particular, the nascent urban recession was exacerbated by the material and psychological impact of two generations of political turmoil, as, in a prequel to the eventual disintegration of the west, external invaders penetrated fleetingly but deeply into Gaul, and, more seriously, internal rebellions triggered

the series of internecine conflicts that led to the temporary secession of a 'Gallic empire' (Drinkwater, 1987). The direct impact of these episodes upon most cities is hard to assess, though some, such as Autun, suffered badly, as we shall see. But the contemporary archaeology of virtually all urban centres, from Amiens to Arles, shows increasing signs of stress, as manifested by recurrent and widespread evidence of fire damage, the dereliction of public buildings of all types, and a more or less significant retraction in urban space consequent upon the desertion and demolition of houses in peripheral areas: in short, a generalised intensification of pre-existing tendencies. Although the restoration of central imperial control from the 270s onwards arrested the immediate crisis, and the vast majority of existing cities continued to function as the centres of their territories, the urban climate had irrevocably changed (Fig. 1). The heyday



Fig. 1. Provinces and cities in late antique Gaul (after Gauthier *et al.*, 2014, p. 8).

of classical urbanism in Gaul, broadly identifiable as running from the mid-first to the late second century, would prove shorter than the long shadow cast by its afterlife over the experience of subsequent generations of city-dwellers, and, until relatively recently, up on the verdicts of modern historiography.

The late antique transformation of the character of Gallo-Roman urbanism is perhaps best encapsulated in the erection at over seventy cities of fortifications, the so-called 'reduced enceintes', that generally encompassed only part, and sometimes only the merest fractions of the urbanised areas of earlier centuries, or even, especially in Novempopulana, enclosed hilltops adjacent to existing settlements. Although around twenty Gallic cities had acquired walls in the early imperial period by virtue of their colonial status or military significance (Esmonde Cleary, 2003), most had hitherto been left unprotected. This new prioritising of urban defence was clearly driven from above, and these circuits sponsored and often probably executed by the imperial administration. However, the steady increase over recent years in good archaeological dating criteria for such city-walls has confirmed that their construction cannot longer be regarded as the product of a sustained programme of urban defensive measures undertaken in the immediate aftermath of the restoration of central imperial authority in the later third century, but instead continued to be carried out piecemeal on through the fourth century and on into the fifth (here the typological classification in Maurin, 1992 was groundbreaking, but there is no up-to-date synthesis). But despite this variation in the immediate historical contexts of their construction, the relationship of such defences to existing urban layouts does exhibit some broadly consistent features besides their generally 'reduced' nature. First, it is clear that considerations of defensive security took precedence over the coherence of existing urban layouts, to the extent that the builders of the new walls sometimes found it necessary to exclude major public buildings of earlier centuries from their perimeters, including, as will be discussed in more detail in the next section, the former civic centre as represented by the forum complex. Secondly, and in similar vein, they took a ruthlessly functional approach to existing monuments of all kinds, sometimes incorporating them into the defences as convenient bastions, but more often demolishing those that stood in the way of the walls or compromised the ineffectiveness; the foundations of the new circuits, in particular, were packed with the *spolia* of unwanted public buildings, commemorative inscriptions, and funerary monuments (Alcheres, 1994; Hiernard, 2003). The new city-walls thus came not only to supersede the old public landscape as symbols of urban prestige (Fig. 2), but were often established at its immediate expense.

Although some cities retained their existing and more expansive circuits, and a few, particularly in the south-east, appear never to have been walled at all, in many centres the new walls consolidated the existing pattern of contraction. It seems logical to assume, moreover, that they often helped to encourage it



Fig. 2. The late antique wall-circuit at Le Mans (photo: author).

further, even if, as we shall see, the routine activities of the inhabitants of these communities were far from restricted to their intra-mural areas. In other respects, too, the fourth century appears characterised more by a slowdown in the progress of urban decline than the reversal of its established trajectory: abandoned areas around the fringes of towns were only rarely or sporadically reoccupied, and in most centres the occasional archaeological indication of public or private building activity, whether in the form of new build or, more often, restoration, seems nowhere near sufficient to redress the losses of the preceding century. The major exceptions to this pattern, tellingly, are found in those centres closely tied to the expanded and increasingly interventionist imperial administration in Gaul, most obviously Trier and Arles – rebranded as *Constantina* – which enjoyed bursts of substantial monumental patronage commensurate with their enhanced status as periodic residences of the emperors (Demandt & Engemann, 2007; Witschel, 2004/5; Loseby, 1996; Heijmans, 2006a), and the types of building from which central authority was exercised, such as the probable palace-complex and basilica erected on the newly-fortified Ile de la Cité at Paris, or the renovated *praetorium* at Cologne (Busson, 1998, pp. 403-26; Precht, 2008). Outside this *ordo* of imperially-favoured cities, however, the funding needed to sustain

urban monuments and amenities appears to have been in short supply, because municipal aristocrats had become unwilling or unable to sustain the spiral of competitive munificence that had generated the civic landscapes, festivals, and games of earlier periods. In this regard the virtual absence from late antique Gaul of the dedicatory inscriptions and honorific monuments of earlier periods that celebrated their contributions to urban communities should be regarded as indicative not just of a change in commemorative practice, but of a fundamental cultural shift, as the wealthy directed their enthusiasms and their resources elsewhere (Witschel, 2016; 2017). At first, the impact of such changes is hard to measure on the ground, because the ongoing use of buildings is generally much more difficult to document archaeologically than their construction or abandonment. But from the mid-fourth century onwards, and particularly in conjunction with a new wave of political crisis in the decades around 400, the renewed proliferation of evidence for the degradation, disuse, and demolition of the classical monumental landscape of Gallic cities marks the point at which the more or less managed decay of a reduced building stock shifts further towards its active rejection, as will be illustrated below with particular reference to forum complexes.

At the same time, however, the progressive deterioration and eventual disavowal of the urban monumental legacy of earlier centuries was offset – and to some extent accelerated – by the imperial adoption of Christianity, which, especially in light of the grafting of the organisation of the church onto that of the state, revitalised almost every existing city to lasting effect as the base for a new resident potentate in the person of its bishop. The pastoral responsibilities of the bishops renewed the old link between cities and their territories, but it was in their cities in particular that they began to preside over a new wave of Christian building patronage, backed by elites who were now as anxious to secure their status in the next world as to cement it in this one. The beginnings of this transformation were slow and uneven, but by the fifth century, as the cult of the saints came to provide an immediate local focus for Christian devotion, it gained in momentum and intensity, coming not only to regenerate urban landscapes, but to revolutionize the dynamics of urban space (Beaujard, 2000, ch.2; Guyon, 2006; Gauthier, 2014). Even as central imperial authority was disintegrating around them, the bishops of cities such as Lyon, Tours, or Clermont (Sidonius, *Ep.* 2.10; Gregory, *Hist.* 2.14; 2.16) were embarking upon ambitious construction projects, both urban and periurban, and, like late antique wall-builders, making copious use of architectonic elements and marble facings stripped from classical monuments in order to do so.

By around 500, in consequence, the majority of Gallic cities had acquired a substantial episcopal ‘group’, generally implanted within the walls, where they existed (though the longer chronology for Gallic fortifications now makes it less

certain in some cases which came first). This complex typically incorporated one or more churches, a baptistery, a bishop's residence of distinction, sometimes equipped with a bath-suite, and an assortment of annexes: an assemblage cumulatively sufficient to absorb a significant proportion of intra-mural space in the many cities with relatively cramped wall-circuits (e.g. at Geneva: Fig. 3, with Bonnet, 2012). In the newly-sanctified suburban cemeteries upon the margins of each city, meanwhile, an assortment of churches, from rudimentary *memoria* to increasingly expansive basilicas were coming to enshrine the tombs of local martyrs and confessors (and, more often than not, ex-bishops), whether real or invented. Whilst the specific topographical relationship between these central and peripheral cult sites was subject to endless local variations, dependent not least upon the number and distribution of venerated tombs around the urban fringes, by the fifth century the same basic combination of central cathedral complex and peripheral funerary basilicas was emerging almost everywhere. But whereas the late antique fortification of Gallic cities was usually the product of a specific moment in time – whenever that moment was – this Christianisation of urban space was incremental, and would build upon this duality throughout the early medieval period (Gauthier *et al.*, 1986-2014). Outside the cathedral complex, other intra-mural churches remained quite scarce (Gauthier, 2014, pp. 376-377), a pattern which even the proliferation of monastic communities in cities from the seventh century onwards did little



Fig. 3. Geneva in Late Antiquity (after Bonnet, 2006, p. 112, fig. 54).

initially to change, since around three-quarters of them were installed amid the sanctified *suburbium*, whether *de novo*, or in association with existing funerary basilicas (Gaillard & Sapin, 2012). As a result, each Gallic city had not so much ‘changed address’, or better ‘shifted its moorings’ (*movetur urbs sedibussuis*), as Jerome (*Ep.* 107.1) had claimed of Rome shortly after 400 in asserting the growing popularity of martyrs’ graves over cobwebbed temples, but come to encompass an expanded field of devotional practice, associated with a new and lasting focus of building activity.

This recurrent investment in urban and suburban church-building, finally, is the clearest material indication of the continuing post-Roman significance of Gallic cities, which arguably saw something of a revival of their institutional and social significance, if only *faute de mieux*, as imperial and provincial frameworks of power and identity broke down in the fifth century and were only sporadically and slowly replaced by stable territorial kingdoms (Loseby 2006; 2013). Cities in the world of Gregory of Tours were indisputably smaller, simpler, and grottier than in the Antonine age, but the vast majority of them had endured throughout as centres of secular and ecclesiastical administration and social organisation, regardless of their spatial coherence or economic weakness. By comparison with the carefully-planned and closely-regulated layouts of their early imperial predecessors, meanwhile, their landscapes had evolved organically in response to the contemporary social priorities of security in this world and salvation in the next. But these two major drivers of urban topographical change, fortification and Christianisation, contained, as we have seen, an inherent contradiction. The new defences generally protected and privileged a particular fraction of existing cities, whereas the proliferation of funerary basilicas and oratories ensured that the spiritual energies and monumental patronage of the *civitas*-community were heavily invested in suburban cemeteries which, as a result of the wide spread contraction of urban settlements since the third century, were often located at a considerable remove from the late antique ramparts. This particularly Gallic conjunction of a contraction of urban activity towards a walled core and an expanding embrace of a sanctified periurban hinterland has significant implications for the emergence of *città ad isole* in the regional context, as will be considered in more detail in due course. Before that, however, it is worth considering what happened in late antiquity to the forum complexes which had hitherto been central to Gallic cities. Their fate serves not only as a vivid illustration of the relatively early and widespread rejection of the monumental ideology of classical urbanism within the region, but also to demonstrate how in Gaul the old civic centres did not generally retain a significance that might have enabled them to act as a counterweight to the spatial or social fragmentation of urban communities to the extent that Wickham contended was possibly the case in other areas of the western empire.

3. THE FATE OF FORUM COMPLEXES IN LATE ANTIQUE GAUL

The forum complex formed the conceptual and monumental centrepiece of the classical Roman city. It was generally located near the heart of the urban layout, at or close to the intersection of its principal orthogonal axes, and consisted of a vast rectangular space, paved in stone and bordered by porticoes and shops, which either included or, more often, was overlooked by a temple, and was also flanked by a basilica, curia, and other assorted administrative buildings. Although the disposition of these constituent parts was subject to innumerable variations, some axial arrangement of place of assembly, religious, and administrative or judicial components– the so-called ‘tripartite forum’ – became a familiar feature of early imperial Gallic (and other western) cities (Gros, 1996, chs. 4-7, with the caveats of Sablayrolles, 1997; Dondin-Payre, 2012). The combination reflected the polyvalent role of the complex in representing the relationship between the city, the empire, and the gods (e.g. Gros, 1987), and incarnated it not only through its major monuments, but through the statues and commemorative inscriptions to emperors, officials, and leading citizens that were set up in and around the square. The archaeological evidence confirms, as one might expect, that Gallic cities generally acquired such complexes in the course of the formalisation of their layouts, between the Augustan era and the late first century AD (Bouet, 2012; *id.* 2012a). Although during the Flavian and Antonine eras other forms of public building such as amphitheatres, baths, and, far less frequently, circuses came, in reflection of changing emphases at Rome, to rival them as venues for expressions of popular enthusiasm and ruling ideology (Gros, 2010), forum complexes remained the focus of Gallic municipal life and dignity throughout the earlier imperial period, as amply confirmed by archaeological indications of their expansion or modification throughout the second century, and in some cases on into the early third (for examples, Bouet, 2012). From then on, however, they began to be implicated in the wider transformations of the public landscape of Gallic cities that were outlined above. But before we pursue the late antique demise of Gallic fora, it would as well to begin by acknowledging some of the methodological difficulties involved.

The first and most basic problem is that of the identification of the forum complex, the location of which in well over half of the cities in Gaul is either unknown, or, at best, surmised from a dubious combination of antiquarian conjecture, general principles, and processes of elimination (in the absence of a pan-Gallic overview, see the regional syntheses in Heijmans, 2006b; 2015; Bouet, 2012b; Pichon, 2015). Even in those cases where the forum zone can be confidently pinpointed on the basis of material remains, our knowledge of its layout is often dependent on old finds and excavations, and, given that such ensembles extended over several hectares, rarely extensive or comprehensive. Many of the better-known forum complexes tend, therefore, to be those of cities which either ceased

at some stage to function as major centres, or significantly shifted in focus, so rendering their remains far easier to locate and excavate intensively than those successively cannibalised or overlain by centuries of subsequent building activity on the same sites. Since some of these unsuccessful centres, such as Vieux or Bayeux, had already lost their status as cities during late Antiquity (Vipard, 2006; Loridan, 2004), this distorts the balance of the evidence towards the forum complexes of the least successful communities, where the demise of the forum cannot usefully be distinguished from that of the city as a whole. In the more typical cases where the archaeological evidence provides only a fragmentary view of the forum complex, meanwhile, it is often hard to tell one can safely generalise from the fate of one component or fraction of the complex to the whole, particularly when its various constituent parts fulfilled very different functions. The likely disuse of forum temples in the later fourth century, after legislative backing for Christianity had proscribed their use, need not for example have condemned an entire complex to similar dereliction, even if it is likely in some degree (depending on the layout of the complex concerned) to have compromised its use, and potentially its appeal (for forum temples see the examples below, and more widely Goodman, 2009; Pichon, 2018). The recurrent, but often flimsy evidence for the appearance in forum porticoes or on the square itself of adventitious dwellings or artisanal activities is similarly ambiguous; it implies a marked change in the forum environment without necessarily proving that this affected the totality of the complex or brought about the cessation of all of its original functions (cf. Diarte-Blasco, 2015). A final complication is that some cities certainly featured several substantial civic spaces; we cannot always be sure, therefore, that the dereliction of one such complex necessarily precludes the existence of a monumental ensemble fulfilling similar functions elsewhere in the same city.

Bearing these caveats in mind, and confining our attention to the better-known examples, a summary outline of the late antique evolution of forum complexes in Gaul suggests that it conforms to the fate of the public urban landscape as a whole, as outlined above: a period of crisis in the later third century, followed by indications of stabilisation, and in some cases renewal, in the decades after 300, only for signs of stress to reappear from the mid-fourth century, which intensify around 400. The earliest unequivocal evidence for forum abandonment tends to be concentrated in those cities which lost their status during late Antiquity when their territory was absorbed into that of a neighbouring city or recentred upon an alternative *civitas*-capital. While such failed cities, identifiable either by their absence from the *Notitia Galliarum*, a list of the region's cities originally compiled c.400, or from their subsequent failure to sustain episcopal sees, make up less than a tenth of the Gallic urban network as a whole (Beaujard & Prévot 2004; Loseby 2000; catalogue in Ferdière 2004), for the reasons given above, their forum complexes are significantly over-represented among the sample of well-documented cases. If we limit ourselves to examples from cities that had failed

well before the end of the fourth century, these include the recently-excavated forum complex of the city of Vieux, near the Channel coast, which had been renovated and embellished as recently as the early third century, only to be left derelict before its end; the industrial-scale butchery that was installed on its northern half continued to function down to the later fourth century (Jardel *et al.*, 2014). At nearby, Lillebonne, the erection of a *castrum* and fortification of the theatre in around 300 seems to have coincided with the demolition of much of the forum complex, and the spoliation of its materials (Le Maho, 2004). In the celebrated – and singular – case of Bavay, in Belgica Secunda, the forum complex itself was turned into a fortification exiguous even by the standards of late antique Gallic cities. The restoration of the its basilica after a late second-century fire had already long been on hold when the complex was abandoned and partially given over to housing in around the 260s, and then adapted c. 300 into a fortress which largely adopted its perimeter walls; this circuit was repaired and redoubled in the mid-fourth century, and by c. 400 included a barrack-like building (Thollard & Denimal, 1998; Hanoune *et al.*, 2000; Delmaire, 2011, pp. 97-149).

This catalogue of derelict or decaying forum complexes in failing cities could easily be extended, but whether we regard it as a cause or consequence of their loss of status (it is generally hard to tell), the demise of these ensembles is likely to be bound up in some way with the diminished significance of these centres within the settlement hierarchy, and as such is an unreliable guide to the contemporary status of such complexes in general.¹ Elsewhere, in cities that retained their status, direct archaeological evidence for the dereliction and abandonment of forum zones as early as the decades around 300 is still scarce. One clear case at Vannes, in Brittany, where the forum complex at the heart of the Augustan foundation on the Boismoreau hill was apparently abandoned in the later third century, is again somewhat anomalous, since its disuse probably occurred in conjunction with a more general shift in the main focus of settlement to the more defensible and newly-walled Mené hilltop, which became the new and lasting focus of the city (Galliou *et al.*, 2009, pp. 345-353). Nevertheless, this is but an extreme example of a more widespread and remarkable phenomenon suggestive of the diminished significance of the old civic centres: their exclusion from various reduced enceintes well-dated on archaeological or typological grounds to the decades around 300. At Bordeaux, for example, the new city-walls, fulsomely celebrated by the patriotic Ausonius, were relatively expansive (32 ha), but still left out all of the city's known public monuments, including the earlier imperial forum complex (though its precise location remains contested, the likely

¹ Alba, Avenches, Javols, Jublains, and Martigny all have more or less clear evidence for the late antique dereliction of their fora, and, although listed in the *Notitia Galliarum*, did not become lasting episcopal sees (for summaries of their declines, see the case-studies in Ferdière, 2004).

areas are all extra-mural). Here the late antique defences were instead focussed upon the protection of the city's port in the tidal lagoon at the confluence of the Garonne and the Devèze (Fig. 4), the 'divider' that in Ausonius' description flowed *per medium urbis* (Ordo, vv. 128-168; Barraud *et al.*, 1996; Doulan & Charpentier, 2013, pp. 49-50). At Périgueux, an elliptical wall-circuit enclosing some 5.5 ha, broadly assigned to the first half of the fourth century, omitted the vast monumental ensembles of the forum and the adjacent temple of Vesunna; its layout seems primarily to have been influenced by a desire to integrate the amphitheatre on the northern edge of the city into the defences as some sort of bastion (Girardy-Caillat, 1996; Bost *et al.*, 2004). At Tours, similarly, an initial conversion of the amphitheatre on the eastern fringe of the Roman city into a

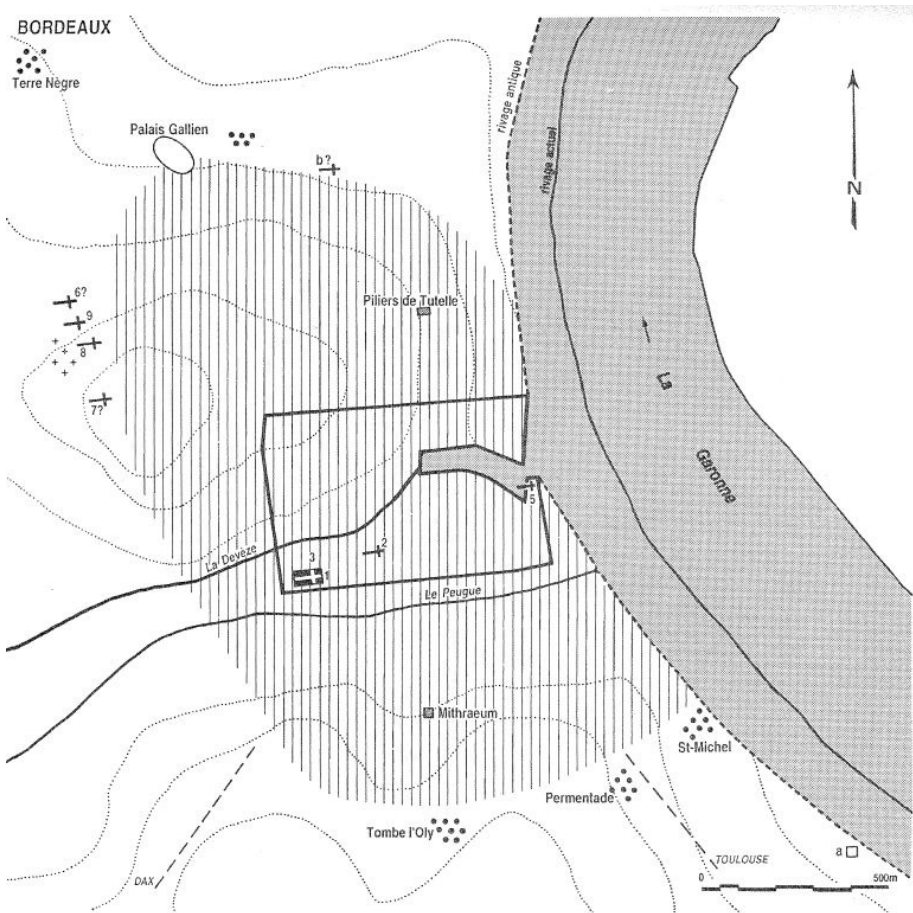


Fig. 4. Bordeaux: the recentring of the late antique city upon its port (after Février, 1998, p. 21) (Vertically-lined area = extent of early imperial settlement; solid line = late antique wall-circuit; † = churches attested by c.750; dots = cemeteries).

bridgehead fortress controlling the Loire was followed in the mid-fourth century by its incorporation into a wall-circuit (9 ha) which again excluded the (little-known) early imperial civic centre (Seigne, 2007). A particularly clear example of the same phenomenon, finally, is provided by Paris, where the fortification of the 9 or 10 hectares of the Ile de la Cité at some time between 308 and 360 – when the Emperor Julian described it ‘an island of limited extent in the middle of the river, encircled on all sides by a rampart’ (*Misopogon*, 340D) – similarly left out the forum complex on the left bank, as well as most of the city’s existing monumental landscape (Busson, 1998, pp. 391-402).

In these and other similar cases, the builders of the reduced enceintes clearly prioritised strategic or defensive considerations over any notional centrality of existing civic centres, the inclusion of which seems an optional rather than a paramount consideration. Evidently, we cannot assume that the omission of these complexes necessarily provides a proxy indication of their immediate dereliction or destruction, particularly since they are often sufficiently distant from the new walls not to have been directly compromised either by their erection or by the creation of an open space in front of them. In some cases, however, the vast amount of *spolia* from disused public buildings and funerary monuments incorporated into the new circuits includes architectonic materials likely to have derived from such complexes; the walls of Périgueux, for example, appear to have recycled masses of dressed stone from the precincts of the forum and the temple of Vesunna, to the extent that the ruined circular tower of the latter which still stands today was already by the mid-fourth century its only surviving remnant (Bost *et al.*, 2004, p. 42).

From the late third and the first half of the fourth century, therefore, we have evidence from a few cities for the dismantling of forum complexes (albeit mostly from those which had or would fail), and indirect indications from several others that such ensembles were not necessarily a central consideration, either literally or metaphorically, during the remodelling of urban layouts inherent in the building of fortifications. The absence of such complexes at any of the various cities that were upgraded to *civitas*-status during late Antiquity, such as Auxerre or Orléans, is perhaps equally revealing, although hardly conclusive given the general deficiencies of the evidence. But while such indications are highly suggestive, this is not to say that forum complexes throughout Gaul had as yet entirely forfeited their ideological functions. Those of Trier and Arles, in particular, were renovated under the house of Constantine and his successors, albeit within the context of wider building programmes that focussed primarily upon the provision of monuments more attuned to contemporary modes of imperial representation and benefaction: lofty palatine basilicas, massive bath-complexes, and circuses (Cüppers, 1979; Heijmans, 2004, pp. 132-243). Outside key centres, however, the picture is less clear. The *Panegyrici Latini* preserve several speeches of gratitude by rhetoricians of Autun who were all too conscious of the galvanising effect that

the imperial presence could have on a city's fortunes by bringing 'men, walls, and favours' in its wake (*Pan. Lat.* VI.22.6), and suitably enthusiastic about the assistance of the emperors in alleviating the lasting damage done to their city by the disastrous siege of 269/70. But although the archaeological evidence does indeed suggest that the restoration work on the city's public buildings, housing, and water-supply which they were at pains to celebrate did include some work on the forum and particularly the adjacent schools, even as they played up the imperial contribution, the panegyrists leave an impression of promises that were yet to be fully delivered; the locals were evidently desperate for more support, and, tellingly, they were heavily dependent upon the state to supply it (Kasprzyk, 2015). Where such assistance was made available to provincial cities in this period, its motivations may, moreover, have been essentially pragmatic. At Amiens, for example, where the forum and amphitheatre stood in exceptional proximity, both monuments were adapted to form the southern perimeter of a reduced defensive circuit erected in the first half of the fourth century. But this remodelling of the forum entailed the demolition of part of its porticoes and the erection in its eastern courtyard of buildings that included a substantial warehouse, indicative of how the retention of such monuments might be accompanied by significant and presumably officially-sanctioned changes in their use (Pichon, 2009, pp. 111-121).

Such hints of a decline in the traditional status and significance of forum complexes within Gallic urban landscapes become more widespread and explicit from the mid-fourth century, as archaeological evidence for their dereliction and abandonment begins to proliferate. Two generations after the civic leaders of Autun had pushed repeatedly for the revival of their city's urban landscape, for example, their descendants presided from the 350s onwards over the sustained dismantling of its civic centre. Although the exact configuration of its civic centre remains debated, the recent observation in the likely forum insula of heaps of chalk and combusted material from a probable lime-kiln coincides with the nearby nineteenth-century discovery of over a thousand fragments of marble inscriptions; the demolition phase of an adjacent circular temple complex nearby includes a similar abundance of marble architectonic elements derived from the dismantling of an entire first-century elevation. Across the road, meanwhile, a layer of mud was being allowed to accumulate on the last solid floors of the building plausibly identified as the renowned *schola Maeniana* before, from around the 370s, this too was broken up (Kasprzyk, 2012; id. 2015). Similar sequences from a series of forum complexes in Aquitanian cities have recently been found to suggest that they were being vowed to decay and then destruction at around the same time.² At Auch, for example, traces of the intrusion of occupation into

² Although a fourth-century public building complex that superseded a *macellum* at St-

the forum during the last phase of its use were soon superseded by its disuse in around the 360s, and an immediate and concerted phase of spoliation perhaps linked with the erection of a wall-circuit around a plateau on the opposite bank of the Gers (Gardes & Lotti, 2012). At Rodez, similarly, dwellings were established in the forum shops and latterly its *area* in the fourth century, before the selective robbing of most of its more substantial structures in the fifth (Catalo *et al.*, 1999). In the case of Dax, finally, new structures and a road were built directly over the foundations of the monument that formed one side of the complex in around 400, indicating that the forum must have lain substantially in ruins for some time (Bouet *et al.*, 2011). The elites of Aquitaine were particularly powerful and extremely rich in the late fourth century, as the careers of Ausonius and his ilk, and the extraordinary opulence of their rural villas amply demonstrates (Balmelle, 2001). But their pre-eminence and wealth was no longer being widely expressed in the forum complexes of the same region's cities, many of which had either been excluded from walled areas or demolished long before the advent of any barbarian invaders, along with the many monuments that had commemorated earlier generations of distinguished civic luminaries and imperial careerists.

To the south-east, meanwhile, in the cities of Narbonensis and Viennensis, the radical transformation of forum complexes has generally been thought to have been delayed until the fifth century (Heijmans, 2006b; *id.* 2015). However, interim reports of recent excavations undertaken by Jean-Marc Mignon at the Le Merci site in Vaison have suggested that the forum complex here was abandoned perhaps as early as the end of the third century and then gradually stripped of its materials over a period extending down to the beginning of the fifth. While this chronology remains to be confirmed, the discovery in the north-west corner of the forum square of a large dump of tiny fragments of polychrome marble *opus sectile* decoration and honorific inscriptions and monuments, including the marble facing of a second-century equestrian statue-base, offers another striking evocation of the pulverisation of municipal memory that the abandonment of such complexes could involve (Mignon, 2015).

By around 400, therefore, the majority of known forum complexes in Gaul for which we have good recent archaeological evidence of their late antique phases had been reduced, wholly or in part, to quarries, and their role as repositories of civic identity and history ground into dust. Even if this does not preclude the ongoing use of some elements of these complexes, it seems unlikely that they can have continued to play a major representational role in the life of their

Bertrand-de-Comminges has been claimed together with its adjacent structures to constitute a new 'tripartite forum' (Fabre & Paillet, 2009, esp. pp. 101-115), this seems problematic both in light of the widespread downgrading and degradation of such complexes in other south-western cities, and the lack of visible fora in settlements newly-upgraded to city status during late antiquity.

communities. The late fourth-century phase of the forum at Amiens, for example, contains abundant evidence of metalworking from a dump which had succeeded the demolished warehouse, and indications that similar productive activities were going on under the roofs of its porticoes. While the courtyard itself was kept clear, suggesting a continued public control of the site perhaps linked to the city's documented role in arms manufacture (Pichon, 2015), this complex was no longer functioning as a forum in any recognisable early imperial sense, and probably had not been for some time. Far away from the frontier zone, meanwhile, even Arles, *urbs Constantina* and Ausonius' 'little Rome of Gaul', was finally affected by the prevailing trend. At the turn of the fifth century, the elevation of the city to unprecedented political significance as the seat of the Gallic praetorian prefecture coincided with the seemingly controlled intrusion of occupation into many of the city's public buildings and spaces (perhaps reflecting an influx of officials, or of refugees from the troubles engulfing northern Gaul); among the monuments affected was the Augustan forum, which had at least part of its portico and paving dismantled, while the dwellings or shops that were erected upon its square used *spolia* taken directly from the monument (Heijmans, 2004, pp. 358-379; Piton 2011). Such evidence tends, once again, to imply the regulated character of such dereliction, but makes it difficult to know what to make of Sidonius' account of his attendance upon the Emperor Majorian in Arles in 461, during which he presents himself as going down to the forum in the usual way, only to discover that people were hiding behind its statues and columns to avoid him because of his supposed authorship of a satire of the imperial regime (Sidonius, *Ep.* 1.11.7). The playful quality of this passage is more certain than its concern for accurate description, though two more matter-of-fact references to a forum at Arles in the days of Bishop Caesarius (502-42) confirm the persistence here of some such space, probably somewhere amid the late antique complex of buildings that stretched between the Augustan forum and the Rhône (*Vita Caesarii*, 1.31, 2.30). But we can be sure, nevertheless, that the statues of earlier centuries at Arles were suffering the same sorry fates as monumental inscriptions and buildings; a dump of marble material discovered in 1951 at one end of the cryptoporticus that underlies its Augustan forum included not only several statue fragments, but also the city's splendid copy of the *clipeus virtutis* awarded to Octavian by the senate in Rome on his elevation as Augustus (Rothé & Heijmans, 2008, pp. 359-360). Once, this had testified to the city's early, and privileged, relationship with the emerging imperial regime; in the fifth century, it probably ended up as part of a lime-kilner's stock of materials, stashed away for re-use and then forgotten.

It is from Arles, too, that we possess a rare (and painful) anecdotal reference to such spoliation. During the episcopate of Hilary (429-449), the saintly bishop healed a deacon called Cyril, who had suffered an unfortunate accident while stripping the marble facings and upper parts of the *proscaenium* of the city's theatre, when the ropes holding the blocks snapped and the *spolia* crashed down upon

his foot (Honoratus, *Vita Hilarii*, 20). Cyril had been busily stripping the ‘places of luxury’, presumably with official authorisation, to prepare ‘holy adornments’ for the churches he was involved in building. Just as *spolia* from public buildings had long been underpinning city-walls, so now their choicer elements were being re-used not only in churches, but also in more mundane building projects. Recent work at Narbonne, for example, has identified the re-use of marble from the vast temple overlooking the forum in two churches erected in the immediate vicinity of the forum complex, but also amidst the material employed to reconstruct a dyke in the city’s port, six kilometres to the south, very shortly after its collapse in around 400. While the forum temple at Narbonne is likely to have been demolished in the late fourth century, therefore, the completion of one of the two nearby churches, St-Felix, is dated by its a dedicatory inscription to 456 (Agusta-Boularot *et al.*, 2014). This evidence coincides with the character of the debris recovered in several recent excavations of forum sites, such as Vaison or Auch, to suggest that the spoliation of such complexes is likely to have been a protracted, and in many cases, incomplete process, which might have continued over decades if not centuries. It also reinforces how the dismantling and re-use of public buildings is likely at least to some extent, particularly in its initial stages, to have been officially controlled, with permits to take down, despoil, or adapt buildings being granted to accredited individuals or institutions.³ One frequent use for forum squares in the immediate aftermath of their dereliction was perhaps as builders’ yards to which access could be regulated, and where materials from adjacent monuments could be accumulation, sorting, and recut prior to allocation or sale. At Toulouse, where the substantial temple that had dominated the forum square, like that of Narbonne, was destroyed and substantially erased at the close of the fourth century, the extremely fragmentary state of the debris found at the foot of its podium confirms, for example, how all the more substantial stone and marble *spolia* from the monument had been carted off for use elsewhere (Boudartchouk, 2012; Cazes, 2012), a pattern consistent with the spoliation residues found in excavations of other abandoned fora.

By the fifth century, if not before, the forum complexes of Gallic cities were therefore undergoing various transformations that were by no means mutually exclusive, but which one might tentatively rank in order of frequency. Firstly, and perhaps most commonly, they were being stripped of their decorative elements and high-quality stonework or burnt up for lime, whether in systematic spoliation campaigns, or in more gradual and incidental fashion. At the same time, parts of them, as some of the examples above have shown, were being adapted to residential or productive use, a phenomenon familiar in other regions of the late

³ The legal regulation of spoliation lies beyond the scope of this paper, but see Janvier, 1969, for late antique legislation concerning public buildings.

antique west. Alternatively, their major buildings might be demolished down to their foundations and then used as the basis for new structures, as was the case at Aix-en-Provence, where in around 500 the cathedral complex was erected directly atop a major public building and an infill established on the paving of the square below it (Fig. 5); whether this was the main forum of the city, or, given its relatively small size, a similar but subsidiary complex, the new church complex substantially reproduced its alignments (Guyon *et al.*, 1998, pp. 94-95). Finally, a few *fora* may have remained in use, as in the case of Arles, or, perhaps more commonly, some individual *forum* monuments might be retained largely intact, even as the complex around them was steadily despoiled. At Nîmes, for example, the magnificent Augustan temple now known as the Maison Carrée stood within a complex that was otherwise being abandoned from the fifth century onwards; although the progress of this dereliction is largely obscure, two substantial public buildings excavated at the Ancien Théâtre site just an *insula* to the west were shown to have been thoroughly eradicated during the fifth century, after which the site appears to have been given over to cultivation (Fiches & Veyrac, 1996, pp. 274-277).

It is impossible now to determine why some such monuments survived intact, while others were taken down or simply left to crumble, and the case of the Maison Carrée is perhaps especially perplexing, given the systematic destruction in around 400 of the equivalent forum temples in nearby Toulouse and Narbonne. Although much has been made of the fact that in 899 the monument was fulfilling a public function, it seems unlikely that a building of this type could have assumed this role as early as the fifth century and then sustained it throughout (for the post-Roman history of the monument, Fiches & Veyrac, 1996, pp. 282-285; it should be noted it was back in private hands in the tenth century. In any case, such survivals of major forum monuments over the *longue durée* are greatly outnumbered by indications of their late antique destruction and adaptation. In Gaul, at least, one might suspect that forum complexes, like other elements of the monumental legacy of the first two centuries AD, were already coming to outlive their usefulness in the decades around 300. While the speed with which recognition of that redundancy translated into their modification or outright destruction varied from one city to the next over the fourth and fifth centuries, the old civic centres were already going the same way as the epigraphic or statue 'habits', as residual testimonies to a by gone culture that in late antiquity had lost its purpose and become superfluous.⁴ The changing dynamics of secular administration in Gallic cities between the fourth and seventh centuries lie beyond

⁴ I make no attempt at interregional comparisons here, but for recent syntheses of the late antique fates of forum complexes in other western regions, see Boube, 2012; Diarte-Blasco, 2018 (Spain); Potter 1995, pp. 63-102, Leone, forthcoming (Africa), and more generally Brogiolo, 2011, pp. 44-51. I am particularly grateful to Anna Leone for letting me see her paper in advance of publication.



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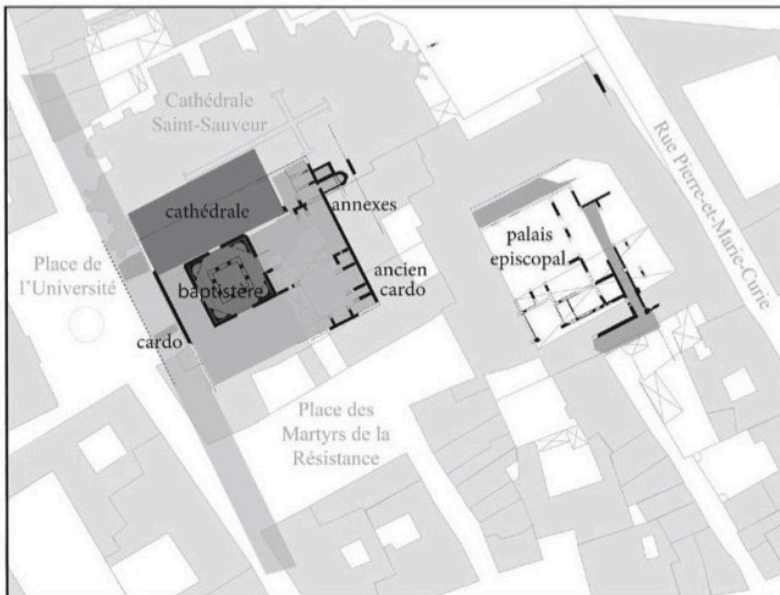


Fig. 5. Aix-en-Provence: episcopal group superseding early imperial monumental complex, c. 500 (after Heijmans, 2015, fig. 4).

the scope of this paper (for those, see Loseby 2006; id. 2013; forthcoming), but it is hard to imagine that forum complexes could generally have remained a regular or privileged setting for its exercise, or a significant force in generating social or spatial cohesion in most urban communities beyond the fifth century. But to assess how far and in what ways such cohesion could continue to exist without them, we might usefully return to the idea of the *città ad isole*.

4. FRAMING CITTÀ AD ISOLE IN GAUL

The fragmentation of settlement within the cities of the post-Roman west came about when a reduced population was distributed unevenly across existing urban and periurban space, and came to cluster in specific areas. In the Gallic context, as we have seen, three of the principal parameters within which such developments occurred were common to most cities and, at least in broad terms, consistent in their effects: first, the progressive rejection throughout late Antiquity of the monuments and modes of classical urbanism, and in particular the dereliction and abandonment of the forum complexes which had once constituted its principal expression; secondly, the renewing effect on cities of the gradual Christianisation of urban and suburban space; thirdly, and more fundamentally, the stability of most cities as the centres from which ecclesiastical and secular power continued to be exercised over their dependent territories. But the crucial Gallic variable, maddeningly resistant to easy synthesis, is the variety of urban fortification. Although a few cities did apparently remain without walls, whilst others retained early imperial circuits that in some cases must have far outstripped the availability of the human or material resources needed to defend them effectively, between half and two-thirds of Gallic cities received circuits that might for convenience be labelled as ‘reduced’, but nevertheless exhibit marked differences in both their extent and their relationships to existing layouts (Loseby 2006, pp. 75-83). It clearly made a huge difference to the experience and evolution of urban space if, rather than enclosing some fraction of the existing settlement, the new late antique circuit was built around a naturally-defended hilltop in close proximity (as in the afore mentioned examples of Vannes and Auch, or the majority of cities in Novempopulana). Similarly, some circuits were more reduced than others: the defences of Reims (55 hectares), Poitiers (42), Bordeaux (32), or Bourges (26), for example, encompassed areas several times larger than those of the equivalent defences at Paris (9-10 hectares), Tours (9), Périgueux (5.5), or Clermont (3). While these variations in intra-mural areas are unlikely to correlate directly with the contemporary extent of urban settlement, they do seem likely to have carried different implications for its subsequent evolution, and, in particular, for the potential formation of *città ad isole*.

Although the combination of local influences at play in the late antique and early medieval evolution of Gallic cities, and in particular the variety of their

defences, makes it difficult to proceed on anything but a case-by-case basis, it is possible to identify a number of general factors which could serve either to limit or to encourage the fragmentation of settlement. The most obvious restraining factor is a strong urban centre, as Wickham affirmed, but this has less to do with the persistence or otherwise of a moribund forum complex, as privileged by his analysis, than with the contemporary institutional, demographic, or economic heft of the city in question, and its spatial concentration upon a wall-circuit. Late Roman and Merovingian Paris, for example, was a city on an island, but it seems doubtful, *pace* Wickham, that it was really a *città ad isole*. The fortified Île de la Cité, with a Kremlin-like palace complex occupying its western end, cathedral complex, monastic foundations, landing wharves, and shopping streets constituted its indisputable core, and even if some sporadic extra-mural settlement did persist amid the ruins of the early imperial centre on the left bank, this was tending to peel back towards the Seine bridges rather than splintering off; the subsidiary fortification once thought to have existed around the abandoned forum is mythical, and an absence of finds suggests this relatively distant area had largely been abandoned (Busson, 1998, pp. 76-77, 92-112, 384-390). At Cologne, where the enduring early imperial enceinte was ten times larger than that of Paris (97 ha), the bustling Merovingian settlement came to cluster in its eastern third, and down to the Rhine waterfront (across some 40 ha), juxtaposing cathedral, palace, and exchange-hub; a couple of secondary pockets of settlement are known to have existed within the western half of the walls, but the city remained substantially coherent (Dietmar & Trier, 2011). At Arles, Wickham's type-site for urban cohesion, the situation is however rather less clear, partly because the recent discovery of a vast church-complex in the south-eastern corner of the wall-circuit makes it unlikely that the cathedral moved to its present location close to the old civic centre before the Carolingian period at the earliest (Heijmans, 2014), but principally because a dearth of evidence after the mid-sixth century means that the argument otherwise has to rest largely upon the continued focussing of the eleventh-century city upon the site of its classical predecessor (Heijmans, 2004, pp. 389-391; Wickham, 2005, p. 666).

If the existence of wall-circuits of assorted shapes and sizes, and the routine location of episcopal groups and administrative 'palaces' within them might be said in principle to have fostered spatial cohesion, there were simultaneously other factors at play which could generate the gradual formation of alternative nuclei of settlement within the same urban and periurban landscape. The most visible of these potential anchor points are the funerary churches that appeared in profusion around the margins of all cities from late Antiquity onwards, a small proportion of which proved sufficiently significant to have a lasting centripetal effect, especially if they mutated into wealthy and substantial monastic institutions. One obvious example is the array of buildings that steadily accumulated around the burial of Bishop Martin of Tours, originally laid to rest in 397 in a cemetery

some 800 metres west of the city-walls. The first church built over his tomb was monumentally upgraded in the 470s, and already by the late sixth century a baptistery, several churches, oratories, and monasteries, and residential buildings to house clerics, mendicants, and pilgrims had accumulated around the basilica and its atrium to form a veritable spiritual power-plant (Pietri, 1983, pp. 368-420). Meanwhile, the formerly urbanised area between St-Martin and a cathedral complex which, as usual, was located within the enceinte that had enclosed the eastern part of the Roman city since the fourth century appears, on the face of it, to have been largely deserted. Whether or not Tours in the time of Bishop Gregory merits classification as urban, it certainly was not spatially coherent; the continuing accumulation of people and buildings around St-Martin, and their overspill into the area between the complex and the Loire was such that this bipolarity was eventually formalised in around 1000 by the erection of a four ha wall-circuit, creating a separate 'Martinopolis'. Only in the later middle Ages was spatial coherence restored to Tours, first by the reoccupation of the area between the two circuits, and finally by the erection of the new fourteenth-century fortification that reintegrated them into a unitary whole (Galinié, ed., 2007, pp. 364-403).

Tours is probably something of a special case, not only because of its rich combination of textual and archaeological data, but because of the gravitational pull on settlement exerted by one lastingly dominant and widely renowned focus of devotion. Even so, similar patterns did eventually emerge elsewhere, albeit in less linear fashion. At Limoges, for example, where a cathedral complex on the edge of the Roman urban area lay within a small enceinte that was in existence by the later sixth century, the principal suburban church at St-Martial, renovated under the Carolingians, subsequently became the focus of a second pole of urban activity, incorporated within a separate wall-circuit that also accommodated the counts' residence (Prévot, 1989a; Brühl, 1975, pp. 177-188). However, in other cities where the necessary conditions for the precocious formation of *città ad isole* seem fulfilled, no comparable fragmentation of settlement apparently ensued. Unlike Tours, our knowledge of late antique and early medieval Clermont has until lately depended almost exclusively upon an exceptional sequence of textual evidence. However, recent investigations have confirmed firstly that the minuscule late antique wall-circuit doggedly defended by Sidonius and his flock against the Goths in the early 470s does not antedate the fifth century, and secondly that a substantial proportion of its three hectares was formerly occupied by the forum complex (*Augustonemetum* 2018). Direct evidence for the late antique condition of the latter is lacking, because it is known only from the substantial infrastructures originally required to create a level platform at the highest point of the Roman city, which made it the natural location for a fortification atop the *clarus mons* after which *civitas Arverna* was subsequently renamed. We might nevertheless infer from the wider history of such complexes that it was substantially derelict,

especially since the cathedral complex built in the mid-fifth century by Bishop Namatius occupied part of the forum zone (and, it might reasonably be hypothesised, exploited the monument and its materials, as at Aix). Outside the walls, meanwhile, the Christianisation of Clermont's suburbs followed the usual incremental pattern: the city had at least 16 churches in the late sixth century, around 25 by the eighth, and as many as 54 by the time of a tenth-century list (Fig. 6; Prévot 1989b; Chevalier & Gauthier, 2014). This proliferation of religious foundations may not be altogether unusual – similar numbers are attested for other Gallic cities from which suitable documentation happens to survive – and nor is their distribution, which favours the established funerary zones at some remove from the walls over the immediately extra-mural areas that had once lain within the much larger early imperial city. It is notable, even so, that none of these cult sites generated a lasting settlement nucleus to rival the tiny walled area, despite the presence to the north of the city of a particular concentration of early churches that Gregory of Tours referred to as the *vicus Christianorum* (Pietri, 1980). One might argue that this was because of the long-term coherence of the core of the city around the hilltop successively occupied by forum, fortification, and cathedral. Its confines were certainly too restrictive, however, to contain the long-running competition between local elites for episcopal power between the fifth and eighth centuries which contributed to the profusion of Christian building activity (Wood, 1983). But the difference between Clermont and Tours was that this enthusiasm was spread across a number of competing family cults and shrines of similar significance rather than concentrated upon a pre-eminent spiritual patron, such that none of them generated a suburban nucleus of activity on the scale of the *urbs Martini*.

Alongside new churches, meanwhile, an alternative set of potential anchors for settlement nucleation were provided by the host of redundant Roman monuments scattered across late antique and early medieval urban landscapes which, wholly or in part, had survived spoliation and quarrying, whether because of their sheer scale, the difficulty and futility of destroying them, or their potential for re-use. We have seen how some forum complexes were variously repurposed, but entertainment buildings, bath-suites, temples, warehouses, or substantial private residences were equally attractive as sources of ready-made elevations and solid floors within, against, or upon which to set up dwellings or workshops. Equally, and on a larger scale, they could serve as bases for the exercise of public authority, or for conversion into religious institutions or fortresses. Several examples of the incorporation of theatres and amphitheatres into late antique wall-circuits have already been mentioned, and a variation on this theme can be found at Nîmes, where a small concentric ramparten closing less than three hectares was erected around the amphitheatre, probably in the fifth or sixth centuries (Monteil, 1999, pp. 437-440). This fortification features prominently in Julian of Toledo's lively but highly literary narration of the siege

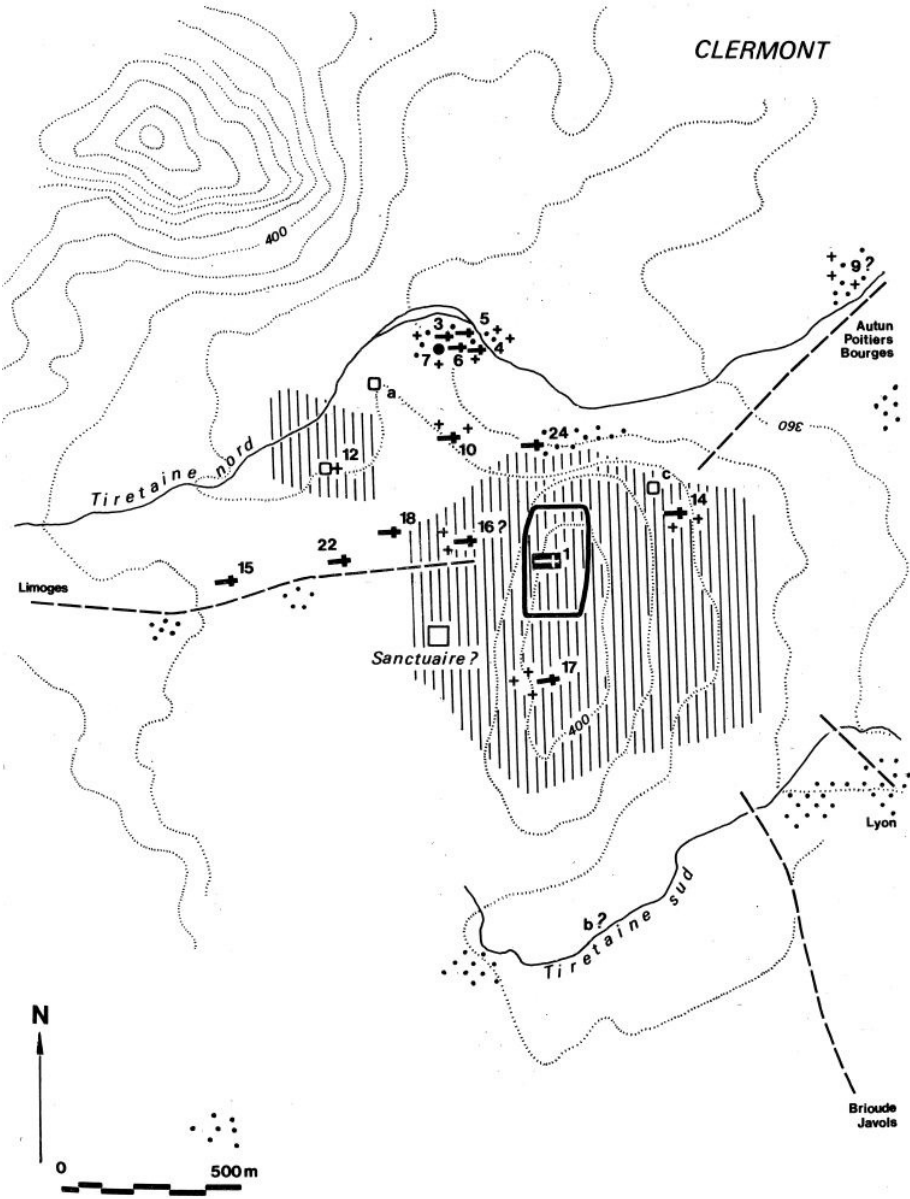


Fig. 6. Clermont: Christian buildings in urban and periurban space by c. 750 (after Prévot, 1989, p. 29) (vertically-lined area = extent of early imperial settlement; solid line = city-walls; † = churches and monasteries attested by c.750; dots = cemeteries).

of the city by the Visigothic king Wamba in 673, as the redoubt to which the forces of the usurper Paul withdrew when their supposed efforts to hold the vast perimeter of the city's early imperial wall-circuit (enclosing some 220 ha) proved unavailing (Julian, *Historia Wambae*, 13-26, esp. 18). One report of Charles Martel's assault on the city in 735 records his order that the arena and the gates of the city be burnt, and from the ninth century, by which time it included the residence of the count, the *castrum Arense* or *arenarum* appears more frequently (Dupont, 1968). As we have seen, however, the forum temple now known as the Maison Carrée, some 400 metres to the north-west of these defences, was also serving as a venue for the exercise of local power by 899, while a further 700 metres to the north-west, meanwhile, one element of a vast Augustan imperial cult complex was adapted in 991 to serve as the church of a female monastic community (Monteil, 1999, p. 442). These are glimpses of a pattern likely to have been replicated in some form, documented or otherwise, in most Gallic cities: a largely derelict former urban landscape, probably given over largely to cultivation or waste, but punctuated by monumental behemoths ripe, sooner or later, for adaptation to political or religious purposes, and for the accumulation of legend and, potentially, settlement (Effros, 2001). In Nîmes, at least, this landscape will also have been girded by the vast remnants of the early imperial wall-circuit, which still seemingly carried some symbolic resonance, however infeasible it seems that, notwithstanding the claims of the *Historia Wambae*, it can have still afforded any practical means of urban defence.

Although the preconditions for the formation of *città ad isole* certainly existed at Nîmes, a shortage of archaeological evidence makes their development largely hypothetical. Across the Rhône at Aix-en-Provence, however, recent excavations have affirmed the likely late antique antecedents of the twelfth-century division of the city into three principal areas of activity (Guyon *et al.*, 1998; Mocci & Nin, 2006). In the Julio-Claudian era Aix, like Nîmes, had received a wall-circuit befitting its colonial status, in its case enclosing around 67 hectares. From the third century onwards, however, many of the fine town-houses in the midst of this enceinte were abandoned and systematically despoiled, and its late antique population instead clustered at the edges of the intra-mural area (Nin, 2006). To the east, one such core of activity came to centre around the episcopal group which, as discussed above, was established on the site of a public building complex in around 500. A kilometre away to the west, meanwhile, the major medieval church of Notre-Dame de la Seds had traditionally been regarded as the original cathedral on the basis of its dedication (*de sede*) and various finds made hereabouts, and excavations in its immediate vicinity in 2003-4 revealed well-preserved remains of the Roman public building long presumed to have existed in this area; it was a theatre, given over to occupation from around the middle of the fifth century, when it formed part of a densely occupied area that also extended between the monument and the old city-walls (Fig. 7; Nin,



Fig. 7. Aix-en-Provence: late antique occupation in theatre (photo: author).

2008). This settlement cluster, which came to be known as the Ville des Tours, endured through to the middle ages, when it existed in counterpoint to the Bourg St-Sauveur around the cathedral, and, directly adjacent to the south of it, the Ville Comtale; the early history of the latter is archaeologically unknown, but the fabric of the count's palace incorporated two flanking towers of the south-eastern gate of the Augustan circuit and a substantial mausoleum that had stood just nine metres south of it. In the intervening area between these western and eastern poles, the Roman street-grid was meanwhile preserved by estate boundaries and isolated house-fronts, but remained largely devoid of occupation well into the medieval period, when the emergence of religious communities and expansions of the various fortifications began gradually to fill it in again. In this case, at least, we can be reasonably confident that the medieval divisions of the city date right back to the late antique fragmentation of the classical layout into *città ad isole*, each of which are associated with substantial Roman public buildings, even if it remains hard to tell whether the theatre or the late antique church that probably stood adjacent to it was the original anchor-point for the later Ville des Tours.

Finally, the topographical evolution of Lyon, Wickham's type-site for the emergence of Gallic *città ad isole*, is more enigmatic, and perhaps exceptional. Here the upper town and its major early imperial monumental ensembles,

scenographically implanted upon the Fourvière hill overlooking the confluence of the Saône and the Rhône, had largely been abandoned by the fourth century, but for the funerary churches that emerged in the suburban cemetery on its south-western slopes (Desbat, 2007). Instead, late antique Lyon had expanded below it, along the western bank of the Saône and upon the peninsula between the two rivers, probably in conjunction with efforts to stabilise their courses. In the decades around 500, when it became one of the capitals of the Burgundian kingdom, the city contained several substantial churches and stone buildings, and remained plugged in to Mediterranean long-distance exchange-networks (Reynaud, 1998; Le Mer & Chomer, 2007). The overall morphology of this relatively dynamic settlement remains elusive, however, despite teasing textual references to the city's walls and gates, and even, exceptionally, to the sixth-century use of its forum. In 573, after the interval prescribed by Roman Law had elapsed since his death, the will of Bishop Nicetius of Lyon was read out to the crowds assembled thereby the judge (Gregory, *VP* 8.5). Although Gregory of Tours' singular emphasis on these formalities is, as so often, unlikely to be disinterested – Nicetius was his relative and mentor, and both the content of his will and his wider legacy were locally controversial – it does seem that a forum here was still serving as the appropriate setting for public acts, in a way that is more generically suggested for some Loire valley cities by a scatter of sixth- to eighth-century formulae. In 840, moreover, the erudite Lyonnais deacon Florus reported the collapse of the *forum vetus*, a 'memorable and distinguished' work that he attributed to Trajan (Florus, *Ann.Lugd.*). This intriguing statement is usually thought to refer to an early imperial forum complex located somewhere on the Fourvière hill (Fellague, 2012), but the monumental ensembles in that area had long been abandoned by the time of Nicetius, raising the possibility that a more recent complex existed somewhere beside the rivers below. If so, its location, like that of the city-walls mentioned in the texts, remains a mystery, amid a sixth-century city apparently composed of multiple islands of settlement, whether west of the Saône around the cathedral, in several distinct sectors of the peninsula, where clusters of churches and dwellings were interspersed with areas of dark earth, or in several areas around the periurban fringes (Fig. 8; Reynaud, 2007). While we can be confident of the existence of this fragmented pattern, we have less sense than at Aix of how it might have come about. Although the former Roman landscape and contemporary church-building no doubt played a part in the formation of these various *isole*, in this case environmental considerations may have been paramount. The moderately torrential hydrological context that prevailed on the peninsula in particular, which in 580 was sufficient to undermine the enigmatic city-walls (Gregory, *Hist.* 5.33), will not only have necessitated the concentration of settlement on higher ground, but probably also dictated that its continual shifting in accordance with the unstable channels of the rivers (Arlaud *et al.*, 2000).

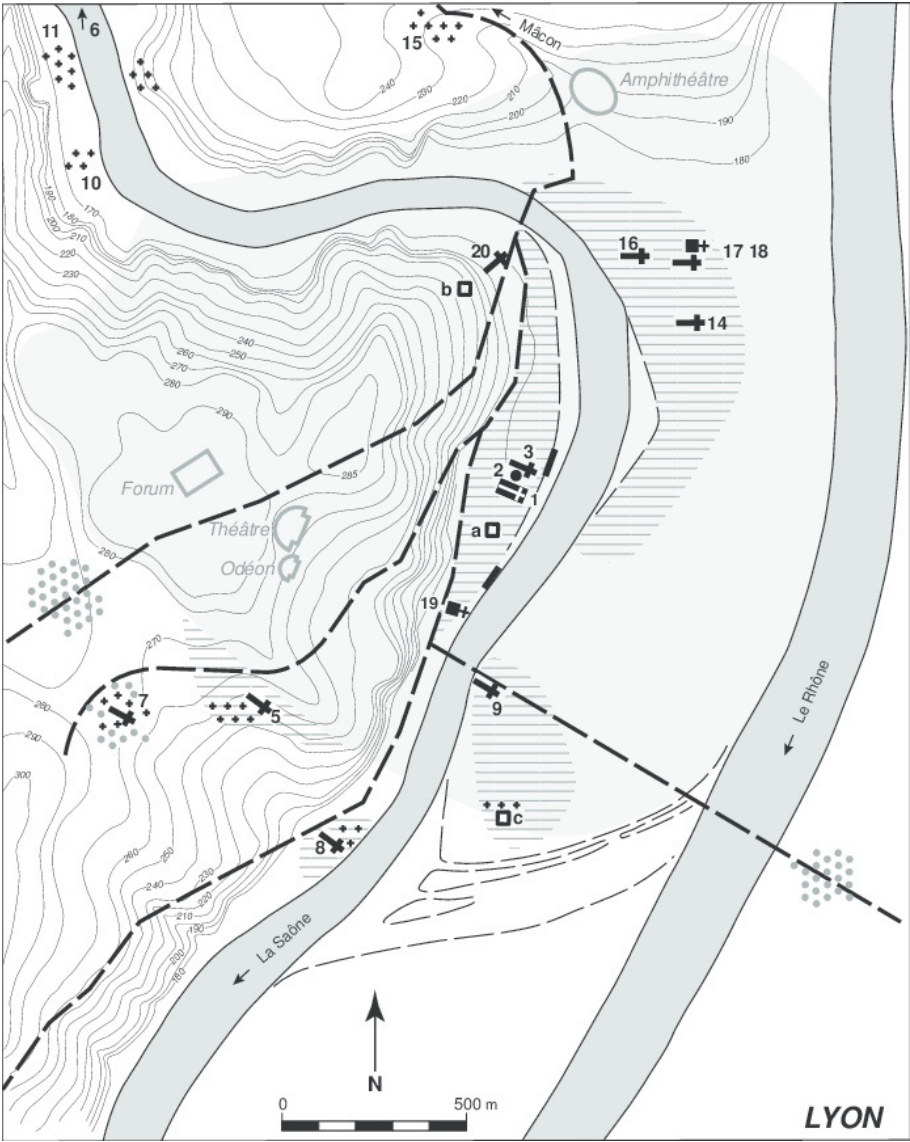


Fig. 8. Lyon: urban fragmentation, c.600 (after Gauthier *et al.*, 2014, p. 558). (horizontally-lined area = settled zones; solid line = city- walls; † = churches and monasteries attested by c.750; dots = cemeteries).

While the fragmentation of late antique Lyon is perhaps attributable in part to specific circumstances, the essential preconditions for the formation of *città ad isole* could be found in most late antique Gallic urban centres. First and foremost, urban populations were reduced by comparison with earlier centuries, and sometimes distributed across wider areas. Secondly, the forum complexes of earlier periods had already ceased to function as foci of municipal identity and community between the third and fifth century, decentring existing layouts. Thirdly, various alternative poles of potential settlement nucleation existed across urban and periurban areas in the contrasting forms of culturally-redundant classical monuments and newly-emerging churches and monasteries. But while these factors are likely to have applied to greater or lesser extent in most cities, whether in the north or south of Gaul, the main variable in patterns of settlement fragmentation was probably the existence of a wall-circuit adapted to the current needs of the community, which in Gaul usually meant a reduced enceinte of late antique origin. Where such a circuit existed, it almost invariably included the local seats of episcopal and political power, and settlement likewise tended to concentrate within it, mainly for reasons of security. But while the existence of such a circuit is likely to have retarded the formation of discontinuous islands of settlement, it certainly did not preclude it, for reasons which, as we have seen, depended above all upon the interplay of local factors.

It seems reasonable, therefore, to imagine that many Gallic cities may have consisted, fleetingly or for centuries, of several discrete islands of settlement, as Wickham's analysis had implicitly concluded. This does not, however, seem a viable basis on which to rank them, because the spatial cohesion embedded in the conception of regularly-planned early imperial cities, and encapsulated above all in their forum complexes, had ceased to be a major consideration in the minds of their inhabitants. In late antique Gaul, instead, city life came to be framed by the monuments of more immediate social relevance, walls and churches, and Christian contemporaries wove a new understanding of urbanism around them that was at once topographically realistic and conceptually symbolic (Loseby, 1998, pp. 252-256). Gregory of Tours, in particular, offers several variations on the theme of the protection of urban communities through some combination of the bishop in his intra-mural cathedral, the city-walls, and the saints watching over their protégés from their extra-mural tombs (e.g. *VP* 4.2; 17.4; *Hist.* 3.29; *GC* 78), while showing scant regard, the reading of Nicetius' will notwithstanding, for the omnipresent monumental remnants of the Roman past. He and his fellow-bishops were meanwhile orchestrating the regular liturgical processions between cathedral complexes and peripheral churches that united their flocks in a grid of holy power that extended beyond the old orthogonal street-systems, and transcended our categories of urban and suburban space. Despite the spatial disintegration of many urban centres in Gaul into *città ad isole* over the course of late Antiquity, they were still bound spiritually, and therefore socially, into single communities.

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SOCIO-RELIGIOUS AND MATERIAL
URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS:
CASE STUDIES FROM HISPANIA

(Página deixada propositadamente em branco)

TARRACO, UNA BASE DE OPERACIONES DE LOS EJÉRCITOS IMPERIALES (CA. 420 – 470 D.C.)

Tarraco, a base for the late Roman army (c. 420 – 470 AD)

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ABSTRACT: This paper focuses on the connection between Tarraco's urban and economic growth during the 5th century AD and the recovery of its geostrategic role as the base for the late Roman army which aimed to regain control over Hispania. Tarraconensis was the last province of Hispania under imperial control after the arrival of the Germanic peoples and the agreed occupation of the most of the Iberian Peninsula. The written sources also refer to the presence of many high officials in the town, both civil and military. This event certainly marked the historical evolution of the city. The archaeological work of the past decades has indeed emphasized the recovery and development from the 5th century onwards of the main entry gate and economic hub of Tarraco, its harbour and the adjacent area known as the 'port suburb', contrasting with the urban and economic recession which characterized the preceding centuries.

KEYWORDS: Tarraco, Hispania, 5th century AD, late Roman army.

1. INTRODUCCIÓN

El comportamiento arqueológico de *Tarraco* a mediados del siglo V puede resultar sorprendente, especialmente dada la etapa de dificultades que vivía la ciudad ya desde finales del siglo II, aunque sobre todo a partir de la segunda mitad avanzada del siglo III (Alföldy, 1991, p. 39). Así, en esta breve contribución nos preguntamos sobre esa revitalización urbana, que ponemos en relación con el

rol ejercido por la ciudad como centro de operaciones de los ejércitos imperiales durante gran parte del siglo V.

El presente artículo traza, por tanto, una panorámica sobre los datos disponibles – textuales y arqueológicos – que pueden ser indicativos de esta relación entre el renovado papel geoestratégico y el impulso urbano de *Tarraco*, con una especial incidencia en la zona portuaria, principal activo de la ciudad.

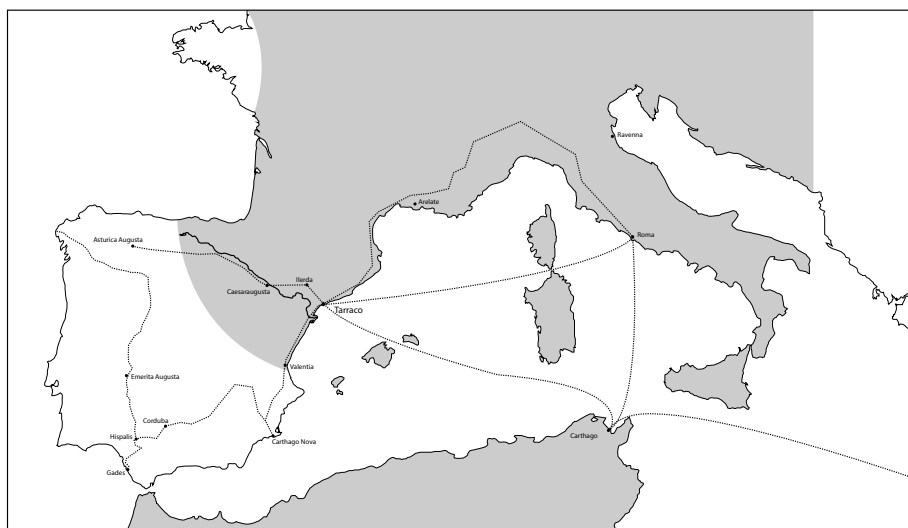


Fig. 1. Mediterráneo occidental (ca. 420 d.C.) (composición propia a partir de diferentes fuentes).

2. EJÉRCITOS IMPERIALES EN *TARRACO*

Tarraco y la Tarraconense quedaron excluidas del reparto de Hispania entre los distintos pueblos bárbaros a los que se permitió la entrada en la Península Ibérica a inicios del siglo V (años 409 y 411 d.C., respectivamente). *Tarraco* y la Tarraconense se convirtieron así en el último bastión del Imperio romano de Occidente en Hispania (Fig. 1). Esta coyuntura confirió a la ciudad un carácter específico como punto de apoyo imprescindible en cualquier intento de recuperación imperial de la Diócesis y de mantenimiento del propio orden provincial. Esto fue así hasta la propia extinción del Imperio romano de Occidente como estructura de poder en estos territorios en la década de los años 470 (Pérez, 2012; *id.* 2014).

Son diversas las fuentes conservadas que atestiguan, a partir de la segunda década del siglo V, la presencia de altos mandos militares y de ejércitos imperiales en *Tarraco*, enviados por la autoridad imperial de Occidente a Hispania (*ad*

Hispanias missi) para hacer frente a los bárbaros y, de una manera muy especial, a los usurpadores (Or. VII, 42, 1).

En torno a los años 418-420, el *comes Hispaniarum* Asterio acudió a *Tarraco*, al mando de “un grandísimo ejército”, encargado de “la dirección suprema de una guerra tan decisiva”.¹ Nos informan de este episodio Hidacio² y, muy especialmente, la Epístola 11* de Consencio³, por quien sabemos además que Asterio estaba unido por estrechos lazos con la ciudad de *Tarraco* y su élite social (PLRE II, *Asterius* 4; Kulikowski, 2000). Consencio nos informa también de que Asterio vivía en el *praetorium* con su hija, con una comitiva formada por hombres muy poderosos (*potentissimi viri*), junto con siervos (*servi*), amigos y parientes (Ep. 11*, 4, 3; 8, 2 y 12, 1), a los que protegían un buen número de soldados (*militum*) (Ep. 11*, 8, 3-4). Se ha planteado la propuesta de identificación de este *praetorium* (residencia y centro de mando), como campamento y base de operaciones, con el conjunto monumental tardorromano de Centcelles (Remolà & Pérez, 2013).

Otros seguirían a Asterio en el tiempo. En el año 422, el *magister militum* Castino se encontraba al frente de los ejércitos imperiales encargados de reducir a los vándalos replegados en la Bética. Nos da cuenta de ello Hidacio, quien nos dice además que, tras ser abandonado por los auxiliares visigodos, se vio obligado a huir y buscar refugio para él y sus hombres en *Tarraco*.⁴

Algunos años más tarde, en el 441, el *dux utriusque militiae* Asturio fue enviado a Hispania, donde derrotó a multitud de bagaudas de la Tarraconense.⁵ Dos años después, en 443, el *magister utriusque militiae* Merobaudes había sustituido a su suegro Asturio en sus campañas contra los bagaudas de Hispania con los mismos éxitos.⁶ En 443, el *magister utriusque militiae* Vito, enviado a Hispania con numerosas tropas a su mando, tuvo un encuentro desafortunado

¹ Consencio, Ep. 11*, 7, 3: *Venit protinus Tarraconam vir illustris Asterio comes cui tanti exercitus cura et tanti belli summa commissa est, et cum eo tot potentissimorum virorum*; 12, 2: *Ad proelium [...] cum exercitu*.

² Hidacio, *Chronica*, 66 [74], ad ann. 420 (Burgess 1993, p. 86).

³ Publicada por Divjak (1981) y editada en versión bilingüe por Amengual (1987), cuya edición seguimos. En esta carta, dirigida a Agustín de Hipona, se relatan las peripecias del monje Frontón para poner al descubierto a ciertos miembros destacados de la sociedad de *Tarraco*, escenario principal de los acontecimientos relatados, por su aproximación a la herejía priscilianista.

⁴ Hidacio 69 [77] (ad ann. 422) (Burgess, 1993, pp. 86-88). Fl. Castino fue *comes domesticorum* entre 420-422, *magister militum* en 422, *magister militum praesentalis* en 423 y cónsul en 424.

⁵ Hidacio 117 [125] (ad ann. 441) (Burgess, 1993, p. 96). Fl. Asturio, *comes et magister utriusque militiae* en 441-443, alcanzó el consulado en 449 en la Gallia, probablemente Arles (PLRE II, Fl. Astyrius).

⁶ Hidacio 120 [128] (ad ann. 443) (Burgess, 1993, p. 96). PLRE II, Fl. Merobaudes.

con los suevos y sus aliados godos, que le obligaron a retirarse precipitadamente.⁷ Hizo falta esperar hasta el año 454 para que Federico, federado visigodo y hermano del *rex* Teoderico II, acabara con los bagaudas de la Tarraconense y les devolviera finalmente a la autoridad romana.⁸

En el año 460, fue el propio emperador Mayoriano quien acudió a Hispania y pasó por Zaragoza de camino a Cartagena, ciudad en la que tenía previsto embarcar para emprender una expedición, después frustrada, contra los vándalos establecidos en el norte de África.⁹ De camino a Cartagena, Mayoriano y su ejército hubieron de pasar por *Tarraco*, donde no sabemos si se detuvieron.

Finalmente, tenemos constancia escrita de la presencia en *Tarraco* del *dux provinciae* Vicente desde el año 464/465 (PLRE II, *Vincentius* 3).¹⁰ Este personaje es el mismo *dux Hispaniarum Vincentius* que, tal y como recoge la *Chronica Gallica* del año 511, una vez muerto el emperador Anthemio en el año 472, apoyó los intereses del *rex* Eurico en la Tarraconense colaborando con el godo Heldefredo en la captura de *Tarraco* y las principales ciudades del litoral (Pérez, 2012, pp. 161–164 y 187–188; id. 2013, pp. 237–248; id. 2014, pp. 117–138).¹¹

A este listado de personajes, se podrían añadir otros de los que, o bien no podemos estar seguros de su presencia en *Tarraco*, o bien se duda de su misión estrictamente militar, lo cual no es, en principio, un argumento para rechazar la hipótesis de que hubieran tenido también en esta ciudad su base de operaciones. Este es el caso del patricio Sabiniano, mencionado en la epístola de Honorio (Sivan, 1985), el *dux Romanae militiae* Andevoto¹² y los *comites* Censurio, Mansueto y Frontón, estos últimos con funciones de carácter aparentemente diplomático.¹³

La actividad desarrollada por estos altos cargos de la administración imperial, militares y diplomáticos, en *Tarraco* durante los decenios centrales del siglo V confirma el papel de la ciudad en la historia peninsular de este periodo histórico, bien atestiguado por las fuentes, en tanto que centro de operaciones de los altos mandos y los ejércitos imperiales encargados de la recuperación de Hispania para la causa romana en Occidente.

⁷ Hidacio 126 [134] (ad ann. 446) (Burgess, 1993, pp. 96–98).

⁸ Hidacio 133 [141] (ad ann. 449) (Burgess, 1993, p. 98). Hidacio 134 [142] (ad ann. 449) (Burgess, 1993, p. 98). Hidacio 150 [158] (ad ann. 453–454) (Burgess, 1993, p. 102).

⁹ *Consularia Caesaraugustana*, ad ann. 460.

¹⁰ *Epistula II Tarraconensium Episcoporum ad Hilarum Papam* (PL LVIII (1847), 16); *Chron. Gall. 511*, ad ann. 472/473 (Burgess, 1993, p. 99).

¹¹ *Chronica Gallica 511*, ad ann. 472/473: *Gauterit comes Gothorum Ispanias per Pampilonem, Caesaraugustam, et vicinas urbes obtinuit. Heldefredus quoque cum Vincencio Ispaniarum duce obsessa Terrachona marithimas urbes obtinuit.*

¹² Su cargo no se menciona en Hidacio 106 [114] (ad ann. 438) (Burgess, 1993, p. 94), sino en la referencia tardía de Isidoro de Sevilla, *Historia Suevorum* 85 citado por Arce 2005: 205.

¹³ Hidacio 88 [98] (ad ann. 432) y 147 [155] (ad ann. 452–3) (Burgess, 1993, p. 90 y 102).

Otro documento relevante, aunque no por ello exento de polémica, es la *Notitia Dignitatum in partibus Occidentis*, compuesto alrededor del año 408 y actualizado en algún momento cercano al 420 (Jones, 1964, pp. 38 y 1417–1450). En él, se relacionan las tropas destinadas a Hispania, bajo el mando de un *comes Hispaniarum*, que estaban formadas por once *auxilia palatina* y cinco *legiones comitatenses*, además de las tropas integradas por federados bárbaros (especialmente visigodos).¹⁴ Otro texto contemporáneo, al que conocemos como *Epistula Honorii*, refiere la presencia de tropas comitatenses en la Tarraconense de los mismos años (*seniores, iuniores, speculatores ac britanni* estacionados en Pamplona).¹⁵

Sabemos que las *legiones comitatenses* se organizaban sobre la base de un millar de hombres (Le Roux, 2004, p. 178) y que, al tratarse de ejércitos móviles, no disponían necesariamente de bases permanentes, lo que requería el uso frecuente de las ciudades como bases de estacionamiento (Reddé *et al.*, 2006, p. 66).¹⁶ Aunque estos ejércitos no estuvieran estacionados de forma permanente en Hispania – de hecho éste era uno de los rasgos propios de las *legiones comitatenses*, su movilidad –, es preciso pensar en un punto de encuentro, una base de operaciones desde donde culminar los preparativos para los diferentes enfrentamientos y un lugar donde refugiarse en caso de derrota o de retirada.

Más allá de la indeterminación de las fuentes con respecto al número de efectivos destinados a la recuperación de Hispania en estos momentos, de lo que no puede dudarse es de las repetidas muestras del compromiso de Honorio y las autoridades imperiales de Occidente de devolver el conjunto de la Diócesis hispana al legítimo Imperio romano de Occidente en el transcurso del siglo V. *Tarraco* parece haber asumido un papel central en este proyecto que convendrá ir perfilando al ritmo de las futuras investigaciones.

3. TARRACO, LA CIUDAD DE MEDIADOS DEL SIGLO V

Este período de recuperación del papel geoestratégico de *Tarraco* como base de operaciones de los ejércitos imperiales coincide con una revitalización urbana y económica de la ciudad y su entorno (Fig. 2). Un comportamiento que, cabe

¹⁴ Arce no es partidario de identificar las tropas comitatenses que aparecen en la carta de Honorio (fecha por él en el año 422) con las mencionadas en la *Notitia Dignitatum* (Arce, 2005, p. 204, nota 66). En su opinión, cuando los textos hacen referencia a ejércitos en Hispania, se refieren a efectivos que venían de la *Gallia*, del exterior, y que, por tanto, no se puede hablar de ejércitos propiamente dichos en Hispania (Arce, 2005, p. 203).

¹⁵ Conservado en un manuscrito del s. X (Códice de Roda). Seguimos la edición de Sivan (1985, pp. 273–287).

¹⁶ El número de soldados integrados en este ejército de campaña varía considerablemente en las diferentes estimaciones disponibles, entre los 6.500 (Sivan, 1985, pp. 273–287) y los 10.500 hombres (García Moreno, 1988, p. 160).



Fig. 2. Planta arqueológica *Tarraco*. El recuadro se corresponde con el área de la figura 4 (composición propia a partir de Macias *et al.* 2007).

señalar, contrasta claramente con la situación anterior¹⁷. A mediados del siglo V corresponden los primeros indicios de transformación en la cima de la colina tarraconense, ocupada, a partir del siglo I d.C., por el recinto del templo de Augusto, una gran plaza de representación y el circo, un conjunto monumental vinculado con la sede del *concilium* provincial (TED'A, 1989; Macias, 1999; Remolà, 2000).

¹⁷ Como resultado de la reforma administrativa de Diocleciano, la Tarraconense quedó integrada en la *Dioecesis Hispaniarum*, con *Emerita Augusta* como capital, y perdió más de la mitad de su territorio provincial. A ello cabe añadir los efectos negativos que pudieron tener sobre la ciudad y el territorio las incursiones bárbaras de finales del siglo III. Además, a nivel urbanístico, sectores clave de la ciudad, como el suburbio portuario, muestran claros síntomas de abandono durante el siglo IV.

Para esta fase inicial de transformación no se constata la construcción de nuevos edificios ni tampoco una alteración arquitectónica o urbanística significativa de los viejos recintos altoimperiales. Ello nos lleva a pensar que, al menos durante mediados del siglo V, se mantuvo la titularidad y el uso público de estos espacios, aunque adaptado a las necesidades de una realidad de poder muy distinta a la del siglo I. Una apreciación que se ve reforzada por el hallazgo del pedestal de una estatua en honor de los emperadores Leo I y Anthemius erigida en el foro provincial (Pérez, 2014) (Fig. 3). El expolio de la decoración arquitectónica y la formación de vertederos domésticos en el interior de estos espacios públicos no pueden ocultar – más allá de una valoración estrictamente estética – una decidida voluntad y capacidad para afrontar la transformación urbanística de un sector tan extenso y preeminente de la ciudad.



Fig. 3. Inscripción dedicatoria a los emperadores León I y Antemio (RIT 100 = CIL II²/14 947).

Los datos disponibles para el sector que se extiende entre el circo y el puerto – la denominada área residencial intramuros – son extremadamente escasos, si bien parecen mostrar una pérdida de densidad del tejido urbano en el siglo V. Este sector tuvo un uso principalmente residencial que experimenta una clara transformación a partir de la segunda mitad del siglo III. Las evidencias arqueológicas disponibles sugieren el colapso gradual de la red de saneamiento público, la formación de vertederos *intramuros* y el abandono de algunos espacios

tanto privados como públicos. Indicios de un proceso de transformación que debió comportar el desarrollo de un modelo de ocupación más disperso, de menor densidad y entidad urbana, que se prolongaría y acentuaría en momentos posteriores (Remolà, 2000, pp. 225ss). Mientras que los focos principales de población se ubicarían en aquellas zonas con una mayor relevancia funcional: la parte alta, como centro de poder, y el área portuaria, por su intrínseco dinamismo económico.

Ya fuera murallas, hacia el río Francolí, se extendía una extensa y densa área suburbial cuyo sector más próximo al puerto y a la línea de costa tuvo un marcado carácter portuario (Remolà & Pociña, 2001; Remolà & Sánchez, 2010; Lasheras, 2017; Lasheras & Terrado, 2018). Los resultados obtenidos en las excavaciones arqueológicas de los últimos años en este sector vital de la ciudad romana pueden considerarse, hasta cierto punto, representativos de las dinámicas generales¹⁸. El suburbio portuario ocupaba, *grosso modo*, el espacio entre el puerto propiamente dicho y la línea de costa al sur, el cierre meridional de la muralla al este, y el río Francolí al oeste. Más impreciso es el límite septentrional que, posiblemente, podemos situar en relación con el trazado de la vía romana conocida con el nombre de *camí de la Fonteta*, uno de los principales accesos a la ciudad¹⁹.

A partir de inicios del siglo V se constata una revitalización del suburbio portuario que no tan solo recupera los espacios abandonados del antiguo suburbio altoimperial, sino que se extiende hacia el sur – en terrenos ganados al mar debido al proceso de colmatación de la rada portuaria por la deposición de sedimentos – y hacia el norte, siguiendo el eje del río Francolí (Fig. 4). Así, se inició un proceso de recuperación y expansión que supuso el restablecimiento de los usos portuario y residencial, además de la incorporación de espacios destinados a la producción. Igualmente, las pequeñas áreas funerarias que habían surgido a lo largo del suburbio, de forma más o menos dispersa, quedaron anuladas y el uso funerario se desplazó preferentemente hacia el río – el denominado suburbio occidental – donde se desarrolló la llamada Necrópolis Paleocristiana (Lasheras, 2017, pp. 795ss; Remolà & Lasheras 2018).

A grandes rasgos, observamos para este período tardío un urbanismo que, aun siendo heredero del anterior, presenta ya características que difieren claramente del modelo precedente. Los principales ejes viarios y las vías de acceso a la ciudad en dirección este-oeste, especialmente el *camí de la Fonteta* y la vía portuaria, mantuvieron en gran medida su trazado durante buena parte del período tardío. En el caso de las vías menores, tanto en sentido norte-sur como

¹⁸ La documentación arqueológica relativa al suburbio portuario constituye la base principal de la tesis doctoral en curso de A. Lasheras (ICAC) sobre el suburbio portuario de Tarraco en época tardía (s. III – VIII).

¹⁹ Muy probablemente se corresponde con la *vía Augusta* a juzgar por el hallazgo en este sector de un miliario (RIT 934) con el nombre de esta vía (Alföldy, 1975).

este-oeste, se perciben más variaciones. Algunas quedan impracticables mientras que otras se crean *ex novo*, con una anchura menor que las altoimperiales y con trazados más sinuosos (Remolà & Sánchez, 2010, pp. 605–606; Lasheras, 2017, pp. 797ss; Remolà & Lasheras, 2018).

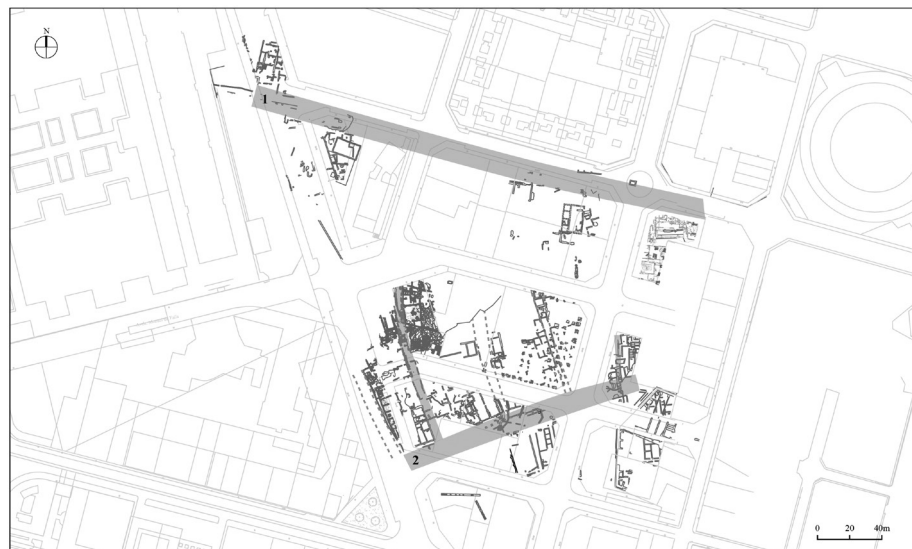


Fig. 4. Planta arqueológica del sector occidental del suburbio portuario. Se indican las principales vías que lo atravesaban (1. *Camí de la Fonteta*, 2. Vía portuaria) y, en punteado, trazado hipotético de algunos viales secundarios.

En las parcelas delimitadas por este sistema viario se observa una distribución que sigue un cierto orden funcional. Los almacenes, construidos *ex novo* y con un esquema compositivo muy similar (estancias cuadrangulares abiertas a un patio de planta rectangular), se concentran al sur de la vía portuaria, es decir, en terrenos ganados al mar. Entre esta vía y la del *camí de la Fonteta* – un sector ocupado en época altoimperial por almacenes – se documenta la presencia mayoritaria de edificios de carácter doméstico. De éstos destacan, especialmente por su conservación y número, los *balnea* (Fig. 5). Junto a residencias de una cierta envergadura, algunas con pavimentos de mosaico, que, aparentemente, ocuparían la totalidad del solar, se detectan construcciones más modestas que los ocuparían parcialmente. El tejido productivo – talleres y edificios de producción artesanal – se localizaba en los puntos más periféricos del suburbio, aunque su ubicación no siempre puede considerarse marginal, como es el caso de una posible *fullonica* cercana a algunos de los edificios domésticos mencionados (Remolà & Sánchez, 2010, p. 603; Lasheras, 2017, pp. 799–800; Remolà & Lasheras, 2018).

El suburbio portuario enlazaba, sin solución de continuidad, con el denominado suburbio occidental – al norte de la vía romana del *camí de la Fonteta* – en el que se observa un comportamiento arqueológico similar. En el extremo más cercano al cauce del río y al puente que conducía a la *via Augusta* y a la *via De Italia in Hispanias*, se venía desarrollando desde finales del siglo III un extenso y denso espacio funerario que experimentó una potente reactivación a partir de inicios del siglo V con la construcción de dos basílicas y diversos edificios suburbanos (Serra Vilaró, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1935, 1936, 1944 y 1948; López, 2006). La basílica más meridional se relaciona con la memoria del lugar de sepultura del obispo Fructuoso y sus diáconos Augurio e Eulogio, martirizados en el año 259. Al norte, y enlazadas por la misma vía, se erigieron en este mismo período otra basílica y edificaciones de índole diversa (López, 2006). Esta intensa actividad edilicia cabe entenderla como parte del crecimiento general constatado a partir de esta centuria en los suburbios portuario y occidental, uno de cuyos ejes principales seguiría el cauce del río, en dirección hacia las citadas vías de acceso a la ciudad desde el sur y el oeste (Lasheras, 2017, p. 800; Remolà & Lasheras, 2018), y coincide, por otra parte, con una época de consolidación y revitalización institucional de la sede episcopal metropolitana (Pérez, 2012).



Fig. 5. Uno de los *balnea* tardíos localizados en el sector occidental del suburbio portuario (archivo Codex – Arqueologia i Patrimoni).

En el otro extremo de la ciudad romana, en torno a las vías de acceso desde el noreste, no se detectan indicios claros de ocupación a partir de finales del siglo III. Hasta ese momento se había desarrollado un suburbio, poco denso y más disperso, del que se conocen diversos tramos viarios, monumentos funerarios y *domus* suburbanas (Remolà, 2004). El anfiteatro, se mantuvo aparentemente en uso. Las *fossae* de la arena de este edificio, el más destacado de este sector, se amortizan en la primera mitad del siglo V, lo que no supone, necesariamente, la pérdida de su función pública y lúdica (TED'A, 1990).

En el territorio más inmediato a *Tarraco* el panorama es similar al documentado en el núcleo urbano. A partir de siglo V se constata una cierta revitalización con la construcción de nuevas edificaciones y la recuperación parcial de otras²⁰. El caso más destacable es el de Centcelles (Constantí), un conjunto

²⁰ La mayor parte de las *villae* y centros productivos (ánforas, material cerámico de

arquitectónico – con una potencia y monumentalidad sin paralelos en la edificación tardía de *Tarraco* – de funcionalidad controvertida cuya construcción creemos que se debería situar a inicios del siglo V (Remolà & Sánchez, 2015; Remolà & Pérez, 2013). También resulta significativo el caso de la villa romana dels Munts (Altafulla) – la que fue, en época altoimperial, la villa romana más extensa y suntuosa del *ager Tarraconensis* –, donde se documentan reformas de una cierta entidad en el sector residencial, también en este periodo. Un comportamiento que puede hacerse extensible a otros yacimientos en el territorio tarraconense como las villas romanas de Cal·lípolis (Vila-seca) y Paret delgada (La Selva del Camp) (Remolà, 2007).

Otro aspecto en el que la documentación arqueológica puede aportar luz sobre el comportamiento de *Tarraco* en el siglo V es el económico. Y, como sucede con el urbanismo, el análisis de los contextos arqueológicos de mediados del siglo V pone de relieve un período de excepcionalidad en relación con lo que constatamos en momentos previos y posteriores²¹ (Remolà, 2000). En primer lugar, cabe destacar el elevado porcentaje de ánforas en relación con el resto de categorías cerámicas. Si en época altoimperial las ánforas representaban aproximadamente entre el 4 y el 8% (Trullén, 2010), a mediados del siglo V este porcentaje se sitúa entre el 29 y el 37%. En segundo lugar, se detecta un notable incremento de la presencia de vino y aceite orientales, especialmente de la región de Antioquia, Palestina y Asia Menor – regiones que hasta ese momento apenas

construcción, cerámica común, etc.) documentados, contruidos entre los siglos I y II d.C., se abandonan de forma permanente o temporal hacia la segunda mitad del siglo III (Remolà, 2007). En algunos casos ya no se observan síntomas de recuperación mientras que en otros se detecta una ocupación más precaria, alejada del modelo altoimperial.

²¹ Hasta un momento avanzado del siglo III d.C., el abastecimiento de bienes de subsistencia (cereales, vino, aceite, etc.) tenía un origen predominantemente provincial, con una escasa aportación externa de vino, aceite y conservas de pescado procedentes, principalmente, de regiones del Mediterráneo occidental como el sur de Hispania y el norte de África. La presencia de alimentos de origen oriental transportados en ánfora, principalmente del área del Egeo, es muy reducida y respondería a un comercio de bienes de prestigio por su calidad y origen remoto. A partir de finales del siglo III – coincidiendo con el abandono total o parcial de las *villae* y centros de producción rurales – se produce el cese de la producción de la variante tardía del tipo anfórico Dressel 2-4, el principal contenedor para el excedente vitivinícola tarraconense desde el siglo I d.C. A partir de este momento no tenemos constancia cierta de la producción de ánforas tarraconenses ni, por lo tanto, de la existencia de excedentes susceptibles de ser transportados en este tipo de envase. Aunque contamos con menos datos, esta situación parece prolongarse durante el siglo IV (Remolà, 2000): ausencia de ánforas tarraconenses y aportaciones externas reducidas – con valores similares a los del período altoimperial – y de origen predominantemente norteafricano y sudhispánico; las ánforas orientales continúan manteniendo unos valores muy bajos. Junto a los alimentos, se detecta también una elevada presencia de cerámicas, tanto de cocina como de servicio de mesa, producidas en el Norte de África (Aquilué, 1992). Un fenómeno que se acentúa a lo largo del siglo III y que se prolonga, con valores variables, hasta finales del siglo VII.

estaban presentes en Occidente²² –, con valores cercanos al 25% del total estimado de ánforas (Remolà, 2000, 2013 y 2016). Un desplazamiento a gran escala de bienes de subsistencia – de alto valor estratégico en periodos de conflicto – en el que la intervención estatal debió tener un papel fundamental. Junto a este flujo principal de alimentos documentamos la llegada masiva de bienes y productos de diversa índole. En los vertederos domésticos de mediados del siglo V de *Tarraco* en torno al 75% de la vajilla de mesa tiene su origen en el Norte de África. Una muestra más del papel ejercido por Cartago como principal distribuidor de bienes alimenticios básicos tanto de origen regional como de los que llegaban procedentes del otro extremo del Mediterráneo.

Además de este transporte de bienes de subsistencia constatamos, como en otras ciudades del Mediterráneo, la llegada de bienes de prestigio. Un buen ejemplo de ello son los numerosos sarcófagos elaborados en Cartago a inicios del siglo V y localizados en la Necrópolis Paleocristiana (Rodà, 2013). No se trata solo objetos, sino también de modelos e inspiración para satisfacer las necesidades de una élite con deseos de autorepresentarse. Tal sería el caso de las laudas sepulcrales en mosaico que formaban el pavimento de la basílica de la ya citada necrópolis o la magnífica decoración, también en mosaico, de Centcelles.

En síntesis, a la luz de los datos actuales podemos establecer que la dinámica expansiva de *Tarraco* a nivel urbanístico culmina a inicios del siglo II. Posteriormente, la pérdida de relevancia geoestratégica y los costes derivados del mantenimiento y funcionamiento de la desmesurada extensión de espacios públicos debieron lastrar considerablemente la economía de la ciudad. De hecho, a finales del siglo III se hace ya evidente que sectores de la ciudad como el área residencial intramuros o las áreas suburbanas habían perdido los niveles de ocupación anteriores e incluso se documenta el abandono, transitorio o definitivo, de un buen número de espacios edificadas. Así sucede en el suburbio portuario, verdadero centro económico de la ciudad. Lo mismo ocurre en las *villae* y centros productivos rurales del entorno territorial más próximo. Esta situación se prolongó durante el siglo IV y no es hasta inicios o el segundo cuarto del siglo V cuando se constatan claros síntomas de revitalización urbana, en especial en el ya mencionado suburbio portuario, y económica.

4. CONCLUSIONES

“Nuestra ciudad es un antiguo cuartel de invierno para los emperadores. Manténgase, pues, esta costumbre cuando llegue la estación. Nosotros no tenemos edificios fastuosos [...]. Sin embargo, tenemos un extenso casco urbano

²² Una llegada de productos de subsistencia orientales que se da también en otras ciudades y enclaves costeros del Mediterráneo occidental – especialmente intensa en los siglos V y VI – y que no creemos que se pueda explicar desde una óptica exclusivamente comercial (Keay, 1984).

capaz de albergar a sus ciudadanos, metecos, extranjeros, así como al Emperador y su ejército. Disponemos de artesanía de todas clases, de una masa de comerciantes, fuentes, un río, un invierno suave y un verano libre de penurias, así como una tierra que, si la fortuna le sonríe, produce en abundancia todos los bienes que nos manda Zeus. Me da la impresión de que éste es el factor que vosotros, los emperadores, habéis tenido en cuenta para invernar aquí durante las campañas contra los bárbaros: que la ciudad está en condiciones de soportar el peso de la empresa.” (Lib., *Dis.*, III, XV, 15-18).

Así reclamaba Libanio para Antioquía el privilegio de continuar siendo la base de operaciones de los ejércitos de Juliano durante la campaña persa (363 d.C.). Antioquía estaba, según el autor, en condiciones de hacer frente a las necesidades que suponía alojar al emperador y al gran ejército que le acompañaba. Una carga que no todas las ciudades podían afrontar sin padecer consecuencias adversas. Libanio defendía así los intereses de su ciudad, consciente de que las ventajas superaban con creces a los inconvenientes.

Un planteamiento similar sería el que podríamos esperar en el caso de *Tarraco*. Una ciudad que, a diferencia de Antioquía, conocía muy bien los inconvenientes inherentes a la pérdida de interés estratégico y geopolítico. Tras una etapa de crecimiento durante los dos primeros siglos del Imperio, *Tarraco* vio menguado su papel de capital desde finales del siglo III, una situación difícil que se prolongó durante el siglo IV. Sin embargo, como hemos expuesto, las circunstancias históricas de inicios del siglo V confirieron a la ciudad un renovado papel como base de operaciones de los ejércitos romanos en Hispania. Una buena oportunidad para revertir el estado de crisis que venía padeciendo desde tiempo atrás.

A diferencia de Antioquía, una floreciente ciudad durante el siglo IV, *Tarraco* requirió un importante despliegue de medios y recursos para poder ejercer convenientemente esta función como base de operaciones de los ejércitos romanos en Hispania. Una inversión que, como se desprende del discurso de Antioquía, significaba también un impulso económico para aquellas ciudades que debían acoger a estos contingentes militares. Esto es, precisamente, lo que vemos en la ciudad de este período a través de la arqueología. A partir del primer cuarto del siglo V, los grandes recintos públicos de la parte alta experimentan los primeros indicios de transformación; mientras que los suburbios portuario y occidental, en clara conexión con las principales vías costera e interior, se reactivan y expanden urbanísticamente. Junto a ello, resulta también significativo el elevado porcentaje de bienes de importación (principalmente alimentos) procedentes de todo el Mediterráneo, síntoma de una intensa actividad portuaria y de una demanda inusualmente alta de productos básicos.

Hay que añadir a esto la presencia de los altos mandos militares y funcionarios civiles que refieren las fuentes, las cuales confirman el carácter de

la ciudad como base de operaciones, así como el protagonismo alcanzado por *Tarraco* en la recuperación del eje oriental de la Península para la causa romana imperial. Por los mismos años en que Asterio ostentaría la máxima autoridad civil y militar en *Tarraco* (Arce, 2005, pp. 220-221), tenemos constancia de otros personajes ilustres en la ciudad. Gracias a su inscripción funeraria (RIT 971), localizada en la denominada Necrópolis Paleocristiana, sabemos que el *primicerius domesticorum* Leocadio – cargo fundamental dentro de los *comites domesticorum* – murió en *Tarraco* durante los primeros años del siglo V (Fig. 6), donde quizás habría estado desempeñando alguna función importante en la gestión de la *res privata* a su cargo en la zona (CIL II²/14, 2126).

Otras inscripciones sepulcrales, procedentes de la misma necrópolis, nos informan de la presencia de otros personajes importantes, entre los que se encuentran el *vir honoratus* Aventino (RIT 946), Ampelio (RIT 954) y Óptimo (RIT 937). Por la inscripción métrica de este último, sabemos que era el “encargado de la gestión de las cosas importantes” (RIT 937: *cui maxima rerum est cura*). De otros, no conocemos ni el nombre ni el cargo, aunque sí conservamos restos de sus magníficos mausoleos. Y de otros personajes importantes que fallecieron en *Tarraco*, como sucede con el *potentissimus servus* de Asterio, sólo conocemos el cargo desempeñado.

En definitiva, la revitalización urbana y económica de *Tarraco* a mediados del siglo V se cimienta, en gran parte, en la recuperación de su función geoestratégica en el contexto de los frustrados intentos del poder legítimo por devolver la totalidad de la *dioecesis Hispaniarum* al dominio romano.



Fig. 6. Detalle de la inscripción del sarcófago del *primicerius domesticorum* Leocadio (MNAT P-42) (Archivo MNAT).

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CARTHAGO NOVA AS A PARADIGM OF ROMAN URBAN PLANNING: FROM THE CLASSICAL PERIOD TO LATE ANTIQUITY

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ABSTRACT: In the late 2nd century AD, the Roman town of Cartagena in south-eastern Hispania began a period of recession that resulted in deep-seated modifications to its urban layout and main buildings, both public and private. Following a violent episode in the 3rd century, it became the capital of the new Carthaginensis province created under the emperor Diocletian and, a century later, it was reborn in a new configuration. In this paper we use archaeological documentation to analyse the evolution of this important town between the 2nd and 5th centuries AD. Our objective here is to define and compare the main features of the urban model of *Carthago Nova* between the classical period and Late Antiquity.

KEYWORDS: *Carthago Nova*, urban planning, town, transformation, crisis; Late Antiquity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Colonia Urbs Iulia Nova Karthago was an important mercantile and military port situated in the far south of the province of Hispania Citerior (Fig. 1a). Thanks

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to its strategic situation on key trade routes and the wealth created through its nearby lead and silver mines, the town flourished between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD. In fact, it was during this period that the buildings that best define its urban layout were constructed. We are learning more and more about these buildings thanks to rescue archaeology works carried out in the last 40 years (Ramallo, 2011)³. The period saw construction of the theatre, forum, port and forum baths, as well as the main *domus* and roads. The Roman town, protected by a wall, extended along an isthmus with five hills, whose uneven orography conditioned the irregular layout of the urban fabric (Fig. 1b).

The Flavian period saw the erection or reworking of other monuments, such as the amphitheatre, the *Augusteum*, the so-called “Atrium Building” – the possible seat of a corporation for convivial practices – and the small temple of an adjacent shrine, dedicated perhaps to Isis and Serapis (Noguera & Madrid, 2014, pp. 32-42). Also attested are some remodelling works in the first half of the 2nd century AD, for example on the *palaestra* of the El Molinete baths – where a *popina* was built – and the *scaenae frons* of the theatre. All of this structural evidence reveals the colony’s vitality and its urban dynamism by the beginning of the Antonine period (Quevedo & Ramallo, 2015, pp. 162-163). However, from the rule of Marcus Aurelius (161–180), Cartagena underwent a process of regression that brought about major changes.

2. CARTHAGO NOVA BETWEEN THE 2ND AND 3RD CENTURIES AD: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CLASSICAL-PERIOD URBAN MODEL

The main characteristics of Cartagena’s urban landscape between the early Roman period and Late Antiquity have recently been delineated and defined based on the close analysis of diverse excavations (Quevedo, 2015). These are summarised below:

2.1. Degradation of Public and Private Buildings

Between the final decades of the 2nd century AD and the first decades of the 3rd, numerous buildings in *Carthago Nova* seem to have fallen redundant. This phenomenon is attested across the whole of the urban area and affected residences and civic buildings alike (Fig. 2). In many cases, a definitive abandonment was preceded by the appearance of artisanal zones among these early Roman/imperial structures: stone basins, kilns or the remains of glass- and bone-working and other activities. It is also common to observe how the spaces were compartmentalised and occupied by modest habitational units.

³ References below will focus on data from the most recent works, which feature detailed descriptions of the buildings cited, their constructive phases and full, related bibliographies.

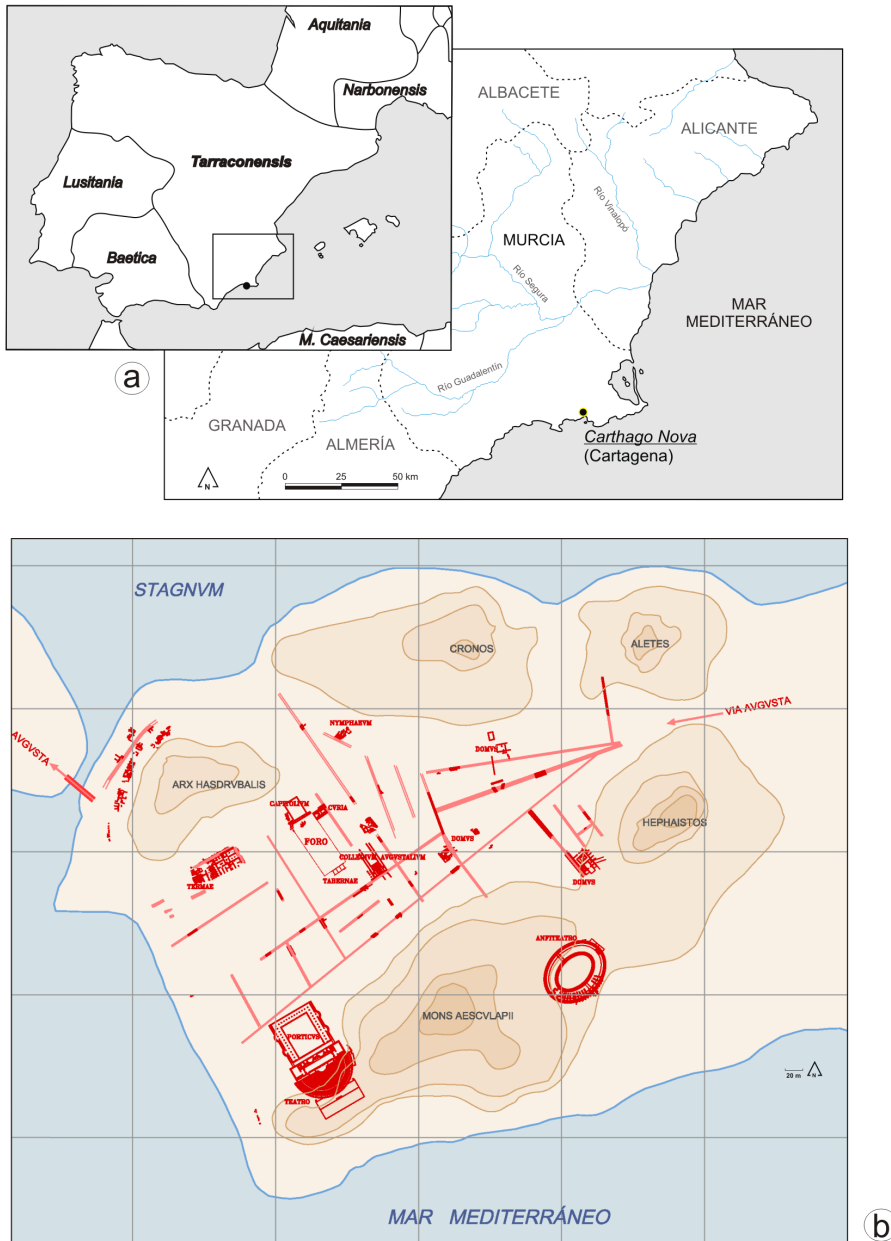


Fig. 1. a) Cartagena and its surroundings: the south-eastern Iberian Peninsula (A. Quevedo);
b) Plan of the city with its main classical-period monuments (S. Ramallo Asensio).

Furthermore, many buildings were plundered for their floors, wall coverings and other building materials. The abandoned buildings came to be buried by the collapse of their own structures (adobe walls, wall paintings, roofs), and became improvised rubbish dumps.

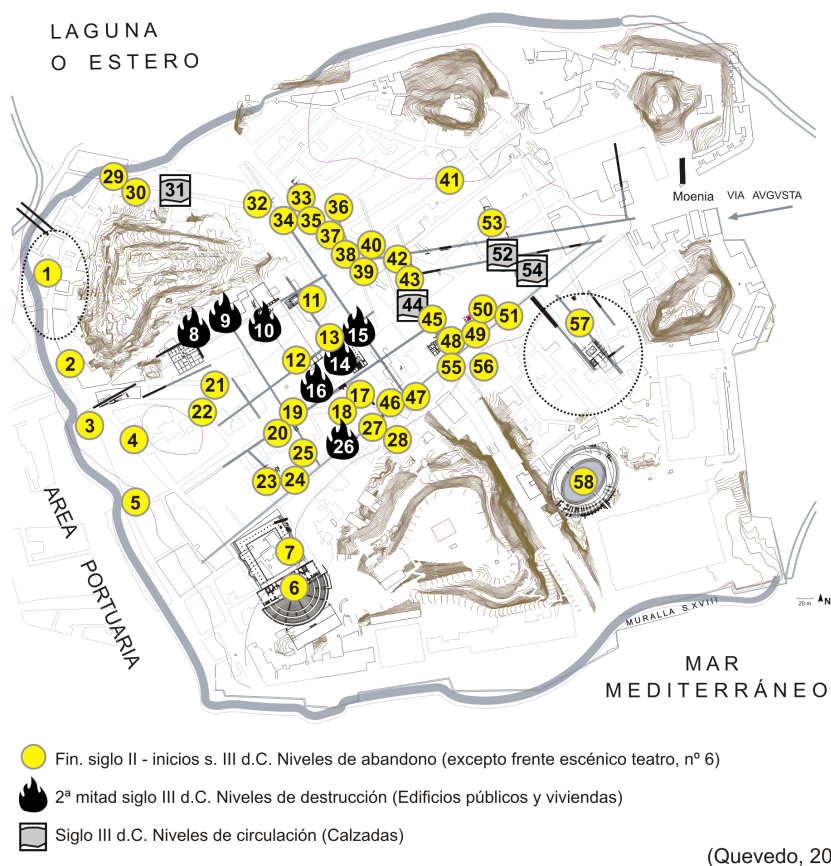


Fig. 2. Levels of abandonment (late 2nd century AD) and destruction (mid-3rd century AD) documented in Carthago Nova (Quevedo, 2015: Fig. 206).

The large classical urban residences, such as the *domus* of the Gorgona and that of Salvius, similarly suffer from this same phenomenon. In the latter, a bread oven was built over one room's paving before the house was definitively abandoned. One of the most emblematic examples here is the *domus* of Fortuna, some of whose rooms were restructured with plundered materials, while others became rubbish dumps (Bermejo & Quevedo, 2014) (Fig. 3). Like many of the

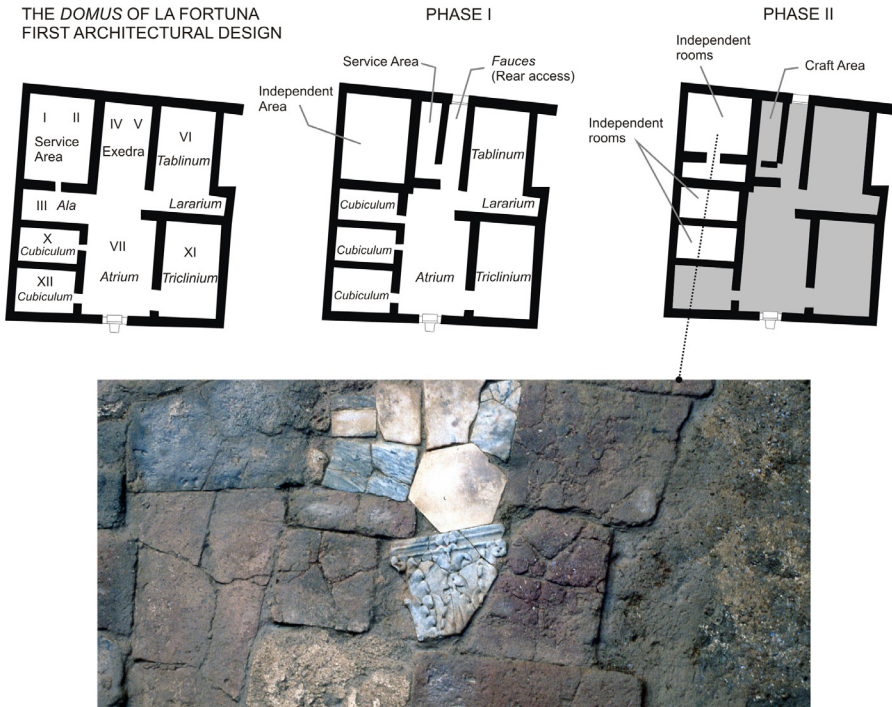


Fig. 3. Plan of the different habitational phases recorded at the Fortuna *domus*. *Opus sectile* pavement from Room I (Phase II, Fortuna *domus*) (A. Quevedo).

cited structures, abandonment of this *domus* is dated, based on the associated material contexts, to between AD 180–210.

Among the failed public monuments, one of the most unusual cases is that of the *curia*. Built next to the forum in the 1st century AD and remodelled at the end of that century or the beginning of the next, it comprises two large spaces: the *atrium* and the *aula*. Before the early 3rd century, the building was plundered and turned into a rubbish dump. Within the abandonment levels that overlay it, was part of the robbed and/or decayed ornamental programme: marble wall veneer, *opus sectile* flooring and a togated statue – perhaps representing a member of the imperial household, such as a *pontifex maximus* (Fig. 4). Potentially in this period the *collegium* of the *Augustales* – inside of which a collection of plundered marbles was stored – also lost its function.

The transformation of other civic buildings allows us to put this process of decay and change into context. Thus, in the case of the theatre, a disparate (d) evolution can be observed: firstly, its *scaenae frons* was destroyed by a fire in



Fig. 4. Different views of the abandonment levels of the Carthago Nova *curia* (AD 180-210), including the togated *capite velato* statue (Quevedo, 2015: Fig. 129).

the late 2nd century AD and was not rebuilt; likely in this same time, diverse artisanal structures came to occupy the *porticus post scaenam* (which is still standing). However, as happened in Clunia, it is possible that the theatre complex maintained its functions, perhaps holding performances transferred over from the amphitheatre, which was abandoned also in this phase. Noteworthy is the evident insertion of a limestone paving covering the *orchestra* and the first rows of the *proedria*, which had already been robbed out/damaged (Ramallo *et al.*, 2013, p. 35). Another paradigmatic example is the noted “Atrium Building” of El Molinete, whose four main rooms were partitioned up at the start of the 3rd century; in this Phase 2, the walls were decorated with new paintings, just as various mural images of Muses from a previous phase were recovered and embedded in the wall. A *titulus pictus* naming the emperor Heliogabalus suggests this set of modifications belong to c. AD 218 (Noguera *et al.*, 2017, pp. 151-161).

2.1.1. The road network

Carthago Nova's streets likewise witnessed major transformation from the late 2nd century AD. In various sectors, the widening of pavements or the encroachment of structures onto the road surface reduced the space for traffic.

The accumulation of rubbish and of collapse from abandoned houses hindered and on occasions prevented traffic flow. The rubbish covering some road surfaces was up to 2.0 m deep, as seen, for example, at the crossroads of Caridad and San Cristóbal la Corta Streets (Fig. 5). While the deterioration of the road network from this time is obvious, it clearly took place unequally within the city: while in parts of the eastern sector, streets were completely abandoned, elsewhere wheel-marks overlie the rubbish and soil levels. In summary, from the later stages of the Antonine period, the city's road system was becoming reduced and much less transitable, and changing from stone-paved streets to dirt tracks.

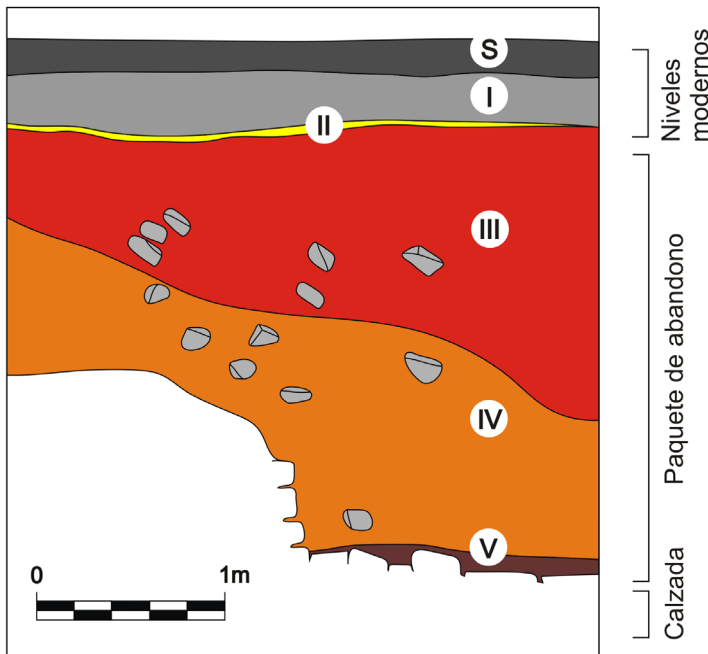


Fig. 5. Abandonment levels on the early Roman *decumanus* of Caridad and San Cristóbal la Corta Streets (late 2nd century AD) (Quevedo, 2015: Fig. 22a).

2.2. The decline of the epigraphic habit

Carthago Nova has one of the richest epigraphic collections in Hispania for the early Roman era and especially the Republican period (Abascal & Ramallo, 1997). Up until the mid-2nd century AD we see one public homage after another, clearly attesting the activity of the municipal senate in the use of the *loco dato decreto decurionum* formula, which expressed the authorisation of the local

government to erect a monument. Some of these inscriptions are particularly revealing in terms of contemporary urban dynamics, such as those alluding to the fulfilment of the last will and testament of L. Amilius Rectus, *civis adlectus* of Carthago Nova. This citizen – for whom we have four preserved inscriptions – reached the rank of knight in the reign of Hadrian (Abascal & Ramallo, 1997, pp. 213-217); we hear how he donated part of his legacy for the construction or repair of various (unknown) public buildings (one of the epigraphs is 3.8 m long), and how he commissioned a statue weighing 250 pounds of silver.

However, from the second half of the 2nd century AD, such epigraphic guides fall away abruptly (Quevedo, 2015, pp. 16-17, Figs. 9 and 10). The majority are of a funerary nature, although we know very little or nothing of the necropoleis of the period. Mention should go to the recent discovery of an inscription dated to around the second half of the 2nd century (Fig. 6a) that may refer to the presence of a *curator reipublicae* in the city (Fernández *et al.*, 2016, pp. 249-253). This find appears to report financial difficulties or problems of another nature – such as shortages or corruption – that Carthago Nova may have been suffering then. The last epigraphs we know of belong to the Severan period. The first is the noted *titulus pictus* from the “Atrium Building”, which refers to Heliogabalus and a prefect of the *praetorium*, *Adventus* (Noguera *et al.*, 2017, pp. 157-161). The second is a pedestal erected to Iulia Avita Mamaea found in the Forum area, which was already very run down in that period (Fig. 6b); the text dates to the reign of her son, Alexander Severus (222–235), and was dedicated by the *conventus Karthaginiensis* and not the local senate/council. Subsequently, we lack other epigraphic survivals until the 5th century.

2.3. Territory and Economy

Between the late 2nd and the early 3rd century, the territory of Carthago Nova underwent the same phenomenon as the town: numerous rural residences and exploitations ceased to operate (Murcia, 2010, pp. 143-149, Figs. 4 and 5)⁴. In some cases, such as that of the emblematic maritime villa of Portmán, we can observe an intrusion of artisanal spaces prior to the buildings being definitively abandoned in the Severan period, suggestive of some recycling activity in/at the site⁵. Similarly, the large spa complexes of the region, such as Archena, Fortuna and Alhama de Murcia, were impacted or fell into disuse. Furthermore, we can observe a decrease in overseas trade and imports, as reflected in the low number of shipwrecks of this period recorded in the waters of Cartagena and its surroundings (Quevedo, 2015, p. 297, fig. 215).

⁴ To an overview about the local *villae*, see the recent catalogue by Noguera, 2019.

⁵ Information courtesy of Alicia Fernández Díaz, the excavation director, following the 2017 campaign.



Fig. 6. Inscriptions from Carthago Nova: a) An epigraph alluding to a possible *curator reipublicae*, mid-2nd century AD (S. Ramallo Asensio, Museo Arqueológico Municipal de Cartagena); b) Inscription to Iulia Mammas (AD 222-235), the last public homage recorded in the town (A. Quevedo, Museo Arqueológico Municipal de Cartagena).

The causes of the recession affecting both city and *ager* appear mainly of an economic nature. Most significant was the cessation of mining, which had accounted for a large part of the local building boom of the 1st century BC and 1st century AD. This fall in the production can be explained by the exhaustion of the local mines. The lead pollution graphs generated from the extant sedimentary records of the lagoon of El Almarjal, which surrounded Carthago Nova to the north, already show an abrupt fall in the third century AD. This loss of Carthago Nova's main economic driving force brought down the whole productive system

that had been built around it. We know little or nothing of the exploitation of other resources – esparto, fishing and salted products – and their possible impacts on the local economy. But we can observe that, at the same time, in the second half of the 2nd century, various other Hispanic towns suffered problems deriving from an unfavourable political or financial climate that saw the arrival of the first *curatores* sent by Rome (Abascal & Espinosa, 1989, pp. 228-229), one of which we have already detected in Cartagena. Much less well understood for these same decades is the impact of the claimed raids or incursions by Mauri/Moors and of the Antonine Plague, neither of which are attested in either literary or archaeological terms (Quevedo & Ramallo, 2015, pp. 170-172).

In the commercial activities, we have few data to understand the export rates during this moment, however, it is well known the economical peak in imports from *Africa proconsular*. In Cartagena prevails african red slip ware and the cooking wares (Quevedo, 2015, pp. 274-277). Scarce amphorae presence can be explained by the grain exchanges with North Africa (Bonifay & Tchernia, 2012).

3. URBAN CRISIS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 3RD CENTURY AD

The archaeological documentation for Carthago Nova in the decades prior to the Severan dynastic era is very sparse, although in architectural terms, the *adaptation* of public spaces and the reuse of architectural elements continued. What archaeological contexts are known have a common denominator: traces of a violent destruction, with strata featuring collapsed structures, often charred, and with domestic objects – mainly pottery – broken in situ (Fig. 7a). The best studied example is a small house established on the remains of an early Roman tavern at No. 40 Cuatro Santos Street, destroyed by fire around AD 240–270. We can also cite the collapse of part of the peristyle in the port baths (Madrid *et al.*, 2015, p. 20) and parts of other buildings, such as the *Augusteum* or the theatre *porticus post scaenam* (Fig. 7b).

Towards the end of the 3rd century, the “Atrium Building” underwent a major metamorphosis that modified its public or semi-public nature. Its interior was partitioned up and each of the imposing halls of the early Roman period was transformed into an individual house in which we can distinguish cooking/kitchen and storage areas. The different domestic units were organised around the space formed by the well and the altar, which became a communal courtyard. Perhaps at the beginning of the 4th century, this whole complex (whose contexts are currently being studied) was destroyed by fire (Noguera *et al.*, 2017, p. 152); strikingly, nothing was removed or retrieved from these buildings and they remained buried until their modern rediscovery.

What were the causes of these destructions? The extension and size of the spaces affected lead us to believe that it was more than a fortuitous or accidental fire. Two main hypotheses can be offered to explain this calamitous episode (or,



Fig. 7 a) An AD 240-270 pottery context from the destruction of the house at Number 40 Cuatro Santos Street (Quevedo, 2015: Fig. 118); b) Collapse of the *porticus post scaenam* in the Roman theatre of Cartagena. The architectural elements remained connected and collapsed on an earlier abandonment level (S. Ramallo Asensio, Fundación Museo Teatro Romano de Cartagena).

perhaps, episodes): a Frankish raid and/or a seismic movement. Anyway, as for the moment we cannot precisely date these evidences, we need to be very cautious in relating with any historical event.

With regard to the Franks, the ancient sources place them in Hispania in c. AD 260-261. Here they laid siege to the provincial capital, Tarraco, where, according to Aurelius Victor, they took ships to sail to Africa. Archaeology has provided some reliable evidence of their passage through Tarragona and the surrounding territory (Macias *et al.*, 2013). According to Orosius, the Germans remained in the Iberian Peninsula for 12 years and, potentially used the captured ships to engage in acts of piracy along the coasts and against ports ("*on ne s'improviser pas marin*": Brassous, 2014, p. 609). This explanation would counter the traditional idea of land-based raiders, and see them arriving to assail the peninsula via the Strait of Gibraltar. Indeed, for Cartagena, the similarities with other destruction contexts on the Levante coast could well support the possibility of a seaborne Frankish attack (Quevedo, 2015, pp. 302-308, Quevedo & Ramallo, 2015, pp. 173-174)⁶.

The nature of the later 3rd-century destruction levels might equally relate, in part, to an earthquake, which seems to be revealed in various deformities and damages to buildings in the city. Most obvious are the (presumed simultaneous) collapses of parts of two public monuments, namely the theatre's *porticus post scaenam* and the wall of the *Augusteum* that adjoined an earlier porticoed space; in both cases strong *opus quadratum* sandstone walls fell down towards the west (Fig. 7b). This coincidence in orientation and the fact that the walls' architectural elements remained connected could well correspond to the effects of a seismic wave that swept across the zone in a single direction (Quevedo & Ramallo, 2015, pp. 174-175). Noticeably, both buildings featured abandonment levels below the fallen walls, indicating prior lack of on-site maintenance. However, only close (ongoing) stratigraphic analysis will be able to determine the definitive causes of collapse. One can, meanwhile, note that evidence of one or more earthquakes appear attested in nearby Baetica, notably those that destroyed the theatre of Córdoba in the 270/280s and the basilica of Baelo Claudia (c. AD 265-270).

⁶ Note, however, that there are no literary data for Cartagena or elements, such as bodies or weapons, to allow this episode to be securely linked to the Franks, apart from a German fibula found out of context (Quevedo, 2015, p. 162, Fig. 110.5). Likewise, for the collapse levels of Aula 14 in the "Atrium Building" cursory mention is made of the presence of a possible projectile (Noguera *et al.*, 2017, p. 153, note 17).

4. CARTHAGO NOVA AND THE SLOW RECOVERY OF THE 4TH CENTURY AD

As a consequence of the reforms instigated by the Tetrarchs, it is argued that c. AD 298 Carthago Nova became capital of the new province of Carthaginiensis – a choice no doubt influenced by the favourable conditions of the port of Cartagena and its capacity to shelter a fleet. However, the effects of this promotion do not register strongly in the short term. The 4th century in Carthago Nova in fact can be divided into two large periods: the first relates to the first half of the century, which is characterised by a lack of archaeological documentation; and the second comprises its last decades, which mark a renewal of urban activity, particularly evident in the funerary area.

As the seat of the provincial governor and his court, the city should have hosted an increased level of political and administrative activity. And yet the material visibility of this is limited as yet: pottery and numismatic evidence alone register trade and circulation levels in the first half of the 4th century (Madrid *et al.*, 2009); such finds are concentrated around El Molinete, near the Forum and the town centre. Otherwise we are so far unaware of any buildings of official and representative nature. The port baths are perhaps the only building of public or semi-public character that could have persisted into the 4th or 5th centuries after which levels of fire damage and collapse are attested (Madrid *et al.*, 2015, p. 20 note an earlier fire of the latter 3rd century which led to part of the peristyle becoming redundant). Nor are the necropoleis of this period yet traced, apart from a few isolated *intra moenia* burials – surprisingly, these perhaps go back as far as the second half of the 3rd century – scattered among ruinous early Roman period structures (Quevedo, 2015, pp. 316-320). In general, the sharp decline in trading activity noted previously continued, flagged by the scarcity of finds and shipwrecks. The same economic weakness can be detected in the rest of the territory, where the majority of *villae* and production centres abandoned in the 2nd/3rd century AD were not reoccupied.

A further gap for this period and for the late antique era relates to textual sources. The only mention, at the start of the 4th century, is of the participation of Eutyches, *presbyter* of Carthago Spartaria, at the Synod of Elvira. The date is the subject of controversy, but the reference would at least confirm the presence of an urban Christian community in the first third of that century. However, no churches are yet documented to provide information about the hypothetical emergent Christian topography of the city or its *suburbium*.

5. THE URBAN RENAISSANCE OF THE 5TH CENTURY

From the second half of the 4th century, Carthago Spartaria recovered its economic pulse, which was translated into a re-activation of construction activity

that would not be fully realized until the mid-5th century (Ramallo & Cerezo, 2018). Below we outline the main aspects of growth and renewal:

5.1. *A new architecture: horrea and tabernae*

The constructions of this period were concentrated on and around the city's port waterfront (Fig. 8). These were characterised by the massive use of *spolia*, including ashlar blocks, capitals and epigraphic pedestals of the 2nd century, reused in careful and systematic fashion. Emblematic is the example of the complex excavated in the Plaza de los Tres Reyes/Gran Hotel: here, an early Roman *decumanus* was completely repaved in this late period with stone that probably came from the Forum, since two of the reused blocks were pedestal bases, indicated by various marks, one of which shows that it was made for an equestrian statue. Next to the 3.5 m wide road, a series of colonnades and two *tabernae* were built, these likewise exploiting elements plundered from earlier buildings. The structures have been linked to a large square paved with flagstones that was found on the neighbouring plot in 1907, when the Gran Hotel was built. The characteristics of the complex and its proximity to the sea have led to the interpretation of a commercial quarter. The fact that the zone was newly paved is highly significant, since elsewhere, as seen, almost all the city's streets had been turned into dirt tracks since the late 2nd century.

A better guide to the political, economic and social recovery of Carthago Nova is the construction of a warehouse or market on the remains of the Roman theatre. The pottery contexts point to a mid-5th-century date for this *ex novo* work that reused many of the architectural elements from the 1st-century AD theatre façade (Ramallo *et al.*, 2013, pp. 35-37). The building comprised two parts: the first is made up of 15 *cellae* set around the former theatre stage; the second is a semi-circular porticoed exedra – 28 m in diameter – built over the *orchestra* and *ima cavea*. Both units were part of a homogeneous complex, as is demonstrated by the careful materials use and its adaptation to the spaces of the Augustan theatre. Although similar buildings in Asia Minor tend to be associated with a *macellum*, the proportions of the compartments in the Cartagena example – long and narrow – are more in keeping with those of a *horreum*.

Other excavated structures built in this period, in some cases occupying earlier buildings, were mainly of a commercial nature, but include also artisans' workshops, as attested by the finds of working areas, ash/charcoal and iron and glass slag. Interestingly, despite the proliferation of such workshops, we can observe careful control and disposal of waste residue, since most of this from this date onwards is not found on abandoned plots, but in pits. This reflects a constructive and concerted effort to cater for the (now elevated) *publicum decus* of the *urbs*, since the pits were often dug down to early Roman levels, occasionally even cutting through the tough layers of *opus signinum*.

5.2. Late necropoleis

In parallel to the vitality of Carthago Spartaria as city and port, in the transition from the 4th to 5th century AD, a large burial ground – the necropolis of San Antón – grew up to the north of the town (Berrocal & Láiz, 1995). This large cemetery is made up of multiple burials, some yet to be excavated. There are two pantheons of rectangular ground plan, built with partially reused materials, although individual tombs are the most frequent mode of interment. The graves are completed (*Tombs are topped*) by a covering of mortar forming a sigma-shaped, rectangular or square *mensa*. Although the absence of epitaphs and grave goods makes it difficult to date the complex more precisely, various parallels with the necropolis of Tipasa (Algeria) should confirm its chronology. San Antón is overall considered to be a Christian necropolis, although it must be admitted that there are no elements to reliably define its cultural attribution.

From the earliest 5th century, another necropolis developed on the city's eastern side, occupying early Roman-period *intra moenia* space, and set alongside the *decumanus maximus*. Most likely set outside the city's new walled area, the necropolis is one of the most significant elements of the changes that affecting the urban topography of this period in confirming the definitive withdrawal of the city focus towards the port. The cemetery features primarily rectangular or slightly trapezoidal inhumation tombs with a (Christian tradition) SW-NE orientation (Vizcaíno, 2009, pp. 539-557). It extended across a neighbourhood of former housing that was abandoned by the end of the 2nd century AD; noticeably, the tombs can thus be dug inside these demolished houses, and sometimes are built with materials plundered from these buildings. The necropolis shows a very long chronology, being active until the early 7th century.

Finally, brief mention is required of a possible third burial area between the Roman theatre and the port, registered by the recovery of various inscriptions from the Byzantine period in Latin and Greek; however, these epigraphs may have been displaced. Indeed, to date, there is no evidence that this supposed necropolis existed in previous centuries.

Only for the 6th century do we know the names of various bishops from the city. These include Hector – who signed as *episcopus Carthaginensis metropolitanae* at the Synod of Tarragona in 516 – and Licinianus, who died in Constantinople in 602. This century, according to an unconfirmed tradition, also saw the birth at Carthago Spartaria of one of the most important intellectual figures of the period, namely Saint Isidore, who, together with his siblings, the saints Leander, Fulgentius and Florentina, were natives of the city or its environs (Fontaine, 2000a).

5.3. The boundaries of the new urban precinct

Two elements help us profile the perimeter of the late-classical Roman city: on the one hand, the presence of the necropolis installed on the ruins of the eastern sector of the colony, abandoned in the late 2nd century; and on the other hand, the progressive silting up of the lagoon and the port, with the advance of the coastline westwards, suffering a progradation with respect to the Augustan-period dock (Martínez, 2004, pp. 22-25, Fig. 4). Such changes explain the shift in and concentration of later building activity in the westernmost sector of the city.

Carthago Nova thus contracted towards the port sector, becoming constricted between the El Molinete and La Concepción hills. This reduction of the urban space has led researchers to question whether a new defensive circuit was built to enclose this (Fig. 8), with a line running between the hills and the eastern necropolis proposed. A recent hypothesis has also suggested a stretch of wall set along the waterfront, parallel to the present-day Calle Mayor (Ramallo

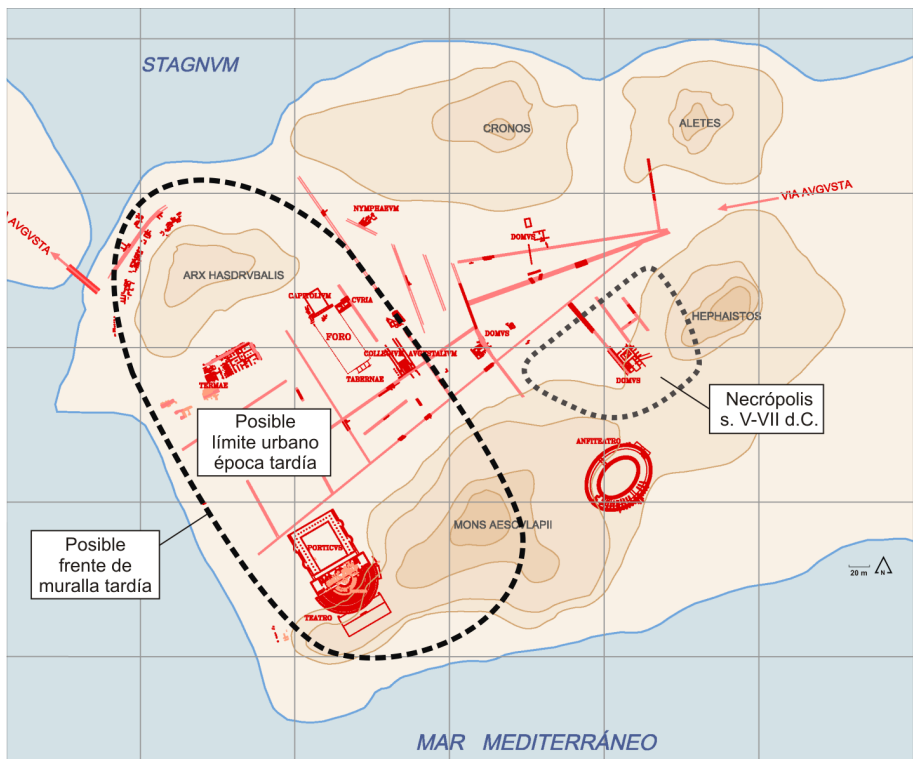


Fig. 8. Carthago Nova during Late Antiquity: the main buildings and a new urban perimeter (S. Ramallo Asensio & A. Quevedo).

& Cerezo, 2018, p. 167). The inscription of Comentiolus of the 6th century AD referring to Carthago's Byzantine defensive curtain (Fontaine, 2000b) could actually be a record of a restoration of the older defences. The inscription refers to elements such as walls, towers, gates or the main entrance of the city, built by the *magister militum* Comentiolus, sent by the emperor Mauritius. Either way, nothing is known of this possible late-Roman wall or the date of its hypothetical construction.

5.4. The commercial floruit of the late period

From the second half of the 4th century an increase in the number of shipwrecks and multiple urban contexts confirm a new period of commercial prosperity. Carthago Nova recovered its previous role as a redistribution centre and began to receive many imports, especially from North Africa and the Orient (Ramallo *et al.*, 2013, p. 37). At the same time, it would have been exporting local products, probably salted goods, with factories likely in Cartagena (Santa Lucía) or at least in the nearby Valle de Escombreras. Certainly, the best-known salting establishments – Mazarrón and Águilas – can be recognised as very active during this period: at the former, an impressive series of large basins was built, and, at the latter, two baths complexes were turned into pottery workshops to manufacture containers for salted products (Ramallo, 2011, pp. 46-47). There should be no doubt that the reactivation of this vigorous industry was one of the economic pillars of late-Roman Cartagena. To date, locally-produced amphorae have been found within Hispania (Berrocal, 2012, pp. 272-273), although we should anticipate that its high volume of production would have seen distribution over a much wider area.

From the second quarter of the 5th century, the activity of these coastal factories appears to slow down, yet most continued in operation until the early 6th century. We do not know if this downturn can be linked to the passage of the Vandals, who, according to the sources, razed Carthago Nova in 425 (Hydat. *Chron.*, 86). To date, the archaeological record lacks any evidence of these events. Moreover, in the second half of the 5th century, the city seemingly received a new boost, as suggested by the construction of the market/warehouse on the site of the Roman theatre. Here it is valuable to note that in 460 the emperor Majorian travelled from Arles to Cartagena with the intention of gathering together a fleet to take to North Africa to defeat the Vandals. Paradoxically, it was the latter who, under the command of their king Genseric, destroyed the imperial fleet in an obscure episode recounted by Hydatius (*Chron.*, 200).

6. DISCUSSION

From the late 2nd century AD, Carthago Nova's townscape was characterised by the abandonment and robbing of public and private buildings, the appearance

of artisanal workshops on these sites, a re-occupation of earlier residential areas, the proliferation of urban waste and the breakdown of part of the road network. The early occurrence of all these aspects is surprising, with especial note regarding the widespread accumulation of refuse, extending also to the *curia*, which had already become a large rubbish dump in the latter period of the Antonine dynasty. The lack of maintenance and breakdown of civic services imply the inability of the local senate/council to guarantee the functioning of the town's core infrastructures, including the basic movement of traffic and goods; the decay of the streets from the late 2nd century on is difficult to interpret as a voluntary change.

From the period of Marcus Aurelius, no new public construction is recorded in Carthago Nova and, in general terms, renewal/upkeep of existing spaces comes to an end, the only exceptions being the "Atrium Building" and the theatre stage. The inscription dedicated by the *conventus* to Iulia Mamaea would be the last erected in the Forum, but coming at a time when some of its buildings were already ruinous. The decrease in epigraphy in Hispania during the 3rd century AD is an acknowledged fact that, far from being interpreted negatively, is seen as a change in mentality (Witschel, 2009, pp. 475-478). However, in the case of Cartagena, the epigraphic tradition ceases abruptly, almost wholly disappearing after the 3rd century. Unlike at other towns in the province, such as Tarraco and Valentia, no references (or at least none has been found to date) exist here to governors or the local council from this period.

The cessation of mining, the initial economic driving force of the colony and its surroundings, is currently perceived as the principal cause of the evident recession within Carthago, one aggravated by a generally unfavourable economic climate (Chic, 2005, pp. 579-583). This would have particularly affected a centre with limited agricultural resources and thus a larger dependency on external sources, as attested in the Roman Republican period. In this scenario we can imagine the repercussions felt from the conflict between Claudius Albinus and Septimius Severus, as demonstrated by the emblematic case of the colony *Virtus Iulia Ituci* (Ventura, 2017, pp. 473-476). The noted lack of inscriptions obscures from us the fate of the city's main aristocratic families from the mid-2nd century AD, and we have to point out the total absence from here of high-level personages occupying important posts in the provincial capital. Even so, Carthago Nova must have had certain minimum resources, such as taxes charged on goods passing through its port.

From the Severan period a certain level of occupation is attested by the rubbish dumps and by modest houses, such as that identified at number 40 Cuatro Santos Street or those built inside the "Atrium Building". But in the second half of the 3rd century a violent event – potentially a Frankish raid or an earthquake (or both) – brought down many buildings which were not rebuilt. Clearly, this episode can be classified as an "urban crisis" – with 'crisis' here signifying a situation in

which the patient either gets better or dies – as defended by Alföldy (1998, p. 32). It was not, therefore, a longer-term phenomenon like the “Third-century crisis”, a historiographical concept that has often been applied without taking into account geographical or chronological nuances (cf Bravo, 2012, p. 127).

Yet the town re-emerges as capital of the Carthaginensis province, following Diocletian’s reform in the late 3rd century AD (Arce, 2009, p. 68) – although we lack notices to confirm this fact, which is accepted insofar as the new province was named after Carthago Nova. But no evidence, either literary or archaeological, exists to vouch for this change in status, such as new civic buildings to accommodate governor and court, or heightened material (e.g. ceramics) contexts. A strong contrast lies in the vigour and vitality of neighbouring Ilici (Tendero & Ronda, 2014, pp. 293-309). The current panorama leads us to believe that, in the first half of the 4th century, the economic and perhaps also the political leads may have moved from Cartagena to Elche. The competition between these towns and the alternating power axes is one key argument used to explain the territorial modifications at this time (Brassous & Quevedo, 2015, p. 6).

We must wait until late in the second half of the 4th century for signs of a reactivation, which strengthens in the mid-5th century AD, from when a new urban model is evident, one that systematically reused the classical-period monuments and with streets repaved with pedestals from the Forum (for example, in the Plaza de los Tres Reyes) and more controlled rubbish disposal in pits; a modified defensive curtain may also have been erected. New warehouses and workshops reflect this economic vitality, which extends out to productive sites in the territory. These vitality can be seen, not only in the *cetariae*, but also in *villae* such as Villaricos (in Mula, 70km from Cartagena), a massive oil producer (González *et al.*, 2018). Anyway, we don’t have information about protagonists that were engaged in these economic activities. Probably they were the same traders, though safeguarded by the new political figures. We can presume that by the relevant improvements in the possible *horreum* over the Roman theatre. Despite all this, Carthago Nova did not recover its early Roman period dimensions.

What the main public buildings were in the 4th and 5th centuries is not known, with the exception of the market or warehouse built with spolia on the remains of the Roman theatre. Nor do we know of any Christian edifices, apart from the necropolis, to reveal a developing Church presence, which is otherwise attested by textual references to several bishops. In fact, we don’t know nothing about the buildings that could be hosting the Emperor and his court. The late-Roman period domestic architecture presents a poorly defined model of modest quality, juxtaposed with spaces devoted to craft industries and storage that continued to be built on/in the ruins of the early Roman buildings. The documented destructive passage of the Vandals in 425 seems not to have affected the town’s momentum, which would once again be transformed when it passed into Byzantine hands during the reign of Justinian.

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LA TRANSFORMACIÓN DE *HISPALIS* EN UNA CIUDAD CRISTIANIZADA. NOVEDADES EN SU TOPOGRAFÍA ECLESIAÍSTICA Y FUNERARIA.

The transformation of *Hispalis* into a Christian city. New perspectives on its ecclesiastical and funerary topography.

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ABSTRACT: This paper provides unpublished information about the late antique city of *Hispalis*. These data complete the new vision of the city offered by our recent investigation.

KEYWORDS: *Hispalis*, Late Antiquity, Late Antique Archaeology, Baetica province, recent archaeological finds, Christianization.

1. EL “EXTRAÑO” SIGLO IV D.C.

En los últimos años se ha avanzado considerablemente en el estudio de la *Hispalis* tardoantigua. Aspectos como el de su posible extensión, las edificaciones domésticas y de funcionalidad artesanal, los niveles de contacto comercial e intercambio con el mundo mediterráneo o el grado de impacto de una reactivada

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² Estudio llevado a cabo en el marco del Proyecto de I+D de generación de conocimiento “Funciones y vínculos de las elites municipales de la Bética. Marco jurídico, estudio documental y recuperación contextual del patrimonio epigráfico. II” (ORDO VI), Referencia: PGC2018-093507-B-I00 (MCIU/AEI/FEDER, UE).

dinámica fluvial, han sido objeto de atención de la investigación reciente (García Vargas, 2012; *id.*, 2014; Ordóñez *et al.*, 2013; Ordóñez, 2016). No obstante, resulta muy cierto que pocos son los datos precisos sobre los grandes edificios religiosos con los que debió contar la Sevilla tardoantigua. De hecho, tan sólo nos ha llegado una mínima muestra de dicha topografía, que se limita a tres focos seguros, exigua muestra que se reduce aún más ya que solamente en un caso existe una constatación inequívoca, el referido a la recientemente excavada necrópolis de La Trinidad (Complejo Edificio S7), a poco más de un kilómetro del flanco septentrional de la hipotética muralla de la ciudad. Los otros dos ámbitos donde se centran las propuestas interpretativas de la actual investigación arqueológica son, respectivamente, el sector de calle Mármoles (Complejo Edificio S8), y el área del Patio de Banderas (Complejo Edificio S9) con prolongación hacia la Avda. de Roma-San Telmo (González, 2011)³ (Complejo Edificio S10).

En *Hispalis* todo parece indicar que la necrópolis más importante, la situada al norte en torno a la Vía Augusta, empieza a contener enterramientos cristianos por estas fechas. Los datos historiográficos y las fuentes históricas hablan de la existencia en la zona de la basílica martirial más importante de la ciudad, la consagrada a las santas locales Justa y Rufina. En este entorno, anexo a la iglesia del ex-convento de la Santísima Trinidad, se han desarrollado varias intervenciones arqueológicas. Hace algunos años vio la luz un último trabajo que recopila prácticamente toda esta información, con una revisión historiográfica así como una propuesta de sistematización de los monumentos funerarios y una interpretación global del conjunto de hallazgos; esta obra constituye hoy por hoy una referencia de singular importancia en el conocimiento de este gran sector funerario (Barragán Valencia, 2006; *id.*, 2009; *id.*, 2010).

Son los solares de Carretera de Carmona 6, 8 y 10 los que han recibido mayor atención. Se trata de una antigua área de necrópolis que presenta evidencias de cristianización y monumentalización desde el siglo V d.C., que se formalizan en pequeños monumentos funerarios con un desigual nivel de conservación en el entorno de una tumba con cripta funeraria de mayor tamaño que aquéllos. Sin embargo, y ante ciertos problemas estratigráficos e interpretativos (Sánchez Velasco, 2011; Eger, 2012), serán las inscripciones las que aporten una cronología más precisa a los restos documentados, con una representación de epígrafes tardoantiguos y de época visigoda, aunque también existen epitafios paganos altoimperiales, confirmando la importante necrópolis pagana previa definida con anterioridad (Ordóñez Agulla, 2005; Rodríguez, 2007). El conjunto funerario de la Trinidad constituye la necrópolis más extensa

³ Para un tratamiento *in extenso* del estado actual de la cuestión sobre estos sectores, con sugerencia de nuevas propuestas de interpretación que no se abordarán aquí, *vid.* Sánchez, 2012 e *id.* 2018, con relación a la posible ubicación, respectivamente, del *episcopium hispalensis* y de un monasterio suburbano en el ámbito meridional de la ciudad.

y con mayor continuidad topográfica de *Hispalis*, dada su ubicación sobre una meseta fluvial, a salvo de inundaciones. A este área septentrional extramuros se asocian ciertos elementos monumentales descontextualizados como “un capitel apilastrado corintio de mármol” de factura tardoantigua procedente de Ronda de Capuchinos 21, a escasos 200 m de la carretera de Carmona. Esta pieza ha llevado a F. Amores Carredano a proponer la existencia de un gran edificio basilical en el entorno, estimando que pudiera pertenecer al arranque de un arco toral de una basílica ubicada en las inmediaciones (Amores Carredano, 2005, p. 153)⁴. Esta sugerencia enlaza directamente con la corriente de la tradición sevillana que desde mediados del siglo XIII estima que el lugar de martirio de las santas Justa y Rufina se situaba junto a la Puerta del Sol, donde por estas fechas se iba a erigir el convento de Trinitarios Calzados de la Santísima Trinidad, en el cual se encontrarían las cárceles donde penaron ambas mártires⁵. Más concretamente, el culto se formalizaría en torno a un *martyrium* extramuros dedicado a las santas, quizá en el contexto del control y fomento de la devoción popular a las santas alentados por la jerarquía episcopal hispalense -Leandro e Isidoro- para la creación de un santoral propio (Gil, 2002, pp. 25-26. Sobre la extensión de su culto en época visigoda, *vid.* Castillo Maldonado, 2005a; *id.* 2005b.). La continuidad en época islámica de esta edificación pudo estar representada por la *kanīsaRubīna* -la iglesia de Rufina- y la contigua *MasʿūdRubīna* -la mezquita de Rufina-, que se mencionan en los textos del *Fath al-Andalus*, IbnIdari e IbnQūṭīyya, y que, según se dice, “dominaba el campo sevillano”. Desde la óptica de los estudios islámicos se ha señalado con verosimilitud que ambos edificios pudieran corresponder realmente a dependencias de un complejo monástico suburbano que sería ocupado por los musulmanes, y donde el gobernador habría materializado la unión compartida de la sede del poder político (*dār al-imāra*) y el religioso (mezquita) en su propia persona (Calvo Capilla, 2007, pp. 159-162; *id.*, 2011, pp. 145-147)⁶. De este modo, esta propuesta vendría a incrementar la

⁴ Otros capiteles tardoantiguos reutilizados se han localizado en diversos puntos de la ciudad, como es el caso de c/ Estrella 3, c/ Corral del Rey, c/ Imperial 21, c/ Archeros, Patio de la Iglesia de El Salvador, Vestíbulo del Rey D. Pedro en el Alcázar, c/ Mezquita y Jardines de Murillo. Caso aparte es el referido a la pareja cimacio/capitel de mármol blanco, del siglo VII, procedentes del antiguo Hogar de San Fernando y hoy en el Museo Arqueológico de Sevilla (ROD 5611 y 5612); estas piezas se han atribuido a la localización actual de esta institución, en c/ Don Fadrique, cercana pues al núcleo tardoantiguo de la Trinidad. Sin embargo, hay que señalar que su origen cierto está en la ubicación tradicional del “Asilo de mendicidad de San Fernando”, una manzana intramuros situada entre c/Santiago y c/Alhóndiga, donde esta institución estuvo desde su fundación en 1846 hasta su cierre en 1956, mientras que el inmueble será demolido a inicios de la década de los 60 del siglo XX (Collantes de Terán y Gómez Estern, 1976, pp. 89-90). Con todo, y como los anteriores, su reutilización impide su uso como índice topográfico.

⁵ Una plasmación iconográfica en la vista anónima grabada por A. Brambilla y recogida en Cabra & Santiago, 1988, nº 36.

⁶ Los textos refieren que a la caída de la ciudad (*Fath al-Andalus* 1889, p. 24) el segundo

exigua nómina de edificaciones monásticas de la topografía hispalense, reducida por el momento al monasterio honorianense que se menciona en algunas de las versiones conservadas de la *Regula* de Isidoro (Reg., Praescrip). Aunque ciertamente no existe hasta el momento evidencia arqueológica al respecto.

Debido al alto número de enterramientos y a la entidad del material recuperado en las excavaciones de Carretera de Carmona, resulta evidente que la necrópolis debe estar en relación con la proximidad inmediata de una basílica o de un complejo religioso de importancia, de forma análoga a lo que sabemos que sucede en otras ciudades hispanas. Obviamente, solo futuras excavaciones en la zona irán perfilando esta realidad. El área ocupada por la necrópolis debió ser considerable, y en ella debió tener lugar un proceso de “monumentalización diferencial” tan característico de las necrópolis de época tardía, que lleva a que los grandes mausoleos se ubiquen cerca de la iglesia que las genera, mientras que enterramientos en fosa y más modestos se ubican más alejados de la misma.

La hipótesis esgrimida por C. Barragán Valencia de la existencia próxima de una basílica martirial es muy probable, especialmente si atendemos a la distribución de otras necrópolis urbanas y suburbanas tanto hispanas como del resto del mundo romano, aunque habrá que esperar a nuevas intervenciones para clarificar la cuestión. Y para esto último es fundamental excavar en los aledaños de la actual iglesia, ya que todo parece indicar que, más que un recinto funerario abierto con accesos y recorridos, aquí podemos estar ante parte de un gran complejo arquitectónico, compuesto por varias áreas que, a su vez, cuentan con diferentes edificios. Nos inclinamos porque, junto a la zona no excavada, más que una pequeña vía funeraria exista una continuidad de los edificios y mausoleos, tal vez a la manera del probable complejo monacal de la basílica norte del Francolí, en Tarragona (López Vilar, 2006), del complejo monacal y de peregrinaje de Cimitile-Nola (Bertelli, 2010), e, incluso, con una acotación más definida, como en el grupo episcopal de *Egara* (García, Moro & Tuset, 2009). En fin, aceptando la posible cercanía -inmediata- de una basílica de grandes dimensiones, posiblemente consagrada a las mártires Santa Justa y Rufina, se hace necesario concretar arqueológicamente este extremo, tanto la existencia o no de la basílica como su advocación.

Entre los elementos que ha proporcionado la excavación para sostener la existencia de una iglesia cercana o inmediata a la necrópolis está la inscripción funeraria de *Cyprianus, lector ec(c)lesi(a)e hispalensi(s)*, fallecido en 544 (*HEp* 14, 336 = *AE* 2005, 809). A continuación nos ocuparemos de otro elemento singular

gobernador de al-Andalus, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Mūsā b. Nuṣayr se estableció en la *kanīsaRubīna*, donde residía en unión con la goda viuda del rey Rodrigo, hasta su asesinato en 716-717, acusado de apostasía y favorecimiento a los cristianos; esta edificación, en fechas más tardías, recibiría el nombre de *RābītaBāb ‘Anbar*, que, según el testimonio de IbnJayr, se encontraba a la salida de Sevilla (Valencia, 2009, p. 64).

que podría adscribirse a una iglesia o basílica, esta vez proveniente de la misma edificación del antiguo convento de la Trinidad. La lectura de los textos clásicos de la historiografía ciudadana puede deparar en ocasiones pequeñas sorpresas y sugerir líneas de trabajo. Un pasaje de la *Sevilla monumental y artística* de José Gestoso (1889, vol. I, pp. 53-54.) reza así:

“Una feliz casualidad nos hizo descubrir notable fragmento de marmol blanco, que á nuestro juicio formó parte de un sepulcro de la misma época visigoda y que hallamos en el ex-convento de la Trinidad, [...] Es un trozo irregular, mutilado en su extremo derecho, y tiene de alto 0’30, 0’89 de largo y 0’14 de espesor. [...]”

El comentario de Gestoso queda ilustrado con una lámina (Fig. 1) en la que esta pieza va acompañada por un conjunto de capiteles que, con excepción de uno de ellos, han recibido ya la atención de estudiosos de este tipo de evidencias (Domingo Magaña, 2006, vol. I, pp. 507, 511, 518-519), aunque ninguno puede ser asociado al conjunto edilicio de la Trinidad. Los esfuerzos para intentar localizar el paradero actual de la pieza han sido infructuosos.

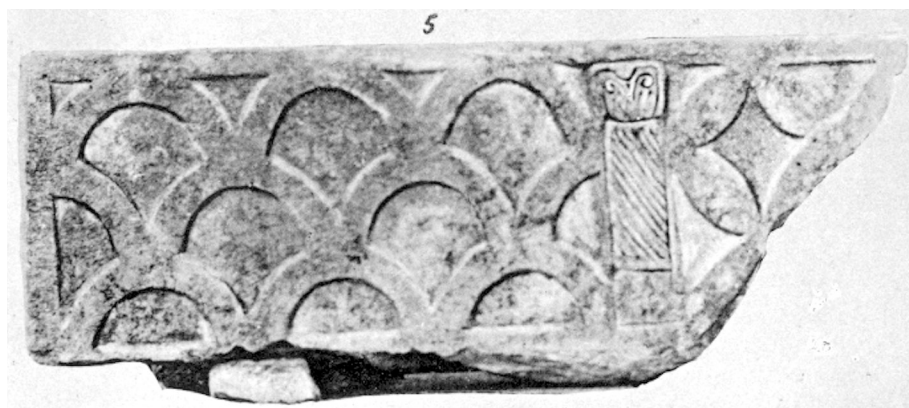


Fig. 1. Cancel hallado en La Trinidad y fotografiado en la obra de Gestoso. Hoy está perdido.

Nos encontramos ante una pieza que, tipológicamente, podría adscribirse a los que se viene denominando cancelos, aunque con ciertas peculiaridades. Su tamaño, alargado, de escaso desarrollo vertical y relativo espesor, lo hace realmente singular. Asimismo, su división decorativa en dos paños -uno de imbricaciones y otro de tetrafolias, ambos obtenidos a partir de círculos secantes- separados por una columna de fuste de estrías helicoidales, tampoco es muy frecuente tomada como conjunto, aunque por separado los diferentes elementos sean extraordinariamente comunes. Como no hemos podido estudiar directamente la pieza, algunos detalles del tipo de talla y del soporte, básicos para esbozar una cronología o definir aspectos funcionales específicos, no pueden ser comentados

con detalle. Lo que parece evidente es que la talla, especialmente la de la columna central, es extraordinariamente plana y poco profunda, y que podría fecharse a finales del siglo IV o inicios del V d.C.

Sin duda, este documento se incluye a la perfección, tanto por su forma como por la composición de sus elementos decorativos, en el ambiente de talleres de decoración arquitectónica y litúrgica de la zona más occidental de la Bética. Su paralelo más cercano, en cuanto al soporte, sería la inscripción hispalense *CILA* II.1, 152, que es reutilizada como un cancel estrecho y alargado, de las mismas características que el que nos ocupa, e incluso con una decoración similar, aunque eso sí, mejor materializada y de talla más profunda. Esta pieza que usamos como referencia, hallada en la necrópolis del Tamarguillo (antigua Carretera de Carmona), mide 30,5 x 79 x 3,5-5 cm, y reutiliza el epitafio de la *famula Sauiniana*, de imprecisa cronología. Este tipo de piezas, alargadas y estrechas, no son comunes, y los dos casos documentados con seguridad son hispalenses y vinculados a ambientes funerarios.

Respecto a la decoración, la división en dos paños decorativos separados por un motivo central es común en canceles de la parte occidental de Hispania y en las inscripciones funerarias tardoantiguas del antiguo *conuentus Hispalensis*, lo que se puede observar en *IHC* 60 = *CILA* II.1, 333 (544 d.C., de *Ilipa*) o en *CILA* II.1, 155 (¿inicios del siglo VI?, de *Hispalis*). Manejamos, como hipótesis, que este tipo de canceles se usaran como delimitación de espacios funerarios en el siglo IV y V d.C., junto a las tumbas, señalando el *tumulus* de las mismas. Más tarde, a partir del siglo VI d.C., nos encontraríamos con que las inscripciones funerarias de la zona más occidental de la provincia adoptan en su cabecera una banda decorativa superior que imita estos singulares canceles, pero ya como mero recurso formal y estético, e integrados en la propia lápida del difunto.

Dentro de su humildad como elemento aislado, este relieve constituye un argumento más a la hora de valorar convenientemente la monumentalización del *suburbium* hispalense en torno a alguna edificación religiosa de relevancia, que tendría la suficiente entidad como para que fuese convertido por el naciente poder islámico, al poco de su entrada en la ciudad y por su especial posición topográfica, en sede de la autoridad política y religiosa.

En un grabado anónimo de la ciudad de Sevilla que se fecha a mediados del siglo XVI aparece, en la zona norte y sobre un promontorio, una ermita consagrada a las santas; a su lado, sobre un promontorio cercano, con un elevado campanario, se representa el convento de la Trinidad. Se trata del único dato topográfico que tenemos de la existencia de un recinto sagrado consagrado a las santas, y coincide con el hallazgo reciente de una importante necrópolis.

El problema radica, básicamente, en aspectos cronológicos. En dicha necrópolis hay enterramientos y lápidas cristianas, y es de suponer que algunos de ellos responden al siglo IV d.C. Pero la falta de contextos estratigráficos precisos y bien datados impide certificar con seguridad el inicio de la cristianización de esta necrópolis.

2. DESCIFRANDO “EL LARGO” SIGLO V D.C.

Nuevos hallazgos permiten recomponer con cierta fiabilidad la organización de la topografía eclesiástica urbana en torno al siglo V d.C.

A inicios del siglo VI d.C. tenemos en el centro de la ciudad hispalense, en la actual c/ Mármoles, un conjunto de columnas que hemos definido como el atrio de acceso a un posible complejo episcopal, ubicado intramuros, y con grandes similitudes con los atrios de Valencia o de Milán. Lamentablemente, las excavaciones en la zona son muy escasas y esta hipótesis deberá ser contrastada en el futuro. Sin embargo, hasta el momento, resulta la única explicación plausible a una estructura de más de 7 columnas -conocidas, sólo tres aún *in situ*- reutilizadas en el siglo VI d.C. sobre un cimiento de *caementicium* que no forma parte de ningún edificio (Sánchez Velasco, 2017, pp. 198-204).

Otros dos datos circunstanciales pueden apoyar esta hipótesis. El primero es la ubicación topográfica de este complejo edilicio, próximo al supuesto trazado del cardo máximo de la ciudad, que incide en las similitudes con otros grupos episcopales, como el valenciano, con el que compartiría, además, la advocación a San Vicente. El segundo dato es la reciente aparición de un cancel decorado con tetrafolias obtenidas a partir de círculos secantes, estando el paño decorativo delimitado por un sogueado. Por el tipo de talla podría fecharse en un momento inicial del siglo VI d.C. Este cancel (Fig. 2) fue hallado en unas obras en la c/ Guzmán el Bueno nº 12-16, situada a unos 100 m al suroeste de la calle Mármoles⁷. Las medidas de la pieza son 0,70 de alto por 0,60 m de ancho. En este sentido, y salvando las distancias tanto estilísticas como cronológicas, debemos decir que el soporte y el esquema compositivo de la pieza sevillana son muy similares a un cancel emeritense que formaba parte del depósito de la Alcazaba y que fue estudiado en su momento por Cruz Villalón (1986, 86, n. 148). El hallazgo de tumbas de cronología tardoantigua en puntos cercanos al solar de Mármoles y de Guzmán el Bueno, como son las tumbas de c/Segovias o c/Argote de Molina, podría ser indicio de cementerios asociados al episcopio hispalense (González, 2011, pp. 353-354), al que quizás pueda asociarse también este nuevo testimonio arquitectónico.

Sin embargo, será la zona extramuros sur de la ciudad, a la salida de la Vía Augusta hacia *Gades*, la que más novedades ha aportado al conocimiento de la ciudad durante el siglo V d.C.

Las recientes excavaciones en el Patio de Banderas de los Reales Alcázares sevillanos han clarificado la evolución del suburbio sur de *Hispalis*, que estaba íntimamente vinculado a la actividad portuaria. En las mencionadas excavaciones

⁷ Agradecemos a José Antonio Valiente de Santis, arqueólogo director de la intervención en el solar de Guzmán el Bueno nº 12-16, el permiso para usar esta información así como la documentación gráfica de la pieza.



Fig. 2. Cancel hallado en c/ Guzmán el Bueno (Fot. Valiente).

han aparecido restos de los almacenes de época Flavia y de una amplia zona artesanal. Estas instalaciones son amortizadas durante el siglo V d.C. para la construcción de un complejo de grandes dimensiones articulado en torno a un patio, cuyas características permiten interpretarlo como un posible monasterio extraurbano que, como todos los monasterios, estaría vinculado a una o varias actividades económicas. Un patio enlosado con ladrillos, al que se accedía con rampas y que está asociado a pequeñas estancias de almacenaje parece que debió cumplir alguna función relacionada con el almacenamiento y distribución de bienes procedentes de la actividad comercial portuaria.

Una de esas estancias pequeñas de almacenamiento fue excavada 40 años atrás, e interpretada como un baptisterio a partir de una pequeña piscina de *opus signinum* sucesivamente reformada entre los siglos V y VIII, alentando la hipótesis de la existencia de un *episcopium* en este lugar, teoría que venía defendiéndose debido a la existencia de una problemática inscripción que, supuestamente, procedía de los Reales Alcázares y en la que se documentaba el enterramiento del obispo hispalense Honorato (CILA II.1, 154). Ambos argumentos, un baptisterio

y el enterramiento de un obispo, eran la base sobre la que pivotaba la teoría tradicional sobre la ubicación del *episcopium* hispalense.

Hoy, gracias al conocimiento que tenemos sobre los baptisterios hispanos y a nuevas investigaciones sobre la pieza de Honorato realizadas con la ayuda de las nuevas tecnologías y el estudio de los legajos de Época Moderna, sabemos que el pretendido baptisterio es, en realidad, un estanque de almacenamiento (de aceite, posiblemente) vinculado a un centro y que la inscripción de Honorato es una falsificación de inicios del siglo XVII. Por consiguiente, hay que descartar la posibilidad de un *episcopium* en la zona a la hora de articular la topografía urbana de la *Hispalis* tardoantigua.

A los resultados ya publicados hay que unir la existencia de una serie de piezas de decoración arquitectónica y litúrgica, halladas en contextos estratigráficos tardíos y/o reutilizadas en fases altomedievales inmediatamente posteriores a época visigoda, que vendrían a consolidar la hipótesis que interpreta los restos hallados en el Patio de Banderas como un posible monasterio. En concreto, nos referimos a las siguientes.

- Placa de mármol decorada (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Pieza y detalle decorativo de la misma. (Fot. Sánchez Velasco).

Se trata de una placa monolítica de mármol blanco, cuyas medidas son 0,68 x 0,45 x 0,04 m. Se encuentra fracturada. El tipo de talla es un biselado suave, salvo en la realización de determinados elementos florales, cuyo perfil se talla de bordes perpendiculares al plano, que aumentan la sensación de relieve. Se usa la técnica del trépano, pero de forma muy desigual.

La composición decorativa se basa en una mezcla de elementos geométricos y florales. El motivo central es una estrella de ocho puntas obtenida a partir de dos cuadrados yuxtapuestos. Las líneas internas que unen cada ángulo forman, a su vez, un octograma diferente, que encierra triángulos, cuadrados y rombos con su interior decorado con octopétalas. Proponemos una datación en torno a la segunda mitad del s. VI d.C.

Un paralelo de esta pieza se encuentra en Córdoba (Sánchez Velasco, 2006, nº Cat. 64), magníficamente tallada en mármol -¿proconesio?- de gran calidad, con una precisión difícilmente equiparable a las formas de trabajo en talleres locales, aunque éstas copien exactamente los modelos decorativos con técnicas propias y en soportes realizados sobre materiales locales.

Los motivos decorativos y el uso del trépano nos han llevado a pensar en la importación directa desde Bizancio de obras de gran calidad, que son imitadas por los talleres locales. Esta importación de materiales bizantinos elaborados por completo y destinados a la exportación está bien constatada (Pensabene, 1972, pp. 332-333). Tanto la talla como la decoración nos remiten a modelos de talleres egeos y constantinopolitanos⁸ del siglo VI d.C., que exportan fustes y basas – principalmente- a otros centros creadores, como por ejemplo Egipto, donde se fosilizarán esos modelos a partir de la conquista islámica (Krautheimer, 1996, pp. 353-355)⁹. Se suelen utilizar como revestimientos de pared y/o canceles en lugares destacados de edificios religiosos o civiles. En algunos casos, forman parte de los laterales de altares de tipo ravenático. Ante la falta de contexto, no podemos pronunciarnos sobre su posible ubicación original, aunque, por su intensa y esmerada decoración, debió situarse en un lugar preeminente del edificio documentado.

- Plataforma monolítica de mesa auxiliar (Ordóñez Agulla *et al.* 2013, fig. 12, p. 241).



Fig. 4. Soporte para mesa auxiliar (Fot. J. Sánchez).

⁸ Para el origen egeo, *vid.* nº 22. Buenos ejemplos de este tipo de motivos decorativos los encontramos en los sofitos decorados de Santa Sofía, *vid.* Yalçın, 2004, pp. 231- 289.

⁹ Con especial atención a las figuras 266 y 268, donde aparece (un tanto evolucionado) el motivo central de nuestra placa.

Es una plataforma realizada sobre una lastra de mármol, con cuatro encastrados cuadrangulares para insertar pequeñas columnitas monolíticas. Sus dimensiones son las siguientes: 0,79 x 0,395 x 0,85 m; los orificios miden 0,09 x 0,09 x 0,05 m y 0,95 x 10 x 0,45 m respectivamente; la distancia entre orificios es de 0,37 y 0,10 m. No posee decoración. La datación propuesta es muy laxa: ss. VI – VII d.C.

Se trataría de una mesa auxiliar, como las que define Chalkia (1991) en su monografía. Estas *mensae*, necesarias para el rito de la oblación y como mesas auxiliares al culto, se caracterizan por contar con cuatro pequeñas columnitas que sustentan un tablero de piedra. Tan sólo en otro lugar de la Bética han sido definidas con seguridad: el Museo de Doña Mencía (Sánchez Velasco, 2012, nº cat. 208 y 209).

La ubicación de estas piezas suele ser próximas a los altares de las iglesias, debido a su función como pieza que ayuda al desarrollo de la liturgia. De hecho, hay un gran similitud con soportes parecidos para altares, y sólo se distinguen -para este mueble litúrgico- por un quinto orificio, central, que sería el *loculus*, y que estaría tapado por un ara.

- Soporte de altar con *loculus* para reliquias (Fig. 4).

Nos encontramos ante un soporte de caliza para encajar un ara de altar de época tardoantigua. Sus medidas son las siguientes: 0,53-0,44 x 0,47-0,42 x 0,44-0,42 m; rebaje para encaje de ara de 0,235 x (0,20) x 0,09-0,10 m; *loculus*: 0,15



Fig. 5. Soporte y *loculus* de ara de altar (Fot. Sánchez Velasco).

x 0,15 x 0,09 m. Sin decoración y sin pulimento de ninguna de sus superficies, habría que descartar, de forma provisional, que se tratara de un ara propiamente dicha. Su gran rebaje cuadrangular para encaje y el posterior *loculus* nos estaría indicando que debió servir para ubicar un ara de altar sobre esta pieza, cerrando el *loculus*. Se podría datar entre los siglos VI-VII d.C.

Resulta muy complicado tratar de esta pieza, especialmente debido a la falta de un registro arqueológico primario. Un análisis detenido de la misma hace pensar que se trata de un elemento no visible relacionado con un altar de época tardoantigua. En nuestra opinión, se trataría del basamento de ubicación subterránea donde se guardarían las reliquias (en el *loculus*) sirviendo de cimentación para el ara de altar, que sí sería visible. Además, situarían el ara en un nivel elevado, a la altura del suelo del *sanctuarium*, que solía estar a una cota más alta que el nivel de uso del resto de los espacios de la iglesia.

Este tipo de estructuras son bien conocidas en Hispania. En Córdoba, una gran basa de época altoimperial sirve a estos efectos, debiéndose colocar encima el ara de altar propiamente dicha (Sánchez Velasco, 2012, n° cat. 79_1). En Mijangos, las aras de altar descansan sobre piedras de este porte, aunque los *loculi* parecen estar en las respectivas aras. En *Conimbriga* se conservan restos *in situ* para encajar aras, con dos bloques de piedra, uno de grandes proporciones y, un segundo, más parecido a una losa de grueso tamaño. En cualquier caso, caben pocas dudas de que sirvieran para encajar aras de altar (Sastre de Diego, 2009, n° cat. P35-P36).

El tipo de ara de altar que se ubicaría sobre esta pieza es bien conocida. Así, en el MASE, se conserva el ara de Gines (*IHC* 75), cuyas dimensiones (0,90 x 0,21 x 0,30 m) encajarían perfectamente en un soporte de este tipo, que no cuenta con *loculus* propio. Una pieza cordobesa (Sánchez Velasco, 2012, n° cat. CO5) es tipológicamente muy similar a la anterior, aunque algo más grande en sus dimensiones. Su estado altamente fragmentario impide saber si contó con *loculus*.

Por consiguiente, y ante la evidencia material y sus correspondencias en *Hispania*, cabe señalar que estaríamos ante un soporte para encajar un ara de altar. Esto implicaría, necesariamente, la presencia de una iglesia próxima al área del hallazgo. El elevado peso y el escaso valor artístico invitan a pensar que no fue trasladado de lugar.

- Fragmento de arco monolítico.

Estamos ante la parte superior de un arco de ventana de mármol, de 0,33 x 0,34 x 0,38 m y trabajado en un único monolito, fechable entre los siglos VI-VII d.C.

Este tipo de elementos se suelen reservar para ventanas y no necesariamente tienen que ser arcos ultrasemicirculares. El resto de la ventana lo conformarían dos sólidas jambas, realizadas con piedras de materiales y volúmenes similares.



Fig. 6. Fragmento de arco monolítico. (Fot. J. Sánchez)

El ejemplo *in situ* más cercano que conocemos es el posible monasterio de época visigoda de San Miguel de los Fresnos (Sánchez Velasco, 2012), en Fregenal de la Sierra (Badajoz), donde se conserva, prácticamente íntegra, una ventana muy similar a la que aquí estaríamos definiendo.

- Dovelas de pequeño arco / bóveda.



Fig. 7. Serie de dovelas para arco, con posible imposta (Fot. J. Sánchez).

Serie de dovelas de caliza de diferente tamaño que conforman un arco y/o bóveda. La pobreza del resto conservado no permite precisiones, pero sí la definición de la funcionalidad. Este tipo de piezas conformaban arcos, ventanas abocinadas e incluso bóvedas de cañón en edificios tardoantiguos.

Todos estos hallazgos, unidos a la secuencia estratigráfica y a la definición de un complejo edilicio de tosca, pero contundente, construcción, provisto de elementos de decoración arquitectónica y litúrgica, y claramente relacionado con actividades económicas del inmediato puerto hispalense. Todo ello nos ratifica en la hipótesis de que estaríamos ante un posible monasterio suburbano de importantes dimensiones y del que apenas hemos podido vislumbrar una pequeña parte. Los hallazgos situados inmediatamente al sur de este lugar cuadran con la existencia de este complejo religioso extramuros, como veremos a continuación.

Siguiendo hacia el sur por la Vía Augusta, encontramos una extensa zona de necrópolis que abarcaría las actuales Av. de Roma y zona del Palacio de San Telmo. Esta necrópolis se articularía en torno a la cambiante desembocadura del Tagarete en el Guadalquivir. Y aunque los restos encontrados están muy dispersos y son de entidad muy variable, lo cierto es que nos permiten afinar una secuencia cronológica en un paisaje topográfico ya plenamente cristianizado.

En unas aún inéditas excavaciones en el Palacio de San Telmo (Matesanz *et al.*, 2008) han aparecido los restos de mayor entidad (Fig. 5). Se trata en concreto de un monumento funerario con pórtico delantero, una tipología muy común en Hispania. En opinión de los excavadores, el edificio se dataría en el siglo II d.C., siendo posiblemente reutilizado. En la cámara interior, dos túmulos realizados en obra acogen sendos sarcófagos de mármol, ejemplos realmente únicos en la ciudad hispalense, que apenas si cuenta con este tipo de elementos funerarios.



Fig. 8. Fotografía general y de detalle de la excavación en San Telmo (Fot. Matesanz).

El primero de los excavados resultó ser un sarcófago liso, de los que abundan en la *Baetica*, dañado ya en la antigüedad, que contenía en su interior dos enterramientos sucesivos. La cubierta es una tapadera lisa formada por una

lastra de mármol reutilizada de otro enterramiento y situada aquí boca abajo, que porta un crismón en su parte superior y una inscripción funeraria con indicación de la *aera* CCCCLXXXV¹⁰. La reutilización de ambos elementos sugiere una cronología de la segunda mitad del siglo V d.C. o inicios del VI.



Fig. 9. Sarcófago liso de San Telmo (Fot. Matesanz).

No tan reciente parece ser el otro sarcófago (Fig. 9) del mausoleo, esta vez rectangular, que reutiliza a su vez como tapadera una placa de mármol con un friso arquitectónico en bajorrelieve. No se han documentado otros enterramientos de cronología tardoantigua en esta necrópolis.

Un poco más al sur, continuando por el trazado supuesto para la salida de la ciudad de la Vía Augusta hacia Gades, siguen apareciendo nuevos restos de elementos tardoantiguos (Fig. 10a y b).

¹⁰ La lectura del texto ofrecida por los responsables de la excavación, que diverge además en el nombre del difunto *-Fl·ridusus · uix· ann · LXXXreceptus in pace DVIII · idus Apri era CCCCLXXXV-* no ha podido ser contrastada aún en autopsia, ni es posible en la documentación gráfica de la memoria.



Fig. 10. Sarcófago decorado de San Telmo, detalle del interior y exterior (Fot. Matesanz).



Fig. 10. Fragmento con decoración de pez (Fot. Ordóñez).

Entre ellos encontramos un mínimo fragmento (19,5 x 18 x 3,7 cm) con una moldura de secuencia de listel, toro y escocia y la forma incisa de la parte trasera de un pez. Se puede observar la representación de parte del tronco y la cola de un pez, con su aleta dorsal redondeada, la anal apenas insinuada con un pequeño apéndice triangular y una cola totalmente esquematizada de final recto. Las escamas se distribuyen en torno a una teórica línea lateral, que se diluye llegando a la cola. Esta pieza inédita se podría fechar en torno a los siglos IV-V. Como todos los peces representados en época tardoantigua en Hispania, no se pretende una identificación pormenorizada de la especie, ni siquiera una representación naturalista. Si analizamos las representaciones existentes, recopiladas por Vidal Álvarez (2005, pp. 363-364), podemos observar que la mayor esquematización de la cola se da en momentos tempranos, como las que aparecen en dos sarcófagos de Tarragona, fechados a finales del siglo III, con dudas (Vidal Álvarez, 2005, pp.

15-17), y donde aparecen individualizados entre molduras. También temprana, aunque posterior, sería la representación de un pez en una imposta monumental conservada en el Museo Histórico de Estepa, que se fecha, también con dudas, en la primera mitad del siglo V (Vidal Álvarez, 2005, pp. 68-70). Aquí ya aparecen, someramente representadas, las escamas.

Más complicado es determinar la funcionalidad de una pieza tan incompleta. En un principio, pensamos que se trataba del frontal de un sarcófago, pero ciertamente el escaso grosor de la pieza suponía un problema para esta adscripción funcional. Sin descartarla, existen otras posibilidades. El grosor de la pieza, así como la decoración, permitirían adscribirla a una mesa. En concreto, la decoración de peces es bastante frecuente en las mesas secundarias de ambientes litúrgicos (Chalkia, 1991), como los del tipo A (Chalkia, 1991, Fig. 8) o tipo D (Chalkia, 1991, Fig. 28), procedentes de Atenas y de Filipos respectivamente. El comercio de estas mesas orientales para ambientes domésticos lujosos, funerarios (Duval, 2005, p. 11; Sastre, 2009, p. 264) o de uso litúrgico está perfectamente constatado en la ciudad de Sevilla (Ruiz, 2017, *passim*), donde han sido hallados algunos ejemplares de mesas en *sigma* polilobuladas en contexto doméstico.

La siguiente pieza procedente de este sector (Fig. 12) sí es claramente un elemento funerario, que responde a una tipología típica de la *Baetica* occidental.



Fig. 12. Inscripción funeraria de Avda. de Roma (Fot. Ordóñez).

Se trata de un fragmento inédito de inscripción funeraria de caliza micrítica grisácea donde se puede apreciar un motivo principal compuesto de un crismón estilizado, con los brazos asemejando terminaciones florales, una posible *alpha* con un pie superior prominente, todo ello encerrado en un círculo decorado con un somero sogueado. Fuera de éste, y en línea con el brazo horizontal del crismón, se observa una cruz patada. Mide 18 x 13 x 4 cm y podría fecharse a inicios del siglo VI d.C.

Posiblemente perteneciente al tipo de una inscripción similar a otra hallada en *Ilija* (IHC 61 = *CILA* II.1, 334), no tanto por la mimesis estilística como

por la presencia de un esquema compositivo común: crismón encerrado en un sogueado y acompañado por motivos obtenidos a partir de composiciones derivadas del círculo, como florones de botón central, círculos con cuadrados inscritos o cruces patadas. El tipo de talla, somera y de escasa profundidad -incisiones profundas, en realidad- es otro rasgo distintivo y común de este tipo de inscripciones. El crismón de terminaciones florales es muy parecido al que aparece en la inscripción de *Gregorius* de *Ilipa* (IHC 60 = CILA II.1, 333).

3. UN VACÍO POR RELLENAR. LA CIUDAD DE ISIDORO.

Habitualmente, la época visigoda se considera un momento de recesión socio-económica, tormentosas disputas religiosas y guerra civil endémica. Y aunque, en verdad, la presencia visigoda en la *Baetica* empezó de una forma terrible, lo cierto es que la etapa no puede caracterizarse de forma tan negativa, y mucho menos argumentar esta supuesta crisis permanente para explicar el hundimiento del estado visigodo en el 711 d.C. A partir del año 533 d.C., en que Teudis parece haber establecido su corte en *Hispalis* (Fuentes Hinojo, 1996, 24), podemos decir que existe una presencia efectiva en la zona occidental de la *Baetica*, aunque la situación distara mucho de asemejarse siquiera a un control efectivo de extensas zonas de la misma. De hecho, hasta el final de las llamadas “Guerras Béticas” de Leovigildo, no se puede hablar de época visigoda en la zona *sensu strictu*. La *Pax Gothica* que impuso el rey significó para la región una ruptura importante, que se puede apreciar en sus ciudades a nivel arqueológico.

Uno de los grandes retos de la investigación sobre la Antigüedad Tardía en Andalucía es, sin duda, poder aportar una imagen coherente de la *Hispalis* (Fig. 13) de Leandro e Isidoro de Sevilla, de la ciudad que ocasionalmente se convierte además en *sedes regia*. Aparte de las menciones a espacios arquitectónicos eclesiásticos en textos conciliares, apenas algunas piezas conservadas en el Museo Arqueológico de Sevilla, y casi sin información sobre su procedencia -más allá de una genérica mención a Sevilla ciudad-, nos permiten hablar de edificios o reformas llevadas a cabo en el siglo VII d.C. Sin embargo, la memoria de esta sede metropolitana debió permanecer. En el *Codex Aemilianensis* (a. 992), conservado en la biblioteca del Monasterio del Escorial (Galtier Martí, 2001, pp. 100-101; Fernández & Galván, 2005), podemos ver una ilustración del II Concilio de Sevilla (a. 619), presidido por Isidoro bajo Sisebuto, donde la ciudad aparece representada como un compacto bloque amurallado con torres, con su puerta principal próxima al río y, en el centro, la reunión conciliar, que se celebró en el *episcopium*. Pensamos que se trataría, en realidad, de un mapa mental de la ciudad visigoda, muy elocuente a juzgar por los elementos resaltados.



Fig. 13. Codex Aemilianensis (Galtier, 2001, pp. 100-101), ilustración del II Concilio de Sevilla (a. 619).

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MÉRIDA TARDOANTIGUA: HACIA UN NUEVO MODELO DE CIUDAD UNDER THE MARTYR'S INFLUENCE: MERIDA DURING LATE ANTIQUITY (IV-VII D.C.)

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims to show how the ancient Roman city of Merida (Spain) evolved from its nomination as capital of the *Diocesis Hispanarum* to become one of the most powerful episcopal centres of the Iberian Peninsula in the 6th century A.D. This transformation is not only topographical, but especially ideological, influenced by the new Christian mentality that aspire to be the new Jerusalem.

KEYWORDS: Augusta Emerita, Diocesis Hispaniarum, christianization, late antique churches.

I. SOBRE LA BASE DE LA MÉRIDA CONSTANTINIANA, UNA CIUDAD RENOVADA PARA UN IMPERIO RENOVADO

“En este tan floreciente y bienaventurado siglo, con el favor dichoso de la época de nuestros señores y emperadores Flavio Claudio Constantino, pío, feliz y máximo vencedor, Flavio Julio Constancio y Flavio Julio Constante, vencedores y augustos siempre poderosísimos, Tiberio Flavio Leto, ilustrísimo varón y comes, ordenó que el circo, derruido por la vejez, fuera reconstruido con nuevas columnas, rodeados de construcciones ornamentales y anegado con agua y así, continuando Julio Saturnino, perfectísimo varón y gobernador de la provincia de Lusitania, su aspecto reconstruido con acierto proporcionó a la ilustre Colonia de los emeritenses la mayor dicha que pensarse puede” (HE 20026).

Con este mensaje de prosperidad tan explícito se anunciaba un tiempo de renovación en el edificio de espectáculos más concurrido de Emerita, el circo, hacia el año 337, bajo la dinastía constantiniana (Chastagnol, 1976). Existe una serie de evidencias que permiten defender que en el siglo IV la ciudad de Mérida fue impulsada en sus cometidos gubernamentales y monumentalizada, dentro de un contexto más amplio de revitalización imperial. La ciudad cabeza de la Lusitania

habría sido privilegiada por la familia imperial como una de las nuevas capitales de la *pars occidentalis* (Sastre de Diego, 2015), y no solo, o no tanto porque existieran “disfuncionamientos en surbanismo” arrastrados desde el siglo III (Arce, 2011, p. 491). Para una capital de *diócesis*, la plasmación material de las funciones que debía desempeñar como parte de un aparato estatal perfectamente organizado es mayor que en ciudades con menor estatus. Así, las funciones económica, como centro de recaudación de impuestos y de almacenamiento de bienes, administrativa, social y de representación han quedado reflejadas en los edificios públicos forales, en las obras de reparación y mejora de la muralla (dotada de algunas torres junto a puertas relevantes), en las numerosas termas distribuidas por toda la ciudad (intramuros y extramuros) y en reformas acometidas en los edificios de espectáculos. Estos elementos caracterizadores de la urbanidad romana se manifiestan en Mérida con la claridad de la que desde su fundación siguió fielmente el modelo ideal diseñado bajo Augusto (Nogales & Álvarez, 2014).

Es sobre todo en la recuperación de la actividad evergética de patrocinio imperial donde mejor se manifiesta el nuevo estatus administrativo de Mérida tras su designación como capital de la *diócesis hispaniarum* (Arce, 2002). Cabría esperar que el inicio de esta revitalización se correspondiera con el periodo de la Tetrarquía en el que se sitúa el nombramiento de Mérida. Sin embargo, la evidencia material y epigráfica apuntan a Constantino y sus sucesores como los verdaderos impulsores. Junto al gobernador de Lusitania, fue el *comes Hispaniarum*, cargo de nueva creación instituido por Constantino y destinado a misiones directas del emperador, el encargado de ejecutar y supervisar las grandes obras públicas del momento. Estas se centraron, además de en el circo, en los otros dos grandes edificios de espectáculos: en el teatro, mediante restauraciones del revestimiento marmóreo en su frente escénico, la ampliación de las cloacas que solucionaban su desagüe y la edificación de la *versura* (Durán, 1998, p. 157), en ambos casos con empleo predominante del ladrillo. En el peristilo contiguo se cierran los intercolumnios de las fachadas en tres de sus pórticos con muretes bajos de ladrillo que limitan la accesibilidad al espacio ajardinado pero recogen toda el agua de lluvia en unos estanques perimetrales. En el anfiteatro, a falta de una lectura de paramentos que confirme su contexto, se rehacen paramentos exteriores con fábrica de ladrillo y otros materiales de reempleo (Fig. 1), y se producen intervenciones en el foso de la arena, tal vez por facilitar su desagüe, que apuntan a que se mantuvo en uso en esta centuria pese a que concitaba el mayor rechazo de los cristianos. Entre estos dos edificios de espectáculos, en lugar elevado para acentuar la escenografía, se propone que pudo ir emplazada una estatua de tamaño colosal perteneciente a un emperador, tal vez Constantino o -con mayores dudas- la Dea Roma, alguno de cuyos fragmentos de mármol aparecidos en 1912 se custodian en el Museo Nacional de Arte Romano, pero en cualquier caso datados en el siglo IV (Nogales, 2007). La elección de los monumentos hace inevitable recordar los tiempos de la fundación de la

colonia y la actividad de la que fueron sus grandes benefactores, Augusto y Agripa, patrocinadores respectivamente del Anfiteatro y del Teatro y de otras construcciones como el acueducto de Cornalbo (nombrada Aqua Augusta) y del pórtico ajardinado anexo al teatro que conforma un conjunto unitario, según recomienda Vitrubio en su conocido *Tratado de Arquitectura* (libro V, cap. XX). Casualidad o no, la renovación constantiniana del teatro coincide con los trescientos cincuenta años de su inauguración.



Fig. 1. Paramento exterior del anfiteatro de Mérida rehecho con materiales reutilizados. Imagen Miguel Alba.

El nuevo estatus administrativo de la ciudad también repercutió en la arquitectura doméstica rompiendo la uniformidad en la distribución espacial que había caracterizado a Mérida desde su fundación (Alba, 2005). Ahora las domus se renuevan con un estilo palaciego, marmorizadas y pavimentadas con mosaicos, aumentando su extensión incluso a costa de suelo público o anexionando partes de otras viviendas, que sufren el proceso inverso de reducción. Esto se aprecia en varios puntos de la ciudad; pero donde se muestra de manera completa es en tres de las residencias señoriales del área arqueológica de Morería, la más conocida es la Casa de los Mármoles, y en otras partes como en la Alcazaba y junto al Teatro, en la llamada “Casa Basílica”. La ampliación de espacios se manifiesta en los peristilos y en crear grandes salones absidiados.

Ciertamente, ya en la segunda mitad del siglo III se detecta un fenómeno de apropiación privada de los espacios porticados de las calles, práctica que se acentuará durante la centuria siguiente, con casos puntuales de invasión parcial o completa de la calle, como se atestigua en el área arqueológica de Morería. De esta manera, espacios públicos pasaron a formar parte de las viviendas, posibilitando la ampliación interna de los peristilos, la introducción de baños privados y la creación de nuevas estancias, o la ampliación de las existentes, y la conversión del espacio de los pórticos en *tabernae* con una planta superior en muchos casos.

Hasta la aparición en 2009 de un crismón pintado en la pared de un antiguo aljibe de una de estas domus bajoimperiales (Heras, 2015), en la entrada a la ciudad por el Decumanus Máximo, no existían evidencias materiales del proceso de cristianización entre quienes habitaron estas casas. Con independencia del matiz interpretativo que se ha dado a este motivo en semejante espacio subterráneo, orlado por una corona de mirto representada con gran realismo y gama de colores, hay unanimidad en relacionarlo con la vivienda de un *dominus* cristiano vinculado a la élite urbana.

Es en el mundo funerario, fuera de las murallas de la urbs, donde primero parece visibilizarse el cristianismo en la topografía emeritense. Es probable que al principio las necrópolis fueran mixtas, al menos en Occidente. Así sucedió en la propia Roma, donde los primeros cementerios cristianos se originaron durante el siglo III, como la necrópolis vaticana, y así parece ocurrir en Mérida a tenor de los escasos datos conocidos para los siglos III y IV (Bejarano, 2004; Sastre de Diego, 2015). No obstante, el verdadero desarrollo de los cementerios cristianos se produjo tras la llegada de Constantino al poder, con una tendencia progresiva a la monumentalización, sobre todo a partir de la segunda mitad del siglo IV (Pani Ermini, 2000, pp. 30-33). Destacan los núcleos funerarios creados mediante la iniciativa privada o familiar; hipogeos privados como el de 'vía Dino Compagni' en Roma muestran la riqueza ornamental e iconográfica de estos mausoleos, a la vez que la convivencia de elementos paganos y cristianos, tan característica de la aristocracia tardorromana que se estaba cristianizando. En un mismo ambiente arquitectónico conviven escenas del Antiguo y del Nuevo Testamento con temas mitológicos y del ciclo estacional. De la misma forma, el uso de sarcófagos estrigilados es común entre los miembros de este grupo social independientemente de sus creencias. Un fragmento de esta tipología (Fig. 2) ha aparecido junto a los restos de lo que parece ser un mausoleo monumental a las afueras de Mérida por la zona sureste, en la finca 'la Heredad', de planta rectangular con cabecera absidiada y sólidos muros de 1 m de grosor, contruidos con abundante cal y paramentos en *opus mixtum* (Fig. 3). Será primordial realizar excavaciones en este edificio, que se ha mantenido emergente a lo largo de los siglos, para determinar si llegó a ser adaptado para la liturgia, aunque su orientación al sur no cumple el precepto.

Perteneciente a esta fase de transición que conllevó la conversión de los gentiles en cristianos, ha sido el hallazgo de un mausoleo de planta cuadrangular con corredor deambulatorio, habitual a la de los contextos paganos, con numerosas sepulturas de inhumación, entre las que destacan dos con cubierta marmórea con representación incisa de crismón, de factura esmerada, propia de un encargo al lapicida (Méndez, 2015, pp. 27 y ss). La documentación arqueológica nos revela que las últimas incineraciones alcanzan hasta el siglo III para imponerse el rito de inhumación también entre las clases privilegiadas.



Fig. 2. Fragmento de sarcófago estrigilado aparecido en el sitio de ‘La Heredad’, a las afueras de Mérida. Imagen Miguel Alba.

Junto a la planta centralizada, la planta rectangular con remate absidial fue la más comúnmente utilizada desde la segunda mitad del siglo III y, sobre todo, durante la primera mitad del siglo IV. Sin embargo, a medida que avanza la centuria, sin duda influidos por los modelos que se desarrollan en Roma y en Tierra Santa con la dinastía constantiniana, irán apareciendo arquitecturas más monumentales de planta centralizada. Aunque parecen llegar con algo de retraso a Hispania, debió ser un diseño exitoso, pues pervive a lo largo del siglo V. A la primera mitad de esta centuria pertenece un mausoleo circular polilobulado aparecido a pocos metros al este de la basílica de Santa Eulalia (Mateos & Sastre de Diego, 2009). Su planta pertenece a la tipología del llamado mausoleo de los *Calventii*, sobre las catacumbas de Pretestato, una construcción circular de seis

lóbulos con entrada en pórtico rectangular columnado. El espacio del pórtico adquirirá un gran desarrollo con el tiempo. En el mausoleo trelatobulado de La Cocosa, antigua villa romana situada en el límite occidental del territorio emeritense, aparece ya con los extremos circulares, tan característicos de la antigüedad tardía. Otros mausoleos con cabecera curva se localizan en la barriada de Santa Catalina (cerca al *Xenodochium* y al acueducto de San Lázaro). De tipo hipogeo hay varios ejemplos documentados entre el cuartel militar y las cercanías del Circo, en la avenida Juan Carlos I (Sánchez, 2005, p. 8), en la vía de Caesaraugusta, y semisubterráneos los llamados popularmente “bodegonos”, algunos con arcosolios para cobijar sarcófagos, como los dos edificios gemelos que pueden contemplarse en los Columbarios, y otros mausoleos tardorromanos con inhumaciones sin acompañar de ajuar y orientación E-W de las sepulturas que se mantienen en la duda la adscripción cristiana o mixta de los finados (Bejarano, 2004, p. 195).



Fig. 3. Restos constructivos de un mausoleo tardorromano aparecido en 2014 el sitio de ‘La Heredad’, a las afueras de Mérida. Imagen: Isaac Sastre de Diego.

A las afueras de Mérida por el NE, en los márgenes de un río Albarregas densamente ocupado desde el alto imperio con un paisaje donde las domus se alternaban entre distintas industrias y algunas áreas funerarias, se localiza el mausoleo más importante de todos, fundamental para entender la nueva

topografía de la ciudad a partir del siglo V. Es el llamado *martyrium* de Eulalia. Tras las excavaciones de los años 1990 en el subsuelo de la basílica de Santa Eulalia (Caballero & Mateos, 1992) se concluyó que los restos del mausoleo de planta basilical que circunda el ábside de la iglesia actual correspondían al lugar donde fue venerada la mártir local (Mateos, 1999). Memoria o *martyrium*, la evolución topográfica del lugar no deja lugar a dudas sobre el poder de atracción que en pocas décadas generó el edificio hasta convertir la zona, no solo en un gran complejo religioso con varios edificios, sino, y desde muy temprano, en la necrópolis más extensa y con los mausoleos más monumentales de toda la ciudad. Precisamente, este espectacular desarrollo de lo que parece fue uno de los cementerios *ad sanctos* más relevantes de la Hispania tardorromana invita a formular varias reflexiones. Conocemos muy bien, por los textos, la epigrafía y los restos arqueológicos, lo que fue el culmen de este proceso urbanístico, ya en la segunda mitad del siglo VI; pero sería oportuno preguntarnos por su origen, por qué se eligió un espacio de la ciudad que no tenía la tradición funeraria de las grandes necrópolis romanas emeritenses. Y es que el núcleo principal de esta necrópolis se crea sobre una domus de peristilo que fue embellecida con mármol. Aunque en las publicaciones de la excavación no resulta concluyente, el uso funerario del lugar parece que estuvo directamente asociado al enterramiento de los restos de la joven mártir. Sería interesante investigar cómo fue el proceso de abandono o amortización de un espacio doméstico y su transformación en un lugar cultural y funerario, si esto fue casual o si formó parte de una acción intencionada dentro de una propiedad familiar que con el tiempo pasó a manos de la Iglesia (Sastre de Diego, 2015).

Los motivos de esta creciente relevancia e influencia de la mártir emeritense, el rápido traspaso de fronteras de su culto y su influencia en el desarrollo de la Mérida cristiana, han sido recientemente explicados desde dos propuestas diferentes pero en parte complementarias. La primera (Alba, 2014; *id.*, 2018) ve en Eulalia un factor determinante para la elección de *Emerita* como sede del vicariato, desencadenante del desarrollo urbanístico que conlleva el peso político de Mérida ya durante el siglo IV. Para ello se basa en un detalle de su historia narrada por Prudencio en los albores del siglo V. En ella destaca la capacidad de argumentación que caracterizó a la joven mártir, su facilidad de palabra, como si el propio espíritu santo se manifestara a través de ella. La fama de Eulalia como mensajera por gracia del Espíritu Santo, según pasa a ser nombrada “Elocuente”, con esta singularidad respecto a otros mártires loados coetáneamente, habrían convertido a Mérida en el foco de peregrinación más importante de la Península, afamada más allá de los confines de Hispania, unido a que su pasión habría sido utilizada por los Padres de la Iglesia como ejemplo de fortaleza frente a los paganos y herejes, especialmente contra el arrianismo al apoyar su *passio* la concepción trinitaria de cristianismo niceno. La segunda propuesta (Sastre de Diego, 2012; *id.*, 2015) entiende que el papel político de la

ciudad y la trascendencia creciente de la mártir local son dos procesos paralelos pero autónomos, procesos que no convergerán materialmente hasta la segunda mitad del siglo V. Mérida ejerce como sede primada de la Iglesia hispana por traslación del plano administrativo romano al eclesiástico, y su mártir se convierte en uno de los mejores ejemplos a seguir porque se trata de la historia de una joven aristócrata romana que vive precisamente en la capital de Hispania y que cambia una vida llena de privilegios por una muerte segura al mantenerse fiel a sus creencias. Es un momento en el que la Iglesia centra sus esfuerzos en atraer a una parte nada desdeñable de la vieja aristocracia, aún reticente al cristianismo, y en este objetivo se encuentra con un formidable rival: Prisciliano. El fenómeno priscilianista, surgido en el corazón de la misma Lusitania, atrae con enorme velocidad a ricos propietarios y, especialmente, propietarias, pues en este círculo unos conservan el mismo protagonismo que tenían entre las tradiciones paganas, y otras lo adquieren. Un protagonismo que además escapa al control de la Iglesia, justo cuando esta se encuentra en plena transformación de su discurso para asimilar mejor la concepción jerárquica de la sociedad romana. Eulalia, su noble linaje, su locuacidad y carisma, transmitían unos valores que resultaban idóneos como modelo a seguir para jóvenes aristócratas y contrapeso al atractivo priscilianista. En ambas propuestas se reconoce el rol de Mérida y de su mártir, protectora e intercesora, en la configuración de una ideología cristiana y su plasmación material en una nueva concepción de ciudad.

II. EN EL SIGLO V, EMERGE UNA NUEVA CIUDAD CRISTIANA

Cuando el *Codex Iustinianus* (I.3.35) define la ciudad por la presencia en ella de un obispo parece evidente que entre finales del siglo IV y mediados del siglo VI se ha producido una profunda transformación respecto a lo que fue la concepción romana de ciudad. Es por tanto oportuno preguntarse cómo se materializa esta nueva mentalidad. En Mérida, la tradicional visión de una ciudad visigoda simplificada a su superposición a la romana, con cambios solo perceptibles en las áreas funerarias y en la adicción de iglesias al paisaje urbano, ha sido cuestionada con el desarrollo de la arqueología urbana (Alba, 2004; *id.*, 2017). Las excavaciones demuestran un uso diferente de la ciudad, con una distinta ocupación y distribución del suelo porque las prioridades y las necesidades, económicas, espirituales, incluso sociales, son otras. Un cambio aún más evidente en el caso de Mérida al partir de una realidad urbana “amplificada”, que había sido monumentalizada en el siglo precedente; esto es, una capital tardorromana que hemos visto renovada sobre los mismos fundamentos de la ciudad augustea. Esta renovación de la romanidad de Mérida durante el siglo IV incide en otro de los factores que definirá a la nueva ciudad cristiana que emerge tras las crisis materializadas en el siglo V y la desaparición del estado romano: la “despaganización” de la ciudad romana promovida por la máxima

autoridad eclesiástica, eliminando sus elementos más simbólicos, especialmente los concentrados en las áreas forales y de espectáculos (Alba, 2014). Un factor de tono más ideológico que se suma a otras evidencias de la transformación del antiguo paisaje urbano romano y que se desglosan en 10 aspectos para el caso emeritense (Alba, 2004): 1) Desmantelamiento de los contextos de representación gubernamental romana; 2) amortización de los edificios de espectáculos y de ocio; 3) cambios radicales y múltiples en la zona suburbana; 4) interrupción del suministro de los acueductos, final de las termas públicas, abandono de las cloacas y presencia de vertederos intramuros; 5) *damnatio memoriae* a todo lo vinculado al paganismo; 6) fortalecimiento de las defensas urbanas; 7) aparición de nuevos enclaves de poder; 8) fomento de la actividad edilicia cristiana; 9) densificación residencial intramuros; y 10) paulatino proceso de ruralización.

Recientemente (Martínez *et al.*, 2017, pp. 67) también se han propuesto 4 identificadores principales distintos al tradicionalmente prevalente de la cristianización de la topografía, que definen la transformación urbana en la Hispania tardorromana:

- 1) El incremento de los amurallamientos (Morillo & Fernández Ochoa, 1991; *id.*, 1992).
- 2) Declive, adaptación y reutilización de los edificios públicos (Diarte-Blasco, 2009; *id.*, 2012).
- 3) El abandono del mantenimiento de las infraestructuras.
- 4) La redefinición del espacio urbano (Diarte-Blasco & Gurt i Esparraguera, 2015).

Aplicados a Mérida, se observan algunas características que parecen indicar que hubo cierta planificación en esta redefinición espacial, sobre todo desde el último tercio del siglo V. Es oportuno empezar por el nuevo hito monumental de las ciudades tardoantiguas: sus murallas. El valor simbólico y urbanístico que adquieren las murallas desde el siglo IV y, sobre todo, durante las convulsas décadas de la primera mitad del siglo V, provocará su identificación en este periodo con la misma ciudad a la que protege. Una metonimia perfectamente consolidada en tiempos de Isidoro de Sevilla (*Etym.* XV.2.1: *urbs ipsa moenia sunt*) y que perdurará durante toda la Edad Media. Pero mientras en muchas ciudades la renovación o construcción de sus murallas tardorromanas supone una reducción del perímetro urbano (por ejemplo en Cartagena, Braga, Lugo, León, Idanha-a-Velha, *Pollentia*), en Mérida, cuya obra es más tardía, del siglo V, el perímetro se mantuvo, reforzando la muralla augustea con un potente muro de *opus quadratum* dispuesto a soga y tizón que se le adosa por su paramento exterior duplicando la anchura (Fig. 4). A esta sólida muralla, que empleó cerca de 220.000 bloques, sillares, *cupae* y tambores reutilizados, y que llegaba a duplicar los 2,5 m del grosor originario en sus más de 4 km de recorrido, se le añadieron

torres rectangulares, dispuestas regularmente a tramos. Muchas de las puertas menores vigentes en época romana fueron tapiadas, reduciendo a 12 los accesos según la propuesta de uno de nosotros a partir del plano de la ciudad que dibuja Laborde en 1802 y la fosilización de igual número de caminos que atraviesan el amurallamiento ya desaparecido (Alba, 2017). Quedarían así 12 entradas, número simbólico que se relaciona con el de la ciudad santa de la Jerusalén celeste, tal y como se describe en el *Apocalipsis*, y así se representará ya en la iconografía altomedieval (Fig. 5), y modelo ideal al que aspiraría a convertirse Mérida una vez superadas las crisis de las invasiones, cuando también se había extendido el referente teórico de la “ciudad de Dios” de San Agustín. A colación de esta propuesta de emulación de la ciudad santa, Alba (2017) trae una serie de indicios, recogidos en diferentes fuentes escritas posteriores y de muy distinto género, que apoyarían tal relación: la más cercana en el tiempo sería el libro de las *Vidas de los Santos Padres de Mérida*, inmediatamente posterior a la configuración de esta nueva Mérida, loa de sus obispos frente a la creciente sede toledana, y por la que conocemos el antiguo título de la catedral emeritense: Santa María de Jerusalén. En segundo lugar se encuentra el testimonio de varios cronistas musulmanes (Al-Razi, Al-Rusati y Al-Himiary) que aluden a la existencia de dos inscripciones, una en mármol y otra en metal, que se encontraban sobre la puerta principal de la ciudad y que fueron mandadas retirar y llevar a Córdoba. En ellas se mencionaban los trabajos de construcción de la muralla de Jerusalén, a cargo de distintas gentes que obtendrían la inmunidad por su labor. Por último, ya del siglo XVII, el cronista local Bernabé Moreno de Vargas (1633, p. 139) recogía la descripción de un capitel que vio en una casa particular “de labor antiquísima” y tallado con la inscripción IERUSALEM. Es inevitable relacionar este capitel, por desgracia no conservado, con el cimacio reutilizado en el pórtico del palacio de 'Los Corbos', en el Templo de Diana, y en cuya parte superior se lee VMNAS (Mateos & Sastre de Diego, 2004).

Pese a que el perímetro de la muralla fundacional es mantenido en la obra tardoantigua, toda el área periurbana, que en Mérida era especialmente dinámica, se vio seriamente afectada durante la primera mitad del siglo V ante las sucesivas oleadas de los distintos pueblos germanos, particularmente interesados en la capital lusitana. Las infraestructuras industriales que desde la fundación de la ciudad se diseminaban por los márgenes de los dos ríos emeritenses, el Guadiana y el Albarregas¹, quedaron amortizadas para siempre; las numerosas domus que circundaban las murallas, algunas, como se ha comentado en el apartado

¹ Como el solar actualmente ocupado por la “Factoría Joven”, a 50 metros del río Albarregas, donde aparecieron varias estructuras arrasadas a nivel de cimientos con un estrato de abandono fechado en la primera mitad del siglo V. El espacio fue reactivado en época emiral, apareciendo los restos de un pozo de noria y numerosos fragmentos de canchales (nº intervención 8194 y 8198, arqueólogo: Isaac Sastre de Diego. Informe Dpto. Documentación Consorcio de Mérida)

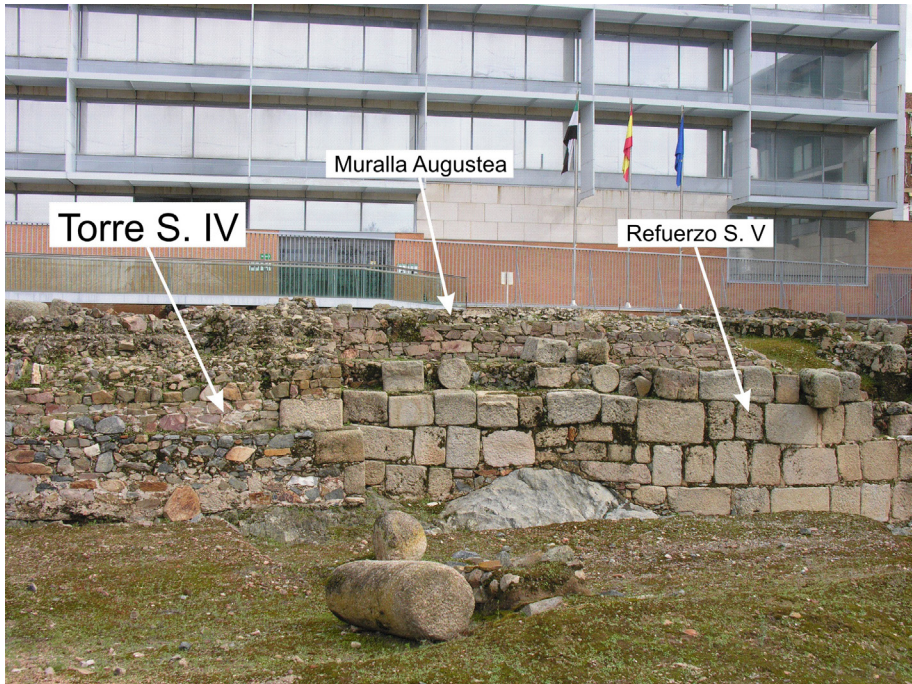


Fig. 4. Lienzo de la muralla de Mérida en la zona de 'Morería', con la muralla augustea al fondo, y el refuerzo del siglo V en primer plano. Imagen Miguel Alba.



Fig. 5. Mosaico con la representación de la Jerusalén Celeste rodeada por los cuatro grandes ríos. Capilla palatina de Aquisgrán. Imagen Isaac Sastre de Diego.

anterior, ampliadas en el siglo IV, fueron definitivamente abandonadas²; y los materiales con los que se habían erigido las tumbas y mausoleos de las antiguas necrópolis expoliados³, convirtiéndose gran parte de esas áreas funerarias en zonas muertas salvo por los aprovechamientos agrícolas. Todas estas acciones, algunas destructivas, otras de abandono, provocaron la generación de niveles de colmatación y escombros, ripios de latericio, teja, piedras de los mampuestos, tapial y adobe detectados en numerosas excavaciones, creando áreas vacías en los suburbios, como el margen derecho del río Albarregas, que no se reactivarán hasta el siglo IX, ya en época emiral. Por tanto, considerando esta otra parte de lo que era la ciudad romana emeritense, sí se puede hablar de reducción importante respecto a la vida urbana precedente, aunque la conversión de los espacios públicos romanos en residenciales y la subdivisión de las casas señoriales en viviendas menores va a densificar el caserío intramuros, al menos al inicio del proceso.

Como ya se ha señalado, otro cambio que trajo consigo la nueva prioridad defensiva es la reutilización de materiales, afectando a un numeroso conjunto de edificios que habían caracterizado a la ciudad romana, algunos de ellos emblemáticos. Esto es especialmente evidente en el área de espectáculos, donde el teatro y el anfiteatro se convirtieron en cantera para la construcción del refuerzo de la muralla en esa zona de la ciudad; pero en el caso del anfiteatro, con anterioridad se había sustraído su mármol decorativo, mientras que en el teatro se halló la mayor parte de su ornamentación marmórea, prueba de que permaneció hasta su ruina, cuando fue desechado durante la extracción de los sillares, delatando momentos distintos de cese de su función original aunque coetáneos en la acción de desmonte que los amortiza (Alba, 2014). Algo parecido sucedió intramuros, en las grandes áreas forales, cuyos templos y edificios institucionales fueron parcial o totalmente desmantelados (Alba & Mateos, 2007; Ayerbe *et al.*, 2009).

La aparición del expolio como medio sistemático de aprovisionamiento de materiales constructivos para su reempleo en nuevas edificaciones no debe llevar a equívoco y hacernos pensar en un empobrecimiento del trabajo constructivo. Ciertamente, se pierden algunas especializaciones directamente relacionadas con la explotación intensiva de las canteras de granito y mármol del territorio, ahora abandonadas o reducidas a extracciones ocasionales. Pero la nueva cantera, la ciudad romana que ya no es útil, se inserta en un nuevo ciclo constructivo que igualmente requiere de esfuerzos de trabajo y de cierto

² Sobre este aspecto destacan los trabajos realizados en el área de Morería, junto al Guadiana, un sector de la ciudad de 12000 m² objeto de numerosas publicaciones (véanse los distintos informes publicados en la serie *Memoria. Excavaciones Arqueológicas*, del Consorcio de Mérida).

³ También para la construcción de la nueva muralla exterior, en cuyo paramento abundan los cipos funerarios romanos.

dominio tecnológico, tanto para la extracción, con el empleo de grúas, como para el traslado y, en varios casos, la transformación del material en nuevas piezas (Utrero & Sastre de Diego, 2012). En Mérida, además, los talleres escultóricos continuaron activos tras el paréntesis de los asedios germánicos, con una exitosa producción de elementos arquitectónicos y litúrgicos desde el último cuarto del siglo V y, sobre todo, durante todo el siglo VI. Talleres que ahora incorporan la iconografía cristiana a su producción, y que son capaces de reelaborar modelos y rediseñar los productos de moda que llegan de Oriente. Ese influjo oriental es fácilmente detectable, sobre todo en la adopción de algunos motivos iconográficos, pero está muy lejos de parecerse a esa penetración del arte bizantino que, como ha defendido la historiografía tradicional, tendría a Mérida como un punto de llegada y centro de irradiación al resto de la península. Las investigaciones de los últimos años reflejan más bien una producción muy local de alcance fuertemente territorial con un reflejo directo en Toledo, “la otra capital”, pero sin afectar a la totalidad de la península (Sastre de Diego, 2013).

Por otra parte, volviendo al urbanismo tardoantiguo emeritense, hubo una clara disminución de la cultura termal. Ciertamente, parece que en las ciudades principales de la Hispania tardorromana, como Barcelona, Tarragona, Cartagena y Lisboa, hubo una preocupación por mantener parte de las antiguas infraestructuras, especialmente las relacionadas con el agua (Martínez, 2015). Pero en Mérida desaparecen los numerosos complejos termales que habían estado en servicio en el siglo IV, como el excavado en el solar de Resti, el localizado junto al Circo, o uno establecido junto a la entrada del puente. Otros negocios de baños surgen ahora pero de tamaño inferior, como el vecino a la llamada Casa Basílica (Alba, 2004, p. 225).

Relacionado con la cultura termal, otro aspecto completamente transformado es el doméstico. La tipología de vivienda emeritense de finales del siglo V y del siglo VI en nada se parece a la casa romana de habitaciones distribuidas en torno a un patio central. Aunque sí está constatada la reocupación doméstica de anteriores espacios de viviendas, como el conocido caso del barrio de Morería, a veces tras un periodo de expolio y abandono, la transformación se produce por subdivisión (Alba, 2005). En este sentido, uno de los elementos más paradigmáticos del cambio está relacionado nuevamente con el mundo hidráulico. En contraste con el auge bajoimperial de las termas privadas, tanto en domus como en villas rurales, en las casas tardoantiguas emeritenses apenas hay constancia de la existencia de ambientes termales, o de algún tipo de estructura que pudiera sustituirlos con una función similar. En 2009, se ha sumado la excavación en el solar del antiguo cuartel de artillería, a las afueras de la ciudad, junto a la vía de salida a Toledo-Zaragoza, de una construcción, conservada muy parcialmente, que ha sido datada entre finales del siglo V y el siglo VI e interpretada como residencia aristocrática con atrio,

tablinum y baño privado (Sanabria *et al.*, 2017). Según sus excavadores, la vivienda tendría unos 450 m² y se habría levantado sobre los restos de un gran complejo termal romano abandonado en el siglo III.

Por otro lado, a lo largo del siglo V, sin poder precisar más en la actualidad, se interrumpió el suministro de agua que traían los acueductos, repercutiendo directamente en el cese de termas y fuentes públicas, a la vez que se abandonó el mantenimiento del sistema de alcantarillado urbano, siendo este uno de los cambios que más debió afectar al modo de vida cotidiano en la Mérida tardoantigua (Alba, 2004; Acero, 2018).

De la mano de la arquitectura doméstica, las calles experimentaron procesos parecidos de ocupación y adaptación. Los pavimentos de las vías, algunos recrecidos por los ya mencionados niveles de colmatación asociados al periodo de invasiones, se estrecharon y retranquearon, perdiendo su regularidad ortogonal clásica ante la apropiación de los antiguos pórticos de las calles, un fenómeno de privatización común en la antigüedad tardía pero que, como vimos, se hizo para habilitar pequeñas viviendas y talleres, algunas con fachadas o elementos invasivos de la calle.

III. TEMPLOS PALEOCRISTIANOS Y “VISIGODOS”

La información arqueológica nos indica que, intramuros, la colonia parece conformada y acabada en tiempos de Augusto, aunque a lo largo de la primera centuria se van a introducir proyectos novedosos en su urbanismo como los foros llamados “Provincial” y “Adiectum” o la progresiva monumentalización del *Cardo Maximo*. Tal vez, el cambio más dinámico se va a producir con las reformas de las viviendas para ganar altura, edificándolas con mampostería y cal, y las novedades introducidas en el bajo imperio para adaptarlas a las necesidades y modas constructivas ya referidas en el anterior apartado que, sobre todo, van a acusar las calles, singularizadas por el cambio de las fachadas respecto a la uniformidad predominante en el esfuerzo fundacional. En conjunto, y a grandes rasgos, el paisaje urbano de los espacios públicos se mantuvo poco alterado durante el Bajo Imperio, cuando el gasto en obras públicas se destina al mantenimiento de lo preexistente. Se podría decir que en el siglo IV la ciudad es reafirmada en sus rasgos augusteos aportándole también novedades que la actualizan a los gustos constructivos de la época. En lo que a los edificios cristianos se refiere, contamos en el siglo IV con el pequeño santuario de Santa Eulalia, bien sea su memoria o, según la nueva propuesta tras el hallazgo de la ‘Sala Decumanus’ (Heras, 2015) una posible *domus ecclesia* junto a una de las puertas principales de la ciudad; además de un templo-catedral igualmente intramuros de emplazamiento y características hoy por hoy desconocidas. Se echa en falta algún templo de planta centralizada, en sintonía a la edificación en boga de esta centuria y al rango capitalino que desempeña *Emerita*.

La ciudad acusa una transformación decisiva en el siglo V sometida a los avatares bélicos y una larga coyuntura de crisis que va a motivar cambios profundos del paisaje urbano, en especial en los espacios públicos y en su arquitectura oficial, en gran parte desmantelada o destinada a otros usos. Esta arquitectura, vestigios de un gobierno imperial extinto, va a servir de cantera para emprender obras prioritarias: restauración del puente, fortalecimiento del amurallamiento urbano y edificación de templos cristianos. Si las inversiones efectuadas en el siglo IV tuvieron la finalidad de devolver el aspecto que tuvo la arquitectura pública en el alto Imperio, o mejorarla como prueba de bonanza de los nuevos tiempos y de regeneración, en el siglo V la mudanza de los espacios públicos va a ser radical. No obstante, aunque la arqueología que se ha practicado en estos sitios consigna su fuerte alteración, no debe ser interpretada como síntoma de la decadencia del medio urbano y de su despoblamiento, sino de una adecuación a tiempos diferentes con necesidades distintas y mentalidades nuevas, ya plenamente cristianas (Alba, 2014). Debemos insistir en que la tardoantigüedad posee más novedades en lo que elimina o transforma del escenario urbano romano que en lo que aporta: iglesias y cementerios. Se mantiene lo que resulta útil y se prescinde de lo demás o es transformado, movidos no solo por razones prácticas sino ideológicas también (Alba, 2017; *id.*, 2018). La incorporación de edificios cristianos es solo la plasmación más evidente de la materialización gradual de un proceso que alcanza su zenit en el siglo VI con el enriquecimiento acumulativo de la Iglesia por donaciones y herencias: “*en aquel tiempo fue tan rica aquella iglesia como jamás había habido otra en los confines de España*” (VSPE, IV. V-1). A su materialidad constructiva dedicaremos estas páginas finales, testimonio del afianzamiento emergente de la Iglesia como poder terrenal, económico y político, capaz de emprender numerosas obras como los siguientes templos identificados hasta el presente:

Moreno de Vargas en su *Historia de la Ciudad de Mérida*, publicada en 1633 (de consulta obligada para cualquier cotejo arqueológico), afirma que de las construcciones cristianas que llegan hasta su tiempo, algunas de ellas antiguas sedes de parroquias medievales, habían sido edificadas en tiempo de los godos (1987, p. 476). A su juicio, eran los casos de Santa María, Santa Eulalia, Santiago y San Andrés, así como la ermita de Nuestra Señora de Loreto. La arqueología ha podido confirmar su acierto en las iglesias de Santa Eulalia y de San Andrés (Fig. 6), contamos con indicios indirectos para aceptar el origen godo de los templos de Santiago y la citada ermita de Loreto y queda pendiente confirmar la actual concatedral, sin suficientes pruebas para descartarlo o corroborarlo.

Sobre la localización de estos edificios paleocristianos o visigodos, el citado autor moderno nos da la pauta seguida tras ganar la ciudad a los musulmanes en 1230, consistente en restaurar los templos que aún estaban en pie como Santa Eulalia que, reconstruida con planta basilical, se esmeran en dotarla de arcos de herradura para rememorar su antigüedad. Las excavaciones arqueológicas

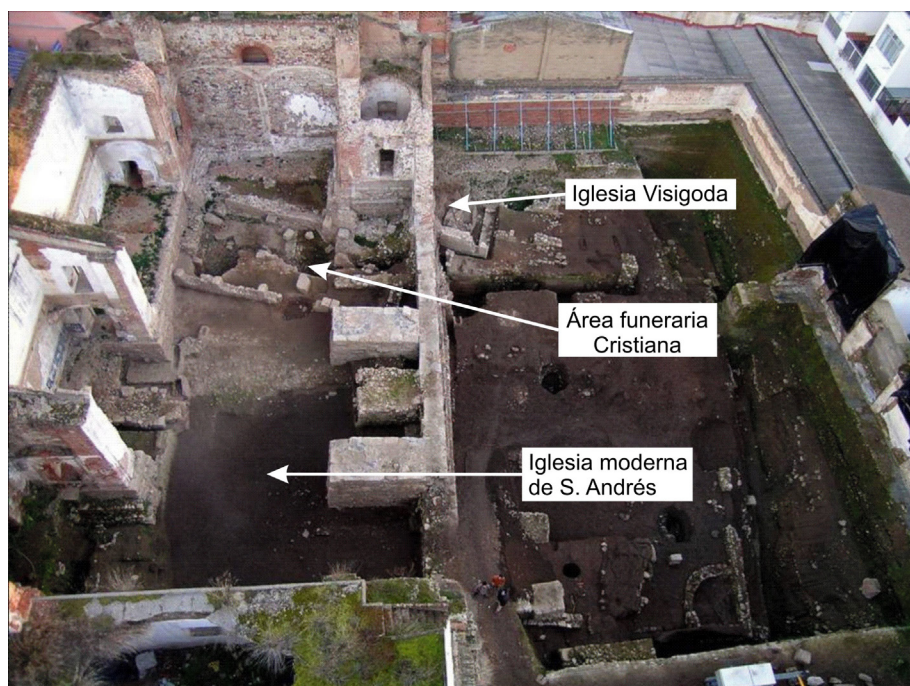


Fig. 6. Vista aérea de las excavaciones del convento de San Andrés, con la presencia de restos arquitectónicos tardoantiguos asociados a la iglesia visigoda. Imagen Miguel Alba.

en el interior de la iglesia permitieron sacar a la luz la planta de un edificio de proporciones modestas y cabecera absidada que habría sido el descrito por Prudencio con gran aparato ornamental de mosaicos y mármoles (Mateos, 1999), frecuentado por peregrinos entre los siglos IV y V, y dañado durante las invasiones que preceden a la caída del Imperio. Los restos de este edificio fueron abarcados en la cabecera de un templo de monumentales proporciones y sólida fábrica de sillares (cuya cabecera permanece en pie en nuestro tiempo), posiblemente edificado en el último cuarto del siglo V, en tiempos del arzobispo Zenón, primado de la iglesia hispana (nombrado por el Papa Simplicio), que acomete construcciones de gran envergadura y complejidad como amurallar nuevamente la ciudad y restaurar el puente del Gadiana. Sobre las capillas laterales se elevarán unas torres campanario en los años sesenta del siglo VI, casi una centuria después, cuando asimismo se menciona la restauración del templo en tiempos del obispo Fidel según informa el libro de la Vida de los santos obispos de Mérida (VSPE, IV,VI-8). La basílica compondría el núcleo de un complejo con diversas construcciones: dos monasterios, uno de ellos femenino, baptisterio, escuela, biblioteca, hospital, etc.) y de servicio a estos (cuadras, almacenes,

negocios y servicios a los peregrinos, etc.), así como el mayor cementerio cristiano de la ciudad, iniciado en el siglo IV.

La catedral se hallaba intramuros, con advocación a Santa María, aunque nombrada en origen “Santa Jerusalén” (VSPE, IV, IX-3). La tradición nos ha transmitido la posibilidad de que la actual concatedral esté sobre el emplazamiento del conjunto episcopal de época visigoda que reunía varios edificios: Catedral, palacio episcopal y baptisterio dedicado a San Juan Bautista. Moreno de Vargas anota este hecho argumentando que aún quedaban en su tiempo vestigios del templo, junto a la Puerta del Perdón (1987, p. 139), en concreto, correspondiente a una puerta conservada parcialmente, rematada por un arco con moldura. El mismo autor refiere la aparición de gruesos y sólidos cimientos que se extienden hacia el convento de Santa Clara. Vicente Navarro (1993, p. 15) en su libro monográfico sobre el templo, defiende asimismo este mismo emplazamiento. Una idea aceptada por muchos autores del siglo XX (Almagro, 1961, p. 196; Álvarez Sáez de Buruaga, 1976, p. 141; Cruz, 1985, p. 408; Andrés Ordax, 1985, p. 9; Camacho, 1988, p. 127). Moreno de Vargas la incluye entre las reconstrucciones de los leoneses, edificada primero como ermita en el lugar que ocupara el templo ruinoso, posteriormente rehecha con traza superior de iglesia hacia 1480, conocida como “Santa María de la Plaza” (1987, p. 415).

La catedral, nombrada “*ecclesia senior*” (VSPE, V, XI-2), razón a su antigüedad e importancia, se puso en relación con un epígrafe monolítico de mármol reutilizado como imposta en la puerta de la Alcazaba (Álvarez Sáez de Buruaga, 1969, p. 196), en el que se menciona un templo dedicado a Santa María Princesa de todas las Vírgenes (conservada en la colección visigoda del MNAR). Bueno Rocha creía que podía deberse a un cambio de advocación de Santa Jerusalén a Santa María después, pero que se trataría del mismo edificio.

La aparición de escultura decorativa en los alrededores y dentro del templo (Cruz Villalón, 1985, p. 409) y seis epígrafes (Ramírez & Mateos, 2000, p. 277) se consideran indicios a tener en cuenta a favor de la posible ubicación en la zona del conjunto episcopal, sin descartar otras alternativas. En este sentido, Mérida y Macías defendieron que el conjunto catedralicio no podía estar en Santa María sino junto al Teatro, en la Casa Basílica excavada por ellos, sin apreciar pruebas, ni indicio alguno, para señalar su localización donde sostenía la tradición (Macías, 1929, pp. 127, ss y 159). Vicente Navarro se inclinó por ubicar la *ecclesia senior* en el solar que ocupara el Palacio de los Duques de la Roca, por el mucho material aparecido al hacer las obras del colegio Trajano (1972, p. 312). Nos podemos retraer aún más en el tiempo para abundar en propuestas de emplazamiento alternativo. Así, el humanista Juan Gómez Bravo, en su obra discrepante y puntillosa con Moreno de Vargas publicada en 1638, plantea otra ubicación por las mejores condiciones, centralidad y presencia de restos. En concreto, en el lugar ocupado por el mercado de abastos, relativamente cercano al mencionado palacio de los duques de la Roca: “No sé cómo lo probará B.M.

puesto que no tenemos instrumento, ni otra cosa que nos pueda guiar, sino razones y conjeturas, y valiéndome de estas, digo que el sitio que hoy tiene la Iglesia Mayor de Mérida es buenísimo, pero en tiempo de los godos, no tanto como el del convento de San Francisco. Porque considerada la muralla antigua, venía a estar no solo en el medio de la ciudad (...) sino en sitio más sano, y más alegre, porque todo lo más vecino al río la experiencia ha mostrado ser menos sano que el resto de la ciudad (...) yo me acuerdo haber oído en Mérida a muchos hombres ancianos que en el sitio que hoy es convento de San Francisco había estado la iglesia Catedral antigua (...) en cuyo sitio se hallaron ruinas que lo mostraban” (Gómez Bravo, 1638, p. 11). Amador de los Ríos defendió también este emplazamiento para la catedral por los restos que vio entre las ruinas del conventual franciscano (1877, p. 21). En 2016 hicimos una pequeña intervención arqueológica en el interior de Santa María que no pudo despejar esta duda (Alba, n° interv. 7038). Llama la atención la no orientación preceptiva del templo gótico, mientras que las iglesias antiguas por regla general sí disponen su cabecera hacia el Este como Santa Eulalia o Casa Herrera. No obstante, este mismo hecho se repite en el caso de la iglesia de San Andrés que trataremos más adelante. La presencia de un pie de altar “visigodo” reutilizado en el mobiliario litúrgico actual se ha presentado también como prueba de pervivencia del lugar (Álvarez Saez de Buruaga, 1976, p. 142), aunque parece proceder del cerro de San Albín, siendo trasladado a inicios del siglo XX a Santa María (Sastre de Diego, 2013).

Ciertamente hay una concentración y dispersión de hallazgos marmóreos de estilo visigodo que establecen un eje que comprende el área arqueológica de Morería, la calle San Salvador, el entorno de Santa María y el citado colegio Trajano, y que coincide con los solares más grandes y los edificios más monumentales de la topografía medieval emeritense. También se puede prolongar este eje a la calle Tenería, colindante al río, donde en la escombrera apareció un fragmento de la inscripción de la tapa del sarcófago del obispo Fidel, aunque José Saenz de Buruaga sospecha que había sido expoliada por los árabes, traída desde Santa Eulalia (Álvarez, 1970, p. 205).

Respecto al baptisterio, las Vidas de los Santos Padres ofrecen una descripción somera, que permite descartar un edificio de planta central e independiente, como los documentados en Mértola (Lopes, 2014), aquí de proporciones ajustadas a una capilla anexa, posiblemente semejante, aunque a mayor escala, al aparecido en la basílica de Casa Herrera: “(...) *la pequeña basílica de San Juan, en la que está el baptisterio, contigua a la basílica, solo separada por un muro, cubiertas la una y otra por el mismo techo*” (VSPE, IV, IX-5).

Contigua a la basílica y al baptisterio, se ubica el palacio episcopal, completamente renovado en el siglo VI, “hasta los cimientos” nos narran las VSPE, en tiempos del obispo Fidel (IV, VI-7), cuando seguramente perdiera su vetusto aspecto de vivienda señorial convencional para adoptar espacios específicos a una arquitectura de representación de alto rango eclesiástico, ya conformada,

con introducción de atrios columnados y, acorde al simbolismo del lenguaje del poder, con empleo profuso de mármoles para revestimiento de paredes y suelos, además de llamativos artesonados. Al palacio se le dio entonces una mayor altura y extensión, lo que también tiene su relevancia simbólica en un paisaje urbano en el que destacan los edificios cristianos, convertidos en referentes visuales de orientación para el viajero (y peregrino) que llega a la ciudad. Confiamos en que la arqueología logre algún día fijar su emplazamiento, constatando estas superposiciones, en las que podemos prever un templo no inferior al de Santa Eulalia y una cabecera curva orientada al este, es decir, en diagonal respecto a las trazas del reticulado urbanístico romano.

La iglesia de Santiago estaba en plena plaza del Parador Nacional, rodeada de un cementerio hasta su desamortización en el siglo XIX, cuando fue demolida (Navarro, 1974, p. 308). Aparece representada en el plano de la población que realiza Laborde en 1802. Según Moreno de Vargas, de la iglesia visigoda restaba su cabecera: *“Santiago Apóstol el Mayor, es iglesia antigua; a lo menos la bóveda de la capilla mayor y otras dos pequeñitas que tiene colaterales que están tan tapadas y arimados a ellas dos altares, son del tiempo de los godos (...)”* (1987, p. 483). El mismo autor refiere que fue parroquia hasta que se edificó Santa María en el siglo XV y asume dicha función. De esta zona proceden varios epígrafes funerarios y se identificaron varias tumbas “visigodas” al hacer el seguimiento arqueológico de las obras del edificio de la Seguridad Social, allí cercano. Un poco más apartado, se rescataron varios mármoles arquitectónicos (algunos propios de iglesias) al crear el Parador Nacional en el conventual de Jesús el Nazareno que ya contaba con un “jardín de antigüedades”. Las piezas escultóricas componen una pequeña exposición permanente, además de las columnas del patio, con epígrafes árabes, de procedencia desconocida pero pertenecientes a un edificio cristiano que bien pudo ser la citada iglesia.

Así mismo se debía guardar memoria o quedar algún indicio de la iglesia primitiva sobre la que se construye San Andrés, convertida en parroquia hasta que en el siglo XV queda relegada a ermita. Entre el siglo XVI y XVII se construye aquí el conventual de Santo Domingo hasta que con la desamortización pasa a tener un uso civil. Las excavaciones arqueológicas llevadas a cabo por Santiago Feijoo (nº interv. 4002), permitieron identificar el lateral de un edificio con muros de mampostería con cal, provisto de contrafuertes al exterior y suelo de opus signinum en el interior, cuya planta está correctamente orientada hacia el Este. Anexo al edificio, en un espacio intermedio hasta la calle, se documentaron varias sepulturas dispuestas en batería de tipo cistas, con cubiertas de grandes piedras. La cabecera de la iglesia moderna, de gran tamaño, se superponía y abarcaba un lado del templo antiguo sin respetar su orientación.

En el *suburbium*, junto a los ríos, contamos con Santa María del Loreto, en la otra orilla del Guadiana, a la salida del puente, y un edificio singular situado en las cercanías de Santa Eulalia y junto a un camino antiguo que cruzaba el

río Albarregas. Este segundo edificio se ha identificado como el hospital de peregrinos (Mateos, 1999, p. 195) fundado por el obispo Masona en el siglo VI (VSPE, V, III-4). Se estructura mediante un aula central con cabecera absidal flanqueada por sendas naves transversales de planta basilical, en cuya excavación apareció una pilastra de características análogas a las reutilizadas en el aljibe de la Alcazaba (Mateos, 1995, p. 254). La cabecera está orientada a la salida del sol.

El templo situado a la salida del puente del Guadiana es nombrado como Santa María de Loreto. Según Vicente Navarro (1974), esta iglesia estaría en otro lugar, en dirección del Matadero y el ferrocarril. Sea cual fuera su advocación última, la primera fue a Santa Lucrecia, de cuya basilica se da noticia en las VSPE (IV-VII.6). Se ignora su emplazamiento preciso al quedar fuera del plano de Laborde, si bien nos ha llegado un apunte paisajístico de un oficial británico de la guerra napoleónica (Lavado, 2013), en el que se aprecia su vecindad al camino y elevación para evitar las crecidas del río. Moreno de Vargas nos dice que ya era ermita en el siglo XVII y sus advocaciones cambiantes: *“La ermita de Nuestra Señora de Loreto está pasada la puente del Guadiana; en tiempo de los godos fue iglesia de santa Lucrecia”* (1987, p. 483) y, especifica: *“(…) el edificio de la capilla mayor y sus dos colaterales son de fábricas de los godos; si bien el cuerpo de la iglesia es de tiempo más moderno”* (1987, p. 198). En esta zona se han encontrado restos de escultura decorativa y tumbas con cubiertas de mármol (Álvarez, 1976, p. 148). Muy próximo, al otro lado de la carretera, en las traseras de la Escuela de Administración Pública, excavamos en 2009 más de una veintena de sepulturas tardoantiguas (Alba, nº de interv. 7034; Fig. 7), entre las que podemos datar algunas en el siglo V, como las de doble tejadillo de *tegulae*. Sin embargo, las de fosa simple cubiertas con grandes piedras o cubiertas planas de *tegulae* o ladrillo creemos que pertenecen a la época visigoda, aunque no aparecieran broches o hebillas, ni los jarritos que suelen dejarse junto a la cabeza del finado en las tumbas características de esta etapa.

A partir de los datos arqueológicos expuestos, podemos concluir que aún falta mucho por conocer en el proceso y resultado final con que se plasmó la edilicia cristiana en la capital de la Lusitania, así como concretar la cronología de estos templos. Estos resultan pocos y de proporciones más modestas a lo que se había imaginado considerando la importancia de la Mérida del siglo IV. Algunos quizás a partir de la traza de antiguas viviendas; rehechos en el siglo V con porte monumental e incrementados en número y dotados de decoración marmórea en los siglos VI y VII, con pervivencia de alguno de ellos a cargo de la comunidad mozárabe. Pero se advierten algunas pautas que merecen ser destacadas. La cristianización cerró su proceso de implantación con un impacto rupturista respecto a las antiguas áreas públicas, desmanteladas y despaganizadas, sin que haya evidencia hasta el presente en Mérida de utilización de este suelo público liberado para la construcción de iglesias, ni para habilitar cementerios, sino que opta por establecerse en lugares nuevos (Fig. 8). Los espacios cristianos, con los



Fig. 7. Excavaciones en las traseras de la Escuela de Administraciones Públicas de Mérida, al otro lado del río Guadiana, con el hallazgo de enterramientos tardoantiguos. Imagen Miguel Alba.

templos y las plazas o plazoletas consustanciales a ellos, ocupan lugares diferentes a los ámbitos sacros del mundo romano. En el exterior del *pomerium*, los templos cristianos no se sitúan de manera aleatoria, sino estratégicamente a la vera de los caminos y preferentemente en sus cruces, lo que debe orientarnos para rastrear las iglesias de emplazamiento desconocido de las que nos hablan las *VSPE*. Lugares idóneos como las salidas principales de la ciudad: junto a las vías de la Plata, de

Caesaraugusta (¿dónde se encuentra la Antigua?), de la Bética, en el ramal más cercano al río y en la calzada de prolongación extramuros del Cardo Máximo hacia el sur, en los terrenos que cruzan el solar de la casa del Mitreo o más allá, entre otras posibilidades. En coherencia con este razonamiento, el extenso cementerio con presencia de tumbas de cistas que abarca desde la Casa del Anfiteatro a la barriada de la Argentina, situado en relación a un importante camino que salía desde la zona del amortizado Anfiteatro, sugiere la existencia de una iglesia.

Por el momento podemos aportar pocas certezas y demasiados interrogantes. Continuaremos, pese a todo, con la labor de intentar comprender la diacronía en un aspecto esencial para la sociedad de estos siglos y poder así dirimir si la cristianización de la ciudad responde a un nuevo modelo de espacio urbano (que pudo haber sido seguido por otros núcleos de la Lusitania) o tan solo se trata de la plasmación espontánea y azarosa de una nueva mentalidad.



Fig. 8. Vista aérea de la ciudad de Mérida con la ubicación de las iglesias conocidas en época visigoda, según Miguel Alba.

IV. CONSIDERACIONES FINALES

Hasta aquí la descripción de la ciudad emeritense durante la mayor parte del siglo V, afectada por la fuerte inestabilidad que provocó la llegada de los pueblos germanos. Una ciudad que sobrevive pero que va siendo profundamente transformada según va dando respuesta a las necesidades de un nuevo tiempo marcado por la supervivencia y la regionalización que ocasiona la desestructuración de las instituciones imperiales; un nuevo tiempo para Mérida donde, desde un punto de vista material, sobresalen sus imponentes murallas como nuevo símbolo urbano, pero también espiritual: la ciudad como fortaleza protegida por Dios a través de sus santos y, sobre todo, de su mártir y nueva patrona, Eulalia, rol que ya le otorga Hidacio de Chaves en el siglo V. Esta ciudad superviviente ante la mayor crisis a la que se tuvo que enfrentar, de casi medio siglo de duración, es el punto de partida para la nueva ciudad que emerge con una nueva identidad. Una de las cuestiones abiertas sobre la que habrá que seguir trabajando en el futuro se refiere a los tiempos de conformación de esta nueva Mérida capital cristiana, perfectamente definida a finales del siglo VI, y loada durante el siglo VII, pero cuyos cimientos, ideológicos y materiales, se fueron colocando en un pasado, más o menos inmediato, pero arqueológicamente aún indefinido, situado entre los inicios del convulso siglo V, creador de niveles de escombros, y la segunda mitad del siglo VI, la época dorada que narran las *Vidas de los Santos Padres de Mérida*. Incluso para el origen de la catedral emeritense se supone una datación muy temprana, como hemos visto, en el siglo IV, acorde con su papel de sede primada que revelan las fuentes escritas.

Como conclusión, y a la espera de que nuevas excavaciones e investigaciones permitan mejorar el conocimiento actual definiendo con mayor precisión este complejo proceso de transformación ideológica a la par que material, se puede decir que, a diferencia del periodo precedente, el altoimperio, marcado por la estandarización y el sentido de uniformidad propiamente romanas que acompañó a la ciudad desde su fundación augustea, la Mérida tardoantigua vive tres situaciones muy distintas pero interconectadas en tres siglos sucesivos: la monumentalidad y esplendor renovados del siglo IV para restaurar el lustre que tuvo en sus mejores tiempos, la adaptación y transformación a la que obligan los acontecimientos del siglo V y, finalmente, la consolidación de una nueva identidad desde el último tercio del siglo V y durante todo el siglo VI que define un nuevo modelo de ciudad: la ciudad cristiana, un proyecto liderado por sus obispos que buscaron materializar el que será uno de los grandes conceptos filosóficos de la Iglesia medieval: la ciudad de Dios, o lo que es lo mismo, el cielo en la tierra.

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NON UNO ITINERE¹. URBAN AND RURAL LANDSCAPES: CONNECTIVITY ACROSS LATE ANTIQUE *LUSITANIA*

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ABSTRACT: In Late Antiquity, the old Roman province of *Lusitania* saw a major process of abandonment in most of the *urbes*. However, a closer look reveals that this was an ongoing process, probably commencing, in some cases, from the 2nd century. Accordingly, we may question the real centrality of most of the urban centres, especially in the *peripheral territories*. In addition, we should recognise several different processes, some with distinctive archaeological materialities.

KEYWORDS: Late Antiquity; *Lusitania*; Urban transformations; Centres and peripheries; monumentality

Thus the Roman Empire has been gradually diminished and become a home for barbarians, or has been reduced to such a depopulated state that the places where the cities used to be cannot be recognized.

Zosimus, 4.59.3.

VITA BUONA FRUAMUR FELICES. We, the fortunate ones, enjoy the pleasures of life. This inscription was engraved on the surface of a small glass bowl made somewhere in the eastern half of the Mediterranean³. Attributed to the second half of the 4th century AD, the caption symbolizes the spirit of an era: after the turbulent events of the 3rd century, the Constantinian *recuperatio* brought a certain stability to the Empire that allowed for some renewed enjoyment of life. However, for those wiser figures, the spirit of that period also meant that seeds of change were underway, dragging the past and present world to new and

¹ Symacchus, *Relatio* 3.8.

² CHAIA/UÉ – Ref. UID/EAT/00112/2013 – (This project was financed by National Funds through FCT/Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia – many thanks go to CHAIA for the translation of the text, and Pilar Diarte-Blasco and Neil Christie for various suggestions and revisions).

³ Corning Museum of Glass, 55.1.1. Comments and framework in Weitzmann, 1979: n° 73, p. 84-85.

troubled transformations, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty. Enjoying the moment was fundamental, as it would not last long: the Empire was entering Late Antiquity, which would be marked by times of profound changes.

1. CONTEXT (“THE GIANT AND THE DWARF”)

By historiographic tradition, the end of the Western Roman Empire is viewed as a moment of sudden collapse or drastic decline in urban life. After a phase of crisis and unreliability motivated by the *barbarian invasions*, combined with Roman civil wars, came the abandonment/destruction of the cities (in part dependent on geographic context) as well as a dispersal of many inhabitants to the countryside, thus creating the *ruralization* of the population. This phenomenon occurred in two stages: one of ‘premonition’, the other of ‘adaptation’. Accordingly, was symbolized first, in the construction of city walls, both in preparation for the *invasions* and in response to a growing insecurity; and, secondly, the emergence of aristocratic *villae* of grand opulence and monumentality, which were manifestations of the late Roman elite’s definitive choice to withdraw to the countryside – a sign that cities had little to offer the elites, now anxious to prolong their codes of power and influence in smaller circuits.

The Roman city at this stage starts to be dismantled, and we will find that the (early) medieval city is a pale shadow of its classical predecessor. Urban life arguably now becomes anaemic, primarily gathered around the bishop’s church; the vibrant daily life of the earlier imperial *urbs*, a component of a monumental and gigantic urban system that widely replicated the functions of the *mater polis*, the *magna urbs*, comes to be replaced by an insipid ruralized, village-like successor, filled with ruins that offer memories of a busier, more ordered and more ambitious past. Church and its agents now form the entrepreneurs within the post-classical townscapes.

However, this vision of “the giant and the dwarf”, a long-held image of *decline and fall* in the Gibbonian tradition, has been challenged by many recent archaeological contributions that, with established chrono-stratigraphic readings and contextual associations, help to re-equate the phenomena of urban dynamics, extending them in time. But, above all, what recent studies have emphasized or revived is the prospect of two fundamental situations prevailing: (a) firstly, that cities suffered multiple and varied phenomena with different regional impacts, whereby in urban clusters within the same territory (or neighbouring territories) completely different situations or outcomes can result, due to internal or external causes; or (b) the urban network did not go into decline in Late Antiquity, but experienced abandonment or decay at an earlier time, but with different durabilities according to the internal dynamics of individual towns.

This second image has resulted from recent, more refined study of traditional ideological prejudices. Such research questions the very concept of *urbs/city*

in its classical sense, instead creating more heterogeneous and deconstructive readings of this phenomenon. The debate has had recent contributions linked to cities and sequences in the Hispania provinces (notably: Diarte-Blasco, 2012; Vaquerizo, Garriguet & León, 2014; Ramallo & Quevedo, 2014; Brassous & Quevedo, 2015; Andreu Pintado, 2017; Ruiz Bueno, 2016), which have certainly enriched our sources and levels of evidence and open up new avenues of analysis and interpretation – as will be explored further below.

2. *VALIDA URBS*

One central problem lies in the very concept of *city*, or how we understand it today in comparison to what it (may have) meant in the Roman world (the *urbs*).

Roman-period urban clusters such as *Olisipo*, *Pax Iulia* and *Salacia* have been shown to be pre-Roman aggregating centres with proto-urban characteristics, long evolving and benefiting from contacts in the Mediterranean orbit, but then gaining extended roles following the peninsula's integration into the Empire, both in terms of legal status as well as through the construction of infrastructures. Places like *Ebora* and *Ammaia*, by contrast, seemingly have no pre-Roman precursors, but their new status under Rome is fully evident in their structured and recognizable *forma urbis*. Analyzing the epigraphic records for their inhabitants, however, we can chart that most were indigenous, descendants of families who occupied large settlements in the vicinities during the Iron Age, but who took advantage of opportunities that these urban installations could offer, rapidly adopting a Roman *modus vivendi* (Mantas, 2000).

However, often the problem lies in understanding the real extent of this urban network, as well as the effective integration and engagement (or not) of the indigenous population. The archaeological mapping of the distribution of towns known from *Lusitania*—reveals areas of thin density, the many voids between urban clusters or other focal locations (for instance, see map in Alarcão, 1990, p. 31) Fig. 1. Some sites might not actually class as urban centres, since many are called *oppida*, and we still lack good material guides to confirm their layouts and contents.

In fact, some locations mentioned in the sources remain untraced: for instance, *Concordia*, referred to as the *Concordiensis* capital and with a legal status of *civitas stipendiaria*⁴, has still not been pinpointed on the ground, as it is true for *Aritiense Oppido veteri* assigned to Casal da Várzea (Abrantes)⁵, and possibly related to the *Aritium Praetorio* mentioned among the road stations of the *Antonine Itinerary* (see the still valid commentary in Alarcão, 1990, pp. 32-34). Yet does this *invisibility* perhaps also mean the absence of an actual urban

⁴ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* IV, 118; Ptolemy, *Geog.* II.5.6.

⁵ For the inscription, see CIL II, 172; generic description of the land realities in RP 6/46.

ROMAN CITIES IN *LUSITANIA*

- 1 – *Eburobritium*
- 2 – *Scallabis*
- 3 – *Olisipo*
- 4 – *Aritium Vetus?*
- 5 – *Ammaia*
- 6 – *Caetobriga*
- 7 – *Salacia*
- 8? – *Abelterium*
- 9 – *Ebora*
- 10 – *Pax Iulia*
- 11 – *Mirobriga*
- 12 ? – *Vipasca*
- 13? – *Myrtilis*
- 14 – *Baesuris*
- 15 – *Balsa*
- 16? – *Ossonoba*
- 17? – *Cilpes*
- 18 – *Laccobriga*



Fig. 1. Roman cities in *Lusitania*.

fabric and/or a weak level of monumentality to its urban fabric? At the same time we must recognize how different echelons of clusters could co-exist, not all necessarily fitting the prototypical conception of the classical *urbs*.

Other questions arise: for example, did some centres not look urban because of other settlement foci or sites in the region? How essential were the components of Roman strategic planning: did an ‘urban’ site had to have units of a public nature, such as baths, or entertainment or administrative spaces? Did the new Roman economic centres stimulate or expand the productive activity of the surrounding territories and serve as a driving force for rural development and for the integration of scattered communities, or did some regions feature an autarkic system? Did people really inhabit these towns on a permanent basis, living day-to-day lives integrated in the classical *modus vivendi*? The variations in the urban models are sometimes hard to read archaeologically, but not so hard to understand if we bear in mind that, in the Roman mentality, legal status was granted only to civic communities, not depending on the scale and equipments of the city in which they lived.

Such considerations indicate that, in its own characteristic way, Roman power created distinct gradations, acting in a flexible way according to the regional players and to the strategic resources that it pursued.

This situation is particularly relevant for *Hispania*, where a diversity of forms is evident, connected to its scale, varied landscapes and populations. It is well known that the Roman conquest of the peninsula had encountered different social and settlement organization types that permitted the existence of models that were closer to the "central circle" of the Mediterranean, co-existing with more archaic systems typical of the "peripheral circles" (Terrenato, 2008, p. 238, Fig. 8.1). However, "the expansion process clearly privileges more advanced areas (the opposite of what happened in modern empires), demonstrating that urbanism is a fundamental requirement, allowing a community to become a functional part of the new political entity" (Terrenato, 2008, p. 251). Unlike other historical processes, *romanization* first integrated those philo-Roman groups that had previously sought and developed contact; and in the case of *Lusitania* one can easily recognize that the process progressed gradually, starting from the Mediterranean front towards the Atlantic and the inland territories. To this end, Rome also sought the collaboration of local elites, even in *urbes* that were founded *ex novo*, as for *Ammiaia* (Mantas, 2000) and, most probably, *Ebora Liberalitas Iulia*, according to the model of the *civitas peregrina*, urban centres ruled by their own customs and able to elect their own magistrates, within the Roman whole.

For these reasons, the urban network of *Lusitania*, like those of other provinces of the *outer circle*, could encompass very distinct urban images: some *urbes* might have a complete combination of *forma urbis*, urban facilities and administrative spaces; others featured only some of these elements, or perhaps none, being distinguished by their centralizing role for a territory or their management of a strategic resource. This variety is explained either from the viewpoint of territorial organization (large zones without urban clusters) or from that of urban structure and facilities. This diversity, which is perhaps surprising to us, is not just due to levels and quality of archaeological research but is also a mark of the era itself. For example, the site called *Mirobriga* features a forum, a bath building and a circus, and yet it seems not to have had any other public infrastructure. It is obvious that this constructive process would also have depended, to a large extent, on the engagement and promotion of local elites and on their private euergetism, since public resources would be scarce for a majority of these new towns. Therefore, the mapping of public monuments in the cities of *Lusitania* inevitably presents significant gaps, and such gaps must be seen on occasion as reflective of the local communities themselves in terms of input and resources. For example, only two circuses are known to have existed: that at *Olisipo* was to be expected given the city's importance and cosmopolitanism, but that traced at *Mirobriga* is totally unexpected, being sited in a small town lacking any other investment in recreational infrastructure. Perhaps the circus at *Mirobriga* links into an area important for horse breeding (*Lusitania* had a high reputation for producing quality horses), but it does not seem a logical base compared to other, larger towns (Fig. 2).

URBAN EQUIPMENTS IN *LUSITANIA*

- Circus
- Theater
- Urban Walls
- ⤿ Aqueduct

(no Amphitheatre...?)



Fig. 2. Urban equipments in the Roman cities in *Lusitania*.

Thus it might not be surprising therefore that in *Lusitania* we can observe the phenomenon of a fairly early withdrawal from the cities, with several showing no evident continuity into Islamic times nor showing revival within the urban network established after the Reconquest (Fig. 3). Although the chronological data are scarce, most of the urban or proto-urban clusters were progressively abandoned from the 3rd century AD, leading also to a progressive loss of memory of these sites. As Peter Brown suggested (2012, chap. 24 for a global perspective): “In many parts of Gaul, Spain, and Africa, late Roman society was miniaturized [...] a world whose horizons had shrunk and where the opportunities for widespread enrichment [...] had, with very few exceptions, closed down to the level of a single region.” Local connections were prioritized, and to be sited near any local spheres of influence was crucial.

All these mechanisms depended on one major core: in many areas of the Hispanic peninsula, the concept of “city” was a new one brought by Roman rule, and probably *becoming urbanised* was not entirely achieved. Perhaps, therefore, the ‘giant’ was not so *gigantic* here: the Roman city, the *valida urbs*, was manifested in different, not formulaic, ways, dependent fundamentally upon the indigenous matrix of the local communities. Potentially, the cultural patterns that I tried to identify in the rural landscape in the Alto Alentejo (Carneiro, 2014, especially

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1 – *Eburobritium*

2 – *Scallabis*

3 – *Olisipo*

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6 – *Caetobriga*

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8? – *Abelterium*

9 – *Ebora*

10 – *Pax Iulia*

11 – *Mirobriga*

12 ? – *Vipasca*

13? – *Myrtilis*

14 – *Baesuris*

15 – *Balsa*

16? – *Ossonoba*

17? – *Cilpes*

18 – *Laccobriga*

(Continuity during Late Antiquity)

(No continuity at all)



Fig. 3. Roman cities in *Lusitania*: continuities/discontinuities.

Chap. 5.2, vol. I, pp. 152-155) can also be applied to the urban fabric in *Hispania*: in the *central* territories, zones more used to the concept of “urban living” things went well, but in the *peripheral* territories and especially in the *ultra-peripheral* landscapes, cities were ambitious insertions and did not match the local expectations, and were onerous to stimulate and maintain. In these areas, the small urban nuclei never generated sufficient dynamism, possibly because they were created in territories that could not sustain a stable economic basis or adequate demographic. Hence these putative bases fade without the wider push and impetus to endure.

Arguably, however, another dimension needs to be added to our discussion: not only should we debate the *built city* or the material reality, but also the perceptions, both of those residing in the cities, but also of those who have excavated/are excavating in them.

3. PERCEPTIONS

In this regard, a fundamental problem lies in the existence of a constant literary *topos* that pervades studies of the classical world, in which the city is portrayed as a place of vices and degradation, while rural life forges character,

ennobled by contact with nature. In the 5th century BC, Plato observed how the urban aristocracy populated the lands around Athens with “beautiful and spacious mansions”, and for this reason “many citizens no longer traveled to the city, not even on feast days, preferring to live in their private homes”⁶; a similar process would transfer itself to Rome in the period following the Punic Wars. The countryside pictured as a place of retreat and *otium literatum* is abundantly evident in the letters of Pliny the Younger but, above all, in the set of authors who lived and composed between the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries: the words of elite scholars and poets like Ausonius, Symmachus, Sidonius Apollinaris, Rutilius Namatianus and Venantius Fortunatus combine to paint a strongly imbalanced picture where full emphasis goes to residing and reflecting in the countryside, somewhere one can enjoy peace and quiet, unlike in the urban world.

This antagonism is constant in all the authors, and so we find very little real, factual information, in the sense of letting us understand any concrete historical facts or any of the dynamics of change. The author who perhaps best describes the situation of ‘crisis’ in the urban context is Rutilius, whose *De Redito Suo* recounts his travels between Rome and his native Gaul in 416, looking back at a time of deep upheaval, when Goths had assailed cities and disrupted routes of communication in northern and central Italy. The author devotes a few verses to the crisis affecting coastal towns and ports, particularly at the mouth of the River Tiber, where desolation is complete, as seemingly attested at Cosa, in Etruria. However, Rutilius’ depiction of the countryside is strangely still largely idyllic, describing great prosperous *villae* where agricultural work – fields, vineyards, etc. – continues without interruption. This entire picture leads us to presume the continuation of the noted literary *topoi*. In the way the author writes, the picture outlined is ambivalent: while cities can be scenarios of destruction, life in the countryside can be peaceful. Other writers such as Ausonius and Hydatius, offer the same paradigms, the same paradoxical picture.

Thus we can understand how the classical world used preconceived values, building a qualitatively negative perception of how cities and urban life could be perceived, transferring the seat of virtues and “*deliciae*” (to use the term given by Pliny the Younger⁷) to the countryside where, in contact with nature, Man rediscovers some of his primatial values. Unsurprisingly, Christian ideology extends this reading, which in some way finds resonance in the archaeological evidence: the rural *villae* are always “aulic”, “monumental”, “sumptuous” – qualifiers that are never attributed to the *domus* of late Roman cities.

The traditional image of the collapse of cities across the West during the 4th and 5th centuries is one that, for long, conditioned interpretation of the

⁶ *Republic* IV: I [Adapted translation].

⁷ *Epistol.* I. III.1: *Quid agit Comum, tuae meaquae deliciae?*; IV, 6.

archaeological evidences. The words of Mortimer Wheeler are well known (1936, p. 28), describing life in *Verulamium* in Roman Britain during the 4th century: “the town has decayed to slum conditions and even to desolation”; or Collingwood (1936, p. 206) claimed that “the greater part of *Verulamium* was uninhabited, a waste of empty houses. Here and there squatters lived among the ruins” (cited in Sami & Speed, 2010, p. 59). For *Hispania*, much of the urban world had been engulfed in the voracity of the invasions in the 5th century – although, interestingly, due to political constraints, sometimes the destruction of urban life could be attributed to the Muslim armies in 711, whereas the Visigoths were seen by some older scholarship as the “restorers” of the Empire⁸.

One illustrative example for *Lusitania* is the city of *Conimbriga*, whose archaeological reading was long drawn from the well-known references by Hydatius to the city’s capture by Suevi in 464, during which they took hostage the wife and children of Cantaber, the local aristocrat who governed the city at that time⁹. The Suevi returned in 468, destroying houses and part of the city wall, making its citizens flee and causing desolation throughout the region¹⁰. The vision offered by the archaeologist Virgílio Correia, following his campaigns in 1930, was perfectly concordant with this paradigm, with all the excavated structures interpreted in line with Hydatius’ claims, especially when destruction deposits were encountered. This faulty image persisted even in the Portuguese-French excavations of the 1960s, as exemplified in the discussion of finds from the house of the cited Cantaber, where the mortal remains of a resident were found in the house’s main *impluvium* carrying two coins of Honorius (402-408): “It is surely proven that the attack on this house and the death of its unfortunate inhabitant” occurred in 464 (Alarcão, 1999, p. 75 [adapted translation]; the coins, however, do not fit this mid-5th century timeframe). Also we can consider the interpretation of the African terra sigillata fragments found in “couches de destruction attribuables aux attaques des Suèves”, even though these levels were disturbed, often with residual later materials (Delgado, Mayet & Alarcão, 1975, p. 288). Of course, our understanding of the archaeology and closer dating techniques has enabled a re-evaluation of the abandonment (and destruction) processes, seeing that life in *Conimbriga* could continue in some manner, thus part-explaining the establishment of the bishopric here in 561, its first bishop named as Lucentius, who attended the first Council of Braga. Despite the later loss of the bishopric

⁸ See examples in Alba, 2014b, p. 384ss, which provides a strong historiographical framework for Merida.

⁹ FHA, IX, p. 83: *Suevi Conimbricam dolose ingressam familiam nobilem Cantabri spoliant et captivam abducunt matrem cum filiis.*

¹⁰ FHA, IX, p. 97: *Conimbrica in pace decepta diripitur: domus destruuntur cum aliqua parte murorum habitatoribusque captis atque disperses et regio desolatur et civitas.* For the analysis and historical integration, see Tranoy, 1975.

to *Aeminium*, Almansor's campaigns in 986 still referred to the strong walls of *Conimbriga*, signifying their maintenance and value to a site which endured to the times of the Reconquest (De Man, 2011, p. 185, with bibliography).

In the case of *Salacia* (present-day Alcácer do Sal), however, there is an opposing example, where the presumed end of settlement activity suggested by the archaeology seems to be contradicted by literary references: the excavations point to a decay and abandonment of *Salacia* from the 2nd century, coinciding with the rise of *Caetobriga* (nowadays Setúbal), which replaced it as the main estuarine port of the River Sado, essentially due to the progressive silting of the river, which hindered access to the interior. The evidence of the ceramics, notably imports like *terra sigillata*, supports this interpretation (Faria, 2002, pp. 64-65). However, in the Muslim era, *Salacia* appears active as the gateway to *Al-Andalus*, a veritable seaport that was endowed with a powerful defensive enceinte (Coelho, 1989, pp. 53-63; Picard, 2000, pp. 194-196). Is this a case of continuity yet to be traced on the ground, perhaps a nucleation of activity that was revived only in the early Middle Ages?

4. DE-CONSTRUCTIONS

The panorama outlined above for *Lusitania* reveals several symptoms of change within its diverse urban centres (Diarte-Blasco, 2017).

Our understanding of urban dynamics is inevitably hampered by the fact that many clusters were inhabited *in continuum* or, at least, with a wide diachrony (Since Iron Age or Roman period to present days). A few major foci, of historical importance in the Roman imperial era, certainly continued to be prominent in later times, such as in the examples of *Olisipo*/Lisboa, *Ebora*/Évora, *Pax Iulia*/Beja, *Myrtilis*/Mértola and *Ossonoba*/Faro. As a result, we face two problems of analysis: on the one hand, subsequent urban dynamics create difficulties in reading the archaeological processes and sequences, whether in terms of robbing, the reuse of materials, the destruction of structures and contexts, residuality of materials, or recognizing structural forms. On the other hand, in Late Antiquity we suffer from issues of scarce archaeological evidence, and from difficulties in detecting coherently activities in the urban environment due to more ephemeral building and materials types, the landfills/removal of land or post-depositional changes, as well as ongoing uncertainty on the enigmatic "*dark earth*" so characteristic of many post-classical contexts¹¹. Furthermore, close dating of contexts is problematic in the absence of strong ceramic records, coins, texts and without access to scientifically-attained dates (via C14 especially).

¹¹ As Christie (2006, p. 262) has pointed out, the layers of *dark earth*, regardless of its varied formation and composition, should certainly indicate activity, and not abandonment – in other words, people using the intra-urban space.

In contrast, many urban centres saw no continuity and were (generally slowly) abandoned, sometimes even before the end of Roman rule. Places like *Eburobritium*, *Ammaia*, *Mirobriga*, *Baesuris* and *Balsa* faded away (and in the modern Spanish sector of the Lusitanian province, *Capera*, *Nertobriga*, *Ugultania* and *Metellinum* among others), although with likely transfers to new population nuclei that grew up close by. In the case of *Eburobritium*, change was due to the probable silting of the Óbidos Lagoon, cutting off its former direct access to the sea; the village of Óbidos, meanwhile, occupied a more defensive position. For the transfer of *Ammaia* to Marvão, insecurity may have played a part, given its location close to unstable regions along the borders in the Islamic presence. And the shift from *Balsa* to Tavira, 5 km to the north, becomes apparent during the Arab period, the late was to be transformed, in the 13th century, into one of the most important cities of the *Garb*.

However, problems remain, most notably because few of these places have seen any modern, scientific and detailed archaeological scrutiny, and so our understanding of the scale and nature of activity across the Roman centuries and the abandonment mechanisms is limited at best. In any case, the transition into late antique and post-classical phases is harder to trace in the archaeological record, since, in general, archaeologists are dealing with (often thin) stratigraphic units of accumulation, rarely indicative of structures/houses, but rather the deposition of sediment levels, from dumps, hearth debris, kitchen waste, wall collapses, and stores and pits. And we must consider also negative evidence, notably the removal of elements such as building and decorative materials, taken from their original contexts and deposited or incorporated into other buildings, sometimes haphazardly (Alba, 2014b, p. 395). We can recognize now how these problematic data long lacked visibility to archaeologists; yet it could be argued that such data can often still not appear in excavation reports. Below I summarize some of key structural and material transitions in these urban sites.

4.1. Disarticulation of the urban fabric

Too often the scale of archaeological investigation has not been large enough to adequately understand or model the changes to the built fabric and plan in these ancient and late antique urban centres. Nonetheless, sufficient evidence has been gathered to enable some vision of the disarticulation process, notably in terms of the decay of public spaces and structures and their gradual appropriation or 'colonization' by private buildings, whether houses, workshops or both.¹² From such evidence, the words of Isidore of Seville can then make

¹² Diarte-Blasco has exhaustively studied these processes; see, in particular, 2012: 253ss; 2015: 292ss.

more sense: in his *Etymologies*, streets are referred to as "the narrow spaces that exist between the houses"¹³, likely denoting an occupation process of ancient porticoes and entrance-halls, causing a less orderly, more regular or coherent layout. This phenomenon corresponds to the devolution of an old norm, legally documented by the *Tabula Heracleensis*¹⁴, requiring private management or maintenance of the streets, to be kept clean by the owners of the establishments (shops, workshops) and buildings that face onto a public space or street. In the Imperial era this requirement was supervised by the *aediles*, who would act in the event of negligence of duty by the shop- and house-owners. They would also regularly maintain the street pavements and surfaces (*refacere*). By contrast, it seems, from the archaeology at least, that in Late Antiquity these management processes saw little or no supervision, hence encroachments and limited order.

One example is in *Astigi*, where the extension to a *domus* invaded the passage of the *cardo maximus*, causing a significant reduction in the road width, already around the end of the 2nd century (García-Dils, 2015, p. 120). From the 5th century, the Church engaged also in this process: thus we see how the space for the early Christian cemetery at *Astigi* takes over more than 20 m of the city's *cardo maximus* area (García-Dils *et al.*, 2011, p. 269).

In *Lusitania* province, the best documented example is at *Augusta Emerita*, and comprised work by action of the city authorities, constructing a large building (of unknown function, but solidly built) which similarly absorbed part of the *cardo maximus* (Ayerbe, 2005, p. 116; fig. 21). This phenomenon of encroachment generally occurred in smaller streets, and has been interpreted by Miguel Alba as a process that was deemed in the best interest of all the protagonists, to the extent that the municipal authorities benefitted via the granting of licenses, while the private individuals gained added floor space and could benefit from opening up new *tabernae* spaces; this process does start in the 2nd century but peaks from the end of the 3rd century. Furthermore, porticoed spaces come to be closed off in order to build divisions that fill in the columned spaces (Alba, 2014b, p. 404). In this context, it is interesting that one of the most common changes in *Hispania* (Ruiz Bueno, 2016, p. 509) is the appropriation of road space for the construction of small baths buildings, as indeed seen in *Augusta Emerita*, where a *decumanus minor* had its width totally covered (Alba, 2001, p. 413). In *Ammaia*, excavation of the square inside the city's South Gate documented a compartmentalization (for houses/shops) of the old public space; the process is also documented in *Conimbriga* (Alarcão & Étienne, 1977, p. 145).

¹³ Isidorus, *Etymologiae* XV: II.1.

¹⁴ A bronze document found near Heracleia, in Lucania, in 1732, and containing the municipal regulations adapted from the *Lex Iulia Municipalis* (45 BC).

4.2. Spolia

Besides the growing redundancy of various old imperial public spaces and structures, fading through lack of maintenance, we find much evidence for removal of their symbolic and architectural components. This process of robbing expresses one of the most remarkable changes in the late antique period: the loss of urban *dignitas*, and the slow abandonment of the once-core central urban space, the *forum*.

The reuse of architectural and sculptural elements, such as columns, friezes, etc., is frequent in the construction of later walls, such as terraces, foundations or enclosures. One good example of this loss and dispersal is in *Pax Iulia*, where numerous epigraphic remains were recovered in the dismantling of the Roman urban city walls, thanks mainly to the careful attention of then bishop of the city, Friar Manuel do Cenáculo (1724-1814, Friar between 1770 and 1802).

However, the best-known cases, unsurprisingly, are witnessed at *Augusta Emerita*. Clear spoliation is traced in the residential area of Morería (Merida), where an well, in the context of dumped materials thrown into, contained diverse architectural elements deriving from the decorative programme of the public space within the city's colonial *forum*. This monument had been progressively plundered, with not even the paving of the square saved and during the post-Imperial moment the same changes affected also the so-called provincial *forum*, where the archaeological records register a gradual removal of ornamental elements (Alba & Mateos, 2006, pp. 356-364). In the main public buildings, the process progressed piecemeal: Miguel Alba (2004, p. 214) estimates that a first phase came around the 5th century and that, in a non-controlled way, the plunderers took the more valuable raw materials, such as marble, bronze and lead. Subsequent was the gathering up of construction elements that were large in volume and weight, which implies a management on the part of some type of authority (likely the bishop), with cranes perhaps required to extract some materials, concentrating on items such as column shafts, capitals and stone blockwork (which might see reuse in a church or monastery), and *cupae* and steles (for burial grounds). In a final phase, evidences for the taking down of other masonry elements, plus roof tiles for re-use. Throughout this process, and throughout the city, one would undoubtedly have noticed a progressive and continued movement of workers and materials, with an inevitable accumulation of detritus, discarded scaffolding and broken materials, as well as, perhaps, temporary housing and workshops. The scale of materials removed was calculated by Alba (2014b, p. 405), who estimated, merely for the reconstruction of the city wall (5th century), c. 220,000 granite blocks, to which must added many others used in the reconstruction of the Roman bridge.

4.3. Ruralization¹⁵, craft activities and storage silos

In *Hispania* the phenomenon of an ‘invasion’ of intra-urban space by small-scale productive and craft activities, which in earlier, imperial times had operated in peri-urban or suburban areas, is well known. Archaeologically, one of the best-known sites for examples of this industrial activity is again *Augusta Emerita*. However, we can also cite Évora, where excavations conducted by the Deutsche Archäologische Institut in the zone in front of the city’s main Roman temple revealed an important set of silos, probably dating from the Islamic era (Hauschild, 2010). By that date, however, all of the forum’s marble paving had already been removed as *spolia*, after which the square seems to have been turned into a storage area, possibly related to military usage under the Arabs, since it appears to have been set within the defensive wall of the citadel.

4.4. Sanitation

There are extant documents from *Hispania*, notably the famous *Lex Ursonensis* and the *Lex Irnitana*, each containing legal municipal precepts, which highlight how the sewerage network needed to be carefully overseen by municipal magistrates, notably the *duumviri*, and the maintenance work done by specific employees, such as the *stercorarii*. Warnings against the throwing and dumping of human waste on the streets are also recurrent (Vizcaino, 1999, p. 93), which tells us much about how the dictates of hygiene were not usually complied to by some residents, even in the 2nd century (Dupré & Remolà, 2002, p. 49). However, this was not necessarily a common or serious issue: thus, in *Lucus Augusti* at the beginning of the 4th century, the sewerage network benefitted from the construction of a major network of underground cesspools (González Fernández, 2011, p. 301). Nonetheless, by the mid-5th century there seems to have been a complete breakdown of the sanitation system in active cities throughout the whole of *Hispania*; the causes seem varied, from lack of maintenance to the loss of the aqueducts that supplied the urban water supply: in the case of *Augusta Emerita*, out of the four known aqueducts, two went out of use in the late 4th century, and the others failed during the 5th (Alba, 2004, pp. 224-225).

One consequence of the dumping waste on public roads was a changing or restricted traffic circulation, as well as the replacement of paved road surfaces for ones of soil/dirt cover, the so-called *viae terrariae*. Such changes are well attested, for example, in the layering of levels in a *decumanus* in *Carthago Nova*¹⁶, yet for

¹⁵ “Ruralization” is not an ideal term, but has become a conventional one. We might note that signs of presence of ‘rural’ activities in cities are very frequent, even in the earlier Roman era, as evident in examples of extensive vineyards within the walls of *Pompeii*.

¹⁶ Five levels of compacted land that were deposited between the 3rd and 5th century were documented: Vidal, Vizcaino Quevedo, 2006, especially lám. 5.

Lusitania, it is only so far registered in *Augusta Emerita*, where Alba estimated a 1.20–1.50m increase of the quota of traffic circulation (2001, p. 407-410). Limited recognition of such deposits in past/older excavations is probably one main reason for the low number of known instances of road change in later Roman times.

This information draws correspondence with data presented in imperial legislation, from which, already from the second half of the 2nd century, we see subpoenas made to compel private citizens to remove waste out of the urban centre (Ruiz Bueno, 2016, p. 539). Yet from this date, the dumps are generalized as being *in urbe* or of *loci sordentes*, reflecting the failure of those relevant officials to enforce the law (Acero, 2011, p. 180). For *Lusitania*, the scale of such waste is not known, except for some evidence in *Conimbriga* (Reis, De Man & Correia, 2011, p. 196) and in *Olisipo* (Banha, 2011, pp. 209 and 212). Otherwise, the capital, *Augusta Emerita*, again provides a useful guide, with rubbish accumulating in the area of the redundant forum, where we also see the leveling of the provincial forum's staircase, possibly in order to eliminate pestilent smells coming from the waste deposits (Acero, 2011, pp. 177-278). Of later date, an indirect testimony of the extent of the collapse of the classical public sanitation system and removal of waste in *Ebora* comes in the account of the city's pillage under Ordoño II, in 913: the state of disrepair of the town walls, partly collapsed, and the rubbish dumps that had built up outside effectively created a ramp that facilitated the entry of the Christian troops. It was in response to this that, during the Islamic reconquest of 914, the defensive curtain was partially reconfigured, now following the outline of the late antique circuit (Fernandes & Vilar, 2007).

4.5. Abandonment and privatization of classical public areas

More varied are the claimed sequences and natures of loss and change of classical public/monumental spaces in these later Roman towns; here too there are problems of archaeological interpretation, with data restricted, especially where classical monuments have been excavated and restored prior to modern techniques and approaches.

Unsurprisingly, the provincial capital demonstrates higher indicators of vitality and persistence of its classical components, reflecting its status as a seat of the *diocesis Hispaniarum*, which allowed it to retain its honorific function and, above all, to serve as a focus of residence (and participation) for an active elite with a high mobilizing capacity. The forum complexes endure, seemingly in good condition and function until the middle of the 5th century; the theatre is restored between AD 333 and 336 (Durán, 2004, pp. 126-127); and the circus likewise undergoes repairs between 337 and 340 by order of the *comes Hispaniarum*. However, in the following decades a porticoed plaza next to the colonial forum becomes partially 'privatized' with construction of a (small and private?) baths

building (Ayerbe, Barrientos & Palma, 2009, p. 803); then, after the mid-5th century, the signs of change increase: both *fora* are abandoned and begin to suffer a process of *spoliation*, while there is loss and ruination in the entertainment structures (see Alba, 2014b), although the circus seemingly remained in use until the 6th century despite elements of decay. Houses start to be built in those spaces, exploiting walls and structures that are often partitioned up, with residential units usually of small dimensions (c. 20-40 m²). Meanwhile, open spaces are found in common areas, perhaps enclosing cattle or offering (communal?) cultivation space (Alba, 2004, p. 236), reinforcing the image of a growing "ruralization" of the city.

Elsewhere in the province, the data are almost nil, with just two examples: although we lack evidence to help understand the sequence of abandonment of public spaces in *Olisipo*, the arcades of the *vomitoria* came to be divided up and used as domestic spaces (Diogo, 1993, pp. 222-224), matching changes in *Conimbriga*.

4.6. Religious ventures

Key in the transition to Late Antiquity was the progressive transferal of towns from a *classical topography* into a fabric in which Christian authority and experience were imposed and expressed in monuments, burial and cultural display¹⁷.

The earliest Christian presence in our towns is silent in terms of physical form, even if documents such as the famous epistle of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, addressed to the Bishops of Mérida and León-Astorga in 254, show 'hidden' communities emerging. But from the 5th century especially we witness the growing authority of the *episcopus*, visible in structural form in town centres and suburbs; the bishops could be in place many years, even decades, enabling lasting impacts; their influence also extended to intervening in the election and appointment of municipal magistrates, whose status and role dwindled (Slootjes, 2006, pp. 222f). As a result, we see local elites looking increasingly to enter the ecclesiastical hierarchy (Curchin, 2014, pp. 284-290). While in the 4th century bishops perhaps struggled to ban pagan spectacles and popular participation in the *ludi*, their actions were much more effective in transforming the urban skyline, through condemning (with support from imperial legislation) pagan rituals and festivals¹⁸ and seeking the closure of temples and the removal of

¹⁷ Recent research begins to shade the importance of Christian action in the urban modifications of Late Antiquity: "un elemento di gran rilievo, ma non determinante nel decidere i destini della città" (Brogiolo, 2011, p. 109).

¹⁸ *Codex Theodosianus* XVI, with several measures proclaimed between AD 341 and 407.

statues and ornaments (Lavan, 2011, p. 35) – a process widely felt across the 5th century (Caseau, 2001, pp. 102, 119-122).

However, in *Hispania*, the province of *Lusitania* has a noticeably more dispersed *ratio* of bishoprics by area, indicating a more diffuse influence of the Church (see Bowes, 2005, pp. 235-237). But archaeology does help show the growing development of church structures, typically extending from the urban periphery to the centre of the *urbs*, taking its time to gain centrality. The initial suburban emphasis links to the cult of martyrs, which begins in the middle of the 3rd century. Early examples are evident at *Augusta Emerita*, with three inscriptions dated from the end of the 4th century, and construction of the probable basilical *martyrium* of Santa Eulalia, which would trigger the creation of a Christian necropolis and the building known as the *Xenodochium* – although with a controversial interpretation (for a global reading of the provincial capital's changing topography, see Alba, 2014a).

Only later, with imperial evergetism and the stronger entrepreneurial power of the Church, can we see in *Hispania* the construction of the *ecclesia cathedralis*, the baptistery and residences for the bishop and his staff (Arbeiter, 2010). Such episcopal complexes are not, however, yet documented in *Lusitania*. For *Hispania* this process is very diverse, and a common standard does not exist because these buildings can be situated either in an intra-urban area but not central, such as near the city walls or a gate, or it can be central and close to the old forum area, or else it can be erected in a suburban area (Cantino, 2003, p. 243). Furthermore, as Arbeiter states, "previsiblemente, en la gran mayoría de los casos, la cúpula eclesiástica, durante el s. IV, se conformaba con edificaciones de limitada envergadura y vistosidad, incluso con estructuras preconstantinianas heredadas" (2010, p. 430).

Although evidence is uncertain or fragmentary in most urban clusters of *Lusitania*, finds in *Myrtilis* – modern Mértola, a site famous especially for its Islamic past and heritage – are significant, with traces of two baptisteries in the Acropolis area, probably set close to a large basilica building, sited next to the porticoed gallery of the cryptoporticus. On the city's outskirts, on a lower area, are two other basilicas, of evident suburban character; the epigraphic record of the second, taken from several dozens of graves, reveals the existence of a complex hierarchy of functions¹⁹. The oddity lies in the fact that *Myrtilis* was small as a centre and was not a *cathedra* to any known bishop. Why, then, its early Christian imprint is so prominent – comparable only to *Augusta Emerita* – remains a mystery at present.

¹⁹ For the Christian topography of Mértola, see LOPES, 2014; for its Christian epigraphic record, see Torres & Dias, 1993.

At *Emerita* there is striking growth around the martyrial complex of Santa Eulalia throughout the 5th and 6th century in the form of a necropolis which seems reserved for the highest members of the city's Church. We can highlight the epitaph of the presbyter *Heleuterius* (604), who established a *monasterium* and a monastic school, as well as the monumentalization process of the crypt of Santa Eulalia, which is described in the text of the *Vitae Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium*, giving indications of the wider entrepreneurial actions and building promotions of a lineage of bishops. So far, this creation of complexes around martyrial spaces finds no parallels in other urban seats in *Lusitania* and yet is well attested elsewhere in *Hispania*, notably *Tarraco*, *Barcino* and *Valentia*.

Meanwhile, we can observe a situation in which the ancient foci of *Augusta Emerita* and *Ebora* were, between the late 6th century and early 7th, losing influence to emergent centres of political power, which were also the main episcopal headquarters – *Toletum* and *Pax Iulia* (see Carneiro & Teixeira, this volume).

Finally, in the Baixo Alentejo region, another interesting phenomenon can be documented: less than 10km distant from each other, two graffiti were found imprinted on *dolia*. That at Monte da Salsa (Serpa), the location of one of the most notable *villae* in the region of Beja, has this wording: *ECLESIAE ESCE MARIE LACALTENSI AGRIP*²⁰ (Almeida, 1962, fig. 301), which closely resembles the text found at the Herdade de São Cristovão, next to the urban cluster of Moura: *ECLESIE SANCTE MARIE LACALTENSI AGRIP*I (Canto, 1997, figs. 111, 112). These two texts seemingly document a direct link between a farm/*villa* and an urban working/processing centre; logically we can assume that ownership was the same – of sites, materials and products. The two graffiti can be dated to the 6th century, and must be referring to the production of olive oil and to the control of this industry (and its presumed trading) by the local church. We must recall that the Church generally became a major landowner from the 4th century and took on the role of benefactor and welfare provider that had once been the State's responsibilities; thus its oversight of productive and economic concerns is a logical one and gives recognition of additional income that came to the Church and its officials.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The urban phenomenon in *Lusitania* is a long way from being understood as something cohesive and/or homogeneous. The end of the Western Roman

²⁰ The news of its discovery is given by Abel Viana, who mentions that "these pots were buried 1.70m or 1.80m deep" in a room shaped like a "long rectangle with a semi-circular apse" (Viana, 1955, pp. 4-5) – interesting information, but not sufficient to clarify the function of the space. Unfortunately, no excavations were made in extension, both in Monte da Salsa and the urban area in Moura, to allow us to understand what kind of sites could have existed.

Empire brought profound changes here, which, in some cases, greatly altered the face of the cities, but allowed some – the most central and/or those at the head of economically stronger territories – to continue to survive, evolve and even to gain new centralities, including in the Christian frame and, later, in the Islamic. For other sites, however, the 5th century marked a stage of struggle, of atrophy or even of extinction, with some populations seeking or forced to seek new homes. Yet none of this should be understood in a linear way because, in reality, the processes of urban change, redefinition and even loss were underway already since the 2nd century in many places²¹. More broadly in *Hispania*, we can recognise increasing difficulties in the management of urban life, with the ability to build to emulate distant Rome falling away²². The progressive atrophy of some of these centres helped to generate open, but also cultivated spaces within the old urban space; though this *ruralization* can be regarded as a mark of continuity of people and place.

Besides those cities falling into decay, we can see in several regions the symptoms of communities that had never truly urbanized. Here, early on, many people had been installed in, or transferred into new urban foundations, in search of the classical *modus vivendi*. But, perhaps like an outfit that is far too large for us to wear, there was always some ‘lack of fit’. The growth of large *villae* is not unique to late Roman *Lusitania*, but it appears more evident in those regions where the urban fabric had never been strong and consistent. If Roman rule in the West had always been a “federation of regions” (Brown, 2012, chap. 24), now the local alliances, the strong basis of identity connections re-emerge again in the scenario where they can best flourish.

Overall, our picture of *Lusitania* in Late Antiquity is becoming clearer, but many aspects remain hazy, with only patchy or fragmentary evidence. We certainly lack in-depth analyses, sufficient urban archaeologies as well as comparative readings, which all make understanding of the scale of the changes and of the processes problematic, but more and more we are able to observe a variety of shifts and reactions. Above all, we can state that change and transformation were not a single, sudden and destructive process prompted by external forces (i.e. “*barbarian incursions*”), but rather these resulted from ongoing dynamics active since the 2nd century.

²¹ As Javier Andreu Pintado points out (2017, pp. 347-349), the problem is not the human presence, but the decay in daily life and in the administrative frame, marking the start of the process of *civitas intermortua* or *oppida labentia* that defines some urban centres in peripheral areas. He lists some possible explanations from p. 364f.

²² *propter amplitudinem maiestatemque populi Romani, cuius istae coloniae quasi effigies parvae simulacraque esse quaedam videntur*, in the words by Aulus Gellius (NA XVI.13.9), albeit referring to *coloniae*.

Significantly, the metal tablets containing the *lex Irnitana* were found inside a dwelling interpreted as a blacksmith's workshop (Fernández Gómez & Del Amo, 1990): based on this find and context alone, already from the 3rd century, the norms enumerated in the *lex* had ceased to make sense.

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PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGE
IN LATE ANTIQUE HISPANIA:
EXPLORING THE WRITTEN SOURCES

(Página deixada propositadamente em branco)

TRANSFORMACIONES INSTITUCIONALES Y LIDERAZGO CÍVICO EN LA HISPANIA POST-IMPERIAL¹

Institutional Change and Civic Leadership in Post-Imperial Hispania

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ABSTRACT: This article discusses the evolution of local government in the aftermath of the Roman empire and throughout the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo. According to current scholarly interpretations, the demise of curial government led to the rule by bishops and counts of the cities, who represented the local community and the king. This article suggests that local, civic government constituted a third actor in the institutional life of cities. Traces of this government appear in references to office holders such as the *defensor civitatis* and tax collectors, and even in informal assemblies of notables, which evolved from the late imperial government by notables. The monarchy itself encouraged this tripartite organization as an *as ti* were system of check and balances, to prevent one institutional actor to prevail over the others.

KEYWORDS: Local government – *Defensor Civitatis* – *Numerarius* – Urban assemblies

En el año 654, el rey Recesvinto (r. 653-672) proclamó un nuevo código de leyes para el reino visigodo, probablemente la primera recensión del *Liber*

¹ Abreviaciones: BA [= *Breviarium Alarici*]: HAENEL, Gustav (1849). *Lex Romana Visigothorum*. Leipzig: Teubner. Chon. [= *Hydatii Episcopi Chronicon*]: BURGESS, R.W. (1993). *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana*. Oxford, Clarendon Press. CJ [= *Codex Justinianus*]: FRIER, Bruce W; CONNOLLY, Serena; CORCORAN, Simon; CRAWFORD, Michael, DILLON, John Noël; KEHOE, Dennis P, LENSKE, Noel, MCGINN, Thomas A. J., PAZDERNIK, Charles F; SALWAY, Benet (2016) – *The Codex of Justinian*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Col. Hisp. [= *Collectio Hispana*]: MARTÍNEZ DÍEZ, Gonzalo; RODRÍGUEZ, Félix (1966–2002) – *La colección canónica Hispana*, 6 vol. Madrid: CSIC; CTh [= *Codex Theodosianus*]: MOMMSEN, Theodor; MEYER, Paulus (1905) – *Theodosiani Libri XVI: Cum constivtionibus Sirmondianis et leges novellae ad Theodosianum pertinentes*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung; FW [= *Formulae Wisigothicae*]: GIL, Juan (1972). *Miscellanea Wisigothica*. Sevilla: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, pp. 70–112; LV: ZEUMER, Karl (1902) – *Leges Visigothorum*. Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Leges, vol. 1. Hanover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani; Orig. [= *Origines*]: LINDSAY, Wallace M. (1911) – *Isidori Hispalensis episcopi Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press. VPE: MAYA SÁNCHEZ, Antonio (1992) – *Vitas sanctorum patrum Emeretensium*. Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 116. Turnhout: Brepols; VSE [= *Vita Sancti Aemiliani*]: OROZ, José (1978) – *Vita Sancti Aemiliani. Hymnus in festo sancti Aemiliani Abbatis*. *Perficit* 9 (119-120), pp. 165-227.

Iudiciorum, una obra comentada por su padre Chindasvinto (King, 1980; cf. Deswarte, pp. 64-65). En él, Recesvinto no sólo simplificó la legislación existente sino también proveyó normas orientadoras para la aplicación de dicha compilación (Martin, 2011, pp. 19-23). A cargo de la aplicación de las leyes se encontraba el *iudex* (“juez” en traducciones modernas), un título que probablemente englobaba varias magistraturas y oficios reales en la legislación previa (King, 1972, pp. 79-84). Recesvinto consideró necesario incluir una ley que aclarara qué se debería entender por “*iudex*” a lo largo del *Liber: duces, comites civitatis*, sus representantes (*vicarii*), *pacis adsertores*, *thiufadi*, *quingentenarii*, *centenarii*, *defensores*, *numerarii* y cualquier otra persona que por mandato real o acuerdo de las partes fuesen elegidos para resolver una disputa legal. El propósito último de esta ley era el de someter a los *iudices* a los beneficios y responsabilidades asignados a dicho oficio en el código.² De este modo, la ley ordenaba los títulos con criterio funcional: oficio real civil (*dux*, *comes civitatis*, *vicarius* y *pacis adsertor*), cargos militares (*thiufadus*, *quingentenarii*, *centenarii*) y oficios cívicos (*defensor* y *numerarius*).³ Cabe destacar también que la norma no incluyó a los obispos, aunque la legislación tardoimperial otorgaba a los líderes cristianos la posibilidad de decidir sobre ciertos conflictos (Cimma, 1989; Lamoreaux, 1995; para la Hispania post-imperial, Petit, 1986). La ley de Recesvinto permitía, sin embargo, que otras personas actuaran como *iudices*, si la monarquía o las partes así lo decidían. Por lo tanto, los obispos quedaban potencialmente incluidos dentro de la norma, aunque no *ex officio* (cf. IV Toledo 31 (Col. Hisp. 5, p. 219).

La diversidad de cargos judiciales contrasta en cierta medida con el marco historiográfico según el cual la administración de las ciudades post-imperiales fue monopolizada por el *comes civitatis* y el obispo, representantes del poder real y de la comunidad local respectivamente. Los funcionarios reales a cargo de hacer cumplir los mandatos que emanaban de la corte administrarían la justicia local, mientras que las comunidades, representadas por sus obispos, adoptarían, negociarían o resistirían las disposiciones de la monarquía. Este modelo se explica en gran medida por la naturaleza de las fuentes disponibles, como ser las actas

² Quoniam negotiorum remedia multimode diversitatis compendio gaudent, adeo dux, comes, vicarius, pacis adsertor, thiufadus, millenarius, quingentenarius, centenarius, defensor, numerarius, vel qui ex regia iussione aut etiam ex consensu partium iudices in negotiis eliguntur, sive cuiuscumque ordinis omnino persona, cui debite iudicare conceditur, ita omnes, in quantum iudicandi potestatem acceperint, iudicis nomine censeatur ex lege; ut, sicut iudicii acceperint iura, ita et legum sustineant sive commoda, sive damna (LV 2.1.27).

³ Las funciones del *dux* en fuentes visigodas suelen presentarse como de carácter militar y/o político (Martin, 2003, pp. 167-175). El *thiufadus*, cargo de origen militar en los siglos V y VI era hacia mediados del siglo VII un oficio civil, que incluía competencias judiciales menores (Martin, 2003, pp. 154-155). Cf. XIII Toledo, *decretum*: dux, comes, thiufadus, numerarius, vilicus aut quicumque curam publicam ages (Coll. Hisp. VI, p. 269).

conciliares, la legislación real o los relatos hagiográficos. Por el contrario, son escasos los documentos sobre otras formas de administración, representación y participación, que sólo podemos reconstruirlas a través de testimonios indirectos y ecos apenas sonoros en fuentes reales o episcopales.

En este capítulo, quisiera explorar la posibilidad de que las transformaciones institucionales de la ciudad tardoantigua no resultaran en una dominación completa del liderazgo cívico por parte del obispo. Las fuentes episcopales resaltan dicho liderazgo, pero sería más adecuado leerlas en el contexto de disputas sobre distintos estilos de autoridad y marcos institucionales a nivel local más que como una prueba concluyente del rol obispo. En el reino visigodo, oficiales cívicos y asambleas de notables podían actuar como contrapeso al poder de los actores reales y episcopales en las comunidades cívicas. Estos oficiales y asambleas cumplían roles vitales para el funcionamiento institucional de las *civitates* del reino, aunque la silenciosa supervisión del gobierno urbano haya dejado pocos rastros en las grandilocuentes proclamas de la legislación real y cánones eclesiásticos. Sin embargo, funcionarios cívicos se abocaron a las minucias de la administración cotidiana y garantizaron la dominación política al nivel local. Sus tareas se plasmaron en tareas como la recolección de impuestos, resolución de disputas judiciales y mantenimiento de registros públicos. La monarquía visigoda se apoyó en instituciones urbanas heredadas de época tardorromana, ya que el liderazgo cívico urbano representó un contrapeso frente al poder de los funcionarios reales y autoridades eclesiásticas. El presente capítulo propondrá un modelo de administración urbana que incluye a las instituciones cívicas como un tercer conjunto de actores políticos de igual importancia (al menos teórica) respecto a los poderes comitales y episcopales en el reino visigodo.

1. OFICIALES CÍVICOS Y GOBIERNO URBANO

Reconstruir la evolución institucional de la ciudad tardorromana en el período visigodo no es una tarea sencilla debido a la escasa evidencia sobre magistraturas y cargos políticos. El ejemplo de los *curiales*, el orden social en la base de la administración cívica tardorromana, ilustra no sólo los cambios y pervivencias institucionales, sino también la naturaleza de las fuentes. Para comenzar, las funciones de los *curiales* no son del todo claras en las fuentes posteriores al siglo V, lo que dificulta establecer sus características jurídicas y políticas. Nuestra fuente principal es el *Breviario de Alarico*, cuya compilación finalizó a principios del siglo VI (Dumézil, 2008, pp. 75-84). En base a la información que provee dicho código es posible afirmar que los decuriones post-imperiales mantenían, entre otras obligaciones, funciones notariales (BA 3.17.1, 4.4.4, 5.1.2, 8.5.1, 9.32.2 y 12.1.8; cf. FW 21 y 25) y relacionadas con el sistema de transporte, tal y como lo habían hecho sus predecesores durante el imperio tardío (BA 8.2.1; LV 5.4.19). No está claro cómo se determinaba el estatus curial,

aunque probablemente continuara siendo de carácter hereditario (Nov. Maj. 7, preservada en el *Breviario* como Nov. Maj. 1). Esto supondría, en el largo plazo, una reducción de la *curia* por cuestiones demográficas en ciertas ciudades, lo cual se ve reflejado de manera indirecta en la legislación sobre el reclutamiento de nuevos *curiales* (BA 12.1.3; BA 12.2.2; cf. BA 12.1.6-7). Sin embargo, las fuentes visigodas posteriores no recogen testimonios directos de asambleas de *curiales*, sino referencias a decuriones como individuos sin contexto institucional (Curchin, 2018). Sólo una ley del *Liber Iudiciorum* menciona *curiales*, ley que parece resumir la poca legislación vigente en la década del 640 respecto a la relación entre propiedad y cargas impositivas (LV 5.4.19).

En cuanto a las magistraturas cívicas, es posible rastrear los orígenes de los dos oficiales urbanos mencionados en la ley de Recesvinto, *defensor* y el *numerarius*, a época tardorromana. El *defensor civitatis*, un oficio con raíces en época constantiniana, era el magistrado urbano más importante hacia finales del siglo IV (Frakes, 2001, pp. 15-85). Durante el reinado de Teodosio I y sus sucesores inmediatos, dicho magistrado acumuló importantes funciones, como la resolución de disputas que no requerían la intervención del gobernador y la recolección de impuestos de pequeños propietarios (CTh 8.5.59, 11.7.12, 12.19.3 y 16.10.12-13; Frakes, 2001, pp. 129-164). No es de extrañar que, en 418, Severus de Menorca hiciera referencia al defensorado de dos ciudadanos de Mahon, Theodorus y Caecilianus, como muestra del gran prestigio de dichos personajes frente a su comunidad (Epistula Severi 6.3 y 19.6, en Bradbury, 1996). La importancia del *defensor civitatis* habría incluso causado la disrupción del monopolio del patronazgo cívico de los notables locales, con importantes consecuencias institucionales (Schmidt-Hofner, 2014, pp. 498-511).

La evolución del defensorado en el siglo V resulta más difícil de rastrear. En el año 458, el emperador Mayoriano promulgó una constitución (Nov. Maj. 3) en la que ordenaba a las comunidades locales que nombrasen *defensores*, quienes mantendrían al menos algunas de las funciones de sus predecesores del siglo IV, como ser la protección de contribuyentes frente a las excesivas demandas de las autoridades imperiales (Oppedisano, 2011). Sólo tres leyes del título del *Código Teodosiano* sobre el *defensor civitatis* (CTh 1.29) fueron incluidas en el *Breviario de Alarico* (CTh 1.29.6, 1.29.7 y 1.29.8 (= BA 1.10.1, 1.10.2 y 1.10.3); otras menciones en BA 2.1.8, 3.19, 4, 8.2.1 y 12.1.4 (= CTh 2.1.8, 3.30.6, 8.5.59 y 12.1.20)). La razón por la cual los compiladores alaricanos decidieron mantener dichas leyes debe buscarse en las *interpretationes*, producto del ambiente legal en el que se realizó la síntesis legislativa (Matthews, 2001). Los comentaristas del *Breviario* establecieron que el *defensor* debía ser elegido con el acuerdo de la comunidad y no por nombramiento externo (BA 1.10.1), que estaba a cargo de proteger a la comunidad bajo su cuidado (BA 1.10.2) y que le correspondía evitar que el patronazgo de los poderosos impidiera el ejercicio de la justicia (BA 1.10.3). El *Breviario* también incluyó una ley de Honorio, en la que se menciona

al *defensor* en la *interpretatio*, aunque no así en la ley original (CTh 2.1.8.). Según la explicación, la norma honoriana establecía que los crímenes menores no debían ser enviados al gobernador provincial para su resolución, sino que debían ser resueltos por el *defensor* o el *pacis adsertor* a nivel local. Los delitos menores a los que refería la norma incluían la fuga de esclavos (o disputas propietarias sobre un esclavo que se presumía fugitivo), robo y conflictos sobre la propiedad de casas y tierras.⁴ Pese a que estas disputas son descritas como menores (*parva crimina*), se tratan de cuestiones que afectarían a las clases propietarias, tanto grandes como pequeños propietarios.

Junto con el *defensor*, el *numerarius* ocupó funciones importantes dentro de la vida de las ciudades post-imperiales. A diferencia del *defensor*, sin embargo, los orígenes tardorromanos del *numerarius* municipal son menos claros. En el imperio tardío, los *numerarii* eran oficiales con funciones fiscales y contables en varias áreas de la administración (provincia, prefectura y ejército) (Jones, 1964, pp. 450, 589-592 y 597-599). El *Breviario de Alarico* sólo transmite una ley en la que se mencionan a los *numerarii*, en este caso funcionarios fiscales al servicio de gobernadores (BA 8.8.1). En cuanto a los recaudadores municipales, el *Breviario* preserva una ley de 386 en la que se indica que la elección de los *exactores* y *susceptores* corresponde a la *curia* (BA 12.2.1). Es posible que en algún momento del siglo VI, dichos oficiales pasaron a ser llamados *numerarii*, aunque no resulta posible afirmarlo con certeza.

Las fuentes de época post-alaricana ofrecen descripciones distintas y a veces contradictorias del *numerarius*. Por ejemplo, la epístola *De Fisco Barcinonensi* (592) indica que los *numerarii* eran oficiales nombrados por la administración real (*comes patrimonii*) en línea tal vez con los funcionarios imperiales tardorromanos (Vives, 1963, 54). Las actas del decimosexto concilio de Toledo (687) mencionan a un *numerarius* de Mérida nombrado por el rey Wamba a pedido del obispo de esa ciudad (XVI Toledo, Lex edita in confirmatione concilii, en Vives, 1963, pp. 517-518). Esta última descripción parecería corroborar una ley de Recaredo discutida en la siguiente sección, en la cual se indica que el *numerarius* es electo por el obispo, o por el obispo y el pueblo (LV 12.1.2). Finalmente, el rol del *numerarius* y el *defensor* en época visigoda es también confirmado por Isidoro de Sevilla. En el pasaje de las *Etimologías* donde discute los distintos tipos de ciudadanos (9.4), Isidoro menciona que los antiguos romanos poseían tribunos

⁴ Interpretatio: Quoties de parvis criminibus, it est, unius servi fuga, aut sublatis iumentis, aut modicae terrae, seu domus invasae, vel certi furti, id est, detenti aut praeventi, sub criminis nomine actio fortasse processerit, ad mediocres iudices, qui publicam disciplinam observant, it est, aut defensores aut assertores pacis, vindictam eius rei decernimus pertinere. Ad rectorem vero provinciae illud negotium criminale perveniat, ubi de personarum inscriptione agitur, vel maior est, quae non nisi ab ordinario iudice, recitata legis sententia debeat terminari [...] (BA 2.1.8.).

de la plebe para defenderse de los abusos de la *nobilitas*. Por esta razón, Isidoro agrega, los magistrados también eran llamados *defensores*, puesto que defendían al pueblo común (*plebs*) confiado a ellos contra la arrogancia de los malvados.⁵ Isidoro añade a continuación que los *numerarii* son aquellos que entregan los fondos (*nummus*) públicos al Tesoro.⁶ Por lo tanto, la evidencia del siglo VI y VII no ofrece una única posibilidad en términos de la esfera y nombramiento del *numerarius* y hasta es posible sostener que estamos en presencia de varios tipos de funcionarios (reales y cívicos) con funciones contables y fiscales (Cf. García Moreno, 1974, pp. 35-54).

En suma, los oficios cívicos mencionados en la ley de Recesvinto tenían sus raíces en época tardorromana, pero con cambios relativamente significativos. Hacia el siglo VI, el defensorado continuaba siendo una institución urbana de importancia, aunque su esfera se habría reducido en relación con el todopoderoso *defensor civitatis* de época teodosiana. Algunas de las antiguas funciones del *defensor civitatis* se distribuyeron entre el *comes civitatis* (alta justicia), el *numerarius* (recolección de impuestos de ciertos contribuyentes) y, como veremos a continuación, el obispo (denuncia ante la autoridad central). No está claro cuándo tuvo lugar esta fragmentación. Quizás no haya existido un momento de cambio preciso, sino una serie de transformaciones imperceptibles en lo inmediato que culminarían con la sanción legal de nuevos roles. Lo cierto es que, hacia finales del siglo VI, la evolución de la administración local habría derivado en una forma de gobierno con esferas formales e informales de poder divididas entre los representantes reales, el episcopado y los magistrados locales.

2. UN MODELO TRIPARTITO DE ÉPOCA VISIGODA

Una ley del reinado de Recaredo (r. 586/7-601), incluida en las dos recensiones del *Liber Iudiciorum*, nos permite reconstruir el modelo de administración urbana tal y cual lo concebía la monarquía visigoda hacia finales del siglo VI. Tal reconstrucción, sin embargo, sólo puede ser parcial ya que dicha ley, LV 12.1.2, tenía como finalidad controlar los abusos de autoridades y funcionarios nombradas por el rey más que regular el gobierno municipal en las ciudades visigodas. La norma fue probablemente promulgada como respuesta a varias cuestiones relacionadas con la administración del reino, entre ellas las quejas

⁵ Tribuni dicti quod plebi vel iura vel opem tribuunt. Constituti sunt autem sexto anno post reges exactos. Dum enim plebs a senatu et consulibus premeretur, tunc ipsa sibi tribunos quasi proprios iudices et defensores creavit, qui eorum libertatem tuerentur, et eos adversus iniuriam nobilitatis defenderent. Unde et defensores dicti, eo quod plebem sibi commissam contra insolentiam inproborum defendant (Orig. 9.4.18).

⁶ Numerarii vocati sunt, quia publicum nummum aerariis inferunt (Orig. 9.4.19).

de contribuyentes al fisco por demandas presumiblemente ilegales por parte de oficiales de la monarquía.

La ley comienza con una admonición en la que se recuerda a los *comites*, sus representantes y los administradores de propiedades reales que el rey se encargaba del mantenimiento de los *iudices* que él mismo nombraba y, en consecuencia, estos no debían agobiar a los habitantes rurales y urbanos con impuestos, tributos en especie o trabajos y servicios compulsivos para beneficio personal.⁷ A continuación, el texto indica que, mientras Recaredo reunía información de los administradores provinciales, se enteró de que *numerarii* y *defensores* eran reemplazados luego de un año, lo cual resultaba en perjuicios para la comunidad local. En consecuencia, la ley ordenaba que tanto *numerarii* como *defensores*, quienes debían ser elegidos por el obispo y el pueblo, completasen el mandato confiado a ellos.⁸ Si bien desconocemos la duración en los cargos de dichos magistrados, tal vez aún regía la práctica tardoimperial de mandatos de cinco años para los *defensores* (CJ 1.55.4; Frankes, 2001, pp. 132-133). La evidencia de los *numerarii* imperiales del siglo IV también sugiere una duración de cinco años en sus cargos, aunque los funcionarios cívicos relacionados con el área tributaria tenían una duración menor.⁹

En cualquier caso, la ley presupone que las instituciones municipales no funcionaban adecuadamente y el rey buscaba remediar tal inconveniente. La ley especifica que el *numerarius* y el *defensor* no debían otorgar una recompensa a ningún *iudex* ni estos debían aceptar o demandar cosa alguna de los oficiales cívicos bajo pena de ser privado de su nombramiento y pagar diez libras de oro al fisco como pena.¹⁰ Recaredo parece sugerir que no se trataba tan sólo de evitar la intervención de oficiales reales en los nombramientos cívicos, sino también que notables locales accedieran a los cargos de *numerarius* y *defensor* a través de la venalidad. Esta preocupación no era una novedad en la legislación visigoda. En el *Breviario de Alarico* se encuentran disposiciones similares contra la obtención

⁷ [I]ubemus, ut nullis indictionibus, exactionibus, operibus vel angariis comes, vicarius vel vilicus pro suis utilitatibus populos adgravare presumat nec de civitate vel de territorio annonam accipiant; quia nostra recordatur clementia, quod, dum iudices ordinamus, nostra largitate eis compendia ministramus (LV 12.1.2). Cf. BA 11.6.1.

⁸ Et quia, dum regali cura actores nostrarum perquireremus provinciarum, conperimus, quod numerarii vel defensores annua vice mutantur, qua de causa detrimentum nostris non ambigimus populis evenire, ideoque iubemus, ut numerarius vel defensor, qui electus ab episcopis vel populis fuerit, commissum peragat officium (LV 12.1.2). Cf. BA 12.2.2, según la cual los *exactores* debían ser reemplazados luego de un año.

⁹ Sobre *numerarii* en el siglo IV, véase CTh 8.1.8. En 433, su nombramiento se redujo a tres años, renovable por otros tres años (CTh 8.1.17). En el ámbito cívico, los recaudadores de impuestos (*exactores* y *susceptores*) debían durar un año, prorrogable a dos, según una ley de 386 (CTh 12.6.22) recogida en el *Breviario de Alarico* (BA 12.2.2).

¹⁰ Quod si quis iudicum hanc nostram transcenderit constitutionem, honore privatus decem libras auri fisco nostro coactus exolvat (LV 12.1.2).

de cargos públicos mediante patronazgo y corrupción, aunque esta regulación castigaba al comprador del cargo antes que al oficial que aceptaba el soborno (por ejemplo, BA 1.10.1 y 12.1.4). Es posible incluso pensar que la norma de Recaredo vino a suplementar las regulaciones del *Breviario* en este ámbito.

Por último, la ley de Recaredo exhorta a los obispos a fin de que denuncien a los funcionarios reales y, presumiblemente, la colusión entre oficiales reales y cívicos. Si los obispos, el rey advierte, se enterasen de algún comportamiento ilegal de los *iudices* y administradores y no lo reportasen al rey, deberán entonces ser juzgados por un concilio (presumiblemente eclesiástico) y devolver las pérdidas materiales que su silencio hubiere ocasionado a los pobres (*pauperes*).¹¹ El rol que Recaredo asigna al episcopado es, por lo tanto, distinto al de los oficiales cívicos y reales. La ley asume que los obispos eran supervisores de la aplicación de las normas que regulaban la vida política y judicial de las comunidades locales (Koon & Wood, 2008, pp. 801-803). Este rol de protector del pueblo e intermediario directo entre la comunidad y el rey para denunciar abusos de oficiales reales se reitera en las actas del cuarto concilio de Toledo (633). En su canon 32, se recuerda que los obispos deben proteger a los pobres frente a las posibles arbitrariedades oficiales reales y los poderosos reportándolos al rey si fuera necesario—en sintonía con el lenguaje legal tardorromano sobre el rol del *defensor civitatis*.¹²

La legislación de Recaredo parecería delinear una suerte de sistema de controles y equilibrios entre tres grupos distintos de oficiales: reales, eclesiásticos y cívicos. Los funcionarios reales administraban la justicia del rey y no debían intervenir en la elección y el nombramiento de oficiales cívicos. Estos últimos estaban a cargo de asuntos menos grandiosos que la justicia real, pero no por ello menos relevantes para el funcionamiento del reino, si las normas de época alaricana aún regían. Dichas normas asegurarían a los pequeños propietarios y habitantes locales acceso a mecanismos judiciales por fuera de un proceso oneroso ante un oficial real. Al mismo tiempo, los obispos intervenían en la elección de oficiales cívicos (o al menos en la elección del *numerarius*) y tenían la responsabilidad de denunciar injusticias cometidas por los oficiales reales y los magistrados locales.

¹¹ Sacerdotes vero, quos divina obtestatione conmonemus, si excessus iudicum aut actorum scierint et ad nostram non retulerint agnitionem, noverint se concilii iudicio esse plectendos, et detrimenta, que pauperes eorum silentio pertulerint, ex eorum rebus illis esse restituenda (LV 12.1.2).

¹² Episcopi in protegendis populis ac defendendis impositam a Deo sibi curam non ambigant, ideoque dum conspiciunt iudices ac potentes pauperum oppressores existere, prius eos sacerdotali admonitione redarguant, et si contempserint emendari, eorum insolentiam regiis auribus intiment ut quos sacerdotalis admonitio non flectet ad iustitiam, regalis potestas ab improbitate coerceat (Col. Hisp. 5, pp. 219-20).

Cabe destacar que la ley de Recaredo expresa las aspiraciones de la monarquía y no necesariamente una descripción fotográfica del funcionamiento institucional urbano. Cada uno de los tres tipos de actores políticos pondría límites a las ambiciones y acumulación excesiva de poder por parte de otros dos grupos. Sin embargo, no sabemos, por ejemplo, si toda *civitas* disponía de un obispo, un *comes civitatis*, un *defensor* y un *numerarius* permanentemente.¹³ Del mismo modo, una distinción rigurosa entre los tres actores institucionales difícilmente da cuenta de las relaciones familiares y sociales que unían a los miembros de las élites sociopolíticas del reino (Wood, 2019, pp. 240-243). Sin embargo, más allá de la solidaridad de clase, las relaciones entre los tres tipos de actores institucionales podían ser conflictivas en contextos de luchas faccionales. La ley pone el foco sobre los conflictos entre los oficiales reales y autoridades cívicas y en la complicidad entre los funcionarios de la monarquía y los miembros de las élites locales, aunque poco dice sobre las posibles tensiones entre el episcopado y los funcionarios cívicos. Sin embargo, la relación entre obispos y líderes cívicos se caracterizó en ocasiones por el conflicto sobre la ascendencia local ya que el monopolio político por parte del episcopado fue más una aspiración eclesiástica que una realidad política. Antes de abocarnos a este último punto, conviene repasar el significado del oficio cívico en el contexto político de las ciudades visigodas.

4. GOBIERNO CÍVICO Y ASAMBLEAS DE NOTABLES

La ley de Recaredo a la que se hizo referencia anteriormente (LV 12.1.2) menciona que el *defensor* y el *numerarius* eran elegidos por la comunidad local (*populus*) y el obispo. Otra lectura posible del texto indicaría que el *defensor* era elegido por el *populus* y el *numerarius* por el obispo. En cualquier caso, la participación de un grupo de personas de origen local sería necesaria para el normal funcionamiento de las instituciones cívicas. Una asamblea de base urbana estaría a cargo, entre otras tareas, de la elección del *defensor* (y quizás también del *numerarius*), lo cual nos permite rastrear el origen y acaso la composición de dichas asambleas al período tardorromano.

A comienzos del siglo IV, el *defensor* era nombrado por el prefecto del pretorio (CTh 1.29.1). Sin embargo, una ley Valentiniano II (387) indica que la elección pasó a estar a cargo de las *curiae* locales (CTh. 1.29.6). Unas décadas más tarde, Honorio expandió la participación en las asambleas encargadas de la elección del *defensor civitatis*: junto a los *curiales*, dicho emperador incluyó a miembros del orden senatorial que residían en las provincias (*honorati*) y propietarios de

¹³ Los *numerarii*, presumiblemente dos, mencionados en la epístola *De Fisco Barcinonensi* estaban a cargo de la recolección de impuestos en varias ciudades de Tarraconensis, si tenemos en cuenta la firma de la carta por parte de los obispos de Tarragona, Egara, Ampurias y Barcelona.

origen no curial (*possessores*) (CJ 1.55.8). La *novella* de Mayoriano mencionada anteriormente encargaba la elección del *defensor* a una asamblea de *honorati*, *curiales* (o *municipes*) y el pueblo en general (*plebs*).¹⁴ Este último término podría incluir a todos los ciudadanos libres, a diferencia de la ley de Honorio que limitaba el tercer grupo a la clase propietaria (Magalhães de Oliveira, 2018, pp. 27-29).

¿Quién era, por lo tanto, el *populus* encargado de elegir al *defensor* según la ley de Recaredo? La historiografía de la Hispania post-imperial ha tratado de reconstruir la cultura asamblearia que reemplazó las instituciones romanas, aunque las fuentes disponibles son francamente escasas (Sánchez Albornoz, 1971, pp. 89-100 y, más recientemente, Wickham, 2017, pp. 397-401). Con toda probabilidad, las capacidades electorales y legislativas del gobierno curial tal y como había existido hasta mediados del siglo IV ya se habían eclipsado en época de Recaredo (Curchin, 2018). Las menciones a *curiales* no desaparecen por completo de las fuentes, aunque sí se reducen drásticamente.¹⁵ Pero el punto de partida de las instituciones asamblearias urbanas hacia principios del siglo V no era el gobierno curial, sino lo que la historiografía moderna ha dado en llamar el “gobierno de notables” (Liebeschuetz, 2001, pp. 104-136; Laniado 2002, pp. 133-223). Estas asambleas incluían *honorati*, *curiales*, terratenientes y residentes en general (*habitatores*). No debemos pensar solamente en términos de grandes terratenientes, sino quizás también en propietarios urbanos de más modestos recursos, cuya participación en ciudades tardoantiguas norafricanas ha sido recientemente remarcada por Julio Magalhães de Oliveira (2012). Durante el reinado de Anastasio (491-518), el episcopado y el clero también formaron parte de estas asambleas urbanas.¹⁶

¹⁴ Quapropter praeceptionis nostrae tenore conperto universarum civitatum, quae sunt inhabitantium frequentia celebres in tuae potestatis arbitrio constitutae, municipes honoratos plebemque communeas, ut adhibito tractatu atque consilio sibi eligant defensorem factumque dematurent (Nov. Maj. 3).

¹⁵ Sobre *curiales* en legislación de Alarico, ver las referencias mencionadas anteriormente en el texto. También, Nov. Theod. 3, 4, 8, 11 (= 3, 9, 15, y 22), Nov. Val 10 y 12 (= 32 y 35), Nov. Maj. 1 (= 7) También se mencionan a “aquellos que están sujetos a las obligaciones de la curia” (qui curiae nexibus obligati sunt) en las actas del IV Concilio de Toledo de 633 (canon 19, Col. Hisp. 5, 209), aunque no está claro que los curiales fuesen un fenómeno generalizado en el reino o limitado a algunas ciudades. Las compilaciones legales del siglo VII sólo recogen una ley en la que se mencionan a los curiales de época de Chindasvinto (LV 5.4.19), por lo que incluso el título de *curial* parece haber caído en desuso completamente en la segunda mitad del siglo VII. *Curiales* aparecen mencionados en la *Vita Aemiliani* de Braulio de Zaragoza.

¹⁶ CJ 1.55.11. Aunque la ley de Honorio mencionada en la nota 44 en su versión del *Codex Justinianus* incluye al clero y a los obispos, es probable que estos dos grupos no formaran parte de la ley original. Como lo ha sostenido Avshalom Laniado, dichas menciones son interpolaciones de mediados del siglo VI, cuando los compiladores del *Codex Justinianus* volvieron a redactar la ley de Honorio con el lenguaje de la ley de Anastasio (Laniado, 2006).

La evidencia hispana, aunque escasa, permite reconstruir un tipo de gobierno similar. La carta del papa Hilario a los obispos de Tarraconensis (465), menciona el apoyo de *honorati* y *possessores* en la elección del obispo Silvano de Calagurris (Ep. 16.1, en Thiel, 1868, pp. 165-166). Un siglo y medio más tarde, Braulio de Zaragoza describió un mundo social en el alto valle del Ebro de similares características, donde *possessores*, *curiales* y “senadores” lideraban la sociedad local.¹⁷ Incluso a mediados del siglo VII, una ley de Chindasvinto (r. 642-653) reguló la venta de tierras con responsabilidades fiscales por parte de “*curiales* y ciudadanos privados que habitualmente proveen caballos y pagan impuestos al tesoro público.”¹⁸ Es probable, por lo tanto, que la comunidad política imaginada por Recaredo (*populus*) estuviera representada por los sectores terratenientes y sub-elites de distinta índole a nivel local.

Sin embargo, el vocabulario de la ley permitía, al menos potencialmente, involucrar a toda la comunidad de hombres libres. La *novella* de Mayoriano ya incorporaba en teoría a la población libre en general, aunque aún mantenía la distinción entre órdenes senatorial, curial y aquellas personas libres que no pertenecían a ninguno de estos dos estamentos. El *Breviario de Alarico*, editado medio siglo más tarde, ilustra el desplazamiento en el vocabulario sobre el cuerpo a cargo de la elección de magistrados cívicos. Mientras que la ley de 387 ordenaba que las *curiae* eligiesen al *defensor*, la *interpretatio* del *Breviario* disponía que este magistrado cívico fuese elegido por “el consenso de los ciudadanos y el acuerdo de todos”.¹⁹ Del mismo modo, la elección de los *exactores* y *susceptores* en CTh 12.6.20 estaba limitada a los *curiales*, mientras que la *interpretatio* de dicha ley en el *Breviario* encargaba la elección a los *curiales* y al *populus*.²⁰ Por lo tanto, cuando la ley Recaredo menciona que la elección del *defensor* debía recaer en el *populus* a fines del siglo VI, es probable que continuase la tradición iniciada en los comentarios de la *Lex Romana Visigothorum* casi un siglo antes, cuando no en la legislación de Mayoriano, en la que los cuerpos electorales urbanos eran descritos con una terminología amplia que incluía, en teoría, a todos los habitantes libres.

Esta simplificación de la terminología refleja la disolución de las categorías político-legales tardoimperiales en el reino visigodo. Si bien las referencias a

¹⁷ Curiales: VSE 23. Senadores: VSE 18, 22, and 24. En general, Castellanos, 1996. Se ha también propuesto la existencia de un “senado-curia” en la ciudad de Córdoba durante el mismo período, aunque la evidencia no es del todo clara (García Moreno, 2007, pp. 437-440).

¹⁸ Curiales [...] vel privati qui caballos ponere vel in arca publica functionem exolvere consueti sunt (LV 5.4.19).

¹⁹ CTh 1.29.6: defensores quos decretis elegerint civitates. *Interpretatio* en BA 1.10.1: defensores, quos consensus civium et subscriptio universorum elegisse cognoscitur.

²⁰ Exactores et susceptores publicae functionis non secretim, sed publice praesentibus aliis curialibus vel populo necessitates agendas expediendasque suscipiant (BA 12.2.1).

senadores, *honorati*, o decuriones persistieron en las fuentes de época visigoda, el estatus sociojurídico a partir de finales del siglo V dejó de estar definido en base a la pertenencia a un orden en particular. En fuentes más tempranas, las líneas entre distintas categorías comienzan a borrarse y, por ejemplo, se asocia a los decuriones con los *honorati*, un título reservado al orden senatorial en época tardorromana (BA 1.7.1 y 9.15.1). La membrecía del senado romano vía magistraturas honoríficas o servicio imperial ya no era una opción para las familias aristocráticas y las menciones a senadores disminuyen y se vuelven más difusas (Curchin, 2013-2014). Las fuentes de época visigoda más tardía utilizan términos de época romana como *honestior*, *nobilior* o *potentior*, aunque nunca se aclaran qué se entiende por tales títulos (King, 1972, pp. 183-189; Martin, 2003, pp. 105-113). Y es probable que Recaredo tampoco pensara en un *populus* indiferenciado, sino en una comunidad con un liderazgo más o menos definido. Así lo entendía Isidoro en sus *Etimologías*, cuando distinguía entre el *populus* como una multitud de individuos asociados por la práctica común del derecho y la unión en armonía. El *populus* no era el pueblo común (*plebs*), advertía Isidoro, ya que el primero incluía tanto a la plebe como a los líderes de la comunidad (*seniores*).²¹ En este sentido, el reino visigodo sería un conjunto de comunidades políticas capaces de elegir sus propios oficiales (Velázquez, 2002, pp. 168-175).

No sabemos a ciencia cierta si el gobierno de notables se mantuvo intacto durante todo el período visigodo. Sin embargo, una ley de Ervigio de finales del siglo VII parece atestiguar la persistencia de las instituciones asamblearias urbanas (LV 2.1.30). En dicha ley, se permite a los obispos que revisen causas judiciales ante una sentencia injusta por parte de un *iudex*. Lo deben hacer junto al *iudex* que emitió la sentencia en primer lugar, a otros clérigos y a “hombres apropiados” (*idonei viri*).²² Por “apropiados” o “idóneos”, el *Liber Iudiciorum* entiende que se tratan no sólo de personas libres, sino también de individuos con reputación y fortuna de cuantía (LV 2.4.3). Aunque las leyes visigodas no mencionen explícitamente un gobierno cívico del tipo tardorromano, la ley de Ervigio sobre revisión de sentencias judiciales asume la existencia de un mecanismo asambleario donde oficiales reales (*iudices*), obispos, clérigos y ciudadanos prominentes comparten el poder de decisión. Como Recaredo un

²¹ *Populus est humanae multitudinis, iuris consensu et concordi communione sociatus. Populus autem eo distat a plebibus, quod populus universi cives sunt, connumeratis senioribus civitatis* (Orig. 9.4.5). Esta dicotomía entre gobernantes y gobernados se refleja en cierta legislación visigoda, donde el término *plebs* se emplea en contraste con la autoridad real (LV 1.1.9, 2.1.4, 2.5.19 y 12.1.3. Cf. 12.2. 1 y 14). Sin embargo, las leyes visigodas también emplean *plebs* y *populus* como equivalentes (por ejemplo, LV 2.1.6).

²² *Episcopus, in cuius hoc territorio agitur, convocato iudice ipso, qui iniustus asseritur, atque sacerdotibus vel idoneis aliis viris, negotium ipsud una cum iudices communi sententia iustissime terminabit* (*Ibid.*). Cf. LV 12.3.21, también de Ervigio (aut cum iudicibus aut cum christianis honestissimis erit).

siglo antes, Ervigio menciona el funcionamiento de mecanismos institucionales locales como contrapeso a los posibles abusos de funcionarios con poderes judiciales.

Por lo tanto, es probable que las ciudades visigodas hayan mantenido prácticas asamblearias de época tardorromana. Miembros de las élites políticas y económicas participarían en la decisión acerca de importantes asuntos locales— asuntos relacionados con archivos municipales, resolución de conflictos y recaudación tributaria. Sólo oímos de dichas asambleas cuando la monarquía visigoda se interesa por el control de los funcionarios reales, sin intervenir verdaderamente en la regulación de la vida municipal. Le elección del *defensor* y, tal vez, del *numerarius* nos permite reconstruir un mundo sociopolítico al nivel de la ciudad que de otra manera quedaría perdido en fuentes sólo interesadas en oficios eclesiásticos y reales.

5. LIDERAZGO CÍVICO Y AUTORIDAD EPISCOPAL

Si aceptamos la pervivencia parcial de las instituciones cívicas que maduraron hacia finales del siglo IV y principios del siglo V, es necesario considerar también la continuidad de distintos actores sociales con sus respectivas agendas sociopolíticas. La competencia por el liderazgo urbano caracterizó la vida política de las ciudades romanas y no hay motivos para sospechar que dicha disputa haya desaparecido en el período post-imperial. Un modelo de liderazgo urbano basado en la dupla obispo/*comes civitatis* no daría cuenta, como se ha visto, de la complejidad institucional a nivel de la *civitas* visigoda. Tampoco es posible aceptar un modelo administrativo bipartito romano y godo (instituciones cívicas y justicia comital) en época de Recaredo con esferas claramente delimitadas (Thompson, 1969, pp. 114-152). Como se ha explicado, una trama tripartita de oficios reales, cívicos y eclesiásticos parece dar cuenta del ideal político a nivel de la ciudad. En la práctica, las fronteras entre estas esferas fueron menos pronunciadas, debido a lazos sociales, familiares y políticos entre los distintos actores. Sin embargo, el entramado legal demarcaba distintos carriles institucionales con posibles consecuencias prácticas.

Conviene preguntarse, entonces, si el andamiaje institucional no conllevó disputas por el liderazgo cívico entre los distintos actores involucrados. El análisis del poder episcopal tardorromano en la península ibérica se ha desarrollado en paralelo a la idea del “señorío episcopal” o *Bischofsherrschaft* en otras áreas del occidente post-imperial (Heinzelmann, 1976; Liebeschuetz, 2001, pp. 155-167). Según esta interpretación, en ausencia de instituciones y autoridades romanas, la iglesia cristiana y su obispo a la cabeza asumieron vastas funciones más allá de lo eclesiástico, incluyendo la representación de la comunidad local (Fuentes Hinojo, 2008, pp. 321-323; Chavarría Arnau, 2018, pp. 51-58). Al igual que sus pares en la Gallia post-romana, la aristocracia romana habría buscado en el episcopado

una nueva forma de mantener su poder local (Mathisen, 1993, pp. 89-104; García Moreno, 1990). Aunque esta imagen guarda relación con la presentación del obispo en las fuentes disponibles, no debemos olvidar que dependemos de documentos de carácter eclesiástico y con un marcado tono episcopal.

Estas mismas fuentes, sin embargo, dejan entrever conflictos entre el episcopado y sectores laicos dirigentes a nivel local. Según la crónica de Hidacio, el obispo Sabino fue expulsado de su sede en Sevilla por una “facción” que ordenó obispo a Epifanio en su lugar (Chron. 116; cf. Chron. 197). No está claro, sin embargo, si se trató de una facción eclesiástica o de un conflicto con el liderazgo civil—o ambos (Ubric Rabaneda, 2004, pp. 72-78). Hidacio también indica en su *Crónica* que él mismo cayó prisionero en el año 460 por la intervención de tres informantes en Gallaecia, quienes eran los suficientemente influyentes como para persuadir al liderazgo del ejército suevo (Chron. 196; Kulikowski, 2004, p. 199). La carta del papa Hilario mencionada anteriormente subraya un conflicto entre los *honorati* y *possessores* y el episcopado local sobre el nombramiento del obispo de Calagurris (Larrañaga Elorza, 1989). Conviene recordar que, a principios del siglo VI, el *Breviario de Alarico* confirmó ciertas atribuciones del *defensor* (como se sostuvo anteriormente) mientras que limitó significativamente los poderes judiciales de los obispos en comparación al *Codex Theodosianus* (Matthews, 2001, p. 22). La epístola *De fisco Barcinonensi* (592) ilumina acerca de áreas en las que los obispos y los *numerarii* (en este caso, nombrados por el rey) podían entrar en conflicto (Fernández, 2006). Casi un siglo más tarde, el rey Egica (r. 687-701/2) recordaba a los obispos reunidos en Toledo que el *spatarius* Theudemund había sido nombrado *numerarius* a pedido del obispo de Mérida, pero había tenido que dejar su cargo luego de un año ante la oposición de la comunidad local.²³ Estos son sólo destellos de evidencia escondidos dentro de la opacidad de fuentes eclesiásticas que permiten suponer conflictos, reales o potenciales, entre el episcopado y el liderazgo cívico local. En el pasaje de las *Etimologías* sobre los *defensores* mencionado anteriormente, Isidoro sostiene que, en su época, ya no había *defensores* sino destructores—un pasaje oscuro pero que adquiere claridad si lo entendemos a la luz del potencial conflicto entre obispos y oficiales cívicos.²⁴ Todos estos conflictos no darían cuenta de una “guerra de facciones” eclesiástica y civil, cuya existencia difícilmente pueda justificarse.

²³ Nam et hoc decreti vestri concedet stylo censendum, ut quia praecessor noster divae memoriae domnus Wamba rex in ipso regnandi primordio Theudemundum spatarium nostrum contra generis vel ordinis sui usum, Festi quondam incitationem Emeretensis episcopi, solius tantum regiae potestatis impulsu in eandem Emeretensem urbem numerariae officium agere instituit, quod etiam unius anni excursu contra rationem noscitur peregrisse, inmo quia nec valuit imperio gentis obsistere [...] (Vives, 1963, pp. 517-518).

²⁴ At contra nunc quidam eversores, non defensores existent (Orig. 4.9.18). Cf. VPE 5.9 (magis perderet quam reget Leovigildus Spaniam).

Incluso el episcopado, a pesar de las constantes proclamas de consenso y unidad, tenía sus propias disputas internas (Stocking, 2000). En cambio, la evidencia sobre controversias entre obispos y miembros de sus comunidades indicarían la activación de mecanismos institucionales diferenciados por partes de las élites locales.

La separación institucional entre obispos y magistrados cívicos tendría su correlato en la construcción de un universo de representados también específico para cada oficio. La ley de Recaredo preveía una representación de la comunidad política de la *civitas* (*populus*) por parte del *defensor* y el *numerarius*. En cuanto a la representatividad del obispo, la ley de Recaredo adopta un lenguaje distinto al indicar que el silencio del episcopado frente a los abusos de los oficiales reales sería en detrimento de los pobres (*pauperes*). Esta terminología no es ajena a otras fuentes de época visigoda en la que se expresa el rol del obispo como líder comunitario. Ya en el Primer Concilio de Toledo (c. 400) los obispos se presentaban a sí mismos como protectores de los pobres frente a los poderosos, aunque su poder quedaba limitado al ámbito eclesiástico mediante la amenaza de excomunión (I Toledo 11 (Col. Hisp. 4, pp. 332-323); cf. Lenski, 2001, pp. 90-1). La relación entre obispo y *pauperes* aparece expresada en actos de caridad, como la frecuentemente citada distribución de bienes a cargo del obispo Mazona de Mérida según su hagiógrafo del siglo séptimo (VPE 5.3). Este recurso a la protección de los pobres representa la continuación de un proceso de disputa por el liderazgo urbano en las ciudades del Mediterráneo romano desde el siglo IV (Brown, 2002). Los autores eclesiásticos de época visigoda entendían claramente la distinción entre comunidad de ciudadanos y *pauperes*, aún cuando en la práctica pudiese haber cierta superposición. Por lo tanto, la ley de Recaredo se hace eco de esta diferencia sutil pero crucial en lo simbólico (Cf. LV 2.1.30, Erv.).

6. CONCLUSIÓN

La arqueología ha demostrado en las últimas décadas que las transformaciones de la topografía de las ciudades hispanas fue un proceso menos abrupto en comparación a las teorías tradicionales sobre el fin de la *civitas* antigua. Las instituciones urbanas parecen haber seguido un modelo similar de cambio, donde continuidades y transformaciones coexistieron a lo largo de la tardoantigüedad. Por una parte, los cambios en el gobierno cívico ya eran visibles hacia finales del siglo IV, en especial debido al ascenso del *defensor*, la intervención imperial en la vida pública de las ciudades y la formación de un gobierno de notables. En paralelo, los obispos comenzaban a disputar espacios públicos en la vida de las ciudades. Es éste el origen institucional y político de las ciudades post-imperiales en el reino visigodo más que la *civitas* del alto imperio o, incluso, de época constantiniana. Si tenemos en cuenta esta realidad inicial de finales del siglo IV

y comienzos del siglo V, las transformaciones del siglo VI y VII parecen mucho menos abruptas de lo que se supuso tradicionalmente.

El modelo obispo/*comes civitatis* no daría cuenta, entonces, de la visión que Recaredo y otros reyes tendrían del funcionamiento político a nivel local. Las escasas fuentes sobre gobierno local reflejan la complejidad en la vida institucional de las ciudades post-imperiales. Más que demostrar una supuesta debilidad de la monarquía goda, la presencia de distintos actores institucionales y los potenciales conflictos por el liderazgo local permitirían ejercer un control más efectivo. Un liderazgo cívico más fragmentado evitaría la supremacía de un actor institucional frente a otros, generaría distintos canales de acceso político a la comunidad local y garantizaría un mayor control de los agentes locales. Recaredo y sus sucesores no sólo asumían la existencia de un liderazgo episcopal en competencia con otras formas institucionales, sino que también dependían de esta dinámica de controles para la administración del reino.

La comunidad cívica representada por sus oficiales y asambleas mantuvo cierto protagonismo institución al en la vida política de las ciudades de época visigoda a pesar del olvido relativo de dichos actores en la historiografía especializada. Reconstruir las instituciones urbanas es una tarea difícil, debido a la naturaleza de las fuentes, ya que sólo contamos con documentos de perspectiva real y episcopal. Asimismo, las fuentes son principalmente de carácter prescriptivo (legislación canónica y secular) y no sabemos a ciencia cierta hasta qué punto estas fuentes describían una realidad o una aspiración sobre cómo la realidad debía funcionar. Por lo tanto, la reconstrucción del gobierno urbano de época visigoda sólo puede ser indirecta y parcial. Sin embargo, las fuentes disponibles permiten entrever instituciones y liderazgos cívicos ajenos al episcopado y la administración comital. Frente a la estridencia documental de los oficios reales y eclesiásticos, las instituciones urbanas representan el sonido de fondo que, aun casi desapercibido, contribuyó a la sonoridad política de las ciudades post-imperiales visigodas.

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**TEMPUS BARBARICUM. POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS
TRANSFORMATIONS IN 5TH-CENTURY AD HISPANIA
BASED ON CONTEMPORARY TESTIMONIALS:
THE *CHRONICA* OF HYDATIUS OF CHAVES¹**

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ABSTRACT: The 5th century saw the collapse of the Western Roman Empire and the end of imperial rule in numerous provinces as a result, among other things, of mass barbarian migrations and of civil wars. This paper takes a closer look at the contemporary historian Hydatius of Chaves' account of events in Hispania, particularly in the territories of *Gallaecia* and *Lusitania*, and compares it with other contemporary sources, to reconstruct the nature and impact of reported events, together with interpreting Hydatius as a literary text, inspired by both ideology and religion.

KEYWORDS: Hydatius Flaviensis, *Chronicle*, Hispania, Visigoths, Fall of the Roman Empire, apocalyptic literature.

1. INTRODUCTION

Historians of the last centuries of the Western Roman Empire are divided between those who believe the period was one of insecurity and impoverishment, as opposed to the creative, outward-looking and optimistic eras of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, of the Flavians and Severans, and those who believe it was one of ongoing unity and cohesion, which brought about transformation in an equally learned culture. According to the former scholarship, who are still affiliated the major and centenary work of Edward Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of The Roman Empire*, the decline of the Roman Empire was a period of decay which saw the collapse of imperial Rome in the West and confined the learned minds to Antiquity. The second viewpoint is more recent, and characterizes these centuries as a period of cultural revolution, highlighting the gradual and unique creative transition from ancient to medieval times. In his 1977 essay *Décadence romaine ou antiquité tardive?*, Marrou summarized the arguments on both sides,

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defending the 'novelty' of an era which was no longer Antiquity but not quite Early Middle Ages. The time of Late Antiquity, as so, becomes not 'worst' nor 'better' than before, but essentially 'new' full of creativeness and challenges. The fact that his work was not unanimously embraced is itself evidence that the debate continued and evolved among scholars (Turcan, 1979, pp. 176-178; Brown, 1971; Cameron, 1993, pp. 4-10, Cameron, 1999, p. 16; Ward-Perkins, 2005).

The conceptual debate is necessarily centered around a simplification of the specific arguments of the scientific discipline at hand (Meyer, 2009, p. 12): economic history and archaeology give credence to the theory of the fall and decay of the classical world (Ward-Perkins, 2005), marked by a decline of trade and a curtailment of monetary circulation (Rostovtzeff & Fraser, 1957; Lot, 1927); or we see a series of negative phenomena, associated with the 4th and 5th centuries, understood and shared by representatives of the era – namely chroniclers and elites – as harrowing, unsafe and challenging, which could be combined to be interpreted as a time of crisis. Yet these same years brought (or at least widely disseminated) modified lifestyles, religious, cultural and artistic innovations that would leave a notable mark on Europe's history and culture.

The insights of Bryan Ward-Perkins, in 2005, drawing on new archaeological data and offering diverse arguments, further fuelled the theory of the fall of Rome. He focused on analyzing objective details in his native England, but evidence is equally found scattered across the Western provinces which suffered in the waves of 4th- and 5th-century invaders: reduced city populations, reduced architectures (fading use of stone), the end of marble and mosaic floors, the breakdown of water supply systems and heated baths, and diminished high quality ceramics are all signs of what Ward-Perkins summed up under the heading "the disappearance of comfort". And there are also the many signs of economic regression: the decreasing presence of large stock animals, fewer quality coins in circulation, the use of hoarding strategies, and the favoring of the consumption of local goods over the once prosperous and efficient, but now struggling Roman trade network to purchase fast-moving goods (cereal, wine, olive oil, fish sauce, ceramics), which seem to confirm that the Roman world's exposure to the influence and settlement of the so-called barbarians led to the/a fall of civilization, to technological and economic decline, and to a collapse in trade. Ward-Perkins believes that those who lived in these troubled times must have viewed them as deeply traumatic, with everyday life disrupted and security and welfare greatly de-stabilized.

In this paper, we will look to the literary texts that bear witness to the events related to the arrival of the barbarians in the Latin West. Our starting point is the *Chronicle* of Hydatius, which is considered an important account of the disruption caused to the Hispano-Roman world as a result of the barbarian invasion in AD 409, which led to a period of major instability that lasted until 468, when his chronicle depicting six decades of terror ends. Given the continuity of the literary genre of the *Chronica*, created by Eusebius of Caesarea and St. Jerome, Hydatius

brings us the unified History of Mankind, from the birth of Abraham up to 468. Using chronological order and the succession of emperors as the main structure (based on the Olympiads), he broadened the traditionally concise and brief discourse of the Christian chronicler. Burgess (1993, p. 9) summarizes him thus: “Hydatius, however, is easily the most verbose of all Late Antiquity chroniclers, especially in the second half of the chronicle when he was no longer following written sources”. Arguably, he takes readers on an unbiased journey, sharing fragments that are worthy of analysis both when it comes to literary art and in terms of the documentary and historical value of his contemporary account of events”.

We will seek to distinguish the documental value from the literary characteristics of Hydatius’ work, in order to furnish an adequate counterpoint or a fruitful dialogue with archeological data, substantially explored in valuable contributions assembled in this volume, not necessarily corroborative. But to interrogate a literary source about historic events means also that we should follow, and to give an interpretation on authors intentionality, semantic and linguistic choices made by him to communicate his testimony. We agree, therefore, with Kulikowski’s words (1997, p. 127; Bowes & Kulikowski, 2005, pp. 15-17) when he says that Hydatius is not narrating events of the world around him but selecting *signa* “of the last days of the world itself”, a “eschatalogical catastrophe”. In these circumstances, we will recur to abundant author’s quotations. In this matter we should enhance W. Burgess, editor and translator of Hydatius *Chronicle*, who developed this work as a PhD thesis published in 1993.

2. BARBARIANS WITHIN ROMAN PROVINCES – SOME LEGAL ISSUES REGARDING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EFFECTS

Late Roman policy had long been to settle allied barbarian groups on Roman territory. In the *Theodosian Code*, we find references of the presence of barbarians on Roman soil, situation that required some legal measures, but not necessarily associated with an organized military movement. These laws focus specifically on the relationship between the Romans and barbarians.

In 366, and revised in 408, the law issued by Valentinian, Valens and Gratian promoted the return of refugees, hostages or those forced to move; it enshrines the right to all that which was taken by *hostilibus irruptionibus*, provided that no acts of treason were committed, and the return of ownership of chattels and property left behind, regardless of the time lapsed and what had happened to such property in the meantime. The rewording, approved by Honorius and Theodosius II, is directed against barbarians keeping displaced prisoners in other provinces, that is, it states their right of return to freedom and to their places of origin (CTh V, 7, 1 and CTh V, 7, 2: “*no one shall hold against their will persons from different provinces who got caught up in barbarian ferocity* (quos barbarica feritas) and

taken captive, but shall give them the opportunity to return to their own homes”). In 370, a law passed by Valentinian and Valens forbade, under penalty of death, marriage between barbarians and Roman provincials (CTh III, 14, 1). In 397, a legal measure against participation in conspiracies against the State by persons in the service of Rome puts soldiers, civilians and barbarians on equal footing in the identification of a crime and the punishment (CTh IX, 14, 3, with text approved by Arcadius and Honorius in 397: “...all those who take part in a criminal plan led by soldiers, civilians or barbarians, [...] all persons in our service, that the criminal intent be punished with the same severity as the crime itself, that is, that he be subject to justice when convicted of the crime of *lèse-majesté*...”):

Another law passed by Honorius and Theodosius II, in 416, describes a situation aimed at limiting the claims submitted by injured parties for damages resulting from instability caused by the barbarian attacks (CTh XV, 14, 14, “If, during the calamity of the attacks brought on by the barbarians (sub clade barbaricae) indecent and heinous acts are committed when fleeing or affected populations agglomerate, such acts shall not give rise to reparation of the laws [...] that those who committed such crimes not be punished, if they were unable to avoid it, unless such crimes brought them material gain. Indeed, we shall not call that which one is forced to do under the threat of death a crime. Injured parties need to understand that, if something is taken from them, it shall be returned provided they can prove that it is still in the possession of the person they allege took it.”). What was the purpose of this law? We believe that it was to ensure the right of such refugees in flight to seek food and shelter on private property, but without causing damage: no one forced to flee following barbarian attacks could take ownership of imperishable or moveable property, but they could feed themselves.

Of these texts, only the prohibition of marriage and the capital are in fact aimed at barbarians; otherwise, all the laws are aimed at Romans affected by contact *with* the barbarians, and reflect the new circumstances created by this relationship: first, we have, on the one hand, barbarians seemingly moving in waves, in search of chattels and prisoners, but without often settling in the affected areas, which meant the old status quo could resume, albeit perhaps at a cost; thus, laws were needed to restore order after the barbarians moved on, to encourage people to return to their homes, and ensure that property returned to its legitimate owners – in short, to preserve stability. The prohibition of mixed marriages, reinforced by extreme punishment threats (capital punishment), leads us to believe that there was a certain level of co-existence (and perhaps co-habitation even...if not, why to legislate about an impossible situation as a mixed marriage?) between the two populations, Roman and barbarian, on Roman soil. Indeed, as confirmed in Hydatius’ narratives, some non-Roman groups, like the Sueves, settled in the cities, necessarily forging relationships with the Roman population (*Romani*) and the natives (*Gallaeci*); as noted above,

these were severely punished when the Goths, with imperial mandate, used their military might to re-impose Roman sovereignty. Orosius' account for the start of the 5th century speaks specifically of the desire to settle and to become sedentary of some barbarian groups, resulting in mutual gains for the population which, for the Romans and natives, in fact meant freedom from a greedy and tyrannical Empire.

3. HYDATIUS TESTIMONY ABOUT THE SPANISH 5TH-CENTURY

Hydatius of Chaves was a privileged witness of the 5th century in *Hispania*². Contradicting the unbiased and impersonal literary genre he inherited, on two occasions he was in fact a protagonist in the events that he experienced: firstly, in 431, he participated in an embassy from his native Gallaecia to Gaul to meet the generalissimo Aetius to report on the hardships that his people were enduring. Following his victory against the Franks, in 432, Aetius sent the *comes* Censurius and Hydatius as envoys to Gallaecia, tasked with negotiating peace (Burgess, 1993, p. 91: "*As soon as the opportunity presented itself, the Sueves again violated the peace treaty which they had entered into with the Gallaeci. Because of their pillaging, the bishop Hydatius undertook an embassy to the dux Aetius who was conducting a campaign in Gaul [...]*"). 8: "*After defeating the Franks in battle and receiving them under terms, Aetius sent the comes Censurius as an envoy to the Sueves, and the above-mentioned Hydatius returned with him [...]*". 9: "*After Censurius' return to the palace, as a result of episcopal mediation and the acceptance of hostages, Hermericus re-established peace with the Gallaecians whom he was constantly plundering*"). Thus, we see the chronicler encouraging the general to initiate negotiations against the constant Suevic attacks (*Rursum Sueui initam cum Gallis pacem libata sibi occasione conturbant; ob quorum depredationem Hydatius episcopus ad Aetium ducem ...suscipit legationem*). He returned a year later, accompanied by *comes* Censurius. Our interpretation is that *comes* Censurius, of whom little is known apart from the information provided in the *Chronicle*, was appointed by Aetius after Hydatius' embassy and accompanied the bishop to Gallaecia from Gaul (cf. Burgess, 1993, p. 95): "*The comes Censurius, who had been sent as an envoy to the Sueves and then been besieged by Rechila in Martylis where he was staying, surrendered under terms*"). Censurius occupied the palace in Bracara after negotiating some measure of peace (with hostages released) with the Sueves, mediated by bishops (*Regresso Censurio ad palatium Hermericus pacem cum Gallecis, quos praedabatur assidue, sub interuentu episcopali datis sibi reformat obsidibus*). This passage reveals the growing role of bishops at a

² Cf. the map. "Les campagnes des sueves et des wisigoths au Ve siècle p.C.". In Hydice, *Chronique*. (ed. and trans. A. Tranoy), Paris: Le Cerf, SC 219, 1974, annexes.

time when Roman military and political presence in the provinces was waning: the bishops took the initiative to restore peace, which they saw as restricted and precarious, and, thus, formally restored Roman political representation to the territories. Secondly, in 460, Hydatius was taken prisoner by a Suevic faction, prompted by “*delatores*” (Dictynius, Spinio and Ascanius) and was held captive for three months, while the territory was ravaged (Burgess, 1993, p. 113): “... *the band of Sueves which he was leading, urged on by the same aforementioned informers, took the bishop Hydatius prisoner in the church of Aquae Flaviae on 26 July and then overwhelmed the same conuentus, causing massive destruction*” (*grandi excidio*).

Moreover, the preface of his Chronicle – a literarily balanced composition according to the craft of the genre – gives readers a glimpse into the importance of what Hydatius experienced. He presents himself as a bishop, living at the ends of the earth (*Gallaecia* being the westernmost tip of the Roman world) and at the end of his life (Burgess, 1993, p. 75, Preface 5: “*But I, Hydatius, of the province of Gallaecia, born in the city of Limici and chosen to be the head of the highest office [...] as much at the end of the earth as at the end of my life*”). When identifying the sources of his information, he mentions written documents, (‘reliable’) stories told by others as well as his own knowledge of these “mournful times” (Burgess, 1993, p. 75, Preface 5: “*Undertaking this task with a faithful regard in my heart (i.e. following his predecessors Eusebius and Hieronymus) I have added what follows basing myself partly on written sources, partly on the reliable oral accounts of many people, and partly on my own knowledge, which now suffers as a result of my lamentable old age*”). He ends his account with a foreboding based on his observations. Aware of the challenges the Roman Empire faced, *Gallaecia*’s regional context, looked at more closely through his testimony, is even bleaker (*luctuosius*): a religion in disarray because of irregular clerical elections, the end of freedom and the decay of Christianity due to heretics – he identifies these throughout his Chronicle: Arianism, Priscillianism, Manichaeism – and to the barbarians (Burgess, 1993, p. 75, Preface 6: “...*I have subjoined the frontiers of the narrowly-confined Roman Empire that are doomed to perish, and, what is more lamentable, within Gallaecia at the edge of the entire world: the state of ecclesiastical succession, perverted by indiscriminate appointments, the demise of honourable freedom, and the downfall of virtually all religion based on divine instruction, all as a result of the domination of heretics confounded with the disruption of hostile barbarian tribes*”).

Strikingly, Hydatius highlights the evil combination of the political and military ambitions of enraged individuals and the disruption caused by lawless peoples from barbarian nations (*occasum ex furentium dominatione permixta iniquarum perturbatione nationum*). We highlight the word *permixta* in this excerpt because, in several annotations in the text, the word is used to identify the social imbalance and unrest. Hydatius seemingly does not approve at all of

the mixing of peoples, viewing such co-existence as the source of decadence and unrest.

The lack of distinction and the confusion among the different peoples was palpable following the death of Emperor Avitus, and the collapse of the military pact between the Goths and Rome prompted the former to return to Gaul after invading Emerita, in Easter 457. (Burgess, 1993, p. 109): *Theudoricus [...] de Emerita egreditur et Gallias repetens partem ex ea quam habebat multitudine uariae nationis cum ducibus suis ad campos Gallaeciae dirigit* – “Theoderic departed from Emerita (...) and, as he made his way back to Gaul, he dispatched part of that multitude of various nationalities which he had with him to the plains of Gallaecia with their own commanders”; in Asturica, invaded by the Goths, he slaughtered a crowd of people of mixed nationalities”: (ibid.) *Nec mora promiscui generis reperta illic caede multitudine*: “In the city they found crowds of people of every kind whom they immediately slaughtered”. In Easter of 460, in the city of Lucus, the Romans, including their governor, who thought themselves to be safe on account of the religious celebrations, were killed in a surprise attack by Sueves who were already living in the city (Burgess, 1993, p. 113).

Having reached the end of the events he experienced, he is coherent in how he perceives their onset, namely with the occupation of Hispania by a group of tribes, from 409, when Alans, Vandals and Sueves invaded the Peninsula, and also with the sack of Rome by Alaric's Goths (*caede depraedantur hostili*). The occurrence of the two historical events at the same point in time in the narrative, and the result (after the dramatic sieges of Rome, the death of the invader Alaric, and, in Hispania, the reference to the brutality of the invasion), serve to anticipate Hydatius' meaning: the Empire's westernmost region is wounded at the same time as Rome, thus intertwining their fates (Burgess, 1993, p. 81): “*The Alans, Vandals, and Sueves entered Spain in the year of 447 of the Spanish era (...) it was Tuesday in the year when the consuls were Honorius for the eighth time and Theodosius the son of Arcadius for the third time. Alaric, the King of the Goths, entered Rome. Although there was slaughter inside and outside the city, sanctuary was granted to all who sought refuge in the shrines of the saints. Alaric died and was succeeded as king by Athaulf. The barbarians who had entered Spain pillaged it with a vicious slaughter*”. In fact, Hydatius' narrative varies between a local and regional perspective (that is, what happens in Hispania, particularly in the provinces of Gallaecia and Lusitania) and a global perspective (what happens in the rest of the Empire and at its centre).

The effect of this enumeration associated with the sudden invasion described by Hydatius' narrative recalls that of other authors such as Ammianus Marcellinus, when he described the invasion of winter AD 367 (during the reign of Valentinian) as a seemingly orchestrated revolt of an array of barbarian tribes on the north-western frontiers of the Roman Empire (Ammianus Marcellinus, *Historiae* 26.4 5-6, p. 588):

*"At this time, as if trumpets were sounding the war-note throughout the whole Roman world, the most savage peoples roused themselves and poured across the nearest frontiers. At the same time the Alamanni were devastating Gaul and Raetia, the Sarmatae and Quadi Pannonia, while the Picts, Saxons, Scots and Attacotti were harassing the Britons with constant disasters. The Austoriani and other Moorish tribes raided Africa more fiercely than ever and predatory bands of Goths were plundering Thrace and Pannonia."*⁶:*"The king of the Persians was laying hands on Armenia, hastening with mighty efforts to bring that country again under his sway, under the false pretext that after the death of Jovian, with whom he had concluded a treaty of peace, nothing ought to prevent his recovery of what he claimed had formerly belonged to his forefathers."*

Also St. Jerome records the calamitous events of the end of the 4th century in his epistles, he lends credence to what will have been perceived as an organized movement of a horde of confusing people from the East, which spread horror and devastation across the Empire: Jerome speaks of tragedies on the Empire's eastern and central frontiers as a result of a chain of attacks by Huns and Goths, although he does not explain the exact causes of those unfortunate events, focusing more on the effects: provinces invaded and plundered by anarchic tribes – hordes which could not be told apart – who brutalized the local populations, and particularly took out their aggression among the virgins, matrons, noblemen and bishops. This hierarchy of victims might in fact be being used to stress the savagery of the barbarians, but it could also reveal a specific reality, namely that the pillaging and destruction of property targeted those wealthy patrons, whose own abduction would of course command healthy ransoms (Ep. 60, *To Heliodorus*, 15-17).

"I am describing not the misfortunes of an unhappy few but the thread upon which human fortunes as a whole depend. I shudder when I think of the catastrophes of our time. For twenty years and more the blood of Romans has been shed daily between Constantinople and the Julian Alps. Scythia, Thrace, Macedonia, Dardania, Dacia, Thessaly, Achaia, Epirus, Dalmatia, the Pannonias – each and all of these have been sacked and pillaged and plundered by Goths and Sarmatians, Quadi and Alans, Huns and Vandals and Marcomans. How many of God's matrons and virgins, virtuous and noble ladies, have been made the sport of these brutes! Bishops have been made captive, priests and those in minor orders have been put to death. Churches have been overthrown, horses have stalled by the altars of Christ, the relics of martyrs have been dug up./ Mourning and fear abound on every side./ And death appears in countless shapes and forms (Virg. Aen. 2, 368-9...)"

Dated to AD 409 is Jerome's *Epistle to Geruchia*, a letter about the issue of monogamy, but whose moral content is interrupted to speak of current miseries

(*praesentium miseriarum*), expressed much like Hydatius in referring to the period as *lacrimabile tempus* – mournful times (Ep. 123, *Ad Geruchiam*, 15). Now, in the West, between the Rhine and the Ocean, countless numbers are said to have overrun the Republic; Mainz, Worms, Amiens, Tournay, Spires and Strasburg had fallen, and much of the population had been slain. For Aquitaine, Lyons and Narbonne, Jerome makes an interesting comment, which we believe could be extended to the economic and social situation of the Roman provinces during these volatile years: the fragmentation of the provinces, a loss of communication, the defense of cities left to the people and intervention of the bishops (in this case, St. Exuperius) and the Church, but with some cities falling, and, above all, an inability to keep rural areas safe and to ensure the supply of food to towns, and thus the well-being of the population. Thus, one might die by the sword, or at home or by starvation (*quas et ipsas foris gladius, intus uastat fames*):

“He that guaranteed the support is taken out of the way, and yet we do not realize that the Antichrist is near. Yes, the Antichrist is near whom the Lord Jesus Christ ‘shall consume with the spirit of his mouth’ (2 Thess 2, 7-8) ‘Woe unto them’, he cries, ‘that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days’ (Mt 24,19). Now these things are both the fruits of marriage. I shall now say a few words of our present miseries. A few of us have hitherto survived them, but this is due not to anything we have done ourselves but to the mercy of the Lord. Savage tribes in countless numbers have overrun all parts of Gaul. The whole country between the Alps and the Pyrenees, between the Rhine and the Ocean, has been laid waste by hordes of Quadi, Vandals, Sarmatians, Alans, Gepids, Herules, Saxons, Burgundians, Allemanni and – alas! For the commonweal! – even Pannonians. For ‘Assur also is joined with them’. The once noble city of Moguntiacum has been captured and destroyed. In its church many thousands have been massacred. The people of Vangium after standing a long siege have been extirpated. The powerful city of Rheims, the Ambiani, the Altrebatae, the Belgians on the skirts of the world, Tournai, Spires, and Strasburg have fallen to Germany: while the provinces of Aquitaine and of the Nine Nations, of Lyons and of Narbonne are with the exception of a few cities one universal scene of desolation. And those which the sword spares without, famine ravages within. I cannot speak without tears of Toulouse which has been kept from falling hitherto by the merits of its reverend bishop Exuperius. Even the Spains [i. e. all its provinces] are on the brink of ruin and tremble daily as they recall the invasion of the Cymbry; and, while others suffer misfortunes once in actual fact, they suffer them continually in anticipation.”

This testimonies share a distant and a superior look over the barbarian. He advances like a natural phenomenon a fire or a stampede. In these excerpts there can be enhanced the common message of a huge humane mass coming, ravaging cities, killing and abducting people in a scenery of horror. Ammianus

Marcelinus and Jerome are quite discrete about Hispania, which is the main subject of Hydatius. In this subject, Jerome's account is vague, likely because of his distance from the events happening there (if we understand, for instance, the mention *ipsae Hispaniae* in all is semantic value "that provinces of Hispania which I can mention vaguely") and yet he still recalls the invasion of the Cimbri far back in the 2nd century AD that ravaged the north of Hispania, which the locals recollected with trepidation in the face of the instability caused by the new invaders. An historic and literary recollection of events, therefore, had taken precedence as the interpretation of the actual events that took place in 409.

The Christians Jerome and Hydatius were loyal Romans and thus the devastation of the Empire and the calamities that afflicted its twilight years proclaimed the end of days, with apocalyptic fatalism: according to Jerome, the peace granted to Mankind by the grace of Christ's first coming – which had of course coincided with the historical zenith of Rome's Empire – would be brought to an end with the coming of the Antichrist (which precedes the second coming of Christ). And so in the Chronicle of Hydatius, the end of organized life in cities is anticipated with the key lecture of the signs of the Apocalypse³. Although these events are being interpreted via the Bible and the authors' own beliefs, the details of popular shock, loss and terror described by Hydatius are fully plausible in a time of crisis, and are somehow corroborated by another 5th-century literary work, Orosius, in the *Historia Aduersus Paganos*.

The barbarians brought war, pestilence, famine and death to Hispania. In the cities, former goods and resources were depleted by *tiranici exactores* and exhausted by soldier Life (*tyrannicus exactor diripit, et miles exhaurit*. Burgess, 1993, pp. 15-17), and famine grew in sieged places until the limits of cannibalism. This specific references to *exactores* and to *milites* (i. e. roman authorities) are a note of realism in a stereotyped "owl to a city", which is, using the words of Schaw (1999, p. 32), a designation to a specific kind of "classical historiography and allied forms of literature that had developed canons of reporting violence that were stereotypical and schematic") recognizing the apocalyptic signs. Hydatius tells also that the barbarians brought themselves to peace (*barbari ad pacem ineundam*), by searching to divide Spanish provinces among them, searching for settlement.

"The barbarians who had entered Spain pillaged it with a vicious slaughter. A

³ Dias, 2013, pp. 43-62, p. 49 and 52. The concept of *mora finis*, that is, a period of tolerance given to the Roman Empire for it to convert prior to the arrival of the end of days, was established by Origen, Tertullian, St. Jerome (see note 14 "*qui tenebat, qui de medio fit...*") and Saint Augustine. In Hydatius, decline takes on the form of an apocalyptic prophecy, a state of disarray and mysterious *mirabilia* that accompany the devastations of war.

pestilence wreaked its own devastation just as vigorously.” 16: “As the barbarians ran wild through Spain and the deadly pestilence continued on its savage course, the wealth and goods stored in the cities were plundered by the tyrannical tax collector and consumed by the soldiers. A famine ran riot, so dire that driven by hunger human beings devoured human flesh; mothers too feasted upon the bodies of their own children whom they had killed and cooked with their own hands; wild beasts, habituated to feeding on the bodies of those slain by sword, famine, or pestilence, killed all the braver individuals and feasting on their flesh everywhere became brutally set upon the destruction of the human race. And thus with the four plagues of sword, famine, pestilence and wild beasts raging everywhere throughout the world, the annunciations foretold by the Lord through his prophets came to fulfilment.” 17: “...when the provinces of Spain had been laid waste by the destructive progress of the disasters just described, the Lord in his compassion turned the barbarians to the establishment of peace. They then apportioned themselves by lot areas of the provinces for settlement: the Vandals took possession of Gallaecia and the Sueves that part of Gallaecia which is situated on the very western edge of the Ocean. The Alans were allotted the province of Lusitania and Carthaginensis, and the Siling Vandals Baetica. The Spaniards in the cities and forts who had survived the disasters surrendered themselves to servitude under the barbarians, who held sway throughout the provinces.”

Hydatius’ reference to *exactores* as tyrants, applicable to all cities, is significant: he implies that the source of hardship and famine in the cities was not the barbarian invaders, but rather the strategy used to defend against them, namely the diverting of supplies and riches by the authorities to sustain military efforts. Did Hydatius agree with this course of action? Probably not: his use of *tyranici* may well indicate his criticism of the legitimacy of their actions. Hydatius’ devotion to Rome is by no means in question, yet he does seem to express some doubt about “in whose name” steps to defend the cities were being taken, given that Rome herself was being invaded by the Goths, and the daughter of the Eastern Emperor Theodosius I, Galla Placidia, sister of Western Emperor Honorius, had been taken hostage by the Goths. Surprising too are references to wild beasts which, after devouring the corpses of those slain by the sword, or through pestilence or famine, attacked the *fortiores homines*, the able, the survivors.

Is Hydatius perhaps shaping events to liken them directly to a catastrophe’s narrative literary genre, as in *Revelations* 6:7 (cf. *Apoc.* 6:7: “The fourth horseman of the Apocalypse brings death by the sword, famine, plague and by wild beasts. When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come.” I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and

by the wild beasts of the earth”; or in Flavius Iosephus, (*De Bello Iudaico* 6.1-9) in describing the dramatic events in the sieged Jerusalem using the same signs: pestilence, hunger, cannibalism, arbitrary violence, constitutes a main model of *excidia urbium*, so as to make the darkness seem even more pitiful?

And can we believe the presence of wild beasts in urban areas? One might anticipate that, in a besieged or a devastated city, bodies would be left unburied outdoors, attracting wild or hungry beasts; the living may have fled and animals entered into the empty, breached cities.

Surprisingly, after the chaos, the barbarians accept peace, likely a surrender and temporary truce negotiated locally rather than a formal agreement with Rome (*barbari conuersi ad pacem ineundam*) achieved by “apportioning” Hispania, which was consequently divided up into settlement spaces for the barbarian forces, with only *Tarraconensis* left unscathed. In fact this stability, denied by Hydatius in his narrative of the subsequent years, coincides with Orosius’ (*HAP* 7; 40-41) moderate discourse. Let us not focus the Orosius’s main goal, which is to prove that contemporary miseries, affecting Christian times, are not different from ancient ones who didn’t benefit of Lords grace and mercy.

This Orosius’ account of between AD 409-420 tells a less dramatic version of the fall of Spain to the barbarians: in the two years following the sack of Rome, the Alans, Sueves and Vandals crossed the Rhine, defeating the Franks and invading Gaul, just on the border of the Pyrenees, and settled there. Two noble Romans, Didymus and Verenianus, sought to protect the region from both the barbarians and the usurper Gratian, crossing the Pyrenees with forces they paid for themselves. A young Caesar Constans is sent to stand against them with *Honoriaci*: “certain barbarians, who had at one time been received as allies and drawn into military service. They were the cause of the first misfortune that befell Spain. After killing the brothers who were trying to defend the Pyrenean Alps with their private forces, these barbarians received permission to plunder the plains of Pallentia as a reward for their victory”. These barbarians, surprised by the abundance of land, abandoned their posts on the Pyrenees frontier and: “Therefore they betrayed their watch over the Pyrenees, left the passes open, and so loosed upon the provinces of Spain all the nations that were wandering through Gaul. They themselves even joined the latter. After engaging for some time in bloody raids and inflicting serious damage upon people and property (for which they themselves are now sorry) they cast lots, divided their holdings, and settled down where they are in possession to this day”. Thus, Spain succumbed silently to the hordes of tribes that settled in the country following internal political dispute in the Empire. Orosius’ assessment of the barbarians in the Peninsula is, at the very least, ambiguous, if not negative for Roman intentions regarding territorial sovereignty, encouraging a co-existence between barbarians and natives against equally unjust Roman occupation. Thus, barbarians became helpers, aids in forced displacement, killing people, but not depriving them of everything, demanding only payment for

their services. The stubborn pagan Romans refused, however, to abandon their squares and, thus, suffered the wrath of God in the form of barbarian violence. In time, the barbarians laid down their swords, joining forces with the Romans and treating them as friends to the point where the latter preferred to live with the barbarians in freedom, rather than live in poverty and at the mercy of taxes imposed by the Roman Empire:

“Spain has been invaded and has suffered slaughter and devastation, but this is nothing new. During the last two years, while the sword of the enemy raged, she endured no harsher treatment from the barbarians than that which she had formerly suffered under the Romans for two hundred years, or than that which she experienced when ravaged for almost twelve years by the Germans in the reign of the emperor Gallienus. (...) whoever wished to go out and depart, found mercenaries, helpers, and defenders in the barbarians themselves. At that time, they were voluntarily offering this help; and though after killing everybody they could have carried off everything, they demanded only a trifling payment as a fee for their services and for the transportation of loads. Many persons indeed did take this course. But those who did not believe the Gospel of God, being obstinate, doubly obstinate if they had not even listened to it, did not flee the coming wrath and were justly overtaken and overwhelmed by a sudden attack of God’s anger. Nevertheless, soon afterward, the barbarians came to detest their swords, betook themselves to the plough, and are affectionately treating the rest of the Romans as comrades and friends, so that now among them there may be found some Romans who, living with the barbarians, prefer freedom with poverty to tribute-paying with anxiety among their own people.”

Orosius’ assessment is of course contaminated by religious views and, evidently, by an argumentative agenda (to prove that the present times were no more violent than those of the past under Roman rule) – a view not shared by Hydatius. Hence, we consider this coincidence between the two accounts significant, of the inhabitants of Spain suffering the tyranny of Roman tax collectors; the barbarian aspirations to settle down and also the naming of specific roman agents clearly in a crisis of loyalty between regional surviving interests and obeisance due to a distant and sometimes cruel formal sovereign. Hence, there was a time, in this conflictual Era, when Romans inhabitants of Spain preferred rather to cooperate in freedom (as Orosius clearly said and Hydatius lets subtly understand), sharing poverty with invaders, than to maintain a resistance in the name of Rome.

The fortresses that were still standing and the cities’ inhabitants were given, as slaves, to the barbarians in exchange for peace (*ciuitates et castella residui a plagis barbarorum per prouincias dominantium se subiciunt seruituti*). Thus, in the first half of the 5th century, matters had reached the point of no return,

where Rome's military might (such as the control of *castella*) and her political and administrative power were transferred to the newcomers, these each established in (specific) areas of the peninsula.

We know well how the central authorities of the Roman Empire responded (Hydatius, Chr. 22-23): in 416, with the Goths already settled in Narbonne since Autumn 413 (Chr. 19: *Gothi Narbonam ingressi uindemiae tempore*), Rome prompted (i.e. paid) the Visigothic King Vallia, the successor of Ataulf, to attack the Alans and the Siling Vandals in Baetica. As a result, a new protagonist, one mandated by Rome (Chr. 23: *romani nominis causa*), appeared among the muddled mix of barbarian tribes scattered around the Iberian Peninsula, confirming the precariousness of the peace brokered initially with the first invaders. In 418, the Visigoths drove the Siling Vandals out of Baetica and forced the surviving Alans, whose King Addax was slain, to seek protection under Gunderic, the King of the Vandals, established in Gallaecia (Chr. 24). In the midst of this *melée* of nations, an unsettling sense of loss of tribal identity emerges, resulting in the "fusions" about which Hydatius complains (Geary, 1999, p. 120). Thus, the surviving Alans, kingless and without a kingdom (*oblito regni nomine*), placed themselves under the protection of the Vandals in Gallaecia; other kingless barbarians were roaming hordes at the service of more powerful barbarians. Vallia, in turn, besieged the Sueves in the west, in western Gallaecia, in 419, but the intervention of the imperial army led by *comes hispaniarum* Asturius forced him to return to Baetica (Chr. 25-26). In this province, the *magister militum* Castinus, together with *auxilarii* Goths, once again stood against the Vandals but, defeated in 422, he returned to Tarracaensis. Thus, the south of the Peninsula was plundered (*depredantur, Hispaniis depredatis*) by the Vandals (Chr. 30): the Balearic Islands, Cartagena and Seville fell; they subsequently invaded Mauretania in 425 and settled there with their families in 429 (Chr. 5).

In 430, the Sueves pillaged central Gallaecia, but local resistance, under the cover of strong fortifications (*castella fortiora*) enabled (another precarious) peace treaty and a return of prisoners (*pacem quam ruperant familiarumque tenebantur redhibitione restaurant*). The next year, the Sueves broke the treaty and returned to pillaging. Hydatius identifies obsessively this lack of character in these new lords of Spain. The chronic defect of *inconstantia* of the barbarians, astonishes, we think, the profoundly roman mind of Hydatius, for whom pacts and laws must prevail. Sueves and Goths, exhibited constantly their *perfidia*, or inability to honour pacts (Burgess, 1993, p. 111): *Solito more perfidiae Lusitaniam depraedatur pars Suevorum Maldarum sequens*: "With their accustomed duplicity those Sueves who followed Maldras pillaged Lusitania". This was followed by the massacre of the Hispano-Roman population and their entry into Lisbon, under the pretext of celebrating peace (*ciuitas Ylixippona sub specie pacis intratur*); *ibid. Malduere Sueui in solitam perfidiam mersi regionem Galliciae adherentem flumine Durio depredantur*: "On Maldras' orders the Sueves reverted to their

usual treachery and pillaged that part of Gallaecia bordering the Durius River” (in 457, entry to the betrayal of the Goths in Asturica). (Burgess, 1993, p. 109): *Theodoricus [...] qui dolis et periuriis instructi, sicut eis fuerat imperatum, quam iam praedones ipsius sub specie Romanae ordinationis intrauerant, mentientes ad Sueuos qui remanserant iussam sibi expeditionem, ingrediuntur pace fucata solita arte perfidiae*: “They were well-versed in guile and deception, and, following instructions, through a feigned peace and expertise which they have developed in treachery they entered Asturica (...) falsely alleging that they had been sent on an expedition against the Sueves who had remained behind”).

This endures mutual mistrust and continuously needs to reaffirm loyalty, which is the attitude of Theodoricus. In 456, delegates of Theodoric, King of the Visigoths, reaffirmed his *fidelity* to the Empire by respecting the peace treaties signed between the Sueves and the Romans and between the Sueves and the Goths. However, the Sueves again broke the pact and invaded Tarraconensis (*remissis legatis utriusque partis atque omni iurationi uiolata* Suaeui Terraconensium, quae Romano imperio deseruiebat, inuadunt), plundering lands and cities and taking back prisoners to their territory in Gallaecia (Chr. 1.): (Burgess, 1993, p. 91): *Rursum Sueui initam cum Callicis pacem libata sibi occasionem conturbant*: “As soon as the opportunity presented itself, the Sueves again broke the peace they had made with the Gallaeci”. A new peace treaty with the Gallaeci in 438 (Chr. 14) led them, under King Rechila, to invade Emerita in Lusitania, and Seville in Baetica (Chr. 17). Rechila’s successor, a Catholic Christian, took back the north-west peninsula, plundering the most isolated regions of Gallaecia (Chr. 24, Burgess 1993, p. 99): (Rechiarius) *Obtento tamen regno sine mora ulteriores regiones inuadit ad praedam*: “However, no sooner had he gained royal power than he invaded the farthest reaches (of Gallaecia) in search of booty”. In 455, the Sueves pillaged Carthaginensis, which they had returned to the Romans (Chr. 31). In 456, comes Fronto was dispatched by the Romans as ambassador to the Sueves; the King of the Visigoths, Theodoric, also sent envoys to the king of the Sueves, with sound reasoning. (Burgess, 1993, p. 105): *Similiter et a rege Gothorum Theuderic, quia fidus Romano esset imperio, legati ad eosdem mittitur ut tam secum quam cum Romano imperio, quia uno essent pacis foedere copulati, iurati foederis promissa seruarent*. “Likewise, because he was faithful to the Roman Empire, Theodoric, the King of Goths, also sent envoys to the Sueves to ensure that they kept, as much with him as with the Roman Empire – since they were united by a single peace treaty – the promises made in their sworn treaty”. Burgess, 1993, p. 117: *post cuius mox egressum de Gallicia Sueui promissionum suarum ut semper fallaces et perfidos diuersa loca infelicis Gallaeciae solito depraedantur*: “Soon, after Cyrila’s departure from Gallaecia, the Sueves, treacherous and characteristically false to their promises, pillaged different parts of unhappy Gallaecia in their usual manner”. Immediately after hosting the envoys sent by King Theodoric in Lugo, the Sueves went back to their usual disloyal, violent and greedy behaviour. The

pillaging of Conimbriga between 464-465, with the abduction of the Cantaber family also occurred under guile (Burgess, 1993, p. 117): *Sueui Conymbrigam dolose ingressi familiam nobilem Cantabris poliant et captiuam abducunt matrem cum filiis*. "Having treacherously entered Conimbriga, the Sueves robbed the noble family of Cantaber, kidnapping the mother and her sons".

Such disobedience led to Theodoric invading Hispania with a vast army, at the behest of the Roman Emperor Avitus, in 456, taking on both Sueves and Goths near Asturica. Victory over the latter accelerated the Gothic occupation of Bracara. According to Hydatius, this victory was gained without bloodshed, but the disregard for Christians, their places of worship and the ordained, the clergy and virgins of God was notorious: the sacrileges saw sanctuaries and altars torn down and churches desecrated through the stabling of pack animals. Has a fatalistic event, the AD 409 episode is repeated in Hydatius' narrative: Bracara fell at the same time as the Empire's capital. (Arce, 1995, pp. 219–229):

"Soon Theodoric, King of the Goths, in obedience to the wishes and command of the emperor Avitus, entered Spain with his own vast army. King Rechiarius and a horde of Sueves met him twelve miles from Asturica at the river called Urbicus, on Friday, 5 October, but soon after the onset of the engagement, they were defeated. The Suevic rank and file were slaughtered, some were captured, but most were put into flight [...] With his army, King Theodoric made for Bracara, the most distant city of Gallaecia, and on Sunday, 28 October he sacked it, an action which, although accomplished without bloodshed, was nevertheless tragic and lamentable enough. A great many Romans were taken captive; the basilicas of the saints were stormed; altars thrown down and broken up; virgins of God abducted from the city, but not violated; the clergy stripped right down to the shame of their nakedness; the whole population regardless of sex along with little children dragged from the holy places of sanctuary; the sacred place filled with the sacrilegious presence of mules, cattle and camels. This sack partially revived the examples of Heavenly wrath written about Jerusalem" (Burgess, 1993, p. 107).

Goths are not liberating Bracara, they are in a punitive mission, exhibiting the hostility against what, under their eyes, can be seen has "heretics and barbarians' collaborators". Once again, this particularly traumatic event prompts a regressive interpretation, with a recollection of the divine wrath which befell Jerusalem, as prophesied in the Bible (Dan 9: 27; Mt 24: 15), but which in fact occurred in AD 70. Hydatius' description shows a certain ambiguity: thus, Theodoric, mandated by the Roman emperor, took prisoners from among the Romans of Bracara; he forced the faithful out of their churches, stripped them of their ritual garments, but respected their modesty; his troops then tore down and desecrated these edifices. If this aggression and lack of respect could be perceived as a reaction of the Arian Goths against Catholic Christianity, on

the other hand, the taking of Roman prisoners was geared more at aiming to maintain civic order and to counter those local groups who were collaborating and cooperating with the settled Sueves, following decades of submission. This ‘benevolent ambiguity’ regarding the Goths continues in the narration of their invasion of Lusitania: as he prepared to order the ransacking of Emerita in 456, Theodoric stopped himself when the martyr Saint Eulalia (Burgess, 1993, p. 109) appeared (*beatae Eulaliae martyris terre turostentis*), prompting them instead to enter the city without violence.

However, no such respect was shown when Asturica and also Palentia fell. Here there were no political, legal or religious constraints to prevent the pillaging of towns and lands (Burgess, 1993, p. 111).

“They broke into holy churches, tore down and destroyed the altars, and carried off every holy object, both decorative and practical; they kidnapped two bishops whom they found there with all their clergy and took them into captivity; they led the weaker people of either sex into pitiful captivity; they set fire to the remaining empty houses of the city and laid waste parts of the fields. The city of Palentia suffered a fate like that of Asturica and was destroyed by the Goths (...); after large numbers of their band had been killed, the survivors returned to Gaul.”

The interesting reference in Hydatius to two bishops abducted at Palentia implies that this city was perhaps a place of refuge for local/regional clerics, either because of damages to their dioceses or even as a result of religious dissent between Priscillianists and Catholics – although this latter is hard to believe since the orthodox Hydatius would surely have noted such an antagonistic partisan (Díaz & Menendez Bueyes, 2005, p. 294).

Despite such losses, the garrison of *castrum Coviacense*, thirty miles from Asturica, still had the resources to kill many Goths in a drawn-out battle and to force survivors to flee to Gaul. This *diutinus certamen* as a strategy of war by and against the Goths demonstrated the nature of the military clashes: rarely formal battles in set locations, but rather a slow, progressive wearing-down of a vast region, via captures of and damages to against cities and lands.

In 458, the Sueves continued their seemingly brutal aggression within Lusitania, entering the city of Lisbon under the pretext of a truce (*sub specie pacis*) – one negotiated by means of delivering ransoms – while other forces moved on to pastures new, namely Gallaecia, plundering sites and farms along the banks of the Douro river en route (Burgess, 1993, p. 111) two groups of Sueves, one led by Maldras in Lusitania, and the other by Remismund in Gallaecia. Maldras attacked the fortress of Portucale (*Portocale castrum*). The assassination of Roman noblemen escalated the hostility between the Sueves and Gallaeci. Simultaneously, the Heruli *crudelissime* pillaged the region of Lugo (Burgess, 1993, p. 111) along the coast on their way to Baetica.

At the end of 459, with a ‘most firm’ pact – *firmissima inter se pacis iura* – (and by using the superlative, again Hydatius highlights the difficulty to bring these peoples into serious commitments) signed between the Emperor Majorian and the Gothic King Theodoric, a strategy seems to emerge designed to take back control of Hispania. But, in May 460, Majorian, seeking to enter Hispania through Carthaginensis, saw his efforts thwarted by traitors who sabotaged the ships of his armada in an attack against North Africa, and who warned off the Vandals (Burgess, 1993, p. 113). Meanwhile, the Goths were once again sent to the north of the Peninsula at the behest of *magister militiae* Nepotianus and by *comes* Suniericus (a barbarian serving Rome) to attack the Sueves; they achieved what Hydatius calls a *umbra pacis* between the Gallaeci and the Sueves (Burgess, 1993, p. 113). Hydatius was not at all hopeful: Suniericus retook control of Scallabis (present-day Santarém) while the Vandal Gaeseric sent envoys to Majorian in Gaul to seek peace; but the emperor was assassinated on his journey back to Rome in a plot (Burgess, 1993, p. 115) crafted by his Western (and barbarian) generalissimo Flavius Ricimer.

Hydatius’ tone conveys the seriousness of the events and the profound Roman despair: Peace was only a shadow, the emperor who sought to be personally involved in Rome’s regaining of sovereignty over the Peninsula and in controlling the federate powers states to the political governance of Rome, gone. Significantly, cosmic and climatic *mirabilia* came together, as indicators of an apocalyptic disturbance. Hydatius’ narrative is marked by these episodes, which allude to a cosmic disturbance foreshadowing the Second Coming of Christ (Mt 24, 7-8; 10-12; 29; Mc 13:24-27; Lc 17:22-31; 21:25-28). We provide here only an excerpt of the end of his narrative (Burgess, 1993, p. 123):

“The year proved unusually harsh at this particular time and the weather and the fruit of winter, spring, summer and autumn were confused. A number of signs and portents were also witnessed in areas of Gallaecia. In the River Minius, about five miles from the municipium of Aquae Leae, four fish were caught: as the pious and Christian men who caught them related, they were unique appearance and type, being inscribed with Hebrew and Greek letters, but with the numbers of Spanish aeras in Latin, which thus embraced the cycle of the 365th year. A few months later, not far from the same municipium, some type of seeds fell from the sky; these seeds were very green like grass and looked like lentils but were bitter to the taste”.

The *mirabilia* are introduced in order: first, the muddled seasons, universal; then, at a local level, regional *signa*, with disruption within the animal kingdom: new species which bring *indicia*; finally, also at a local level, there is disturbance in the plant kingdom: bitter seeds falling from the sky, instead of seeds sprouting from the ground (Burgess, 1993, p. 123).

Despite efforts to restore peace by envoys (Cyrila and Remismund) sent to Gallaecia by Theodoric, who would soon be acknowledged as the legitimate King of the Sueves⁴, we are told that lawless disorder reigned over the relationship *inter Gallaecos et Sueuos* (Burgess, 1993, p. 117). In fact, it could be argued that the violence has a formal dimension, between the forces that fought and those that retreated, once the lines of peace had been drawn. However, the mobility of the 5th century left a trail of settlements of different nations, among whom interaction or co-existence was problematic, despite the biased words of mutual support in Orosius.

Indeed, relations between the Sueves and the Visigoths – with the latter seeking to exert influence over the former – were tenuous at best: Ajax, a Greek Arian, was sent with the support of Theodoric and the Goths to indoctrinate the Sueves, but this caused the Sueves to react violently on Aunona⁵. Theodoric also sent embassies to Remismund, who rejected them; Euric, Theodoric's successor, was also rejected. The expedition to fight the Vandals, which saw the participation of both Goths and Sueves (equally summoned), failed due to the hostility of the Sueves, who apparently went back to their fickle ways: the Goths returned to Lusitania, only for the Sueves to cross into that territory, destroying, in 467, Conimbriga, and capturing some citizens and forcing others to flee (Burgess, 1993, p. 119):

“Likewise, the Sueves who, after the dismissal of the Gothic envoys, had been dispersed in their usual manner throughout various places in search of booty, were also recalled, but a few months later the king of Sueves himself crossed to Lusitania. Deceived in a time of peace, Conimbriga was plundered. Its houses were destroyed along with a certain part of walls, its inhabitants were captured and dispersed, and both the city and its territory were left desolate”

⁴ Peace between the Sueves and Visigoths was reached upon the death of Frumarius, and Remismund, backed by Theodoric, restored sovereignty and peace among the Sueves. As a sign of peace, Theodoric, in Gaul, sent Remismund gifts, weapons, and Remismund's wife, who has been held hostage (Burgess, 1993, p. 117).

⁵ 466. Burgess, 1993, p. 119. *Plebs Aunonensis* (twice); 121, Ol. 312, 2 *Aunonenses*. Yet there is no Roman city in Galicia known by this name. With three occurrences in the chronicle of Hydatius, the term used is always the ethnonym. The way the conflict between the Sueves and the Aunonenses is described does not imply the taking or attacking of positions, but rather a conflict between tribes and communities, with no territorial impact. The issue is left hanging, but given how the invasions of the cities are described in the chronicle, the *Aunonenses Plebes* event appears to be more of a social conflict rather than a dispute over land. See Diaz & Menendez Bueyes, 2005; Díaz, 2009, p. 208, in which he suggests the hypothesis that it is a misinterpretation of the manuscripts by *auregenses*, which Hydatius also mentions.

In late 468, the cities of Lusitania were again subjected to instability in their sovereignty with ambiguous acts from roman population: thus, the Goths, under orders from the Emperor, forced Emerita to deliver both the Suevic ambassadors. Lisbon was occupied by the Sueves after the betrayal of a preminent citizen named Lusidius. Under the eyes of Hydatius, we suppose, in this case, that it was without significative violence (there is a difference between *occupare* and *praedare*, et *uastare*). It can be perceived even a kind of popular complicity that justified, as a consequence, the attack and pillaging by the Goths for all Lusitania, with both, Sueves and Romans indistinctly persecuted (Burgess, 1993, p. 121). This means that for the locals, especially romans installed or searching to install, roman sovereignty was not an absolute value to follow, and the Goths as emperor's representatives seemed unlawful and noxious. Suevic advances against Lusitania and the *conuentus* of Asturica were followed by fierce reprisals by the Goths, who pillaged the lands (Burgess, 1993, p. 123), prompting King Remismund to send the governor of Lisbon, Lusidius, as well as some Suevic subjects to the Emperor at Rome. Hydatius' choice of words is expressive, showing a kind of tiredness and experience in confronting the same distressfull events: *Gothi circa eundem conuentum pari hostilitate deseuiunt; partes etiam Lusitaniae depredantur*. "The Goths vented their rage with equal enmity around the same conuentus and also pillaged parts of Lusitania". Hydatius does not tell us about this embassy, but the embassy is very significant in showing the Sueves seeking an end to Gothic aggression and looking for acknowledgement of the legitimacy of their own occupation.

CONCLUSION

The use of the *Chronica* of Hydatius as a leitmotif to understand and explain the turbulent 5th-century events that transformed the political and social landscape of Hispania requires some brief conclusions:

Firstly, we should note the author's failure to record the material and economic conditions of the Hispanic provinces: for example, nothing is said specifically about agriculture, industry, mining or trade. If reading Hydatius' account alone, we learn nothing about the impact of the arrival and machinations of the new tribes on the population's livelihood. We can at least deduce that such activity sought to be maintained – to feed and supply cities especially – but was inevitably disrupted by the barbarian groups who, in their seemingly random movements (despite having been agreed spaces to settle), are shown as pillaging sites and lands, and taking hostages and prisoners, causing, in some tragic circumstances, the depopulation and destruction of cities and neighboring areas (as claimed for Asturica and Conimbriga). Yet the cyclical return of these barbarians to areas previously attacked reveals the ability of sites and people to endure and to restore activities to replenish resources – a regeneration that, of course, also drew the barbarian groups back. This is a known violence method,

used even today in contexts of informal conflict or of dissolution of State's authority: in their passages, the lords of war prefer to secure cyclical provisions, by letting some population to work and some economic capacity, terrorizing them enough in order to obtain submission and new crops and goods in a next way back. Meanwhile, the taking of hostages from among the *nobiles* and the *Romani* afforded the barbarian newcomers the opportunity to negotiate ransoms or temporary peace treaties.

But what can we see of any mass displacement of civilians, explicitly creating the effect that of *desertus*, *solitudo*, *uastatio* – the rupture of human presence in some places? Were some transferred to settlement areas assigned to the barbarians? In a context of prolonged instability, these native population groups would have formed a valuable workforce and perhaps were exploited also as soldiers. In the context of a durable conflict, it also creates abandoned areas, hostile also to the enemies' armies and peoples. According to Hydatius, the barbarian strategy led to an ethnic *mixtura* in several of the provinces of Hispania, in particular Gallaecia and Lusitania.

What consequences can we highlight in this context? We can note in Hydatius' narrative the loss of a sense of *uicinitas*, the fragmentation of roman cities net structure, and the end of the vision in which the Empire was no longer seen as a certain and stable in the future, key to a Roman way of life. Communications between the major cities of each of the provinces will have been hindered not only by the mobility of barbarian forces, but also by people (from towns, lands) in flight and by areas largely devoid of human presence. Similarly, the link between the city and countryside, essential to Roman culture, suffered a severe decay. The *ciuitates* or *castella* (*Spani per ciuitates et castella residui*, Burgess, 1993, p. 83; *castella tutiora*, Burgess, 1993, p. 91) were able to retain some bargaining and military power, specially to proceed to sudden attacks and to take hostages as a way to obtain from the invaders, not the retreat, but a more controlled and peaceful way to occupy territory. The rural areas appear to have been constantly pillaged. We should, therefore, rationalize Life in the strongholds was possible so long as the limits the tragic situation of Bracara, with the entry of the Sueves at the onset of the invasions, or the opening of Lisbon to the Gothic invasion in 368.

As significant is the loss of unity between the provinces, once subject to Roman law, which, even with the precarious pact of 418, came to be divided among multiple peoples averse to acknowledging the sovereignty delegated by the Empire. Nevertheless, this brokered sovereignty served as the basis for co-existence and to explore relationships between natives and the new masters, only to be interrupted, however, by the violent actions of the Goths, tasked by Rome to re-establish (imperial) order in the Hispanic provinces occupied and disrupted by hostile Sueves, Heruls and Vandals. For this reason, the Gothic attack in the mid-5th century made no distinction between invaders and native

population groups, Lusitanians, Gallaeci and Romans, who were already partly converted into an ethnic mixture, as happened in Emerita and Lisbon.

As this merging of identities happens, so we see the growing sense of belonging to a religious identity, which nonetheless became a source of conflict between the local Catholics and invading Arian Goths, or among these and the sects, notably Manichaeans and Priscillianists. In his Preface, Hydatius laments the heresies and the perverted ecclesiastical order in his native Gallaecia.

Also significant to a 'Roman way of life,' at least in an ideological and rhetoric level (which is relevant in a literary text as the *Chronica*) is the continuous reference to the lack of *fides* inherent in barbarian acts, with severe consequences in roman landscape cohesion: Rome's limited ability to intervene in the country is clear: she intervened through treaties in which she "purchased" security or a precarious formal presence from the barbarians or such was extorted (that is, the new masters promised to act on behalf of Rome), through envoys sent to talk with the leaders of the occupying forces and, mainly, through the allied Goths. Perhaps this is why Hydatius tolerated the Goths more than the Sueves, using the term *perfidia* only once in reference to the former, whilst repeatedly using it to refer to the Sueves, since it was the Goths who intervened in the Peninsula under imperial orders. With bigger problems in the East, in Eastern Europe and in Italy itself, the Empire obviously had to use its military forces carefully to fight for the survival of the very idea of the Empire, which it managed to do by turning its enemies into friends.

In his recording of events, Hydatius is the voice of Gallaecia, speaking from the ends of the earth, but making his region the point of observation, through his eyes. From his perspective, as someone who participated in and experienced the events, the Roman world as he saw it in Gallaecia and Lusitania fell; events in other parts of the Empire were reported to him in vague references and in such a way that they confirmed his theory of a generalized end of days, and yet in keeping with divine providence. In this regard, Hydatius' voice too is contaminated by the fragmentation of the Empire as a universal whole: a world transformed in its material, political, economic and social circumstances, made worse by irreparable levels of discomfort and instability, but which rested upon other factors of continuity and hope – even if Hydatius did not see them as positive: the endurance of Christianity as an identity and an anchor for new conditions of commonwealth and the fusion of nations that did not shake the basic foundations of the Roman matrix.

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FROM *INVISIBLE* TO *TANGIBLE* POWER IN LATE ANTIQUE RURAL *LUSITANIA*: BETWEEN TEXT AND MATERIAL EVIDENCE

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ABSTRACT: This paper analyses settlement and land evolution in the territory of *Augusta Emerita* (Mérida), the capital of the late Roman province of *Lusitania*, seeking to contrast the archaeological data related to the new occupation profiles of the sites and evidence for *villa* life and changes in ownership, with the perception conveyed by the *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium* on this specific phenomenon of rural change. The resulting image will contribute to enhancing current understanding of the local context and its dynamics in *Lusitania* after the collapse of the Empire.

KEYWORDS: *Lusitania*, *villa*, Christianity, power, bishops

1. POWER AND AUTHORITY: VISIBILITY AND INVISIBILITY

Following the break-up of Roman Imperial authority, the territory of the *Lusitania* province underwent profound transformations. Similar to changes in other Western provinces, *Lusitania* did not escape the dynamics of a time affected by profound (although geographically not uniform) economic, social and political upheavals, and by the consolidation of a new cultural and religious reality. Between the 5th and 7th centuries, the rural (and urban) settlement network suffers a downturn, with properties and estates being abandoned, and architectural norms and lifeway sat *villae* undergo notable, even drastic, modifications. These changes, among others, can be perceived as the abandonment of the *otium* and *convivium* that had marked the lifestyles and material expressions of rich landlords who had owned parts of the countryside in the previous centuries; as the resultant emergence of new communities; and the economic transformation of the rural exploitation model, which devolved from

a large-scale exploitation of agricultural resources to a model based on extensive, but much less sophisticated exploitation.

In part related to these changes is the growth and influence of Christianity, which in time modified sensibilities according to a new cultural and moral paradigm, leading to new ways of perceiving rural populations, sites and the territory. However, any Christian presence in the territory was relatively muted prior to the 4th century AD (Maciel, 1996, p. 31), and in this respect archaeology to some extent mitigates the reference made by Cyprian of Carthage (in *Epistle* 67, written in AD 254) to the “Christian people” of some cities, including *Emerita Augusta* – this roughly coinciding with the first martyrdoms documented in the Peninsula in 259 (with prominent victims being Fructuosus, Bishop of Tarraco, and his deacons Augurius and Eulogius), and with later records of numbers of martyrs, including Eulalia, during the wave of persecutions led by Diocletian. Material evidence of Christian presence becomes stronger subsequently,¹ attested, for example, by epigraphic records, namely two inscriptions, one funerary and the other of AD 380 possibly related to the construction of a basilica or a place of worship (Mateos Cruz, 1995, p. 241), but also by the presence of bishops from *Emerita* in the Church Councils in the 4th century².

Although this late expression of Christianity may be explained by the fact that *Augusta Emerita* was, by this stage, very closely bound to the traditional canons and dominated by an equally traditional political elite³, it was this elite

¹ Arce, 2002, p. 31: “Aunque escasos, los testimonios del cristianismo en *Augusta Emerita* durante el siglo IV dejan entrever una comunidad cristiana que probablemente no era muy numerosa pero que a nivel jerárquico, y posiblemente como consecuencia de la situación preminente de la capital, se muestra muy activa y influente; por otra parte, el rápido desarrollo en los siglos siguientes de los cristianos de Mérida es la mejor muestra de que el germen era lo suficientemente importante en el siglo IV. No obstante, para la época que estudiamos, la «topografía cristiana» de Mérida parece reducida exclusivamente al *tumulus* de Eulalia y a la basilica de Santa María.” For an overview of the situation in *Augusta Emerita*, see Sastre de Diego, 2011.

² The numerical presence of bishops recorded in the Councils will always be low. For instance, in AD 308 the bishop Liberius was present at the council of Iliberri, where 19 bishops and 24 priests were present; and in 314, the same bishop attended the council of Arles, but on that occasion was the only Spanish bishop present. Bowes, 2005, p. 237, observes that «Hispania remains a starkly under-bishoped province by any standard. The Spanish bishop would thus have found his geographic area of responsibility much larger than that of his Gallic or Italian colleagues, and his hold on the furthest regions of his diocese would have depended very much upon his personal interest and energies.»

³ Arce, 2002, p. 16, states: ‘En *Emerita* residía el *vicarius hispaniarum*. [...] El *officium* de un *vicarius* venía a incluir unas 300 personas, y el de gobernadores provinciales en torno a las 100. Toda esta enorme cantidad de burócratas constituían una *militia non armata*, y eran la esencia misma de la organización del poder tardorromano’. It is worth noting that in Merida the major performance venues continued in use: the theatre and the circus (for which the tombstone of Sabinianus – curiously a Christian *auriga* – demonstrates the social impact of the races), as well the forum.

who, progressively Christianised, in fact came to ensure that urban dynamics, trade flows and distinctive cultural life that attracted people and ideas to the city from across the Mediterranean, were maintained. In this way the *redefinition* of the city was supported by the activities of Christian groups and leaders, who in time became notable landlords hierarchically organised. They also became involved in maintaining or renovating the infrastructures (such as city walls, streets and bridge, plus other projects in public areas), and in ordering the urban community (Arce, 2002; Gómez Fernández, 2003).

When the Emperor Diocletian promoted *Emerita Augusta* to capital of the *Diocesis Hispaniarum*, this reinforced the city's prestige and strategic importance⁴. In the 5th century, *Emerita* survived the passage and damages of the Suevi, Vandals, Alans and Visigoths, and in the 6th century even experienced a renaissance: the decaying pagan and monumental classical public spaces were offset by Christian ecclesiastical powers, who built and populated new architectural spaces (or reshaped the pre-existing ones) (Díaz, 2003, p. 135), overseen by the most senior authorities of the Catholic Church, namely the bishops, who exponentially increased their influence in the city.

However, while archaeological excavations within the city have led to the discovery of several monuments and structures (notably the Santa Eulalia Basilica and a structure interpreted as a *xenodochium*) and so provided strong guides as to how the urban zone was reconfigured, far less secure is our picture regarding rural areas. Although the archaeological data generally confirm that land usage was active (cf Rodríguez Martín, 2002; Christie, 2006, p. 6), the nature of this is on many levels substantially different from the classical model of land occupation that had prevailed in *Lusitania* in the previous centuries. Firstly, the concentration of properties in the hands of prominent *domini*, presumably largely belonging to the old Hispanic-Roman aristocracy and to members of the new Visigothic court, led to the progressive disappearance of medium-sized productive units and the subsequent abandonment of some *villae*. The difficulties in maintaining or reconstructing the imperial-period water infrastructures (notably aqueducts) also led to the gradual abandonment of larger-scale irrigation farming, to be replaced by a more extensive and less specialised agriculture, as well as by the practice of pastoralism⁵. With regard to production, although it is

⁴ Cruz Villalón, 1985, p. 28, observes: "Desde la reforma administrativa llevada a cabo por Diocleciano, se convirtió en la capital gubernativa de la *Diocesis Hispaniarum* que comprendía también la Mauritania Tingitania, dignidad que aún queda documentada claramente a finales del siglo IV. (...) La primacía de la ciudad de Mérida en España quedó testimoniada por Ausonio en el *Ordo Civium nobiliorum*, donde Mérida es incluida entre las ciudades más destacadas del Imperio, y en el mismo siglo IV, también por Prudencio, que en el *Peristephanon* alude a la ilustre colonia de Mérida, a la que califica de floreciente y rica."

⁵ Chavarría Arnau, 2007, p. 81: «Las pizarras visigodas se refieren a caballos (39 y 42), a

difficult to analyse what the economic base of the region may have been, given the current lack of relevant archaeological data, documentary evidence reveal that, from the 5th century onwards, weak currency circulation led to major economic problems (Chavarría Arnau, 2007, p. 86), meaning that the basic method of payment now became centred on the exchange of goods, namely cereals⁶. Therefore, although the reconfiguration of economic space, which had become increasingly concentrated and less specialised, arguably indicates an “end of complexity” (Ward-Perkins, 2006), there was in fact still a combination of complex relationships that culminated in the reorganisation of the local and regional aspirations of populations and in the creation of a new political and institutional legitimacy.

In terms of contemporary written sources, the *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium* (VSPE), an anonymous work, undoubtedly panegyric and structured into five narratives, are a significant testimony of events within the city between AD 530 and 620, and a prime source for understanding the social, political and religious conflicts that afflicted *Lusitania* from the sixth century. Setting aside the diverse historical and political questions that have been very widely studied and debated with regard to the VSPE (notably those on ecclesiastical power relations between *Emerita* and Toledo, and the tensions emerging from heresies and other dogmatic differences; and, from a literary point of view, questions of intertextual relations with other hagiographic works from the Western late antique tradition), these texts are a key source through which to analyse and contrast those archaeological data which reveal changes in the rural landscape, as well to help understand the new forms of land occupation and how these changes were projected in the perceptions of the local community.

One notable episode in the VSPE of value in this regard is the description of the process of transferring an enormous property, offered in an individual capacity by one of the most distinguished inhabitants of *Augusta Emerita*, namely a senator and *illustris vir*, to a bishop named Paulus who had miraculously cured the senator's wife (VSPE IV, pp. 1-18; Diaz, 2003). Later, on the death of the bishop's heir (his nephew Fidel), the Church of *Augusta Emerita* inherited this entire estate, thereby becoming the largest property owner in the whole of *Hispania*.

yeguas (43), vacas y terneras (uitulas) y novillos (*nouellos*) (54), corderos (54), ovejas (75 y 97), carneros (76 y 97), cerdos (92) y marranas (*scrona*) (54).» The author cites some archaeological data indicating the maintenance of a mixed system of livestock supplemented by the practice of hunting. In general, the osteological register remains constant in relation to the pattern under the Empire but with two differences: a growing importance of cattle and a loss of exotic species.

⁶ In the Visigothic *pizarras*, in the Salamanca region, payment in grain is attested. See Velázquez, 1989.

The concentration of lands to which this source refers would certainly have been a more common reality, enabling a new rural landscape to be created that extended over vast areas. This phenomenon confirms the trend by which the bishops, together with the major landowners, became both spiritual leaders and secular authorities in the political-institutional network of *Lusitania*, and the driving force behind the emergence and sustainability of the new systemic functions. As Pérez Sanchez observes, «el obispo, acorde con los fenómenos sociales imperantes en la época, desempeña en las ciudades de manera clara el papel de patrón, de protector, a través del ejercicio de la caridad mediante obras que son en gran medida continuadoras de las prácticas evergéticas anteriores. El poder del obispo se sustenta en una labor social de carácter redistributivo [...]» (Pérez Sánchez, 2002, p. 251)

In other words, the bishop was established in the community as the pastor who sheltered and protected, linking the Christian community by a unified worldview, structured by divine morality.

Significant in this regard is the catalogue of the works (as well the political *res gestae*) carried out by Masona (VSPE V, 3), the successor of Fidel in the city's episcopate: the text tells us that Masona, a man of great wealth, founded many monasteries, providing them with extensive properties, several churches as well as a *xenodochium* to welcome travellers and sick people, giving orders to uphold all men, free or slave, Christian or Jew. Similarly, his charitable actions are widely listed: he answered all the requests of the poor and instructed a deacon of the monastery of Santa Eulalia to respond to any who were in dire need; and, in keeping with the moral qualities a bishop should display, these efforts were always focused on the public sphere⁷. Equally important is Masona's psychological portrait, revealing a man of humble spirit, of immaculate conscience and a mind free from malice; his constancy did not change as a result of gains or losses; unflappable in the face of adversity, prepared for anything, he was always patient and firm; his expression never changed either in joy or in sorrow; and in all situations he retained a pure humility and serenity (VSPE V, 3), even in exile (VSPE V, 6).

This portrait of Masona presented in the VSPE includes three important features: his activity as sponsor for the construction of ecclesiastical works; his close connection to the community in which he acts as a both *reparator* and saviour⁸; and his personal qualities which resemble the sage's virtues in the Stoic

⁷ VSPE V, 3, 11: *nihilque auferebat, et ultro cunctis concedebat, donabat multa, largiebat plurima, ditabat munificentia universos beneficiis, et, munificentia largus habebatur. Omnes ab illo augebantur, donis ac diuitiis locuplebantur, et non tantum fratribus et amicis, quam et ipsis servulis ecclesiae se muneribus largum, ultra quam credi potest, praebebat.*

⁸ Particularly interesting is the reference to his quasi-euergetic role as a distributor of wine, oil and honey to the *civibus urbis aut rusticis de ruralibus* (VSPE V, 3, pp. 4-9). See Diaz, 2000, p. 26.

tradition. The portrait's rhetoric implies therefore a double aspect: on the one hand, it is a narrative and an expressive medium demonstrating the characteristics and actions of a distinguished man among his community; on the other hand, this portrait works as a universal *exemplum* to be admired and imitated. However, contrary to what happens in, for instance, martyrdom narratives, in which the martyrs are characterized almost solely by their Christian qualities (unwavering faith, strength in adversity, etc.), the construction of Masona's portrait, in this diverse historical context, centres on tangible actions within public sphere and involving public perception (in this regard it has more resemblance to Homeric heroes, whose recognition and honour depended on public perception, than to Stoic philosophers). Indeed, such episcopal interventions in the public sphere, both physically and socially, would be decisive to the growth of Christianity and the Church in terms of social and power relations: since the 5th century (and even the 4th century given state donations) the Church had become a major property owner, both in an institutional sense and in terms of its individual members, some of whom held large properties⁹ inherited from their families or acquired as rewards; this meant that an ecclesiastical career enabled individuals to act «como un auténtico *villicus*, un administrador patrimonial»¹⁰. In this respect, the concentration of landholdings could come to have a decisive influence on the Christian management of the territory – a management based on the precept of working in direct contact with communities and legitimised by «procedure» or, in other words, by *visible power*.

This visible power was also manifested in the landscape. In fact, one of the essential concerns of the Catholic hierarchies in the early days of Christianity lay precisely in the «*domestication of the rural landscape*» and in removing from here residual secular pagan rites. As such, these *possessores* stamped their *fundi* and luxurious *villae* with an imprint that attested to their new Christian ownership. This imprinting took place at different times and might be organised either by members of the local elites or by bishops¹¹, who transformed their estates into physical and symbolic landmarks in the new Christian topography.

⁹ Maciel, 1996, p. 39, observing: «[...] também na Lusitania os bispos possuíram propriedades rurais fundiárias, quer para produção quer para descanso ou *otium* como os seus congéneres da Itália ou da Gália, seja por pertencerem a famílias aristocráticas detentoras de grandes *fundi* no campo, seja como administradores dos bens eclesiásticos, desde que *Constantinus* distribuiu à Igreja massa *fundorum*.»

¹⁰ Díaz, 1994, p. 307. The ecclesiastical structure also offered the possibility of a career – something attractive at a time when the *cursus honorum* had stagnated or even expired. Although the entry criteria for an ecclesiastical career were tightened, the phenomenon was not restricted to elites. On this subject, see Jones, 1973, pp. 920-929. Canon 18 in the Mérida Council of AD 666 clearly reflects the concept: *dominus et presbiter*, where the priest is attested as the administrator of both the productions and the labourers.

¹¹ Sanz Serrano, 2017, pp. 328-329: «A ellos podemos sumar los numerosos ejemplos

One of the structures most affected in this process was the *villa*. Whilst the changing powers and politics had led to the abandonment of some, within *Lusitania* a relatively continuous occupation of these spaces has been recorded throughout the 6th century and even into the 7th.¹² However, from the 5th century onwards, it is no longer possible to speak of the *villa* in terms of the classical rural complex, since even where still occupied, these sites had been adapted to meet the needs of the new faith and of different economic priorities. It is not surprising, therefore, that places of worship come to be established in these, as confirmed archaeologically at various sites across the Mérida region (Fuentes Dominguez, 1995, pp. 235-236; Sastre de Diego, 2011). The phenomenon of structural change was not entirely new, being the continuation of a mechanism of change that can already be identified at some *villae* in the 3rd century, linked to the weakening of civil prestige and public careers and to modified outlooks. This trend was reinforced in the 5th and 6th centuries, following the definitive breakdown of Roman imperial control, and accompanied the replacement of public offices by Christian power. As part of this process, the classical concept of the *villa* suffers a gradual implementation of a less ordered form of habitation structured around a symbol of authority, which is now symbolic and religious. In other words, the *villa* as a «*conceptual paradigm of rural life*» effectively ended in the late 5th century or during the 6th century¹³, surviving only in isolated situations but by then already devoid of the content which the original concept implied¹⁴.

However, this adjustment to new times and uses was not uniform: in some cases it involved an ongoing grandeur and in others a simplicity of expression. The work by Bishop Braulio of Zaragoza (ca. 590-651) provides an outline image of properties in the middle region of the Ebro Valley, showing that «Toda esta zona parece ser un espacio habitado por aristócratas con propiedades de ámbito local que siguen la tradición tardorromana, al menos a lo largo de todo el siglo VI» (Wickham, 2008, p. 330). In the *Gallia* territories, the classic guide is Sidonius

presentados por Ildefonso de Toledo en su *De viris illustribus*, obispos a los que podemos considerar como grandes transformadores de los territorios, *castra*, *vici*, *pagi* y *villae* que les pertenecían por herencia familiar. Por lo tanto es evidente la acción de las elites cristianas, poseedoras de grandes predios y lujosas villas, en el fenómeno de la transformación del espacio rural y de su cristianización con la fundación de iglesias y de monasterios y la imposición de la nueva fe por las buenas o por la fuerza a siervos y esclavos que dependía de esta nobleza y que en los concilios aparecen denominados como *familia ecclesiae*.»

¹² Chavarría Arnau, 2006, p. 32, states that Higinus reports that, in his time, several *possessores* had acquired multiple properties; however, while some of these properties were maintained, others might well have been left abandoned or vacant and uncultivated.

¹³ Wickham, 2008, p. 670. The phenomenon occurred at different paces, with peripheral territories again the first to be abandoned: for 5th-century Britain, see Dark, 2004.

¹⁴ In many cases, these were already extinct: see Chavarría Arnau, 2007.

Apollinaris (mid-5th century), who describes an active landscape of residential *villae* where poetry recitals and receptions were held and whose atmosphere was, in general, conservative or even one of splendid and magnificent places that ignore a ruined world¹⁵. Thus, the author gives a portrait of his property in *Avitacum* (*Ep.* II, 2, pp. 4-13) which appears, even in these times, ostensibly pagan and *classical*: the *villa* has a porch made up of numerous columns, from where one can contemplate the lake; a watercourse that feeds water to the still fully operational baths building; whilst for the majestic main building, the reception room has a *stibadium*, and there is a winter triclinium (*triclinium hiemale*) and another *triclinium* used by his wife (*triclinium matronalis*), by whom he had inherited the property.

The same impression is evident in *De reditu suo* by Rutilius Namatianus at the start of the 5th century, who, as a senator and the owner of extensive properties, describes journey back via (a damaged Italy) to his estates in Gaul. Despite some evidence of damage and even destruction in the cities especially, and of an instability and insecurity experienced by those travelling on the roads, Rutilius' vision of life in the *villae* that he visited in fact remains one of remarkable tranquillity, in which normal activities were still being pursued.

Such accounts and reports present us with an interpretation of continuity: regarding the ways of living in the rural world, the conservative atmosphere continues to flourish, providing the *otium ruris litteratum* and *philosophicum* (Sfameni, 2006, p. 64).

However, the signs of change were already present, and one of the most interesting and revealing testimonies of how habits were evolving emerges from the descriptions left by Sidonius Apollinaris, namely when he speaks about Maximus, former head of the provincial administration who had retired to his *villa*, a building of no particular decorative or architectural interest, and one where he ate frugally, wore a long tunic and let his beard grow, living an almost monastic life (*Ep.* IV, 24, pp. 3-4). Here we observe the gradual transition from an aulic ambience and from *luxuria priuata*, towards an introspective environment, now favouring an austere, humble way of life. Indeed, this denotes a new paradigm of daily life, and yet this new paradigm uses the same architectural structures. Traditional historiographical explanations tend to see this process of change and greater simplicity as symbolising a “loss of techniques” and “technological setbacks” linked to economic decay especially. However, there is also still an ethnic reading offered, seeing this material change as one of the effects of the replacement of indigenous populations by

¹⁵ Ignoring this world or intentionally avoiding it, according to the perspective by Sanz Serrano, 2007, p. 467.

barbarian population groups, and yet, in reality, the archaeological evidence for destructions caused by barbarians is scarce.

But probably the most significant episode displaying changes in elite rural lifeways is the story of Abbot Nactus (VSPE III, 8ff), who came from the «African regions» and who, after spending some time in *Lusitania*, joined the Santa Eulália basilica. Like Bishop Paulus, this abbot was given an estate (*locum fisci*) by the Visigothic King Leovigild. The property was transferred together with its inhabitants/workers, who are assumed to have been free-men (with families), bound by economic constraints to a life of servitude and therefore tied to the titleholder of the property. However, it appears that when they met their new landlord, they were so disenchanted with his humble appearance that they refused to serve him and decided to kill him. The murderers were brought to justice, and yet the king decided to release them, saying «if they have killed a servant of God, let God avenge the death of his servant without recourse to my vengeance» (VSPE III, 14). The author of the VSPE ends the story by describing their punishment: «As soon as they were set free, they were set upon by demons who tormented them for many days, until they drove their souls from their bodies and they died a cruel death» (VSPE III, 15).

This account, to be set between AD 570 and 580, clearly describes a community (or, rather, diverse small communities) of workers, who probably lived in settlements close to the big *villae* and were buried in a sizeable necropolis or shared burial ground. These people likely worked under a system of *absentia domini* which, as in other regions, was becoming increasingly common for two reasons: firstly, because direct management both of extensive properties *in continuum* and multiple properties made up of geographically dispersed *fundi* was becoming difficult, if not impossible¹⁶; and, secondly, because the rural economy, in which large agricultural estates prevailed, did not require a trained and regular workforce. However, more importantly than these economic references, this episode constitutes a powerful mental and cultural representation of a community which encapsulates a set of puzzling features: for, in fact, although they were effectively in servitude, the community had sufficient autonomy to work together to assassinate the new *dominus*; and they had no very serious reason for killing him, only an *aesthetic* motive (the «tattered clothes and dishevelled hair of the *dominus*»).

Arguably, this aesthetic motive carries an important symbolic dimension, for it brings to the forefront the problem of power representations. And here the

¹⁶ Chavarría Arnau, 2004b, p. 116: «La acumulación de propiedades y la dispersión geográfica de las mismas hace que difícilmente este patrimonio pudiese ser gestionado de modo directo y lleva a pensar que, como en otras provincias, es posible también en *Hispania* que el sistema de arrendamiento de tierras fuese uno de los modos utilizados por los grandes propietarios para explotar el territorio.»

problem is especially eloquent, because it shows the clash between two worlds: on the one hand, if the murder of the *dominus* suggests that the servants can still be connected to a traditional worldview in which the elites asserted their influence, wealth and authority through external signs, including appearance and dress, on the other hand, the response given by the VSPE text to answer to this inability in perceiving new power signs, is entirely Christian. Yes, the servants were punished, but the punishment, far from late Roman legal prescriptions which would have demanded the death penalty for any servant guilty of murdering their *dominus*¹⁷, seems no longer to have a basis in civil law, being now defined and applied by *divine* will. Nevertheless, these apparent perplexities reveal the dual tension being experienced then in terms of sensibilities, regarding how the symbolic capital emanating from the power structures was displayed.

In sum, this process of affirmation of new cultural values, which replaced ostentation by austerity, corresponds to a phenomenon already felt in Sidonius Apollinaris' time and which became stronger in the following centuries, leading to the «desvanecimiento del principal elemento que había determinado el estilo de vida aristocrático durante el período imperial: la existencia de una cultura literaria civil y erudita» (Wickham, 2008, p. 376). However, despite its relative uniformity, the process was slow – as often happens in periods of paradigmatic transition. In fact, if the description of Maximus and the story of Abbot Nactus reflect the premises of the new faith, the simplicity of habits still co-existed with sophisticated appearances and an almost baroque taste for jewels and ornaments inspired by Visigothic aristocracy or by Byzantine power. In this respect, the Visigothic necropoleis in the centre of the Peninsula – without doubt reflective of a notable landowning context in proximity to the royal court in Toledo – provide evidence of how such ornaments were displayed, both in life and death¹⁸.

2. DISPLAYS OF POWER: CHANGES IN MATERIAL CULTURE

In terms of material culture, the Christian places of worship that were erected in the *villae* formed one of the most efficient forms of organising the related and dependent rural communities¹⁹. However, the process of insertion

¹⁷ Probably the most famous case of a *murder* of a *dominus* by a slave is the case of Pedanius Secundus in AD 61. The Senate ordered the execution of all of the *dominus*' slaves, including an elderly, women and children. Cf. Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.42-44.

¹⁸ Brogiolo and Chavarría Arnau, 2008, p. 202: «Teniendo en cuenta la frecuencia con que estos elementos aparecen, tal vez haya que plantearse la posibilidad no sólo de la profunda romanización de las poblaciones bárbaras, sino también el fenómeno contrario: la población romana fue absorbiendo progresivamente nuevas formas de vida y signos de identidad traídos por inmigrantes e invasores.»

¹⁹ Bowes, 2001, pp. 336-338, states: «Taken together, the canons of the councils of Zaragoza and Toledo attest to the presence of extra-episcopal villa-churches that were viewed as a threat

of Christian chapels and churches is surprisingly poorly documented, in terms of both contexts and pace/chronology, due to obvious difficulties in establishing dates based on limited associated finds (cf Bowes, 2005, 207). In general, in the few cases examined in detail in *Lusitania*, there appear to have been two distinct periods: (i) up until the 5th century, construction involved redesigning a pre-existing structure, most likely a pagan shrine or cult space, in the villa complex itself; plans, therefore, in part depended on these pre-existing units (as in the well-known examples of Quinta das Longas, Elvas, and Monte da Cegonha, Beja). Subsequently, these new cult *foci* tended to be erected from scratch in an area near the residence, sometimes within the baths structure (something fairly common in the Italian Peninsula or in Catalonia, but less well-known in Lusitania²⁰), or sometimes further out, up to half a kilometre distant from the residence, which in general, by this stage, had been abandoned. One notable example is the huge *villa* of Torre de Palma, Monforte, where the basilica was established in the previous burial area.

Obviously all these different transformations and impositions had a different significance, since building a Christian chapel in an active, albeit redesigned complex is not the same as erecting one in abandoned or non-functioning areas or in a detached location. Yet, despite these variations, the new presence of a church would not “perpetuate” the life of the *villa* itself in any of these cases, since in practice this involved a complete reformulation of the dwellings, meanings and substance of their symbolic content²¹. Furthermore, the insertion of burials around or even within the (normally ruinous) *villae* structures accentuated this trend. In fact, the creation of such burial grounds in *villa* sites in *Lusitania* help to reveal this inversion of modes of perceiving and valuing built structures, through their (re)using of an area that had formerly been a “living space” as a resting place for members of the community. And often it appears that the deceased in these

to episcopal control. Their rural setting suggested non-orthodox practices specifically associated with agricultural rituals. [...] The villa churches similarly suggest a semi-independent, rural Christianity, tied to the *dominus* and the *fundus*, and founded in areas with few urban entities and even fewer bishoprics.»

²⁰ Bowes, 2001, p. 324: «There are two basic structural types of villa-churches, the intra-villa church, constructed inside the *villa urbana* or *rustica* by modifying an extant space, and the extra-villa church, a free standing building located 100-500m from the villa proper.»

²¹ In some cases, it is possible that monasteries were installed. This might be the case of Palhinha, Fronteira, and São Pedro dos Pastores, Campo Maior, with epigraphic evidence too (Carneiro, 2014). In very special cases, other types of spaces may have been built with more specific purposes in mind; note the significant example given by Bowes, 2006, p. 95: «The letters exchanged between Paulinus and Sulpicius describe in some detail the latter’s elaborate provisions for his ever-increasing relic collection. Sulpicius, who had attempted to procure the body of Martin de Tours, had to be content with that of Clarus, Martin’s disciple, which he housed in a church on his estate-*cum*-ascetic community, along with a number of Holy Land relics.»

burial plots were of workers, not related to the former family owners of the *villa* and estate, further reinforcing the transition in role and perception²².

As previously discussed, the presence of these rural Christian places of worship developed in various ways, and this diversity undoubtedly should be seen to reflect distinct rhythms and concepts, which had very different meanings. However, what is interesting to note is that, despite this polymorphism, these basilicas and chapels emerged as semi-public spaces, which were accessible to a greater number of the faithful than those residing in the *villa* (in those cases where residential functions persisted). Kim Bowes has noted this phenomenon: «these basilicas are more than private chapels. (...) The church was only accessible from outside the domestic core, suggesting permeability to extra-household members» (Bowes, 2001, p. 334). This concept led to changes in the way in which the space was perceived: in fact, its transformation, in order to provide access for people who did not live in the *villa*, marked a strong contrast with the privacy that had been dear to the Roman spirit and thus had been associated with these structures in previous centuries. These new circuits may have perhaps been seen as a means of elevating the figure of the *dominus* and impressing the *rustici*, allowing them to view quality areas of the *villa*. However, this effect should not be overemphasised, since the structure of the (surely multiple) Hispano-Roman societies did not change so significantly in such a short space of time. In the *villae* where basilicas were constructed within the fabric of the original building, access would have remained restricted to the established social networks, without the assumption that these spaces would function as “missionary cells”²³ *urbi et orbi*.

Yet the construction of the “semi-private” basilicas implies the presence of at least a priest or a body of priests or even of an ecclesiastical authority capable of organising and overseeing related rural territories and worker groups. So far this has only been documented from the 6th century onwards or, on other words, from the point at which the *villae* were definitively abandoned as residential *foci*. In 5th-century Church Councils, parish administration was not discussed²⁴, indicating that for some generations the Christian faith had spread in an unstructured way, promoted more on the basis of private initiatives, with

²² It's difficult to perceive the dimensions of the burial grounds and the number of graves per site, due to the lack of extensive excavations. However, in Pombais (Marvão, in the previous bath complex) we can count at least 30 burials, and in Monte de São Francisco (Fronreira, survey obtained by GPR) there are nearly 15.

²³ Jorge, 2002, p. 165: «Ces *villae*, témoins de l'enrichissement de leurs propriétaires, pouvaient de la sorte constituer de vraies cellules missionnaires.»

²⁴ Bowes, 2001, p. 334: «However, the Church councils of the fourth and early fifth century are silent on matters of parish organization. The only canons scholars have cited as evidence for such organization are precisely those condemning villa-churches.»

the Catholic hierarchy struggling to operationalize proper oversight of what was actually happening in rural areas²⁵.

In summary, the redesigning of spaces, the creation of burial areas and of Christian chapels and basilicas in areas surrounding the *villae* indicates that the *villa*, representing the outer shell of a classical way of life, no longer functioned and its material structures were now understood in a different way. These trends agree with the documentary data that also signify that the use of the term *villa* was gradually dying out and being replaced by more neutral terms²⁶. Nevertheless, this set of factors helps to explain one of the most surprising facts concerning early Christian architecture in *Hispania*, namely the diversity of plans and solutions in the rural context, which were far greater than those found in cities (Chavarría Arnau, 2007)²⁷. Arguably, this wealth of forms in architectural expression reflects, on the one hand, the noted weakness of the Church's networks of control, but also the ambitions of the secular elites to affirm their influence on a local level. This later influence may have been expressed in many ways, namely by creating structures evocative of *martyria* and spaces dedicated to *memoria* containing relics and other symbols that served as an additional attractions for the faithful. The gradual building of places of worship would polarise the investments of the elites, whilst at the same time serving to affirm the new languages, either from an architectural or, primarily, from an iconographic point of view, as languages that would eventually replace the classical pagan culture.

²⁵ Bowes, 2005, highlights how under the early Church, the Hispanic Episcopal network would have been fairly weak and not very active, as can be inferred from the scattered presence of bishops in the councils. Despite the hierarchical determinations, the regional relations of the Church with the secular elite would have constrained the actions of Church officials, who will have been still very attached to clientelistic alliances.

²⁶ Isla Frez, 2001, p. 12: «También resulta sorprendente que las menciones de *villae* desaparezcan de la *Hispania* a partir, precisamente, de *circa* 400. [...] En las fórmulas visigodas, un repertorio de textos elaborado en el último período del reino visigodo para servir de modelo en diferentes actos jurídicos, conservamos algunas que tienen que ver con la compraventa de tierras, la fundación de centros eclesiásticos o las cartas de dote. Curiosamente en ninguna de ellas se menciona la *villa* como referente del mundo agrario [...]. Nos encontramos, sin embargo, con termos más genéricos del tipo *locus* o, en algún caso, *possessio* (*Form.* IX) e, incluso, *terrae in locum...* (*Form.* XXXVI).» The author reflects also on the use of the word *villula*, recalling the words of VSPE, where the term appears to describe sites most probably located on the banks of the Guadiana.

²⁷ Bowes, 2005, p. 228: «Just as the functional aspects of these rural Christian buildings show a surprising variety and complexity, so, too, do their designs and construction techniques. Unlike the garden-variety plans and generally modest materials of Spain's urban churches, the peninsula's rural commemorative monuments display a dizzying array of plans and materials, many of them otherwise unknown in Hispania. While standard designs can be found within the corpus, Hispania's countryside also boasted a number of real Christian architectural oddities, displaying plans that were either rare or unique for their date.»

Overall, it can be argued that the *villa*, ceasing to be a structured model, loses its classic identity as paradigm, one organized to function as an economic and social microcosm; and yet, curiously, it does not lose its symbolic potential. Previously, the Roman elite had established around the concept of *villa*, relations between nature and culture, between *otium* and *negotium*, human and nature, city and country; these relationships not only echoed the real world of the *villa*, but also several symbolisms, whether aesthetic, political or philosophical (Spencer, 2010, especially chapter 5). With the demise of the classical world, the *villa* disappears. But the architectural changes and the construction of Christian symbols in these old spaces leave us an important message: the Empire had suffered territorial fragmentation; as the Middle Ages progress, the creation of nationalities will develop strong regional self-consciousness among populations; the development of national languages will mean that the inhabitants no longer recognize themselves as part of the same linguistic and literary community; the division between urban and rural worlds will become further pronounced – and these symbols, found both in cities and in the countryside, whether in *Lusitania*, in Gaul or in any other former Roman province, display a cultural homogeneity in a world that, despite being already fragmented, religiously and symbolically will never be so unified.

Overall, these data enable us to understand that Christianity in fact fostered the evolution and transformation of an architectural and experiential profile, adding new cultural elements that were blended with existing ones to create new realities; and this was a trend that spread slowly outward from the cities to the countryside. It is becoming increasingly evident that periods of transition are broad and that within them there was always scope for assimilating contributions from other cultures, many of which remain to be fully considered. Within this field, the entire 7th century AD in *Lusitania*, and more widely, represents a crossroad where diverse Christian, Visigothic and even Byzantine influences converged and influenced one another²⁸, forming a new way of living, perceiving and planning, in an area that is now starting to be considered “plural and multiform”.

²⁸ Maciel, 1996. On the architecture of the seventh century, see Almeida Fernandes, 2009, and Caballero Zoreda, Mateos Cruz & Utrero Agudo, 2009.

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PEOPLE IN THE TRANSFORMED LATE ANTIQUE
CITIES: AGENCY IN ARCHAEOLOGY

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FROM ROYALTY TO REFUGEES: LOOKING FOR THE PEOPLE IN RECONSTRUCTING URBAN CHANGE IN LATE ANTIQUE ITALY

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ABSTRACT: The key trends in terms of changes or transformations to the old classical towns/cities of the Roman West from the fourth century AD onwards are nowadays well-known or are growing archaeologically better-informed, although more work is required to track closely the chronological parameters for these and to understand better the uses (not always single or uniform) that decayed urban monuments were put to. However, this paper argues that we are still failing to explore the human dimension of these transformations: to ask more of the agents of change, from patrons to builders to workers to users; to think more of the evidence for these peoples; and to look for indicators of the types of people, whether male, female, old or young, since too often the ‘townsfolk’ are seemingly otherwise always portrayed as adult (male) workers. With a focus on archaeologies from late antique urban contexts in Italy, this paper initially draws on visual images – i.e. modern reconstructions – for Anglo-Saxon England and the ‘colonised’ spaces these of Roman urban ruins.

KEYWORDS: Italy; late antique urbanism; Anglo-Saxon England; change; agents; builders; patrons; royalty; refugees; ruins.

INTRODUCTION

It can be fairly straightforward to explore the transformation of towns in the late Roman and late antique periods through aspects of loss, continuity or change to key facets of the urban fabric, notably the monuments that so dominated the urban plans and skylines of classical antiquity. We can observe, using occasional textual evidence, but primarily through archaeological data, the diverse indicators of decay – failed maintenance, robbing, abandonment, or the intrusion of new features such as burials – and calculate when and how such components faltered; or we might see efforts to reuse or adapt, in part or even wholesale, these old complexes to new uses, from industrial or domestic to religious. Much excellent investigation and interpretation already enable us to attach chronologies (if not always precise ones) to decays, ends and/or adaptations and to build thus a picture of the transformative events to many late and post-classical towns.

But while all such discussion is positive in terms of advancing our archaeological understanding of late antique settlements and territories, it is

striking that we remain little engaged in thinking through the human components in all these changes: it is very easy here to rely on the minimal documentary references and see a simplified set of agents involved – core to these being the Church (primarily a bishop), royalty (a king, queen) and, perhaps, the military (a general, garrison), alongside a very hazy wider ‘population’ who might build houses or workshops or who might rob old buildings and dump their rubbish in redundant public spaces. This paper wants us to give much more thought to the diversity of people, to show that we should avoid bland assignation of works and actions and instead always ask more of the related data and context to better understand what change was, who effected it and who it affected. These people were the ones populating, working in and contributing to towns in different ways; archaeology in its many guises is the ideal approach and resource to try and track them.

In order to tackle this task, I will be drawing on a variety of examples, mainly from Italy, since archaeology and documentation are fairly good here for questioning agency in the late antique and post-classical periods, although theoretical debates are perhaps more developed elsewhere, such as in France and in England (cf papers in Lorans & Rodier, 2013; Sami & Speed, 2010; plus Rogers, 2011), where change ‘after Rome’ was often more dramatic. We need also to be drawing on more contemporary, i.e. current, activities, impacts and contexts to help understand better the human players and their reactions and drives. Overall, I hope that my thoughts and partial conclusions will have wider applicability and can kick-start research generally on the agents of late antique urban transformation.

A VIEW FROM THE FRINGES

We will in fact first look away from the central parts of the old Roman world to reflect on images that we can draw from *Britannia*, a territory where Roman rule saw a documented caesura in the early fifth century, largely prompting rapid urban breakdown, to the degree that a once major trade and administrative hub, *Londinium*, seemingly lacks coherent and certainly no substantial tangible archaeology to show activity after c. AD 400/425 (e.g. Rowsome, 2000, p. 47; Speed, 2014, pp. 25-27). And, more broadly, while individual towns can register pockets of continued usage (e.g. Verulamium – Niblett, 2001, pp. 131-146), scales of activity and urban-ness fell away hugely (see Rogers, 2011; Loseby, 2000). A few sites are viewed as retaining a degree of authority, due in large part to their physical presence – even if ruinous – and especially to their town defences which could be patched up to enable an enduring façade of differentness in an otherwise rural landscape. Towns like Great Casterton feature burials of fifth-century date near the gates, thus respecting Roman extramural burial tradition, but implying also an intramural presence, with some persons of authority within (unless, of

course, the burial locations mean that the relatives of the deceased themselves also lived outside the old towns); in the case of a site like Leicester (*Ratae*), new and extensive excavations have helped to show that intramural early Saxon-period houses can be found when circumstances allow adequate exploration (Speed, 2010, pp. 96-100; 2014, pp. 79-84). In some cases a higher power base is proposed for these 'partial towns': Lincoln (*Lindum Colonia*), for example, is viewed at the seat of the short-lived Kingdom of Lindsey (Sawyer, 1998, pp. 44-52; cf Speed, 2014, pp. 89-92), while Wroxeter (*Viroconium Cornoviorum*), with a still-disputed sequence of usage and modified planning extending to c. 625, was perhaps a local king's base (White, 2007, chapter 8; Baker, 2010, pp. 83-88, highlighting the subsequent rise of Shrewsbury within the Kingdom of Mercia. Cf the adaptation of some forts on Hadrian's Wall in the fifth century and perhaps still in the sixth – Collins, 2012, pp. 161-168). Yet the archaeology remains problematic, despite advances in techniques, scientific analysis and recording, since artefactually and structurally these post-Roman (sometimes called 'sub-Roman') presences are ephemeral.

Despite this material fragility, these urban sites still 'meant' something in the landscape, as suggested also in place-names, with some (re-emerging) sites bearing names that connect back to the Roman ones while also flagging their main extant features, namely their city walls – hence Wroxeter draws both on *Viroconium* and on *ceaster/castrum* – 'fortress' (cf Winchester as Anglo-Saxon *Wintanceaster*, combining elements from the Latin *Venta Belgarum* and the Old English *ceaster*: Atherton, 2014, p. 75). This 'meaning' is a significant factor in the first stage of 'renewal' or 're-working' of some urban sites in the Anglo-Saxon period: when the evangelising mission of (saint) Augustine was sent to England/the Angles at the end of the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great envisaged that the faith would be based in and would radiate out from the ancient *civitates* – in other words, the towns were thought to still be there and were still 'Roman' and so symbolised points of civilisation (Hoggett, 2010, pp. 54-55). These centres were also assumed to be sites of assembly and thus arenas for conversion: Augustine's principal and initial focus was accordingly Canterbury (ancient *Durovernum Cantiacorum*), then the seat of the King of Kent, Æthelbert, whose Frankish Christian wife Bertha was probably a part of the inspiration for the mission (Fleming, 2010, pp. 152-155, 185-186). What is useful to do, therefore, is to consider the archaeological image of the post-classical town of Canterbury (Old English name: *Cantwara-byrig*) in the early seventh century and to ask questions of this in terms of what 'natives' lived and worked there, and how they might have perceived the Roman remnants around; and to ask how this perception of the place might have differed in the eyes of Saint Augustine and his fellow monks and workers.

We in fact have two archaeological reconstructions to view, both based on excavated data and wider extrapolations, yet both different in important ways

(On the key related archaeology, see Blockley *et al.*, 1995; cf Fleming, 2010, p.186 noting abandoned spaces in the old city's western parts). The first (Fig.1) has, as a background focus, a new building on show: a Roman-style basilica church, brick-and stone-built and tile-roofed – a material expression of the successful first stage Christianisation of the Kentish capital; this stands somewhat separate from a foreground of decayed, yet functioning ancient city wall within whose confines are remnants of former Roman buildings, most prominent being a two-storeyed theatre, but with active timber- and clay-built houses and halls otherwise scattered inside, along with cultivated plots. The picture to my mind shows both an Anglo-Saxon 'present' which is colonising and only in part exploiting the old Roman 'past', and a different 'present' in the form of the church and the monastic – plus royal – community. We might note, however, that to build this new community, the past had to be exploited: old Roman ruins were robbed for bricks, stone and tiles. While we might think of holy Augustine laying the first brick, the builders are, to us, anonymous workers who travelled with the missionary group, even though only the monks get textual recognition; potentially the 'workers' were from Frankish Gaul, where church and monastery building were regular acts in the sixth and seventh century (Fleming, 2010, p. 186).

This latter point/possibility is relevant, since we must bear in mind – though this is something often overlooked – that Augustine and his fellows originated



Fig. 1. Reconstruction image of seventh-century Canterbury (Image © Canterbury Museums and Galleries).

from lands which had a much stronger Roman residuality, with many active and large towns and cities, with maintained defences, often multiple churches, plus still recognisable classical monuments, such as amphitheatres, albeit converted to other uses, chiefly housing and workshops. In this regard, the missionary group of Augustine and his fellow must have felt somewhat like ‘strangers in a strange land’; yet would have felt more comfortable in a space that felt familiar enough to them as a town, with a working population and an evident social hierarchy.



Fig. 2. A second reconstruction image of early Anglo-Saxon Canterbury and its community of workers, animals and timber huts in c. AD 600. (Drawn by John Atherton Bowen 1985/86; by courtesy of and © Canterbury Archaeological Trust Ltd).

The second image (Fig. 2) of Anglo-Saxon Canterbury might, however, have made Augustine feel a bit less ‘at home’, since here the theatre complex has become shrouded in bushes and trees and other parts of the old townscape likewise reclaimed by Nature. Instead we see lots of small timber huts (the classic ‘SFBs’ or ‘sunken-feature buildings’) in more random format and with much less in the way of any authority evident (see Loseby, 2000, p. 340; Speed, 2010, p. 101). At the same time, we must register how this is a peaceful scene with workers, vendors, children and animals, and not one of heathen barbarism. The image also lets us consider the perspective of the local inhabitants, who were followers of the king, or workers and families attracted to the site, and perhaps included farmers

based inside the walls rather than in the countryside; to the majority of them, the Roman ruins were, fairly quickly, 'background noise' – in other words, just part of the place they lived in. But these residents must have viewed the ancient remains in different ways – some were just ruins from which to extract timber or stone; or convenient lines of walls to build houses or pens against; intriguing spaces from which bits of metal or pottery might be found; places to simply explore and hide in for children; convenient dumps for rubbish (although the reduced material culture and its generally organic nature meant more recycling went on, including for manuring); and some ruins were just dangerous spaces to be avoided and to be left to the brambles. In this population's eyes, the large hall of the king, but especially the new church and its attendant church/monastic cells will have been notable landmarks to elevate their settlement to higher status; and, we should guess, these were also structures to go visit and admire.

A VIEW IN THE CENTRE

The above commentary hopefully shows that, when discussing townscapes in post-classical contexts, it is important to have images in mind, based on the hard archaeology, but based also on careful inference and comparison, in order to 'populate' these places and thereby gain a more nuanced understanding of how these places looked, how they worked and, in particular, who worked and lived there and the roles these different people played in shaping these spaces. As noted above, it is easy to be too simplistic and sweeping in such discussions, but doing so will dilute the dynamics of these urban centres in what was a crucial timespan.

The same questions are necessary no matter where one studies, whether sixth-century Wroxeter, early seventh-century Arles or late fifth-century Tiermes, with answers necessarily linked to the individual site, its context and archaeology. We need be aware of or ask about, for example, the leading figure(s) in that townscape or territory, whether duke, count, bishop or abbot; the economic and/or politico-military significance of that site at diverse times; the potential demographic profile; and the archaeological scope to view any of these (for example, do we rely on rescue excavation in a still active centre or is it an abandoned/lost site where diverse research excavations have sampled the site?). Even for a city like Rome the same range of questions must be applied or we run the risk of simply relating any change to 'papal policy and interventions' or 'military works' or a broad set of 'urban residents'. In this regard, we might briefly consider the well-known reconstruction image (Fig.3) of c. AD 500-550 of the zone explored in the Crypta Balbi excavations, sited west of the heart of ancient Rome. Here we benefit from extended, systematic excavations which paid full attention to *all* periods of stratified and residual activity, enabling both wide-scale and locale-specific analyses (Crypta Balbi 2000; Manacorda, 2000; Arena *et al.*, 2001). The same depth of detail has been generated in other urban projects in Italy, notably

at the Santa Giulia excavations at Brescia, which was, arguably, one of the first to enable serious academic discussion of post-Roman and early medieval urban trajectories in the peninsula (Brogiolo, 1993, 1999, 2005; Panazza & Brogiolo, 1988; covered also in Brogiolo, 2011; Brogiolo & Gelichi, 1998).

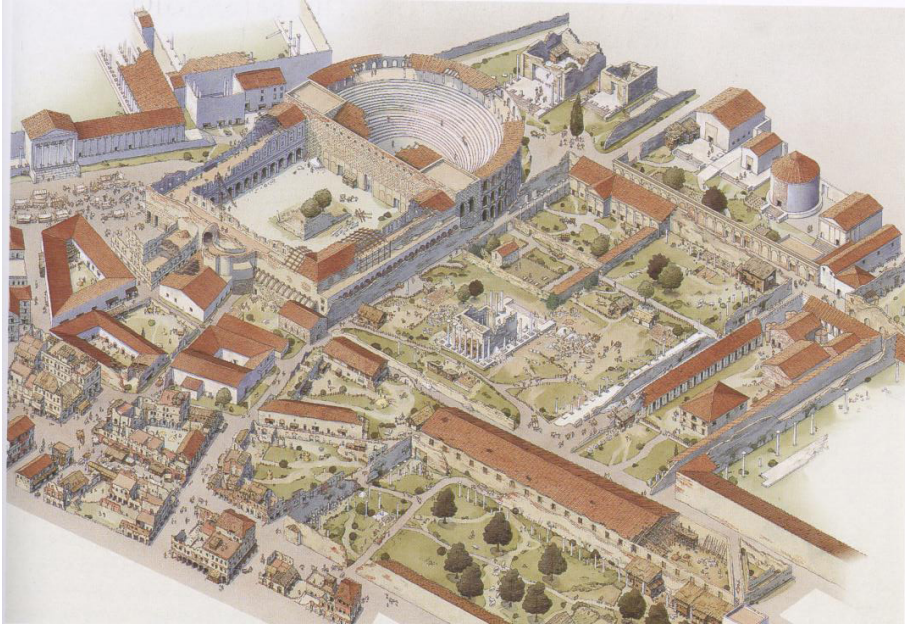


Fig. 3. Rome: The Crypta Balbi and Porticus Minucia zone in the fifth to sixth centuries AD (Image from Manacorda, 2001, fig. 47 – compare the more privatised image Fig 71 of the tenth century).

Unlike at Canterbury, this part of the Rome cityscape is inevitably one much more Roman in look, i.e. with far more structures still standing, due to their massive bulk and the durability of their building materials; there are some complexes abandoned and ruinous, but others can be seen to be patched up and part-maintained. Indeed, most discussions of the zone of the Crypta Balbi centre on such questions of residual monumentality and de-monumentalisation, of chronologies of change (loss/repair/repurposing), and of the scale of change; we ask also why a certain sector might be paid more attention – whether for robbing or for repair – than another. These are important and essential questions, but not always do they include the human agents in the processes of change. For example, we are generally vague in understanding who ‘owned’ the ruins here – how far these were ‘civic’ burdens and how far things had become Church-/State-owned. This issue is crucial for asking who made decisions about the townscape in terms of demolition, stripping of materials, seeking to preserve an old edifice, etc. This also

links into access: if we see an old monument ‘colonised’ by houses, what processes happened to allow that and how ‘ordered’ was this process? Were such actions always permitted or were some simply ‘organic’ events that just slowly took shape, not necessarily with formal approval or permission? And was there some control over the *types* of people who might be allowed to occupy such spaces? However we might explore and debate these questions (which I will partly do below), a key observation to highlight is how the reconstruction image (and the related excavation data) for the Crypta Balbi zone reveals how people here were living *with* the ruins – in contrast with the image of people largely *avoiding* the ruins or creating a new settlement design as can be claimed for Anglo-Saxon *Cantwara-byrig*.

FROM PATRONS TO BUILDERS TO USERS

We can next turn to a specific study area, namely northern and central Italy, in order to tackle these issues of agency and agents – from patrons to builders, consumers, craftworkers and squatters. What is crucial to recognise is the changing nature of patronage and workforces, as well as changes in the focus of building works, across the late Roman and late antique periods. These directly reflected and responded to changes to the fabric of the Empire caused by socio-political upheavals, military threats, religious re-orientation and, as important, concomitant economic impacts. There is no space here, of course, to delve into the multiple factors involved; rather we can highlight the transition from an ‘open’ and busy landscape of patronage and investment in the earlier Empire, to a more ‘closed’ or ‘narrow’ one, where expressions were curtailed but never fully removed (A valuable overview of changing society and space is Brogiolo, 2011, especially chapter III). The following Table 1 offers a succinct (but by no means complete) encapsulation of the changes/transition by century:

<i>Mid-3rd and 4th centuries:</i> Some elites as patrons still, but increasingly works are by State officials using civic income – prefects and governors especially. Last vestiges of amenity investment (chiefly baths).	<i>Early 6th century:</i> Prominent are royal activity and investment in selected sites; elsewhere required civic needs – e.g. granaries and walls – overseen by State officials such as counts; other civic groups ‘make do’. Bishops make a stronger mark.
<i>5th century:</i> Predominantly works are by the ‘central authorities’ requiring works to keep towns going – city walls, roads, etc. But bishops more prominent in Church works, and elites came to contribute in religious ventures.	<i>Mid- to late 6th century:</i> Military officials for the State as leads for the essentials of towns (walls, <i>castra</i>, granaries) in a battered peninsula. Bishops gain more prominence as ‘providers’ as State control becomes more politically and economically weak/fractured.

Table 1. Urban patrons in fourth – to sixth-century Italy.

This basic tabulation is one that draws heavily on the documentary – especially epigraphic and legal – sources for the period, which flag the names and posts of patrons/promoters of building works, although some works, such as city walls, tend not to find (extant) epigraphic reference (For Italy, a key publication with appendix listing of names, dates and works is Ward-Perkins, 1984; for the important mid- to late third-century ‘Anarchy’ phase when old-style euergetism suffers severe blows, see the province-by-province catalogue in Rambaldi, 2009. Changing social leads are neatly considered in Brogiolo, 2011, pp. 77–83). The core evolutions highlighted in the table are, firstly, the increasingly reduced role of ‘private’ patrons, such as wealthy elite, to adding to or maintaining the public monumentality of cities/towns, and, secondly, a phase of urban redefinition whereby city walls multiply, often at the expense of the materials and spaces of some public monuments. The fifth century sees more ‘functional’ cityscapes emerging, economically weaker, with more State enforcement to maintaining the infrastructure and adding elements linked to militarisation. The Church, however, chiefly through State support, ensured that a degree of monumentalisation persisted, and we see bishops – and later other *religiosi* and some State officials – take the mantle of urban benefactors through church building and, with time, infrastructural works.

There was also a shrinkage across time in terms of the *venues* of patronage. I would argue that from the fifth century onwards those centres that witnessed investment beyond basic maintenance and the insertion of small-scale churches came to comprise chiefly royal/imperial foci and those with high Church or State–military roles. Major late Roman capitals like Milan and Ravenna stand out for investment in wall circuits, in palace complexes, in arch-episcopal churches, in other churches and relics, in roads and water supply and in trade support (including, for Ravenna, the growth of the port-city of Classe). The scale and enduring grandeur of these cities, their (increasingly Christian) monumentality, their elite populations and their connectivity were all factors leading to their retention as capitals or royal seats under Ostrogoths, Byzantines and Lombards alike (Cirelli, 2010; Christie, 2011, pp. 142–157). Gothic royal input especially then stands out, with known works at seats like Verona (walls, palace) and Ravenna (palaces, churches), with King Theoderic clearly viewing patronage and restoration activity as marks of Roman imperial dignity and display (Johnson, 1988; see papers in Arnold *et al.*, 2016). Albeit on a lesser scale, and with far less archaeological visibility, so too did Lombard kings show power through buildings, such as palaces at Monza, Verona and Pavia (Brogiolo, 2000. On city walls as symbols of authority and urban status across these centuries, see Latimer, 2010). In these State urban foci Church power was likewise prominent, growing by association with, but sometimes rather independent of the State, such as for Byzantine Ravenna in the period AD 550–650 (cf Thomas, 2018). What might be termed State–episcopal pairing is evident occasionally outside the capitals,

at strategic sites, such as seats of dukes, hosting diverse structural display (for example, Grado, with churches, baptisteries, walls; Cividale, with defences, palace and churches; and Trento, with *castrum*, granary, churches). Selectivity is a feature already in the fourth century, when governors/*correctores* would favour specific centres for restoration works, defensive wall building, etc. (see Ward-Perkins, 1984, chapter 2).

One must assume some clear correlation between ongoing and prominent investment and site size and perceived value: not all towns endured after the fifth/sixth century, and not all bishops stand out for building programmes; instead, centres on major route ways with some strategic importance, with royal connections and/or with important early Christian heritage (martyrs, relics) tend to be those which retain a viable demographic profile (i.e. with some elites), feature State input (e.g. garrison and high-ranking commander/regional officer) and show scope for episcopal display.

Indeed, strong bishops had the potential to re-work and reconfigure their associated cityscapes and our available documentary sources provide a good number of examples of proactive bishops who worked for Church, community, city and self, ranging from Ambrose in later fourth-century Milan to Sabinus/Savinus in Canosa/*Canusium* in sixth-century *Apulia* in south-east Italy and to Pope Gregory the Great in the late sixth century (see Volpe, 2007, and 2016, p. 89; and this volume; Christie, 2006, pp. 108-112. More widely on episcopal works and sponsorship, see Brogiolo, 2011, pp. 79-82. Cf Chavarria Arnau, 2018, pp. 49 ff for Spain). Such bishops seemingly early on gained the authority to force closure of pagan temples; to order demolition of such; to obtain materials/*spolia* from ruinous monuments for reuse in new churches or restoration works; and to claim space for building churches (and episcopal residences) and support structures. However, here we need to bear in mind that less energetic bishops, ones more financially restrained, will not have participated in these (often major) urban Christianising projects: earlier post-holders may have created ample change and later bishops instead simply maintained and ensured a functioning and contented flock.

BEYOND BISHOPS AND STATE: BUILDERS, WORKERS, SOLDIERS AND REFUGEES

From the above comments, one issue that I would raise linked to current discussions of this period of urban transition regards how we refer to the patrons, since scholars too often imply that these are the agents, architects and builders combined. Thus, reference in modern texts is often made to ‘King XXX built this...’ or ‘Bishop XXX erected that...’ But, of course, it was an array of many people who were responsible for the actual acts of building and for the multiple stages required en route – from site clearance, gathering of materials, supply of

scaffolding, collecting and organising a work force, etc., to the actual building work, carving/recurving of capitals, floor laying, fresco/mosaic decoration, provision of internal furnishing, etc. – all such activities requiring much time, effort, logistical support and skills. We frequently forget to calculate in these tasks and labour needs and to recognise that work to complete a large city church could easily take decades (Chavarría Arnau, 2018, chapter 6, on actual church construction from commissioning to materials) (Table 2). Note was made above how for Saint Augustine at Canterbury, fellow monks and Frankish workers and masons were seemingly those doing the actual building work, though we must certainly assume that local Anglo-Saxons (and other natives) were called on to chop down trees and cut timbers, gather clay, provide victuals, etc. For bishop Savinus at Canosa, the church building campaigns he instigated must have been a major boon for artists, craftsmen and labourers in the city as well as a magnet for labourers from neighbouring towns and the environs seeking a secure income.

3rd and 4th centuries: Still specialist workers and architects; urban defences a key focus of works. Imperial church projects mark new investment in skills and in materials production. Ability to still call on large numbers of slaves.	Early 6th century: Royal activity and investment in selected sites enables levels of skilled architects and workers to persist – more mobility though in artists (e.g. from the East to projects in the capital at Ravenna). But overall a much reduced market for manpower. <i>Spolia</i> as the key medium; extensive exploitation evident = heightened change in old public spaces?
5th century: A greater call on ordinary people to help build, maintain, repair infrastructure – roads, bridges, city walls (see edicts in the <i>Codex Theodosianus</i>); but special levies also for funds. Bishops via Church/State funds enable continued generation of skilled workers and artists. Growing (but controlled) use of <i>spolia</i>.	Mid- to late 6th century: Military focus and civilian labour/levies. Reduced scale of operations. Bishops as key patrons and stimulants for labour – but did Church employ its own groups of workers, or were its ‘servants’ also workers? Activities inconsistent. <i>Spolia</i> as primary building medium; extensive exploitation evident (with uncertain level of control). More reuse/adaptation of old buildings.

Table 2. Builders and workers in fourth- to sixth-century Italy.

While State/royalty and bishops can be viewed very much as the main – as well as of course the best recognised and best documented – patrons and promoters for any new monumentality or large-scale maintenance/ restoration programmes within late antique and early medieval towns, what is vital to stress is the fact that these patrons were acting in what were *inhabited* spaces, often with still sizeable population groups. In truth, a serious gap exists in understanding

these ‘others’, as residents and workers, who are often shadowy figures, mentioned only broadly in laws, letters and texts in terms of public duties (Ward-Perkins, 1984, pp. 193-194) or as part of the ‘flock’. What other people then contributed to change in the old cities? How did they operate in the changing urban fabric?

We can draw on a small selection of textual evidence to start this discussion. First is a legal rescript from the Emperor Majorian to the City Prefect of Rome, Aemilianus, in the mid-fifth century (*Codex Theod.*, *Novellae Maioriani*, IV, of AD 458):

“While We govern the State, We are anxious to correct obnoxious practices which have long been allowed to deface the appearance of the Venerable City. For it is obvious that public buildings, where in consists the whole beauty of the Roman State, are on all sides being destroyed by the most deplorable connivance of the City administration. While the requisite materials for public buildings are being collected, the noble constructions of antiquity are torn down, and a great desecration is committed to allow a trivial repair. This has given rise to the practice that allows even individuals building private houses to filch and transport without hesitation, and with the indulgence of the city magistrates, what they require from public buildings, although all that contributes to the magnificence of the City should be kept in good repair by the zeal of the citizens... We therefore proclaim by a general law that all public buildings, and everything deposited in temples or monuments by our ancestors for public use or amenity, may not be destroyed by anyone: further, that a justice who shall permit such a contravention, shall be fined 50lbs weight of gold...”

The law appears specific to Rome and its expansive array of old classical monumental buildings, where the number and scale of these must have been a total nightmare for the Prefect and his team to somehow keep in repair and secure (as other laws had sought to impose), but nearly every ancient city of note possessed public edifices to challenge their civic authorities (see Christie, 2006, pp. 208-213 on *spolia* and upkeep). Majorian’s order does, however, recognize that the acts of despoiling, robbing, encroachment and neglect – by people of all types, we are led to believe – were not new, and it bemoans mainly the City administration’s ‘turning a blind eye’ to these (the administrators no doubt pocketing some of the proceeds from sale/access, etc.). At the same time this law does recognise the impossibility of maintaining *all* of these buildings, hence it states that ‘any amenity which We find to be beyond possibility of repair, may nonetheless be used for the adornment of some other public building’ (see the excellent discussion of such laws and the public space *versus* private constructions conflict in Baldini Lippolis, 2007).

All types of people must have been involved in the ‘filching’ of materials, from elites (including city prefects and governors and the Church) paying individuals

and gangs to gather up *spolia* such as columns, capitals, etc. for reuse in *domus*, chapels, etc.), to entrepreneurs hoping to sell on materials, and labourers burning down marble for lime to sell (Marsili, 2016). The ‘private houses’ might have included partitioning up of space or the setting up of patchwork houses alongside old walls – the recent archaeology of the Rome Forum and the imperial fora has been able to trace such fair-to-crude buildings of late antique to early medieval date (Meneghini & Santangeli Valenzani, 2004, pp. 31-51; 2007, pp. 115-122, 130-136; Meneghini, 1989. Wider discussion of housing in Brogiolo, 2011, chapter IV).

A second text is the letter sent in the early sixth century from the people of Catania in eastern Sicily seeking permission from the central (then Ostrogothic) government to use stones from their ruinous amphitheatre to help in building/repairing the town walls. The letter reports that these stones had ‘fallen down from age and [are] now of no ornament to the town, in fact only *disgraceful ruins*’ (Cassiodorus, *Variae*, III.49; Ward-Perkins, 1984, pp. 194, 212) (Fig. 4). More common in these letters or *Variae* of the Rome-based minister are recommendations by the king to restore, efforts to counter decay, prompts for wealthy citizens to ‘do their bit’ and, less commonly, grants from the king/State to rebuild (see Deliyannis, 2016, pp. 236-239; and noting on pp. 249-250 on the patrician Symmachus being asked to supervise repairs to the Theatre of Pompey in Rome). At Catania, those people requesting permission are labelled as *possessores*, *defensores* and *curiales*, indicating that these were some of the town’s main citizens, i.e. local elites, landowners and civic office-holders. The request



Fig. 4. View of the exposed eastern sector of the amphitheatre at Catania – now a modern tourist ‘hit’, and not the early sixth-century ‘disgraceful’ ruin and eyesore (Image: author).

was being made for the *civic* good – the restoration of the defensive curtain – and no doubt ordinary people would be called upon to assist in the collection of the materials and in the actual construction work. Otherwise we might query whether the rest of the townsfolk were at all interested in the decayed amphitheatre (On the erection and roles of late Roman town walls and popular attitudes to these, see Christie, 2013).

A third textual extract comes from the bishop of Pavia, Ennodius, writing in the early sixth century but referring back to the transition in rule over Italy from that of Odoacer to that of the Ostrogoths. He relates (*Opera*, in *MGH, AA VII*, 98) how, in AD 489, Ostrogothic troops took shelter within his city and imposed themselves on the citizen body:

‘You would have seen the city teeming with vast throngs of troops and with huge *domus* cut up into the narrowest of huts. You would have seen even the largest buildings disappear from their foundations, nor was the ground itself sufficient to take such a dense mass of people’

Here Ennodius offers a very striking explanation to an oft-documented archaeological sequence in fifth- and sixth-century towns, namely of large town-houses being partitioned up, their old mosaic floors covered over and penetrated into by timber posts/walling, rubbish pits cut down almost randomly around, etc. (Brogiolo, 1999, pp. 104-105, with changes to *domus* at Brescia being strong archaeological examples of such – see Brogiolo, 1993; Brogiolo (ed.), 1999 and 2005). While some such military impositions were short-term (e.g. one winter long), even this brief spell could irrevocably change the city fabric. Yet, in reality, the fifth to seventh centuries witnessed fixed garrisons in many key towns, especially for northern and central Italy, in the context first of the Byzantine–Gothic Wars (533–554) and then of the Byzantine–Lombard conflicts (569–643+). Such garrisons or army detachments might number between 100 to 5000 soldiers; the burden then fell on the town authorities to billet them, necessarily exploiting both public spaces and civilian houses, and to help supply them with food and equipment. But what is poorly known archaeologically is how such ‘regular’ garrison troops were housed: did ‘barracks’ exist at all in these centuries? If so, were they in or near to the city core or near city gates? We might expect ‘citadels’ (or military headquarters) in some towns, and such might have been created out of the redundant amphitheatres, as potentially achieved at Spoleto and Rimini, but archaeology remains largely quiet on this aspect. One example in Spain is the reuse of the Roman theatre at Cartagena for housing in the city’s Byzantine period (sixth–seventh centuries AD), with belts and other items potentially hinting at soldiers, at least in family contexts (see Vizcaíno Sánchez, 2017).

Otherwise we can draw on plenty of medieval to modern instances of troops – mobile or fixed – being billeted inside town houses and even public buildings,

including churches, often creating havoc and mischief with locals whose houses and families could be severely disrupted (ranging from theft to sexual demands – cf Gibson, 2001 in the context of World War I troops and billeting and ‘respite’ behind the front-lines). Such ill behaviour was matched and moaned at equally in late Roman contexts and regularly legislated against (but presumably not always effectively – see Lee, 2007, pp. 167-170).

As important as these (sometimes) documented military impositions, the bouts of warfare and concurrent damage to lands and farms especially also brought refugees (individuals and families) and displaced farmers to the (presumed) safety of walled towns. What happened to these incomers – whose numbers we cannot of course quantify – and how were these sheltered and fed? Often harrowing images from the various scenes of modern/current civil conflict especially in Egypt and the Middle East, and Syria in particular, bring home the material damages, personal hardships (from food and medical shortages to local aggression) and traumas suffered by farmers and civilians of all ages, with such victims eking out life in city ruins or in temporary camps, always short of food and water and regularly under threat (Fig. 5). Modern media bring home some



Fig. 5. The mass numbers of residents of the besieged Palestinian camp of Yarmouk in Damascus, Syria, queue to receive food supplies, with the war-damaged city fabric a sad, battered frame. (Source: UNRWA, 9.11.2016 –<https://www.newsdeeply.com/syria/articles/2016/11/09/long-read-why-khan-eshieh-palestinian-camp-could-be-the-next-yarmouk>).

of these traumas, related calls for help (money, food, sanctions, and even counter-aggression) and for government stances (To cite just one source, see the efforts by the *CENTER FOR CIVILIANS IN CONFLICT* – <https://civiliansinconflict.org/publications/policy/> with many reports and policy statements, such as on ‘Syria: Civilian Harm and Assistance’). Such images do, I would argue, help us to better visualise some of the upheavals happening in the fifth and sixth centuries AD; they also give us an idea of how people somehow cope, adapt and (hopefully) survive, and also show how ‘fragile’ their related material cultural presence is in these contexts. Only when such conflicts dissipate and some efforts to rebuild come along might the archaeology show people again functioning, but such urban renewals will largely remove the traces of those damaged months/years/decades.

Many of these refugees in Late Antiquity would have been skilled workers or valid labourers and on some levels ongoing urban authorities could have exploited this – e.g. getting this new labour force to help clear ruinous space, to set up temporary/semi-permanent housing, to generate cultivable space inside the walls, to recycle metals, etc. We are of course ignorant of how this would have been achieved and how responsive refugees were; but presumably Church authorities might have been core to accommodating and assisting these newcomers.

Outside of Italy, a valid archaeological guide to highlight is late Roman Arles (southern *Gallia*), where buildings came to be erected against active public spaces, notably the circus, and encroached on other public space such as the forum; many of these structures reused *spolia* (Loseby, 1996, pp. 52-58). Loseby argues that these intrusive works need not be seen as ‘chaotic’ but reflective of, ‘at least initially, an orderly relaxation, or redefinition, of the boundaries between public and private space which, in Arles in the fourth and fifth centuries, can only have been carried out with official encouragement’ (p. 54). Clearly these buildings responded to a need for new housing, and presumably relate to an influx of extra people. This was a period of insecurity and of change: on the one hand, Arles gained a heightened administrative and military role and so needed to accommodate new support staff and a likely garrison; on the other hand, insecurity brought in refugees from elsewhere, plus others seeking actual work. Sadly we lack sufficient finds from these houses to enable us to qualify them in terms of status – whether occupied by workers, office-holders, soldiers (or their families) or beggars. Either way, the civic authorities gave space, allowed materials to be used, and ordered the new demographics of the city by compromising old classical space, while recognising its reduced role/value (*ibid.*, p. 56. For comparable issues/sequences in Hispania: Diarte-Blasco, 2015 and 2012, e.g. pp. 253-256 on changes to fora space). These were mutable cities, forced to change through circumstances, but while monuments could fail and the fabric of these and of spaces around change, it is important to recognise in many – but not all cases – of these post-classical urban centres the resilience of the population/residents, who were, as identified above, themselves mutable.

DIVERSIFYING THE POST-CLASSICAL URBAN DEMOGRAPHIC

The discussion above allows us to reflect on a final facet of these changing townscapes and their populations, which is something that all of the images I have used thus far ask us to remember – namely that populations were a mix of people, not just a mix of ‘elites’ and ‘workers’ or the ‘clergy’ and the ‘flock’, but rich, poor, old, young, male and female, local and non-local, and from crippled grandparent to inquisitive teenager. Another reconstruction image is thus Figure 6, which depicts one (excavated) part of Anglo-Saxon Leicester, and shows adults, but also a beggar-woman, a mother with child and baby watching people at work in a Roman ruin, and a pair of pigs. As scholars, we speak indeed of houses and domestic spaces and we do look at rubbish/discarded items from pits or stratified deposits, but these are almost always simply equated to ‘households’. And yet when we investigate the burial population, from graves near to houses or in detached cemeteries, the analyses of their bones and of related finds and possessions (where present) inform us strongly on the *full* range of people, their health, diet, illnesses and injuries and reveal something of their beliefs and lifestyles (e.g. papers in Part IV ‘Scientific Perspectives in Medieval Archaeology’ in Gilchrist & Reynolds (eds.), 2009). There is still, therefore, an important transition to make in our archaeological reading and populating of towns – in all periods, not just in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages – although some efforts have already been made (e.g. Gilchrist, 2012, surveying bodies, life courses, households, rituals and objects as assemblages of people in the Middle Ages; and for medieval children, contributions in Hadley & Hemer (eds.), 2014 discuss the spaces, games, materials, etc. of youngsters in families, albeit with limited discussion of urban evidence).

In this regard, the ruins that littered most post-classical towns should be exploited archaeologically as human ‘haunts’ too, ones that included humans of all ages – whether adults robbing the remains (as in Fig. 6), householders building their huts in and around these (as in Figs 1 and 3) or children keen to explore, but with mums telling them about the dangers of venturing inside these tumbling giants of the past (Fig. 6). Indeed, we need recognise how these ruins (perhaps to be termed ‘ruinscapes’) would surely have generated varied *sentiments* amongst local inhabitants: viewing them as resources, or else as ‘no-go zones’ – both in terms of ownership by civic powers, or just in terms of being dangerous, dark and maybe even haunted. The term ‘topophobia’ is nowadays used to define this anxiety of place or ‘geography of fear’, and I have identified elsewhere (Christie, 2016a) how, in a modern context, we use warning signs, high fences, barbed wire, CCTV and sometimes guard dogs to reinforce this sense of ‘Private property’, ‘Keep out’ and ‘Danger within’. But such signs can equally *attract* danger-seekers, who, especially in modern contexts (but certainly in antiquity too) comprise teenagers – either bored or on a ‘dare’, and I have no doubt that ‘exploring the



Fig. 6. Anglo-Saxon Leicester: houses built over the collapsed façade wall of the Roman macellum and with robbing of the ruined interior (Image by Mike Codd, courtesy of University of Leicester Archaeological Services; reproduced in Morris *et al.* 2011, pp. 38-39).

ruins' may well have been a regular pastime in these post-classical sites. The current phenomenon of 'Urban Exploration' (urbex or UE) offers a guide to this, with the aim of the so-called 'ruinistas' being the 'recreational trespass in the built environment', centred on 'disused factories and hospitals, former military installations, bunkers, bridges and storm-drain networks... [from whose exploration] the aesthetic payoffs – the pathos of abandonment, the material residue of inscrutable histories – are rapid' (Macfarlane, 2013, noting how social media are key in spreading the trend – for example, the excellent website <https://www.pinterest.com/missrobinann/urban-ruins/>; see also Garrett, 2010) (Fig. 7). Accordingly, even the 'unclaimed' ruins could be active spaces, and occasional finds within these may well reveal the fleeting visit or trespass of one or more teenagers or children at various times – each generating a story and memory which they might recount much later, as parents or as old folk to the new group of inquisitive children wondering about the 'ruins'. Only as these places became renewed and ruins were cleared or refashioned would such memories be lost and new haunts be hunted out by the children.



Fig. 7. Urban decay and exploration: braving and experiencing an abandoned church in Detroit. (Image by Tim Gaweco – see: <https://iso.500px.com/top-20-urban-exploration-photos-on-500px-so-far-this-year/>).

CONCLUSION

This paper has not drawn on new data or finds, nor has it re-written the already interpreted sequences of loss of monuments or of the imposition of churches in towns in late antique Italy; nor has it really challenged how we measure changes and transformations, nor has it questioned the chronologies of these. Instead, it has – without explicit citation of theoretical approaches and models – asked readers to think more closely and fully about structures and agency, about assemblages of activity and inactivity, about place and perception and about the diversity of people and their roles in shaping the cities and places that they lived, worked and died in. In particular we should recognise multiple agents involved in the active reconfiguration of town spaces in Late Antiquity, yet also recognise that their roles and engagement in this re-shaping were of course variable – some passive, some active, some unwilling – as were their relationships to their towns and the pasts of those places (cf Christie, 2016b), with their ancient ruins frequently foci more of robbing, exploitation, ‘cannibalisation’, curiosity or ignorance. Moving away from bland reference in archaeological or historical narratives to the ‘inhabitants’ to actually discussing how individuals of all ages used and lived in these places is an essential task to pursue. And in reality it is not too big a jump at all to start to do this, adjusting from bigger narratives and contexts (of city transformations, patrons and politics) to personal/ human stories of change, transition and adaptation, based on the excavated material

culture (from houses to possessions to rubbish). Indeed, a good range of excavated sequences of individual towns (sites such as Verona, Luni, Brescia, Classe, Florence, Agrigento) exist to start this more intimate writing of urban change and urban life across Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (see contributions in, for example, Augenti (ed.), 2006 and, more widely, Christie & Augenti (eds.), 2012, and Parello & Rizzo (eds.), 2016. On aspects such as rubbish and waste, see Johnson, 2016). Yet, as many long-running research projects and sizeable rescue projects have shown, the availability, accessibility and legibility of post-classical to medieval deposits are often problematic, with stratigraphies compromised, structures only partially visible, and related finds out of context; it is understandable, therefore, that emphasis has gone on the larger monuments and on the church building, and on painting the wider picture. But, arguably, we owe it to the many citizens and ‘players’ of the past to try to put much more individual and human detail into these urban pictures.

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ACTORES PRINCIPALES Y SECUNDARIOS: LOS AGENTES TRANSFORMADORES DEL MODELO URBANO EN LA HISPANIA TARDOANTIGUA Y ALTOMEDIEVAL

'Leading actors and supporting actors. Agents in the urban model transformation in Late Antique and Early Medieval Hispania'

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ABSTRACT: While the transformations of the classical city in Late Antiquity and the emergence of a new type of town 'plans' in this period have long been studied, in Spain, as in other Mediterranean regions, the last three decades have seen a sharp rise in archaeological studies which enable a much clearer vision of the main characteristics of the process. However, the vast majority of studies focus attention on the materiality of the changes and the functional implications, with a general, systematic failure to consider the agencies of this process. In other words, scholars are familiar with ideas such as abandonment and reoccupation of public spaces, topographical change and Christianization or the new functionality for former buildings, but in only a few cases has there been close engagement with the intentionality or agency of the individuals and/or the urban collective in these processes. This paper aims, using a critical and theoretical approach, to analyze these urban transformations considering especially the role of human actor/s in promoting changes and the current limitations in Archaeology in identifying key and supporting individuals and people in the archaeological record. Taking into account current knowledge and the large quantity of Spanish projects and publications exploring late antique urban transformations, this paper shows past, present and future directions of agency in late antique Hispania.

KEYWORDS: *Hispania*, Late Antiquity, Agency, Urban Transformations.

1. INTRODUCCIÓN: LA AGENCIA EN LA ARQUEOLOGÍA

En los últimos años, los estudios dedicados a la Antigüedad Tardía y, más concretamente, a los procesos que dieron por finalizada la Antigüedad Clásica y daban paso poco a poco a un nuevo mundo, el Medieval, han crecido exponencialmente. En lo que podría considerarse algo así como una *primavera*

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de la investigación arqueológica dedicada a estos siglos de transición, hemos visto como, sobre todo en lo referido a la ciudad, se han generalizado conceptos como reutilización, abandono de solares, *spolia* de materiales arquitectónicos o privatización de los antiguos espacios públicos, como parte de un hilo discursivo más amplio en el que el agotamiento del periodo Clásico era el punto de partida. Esto significa que, entre otras muchas cuestiones, tenemos un buen conocimiento de la fisonomía que las antiguas ciudades romanas adquirieron antes incluso del final y desmembramiento del Imperio Romano. Es fácil imaginarse unas ciudades que en la mayor parte de los casos se mantuvieron dinámicas y eficaces como centros aglutinadores de actividades socio-económicas y político-administrativas, mientras que una intensa transformación urbana tenía lugar. Los espacios públicos, por ejemplo, eran repensados y a veces desmantelados, otras veces ocupados con espacios domésticos y/o productivos, mientras que las viviendas ganaban espacio a costa de la vías públicas – bloqueando pórticos o incluso ocupando parte de la calzada – y los sistemas de saneamiento urbano se colapsaban y abandonaban.

No resulta desde luego un panorama muy halagüeño y, menos sobre todo, desde nuestra perspectiva contemporánea más acostumbrada a la transmitida idea del orden y la belleza del Mundo Clásico (aunque quizás sería necesario matizarla), que a la de imprevisión y desorden tardoantiguo (igualmente matizable). Sea como fuere, y más allá de los grandes dogmas de este periodo, es evidente que la materialidad del proceso de transformación urbana y sus implicaciones funcionales son conocidas; no así, en cambio, los actores que fueron parte de él, que lo ejecutaron, que lo vivieron y que permanecen, en la mayoría de los casos, completamente ausentes del registro arqueológico. Un buen número de estudios, de hecho, se olvidan sistemáticamente de los agentes del proceso de cambio urbano, de su intencionalidad – sea individual o colectiva – y de las repercusiones que tuvo en el día a día de los ciudadanos.

Es cierto, no obstante, que interpretar el papel que las personas tuvieron en la realización o la promoción de estos cambios resulta muy complicado, no sólo porque rara vez aparecen documentados en la estratigrafía, si no porque además las escasas fuentes escritas referidas a este periodo suelen carecer de esta información. Quizá, la excepción podría establecerse en los edificios religiosos, en los que a veces se alude a las altas jerarquías eclesiásticas – señalando directamente a las personas que los encargaron y a los medios usados –, cuando se refiere a la construcción de los mismos. Sin embargo, prácticamente nada se sabe sobre las personas que realizaron – quiénes fueron la mano de obra y los verdaderos ejecutores del cambio –, como tampoco conocemos la influencia que en estas transformaciones tuvo el otro sector de las clases dominantes, la aristocracia secular, de la que la fuentes nos transmiten muy pocos datos. De hecho, sorprendentemente, es probable que sea de estos últimos de quienes menos sabemos.

En cierto modo, los resultados de la investigación arqueológica dedicada a este periodo parecen haber sufrido una inversión con respecto al periodo anterior: mientras en el Alto Imperio las personas que mejor detectamos en el registro arqueológico (sea a través de las lujosas *uillae*, de los magníficos lugares de enterramiento o directamente de su auto-representación en los espacios públicos) son precisamente los pertenecientes a los grupos aristocráticos, en la Antigüedad Tardía y Alta Edad Media, parecen ser las clases menos favorecidas, especialmente fuera del medio urbano, las que mejor documentadas están. En la esfera rural, de hecho, es donde en los últimos años mayores progresos se han hecho al respecto, con una especial atención al campesinado, a las desigualdades entre unas comunidades y otras, a sus jerarquías y a la complejidad social (Quirós Castillo, 2016), pero sobre todo a sus formas de vida, a través del análisis de un buen número de espacios domésticos incluidos en los emergentes pueblos y aldeas, que se gestaron en la Península Ibérica a partir del siglo V (Vigil Escalera, 2000; *id.*, 2009; Quirós Castillo, 2011).

El conocimiento que se tiene – y que sigue progresando – de los campesinos no es desde luego equiparable con el que se tiene de las personas de similar nivel socio-económico en el medio urbano². Desgraciadamente, los estudios dedicados a las ciudades han prestado poca atención a las personas en general y a los agentes de las transformaciones en particular. No pretendemos en este breve texto, basándonos en las teorías de Pierre Bourdieu (1977) y Anthony Giddens (1979; 1984), intentar crear sistemas teóricos que aspiren a abarcar la totalidad de la vida social y cultural de las ciudades hispanas en la Antigüedad Tardía y la Alta Edad Media³. Sería probablemente un tanto pretencioso y un objetivo inalcanzable por el momento; nos gustaría, sin embargo, con los escasos datos que tenemos, intentar desentrañar la relación y la interacción entre las personas y los espacios urbanos como principal objetivo de este artículo, en el que además se pretende analizar las características fundamentales del cambio social y los diferentes niveles de negociación entre las comunidades locales y los grupos de poder.

2. EL NUEVO MODELO URBANO Y LOS PRINCIPALES AGENTES TRANSFORMADORES

Como hemos visto en la breve introducción, las pocas veces que se alude a los agentes del cambio es casi siempre para señalar a la Iglesia y a sus obispos como los principales responsables de la aparición de nuevas construcciones -sobre todo, como es lógico, edificios religiosos – en el tejido urbano. Ellos tuvieron,

² Para reciente aproximación sobre este asunto y sus particularidades en *Hispania*, *vid.* Diarte-Blasco, 2018, pp. 82-107.

³ Sobre el nacimiento y evolución de la Agencia y su aplicación arqueológica, *vid.* Dornan, 2002; Dobres y Robb, 2005.

sin duda, un papel fundamental en el nuevo aspecto que adquirieron los centros urbanos, aunque no por eso fueron los causantes de todas las modificaciones que acontecieron. Sin embargo, el resto de transformaciones que se documentan en las ciudades suelen aparecer como hechos impersonales, que tienen lugar sin más o, como mucho, referidos a los 'habitantes' o a la 'gente' que puebla estos centros urbanos, sin mayores concreciones.

Es importante tener en cuenta que, aunque las transformaciones urbanas se iniciaron en muchos caos ya a finales del siglo II o en el siglo III, es precisamente en el siglo IV y V cuando se intensifican considerablemente. No es extraño, entonces, que el inicio de dichos cambios coincida con el periodo en el que muchas de las más importantes reformas político-administrativas y militares se estaban llevando a cabo con Diocleciano, como, en lo relativo a la Península Ibérica, la formación de la *Diocesis Hispaniarum*, la reorganización de las provincias que la formaban y la instalación de la capitalidad de la misma en *Emerita* (Arce, 2009, pp. 43-81). No obstante, en líneas generales, el siglo IV fue un periodo relativamente calmado y de prosperidad para *Hispania*, que permaneció un tanto alejada de tensiones políticas y escenarios de luchas de poder, a diferencia de otras regiones (Fig. 1).

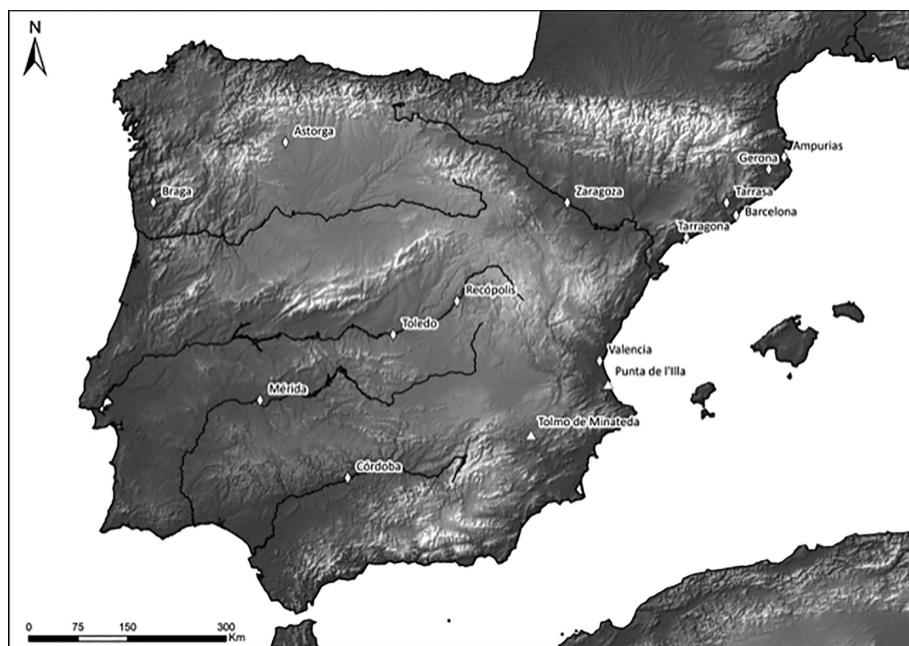


Fig. 1. Principales ciudades y sitios arqueológicos citados en el texto (P. Diarte-Blasco)

La situación cambia considerablemente a inicios del siglo V, cuando tuvo lugar la entrada de un grupo heterogéneo de *gentes*, concretamente suevos, vándalos y alanos que, como transmite Hidacio, el principal historiador del periodo, contribuyeron significativamente a afianzar la sensación de inseguridad e inestabilidad que atravesó la Península, como otras muchas zonas del Imperio, durante estos años. En cierto modo, el siglo V fue la antesala de lo que después será el definitivo establecimiento de los Visigodos, de la formación de su Reino – que convivió durante un tiempo con el Reino de los Suevos y con la presencia de los bizantinos en una estrecha franja del sudeste hispánico –, hasta su completa disolución a inicios del siglo VIII, como consecuencia de la entrada de los árabes (Arce, 2005; Díaz Martínez, 2007, pp. 273-392).

Pese a los críticos momentos vividos como consecuencia de la lenta desarticulación del antiguo Imperio Romano y su definitivo colapso, los centros urbanos continuaron desarrollando su papel clave como centros políticos y culturales y, desde luego, como principal elemento dinamizador del paisaje. Es cierto, no obstante, que a veces se ha sugerido que el Reino Visigodo no desarrolló una administración exclusivamente basada en las ciudades, sobre todo aludiendo al hecho de que a partir del XII Concilio de Toledo, celebrado en el año 681, queda reflejado que era común crear episcopados que no estuvieran directamente en relación con *ciuitates* (Sotomayor, 1995, p. 291), algo completamente improbable durante el siglo V.

Es innegable, no obstante, que importantes centros urbanos como Mérida y Córdoba potenciaron sus defensas en este periodo (Alba Calzado, 1998; Hidalgo, 2010), mientras otros como Valencia y Barcelona construyeron impresionantes sedes episcopales y otros muchos, como Zaragoza y Astorga, mantuvieron una capacidad económica indiscutible que les podía asegurar en caso de necesidad el autoabastecimiento. En cierto modo, es la propia historiografía la responsable de esta imagen de un Reino Visigodo poco urbanizado, como consecuencia del abandono de algunas ciudades, la escasa fundación de nuevos núcleos urbanos y, por otro lado, la ya citada potenciación de los estudios dedicados al surgimiento de nuevos asentamientos campesinos, que a veces puede inducir a pensar en la generalización de espacios desurbanizados en la Península Ibérica. Más allá de Recópolis, *Victoriacum* y *Ologicus* (las dos últimas, todavía sin localizar, estarían situadas en el norte peninsular, en la Vasconia, según *Chronica* de Juan de Biclaro y la *Historia Gothorum* de Isidoro de Sevilla, ambos autores contemporáneos a su fundación), los Visigodos no crearon nuevas ciudades, aunque eso no significa, como es lógico, que no se sirvieran del tejido urbano existente. De hecho, una buena muestra de esa continuidad durante el Reino Visigodo es que los invasores musulmanes que dieron el golpe de gracia al Estado utilizaron las ciudades como objetivo principal de la conquista (Gutiérrez Lloret, 1998).

Pese a que no podemos negar el deterioro de algunos centros urbanos que, en algunos casos, vieron como su rol de elemento central de control y gestión

del territorio se vio debilitado, la preeminencia de las ciudades como centros político-administrativos, religiosos y económicos en el paisaje peninsular es indudable. Las fuentes contemporáneas a este periodo señalan figuras como las del obispo y, en menor medida, las de los poderes laicos y/o funcionarios, como el *comes ciuitatis*, como los encargados del dinamismo urbano de estos siglos. Desde Eurico (cuyo reinado se extendió desde el 466 hasta el 484), la monarquía visigoda contaría con una corte formada por los principales miembros de la aristocracia y, en consecuencia, con un *consilium regis* desde el que se gobernaría las provincias y las ciudades, por medio de los *duces*, *comites*, *rectores vel iudices prouinciarum*, etc., solo por nombrar los más relevantes funcionarios del Reino. Estos cargos, con funciones civiles y militares, seguirían el modelo romano, sobre todo en lo referente a la aplicación de la justicia y la fiscalidad, mientras que la idiosincrasia germana aparecía más claramente en lo relativo a lo militar (Díaz Martínez, 1998).

La intensa relación entre este aparato administrativo-militar, encabezado por la aristocracia secular, y la Iglesia es especialmente evidente en las ciudades más importantes, cuyas actividades en muchos casos fueron de la mano. De este modo, en Barcelona, la correspondencia entre ambos poderes fue evidente, no solo gracias al gran complejo religioso que, ubicado *intramuros*, ocupó prácticamente un cuarto del solar de la antigua colonia romana, sino también en su actividad más 'laica'. Así, el documento *De fisco Barcinonensi* (592), nos muestra que, controlados por el *Comes Patrimonii*, los que se encargaron de la recaudación de las rentas, tanto en especie como en metálico (López Campuzano, 1990, pp. 528- 529), fueron precisamente los obispos de las diferentes sedes – Tarragona, *Egara* (la actual Tarrasa), Gerona y Ampurias – que formaban parte de la circunscripción de Barcelona.

En Mérida, por utilizar otro caso bien conocido, el *dux* godo Salla y el obispo Zenon llevaron a cabo conjuntamente la restauración de las murallas y del puente sobre el Guadiana en Mérida en las últimas décadas del siglo V, como se celebra en un epígrafe hoy perdido (Vives, 1939, pp. 1-7; Camacho, 1986, p. 239; Alba Calzado, 1998, p. 364). Referido a esta misma ciudad, en la *Vitas Patrum Emeritensium*⁴, un texto hagiográfico escrito en la década de los treinta del siglo VII, se citan a dos aristócratas locales, un noble con orígenes senatoriales y su mujer, que, tras su muerte, donan todo su patrimonio al obispo Pablo, en primer lugar, y después a su sucesor en el cargo, Fidelis. De nuevo, observamos como la relación entre ambas esferas, la civil y la eclesiástica, se mezclan con normalidad durante este periodo. De hecho, las donaciones y las herencias privadas se convirtieron en una de las fuentes fundamentales

⁴ En este artículo se sigue la edición y traducción de A. Maya, 1992.

de enriquecimiento de la Iglesia que, poco a poco, iba adquiriendo más propiedades. Muchos obispos, en consecuencia, aunque residían y ejercían su poder desde la ciudad, se convirtieron en algunos de los mayores terratenientes de la Hispania Visigoda.

Mérida se erigió en la Iglesia más rica de la Península, lo cual no sorprende demasiado si tenemos en cuenta que no se trataba de una ciudad más, sino de un centro que había sido capital de la *Diocesis Hispaniarum* hasta el final del Imperio, para a continuación convertirse en capital de los Suevos por un breve lapso de tiempo y después en una de las ciudades más importantes del Reino Visigodo. Gracias a las *Vitas*, sabemos que el obispo Masona (570-610) fue el encargado de construir el *xenodochium*, que acogería a enfermos, viajeros y peregrinos. El edificio, de hecho, se ubicó *extarmuros*, junto a la basílica de Santa Eulalia y dos monasterios, uno para monjes y otro para vírgenes, conformando un auténtico polo de atracción para la Cristiandad hispana. Sabemos además que, coincidiendo con Masona en *Emerita*, el *dux* Claudio, la máxima autoridad militar en la ciudad, ubicó su residencia palacial – de la que no tenemos por el momento documentación arqueológica – junto al complejo episcopal (*Vitas*, V. X, 30-35). Gracias a la descripción aportada por las *Vitas*, y los hallazgos arqueológicos en el sector de la actual concatedral de Santa María, se ha propuesto que la sede episcopal primigenia se ubique bajo este edificio (Maya, 1992, IV. IX, 7, p. 42. Sobre los hallazgos arqueológicos en esta zona, entre otros: Mateos Cruz, 1995; Mateos Cruz & Alba Calzado, 2000, p. 150; Alba Calzado, 2014, pp. 83-84), lo que nos hace pensar que el palacio de *dux* no se situaría demasiado lejos de esta zona.

Más allá de la cercanía topográfica, ambas formas de poder urbano estuvieron en constante relación. Sin ir más lejos, Claudio fue precisamente quien avisó al rey Recaredo de las conspiraciones arrianas para intentar asesinar al obispo católico Masona. Se evitó el asesinato y además se puso en conocimiento otra conjura, esta vez contra el propio rey Recaredo, encabezada por el obispo arriano Sunna y un noble llamado Segga, que probablemente ostentaba el título de *comes ciuitatis* (Arce, 2011, pp. 162-163). Una vez más, con el telón de fondo de la lucha religiosa entre arrianos y católicos, se observa como el poder religioso y el civil van de la mano, incluso en las conspiraciones.

Lo cierto es que Masona fue un obispo con una gran capacidad económica que le permitió, entre otras muchas cuestiones, llevar a cabo la construcción de numerosos edificios en la ciudad, desde los exclusivamente pensados para el culto hasta un hospital-residencia. Pese a que como es lógico, no todos los obispos tuvieron a su disposición esos mismos recursos, lo cierto es que el rol del obispo como 'constructor' (Picard, 1991) es muy común en la Antigüedad Tardía. En el siglo VI, por ejemplo, destacan los hermanos (lo cual también señala la relevancia que tenía, en muchos casos, la pertenencia a una familia determinada para alcanzar la cátedra episcopal) Justo de Urgel, Elpidius de Huesca, Nebridius de

Egara y Justiniano de Valencia⁵, que llevaron a cabo una importante restauración del complejo episcopal de sus ciudades. En el caso de Valencia, un ejemplo además muy bien conocido gracias a la arqueología, Justiniano, entre el año 530 y el 550, puso en marcha la monumentalización del complejo episcopal, cuya fase inicial había sido construida a finales del siglo V (Ribera i Lacomba, 2008).

Una monumentalización que dejó poco margen a la improvisación, ya que sin duda alguna la renovación del gran complejo episcopal (Fig. 2) estaba sujeta a un plan preciso en el que fueron necesarios una gran catedral, un baptisterio, un mausoleo cruciforme (todos ellos dentro del mismo discurso constructivo) y la obliteración del pórtico del foro, convirtiéndose de este modo en el recinto o amurallamiento del grupo episcopal (Ribera i Lacomba & Roselló, 2005; Ribera i Lacomba, 2008). Ciertamente, antes de esta gran remodelación, es muy poco lo que sabemos sobre la catedral, como ocurre también en otros grupos episcopales, en los que la primera fase del edificio (la mayoría de los obispados de la red episcopal hispana estaban ya formados entre el siglo IV y las primeras décadas del siglo V, *vid.* García Moreno, 1990) ha quedado prácticamente enmascarada por las reformas realizadas durante el periodo visigodo.



Fig. 2. Reconstrucción 3D, a partir de los datos arqueológicos, del complejo episcopal de Valencia (Ayuntamiento de Valencia).

⁵ Algunos concilios, como el que se celebra en el año 599 en Barcelona (II, c. III; *vid.* Vives, 1963), intentaron limitar el monopolio que algunas familias y sus redes clientelares tuvieron sobre las sedes episcopales y el sumo sacerdocio.

El origen del grupo episcopal valenciano y su localización directamente sobre el foro de la ciudad, en un lateral del mismo, está relacionado estrechamente con la ubicación de la *carcer* donde Vicente – santo mártir de la ciudad – fue encarcelado y, probablemente, martirizado (Ribera & Roselló, 1999; Ribera i Lacomba, 2005). Este dato es fundamental para comprender la relevancia que la Iglesia y sus representantes adquirieron en la ciudad, con la inclusión dentro del corazón de la misma de su principal y más representativa edificación, como ocurre también en el caso de Tarragona. En esta ciudad, de hecho, el antiguo *Concilium Provinciae* vio previamente como durante el siglo V se erigieron sobre él espacios domésticos y artesanales, además de vertederos a cielo abierto, hasta que a finales del siglo VI, se instalaba en esta zona el grupo episcopal, utilizando incluso para su edificación parte de la estructura constructiva del *temenos* del templo pagano (Aquilué, 1993; Macías, 2013).

La actuación del obispo excedió los límites de la ciudad, accediendo también al territorio que regían. De hecho, las *basilicae minores* y monasterios que aparecen en los contextos rurales eran, en la mayor parte de los casos, concebidos desde el episcopado urbano. De nuevo, Justiniano, gracias a un epitafio hoy perdido (del que por fortuna queda una copia realizada en el siglo IX) es un buen ejemplo de la actividad que también llevó a cabo en la esfera rural (Díaz y Díaz, 1959, num. 63; Vives, 1969; Llobregat, 1977). La isla en la que edificó un convento y probablemente también un dique es Punta de l'Illa de Cullera, ubicada a unos 40 km al sur de Valencia, donde entre los muchos materiales arqueológicos – destacan crucifijos, monedas y ánforas (la mayoría de ellas africanas) –, se halló un gran edificio cuadrangular en la parte central de la isla, datado a mediados del siglo VI (Llobregat, 1977; Roselló Mesquida, 1995). No obstante, esta relación ciudad-campo tenía a veces un camino de vuelta, como sabemos gracias al obispo Braulio de Zaragoza (*Vita. Emil.* I, 10), ya que a partir de un culto nacido en el ámbito rural, concretamente el de San Emiliano en La Rioja, se construyó una iglesia dedicada a este *patris patronique* en su propia ciudad (Lopez Campuzano, 1990, p. 522). La basílica, probablemente, fue construida con anterioridad a su propio episcopado (631-651), durante el de su hermano Juan, entre el año 619 y el 631, pero desgraciadamente no tenemos constatación arqueológica de ella.

La gran actividad constructora de Justiniano es sin duda una forma de reafirmar el poder episcopal. Tanto la construcción original de la sede como la gran reforma de Justiniano utilizaron materiales arquitectónicos romanos, la mayoría procedentes del foro, lo que permite además entrever la capacidad de la Iglesia para disponer de elementos constructivos pertenecientes a los antiguos complejos públicos. No solo eso, sino que más allá del rol de la Iglesia como principal autoridad municipal, en algunos casos, y Valencia es uno de ellos, los obispos pudieron personificarse en su legado constructivo. Así, cuando Justiniano erige el mausoleo cruciforme, lo hace con el objetivo de transferir a esta sede, como así se hizo, las reliquias de Vicente que se encontraban en el área

funeraria de Roqueta, a las afueras de la ciudad (Saxer, 1995). Sin embargo, es muy probable que cuando construyó el mausoleo, lo hiciese también pensando en un lugar propio para su enterramiento – y que mejor lugar que junto al santo más importante de la ciudad. De hecho, el esqueleto hallado en la tumba central del mausoleo se data a mediados del siglo VI, lo que ha permitido plantear la hipótesis que se trataría del cuerpo del propio Justiniano (Roselló Mesquida & Soriano, 1998). Después de él, otros obispos fueron también enterrados en este lugar, dentro del mausoleo. Fuera del edificio, además, una necrópolis *ad sanctos* surge como lugar de enterramiento de otros eclesiásticos o de fieles de 'alto nivel', no desde luego para el vulgo cristiano, ya que como sabemos cuánto más próximo se estaba del santo, mayor relevancia social tenían los inhumados.

Otro caso digno de mención es el relativo a Barcelona y al obispo arriano Ugnas que mantuvo la cátedra episcopal gracias a que se convirtió al catolicismo en el III Concilio de Toledo, celebrado en el 589, y llevó a cabo la expansión y monumentalización del grupo episcopal. Se ha insinuado, de hecho, que quizá hubo una relación entre la conversión y la magnífica remodelación de la sede episcopal, como si se tratase de una muestra de su poder ante la Iglesia Hispana, que lo había acogido tras su conversión (Bonnet & Beltrán de Heredia, 2003).

Los cementerios en Barcelona se agrupan a lo largo de las principales vías, pero sobre todo en el entorno cercano a las basílicas martiriales. En general, aunque son numerosos, resulta complicado determinar la posición social de los inhumados, pues no existen grandes edificaciones o elementos de ajuar que permitan individualizarlos. Sin embargo, en el llamado *suburbium* oriental, en el eje que transcurre dirección SW/NE por la Avenida Francesc Cambó, se halló un conjunto con más de 250 sepulturas, que se separa, por medio del ramal costero de la *Via Augusta*, de otro grupo – datado entre los siglos IV y VI – que se asocia a la basílica de Santa Caterina y en el que han podido documentarse recintos funerarios, quizá mausoleos (se trata generalmente de espacios cuadrangulares de entre 3 y 6 m²), que estarían marcando un clara separación con respecto a otros inhumados, lo que en consecuencia ha permitido sugerir que podrían pertenecer a las elites de la ciudad (Aguelo i Mas *et al.*, 2005; Beltrán de Heredia, 2010, p. 365). También en Córdoba se documenta en este periodo algunos recintos de este tipo (Sánchez Ramos, 2007), pero son los menos, ya que la escasa monumentalidad es la norma general en el paisaje funerario de estos siglos.

Los anteriores ejemplos funerarios sirven para señalar la existencia en los centros urbanos de una estratificación social, que si no fuera por ellos, quedaría diluida en el mar de las escasas estructuras domésticas conocidas y de la humildad de los materiales y de las técnicas constructivas utilizadas. Desgraciadamente, no son muchos los cementerios que conocemos con estas estructuras y disposición. Es importante señalar que los enterramientos de los primeros cristianos no tenían diferenciación de los paganos que, desde el siglo II-III d. C., también se inhumaban. Además, más allá de las escasas laudas sepulcrales,

con bellas decoraciones como las de Tarragona o las de un recóndito lugar del Pirineo de Huesca, en Coscojuela de Fantova (Arco, 1922), o con ajuares con motivos cristianos, son exiguas las demostraciones de lujo en los enterramientos cristianos. De hecho, en la mayor parte de los cementerios no somos capaces de ver una diferenciación en sus inhumados (Sales Carbonell, 2016, pp. 536-538); como hemos visto, solo las clases más altas, y en contadas ocasiones, aparecerían representadas. No obstante, se ha señalado que la existencia en las ciudades de pequeños grupos de inhumados – a veces incluso con solo uno o dos cuerpos –, aislados de los grandes cementerios y/o de los edificios religiosos, podría estar señalando la exclusión social de los mismos, sobre todo en los casos en los que los difuntos aparecen arrojados en pozos o en vertederos (referido especialmente a contextos rurales, *vid.* Vigil-Escalera, 2016).

3. LOS ACTORES SECUNDARIOS EN EL REGISTRO ARQUEOLÓGICO

Como hemos visto con el breve repaso que hemos realizado sobre los pocos agentes conocidos del cambio urbano en *Hispania*, en la mayor parte de los casos nos referimos a personajes en relación con la órbita eclesiástica, casi siempre obispos. De hecho, más allá de la construcción de edificios religiosos y/o, a veces, de la erección o restauración de murallas, prácticamente no tenemos datos sobre otro tipo de construcciones civiles. Por poner un ejemplo, no conocemos quienes se encargaron del mantenimiento de las vías y las plazas públicas, quienes fueron los que dieron permisos (si es que se dieron) para la ocupación de las mismas y, lo que es peor, desconocemos completamente a las personas que realizaron y vivieron los acontecimientos urbanos a los que nos referimos. Es decir, en el mejor de los casos, se nos ha transmitido el dato referido al ordenante de la construcción, pero nunca tenemos conocimiento sobre las personas que lo llevaron a cabo. Para ser justos, conviene reconocer que no solo desconocemos a las clases trabajadoras, sino que tampoco tenemos muchos datos sobre la nobleza secular, de su presencia en las ciudades o, simplemente, de las diferencias en el modo de vida aristocrático y de las clases menos favorecidas.

La información que poseemos sobre el grueso de la población ciudadana es muy escasa, a pesar de que son, desde luego, los que circularon, ocuparon la mayor parte de las estructuras urbanas y, en definitiva, el elemento clave de las transformaciones de las ciudades. Gracias a la Arqueología, sabemos que los espacios donde la élite dominante aparecía autorrepresentada – el hábito epigráfico está desaparecido o en vías de estarlo (MacMullen, 1982) – fueron poco a poco desvaneciéndose. Los espacios públicos que poblaban la ciudad – foros, teatros, anfiteatros, termas, etc. – se ven redimensionados, en algunos casos abandonados y, en la mayoría, reocupados con casas y talleres (Diarte-Blasco, 2015). El único elemento novedoso son los edificios religiosos que gradualmente comienzan a surgir en la trama urbana, mientras las calles continúan funcionando, aunque

no es extraño que se vean intercaladas por basureros y/o solares abandonados. Así las cosas, nos encontramos ante unas ciudades que, pese a que debían seguir contando con una autoridad cívica, muestran muy poco de su existencia.

De la mayoría de los habitantes, a partir de sus residencias y gracias a su conservación en algunos casos en el registro arqueológico, algo de información podemos obtener. La generalización de las estructuras en madera y de los muros realizados con materiales de *spolia*, la ocupación de los antiguos espacios públicos – tanto para uso doméstico como productivo- y el aumento de los niveles de los llamados depósitos o estratos de 'dark earth' estarían señalando una ruralización de las ciudades (Christie, 2016) y, en cierta forma, de sus habitantes. No podemos negar que los espacios domésticos son, en general, una buena muestra del nivel socio-económico de quien los habita y, en consecuencia, los que se adscriben a este periodo parecen estar indicando una economía deprimida y sin demasiados recursos. Es cierto que, en *Hispania*, tenemos casos en los que la reocupación de los espacios públicos con casas parecen vincularse con gente de un cierto nivel adquisitivo, como pueda ser el caso de la rica *domus* de Sant Honorat – en uso hasta el siglo VI –, que ocupó una parte del foro de Barcelona (Florensa & Gamarra, 2006, pp. 189-209). Sin embargo, es justo señalar que estos casos son excepcionales y, que la mayor parte de las viviendas que se documentan en este periodo están relacionadas con personas de escasos bienes económicos, como queda patente por los elementos arquitectónicos utilizados – en muchos casos, con materiales perecederos – y la cercanía de los basureros y áreas de cultivo (a veces simples huertos domésticos). Estas casas aparecen por igual sobre los antiguos espacios públicos (Diarte-Blasco, 2009; *id.*, 2012), como en otras zonas o, incluso, junto a las iglesias y a las estructuras cívicas.

Salvo escasísimas excepciones, tampoco tenemos confirmación material de la existencia del *comes ciuitatis*, lo que supone que tengamos una imagen un tanto tenue y poco definida de estos funcionarios que, sin embargo, aparecen nombrados en las leyes visigodas, ya desde el reinado de Eurico. Más allá de sus funciones fiscales como recolectores de impuestos y administradores de justicia, parece que estos funcionarios se encargarían también del control de la actividad militar ya que, en este periodo, los soldados estaban muchas veces acantonados en las ciudades. De hecho, estos delegados reales eran los máximos representantes del estado en la ciudad y habría habido uno en cada una de ellas. Solían además contar con un número de auxiliares, como el *vicarius* y el *thiufadus*, que serían fundamentales para el correcto funcionamiento del fisco o e aplicación de justicia para casos de menor importancia o causas en el ámbito rural. Como contrapunto a este poder, para evitar las arbitrariedades que a veces surgían, también existieron el *numerarius* y el *defensor ciuitatis*, que eran elegidos por el pueblo y el obispo. De hecho, en alguna ocasión, éste último pudo hacer las veces de *defensor* si alguien se sentía agraviado por parte de los funcionarios del Reino Visigodo (Díaz Martínez, 2007, pp.447-448).

Una economía debilitada genera una endeble expresión material que en la Antigüedad Tardía también afectó a las clases teóricamente más pudientes. Desgraciadamente, la imagen que tenemos sobre las residencias de las élites es todavía más escasa que la que tenemos sobre las clases menos favorecidas de los centros urbanos, de los que al menos conocemos su humilde arquitectura. Así, pese a que supongamos que en las ciudades más importantes y de mayor tamaño, los *comes ciuitatis* tuvieron que disfrutar de notables residencias, con sus espacios de representación y recepción, la realidad es que en pocos centros urbanos tenemos algún dato sobre ellos. Uno de los pocos casos que conocemos es el de Gerona, donde se ha podido documentar el palacio del *comes ciuitatis*, construido en el siglo VI (Nolla *et al.*, 2008, pp. 180-182). Resulta interesante que la erección de dicho edificio tiene lugar sobre parte del antiguo *forum*, utilizando gran cantidad de materiales de expolio y parte del espacio y las estructuras de la antigua basílica, perpetuando así el desarrollo de las funciones político-administrativas en este mismo lugar. Así, el foro, que había iniciado ya unas intensas reformas en el siglo III y que se extendieron durante todo el IV, vio como la parte más occidental de la plaza se ocupó con una gran estructura rectangular de dos plantas, el palacio, ubicado a los pies del *Kardo Maximus*, permitiendo de este modo el control del acceso a la ciudad.

Sabemos que, en general, entre finales del siglo V e inicios del siglo VI, el antiguo modelo de casa con peristilo, usual entre las élites romanas estaba agotado (Ellis, 1988; Mar & Perich, 2014). Surge en cambio una nueva estructura doméstica que, en la Península Ibérica, parece caracterizarse por una tendencia a la desaparición del espacio abierto central (el peristilo o patio interior), con una esquema habitativo mucho más compacto, que en el caso de las estructuras más lujosas y/o palaciales, se caracterizaría además por la existencia de contrafuertes y la localización de la sala de recepción en la segunda planta, dejando la planta baja para otras funciones. Esta distribución, evidentemente, implicó no solo un cambio arquitectónico, sino también una transformación de las mentalidades y de la forma de relacionarse socialmente. Los espacios de representación ya no se localizaban en la planta baja, facilitando la recepción, sino que requerían una mayor penetración en la residencia. No cualquiera, en consecuencia, podía acceder a ellos.

Uno de los casos más conocidos es el del complejo palatino de Recópolis (Olmo Enciso, 1988; *id.*, 2008), ubicado en la terraza más alta de la ciudad, junto a la basílica (Fig. 3). El palacio Visigodo se extiende a lo largo de 133 metros, con pilares centrales y contrafuertes exteriores, que estarían señalando la existencia de una segunda planta, que como decimos estaría dedicada a la recepción. De hecho, mientras que en ella se localizan refinados elementos decorativos (con pavimentos de *opus signinum* y una rica decoración escultórica), la planta baja, más sencilla (con apenas decoración y pavimentos sencillos de mortero de cal), quedaría relegada para actividades de tipo administrativo y/o almacenamiento.

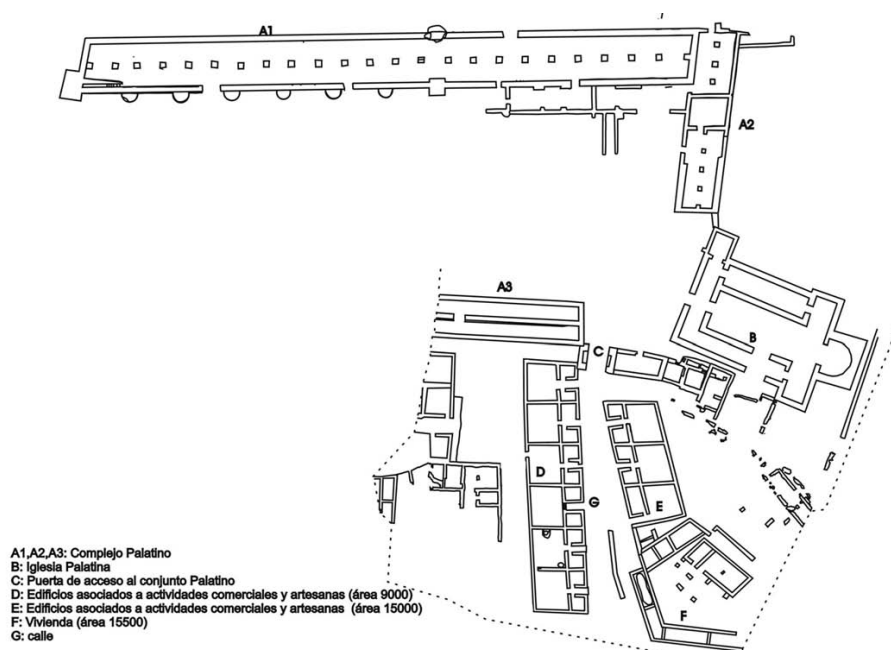


Fig. 3. Planta General de la primera fase visigoda de Recópolis (finales del siglo VI d. C.). Escala 1:800 (Olmo-Enciso, 2008).

Este modelo palacial es muy similar al que encontramos en Falperra (Fig. 4), cerca de Braga (antigua *Bracara Augusta*, capital del *Conventus Bracarensis*, para después erigirse como capital del Reino Suevo). Este complejo palacial, construido entre el siglo V y el VI, estaba formado también por una basílica y por una residencia palacial, que se desarrollaba de forma rectangular y tenía pilares centrales en su interior, mientras que en el exterior aparecen los contrafuertes (Real, 2000). En realidad, no habría mucha diferencia entre estos complejos palaciales y los relacionados con los obispos, ya que observamos que los palacios episcopales siguen, en la mayor parte de los casos, esta misma organización y similares técnicas constructivas, como vemos en el Tolmo de Minateda, construido en el siglo VII (Gutiérrez Lloret & Cánovas, 2009, 95). O en Barcelona (Bonnet & Beltrán de Heredia, 2003, pp. 174-176; *id.*, 2005, pp. 143-148), donde un siglo antes, en el VI, siguiendo técnicas constructivas muy similares a las que observamos en Recópolis, se construiría un gran complejo episcopal junto a otros edificios administrativos y de gobierno, creando así un centro de poder en el que se incluiría la residencia del *comes ciuitatis*. El palacio del *comes*, que probablemente también en este caso tendría dos plantas, tenía forma de 'U' y se ubicaba entre la iglesia cruciforme y el palacio episcopal, aunque totalmente independiente de ellos (Beltrán de Heredia, 2008).

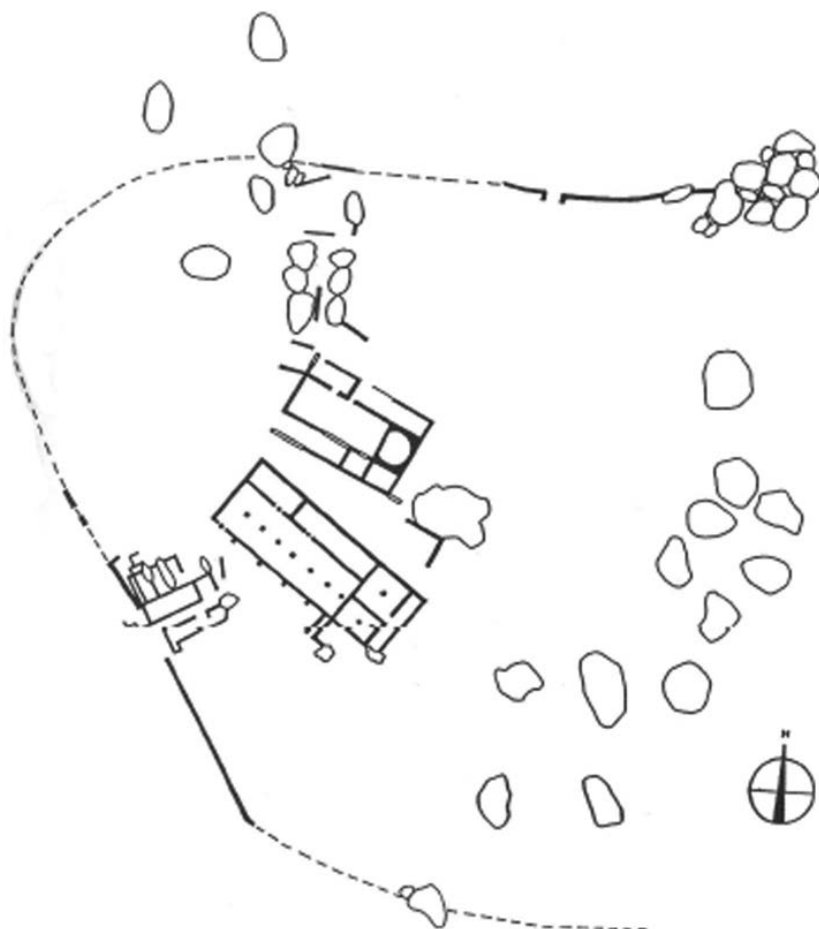


Fig. 4. Planta de la acrópolis de Falperra (Real, 2000).

A excepción del Tolmo, donde por el momento no se ha localizado la existencia de una residencia para el poder cívico, en los casos anteriores vemos como el complejo palatino y la basílica se ubican en una misma zona, de forma independiente, aunque relacionados, subrayando las intensas relaciones entre el obispo y el *comes ciuitatis*, lo que seguro tenía una consecuencia directa en la administración de las ciudades y sus territorios. Efectivamente, sabemos que los obispos tenían relación no solo con ellos y con sus feligreses, sino también directamente con la monarquía, que tenía de hecho la prerrogativa de consagrar obispos, como así aparece en el II Concilio de Barcelona, celebrado en el año 599, en el que se afirma que este modo junto a la aclamación popular y episcopal son las dos formas de designar un nuevo obispo.

El rol del obispo, en consecuencia, abarcaría todo el espectro social, desde las clases más bajas hasta la cúspide de la pirámide, representada por los reyes. No obstante, como ya hemos notado con anterioridad, sus actividades, su capacidad de munificencia – que podría ser entendida como un evergetismo tardío y/o alto medieval –, estaría directamente en relación con la riqueza de la diócesis. Conocemos los casos de Justiniano de Valencia o los de los obispos de Mérida, pero podemos suponer que esfuerzos comparables se harían en ciudades como Zaragoza o Sevilla, no así en las más pequeñas y periféricas, donde probablemente no había ni tantos recursos ni tanta capacidad de acción.

4. CONCLUSIONES

Resulta difícil establecer un modelo único de transformación de los centros urbanos durante la Antigüedad Tardía y casi podríamos decir que hay tantos modelos como antiguas ciudades romanas. Quizá sea una exageración, pero lo cierto es que, aunque efectivamente tuvo lugar en todos núcleos urbanos, las formas, aspectos y duración de las transformaciones varían mucho de una ciudad a otra. Qué duda cabe que, aunque el proceso se puede dar por iniciado desde el siglo III, es durante los siglos V y VI cuando vemos una aceleración del mismo, coincidiendo con la progresiva fragmentación territorial y los nuevos poderes que se asientan en la Península.

Esos nuevos poderes, sin embargo, no cambiaron el lugar desde donde ejercieron el control y, si bien aparecieron nuevos centros rectores, como los asentamientos en altura (Gutiérrez González, 2002; Martín Viso, 2006) – en los que probablemente residió algún tipo de aristocracia rural que quizá pudo hacer de intermediaria entre la esfera rural y la urbana –, son las ciudades las que siguieron poseyendo el rol dominante en el control de territorio.

Sin embargo, esa no era la discusión que se planteaba en este artículo, sino quién o quiénes, desde las ciudades, fueron los principales actores en los cambios que se estaban gestando. Sabemos que en las más importantes, las que eran sedes episcopales y tenían un papel importante en la administración visigoda, residía el obispo y el *comes ciuitatis*, seguramente acompañados y ayudados por un nutrido grupo de personas, de una camarilla, que también residirían en las ciudades. Como hemos visto, es de los obispos y sobre su papel de constructores de edificios religiosos, de quienes más información poseemos, mientras que el poder cívico parece prácticamente ausente en el registro arqueológico, creando una imagen un tanto descompensada de los poderes urbanos⁶. De hecho, pese a

⁶ A este respecto, no es casual que los primeros estudios arqueológicos dedicados a este periodo se agrupasen dentro de lo que se denominó, sobre todo en la segunda mitad del siglo XX, como Arqueología Cristiana. Esta denominación, hoy tendente al desuso, esconde otras realidades mucho menos evidentes en el registro arqueológico, lejanas a la órbita cristiana, que

que sea cierto que los obispos fueron adquiriendo gradualmente prerrogativas del poder cívico, no es menos cierto que la administración visigoda continuó ejerciendo sus labores de control y gestión desde los centros urbanos. No obstante, el crecimiento que los grupos episcopales tuvieron en el entramado urbano, con impresionantes basílicas y palacios episcopales que dominaban el paisaje de la mayor parte de las ciudades hispanas, estaría sin duda señalando que la Iglesia, poco a poco, tomó el liderazgo de la vida urbana.

Los habitantes de las ciudades, en consecuencia, tuvieron que responder ante dos esferas de poder, la laica y la religiosa, que intervenían directamente y organizaban la mayor parte de las facetas de la vida urbana. Estos habitantes vieron como sus espacios domésticos se deterioraban con respecto a los siglos precedentes, con una clara simplificación de las técnicas constructivas y materiales de escasa calidad. Todo apunta, por tanto, a que el poder adquisitivo de la mayor parte de los que poblaban las ciudades era reducido. Asimismo, señala también una nueva identidad cultural y unas necesidades que quedaban cubiertas de una manera mucho más humilde que en el pasado. Una sociedad empobrecida que soportaba las actividades productivas y comerciales de las ciudades y que, de hecho, en muchos casos, vio como la esfera doméstica no quedaba separada de la artesanal. Esto pone de relieve no solo que ambas actividades ocupasen el mismo espacio, sino un nuevo comportamiento vital, que encierra también el establecimiento de un nuevo paradigma de relaciones dentro la comunidad urbana.

La escasa diferenciación social durante la Antigüedad Tardía y la Alta Edad Media se refleja en estas casas, en las que no hay grandes variaciones ni en cuanto a dimensiones, ni en materiales o experiencia constructiva de quienes las realizaron. Nos encontramos ante una gran masa de ciudadanos que vive en condiciones muy similares, con pocos recursos y posibilidades. Es más, los contrastes que podemos encontrar en algunos enterramientos con ajuar (las típicas hebillas de cinturón y elementos de adorno personal que aparecen en algunos contextos peninsulares, *vid.* Jéput, 2009) que hallamos en el ámbito rural, no los encontramos en los centros urbanos, donde no tenemos tampoco esa clase de materiales y, en consecuencia, tampoco poseemos esos marcadores de diferenciación social, aunque sea en el complejo territorio de la muerte.

No existe, hoy por hoy, una explicación clara para esa diferenciación funeraria que aparece en el ámbito rural y que en cambio nos es completamente ajena al mundo urbano. No sabemos porque ocurre y ni siquiera, de momento, hay un consenso sobre quienes serían esas personas y si esos ajuares señalan una diferencia étnica y/o social – ¿Poblaciones germánicas? ¿Hispanorromanos a la moda a los que gustaba el estilo germano? ¿Aristocracias rurales? –. En

las ciudades, más allá de los escasos recintos funerarios que hemos citado, la muerte no parece un elemento a considerar para remarcar la pertenencia a una clase social. Esa diferenciación, probablemente era muy evidente y se realizaba a través del estilo de vida que llevaban, las vestimentas, los alimentos que ingerían y el acceso a bienes más o menos exclusivos y/o de lujo. Pero esto, desgraciadamente, no es más que una suposición, ya que la arqueología sigue guardando silencio sobre los agentes que participaron en el proceso que llevó al final de la ciudad clásica y a la formación de un nuevo centro urbano. De hecho, más allá de los obispos – sin duda, los actores principales si nos atenemos al registro arqueológico y a las fuentes –, poco es lo que sabemos de los actores secundarios. Si bien conocemos algún nombre de algún *dux* o *comes ciuitatis*, del que nos ha llegado además algo de información sobre sus actividades, de la mayor parte de ellos no tenemos prácticamente ninguna referencia. No conocemos bien a las aristocracias urbanas, ni sus residencias, ni sus relaciones sociales, ni esferas de actuación. No sabemos quienes fueron, como tampoco sabemos demasiado de los habitantes de estos núcleos, que vieron como cambiaban sus ciudades y que, sobre todo, fueron partícipes y elementos claves de esas transformaciones. De la gente corriente que vivió y trabajó muchas veces en un mismo espacio, que podía ubicarse sobre las ruinas de un antiguo foro o de un teatro o en cualquier otro lugar del entramado urbano. Solo nuevos análisis arqueológicos que tengan en cuenta no sólo las estructuras, sino también a quienes las construyeron y las utilizaron, a quienes las pensaron y proyectaron, podrán dar algo de luz sobre las relaciones y respuestas sociales que poco a poco dieron fin a la antigua población hispanorromana e inauguraron una nueva organización social, durante el Reino Visigodo, a la espera de que la invasión musulmana lo transformase todo de nuevo.

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