

***THE FORTIFICATIONS OF THE
CITY OF LEÓN FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE
YEAR 1000. HISTORICAL,
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND LEGAL CONTEXT***

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Current appearance of León's walls (western face and the Tower of San Isidoro).

To my dearest *maestro*, Dr. Antonio Fernández de Buján

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Foreword

Some years ago, I had the opportunity to meet Dr. Rocío A. Fernández Ordás, who asked me to tutor her brilliant and extensive work, which she started decades ago and is now bearing fruit. I am a member of the Instituto Universitario de Investigación de Ciencias de la Antigüedad, part of the Universidad Autónoma in Madrid. It brings together a good number of researchers from the most varied disciplines from Roman Law to Ancient History as well as, without intending to be exhaustive, Classical Philology, Archaeology or Philosophy, all having in common a passion for Ancient History. And there we met.

The first thing that struck me about Dr. Rocío A. Fernández Ordás, the author of this work, was her extraordinary *curriculum vitae*. With degrees in History and Archaeology from the Universities of León and Valladolid, and associate professor at the University of León for some time, she is a technical expert in Historical and Cultural Heritage Management. In addition to her publications, she has also assumed the technical direction of almost a hundred archaeological activities with the pertinent authorizations from the Public Administration, including dozens of excavations as well as field prospection work. Consequently, the author has carried out various archaeological interventions and excavations, not only in the city of León itself, but also in the province of León, as well as in those of Zamora, Palencia, Valladolid, etc.

This extensive dedication made the author, Dr. Rocío A. Fernández Ordás, one of the best qualified researchers to undertake the work that is here displayed. Rocío A. Fernández Ordás also stood out above all for her passion towards her work, towards research, without which it is impossible to carry out and challenge the effort and sacrifice that all new work requires. In this way, throughout the pages that follow, the reader will be able to appreciate the author's remarkable knowledge of León's archaeology, topography and history. In the text, walls, buildings, streets and squares vibrate because she brings them to life, like the people that populated León in those days. You will also be able to observe her complete mastery, real and effective, of all sources of information not only archaeological, but also textual, epigraphic and historical, which are not only

disclosed but also interpreted, providing novelties so as to understand in depth the archaeological and historical context of the entire northwest of the Iberian Peninsula. This the author masters outstandingly and so, when Astorga, Valencia de Don Juan, Mansilla de las Mulas, Puente Castro and León itself are mentioned in the text, to give just a few examples, they are locations that the author knows first-hand from having excavated there.

However, as indicated above, the reader will be able to experience the author's passion for research and her love for her work. Knowledge, passion and novelty portray, as few others do, her production. In short, her work has conceived a new vision of the fortifications of León, which were set within the context of the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula. But her work has gone even further, like León's own historical significance, extending out into the entire Peninsula and the whole of the Roman Empire and even further, up to the medieval period around the year 1000.

The text was registered as a doctoral thesis in November 2018 and defended in March 2019, and it is now presented partially reworked and rewritten. Very little can I contribute further to her work. Perhaps I can offer a certain approach to classical sources and, from a researcher's point of view, to some of the multiple and recurrent research leads to military history and the study of fortifications, or rather the hostile armies to Rome, Eastern Roman and pre-Roman fortifications, Roman and Hellenistic camps and also Eastern Hellenistic and Roman walls. It is true, nevertheless, and evident in the work itself that León is perhaps only comprehensible in a global ecumenical context, in the Greco-Roman sense of the term.

In addition, obviously, from the *Legio VII, Galbiana* first and later *Gemina*, the legions of the Cantabrian Wars or those created by Galba himself—in addition to the VII, the I *Adiutrix*—were familiar to me. Thus, the *Legio X Gemina, Equestris, Venerea, Pia, Fidelis*, even for a short time *Domitiana*, victorious over the Helvetii and in the battles of Farsala and Munda, one of the most famous of the Empire, the VI *Hispaniensis* (later *Victrix*), the V *Alaudae*, this more doubtfully, and the IV *Macedonica*, all fought in Actium in September 31 BC on the coasts of Epirus and *Acarnania*. The first three on the side of Mark Antony, and the last one on the side of Octavius, the future Augustus. In the Iberian Peninsula, within the context of the Cantabrian Wars, they were to forge their brotherhood at arms. The work of Dr. Rocío A. Fernández Ordás allowed me to approach it from the “other side” of history, maybe thanks to the attraction of an evil but powerful genie, a *Daemon*, we could say, who knows, perhaps the genie of the *Legio VII* itself.

The topic of this research undoubtedly exerts a powerful attraction. *Legio*-León, for some five hundred years the main camp and headquarters of the only legion established in the Iberian Peninsula, is a unique place, central to the history of Antiquity and the Middle Ages (at least of these two periods). First of all, to talk about León is nothing other than to immerse oneself in the universe of the Roman world. In addition to the VI and the VII, the author suggests the possibility that other legions or some of their detachments from the X *Gemina*, the V *Alaudae* and maybe even the I *Adiutrix* passed through León or were quartered there. These legions are a good proof of the globality of the Empire in which the city of León itself is inserted and makes sense.

Consequently, the *Legio VI*, set up by Augustus in 41 BC, served first in Italy. Relocated to Hispania from the year 29 BC, it fought in the Cantabrian Wars and there obtained its name of *Hispaniensis*. After a long stay in Hispania (29 BC to AD 70), its next destination, already with the new name of *Victrix* in the Flavian era, was stationed on the Lower *Limes Germanicus* in the battles against the Batavians. There it would earn the title of *Pia Fidelis*, and also *Domitiana*, being the latter an appellative associated to the Emperor, which the Senate would remove after the *damnatio memoriae* decreed for the last of the Flavians.

Established firstly in *Novaesium* (Neuss) and later in *Vetera* (Xanten), from Germania it would leave for Britannia where, stationed in *Eboracum* (York), it survived still when the legions left the island in AD 402. The X *Gemina*, the oldest and one of the most famous legions, was recruited in 70 BC in Cisalpine Gaul, and it served with Julius Caesar in Gaul and, in the course of the Civil Wars, moved to Epirus and Macedonia.

After the Cantabrian Wars, it went to *Pannonia* (*Carnuntum*, 63-68 AD) and, after a brief journey through Hispania (68-70), it was stationed in Germania, in *Noviomagus* (Nijmegen, 70-104), ending up in *Pannonia* and quartered in *Vindobona* (Vienna) until its disappearance in the 5th century AD.

The V *Alaudae*, set up by Julius Caesar in 52 BC in Cisalpine Gaul, fought first in Gaul. After its participation in the Cantabrian Wars, it moved to Germania (Xanten, Germany), where it might have been annihilated either by the Batavians or by the Dacians. In any case, it did not survive the Flavian era. Along with all of them, the IV *Macedonica* fought in the Cantabrian Wars, set up also by Caesar in the year 48, serving in Epirus and Greece too. After the Cantabrian Wars, it remained until its dissolution in the year 70 in Upper Germania, in *Mogontiacum* (Mainz). The I *Adiutrix*, recruited by Galba in 68, was

sent from AD 70 to Mainz, passed through *Pannonia* during the Dacian Wars and ended up being stationed in *Brigetio* (Szony, Hungary), where there is evidence of its existence still in the middle of the 5th century AD. Then the *Legio VII*, of course, born Galbiana in *Clunia* (Coruña del Conde, Burgos) on 10th June 68 BC in support of Galba, proclaimed as Emperor (by the VI *Victrix*). After a journey through the Italian peninsula, where it contributed to the end of Nero's regime, it was sent to *Pannonia*, from where it moved to León in 74, as the VII *Gemina Felix*. It would later receive the name of *Pia* under Septimius Severus.

It is not only about troop movements, but also about the effective participation of all of them in the main events that marked the history of the Empire and its birth. Therefore, battles such as Ilerda, Munda, Farsala, Philippi or Actium, or the dynastic changes that supported or fought, such as the proclamation of Galba and the end of the Julio-Claudians. All this contributes to demonstrate the inclusion of León in the global context of the Empire.

However, León reaches beyond the Iberian Peninsula not only because of its legions. It is one of the few locations in the entire Empire which was the headquarters of a legion. As the author emphasizes, León also played an essential role within the imperial treasury. Its importance in the military and also administrative and economic framework of the Empire is what precisely explains the maintenance of a legion in a location so far from the *limes* and what is more, that *limes* would not be such until the arrival of the Visigoths in Hispania. Furthermore, the fortifications of León, its earth walls and those made later of small ashlar, are obviously to be seen in the context of legions and their fortifications globally within the entire Empire.

In all, and as we have already described, the historical role of León would be inexplicable and misunderstood without paying attention to this global context against the background of the Roman world. *Legio*-León cannot be reduced to a merely local matter, though we should keep the local context in mind.

With its manifold importance, León also certainly stands in a properly Hispanic context, where we can say unquestionably that it played a decisive role for many centuries.

In imperial times, León undertook effective control over the whole northwest of the Iberian Peninsula and reaching out over the entire Peninsula. Just one example suffices: a *vexillatio* from the VII is present in *Italica*, in the South, in 171 in the fight

against the Mauri. In short, León and its legions, especially the VII, contributed in an absolutely decisive way to the creation, the consolidation and the centuries-long prevalence of Roman Hispania, as well as introducing us into the global world of the *Mare Nostrum*.

The author also highlights the importance of medieval León, at first in a context of settlement and confrontations between Suabians and Visigoths and then in the context of the Christian kingdoms of the Early Middle Ages until around the year 1000. Here the author points out several essential facts such as, for instance, the birth of León as a city, which would not have taken place in Roman times, and the medieval origin of its so-called *muralla de cubos*, an absolutely new thesis whose data are gradually being confirmed.

As one of the few capitals among the peninsular kingdoms, the relevance of León appears not only within the Peninsula but goes beyond towards Europe and the West. The city itself and its manifold transcendence –peninsular, European, Mediterranean–, fully justifies the importance of this work as well as the numerous conclusions she will arrive at later.

In the introduction, the author presents the methodological and conceptual aspects that structure the work and its objectives. To understand and explain the events related to the walls of León, from the origin of the settlement itself until the year 1000, Dr. Rocío A. Fernández Ordás carries out a broad historical and archaeological reconstruction, distancing herself from interpretations and commonplace proposals, whether more or less conventional or officialist.

Thus, the chronological, functional and dimensional evolution of the fortifications of León is studied through the reconstruction of their various stages of formation from a non-urban reality, within a spatial military context, synthesizing, as the author points out, the different theories about the history of León, taking also into account "the human need for a global vision of things".

First of all, we are facing a new archaeological perspective. It is about what the author herself has excavated, discovered for the first time in centuries, then studied and interpreted. The archaeological remains do not speak for themselves, but from a direct dialogue set in the text between the author and the archaeological documentation, without intermediaries, and there many questions arise. Answers are provided to appropriate questions. As the author says, one investigates "the evolution of the old fortifications of

León and their historical contexts tries to achieve, in several aspects, an alternative interpretation to that proposed up to now, by means of an approach, using the perspective of 21st century archaeological studies.”

But the work cannot merely be reduced to an archaeological perspective with the purpose of displaying the excavations carried out by the author. Although this is important, it stands out due to its interdisciplinary nature, which brings together history and archaeology, as well as historiography, epigraphy, numismatics, military architecture and urban planning and, significantly, the legal aspects that surrounded the fortifications of León.

Certainly, without considering the Roman legal mindset, it is impossible to access the history of Rome itself and, therefore, that of the Roman *Legio*. On the other hand, her dissertation encloses not only an astonishing and absolute knowledge of the sources of information, which are also reinterpreted, but of the bibliography too where, while employing the most recent, the most remote is not disregarded in any way.

It is all based on a solid conceptual and methodological scheme. In short, it proposes a change of perspective in the analysis of the fortifications of León as a result of a synchronic articulation and that we can qualify as absolutely new. The whole work breathes novelty in its approaches, hypotheses, theses and conclusions. While all research is based on what has already been done, due to its intrinsic nature, it also has a character that breaks with the established learning process, and this one exhibits it to the highest degree, hence its importance. This confirms the fundamental right –radical, too, because it cannot be renounced– of every researcher, to display the results of their research. Concept, method, multidisciplinary work and endeavour lead to the overwhelming novelty of this work.

In the first chapter, dedicated to “The Genesis of the fortifications of León”, she makes an analysis of the context of the Cantabrian Wars integrating the most recent archaeological information, especially those of the eastern Galician areas and the Leonese regions of Los Ancares, El Bierzo and La Cabrera. They were wars for which a change in the paradigm is also proposed in relation to the axis of the conquest from the banks of the River Duero northwards, that is to say from the South and not eastwards as has been traditionally suggested. She defends the location of the pre-Roman *Lancia* in the Castro de Las Labradas (Arrabalde) in Zamora and not in Villasabariego in the province of León; a thesis proposed some decades ago by Dr. Santos Yanguas, now contextualized within

the Roman military deployment in the *Asturia Cismontana*, and “to reinforce this idea, the greatest concentration of Roman camps from the time of the Asturian Wars has been found in this area: in the surroundings of Rosinos de Vidriales (Zamora)... and Castrocalbón (León)... both areas are almost equidistant to the west of the hill-fort of Las Labradas in Arrabalde (Zamora)”.

While awaiting fresh excavations, this thesis is apparently difficult to refute. The existence of a *limes* in the Northwest is also discarded and the evolution of the army as well as the Roman fortifications in the northwest of Hispania is analysed as a whole. The author associates the origin of the settlement in the current city of León with the end of the Cantabrian-Asturian Wars and its location *ex novo*, since there are no archaeological remains in the city of León of any previous settlement. Consequently, León was created, perhaps by the *Legio VI Hispaniensis*, as a legionary camp at the end of the 1st century BC, with the years 25/24 BC as the *terminus post quem*, just as numismatic findings mentioned by the author seem to indicate. Troops from the X *Gemina* would also pass through it, without discarding the V *Alaudae* either. Its birth is thus enfolded in a special way in the occupation process after the (relative) *Pax Augusta*.

A specific section within this chapter refers to the analysis made by Dr. Fernández Ordás of the earth wall, which dates precisely from the founding period. The previous hypothesis of two presumed phases of wooden and earth walls is abandoned, which would have been inappropriately called León I and León II. In fact, the idea of a first phase –*Augustea* or León I– and a second –*Tiberiana* or León II– has been traditionally maintained.

Opposed to this the author proposes a new single hypothesis, that is the existence of a single phase of a wall of wood and earth, a *vallum*, with its corresponding *agger* of clay blocks, something that is much more in consonance with what is characteristic of Roman camp building with a frontal moat. This would come to be known as León I.

Also of special interest is the author’s examination of the so-called *prata legionis*, which served to support the legion, and of the legal framework that regulated public fortification works and their financing, as well as religious and legal aspects. Consequently, this section examines key elements such as the *res publica in publico uso*, *res sanctae*, *res sacrae* and *res religiosae*.

In the second chapter, “The Early Imperial small-ashlar wall (León II)”, constituting the second wall of León or the stone wall, the author analyses the possibility that this wall was already partially or totally built when the *Legio VII Gemina* settled in the camp in AD 74. In the opinion of the author, the participation of other military units in addition to –or instead of– the *VII Gemina* in the stone refortification of León cannot be discounted. The possibility that this second wall could be attributed to the *Legio VI*, the *Victrix*, the old *Hispaniensis*, which was also able to build the earth fortification, is not excluded either, without overlooking the remote possibility that several troops could have intervened in its construction, such as, for example, members of the *Legio X Gemina* or the *I Adiutrix*. This stone wall, built during the Principate, would effectively be León II and not a so-called *Tiberiana*.

Other fundamental aspects of this epigraph have to do with the relationship of the fortifications of León with others in the Northwest, for example, with that of Lugo, for which a military camp origin is also proposed, and with the location of the *Canaba* of León in Puente Castro, a place where the author herself has also carried out excavations.

Finally, the author delves into a decisive element, the strategic location of León, to carry out the works of conservation of the roads and the engineering structures necessary for the imperial administration and the Roman economy as well as its main role in controlling the Northwest and the revenues for the imperial treasury.

In the third chapter, "Late Roman Hispania: context of an unnecessary refortification in León", she rejects the idea that the semicircular towers (herein after, *cubos*) of the walls in León (León III) could belong to the period of the Tetrarchy or Late Empire, as has been suggested on occasions and is still commonly called, and serves in the northwest of Hispania as a model for the crisis of the Empire during the 3rd and 4th centuries. Considering as a *post quem* date the start of the 5th century, Rocío A. Fernández Ordás leaves open the possibility that these could be the last of the “Late Roman” walls built in Hispania, but only if we take into consideration the fact that the *Suevi* reached the northwest of the Peninsula as Roman federates, and as such, they could have refortified León.

Also based on her description of the reforms of the systems of defence and the context of Late Imperial Hispania, she concludes that the wall of *cubos* is not a Late Roman Tetrarchic refortification, unnecessary in a military camp. The author highlights "the exceptionality of this case in León, which is due to the fact that it was the only

permanent Roman camp settlement of a legion in the Hispanic provinces for more than five centuries up until after the middle of the 5th century."

Since archaeological data indicate quite clearly that when this wall was built in León, the 1st century Roman wall was already in ruins, it seems difficult to accept that a permanent military garrison would have allowed the destruction of its defensive protection.

In the last chapter, "The wall of *cubos* in León (León III)", she analyses the documentary and archaeological testimonies of the Early and Central Middle Ages, and also the Suebian, Visigothic, those of the Asturian kings and finally the Leonese contexts. In the opinion of the author, the invasions of the *Suevi* and Visigoths entailed the transformation of the old Roman camp of León into a civil nucleus, giving rise to the birth of León as a city as a key fact, and also a change in the idea of defence, based on documentary and archaeological evidence. Precisely the Suebian settlement first and later the situation of military tension between the *Suevi* and the Visigoths provide an adequate context for the construction of a wall of *cubos* in León, which would not serve as a reinforcement for the pre-existing legionary walls but rather, as the author suggests, this wall would replace them.

As a result, the Suebian Kingdom, established in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula for almost 175 years, could have used Roman funerary monuments as *spolia* and fortified León to defend themselves from the constant advance of the Visigoths. The author also proposes a second hypothesis: just like the *Suevi*, almost five centuries later, Queen Elvira of León also had at her disposal the same materials, the *spolia*, in addition to the stone from the nearby quartzite quarries in the province of León. She also had reasons to fortify León against the constant advance of the Muslims, as well as to protect against internal threats, such as the independence of the Counts of Castile. In any case, the *terminus ante quem* of the Leonese wall (León III) would be found in Late Medieval documentation, which would indicate that the wall was already completed in the time of Alfonso V, before at least the year 1011 when it is mentioned that this wall was in use. In short, the author raises the double hypothesis of its construction, either in times of the Suebian Kingdom or by Queen Elvira García of León, the mother of Alfonso V. But, above all, it asserts the very Late Antique or medieval nature of the wall of *cubos* wall (León III).

There are many novelties, as we can already appreciate in this prologue, that the author proposes and that suggest a considerable change to the panorama of our knowledge of the history and archaeology of León. Finally, through reading this work we immerse ourselves in an ultimate, essential, conclusive, transcendent reality: León, the Roman *Legio*, medieval León, heritage of all, heritage of the world as a whole, forms, owing to its historical importance, part of our own identity, of what we once were and what we are today.

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INTRODUCTION

A relatively long time ago, in 1979, D. Juan Mateo Marcos, major general and professor at the Army General Staff School and the Senior Army Academy, carried out a brief study of the walls of León that was to be published two years later under the title of *Origin, Evolution and Decline of the Walled Enclosure of León*¹. Since then, several works on systems of fortification have come to light, in which the evolution of León's means of defence have been discussed from different points of view but, nevertheless, few have brought together the amazing archaeological findings and reports made in the last few decades.

In fact, the publication by Mateo Marcos has gone almost unnoticed and is hardly cited in works on the subject despite the fact that it summarized the state of knowledge at the end of the 20th century and that it could have been a good starting point for further progress. Likewise, the availability of publications about the progress in understanding the Leonese walls (appearing at numerous congresses, symposia and in monographs concerning the systems of defence in Hispanic and European antiquity on the Roman *limes*, their definition and evolution) requires, in our opinion, a joint approach and an exhaustive and critical review of previous contributions. This also includes the unpublished results of the latest archaeological studies carried out, many of which remain stowed away today in regional and local government archives. In other words, despite what has been published, we lack an overall vision that allows us to integrate the latest discoveries and new working methodologies. The present work sets out to fill this gap as far as possible, not only from an archaeological but also a historical perspective. When investigating the evolution of the ancient fortifications in León, the need arose to elaborate beforehand a coherent methodological framework in order to previously establish a structure that would provide a specific outline plan for research. This work aims, therefore, to reconstruct the historical and archaeological basis so as to understand and explain the

¹ MATEO MARCOS, Juan, (1981): *Origen, Evolución y Decadencia del Recinto Amurallado de León*, C.S.I.C. León.

whole scenario of the Leonese walls using a basically inductive methodology², though in the end not excluding deduction as a valid argument to understand the current architectural reality, despite it might be unnecessary to grasp the historical process of its military purpose.

The first approach came about from the attempt to avoid the repetition of previous interpretations and proposals; we lay out a change in perspective resulting from a synchronic articulation of the elements already known, giving rise to different perspectives without renouncing archaeological "scientism". This should not go against the autonomy of reason, as merely positivist or historicist paradigms have already been surpassed. So, it is necessary to review the role of events in the formation of our concepts assumed from a past that linked historiography to literature, rhetoric and art history. Most of the contributions of archaeology to historical knowledge do not refer to material remains, though they do exist, and some in a forceful way; what archaeology almost always provides are reconstructions, deductions, interpretations, validation of structures from the past that have not persisted as such –or not in their original form and function. In many cases they would not exist were it not for the way we archaeologists unravel or describe them. This links in with the Kantian idea that human contribution is essential for understanding, and that it is the subjective representation that makes possible the existence of an object and not the opposite.

Validation is one of the two possible types of scientific justification established by H. Feigl³ regarding the task of thinking: *validation* as cognitive justification in a theoretical framework and *vindication*, a practical justification of the facts. In the pragmatic scientific justification –to which this work adheres– all inductive inference tries to show a certain rational justification without forgetting that all archaeological conclusions will be supported by elements of knowledge subjectively chosen, without the possibility of verification, and therefore, they may be refutable⁴. We will use *vindication*, then, to scientifically justify this work, beyond the pretence of empiricism, leaving out that complex that other disciplines⁵ do not share: the case of Democritus's metaphysical atomic theory is paradigmatic, not crystallising as a proven scientific formulation until

² Ref. ALLAIS 1999, for the requirement of a prior scientific methodological approach.

³ CRUZ RODRÍGUEZ, 2004, p. 42; FEIGL 1952, pp. 674-675.

⁴ About the lack of dogma in modern archaeology, see HARARI 2015, pp. 264-266, 283, 289.

⁵ ALLAIS 1999.

centuries later. Historians of science have already shown the disruptive nature⁶ of the knowledge process, explicitly rejecting continuism since, regardless of its faithfulness to history, it penetrates the ideology of scientific thought. Archaeologists, like philosophers, venture theories not open to experimental refutation in its entirety, even if it is applied to its parts. If in other sciences the repercussion of a researcher's particular world view⁷ is undeniable, in the specific case of archaeology we should also add the intellectual conception they hold about their practice, which may or may not be ideology, according to whether they try to direct their discoveries or, on the contrary, to ascertain knowledge of the social reality of an era as impartially as possible. Beliefs are to be found in all branches of knowledge. Antonio Gómez Ramos⁸ wrote that "outside of theology and Genesis, that is, within the historical space that concerns us, there are no absolute principles". To this quote we might add at the end "nor final"⁹, to be able to begin to treat the subject of when the Leonese Roman fortifications were abandoned by the Romans, if the Romans ever left the site in León initially occupied by the VI *Hispaniensis*¹⁰ legion and the X *Gemina*¹¹, without ruling out the presence of the Augustan legions or, especially, of the V *Alaudae* and, in the following century, of the VII *Gemina*.

This study is an attempt to comprehend the evolution of a fortification from antiquity, that of the city of León, by reconstructing its various stages of formation from a non-urban reality –always from a military spatial context– using a unified conceptual outline scheme, among all those possible, whereby theories about the history of León can be synthesized, always taking into account the requirement for a global vision¹². This work tries to integrate the many scattered studies and data¹³ for the benefit of an interdisciplinary deepening that brings together history and archaeology but also epigraphy, military architecture and urban planning. By reviewing them exhaustively and

⁶ KUHN 1962, where the concept of "*paradigm shift*" was established.

⁷ ORTEGA Y GASSET 1924, pp. 767, 770.

⁸ GÓMEZ RAMOS 2003 p. 69.

⁹ GORDON CHILDE, Vere (1947) *History*, London, p. 4; SCHOPENHAUER 2007, p. 18 prologue, note 18: "*e meris affirmativitis in secunda figura nihil sequitur (...)* from mere affirmations nothing follows in the minor".

¹⁰ SEYRIG 1923, pp. 488-497; SAUVER 1908, p. 61.

¹¹ ROLDÁN HERVÁS 1974, p. 199.

¹² RADNITZKY 1973, p. 211.

¹³ Data whose origin arising out of a culture (from archaeological understanding) are sometimes identified with the society that produced them, culture in its social dimension. We have taken into account N. Faulkner's marxist theory (2008) on analysing these data, forewarning about the problems that may arise when one equates both concepts of culture. This can be avoided by establishing a reasonable relation between the data provided by archaeology and physical remains.

critically, we have attempted an analysis of the chronological, functional and dimensional evolution of the fortifications of León. In short, this work on the evolution of the old fortifications of León and their historical contexts tries to achieve, in several aspects, an alternative interpretation to that proposed up to now, by means of an approach, using the perspective of 21st century archaeological studies.

The opening chapter is devoted to contextualizing the evolution of the Roman army and fortifications in Northwestern Hispania. In the first place, the origin of the settlement is located in the current city of León in the context of the end of the Cantabrian-Asturian Wars¹⁴, wars of conquest in the most important mining territory of the Iberian Peninsula and whose geographical progression we place from south to north, thus refuting the traditional hypothesis that considered the military advance from the Ebro Valley, and also the one that continues to mistakenly equate Roman *Lancia*, located in Villasabariego¹⁵ near the Leonese Roman camp, with the capital of the Lancian Asturians. With the archaeological evidence currently available, the assumption of the existence of a border *limes*¹⁶ in northwestern Hispania during this stage of conquest cannot be maintained either and we hold that there were two routes of penetration to the North, one of which would cross the province of Orense as far as Lugo, from where the Roman conquest could have continued in an east-west direction, perhaps in both directions. The other possible route of conquest, perhaps simultaneous, would cross the province of León, once the Asturian capital of the people of *Lancia* had been defeated (Las Labradas, in Arrabalde, Zamora). The second part of this first chapter is devoted to the primitive Roman earth-built fortification of the city of León, which since its creation as a legionary camp at the end of the 1st century BC (perhaps by the *Legio VI Hispaniensis*) coincides in time with the process of occupation after the (relative) *Pax Augusta*. The previous hypothesis of two supposed phases of wooden and earthen walls, inappropriately named León I and León II¹⁷, is analysed proposing a new unitary hypothesis by reinterpreting the known remains and comparative analysis with the Scottish model offered by G. Carter

¹⁴ VICENTE GONZÁLEZ 2011, pp. 4-10.

¹⁵ CÉLIS SÁNCHEZ 2018, pp. 321-322. On the use of the word *Lancia* in Hispania: GÓMEZ-PANTOJA 1994, p. 181. On the existence of various places with the same denomination, see FERNÁNDEZ ÁLVAREZ; JORDÁN CÓLERA.

¹⁶ MORILLO CERDÁN 2017, pp. 191-223; *Ref. Id.* (2003). On the old problem of the Late Antique *limes*, DOMÍNGUEZ MONEDERO 1984, pp. 3-30; GRAU LOBO 2016, p.21.

¹⁷ GARCÍA MARCOS and MORILLO CERDÁN 2018, pp. 319-340; *Id.* 2015, pp. 91-112; GARCÍA MARCOS; GUTIÉRREZ GONZÁLEZ; MIGUEL HERNÁNDEZ; CAMPOMANES ALVAREDO and MUÑOZ VILLAREJO 2013, pp. 313-327.

and with the camp iconography of the wooden castra reproduced on Trajan's Column. Finally, the legal framework regulating public fortification works as well as their financing and their application to the genesis and evolution of Roman camps and their different types, are described in relation to those known in northwestern Hispania with special emphasis to the analysis of the fortifications in León.

Another question that opens the first chapter and is developed in the second refers to the implications of analysing the epigraphic findings, some recent, in a comparative way with the latest historical and archaeological advances, involving the legions V *Alaudae*, VI (perhaps already then *Victrix*) and X *Gemina* in the construction and reconstruction of the Roman camps of the later León territory; making clear the impossibility of ruling out the participation of any of them in the construction of the first stone wall of the Leonese capital, the Early Imperial one (this one being León II), and opening the debate on its attributed Flavian chronology and on the possibilities that this ashlar wall was already partially or totally built when the *Legio VII Gemina* settled in the camp in AD 74. The long permanence of the *Legio VI Hispaniensis* is documented stationed in León for almost a century until AD 68, and new evidence pointing to its authorship is analysed archaeologically: an unpublished mark on an ashlar in the tower of San Isidoro, whose base points to its Roman origin.

In the second chapter, we review the Early Imperial context of the first stone walls of León, beginning with a cross-check from military historiography and iconography where the first stone defences of the Roman camp of León, the ashlar wall, were built. For this, its formal aspects are examined and a comparative analysis is made with some fortifications in northwestern Hispania occupied or built by troops of the same Roman legions, such as Astorga, Lugo, *Aquis Querquennis* (Baños de Bande, Orense) or Ciudadela (Insúa, Sobrado dos Monxes, La Coruña) and some others considered medieval but with formal aspects that indicate Roman origin, such as the *castellum* in the León suburb of Puente Castro or the walls at bridgeheads on the Esla River of Mansilla de las Mulas and Valencia de Don Juan, both in the province of León.

The third chapter describes the context of Late Imperial Hispania in which there was no late-Roman tetrarchic refortification –not necessary– in the Leonese legionary camp. The paradigm shift regarding the crisis and ruralisation of Hispania and the inconvenience of applying to the *military* camp of León the hypotheses concerning global *urban* wall-building policies are considered. Regarding the reforms of the Late Imperial

defence system, the defence thesis is clarified in depth for the Hispanic Northwest, incorporating the relevance of episcopal power as the *defensor civitatis* and maintainer of the walls, although this does not seem to have been the case in León where the last documented Roman bishop was *Decentius* in the early 4th century; a century later, at the beginning of the 5th century, the Roman administration regulated a new type of urban militia in Late Roman Hispania, the *burgarii*¹⁸, part of a new defensive strategy that would still maintain a palatine legion as a regular army in León, according to the data of the *Notitia Dignitatum*. The “tetrarchic” chronology of the Leonese walls is refuted on the basis of their functional continuity and through arguments such as their legal nature, and the erroneous consideration of funerary monuments as *spolia* during the Tetrarchy. This was not possible legally until the last decade of the 4th century after the prohibition of paganism.

The fourth chapter studies the third phase of the walls of León, those with *cubos*, establishing its construction at a later time than the first half of the 5th century, owing to the extant *foedus* signed in the years 411 and 438 between Rome and the *Suevi*, who occupied northwestern Hispania, where they would remain 174 years as allies of the Romans. The invasions of Suebians and Visigoths appear in documentary¹⁹ and archaeological evidence: in the 5th century it is probable that the Hispano-Romans conserved the best fortresses of “the Suebian midlands”, although the Suebian parochial set-up included León as a parish, and in Lugo, Hydatius described the coexistence of Suebians and Romans. Finally, we bring the narration of Lucas de Tuy’s chronicle to bear, whose allusions to the rebuilding of the walls by Alfonso V have been wrongly dismissed by current archaeologists and historians²⁰, due to the supposed poverty of their materials.

¹⁸ SÁNCHEZ-ALBORNOZ 1943, p. 60

¹⁹ GARCÍA MORENO 2008, pp. 56-57, on Suebian and Visigothic attacks by the Ruccones (Luggones) as far as La Bañeza (León).

²⁰ GUTIÉRREZ GONZÁLEZ 1992, p. 37; PRADA MARCOS and VIDAL ENCINAS 2007, pp. 601, 616-617. *Ref.* PEREZ DE URBEL 1952, pp. 344-345.

CHAPTER 1

The genesis of the fortifications of León (León I - and II?)

2.1 The context of the Cantabrian and Asturian Wars and the axes of the conquest of the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula

One of the most commonly acknowledged arguments of the origins of the Roman fortified precincts in the area of León –the territory of the *Cismontane Astures*²¹– is its enfold in the military strategy of the Cantabrian and Asturian Wars (*Bellum Cantabricum*) at the end of the process of conquest of the north of the Iberian Peninsula. This is the only hypothesis favoured by almost all historiography²² and, in the case of the capital of León, it should be revised in light of the archaeological discoveries made in recent decades.

The *Bellum Cantabricum*, praised by 1st century AD Roman historians as Augustus' personal heroic feat, came to conclude a conquest which began centuries before, although the reality is that even in Nero's time the *Astures* continued fighting. *Hispania* had been the first great imperialist adventure of the Roman Republic, risking its own future in the Iberian Peninsula during the Punic Wars²³. The war against Hannibal

²¹ The Asturians were found on both sides of the Cantabrian Mountains, in the current provinces of Asturias, León and Zamora mainly, although their territorial limits included the southeast of Lugo, the east of Orense and possibly the area of Portugal as far as Bragança on the River Coa: SANTOS YANGUAS 2006a. For the testimonies about the Asturians: FLORO. *Epítome de la historia de Tito Livio*. Introduction, translation and notes by Gregorio Hinojo Andrés, 2000, Ed. Gredos, Madrid; PLINIO. *Historia Natural*, Ed. Edición de Josefa Cantó, Isabel Gómez Santamaría, Susana González Marín and Eusebia Tarriño 2007, Cátedra, Madrid; DIÓN CASIO. *Historia romana. Books L-LX*. Translation and notes from Juan Manuel Cortés Copete, 2011, Ed. Gredos, Madrid; ESTRABÓN. *Geografía. Books III-IV*. Introduction, translation and notes by M^a J. Meana Cubero and F. Piñero, 1992, Ed. Gredos, Madrid; OROSIO. *Historias*. Introduction, translation and notes by Eustaquio Sánchez Salor, 1982, Ed. Gredos, Madrid.

²² SANTOS YANGUAS 2007b, pp. 51-86; VICENTE GONZÁLEZ 2011, pp. 4-10. The archaeological materials published by the Museum of León up to this date in the city of León date back to after 15 BC, the date of the controversial "The Edict of el Bierzo" or "Bembibre Bronze". Regarding the oldest remains of *terra sigillata* found so far in the capital of León they date to the end of the 1st century BC near the change of era.

²³ KULIKOWSKI 2010, pp. 1-2. FERNÁNDEZ DE BUJÁN 2019, p. 164: "The setting of the second Punic War is the Iberian Peninsula. The Carthaginians conquered Sagunto in 219 BC (which was reconquered by the Romans in 212 BC) and the Romans conquered Tarragona (218 BC) and Cartagena (209 BC). Rome

began in the year 218 BC, when Cneo Cornelio Scipio arrived with his army in the Greek city of Emporion (Ampurias) to continue colonising the southern interior of the Iberian Peninsula, after the victories of the young Publius Cornelius Scipio, “the *Africanus*”, founder of *Italica* (near *Hispalis*, Seville) as a settlement for its veterans.

The first piece of news ever known about the *Astures* during this period does not refer to their role in the defence of Hispania during the conquest, nor to their further presence in the Roman divisions. The documentation testifies to the first Asturian soldiers being part of an extra peninsular division in the Carthaginian army that Hannibal (247-183 BC) led to Italy, as Quintus Horatius Flaccus described in the following centuries – Book IV, Oda XIV– and especially Tiberius Catius Asconius Silius Italicus in his work on the Second Punic War –Book. III, and Book I (V, 252): *Tremvitque exercitus astur*, “and the Astur army trembled”.

There is only one location with an archaeological interpretation that takes into account the remote possibility of Punic influences in the area of Asturias and León: this is the villa of El Soldán in Santa Colomba de Somoza (León)²⁴. This Republican occupation²⁵ of the Iberian Peninsula took place at the same time as the provinces of Hispania were expanding and, at first, were poorly administered because the territory was occupied in the interest of the Romans of the Italian peninsula²⁶. Already in 197 BC the Roman Senate had designed the future territorial organization in two *provinciae*, *Hispania Citerior* and *Hispania Ulterior*, with capitals in Tarragona and Córdoba respectively. *Tarraco* was endowed with the massive fortifications that characterised the city even during the Middle Ages.

took two centuries to dominate the Iberian Peninsula, and Galicia and Cantabria were the last territories to be subjected. The Basque Country was not actually conquered by the Roman armies”.

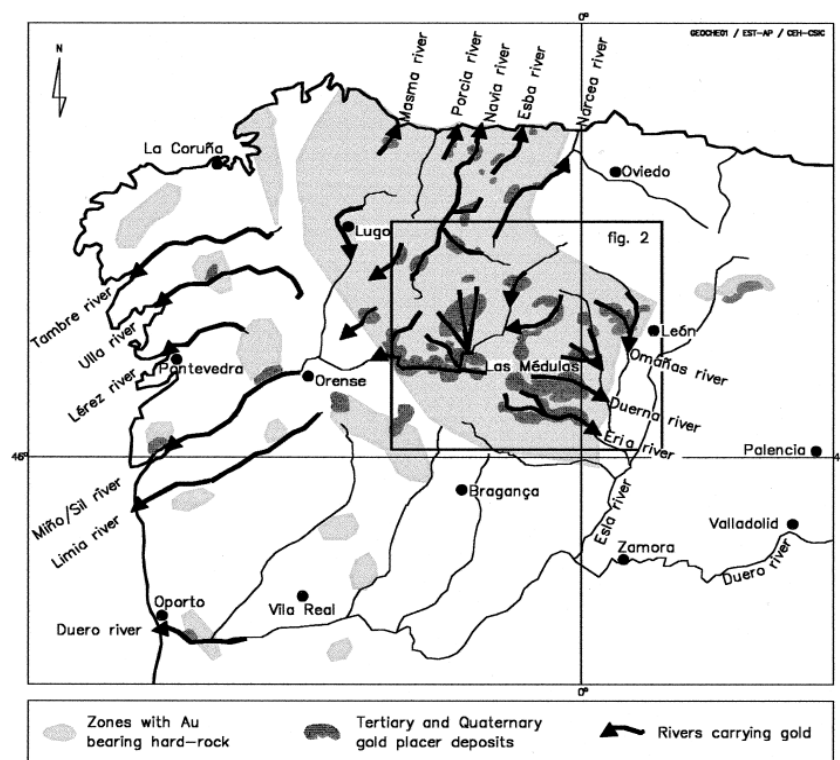
²⁴ Excavated in 1933 by Doctor Julio Carro, from Astorga, who dated it at the beginning of the 1st century in the context of the gold mining operations in Las Médulas in Santa Colomba; stratigraphic decontextualization does not allow one to confirm a date despite having photographs of archaeological materials (some of them later) and after the use of the horseshoe arch in its architecture having been documented. Nearby, in the same region of La Maragatería in León, in Quintanilla de Somoza (Luyego), a rare 3rd or 4th century inscription was found dedicated in Greek to the “*Unique Zeus Serapis Iao*”, as an example of orientalising religious syncretism.

²⁵ MORILLO CERDÁN 2003b, pp. 42-50. GARCÍA MERINO 1996, pp. 269-273; COSTA GARCÍA and CASAL GARCÍA 2015, pp.146-147.

²⁶ GIUFFRÉ 1996, pp. XIII-218; FERNÁNDEZ DE BUJÁN 2019, p. 169: “*pro-vincere*, to bring about peace, to win (...). The magistrate who annexed the province and later its governor (pro-consular or pro-praetor), in agreement with the Senate, established the *lex provinciae*, the basis of the province's organization. In general terms, traditions and local law were obeyed in the annexed territories, where Roman citizens were living together with people to whom the rights of Latins were applied as well as foreigners to whom the *ius gentium* was applied or their own regulations (...) The Romans maintained, for a certain time, the local territorial structures and their own governing systems.”

Rome did little more for the administration of Hispania until the Principate of Augustus, apart from the establishment of a simple tax regime²⁷ around the year 179 BC, which helped boost peninsular agriculture. The peoples of Hispania suffered the consequences of having fought on the losing side of the Sertorian Wars: when Pompey celebrated his triumph over them in 71 BC he did so as conqueror of a foreign people, of the natives who had helped Sertorius.

In addition to the expansion itself, the other interest in the Roman conquest of the territory of Asturias was economic, the exploitation of its rich mineral resources. Caesar's victory over Pompey continued with the tactics of establishing *coloniae* of Roman citizens in autonomous settlements in territories of the *ager publicus*. The mining areas were considered *agri publici* and evidence of the Roman state's interest in the exploitation of mining resources was the *locationes* system: concessions that contributed 25,000 drachmas a day to the Treasury, according to Polibius (XXXIV, 8-11), collected by *publicani* or by *societates publicanorum*.



²⁷ WEBER 1982, p. 99.

Fig. 1. Gold distribution in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula according to L.C. Pérez García (2000). *Journal of Geochemical Exploration* 71, 225-240. (Incorporating data from Sánchez-Palencia *et al.* 1996).

During the Principate under the government of Tiberius there is proof of the existence of an imperial-owned mining sector, at the same time as the appearance in Roman criminal law of a new type of criminal sentence: work in mines or *damnatio ad metalla*²⁸. These workers were located in newly established Roman settlements such as La Malladica, Los Chaos de Mourán, Orellán, El Nocellal or Pedreiras de Lago. They were settled in the areas around Las Médulas gold mines and have been archaeologically dated to between the late 1st century AD and the mid-2nd century.

The alluvial gold deposits concentrated in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula, in the basins of the rivers of León and mainly on both banks of the rivers Eria and Duerna (especially on their right bank, uninterrupted for more than 20 kilometres). Remains of Roman mines have been found in tertiary and alluvial deposits with great impact on the landscape due to the high volume of earth movement entailing hundreds of millions of cubic meters.

A second type of mining exploitation is found in the province of León around the higher slopes of Mount Teleno, in colluvial deposits of fluvial-glacial origin (see figs. 1 and 2). The kind of mining work carried out by the Romans²⁹ has left traces in the archaeological landscape of León, especially in El Bierzo and La Cabrera regions. It is worth highlighting the Las Médulas gold-mining complex and its hydraulic network, where it was supplied by artificial channels to the south of the Montes Aquilanos from river catchments such as the River Cabrera. The longest canal, 143 kilometres long, runs above the village of La Baña in La Cabrera (Encinedo, León) supplying water to an exploitation of red tertiary deposits on the right bank of the River El Miédalo. Additionally, new *castra* from the Roman era were built, such as Teso de la Viña, in the same municipality of La Baña (La Cabrera, León).

²⁸ RODRÍGUEZ ENNES 1994, pp. 63-73; GARCÍA-BELLIDO 2004 p. 57; SÁNCHEZ-PALENCIA *et alii* 1996, pp. 101, 103 and 106. *Ref.* SASTRE PRATS 2010, p. 159.

²⁹ PÉREZ-GARCÍA; SÁNCHEZ-PALENCIA and TORRES-RUIZ 2000, pp. 225-240; SANTOS YANGUAS 2015, pp. 105-122; MATÍAS RODRÍGUEZ and GONZÁLEZ-NISTAL 2014, pp. 519-542; BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 1970, pp. 117-150; DOMERGUE 1970, pp.151-193; DOMERGUE 1970, pp.253-286; *Id.* 1974, pp. 499-548; *Id.* 1973; DOMERGUE and MARTIN 1977; DOMERGUE and SILLIÈRES 1977; DOMERGUE and HÉRAIL 1978; MARTÍNEZ ABAD 2013; SAENZ RIDRUEJO and VÉLEZ GONZÁLEZ 1974; SÁNCHEZ-PALENCIA 1983; *Id.* 1985; *Id.* 1983, pp. 67-87; SÁNCHEZ-PALENCIA *et alii* 1996; SÁNCHEZ-PALENCIA and FERNÁNDEZ-POSSE 1988.

In the phases of conquest and occupation of these ample mining territories, whose eastern limits were the River Bernesga in the north and the Esla in the south, the origins of the capital of León overlap those of the rest of the camps in the province known to date: in Astorga³⁰, Castrocarbón, the mountainous areas of Bierzo and Los Ancares bordering Galicia, and the natural mountain passes between León and Asturias.

In conclusion, the Romans' choice of the site of the future city of León to establish a permanent military camp may have been due to its central position bordering to the east, the large mining seams of the Northwest, rather than to its potential strategic position during the conquest of the territory. Its geographical relevance becomes more evident during the phase of economic occupation with the idea of controlling the mining revenue, and not in relation to the Cantabrian and Asturian Wars, for which arguments have been sought to prove possible strategic intervention by the Leonese fortified enclave.

The importance of the conquest of these mining territories in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula surpassed that of other colonisations of the Roman State with greater economic and territorial repercussions throughout its history, not only due to its military relevance, but, from a propagandistic point of view, for the political glory of the only operation directed personally by the *princeps* Octavius Augustus³¹.

This emperor also led the campaign in the Iberian Peninsula in the years 26 and 25 BC when he declared victory over the *Cantabri*, allowing him to close the doors of the Temple of Janus in Rome. This was, in essence, a gesture in his promotional strategy,

³⁰ AMARÉ TAFALLA *et alii* 2006, p. 96. The published archaeological evidence refers to a minor unit and not to a legionary camp dating from 15-10 BC onwards, after the campaign against the *Astures*. According to the data the foundation of the city would occur decades later in the time of Tiberius (AD 15-20).

³¹ Ref. ZANKER 1992. To learn about Hispania and its conquest: *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*. Edition, translation and comments by Juan Manuel Cortés, 1994 Ed. Clásicas, Madrid; ALVAR EZQUERRA, Antonio (1981) "Las *Res Gestae Divi Avgvsti*. Introducción, texto latino y traducción" in *CuPAUAM Cuadernos de Prehistoria y Arqueología* 7-8 (1980-1981), Ed. Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, pp.109-140; APIANO. *Guerras Ibéricas*, Translation to Spanish by D. Miguél Cortés López, From the Latin text by Juan Schweigewser, Printed by José de Orga, Valencia, 1882 [Biblioteca Digital Hispánica, Biblioteca Nacional de España]; DIODORO DE SICILIA. *Biblioteca Histórica, Books I-XX*, 2012, Ed. Gredos, Barcelona; ESTRABÓN, *Geografía, Books III-IV*, Translations, introduction and notes by M^a José MEANA CUBERO and Félix PIÑERO, notes by José MILLÁN LEÓN, José, 1992, in *Biblioteca Clásica Gredos* 169, Ed. Gredos, Madrid; TÁCITO. *Vida de Julio Agrícola*, Ed. José M^a Requejo Prieto, 2011, Ed. Gredos, Barcelona; PLUTARCO. *Obras morales y de costumbres (Moralia)*, Edited by Manuela García Valdés, 1987, Ed. Akal, Madrid; VELEYO PATÉRCULO. *Historia Romana*. Introduction, translation and notes by María Asunción Sánchez Manzano, 2001, Ed. Gredos, Madrid; POLIBIO. *Historias*. Edited by Fisher, 1952, Oxford University Press; SUTONIO. *Vidas de los Césares*, Edited and translated by Vicente Picón, 2004, Ed. Cátedra, Madrid; FRONTINO. *Los acueductos de Roma*. Edition Tomás González Rolán, 1985, Ed. CSIC, Madrid; AURELIO VICTOR, Sexto. *De viris illustribus urbis Romae*. Translation by Agustín Muñoz Álvarez, 1779, Printed by Vázquez, Hidalgo y Compañía, Sevilla; V. SCHULTEN, A. (1952), *Estrabón, Geografía de Iberia (Fontes Hispaniae Antiquae VI)*, Barcelona; GROSSE, R. (1959), *Las fuentes desde César hasta el siglo V d.C. (Fontes Hispaniae Antiquae VIII)*, Barcelona.

since the sources indicate that at least seven legions participated in the Astur-Cantabrian Wars and did so for approximately a whole decade: the I *Augusta*, the II *Augusta* and the III *Macedonica*, who fought on the Cantabrian side (the III *Macedonica* could possibly have been incorporated at the end of the war). On the other hand, the V *Alaudae*³², the X *Gemina* and the VI *Hispaniensis* –renamed later VI *Victrix* in the time of Nero–, would operate on the Asturian front, the last two probably in Leonese territory, and the V *Alauda* was quite likely in what is today the province of León around the year 15 BC. The Seventh Legion may have been the VIII *Hispana*³³

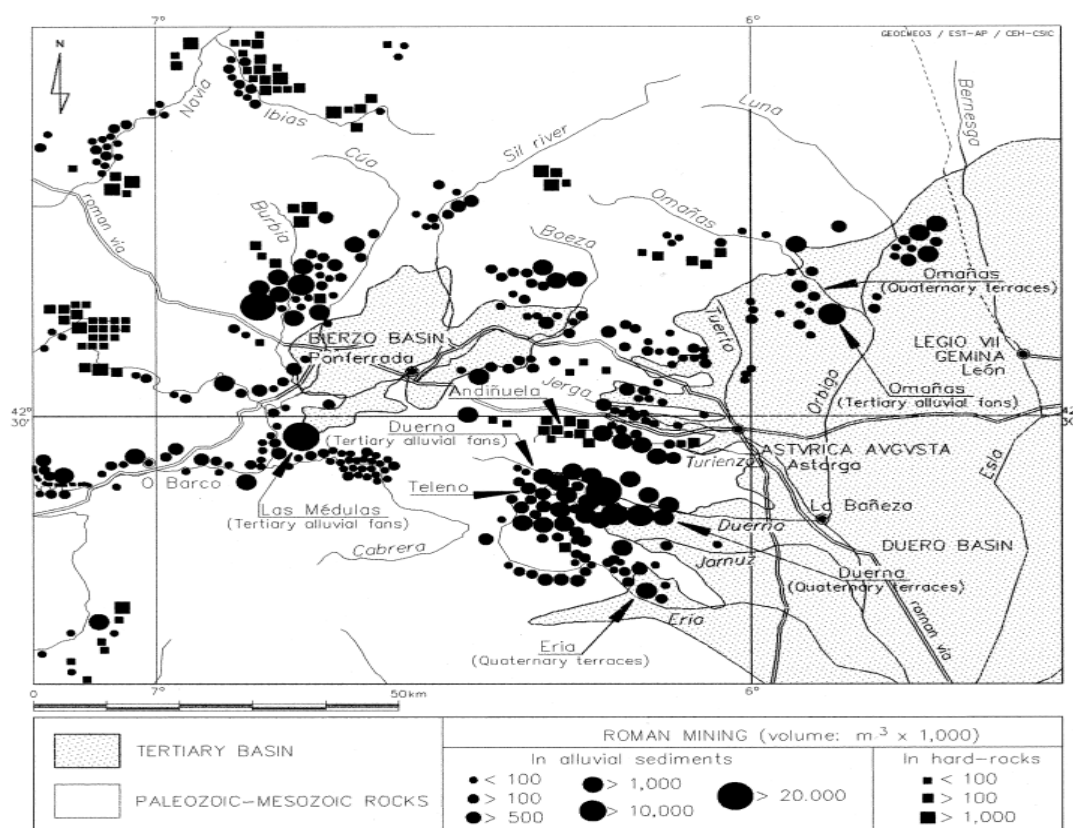


Fig. 2. Distribution of deposits that indicate Roman gold results in the Duero Valley and El Bierzo, Valdeorras and La Cabrera regions according to L.C. Pérez-García (1977) published in Journal of Geochemical Exploration 71, (2000) 225-240. (Incorporating modifications from Perea and Sánchez-Palencia, 1996).

The war campaigns continued in the north of Hispania until Agrippa ended them in the year 19 BC (although Asturian uprisings are known to have occurred almost half a century later), massacring the *Cantabri* warriors and relocating the survivors in the valleys

³² SANTOS YAGUAS 2007b, pp. 66-68; PERALTA LABRADOR 2017, p. 155; FRANKE 2000, pp. 39-48.

³³ GARCÍA-BELLIDO GARCÍA DE DIEGO 2004, p. 57, 67-68.

where they would be easier to control. That is why it is not plausible to accept that the great capital of the *Astures*, *Lancia*, be located on a hill for centuries and so its almost unanimously recognized location in León (Villasabariego) could have only been what it was: a population nucleus whose relevance emerged with the arrival of the Roman Empire. The paradigm shift regarding the location of the capital of the *Astures*, which we will be analysing later, leads us to a different theory concerning the installation of a Roman camp in this territory in León in the context of the Cantabrian and Asturian Wars: the original camp in León is not related in any way with the later relevance of the Roman *Lancia* located in Villasabariego (León).

With regards to the historiography on the Cantabrian and Asturian Wars, Menéndez Bueyes wrote a summary³⁴ of the main lines of research developed until the end of the 20th century by scholars covering these campaigns of conquest. As we shall see, two great schools have appeared besides others that combined both stances. In addition to these three trends, a new interpretation of the Asturian and Cantabrian Wars has been raised in the last decade by authors such as N. Santos Yanguas, E.J. Peralta Labrador, A. Menéndez Blanco, D. González Álvarez and JL Vicente González³⁵, who, apart from analysis of textual sources, take recent archaeological discoveries as the basis for the reconstruction of a new historical context. This debate could be summarized as follows:

1.- Thesis by A. Schulten³⁶ based on the hypothesis of the establishment by Augustus in the year 26 BC of three camps among which operations would have taken place, and according to which, there was an extensive, combined and simultaneous military operation in the northwest of the Peninsula, thus a military front spanning close to 400 kilometres.

a) *Segisamo* (Sasamón), from where a column would depart towards *Aracillum* (identified with Aradillos);

b) *Asturica* (Astorga), from where another column would advance towards El

Bierzo and would win the Battle of *Belgida* or *Bergidum* (Castro Ventosa, in Cacabelos), forcing the withdrawal of the *Astures* towards *Mons Vindius*;

³⁴ MENÉNDEZ BUEYES 2001, pp. 91-92.

³⁵ MENÉNDEZ BLANCO; GONZÁLEZ ÁLVAREZ; ÁLVAREZ MARTÍNEZ and JIMÉNEZ CHAPARRO 2013, pp. 245-251; VICENTE GONZÁLEZ 2011, pp. 4-10; PERALTA LABRADOR 2006, pp. 523-547.

³⁶ SCHULTEN 1962.

c) *Bracara* (Braga), from where a third column departed towards Galicia, defeating the *Galaici* in *Mons Medullius* (identified by this author as Monte San Julián, in Tuy).

Later, in 25 BC Publius Carisius' campaigns against the *Astures* would take place, ending with the occupation of *Lancia* (according to A. Schulten, located in Villasabariego, León).

2.- The thesis by R. Syme³⁷ –in line with what Father E. Flórez had already pointed out at the time–, which placed in Cantabria the most significant action of military campaigns in the year 26 BC, when the Battle of *Belgida* took place, located this place in the city of *Vellica*³⁸, Cantabria. He disapproved of the triple simultaneous attack proposed by Schulten, and practically excluded Galicia from the conflict, since he located *Mons Medullius* in El Bierzo, between the provinces of León, Lugo and Orense. The operations against the *Astures* would take place in 25 BC, although his hypothesis sets the Carisius episode, in which he repels an attack from the *Astures* and marches against *Lancia*, in the year 26 BC.

3.- As an eclectic approach, C. Fernández Ochoa accepted R. Syme's thesis, the division of a *Bellum Cantabricum* for the events in 26 BC, and a *Bellum Asturicum* for those in 25 BC, though considering that the Carisius episode should be set in the year 25 BC and admitting its indirect action of control over the towns on the border with the *Cantabri*. He does not manage to accept the reconstruction of the episode of *Mons Medullius* nor its location, since he considers it as a third phase in the development of the Cantabrian Wars, around 24-19 BC.

Just like R. Syme, most authors locate *Mons Medullius* next to the River Sil, but C. Fernández Ochoa believes that it should be set somewhere between Asturias, Galicia and León, in the surroundings of the upper course of the River Miño, based on the scattered findings of military coins or *caetra* in the area around the most relevant battle spots. The new hypothesis, which we will later be analysing, assumes this theory and leads us to situate the initiation of the conquest from the River Duero.

³⁷ SYME 1970, pp. 79-107.

³⁸ For some authors, identified with Monte Cildá, in Olleros de Pisuerga (Palencia): PERALTA LABRADOR 2011, pp. 23-36; *Id.* 1993, pp. 223-226.

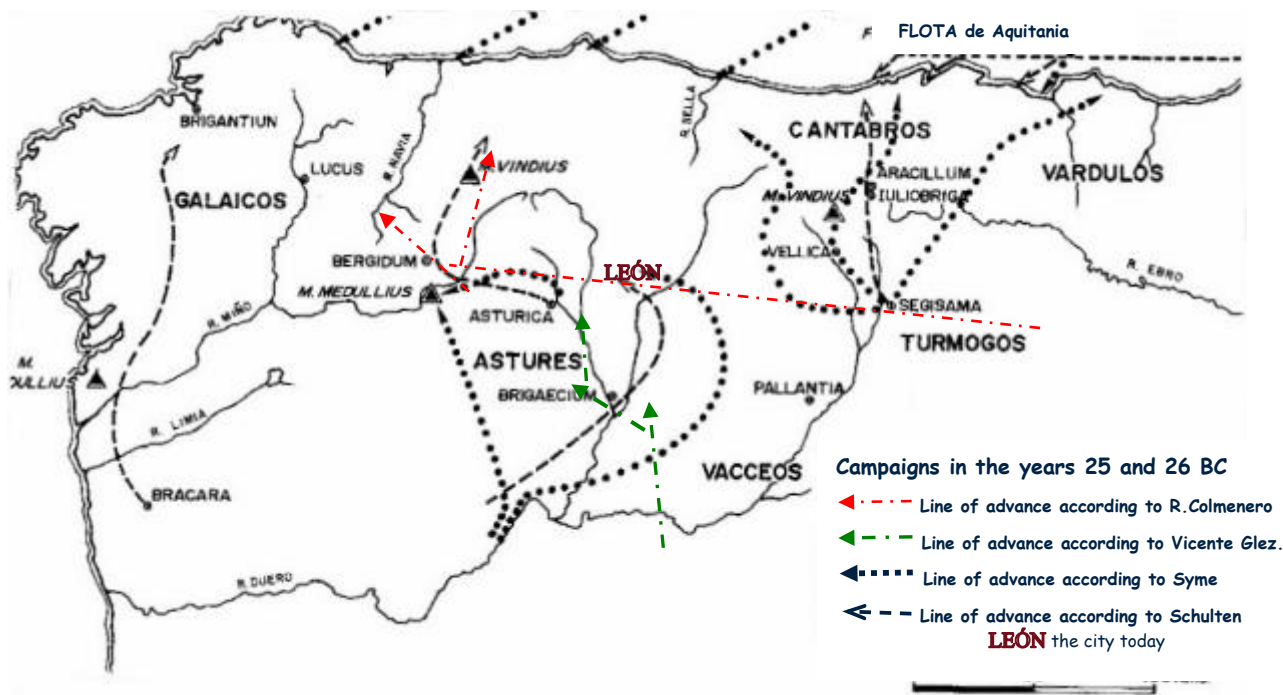


Fig. 3. Comparative map of the traditional and recent hypotheses of routes of conquest in northwest Hispania in the campaign of 26-25 BC, which make conquest of the *Astures* start from the east.

As we said before, the current status of the *Bellum Cantabricum et Asturicum* argument has benefited from a progressive increase in archaeological findings from the Roman *castra*³⁹, relying on new interpretations of the sources. The prevalent historiographic version regarding the Cantabrian Wars is that the Romans found several forts with large-scale fortified defences in their advance through the territory, such as those of Monte Bernorio, Monte Cildá or Peña Amaya. We now know that these were besieged by a considerable number of *castra aestiva* or campaign camps sometimes brought together before a single native fortification.

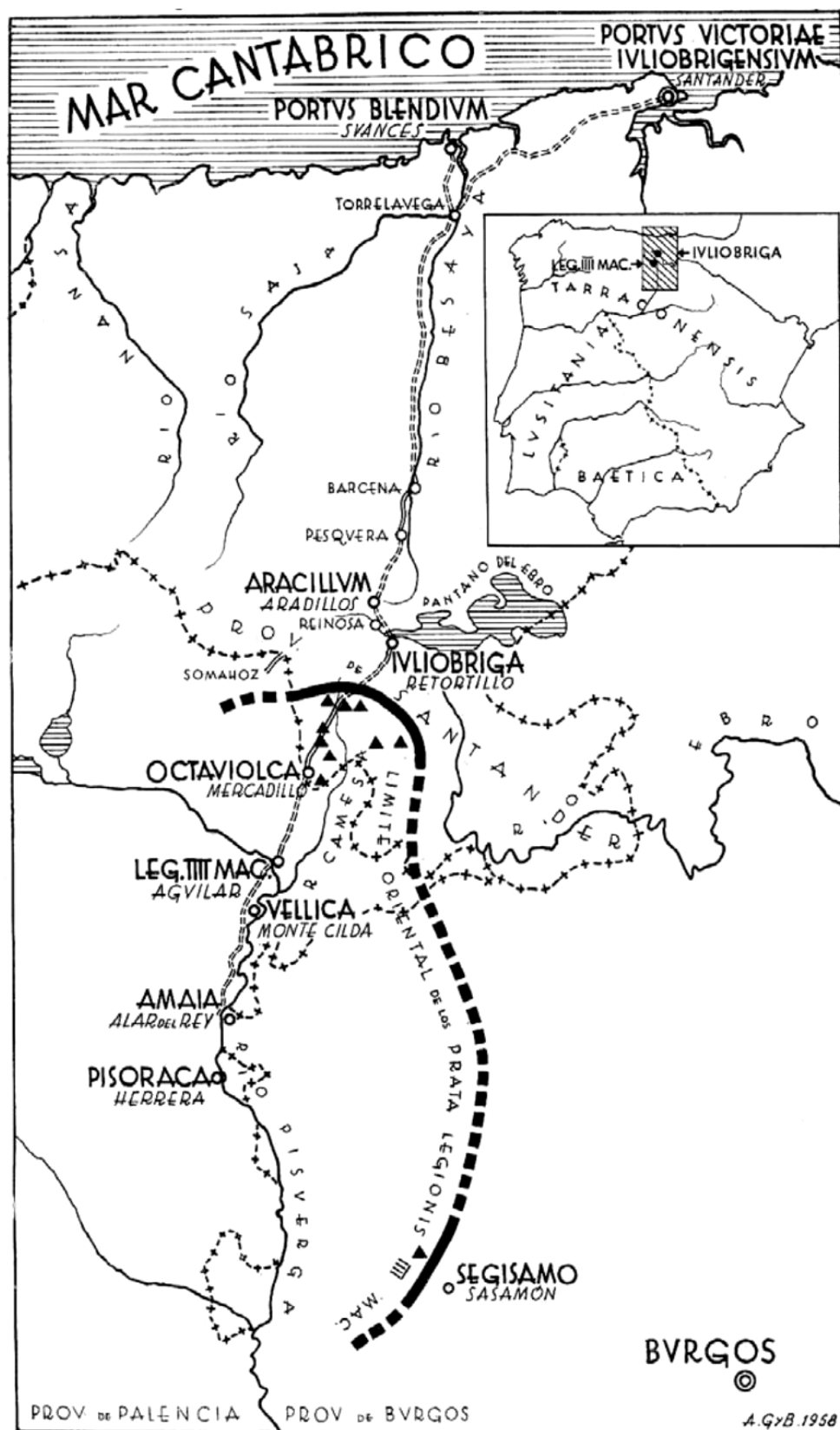
After the conquest in 19 BC a permanent camp of *Legio IIII Macedonica* was stationed in *Pisoraca* and only three years later, the *Cantabri* rose up again. Despite this, Rome founded the city of *Iuliobriga*⁴⁰ in 15 BC to administer the conquered territory and to make its resources available to the Roman treasury, which in this region were mainly salt, lead and iron, although sphalerite and zinc mines were also exploited.

On the other hand, new interpretations of the sources have caused severe criticism against traditional historiography, which soon extended to the bibliography

³⁹ AJA SÁNCHEZ 2002, pp. 19-21, p. 143.

⁴⁰ *CIL* II, 2196; GONZÁLEZ ECHEGARAY & SOLANA SÁINZ 1975, pp.151ss. Ref. GARCÍA BELLIDO 195 p. 186-195.

Fig. 4. *Territorium legionis* Eastern limit of the *Legio IIII Macedonica*: section of the Roman road to the coast and places with *termini Augustales* –black triangles– (according to A. García Bellido).



1.2 Military strategy in the Northwest of Hispania and Archaeology

Where Roman military sites of conquest can be located in Cantabria, one can observe a south-to-north⁴² direction model in the army's advance. They are archaeologically documented in the Besaya basin, in the camps of La Poza and Sierracastro, connected to the road to *Portus Blendium* (Suances), or through the Sierra del Escudo towards the coast (at least two camps in El Cincho and several more in Monte Cildá, La Espina del Gallego and El Campo de Las Cercas⁴³). These findings contradict the traditional hypothesis of conquest of the north and northwest of Spain that it essentially started from the east. J.J. Palao Vicente proposed a model of Roman incursion from the central valley of the River Duero to the territory of Cantabria, advancing from perhaps the Alto Carrión or Campoo, and finally following the mountain ranges between the valleys of Luena-Toranzo and Besaya⁴⁴.

Despite the recent data found on the sites on the Roman road of El Escudo, the Roman forts of El Cantón and La Espina del Gallego⁴⁵, and the Roman camps associated with their siege, we can still consider Monte Bernorio (Villarén de Valdivia, Palencia)⁴⁶ the most significant fortification in the Roman conquest of the Cantabrian territory⁴⁷. Located in the southern foothills of the central area of the Cantabrian Mountains, Menéndez Bueyes proposed the theory that the walls of Monte Bernorio, like those of Celada Marlantes (Campoo de Enmedio, Cantabria), could have been built in the second or even the 1st century BC⁴⁸.

As in the case of Espina del Gallego with the Roman camp of Cildá, set up opposite the *oppidum* of Monte Bernorio, a *castra aestiva* or temporary Roman camp, has

⁴² These emplacements correspond to type IV according to Pseudo-Higinus (II c.), a mountain camp or *castra in monte*, Cildá being an example discovered in Corvera de Toranzo, Arenas de Iguña and Buelna; v. PERALTA LABRADOR 2003; *Id.* 2002, pp. 327-338; PALAO VICENTE, (2014, pp. 53-78.

⁴³ Campo de las Cercas (or de Tarriba) is a grand 18-hectare Roman camp at the top of Monte Tejas (San Felices/Puente Viesgo, Cantabria) identified by Peralta Labrador. GUTIÉRREZ CUENCA 2002, p. 90; GUTIÉRREZ PÉREZ 2016, p. 30.

⁴⁴ CAMINO MAYOR; PERALTA LABRADOR and TORRES MARTÍNEZ 2015; PALAO VICENTE, 2014, pp. 53-78; TORRES-MARTÍNEZ *et al* 2013, p. 58.

⁴⁵ Espina del Gallego (Corvera de Toranzo, Anievas and Arenas de Iguña) was discovered in Cantabria almost two decades ago: GONZÁLEZ DE RIANCHO MAZO 1988; PERALTA LABRADOR 1999, pp. 195-212; *Id.* 2004, pp. 85-130.

⁴⁶ Monte Bernorio is an *oppidum* situated on a higher level of a plateau, with a wall, protected by ditches, 1,700 metres long and had three gates, found by archaeological investigation. PERALTA LABRADOR 2000.

⁴⁷ PERALTA LABRADOR 2004; *Id.* 1999, pp. 195-212; *Id.* 2003, pp. 264-265.

⁴⁸ MENÉNDEZ BUEYES 2001, p. 91.

been found, that of Castillejo⁴⁹ or La Lastra (Pomar de Valdivia, Palencia). This is a very large dormitory camp capable of housing two legions (in total, 41 hectares of military structures, the largest known to date in Europe, with a central camp of 18.4 hectares). Both in Monte Bernorio and Espina del Gallego the existence of a Roman *castellum*⁵⁰ has been archaeologically confirmed on top of part of the primitive fortification once destroyed.

As for the natural passes through the peaks of the eastern end of the Cantabrian Mountains to the province of León, remains of a *turris* or small camp have been found in Robadorio⁵¹, a 2,219-metre-high peak between Vega de Liébana (Cantabria) and Boca de Huérgano (León), to control San Glorio from the South, one of the natural passes between the Cantabrian Valley of Liébana and the León side of the Picos de Europa.

Many discoveries have been made these recent years, both in the pre-Roman hill-fort of La Loma (Santibáñez de la Peña, Palencia)⁵² –a possible location for *Bergida*–, and of the Roman fortifications associated with them and built during the conquest of the Cantabrian Wars. Among them, the *castrum aestivum* in El Alambre⁵³ (Valle de Valdelucio) and the site of La Muela (Villamartín de Sotoscueva), both in Burgos, or the camps of La Poza⁵⁴ and the *castellum* of El Pedrón (related to the hill-fort of Las Rabas) in the municipality of Campoo de Enmedio, near Cervatos, Palencia.

In addition, several larger campaign camps have been documented which appear to have been built for the conquest of nearby hill-forts or *oppida*, complementing the military strategy with *castella* or military precincts for auxiliary units, such as the two temporary camps of almost 17 hectares archaeologically documented in El Cincho (La Población, Campoo de Yuso), and another enclosure connected to the conquest of the hill-fort of Espina del Gallego in Las Matas del Castillo (Corvera de Toranzo/Anievas). The latest discovery occurred in Castañeda (Cantabria), in the upper part of La Cabaña, bordering the municipality of Puente Viesgo (location of the camp of Campo de las

⁴⁹ The Roman camp of Castillejo was constructed near the *oppidum* in Monte Bernorio: TORRES-MARTÍNEZ and SERNA GANCEDO 2010, pp. 73-87; PERALTA LABRADOR; HIERRO GÁRATE and GUTIÉRREZ CUENCA 2011, pp. 151-172.

⁵⁰ REIGADAS VELARDE 1995, pp. 25-49.

⁵¹ SERNA GANCEDO and GÓMEZ CASARES 2010, pp. 121-126.

⁵² La Loma (Santibáñez de la Peña, Palencia) is the most significant known hill-fort in the Alto Carrión region. Next to this hill-fort, remains of three Roman fortified precincts related to the 25/24 BC campaign have been found: PERALTA LABRADOR 2018, pp. 34-35.

⁵³ El Alambre (Fuencaliente de Lucio, Burgos) is located on a hill to the southwest of the aforementioned town, within the scope of influence of the Roman camp of El Castillejo and of the *oppidum* of Monte Bernorio.

⁵⁴ TORRES-MARTÍNEZ *et al* 2013, p. 61.

Cercas). It is a two-hectare Roman camp from 25 BC. Its three defensive lines of trenches and ramparts were detected by satellite just before being destroyed by the Regional Forestry service.

Regarding the *Bellum Asturicum* and the Roman occupation of the Asturian territory, J.L. Vicente González's hypothesis (2011)⁵⁵ should be taken into account about a route of conquest that would have started from the River Duero, according to which the final battle where the Romans beat the *Lancienses* (and he refers to the *Lancienses* in Arrabalde, Zamora) did not take place in Las Labradas, the strongly fortified Asturian hill-fort close to the northern limit of the current province of Zamora but in its surrounding area in León.

As this study proposes, Roman armies could have penetrated from the South, from *Lusitania*⁵⁶ towards the North of the current territory of Zamora and, once the Asturian capital of the *Lancienses* had been conquered, they could have continued towards the North through two different routes, perhaps simultaneously:

1. Through the current province of Orense, where several Roman camps have been recently documented, one of them being an *en route* camp in Penedo dos Lobos (Manzaneda)⁵⁷, coexistent with the Cantabrian-Asturian Wars, and another in Cabeza do Pau (Petín), both built in stone, as well as two other larger ones: one with an earth wall in Chaira da Maza (*concello* of Lobeira) and another with the capacity to house two legions in Lomba do Mouro (between Vereá in Orense and the Portuguese Viana do Castelo). From there they could have reached the place that would later be occupied by *Lucus Augusti*⁵⁸, where remains of a camp for the *Legio VI Hispanienses*⁵⁹ military personnel have been found. The further advance of the Roman conquest could well have progressed from west to east, since the Roman camps of Coto do Rañadoiro (Carballedo), Monte de Ventín (Pol) and A Penaparda⁶⁰ (between the municipality of A Fonsagrada in Lugo and

⁵⁵ VICENTE GONZÁLEZ 2011, pp. 4-10.

⁵⁶ FABIÃO 2006, pp. 107-126; CORDERO RUIZ; CERRILLO CUENCA and PEREIRA 2017, pp. 197-201; SANTOS YANGUAS 2017a, pp. 151-162.

⁵⁷ FONTE, J. 2018, in romanarmy.eu/es/ [searched on 29/08/2018]. COSTA GARCÍA, J.M.; FONTE, J. and GAGO M., 2019, pp.17-49.

⁵⁸ RODRÍGUEZ COLMENERO 2006, pp. 44-46.

⁵⁹ The *Legio VI* was relocated in *Hispania Tarraconensis* around the year 29 BC and participated in Augustus' war against the *Cantabri* between 25 BC and 13 BC. It was in the northwest of Hispania until Vespasian came to power in the year AD 69. The earliest reference to this legion in Hispania appears to be a tombstone preserved in the Museum of Córdoba, of a standard bearer who had also served in the *Legio Marcia* (PEREA YÉBENES 1993, pp. 297-305).

⁶⁰ COSTA-GARCIA; FONTE; GAGO; MENÉNDEZ BLANCO and ÁLVAREZ MARTÍNEZ 2017, pp. 39-70.

Santalla in Asturias) have been found. Without dismissing the thesis of a synchronised movement of Roman troops from the Ebro valley⁶¹, another possibility could have been the advance from the province of Lugo towards Asturias through the valley of the River Navia from Piedrafita do Cebreiro, as evidence of *en route* camp locations in El Pico el Outeiro, A Pedra Dereta and El Chao de Carrubeiro seem to show.

2. With regards to a route of conquest through the current province of León, the journey of the army could have started from the navigable section of the River Duero, reaching the north of the province of Zamora⁶², after seizing the capital of the *Astures Lancienses* (Las Labradas, Arrabalde, Zamora) from the nearby camp of Rosinos de Vidriales (Zamora) and probably continuing towards the Northwest, passing through the Roman precinct of Chana de Castrocalbón in the area of La Valdería in León, and halfway between the camps of Vidriales and the old *Bedunia* (San Martín de Torres, León). To reinforce this idea, the greatest concentration of Roman camps from the time of the Asturian Wars has been found in this area: in the surroundings of Rosinos de Vidriales (Zamora) a *hibernum castrum* in *Petavonium*, and a presumed *castrum aestivum* in Valmorero (Cunquilla de Vidriales, Zamora⁶³), and Castrocalbón (León) with various *castra aestiva*. Both areas are almost equidistant to the west of the hill-fort of Las Labradas in Arrabalde (Zamora), forming a group of Roman camps and indigenous forts, as we have already mentioned before, of great importance in relation to other locations relevant to the development of the Roman invasion of the northwest of Hispania. These fortifications would be supported by other smaller enclosures: towards the Northwest, in the area of La Cabrera in León, the Valdemeda camp⁶⁴ (Manzaneda, Truchas), and almost on the northern limit of the current province of Zamora, Los Tesoros in Villaveza del Agua and El Castro in Milles de la Polvorosa⁶⁵ related to the Roman road between Mérida and Astorga, and also that of Villalazán (Madridanos)⁶⁶.

⁶¹ The hypothesis of the simultaneous Roman "pincer attack" on the region of El Bierzo in León from Galicia and the Meseta was published online for the first time in the internet forum <http://www.foro.elgrancapitan.org/viewtopic.php?p=827192>; later, MORILLO CERDÁN, pp. 12-13.

⁶² VICENTE GONZÁLEZ 2011, pp. 4-10; LE ROUX 1992, pp. 231-236. With regards to Castrocalbón: DESCOSIDO FUERTES 1982, pp. 121-125.

⁶³ LOEWISOHN ROBLES 1994, p. 103.

⁶⁴ COSTA-GARCÍA and CASAL GARCÍA 2015, pp. 146-147; SÁNCHEZ PALENCIA 1986, pp. 227-235.

⁶⁵ LOEWISOHN ROBLES 1994, p. 103.

⁶⁶ COSTA GARCÍA and CASAL GARCÍA 2015, p. 146; DEL OLMO and RODRÍGUEZ 1993; DEL OLMO 1995, pp. 115-118; DEL OLMO 2006, pp. 333-335; ARIÑO, DIDIERJEAN *et al.* 2007; DIDIERJEAN 2008, p. 108; ARIÑO GIL; DIDIERJEAN; LIZ GUIRAL and SILLIÈRES 2007, pp. 171-193.

Very significant are the Roman camps erected in La Chana in Castrocalbón (León) in the Early Imperial period. Its strategic location is optimum since, within the scope of 15 kilometres from Castrocalbón, there are:

– In the south of León province, the Castrocontrigo gold mining area; the Asturian *civitas Bedunia* (San Martín de Torres) cited in ancient sources⁶⁷, and the villages of Villalís de la Valduerna (about 14 kilometres away), where relevant epigraphs of the *Legio VII Gemina* have been found, and Villamontán de la Valduerna, where remains of at least two Roman campaign camps⁶⁸ have been located.

– In the north of the province of Zamora, in Rosinos de Vidriales, the Asturian fortification of Las Labradas de Arrabalde (about 13 kilometres away) and the Roman camps of *Petavonium* (about 11 kilometres away). These camps in Zamora prior to *Petavonium* (Rosinos de Vidriales) have an extensive bibliography⁶⁹ resulting from various archaeological investigations carried out during the 20th century in several of its fortified precincts, belonging to consecutive barracks of both auxiliary and legionary units⁷⁰.

The construction of Roman military precincts related to *castra*⁷¹ in areas of León of abundant gold resources can be seen in Valdemeda (Manzaneda, Truchas, León). This camp was discovered in 1986 by M^a. D. Fernández-Posse⁷² and F. J. Sánchez-Palencia⁷³, during their archaeological research works in the regions of La Valdería and La Cabrera in León. The review of the photograms taken during the flights in 1946 and 1956⁷⁴ reveal structures later covered by the re-afforestation of the area. This site is located in an area that has recently revealed important remains of Roman mining, since Castrocontrigo and Pico del Teleno are located just over ten kilometres away⁷⁵.

⁶⁷ PTOLEMY, II, 6, 30: *Baidounia*; *Antonine Itinerary*, 439,7; *Itinerary* (clay slabs) of Astorga, III, 2: *Bedunia*.

⁶⁸ GARCÍA Y BELLIDO 1966, p. 18; CÉLIS SÁNCHEZ; MUÑOZ VILLAREJO and VALDERAS ALONSO 2016.

⁶⁹ CARRETERO VAQUERO 2006, p. 642; CARRETERO VAQUERO and ROMERO CARNICERO 2005, pp. 219-229.

⁷⁰ CARRETERO VAQUERO 2009, pp.13-44; DESCOSIDO FUERTES 1982, pp. 91-96: about an Augustan landmark referring to the territory of the *Legio X Gemina*, dating after the time of Augustus – when it was relocated in Rosinos de Vidriales– after having been quartered on the site of the future *Asturica Augusta*.

⁷¹ COSTA-GARCÍA 2011, pp. 215-223; RODRÍGUEZ COLMENERO (ed.) 1996.

⁷² FERNÁNDEZ-POSSE and SÁNCHEZ-PALENCIA 1988, p. 222.

⁷³ SÁNCHEZ-PALENCIA RAMOS 1986, pp. 227-235. See COSTA-GARCÍA and CASAL GARCÍA 2015, p. 149.

⁷⁴ COSTA-GARCÍA and CASAL GARCÍA 2015, pp. 146-147.

⁷⁵ MATÍAS RODRÍGUEZ and GONZÁLEZ-NISTAL 2014, pp. 519-542.

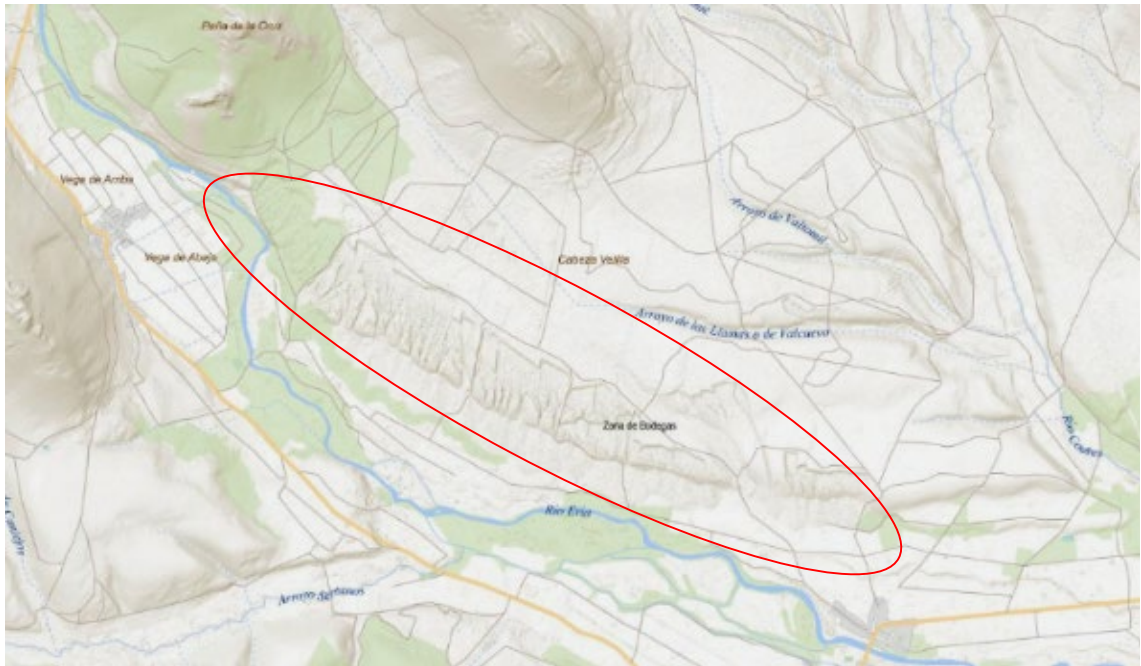


Fig.5. Roman mining structures. Castrocontrigo (León). DATUM: ETRS89, Scale 1:50.000. Lidar 2ª cobertura (2015-2020), Centro Nacional de Información Geográfica, Gobierno de España.

The *castrum* of Castrocontrigo was already well-known at the beginning of the 20th century but its true importance has been revealed in recent times after a fire devastated the area in 2012, bringing to light via aerial photography the remains of a large gold exploitation. In 2010 F. Didierjean, the researcher of the Cantabrian fortified sites mentioned above, had already noted in his report⁷⁶ the possibility of a *castrum* in the area of “El Piornal-La Mesa” (Morla de la Valdería, Castrocontrigo, León) located at a maximum altitude of 1,443 metres, with a drop of 448 metres, emphasizing its proximity to the Roman camp of Valdemeda. The inventory of *castra* proven to exist in the valleys of the rivers Eria and Cabrera and in the Sierra del Teleno⁷⁷ (León) currently rises to about 40. Other new Roman military structures associated with their conquest could additionally appear as suggested in recent contributions published, such as for example a precinct that has been located⁷⁸ in the surroundings of Quintanilla de Yuso (Truchas, León), associated with the Roman road crossing the region of La Cabrera.

⁷⁶ DIDIERJEAN 2010, p. 2.

⁷⁷ Twenty-five years ago there were 27 known *castra* in the area: FERNÁNDEZ-POSSE and SÁNCHEZ-PALENCIA 1992, pp. 175-188.

⁷⁸ CARRACEDO FERNÁNDEZ 2016. The author claims to have found the remains of what appears to have been a permanent Roman camp.

Those of Castrocalbón were the first military settlements detected in Hispania by aerial photography⁷⁹. Others of aerial prospecting works in more recent times⁸⁰ have identified up to four Roman camp sites and a possible watchtower for the nearby Roman road⁸¹. The latest research using satellite photography and MDT-LiDAR allowed J.M. Costa García and R. Casal García⁸² to detect structures of “at least one new camp”. Costa-García⁸³ summarized the situation of this subject: “the historiographical debate on the site [Castrocalbón] has been reopened in search of a better contextualization of the archaeological complex within the Roman military deployment in *Cismontane Asturia* during the early days of the Empire”.

On the other hand, we can safely say from the Augustan age *termini* found in this area, that the *Cohors IIII Gallorum*, an auxiliary unit of the nearby *Legio X Gemina*, was stationed in this area –perhaps even during the conquest⁸⁴. The line of the course of conquest would perhaps split from Castrocalbón onwards to secure two rich mining areas in León, that of La Valduerna –where relevant epigraphic remains have been found in Villalís and others from Roman camps in Villamontán– and that of La Cabrera, as far as the region of El Bierzo⁸⁵, where traces of a Roman military precinct have been found in the northern Serra da Casiña (Valverde, Balboa, León).

⁷⁹ LOEWISOHN ROBLES 1965, pp. 26-43.

⁸⁰ LEROUX 1982, pp. 107-108. With archaeological aerial surveys: DEL OLMO MARTÍN 1995, pp. 109-118.; *Id.* 2006, pp. 313-340. *Ref.* CARRETERO VAQUERO 1993, pp. 56-57.

⁸¹ The Roman road seems to be from the end of the 1st century BC. (*CIL* II 4776 and 6215); RODRÍGUEZ COLMENERO; FERRER SIERRA and ÁLVAREZ ASOREY 2004, p. 105.

⁸² COSTA-GARCÍA and CASAL GARCÍA 2015, pp. 145- 146.

⁸³ COSTA-GARCÍA 2016, pp. 47-85.

⁸⁴ The *Cohors IIII Gallorum* was in Castrocalbón during the Early Empire until the year AD 42 when it was sent to *Mauritania Tingitana*, where it was quartered in Sidi Kacem (Morocco) on the Roman road linking *Tingis* (Tangiers) with *Volubilis* (Walili, Morocco). *See* ROXAN 1973, pp. 838-855.

⁸⁵ The existence of a Roman road between El Bierzo and Lugo has been known for some time: BLAZQUEZ Y DELGADO and BLAZQUEZ Y JIMÉNEZ 1923.

archaeological excavations have changed the paradigm: several dozen camps have been discovered in the north of the Iberian Peninsula related to the Cantabrian-Asturian Wars, among them the aforementioned remains of two fortifications located between the region of Ibias in Asturias and Los Ancares both in Lugo and León. The camps of A Recacha and A Granda das Xarras were probably set up to control the strategic passes between the area of gold mining prospection and the coast. A Granda das Xarras is located in the pass between the current valleys of Ibias (Asturias) and Valouta (León) on a plain with gentle slopes, with a maximum of 1,371 metres elevation and only 1,700 metres away from another small fortified precinct, perhaps a *castellum*, and A Recacha, located on top of a peak in the Sierra de Penamarela, at approximately 1,250 metres, with an atypical morphology adapted to the contours. The archaeological site in the municipality of Navia de Suarna (Lugo) had been registered long ago but its contextualization and chronological estimation are rather recent, in fact from 2011⁸⁷. In 2014 a team from the CSIC (acronym for the Spanish National Research Council) carried out an initial archaeological intervention there. Around 20 kilometres from these camps, also in the northern part of Los Ancares region, this time between the provinces of León and Lugo, the Campo de Circo or Cortiña dos Mouros camp was discovered, located also about 6 kilometres from the Serra da Casiña site, in Valverde, León (Balboa) and related to the Portelo Pass and its natural mountain routes used before the construction of the Roman road, road XIX of the *Antonine Itinerary*.

From the Sierra de los Ancares, the Roman armies would later advance towards Lugo, establishing a legion there to continue towards the Cantabrian Sea. This possibility also seems to be backed by the existence of an extensive gold mining area in Vilalba located 24 kilometres southeast of this town in Lugo. The mining area is structured in three areas, called Castro de Rei, Valiña-Azúmara and Arcos⁸⁸. It can also be related to the later establishment of permanent Roman camps in *Aquae Querquennae*⁸⁹ (Portoquintela, Bande, Orense), associated with the *Via Nova*, in O Cornado (Negreira,

⁸⁷MENÉNDEZ BLANCO; GONZÁLEZ ÁLVAREZ and COSTA GARCÍA 2015, pp. 239-251; MENÉNDEZ BLANCO; GONZÁLEZ ÁLVAREZ; ÁLVAREZ MARTÍNEZ and JIMÉNEZ CHAPARRO 2011, pp. 145-165.

⁸⁸ Twenty Roman gold mining sites are known in Galicia, eight of them in Lugo. In the province of Orense there are another eight mines and three in the province of A Coruña: MARTÍNEZ ABAD 2013.

⁸⁹ VEGA AVELAIRA; FERRER SIERRA and RODRÍGUEZ COLMENERO 2009, pp. 465-480; RODRÍGUEZ COLMENERO 2000, pp. 209-214; VEGA AVELAIRA 1997, pp. 198-204. *Aquae Querquennae* is classified as a *castrum stativum* founded by the *Cohors III* of the *Legio VII Gemina* in the time of Flavia (AD 69-79) during the construction of the *Via Nova*, *Via XVIII (Bracara Augusta to Asturica Augusta)* and was abandoned in the time of Hadrian (AD 117-138).

Coruña) and in Cidadela (Sobrado dos Monxes, Coruña), the latter being an unusual case due to its situation, far from the main Roman road network⁹⁰. The most recent findings of Roman camps in A Coruña have expanded the catalogue of Roman camps in the northwest of Hispania with the presence of small enclosures such as that of Cova do Mexadoiro (Trazo) and of singular cases such as that of Santa Baia (A Laracha), a camp built around a pre-existing fort. These new discoveries seem to respect a part of A. Schulten's thesis, because both stable and temporary camps could have been part of a combined (although this author does not consider it simultaneous) action of conquest in the Northwest, in the Asturian-Cantabrian area between 29 and 19 BC. However, Syme's thesis, which practically excluded Galicia from the conflict, seems invalidated by the results of the discoveries of the above-mentioned camps in the provinces of Orense and Lugo, as well as by the known data about the Roman conquest of the El Caurel⁹¹ mountains between León and Galicia. On the other hand, the conquest of the Transmontane *Astures* from the north of León could have been undertaken along three axes of incursion from South to North, crossing the mountain range that separates the current provinces of León and Asturias, all of them with temporary high altitude camps: a) the axis of the Ancares described above, between Lugo, El Bierzo in León and Asturias (Serra Da Casiña, A Cortiña dos Mouros, A Granda das Xarras and A Recacha); b) the Puerto de la Mesa, where the Roman sites of El Mouro and Valbona have already been located at levels of around 1,200 metres; this route on the Via de La Mesa would be a fundamental communication route in Roman times from the Cismontane Asturia to the mouth of the River Nalón and nearby, according to Ptolemy (II, 6, 4-5), was built the city of *Flavionavia*. Following the layout of these routes, the site of El Mouro was discovered in 2010 thanks to survey flights whose objective was to ascertain the routes of invasion in the *Bellum Cantabricum et Asturicum*. On the eastern slope of El Mouro archaeological excavations revealed material remains of Roman military provisions (a tent peg with a

⁹⁰ GAGO MARÍÑO and FERNÁNDEZ MALDE 2015, pp. 245 and 248. Regarding La Cidadela, this was quarters for the *Cohors I Celtiberorum*, an auxiliary unit of the *Legio VII Gemina* consisting of some 400 soldiers defending the gold mining area in Lugo and the north of A Coruña. Its camp dates from 1st-2nd century and was abandoned in the 5th century when the troops were sent to the German *limes* to defend the territories of the Empire from the barbarian invasions: BLANCO-ROTEA; COSTA GARCÍA and SÁNCHEZ-PARDO 2015, pp. 89-90; CAAMAÑO GESTO and FERNÁNDEZ RODRÍGUEZ 2000, pp. 199-207; CARLSSON-BRANDT FONTÁN 2011, p. 167; COSTA GARCÍA; RODRÍGUEZ ÁLVAREZ and VARELA GÓMEZ 2011.

⁹¹ In the Sierra de El Caurel various gold mines have been discovered and also a hydraulic structure excavated in rock from 2nd century (Romeor, in the Monte das Valiñas) that was possibly used for panning the mineral deposits coming from the mines such as those of Millares and Torubio. *Ref.* LUZÓN NOGUÉ and SÁNCHEZ-PALENCIA 1980, pp. 82-84 and MORET 1991, pp. 9-10.

ring of the same type as those found in Curriellos and Llagüezos), sandal studs –*clavicaligarii*–, etc.). In 2011 the same team discovered the Valbona camp⁹² on the Via Carisa, with a Roman camp at around 1,700 metres altitude on the border between the current provinces of León and Asturias (Llagüezos on its left bank, in Villamanín) and in the Asturian section, Curriechos on the righthand side of the road, and A Cuaña⁹³.



Fig. 5. Map of the Roman fortifications in the northwest of Hispania published in 2015. University of Oviedo.

In contrast with a historiography traditionally focused on the evolution of stable camps (*castra stativa* or *hiberna*) such as León, Astorga, Rosinos de Vidriales and Herrera de Pisuerga, the aforementioned studies have studied the temporary campaign camps (*castra aestiva*) built before them as well, whose location sometimes contradicts the commonly accepted hypotheses of conquest. The study of these Roman campaign camps associated with mountain passes and the great Cantabrian hill-forts⁹⁴ has also provided possible evidence in the vicinity –although not a very firm one– of that considered by "official" historiography as the Asturian capital, the *Lancia* of Villasabariego (León): the possible location of a Roman fortified site nearby, in the area of La Cuevorra.

⁹² Consejería de Cultura del Principado de Asturias, Exp. 605/10. The team from the Institut Ausonius in Bordeaux, directed by François Didierjean used aerial survey and orthophotography to survey these two sites; Valbona, the nearest to the Via de La Mesa, has a 783 metres perimeter and encloses some 4.45 hectares, the southern sector having been devastated.

⁹³ CAMINO MAYOR 2018, pp. 22-28.

⁹⁴ CAMINO MAYOR; PERALTA LABRADOR and TORRES MARTÍNEZ (eds.) 2016; MENÉNDEZ BLANCO; JIMÉNEZ CHAPARRO; GONZÁLEZ ÁLVAREZ and ÁLVAREZ MARTÍNEZ 2012, pp. 339-346.

With all these data, a new interpretation of Strabo's testimony (III, 4, 20) can be proposed:

"At present, some provinces having been assigned to the People and the Senate and others to the Emperor of the Romans, *Baetica* belongs to the people, who send a *praetor* who has under his command a quaestor and a legate. They have established their eastern boundary near *Castolon* [*Cástulo*]. The rest belongs to Caesar who sends two of his legates, a *praetor* and a consul, the *praetor* having under his orders a legate for the administration of justice over the *Lusitani*, who live next to the *Baetica* and reach as far as the Duero River and its mouth, because now this territory has come to be called like this in a restricted way [*Lusitania*] due to this [because it is occupied by *Lusitani*]. Here is *Augusta Emerita*. The rest, which is actually the majority of Iberia, is under a consul who has a considerable army, made up of three legions and three legates, one of which with two legions guards the entire region beyond the Duero, which before it used to be said of the *Lusitani* and that now is called of the *Callaici*. The northern mountains, together with the Asturian and Cantabrian mountains, mark its limit. Through the Astures flows the Melso River, and a little further on is the city of Noiga, near the ocean estuary that separates the Astures from the Cantabri".

If we analyse the expression "...the entire region beyond the Duero, which before it used to be said of the *Lusitani* and that now is called of the *Callaici*. The northern mountains, together with the Asturian and Cantabrian mountains, mark its limit..." we notice that both peoples are excluded from the surveillance area of the legion that guards the entire region beyond the Duero. Regarding the delimitation of the territory of the *Callaici* to the north of the Duero, guarded by a single legion, uncertainty remained as to whether the *Astures* shared borders with the *Callaici*, or were to be found beyond the mountain ranges. The translation of the Greek text⁹⁵ provided seems to lean towards this second option on referring to the Cismontane *Astures*. The description that places the *Astures* and *Cantabri* outside the territory of the *Callaici*, outside the "beyond the Duero" leads us to consider that the territory of the Transmontane *Astures* and *Cantabri* was guarded by the other legion.

This situation would open new hypotheses, since archaeology shows us that members of the VI *Hispana* seem to have been guarding the region of Lugo just after the conquest of northwestern Hispania, and the IIII *Macedonica* in the Cantabrian area. This leaves open the possibility that V *Alauda* or X *Gemina* troops would be the first occupants of the León site. As we will see later, epigraphy can validate this hypothesis, which must

⁹⁵ Translation by Prof. Dr. José Pascual González, the director of the doctoral thesis in this work.

be considered when investigating the origins of the city of León. This seems to have been the setting at the beginning of the 1st century, when Strabo finished his Book III.

Besides that, the famous theories about the conquest that arise from these sources despite the diversity of historiographical arguments make the main incursion routes⁹⁶ come from the east in the peninsular Northwest, leaving aside the strategically unlikely fact that they would be pushing out the native population, which was still not subjected, in order to concentrate precisely on the richest gold areas of Hispania, whose ports in the Atlantic Ocean and the Cantabrian Sea were necessary to ensure the supremacy of the Roman imperial navy. Regarding the duration of the conquest, epigraphy refutes the sources regarding the pacification of the Asturian territory after the campaigns of Augustus, since a tombstone preserved in Rimini –the Roman *Ariminum*– provides us with data of an uprising of the *Astures*⁹⁷ around the years 55 to 60, stating that the *primipilus Marcus Vettius Valens* was decorated thanks to their submission in one of the last known actions of the *Legio VI* in the Iberian Peninsula. At that time, it was one of the only two legions that the Roman army held in Hispania, in addition to the *X Gemina*. Both were stationed on the Asturian front: the latter remained until AD 63⁹⁸ in the Rosinos de Vidriales camp (Zamora), and associated with it we may interpret the presence of an auxiliary unit, the *Cohors IIII Gallorum*, in Castrocabón (León). The bulk of the troops of this *Legio VI Hispaniensis* would be stationed at that time in the current capital of León, since the previous military precincts of the two legions –*Asturica Augusta* and possibly *Bracara Augusta* or *Lucus Augusti*– had been transformed into cities (Florus, II 33, 59).

Between the years AD 63 and 68, the *Legio VI*, then already named *Victrix*, was the only garrison legion in the Peninsula, and according to Tacitus left Hispania definitively between 69 and 70 (Hist.IV, 68: *sexta ac prima ex Hispania accitae*)⁹⁹, and

⁹⁶ LÓPEZ NORIEGA 1997, p. 222.

⁹⁷ GARCÍA Y BELLIDO, A. 1961, pp. 123-124, no. 6. Ref. FERNÁNDEZ ORDÁS, R.A. 2003, *Intervención arqueológica en Cl. Arco de Ánimas 2, León*.

⁹⁸ Between the years 63 and 68 it was stationed in *Carnutum*, but in the year 69 it seems to have been found protecting the Straits of Gibraltar, so we can take it that it could have participated in the conquest of Mauritania begun by Caligula and completed by Claudius. This *Legio X* or some of its Asturian and Galician cohorts were stationed beforehand in Mauritania around the year 57, a date found on an inscription which relates the participation in the construction of the forum and a porticoed gallery in *Volubilis* and possibly the *praetorium* of the nearby military camp of Aïn Schkour, some 3.5 kilometres away. In this same line of southern fortifications in the 1st century we can also find the *Cohors I Hispanorum* and in Sala the *Cohors I Lemavorum*. As far as the North-African camps are concerned, the *Ala III Asturum* was stationed in the camp of Tamuda, the *Cohors II Hispanorum* was quartered in Suïar and the *Cohors III Asturum* in Tabernae: GOZALBES CRAVIOTO 2002, pp. 11-42.

⁹⁹ GARCÍA Y BELLIDO, A. 1961, pp. 114-160; ALFAYÉ VILLA, S.M. and MARCO SIMÓN, F. 2014, pp. 53-86. The *Legio VI* had spent almost a century in Hispania, perhaps from the beginning of the

in the year 70 (*Hist. V*, 22) it was mentioned in the sources as reconstructing the *Novaesium* fortification (Neuss, Dusseldorf). To the *Legio VI* of this time correspond the remains of one of the ten successive Roman camps discovered by archaeology to date, the one named by its directors H3, which has been almost completely excavated, presenting some stone walls that surround an area of 24.70 hectares (432 x 570 metres), and whose main streets had colonnades. To the west of the camp, traces of its *cannabae* have also been detected.

Together with what we said before, the presence has been proven of stable Roman camps from the times of the conquest in the Leonese territory. In principle this was associated both with the courses of rivers in mining areas and with natural mountain passes and communication routes between the central plateau and the Cantabrian Mountains. In fact, a stable organization of Augustan Roman roads would occur somewhat later, mostly during the 1st century, in order to ensure the land connection¹⁰⁰ between the capital of the new province of Lusitania, *Emerita Augusta*, and the recently conquered peninsular North. The archaeological findings have modified the chronology and strategy of the advance of the Roman troops through the mountain routes between the Leonese camp and the coastal port of Gijón, which may well have been through the westernmost axis of the three found in the Leonese province: the *Vía Carisa*, whose transmontane branch receives that name from Publio Carisio who, while governing *Hispania Ulterior* between the years 26 and 22 BC, would have promoted the construction of this road against the background of the Asturian campaigns. At least three Roman mountain legionary camps erected at altitudes between 1500 and 1800 metres have been revealed. J. Camino Mayor's study¹⁰¹ of the remains of the Roman camp of Pico Llagüezos, discovered in 2011 between Villamanín (León) and Lena (Asturias), deduces that this is prior to another military installation associated with the same route and located less than 5 kilometres away, where the remains of the Roman compound of Mount Curriechos or Curriellos are to be found. It was rediscovered in 2009 (described in 1858 by the military scholar E. García-Tuñón y Quirós) and is of uncertain dating but later than 23 BC. A few kilometres from the previous one, there are signs of a third Roman camp that crossed the

Cantabrian wars in AD 29, most likely stationed in the permanent camp in León, when it was transferred to Lower Germany in the year 70 by order of Vespasian so as to form part of the troops that would repress the Batavian uprising. Afterwards the legionaries would use their great experience in construction work to help rebuild the camps on the line of defence along the Rhine. Their work in the sandstone mines in the Valley of Brhol (Germany) has also been documented; CIL XIII 7697, a votive stele dedicated to Hercules Saxanus by the centurions of the VI *Victrix* and X *Gemina*.

¹⁰⁰ COSTA-GARCÍA 2011, pp. 215-223; RODRÍGUEZ COLMENERO (ed.) 1996.

¹⁰¹ CAMINO MAYOR *et al* 2007.

Via Carisa in Carraceo, between the Asturian towns of Lena and Aller. In addition, attributing initially the walled enclosure of Homón del Faro –two oblique walls that join at the top of the Portiichu de Busián hill, with remains of a circular building– to Roman construction has been rejected because absolute dating has revealed a medieval timeline between the 7th and 8th centuries.

In the southern part of León, the pattern of military field settlements in the vicinity of larger *castra* seems to be maintained. Very recently new Roman camp sites have been discovered in Navatejera¹⁰² (Villaquilambre) and in Huerga de Frailes¹⁰³ (Villazala). Through aerial surveys in this latter area, it has been possible to define the layout of its axes and walls, and even a possible rectification of its perimeter and original format. This camp is located very near the eastern bank of the River Órbigo, in an area that the Romans would always keep an eye on since it gave access to the military *prata*. Its position is strategic since it is located approximately 17 kilometres from Astorga (*Asturica Augusta*), at the same distance from Villalís and Villamontán de la Valduerna, about 23 kilometres from Castrocalbón and around 13 kilometres in a straight line from San Martín de Torres (near La Bañeza), the possible location of *Bedunia*¹⁰⁴, in the rich fertile plain of the Órbigo.

The *civitas Beduniensium* is one of the Asturian cities named by Pliny¹⁰⁵, as are the nearby towns of *Ocellum Duri* and *Brigaecium*, also mentioned *mansiones* in the *Antonine Itinerary* (439.7), or the *Itinerario de Barro* (*Clay Itinerary*, table III, 2). Furthermore, in the case of *Bedunia* its existence in this area is confirmed in the Augustan *termini* that separated its territory from the *prata legionis* of the X *Gemina* and the *Cohors IIII Gallorum*. Following the archaeological pattern of the Roman conquest of the Hispanic Northwest that relates the Roman military establishment to a pre-existing hill-fort, the case of the mentioned Villalazán¹⁰⁶ and Albocela¹⁰⁷ camp (Madridanos, Zamora)

¹⁰² CASTRO DE LERA, Mónica (2013) “Una arqueóloga leonesa localiza un campamento romano en Villaquilambre”, in the *Diario de León* 18/02/2013, which literally indicates that she has surveyed the whole city using the same LiDAR tool, as well as the camp of *Lancia* (...). In *Lancia* no structures of this size have been found. Ref. MARTINO REDONDO 1992.

¹⁰³ MENÉNDEZ BLANCO; GONZÁLEZ ÁLVAREZ; JIMÉNEZ CHAPARRO and ÁLVAREZ MARTÍNEZ 2011, pp. 32-35. COSTA-GARCÍA and CASAL GARCÍA 2015, p. 144: the camp site in Huerga de Frailes “easily covered the needs of an entire legion”.

¹⁰⁴ GARCÍA BELLIDO 1963, p. 21 who places it near Riego de la Vega, in the vicinity of Soto de la Vega, where the majority of the mentioned *termini* appeared. Ref. ROLDÁN HERVÁS 1971, p. 105.

¹⁰⁵ PLINY, *Nat. Hist.*, 4.117-118.

¹⁰⁶ GONZÁLEZ MATELLÁN 2009, pp. 10-15; see MORENO GALLO 2010, p. 29; ARIÑO GIL; DIDIERJEAN *et al* 2007, pp. 171-193.

¹⁰⁷ COSTA-GARCÍA and CASAL GARCÍA 2015, pp. 144, 146.

should be analysed because this perhaps might be the place of origin of the *Lancienses Ocelenses* mentioned by Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* IV, 118) as Lusitanian tributary vassals, and where the existence of a section of about 60 kilometres of Roman road between this town nucleus and the River Esla¹⁰⁸ seems proven. This road, which linked *Asturica Augusta* and *Caesaraugusta*, intersected here another road that came from *Emerita Augusta* and converged with the previous one¹⁰⁹ in the current Villalazán, and near the Culo del Mundo quarries¹¹⁰, in the same municipality of Madridanos, about 15 kilometres east of Zamora. Identifying this place with the *Ocellum Duri* of the *Vettones* is more controversial, although this is probably the place that appears as a *mansio* in the *Antonine Itinerary* (434.6 and 439, 10) with the place name *Ocellum Duri*¹¹¹, whose etymology might be the same as that of the *Ocella* that Strabo (III.4.3) placed in Cantabria, a region that then included the banks of the Esla to the south of the province of León. And once again, the archaeological data agree with the information provided by Florus (II, 33, 56) from whom the location of the base camps can be ascertained on the banks of the *Astura* River (nowadays the River Esla), a tributary of the Duero. The campaign beginning from the Duero may be a valid hypothesis if, in addition to the León and Asturian remains and those of northern Zamora previously listed, we analyse the location of the archaeological remains of the Roman camp of *Albocela* in Villalazán near Benavente, and those of Villabrázaro¹¹², about 60 kilometres from the previous one (one of the intended locations of *Brigaecium*, in the vicinity of Zamora).

For this research, all the hypotheses about the position of *Brigaecium*¹¹³ are pertinent, whether the pre-Roman nucleus was located in the Benavente area, in Villabrázaro or in Fuentes de Ropel (Zamora) or even if it was in Valderas¹¹⁴ (León). These places are located on different banks of the River Esla but at similar latitudes, also close to those of the Castro de Las Labradas (Arrabalde) and the Rosinos de Vidriales camps (both in Zamora). If the *Brigaenci* betrayed the *Lancienses* and encouraged the

¹⁰⁸ MORENO GALLO, I. 2011 *Vías romanas de Castilla y León*, <http://www.viasromanas.net/>

¹⁰⁹ MORENO GALLO, p. 64 who states that Villalazán is *Ocellum Duri*.

¹¹⁰ VICENTE GONZÁLEZ 2012, p 42-49.

¹¹¹ VICENTE GONZÁLEZ 2012, pp 42-49.

¹¹² *Id.* (2011) “*Bellvm Astvricvm*. A hypothesis well-adapted to Roman historiography and the archaeological and geographical background of the area of “Los Valles de Benavente” and its neighbourhood”, in the magazine *Argutorio*, no. 27, Astorga, pp. 4-10.

¹¹³ MARTINO GARCÍA 2015, pp. 79-97 who names the most likely sites as: “el Peñón” (Villabrázaro, Zamora) and the “Dehesa de Morales de las Cuevas” (Fuentes del Ropel, Zamora) as well as mentioning a site further east in Valderas (León) as proposed by F. WATTENBERG in 1959.

¹¹⁴ MERINO MOVILLA, 1922 pp. 199-210.

capture of *Lancia*, it is much more logical to think that both settlements were close, and one can even handle the hypothesis of competing border interests as a cause of those who "betrayed" *Lancia* to the Romans. The pact between these and the *Brigaenci* could have lasted, opening the possibility that native warriors enrolled in the drafts undertaken by Galba in 68 to form the *Legio I Adiutrix*, a body of troops whose most permanent camp took the name of *Brigetio* (in Szöny, Hungary). It would be destroyed by an earthquake in 458, when part of the Latin population abandoned the city and perhaps a group would settle in the old site of the Hispanic *Brigantii* in *Sabaria* (Zamora), as we will see later. The tribal name Brigantinus was used in antiquity for Lake Constance in Austria and is the origin of the nearby toponym *Brigantion* (today Bregenz), where other *Brigantii* lived. The toponym "*briga*" means a high fortified place, and in the northwest of Hispania it was used in the very limits in *Brigantia*, the city generally identified with the later Roman *Flavium Brigantium* (probably La Coruña, or Betanzos) where the legendary King Breogan built a tower, according to what 11th century Irish literature recalls in the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* (*Leabhar Gabhála Éireann* or The Book of Irish Invasions). Perhaps the origin of these names is the goddess *Brigantia*, probably Celtiberian, who was worshipped even in Gaul and Britannia, where the Romans assimilated her to their cults of *Minerva*, *Fortuna* or *Victoria*, as we can see on the epigraphs found in Yorkshire, Birrens (the Roman *Blatobulgium*), Dumfries, Corbridge (the Roman *Coria*, on Hadrian's Wall) and in Irthington (near Brampton in Cumbria, where she is venerated as *deae nymphae Brigantiae*), and Galloway in Scotland. It is believed that in the British Isles the cult to *Brigantia/Brigid* was the origin of several rivers such as the English Brent, the Welsh Braint or the Irish Brigid, and perhaps for the tribe of the *Brigantes* in Leinster (Ireland). Surprisingly in Hispania on the banks of the Leonese rivers Esla and Bernesga, ethnographic studies have revealed a strange type of popular celebration on the feastday of the Irish Abbess Brigid (453-524), despite there being no church dedicated to her. Folklore also hands down the popular proverb "St. Brigid and St. Stormmaker, the first day of February", and the requirement that groups of young men, "*mozos*", organise festivals throughout the area around León in villages such as San Andrés del Rabanedo, Fresno de la Vega, or the area around La Sobarriba, places that surely belonged to the domain of the legion, as the fossilized rural land division shows.

As for the exact siting of the nucleus of the Hispanic *Brigaeci* (*Brigaecia*), other archaeological finds seem to validate Eugenio Merino's thesis, collected by G. Delibes de

Castro¹¹⁵ and by later authors such as J. del Olmo Martín¹¹⁶, on the location of the nucleus in Dehesa de los Morales (Fuentes de Ropel, Zamora), with a pre-Roman stratigraphy from the 2nd-1st BC, in addition to remains belonging to the Romanized *Brigaecium*. The identification of the remains of *Brigaecium* at the confluence of the Esla and Cea rivers in the extreme northeast of the province of Zamora near its limits with those of León and Valladolid was suggested by E. Merino¹¹⁷ and corroborated by G. Delibes de Castro, making clear that among the materials collected the ceramic findings include some fragments of *terra sigillata* from the south of Gaul and much more abundant Hispanic remains from the 1st and 2nd century. These surveys did not provide materials after the 3rd century, so it can be assumed that it was abandoned around this date. Despite this opinion, he takes into account the contrary opinion¹¹⁸ of Wattenberg, who had placed *Brigaecium*, with little conviction, in Valderas, and that of Gómez Moreno identifying *Intercantia* in Villaverde de Campos, although he could have been in Palazuelo de Vedija (Valladolid).

Returning to the Latin sources, let us take up again the description of the conquest of the *Astures* by Florus (II, 33, 56)¹¹⁹:

“Around this time the *Astures* descended from the mountains forming a powerful army. They did not fight recklessly, as was the custom of the barbarian peoples but, placing themselves on the banks of the *Asturis* [River], after dividing the army into three sections, they prepared to attack the three Roman camps simultaneously.

If the *Trigaenci* (sic) [*Brigaenci*] had not sold the *Astures* before the sudden appearance of such a powerful, disciplined and brave enemy, the combat would have been doubtful, bloody and the losses of equal consideration on both sides. Warned by them, Carisius got in their way and upset their plans, not without experiencing considerable losses.

The hard-working *Lancia* welcomed *within its walls* the remains of the Asturian army, and the fierceness with which it fought was such that the Roman soldiers asked for torches to set fire to the city. The Consul was barely able to prevent it, who knew that this city, preserved and not burned, would serve as a monument that attested to the victory obtained by Rome. In this way Augustus ended his military expeditions and Spain ended its rebellions.”

¹¹⁵ DELIBES DE CASTRO 1975, pp. 206-224.

¹¹⁶ Ref. OLMO MARTÍN 2006, p. 321 describing the results of J. Celis’ archaeological excavations.

¹¹⁷ MERINO MOVILLA 1924, p. 32.

¹¹⁸ DELIBES DE CASTRO 1975, pp. 223-224.

¹¹⁹ DÍAZ-JIMÉNEZ and MOLLEDA 1904, LUCIO ANNEO FLORUS, *Compendio de las hazañas romanas*, Trans., Ed. J.C. Cebrián, Madrid, pp. 167-168.

In this case, the translator Díaz-Jiménez y Molleda¹²⁰ identified two possible locations for *Brigaecium* and *Lancia*:

"*Brigecum*, city of those [*Brigaenci*]: some believe that it should have been located on the banks of the River Órbigo, not lacking those who think that it corresponds to the town of Villabrázaro, opposite Benavente [Zamora], on the right bank of the Esla, where it meets the River Cea and at which point, according to Rosales, Roman remains have been discovered.

Lancia, not only due to the effort of its inhabitants, but also to its importance and extension, was the most noteworthy city of the *Astures*. *Lancia maxima Asturum urbs*, says Dion Casius. *Lancia* must have been located in the Castro, a point between the Porma and Esla rivers, belonging to the municipality of Villasabariego, which is two and a half leagues from León."

A precise reading of the literary sources makes it clear that they narrate the conquest in an orderly manner and, immediately after describing the attack by the *Astures* against three Roman camps established in Augustan Asturian territory, go on to narrate the capture by the Romans of the capital of the *Lancienses*. These *Lancienses*, neighbours of the *Brigaenci*, possibly located near Benavente¹²¹, would probably live in the vicinity of the Esla. The paradigm shift regarding the location of the capital of the *Astures Lancienses* deserves a more complete reflection since, as previously stated, it denies one of the factors usually considered concerning the origins of the location of a legionary camp in the city of León, as the control of these *Astures* would require. On the other hand, the toponym *Lancia* is repeated in the sources causing confusion that has survived to the present day. That is, as an example, the case of the *Oppidani Lancienses* cited by Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* IV, 118), a town that epigraphic findings placed in the *Lusitania Emeritensis* (CIL II 460, 760.7) and that a recent publication located in Belmonte (Portugal) after reinterpreting¹²² the archaeological remains associated with the *Centum Celas* nucleus, a Roman tower known for centuries. Or the case of the soldiers from *Laciari Sabarienses*

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 272, nos. 94 and 95. Ref. MORENO GALLO 2006, p. 64: states that Villabrázaro is not *Brigeco*.

¹²¹ One of the Roman roads between two Augustan foundations, *Asturica Augusta* and *Caesar Augusta*, passing through San Martín de Torres (León) and Villabrázaro (Zamora), and from Benavente it went to Palencia: MARTÍNEZ GONZÁLEZ 1874, p. 36. This author thinks likewise that *Brigeco* "ought to be found somewhere between Villabrázaro and Benavente, at the end of the bridge at Mosteruelos (...) we should suppose that the waters from the River [Órbigo] would come together in one only course in that period (...)".

¹²² GUERRA and SCHATTNER 2009, pp. 333-342.

(perhaps from the same *Sabaria* in Hungary which we mentioned earlier), appearing under the same name in the *Notitia Dignitatum* at the end of the 4th century, whose possible presence in Hispania gives rise to this research and, despite its improbability nowadays, gives credit to the comparison using ethnic terminology hypotheses.

The thesis of the situation of *Lancia*¹²³, the capital of the *Astures*, in the pre-Roman fortification of Las Labradas (Arrabalde) in the north of Zamora, almost on the southern limit of the current province of León, supposes the invalidation of the identification of the Roman *Lancia* located in Villasabariego¹²⁴, near the Roman camp of León, with the capital of the *Astures Lancienses*¹²⁵. This Leonese *Lancia* does not provide known archaeological remains of any kind of wall. One can acknowledge it as a Roman urban nucleus and as the Roman *mansio Lance* but not with the great fortified Asturian settlement, the *validissima civitas*¹²⁶ described by Florus (II, 33). Thus, the findings of the successive excavators of this *Lancia* near León have been interpreted in a totally Roman context following the works of Blázquez Jiménez and Jordá Cerdá¹²⁷.

Regarding the new interpretation of the location of the capital of the *Astures Lancienses*, we owe it to N. Santos Yanguas¹²⁸. However, a majority of authors still do not accept this hypothesis, and with respect to *Lancia* as a capital, they claim that "Ptolemy places it between *Argentola* and *Maliaca*, both cities most likely located in the province of León", while minimizing the relevance of the pre-Roman remains of Arrabalde (Zamora) when describing it thus: "In the Sierra de Carpurias, very close to the camp of *Petavonium* in Rosinos de Vidriales, Zamora, from where watchful oversight of the territory could be exercised. Its dimensions force us to think that not all the interior space

¹²³ SANTOS YANGUAS 2004, pp. 71-86. See ESPARZA ARROYO 1976, pp. 23-24; SEVILLANO CARBAJAL 1978, pp. 46-49; DELIBES DE CASTRO and MARTÍN VALLS 1981, p. 154.

¹²⁴ This *Lancia* in Villasabariego (near Mansilla de las Mulas, León) can be identified with the Roman city of *Lancia*. The latest publications still allude to its identification with the most important city of the *Astures* and the scene of the final and decisive conquering battle against them, after which it was spared being burnt down: CAMPOMANES ALVAREDO 2016, p. 126; MORILLO CERDÁN 2018, pp. 10-11; CÉLIS SÁNCHEZ 2018, pp. 321-322.

¹²⁵ Plin. *Nat. Hist.*, III, 28: *Iunguntur iis Asturum XXII populi divisi in Augustanos et Transmontanos, Asturica urbe magnifica. in iis sunt Gigurri, Paesici, Lancienses, Zoelae, numerus omnis multitudinis ad CCXL (milia) liberrorum capitum.*

¹²⁶ A *civitas* could maintain several *castella* spread over its territory and could appear in classical sources with the name of *forum*. Ref. Ptolemy (II, 6) for the *Forum Gigurrorum* as the major city of the *Gigurroi/Gigurri*, see RODRÍGUEZ COLMENERO 1996, p. 97.

¹²⁷ BLÁZQUEZ Y DELGADO AGUILERA 1920; JORDÁ CERDÁ 1962.

¹²⁸ 2004, pp. 71-86; 2005, pp. 13-51.

of its two walled enclosures was destined for housing, a place where numerous Celtiberian materials and a valuable treasure were found, dated between the years 29-19 BC.”

N. Santos Yanguas located the Asturian capital of the *Lancienses* in the north of Zamora, in Arrabalde¹²⁹, on the basis of epigraphy, numismatics and literary sources, to which can be added the presence of remains such as the treasures of Arrabalde and the fortified defences of Las Labradas, whose pre-Roman origin is undeniable¹³⁰. And, like in the case of the Cantabrian hill-forts of Monte Bernorio and Espina del Gallego, we have already pointed out that in the vicinity of the fortified Asturian hill-fort of Arrabalde, archaeological proof of several nearby Roman camps associated with its conquest has been found. Despite the fact that it has been known for more than a decade that the pre-Roman remains appearing in the *Lancia* near León are of little relevance and there is no trace of a wall resulting from that phase of occupation, and also that habitation on the site has been proven to be predominantly Roman by means of archaeological excavations carried out and directed by Dr. Liz Guiral¹³¹, resistance to recognising the data provided by archaeology is still held, except in the media. In answer to this doctoral thesis and more than a year after its theories were published, an article appeared in a newspaper from Zamora announcing the discovery of Roman siege camps in the vicinity of the Castro de Las Labradas by LiDAR technology, covering one hectare and some 200 metres from the Asturian wall in Arrabalde, and another one slightly further away in the fields of La Mina (Villaferreña) of about 6 hectares, although it is likely that the supposed remains in La Mina, in the lower part of the Sierra de Carpurias, actually correspond to geological structures separated from Las Labradas by the River Eria. In this context, at least one Roman settlement must have been located on the same left bank of the River Eria,

¹²⁹ See for example, HERNÁNDEZ GUERRA 2007, pp. 32-33.

¹³⁰ MISIEGO TEJEDA; SANZ GARCÍA; MARTÍN CARBAJO; MARCOS CONTRERAS and DOVAL MARTÍNEZ 2014, pp. 479-498 for El Castro de Las Labradas, in Arrabalde (Zamora) as one of the largest proto-historic fortified encampments in the northwest of the Peninsula with a surface area of 23 hectares and several lines of walls that make up the enclosed perimeter of nearly 2,500 metres in length. They have not been able to recognise this hill-fort in Las Labradas de Arrabalde (Zamora) as *Lancia*, despite having also participated in the excavations of the Roman *Lance* in Villasabariego (León), where no Asturian fortification has appeared whatsoever. To accept the high probability of locating the Asturian *Lancia* in Arrabalde requires recognising the error of the hypothesis of siting the capital of the *Astures Lancienses* in a non-fortified site in Villasabariego, in León. The same can be said of other archaeologists who have recently excavated the Roman *Lancia* in Villasabariego. See CÉLIS SÁNCHEZ 2018, pp. 319-340; LIZ GUIRAL; CÉLIS SÁNCHEZ and GUTIÉRREZ, 2002.

¹³¹ Under whose direction I had honour of collaborating in the campaign of excavations in *Lancia* in 1999, confirming the very few findings of remains of the *Astures*. CAMPOMANES ALVAREDO 2016, p.126 and CÉLIS SÁNCHEZ 2018 still hold to the hypothesis placing the Asturian *Lancia* in Villasabariego, pp. 319-340. However, assigning it in this way has begun to be considered a “controverted” case by the most recent researchers (see LÓPEZ ALONSO 2015, p. 185).

northwest of the current town of Arrabalde, approximately 1 kilometre north of the Las Labradas hill-fort, in Teso de los Moros.

Likewise, the interpretation of the aforementioned discovery of a possible Roman camp in La Cuevaorra (Villasabariego, León) is considered equivocal since it too has been used in relation to the Asturian capital of *Lancia*, in this case of the Roman *Lancia*¹³² near León; but this is not the only possible hypothesis to interpret the Roman presence at the interfluvium between the Moro (tributary of the Porma) and Esla rivers, on a probable eastern Leonese axis for the Romans to reach Cantabria from the south of the present-day province of León, a route that should not be ruled out in either direction since, as we will see, there are Roman settlements found in Valderas, Valencia de Don Juan, Mansilla de las Mulas and the banks of the Esla¹³³ as far as Cistierna, as well as the ancient Vadinian territory of the Mountains of Riaño and the Picos de Europa.

In conclusion, based on these recent archaeological discoveries, this study has supported a new theory about the itineraries followed by the Roman conquering armies during the Cantabrian-Asturian Wars, altering the traditional hypothesis that said the conquest took place advancing up from the Valley of the Ebro towards León to then head North and reach the Cantabrian Sea. Two hypotheses¹³⁴ are still being considered about the final stage of this advance of the legions from the South, from the territory of León to Lugo, namely: that before the founding of *Lucus Augusti*, a military camp existed here contemporary to those of Los Ancares and so there would be the possibility of an advance in either direction along the east-west axis; or that the Los Ancares camps were established there after the founding of *Lucus Augusti*, in which case the direction of the conquest could only have been west to east.

¹³² CAMINO MAYOR 2018, p. 23: the author considers these opinions as “not creditworthy” about the alternative siting of *Lancia* and says literally that in the “wide hill” -situated alongside Villasabariego- where the Asturian township is to be found below the Roman city that replaced it, as well as what could be the first hints of a Roman camp at its feet in the place called La Cuevaorra. See BRASSOUS and DIDIERJEAN 2010, pp. 345-370. These two authors have analysed Itinerary 387.4 going from *Mediolanum* (Milan) to the camp of *Legio VII Gemina*, and dates it to a period after Galienus, when Milan was the Imperial residence under the Tetrarchy and during all the 4th century. In note 59 on p. 356 he identifies *Lancia* with La Cuevaorra (Villasabariego); DIDIERJEAN; MORILLO CERDÁN and PETIT-AUPERT 2014, p. 150: “*Lancia*, localisée sans contestation à la Cuevaorra, commune de Villasabariego (León)”. *Ibid.*, p. 156, fig. 11, where an aerial photo taken on the 5th June 2010 appears of the field of La Cuevaorra (Villamoros, Mansilla Mayor) showing clearly semi-rectangular structures placed one on top of the other at right angles.

¹³³ RODRÍGUEZ FERNÁNDEZ 1969, pp. 109-132. This researcher considered that after the wars there was a relocation of groups of *Cantabri* on the plains of León on the Esla valley between Valencia de Don Juan and Mansilla de las Mulas.

¹³⁴ GONZÁLEZ ÁLVAREZ *et al* 2011, pp.145-165.

On the other hand, traditional theory had identified in these wars with the *Cantabri* and *Astures* two fronts close by each other, in Cantabria and eastern Asturias¹³⁵, in line with the known documentation. This presumption seems to be invalidated by the archaeological finding of traces of dozens of campaign quarters or *castra aestiva* in the last two decades¹³⁶. These newly discovered camps indicate a new route of advance in the Los Ancares area (between León, Asturias and Lugo) that seems to lead to a third front in Galicia on one side, or continue towards the Via de la Mesa in central Asturias, with another possible front in the lower basin of the River Navia: camps have so far been discovered in El Mouro (Grau-Miranda), Cueiru (Taja, Teverga), El Xuegu la Bola (Arvechales, Somiedo), El Pico el Outeiro (Taramunde, Vilanova d'Ozcos), A Pedra Dereta (Bual-Castripol) and El Chao de Carrubeiro (Bual). The aforementioned Monte Curriechos camp has been found on the Via Carisa, and in the upper basin of the River Narcea there is a possible site in the mountain area in El Castiellu de Valláu (Cangas de Narcea), to which we must add the mountain camp from Moyapán in the Sierra de Carondio (Ayande)¹³⁷.

However, perhaps the key archaeological find is the set of three camp sites in Cha de Santa Marta (Láncara, Sarriá, Lugo), an access plateau to the eastern Galician mountains that archaeologists have identified as a possible base: a place where the soldiers would have regrouped before entering the territory in several columns during the approach march, presumably towards *Mons Medulius* described above, and whose situation in relation to the mines of Las Médulas in El Bierzo in León seems beyond dispute. The most probable hypothesis is that the existence of three camps is related to the existence of three columns¹³⁸ that were divided and were quartered in the three camps we find at that distance from those of Cha de Santa Marta. If the advance occurred in the west to east direction, the *castra* could have been built at the end of the Sierra de los Ancares already mentioned (to the north in the La Recacha and A Granda das Xarras camps¹³⁹, to the south

¹³⁵ SANTOS YANGUAS 2017, pp. 151-162.

¹³⁶ These are different to marching camps raised for one or two nights during the campaign advance, raised by the troops and specialised staff (topographers, supply personnel, etc) who would march with them: GONZÁLEZ ÁLVAREZ *et al* 2011, pp.145-165; GONZÁLEZ ÁLVAREZ, David *et al* (2011b), pp.245-267.

¹³⁷ MENÉNDEZ BLANCO; GONZÁLEZ ÁLVAREZ; ÁLVAREZ MARTÍNEZ and JIMÉNEZ CHAPARRO 2013, pp. 245-251. The authors have identified three sectors of attack from western Asturias: the one from Penouta, that from the Ancares, and the one from the Sierra de Carondio.

¹³⁸ FLORUS II, 33, 48.

¹³⁹ MENÉNDEZ BLANCO; GONZÁLEZ ÁLVAREZ; ÁLVAREZ MARTÍNEZ and JIMÉNEZ CHAPARRO 2011, pp. 145-165.

those of Serra da Casiña and Campo de Circo or Cortiña dos Mouros). If the conquest of the territory was carried out in the opposite direction, that is from east to west, we would also find a *castrum aestivum* one day's march away: the camp of Monte dos Trollos (O Páramo, Lugo) located on a hill near a natural ford of the Miño. The most western known Roman sites in the northwest of Hispania, those already mentioned in O Cornado (Negreira, La Coruña)¹⁴⁰, and Campos, in Vilanova de Cerveira, on the Portuguese bank of the Miño, are both enclaves associated with a natural route that runs through the region from north to south, the Meridian Depression, used by route XIX of the *Antonine Itinerary* between Tuy and *Iria Flavia*. Shortly after, the Ferreira de Valadouro camp was discovered in A Mariña (Lugo). These last three have in common their proximity to the coast and the old gold and iron mines.

As described above, a concentration of Roman camps in the Duero River basin¹⁴¹ was also detected decades ago, relating to the conquest of the Asturian territory from the current provinces of Zamora and León between the years 26-25 BC¹⁴², with three well defined bases and almost equidistant from the Asturian fortification of Arrabalde (Zamora), the probable capital of the *Lancienses* near Rosinos de Vidriales (Zamora) and Castrocalbón (León). Here we find a considerable concentration of fortified areas around Rosinos de Vidriales, in the south of the province of Zamora, with a bridgehead over the River Esla in the *Priorato* hamlet (Arcos de la Polvorosa), and the Albocela legionary camp in Villalazán (Madridanos), next to the River Duero, with an area of 22 hectares (565 x 405 metres) and a moat about 6 metres wide¹⁴³.

The other grouping of Roman camps near La Chana (Castrocalbón, León) has several temporary enclosures, of which three were considered exercises in fort building, an unlikely hypothesis during the phases of conquest and occupation of the territory. If true, that would happen later. It seems more plausible that they were *castra aestiva* built

¹⁴⁰ GAGO MARIÑO and FERNÁNDEZ MALDE 2015, pp. 229-251.

¹⁴¹ COSTA GARCÍA and CASAL GARCÍA 2015, pp. 143-144. There are Early Imperial permanent camps in Castile and León known for a long time but, as in the case of Castrocalbón, they lack stone structures: the sites mentioned beforehand in Villalazán, El Burgo de Osma and Huerga de Frailes.

¹⁴² We cannot count out that these encampments were built during the previous campaigns in 29 BC against the *Astures*, *Vaccei* and *Cantabri*, under the command of Statilius Taurus; see CARRETERO VAQUERO 1999, p. 144.

¹⁴³ El Alba was close to the Roman site in Albocela connected to the Roman road towards Salamanca, considered now to be part of the *Vía de la Plata*, which runs all along the western side of Iberia from Mérida northwards; see DEL OLMO MARTÍN, pp. 115-119.

in succession as the previous ones were destroyed when they left them to avoid their reuse by the enemy¹⁴⁴.

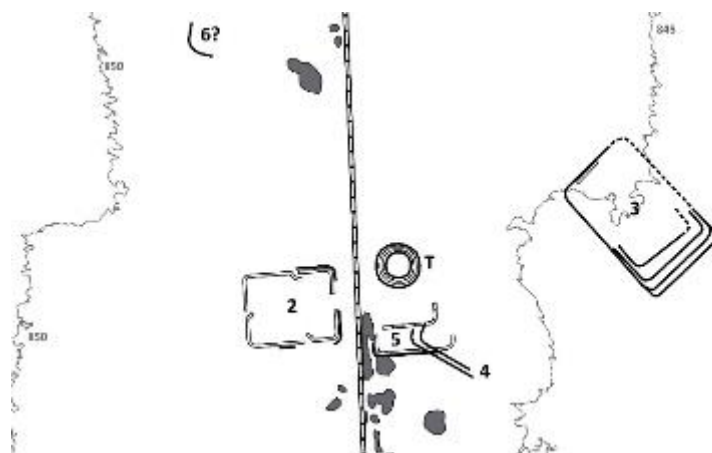


Fig. 6. Roman road and Castrocalbón camp according to J.M. Costa García¹⁴⁵.

On the same south-north axis between Castrocalbón and Astorga, remains of at least two overlapping Roman camps of 5.8 and 3.8 hectares have been located, in the municipality of Villamontán de la Valduerna¹⁴⁶, in the area where in recent centuries the Roman epigraphic collection of Villalís had appeared, in the surroundings of the Via XVII between *Asturica* and *Bracara*, in the place where the *mansio Argentiolum* was later located, in San Cristóbal hill-fort. To the Northwest, already in the Leonese region of La Cabrera, possible seasonal enclosures have been found in the municipality of Truchas, with at least one clearly documented camp in Valdemeda (Manzaneda). Turning Northeast, another campaign site has been found in Huerga de Frailes (Villazala, León), on the left bank of the River Órbigo.

The association of Early Imperial Roman camps and large indigenous hill-forts can be clearly seen again in these areas of Zamora and León as we mentioned when reviewing the Cantabrian enclosures, a pattern that has not yet been found among the second concentration of related Roman military encampments connected with the Asturian conquest and that have been detected further north, in the border area between the current provinces of León, Lugo and Asturias.

¹⁴⁴ (APIANUS, *Iber.*, 86; FLAVIUS JOSEFUS, III, 90). See CARRETERO VAQUERO 2006, pp. 176-177; DESCOSIDO FUERTES 1982b, pp. 121-125.

¹⁴⁵ COSTA GARCÍA 2016, pp. 47-85; DEL OLMO MARTÍN 1995, pp. 110-111.

¹⁴⁶ DE CELIS SÁNCHEZ; MUÑOZ VILLAREJO and VALDERAS ALONSO 2016.

There is also the possibility that the conquest to the north of the Duero¹⁴⁷ starting precisely from this river might have gone almost unnoticed, as we said before: The River Duero in Augustus' time was navigable from its mouth to a point some 150 kilometres inland, as described by Strabo¹⁴⁸. Pliny is even more explicit: The River Duero was the natural boundary between tribes such as the *Arevaci* and the *Vaccaeii*, between *Astures* and *Vettones* and between *Lusitani* and *Galaici*, separating the *Turduli* from the *Bracari*¹⁴⁹. Archaeological surveys in Verín (southwest of Orense) have resulted in the identification of remains of fortified structures in Outeiro de Arnás (a possible Roman *castellum*) and Alto do Circo¹⁵⁰, which may in future be related to this conquest of the current Galician region from the Duero. More recent is the discovery of a large camp that could have been occupied by two legions in the municipality of Lobeira in Ourense.

In sum, recent archaeological research in the eastern Galician areas seems to endorse the existence of another route of simultaneous advance of the Roman armies from Lusitania and northern Zamora during the conquest of the Asturian territory, a route that, as has been analysed previously, would continue through the current provinces of Orense and Lugo, as far as the three camps of Cha de Santa Marta in Lámara (Sarriá).

1.3 Roman legions during the change of era in León: conquering Hispania, building Hispania.

From the Second Punic War onwards, Roman territories in Hispania were protected by two legions which were not ascribed to any specific domain and accompanied by a multitude of civilians –*calones* and *lixae*– who had become an authentic occupation

¹⁴⁷ The archaeological remains so far seem to indicate this as they show a possible Roman fort in the Portuguese valley of the Duero in Castelo da Pousa (Fonte do Milho, Peso da Régua); on the same Duero basin flowing to the ocean several Late Republican and Augustan remains have appeared in Castro de Alvarelhos (Santo Tirso). *Ref.* FABIÃO 2006, pp. 107-126. In the same sense we can interpret recently discovered remains (CORDERO RUIZ; CERRILLO CUENCA and PEREIRA 2017, pp. 197-201), or the possible Augustan occupation of Republican encampments in Extremadura such as *Castra Caecilia* (Cáceres el Viejo) or El Pedrosillo (Casas de Reina-Llerena, Badajoz). For the conquest of Cantabria from the central area of the Duero: PALAO VICENTE 2014, pp. 53-78.

¹⁴⁸ Strabo (III, 3 ,4) offers the information that the River Duero was navigable upstream for 800 stadia. SALINAS DE FRÍAS 2017, p. 601.

¹⁴⁹ PLINY, *Nat. Hist.*, IV, 34, 112; FLORUS, II, 33, 48.

¹⁵⁰ BLANCO ROTEÁ; COSTA-GARCIA; FERNÁNDEZ-GÖTZ; FONTE; GAGO; MENÉNDEZ BLANCO; GONZÁLEZ ÁLVAREZ and ÁLVAREZ MARTÍNEZ romanarmy.eu, “*Proyecto de prospección arqueológica mediante técnicas de teledetección dos sitios arqueológicos de Outeiro de Arnás y Alto do Circo (Verín, Ourense)*”.

army¹⁵¹. With regards to the northwest of the Peninsula, the first lands conquered were those of *Finisterrae* in Galicia, still in the Republican era, and successive campaigns are acknowledged under the command of Quintus Servilius Caepius, Decimus Junius Brutus Callaicus and Julius Caesar. The latter during his consulate could well have made levies for legions I to IIII, despite the fact that the II and III are usually considered to have been recruited after his murder.

The reorganization of the army by Augustus from the year 30 BC is the reason for which his first three legions were named *Augusta*, but with uneven fortune. While in this year the *Legio III Augustan* was sent to Africa, the *Legio I* remained in *Hispania Citerior Tarraconensis* from 30 to 19 BC. Before leaving, according to Dion Cassius (LIV, 11, 5), it was stripped of its title of "*Augusta*" against the *Cantabri*, also taking away its emblem. Previously, the *Legio I Augusta* had fought in the eastern front of the Cantabrian and Asturian Wars under the command of the imperial legate Caius Antistius during the years 27 to 24 BC, of Aelius Lamia from 24 to 22 BC, then of Caius Furrius between 22 and 19 BC, and finally it was placed under the command of Publius Silius Nerva and Agrippa in the camp of *Segisama Iulia* (Segisamo, Burgos).

Decades later, the *Legio I Augusta* would be called "Germanica", disappearing after the Batavian revolt in AD 70. Survivors of this legion would later be incorporated into the VII *Gemina*, the Leonese legion par excellence. Recent investigations suggest a pacified situation as early as the 1st century, with a very small representation of *Cantabri* in Roman auxiliary infantry corps and perhaps even in the legions: a Vadinian epigraph from Leonese Cantabria (Santa Olaja de la Varga, Cistierna) is the epitaph of the warrior Pentovius Blaesus, who fought with the Romans in the *Augusta* legion¹⁵².

On occasions the bibliography has traditionally identified the *Legio I Augusta* as the successor of the *Legio vernacula*, a legion recruited in the year 49 BC in the Iberian Peninsula by the legate Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus in the context of the civil war between himself and Caius Julius Caesar; a *legio iusta* (of Roman citizens) that sources (*Bell. Hisp.* VII, 4) describe as "*facta ex colonis qui fuerunt in his regionibus*". The truth is that the recruitment of this legion may not only have been formed from the most romanized Baetic citizens, as has been thought, since there existed a levy carried out by the Pompeian

¹⁵¹ GOLDSWORTHY 2005; PALAO VICENTE 2010, p. 165; THORBURN 2003, pp. 47-62.

¹⁵² RABANAL and GARCÍA 2001, pp. 418-419, no. 388, print XCIII, 4:

[M(onumentum)?]/ [Pen]tovio. Bla/[es]o mile(s) l(egionis) A/[ug(ustae)?] vad(iniensi)an(norum) XXV/[Ela]nus Arga(elus)/ [am]ico p(osuit) h(ic) s(itus) e(st)

general Lucius Afranius in Cantabria in that same year (*Bell Cant.* I, 38-39) before the battle in Ilerda. In 49 BC, a cousin of Caesar was a military tribune in Hispania, Sextus Julius Caesar, who later became Governor in Syria.

Regarding the *Legio II*, it could have been the one named II *Pansiana* and *Sabina*, (consular legion recruited by Caius Vibius Pansa around 43 BC in the country of the Sabines), but with the name of *Augusta* participated together with the I *Augusta*, and under the orders of the same generals, in the last wars of conquest in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula. It was perhaps quartered with the I *Augusta* in a town of the *Turmodigi*, enemies of the *Cantabri*, according to Florus (Epit., XI, 33, 47) and Orosius (Hist., VI, 21, 3) in *Segisama Iulia* (Sasamón, Burgos) at least from the year 26 BC. The *Legio II* was in Hispania during all the Cantabrian and Asturian campaigns and could have remained in another camp until 9 BC, perhaps in the surroundings of *Iuliobriga*¹⁵³. After the extermination of the *Cantabri* by Agrippa, these troops may have remained based on the Asturian front during the following decade.

Regarding the veterans of these first two *Augustae* legions we know of two joint *deductiones* from around the year 27 BC, they founded two colonies that shared the same toponym, *Colonia Iulia Gemella Tucci* (Martos, Jaén) and *Acci* (Guadix, Granada). As we will see later, the other colonies founded by veterans from several participating legions in the Cantabrian and Asturian Wars, such as *Emerita Augusta* or *Caesaraugusta*, did not include in their names the adjective "*gemella*". These veterans from the legions I and II would have had to occupy one or more barracks before leaving military service; camps that, for now, cannot be limited to that of *Segisama Iulia*, since the chronology of the initial occupation of this place seems to be later than its *deductio*.

For this reason, we cannot count out either the idea of an occasional presence or a stable cantonment of the Augustan legions I and II in any of the camps in northwestern Hispania. Along the same lines, we should also assess an honorary pedestal kept in the Regional Museum of Archaeology in Braga (Portugal), dated between AD 25 and 33, dedicated to *Caius Caetronius Miccio*, who was legate of Augustus in *Hispania Citerior*

¹⁵³ OROS., VI, 21, 3-4 and 21, 9; SANTOS YANGUAS 2007, pp 51-86; PITILLAS SALAÑER 2007, p. 115; SERRANO DELGADO 1981, pp. 203-222; ROLDÁN HERVÁS 1974, pp. 457-471; GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ and RABANAL ALONSO 2001, pp. 419-419, num, 388. PERALTA LABRADOR 2018, pp. 123-198; SEYRIG 1923, pp. 488-497.

after being Augustus' legate of the *Legio II Augusta* and prefect of the military treasury (*CIL* II, 2423).

Another gravestone of a veteran found in Saldanha (Portugal), very close to the border with Zamora, confirms the *Legio V Alaudae* passing through northeastern Hispania: *I(nuicto) b (eterano) (sic) / Anto (nio) / G (...) V Alaudae / legionis / numini* (AE, 1987, 596). And an epigraph dedicated in *Tarraco* to Caius Emilius Fraterninus, a military tribune of the *Legio V Alauda[rum]* (*CIL* II, 4188) reveals the possible presence of a prefect of works in this legion during the Julio-Claudian period. In the case of the *Legio V*, the epigraphy guarantees the possibility that their soldiers could have built a camp in the northwest of Hispania.

As previously observed, the military forces had significantly increased during the Cantabrian and Asturian Wars (26-16 BC) with the participation of up to seven legions, of which at least three, the *X Gemina*, the *V Alaudae* and the *VI Hispaniensis*, were for sure quartered in the province of León during part of their assault in temporary camps during their advance, where troops of legions I and II *Augustae* were probably also stationed, and in permanent fortified quarters afterwards.

Regarding the possibility of the *Legio I Adiutrix* being in León, a first evidence comes from decades after: a passage from Tacitus (*Hist.*, II, 67) locates it in Hispania, replacing the *V Alaudae* during the Galba uprising in AD 68, forming part of the peninsular Roman garrison along with the other two legions mentioned above, the *VI Hispaniensis* and the *X Gemina*, which continued quartered in the Northwest.

Returning back to Strabo's testimony (III, 4, 20), to understand the situation in the north of Hispania at the time of Tiberius, in the translation by M^a J. Meana and F. Piñero (1992) these authors identify "the two legions under the command of only one of the legates guarding the north of the Duero" with the *VI Victrix* and the *X Gemina*¹⁵⁴:

"The region that follows [east of the Ocean, mouth of the River Sella], parallel to the mountains as far as the Pyrenees, is commanded by the second of the legates with another legion".

This "region that follows" has been interpreted¹⁵⁵ until now as that of the *Gallaeci* from the boundary between *Cantabri* and *Astures*, data we may assume as such, even though Strabo does not actually mention it. Progress made in archaeological

¹⁵⁴ STRABO, *Geography. Books III-IV*. Translation by MEANA and PIÑERO (1992), pp. 113-114, no. 279.

¹⁵⁵ FERNÁNDEZ OCHOA and MORILLO CERDÁN 2002, Madrid, pp. 889-910.

knowledge indicates that it is very possible that the legate who had control over two legions in the peninsular Northwest, was still dominating the territory between the *Astures* and *Gallaeci*, while the other legate controlled that of the *Cantabri*¹⁵⁶.

From other sources, like Cassius Dio (Roman History LIII, 25, 8 and LIV)¹⁵⁷ and Florus (II, 33, 54-59), we may assume that the first legion to be in Hispania was the X *Gemina* from the start of these wars, because in the year 25 BC under Carisius its veterans together with those of the *Legio V Alaudae* founded *Augusta Emerita* (Mérida). One of its old camps in Asturian territory gave rise to the foundation also in 25 BC of *Asturica Augusta* (Astorga, León). However, the other two legions in the Peninsula by then –the IIII *Macedonica* and the VI *Hispaniensis*– do not appear in the account of the foundation of Mérida, which leads to the hypothesis that they would have moved some years later, probably to take part in the campaign of 19 BC.

The possible coincidence of the troops of legions VI and IIII during the Cantabrian and Asturian Wars seems to be backed by epigraphic remains recently found in the ancient *Astigi Augusta Firma* (Écija, Seville), a colony that around 24 BC seems to have also held veterans of the aforementioned *Legio II Pansiana* and even soldiers who served in the *Classica* legion, such as Valerius Maximus (*CIL* II / 5, 1284), and also in the *Martia* legion, before serving in legions IIII and VI. This is the case of the veteran Minucius (*CIL* II2 / 14, 1023, an epigraph dating between 44-36 BC) from the colony of *Urbs Triumphalis* in *Tarraco*. Knowing that legion *Martia* had a rather short life (between the years 49 and 3rd October 42 BC) and that the veterans who entered very young could have been active a quarter of a century later, this provides a rather precise *terminus ante quem* for the epigraph: between the years 24 and 17 BC. According to J. González Fernández, the *deductio* in *Astigi* must have been carried out by Publius Carisius around the year 24 BC. On the other hand, three legions –X, IIII and VI– appear in numismatic materials in the foundation of the colony *Caesaraugusta* (Zaragoza) although no trace of the V *Alauda* or II *Augusta* legions has been found in them.

It is interesting to go back to studies such as that of A.U. Stylow that contemplated the uniqueness of the tribes in the colonies of Mérida, Zaragoza, Écija and Guadix, which led him to propose foundation dates prior to 27 BC. Regarding the

¹⁵⁶ STRABO, *Geography. Books III-IV*. Translation by MEANA and PIÑERO (1992) Madrid, p. 114, no. 283: indicates what was arranged with the *Legio IV Macedonica*.

¹⁵⁷ GÓNZALEZ ECHEGARAY 1999, p. 150; SANTOS YANGUAS 2007, pp 51-86.

chronological limits, they provide epigraphs such as that of M. Septicius (erected around AD 6¹⁵⁸) of the *Papiria* tribe and standard bearer of an undetermined legion (Museo Arqueológico de Córdoba, Inv. 27725), who Perea Yébenes considers a veteran established in a pacified province after his retirement. The truth is that the attribution of colonists to the *Papiria* (rustic) tribe instead of the *Galeria*, as was usual in the Augustan urban foundations, should be related to the military origin of the *deductiones* of veterans from the said colonies. Regarding the possible foreign origin of the soldiers from some legions, such as the *Vernacular*, the V, IIII and VI, proposed in the sources (*Bell. Alex. LIII*, 4), it was modified by granting Roman citizenship at the beginning of the military service.

As mentioned before, thanks to epigraphy and historical sources used from ancient times, we already knew that the legions of origin of these veterans –I and II *Augustae*, V *Alauda*, VI *Hispaniensis*, X *Gemina*– had participated in the wars of conquest in northwestern Hispania, and, despite testimonies such as those of Cassius Dio or Tacitus¹⁵⁹, researchers such as Pitillas Salañer had suggested the existence of an Astur-Galician front as well as another Cantabrian front. Archaeology has provided sufficient evidence to prove that these legions would have been in charge of carrying out a subsequent territorial reorganization through the methodical execution of a city foundation program and the creation of a road network with the relevant engineering elements: *mansiones*, ports, bridges, aqueducts, fountains, temples, basilicas, forums, warehouses, prisons, barracks, forts and walls that changed the urban appearance of the northwest of Hispania, even when from scratch as was the case of the current city of León.

Many of the old stone bridges of the peninsular Northwest are certainly Roman but bear no identifiable traces of construction¹⁶⁰. In these and in other public works, legionaries who built them have left traces that facilitate the identification of their builders.

¹⁵⁸ GURT and RODÀ 2005, pp. 151-153; VENTURA VILLANUEVA 2015, pp. 7-27; GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ 1995, pp. 281-293; cf. STYLOW 1995, pp. 105-123; PEREA YÉBENES 1993, pp. 297-305; GONZÁLEZ ROMÁN 2010, pp. 17-18; PALAO VICENTE 2010, pp.85-110.

¹⁵⁹ PITILLAS SALAÑER 2007, p. 117: “(...) in AD 23 and according to the testimony of Tacitus [Ann, IV, 5, 1] there were only three legions in Hispania. With the information we have, their location could have probably been the following: in the eastern area, the Cantabrian, the IIII *Macedonica*, and in the western, the Asturian, the VI *Victrix* and X *Gemina*. This allows us to consider that this disproportion of forces (two legions in the Asturian sector compared to only one in the Cantabrian) could be due to differing needs derived from gold mining. Therefore, the Roman occupation army was to be found in two areas, in *Gallaecia-Asturia*, where the aforementioned VI *Victrix* and X *Gemina* were in charge of its surveillance, and in *Cantabria* the IIII *Macedonica* which, from a safe position, kept its territory under control”.

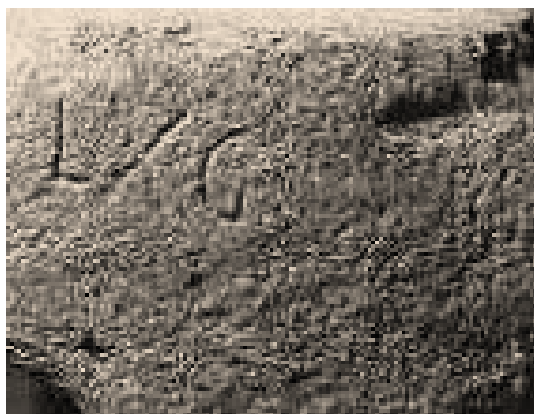
¹⁶⁰ FERNÁNDEZ CASADO 1979, pp. 47-84.

Good examples are the *Puente del Diablo*, Devil's Bridge¹⁶¹ (Martorell, Barcelona) on the Via Augusta, built around the year 10 BC by soldiers from different legions, as evidenced by the marks found on the ashlar. Also, the river-port in Zaragoza where possible building marks of the X and VI appear, in addition to a controversial mark probably from the IIII. Likewise, in *Graccurris* (Alfaro, La Rioja) a mark of the *Legio VI* was found together with a *miliarium* from the time of Augustus, dated in 6 BC.



Fig. 7. Detail of the ashlar with mark VI –deteriorated at the bottom part–, located in the current Museum of the River Port in Zaragoza (HEp. 16, 2007, 601). Photograph by F. Beltrán Lloris.

The most interesting discovery regarding our proposal to determine a new date for the first Roman stone fortification in León is a yet unpublished mark of the *Legio VI* visible in one of the towers of the Leonese wall with the same typology as those in Zaragoza and the *Puente del Diablo* in Martorell. Like these, the mark in the Leonese ashlar in the tower of San Isidoro is a numeral, whilst those found in Astorga in 1992 show the acronym LGX, *Legio X Gemina*, on two ashlars reused in a *domus* that dates back to the end of the 1st century.



¹⁶¹ GURT and RODÀ 2005, pp. 149-153; BELTRÁN LLORIS 2007-2008, pp. 1069-1079; LIZ GUIRAL, 1985, p. 53; HERNÁNDEZ VERA; ARIÑO GIL; MARTÍNEZ TORRECILLA and NÚÑEZ MARCÉN 1998, pp.219-236.

Fig. 8. Photograph of Roman ashlar with marks found in Astorga.



Fig. 9. Detailed photograph of ashlar with VI mark *in situ* on a blocked putlog hole. Tower of San Isidoro (León).



Fig. 10. In the tower of San Isidoro (embedded in the west-side of the medieval wall of *cubos*), ashlar with the mark “VI” on the north facing wall, visible from the exterior.

The *Legio VI* mark on a stone ashlar of the tower of San Isidoro in León is very similar to the ones mentioned above and those in the *Puente del Diablo* (Martorell, Barcelona) and in Zaragoza’s river-port, but very different from those left by legionaries from the *Legio VI* in British fortifications, such as the one found at Croy Hill, a Roman fort, part of the Antonine Wall’s system of defence in Scotland:



Fig. 11. Ashlar mark of the *Legio VI*, Edinburgh Museum (Scotland). Photographs by the author.

Another epigraphic discovery, (*CIL* IX 4122 = *ILS* 2644), the tombstone of the *primus pilus* Sabidius, to which we will return later, allows us to consider the hypothesis that these three legions that conquered the peninsular Northwest were the same as those *Sabidius* was a centurion of: Legions V, X and VI. Additionally, his later *cursus honorum* suggests that he could have been *Primipilus* before the change of era. According to the epigraph, if Sabidius was a prefect to a caesar and also to Tiberius¹⁶², it does not seem feasible that the first was Julius Caesar, since Sabidius would then have exercised the first prefecture before 44 BC, date of the death of Julius Caesar. This thesis does not fit with the fact that he was also prefect during the government of Tiberius (AD 14-37). On the other hand, and most likely, he could have been first of all prefect of another caesar, Lucius, son of Agrippa and grandson of Augustus, who changed his name from Lucius Vipsanius Agrippa to that of Lucius Julius Caesar, and died in the year AD 2, while Augustus was still alive. The *CIL* XI 3312 found in Bracciano (Italy), dedicated to the tribune of the Legio Aulus Octavius Ligor by the *Centuriones Leg(ionis) VI ex Hispania*, can be considered contemporary to this tombstone.

This leads us to discard neither the idea of a most likely participation of military personnel from any of these three legions (V *Alauda*, VI *Hispaniensis* and X *Gemina*) in the genesis of the Roman fortifications in León nor the more questionable possibility of a collaboration of troops from the Legions I and II *Augustae*. The evolution of this research

¹⁶² BOATWRIGHT 2018, p. 66.

should incorporate the contribution of all of them, both to the system of military camps of conquest and to that of fortresses of occupation.

In conclusion, the discoveries during the first years of the 21st century of several dozen camps in the north of the Peninsula add up to the argument that the first military camp erected in Hispania by troops of the *Legio VI Hispaniensis*¹⁶³ was built in association with the founding of *Lucus Augusti* (25 BC) or even earlier 164. These scenarios are in consonance with N. Santos Yanguas' conclusions¹⁶⁵, when he argues that the Romanization of Asturias was carried out in two phases in a period of about two hundred and fifty years, by means of military troops situated in mining or strategic enclaves, and that the advance towards inland Asturias would have occurred at the same time as the construction of the Roman road network.

This second period, when it was necessary to secure the territory¹⁶⁶, did not require the establishment of any borders since the entire Iberian Peninsula was under the provincial regime and there were no *gentes externae* to defend themselves against, nor the need for any defensive system against neighbouring barbarians. According to the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (26.1 and 2), Augustus wrote about extending the borders of the provinces and then went on to describe the pacification of Gaul and Hispania, discarding these as border provinces:

"26. [1] I extended the borders of all those provinces of the Roman people on whose frontiers lay peoples not subject to our government. [2] I brought peace to the provinces of Gaul and Hispania as well as to Germania, so that the Ocean became our limit from Cadiz to the mouth of the River Elbe."

With the archaeological evidence currently held, it is difficult to maintain the idea of the existence of a *limes*¹⁶⁷ in the northwest of Hispania from the beginning of the

¹⁶³ TACITUS, *Hist.* IV, 68, 76: The *Legio VI* left Hispania together with the *I Adiutrix*, created by Galba, like the *Legio VII Gemina*, leaving in Hispania only the X.

¹⁶⁴ RODRÍGUEZ COLMENERO 2006, pp. 44-46.

¹⁶⁵ SANTOS YANGUAS 2006; *Id.* 2011.

¹⁶⁶ LUTTWAK 2016, p. IX.

¹⁶⁷ ALVAR EZQUERRA 1981, pp. 109-140; CASTELLANOS GARCÍA and MARTÍN VISO 2005, p.3 no. 3; CEPAS PALANCA 1997, pp. 41-42; NOVO GÜISÁN 1993, pp. 61-90; ARCE MARTÍNEZ, pp. 185ss; DOMÍNGUEZ MONEDERO 1984, pp. 3-30; POVEDA ARIAS, pp. 1163-1166. For bibliography about the archaeological debate and the difficulties regarding the *necropolis* and the *castella*, see MENÉNDEZ BUEYES, 2001: 201-203: in general terms, it has been possible to verify that the funerary objects of the so-called "Necropolis of the Duero" do not have a military character but rather a merely rural one, and that the *castella* were actually built at different times, from pre-Roman times to the time of the Reconquista". Also, WHITTAKER 1997. MORILLO CERDÁN 2003, pp. 81-83 does not take into account the data of the first location of at least one military unit associated with the *Legio VI* on the *Lucus Augusti* site, and refers to the other three Augustan camps, already known as a "*limes* without border and that indicates the model applied on the northern borders of the Empire some years later"; *id.*, 1996, pp. 80-81; with partial amendments in 2017, pp. 191-223.

Empire if we assume the high probability of the legions conquering the territory from the South, heading from Lusitania towards the northern limit of Zamora, and, once the Asturian capital of the *Lancienses* had been defeated, they would follow towards the current Galicia setting up a camp for the *Legio VI Hispaniensis* or some of its *auxilia* on the site of *Lucus Augusti*¹⁶⁸. So, the later advance of the Roman conquest in northern Hispania could also have been from west to east, and not only in the opposite direction.

Although the Hispanic provinces could be considered pacified, the army under the Flavian dynasty would continue to play a relevant role in the Imperial administration¹⁶⁹, with troops made up of one legion, one cavalry wing and four cohorts. The *Legio VII Gemina Felix* quartered in León; the *Ala II Flavia Hispanorum* c. R. replaced *Legio X Gemina* in the camp of Rosinos de Vidriales; the *Cohors I Celtiberorum* in the *castra* of Santa María da Cidadela (Ínsua, Sobrado dos Monxes, La Coruña).

The existence of an auxiliary camp in *Aquae Querquennae* (Baños de Bande, Orense) was proposed by Rodríguez Colmenero¹⁷⁰. This fortification has walls with a thickness of 3.60 metres, very robust compared to the walls in Rosinos and Cidadela. P. Le Roux¹⁷¹ suggested the possibility that its occupants could have been troops from the *Cohors I Gallica*, based on the discovery of an epigraph dedicated to *Bandua Veigebreaegus* by a *signifer* of that auxiliary unit, in Rairiz de Veiga, not far from the Via XVIII of the *Antonine Itinerary* –between *Asturica* and *Bracara Augustas*–, which went through *Aquae Querquennae*.

It is not possible to confirm or deny the provisional conclusions concerning the temporary occupation of camps during the Imperial Era in Sasamón (Burgos) or Valdemeda (León)¹⁷², because the publications known to date have not specified either their military units or their chronology. However, P. Le Roux¹⁷³ placed earlier to the change of era the boundary stones of the *prata* from the *Legio X Gemina* during their

¹⁶⁸ AJA SÁNCHEZ 2002, pp. 41-42. Ref. RODRÍGUEZ COLMENERO 1996, pp. 129-133; *Id* 2006, pp. 29-60.

¹⁶⁹ LE ROUX 1992, pp. 233-234.

¹⁷⁰ RODRÍGUEZ COLMENERO, A. (2002), pp. 227-244.

¹⁷¹ LE ROUX, 1992, p. 234, no. 18.

¹⁷² *Ibidem.*, p. 234, note 19; ref. ROLDÁN HERVÁS 1984, p. 71; ABÁSOLO ÁLVAREZ 1975, p. 129. SÁNCHEZ PALENCIA 1986, pp. 227-235, attributes between 4.2 and 4.5 hectares to the Valdemeda camp, located in the Eria valley and associates it with the gold mining works in this area in the current province of León.

¹⁷³ LE ROUX 1992, p.234, no. 21: “The abbreviation BED contrasts with *Beduniensium* in all the boundary inscriptions of the *Cohors IIII Gallorum*. *Bedunia* is undoubtedly in San Martín de Torres, southeast of La Bañeza”.

quartering in Rosinos de Vidriales (Zamora) when he observed that the name of the city bordering its wide territory, *Bedunia* (San Martín de Torres, León), had been engraved by another hand later than the rest of the epigraph. This would discredit the traditional chronological interpretation of these territory markers during Claudius' reign.

Likewise, this observation by P. Le Roux about the reuse of the Augustan boundary stones of the *prata* leads us to think of a Hispanic military reorganization under Claudius would lead to a new division of lands between the *Legio X* and the *Cohors IIII Gallorum*¹⁷⁴ as well, perhaps, as an enlarging of the *territorium legionis* used for certain concrete activities but not necessarily next to their *castra*.

In this context, hospitality pacts¹⁷⁵ were signed and renewed from the time of Augustus between military commanders and native clans such as the *Coelerni* and the *Zoelae*.

1.4 Roman territorial distribution in the province of León: from Prata Legionis to municipal limits.

Among the *Astures* and *Cantabri*, some communities remained outside the Roman domain but, as the rest of the Peninsula was pacified, Augustus adopted as his first objective of imperial policy doing the same with the North. The Republican military organisation of an army of conquest would be transformed under his government into an army of occupation, formed by "professionals": the troops scattered throughout the different territories became permanent garrisons and established long-lasting relations with their territories by means of essential Roman institutions such as the *prata*.

When analysing the advance along routes of conquest into Leonese lands by means of the creation of the Roman military camps for the legions V *Alauda*, VI *Hispaniensis* and X *Gemina*, or some of their *vexillationes*, it is important to know about their *prata legionis*¹⁷⁶. These were a territory assigned to military units and segregated from the land belonging to northern native settlements. As the quartermasters evidently

¹⁷⁴ The *Cohors IIII Gallorum equitata civium Romanorum* was quartered in *Hispania Tarraconensis* between the years 27 BC and AD 41, possibly in Rosinos de Vidriales. CARRETERO VAQUERO, S. 1993, pp. 47-73.

¹⁷⁵ BELTRÁN LLORIS 2001, p. 46: dates the hospitality pact in AD 14; ILLARREGUI GÓMEZ 2010, pp. 15-28. He noted that this agreement was made before legionary magistrates in a camp.

¹⁷⁶ ABASCAL PALAZÓN 2009, pp. 78-81.

needed to supply the army¹⁷⁷, both marching and stationed in their camps, it was necessary to obtain from the *prata* their own production as soon as possible even when counting on cereal provisions from the metropolis¹⁷⁸.

Right from the beginning, the *prata legionis* of the camp in León must have been located in the capital's alfoz (farming area around the city) in the rich plains of the rivers Bernesga and Torío. Traces of a hydraulic irrigation system have lasted until the 20th century, with dams and irrigation ditches such as those of San Isidoro (the arch in the wall next to San Isidoro allowed the water from this dam into the fortified area) and those of the River Bernesga discovered by GIS in the municipality of San Andrés del Rabanedo.

The confusion between this type of irrigation structures excavated in the earth and camp ditches has recently led to their consideration as a group of “at least eighteen Roman camps” (information distributed to the news agency EFE on 16th July 2020 by A. Morillo Cerdán). The age-old relevance of irrigation in lands bordering the Bernesga was believed to have been due to medieval constructions until the recent discoveries, such as the *Lex riui Hiberiensis*, have revealed the complexity of the irrigation network in the north of Roman Hispania.



Fig. 12. Dam of the River Bernesga as it passes through Trobajo del Camino (San Andrés del Rabanedo, León). Fossilised remains of a possible rural area of Roman Centuriation.

¹⁷⁷ Ref. PONS PUJOL 2009, pp. 39-42.

¹⁷⁸ SANTOS YANGUAS 1997, pp.199-200



Fig 12 b. *Territorium Legionis*, with “lots” or land corresponding to military land shares fossilised San Andrés del Rabanedo (León). DATUM: ETRS89, Scale 1:12000. Lidar 2ª cobertura (2015-2020), Centro Nacional de Información Geográfica, Gobierno de España.

The distribution of a *territorium legionis* for each of the legions and auxiliary troop corps would be complemented by use of a workforce of the native population under the command of the legion's legate¹⁷⁹. Part of these fields came from the territory of the *civitates* where Rome had administratively grouped each *gens*, and the other *prata* were taken from the *ager publicus*, generally used for pasture of the cavalry and as croplands. In Hispania, around fifty public *termini* have been studied¹⁸⁰, and there is a notable accumulation of *termini pratorum* in the Hispania Citerior, where more than thirty inscriptions have been identified concentrated in two areas of the peninsular Northwest. In the current province of León eleven boundary stones have appeared: eight of these separated the territory of the *Cohors IIII Gallorum* from the *civitates Luggonum* and *Baeduniensium*¹⁸¹, while another was found in Castrocalbón, dated around AD 41, marking out the *prata* of the *Cohors IIII Gallorum* from the territory of Bedunia; a third

¹⁷⁹ SCHULTEN, 1894, pp. 481-516. MOCSY, 1967, pp. 211-214.

¹⁸⁰ Several boundary markers have also been preserved (*CIL* II 857, 858 and 859) from the Augustan era (AD 6) in the *conuentus Emeritensis* that mention the *civitates* of *Salmantica*, *Bletisa* and *Mirobriga*.

¹⁸¹ RABANAL ALONSO and GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ 2001, pp. 313-314. Dated during the Claudian Principate, they were found in Castrocalbón and Soto de la Vega (near *Bedunia*). On five occasions they mark the boundary of an auxiliary unit, the *Cohors IIII Gallorum* with the *civitas* of *Bedunia* and on two with the *civitas* of the *Luggoni*, whose main town could be *Argentiolum*. See GARCÍA y BELLIDO 1961, pp.155-159.

was found between Quintana and Congosto, between Astorga and El Bierzo. Even though the name *civitas*¹⁸² has not been preserved in the latter, it evidences the demarcation of the *prata* of the *Legio X Gemina*. Remains of two more *termini* have survived to this day though their texts are illegible. On the other hand, other epigraphs of great relevance have been found in this same area of the Leonese regions of La Bañeza and Valduerna: the stones found in Villalís (Villamontán de la Valduerna, León) commemorate the birth of the *Legio VII* and are considered a rare expression of military tribute in Hispania to the Dioscuri¹⁸³, the twins Castor and Pollux who guarded this legion called *Gemina* in association with *Victoria* and *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus*, guarding gods of the army.

This seems to indicate that this area was under the influence of the *Legio VII*, where no *termini pratorum* have been found despite it being the legion that stayed longest in the area; nor have they been found any for the *Legio VI*. It seems increasingly clear that its *territorium legionis* comprehended the rich plains of León's *alfoz*, occupying those of the River Bernesga as it passed through the territories of the current municipalities of Cuadros, Sariegos and especially San Andrés del Rabanedo, whose fields preserve traces of Roman land division and its irrigation system would develop into La Presa del Bernesga canal. The lack of *termini* from these legions settled in León and its territory might be due to the inexistence of a previous *civitas* in the area both from the time of the camp's origin or later, once the *Legio VII* was permanently installed, an argument that supports the non-existence of a *civitas* or *urbs* in *Lancia*.

Another group made up of nineteen boundary stones¹⁸⁴ delimits the *territorium legionis* of the IIII *Macedonica* in the valley of the *Pisoraca* (Herrera de Pisuerga, Palencia), investigated before the exact siting of the camp corresponding to this military unit had been located¹⁸⁵. They separated it from the *ager* of *Iuliobriga* (could that be Retortillo? –in Cantabria), a city whose name appears on another eighteen examples found

¹⁸² DESCOSIDO FUERTES 1982, pp. 91-96. With regard to the *Legio X Gemina*, See GÓMEZ- PANTOJA 2000, pp. 169-190.

¹⁸³ *CIL* II, 2552-2556; GARCÍA Y BELLIDO 1966, pp. 34-37. CID LÓPEZ 1981, pp. 115-124 considers that the majority of samples about the *Cohors I gallaecorum (equitata)* appear in Villalís and concludes that the *vexillatio cohortis I celtiberorum* was also present in a place where it could control mining operations in the Sierra del Teleno.

¹⁸⁴ The *termini pratorum* were found as following: two in Henestrosa de las Quintanas, two more in Castillo del Haya, three in San Vitores, one in Hormiguera and the two remaining in Cuenca, all of them in a territory of between 30 and 35 kilometres, half-way perhaps between *Iuliobriga* and Aguilar de Campóo.

¹⁸⁵ GARCÍA Y BELLIDO 1961, p. 118.

in the province of Cantabria and from the territory of *Segisama Iulia*¹⁸⁶, mentioned on one solitary epigraph¹⁸⁷ found in Villasidro (Burgos). To this and in the same province we should add a *miliarium* from the time of Tiberius dated around AD 33/34 found in Olmillos de Sasamón that belonged to the road between *Segisamo* (Sasamón, Burgos) and *Pisoraca* (Herrera de Pisuerga, Palencia).

Roman interest in the northwest of Hispania was mainly military and economic until Augustus, this was reflected in the initial territorial distribution¹⁸⁸. However, during the Principate Hispanic provinces¹⁸⁹ were organized around urban territories at whose centre were *civitates* such as *Asturica Augusta* (Astorga) and *Bedunia* (San Martín de Torres), both in the current province of León, under the control of the provincial governor and the emperor. Even in remote areas and dominated more in name than in practice, with little urban tradition, Rome used *civitates* as a means of territorial organization and integration of the native population¹⁹⁰. Most of what we now call Hispanic *civitates* were not restructured native settlements, they were small administrative units whose urban centres would acquire privileged status under Roman law within the short span of seventy years, when they became *municipia*.

These *civitates* did not always have as their centre of power a recognizable *urbs*. Such is the case of the *Vadinienses*: between the current provinces of León, Cantabria and Asturias, in the regions of Liébana and Tierra de la Reina, was the *civitas* of Vadinia, one of the eight Cantabrian *civitates* according to Ptolemy (II, 6, 30)¹⁹¹. The Romanization of the *Vadinienses* has been reproduced in an epigraphic *corpus*¹⁹², almost entirely conserved in the Museum of León. It is a good proof of the territorial organization of the Leonese Eastern mountains of Riaño, Picos de Europa and part of the Esla Valley after the Roman conquest. The Latin language and epigraphic formulas were adopted and its population communicated with the rest of the Roman Empire by means of the road beside the River

¹⁸⁶ CIL II, 5807 = ILS 2455. Ref. FERNÁNDEZ 1966, pp. 23ss., no. 8; ROLDÁN HERVÁS 1974, p. 448, no. 523ss.

¹⁸⁷ CIL II 5807; CRESPO ÓRTIZ DE ZÁRATE and ALONSO DÁVILA 2000, 240, no. 599.

¹⁸⁸ SANTOS YANGUAS 2017, pp. 229-255.

¹⁸⁹ The new division made by Augustus in AD 27 left one senatorial province (*Hispania Ulterior Baetica*) and two imperial provinces (*Hispania Ulterior Lusitania* and *Hispania Citerior Tarraconensis*); GOFFAUX, 2011, p. 449. Ref. CANTO 1990, p. 267.

¹⁹⁰ SASTRE PRATS 2002, pp. 79-93.

¹⁹¹ ALVAREZ-LARIO and ALVAREZ-ROY 2017, pp.147-168; BLAZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 1989, pp. 573-616.

¹⁹² Almost 80 epitaphs have been recovered at present. MARTINO GARCÍA 2002, pp.142-156; RABANAL ALONSO and GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ 2001.

Esla and several secondary roads following the course of the rivers Cea and Porma that connected the Meseta with Asturias and Cantabria, crossing the mountain passes of San Glorio, Pontón, Ventaniella, Tarna and San Isidro. But they maintained their demonym roots for centuries.

It is often said that Augustus himself founded three *urbes* in northwestern Hispania: *Bracara Augusta* (Braga, Portugal), *Lucus Augusti* (Lugo)¹⁹³ and *Asturica Augusta* (Astorga, León)¹⁹⁴. These last two, according to the data provided by archaeology, can be classified among the minority of foundations associated with military or *oppidum*-type housing units that, according to historiography, were erected as cities after the pacification of the territory¹⁹⁵. As indicated above, the foundation of Augustan colonies by *deductio* could have included veterans from the Hispanic Northwest, although no such colony was located there. Regarding the legal promotion of cities in the *Tarraconensis*, this has been related to the three journeys made by Augustus to Hispania as shown, for example, on an inscription found in *Segobriga* (Saelices, Cuenca) with a *decretum decurionum* from the year 15 BC indicating that *Segobriga*¹⁹⁶ was a *municipium iuris Latini* governed by a local Senate, the *ordo decurionum*. Except in the few mentioned areas of the Northwest, the provinces in Hispania would present an image similar to the Italic ones. The *civitas* was the unit that defined the political, administrative, social and religious geography¹⁹⁷: it had an *ager*, its dependent territory and, in general, was autonomous although of little significance, contrary to what happened in *Tres Galliae*, where many large cities served as administrative capitals on which other *civitates* could depend. This type of hierarchy has not been verified in Hispania where the terms *civitas* and *municipium* would be functionally interchangeable as early as 2nd century¹⁹⁸.

¹⁹³ LE ROUX 1996, p. 366.

¹⁹⁴ GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ 2012, pp. 257-294.

¹⁹⁵ See MORENO GALLO, Isaac, *Vías romanas de Castilla y León*, <http://www.viasromanas.net>: The investigation of this engineer who specialises in Roman roads leads him to suggest that the possible sites in the province of Zamora of *Ocelo Duri* in Villalazán -rejecting the siting in the capital, Zamora- and of *Albocela* (Tiedra, rejecting Toro). He also discards the siting of *Amallobriga* in Tiedra (he places it in Montealegre, Valladolid). He emphasises the uncertainty about the location of important Roman settlements on the *Antonine Itinerary*, such as *Intercatia*, *Tela*, *Vico Aquario* or *Nivaria*, while he also considers unfounded the commonplace identification of *Pintia* (Las Quintanas, Padilla de Duero, Valladolid) of *Brigeco*, in Zamora, in the Dehesa de Morales (Fuentes de Ropel) and not in Villabrázaro.

¹⁹⁶ The piece was recovered while excavating a tavern in the forum of Segóbriga in 2003 (See ABASCAL PALAZÓN 2006, no.9, p.71).

¹⁹⁷ GOFFAUX 2011, p. 457.

¹⁹⁸ MARTINO GARCÍA 2004, pp. 19-21, 36.

During the Early Empire the territory in Hispania was made up of between three and four hundred urban centres of four different types: colonies and municipalities, both with Roman juridical statutes, allied cities, and dominated cities. However, the origin of the Roman walls of the current city of León was not that of an urban enclosure but a military fortification with the legal character of a colony¹⁹⁹. This could imply a notable conceptual difference²⁰⁰ between these walls and the rest of the walls in northwestern Hispania with which they were grouped typologically or chronologically: the walls of the Augustan-foundation cities already mentioned as well as that of Gijón (in our opinion, that of *cubos* is of a later chronology). This has also been said of northeastern cities such as *Caesaraugusta* (Zaragoza) or *Barcino* (Barcelona). Despite the military origin of the Leonese wall, it has been assumed that it had *cubos* of stone ashlar as early as the 1st century AD. This seems rather strange since the rest of the aforementioned urban walls with which the wall of León is usually compared, is based precisely on the similarities of their *cubos* or towers with a semicircular ground-plan (o ultrasemicircular), all of them urban enclosures in their origin. And in all of them it is assumed that they had a late-Roman second wall built in the late 3rd or early 4th century, as we will see later.

In the current province of León and its surroundings, we know of Roman nuclei in the cities of León (with a military origin) and Astorga (whose military origin is being questioned in light of recent archaeological discoveries), and others without a continuity in terms of population, such as *Interamnium Flavium* (San Román de Bembibre), *Bergidum* (Cacabelos), *Camala* (Sahagún); in the province of Palencia, *Viminacium* (Calzadilla de la Cueva), *Lacobriga* (Carrión de los Condes) and *Dessobriga* (Osorno); and then in Zamora, *Petavonium* (Rosinos de Vidriales). The transformation of Asturian settlements into Roman cities seems feasible in cases such as the aforementioned *Bedunia* (San Martín de Torres), *Utaris* (Ruitelán) or *Argentiolum* (Villamontán de la Valduerna) in León, or in its neighbouring provinces: *Veniatia* (Mahide, Zamora), *Forum Guigurrorum* (A Rúa Vella de Valdeorras, Orense), *Iuliobriga* (Cantabria), *Pisoraca* (Herrera de Pisuerga, Palencia). Probably, these Roman foundations also survived during

¹⁹⁹ FERNÁNDEZ DE BUJÁN 2019, p. 168: “(...) Colonies were citizen settlements in a certain place. They held a strategic or military purpose. Later colonies of war veterans were set up and the *ager publicus* was shared between them so that they could settle in the colony. Political and administrative autonomy of the colony was less than that of a *municipium*. Colonies were distinguished between those of Roman citizens and those of Latin citizens.”

²⁰⁰ HOURCADE 2003, pp. 295-297.

the following centuries in fortified areas and bridgeheads such as the crossing over the River Esla (Mansilla de las Mulas) and other relevant populations like Valderas.

Regarding the status of *municipium* in Leonese Roman settlements, epigraphy provides us with some information about local magistrates which indicate this category for the townships, like for example *Asturica Augusta*²⁰¹, *Bergidum Flavium*²⁰², perhaps *Brigaecium*²⁰³ and *Lancia*²⁰⁴, as we will see later.

Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* III, 18) assigned twenty-two *civitates* to the *Asturum conuentus*, bordering with the River Duero to the south and to the east with the River Astura (currently the Esla). Apart from two of the *civitates* named by Pliny, *Asturica* and *Lancia*, it seems that at least three others were in the Meseta area. Therefore, it is possible to work with the hypothesis of the existence of up to a dozen Asturian *civitates*. According to N. Santos Yanguas, Pliny himself must have lived in *Asturica Augusta* in his position as *procurator Augusti* of *Hispania Citerior* (in the year 73), he was perhaps the first to hold this position²⁰⁵.

We cannot discard the idea that part of the current province of León –including the current capital of León– was, however, in the territory of the *Cluniacensis conventus*: in fact, in the year AD 222, the governor of the *Legio VII Gemina* was also governor of the *conventus Cluniensis*, therefore outside the new *Gallaecia* province created by Caracalla before 217²⁰⁶.

²⁰¹ DIEGO SANTOS 1972, pp. 5-20; CURCHIN 2015, pp. 54-55, docs.414, 415; p. 99, docs. 1113-1114; *Id.* 1990, p. 181.

²⁰² CURCHIN 2015, p. 57, doc. 450.

²⁰³ CURCHIN 2015, p. 58, doc. 464; *Id.* 1990, p. 187.

²⁰⁴ CURCHIN 2015, p. 73, doc. 769; *Id.* 1990, pp. 189, 212, 258.

²⁰⁵ SANTOS YANGUAS and DOPICO CAÍNZOS 2016 “p. 295, note 17.

²⁰⁶ CURCHIN 1991, p. 90; MARTINO GARCÍA 2004, p. 32; LÓPEZ NORIEGA 1997, pp. 218-222: mentions *Segisama* (Sasamón, Castrojeriz, Burgos) and *Pisoraca* (Herrera de Pisuerga, Palencia) as examples of settlements *ex novo* that had their origin as military camps, comparing them with the “cities of the *conventus cluniensis* which were built from scratch a few kilometres from native settlements, and yet maintain the same toponym as that of the older settlement”. She also quotes Monte Cildá as settlement *ex novo* in the province of Palencia on p. 222, thus placing in doubt its relation with the existence of *Vellica*; Monte Cildá seems to have been occupied between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD but remained empty until the 5th century, perhaps in connection with the occupation of the nearby settlement of Mave between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD. Its necropolis of 3rd century may have used as memorial stones the ashlar from the walls of Cildá. She also describes as *ex novo* settlements (p. 219) *Clunia* (Alto del Castro, Coruña del Conde, Burgos), suggesting continuity between the Iberian population of *Arevaci* in *Kolounioku* and the Roman *Clounioq*, toponyms found on its coins before the Early Imperial *Clunia*. The list of settlements continues (pp. 220-221) with *Deobrigula*, which seems to be located in Tardajos (Burgos), and *Intercatia*, for which the author thinks it might be situated in Villalpando or Castroverde de Campos (Zamora) although she prefers to place it in Aguilar de Campos (Valladolid) owing to the fact that it matches better the distances the Roman milestones discovered provide. She situates *Segontia Lanka* in Langa de Duero (Soria), and alludes to the remains of Roman epigraphs in San Esteban de Gormaz, which at the

Additionally, the explicit existence of *castella* or *castellani*²⁰⁷ is documented in the epigraphy that refers to the Hispanic Northwest during the 1st century AD, in the *conventus Bracarensis* and *Lucensis*, and in *Asturica Augusta*²⁰⁸. This indicates the continuity of a self-governing population model of independent but economically and culturally related nuclei. We find evidence of the use of the name *fora* applied to relationships of some *gens* of the *Astures* in the Northwest, within the limits of the province of León, for example, the *forum Gigorrorum* (Valdeorras, Orense). The epigraphy reveals a juxtaposition of Galician military social units, as well as other Cantabrian ones, within the Asturian territorial area of León, such as the matrilineal structure (Strabo, III, 4.18) or avunculate, a dynastic transmission from the maternal uncle. It was generally egalitarian, except in the case of military chiefs or *principes* found among the Galician *Albiones* and the Cantabrian *Vadinienses*²⁰⁹; and among *magistrati* (among the Asturian *Zoelae*). They would be the means whereby the native population was integrated²¹⁰ into the armies and the Roman *castella*, administrative centres²¹¹ that were sometimes founded on pre-existing *castra*²¹² in the Galician, Cantabrian and Asturian territories²¹³. *Castellani* also appear (*Paemeiobrigenses* and *Aiiobrigiaecinos*) mentioned

beginning were regarded as related to *Uxama Argalea*, situated some 16 kilometres away. In the province of Álava, she places Roman settlements in *Suessatio* on the *Via Ab Asturica Burdigalam* in Arcaya, related to the pre-Roman township of Kutzemendi (Olarizu) and *Uxama Barca* (El Manzanal, Osma de Valdegobía). In the province of Vizcaya on p. 222, related to the pre-Roman hill-fort of Castro de Kosmoaga (Valle del Guernica), which was not romanized, the Roman settlement of Forua has been recorded nearby.

²⁰⁷ ALBERTOS FIRMAT 1988, pp. 191-195. Ref. PEREIRA MENAUT 1982, pp. 249-267.

²⁰⁸ For example, the *castellum* of *Intercatia* is known through a 1st century AD inscription found in Bonn (CIL, III, 8098) of *Pintaius Pedilici*, a transmontane Asturian soldier, with a good copy kept in the Museum of the Real Basilica of San Isidoro in León. *Intercatia* was also the toponym of one of the 19 *poleis* of the *Astures* according to PTOLEMY (Geog. II, 6, 31) and would be located in the valley of the River Duerna in León, according to TRANOY 1981, p. 50. A Roman memorial stone found in Astorga and dedicated to *Fabia Eburi* mentioned the *c[astello] Eritaeco* (See MANGAS and MATILLA 1981, pp. 253ss).

²⁰⁹ We find in the Museum of León (no. of inventory 1998/09) the epitaph of *princeps cantabrorum Douiderus*, son of *Amparamus*, Deobrigense, found in Peñacorada (Valmartino, Cistierna).

²¹⁰ SANTOS YANGUAS 2014, pp.53-58.

²¹¹ MENÉNDEZ BUEYES 2001, p. 91.

²¹² An example of the area we are referring to, the case of *Gigurri* who, according to PLINY (Nat. Hist. III, 28) are not a *gens* but a *populus*. Their township in the area of El Barco de Valdeorras was already in existence before the Roman conquest but, after it, its name was latinized to: *Forum Gigurrorum*, as the place of the *Gigurroi*/ *Gigurri*, suggesting a *civitas Gigurrorum* grouped with its *castella*. On the epigraphs there appear as *gentes* the *Susarri*, the *Zoelae*, etc., which in turn were divided into *gentilitates*, just as they appear in the Tabla de Astorga (CIL II, 2633): *...gentilitas Desoncorum ex gente Zoelarum / et gentilitas Tridia/vorum ex gente idem / Zoelarum...* This hypothesis does not disregard other possibilities of the concept “*castellani*”, as *castellani Toletensesy Allobrigiaecini* on the Tésera del Caurel, or those dedicated to the goddess *Cenduedia* in San Esteban del Toral. See BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 2010, pp.504-505.

²¹³ SASTRE PRATS 2002, pp.35, 72.

even in the controversial Bembibre Bronze (León), supposedly an edict of the Emperor Augustus dated 15 BC whose authenticity is controversial²¹⁴.

The paradigm shift revealed in this hypothesis regarding the strategy of conquest of these southwestern territories constitutes another possible argument in the debate about the existence of a *Transdurian* province, probably created on a temporary basis by Augustus during the wars of conquest in the same year (15 BC), when Rome had founded the city of *Iuliobriga*²¹⁵ to administer the territory of the Cantabrians they had conquered.

Although it is true that the River Duero could have been a border between the Romans and the unconquered Asturian territories²¹⁶, in 15 BC the pre-Roman model of self-governing occupation of the territory in the mining area of the future *Asturia et Callaeci* was beginning to be replaced by a repopulation model marked by the requirements of profit from the mines and their operational specialization. That is: mining work, metallurgical production, hydraulic infrastructure, agricultural and farming logistics²¹⁷. It would be a type of territorial administration whose ultimate consequence at this stage would be the creation of a *conventus iuridicus* with the name of its administrative capital.

This functional distinction also affected the road network and some Asturian coastal townships and seaports such as *Flavionavia* (possibly located near Pravia) or Gijón. On the rest of the Cantabrian coast, the Romans established a series of ports to have a sea route in two directions. The first led towards *Gallia* and the British Isles or navigating around the Iberian Peninsula: *Portus Vereasueca* (San Vicente), *Portus Blendium* (Suances), *Portus Victoriae* (Santander), *Portus Samanum* (later *Flaviobriga*²¹⁸, nowadays Castro Urdiales, located outside the domain of the *Cantabri*, in territory of the *Autrigones*) and possibly *Lapurdum* (Bayonne, nowadays in the French Basque territory). In the opposite direction, we should not underestimate the relevance of the Galician ports such as that of *Brigantium* (La Coruña), which could well have been the shipping point for Asturian metals extracted from El Bierzo and the Ancares. Also, the estuary of *Vico Spacorum* (Vigo, Pontevedra) could have been the destination of gold from La Cabrera in

²¹⁴ CANTO and DE GREGORIO 2001, pp. 153-166. Ref. SALINAS DE FRÍAS 2017, p. 604.

²¹⁵ GONZÁLEZ ECHEGARAY and SOLANA SÁINZ 1975, pp.151ss; GARCÍA Y BELLIDO 1956, pp. 186-195; AJA SÁNCHEZ 2002, pp. 19-21, 143.

²¹⁶ SÁNCHEZ-ALBORNOZ 1929, pp. 317ss.

²¹⁷ FERNÁNDEZ POSSE *et alii* 1995, pp. 191-212.

²¹⁸ GARCÍA CAMINO 2016, p. 197.

León. Both cases would connect by land transport on secondary roads, linking with principal routes such as the XIX of the *Antonine Itinerary*.

Another well-known Roman route, the aforesaid *Itinerario de Barro* (in English, Clay Itinerary) or *Tablas de Astorga* (four *tabulae* from 3rd century AD signed by the municipal magistrate, the *duumvir Caius Lepidus*) includes five itineraries from northern Spain. The *Tabula I* describes the route of the *Legio VII Gemina ad portum Blendium*, situating seven Roman miles away and as its first stop a settlement whose name is barely legible due to breakage but has been transcribed as *Rhama*; it could also have been transcribed *Phamia*, *Hama*, *Haria* or *Hadia*. The identification of the next village, *Amaia*, is also uncertain, to which it indicates a distance of eighteen miles, although it could well be Peña Amaya. It locates the nucleus of *Villegia*, five miles from *Amaia*, and identified with Monte Cildá (Olleros de Pisuerga, Palencia) where the Cantabrian *tessera* appeared. The evidences on the map reveal that the place of *Villegia* marked in these *tabulae* corresponds better to the Roman camp erected by the *Legio IIII Macedonica* in the area of Pomar de Valdivia (Palencia), which would take part in the pacification of the Cantabrian territory after the conquest of the Monte Bernorio hill-fort.

There appears on the *tabulae* mention of the *Legio VII Gemina*²¹⁹ and *mansio Legio I (III)* as a place-name, possibly Herrera de Pisuerga (Palencia), taking into account that this last military unit had left the Iberian Peninsula in 39 BC and that the *Itinerario de Barro* dates the *tabulae* later than the mid-3rd century (between the years 267 and 276, possibly). The routes it describes, though, may be much earlier²²⁰ and would have been those used during the campaigns of conquest in the peninsular Northwest. As we will see later, Roman camps established on the outskirts of these communication routes in the Asturian and Cantabrian areas present great typological similarities. The fortified enclosures of León and Lugo are different from the others and also from each other, despite having, probably, the same legionary origin from *militia* of the *Legio VI*

²¹⁹ The *Tabla III* of the *Itinerario de Barro* describes the route between *Asturica* and *Emerita Augusta*, with its first halt at seven Roman miles in *Bedunia*, and ten from there to *Brigecio*. The original settlement of the Roman soldiers during the Cantabrian campaigns *Segisama Iulia* (Sasamón, Burgos) seems to be the start of this itinerary on the *Tabla III*, one of the Roman military roads of access to Cantabria built in 1st century AD. The change of toponym could be an error in copying 3rd century AD, given that from the 1st century BC the *Legio VII* brought together the only troops in Hispania. In favour of this theory, the finding of two Augustan milestones in Padilla de Abajo, some 10 kilometres (seven Roman miles) west of *Segisama Iulia*. The road continues straight as far as Peña Amaya, and the rest of the toponyms also fall in line with this theory.

²²⁰ FERNÁNDEZ OCHOA *et alii* 2013, p. 154.

Hispaniensis, which today we know is not related to the establishment of a Hispanic *limes*²²¹.

When the *Pax Augusta* reached the northwest of Hispania²²² once the war was won²²³ during the phase of military occupation, a juridical organization was imposed that lasted until the beginning of the 3rd century. The territorial system during the Principate had already unfolded around 13 BC, when it changed the name of a province, the *Hispania Citerior Tarraconensis*, and divided the *Hispania Ulterior* into two new ones: *Baetica* and *Lusitania*. Their boundaries were yet not well established because between 7 and 2 BC the areas occupied by the *Gallaeci* and the *Astures* in *Lusitania* passed to the *Citerior Tarraconensis* along with some regions of the *Baetica*. Later, at the beginning of the 3rd century the territories of the *Gallaeci* and *Astures* would change province again, this time to the new *Hispania nova Citerior Antoniniana*, created by Caracalla and for only a short period. Diocletian would constitute two new Iberian provinces derived from the *Citerior Tarraconensis*: *Cartaginensis* and *Gallaecia*, in addition to a new territorial entity, the *Diocesis Hispaniae*, which held together all the provinces in Hispania, and to which an African province was also incorporated, *Mauritania-Tingitana*.

1.5 Genesis of the city of León: the fortified compounds of León I and II.

The current scholarship about the various Roman permanent military camps documented archaeologically is disparate due to the fact that the interest they have aroused depends on very diverse factors, sometimes even unrelated to scientific research, here M.C. Bishop's global study and planimetric inventory²²⁴ stand out. With regard to the historical understanding from literary sources, it is necessary to take into account A.

²²¹ MORILLO CERDÁN; SALIDO DOMÍNGUEZ and CABELLO DURÁN 2014, pp. 117-118. The authors correct their previous theory about the existence of an Early Imperial Hispanic *limes*, shortening its duration to 19 BC, and rectifying in consequence their previous interpretation about the origin of León as a frontier camp. Even so, they insist in calling the *Legio VI* the *Victrix* during its presence in Hispania at the end of the Cantabrian Wars (19-15 BC). Ref. MORILLO CERDÁN and MARTÍN HERNÁNDEZ, E. eds. 2009; MORILLO CERDÁN 2003a, p. 83. It does not take into account the fact of a prior stationing of a military unit associated to the *Legio VI* on the site of *Lucus Augusti*, and refers to the other three Augustan camps already known as a "*limes* without a border and that points to a plan on the northern borders of the Empire some years later" in 1996, p. 81.

²²² Ref. MARINER BIGORRA 1973, pp. 319-329.

²²³ PALAO VICENTE 2010, p. 165.

²²⁴ BISHOP 2012; GOLDSWORTHY 2005; PALAO VICENTE 2006; GARCÍA Y BELLIDO 1966a, pp. 15-25; *id.* 1961, pp. 114-160.

Goldsworthy's sound reflection²²⁵ on the lack of correspondence between the magnitude and relevance of a defensive element and how it is referred to in the sources, especially in our case those that provide us with testimonies about Hispania from the 3rd century BC.

In general, the writings of the following historians are considered primary sources: Polibius (200-118 BC), who participated with Publius Cornelius Scipio in the siege of Numancia, as narrated in his *Histories* (books I to V are preserved complete and fragments of other books), and Livy (59 BC- AD 17), author of *Ab Urbe Condita* (books XXI-XXX). Most historians of antiquity, who often interpolate earlier writings, took their information from these two, via what would now be called "intertextuality", although they did not give reference to earlier works. Another author, Frontinus, described the trickery used by the generals of antiquity in his work *Strategemata*. Thereafter, two authors stand out: the treatise writers Vegetius and Vitruvius, who provided more theoretical information in two manuals; and an anonymous third who transmitted to us *De Munitionibus Castrorum*, a work on the fortification of military camps written between the end of the 1st and early 2nd century. It was attributed to Hyginus Grammaticus, so its anonymous author is known as Pseudo-Hyginus; despite the chronological distance between this last work and that of Vegetius²²⁶ (late 4th or early 5th century), the Roman camp building system they describe is basically the same and was compiled in the 6th century by Justinian in his two major legal works, the *Codex* [C. J. 12.35 (*de re militari*)] and the *Digesta*, especially in some of its parts [D. 49,16 (*de re militari*)].

The soldier Ammianus Marcellinus gave detailed testimony of invasions and sieges of part of the 4th century, some of which he witnessed. Also from Late Antiquity

²²⁵ GOLDSWORTHY 2005, pp. 8-10; as an example, the epigraphic controversy that arose over the meaning of *castrum*, *castellum* or *centuria*, while other relevant archaeological sites have been ignored by historiography. Concerning the know-how of military strategy and Roman camp building: FLAVIO JOSEFO. *La Guerra de los Judíos*. Introduction, translation and notes by Jesús María Nieto Ibáñez, 1997, Ed. Gredos, Madrid; VITRUBIO, Marco Lucio (h. 15 a.C.) *Los diez libros de Arquitectura*. Translation, prologue and notes by Agustín Blázquez, 1986, Ed. Iberia, Barcelona; VEGETIUS RENATUS, Publius Flavius, *Compendio de técnica militar*, edition by D. Paniagua Aguilar, 2006, Ed. Cátedra, Madrid; POLIBIO. *Historia de Roma*. Ed. José M^a Candau Morón, 2008, Alianza Editorial, Madrid; TITO LIVIO, *Ab Urbe Condita*. Translation by José Antonio Villar Vidal, 1997, Ed. Gredos, Madrid; PSEUDO-HYGINIO, *Liber de Munitionibus Castrorum*, translation to French by M. Lenoir, 1979 *Des fortifications du camp*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris; *Ammianus Marcellinus, Books XX-XXVI*, Ed. John C. ROLFE, 1963, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. ZOSIMO. *Historia nueva*. Translation by François PASCHOUD. *Zosime. Histoire nouvelle, Livre VI et index*, 1989, Ed. Les Belles Lettres, Paris.

²²⁶ VEGETIUS II, 2. "The legions have carpenters, cart drivers, smiths, painters and other artisans to make the barracks in their winter and summer camps, to repair the damaged machinery, the wooden towers and other defence siege machines... They also have workshops to repair shields, breastplates, spearheads, arrows and all types of armament... they must provide all that is required (...)"

are the works *Deployment against the Alani* and *Ars Tactica*, both by Arrian. Isolated references to troops and camps in Hispania in the 5th century are to be found in Zosimus. As for the *Codex Theodosianus*, compiled in the same century, he dedicates his book VII, *De re militari*, to regulating many aspects of life in the army but, according to Cañizar Palacios²²⁷, it seems that the territory of Hispania was "ignored as a place of publication of imperial regulations and even as a place of its reception", probably due to the "degree of relative tranquility that reigned over by the *Diocesis Hispaniarum* during the 4th century AD, a circumstance motivated by being in an area truly distant from the main theatre of war at the time as well as decision-making, both politically and military, which suggests that emperors do not apparently question the loyalty of the territory, and what is more, their fidelity to the Theodosian dynasty after his death in 395 has been brought out."

Rome may have lost administrative control of much of the peninsular territory from the beginning of the 5th century AD, as the facts seem to suggest that there are no known constitutions alluding to the Iberian Peninsula that mention Theodosius II in the *inscriptio*, the compiler of this Code, and that the last allusion belongs to the reign of Arcadius and Honorius, namely *CTh.* I, 15, 16, 401.

From what these historical and literary sources have made known to us, we assume that the Roman fortifications of León were never integrated into a supposed Hispanic *limes*²²⁸, either at the time of their creation around the change of era, or during the Imperial period. However, they were certainly part of a strategy of occupation and exploitation of Hispania's resources and territorial administration, a strategy that would be carried out by the Roman army along with the implementation of a state public works policy. While the existence of a Roman fortification in León has been documented archaeologically placing it during this phase of occupation of the Hispanic Northwest, León originating from its camp is usually imbricated in the final phase of the conquest of Hispania during the Cantabrian Wars. And if the historiography of the Ancien Regime attributed its origin to the *Legio VII Gemina* (and before even to Hercules), using A. García and Bellido's reflections²²⁹ the origin has been attributed by all the later historiography up to the present to the *Legio VI Victrix* as the first occupant of the Leonese site, even though this cannot be known for certain from the data we have at present.

²²⁷ CAÑIZAR PALACIOS 2002, pp. 82-83.

²²⁸ Even those who defend the argument that the fortification of León owed its existence to a Hispanic *limes* are reinterpreting their previous conclusions (see MORILLO CERDÁN 2017, pp. 191-223).

²²⁹ MORILLO CERDÁN 2018, p. 12.

On the other hand, despite knowing the date of foundation of the Leonese city of *Asturica Augusta* (Astorga) in 25 BC, a year after those of *Juliobriga* and *Segisama Julia* in Cantabrian territory, whose place names still come from the demonym *Julius* from the Emperor, the same is not true of the first fortified enclosure of León. This is due to the fact that the dating provided by archaeology is not precise but, in any case, it is prior to the stage in which the *Legio VI* began to bear the name of *Victrix*. Its construction may possibly correspond to troops from the *Legio VI Hispaniensis*²³⁰, without ruling out the likelihood of participation of units from the V and X legions, or a probability –less supported nowadays– that the first two Augustan legions might have done so.

Both the lack of combined studies of contextualized archaeological materials and the absence of brick seals on the building materials used in the early stages of Roman León make it difficult to date accurately.

Regarding the generals who fought in these campaigns²³¹, the sources have provided us with the names of some of them. Augustus sent his best generals to the north of Hispania: Calvisius Sabinus (commander of the fleet against the Cantabrians in 28 BC), Sextus Apuleius (who celebrated a victory over the Cantabrians in 27 BC and, according to Asturian historiography, took Gijón) and Statilius Taurus (documented in 26 BC). Besides these, two other generals accompanied Augustus in *Tarraco*: Caius Antistius Vetus and Publius Carisius as legates of *Hispania Citerior* and *Ulterior*, who continued the battles in the years 26-25 BC. Traditionally direct command of the V *Alauda* legions, VI *Victrix* (actually still *Hispaniensis*), IX *Hispana* and X *Gemina* has been attributed to Publius Carisius, and to Caius Antistius the IIII *Macedonica* and I and II *Augustae*, although the fact that there are joint *deductiones* of veterans of legions that were supposed to have fought on different fronts may indicate flexibility and mobility of Roman troops in the face of prolonged resistance from the *Astures* and *Cantabri*.

Publius Carisius, Augustus' general and governor of Lusitania (26-22 BC), minted silver coin²³² (*denarii* and *quinarii*) with the head of Augustus on the obverse and his name and charge on the reverse, P. CARISIVS LEG AVGVSTI, and war artefacts (trophies, weapons, shields and helmets); he also stamped bronze pieces with the image of Augustus on the obverse and the *caetra* or weapons typical of the northern peoples, on

²³⁰ ESPARZA TORRES and SARMIENTO GONZÁLEZ 1994, p. 286.

²³¹ GONZÁLEZ ECHEGARAY *et alii* 1999, pp. 159-161.

²³² SANTOS YANGUAS 2003, pp. 165-187.

the reverse. These coins have appeared with pre-Roman materials in the famous treasure of Arrabalde (Zamora), yet another indication that *Lancia* was situated there, conquered by Publius Carisius. And even more significant, Carisius was the architect of the construction of the first Roman road around the year 26 BC, overlaying one of the ancient routes of penetration into the Meseta from present-day León. As a result, one of the passes between León and Asturias in the Carraceo mountain range has been called the "Via Carisia"²³³. The conditioning of this ancient route was carried out within the framework of the military strategy of conquest of transmontane Asturias with an army formed by three legions: the V *Alaudae*, the X *Gemina* and the VI *Hispaniensis*. With the veteran soldiers of the first two units, Publius Carisius founded the above-mentioned colony of *Emerita Augusta*. Thanks to the sources, in particular Casius Dio (LIII, 29, 1-2), the best known episode in the conquest of the territory of the *Astures* is the simultaneous uprising of *Cantabri* and *Astures*, which Florus also narrated (II, 33, 56), describing precisely the taking of the "highly fortified" *Lancia* by this same general, P. Carisius.

In the year 24 BC the general in charge of the war was Lucius Elius Lamia –a substitute for Caius Antistius as legate of the *Tarraconensis*– and in 22 BC it was Caius Furnius. Two years later, he was relieved by a military mountain campaign expert, Publius Silius Nerva, and finally, the best Roman commander of his time, Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, in 19 BC. Both strategy and military logistics would include the rehabilitation and construction of roads in northwestern Hispania outside the time of battle.

The most recent studies have emphasised the important leadership of Agrippa at the end of the conquest of the Asturian territory. Although this is often given less importance than his facet as military strategist, the amount of building work he undertook²³⁴ helped him to shape his political renown to almost the same extent. As a result it is not unlikely that it was Agrippa himself who planned the construction of the first fortified structure toward the end of the conquest around the year 19 BC, both in anticipation of possible uprisings (which would indeed take place up to the 60s of the following century at least) and to organize the exploitation of the new territories annexed by the construction of roads, bridges and new settlements and mining facilities. There is archaeological record of these activities by Agrippa during his stay in Hispania in *Emerita Augusta* (in the epigraphs commemorating the foundation of its theatre in 16 BC): in La

²³³ CAMINO MAYOR *et alii* 2007.

²³⁴ See CASTÁN PÉREZ-GÓMEZ 2013, pp. 196-290.

Serena (Badajoz), *Carthago Nova*, *Barcino*, Ampurias, Ulia, Menorca (where lead ingots were found a few years ago in a wreck in Cap D'en Font, marked with the name of Agrippa) and in *Caesaraugusta*, where a controverted inscription of the year 27 BC (*CIL* II 255*) attributes to him the construction of its wall. It should be remembered that *Caesaraugusta* was founded on the Iberian *oppidum* of *Salduba* on the banks of the Ebro by the legions that participated in the Cantabrian and Asturian Wars: the IIII *Macedonica*, the VI *Hispaniensis* and the X *Gemina* under Agrippa who acted as *auditor imperii*²³⁵ from 19 BC. Data provided by urban archaeology indicate that the Roman foundation of Zaragoza occurred around 15 or 14 BC. It would not have been the only known fortification erected by Agrippa, since the *oppidum Ubiorum* (Cologne, Germany) had also been erected under his command.

It is possible that other delegates of Augustus were overseeing urban geographical reorganization in Hispania, as could be inferred by the find in *Segobriga* (Saelices, Cuenca) of a pedestal fragment of a statue in honour of M. Porcius, *Caesaris Augusti scriba*, Augustus' personal secretary. The tribute must have been given after Augustus' last trip to Hispania, between 15 and 13 BC when, according to Casius Dio (LIV, 23, 7), "[Augustus] colonized numerous cities in Iberia"²³⁶.

Another of Augustus' generals, the aforementioned T. Statilius Taurus, had previously been proconsul of *Hispania Citerior* between the years 29 and 28 BC and had participated in the wars against *Vaccei*, *Astures* and *Cantabri*. He had also been honoured with a pedestal in a place a long way away from the Cantabrian coast, the Mediterranean coastal city of *Ilici* (Elche, Alicante), perhaps a tribute due to the second veterans' *deductio* that transformed the colony of *Iulia Ilici* in the middle of the 1st century BC into the colony of *Iulia Ilici Augusta* about two or three decades later, around the same time when another *deductio* was made, that of *Augusta Emerita* (25 BC)²³⁷. If Statilius was honoured by the military veterans in the *deductio* of *Ilici* (25/15 BC), it is possible that these men would have fought precisely against the *Vaccei*, *Astures* or *Cantabri*, and perhaps some of them may have also been involved in the construction of a new military compound to control the rich "pacified" mining area.

²³⁵ RODDAZ 1993, p. 117.

²³⁶ The fragment of the equestrian statue was recovered in the 2002 excavations of the forum at *Segóbriga*, a city of great importance due to the mining of *lapis specularis* (see ABASCAL PALAZÓN 2006, pp.70-73).

²³⁷ ABASCAL PALAZÓN 2006, p.68.

1.5.1. The builders of the primitive fortification of wood and earth: the vallum

The activity of Augustus' delegates in Hispania enables us to approach the very first origins of the current city of León²³⁸ as a military camp, situated on raised ground in the confluence of two rivers, Bernesga and Torío. Its origin may be dated a few years before the change of era and has been extensively studied by historians and archaeologists who, in recent years, have set that precise moment as the establishment of one of the Roman legions that fought in the Cantabrian Wars under Publius Carisius' command, namely the VI. This legion was renamed, maybe too soon, the "victorious", since it was still called *Hispaniensis* at the time when the first fortification in León was built²³⁹. Apparently, the appellative *Victrix* was given to this legion later and its use is documented during the rule of Nero. Nevertheless, this was actually the same *Legio VI* that supported the uprising against the governor of *Hispania Tarraconensis*, Servius Sulpicius Galba, proclaiming him emperor in *Clunia* according to Suetonius (Galba, IX). By then, soldiers²⁴⁰ of Hispanic origin were already forming part of the legions and by the end of their military service²⁴¹ they would settle near their places of origin, in Roman centres in their provinces if they still existed, or forming new colonies or municipalities, as we have just seen.

The standard theory regarding the genesis of León is that the *Legio VI* had been stationed in the Iberian Peninsula for almost a century, perhaps from when it was sent to *Hispania Citerior* in 29 BC to fight in the wars against Cantabrians and Asturians, and also that it never coincided with the *Legio VII* in the camp in León. However, our present documented understanding today is much more complex: in light of the epigraphic discoveries of recent years, there were troops of the *Legio VI* documented in 26 or 25 BC (it is not yet known if the entire legion) on the site of *Lucus Augusti* (Lugo). On the other

²³⁸ The following military camps were the first Augustan legionary camps in the peninsular Northwest known to Archaeology: one in León, in succession of at least the *Legio VI Hispaniensis* and *VII Gemina*; another in Herrera de Pisuerga (Palencia), the camp of the *Legio IIII Macedonica*; others in *Petavonium* (Rosinos de Vidriales, Zamora) and in Astorga (León), these last two documented as barracks for the *Legio X Gemina*. To these there followed the already mentioned camp in Cidada (Sobrado dos Monxes, La Coruña), where a cohort of the *Legio VII* was encamped, the *Cohors I Celtiberorum*, and in *Aquis Querquennis* (A Cidá, Bande, Orense), the probable location of the *Cohors I Gallica* of the *Legio VII*, and then in Lugo, where the troops of the *Legio VI* would be quartered, prior to being quartered in León, and later the site of a *statio* under the command of a centurion of the *Legio VII Gemina*, among others.

²³⁹ GARCÍA Y BELLIDO 1961, p. 125.

²⁴⁰ Concerning the presence of Hispanic soldiers in the Roman army: SANTOS YANGUAS 2014, pp. 185-196; *Id.* 2011, pp.191-214; PITILLAS SALAÑER 2004, pp. 141-152; CEÑAL MARTÍNEZ 2009, pp. 59-80.

²⁴¹ ROMANO 1803, p. 7.

hand, with the reinterpretation of an already known document, it is likely that detachments of at least two legions could have occupied the Leonese fortified camp before the *Legio VII Gemina*: thus, we know from an Italian epigraph of the tribune Aulus Octavius Ligur²⁴² that the *Legio VI Hispana* was in Spain in the year 5 BC.

Another inscription also from Italy (from *Aequiculi*) is key to understanding this precise moment in León's history: a memorial stone honouring Sabidius²⁴³, who seems to have been centurion of the V, X and VI legions, at the same time in two of them, the X and VI²⁴⁴. This circumstance made Ritterling propose the hypothesis that perhaps legions VI and X would have occupied the same camp, although this author did not identify the two legions as *X Gemina* and *VI Hispana*, because Sabidius could have been a centurion of two other X and VI legions stationed in the same province, namely in Syria, which was also manned by two legions, *X Fretensis* and *VI Ferrata*²⁴⁵.

In any case, it seems confirmed that the Roman troops in Augustus' time were in a state of almost permanent mobilization in the northwest of Hispania during the conquest, and that the troops would begin quartering from the following phase of occupation onwards, possibly during the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Once again, the epigraph mentioned above was one of the premises of Roldán Hervás' proposal²⁴⁶ almost half a century ago of “a scope of action in the Astorga-León-Benavente region that includes the city of *Lancia*, in whose assault the *Legio V Alaudae* participated according to the well-known description of Florus and Orosius”. We ought to add to all of this the definition of *Lancia* as the largest settlement of the *Astures* made by Cassius Dio²⁴⁷.

²⁴² GARCÍA Y BELLIDO 1961, p.122.

²⁴³ At the moment we do not know where this is to be found, it was seen in Aequicoli (Italy) in Corvaro, near Borgocollegato, and was published in the 17th century by Muzio FEBONIO (*Historiae Marsorum*, p.177); it was also published by: F. MARTELLI (*Antichità de' Sicoli*, t. II, p. 159), T. MOMMSEN, *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, vol. III dell'Orelli no. 6779), with slight modifications in the transcription, and in Spain the first to study it was: A. GARCÍA Y BELLIDO: CIL, IX 4122= 5712 = ILS 2644. no. 1492: Sa]bidius C(ai) f{ilius) Pap(iria), prim(us)pil(us), [••• (centurio?) le]g(ionis) V et leg(ionis) X et leg(ionis) VI ita ut in [leg(ione)] X primum pil(um) duceret eodem[que te]mpor~ princeps esset le~(ionis) VI, praef(ectus) [q]u(inquennalis)], / [C(ai) ou...; See GARCÍA Y BELLIDO 1961, pp. 114-16. The name of “Sabidius” comes from a plebeian Roman tribe, the gens *Sabidia*. (RIB 104; CIL, X, 774, 1233; CIL XII, 4482; CIL XIV, 244; CICERO, Quintus Tullius, *De Petitione Consulatus*, 2 § 8: “in praetura competitorem habuimus amico Sabidio et Panthera, quem ad tabulam quos poneret non haberet”; GAYRAUD 1981, p. 545; BIRLEY 1980, p. 197; MUNZI, 1997, pp. 283-293).

²⁴⁴ SAUVER 1908, p. 61.

²⁴⁵ CARRETERO VAQUERO 1993, p. 60; GÓMEZ- PANTOJA 2000, pp. 169-190.

²⁴⁶ ROLDÁN HERVÁS 1974, p.199.

²⁴⁷ FLORO, *Compendio de Historia Romana* II, 33, 54-59; OROSIO, *Contra los Paganos* VI, 21, 3-10; DION CASIO, *Historia de Roma*, 53, 25, 8.

With the new location of *Lancia* proposed by the latest archaeological discoveries in Arrabalde, in the surroundings of Rosinos de Vidriales (Zamora), the range of action would only extend a few miles to the Southwest. This would lead us not to rule out the possibility of the lesser-known *Legio V Alaudae*²⁴⁸, sent to the Iberian Peninsula by Augustus in 27 BC under the command of Publius Carisius and serving on the Asturian front, wintering in the camp in León, or the possibility of its being quartered in Astorga. Like in the case of the *primus pilus* Sabidius²⁴⁹, another inscription documents the presence of Lucius Blatius Ventinus in Hispalis²⁵⁰, a tribune of the *Legio V* and *X*. Both legions, as has already been indicated above, were part of the *deductio* of veterans discharged by Carisius in the year 25 BC for the founding of the colony of *Emerita Augusta*, Mérida, located like León on the confluence of two rivers, in this case the Anas and the Barraeca, in the river-basin of a large navigable river, the Guadiana.

On the other hand, the hypothesis we hold with regards to *Legio VI* stresses the difference between the settlement of veteran soldiers from *Emerita Augusta* (Badajoz) and those from *Caesaraugusta* (Zaragoza), founded on the banks of the River Ebro, the *Iberus*. *Caesaraugusta*, a *colonia immunis*, may have been created between 27 and 22 BC²⁵¹, or maybe between the years 16 and 13 BC²⁵², and was also founded to settle army veterans from the Cantabrian Wars of the *X Gemina*, together with soldiers²⁵³ already discharged from the military service from the *III Macedonica* and the *Legio VI*, although without the title yet of *Victrix* after the Cantabrian-Asturian Wars.

In conclusion, the legion that would have perhaps raised, alone or together with other military bodies, the Leonese *vallum* would then be officially called the *Legio VI Macedonica Hispana*²⁵⁴. As has been pointed out, around the years 26-25 BC military personnel from *Legio VI* (perhaps a detachment) left remains of a barracks on the site of

²⁴⁸ CARRETERO VAQUERO 1993, p. 54.

²⁴⁹ RITTERLING 1925, 1600; *id.* *RE* XII 1566; [--- Sa]bidius C(aii) f(ilius) Pap(iria), prim(us) p(ilus), / [(centurio) le]g(ionis) V et leg(ionis) X et leg(ionis) VI, ita ut in / [leg(ione)] X primum pil(um) duceret eodem/. [que te]mpore princeps esset leg(ionis) VI, praef(ectus) [q]u[inquennalis]; ROLDÁN HERVÁS, 1974, p.199, no. 777.

²⁵⁰ *CIL*, II, 1176: L. Blatius L. f. Serg. Ventinus fue tribunus militum legionum V et X Geminae, aedilis et Ilvir; see GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ 1994, pp. 135-136; GARCÍA Y BELLIDO 1961, pp. 122-123; *CIL* II 4188. Cf. *ibidem* in Seville (Ritterling *RE* XII col. 1570) is nothing more than a hazardous deduction from *CIL* II 1176.

²⁵¹ CARRETERO VAQUERO 1993, p. 54.

²⁵² ALFÖLDY 1996, p. 453; MOSTALAC CARRILLO and BIEL IBÁÑEZ 2008, pp. 643-892 dated it between the years 15 and 14 BC.

²⁵³ CARRETERO VAQUERO 1993, p. 51.

²⁵⁴ Later it would receive others such as: *Victrix Pia Fidelis Britannica Felix* (see SANTOS YANGUAS 2005, p. 245; RODRÍGUEZ GONZÁLEZ 1998, p. 34).

the future *Lucus Augusti* before its foundation as a city around the year 15 BC²⁵⁵. From this it can be supposed, following Carretero Vaquero, that the participation of the entire *Legio VI Hispana* during the conquest might be after the year 25 BC, or even 23 BC²⁵⁶ although much of the bibliography generally maintains the year 29 BC, the date of the beginning of the military campaigns in the Hispanic Northwest.

Meanwhile, the *Legio V Alaudae* could have remained quartered until the year 15 BC²⁵⁷ in at least one of the permanent camps identified in León, Astorga, or even in Villalazán (Zamora) in the Roman military camp located near the largest *Vaccaei* site in the area, Albocela (Castro del Viso, Madridanos, Zamora). It cannot be ruled out either the possibility that the entire legion or some of its auxiliary units or *vexillationes*, could have occupied several camps simultaneously or consecutively. Based on the epigraphic information from *primus pilus* Sabidius and the *tribunus militum* Lucius Blatius, the *Legio V* or some of its detachments could well have shared some of their quarters with troops from the *Legio X*.

Some analysts have also suggested the possibility of the presence of the *Legio I*, based on a now lost memorial stone found in the Leonese wall, in the Puerta Obispo area: that of L. Pupius Praesens (*CIL* 2666)²⁵⁸. The epigraph actually refers to a *leg [...] trix* that could refer to the *I Adiutrix*, set up by Galba, or the Neronian *VI Victrix*. Tracing the public career of L. Pupius Praesens, an inscription has been found (*ILS* 8848) commemorating the decree of Emperor Claudius setting limits between the Galatian city of *Sagalassos* and the settlement of *Tymbrianassos*, implemented by Quintus Petronius UMBER (Galatian legate in 54 and 55) and Lucius Pupius Praesens, imperial procurator in those years. That is to say, in AD 54 L. Pupius was procurator in *Galatia* (Anatolia) and seems to have been

²⁵⁵ VILLANUEVA ACUÑA 2016, pp. 273-286; RODRÍGUEZ COLMENERO and CARREÑO GASCÓN 1992, pp. 389ss.

²⁵⁶ SAUVER 1908, p. 61; SEYRIG 1923, pp. 488-497 quotes L.R. Dean's publication of four epigraphs concerning *T. Claudius Dinippus*, duumvir of Corinth, who had been a military tribune of the *Legio VI Hispana*, as well as brick stamps from the same detachment in Szent-Mihály in Dacia.

²⁵⁷ GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ 1994, p.136: The *V Alauda* would remain in Hispania until it was transferred to Germania in 17 BC *ref.* SYME 1933, p. 19.

²⁵⁸ This theory was maintained for decades by the Jesuit Eutimio Martino but has been ruled out: *ref.* RÉMY 1990, p. 89, no. 286; MORALES ORDÁZ 2018, pp. 132-134, especially no. 313. On the other hand, MARTINO REDONDO (1992) studied the northern area of León near the Roman villa of Navatejera, the site called *Babilonia*, full of water-channels opposite the *Molino de la Roma*, where he found some brick remains which he identified as being from a *Legio V Insequentis* "pursuers", which he also found in *Lancia*, identifying them with the *V Alaudae*. Although no pictures of these remains are available, it is possible that there is a transcription error of [V I] for the numeral VI.

active during the rules of Claudius and Nero. This dating makes it highly likely that the lost Leonese epigraph refers to the *Legio VI Victrix*.

In addition to the epigraphy, other merely typological elements have been analysed to prove the possible presence of troops, in this case the *Legio X Gemina*, building a new camp in León: its shape was adjusted to the limitations of the lay of the land in the southeast corner area, deviating by ten degrees from its theoretical course. The same happens in another of the cantonments of this legion in the Leonese province, in Astorga, and in the camp occupied later by the *Legio X* in *Ulpia Noviomagus Batavorum* (the current Nijmegen) –between the years 70 to 104– which also presents an irregular corner, in this case the Northeastern²⁵⁹. Before leaving Hispania, we know that the *Legio X Gemina*, which appeared in the epigraphs as in some way related to the *Legio V Alaudae*, joined forces with the *Legio VI* after the VI's appearance on the war scene, commanded by the same legate, as seen by the epigraph of Sabidius and the sources²⁶⁰. This information leads to another hypothesis to reflect on: the possibility that units of legions V, VI and X had shared a camp in León or Astorga at least some time during the Asturian campaigns between the years 25 and 15 BC. Also, after *V Alaudae*'s departure from Hispania, this same situation could have occurred with the VI and X legions until the latter was sent to Pannonia in AD 63. The *Legio VI* left Hispania a few years later around the year 70 when, according to Tacitus (Hist. V, 16), it was sent by Vespasian to *Novaesium* (Neuss, Germany) perhaps with the *I Adiutrix*.

Another interesting fact we can incorporate to the understanding of the *Legio VI Hispana* that appears in the early origins of the city of León is the Corinthian epigraphic material published by Dean²⁶¹ and reinterpreted in 2015 by Gebhard and Gregory²⁶². Thus, by studying a dozen inscriptions (nine of which were found in the *forum*) that refer to Tiberius Claudius Dinippus, son of Publius, the following positions appear in his *cursus honorum*: *duumvir*, *duumvir quinquenales*, *augur*, *sacerdos Victoriae Britannicae*, *tribunus militum* of *Legio VI Hispaniensis*, three times *praefectus fabrum* (most likely

²⁵⁹ CURCHIN 2014, p. 76; GÓMEZ- PANTOJA 2000, p. 173.

²⁶⁰ TACITUS, *Ann.*, IV, 5, 1; STR., III, 4, 20

²⁶¹ DEAN 1918, pp. 189-197. Ref. (*CIL*, II, 4.188) documents another case in *Hispania Citerior* of a military career that presents both, but in a different order: *Caius Aemilius Fraternus* after being appointed as *praefectus fabrum* in the year 61, he was military tribune of the *Legio V Alauda* in *Germania Inferior*. This indicates he was possibly a *tribunus angusticlavius*, coming from the cavalry, which would require previous years of service in the army, as well as *praefectura fabrum*, which changed being undertaken in the Claudian period by younger men and some of them with the rank of *equites*. ÁLVAREZ MELERO 2013, pp. 123-154.

²⁶² GEBHARD and GREGORY 2015, p. 213.

during the reign of Vespasian), *annonae curator* and *agonothetes* of Sebastea in honour of Nero, of Isthmia and of Caesarea²⁶³. A prefect of *Legio VI*'s workers is also known when it had become *Victrix*, M. Cornelius A. f. Nouatus Baebius Balbus. During his possible stay in León, he was in charge of building and financing the *Igabrum* aqueduct (Cabra, Córdoba), perhaps in relation to his provincial priesthood in *Baetica*. This continuity of *Legio VI*'s *praefectura fabrum* during its presence in Hispania could be related to the constructions found in the camp in León, even to the second phase of fortification using small ashlars.

Going back to the origin of the walls, it is uncertain²⁶⁴ when the *ex novo* camp was built in León, even who its architects were. But assuming that it could have been *Legio VI*, had it been fully quartered in *Lucus Augusti* in 25 and 24 BC as the numismatic findings seem to indicate, this date would be the *terminus post quem*. If, on the contrary, only part of the military personnel of the *Legio VI Hispaniensis* were quartered in Lugo, that date would not be feasible. Neither would it be feasible if the troops that built that first camp were a mixed brigade of legions VI, V *Alauda*, which was in Hispania until 17 BC, and X *Gemina*. In this sense, it is convenient to quote literally another translation of Strabo's text (III, 4, 20): "One of the three [legates], with two legions, guarded the border of the whole territory beyond the Duero to the North"²⁶⁵. From this text, interpreting it synchronically and analysing the information with accuracy, a new possibility seems to arise in the construction of the first permanent Leonese camps, both in Astorga and in León, troops of at least two legions could have participated at the same time. In summary, and as regards to the first camp in León, the dating limits of its first period are still to be established, but they seem to be associated with the *Legio VI Hispaniensis* around the year 23 BC, stressing that to this day it cannot be ruled out that also (and even previously), the origin of the camp in León may be due to a temporary quartering of the *Legio X Gemina* and V *Alaudae*, or of troops of the legions I or II *Augustae*.

²⁶³ BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 1970, p. 14. The *praefectus fabrum* was in charge of undertaking and financing public works such as aqueducts, triumphal arches, etc. and should not be mistaken for the *praefectura collegii fabrum*. At the end of 1st century AD comes an Italian memorial stone, concretely from Agnano, Regio I (AE, 1913, 215) alluding to a *praefectus fabrum legionis VII: L. Decrius L. f. Ser. Longinus praef(ectus)fabr(um), leg(ionis) II Aug(ustae) et VII Gemin(ae) bis et XXII Deiotaran(ae), p(rimus) p(ilus) leg(ionis) eiusdem, praef(ectus) castror(um) leg(ionis) VIII Hisp(anae)...*(see LE ROUX 1972, p. 123, fig. 2).

²⁶⁴ Ref. CAMPOMANES ALVAREDO 2016, pp. 28-30.

²⁶⁵ See JONES, Horace Leonard, trans. (1923) *The Geography of Strabo*, Loeb Classical Library edition, Vol. II, Books 3-5, Harvard University Press, pp. 121-123.

As time went on, the Leonese fortified enclave would become the military and political centre of the peninsular Northwest where *Legio VII Gemina* would remain quartered for centuries since, even before Hadrian (therefore before AD 117), it was the residence of the Augustan legate in Asturias and Galicia. The military veterans would have acquired properties in León where they settled with their families²⁶⁶ so, at the end of the 3rd century after the destruction of the military *vicus ad Legionem*, in the suburb of Puente Castro, the civil nucleus related to the Leonese camp could have moved, perhaps after the documented Cyprian Plague around the year 270, towards the interior of the fortified precinct, which in the case of emergency would admit the civilian population, although there is no such certainty of when or how it turned into a *municipium*, if ever it did.

1.5.2. *The first Roman wall of wood and earth (León I).*

Almost four decades ago Mateo Marcos²⁶⁷ described the military camp as “a rectangle 550 metres long in an approximately north-south direction and about 380 metres wide from east to west, occupying a total space of 210,000 square metres”, and indicated that the original timber wall was soon replaced by a solid wall of stone and mortar “that was built in the same rectangular shape, on the same foundations as the old fenced area, and that the walls follow this general outline today”. It also states that the civil city developed from the “*Canabae*”, very possibly located to the south of the camp.

Despite the fact that the existence of a “fenced” or primitive timber wall in the city of León was already known, there is a striking misinterpretation or even a complete omission of the existence of this first Roman precinct in most studies about the Leonese walls. Such an oversight concerning the verified existence of a first Roman timber fortification is well reflected in the description and map included in the current *Plan Director de las Murallas de León* (Master Plan for the Walls of León)²⁶⁸, promoted in

²⁶⁶ SANTOS YANGUAS 2011, pp. 191-214. Ref. PLINY, *Nat. Hist.* III, 30.

²⁶⁷ MATEO MARCOS 1981, p. 14.

²⁶⁸ *Previos a la redacción del plan director de las murallas romana y medieval de la ciudad de León 2005-2007* (Preliminary Studies to the drafting of the Master Plan of the Roman and Medieval walls of the city of León 2005-2007) is a work by the architects Ramón CAÑAS APARICIO and Carlos SEXMILO HUARTE, and the *Estudio Láser fotogramétrico de la zona de la muralla en torno a Puerta Castillo y la excavación arqueológica de los campamentos romanos de la ciudad de León* was carried out by the

2005 by various Public Administrations –León City Council, Junta de Castilla y León (governing and administrative body of Castile and León) and the Instituto de Patrimonio Histórico–Español (Institute of Historical Spanish Heritage) of the Ministry of Culture– and carried out by the architect M. Ranilla García, where the first fortified site of León is described as “tied to the Roman camp layout, rectangular and with rounded corners (570x350 metres, 19'95 hectares).

The Roman construction presents two walls. The first one is 1.80 metres wide, with an outer facing constructed with ashlar (*opus quadratum pseudoisodomum* and *opus vittatum*) and filled with *opus incertum*; it has been dated in the Early Empire (A.GARCIA BELLIDO, 1968, pp.13-16). The external wall (5.25/5.15 metres wide) was attached to the first in the 3rd century (I.A. RICHMOND, 1931, p.91), equipped with semicircular defensive towers. It was built with large ashlar with notches for lifting with machinery and other construction materials and Roman inscriptions. It is located at the base of the *Torre de los Ponce* (Tower of the Ponce, southeast corner), at the base of the semicircular towers in Avenida Ramón y Cajal in the western section, where they appear with mouldings, in the Avenida de los Cubos (northern section) and Calle Serradores (eastern section)”.

With respect to the primitive fortification of wood and earth, the construction of which has been attributed by all the latest publications and without hesitation to the *Legio VI* when quartered in León, we currently know of some remains thanks to various archaeological urban interventions, especially those carried out in 1997 and 1998 in the courtyard of the called "Casona de Puerta Castillo", which is attached to the inner face of the northern section of the wall.

After long restoration work, at present and from April 2014, part of the archaeological findings can be visited in a permanent exhibition at the *Centro de Interpretación del León Romano* (Interpretation Centre of Roman León), managed by the Local Administration. However, the historical interpretation of these archaeological remains suffers, as we will see, from a rigidity that results from a controversial and strictly diachronic vision of both its history and Roman construction techniques.

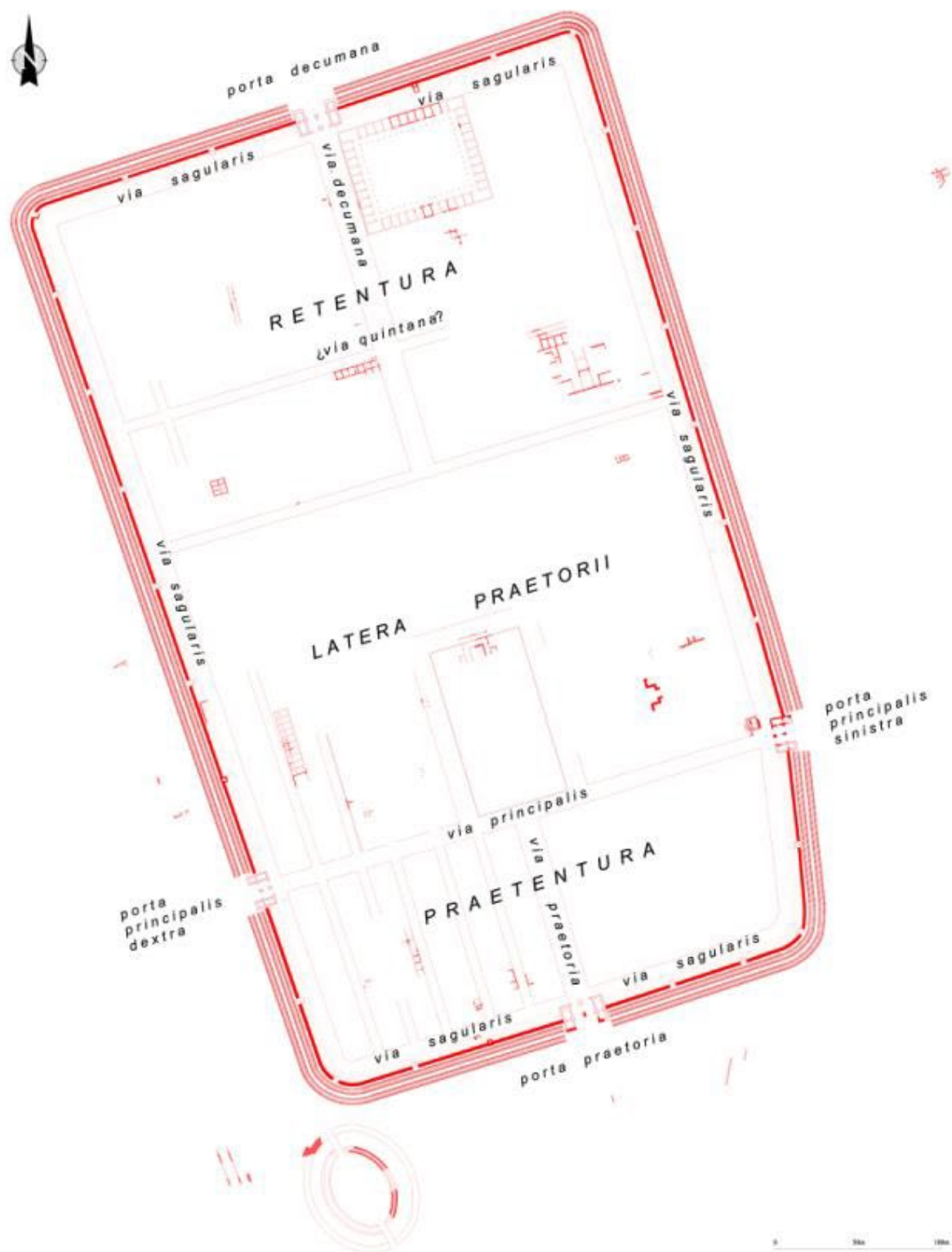


Fig. 13. Plan of the Roman walls of León according to the current *Plan Director de las Murallas de León* (M. Ranilla García).

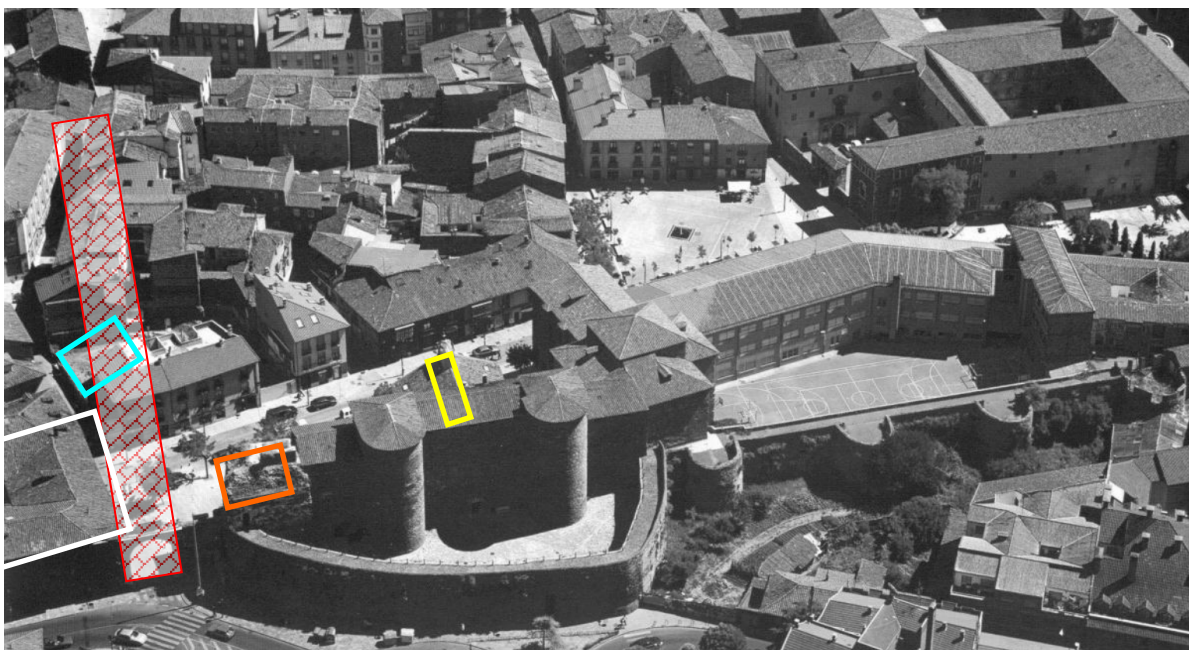


Fig. 14. Aerial photograph of the northern section of the Leonese wall.

The photograph above shows the sites marked, in the surroundings of the section of the wall of *cubos*, where the excavations have provided data concerning the primitive Leonese fortifications. To the left of the Medieval Towers (now the *Archivo Histórico Provincial*, Provincial Historical Archive), marked with a yellow box, is the area where the Early Imperial wall and the gap separating it from the wall of *cubos* were documented. Attached to the oval wall of the Towers is *Puerta Castillo*, flanked by the remains of one of the two towers (marked in orange) that defended the original stone wall, and by the *Casona de Puerta Castillo*, marked in white. Marked with a red pattern is the path of the N-S Road which appeared in two plots (Calle Serranos, 37 and 39) excavated by the author and where a section of jack-arch aqueduct was also found and various Early Imperial structures, marked in blue on the image above.

Durán Cabello's description²⁶⁹ of the construction of the primitive Leonese Roman wall calls this first enclosure, attributed to *Legio VI*, “León I” and dates its foundation around the change of era²⁷⁰, though in recent years it has been dated earlier, around 15-10 BC²⁷¹, according to different analysts and depending on various publications.

²⁶⁹ DURÁN CABELLO 2009, pp. 793-804.

²⁷⁰ MORILLO CERDÁN 2017, p. 209

²⁷¹ GUTIÉRREZ GONZÁLEZ, J. A. *et alii* 2013, p. 313.



Fig. 15. Archaeological strata interpreted as belonging to the first *Legio VI* camp, fortified in wood and earth, in Calle Santa Marina (León). The timber *vallum* has been defined as the Augustan León I camp (García Marcos and Morillo Cerdán 2015, p. 95)

The author described the first camp as “*agger*-type defensive system, with a “V”-shaped ditch and box rampart-type *vallum*, consisting of two timber walls with vertical reinforcing posts and internal filling of gravel and clay. To the outside of the defence structure there was a road around 7 metres wide, paved with small stones”. In the archaeological excavations outside the walls of the Roman enclosure carried out by the author of this study in the streets Los Cubos, San Lorenzo, Santa Teresa, etc., we have only found levels of paved pathways, constructed after the medieval wall of *cubos*, some of them still in use at the end of the 19th century, as can be seen in the following photographs:



Figs. 16 -17. Medieval occupation levels under a stone-paved road and over medieval wall structures, located outside the wall of *cubos* enclosure (Santa Teresa 1, León, 2020).



Fig. 18. Plaza de San Lorenzo (León) from early 20th century

The following theoretical phase of the camp, named León II, was supposedly erected after dismantling the previous *agger* to build a new earth-walled precinct at the beginning of Tiberius' reign, between AD 15 and 20 and coinciding with the new Hispanic military strategy of occupation that replaced the one employed during the conquest. According to this interpretation, this new 4-metre-thick *agger* would have "double-facing" and would consist of two parallel wall faces of sods, *caespites* (in Spanish *tepes* or *tapines*). The space between them would then be filled in with earth, stone and riverstones. Like the previous *agger*, this would have been destroyed to build the next fortification, which would be erected by the *Legio VII Gemina* and laid "almost exactly" over the previous one, according to this hypothesis.



Fig. 19. Archaeological strata of clay blocks in the northern section of the current wall enclosure (Calle de Santa Marina), interpreted as one of the walls belonging to the *vallum* of the Julio-Claudian camp (León II). Behind is the internal face of what is considered today the *Legio VII Gemina*'s first wall (photo: V. García Marcos). According to A. Morillo Cerdán's interpretation.

The publication of the archaeological findings in Calle Santa Marina was intended to be completed in 2014 with a virtual restoration²⁷² that provided the following conclusions with regards to the *Legio VI*'s fortified constructions:

²⁷² The virtual modelling was undertaken by Carmen Valenciano Prieto and by the firm Arquex S.L, directed by MORILLO CERDÁN; DURÁN CABELLO; MENDO; PRIETO; DUPRADO and BONACASA 2014, pp.140-147. The same phases are still mentioned in the latest publications concerning the wall (see GARCÍA MARCOS and MORILLO CERDÁN 2018, pp. 319-340).

"(...) the existence of two camps –León I and León II– attributed to *Legio VI* has been archeologically confirmed. The defensive system of León I was of an *agger* type, built of wood and earth. Its ditch had a “V” shape, with a *box-rampart*-type *vallum*, consisting of two wooden wall faces reinforced with vertical posts. The second camp, León II, presents an *agger* or embankment formed by two converging wall faces of about 4 metres at its base, made with blocks of *tapines* or *caespites*, that is with regular blocks of clayey earth obtained from the nearby meadows”.

These archaeological remains of wood and earth camp structures have been interpreted as belonging to two partially overlapped enclosures, the Augustan, with “*vallum* or earth wall and a ditch in V or external *fossa fastigata*” and the Tiberian, which extended the walled precinct in a northerly direction²⁷³, “yet with earthen fortifications (*muris caespiticiis*, wall of sods)”²⁷⁴.

This is a possible hypothesis but not the only one or the most likely, given the current state of the research that studies the making of the Leonese Roman fortifications. In the first place, this interpretation lacks a minimal explanation about the function of the timber structures (are they supposed to be retaining walls?). Perhaps due to different interpretations: firstly, the timber structures were interpreted following the fence-type models of the historicist reconstructions from around 1900 suggested by the explanation of the Roman borders at that time (for example, that of Haltern²⁷⁵), and more recently proposing *box rampart* fortifications, according to Johnson’s classification²⁷⁶.

²⁷³ An alternative interpretation can be seen in DURÁN CABELLO 2009, p. 794: “(...) *agger* called “double-revetment”, which was destroyed during the construction of the *Legio VII Gemina* camp wall in the Flavian era which lays almost exactly over the defences of the previous camp”.

²⁷⁴ CAMPOMANES ALVAREDO *et alii* 2013, p. 313. Also, ILRUF, TALACTOR S.L. *et alii* (2012) “La Casona de Puerta Castillo y el Solar de Santa Marina. Trabajos de rehabilitación y arqueología”, Ed. ILRUV (Instituto Leonés de Renovación Urbana y Vivienda), pp. 41 and 42.
http://www.aytoleon.es/es/ayuntamiento/areasmunicipales/urbanismo/ILRUV/Documents/LIBRO_CASO_NA.pdf

²⁷⁵ Antiquarian History Association (*Verein fuer Altertumskunde und Heimatpflege*), Haltern, 1901.

²⁷⁶ MORILLO CERDÁN 2010, p.466; JOHNSON 1983, pp. 62-63.



Fig.

20. Detail of the photograph: reconstruction of the Haltern fortification (Haltern Antiquarian History Association, 1901).

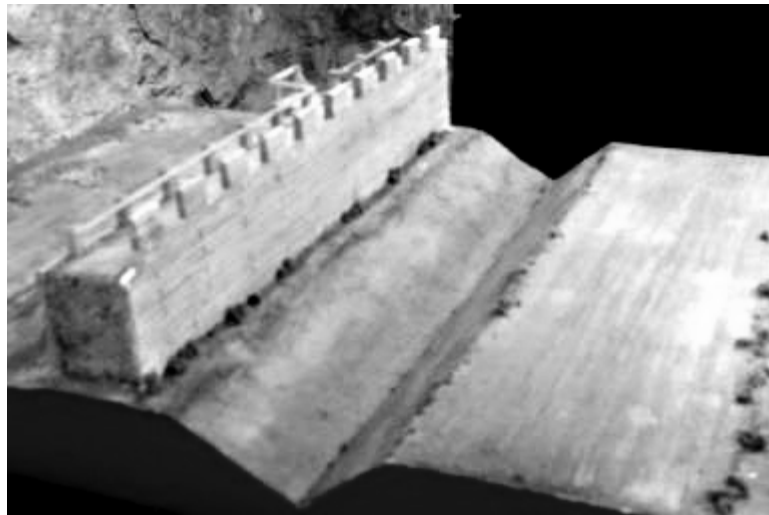


Fig. 21. Model of a presumed first wood and earth fortification of the *Legio VI*, (León I). Interpretation Centre of Roman León, León City Council).



Fig. 22. Roman mosaic with representation of a timber fortress. Villa of Casale, Sicily.

Likewise, it is wrong to define the clay blocks with the name "*tapines*" or "*tepes*" (turf sods) with traces of grass²⁷⁷. This type of brickwork is more in line with the definition of "*tapia gallonada*". The "*tapín*" or "*tepes*" is a portion of grass containing the matted roots and is not associated to a clay block attached to it. In Asturias and León, the word "*tapines*" defines the turf sods used on the tops of roofs in popular architecture, but the traditional term "*gallón*" is used to define the compact blocks of earth employed in walls.



Fig. 23. Detailed photograph of the previous archaeological strata, considered a glacis built with *tapines* (*caespites*), a part of the *vallum* of León II, according to A. Morillo Cerdán and reinterpreted as the *agger* of León I.

Moreover, the timber remains of the *vallum* have always been interpreted in a diachronic way, as corresponding only to a first phase –known as Augustan or León I– of the two consecutive phases made with earth. The second, classified as Tiberian or León II, would not only have a wooden structure but two presumed revetted walls filled with soil, a double-revetted *agger*²⁷⁸. The archaeological reality actually does not certify this interpretation in two phases because, although remains of two wooden structures have appeared from the Augustan phase León I, in the so-called Tiberian or León II phase, only one single wall of clay blocks has been discovered inside the embankment with a preserved average height of about 72 centimetres and a thickness of 0.85-1 metres. Each

²⁷⁷ DE HOZ ONRUBIA; MALDONADO RAMOS and VELA COSSÍO 2003.

²⁷⁸ GARCÍA MARCOS and MORILLO CERDÁN 2018, p. 302; MORILLO CERDÁN 2010, p.467.

clay block is approximately 0.30 x 0.30 x 0.12 metres. These measurements seem to imply an interior filling of 0.80 metres in width between the two walls²⁷⁹, one of which, let us remember, has not yet appeared. It could well be just a stratum deposited following the phase of employment of the *agger*.



Fig. 24. Model of a theoretical second fortification of the *Legio VI*, (León II). Interpretation Centre of Roman León, León City Council.

The archaeological remains uncovered during the excavation associated with the construction of a residential building in the northwest corner of the camp, at the entrance to the site through the current Calle Abadía, were not fully analysed in the intervention report (E. Campomanes and F. Muñoz). According to the explanation that the person in charge of the fieldwork, A. Villar Pérez, kindly provided to several people on site, among whom I was present, the existence of *one* convex structure of mound-shaped clay blocks corresponded to a road of access to the camp. She also attributed the pronounced curved outline of the archaeological stratum of clay blocks to a presumed drainage system on both sides, interpreting it as a road, which supposedly had been eroded by the carriage tracks making the curve of the road more noticeable. In my opinion, that *one and only* clay-block structure with a curved outline, not even reaching a height of 1 metre, was the remains of the *agger* of the primitive Leonese fortification, perfectly recognisable in the stratigraphic profile, which they did not perceive at the time.

²⁷⁹ MORILLO CERDÁN 2010, p. 467.

Therefore, the model of development of the Roman fortifications in León presented by the aforementioned authors, as they interpreted the whole set of archaeological interventions carried out at the time, maintained exceedingly complex deductions when studying the stratigraphic survey of the presumed phase II of the wall in León because, besides placing in the model a second vertical wall of clay blocks –of which there is no archaeological record whatsoever– they disregarded the step or change of level observed in the glacis of the presumed sod wall observed in the stratigraphic profile photograph. In the model it appears with a continuous angle, as can be seen by comparing the following photographs.

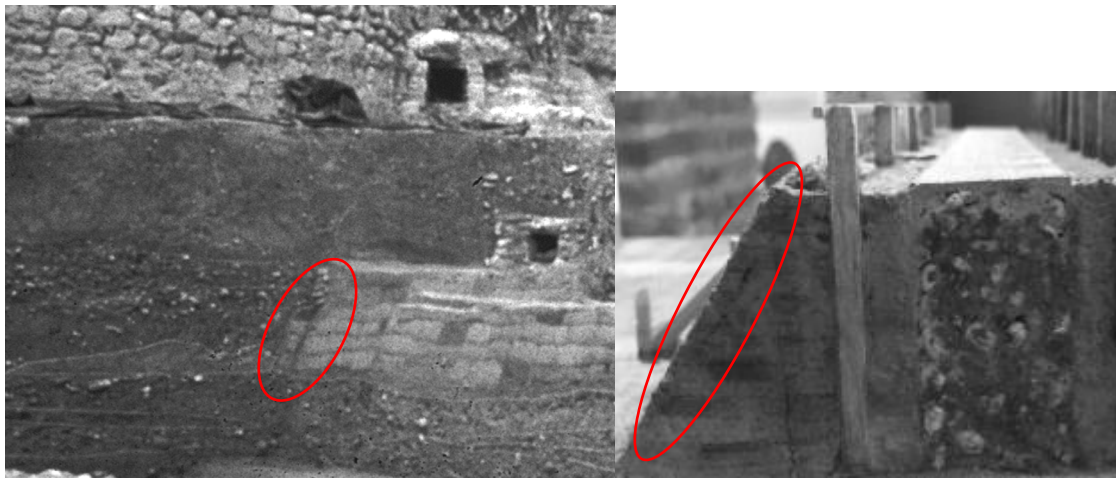


Fig. 25. Photographs of the cross section of the excavation (to the left) and model of the presumed second fortification León II from the Interpretation Centre of Roman León (to the right).

Regarding the construction system used, Canivell García de Paredes²⁸⁰, in his doctoral thesis on historical rammed earth (*tapial*) building techniques, defines the concept of rammed earth itself, distinguishing between “types of domestic and military manufacture”, and includes the following indication with regards to the *Tratado Construcción Civil* (Civil Construction Treatise) by Ger and Lóbez: "It must not have a mixture of roots or grass either, which, after rotting, may leave holes or gaps; however, straw does no harm because with certain soils it prevents them from cracking." When excavating in León, the clay compound that we archaeologists found when reaching the geological level would have facilitated the construction of rammed earth modules. Roman builders could have used blocks of compressed earth (0.30 x 0.30 x 0.12 metres) together

²⁸⁰ CANIVELL GARCÍA DE PAREDES 2013, pp. 104, 111.

with some kind of dry vegetal material between them to prevent cracks and to raise a wall or *vallum*. Although this does not seem to be the case because the still extant height, less than 80 centimetres, indicates that this unique wall-like structure of earth found could correspond to an *agger* or embankment, the simplest form of fortification that usually appears associated with the *vallum* forming part of the same defensive structure. What is more, blocks of earth or adobes had previously been found in Roman camps from the 1st century BC, such as that in Villajoyosa (Alicante), shown in the following photograph published in 2005, of the excavation led by D. Ruiz Alcalde and A. Marcos González.



Fig. 26. Fosse in V of the Late Republican camp of Villajoyosa (Alicante) whose intentional filling includes adobes that have not been reused, according to P. Peña Domínguez²⁸¹.

In any case, the idea of using turf sods (or *tepes*, *tapines*) with grass topping for the construction of the wall or *vallum* is ruled out. Although a turf sod could have kept compact a ten-centimetre-thick block and less than 80 centimetres high of the presumed *agger* of the phase León I camp, this type of *caespite* construction could never have resisted the pressure of a *vallum* several metres long. Even less feasible is the tectonic resistance of two sod (or *tapines*) faces supporting the pressure of an interior filling and exposed to rain in its upper part. Let us remember here that only archaeological remains of one earth block structure with traces of grass between them has been found.

Following the idea that the primitive traces of the Roman fortification in León may still hold many surprises, we found²⁸² two perpendicular trenches of different shapes (one in V and the other in U) in an archaeological excavation carried out in 2004 in Calle Serranos 39-41 in León near the excavation site in Calle Santa Marina, considered

²⁸¹ PEÑA DOMÍNGUEZ 2013, pp. 52-90.

²⁸² FERNÁNDEZ ORDÁS 2004: Unpublished report. Archaeology Service, City Planning Department of León City Council.

paradigmatic. These trenches were excavated from just above the geological level so they can be considered as belonging to the first occupation phase of the Leonese camp. The oldest material found was a piece of *millefiori* glass from the Augustan period, between 1st century BC and 1st century AD. The trenches, arranged in an "L" shape, at right angles, could be related to the León I defensive precinct although in this area there are not any remains of the earth and wood wall, which perhaps was destroyed during the following Roman construction phase of the Flavian period, at the same time as the corner ditch was covered up in the middle of the 1st century AD as its ceramic materials indicate (*terra sigillata sudgalica*). If the corner ditch is the southwest limit of the defences (León I) of much smaller size than the later fortification, we then have a hypothesis to test.



Fig. 27. Corner *fossae* in U and V shapes from León's first occupation phase, intentionally filled with stones. Calle Serranos, 39.



Fig. 28. Corner *fossae* in U and V shapes from León's first occupation phase.

The ditches were filled intentionally with large size riverstones and the ground was levelled for the further construction of an ashlar wall in the mid-1st century AD which, as we will see later, may correspond to the military hospital of the campsite or *valetudinarium*. Hundreds of fragments of brick material found with no markings at all date these structures from a later period than the U and V shape ditches, maybe from a period before Claudius. Therefore it is very possible that the small-size ashlar wall could correspond to structures from the Augustan camp or from its following successor in the time of Tiberius²⁸³, who may have destroyed every vestige of the previous earth defence system. This archaeological evidence indicates the possibility of a first Roman military precinct (with its *fosse*) of smaller size and in a different layout than the following stone fortified enclosures. This is a different hypothesis from those offered so far regarding the fosses associated with the Roman fortified precincts in León, based on the fact that no evidence of *several* (sic) supposed to have existed, due to the fact that they supposedly

²⁸³ STRABO, Geography, III, 3, 8: "But today, as I have said, these wars have ceased completely; the Cantabrians themselves (...) and their neighbours have been subdued by Augustus Caesar (...). Further, Tiberius, following instructions from Augustus, his predecessor, has sent an army of three legions to these lands, whose presence has done a lot not only pacifying some of the peoples but also civilising them as well".

remained beneath the wall of *cubos* except in some sections, very commonly found in Early Imperial camps²⁸⁴.

In light of the above, a new synchronic hypothesis should be taken into account, against what has been considered as the two consecutive phases of earth fortification: a phase I of double timber wall with earth filling, about 3 metres wide and 5 metres high²⁸⁵, mistakenly interpreted, and a phase II built with two coverings made out of sod (*tapines*) walls. But we should also consider the possibility of a single phase of timber and earth wall, a *vallum*, with its corresponding *agger* (this would certainly have been made of clay block *caespites*), which would have occupied the northeast corner of the later fortified enclosure. It would have been smaller, in line with the archaeological discoveries of two corner ditches made by the author of this study during the excavations in Calle Serranos 39 and 41, which also indicate the intentional covering up of that first phase of the Roman occupation of León, as we will analyse later on.



Fig. 29. Phases of occupation II and III of the Leonese Roman camp above the previous ditch. The perpendicular walls of both phases are previous to Claudius' period. Archaeological excavation in Calle Serranos 39, León.

²⁸⁴ GARCÍA MARCOS; GUTIÉRREZ GONZÁLEZ; MIGUEL HERNÁNDEZ; CAMPOMANES ALVAREDO and MUÑOZ VILLAREJO 2013, p. 313. However, according to these authors, the first Augustan camp already had an external V-shaped ditch (*fossa fastigata*).

²⁸⁵ <https://murallasromanasdehispania.wordpress.com> [9th May 2016]. In this publication the second clay-block structure, about 20 metres ahead of the first, is attributed to the *Legio VII Gemina*, and delays the building of the stone wall until the 2nd century AD, and dates the wall of *cubos* to the 3rd century AD.

We might also suggest another new synchronic approach to these stratigraphic units, so far considered only part of the León I enclosure: the possibility that, while building the first stone camp in León, a temporary defensive palisade could have remained in use, perhaps necessary after the possible intentional covering up of the first earth fortification or León I.

On the other hand, it is easier to interpret these remains based on G. Carter's²⁸⁶ theoretical model of the Scottish *vallum*, though adapted to the findings of wood and earth structures in León where no double wooden posts appear but simple ones²⁸⁷, and where what has been identified as turf sods (*tepes* or *tapines*) could also be interpreted as organic residues between the blocks of rammed clay of an *agger*, as displayed in the following images²⁸⁸.

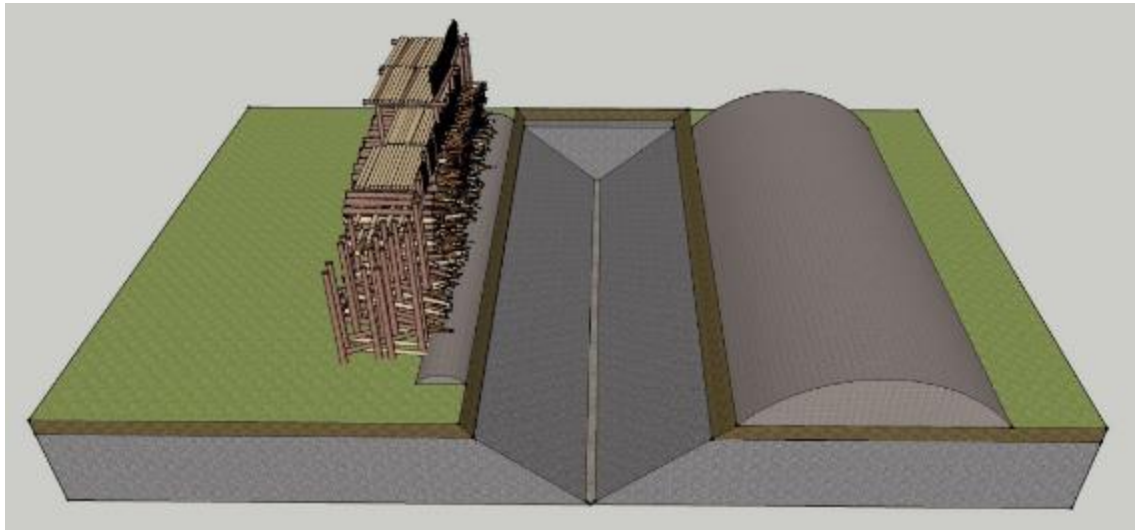
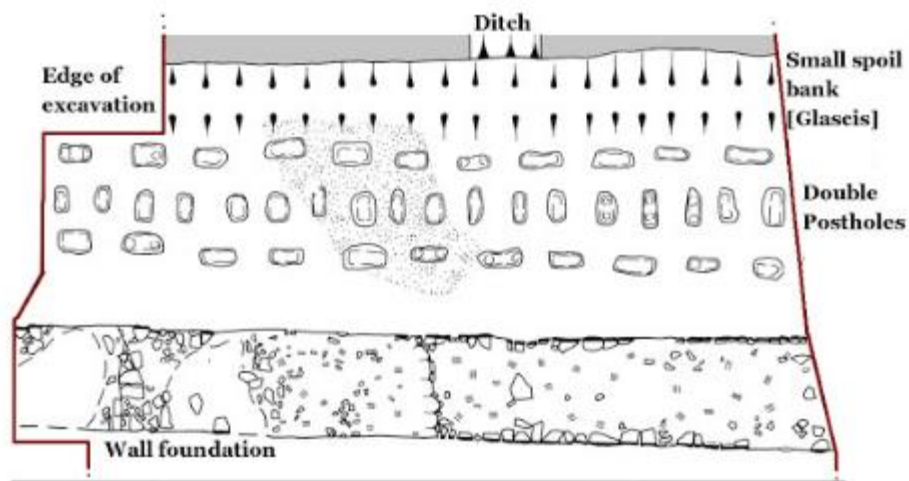


Fig. 30. Model of a wood and earth *vallum* with *agger* for Hadrian's wall built with *caespites*, according to G. CARTER (2014).

²⁸⁶ CARTER, 2012 <http://structuralarchaeology.blogspot.com>. In each part of the wall, in which archaeological excavations have been carried out in the last decades, three lines of double post holes have been found. They correspond to a primitive wooden wall with its ditch which formed part of a temporary barrier while the Roman *vallum* was being raised. Carter states that the post holes are the remains of a palisade which, together with a wall of turf, formed the first phase of the barrier wall and ditch.

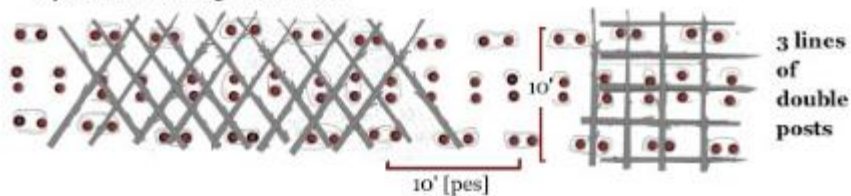
²⁸⁷ Similar to the one raised on the German border immediately after its conquest at the beginning of the 1st century AD in *Haltern* (Kr. Recklinghausen), according to a historical recreation from 1901: like a palisade identical to the accepted interpretation of the first Leonese wall.

²⁸⁸ CARTER, 2014, <http://structuralarchaeology.blogspot.com>.



Body of rampart formed by layers of timbers placed at 60°

Timbers can also be placed at 90° and parallel to line



Theoretical Model: Timber Wall at Shields Road, Byker, Newcastle

View: Plan
Showing: Archaeological Features [above]
Timber Wall model [below]

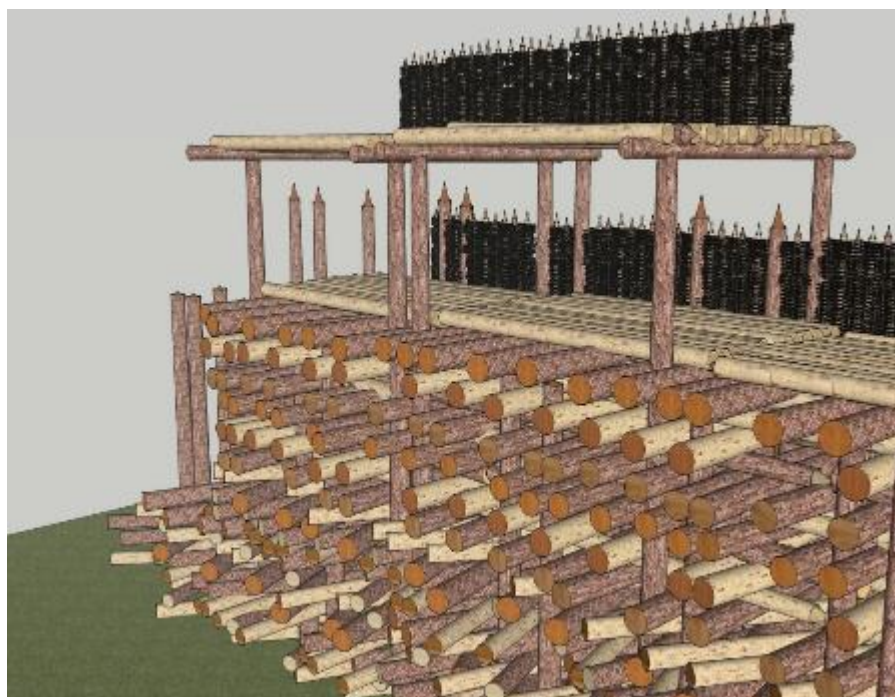
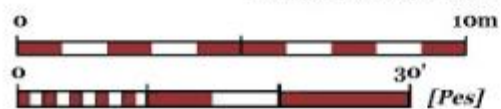


Fig. 31. Details of the wood and earth *vallum* model with a *caespite agger* (G. Carter, 2014). G. Carter came to his theoretical model not only from archaeological discoveries but also from the analysis of the stereotypical timber constructions of Trajan's Column²⁸⁹ (scenes 66, 132-133, etc.).



Fig. 32. Construction of a fortified camp with rounded logs or tree trunks, Trajan's Column, Rome. (www.trajans-column.org, scene 65 Roman defences).

²⁸⁹ <http://www.trajans-column.org>



Fig.33. Fortified camp with log-built fortifications, Trajan's Column, Rome. (www.trajans-column.org, scene 66).



Fig. 34. Ashlar wall attached to a log-built tower, made of logs or tree trunks seen in Trajan's Column, Rome. (www.trajans-column.org, scene 75).



Fig. 35. Image of log-built or tree-trunk defences and a tower surrounded by a palisade, which also appear in the forts at the base of Trajan's Column (www.trajans-column.org, first spiral, scenes I and II, preparation for war).

The first defensive system in León seems to have elements of G. Carter's theoretical model of the primitive Scottish *vallum* and also elements of M. Bishop's proto-fortress²⁹⁰, of a Haltern type. However, this would entail partially invalidating the 2014 diachronic reconstruction, in which the timber palisade assumed to have been carried out in the same way as the 1901 historical recreation of the aforementioned German camp. Also, the graphic representation of G. Carter's model should adapt to a greater extent to the images of Trajan's Column in order to coincide with the archaeological facts in León. The archaeological remains of timber structures appear with a horizontal brace between the pole holes, just above the surface, which cannot be seen under the rows of logs, bound together in header and stretcher pattern as proposed by Carter in Scotland's virtual restoration.

Three possible archaeological hypotheses result from the above, the last two most feasible, regarding the primitive Leonese defensive system (León I), all of which are theoretical models based on a wall equipped with a fosse and an *agger* of rammed earth blocks:

1. That the first Leonese *vallum* would consist of a structure made up of a timber palisade on its external face attached to an earth embankment, perhaps by means of wooden braces that connected them at the top, and at

²⁹⁰ BISHOP 2012.

the back was also covered in wood. This thesis seems difficult to defend for structural reasons since according to the proposed model the double facing of wood would contain an internal filling of an enormous volume of rammed earth with no covering, as observed in previous pages, in the model of León I fortification (fig. 21). In this hypothetical fortification, the harsh climate of Leonese winters would have caused frost wedging or frost weathering, and the contact with soggy ground would have structurally weakened the timber of the palisades very quickly. It is unlikely that this kind of compound fencing would have resisted more than three quarters of a century as this hypothesis suggests with its interpretation, which postpones the construction of the stone wall until the arrival of the *Legio VII* to León.

2. That in the primitive Leonese *vallum* the timber remains of the palisade found buried in the ground do not correspond to the total height of the aerial structures of the two palisades above the passage level, but to a temporary structural element (two horizontal joists, two coffers or formworks, some kind of provisional box-shape mould), to support the thick filling of clay soil during its hardening process. In this case, the type of palisade could have been the one represented in the Roman sculptural iconography, used in the British wall by G. Carter.
3. That in the primitive Leonese *vallum*, the timber remains of the two palisades are not related to the total length of the fortified precinct but to a tower attached to the wall, a model also represented in Trajan's Column (Fig. 34).



Fig. 36. Detail of the archaeological strata of León's military precinct, in wood and earth, which could have remained in place (or created) *during* the construction of the ashlar wall.

With the information we know so far, it is difficult to accept, although it has been taken for granted, the hypothesis of a second phase of the wall in earth and wood that includes two glacis made of sods lining the timber palisades, which in the case of the outer side seems also inexplicable as a defensive element. Despite this, the two new archaeological interpretations proposed here on the known remains of the wood and earth *vallum* and the clay block *agger* are both compatible with the two possible hypotheses about the first defences of León: that of their excavators, F. Muñoz and E. Campomanes who have interpreted two different and successive phases of earth fortification, which although we do not share the idea, cannot be completely refuted today, or the one provided by this new analysis, which implies a single defensive structure built of wood and earth, made up of a *vallum* and an *agger*.

Likewise, the hypothesis presented here contemplates the contingencies pointed out on a part of this fortification structure, the wood and earth *vallum*: either it was maintained after the intentional, and non-violent, covering up of the ditches of the first earth defence (León I), or this *vallum* is more recent than the *agger* of clay blocks and was raised temporarily during the construction of the Early Imperial stone wall.

On the other hand, and despite these uncertainties, the report quoted from the archaeological intervention in the Casona de Puerta Castillo states that the third and fourth phases of the wall are the work of the *Legio VII Gemina*.

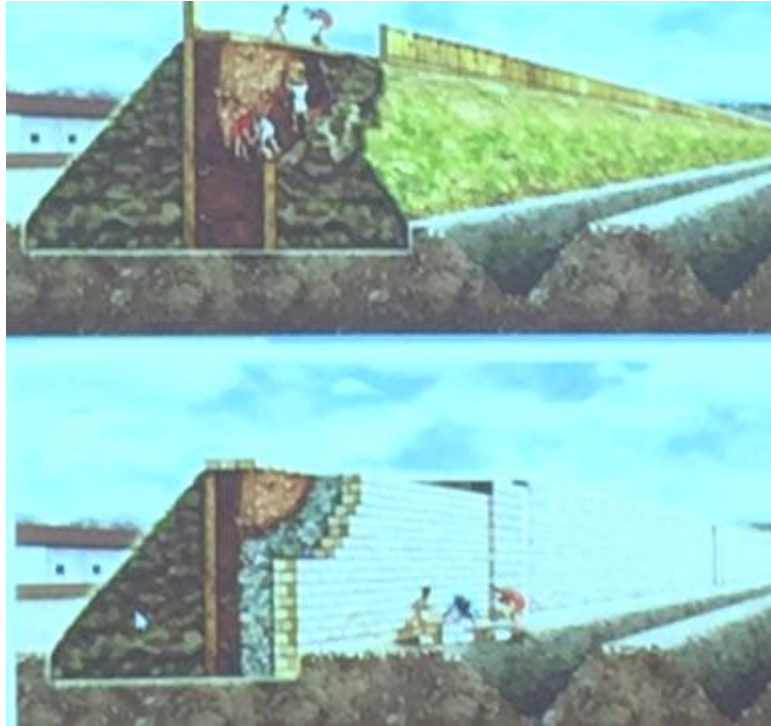


Fig. 37. Interpretation of the supposed construction process of the first stone fortification of León III by the *Legio VII Gemina*. A. Morillo Cerdán and V. García Marcos (Ayuntamiento de León, 12/20/2018).

To explain that only remains of one structure of earth blocks have appeared – instead of the two that they imagined to be part of León II–, both authors proposed the destruction of the outer half of the earth structure almost a century after its construction, leaving standing a supposed second glacis of sods of the same final height as the wall, inclined towards the interior. What this model does not explain is what happened in the end with such an immense volume of earth removed when eliminating the glacis.

The historical analysis of A. García and Bellido²⁹¹ of the movements of the *Legio VI Victrix* is still of particular relevance for the clarification of the military origins of León. As far as we now know, between 70 and 74 the Leonese camp might not have been occupied by either the *Legio VI Victrix* or by the *Legio VII Gemina*, and archaeology has

²⁹¹ GARCÍA Y BELLIDO 1961, pp. 114-160: “(...) taking into account that the army in Hispania then had only two legions (the VI *Victrix* and the X *Gemina*), we can infer that the camp of the *Legio VI*, which is what interests us now, was a different one, we know not which. But if it fought the Astures towards the year AD 55, it is natural to suppose that its camp would be placed on the Asturian front, perhaps -this is a mere hypothesis- where afterwards the *Legio VII Gemina* would be stationed. That is to say, in León. But today we have no proof of it”. (...) This legion left Spain in the year 69-70 (Tac. Hist. IV 68: *sexta ac prima ex Hispania accitae*) and never returned to the Peninsula. Towards the end of Autumn of the year 70 we see it reconstructing the camp in Novaesium, 3 kilometres south of Neuss, near Dusseldorf (Tac. Hist. V 22).

released evidence that, at least in the site of Calle Serranos 39, there was an intentional covering up of Augustan structures, so it might have been destroyed; otherwise, members of the *Legio X Gemina*, who had returned to Hispania between AD 68 and 70²⁹² or from the *Legio I Adiutrix* created by Galba²⁹³ at that time, might have settled in León around those years but there are no clear references about their quartering.

The current state of archaeological knowledge and the fact that urban stratigraphy has been constantly altered, since it seems that part of the *agger* of the primitive *Legio VI*²⁹⁴ camp was destroyed to raise the stone wall, only allow reflective doubts while waiting for publication of new data allows us to clarify it.

1.6 Legal and social context of León's first fortification

Having summarised the current state of historiography and archaeological scholarship with regard to Rome's military strategy when it became an empire, it is assumed that the defensive system in which León's permanent legionary camp was created was not that of a permanent border, and that the legions established there, especially the *VI Hispaniensis* and the *VII Gemina*, were not quartered there for several centuries on a non-existent Hispanic *limes*²⁹⁵: the Leonese camp became permanent due to the need to control the territory where the greatest mining resources and access roads to ports were, allowing Rome to control the Atlantic Ocean and the Cantabrian Sea. The northwest of the Iberian Peninsula was ports and mining territory.

The wall is not only a work of military engineering and technology but must also be placed within the context of an administrative, legal, social and financial world that enabled its construction. For this reason, in order to understand the fortification of León in all its complexity and distinguish the constructive development of its walls, it is essential to analyse the transformation of the administrative and financial framework of

²⁹² MORILLO CERDÁN 1993, p. 392.

²⁹³ Concerning the origin of Galba's conscription, see TACITUS, *Hist. Lib.* IV, 33: (...) *Vasconum lectae a Galba cohortes ac tum accitae, dum castris propinquant...* The Basque cohorts levied by Galba and called to arms at this moment, on reaching the camps.

²⁹⁴ In the abovementioned site in Calle Santa Marina situated to the north of the camp limits as well as in its southern area, where remains of a wall have been found in the Plaza del Conde Luna.

²⁹⁵ POVEDA ARIAS 2013, pp. 1157-1160, no. 13. See GUZMÁN ARMARIO 2006, pp. 23-59, 173-178; MAYERSON 1989, p. 289; ALONSO SÁNCHEZ 1986, pp. 182-183.

the Roman army, the architect of the Leonese camps in the decades prior to the change of era, as well as their legal consideration as sacred constructions.

1.5.1. Military evolution and the Roman army in the northwest of Hispania

The Roman army evolved out of the Republic's armed militia²⁹⁶ in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. It was then composed of free men levied to fulfil a duty to the State, which took place limited to certain periods of battle. Its *milites* were citizens with sufficient property to be able to pay for the armament and equipment necessary for war²⁹⁷. This was the army that conquered Italy, defeated Carthage and imposed Roman supremacy on the Mediterranean Sea. The structural change in the Republican army²⁹⁸, led by General and Consul Gaius Marius, did not modify the fact that it still lacked permanent encampments. The number of troops steadily increased until AD 14 but their campaigning was limited to warm seasons, after which each legion would settle into winter barracks, *hibernia*, larger than provisional defensive systems or marching camps, with taller parapets built of wood and earth and towers attached, while the tents inside them were replaced by barracks, as may well have occurred in León.

From the 1st century BC until the beginning of the 3rd century AD the army underwent an important transformation as it professionalised its soldiers due to the need for longer expeditions and the setting up of camps of occupation on the borders and in conquered territory. This worsened the social conditions of the soldiers and radically transformed relations between Army and State, bringing about civil wars and revolts like the one that provoked the end of the Republic. At the time of Augustus, the military system was completed with the creation of the *aerarium militare*, the military treasury of Imperial Rome, which began by financing the costs of camp logistics as well as paying the veterans' *stipendium* and the soldier's equipment and weapons, whose manufacture was a monopoly of State factories. In the city of León, remains of smithies have been found in the area of the so-called *porta praetoria* (Calle Plegarias, 5) and a possible armour factory²⁹⁹ in the surroundings of the northern gate of the wall, though dated much later.

²⁹⁶ GOLDSWORTHY 2005, pp. 7ss.

²⁹⁷ Ref. ROLDÁN HERVÁS 2013, pp. 459ss.

²⁹⁸ DE MARTINO 1965, p. 832.

²⁹⁹ AURRECOECHEA-FERNÁNDEZ 2006, pp. 309-334, LETKI 2009, p. 61, note 83.

Also, at the time of Augustus, the legionary hierarchy was regulated, appointing a *legatus legionis*³⁰⁰ for each legion, depending directly on the emperor and not on the provincial governor. This legate controlled the *territorium legionis*, the state-owned *prata* dedicated to the soldiers' provisioning. The *tribunus laticlavius*, second in military command, also came from the senatorial class like the legate. However, in the *Legio VI Hispana*, the Republican era hierarchy seems to have been maintained, since there is epigraphic evidence of at least one *tribunus militum* in this legion, Tiberius Claudius Dinippus³⁰¹, who we mentioned before in this study when addressing the *praefectura fabrum* associated to these troops: prefects of workers in charge of building, and sometimes financing public works. Other *Legio VI* officials during Nero's reign have been identified: on an epigraph found in Mérida (*AE* 1935,5; *AE* 2002, 929) T. Pompeius Albinus is mentioned as *tribunus militum legionis VI Victricis*. We also know the name of the legate of the *Legio VI Victrix* in the year 68 associated with the Galba uprising, Titus Vinius Rufinus. And not only do we know the name of some of its officers, but we also have several epigraphs that document this legion's capacity as a builder³⁰² as we have already described (Figures 6-10). Likewise, we have epigraphic evidence of several legates from the *Legio VII Gemina*³⁰³, such as Lucius Attius Marcus, Gneus Lucius Terentius Homullus Iunior, Quintus Mamilius Capitolinus and the Emperor Trajan. The third officer in command of a legion, the *praefectus Castrorum*, was an experienced and technically trained officer who would probably be an administrative officer. These were followed by five *tribunes angusticlavii* belonging to the equestrian order, and below them the centurions, six in each cohort. It is difficult to demonstrate differences in the types of accommodation among these lower-ranking officers –*principales*– from the archaeological remains located in the barracks of the permanent camp in León, as against the residence, the *praetorium*, of its commanding officer, which was of greater entity and even had a hypocaust heating system.

³⁰⁰ RODRÍGUEZ DE LA ROBLA 2003, pp. 59-63.

³⁰¹ See above notes 259 and 260. Six military tribunes are known from the *Legio VI* in Hispania (*CIL* II 1614, 2637 + 5082, 460, 6097, 6150 and *ERAE* 110).

³⁰² Ref. *ERZ* 11; *IRC* I, 1; *HEp* 7, 396 and 9, 482.

³⁰³ Centurions were classed according their seniority: *hastatus posterior*, *hastatus princeps*, *posterior*, *princeps* and *primus pilus*. There were 59 or 60 centurions in each legion and a similar number of auxiliary centurions called *optiones* from the time of Aurelian. Some *optiones* formed an elite group, *ad spem ordinis*, and were able to be promoted. The centurion was also assisted by the *principals*, a *signifer* and a *tesserarius*. There were other posts considered an honour: *librarius*, *cornicularius*, *beneficiarius*, *discentes*... and among them all the *immunes* were exempted from some duties and ordinary jobs.

The transformation process of the camp towards a permanent fortification was concluded by Augustus since, as the territorial expansion progressed, the legions were stationed in the conquered provinces for longer periods³⁰⁴ where, in addition to housing and provisioning tasks, they carried out administrative functions and control. For this reason, when choosing a location to settle it was important to be close to communication routes (with access to mountain passes and seaports) and economic resources (mines, water, cereals...). Fortresses of different sizes were built in its surroundings, from *turres* or *castella* to *castra* that could house up to two legions (such as that of *Vetera*, Xanten, on the Rhine) and could have an area of 20 to 25 hectares. This could imply that the permanent camp of León was fortified in stone in the Augustan era when it was occupied by the *Legio VI Hispana*.

Modifications in the *castrum* were accompanied by other reforms in military life, such as the honourable discharge from military service after twenty or twenty-five years of active service (*missio honesta*), or earlier in the event of illness, accident or war injuries suffered by war causing him disability for continued service (*missio causaria*); they would then receive a discharge payment or *praemia militiae*, called *missio nummaria* taken from the military treasury, as well as a deed for rural property with cattle and farming implements, called *missio agraria*, and a series of additional benefits such as exemptions from tax and public duties or freedom to choose their place of residence wherever they deemed suitable³⁰⁵. To this end, the discharged soldier would receive a certificate of discharge –*epistulae testimoniales* and *diplomata militaria*– as evidence of his military service and which would include the name of the holder and the benefits granted. Some military diplomas in bronze have been found, though outside the Iberian Peninsula, with references to Hispanic, Cantabrian, Bracaraugustan and Lucensian cohorts, such as those in Montana (National Archaeological Museum of Sofia, Bulgaria), in *Pompejanum* in Aschaffenburg (Bavaria, Germany), and also a military diploma has been found in the Klostemburg *castellum* now kept at the Museum of *Carnutum* (Austria) *CIL* XVI 26 = *CIL* III 854, which mentions a *II Astu/[rum et] Callaecorum* cohort, as well as two other of Hispanic origin such as the *II Hispanorum* and *II Lu/[censi]um*, dated AD 13th June 80. The setting up of the *I Asturum* cohort must have been earlier than this as mentioned by the diploma *CIL* XVI 52, from the year 106 among the *auxilia* in *Noricum*

³⁰⁴ CURCHIN 1991, p. 92.

³⁰⁵ PALAO VICENTE 2010, pp.85-86, about the different types of pay to the veterans. *Ref.* also GIUFFRÈ 1996, pp. 40ss. (*C.Th.* 7, 20, 3, 8). PERALTA LABRADOR, 2017, pp. 134-135.

(Austria). Another military diploma has been dated three years before this, found in Malpas (Cheshire), *CIL* XVI 48 and was awarded to a centurion of the *I Pannoniorum Tampiana* cavalry regiment, a certain Valerius Celsus whose cognomen, *Reburus*, refers to his origin in northwestern Hispania. However, the soldiers settled in the Leonese territory since they were legionaries did not receive military diplomas unless they had served at some other time in their career in legions I and II *Adiutrices* during the first years of the Flavian period.

Changes in the military legal regime also impacted directly on the Roman fortifications and camps like, for example, the banning of marriage –*iustae nuptiae*– at the time of the Principate. This would be one of the reasons for new types of dwelling found in the *cannabae* of the camps, with *insulae* for the families of soldiers. This regulation would possibly have been established by Augustus to avoid marriage with the women in the province they were assigned to and a possible cohabitation of the soldier with his wife within the camp³⁰⁶. She held the status of *peregrina*. This ban, whatever its scope, would be abolished by Septimius Severus but, in any case, documents relating to Roman soldiers of that time evidence that soldiers' stable relationships were recognized in practice. The epigraphy associated with the Leonese military camps has provided numerous examples of funerary monuments dedicated to soldiers by their families³⁰⁷: around 70 epigraphs have been analysed by R. López Casado³⁰⁸ with references from the end of the 1st century BC until the beginning of the 4th century AD.

These epigraphic sources help us interpret the archaeological findings in order to know more about the origin and evolution of *cannabae*³⁰⁹ in the camps. Like the Leonese *Ad Legionem*, these were built at the same time as the fortification itself. In the case of this *vicus* located in the current León neighbourhood of Puente Castro, it seems to have been occupied until AD 270³¹⁰, perhaps due to the relocation of soldiers' families to

³⁰⁶ LIVY, 64, 3; *Digest* (XXIV, 1, 60-62). Augustus banned marriage for soldiers but not for officers (equestrians and senators).

³⁰⁷ FERNÁNDEZ ORDÁS and SÁNCHEZ LAFUENTE-PÉREZ 2008, pp.177-180: in 2002 the author found a funerary epigraph dedicated by *Aemilius Flaccus* to his father *Aemilius Reburus* and his assumed brothers *Aemilius Bassus* and *Aemilius Reburus*. It could refer either to a family of soldiers or a family of legionary potters whose mark was documented by Jesús LIZ GUIRAL and Maite AMARÉ TAFALLA (AMARÉ TAFALLA and LIZ GUIRAL 1993, pp. 64-65). On the name *nomen Aemilius*, see SASTRE PRATS 2002, p.35; D'ENCARNAÇÃO 2010, p. 90.

³⁰⁸ LÓPEZ CASADO 2015, pp. 123-142.

³⁰⁹ PALAO VICENTE 2010, p. 165. *Ref.* THORBURN 2003, pp. 47-61; FERNÁNDEZ OCHOA *et alii* 2014, p. 120; WEBSTER 1988, p. 123, no. 33.

³¹⁰ MORILLO CERDÁN; SALIDO DOMÍNGUEZ and CABELLO DURÁN 2014, p. 117; GONZALBES CRAVIOTO and GARCÍA GARCÍA 2013, p. 76.

the outskirts of the fortified enclosure. With regard to the main reason for the abandoning of this *vicus*, the archaeological studies published so far do not suggest a violent destruction and have been associated to a potential conversion of the military camp into an *urbs*, something that seems rather unlikely at that time. Some other kind of external occurrence may explain the decay of the Leonese suburb such as an epidemic, possibly the so-called Plague of Cyprian (251-270) which occurred at the same time, since a letter from Bishop Cyprian is acknowledged to have arrived in the Christian community of León at that time, which implied the arrival of a messenger or courier that could have caused a general infection among the *Ad Legionem* population and its later abandonment. What is not possible from current scholarship is to conclude that its population moved into the fortified enclosure of León as a result of a non-verified barbarian invasion in the 3rd century.

When carrying out a preliminary analysis of the possibility of the existence of a permanent population of women and children within the Early Imperial military precinct, it seems a rather legally uncertain hypothesis, considering that the barracks were an exclusively male site: the confirmed presence of families gives rise to considering their social influence by turning soldiers into *pater familias*.

Beyond confirming the presence of women inside or outside the fortified precinct, we should emphasize that it was the permanence of the female population associated to the camp that enabled the growth of a population with a remarkable military identity lasting at least five centuries. The Roman legion established in León kept its ranks supplied from its own soldiers' sons generation after generation –they used to inherit the military profession so giving rise to a Hispano-Roman city. Paradoxically, though being a fundamental characteristic of its origins, the analysis of women and children's housing within the fortified camp has not yet been fully addressed. In the *vicus* of Roman civil population associated to the camp, archaeological remains of medical instruments have been found³¹¹. Their interpretation should be carefully analysed and should not be presumed an exclusively “male” usage, as the existence of newborns³¹² has been

³¹¹ ÁLVAREZ ORDÁS *et al.* pp.141-158.

³¹² FANJUL ALONSO, Cristina (2012) “*El bebé que despeja el enigma*” in *Diario de León*, 29/09/2012. E. CAMPOMANES ALVAREDO states in this newspaper article that a burial of a newborn baby had been found under a Roman building in Calle Fernando Regueral in León. The existence of women *obstetrices* has been documented for this period: midwives (even freedwomen or slaves) and *medicae* (in general free and educated): CELSO, *De Medicina*, Lib.VII and VIII; ALONSO ALONSO 2014, epigraph no. 177: he infers from the grave of a midwife Scribonia Attice and her husband M. Ulpius Amerimmus the existence of a private clinic. Concerning newborn babies inside the camp, *see*.

confirmed in the Leonese camp. On the other hand, in the fortified precinct of León and, generally in the Roman military spheres, the main function of women who were not part of soldiers' families –*uxor* (wife), *coniunx* or *mater*– would be that of concubines or serving staff, in the broadest sense. They could have also provided services as artisans and merchants, as has been documented in Mérida.



Fig. 38. Tombstone showing the tavern keeper Sentia Amarantia. National Museum of Roman Art, Merida.

The legal framework of the Early Empire recognised the presence of women and children within military camps, awarding considerable freedom to soldiers to make wills: the *testamentum militis* (only to be granted while serving in the army) had almost no limitations and they could assign their wives as heirs even if they were not Roman citizens. This freedom was a true *ius singulare* that sources describe as *privilegium*. The *testamentum militis* did not expire until a year after discharge. From Augustus, those Roman soldiers, sons of families –*fili families*– used freely the *peculium castrense* (those goods that the *filius* had acquired as a soldier *in castris*). In the legionary camp of León, Hispano-Roman descendants of the first foreign legionaries swelled the levies (*dilectus*)³¹³ of the army for the following five centuries, as sons inherited their father's profession, and over time, the patrimony also included the donations made by the *pater* to the son upon entering the army. Part of this patrimony was also the *fili families* wife's possessions, the inheritance left by a comrade-in-arms and the properties acquired with money from the *peculium*. However, the funeral ceremonies were financed by the soldiers themselves

³¹³ Conscriptions to the army were undertaken by the provincial governors.

through an annual deduction from their wages, which only paid for a simple grave, so a simple tombstone with an inscription required an extra contribution, greater in the case of the most ornamented ones. So, on many occasions, wills included many instructions with this in mind. Such is the case of a 3rd century tombstone found in the Leonese wall, which is currently part of the epigraphic collection of León Museum. It is dedicated to Publius Atilius Rufus, a soldier from the *centuria* of Aurelius Fronton pertaining to *Legio VII Gemina*, who died at the age of 36, where he explicitly indicated that an heir should take care of it for 17 semisses³¹⁴. As we will see later, this ought to be taken into account when interpreting Roman funerary monuments from the 3rd and 4th centuries as part of building materials of a presumed “Tetrarchic” wall of *cubos*. It is also important to note that this information does not refer to the early stages of the camp’s population, since up to the 2nd century the normal funerary custom would have possibly been cremation like in the rest of the Roman Empire, replacing it by burial some time in the 3rd century. A detail that does not go unnoticed is the absence so far of *cuppae* by archeology in León, except for those reused in the wall of *cubos*.



Figs. 39 and 40. Tower of the medieval wall of León built with reused Roman funerary *cuppae*. Detail of the *cuppa*.

³¹⁴ RABANAL ALONSO 1988, p. 149.

The early presence of Asturian and Galician soldiers among Roman troops deserves special mention and has been especially studied by N. Santos Yanguas³¹⁵. There are some paleo toponym remains from the movements of Asturian troops throughout the Empire, such as that of the fort of *Asturis* in the province of *Noricum Ripense* (in the current Zwentendorf, Austria) which centuries later would appear included in the *Notitia Dignitatum*³¹⁶ under the command of a *tribunus cohortis* (OC XXXIV, 46), in the same area as the prefect of the *Legio X Gemina* quartered in Vindobona (OC XXXIV, 22), which at the end of the 5th century continued as a small *oppidum* as documented in the first chapter of the *Vita Sancti Severini*³¹⁷.

Whilst the *Astures* were incorporated rather early in Roman auxiliary troops, this might not have been the case for other Leonese peoples, such as the *Cantabri Vadinienses* who occupied the eastern part of the mountains, today's Montañas de Riaño and Picos de Europa. Several authors have confronted the limited integration of *Vadinienses* in Roman auxiliary troops from different perspectives, such as García y Bellido and Balil³¹⁸. An example of the participation of other Cantabrian and Lusitanian peoples³¹⁹ in Roman war campaigns is the siege of what has been described as the most impressive fortification in the entire Middle East, *Masada*, which was besieged in AD 73 by the prefect Flavius Silva. Here, the strategy was similar³²⁰ to that deployed two centuries before in Hispania in order to conquer Numancia by surrounding it with a wall protected by eight camps and watchtowers on its east side. Some of the auxiliary cohorts that participated in the siege of *Masada* came from Hispania, such as the I *Augusta Lusitanorum* and the II *Cantabrorum*.

³¹⁵ SANTOS YANGUAS 2018, pp. 31-89; *Id.* 2016, pp. 31-89; *Id.* 2012, pp. 229-242; *Id.* 2011, pp. 191-214; *Id.* 2010, pp. 341-368; *Id.* 2010, pp. 37-42; *Id.* 2010, pp. 3-236; *Id.* 2010, pp. 341-368; *Id.* 2009, pp. 41-57; *Id.* 2014, pp. 185-195; *Id.* 2014, pp. 85-98; *Id.* 2012, pp. 43-61.

³¹⁶ NEIRA FALEIRO 1998, pp. 537-538.

³¹⁷ ROGERS FLYNT 2005, pp. 112-114. GRITTI 2014, p. 46: *Capitoli: § I. Tempore - Destrucción*: the death of the *rex Hunnorum*, Attila, and the subsequent period of political instability for the territories bordering on the Danube. The arrival from the east of a Catholic man with name of Severinus in the small *oppidum* of *Asturis* in the province of *Noricum Ripense*, famed for his gift of prophecy. Prophecy of the destruction of *Asturis* at the hands of their enemies. Severinus' journey to the nearby *oppidum* of *Comagenae*, governed by Roman *foederati*. Testimony of the massacre of the people from *Asturis* (trans. by the author).

³¹⁸ PITILLAS SALAÑER 2003, pp. 83-84.

³¹⁹ PERALTA LABRADOR 2017, pp. 131-172.

³²⁰ MAGNESS 2011, p. 350: mentions the finding of a *gladius hispaniensis* from the period of Herod during the excavations at Yigael Yadin in *Masada* in the 1960s; SCHULTEN 1933; DÍAZ BOURGEAL 2016, p. 67.

The relation between the military units in Hispania and the bordering areas of the Empire has been traced from Augustan times, when the Romans ventured beyond the Alps and troops met with them from Hispania: the re-foundation of the colony *Emerita Augusta Raurica* (the old *Castrum Rauracense*, near today's Basel, a Swiss city located in the border with France and Germany) could well have been carried out by Hispanic troops from the *Ulterior*, since Hispanic coins have been found in this area, especially some from the mint in Merida. All this is well reflected in the excellent work by García-Bellido García de Diego³²¹ where, using numismatics, he traces the presence of Hispanic troops in German provinces up to the time of Claudius when provincial Hispanic currency ceased to be minted. During Drusus' and Tiberius' campaigns of conquest, camps such as those of Dangstetten, *Vindonissa* and Oberhausen were erected. *Vindonissa* (currently Windisch, Switzerland) was founded in AD 15 and the *Legio X Gemina*³²² was garrisoned there between the years 44 and 45.

Concerning *Legio VI Hispaniensis*, stationed in Hispania for almost a century from the year 29 BC, whose troops were garrisoned among other places in Lugo and in the permanent camp in León, it was transferred by order of Vespasian to Lower Germania around the year 70. Now named *Victrix*, it formed part of the troops that would quell the Batavian Revolt. Later its troops put into practice all their experience in construction in the rebuilding of the Rhine defence settlements. There they would reconstruct one of the two most important military camps³²³, that of *Castra Vetera II*, today Xanten (Lower Rhineland, Germany)³²⁴. The work undertaken by the legion in the stone quarries in the Brhol Valley (Germany) has also been documented. Later this *Legio VI* would depart towards Upper Germania in the year 89 and then in 119 would be relocated to Britannia.

Overall and as evidenced above, the legal regime and eventual mobility of the army had direct repercussions on the origins of León's fortifications, as well as on the

³²¹ GARCÍA-BELLIDO GARCÍA DE DIEGO 2004, pp. 21-23, 283.

³²² The *Legio X Gemina* arrived with Augustus to fight in the Cantabrian Wars and remained stationed in northwestern Hispania for over a hundred years, almost certainly in Rosinos de Vidriales (Zamora) and in Astorga (León). It was transferred to a camp in *Pannonia*, *Carnutum* (Petronell, to the east of the city of *Vindobona* -Vienna-, in Austria) between AD 63 and 68, and returned briefly to Hispania for two years during which time the recently created *Legio VII Galbiana* occupied the barracks of *Carnutum*.

³²³ The other was *Noviomagus Batavorum* (now Nijmegen in Holland).

³²⁴ CARRERAS MONFORT 2006, pp 25-39. Around 13 BC Drusus, a nephew of Augustus, built a river port on the right banks of the Rhine and with it also the camp of *Castra Vetera I*, destroyed in a revolt in the year 70; the *Legio VI Victrix* constructed another *Castra Vetera II*. The latter city of *Colonia Ulpia Trajana*, was fortified with walls 6 metres high and strengthened by 22 towers with a perimeter of 3.4 kilometres. It had an irregular groundplan as the amphitheatre was inside the walls.

registered recruitment of Asturian soldiers among its troops³²⁵, both circumstances essential to understand the genesis of the Leonese settlement.

1.6.2. The evolution of Roman administrative structures

The governors of the Republican provinces administered them without separating their personal patrimony from the sums received for their mandate since that was the custom, and neither they nor later the *Princeps* administrator of the provinces³²⁶ placed under his command were accountable. The imperial province of Tarragona was already governed at the time of Augustus by a *legatus Augusti pro praetore*, taken from the Roman senatorial order.

During the change of regime from the Republic to the Principate the finances of the state administration seem to have lacked regulation, although this did not result in a lack of provincial administration, but it did lead to Augustus employing his loyal followers, primarily imperial freedmen. In *Asturica Augusta* (Astorga, León) the *nomen* Iulius repeatedly found on the High Imperial memorial stones includes the patronage of freedmen³²⁷. The relevance of the freedmen seems to have continued throughout the Early Imperial period: a freed procurator of Augustus, Zoilus appears as head of the *Cohort I* of the Celtiberians on the epigraph of Villalís (Villamontán de la Valduerna, León) dated 15th October 167³²⁸. In addition, a votive memorial stone found in Vienna has been documented, whose dedicator from the *conuentus Asturum* erected it in honour of the *procurator* of Asturia and Galicia, Q. Petronius Modestus (110-116)³²⁹. In the camp in León, the influence of the Augustan imperial aristocracy seems to have lasted until the time of Caracalla (198-217), as indicated by the well-known case of C. Julius Cereal (*ERLeón* 73 and 74)³³⁰, who would hold the position of *consul legatus Augusti pro*

³²⁵ PITILLAS SALAÑER 2007, pp. 111-126; PITILLAS SALAÑER 2004, pp. 141-152; *Id.* 2002, pp. 15-ss; SANTOS YANGUAS 2009.

³²⁶ GOFFAUX, *Bertrand* 2011, p. 445.

³²⁷ GALLEGO FRANCO 2017, p. 586, note 10: the author mentions several freedmen among the elite of the *Iulii* in *Asturica Augusta*, on analysing the relationship of personal names with the Imperial *gens Iulia* and Augustus' Romanising influence.

³²⁸ RABANAL ALONSO 1988, pp. 151-152.

³²⁹ ÓZCARIZ GIL 2014, p.89: *ILS* 1379. Q. Petronius C. F. Pu [p] Modestus (...) *procurator provin[ciae Hi]spaniae citerioris Asturiae et Callaeciarum*. The plural *callaeciorum* refers to the two *conuentus* of the *Gallaeci*. However, another epigraph dated between the years 114 and 116 is a dedication by the *conuentus Asturum* to the procurator *D. Julius D.f. Vo[lt] Capito*, named here as *procurator Asturiae et Callaeciae* (*CIL* II 3840, *ILS* 1380).

³³⁰ ÓRTIZ DE URBINA ÁLAVA 2014, p. 102.

praetore, in this case in the short-lived *provinciae Hispaniae novae citerioris Antoninianae*.

The Augustan provincial administration had privatized the Roman state economy by means of a policy of exploitation of natural resources and leasing of imperial public patrimony, which was soon confused with that of the State (mines, agricultural estates, mountains, forests and quarries). This form of land leasing in exchange for a *canon* in kind evolved into the renting of the land or its sale but it coexisted with the exploitation of the territories and of the occupied *ager publicus*. In the words of M. Weber³³¹, “there began the financial use to the Treasury’s advantage. The primitive form of free occupation of land in exchange for a *canon* in kind was replaced by systematic sales or rentals of the same land”. However, we should not rule out the income –different from taxes and payments demanded from enemies in compensation or as a fine– from spoils of war or *praeda*³³² that did not include the *de facto* acquisition of territories, which thus became the aforementioned *ager publicus*³³³.

Although the *fiscus Caesaris*³³⁴ arose with the birth of the Principate, it was later under the government of Claudius in the middle of the 1st century when the *aerarium Saturni*, or Senate Treasury, (where in addition to money, the banners of the legions were deposited and the tablets in bronze containing the laws) and the *fiscus Caesaris*, or Imperial Treasury³³⁵, were separated. The juridical legate *per Asturiam et Gallaeciam*, Quintus Mamilius Capitolinus, became the *praefectus aerarii Saturni*. He also became *dux* of the *Legio VII* according to an epigraph erected around the year 197 in Astorga (León) in dedication to the Genius of the *praetorium* (CIL II 2634).

After Augustus the Imperial regime handed down a healthy Treasury to his successors, mainly due to the wealth of the provinces. Within each one of them, the highest financial authority³³⁶ became the *procurator augusti*. In addition to being guarantor of the collection of part of the taxes (*XX hereditatum*, *XX libertatis*, *portoria*) and confiscations

³³¹ WEBER 1982, p. 99; BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ, 1986, p. 220.

³³² GIUFFRÈ 1996, p. 25.

³³³ GARCÍA RIAZA 2008, p. 19.

³³⁴ SERNA VALLEJO 2005, p. 13, no. 3.

³³⁵ FERNÁNDEZ DE BUJÁN 2012, p. 252, refers to the Vipascan Laws relating to these changes. *Ref.* MALAVÉ OSUNA 2007, pp. 30ss. The relation between *fiscus Caesaris* and *aerarium* is not well known, although literary sources describe Imperial grants to the *aerarium* on occasions for public works. It seems likely that the *fiscus Caesaris* broadened the scope of action of the State as a whole while the *aerarium* ended up being the Tax and Revenue Office for the city of Rome.

³³⁶ CARRERAS MONFORT 1997, pp. 152, 173.

destined for the *fiscus*, he would be responsible for both the military provisioning from local markets and the exploitation of its own resources (*prata, figlinae, fabrica*, etc.), as well as for the management of the Roman army supply system in the province. Taxable agricultural production in Hispania paid the *vicessima* of the harvest. Here, as Pliny³³⁷ also mentioned, it is interesting to note that the poor of Hispania covered half of their obligations with the acorns from the evergreen oaks. Tenney Frank calculated the total revenue of taxes in Hispania during the years of Augustus' rule as about 500,000 *denarii*, estimating the expenditure as a third or a quarter of revenue³³⁸.

The economic data concerning the north of the Iberian Peninsula at that time are scarce, although we know that the revenue of the municipalities came from agricultural and cattle exploitation within their territory, whose taxes were rented out. To these were added fines, local taxes and donations from wills. Until relatively recently, it was thought that cities contributed to the treasury with taxes that were generally collected in kind and rental payments also in kind, although current state of research on mints and monetary circulation at that time shows that payment in cash³³⁹ was customary. The term *vectigal* (from *vehere*, to transport) was used during the Principate to designate the indirect taxes levied on economic activity in the *ager publicus* or the *canon* paid for leasing the *res publica* paid by the concessionaires of public goods –for example with mines, whose concession was regulated by the *lex metallis dicta*. Although at first the *vectigalia* used to be paid in kind they changed over time and became a set of indirect and direct or personal taxes (*tributum* and *stipendium*) which made up the tax system³⁴⁰. We know from Pliny that in his time the second half of the 1st century AD, all the communities north of the Duero River would be stipendiary towns of the *conventus cluniensis*³⁴¹. It is to be assumed

³³⁷ PLINY, *Nat. Hist.*, XVI, 32.

³³⁸ FRANK 1920. FERNÁNDEZ DE BUJÁN 2012, pp. 282, 288, 290: From the 2nd century on, the *stipendium* became a regular tax levied on subjected peoples apart from war, though it continued to pay the troops' salaries. And so the inhabitants of the city of *Lancia*, according to Ptolemy a city of the Astures, were *stipendiarii*, and according to Pliny part of the *conventus cluniensis* (see HERNÁNDEZ GUERRA 2008, p. 416).

³³⁹ ARIAS FERRER 2007, pp. 368-370.

³⁴⁰ FERNÁNDEZ DE BUJÁN 2012, p. 248; BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 1986, pp. 220-221; HERNÁNDEZ GUERRA 2008, p. 416.

³⁴¹ PLINY describes the *Citerior Tarraconensis* in the sections from Book III to the end of Book IV (*Nat. Hist.* III 4, 26-279): the *conventus Cluniensis* was made up by the territories of eight pre-Roman peoples among whom the Astures were not to be found. They were the: *Arevaci, Autrigones, Cantabri, Caristii, Pellendones, Turmodigi, Vaccei* and *Varduli*; (*Nat. Hist.* III 18): In Early Imperial *Hispania Citerior* we find 12 colonies, 13 *municipia*, 18 *municipia Latina*, one federate city and 135 stipendiary cities. Compared with the other *conventus*, he does not mention in the *conventus Cluniensis* or the rest of NW the juridical status of the communities, so we may consider them as all stipendiary. Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* III, 26, 27, 28): "Sharing a border with these 22 Asturian tribes, divided between Augustan and Transmontane, with Asturica

that the same situation would occur in the three Roman *conventus* in the northwest of the Peninsula, which at that time had only three cities recognized as such, the Augustan foundations of Astorga, Lugo and Braga, and a whole host of *populi stipendiarii*, among whom were the Asturian *Lancienses*, which Ptolemy in his work *Geographias Hyphegesis* differentiates from the *Lanciati Vettoni* (then included in the *Lusitania Ulterior*)³⁴². This is another argument in favour of the survival during the Augustan period of several *Lancienses* peoples, the *Astures* in the north of Zamora, and other tribes such as the *gens* of *Vettones* of *Lanciati*, it being possible that any of them would give rise to the Roman *Lance* in Villasabariego in the vicinity of León. It should be noted that the ethnic classification of Asturian peoples was not always adapted to the Roman provincial or conventual territorial administration, whose "geographies" would be used for tax purposes, and this is sometimes contradictory even in the analysis of the same source: according to the data provided by Pliny³⁴³, the Asturians lived in *Gallaecia*, bordering Cantabria (Nat. Hist. 34, 158); and the *Zoelae* were first described among the *Astures* (Nat. Hist. III, 28) and later defined as *civitas* from *Gallaecia* (Nat. Hist. III, 9, 10).

Augustus established another series of personal taxes, the so-called *vigesima libertatis* that involved the payment of 5% of the value of slaves in manumissions. One was a tribute whose fiscal relevance would lead to the creation of a *fiscus libertatis et peculiarum* in the 2nd century and another, the *vigesima hereditatis*, an inheritance tax. One of the most advantageous taxes for the Treasury was still the *portorium*, a toll and customs duty. In addition to the Public Treasury, another of the institutions imposed by Rome on the Iberian Peninsula was the postal system, with relay teams established along military roads. The stopping places were of two kinds. The first was called a *mutatio*, which was a stopping place similar to a staging post that kept twenty horses ready for the transmission of orders and news, and also carts, oxen and mules necessary for the transport of people and goods. One of them was probably located in the aforementioned *Lance*³⁴⁴

which is a major *urbs*. Among these peoples there are *Gigurri*, *Paesici*, *Lancienses* and *Zoelae*. The total population is 240.000 free men".

³⁴² PTOLEMY (*Geograph.* II, 4, 6), though it is possible that he is using paleo-ethnonyms. *CIL II* 760, the dedicated epigraph on the bridge in Alcántara mentions two "*municipia*" (sic) *Lancienses* well differentiated, the *oppidani* and the *transcudani*, both stipendiary of Lusitania, making the Latin terms *civitas* and *municipium* equivalent.

³⁴³ PLINY (*HN* III, 4, 112) mentions the *Astures* as *Gallaeci* (province of *Citerior Tarraconensis*), and the *Vettoni* as *Lusitani*: "*Durius amnis e maximis Hispaniae, ortus in Pelendonibus et iuxta Numantiam lapsus, dein per Arevacos Vaccaeosque, disternatis ab Asturia Vettonibus, a Lusitania Gallaecis, ibi quoque Turdulos a Bracaris arcens*".

³⁴⁴ Jesús LIZ GUIRAL, Professor and Chair of Archaeology at the University of Salamanca, and one of the most recent to study the Leonese *Lancia* in Villasabariego, proposed in the lecture he gave on the 4th of

in León. Larger ones had twice the number of animals and could be a *civitas* –a enclosed population nucleus–, or a *mansio*³⁴⁵, a place of accommodation and food staged for troops while marching. The others were *stationes*³⁴⁶, another type of construction related to roads. They were meeting places sometimes fortified and able to undertake customs functions³⁴⁷.

Apart from this, the financial scenario continued practically unchanged until in the Flavian era the Equestrian Order took over the administration. Though it was not until the end of the 2nd century when an imperial administrative organization was set up, with a *cursus honorum* that governed finances and the Treasury by means of a *procurator a rationibus*, hierarchically superior to the provincial *procuratores*. The *procurator* controlled revenue and also expenditure on behalf of the *fiscus*. The mines of the Hispanic Northwest³⁴⁸ were transferred to the Imperial Treasury. It was a region that in the time of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus began to be controlled by a *procurator metallorum*, an office about which F. Sánchez-Palencia³⁴⁹ says is "the result of a general policy developed at this time of the Empire, tending to place the Imperial freedmen, almost always from the East, in posts of financial and technical responsibility". From the memorial stones in Villalís (Villamontán de la Valduerna, León) we know that it was a position held by a commander from the *Legio VII* in 191: the freedman M. Aurelius Firmus (IRPLe 1986, 41).

The emperor would receive from the *aerarium* the sums necessary for the government and administration of most of the provinces of the Empire but his *patrimonium*³⁵⁰ was also included in the *fiscus* –according to the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*– but finally disassociated at the end of the 2nd century. The two persons then responsible for the Treasury and central finances were then the *comes sacrarum largitionum* (count of the sacred magnanimity, responsible for the *aerarium sacrum*) and the *comes rei privatae* (count of the assets of the Treasury and the emperor's private property), after a process of

February 2011 within the context of the *Cátedra Promonumenta "Realidad Arqueológica de la antigua ciudad de Lancia"* the locating there of an Augustan *mutatio* whose remains were the only known ones until then in the Iberian Peninsula and one of the few ever identified throughout the Empire.

³⁴⁵ SAAVEDRA Y MORAGAS 1862, pp. 19-20.

³⁴⁶ SANTOS YANGUAS 2014, p. 368.

³⁴⁷ FERNÁNDEZ OCHOA; SALIDO DOMÍNGUEZ and ZARZALEJOS PRIETO 2014, pp. 122-124.

³⁴⁸ SANTOS YANGUAS 2015, pp. 105-122; OZCARIZ GIL 2014, pp. 228 and 248.

³⁴⁹ SÁNCHEZ-PALENCIA RAMOS 1983, pp. 664ss.

³⁵⁰ MALAVÉ OSUNA 2007, p. 33: the former properties of the Imperial family increased the *patrimonium Caesaris* and everything else that was added by means of inheritance, donations, acquisition or confiscations thereafter. In charge of these appears the figure of *procuratores patrimonii*.

progressive transfer of resources from the administration's "central revenue fund of the Empire" to the "funds of the provincial prefectures". This financially bolstered provincial funds to the detriment of the central administration. Regarding the taxation of the military, financing started out by being levied according to each war campaign by means of an extraordinary *tributum* for payment of the *stipendium*, although there was a different sum, the *aerarium Sanctius*, a sacred deposit provisioned by the *vicessima*, set aside for war within the *aerarium Saturni*. Under Augustus around the year AD 6, military expenses began to be transferred to the *aerarium militare*³⁵¹ placing a college of three senators in charge, the *praefecti aerari militari*, who administered it for the following two hundred years.

These taxes were used to finance Roman public works³⁵² in the provinces of Hispania, especially roads and urban and military fortifications. The permanent camps in strategic places were set up as advanced positions for the legions and auxiliary corps during the conquest and, immediately after, served as prisons and colonies. These colonies could not remain strategically isolated³⁵³ among native inhabitants, so the construction and maintenance of Roman roads and works associated with them³⁵⁴ such as bridges, were right from the start essential for the pacification of the territory, centralized political control and the establishment of stable commercial routes. A case is documented in a 19th century newspaper article³⁵⁵ concerning the donation of city walls and gates for *Pax Iulia* (Beja), in the *conventus Pacensis* by Augustus himself, according to an epigraph dated between July 3 BC and June 2 BC.

It is in this context that the construction of a stable occupation camp would become necessary as part of the control strategy of the northwest of Hispania, that of the *Legio VI Hispaniensis*, at the confluence where the River Torío flows into the Bernesga, one of the tributaries of the old *Astura* River, today's River Esla. This does not rule out that the first fortified precinct of León –the wooden *vallum* with earthen *agger*– was used as a barracks for the troops during the conquest phase and that its first occupants were

³⁵¹ For the *aerarium Saturni*, see CORBIER 1974. For the *aerarium militare*, FERNÁNDEZ URIEL 2003, pp. 197-214. The relation between *fiscus Caesaris* and *aerarium* is not well known, although documentary sources describe Imperial grants to the *aerarium* on occasions of public works. What seems likely is that the *fiscus Caesaris* extended its scope of action over the State as a whole while the *aerarium* ended up being the Tax and Revenue office of the city of Rome.

³⁵² BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 1992, p. 221. Ref. HEICHELHEIM 1972, pp. 1148ss.

³⁵³ BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 1996, p. 82.

³⁵⁴ FERNÁNDEZ OCHOA *et alii* 2014, p. 115.

³⁵⁵ D'ENCARNAÇÃO, 1988 (= AE 1989, 368; HEp 2, 744) + *id.*, FE 40, 1992, *addenda*, taken from ABASCAL PALAZÓN, 1996, p. 48.

troops from the V *Alaudae* or X *Gemina* legions. The current state of archaeological research refers to the troops of the *Legio VI Hispaniensis* first and the *Legio VII Gemina* later as the occupants of the Roman fortification that would give rise to the city of León.

However, as we have already seen, in the current Leonese territory, pacification was not assured at the beginning of the Imperial period because Tiberius then sent three legions to the territory of the northern mountain peoples (the *Gallaeci*, *Astures* and *Cantabri*), as we may interpret from Strabo (III, 3, 7-8). It is possible that the second Roman camp of León, the Early Imperial camp, was built then, although it is more likely that the *Legio VI Hispaniensis* had already erected its stone fortification in Augustan times.

Around AD 73-74, when Pliny the Elder was an Equestrian procurator in Hispania Citerior, Vespasian would carry out extensive military and financial reforms³⁵⁶ relating to the granting rights of *Latinitas* to the three *Hispaniae* after AD 69³⁵⁷. This, however, would not affect most of the Leonese centres at such an early date, although some sources call them *res publica*³⁵⁸, as has been verified for example in *Lancia* (Villasabariego, León). Almost half a century ago Diego Santos³⁵⁹, in the already mentioned epigraphic study on the *conventus Asturum*, considered the possibility that several Leonese centres of population held municipal status juridically, and offers as proof the verification of the presence of a *Brigaecium duumvir*, a *duumvir bis* in *Lancia* and a *sacerdos* from *Bergidum Flavium*, all holding municipal offices in the capital *Tarraco*, where delegates from the *civitates* attended the provincial *concilium* every year. The author deduces that they would not have dared to boast of such municipal honours, "*omnibus honoribus in re publica functus*" if their places of origin had not been *municipia*. In addition, it is also known from epigraphy that municipal priests and priests of the imperial cult of this *conventus* became provincial *flamines*, such as L. Fabius Silus, who

³⁵⁶ Imperial administration was delegated to its ally, the previous governor of Syria, Caius Licinius Mucianus, whose fiscal reform increased the taxes from the provinces, as well as his own personal wealth. (CASIUS DIO, Cornelius, *Historia Romana*, LXVI.2, 5.)

³⁵⁷ CANTO and DE GREGORIO 1996, p. 216.

³⁵⁸ GARCÍA FERNÁNDEZ 1991; KREMER 2006, pp. 121-175. ORTÍZ DE URBINA ÁLAVA, 2000, pp. 448, no. 8: "The term *res publica* is found associated both with communities holding a known juridical statute (*colonia* and *municipium*) as well as to others whose statute is unknown like, for example, *Avobriga*, *Bergidum Flavium*, *Bracara Augusta*, *Lucus Augusti*, *Lancia*, *Intercatia Vaccaeorum*, *Segobriga*, *Segontia Arevacorum*, *Tritium Magallum* or *Pompaelo*".

³⁵⁹ DIEGO SANTOS 1972, p. 20.

served in *Brigaecium* as *iudex* (judge) and became priest of the province of Hispania Citerior³⁶⁰.

In short, as has already been described before, the presence of several military units in the Leonese context over several decades during the Roman conquest phase has been archaeologically verified³⁶¹. However, the later occupation phase lasted much longer in time, some five centuries. Corresponding to the latter is the presence of at least two legions garrisoned successively in the capital and the probable continuity of at least one garrison or a *vexillatio* in the Leonese suburb of Puente Castro. There were also other units in various places in the province of León such as in Villalís de la Valduerna where the repetition of epigraphs (one from the year 163 and another from the year 184) commemorating the birth of the *Legion VII Galbiana, ob natalem aquilae*, seems to indicate that this could have been the place where this military corps was founded on 10th June 68 AD. In the same region commemorative epigraphs have also appeared of the *Cohors I Celtiberorum* in Priaranza de la Valduerna, and of the *Cohors I Gallica*³⁶² in Luyego de Somoza, both dated in the 2nd century. Many decades before, the *Legio VII Galbiana* had been renamed *Legio VII Gemina*, and the veterans of the *Legio VI Victrix*, such as the tribune Pompeius Faventinus, prefect of the *Cohors VI Asturum*³⁶³, were still connected to the Leonese province, perhaps because this was their place of origin.

1.7 Roman fortifications: *res publica in publico uso* and *res sanctae*

While during the Republic only the assets belonging to the Roman people were considered *res publicae*³⁶⁴, later the assets for public use owned by the colonies or municipalities of Rome (*res universitatis*) such as theatres, forums, ports and other similar assets were also subject to an analogous legal regime to that of *res publicae in uso publico* or belonging to the Roman people³⁶⁵. The *res publicae in uso publico* were considered as such either because of their very nature as well as *ius gentium* (as in the case of the sea

³⁶⁰ MARTINO GARCÍA 2018.

³⁶¹ COSTA-GARCÍA and CASAL GARCÍA 2015, p. 144.

³⁶² GARCÍA Y BELLIDO 1966, pp. 34-37; BELTRÁN ORTEGA and ZUBIARRE 2017, 377-387.

³⁶³ As proof of the epigraph found in Asturica Augusta: *CIL* 2.2637=AE 1966, 187=IRPLEón78 (see GOFFAUX 2011, pp. 464-465).

³⁶⁴ D.50.16.15. Ulpiano; *Comentarios al Edicto, Libro X*. “the property of a city has been called exaggeratedly “public”, because what is public is only that which belongs to the Roman people”.

³⁶⁵ SERNA VALLEJO 2005, p. 14. Quotes as its source D.1.8.6.1. “They belong to the community, not to private owners, for example, the theatres we find in cities, the stadiums and other such things, as well as others that are held in common by the cities...”.

and its coasts, rivers with permanent flow, whether or not they were navigable) or because the authorities had intended them so for public use by means of a special edict called a *publicatio*. Streets, roads, bridges, forums, squares, theatres and thermal baths were so considered. Those *res publicae* belonged to the *populus Romanus*, to the State, to be used by all the citizens of Rome, since they were intended for public use, hence they also received the name of *res publicae in uso publico*³⁶⁶.

Gaius in his *Institutiones* (Gai, II, 2, compiled by Justinian in D.1.8.1) indicates that:

“The main division of things is reduced to two classes: things subject to divine law and things subject to human law. Those subject to divine law are, for example, sacred and religious things. Sacred places are to a certain extent under divine law like city gates and city walls. Things subject to divine law are exempt from the private domain; but things subject to human law are most of the times subject to the private domain; however, they may not belong to anybody, for things belonging to an inheritance before any one has become heir have no actual owner”.

This disposition leads us to propose the divine character, *res sanctae*, of Roman fortifications. In this sense Serna Vallejo³⁶⁷ makes the following observation on Gaius’ principle: “*Res humani iuris* are opposed to *Res divini iuris*, a category that includes *res sacrae* consecrated to the superior gods, *res religiosae* intended for the worship of the lower gods or Manes, and *res sanctae* are considered by Gaius “to a certain extent divine law”. This group included the city walls and city gates for having been placed under the protection of the gods through a special ceremony, even though they had not been consecrated to them. The reason that cities gates and walls of cities were considered “sacred things” has to do with the fact that the violation of this type of property was a crime, providing severe sanctions for its authors, which provided these properties with a special protection against attacks to which they may be subjected (D. 1. 8.8. pr; D.1.8.8.2; D.1.8.9.3; D. 1.8.11)”.

A. Fernández de Buján detailed³⁶⁸ the different forms of crime related to the above: one was *peculatus*, consisting of stealing or misusing public, sacred or religious

³⁶⁶FERNÁNDEZ DE BUJÁN Y FERNÁNDEZ 2013, p. 9: “La distinción romana entre cosas publicas de uso público y cosas públicas patrimonio del estado, que se corresponde con las actuales nociones de bienes demaniales y bienes patrimonio del Estado”; MELLADO RUIZ 2013.

³⁶⁷ SERNA VALLEJO 2005, p. 13. Ref. PONTE ARREBOLA 2007, p. 54: Gaius explains the sense of the *res sanctae* of public property in another work, *Epitome* II, 1.1).

³⁶⁸ FERNÁNDEZ DE BUJÁN 2018, p. 187. *Id.* (2000), p. 11: “the application of the *ius* corresponded to the *pontifices* and the religious idea would shape the structure and effects of important juridical institutions whose infringement would not only constitute in these cases an act against the *ius* (*ius non est, iniuria*) but also against the *fas* (*fas non est, nefas*): for instance (...) the profanation of tombs or other religious sites”.

assets by a public official. Against this crime Augustus promoted a law possibly inspired by Julius Caesar, the *lex Iulia de peculatu et de sacrilegiis*. In addition to the criminal behaviours punished by this law, there were other punishable acts within the sphere of *imperium militae* if magistrates considered them as such, even though they were not explicitly classified as criminal. J.M. Albuquerque Sacristán analysed the explicit forbiddance of "burial, cremation, and construction of funerary monuments or the construction of new sites for cremation (*ustrinam*) within 500 paces of the city walls, the prohibition of unroofing, demolition or destruction of a city building without prior authorization, and the principle that we know as *ne urbs ruinis deformatur* in order to preserve public places". He concludes that "in the *praetorial*, jurisprudential and legislative provisions –including the oldest regulations and municipal legislation– a constant predisposition emerges in everything that concerns the protection of *res publicae*, especially *res publicae in publico usu*" ³⁶⁹.

Gaius' division of things would be extended in late Christian Roman times by Justinian's *Institutiones*, according to their holders: common, public, corporate bodies, private or *nullius* (belonging to no one) and the latter, *nullius*, are classified as sacred, religious and holy. The criteria inherited from paganism were modified in some respects, but they kept the graves, except those of enemies and empty funerary monuments, in the category of religious things while the walls in that of holy things.

Gaius II, I, 10:

"(...) The walls are called *sanctae* because any attack committed against them are punishable with death, just as those parts of the law that establish punishment against those who violate them are called *sanctions*".

This was also the case for the Leonese walls, *res sanctae* immersed in Roman military ritual religiosity which, as we will see later, will have implications impossible to ignore when reinterpreting their architectural evolution: it seems difficult to imagine Roman citizens –even less legionaries– from the 3rd and 4th centuries using funerary monuments of their relatives to repair or expand their sacred walls.

The change of religious rituals that led to the official conversion of the Empire to Christianity after the promulgation of the *lex Cunctos Populos* Edict of Thessalonica (*C.Th.* XVI, 1, 2) on 28th February 380 might have been rather categorical in some aspects

³⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 253; ALBURQUERQUE SACRISTÁN 1997, pp. 139-160.

or have induced a gradual religious acculturation for decades from the mid-4th century, reaching the entire state administrative structure at the beginning of the following century. Actually, in the year 341 Constans and Constantius II had forbidden sacrifices (*C.Th.* XVI.10.2) and closed urban temples (*C.Th.* XVI. 10. 3) in honour of pagan gods. Half a century later, on 14th November 408, another edict (*C.Th.* XVI, 5, 42) issued by Honorius excluded from the palatine administration the *enemies of the Catholic sect*. As we have explained, despite a change in the official religion, Justinian regulations certified the survival of the holy character of the walls during the following century. And so, it seems unlikely that the Hispanic-Roman Christians of the northwest of Hispania used funeral monuments of the 3rd and 4th centuries, either in León's fortification or in the urban walls of Astorga, Castroventosa, Lugo, Gijón, or in the Portuguese cities of Braga and Porto, among others. This leads us to open a discussion concerning the dating of all these holy fortified precincts.

Sacralization of Roman territory is one of the underlying axes of the administrative organization that led to a dichotomy between *provinciae* as a delimited, purified and guarded region against the *externae gentes* who populated desecrated and disorganized spaces. There is a certain peculiarity about the Hispanic Northwest worth noting, perhaps due to the current state of historical research provided by epigraphy, but merits documenting: namely, there is no explicit evidence of a local priesthood in the *Asturum*, *Bracaraugustanus* or *Lucensis conuentus* despite the fact that two local *flamines*³⁷⁰ have been documented in *Clunia*. However, we should remember the case of an Asturian proposed as provincial *flamen* in the 2nd century, Caius Iulius Fidus, in addition to the aforementioned Brigaecian judge who became the *flamen* of the Citerior³⁷¹. A recent discovery of an epigraph in Mérida where three dedicators appear on other Lusitanian epigraphs shows the relationship between Cornelius Bocchus³⁷² posts: he was *flamen* (of Lusitania) and *praefectus fabrum* in charge of the construction, in this case, of a temple to Divus Augustus in Mérida. The same epigraph is one more example of the diversity of devotions found in Roman epigraphy in Hispania, which includes worship to

³⁷⁰ The epigraph *CIL* II 4233 mentions the *flamen* *L. Antonius Modestus* from *Intercantia (...)* *Amocensis* and *Cluniensis*; ref. GOFFAUX 2011, p. 457, 459, nos. 105, 108.

³⁷¹ *C. Iulius Fidus*, from *Asturica*, on whose gravestone it says that he had been *sacerdos Romae et Augusti* and *Flamen provinciae Hispaniae Citeriores*, which does not imply a local priestly office in Astorga (see PASTOR MUÑOZ 1977, p. 194; GALLEGO FRANCO 2017, p. 586).

³⁷² SAQUETE CHAMIZO 2011, pp. 163-172.

natural female deities such as *Mater Dea*, as shown by Ortíz de Urbina Álava³⁷³, analysing an inscription from the 2nd or 3rd centuries found in Veleia (Iruña, Álava), a walled city and local community to which the dedicating public slave, Eucarpus, belonged.

Regarding the religious activity in the Hispanic military context³⁷⁴, the Leonese epigraphy also testifies to the relevance and diversity of liturgies in Roman camps; the best example is the votive altar, *CIL* II 2660, dedicated to Diana by Quintus Tullius Maximus, commander of the *Legio VII Gemina*³⁷⁵. Subirats Sorrosal³⁷⁶, in his study on the Roman military ceremonial in the Early Empire, holds to J. Helgeland's³⁷⁷ hypothesis, which follows Vegetius³⁷⁸ and Flavius Josephus³⁷⁹ and states that Roman military structures have religious character as cities since they are "armed cities". And continuing with the Etruscan tradition, both in the Roman cities and within the military camps there was an *Auguraculum*³⁸⁰, a sacred area that in fortifications was used by the military augurs. In fact, religion involved all aspects of Roman military life right from the moment the personal oath was taken by soldiers in pledging their loyalty to the Emperor with the rituals of *sacramentum* and its purification, the *lustratio exercitus*. The Leonese camps and fortifications were also from their origin under the protection of their own *Genius*³⁸¹, and submitted to religious rites during their planning and building processes with several consecutive ceremonies: *inauguratio*, *orientatio*, *limitatio* and *consecratio*. The *inauguratio* was the preceding consultation of the will of the gods on the foundation of the camp. With the *orientatio*, the *augur* and the military land surveyors established the direction of the camp's axes: *cardo* (usually from north to south) and *decumano maximo* (from east to west). The *decumano* used to connect two gates: the *praetoriana* (closest to the enemy) and the *decumana* at the opposite end, although in León the northern gate of the camp has been called *decumana*. Those inscriptions to the Augustan *lares viales* can be understood in this context, the same as those built by Marcus Annius Verus and Marcus Annius Verianus, centurions of the *Legio VII Gemina* according to an inscription found in

³⁷³ ORTÍZ DE URBINA ÁLAVA 2012, p. 448.

³⁷⁴ ANDRÉS HURTADO 2002, pp. 137-160; *Id.* 2005.

³⁷⁵ RODRÍGUEZ DE LA ROBLA 2003, pp.85-90, no. 32, 33 and *CIL* II, 2660.

³⁷⁶ SUBIRATS SORROSAL 2013.

³⁷⁷ ANDRÉS HURTADO 2002, p. 139, no. 9; HELGELAND 1978, pp. 1490-1493.

³⁷⁸ VEGETIUS, II, 25: "(...) ut, in quovis loco fixerit [legio] castra armatam faciat civitatem(...)".

³⁷⁹ FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, II, 5, 2.

³⁸⁰ BAYET 1984, p. 44.

³⁸¹ SANTOS YANGUAS 2014b, pp. 379-380 who brings together the altars known so far and dedicated to the Genius of the *Legio VII Gemina*. Ref. RABANAL ALONSO 1988, p. 146.

Lugo³⁸², dated between 2nd and 3rd centuries (*CIL* II 2572 = *AE* 1973, No. 393). According to Resina Sola³⁸³ the *limitatio* when used in camps is also called *castramentatio* and showed the perimeter boundaries and the internal spaces, adapting the construction of the fortification to the type of military unit as well as to the number of soldiers and their mounts and the lay of the land³⁸⁴. They probably employed fixed modules for each building, using *pes monetalis* (29.6 cm) and *pes drusianus* (23.2 cm)³⁸⁵ as standard units of measurement. Other religious ceremonies, the *lustratio* and the subsequent *consecratio*, gave the fortified space a sacred character by means of a new sacrificial ritual that purified its ground, the *suovetaurilia*: the legionary standards, the *signa*, but not their carriers participated in these. After the *consecratio* the religious requirements for obtaining sacred protection in the camp were considered fulfilled.

Regarding the “physical” liturgical requirements for the construction of the camp, a moat was first excavated, *circumagebant sulcum*, and the walls and the main access were built at the same time, while trees in the area were chopped down. Meanwhile, the interior was levelled as far as possible. This *modus operandi* could be the origin of a new hypothesis about the León II precinct analysed in this essay: the possibility that, whilst the first stone-built camp was constructed, a temporary defensive palisade could have been built after the possible destruction of the first earthen fortification, called León I.

The *principia*³⁸⁶ were the sacred heart of the legion. At the entrance of the *atrium* of the headquarters in some British (Pen Olsztyn) and Germanic (Rottweil) camps on the *limes* at the exact centre of the enclosure, foundational deposits have been found, a hearth excavated in a shallow structure and later sealed. The main entrance in the *via praetoria*, was monumental, open to a columnated patio usually paved that overlooked a basilica-type building of around nine to twelve metres wide, with a double row of solid columns supporting the roof. In the centre of the back wall there was access to the *aedes* or *sacellum*, the sanctuary where the eagle and the legionary standards with 59 or 60 *signa*, *imagines*, busts of the imperial family and the *vexilla*³⁸⁷ of the detachments were kept.

³⁸² SANTOS YANGUAS 2014b, p. 377.

³⁸³ RESINA SOLA 1998, p. 377.

³⁸⁴ RICHMOND 1955, pp. 297-315.

³⁸⁵ WALTHER 1988, pp. 81-98; BONI 1998, pp. 853-873.

³⁸⁶ FELLMANN 1958.

³⁸⁷ The *vexillum* was a standard whose flag dropped vertically from a horizontal boom on the staff. Each cohort of the legion had one that identified it and beneath it the cohorts were formed in battle as *vexillationes*. The word *vexillatio* increased in use to refer to any unit outside that of the legion.

The archaeological excavations of some *principiae* evidence they had an open *atrium* and columns, like the camp of *Legio III Augusta* in *Lambaesis*, in North Africa. Other fortifications such as the British ones of Caerleon and York also follow this model³⁸⁸. Possible headquarters of some camps in the northwest of Hispania have been studied, including part of those of the *Legio VII Gemina* in León, excavated in two phases. The first carried out by F. Miguel Hernández in 1989 and the second directed by M.L. González Fernández³⁸⁹. These *principia* are located in a building situated in the area where the *via decumana* and *principalis* (named as such by Leonese historiography) intersected within the precinct, where the remains were found of a construction built of sandstone ashlar in *opus vittatum* technique with enhanced grouting as in the camp wall made of small ashlar (from the Flavian era). These remains have been interpreted as the wall of the northern part of the legion's headquarters, despite the fact that the building's proposed floor-plan (with free-standing *aedes*) did not follow the general design of *principia* in other legionary camps, but rather the layout of those enclosures associated to smaller troop formations such as the cohorts, like the camp of Ciudadela (Insúa, Sobrado dos Monxes, La Coruña).

In the surroundings of these *principia* was the *praetorium*, residence of the legate, which was a large building and sometimes included an arcaded *atrium* and garden (as verified in the *Caerleon* and *Xanten* fortifications). It also had its protective deities, as evidenced in the aforementioned votive stone *CIL* II 2634³⁹⁰ from Astorga (León), which in addition to the aforementioned *cursus honorum* preserves the epigraph with a dedication by the prefect of the public treasury, Q. Mamilius Capitolinus, to the *Genius* of the *praetorium*. It may be possible that Mamilius Capitolinus dedicated this inscription to the *Genius* of the *praetorium* in *Asturica Augusta* or to the one of the nearby camp where he served in León, a *praetorium* that was discovered in the course of two successive archaeological excavations carried out at the site of San Pelayo no. 8, directed in the first phase by the author of this study³⁹¹ and in the second by Hervés Raigoso. There we found remains of a large building that might correspond to the camp's *praetorium*, whose *Genius*

³⁸⁸ BOON 1972, p. 14; WEBSTER 1969, p. 184.

³⁸⁹ RODRÍGUEZ COLMENERO *et al.* 2009, pp. 465-480; GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ *et al.* 2005, pp. 161-184, outstanding among the material found there is an epigraph in honour of Antoninus Pius.

³⁹⁰ *CIL* II.2634 (Astorga, León); SANTOS YANGUAS 2014, p. 380.

³⁹¹ FERNÁNDEZ ORDÁS 2005: *Informe preliminar de la excavación arqueológica de dos sondeos en San Pelayo 8 (León)*; HERVÉS RAIGOSO 2014: *Memoria excavación arqueológica en área. Limpieza fase anterior y ampliación área calicatas. Solar plaza San Pelayo N° 8, León*. Unpublished, Servicio Territorial de Cultura de León, Junta de Castilla y León.

the previous altar was dedicated to. In both interventions two Roman construction stages have been identified: one from the last quarter of the 1st century AD (an *opus signinum* floor possibly converted into a pool with remains of *tesserae*) and another phase with brick walls from the early 3rd century AD. Part of this construction is still underground, so its size is still unknown, yet a recent urban intervention in the nearby square left a hypocaust visible.



Fig. 41. Structures corresponding to the *praetorium* of the Roman camp of León, reused during the Early Middle Ages. Photograph by Francisco M. Herves Raigoso.

Continuing with this revision of the religiosity of the Roman army, in the case of León, we have highlighted in previous pages the discovery on epigraphs of various cults practised by *milites* and magistrates settled there for several centuries. They indicate that, despite the obliged and regulated rituals where the worship to the Empire was strictly observed, there was religious tolerance towards native traditions. This is to be seen with the worship of *Vagus Donnaegus*³⁹² found on a tombstone in La Milla del Río (León) or of the *Genius* of the *asturicensis*. Thanks to the Latin epigraphs dedicated to ancient pre-Roman goddesses³⁹³ in El Bierzo region, we also have information regarding female cults such as those of *Deae Degant[ia]* –protective goddess of the *Argaeli*– to whom a memorial stone found in Cacabelos was dedicated, the goddess *Mandicae* (Ponferrada) or

³⁹² GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ 2014, pp. 209-210: the epigraph *CIL* II 2636 appeared some 20 kilometres from Astorga on a memorial stone reused in the paving of a Late Imperial villa.

³⁹³ OLIVARES PEDREÑO 2002, pp. 106-108. The author expressly warns about the qualitative difference between dedications to male gods, far more frequent, and those which honour female divinities.

Deae Cenduediae from San Esteban del Toral, in the municipality of Bembibre, where another dedication to *Matribus* has been found, which may certainly have been a Roman cult³⁹⁴. The guardian goddess *Asturica* also seems to have been worshiped in the city from whom it takes its name, the current Astorga. In addition to *Degantia*, *Mandica Cenduedia* and *Asturica*, other goddesses were worshiped in the mountain area of the provinces of León and Asturias such as *Deva*, who was perhaps a deity from the northern part of the Iberian Peninsula, or a river name like that of the Asturian river that rises in Picos de Europa, the River Deva. And reference has already been made to a possible cult to *dea Brigantia*, of Nordic origin, in the northwest of Hispania.

As for the gods of the Roman pantheon, we know of dedications to Jupiter, the Capitoline Triad, the goddesses Fortuna and Diana, the Nymphs, and even the gods of health such as Mercury, protectors of mines and the army and deities from eastern worships (*Aesculapius*, *Isis*, *Osiris*, *Mitra*³⁹⁵...). Less common is the cult to the *Dioscuri*³⁹⁶, the twin gods Castor and Pollux, which is related to the name *Gemina* of *Legio VII*. The Roman religion would continue to surround military life in the province of León until the end of the 4th century when it was officially replaced by Christianity after the Edict of Thessalonica in the year 380 (*CTh* 16, 1,2, 380). The 2nd century epigraphic group found in Villalís³⁹⁷ (Villamontán de la Valduerna, León) seems good proof of this. Another epigraph from the beginning of the 3rd century was found in the city wall of León³⁹⁸ near the Basilica of San Isidoro and dedicated by Caius Iulius Cerealis, the first legate *propraetor* sent by the Emperor to the newly created province *Hispania Nova Citerior Antoniniana*, to the goddess Juno (queen of the gods and mythological representation of motherhood), to the Emperor Caracalla and his mother Iulia Domna. He calls her “Pia, Felix, Augusta, mother of Antoninus Augustus, of the camps, the Senate and the Fatherland”, in that order. The title of *mater castrorum*, “mother of the military camps”, was previously held by some women from the *domus Caesarum* or *domus*

³⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 122.

³⁹⁵ GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ 1997, pp. 249-ss. These epigraphs are not frequent in Hispania and in the old *Astur* territory only one is known, discovered in the camp of *Legio*, possibly in the space occupied by the *valetudinarium*, the only camp precinct where votive memorial stones of non-official cults could be placed (*A.E.* 1967, no. 223 = Texts no. 19).

³⁹⁶ CID LÓPEZ 1981, pp. 115-124.

³⁹⁷ SANTOS YANGUAS 2010, p. 357. This author analyses the memorial *CIL* II.2553 = *ILS* 9127, of Lucretius Maternus, the *imaginifer* the *Legio VII Gemina*.

³⁹⁸ RABANAL and GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ 2001, pp. 138-141, epigraph no. 73, plate XX, 3. National Archaeological Museum of Madrid (*CIL* II 2661).

Augusta, perhaps by Agrippina and surely by Faustina the Younger³⁹⁹. In the current city of León, the cult to nymphs and protecting deities of the water supply was important right from its foundation as a military camp, as we can see from the discovery of hydraulic engineering remains found in urban archaeological excavations made in the mid-20th century.

Remains of a hydraulic channeling system or aqueduct from the first military settlement were discovered by A. García y Bellido in the northern part of the camp (in the garden of the Royal Collegiate of St. Isidoro and in Calle Abadía), who also discovered a settling tank with its water supply blocked up in the Early Imperial period. This information is relevant since it backs the hypothesis here proposed regarding the possible intentional destruction of the first military precinct as part of a general Roman military strategy to avoid leaving an abandoned camp to an enemy. In León, in any case, this demolition would not have been violent, according to current archaeological information, taking into account that the first wall built was made of wood and earth.

Moreover, the findings of García y Bellido are also in line with the discovery mentioned earlier in an emergency urban excavation to document two possible perpendicular ditches in U and V shape. These were dated in the Augustan period over a decade ago and were located opposite the northern gate of the Roman stone wall but inside the wall of *cubos*. These trenches were intentionally blocked and made inoperative prior to the construction of a hydraulic pipeline, one of whose sections was found by the author in the excavation of the neighbouring site⁴⁰⁰.

This new section of the aqueduct, oriented north-south running parallel to the later small-ashlar wall, was partly covered by the *via decumana* (in León referred to as the north-south axis of the Roman camp, as already mentioned before) in its nearest section to the northern part, where stratigraphy is best preserved from Roman times. Near the southern part, several medieval negative structures had perforated the hard *opus caementicium* of the aqueduct and the wall, situated to the west, constructed with small ashlar and brick materials from a *hypocaustum*. We believe a monumental open arched construction could have been raised above the level of circulation that covered a part of the hydraulic channeling system, as suggested by the structure of *opus caementicium*

³⁹⁹ CONESA NAVARRO 2019, pp. 281-299.

⁴⁰⁰ FERNÁNDEZ ORDÁS 2004a, *Intervención arqueológica en Cl. Serrano, 37, León*.

found to the south of this canalization, which was protected from the exterior by large blocks some of which were plundered centuries ago.



Fig. 42. Detail of a section of the aqueduct in the north-south direction (Calle Serranos, 37, León).



Fig. 43. Ashlars on the external face of the aqueduct section (Calle Serranos, 37, León).



Fig. 44. Photograph of the archaeological excavations at Calle Serranos 37, 39 and 41 in León, directed by the author⁴⁰¹. From right to left in the photography (from west to east on the site) below, the pillar base, possibly from an arched open structure, on the *via decumana*; a section of the aqueduct in the north-south direction with its external wall exposed; remains of the *via decumana* perforated by several medieval negative structures; an L-shaped ditch blocked with a significant amount of riverstones in the mid-1st century; ashlar wall probably from the *valetudinarium* (hospital), built after the occlusion of the trench.

As we have indicated before, the negative U and V shaped structures were intentionally blocked⁴⁰² and made unusable in the mid-1st century by filling them with riverstones of considerable size (with a diameter of between 20 and 25 cm). The oldest material discovered from the initial occupation phase, corresponding to the level where the trenches were built, is a fragment of *millefiori* glass from the Augustan period.

⁴⁰¹ FERNÁNDEZ ORDÁS 2004b: *Intervención arqueológica en Calle Serrano, 39-41, León*.

⁴⁰² The dismantling and planned closing of winter camps was a customary practice even in the time of Vespasian, according to Tacitus (Hist. IV, 61): (...) “*cohortium alarum legionum hiberna subversa cremataque, iis tantum relictis quae Mogontiaci ac Vindonissae sita sunt*”, the winter quarters of the cohorts, cavalry wings and legions were dismantled and burnt leaving standing only those in Maguncia and Vindonisa.



Fig. 45. Detail photograph of the archaeological excavations on Calle Serranos, 39 and 41, in León, directed by the author of this thesis. Wall with ashlar cladding, set in north-south direction, parallel to the so-called *via decumana*; probably a *valetudinarium* built after the blockage of the Augustan trench.

The later wall, with ashlar cladding, may possibly correspond to a large building of the camp, the *valetudinarium*⁴⁰³, that had an arched access from the northern road with direct access to the camp. A *castellum aquae* would have possibly been situated in one of the towers of the entrance gates. The findings seem to be directly related to the aqueduct's supply of clean water, and brick construction materials indicate that it had at least one hypocaust, a central heating structure whose stratigraphy was destroyed by a medieval well-built of riverstones, whose silting tank contained Early Medieval burnished ceramics. This well was found in an interior space enclosed by an ashlar wall. Its foundation trench penetrates a pre-existing street level, a layer of clay hardened to waterproof the area around it. Other examples of *hypocaustum* have been found in the remains of at least two *balnea*: those found under the Cathedral belonging to a large thermal bath complex⁴⁰⁴, corresponding to the second phase of the camp of the city of León, like the *valetudinarium*.

⁴⁰³ The *valetudinarium* was the military hospital which was set up in the surroundings of the central courtyard and, in some camps, it could have a size comparable to that of the *principia*: for example, in the Scottish camp of Inchtuthil it measured 91 metres long by 56 metres wide, being an area divided into 64 rooms.

⁴⁰⁴ Excavated in the 19th century by Demetrio DE LOS RÍOS Y SERRANO, *see below* fig. 117, p. 290.

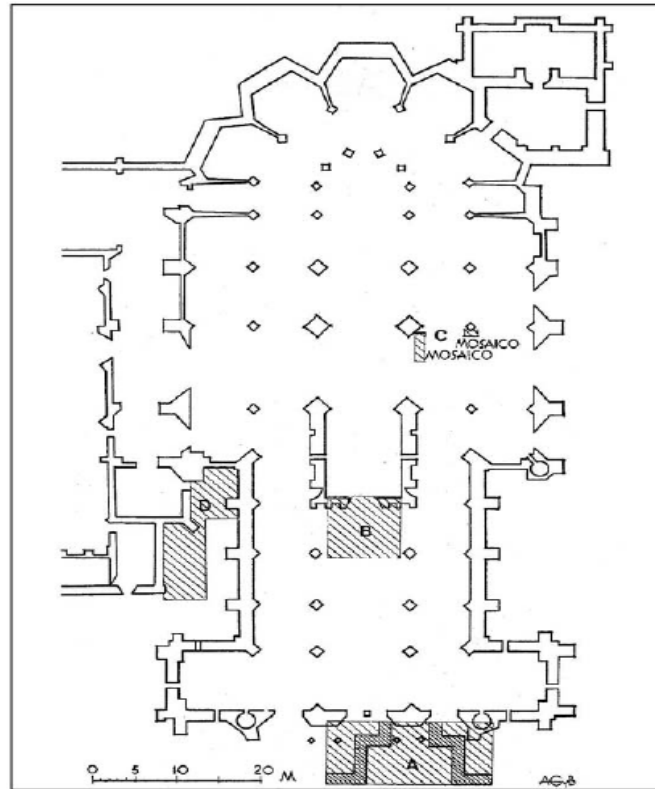


Fig. 46. A. García and Bellido's plan with the cathedral plan of León; marked with diagonal stripes, the Roman remains found underground between 1859 and 1961

In this military camp in León, signs have been found of a *fabrica* (workshop)⁴⁰⁵ of breastplates which could also have been a warehouse, but which in any case did not appear to have been related to the first Roman camp. This discovery's chronology coincides with the notable shortage of pre-Augustan weapons, which occurs similarly in the entire Hispanic Northwest⁴⁰⁶.

The *horrea* or granaries were equally important for military logistics and supplies; warehouses sometimes elevated above the ground by means of low walls or piling and at other times constructed underground. In the region of León the building known as *ergastula* in *Asturica Augusta* (Astorga) might have actually been a large underground barn⁴⁰⁷.

⁴⁰⁵ AURRECOECHEA-FERNÁNDEZ 2006, p. 330; LAVIÑA BLASCO 1876, pp. 23-25.

⁴⁰⁶ QUESADA SANZ 2007, p. 388, fig. 3.

⁴⁰⁷ SALIDO DOMÍNGUEZ 2013, p. 137.

CHAPTER 2

The Early Imperial small-ashlar wall (León II)

2.1 Military historiography and iconography and the stone walls.

As a rich source of knowledge to understand the León I and II camp enclosures, we return in this chapter to the information provided by the Column of Trajan⁴⁰⁸, without forgetting that this emperor was *Legio VII Gemina*'s legate just twenty years after its creation. We should pay attention to both the detailed sculpted representation of all types of *castra* (stone fortifications, temporary camps and *castellum*) and the iconographic relevance of the construction scenes. Permanent fortified cities or *castella* appear in scenes 32, 33, 47; Roman camps already completed and with tents inside, in scenes 8, 13, 21, 28, 43, 53, 56, 61, 62, 66, 98, 102 and 103; maybe 107, 110, 113, 125, 128 and 141. Completed and permanent interior constructions in the fortifications also appear in scenes 51 and possibly in 92. Other camps are represented already built but with the interior not visible to us: 24, 27, 50, 58, 134 and 147. The most interesting of all are those that represent the construction of a camp: 11-12, 16-17, 18-20, 39, 52, 60, 65, 68, 127 and 129.



⁴⁰⁸ <http://www.trajans-column.org>

Fig. 47. Fortification of stone ashlars and wooden *vallum*, at the base of the Trajan's Column.



Fig. 48. Scene of a fort construction with stone ashlars in Trajan's Column (<http://www.trajans-column.org>, scene 12)

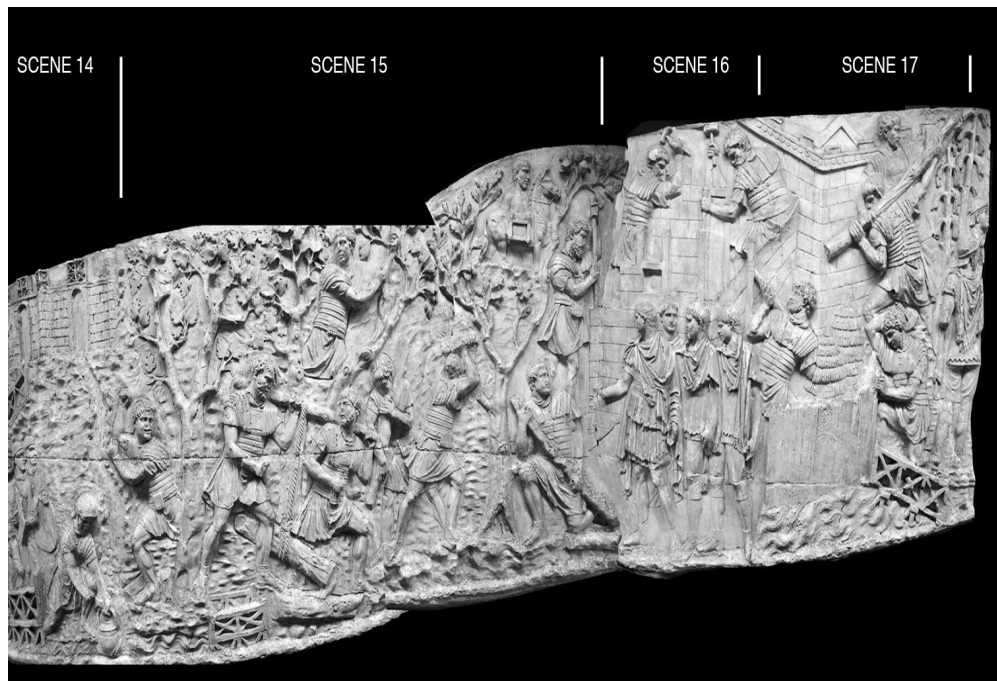


Fig. 49. Scene of wall construction with stone ashlars behind a wooden *vallum*, Trajan's Column (<http://www.trajans-column.org>, scenes 16 and 17)



Fig. 50. Scenes of wall construction with stone ashlars, Trajan's Column (<http://www.trajans-column.org>, scene 60)



Fig. 51. Scenes of camp construction with stone ashlars, Trajan's Column (<http://www.trajans-column.org>, scene 129)

Regarding historiography⁴⁰⁹, during the 19th century studies concerning Roman fortifications grew significantly, especially in the United Kingdom and Germany, not forgetting Napoleon III's excavations in search of *Alesia* (France) or the first Spanish works published in the *Revista de Bellas Artes e Histórico-Arqueológica* (Fine Arts and History-Archaeology Magazine) 1866-1868, with 87 numbers issued. However, it is considered that military historiography in Hispania⁴¹⁰ started at the beginning of the 20th century with the work of Adolf Schulten (1870-1960)⁴¹¹, doctor in Geology, in connection with his first excavations in the military camps of the site of *Numantia* (1909-1918) and his work on other sites such as those of Cáceres el Viejo, Rosinos de Vidriales (Zamora), Almazán and Alpanseque (both in Soria), Almenara (Castellón), Aguilar de Anguita (Guadalajara) or Ciudadela (La Coruña).

We cannot overlook the work of J.R. Mélida and Alinari⁴¹², nor the immense research of B. Taracena (1895-1951)⁴¹³, although García y Bellido was of greater importance for the study of the Northwest, having investigated the Roman past applying a scientific methodology that was lacking in previous archaeological research. After the Spanish Civil War, in the 1950s, he published his first work on the *Legio VII Gemina* as part of military research that culminated in 1961 with a general work studying the *exercitus hispanicus*. That same year he requested permission from the Diputación de León (County Council) to excavate inside the walled precinct of León, where he would return to excavate again in 1967, the year before the commemoration of the XIX centenary of the birth of the *Legio VII* (AD 68).

His studies meant a turning point from an earlier period where historical research was limited to written and architectural evidence⁴¹⁴ to another where archaeological

⁴⁰⁹ See DÍAZ-ANDREU and MORA RODRÍGUEZ 1995, pp. 28-30.

⁴¹⁰ An extraordinary historiographic overview in FERNÁNDEZ OCHOA and MORILLO CERDÁN 2005.

⁴¹¹ GARCÍA Y BELLIDO 1960, pp. 222-228; DURÁN CABELLO; MORALES HERNÁNDEZ and MORILLO CERDÁN 2017, pp. 174-201.

⁴¹² CASADO RIGALT 2006.

⁴¹³ TARACENA AGUIRRE 1941; *Id.* 1934.

⁴¹⁴ In the case of León, the historical work by P. Manuel Risco, author of the book XXXIV (1784) where he tells the ancient history of León within the context of the work directed by P. Flórez -*España Sagrada*-, and his *Historia de la ciudad y corte de la ciudad de León y sus reyes* (1792); the *Sumario de las Antigüedades Romanas que hay en España, en especial las referentes a las Bellas Artes* (1832) by the Enlightenment author Juan Agustín CEÁN BERMÚDEZ; the reports by P. Fidel FITA COLOMÉ in relation to the *Comisión Provincial de Monumentos de León* at the end of the 19th century, published then in several volumes in the *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* and now in the digital library of the Instituto Cervantes and used as a source for various epigraphs studied here; J. Eloy DÍAZ-JIMÉNEZ y MOLLEDA was secretary of the same Comisión Provincial de Monumentos de León at the beginning of the 20th century: in one of his works there is a review (Eloy Díaz Jiménez y Molleda, "*Historia del Museo Arqueológico de San Marcos de León. Apuntes para un catálogo*") in volume 78 of the *Boletín de la Real Academia de la*

materials were exhaustively catalogued in an innovative way making them an invaluable source of information since the earliest Roman documents we have available are mostly epigraphic. Finally, the great importance of the publications on Roman Hispania by J. M^a Blázquez Martínez, who died recently.

As for investigations concerning Roman engineering, it is worth highlighting those of Fernández Casado on Roman bridges⁴¹⁵ and of Saavedra and Moragas, Loewinsohn Robles and Moreno Gallo on Roman roads (as well as those of Blázquez y Delgado, or Sánchez Albornoz); and excellent recent studies on mining exploitations by Matías Rodríguez. Studies are yet to be carried out on the Roman irrigation systems of the *prata legionis*, as these remains are the predecessors of the old river canal systems in the Leonese *alfoz* such as the sluice in the River Bernesga and the canal of San Isidoro, both of Roman origin.

Regarding the vast bibliography on camp building, as an overall study we should mention the work by Ble Gimeno⁴¹⁶ and the contribution of archaeology to the general understanding of Roman military history and the innovative contribution that Virtual Archaeology⁴¹⁷ is lending to reinterpretation. In the case of the Leonese walls, the virtual debate that the engineer A. González Menéndez⁴¹⁸ has started up in a forum on military history is invaluable.

Historiography of Roman León carried out in the last two decades has been thoroughly referenced throughout this work despite the legal incongruity that results from

Historia (1921), written by Manuel GÓMEZ MORENO, whose *Catálogo Monumental de la Provincia de León* (1906-1908) is also worth mentioning. We should not forget the architectonic findings carried out during the restoration of monuments such as the Roman remains found below the floor of the Cathedral of León described by its restorers, the architects Matías LAVIÑA BLASCO (1859-1868) and Demetrio DE LOS RÍOS, one of whose plans, drawn up after finding the *termae* in 1888, is reproduced above. We should also mention the restorations carried out in León by Luis MENÉNDEZ-PIDAL when he was the “architect and conservator of monuments of the First Zone” between the years 1941 and 1975, among them León’s city walls from 1962-1972, freeing them by and large from the buildings attached to them (see MARTÍNEZ-MONEDERO 2005, p. 6).

⁴¹⁵ Of special interest for this work is the publication in 2010 by the Fundación de la Ingeniería Técnica de Obras Públicas of the Minutes of the V Congress of Roman Public Works, *Las Técnicas y las Construcciones en la Ingeniería Romana*, Madrid; FERNÁNDEZ CASADO 1979.

⁴¹⁶ BLE GIMENO 2013.

⁴¹⁷ In 2008 the Sociedad Española de Arqueología Virtual, SEAV was founded and its Board of Management set up in 2013, in order to promote virtual interdisciplinary study of Archaeology, now available internationally on the *Virtual Archaeology Internacional Network, INNOVA*, and with electronic projects such as *Arqueovirtual* (University of Zaragoza) or *Arqueológica 2.0*, which organised its 8th *International Meeting on Graphic Archaeology and Informatics, Cultural Heritage and Innovation* in 2016.

⁴¹⁸ GONZÁLEZ MENÉNDEZ 2016 <http://www.foro.elgrancapitan.org/viewtopic.php?p=827192>

assuming the use of Roman tombstones as *spolia* by the Roman soldiers themselves during the 3rd and 4th centuries.

2.2. The Early Imperial context of the first Leonese stone walls

Some theories assure that the next stone fortifications of León would have been built by the *Legio VII* in the Early Imperial era, after the process of political evolution that caused changes in the administrative structures in the Roman provinces. But it is certainly more likely that they would have been built in stone by the *Legio VI Hispaniensis*, a military body that, as we have already pointed out, left evidences of its work in stone not only in the wall of León, but also in several other places in northern Hispania (Alfaro, Zaragoza, Martorell...), and so, immediately after leaving the Iberian Peninsula, continued to re-fortify *Novaesium* in the lower *limes germanicus* by constructing a wall in stone, as we already mentioned in the previous chapter.

The first stone wall of León was dated, perhaps with weak arguments, around AD 73-74 at the time of *Legio VII Gemina*'s settlement in the Leonese camp, when Vespasian carried out an extensive reform of the Roman financial system and granted *Latinitas* to all the three *Hispaniae* after AD 69. One of the rights that the Roman citizenship granted was the right to take part in the Roman army, *ius legionis*, which would have repercussions among the troops that remained in the Iberian Peninsula after the year 70, year of the withdrawal of most of the troops. But sources⁴¹⁹ refer to legions such as the *Vernacula* created by Pompey in Hispania in 49 BC and the *VI Hispaniensis*, including native *peregrini* in the legions as early as a century before, not only in the auxiliary corps. *Latinitas* would have enabled more Hispanics to join the legions from the moment it was granted and the epigraphy shows that the Roman army quartered in León may have continued to renovate its troops with children of former soldiers sometimes with native names characteristic of the North such as the case of the *Reburri*⁴²⁰. During an urban archaeological intervention led by the author⁴²¹ of this work, outside the walls of the Leonese Early Imperial enclosure, this name appeared in a large granite ashlar carved on a Roman memorial stone which could have been part of the Palace of the Quinones of

⁴¹⁹ CANTO Y DE GREGORIO 1996, p. 216; ROLDÁN HERVÁS 1974, pp. 457-472.

⁴²⁰ SANTOS YANGUAS 2011, pp.191-214.

⁴²¹ FERNÁNDEZ ORDÁS and SÁNCHEZ LAFUENTE-PÉREZ 2008, p. 195.

Laciana, a noble building built in this place in 1623. The damaged epigraph preserves references to three members of a family with the same *cognomen*, *Reburus*.

This did not influence the drastic decrease of soldiers in the Roman army in Hispania, leaving almost only the *Legio VII Gemina*⁴²², stationed in León from AD 74, and several auxiliary units stationed in A Ciudadela –*Cohors I Celtiberorum*–, Baños de Bande, Herrera de Pisuergra –*ala Parthorum*, *Cohors I Gallica*–, and in Atxa (Vitoria, Álava), where a military camp was built, possibly a temporary one⁴²³. The administrative organization of the army seems to have taken place shortly after because in the year AD 79 a new appointment as *procurator per Asturia et Callaecia* appears at the top of the hierarchy in army provisioning, a post held above the *beneficiarii*⁴²⁴ whose functions would not be limited to those of supply, as he also carried out other management tasks such as tax collection. This meant that the administrative structures in the Flavian period were now regulated as well as the Roman army's provisioning system in Hispania⁴²⁵.

At that time, it is believed *Asturica Augusta* (Astorga, León) may have been the great redistributing centre of all commerce in the Northwest, since the two great Roman roads leaving from Tarragona and Mérida converged there, in addition to the routes from the Asturian (Cantabrian Sea) and the Gallaecian ports (Atlantic Ocean). Nevertheless, this thesis considers maritime trade⁴²⁶ a rather improbable hypothesis as "a complementary function in military provisioning", since it does not take into account the relevance of Cantabrian commerce in the region. Furthermore, it does not admit, due to lack of archaeological support, that the routes between Astorga and the coasts of the Northwest were used for the naval transport of gold from the Asturian mines to Rome. The presence of Roman shipwrecks located on the coasts⁴²⁷ is not considered evidence, or the existence of ports founded at that time in northern Hispania, such as Gijón⁴²⁸. Others

⁴²² The *Legio VII Galbiana*, weakened by combat in Italy, was reinforced by Vespasian and transformed into the *Legio VII Gemina*: GOFFAUX 2011, pp. 464-465.

⁴²³ GIL ZUBILLAGA 1995.

⁴²⁴ CARRERAS MONFORT 1997, p. 152, no. 1. *Ref.* MORILLO CERDÁN 2006, p. 61.

⁴²⁵ MORILLO CERDÁN 2006, pp. 33-74.

⁴²⁶ *Ibidem*, 206, p. 63.

⁴²⁷ RODRÍGUEZ ASENSIO 1995, pp. 153- 161; FERNÁNDEZ OCHOA and MORILLO CERDÁN 1994. Long distance trade has been proven archaeologically from the port of Vigo through the finding of imported pottery dating from the 4th to the 7th centuries (*see* FERNÁNDEZ FERNÁNDEZ; FOLGUEIRA CASTRO and ALCORTA IRASTORZA 2019, pp. 551-602; FERNÁNDEZ FERNÁNDEZ, 2011, pp. 1-43; *Id.* 2011 (unpublished doctoral thesis).

⁴²⁸ MORILLO CERDÁN 2018, p. 11; IGLESIAS GIL 1994, p. 24. *Ref.* FERNÁNDEZ OCHOA and MORILLO CERDÁN 1994, pp. 225-226, 229.

like *Portus Amanum* (Flaviobriga) became a colony as early as AD 74 (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* IV, 110).

When estimating the importance of Cantabrian trade with the area of León, we can analyse as an example the relevant findings of oysters⁴²⁹, a quite sumptuous product (called *calliblepharis* by Romans, “beautiful eyelids”). A huge amount has been discovered in the excavations proving massive consumption in the Roman camp of León, found by, among other scholars, the author of this work, in the surroundings of the *praetorium*. Oysters have appeared constantly even in areas outside the walls⁴³⁰, in a Roman organic agricultural deposit. The huge quantity of oyster shells found in the Leonese archaeological levels corresponding to the Roman period does not prevent them from being considered a sumptuary product comparable to *terra sigillata*, the luxury ceramics of the time. It is disputable to consider them a “basic consumer good”⁴³¹ when discussing military trade in Hispania. Equally debatable is the thesis that suggests that the slower land route through *Galia* would be more secure, which does not take into consideration the presumably close relationship established between the British Isles and Asturian ports due to the transfer of auxiliary army units. This is evidenced by the stationing of the *Ala II Asturum* in the British Chesters (*Cilurnum*⁴³², one of Hadrian Wall’s fortifications) from the early 2nd century AD until the 4th century. The British name *Cilurnum* seems to refer to the Asturian *gens cilurnigorum*, who populated the *oppidum Noega* in Gijón.

For this reason, we do not believe that this theory about the importance of this route derives from “the very existence of a *statio Segisamonensium* in Amaya (Burgos), perhaps a point of collection of the *portorium* and control of goods”. In previous pages, we have mentioned other possible *stationes* managed by officials of the *Legio VII* that could provide this same argument for the Cantabrian route. What seems certain is that one of the main functions of the troops established in the Leonese camp was to control the

⁴²⁹ VEJEGA GARCÍA *et al.* 2014, p. 113: brings together data from the archaeological excavation that took place in 2010 in the site of *Ad Legionem* (Puente Castro, León) occupied from the mid-1st century AD. References from sources to oysters in Spain may be found in STRABO, *Geography*, Book III 2,7 and in PLINY, *Natural History*, Book IX (XXXII, 59-62).

⁴³⁰ The most recent find occurred in Calle Santa Teresa, in an archaeological dig directed by the author and finalised in February 2020.

⁴³¹ MORILLO CERDÁN 2006, pp. 33-74.

⁴³² FERNÁNDEZ OCHOA and PÉREZ FERNÁNDEZ 1990, p. 260-261.

communication network between the Cantabrian and the Atlantic ports in the northwest of the Peninsula, from which Roman routes departed to both south and east.

2.3. The camp of the Legio ... VII? (León II)

It is often considered that the concept of “permanent” encampments appeared around the 1st century BC during the Principality and derived from the experience of “proto-fortresses”⁴³³ in the Republican period, some examples of them in Hispania are the camps of Cáceres el Viejo and those built during the Numantian siege (Castillejo, Renieblas and Dehesilla). However, it was on the German border at the time of Augustus when the first fortresses were built for settlement in a territory during the occupation phase after its conquest in the beginning of the 1st century AD: *Anreppen* (Delbrück) constructed in wood and dated in AD 4; *Marktbreit* (Bavaria), which we have already referred to, *Oberaden* (Westphalia), and *Haltern* (Kr. Recklinghausen). The camp researched by archaeologists in León, or its first fortified earthen precinct attributed to the *Legio VI Hispaniensis*, corresponds to this period and was perhaps built with similar construction methods.

The following early stage of permanent Roman *castramentatio* also has its best examples on the German border with very similar enclosures. The earliest camps were twofold because they were designed to accommodate two legions, such as the aforementioned *Vetera I* (Xanten) and *Mogontiacum* (Mainz) or Hunnerberg (Nijmegen, The Netherlands). The Hunnerberg fortress was large and seems to have offered accommodation for up to three legions and the precinct was surrounded by two fosses and a large wall, with towers every 24 metres. However, both in the Germanic provinces and in Britain, rather simple legionary camps began to be built to accommodate just one legion with regular rectangular shaped layouts that became the model of “classical” Roman *castramentatio*. The third camp in *Novaesium* (Neuss, on the German border) was built by the *Legio VI Victrix* around AD 70, very soon after leaving its lengthy posting in León in Hispania, perhaps after having reconstructed its camp walls in stone. Under Hadrian in the 2nd century on the Austrian *limes Norici*, the wooden and earth structures were replaced by stone, which had to be rebuilt later in the 4th century, like for example, the *castellum Asturis* (Zwentendorf), ethnonym of the *Ala I Asturum*.

⁴³³ BISHOP 2012.

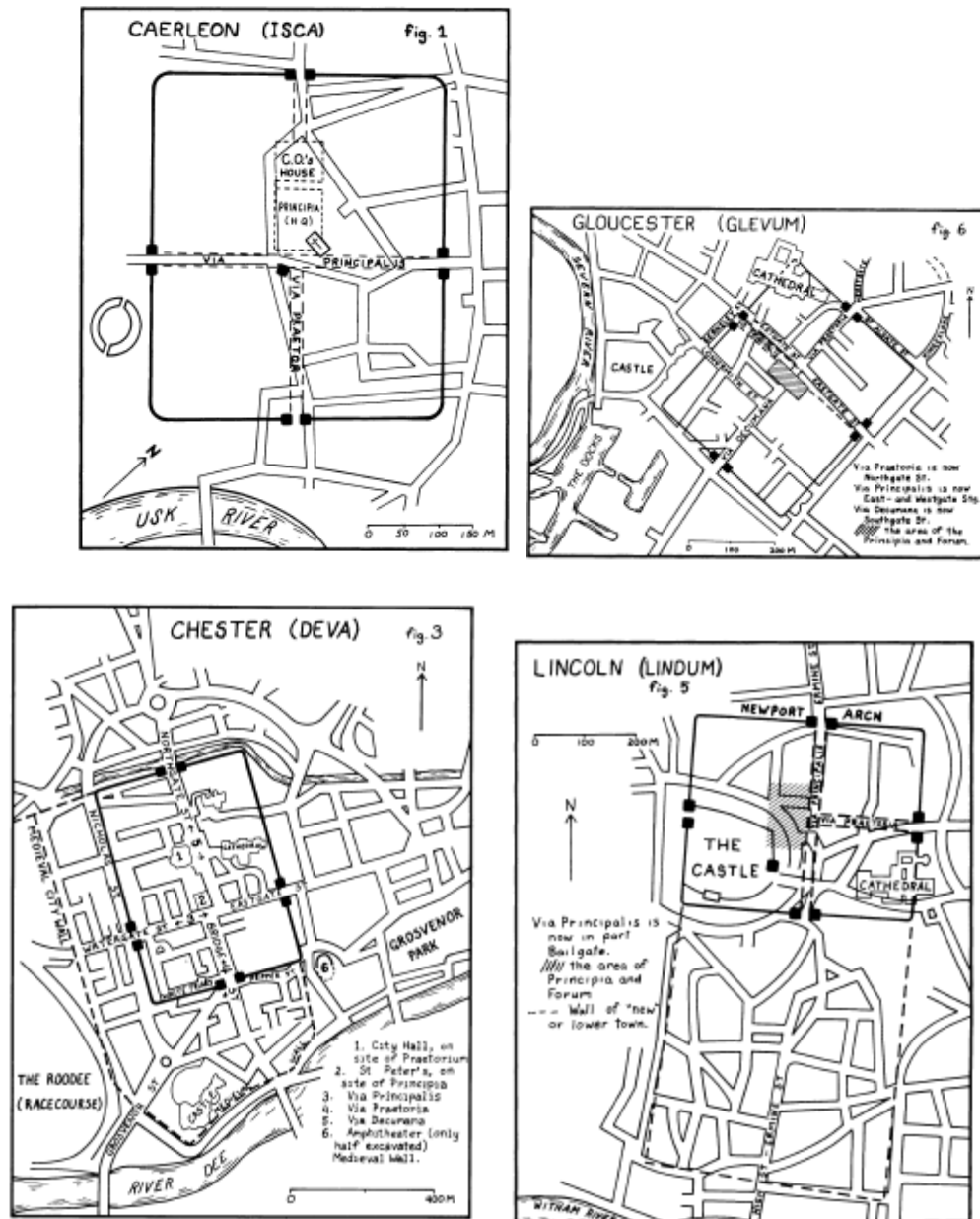


Fig. 52. British legionary camps (WATKINS, 1983, pp. 16-18).

Some of the British enclosures such as *Camulodunum* (Colchester), *Isca* (Caerleon, Wales), *Glevum* (Gloucester) and *Lindum* (Lincoln) were also built with this pattern. Also in *Britannia* appears in the early 2nd century the reconstruction in stone of some of the wooden defences such as in *Isca*, Inchtutuil, which was abandoned before being completed, *Deva* (Chester) and *Eboracum* (York), the latter carried out, once again, by the *Legio VI Victrix* and the others by other troops who had been in Hispania during the Cantabrian Wars such as the *Legio IX Hispana* and *Legio XX Valeria Victrix*.

Late *castramentatio* evolved together with the army towards smaller structures in comparison to the early precincts, adapting to the dimensions of auxiliary units or smaller detachments such as *Divitia* (in Köln-Deutz, Germany) built to defend the bridge in Cologne, capital of Lower Germania, and in Austria those of *Ioviacum* (Schlößen) and *Favianis* (Mautern). New forts were also erected in the eastern provinces such as *Betthorus* (El-Lejjun) or *Adrou* (Udruh) both in Jordan while others used previous architectural structures, even a Theban temple in Luxor (Egypt). Transformations of previous enclaves continued, such as that of *Aquincum* (second fortification, Budapest, Hungary). According to some authors⁴³⁴, throughout the 3rd and early 4th centuries, cities were walled and camps in Gaul and northern Hispania were refortified, among them the enclosure of León is usually included, probably for meeting the requirements of an *annonaria* route or in response to barbarian raids. However, as we will analyse later on, this does not seem to have been the case of León.

As we have already pointed out, the *Legio VII Gemina* encamped in León in the year AD 74, almost a century after the first garrison settled in this camp. It was a body of troops recruited in Hispania six years earlier by Galba, governor of the province of *Hispania Tarraconensis* during his rebellion against Nero.



Fig. 53. Photograph of a Galba Denarius, *Tarraco*. Obverse: GALBA IMP., Laureate bust. Reverse: HISPANIA. Hispania standing, holding two ears of corn, two spears and a shield, 3.37 grams⁴³⁵.

This legion has been called *Galbiana* by historiography since the 18th century, based on Tacitus' *Histories*, and Antonius Primus was its legate⁴³⁶. The later epithet *Gemina* could have been given due to the union of two legions, the VII *Galbiana* and the *Claudiana*. G. Spalletti anticipated the debate two centuries earlier concerning the

⁴³⁴ FERNÁNDEZ OCHOA *et al.* 2011, pp. 265-285; BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 2003, pp. 63-89; RICHMOND 1931, pp. 86-100.

⁴³⁵ Catalogue of auction at Aureo & Calicó on 28/04/201: lot 1031 s/d. Galba. Sesterces. (Co. 294).

⁴³⁶ TÁCITO, Hist. 1, 51, 3; 65, 2; 67, 2; 2, 11, 1; 85; 3, 2, 1; 7, 1; 10, 1; SPALLETTI 1777, p. 21; *Ibidem*, pp. 85-90.

presence in León of a "victorious" legion by reproducing in his work the tombstone of the veteran *Q. Fulvius Severus* from the *Legio VI Victrix*, for which he proposed a reading as *Legio VII Victrix* to identify this last legion with the *Claudia* despite being aware that this was not what the epigraph reflected. He based his hypothesis on another epigraph belonging to the tomb of M. Eburio on the *Via Appia* in the area of Velletri, which referred to the military tribune of the *Legio VII Claud. Victrix*. He also bases his thesis using a reference to a bronze *tessera* that mentions a LEG (ATUS) LEG (IO) C (CLAUDIA) V (ICTRIX)⁴³⁷.

The *Legio VII Gemina (Pia) Felix* was studied almost two centuries later in Spain by A. García y Bellido, who disclosed his research in various articles and in the minutes of an international congress celebrated in León in 1968, "*Legio VII*", an excellent work published in 1970. It has also been subject of a more recent study by Palao Vicente⁴³⁸, who has also analysed the *castra* of this legion⁴³⁹ as well as other military sites in Hispania. Equally exhaustive, but in this case from the point of view of the poliorcetica, are the contributions published by González Menéndez.

Finally, according to the conclusions published by the archaeologists who carried out⁴⁴⁰ the excavations in the archaeological site of Casona de Puerta Castillo, considered the paradigm of the Leonese wall, the following two walls in León would have been built by the *Legio VII*:

"The third wall (*Legio VII*) was built occupying part of the previous *vallum*. *Opus vittatum* is used in the external facing, built with sandstone small-ashlars, whilst the rest of the wall, up to 1.80/2.00 metres wide, was raised using *opus caementicium* (mortar and riverstones). One of the towers of the precinct has also been discovered, built over the former barracks, possibly a storehouse.

The fourth wall (late Roman or "de cubos") is built attached to the exterior Early Imperial wall and with a similar construction technique, ashlar on the outside facing and *opus caementicium* on the inside, though of poorer quality. It has been greatly transformed by successive interventions in both Medieval and Modern times."

⁴³⁷ SPALLETTI 1777, p. 36, p. 89; *Ref. CIL* VI, 1454 and SANTOS YANGUAS 1988, p. 96, no. 261.

⁴³⁸ GARCÍA Y BELLIDO 1970, pp. 569-599; PALAO VICENTE 2006, pp. 263-305.

⁴³⁹ As the only legionary grouping in Hispania until the 5th century, it could count on several auxiliary units: The *Ala II Flavia Hispanorum*, and four cohorts, the *I Gallica*, *II Gallica*, *I Celtiberorum* and *III Lucensium*; see BRAVO BOSCH 2015, pp. 82-83, no. 126.

⁴⁴⁰ TALACTOR SL. The 1997 campaign was directed by José Carlos Álvarez Ordás. The following year it was undertaken by Fernando Muñoz Villarejo and Emilio Campomanes Alvarado (ILRUF, TALACTOR S.L. *et alii* (2012) "La Casona de Puerta Castillo y el Solar de Santa Marina. Trabajos de rehabilitación y arqueología", a pdf document published by the ILRUV (Instituto Leonés de Renovación Urbana y Vivienda), Concejalía de Urbanismo y Medio Ambiente, Ayuntamiento de León, pp. 41 and 42); CAMPOMANES ALVAREDO; MUÑOZ VILLAREJO, *et alii* 2013, pp. 313-327.

The discoveries from these archaeological excavations were interpreted following the hypothesis⁴⁴¹ of four Roman camp phases, the last two corresponding to two⁴⁴² consecutive Roman stone walls, one from the Flavian period and the other during the Tetrarchy (from the end of the 3rd or beginning of the 4th century), attached to the former on its external face, with an internal rampart from the previous fortification excluding, therefore, any hypothesis of these walls being concurrent, as in the case of Astorga.



Fig. 54. In the background, the small-ashlar Roman wall, until now considered from the Flavian period (León III), to which the later wall “of *cubos*” at the forefront is attached. A tower (or *cubo*) is annexed to the wall of reused ashlars (access stairway to San Isidoro from Avda. Ramón y Cajal).

This diachronic vision is refuted by, among other testimonies, scene 73 of the Trajan Column, where we can observe the coexistence of both a wooden *vallum* and a stone wall *during* the construction of the latter, so the former did not necessarily have to be destroyed while the second one was being built, as might have happened in León.

⁴⁴¹ MORILLO CERDÁN; DURÁN CABELLO; MENDO; PRIETO; DUPRADO and BONACASA 2014, pp.140-147; MORILLO CERDÁN and SALIDO DOMÍNGUEZ 2013; *Id.* (2013b); *Id.* 2011-2012, pp. 599-623; *Id.* 2011, pp. 153-178; *Id.* 2010, pp. 463-477; *Id.* 2010b, pp.135-164; MORILLO CERDÁN and MARTÍN HERNÁNDEZ 2009; MORILLO CERDÁN 2012; *Id.* 2010c “; *Id.*2008), pp. 379-405; *Id.* 2005; *Id.* 2003, p. 83; *Id.* 2003, pp. 41-80; *Id.* 1996, pp. 80-81; *Id.* 1993, pp. 379-398; *Id.* 2006, pp. 33-74; FERNÁNDEZ OCHOA; MORILLO CERDÁN and SALIDO DOMÍNGUEZ 2011, pp. 265-285; FERNÁNDEZ OCHOA and MORILLO CERDÁN 2003; *Id.*1994, pp. 225-232.

⁴⁴² MORILLO CERDÁN and GARCÍA MARCOS 2018, pp. 299-318; MORILLO CERDÁN; DURÁN CABELLO; MENDO; PRIETO; DUPRADO and BONACASA 2014, pp.140-147.



Fig. 55. Scene of the construction of a camp in Trajan's Column, Rome. (www.trajans-column.org, scene 17).

Military rationale, rather to the contrary, provides a new theory of synchronic timing of the first stone wall in regard to the previous fortification of earth and wood: a permanent camp in use in a rather pacified area during the phase of occupation, as was the Leonese camp, would have kept the previous defence system in wood and earth while the new stone wall was erected. It must be taken into account that archaeology demonstrates that when the *Legio X Gemina* left the nearby camp in Rosinos de Vidriales (Zamora) or even closer by when the fortification of Astorga was transformed into an *urbs*, they both had stone walls, and so had the camp of the *Legio VI* in León, according to the latest discoveries following our thesis here.

Regarding the stonework of this first Early Imperial Leonese fortification, apart from specific variations such as the one introduced in this work, the conclusions of A. García y Bellido in 1970⁴⁴³ are still in force. Although he attributed the construction of this wall to the *Legio VII Gemina*, he rigorously described it as a classical rectangular ground plan with rounded corners and defensive masonry with an average thickness of 1.80 metres. Outwardly it features sandstone ashlar facing, an *opus vittatum* with lime and sand hydraulic mortar grouting.

⁴⁴³ GARCÍA Y BELLIDO 1970, pp. 569-599; this publication re-edits a previous version: *Id.* (1968).

García y Bellido used the term *opus vittatum* and not *opus quadratum* to define the type of masonry bonding for the ashlar facing, despite the fact that the stone courses seem to have the same height and composition. Only in the facing that appears on the side of the access stairway to San Isidoro from Avenida Ramón y Cajal can it be proven that the sole upper part of masonry visible shows a header and stretcher pattern bonding.

If we follow the teachings of A. Choisy⁴⁴⁴, this would be part of a bonding of alternating stretcher course with a mixed course of headers and stretchers, which would be one of the only two variants⁴⁴⁵, the most frequent, in Roman building of walls of masonry facing and concrete filling. A. Choisy further asserts that, with respect to these walls composed of masonry facings and *opus caementicium*, “two directly overlapping header and stretcher courses have never been found in any Roman building; there is always a row of stretchers interposed so that the headers form a series of toothing or ties that are embedded in the concrete. This bond combines strength and economy, and its use could be recommended even today due to its excellent connection with concrete”.

This categorical statement has far-reaching implications as an argument against dating the wall of *cubos* attached to it, a wall impossible to date during the Tetrarchy as we will see later.



⁴⁴⁴ CHOISY 1873 [1999], pp. 99-101. This exterior facing made from a bonding of stretcher courses alternating with mixed courses of stretchers and headers has been defined as *opus vittatum* or small-ashlar (see GARCÍA MARCOS and MORILLO CERDÁN 2015, pp. 91-112; GARCÍA MARCOS; GUTIÉRREZ GONZÁLEZ; MIGUEL HERNÁNDEZ; CAMPOMANES ALVAREDO and MUÑOZ VILLAREJO 2013 pp. 313-327).

⁴⁴⁵ CHOISY 1873 [1999], p. 100. The other alternative would be a bonding of one course of headers alternating with another of stretchers.



Figs. 56 and 57. Photographs of the bonding of stretchers alternating with mixed courses of header and stretcher: interfaces of the ashlar facing of the Roman wall (access to San Isidoro from Avenida Ramón y Cajal). At the top of the images, lime and stone concrete filling in the wall of *cubos*.

As can be seen in the photograph of the intervention in the Plaza del Conde Luna reproduced below, other sections of the wall of small ashlar in León have been found in contract archaeological excavations; in this one, a masonry bonding of alternating stretcher course with a mixed header and stretcher course appears as described above, with lime grouting between the ashlars. However, what is decisive in reinterpreting the phases of the León fortification is a hollow between the ashlars, perhaps corresponding to a putlog hole, which was later carefully blocked up⁴⁴⁶, all this prior to the construction of the wall of *cubos*. One of the possible explanations for these interventions on the outside of the Roman wall is that its facing was used as a wall for some kind of building attached to the external face of the fortification in the Late Ancient period.

⁴⁴⁶ At first sight this indicates at least two phases shown clearly in the interfaces of the exterior facing of the Roman small-ashlar wall: one where the toothing is used and another where it was blocked up. This implies two intermediate stages (of reuse of the facing) between the Roman small-ashlar wall and the wall of *cubos* added to it. The artistic care when filling in the toothing, using an ashlar made to measure, has implications on the time that the rehabilitation might have been exposed to view, which obviously was not done so as to use the small-ashlar wall as a walling formwork.



Fig. 58. Exterior facing of the Early Imperial wall with ashlar grouting, Plaza del Conde Luna, León. (Photograph by V. García Marcos, published by A. Morillo Cerdán, 2012).

Attached to the interior facing of small ashlars, in the *opus caementicium* or concrete filling that forms the bulk of this wall, we find the use of large fragments of *tegulae* in the Roman concrete layers (lime mortar and gravel with ceramic fragments) as well as the use of broken stones of an average diameter, smaller than the riverstones used in the filling of the later wall of *cubos*.



Fig. 59 Photograph of Calle Ruiz de Salazar. Roman wall with large fragments of *tegulae* in the concrete filling. On the left, attached to its outer ashlar face, the wall of *cubos*.

The implications of the differences between the masonry of the small-ashlar wall and the wall of *cubos* have been made clear through the archaeological analysis of the architecture of their facing. These differences have not been detected in terms of the shape of the plan of the new fortification with *cubos* when compared to the previous one because it seems to have had four openings just like the previous wall at the end of the main streets, where the wall gates were fortified with solid square towers slightly projected towards the interior. As we have already pointed out, after the second half of the 20th century the small-ashlar wall has been dated without a solid basis from the moment the *Legio VII Gemina*⁴⁴⁷ was set up in AD 74 in the Flavian era.

⁴⁴⁷ GARCÍA Y BELLIDO 1970, pp. 569-599, fig. 4.

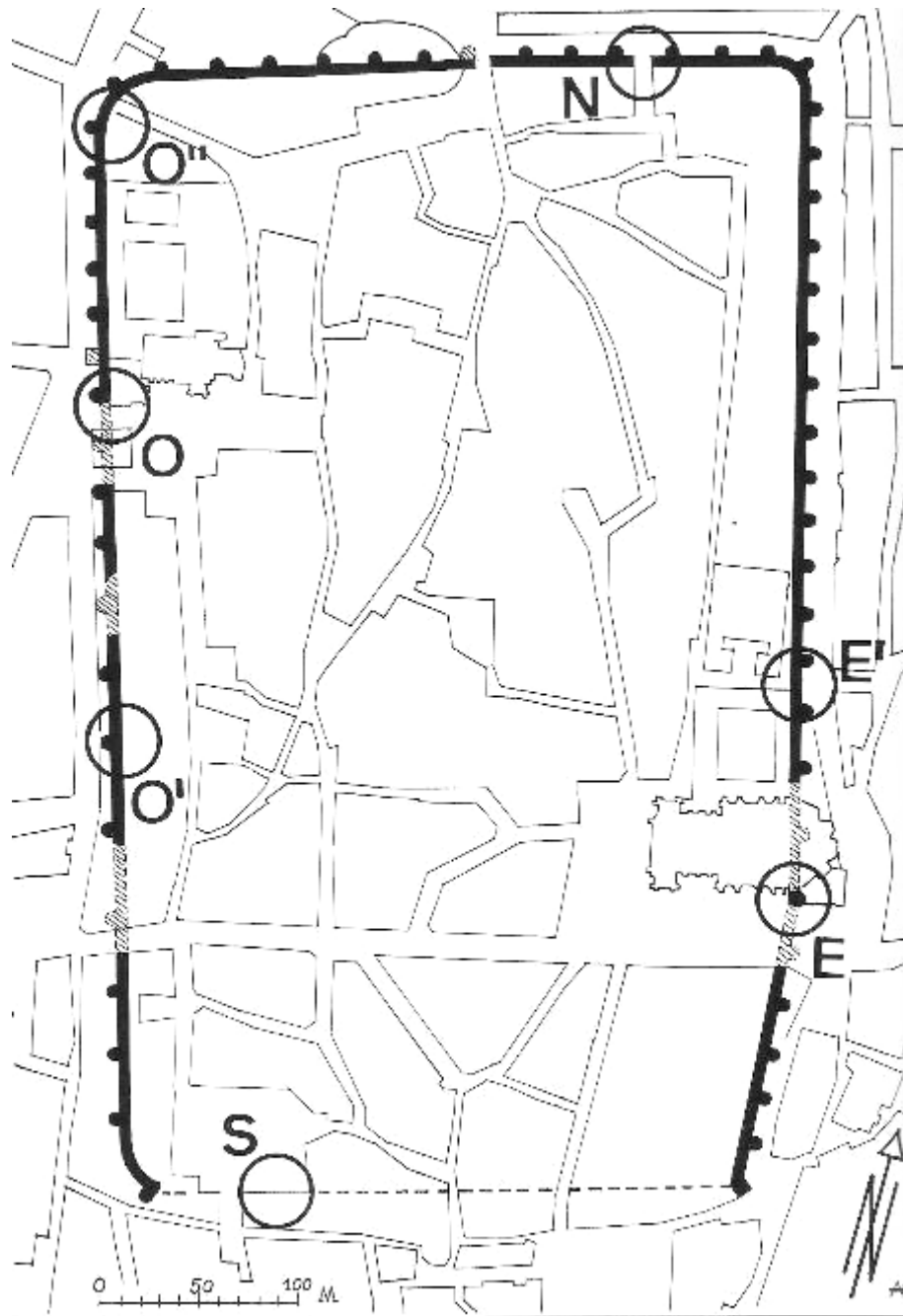


FIG. 4.—Recinto murado de León. Los círculos indican los lugares donde se han comprobado restos del muro de 1,80 m. de grosor, adosado a la faz interior de las murallas taricadas hoy visibles. (Según A. García y Bellido.)

Fig. 60. Plan of the Roman wall complex in León according to A. García y Bellido.

As can be seen in the above map located at a point indicated “O” is San Isidoro Tower. It is a square-shaped tower embedded towards the exterior in the later wall of *cubos*. The lower platform of San Isidoro Tower has been attributed to Roman construction, as has been proposed in this work. It reveals the situation of an ashlar marked with *Legio VI*, and also the presence of an arch attached to the tower is perceptible both in the archaeological analysis of the wall layers and in an old photograph of the tower.

The results of these analyses have given rise to one more hypothesis: the presence of two gates on the west side of the Leonese wall. Another probably also existed on the eastern wall, opposite the current Calle El Pontón (which could have fossilized the old access to that gate in the urban street layout). This would imply that there were at least six gates in the small-ashlar wall of the Early Imperial camp, as documented in the late 19th century⁴⁴⁸ for the British camps of *Cilurnum* (Chesters) and *Ambloganna* (Birdoswald). The *Cilurnum* camp was built around AD 123 by a *vexillatio* of the VI *Victrix* legion, the *Ala Augusta ob Virtutem Apellata*, and other units passed through it, including the *Ala II Asturum*. The *Ambloganna* fortress dates from AD 122 but its builders are unknown.



Figs. 61 and 62. Current photographs of the Torre del Gallo or San Isidoro Tower. To its right, you can see the blocked arch layout on the face of the wall of *cubos*.

Supporting this hypothesis is the fact that the square base of this tower was next to an open arch in the section of the wall of *cubos*, still visible in the late 19th century according to this old photograph. The corner enclosure attached to the tower—which no longer exists today—reveals the top of a large arch, which was later blocked with a stone

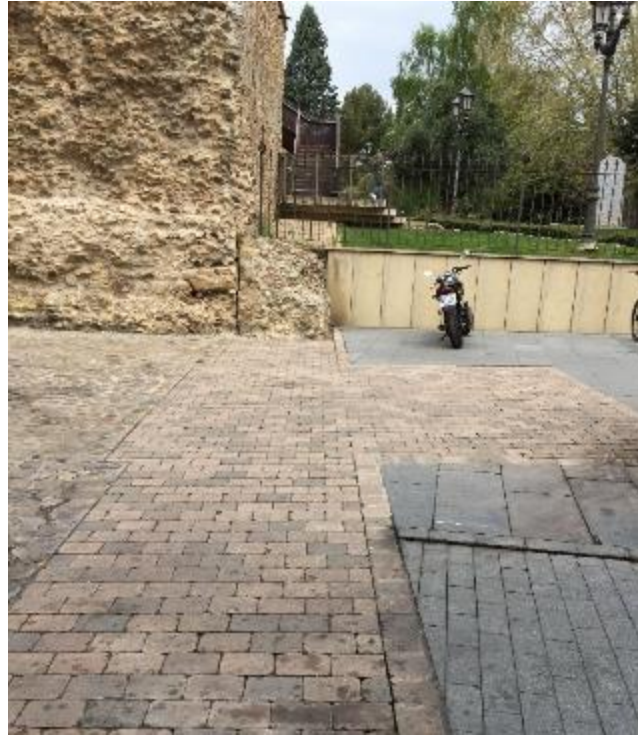
⁴⁴⁸ BRUCE, 1863 [1947], p.88.

filling but whose trace can be seen today, as well as the damp stain due to capillarity that rises in that area from the ground to the first floor of the building.



Fig. 63. Old photograph of San Isidoro Tower. To its right and almost hidden by a corner enclosure, you can see the open arch in the section of the wall of *cubos* on which two floors of a building were erected.

Limiting ourselves to the archaeology of the Early Imperial fortification, three interior towers with a square plan have been found like the one of the towers found on the corners of the precinct, except for the fact that the ones discovered so far on the corners have a base with large padded ashlar that do not appear on the wall sections.



Figs. 64 and 65. Photographs on Ruiz de Salazar street. The paving stones on the ground mark the layout of the plan of the rectangular tower projected into the interior of the Roman walled precinct. On the left, attached to its outer small-ashlar face, the wall of *cubos*.

Several gates have also been documented in the Roman wall, reproduced in the wall of *cubos*, although with important variations in their corner towers, as shown by the recent collapse of the tower that occupied the southwest corner of the Roman camp in Calle Conde Rebolledo. This tower, ruined in 2017, showed in July 2019 (after the publication in March of the doctoral thesis included in this book) a medieval tower with a square floor plan, which was considered “fan-shaped”, and under this second floor in a

new phase of archaeological excavation a third foundation appeared, that of a square-shaped Roman tower with large ashlar.



Figs. 66 and 67. SW corner of the medieval wall of *cubos* in León. At least two phases of fortification prior to the fallen tower in 2017 are noticeable: the older, a square plan foundation of large ashlars of possible Roman origin; the next, a building with ashlars on the corners, restored with a fan layout plan (2019).



Figs. 68 and 69. Archaeological excavation of the tower placed at a SW angle to the wall. On the left, corner of a tower foundation, probably Roman, with large padded ashlars. Calle Conde Rebolledo, July 2019. Photographs by the author.

This recent archaeological discovery validates the rebuttal of the Roman origin of the wall of *cubos* in León as had been previously defended in the published thesis, and also warns us against any attempt to take circumstantial statements for granted because there are still many to clarify. It remains to be determined, for example, if the large ashlars were used only for the foundations and base of the square-plan corner towers of the Roman camp; or also at the corners of the square-plan towers mentioned, or perhaps even in the areas of embedding of these towers into the sections of wall. The use of corner ashlars in the towers is suggested when analysing the remains of ashlars incorporated into the rear wall of commercial premises in Calle La Rúa, which seems to continue the structures of the tower found in July 2019 in Calle Conde Rebolledo.



Fig. 70. Commercial premises in Calle La Rúa, back wall: it borders the wall in Conde Rebolledo. Corner ashlars possibly corresponding to the Roman tower at the SW corner of the Roman camp in León.

As we have already seen, this type of large ashlars also appears at the Roman base of the Torre de San Isidoro on the western section, on top of which other smaller ashlars were placed, where the legionary mark “VI” has been found. The data known so far seems to indicate that it is possible that this was the constructive pattern of the towers: foundations with large ashlars and upper courses in which the size and weight of the stone blocks were reduced, lightening the aerial part of the towers, as seen in the Torreón de los Ponce.



Fig. 71. Torreón de los Ponce (in the southeast corner of the Roman camp of León), which preserves the foundation or base of large padded ashlars.

It remains to be seen, furthermore, if these large ashlars from the towers of the Roman camp were reused, and if that is also the origin of those that were later inserted as *spolia* (along with other worked stones) in the sections of the wall of *cubos*, as seen in Avenida Ramón y Cajal and on other sections of the medieval walls.



Fig. 72. Unresearched basement of a tower at the southern gate of the Roman camp in León with large padded ashlars in the wall of a cellar in Calle Azabachería.

Regarding the towers of the gates of the Roman camp, while correcting the doctoral thesis on which this study is based, we found an unresearched tower base in another warehouse cellar in Calle Azabachería, whose photograph shows the Roman construction pattern in the foundations of gate towers and corner towers of the Leonese fortification by using several courses of large padded ashlars.

Among the towers already-known and researched are the remains of the *porta praetoria* or southern gate in Calle Platerías, with the same plan and rectangular six-metre-wide towers. Archaeological data have also been published about the *porta principalis sinistra* located to the East, between the Cathedral and the current bishop's palace, with a double gateway, central *spina* and fortified with two equally rectangular flanking towers

projecting out both to the exterior and interior⁴⁴⁹, built in *opus quadratum* of large padded limestone ashlars, which do not correspond in plan with the wall sections.



Fig. 73. Photograph of the restitution of the archaeological remains of the so-called *porta principalis sinistra* of the Leonese camp, attributed so far to the *Legio VII Gemina*.

In the area of the so-called *porta principalis sinistra* one can also see the embedding between the legionary walls and the later wall of *cubos*, exactly below the Cathedral.



Fig. 74. Photograph of the connection point of the flanking tower of the so-called *porta principalis sinistra* with the walls of the Roman fortified enclosure and the rear wall of *cubos*. The large

⁴⁴⁹ GARCÍA MARCOS; GUTIÉRREZ GONZÁLEZ; MIGUEL HERNÁNDEZ; CAMPOMANES ALVAREDO and MUÑOZ VILLAREJO 2013, p. 313.

ashlars shod with rubble are supported on the late quartzite facing, so according to the principles of archaeological stratigraphy they are later than the original section.



Fig. 75. Detail photograph of the connection point of the flanking tower of the so called *porta principalis sinistra* with the walls of the Roman fortified precinct and the later wall of *cubos*. Detail of the construction systems of the tower—with non-padded sandstone ashlar and shod with rubble—, and the lower part of the medieval wall of *cubos*, made of ordinary squared quartzite stonework.

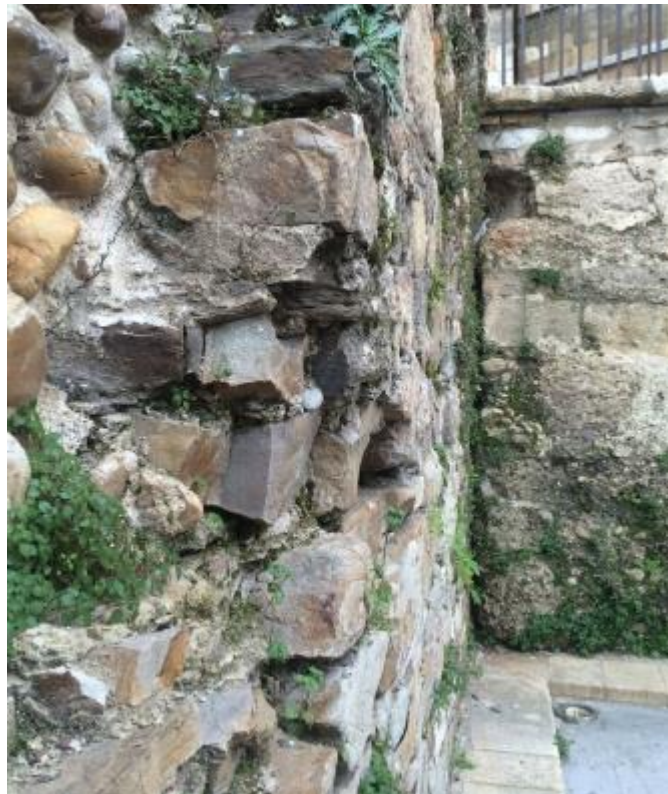


Fig. 76. Photograph of the connection point of the structure in front of the previous tower (flanking the *porta principalis sinistra*) with the walls of the Roman fortified precinct and the later wall of *cubos*. Like the tower, the masonry facing rests on the quartzite facing of the section of the wall of *cubos*.

The northern gate (or Puerta del Castillo) also preserves the aerial structure of one of its supposed Roman flanking towers, the western one, with a square plan and lined by a medieval arcaded structure that allowed access to the Torres de León wall, also medieval and today's headquarters of the Provincial Historical Archive. The author's archaeological intervention in this tower during the rehabilitation of the Archive⁴⁵⁰ revealed that its Roman concrete technique with large riverstones was solid to a considerable height and that it must have been rebuilt before being covered up by the medieval tower in which it is currently located, since ashlar from the 1.80 metres Roman wall were reused, still conserving their grouting. In the course of the same archaeological investigation, the breach or gap between the Early Imperial Roman walls and the wall of *cubos* was documented by A. García y Bellido⁴⁵¹. We will refer to this later because its verification in various sections of the Leonese walled enclosures offers a clear indication that the wall of *cubos* was not the work of the *Legio VII Gemina*, but that it is at least a century later than its customary dating.

This breach shows that even in antiquity the two stone walls were not functionally attached, ruling out that the Roman wall, which A. García y Bellido referred to as the "1.80 metre *low wall*" (1.80, due to its narrow width), served as a formwork for the entire aerial structure of the wall of *cubos*, which opens new questions about the possible builders of the new walls which, from the 5th century onwards, could have been the *Suevi*, the Visigoths or the Leonese monarchy.

⁴⁵⁰ FERNÁNDEZ ORDÁS 2001: *Intervención arqueológica en el Archivo Histórico Provincial*, included in the Implementation Project, improvement of access, functionality and evacuation of the building. Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte. (Unpublished report. Servicio Territorial de Cultura, Junta de Castilla y León).

⁴⁵¹ GARCÍA Y BELLIDO 1970, pp. 569-599, figs. 5 and 6.

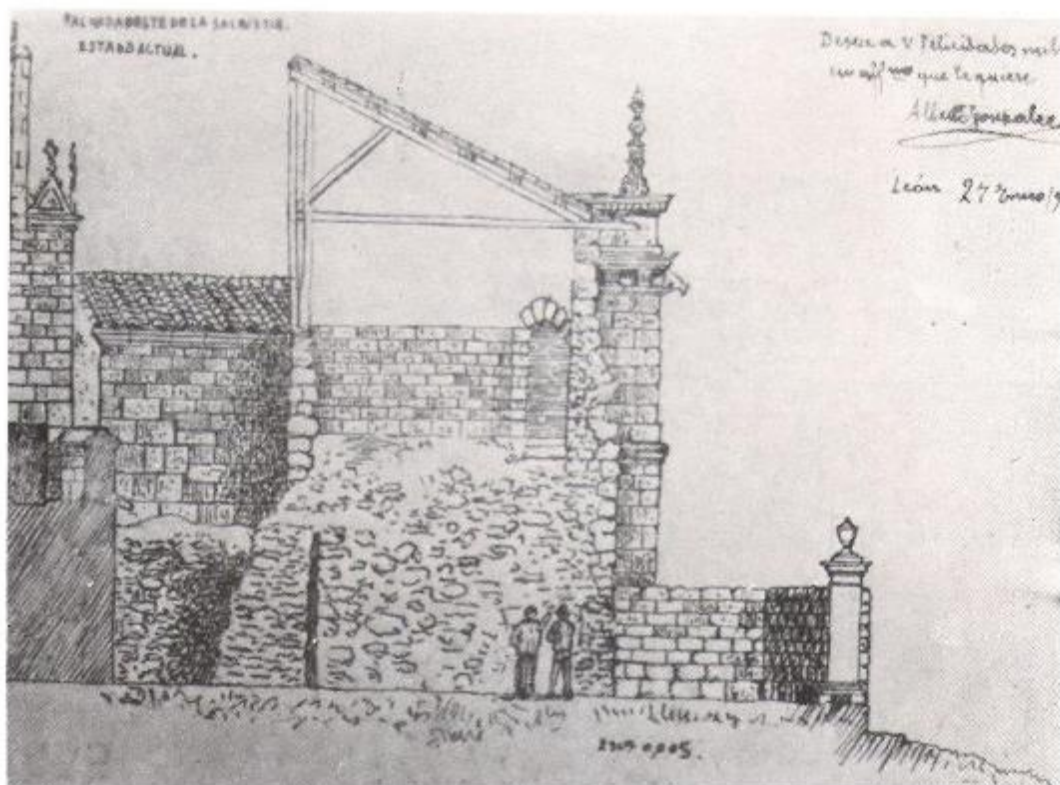


FIG. 5.—Fotografía de un dibujo de 1911 donde se ve la muralla y, adosado a ella (izquierda), el murete de 1,80 m. de grosor. (Cfr. la figura siguiente.)



FIG. 6.—Fotografía de 1911 en la que se ve la cisura que separa el muro de 1,80 m. de la muralla.

Fig. 77. Photograph and drawing published in 1970 by A. García y Bellido in his article “Studies of the *Legio VII Gemina* and its encampment in León”, documenting the breach between the Roman and medieval walls.

This same breach between two interfaces of wall strata has been visible since 2009 when a gap was revealed between the two fortifications, the Early Imperial Roman one and the one of *cubos*, in Calle Ruiz de Salazar. The subsequent archaeological intervention in the Leonese wall in this section in 2010 once again labelled the wall of *cubos* as late Roman and "first construction phase" of the fortification at this point, forgetting the presence of the authentic Roman wall.



Fig. 78. Photograph of the two walls, the Early Imperial Roman one and the wall of *cubos*, in Calle Ruiz de Salazar, with the gap or breach between both of them. On the ground can be seen, via a floor layout of riverstones, the foundation of the missing section and the tower of the last Leonese wall of *cubos*, projected towards the outside of the walled enclosure in the lower right corner.



Figs. 79 and 80. Detail of breach between the two walls, the Early Imperial Roman wall and wall of *cubos*, in Calle Ruiz de Salazar. Above the breach, part of a layer of mortar and riverstones that proves that the small-ashlar Roman wall was already in ruins when the wall of *cubos* was built, and it did not serve as a support higher up.

In the detailed photographs one can distinguish the “1.80 metre wall” described by A. García y Bellido. Part of an overflow of the lime and stone mass spreads out from the later wall of *cubos*, perhaps due to bad support from what was used to contain it while it was setting, which means that at least at this point the older wall of the Roman camp

was ruined to the height of a low wall when the new wall of *cubos* was erected, which obviously could not use the previous one as formwork⁴⁵² except at its base.

Applying the principles of archaeological stratigraphy to the architectural facings, we can say that in the remains of the Leonese walls visible in Calle Ruiz de Salazar from 2009 the stratigraphic wall unit that makes up the concrete infill (*opus caementicium*) of the wall of *cubos* rests vertically on the Roman small-ashlar wall only in its lower part and falls horizontally over the negative interface (surface of the stratum, in this case the result of its destruction) of the previous Early Imperial Roman wall.

That is to say, when the wall of *cubos* was made the Roman wall was already at the same height we now see, and the concrete moved onto its upper level. It is possible that during the construction of the wall of *cubos* the “low Roman wall of 1.80”, available as a support structure, was used in the lower part, but the rest of the height of the later facing had to have wooden box formwork or some other type of temporary structures that would allow the layers of lime and stone mortar to set as can be seen both in this section of the wall and a few metres further north on this same eastern section of the wall, in the tower located next to the tower of San Isidoro.



Fig. 81. San Isidoro from Avenida Ramón y Cajal. On the left, detail of the layers of mortar and riverstone resting on the lower part of the Early Imperial Roman wall.

In the already mentioned archaeological intervention carried out in 2001 in the Provincial Historical Archive of León, one of the places that was the object of excavation was the *passageway of the patio* named in the rehabilitation project *space A 1* (transit space located on height level 1 between the North courtyard, created by the misnamed

⁴⁵² Ref. MORILLO CERDÁN 2010, p. 472.

"ravelin" that was identified in the excavation report as the medieval wall of the Torres de León, and the current Archive building). In the excavation of the passageway, the breach described by A. García Bellido appeared again, hollowed out manually and by means of the invaluable help of A. González Menéndez, which gave the following results:

Upon removal of the existing tile flooring and a thin preparatory levelling layer of concrete, a lime and stone surface appeared where only a slight crack was noticeable. The breach between the Roman wall and the wall of cubos appeared about five meters from the entrance to the passage from the North Court. This breach extended on both sides of the walls right up to ceiling level, as observed when making explorations into the walls by removing the plaster, which indicated its structural nature and suggested its deep extension. When excavating the gap, a detail was noticeable that could very possibly have delayed the construction of the wall of cubos: the breach between the wall of lime and stone and the Roman wall of small ashlar (the "1.80 metres low wall") was filled in before the construction of the Torres de León. It was filled in in two phases up to the level of circulation on which the semicircular towers rise, from which it could be inferred that they were attached to the later wall after the elevation of its walls.

This high medieval repair of the documented breach was made taking into consideration the effects of the use of unsorted materials and different construction techniques in both walls (compensation of tectonic forces and of different degrees of expansion or contraction that gave rise to damp). For this reason, after removing the floor from the last restoration of the passage used for access to the medieval towers or castle, an insulating construction level appeared, consisting of curved tiles (Arab tile) with the concave part upwards, under which was found a deposit of riverstones that filled the middle part of the breach or gap, located on another deposit from possibly an Early Medieval period. It is difficult to date since it contained a ceramic fragment of Roman *tegula* that was no longer accessible due to the narrowing of the gap.

The other space in the Provincial Historical Archive of León in which archaeological intervention was carried out was the so-called *Patio Fantasma* or space D 3 (located on height level 3) in the rehabilitation project. Severely rebuilt, it had a solid concrete interior, which was expanded in a period after it was first built because it revealed the upper part of what is possibly a blocked up opening.

In the lower area one could see the reuse of small-ashlar pieces of the outer facing of the Roman stone wall, which kept part of its grouting. This eliminates the possibility of

it having been constructed at the same time as the Roman walled precinct, at least in its accessible part; not so with regard to the part still filled in by the mentioned concrete mass.

The tower, in its original Roman construction, covered today by another medieval one, possibly formed part of the defensive structure of the northern gate of the Early Imperial Roman fortification, although the hypothesis should be maintained that, once again synchronically, a *castellum aquae* was located here because the Roman aqueduct entered the camp of León at this point and a spring can still be found nearby today.

The photographs on the following pages come from the 2001 excavation report, which was in turn part of the research project presented to the University of León in 2004 and has been available to authors who have since published various studies on the Leonese walls⁴⁵³. Without citing it as the source, it may have been used in part, for example, for the identification of the wall of the medieval castle or Torres de León, which until that date had always been called “ravelin” and was considered a later construction.



⁴⁵³ MORAIS VALLEJO 2005, pp. 135-160.



avación de la grieta: U. E. 1010, nivel constructivo aislante de tejas con la parte cóncava hacia arriba .



10. Excavación de la grieta: U. E. 1014, acumulación de cantos rodados.



11. Pasadizo, excavación de la grieta: retirando relleno plenomedieval con útil construido a tal fin.



12. Excavación de la grieta: aparición de interfaz bajo el relleno anterior.



13. Pasadizo, excavación de la grieta: *tegula* romana entre el relleno medieval.
Aparición de mampostería de sillarejo que parece rematar el paramento



14. Excavación de la grieta: retirada del segundo nivel de depósitos..



15. Pasadizo, excavación de la grieta: *tegula* romana entre el relleno medieval, detalle.



16. Excavación de la grieta: retirada del segundo nivel de depósitos. Detalle.



19. La torre del Castillo en el sistema defensivo medieval: contacto visual con la mota de Puente Castro.

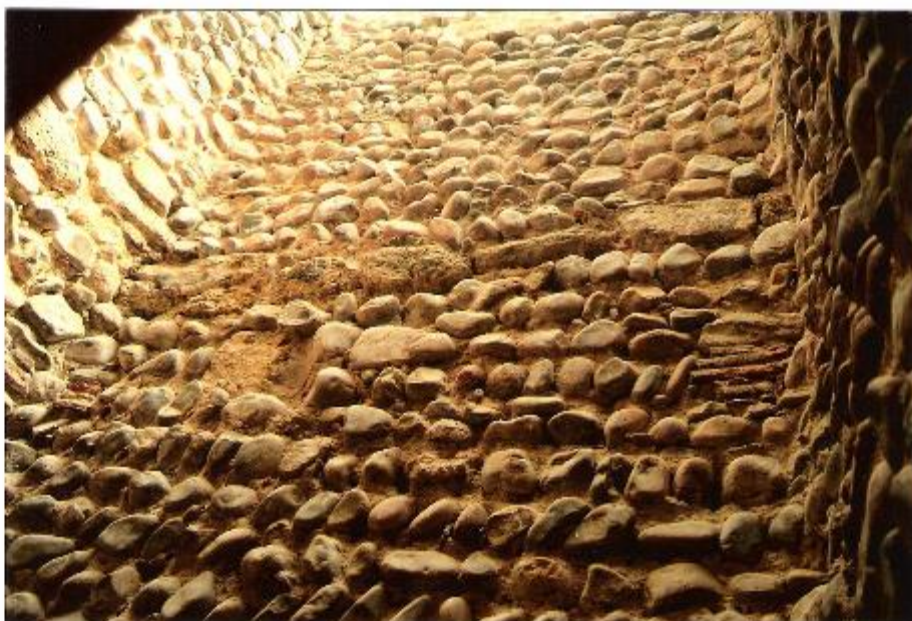


20. Vista panorámica desde la torre. Cubrición del *Patio Fantasma* anterior a la intervención.



26 y 27. Limpieza del patio previa al comienzo de la excavación. Detalles de la superficie.





22 y 23. Paramentos de la torre de cal y canto con sillares reutilizados.
Se advierten diversas reedificaciones desde el siglo X al XX.





28 y 29. Estratigrafía bajo el dintel de la actual puerta de acceso en el paramento oeste del patio de la torre.





34 y 35. Seguimiento de la realización del nuevo solado del patio de la torre.



As has been argued, the Roman state was explicitly responsible for the construction and maintenance of fortifications. The emperor signed the financial legislation that demanded the allocation of a percentage, generally a third of the urban resources, for construction or restoration of public works. In the Late Imperial period revenues began to be used to meet these expenses, such as those of the so-called *arca vinaria*, a fund smaller than the central treasury. And we should not forget the mention in the legal compilation of the Theodosian Code (*C.Th.* XV, 1, 36), already outlined above, of the requirement to reuse materials from demolition of public buildings⁴⁵⁴.

Regarding the financing of public works in Hispania, J. Mangas⁴⁵⁵ has pointed out that those who invested most actively in municipal public works were local notables and wealthy citizens in what has been called forced private initiative. Quite a few cases of this private intervention in Hispanic municipal finances through euergetism have been documented. In fact, a Hispanic notable's donation is the highest known in Western Europe: ten million *sestertii*⁴⁵⁶ given by Q. Torio Culleo and used for public works, among others, to restore the walls of his city, Castulo. And despite the fact that the main source of wealth at the time was agriculture, the income from the Hispanic *euergetes* known to us seems to have come essentially from the trade in oil and garum and to a lesser extent from the exploitation of mines and quarries, activities requiring administrative concessions. Concerning the plebs, the *munera* system, unpaid forced benefits imposed on citizens for the execution of public works, so characteristic of the first centuries, survived beyond the Late Empire in all the provinces⁴⁵⁷. A. Fernández de Buján y Fernández⁴⁵⁸, in the prologue of Malavé Osuna's work on the financial legal regime of Roman public works, highlights the custom of contracting them out to private companies through administrative contracts, and the coexistence of public and private financing models. Late Imperial legislation was more uniform, as all cities had to unavoidably reserve a quota of their resources for urban maintenance, insisting on the optimization of

⁴⁵⁴ MALAVÉ OSUNA 2007, pp. 12-18.

⁴⁵⁵ MANGAS MANJARRÉS 1971, pp. 135-136.

⁴⁵⁶ MELCHOR GIL 1994, pp. 346- 347 no. 51 (*CIL* II, 3270).

⁴⁵⁷ FERNÁNDEZ DE BUJÁN 2007, p.16: "according to the traditional theory concerning *munera* there were three categories: extraordinary or corporal, *personalia* and *patrimonialia*. By means of the first one the State obtained free manual labour, whether qualified or not. The *munera personalia* implied the taking up of a purely personal duty". *Ref.* MALAVÉ OSUNA 2007, p. 117.

⁴⁵⁸ FERNÁNDEZ DE BUJÁN 2007, pp. 14-18.

resources by prioritizing not only restoration over new construction, but even the compulsory reuse of materials from demolition of public buildings (*C.Th* XV, 1, 36)⁴⁵⁹.

Equally noteworthy for the study of the financing of Roman fortified structures, and in this case mentioning the ones in León, is the work of Melchor Gil⁴⁶⁰ on imperial, municipal and private initiatives in public construction in Roman Hispania. He verifies among other data the reuse of materials in *Barcino*, where part of a structure of arches was incorporated into one of the towers of the south gate. Melchor Gil refers to the mentioned *CIL* II, 2660, dated between AD 162 and 166, with the presence of a "free donor of the *ordo senatorialis*", Quintus Tullius Maximus, *legatus augusti legionis VII geminae*, who would be the probable benefactor of a temple to Diana where the votive altar would be placed, perhaps in the camp of the *Legio VII*. Another significant epigraph, *CIL* II, 5690, a monumental inscription from the 2nd century found in the wall of León, describes the construction of a bridge in the camp of this legion with an uncertain donor statute, a woman member of the senatorial order. She is less likely to have held residence in the camp of León than in the nearby *vicus* of *Ad Legionem* or in the *cannabae*, despite the fact that the officers of the legion could marry. Regarding this second heading, J. Mangas⁴⁶¹ also concluded that the aforementioned monument would be a remarkable case of private collaboration in a public work associated with a legionary camp or with its *cannabae*, for whose locality the bridge paid by Domitius Atticus, a freedman of Domitia Presilla, might have been destined. J. Mangas's idea that the *Legio VII* soldiers would not wait for Domitia Presilla's charity to be able to cross both rivers [Torío and Bernesga] via bridges built by soldiers, leads him to think of a third bridge. Given that signs of Roman construction have been found on the San Marcos bridge and unpublished remains of another in the vicinity of the River Torío on the way to Lancia, and the *vicus* of Puente Castro coming to light recently, it is very likely that it is the bridge of the *castrum*, the same one that has given its name to this suburb of León, to which the aforementioned epigraph refers.

As for the different legal consideration of the Roman camps with respect to the municipalities or colonies, this same epigraphic document is an example to keep in mind about the consideration of rivers as *loci publici* and of legionary *prata*, and that what was

⁴⁵⁹ Concerning the financing and construction of fortifications, the citizens were obliged to participate in the work (*C.Th.* 16, 10) and the provincial authorities watched over the fulfilment of this obligation (*C.Th.* 15,1), but we know that the *collegia* were also used as a source of labour.

⁴⁶⁰ MELCHOR GIL 1992, pp. 129-170. For the *Legio VII*, pp. 151 and 158.

⁴⁶¹ MANGAS MANJARRES 1987, pp. 245-251, *CIL* II, 5690.

built on *locus publicus* came to be considered “*publicus*”, even if its financing had been private. So “a formula like *L (oco) P (ublico) F (acto)* makes full sense if it is the construction of a work of public use paid for by a private person in a public place. In a colony or municipality, a formula like *l (oco) d (ato) d (ecreto) d (ecurionum)* should have appeared. But in the camp or in the vicinity of the *Legio VII Gemina* there would be no place for a decurional act”⁴⁶². Contrary to what J. Mangas believed before, perhaps the *cannabae* of the *Legio VII Gemina* reached the rank and organization of a municipality, given the presence of municipal offices, such as the case of Popilius Respectus, the lictor⁴⁶³ in some Leonese epigraphs. It was perhaps also in this context that León’s amphitheatre, outside the walls, was renovated. The case of the amphitheatre exemplifies well the way in which Leonese archaeological knowledge advances: this construction was called “cryptoporticus” or “crypt of Cascalerías” for many years, until the author of this work identified the vaulted structures of the Leonese cryptoporticus with the lower gallery or entrance to an amphitheatre⁴⁶⁴, which gave rise to various publications that, albeit late and surprisingly, found the solution to the enigma⁴⁶⁵.

Returning to the troops that were then stationed in this Leonese fortification, a reflection should be made about their movement from Hispania to other areas of the Empire. It also has implications for our hypothesis since while garrisoned in other camps, reconstruction and conservation works in fortifications have been documented, as we will see. In fact, the change towards a military strategy of troop mobility favoured by Septimius Severus (193-211) had meant that not all the company of the *Legio VII* had remained stationed in their León camp, but that some *commandos* or *vexillationes* moved to other areas. According to J.J. Palao Vicente⁴⁶⁶, the dispatch of troops from the *Legio VII* to Africa had to happen beforehand during the last stage of Trajan’s rule because from the time of Augustus there had been no large military campaigns planned again and after

⁴⁶² MANGAS MANJARRÉS 1987, p. 247.

⁴⁶³ CRESPO ORTIZ DE ZÁRATE 2008, pp.249-274.

⁴⁶⁴ “*El Patrimonio Arqueológico declarado Patrimonio de la Humanidad*” financed by the EU and organised by the *Servicio de Arqueología* of the *Dirección General de Patrimonio y Promoción Cultural de la Junta de Castilla y León*, (22-27 October 2002). Its itinerary included a visit to the amphitheatre in Tarragona whose obvious similarity to the structures of the Leonese amphitheatre seemed to me definitive in ending the lack of categorisation of the cryptoporticus in Cascalerías.

⁴⁶⁵ VIDAL ENCINAS 1996, pp. 314-315; GARCÍA MARCOS 2002, p. 202. After a new archaeological survey in 2000 in Calle Cascalerías 7, published in *El Diario de León 10-11-2002* “El enigma de la cripta de Cascalerías”: “(...) a gallery of some 60 metres long, almost three metres tall and a metre and a half in width (...) whose purpose still remains a complete mystery for the archaeologists, who have not managed to dilucidate the function of such an enigmatic construction”.

⁴⁶⁶ PALAO VICENTE 2006, p. 76; ROLDÁN HERVÁS 1974, pp. 629-630, on the soldiers of the *Legio VII* coming from *Cartago*: *CIL VIII* 24682, 12590.

Trajan's wars, they would not be necessary until the time of Marcus Aurelius. And as we have previously mentioned, in the year 222 at the beginning of the Severan dynasty, the commander of the *Legio VII Gemina* governed the entire *conventus Cluniensis*⁴⁶⁷. Presumably, at that time in the 3rd century the Early Imperial wall was adequately maintained.

In this sense, E. Gonzalbes Cravioto's work⁴⁶⁸ is interesting concerning the military border in *Mauretania Tingitana* in the valley of the River Martil, in the vicinity of Tamuda (Tetouan, Morocco). Its *castellum* already existed at the beginning of the 3rd century when the *Ala III Asturum* was stationed there, camped in Aïn Schkour (about 3 kilometres north of *Volubilis*), probably from the end of the 1st century and for much of the 2nd century, before later moving to Tamuda. The first excavations carried out in the year 1921 by Montalbán and the study by Gómez Moreno⁴⁶⁹ imply that, once the Mauritanian city was destroyed, possibly in the time of the Emperor Hadrian [118-136], "a stable camp was presumably established with the likely purpose of ensuring communications in the valley". M. Gómez Moreno's description highlights an appreciation of the similarity of the Tamuda military complex with the camp walls of León and Ciudadeja de Vidriales. Archeological surveys found that the monumental remodelling of the southern gate, possibly the *porta praetoria*, was later than 238, from the time of Gordian III (238-244), at a time immediately after the succession of Alexander Severus (222-235), a period of prosperity in *Africa Tingitana* where the crisis appeared around the years 268-275. As can be deduced from the excavations in 1943, the western gate was later provided with an internal corner wall⁴⁷⁰. The refortification of the Tamuda *castellum* in the time of Gordian III might have been due to the consequences of the political instability that led to the decomposition of the African Legion (the *III Augusta*⁴⁷¹ with its camp in *Lambaesis*) and a possible decrease in the number of troops thus requiring

⁴⁶⁷ CURCHIN 1991, p. 90.

⁴⁶⁸ GONZALBES CRAVIOTO 2009, pp. 1575-1579.

⁴⁶⁹ GÓMEZ MORENO 1922, p. 8: "with a poor bonding of stonework and mud, a nearly square enclosure was formed, with a gate in the middle of each wall and rounded corners, as in León and in Ciudadeja de Vidriales (Zamora). Its age can be verified by the coins found in abundance within, from the Antonines until Honorius and Arcadius, all bronze, except for a silver one and a golden solidum of the last mentioned emperor. Probably previous to its foundation, its precinct was refortified, adding rounded towers, two at each gate and others at the angles and between them; twenty in all, some of them hollow and others solid".

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 1580: "(...) Concerning these changes Tarradell (1949:34) found: These towers were most certainly built in the last stages of the city, which must have endured a very precarious situation, as the new defence system set up in the southern gate testifies. In fact, the space that remains between the two towers and the old gate was later closed with two walls jutting out that formed a new entrance of hardly a metre's width (...)"

⁴⁷¹ BOHEC 1989, pp. 453-456.

better fortification. All this caused an evolution of the defensive system in Roman Africa. The final appearance of the Tamuda *castellum*⁴⁷² corresponds to the reconstructions carried out from the last part of the 3rd century and during the 4th century at the corners, when the towers were strengthened outwards forming bastions. The description that we include of the Tamuda *castellum* is due both to its construction by soldiers coming from a military garrison formed by *Astures*, and to the undeniable similarity of the construction of its walls and gates with some Leonese fortified precincts. To the similarity found and already published in 1922 by M. Gómez Moreno, we should add here the similarity that the west gate of the *castellum* of Tamuda excavated in 1943 (figure 2 in the work by E. Gonzalbes Cravioto, 2009) shows to the 5th century fortress of *Castrum Bergidum*, the Castro Ventosa in Cacabelos in the Leonese region of El Bierzo. It was repopulated by Mozarabs from Córdoba whose Omayyad fortification techniques would arrive from Africa to the north of the Iberian Peninsula in the 11th and 12th centuries⁴⁷³ and seem to have their origin in the Roman *limes arabicus*⁴⁷⁴ as well.



Fig. 82. Appearance of semicircular towers (*cubos*) in the late ancient wall of Castro Ventosa (Cacabelos, León)

The truth is that, irrespective of whether the Leonese Roman stone small-ashlar wall was built entirely by the *Legio VI Hispaniensis* or the *VII Gemina* participated in its construction, it was the latter's legionaries who maintained the fortification for almost four centuries, giving rise to a Hispano-Roman population that never left the site. Even after the Suebian conquest of northwestern Hispania, we cannot be sure that the Hispano-

⁴⁷² BERNAL CASASOLA; CAMPOS CARRASCO and BERMEJO MELÉNDEZ 2015, pp. 229-246.

⁴⁷³ PAZ PERALTA 2015.

⁴⁷⁴ ARCE GARCÍA 2009, pp. 155- 179.

Romans would leave *Legione*, even when the Roman legion ceased to exist as such. At least a part of the former soldiers and their families would continue to inhabit the Leonese walled enclosure, perhaps sharing their space with the "barbarian" newcomers, the *Suevi*, in a similar way to what is narrated by Hydatius' *Chronicle* in Lugo. There even in the year 460 he refers to a group of Romans called "*romani*"⁴⁷⁵ with its leader (*cum rectore suo*) possibly the tribune of the *Cohortis Lucensis*, the *Luco Praesidens* mentioned in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, who would be in command of a military detachment of between 300 and 500 men.

The functional continuity of the León stone small-ashlar fortification that we defend here will serve to support historically the archaeological evidence that the wall of *cubos* is in any case later than the second half of the 5th century, and that it was erected when the old small-ashlar structure was in ruins. To the imperial conservationist legislation regarding the fortifications, we will add several historical aspects that make a wall improbable and unnecessary in León at the end of the 3rd century or during the 4th century. In any case, it seems undeniable that a new "Tetrarchic" wall in a camp occupied by Roman troops without interruption would hardly have been necessary.

2.4. León and the Roman Early Imperial fortifications in the Hispanic Northwest.

León was the main centre of a fortification network whose purpose was fiscal control and exploitation of the territory. Without referring in the slightest way to the different fortified precincts that formed part of this network, the study of León's historical role would remain incomplete, and perhaps to some extent incomprehensible, without taking into account the network in which its fortification was set.

The construction of new *castra stativa* or permanent camps seems to have taken place after most conquest troops had abandoned Hispania between AD 69 and 70. They were erected as barracks for the occupation troops who took care of the exploitation and organization of the territory, control of communication routes, police functions and collection of taxes, but also were responsible for the construction and maintenance of public works (such as roads, aqueducts, bridges, sewerage networks, etc.). Legions X

⁴⁷⁵ HYDATIUS, *Chron.*, 194: *Per Sueuos Luco habitantes in diebus Paschae Romani aliquanti cum rectore suo honesto natu repentino securi de reuerentia dierum occiduntur incursu.*

Gemina, VI *Hispaniensis* and VII *Gemina* formed the occupation troops in the context of the fortifications in León, sometimes distributed in auxiliary units or *vexillationes*. The presence of *Legio V Alauda* during the conquest of León between 27 and 19 BC is highly plausible. It seems it could have been stationed during the first campaigns of Tiberius (AD 14-16) in a wooden camp in *Castra Vetera* (Xanten, Germany) which was recouped years later to raise another one. Perhaps this *Alaudae* was the *Legio V*, the tribune Titus Cassius belonged to. He signed the contract for the sale of a slave documented on the wooden *Tolsum* tablet (Friesland, Netherlands) around AD 29. Apparently, it was also quartered in *Castra Vetera* around AD 69 and then in *Singidunum* (Belgrade, Serbia) or *Brigetio* (Panonia) before disappearing around AD 90⁴⁷⁶.

We know about the *castra stativa* of some auxiliary units: in Rosinos de Vidriales (Zamora), *Ala II Flavia*; in *Aquis Querquennis* (Baños de Bande, Orense), possibly the *Cohors I Gallica*; in Ciudadela (Sobrado dos Monxes, La Coruña), the *Cohors I Celtiberorum*; in Herrera de Pisuerga (Palencia), the *Ala Parthorum* and *Cohors I Gallica*; and perhaps in Atxa (Vitoria, Álava). We find a specific type of permanent camp, the so-called *castra hiberna*, which were built to accommodate the troops during the winter season between war campaigns. Additional barracks could be built every year to adapt to the number of military personnel from each mission, as could be the case of the X *Gemina*, a legion whose foundation is connected with the origin of *Petavonium* (Rosinos de Vidriales, Zamora) and perhaps *Asturica Augusta* and the first fortified precinct of León, which would later become the permanent camp of the *Legio VI Hispaniensis* and of the *Legio VII Gemina* from the year AD 74. Therefore, despite being a theory widely acknowledged in present research, we cannot rule out that the *Legio X Gemina* or *Legio V Alaudae* could have passed through the Leonese camp. For the same reason, we have not ruled out as a working hypothesis in this study that any of these legions, or any of their auxiliary units, could have participated in the construction of the first defensive earthen and wooden structure in the city of León.

Later, with the occupation phase already assured, the construction of defensive bastions would no longer be a strictly military initiative but would ultimately be promoted by the *procurator per Asturia et Callaecia*, who would command the military administration from AD 79. As we have already pointed out, he controlled the work of the

⁴⁷⁶ SANTOS YANGUAS 2011, pp.191-214; PERALTA LABRADOR 2017, p. 155; FRANKE 2000, pp. 39-48.

beneficiarii in provisioning supplies under his command, and the *frumentarii* or military transporters of provisions, some as unexpected as the already mentioned oysters, whose remains have been found in huge quantities in the Leonese *praetorian* quarters, as well as some utensils very characteristic of Roman household ware, such as the Hispanic *terra sigillata* found throughout all the peninsular Northwest, as well as other medical instruments, military equipment, etc.

To end the contextualization of the Roman fortifications in the current territory of León, a brief comparative analysis of them is required, both of the sites within the province and those of its surroundings which may present some relationship with the legions and auxiliary units here studied, including archaeological remains from uninhabited sites, within the walls of current urban centres or in fossilized remains in the city layout.

2.4.1. Rosinos de Vidriales (Zamora)

This is not the case of the camps in Rosinos de Vidriales⁴⁷⁷ (Zamora), where against the norm there happens to be a fortified legionary camp that was not reoccupied by civilians after being abandoned by its last garrison, the *Ala II Flavia Hispanorum civium Romanorum*. It seems to have been first occupied by the *Legio X Gemina*⁴⁷⁸, which was sent to Hispania in 27 BC and some time between 25 and 19 BC would have built an enclosure of 17.35 hectares (550x315 metres), surrounded by a double moat like that of Astorga (León). Its garrison would have been composed of militia from the *Legio X Gemina*, probably before its foundation as a city in the year 25 BC, which leads us to think of a possible division of troops between the Rosinos de Vidriales (Zamora) camp and the camp of what would later be *Asturica Augusta*.

The chronology of the camp of the *Legio X Gemina* in the north of Zamora is somewhat imprecise, though it could have possibly lasted until AD 62-63, when this legion was sent to *Carnuntum* in Pannonia, near modern Vienna. Between AD 68 and 70

⁴⁷⁷ *Petavonium* is the toponym of the *mansio* of the *Antonine Itinerary* (423,3) found in the same place. CARRETERO VAQUERO, Santiago and ROMERO CARNICERO, M^a Victoria (2006) “Materiales y técnicas de construcción en Petavonium”.

⁴⁷⁸ GARCÍA-BELLIDO, M.^a Paz and PETAC, Emanuel (1998) “*Contramarcas y sellos de la legio X en Hispania y en Moesia o Renania*”, in *AEspA*, N^o 71, pp. 257 to 264. They publish markings with an X, a possible seal of the *Legio X Gemina*, on lead lingots or coins from the year AD 19 during Agrippa’s visit to Hispania; the presence of the legion in Petavonium (Zamora) is documented with a double marking, consisting in an eagle head and the numeral of the *Legio X*.

it would have returned to Hispania, though no further information⁴⁷⁹ has been found as to where the *Legio X Gemina* might have been quartered. A possibility, as mentioned before, could be León in an effective exchange of quarters, since the newly created *Legio VII Gemina Galbiana* could have departed from here towards *Carnutum* when its previous location in Astorga (León) had already become the city of *Asturica Augusta*.



Fig. 83. Aerial view of Rosinos de Vidriales military camp (Zamora)

The information provided by archaeological stratigraphy⁴⁸⁰ indicates the absence of a level of intentional destruction or fire after the last period of occupation of the site by the *X Gemina*, which would have happened if the camp had been closed; on the contrary, the signs of reuse of internal structures indicate a continuity in its military activity.

Regarding these internal structures, archaeologists have documented two construction phases using different materials: the first one in wood, shown by post holes associated to an alignment of stones as support; the second one built with a stone base and earthen walls made of rammed earth or adobes, adobes which also frequently appear

⁴⁷⁹ MORILLO CERDÁN 1993, p. 392.

⁴⁸⁰ CARRETERO VAQUERO and ROMERO CARNICERO 2004, pp. 219-229; CARRETERO VAQUERO 2006; *Id.* 1993, pp. 47-74.

reused in the buildings of the later camp of the *Ala II Flavia Hispanorum civium Romanorum*, as foundations. This second occupation is usually dated from the year 63.

2.4.2. Astorga (León)

Regarding the origins of Astorga, it has been stated⁴⁸¹ that the *Legio X Gemina* was stationed in the site of Astorga after the Cantabrian Wars before it became a nucleus of civilian population. This is a possible hypothesis but not the only one in light of the latest archaeological discoveries, and especially due to the lack of certainty about where the *Legio V Alaudae* settled between 27 and 19 BC.

News⁴⁸² regarding the discovery of an inscription during an archaeological excavation has recently been published: the epigraph of *Trebius Nepoti*, that proves that Astorga was already a city during the government of Tiberius (AD 14-37), it was at least so around AD 30. Despite the fact that only a third of this epigraph has been found, it evidences the appointment of a specific proconsul for *Asturica Augusta* by Tiberius. This archaeological and epigraphic testimony seems to break the diachronic version according to which the *Legio X Gemina* –or one of its *auxilia*– settled in Astorga during the Cantabrian Wars, before the place became a nucleus of civilian population. This hypothesis was based on a somewhat forced interpretation of literary sources about the attack of the *Astures* against the three Roman camps in the territory of *Astures Augustanos*: Orosius (Hist., VI, 21, 9) and Florus (II, 33, 54).

⁴⁸¹ MORILLO CERDÁN 1993, pp. 391-392; SCHULTEN 1943, p. 154; MAÑANES 1976, pp. 77-78; *Id.* 1983, p. 146.

⁴⁸² *El Bierzo Digital*, 12th May 2017. The excavation in Calle Pío Gullón in Astorga was directed by M.^a Luz González Fernández.

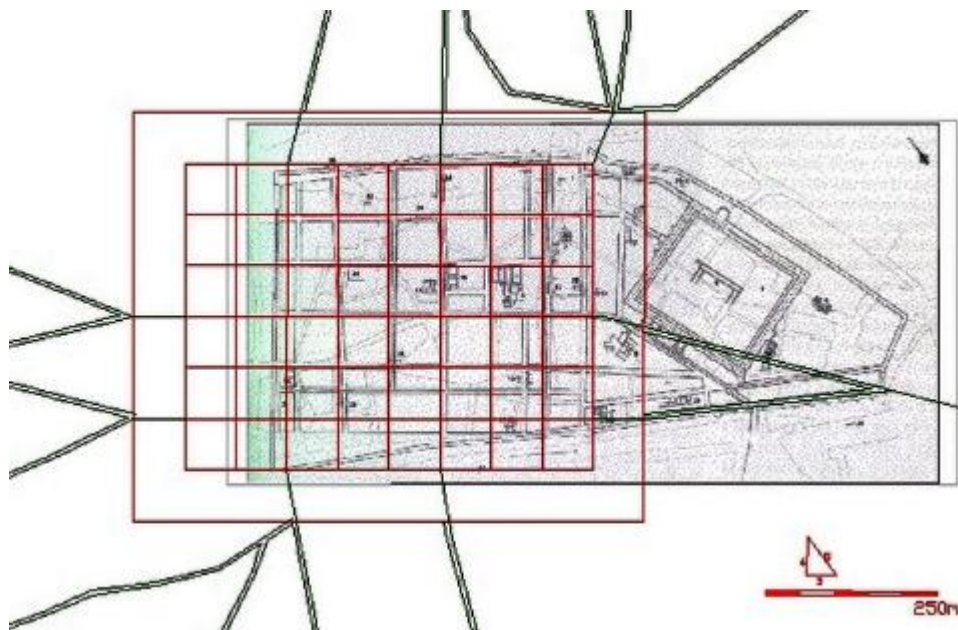


Fig. 84. Recreation of *Asturica Augusta* and the *Legio X* camp (<http://arqueolugares.blogspot.com.es>)

The reasoning concerning a military origin for *Asturica Augusta* rules out the possibility of synchrony, and the few publications from recent years clearly⁴⁸³ consider that, before becoming a city, Astorga was a military camp. This conclusion perhaps does not take into account that the historical axiom that legions could not settle for long in a city has been revised in recent decades⁴⁸⁴, and we know today that, in addition to the capitals of provinces which hosted the governor's escort troops, many Hispanic cities held a military garrison. Even in Imperial times, when legions had permanent camps, there was also a military representation in cities; in *Tarraco*, for example, at least one *Cohors Laietani* was quartered in the city. For this reason, the following hypothesis presented in this work should be considered: the possibility that it was a *vexillatio* of the *Legio X Gemina* quartered in the city of *Asturica Augusta* during the first years of the Empire. The possibility of this happening at the same time in *Lucus Augusti* has already been suggested above. And this fact has been verified also in other urban centres such as *Ilipa* (Alcalá del Río, Seville) or *Castulo* (Cazlona, Linares, Jaén) in the 1st century BC.

This *synchronic* hypothesis is accordant with the discoveries that urban archaeology has provided in Astorga. Namely that one part of the fortified enclosure,

⁴⁸³ MORILLO Cerdán 2006, p. 52; GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ et al. 2003, p. 298; GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ 1997, pp. 5, 12-13.; SEVILLANO FUERTES 2002, p. 24.

⁴⁸⁴ CURCHIN 1991, p. 92.

specifically, two possible parallel trenches attributed to the fortified camp⁴⁸⁵ enclosure were dug out by the *Legio X Gemina* to protect the hill where the ancient *Asturica Augusta* was located, the nucleus of the territorial organization of the Hispanic Northwest. As in the case of León, we cannot rule out the possibility that members of the *Legio V Alaudae* participated.

Researching the evolution of the fortifications of Astorga, in 2007 a preliminary report of the archaeological excavation carried out by the author in Plaza Obispo Alcolea 5 and 6⁴⁸⁶ on a site attached to Astorga's "Late Roman" wall of *cubos* (in my opinion, as medieval as that of León) was presented to the Regional Administration. In this report, a possible section of an earlier wall was revealed, this one Roman with quartzite masonry and lime mortar, exactly inside the above-documented V-shaped pit whose counterscarp is missing because it was razed by later structures. This wall of great height but only half a metre thick might have been the exposed face of an emplecton fill.

The truth is that in the adjoining site, Plaza Obispo Alcolea 7, a ditch has appeared likewise associated with this wall, which has been considered "a great foundation trench in which the foundation of the fortification is installed"⁴⁸⁷, a misinterpretation that follows on from previous conclusions. The fortification to which it seems to refer is the "late wall" whose inner face is said to be documented as well as the aforementioned "great foundation trench" that was described as a four-and-a-half-metre-wide V-shaped trench and almost 3 metres deep, excavated in the geological substrate. This is not the only occasion⁴⁸⁸ when the initial conclusions given to the findings of an archaeological excavation have had to be modified in the face of subsequent discoveries, in some cases taking into account the preliminary report of another archaeological intervention with a different direction, such as the one reproduced a few lines below.

⁴⁸⁵ GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ 1997, pp. 7-10; *Ref.* FERNÁNDEZ ORDÁS, 2007, pp. 34-35. We should consider the hypothesis, when comparing photographs of the remains of the ditches found in Plaza Obispo Alcolea 5 and 6 in 2007, and those found in Paseo Blanco de Cela in 1993 and 1995, that there was only one ditch in V-shape with a counterscarp of a possible second ditch in U. It is true that my interpretation of both excavations differs from that of my colleague M. Luz González because I do not see remains of a second V-shaped ditch.

⁴⁸⁶ FERNÁNDEZ ORDÁS 2007, p.45.

⁴⁸⁷ FERNÁNDEZ ORDÁS 2007, p.45.

⁴⁸⁸ Despite the fact that these reports on Plaza de Obispo Alcolea 5 and 6 and 7 have been placed in deposit with the Junta de Castilla y León, there is still an insistence in saying that these remains have only appeared in the defensive system in Astorga in Calle Padre Blanco (*see* GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ, 2018, pp. 277-279).

However, it must be affirmed that the existence of a single ditch with a V profile, a few metres *inside* the wall of *cubos* (and parallel to it), has been found in these plots in Plaza Obispo Alcolea 5 and 6, as well as nearby in the Plaza Obispo Alcolea 7⁴⁸⁹. The possibility of a second filled ditch to build subsequent structures should not be ruled out. Likewise, the presence of an earthen wall associated with this V-ditch is not to be ruled out either because the volume of clay present in the strata of that phase might be due to an earthen fortification, possibly the first camp site on the Astorga site. Likewise, the subsequent construction has been proven in the V-ditch of a wall half a metre thick made of quartzite masonry and lime mortar, of which more than 2 metres high is still extant. It probably corresponds to the exposed face of a second stone wall with an internal structure of emplecton that the Romans built in Astorga. It should be noted that despite being parallel to the wall of *cubos*, this wall structure has a worked facing on the inside looking into the city.



Fig. 85. Roman defensive systems of Astorga (León) attached to the inner face of the wall of *cubos*, Plaza Obispo Alcolea 5- 6. Ditches inside the walled enclosure.

⁴⁸⁹ SEVILLANO FUERTES 2008.



Fig. 86. V-shaped ditch inside the Roman walled enclosure, which in turn lays inside the wall of *cubos*, Plaza Obispo Alcolea 5 and 6, Astorga (León).

The top photograph shows the V-shaped ditch reused as a foundation trench for the wall parallel to the wall of *cubos*, but with the worked facing looking inside. The non-existence at this point of the second “V-shaped” ditch that appears in other places in the city of Astorga may be due to the fact that these ditches might correspond to an urban, non-legionary walled precinct built after the first phases of Roman fortification of Astorga. That Astorga seemingly had two walls, consecutive or simultaneous, is yet to be proven, both being prior to the wall of *cubos* that has been considered Roman. The unknowns are aggravated because the counterscarp of the V-shaped ditch was excavated in a clay deposit under which a smaller dry stone wall structure had been buried, with an extant height of 1.60 metres. This has yet to be interpreted, pending the completion of the archaeological intervention paralyzed by the owner of the property.



Fig. 87. Dry stone wall found under the clay layer in which the V-ditch was excavated looking towards the inside of the Roman walled enclosure, Plaza Obispo Alcolea 5- 6, Astorga (León). Photograph of the author, 2007 (except for the red mark on the interface of the wall: JCyL).

On the other hand, it is not possible to continue to hold a Late Imperial timing for the re-fortification of this city, the wall of *cubos* of Astorga. Its historical dating should not be endorsed either by the "close relationship between the permanent troops and the walled cities"⁴⁹⁰ in the north of Hispania, or by the archaeology of Astorga, which presents an uninterrupted occupation of the urban nucleus even in the middle of the 5th century⁴⁹¹. Likewise, mentioning continuity, historical documentation places the seat of a Suebian bishopric in Astorga in the 6th century.

2.4.3. *Lugo*

Regarding the military origin or not of the city of *Lucus Augusti*, there are still diverse opinions⁴⁹² but what archaeology shows is that its current site may have housed a primitive camp in the northwest corner of its walled urban precinct resulting from the

⁴⁹⁰ FERNÁNDEZ OCHOA; MORILLO CERDÁN and SALIDO DOMÍNGUEZ 2011, pp. 281-282.

⁴⁹¹ PAZ PERALTA 2004, p. 38: "(...) The presence of the forms Hayes 99 A and 103 A variant are a reliable indication that the city continued to be inhabited after the events the year 457. (...) In the excavations undertaken no levels of violent destruction corresponding to this period have been found".

⁴⁹² It was founded in the year 25 BC by Paulus Fabius Maximus and the first historical reference to it after the Roman period is dated 730, when King Alfonso I reconquered the city from the Arabs. *Ref.* FERRER SIERRA 1997, pp. 425-446.

discoveries of caetra-type coinage from *Lucus*, as well as the remains found on “(...) a site near Rúa Montevideo where the large rounded corner of an enclosure delimited by a double parallel ditch has been excavated, without doubt belonging to a camp”⁴⁹³. It is not, however, the presumable legionary camp that gave rise to the city because it is located on the northwest edge of the walled enclosure and oriented towards the outside. It was, perhaps, the camp of a wing or cohort that might have accompanied the corresponding legionary expedition in the course of the Cantabrian Wars, or better still, a small camp of the *Legio VI* to which the aforementioned discovery alludes, destined for *Lucus* when on Augustus’ second visit to the Northwest it was sent to the civilian city and due transformations became necessary”. Another different hypothesis is the one maintained by Rodríguez Colmenero⁴⁹⁴, in whose opinion it was a larger camp transformed into a city after Augustus’ second stay in Hispania.



Fig. 88. Aerial view of the walled precinct of Lugo (*Lucus Augusti*). In red, a fossilized grid pattern of possible Roman origin.

⁴⁹³ RODRÍGUEZ COLMENERO 2006, pp. 44-46.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibidem*.

The discovery of an epigraph dedicated to Mithras by the centurion of the *Legio VII Gemina*⁴⁹⁵ in charge of a *statio* in Lugo in Caracalla's time suggests the continuity of the military settlement associated with the city during the Early Imperial period.

The rest of the studies published so far on the wall of Lugo, declared a World Heritage Site in 2000, are unrelated to the possible legionary origin of a previous settlement of the *Legio VI Hispanienses*, or any of its detachments. In the same year 2000, beneath the Vice-Rectorate of Lugo (of the University of Santiago de Compostela), remains of the Late Imperial wall appeared on top of two previous Roman phases. According to the archaeologist Rodríguez Cao⁴⁹⁶, the first would be a *domus* from the first quarter of the 1st century in which a temple dedicated to Mithras was built two centuries later, remaining until around AD 350 when it was expropriated to build the wall. The truth is that much of the Roman city is outside the present walled enclosure, whose chronology is yet to be clarified. As happened with Astorga, Lugo maintained a bishopric during the 175 years of domination of the peninsular Northwest by the *Suevi* who, as we have already pointed out, lived in the city with the Hispano-Romans.

2.4.4. Porto Quintela (Bande, Orense)

This enclave near the Portuguese border where the *Aquis Querquennis* road mansion was later located is believed to have housed the *Cohors I Gallica*⁴⁹⁷, a detachment of the *Legio VII Gemina*, quartered in León. The fortress guarded the River Limia and might have been built in Vespasian's time (AD 69-79) in connection with the construction of the *Via Nova*, the *Via XVIII* of the *Antonine Itinerary*, between *Bracara Augusta* (Braga) and *Asturica Augusta* (Astorga). It was abandoned around AD 120.

⁴⁹⁵ SANTOS YANGUAS 2014, p. 368.

⁴⁹⁶ RODRÍGUEZ CAO 2019, lecture given about Mithras in Lugo.

⁴⁹⁷ The adjective *Gallica* (and not *Galaica*) for this *Cohors I* had its origin in the first posting of this unit: although it had been set up in Italy in AD 10 after the Teutoburg Forest disaster, it was sent to the German border, which until the period of Augustus formed part of the province of *Gallia Belgica*. On an indeterminate date but before AD 30 it was transferred permanently to the *Hispania Tarraconensis*, and in 68 it was one of the auxiliary units assigned to the *Legio VI Victrix*, whose number is mentioned by Suetonius (Galba, 10, 2-5) although not specifying its titles. It was A. GARCÍA y BELLIDO 1970, p. 32 who concluded that it must have been those cohorts. From the year 74 it was assigned to the *Legio VII Gemina*. At the end of the 1st century it was transformed into a cavalry unit and stationed in the *castellum* de *Pisoraca* (Herrera de Pisuerga, Palencia).



Fig. 89. Aerial view of the Porto Quintela camp (Bande, Orense).

It is a classic *castellum*, rectangular in shape with smoothed corners and occupies about three hectares. The wall is separated from the outside by a deep "V" shaped moat (4 metres wide by 3 metres deep) and from the interior of the camp by an 11 metres *intervallum*. It was built of granite *opus vittatum*, 3.20 metres high, and it must have had semi-cylindrical battlements. Its four access gates –two of them have been excavated, the *Principalis Sinistra* which has two openings, and the *Decumana* with only one–, are located accordingly, at both ends of the two orthogonal main roads, the *cardo* (in this case four metres wide) and the *decumanus*.

The archaeological works of the *Aquae Querquennae* Foundation (2009-2011) continue today under the direction of Santiago Ferrer Sierra and have documented some internal structures very similar to those of the *Legio VII* camp in León, such as several barracks, the *principia* or headquarters and some *termae*. Worthy of mention is the finding of two *horrea* or rectangular granaries which must have been covered by vaults, since their walls were thick and held buttresses. Also noteworthy is the presence of a possible military hospital or *valetudinarium*, perhaps built around an interior courtyard or *impluvium* and with a peristyle because there are architectural remains that could correspond to column or pillar bases similar to those found in León during excavations next to the north gate of the camp⁴⁹⁸.

⁴⁹⁸ FERNÁNDEZ ORDÁS, 2004 and 2004b.

2.4.5. Ciudadela (*Sobrado dos Monxes, La Coruña*)

When A. Schulten⁴⁹⁹ visited A Ciudadela in 1930, he considered the hypothesis that this camp had been erected by Decimus Junius Brutus (180-113 BC). This seemed to indicate its presence in this strategic place due to the conquest of the current Galician territory. It lay on a natural route between *Brigantium* (La Coruña) and *Lucus Augusti* (Lugo), on a plateau in the interior of the Serra da Corda mountain chain, between the River Cabalar and its tributary, the Pequeno. The camp would communicate through a secondary road with the XIX-XX of the *Antonine Itinerary*, today the Camiño Real.

The defensive system included at least two surveillance posts in the mountains, north and southeast of the bastion, built on two old megalithic burial mounds called *medorras*. The surveillance posts were built of stone and mortar, except for the corners in granite ashlar and with brick materials, with legionary markings identical to those of the camp. Fragmented *tegulae*⁵⁰⁰ have appeared in hundreds with marks on them testifying to the presence in this camp of the *Cohors I Celtiberorum Equitata*⁵⁰¹. It was a unit documented between the 2nd and 4th centuries when, according to the *Notitia Dignitatum*, the cohort was located in “*Brigantiae, nunc Iuliobriga*”. This has been interpreted as a cohort transfer from La Coruña to the *Iuliobriga* of Cantabria⁵⁰². The fact is that this was not always the case because traditional historiography has simply confirmed a change in the name of the place. More than interpreting the “*nunc*” as now, because the *Brigantiae* cohort from La Coruña was “now” in *Iuliobriga* due to its transfer to the *civitas* of the same name in Cantabria, we opted to interpret that “*nunc*” as a more likely name change from *Brigantiae* to *Iuliobriga*, just as Flórez, Risco and Madoz translated it so simply. And so, the *Notitia Dignitatum* lists the *Cohort I Celtiberiorum* among the troops of *Callaecia*. If we add to this the epigraphic data provided by J. R. Aja Sánchez, the Galician *Iuliobriga* could be the Late Roman name for the Ciudadela camp.

⁴⁹⁹ SCHULTEN 1962, p. 220.

⁵⁰⁰ CAAMAÑO GESTO and CARLSSON-BRANDT FONTÁN 2015, pp. 107-120; COSTA GARCÍA 2010, pp. 163-177. The marks are rectangular with the corners having nine different types of seal markings (see CAAMAÑO GESTO 1984/85).

⁵⁰¹ COSTA GARCÍA 2009 pp. 201-222. There was another unit named *Cohors I Celtiberorum* stationed in Britannia in the 2nd century. But the *Cohors I Celtiberorum Equitata Civium Romanorum* was stationed in the *Tarraconensis* in the year AD 132 attached to the *Legio VII Gemina Felix* on the tablet of Castromao (Celanova, Orense), Provincial Archaeological Museum of Orense.

⁵⁰² CAAMAÑO GESTO; COSTA GARCÍA and RAMIL GONZÁLEZ 2012, pp. 269-290; CAAMAÑO GESTO and FERNÁNDEZ RODRÍGUEZ 2000, pp. 199-207; Ref. AJA SÁNCHEZ 2002b, p. 25.

The archaeological excavations in Ciudadela began in 1934 under the direction of A. del Castillo López⁵⁰³ and were resumed during the last decades of the 20th century under the direction of J. M. Caamaño Gesto, thus marking out the history of this enclave. Under the modern wall that closes the precinct the camp wall⁵⁰⁴ was exposed, with an average width of 1.15 metres and a preserved maximum height of 2.23 metres, double faced with the inside in regular stone and mortar and the outside lining of irregular facing, filled with a simple emplecton between both. The wall featured four gates flanked by towers, preceded by a double moat. Its *castellum* has a north-south orientation and a classic rectangular shape (170 x 140 metres) with rounded corners; it would occupy about 2.4 hectares. Inside the precinct the *principia*⁵⁰⁵, a *horreum* and some barracks have been excavated. The findings have consisted of furnaces, pottery from the 2nd to 4th centuries (both ordinary pottery, *Hispanic Terra Sigillata* and thin-sided pottery), metal objects (remains of tools and weapons, coinage from the 2nd to 4th centuries). Two inscriptions stand out among them, an altar dedicated to Fortuna found in the vicinity of the walls (AE 1986, 387)⁵⁰⁶, and a fragment of a tombstone in which a possible standard bearer from the *Cohors I Celtiberorum* appears (AE 1984, 548). The precinct was reused by Germanic population groups in the 7th century, and the church of Santa Maria de Ciudadela was built in its vicinity.

2.4.6. Castroventosa (Pieros, Cacabelos, León)

Associated with this site of Castroventosa in El Bierzo and to *Bergidum Flavium* is the nearby archaeological site of La Edrada, at the crossroads of the routes to the three capitals of *Conuentus* created by Augusto (*Lucus*, *Bracara* and *Asturica*). Castroventosa is located between the Leonese villages of Pieros and Valtuille de Abajo (municipalities of Cacabelos and Villafranca) in El Bierzo. It has been identified with the *Castro Bergidum*⁵⁰⁷ or *Bergidae* that was conquered by Roman troops between the years 25 and 23 BC, according to the recurring literary sources of Florus (II, 33, 48-50) and Orosius (VI,

⁵⁰³ DEL CASTILLO LÓPEZ 1931, pp. 55-58. The author discovered the figure on the way to the nearby village of Insúa, thus commencing his interest in Ciudadela.

⁵⁰⁴ COSTA GARCÍA 2013, p. 117.

⁵⁰⁵ CAAMAÑO GESTO and FERNÁNDEZ RODRÍGUEZ 2000, pp. 220-222. It shows a rectangular plan, almost square of 29.50 x 29.60 metres.

⁵⁰⁶ ANDRÉS HURTADO, 2002, p. 148

⁵⁰⁷ MAÑANES PÉREZ 2003 p. 35: locates *Bergidum Flavium* in the nearby hillfort of La Edrada, also in the municipality of Cacabelos (El Bierzo, León), a site where numerous Early Imperial materials have been found.

21, 5), who narrate that their inhabitants were defeated by hunger and fled towards *Mons Vindius* (identified with the Sierra de Los Ancares). Its location at an altitude of 642 metres on a high plateau makes this walled castle a strategic enclave for mastering the depression of El Bierzo and controlling the surrounding gold mining areas. Irregular, its dimensions make it the biggest hillfort in the Leonese province⁵⁰⁸, since its major axis is 442 metres and its maximum width 168 metres. Its wall seems to hold two types of joined masonry, one of them very similar to the late Roman fortress of Tamuda (North Africa). While its outer perimeter registers a circumference of 1,136 metres, with varying thicknesses of up to 4 metres, and height about 8 m, it still retains 15 semicircular towers. Its interior precinct is currently dedicated to vineyards.

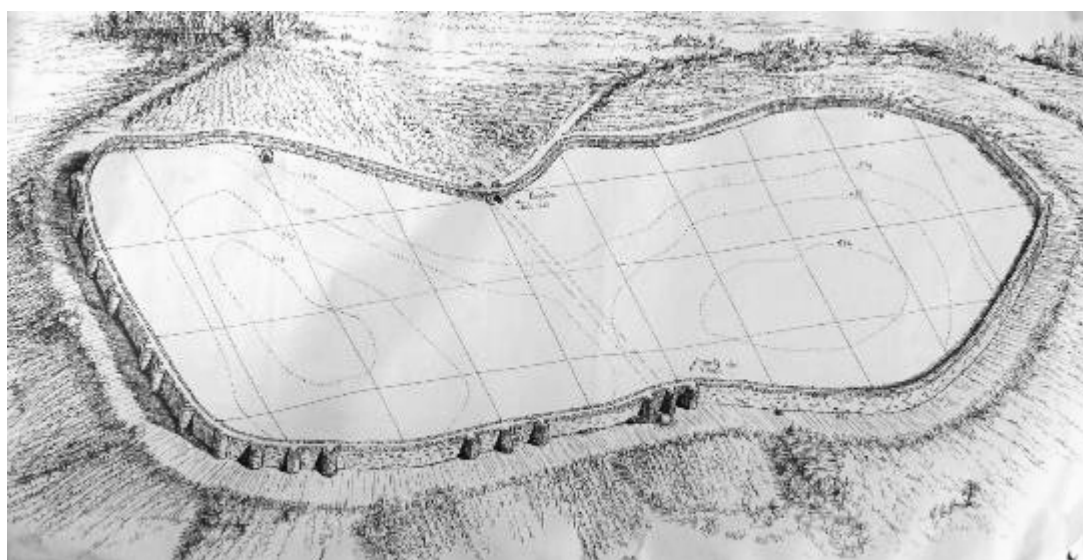


Fig. 90. Map of Castroventosa (Cacabelos, León).

Archaeological interventions have been carried out in Castroventosa since the seventies of the last century, the first being by T. Mañanes Pérez⁵⁰⁹. In 2004 I had the unforeseen coincidence of finding an excavation in progress directed by G. Marcos Contreras⁵¹⁰ prior to the restoration of part of the wall dated between the end of the 3rd century and the beginning of the 4th century AD while observing the debris from before the closure of the precinct, its materials provided dating of the 4th and 5th centuries AD.

⁵⁰⁸ MARCOS CONTRERAS; MISIEGO TEJEDA; FERNÁNDEZ ORALLO and MARTÍN CARBAJO 72007, pp. 419-445. GONZÁLEZ CASTAÑÓN 2012, pp. 13-108.

⁵⁰⁹ MAÑANES PÉREZ 1981.

⁵¹⁰ Concerning the 2004 archaeological campaign in Castroventosa, see GONZÁLEZ CASTAÑÓN 2011, pp. 60-70; MISIEGO TEJEDA; FERNÁNDEZ ORALLO; MARCOS CONTRERAS and MARTÍN CARBAJO 2003, pp. 203-226.

The chronological framework for the construction of the Roman wall is late, when the only legion in Hispania was the *Legio VII Gemina*, although in this area a much earlier presence of a *Legio VII Gemina* veteran has been detected near Las Médulas on an epigraph from the mid-2nd century AD found in Voces (Borrenes, León)⁵¹¹ where the endowment of a family grave appears commemorated.

On the other hand, eleven coins have been found on the level of circulation of the road in an opening in the wall in Castroventosa. Five of them bore the legend of Constantine, one of Constantius and another of Constantine (II), the others illegible. These findings provided a date (of use, not of construction) prior to the middle of the 4th century BC although it is worth recalling that Gómez Moreno set the dating of construction of this wall later, which seemed to him to be the work of Suebians or Visigoths. So, Gómez Moreno seems to be right judging from the famous 4th or early 5th century bone comb found by Díaz Álvarez in 1988 during the archaeological cleaning and consolidation works on the wall. This comb has been catalogued as belonging to a culture of Eastern Europe, that of Tchernjahov⁵¹².

The latest excavations were co-directed by Sánchez-Palencia and Criado in 2008, but a recent reinterpretation of the results of previous archaeological interventions by Tejerizo García and Vigil-Escalera⁵¹³ has helped to fix the fortification of the fort at a much later date: between the first half of the 5th century and the 6th century AD, in a medieval ceramic context that these researchers compare with those found in Lugo, Braga and Astorga⁵¹⁴. This publication has also reviewed the sequence of occupation of Castroventosa in relation to the phenomenon of Early Medieval fortified settlements, concluding that the analysis of its ceramic materials indicates an occupation of this fortification *only* between the beginning of the 5th and mid-6th century AD⁵¹⁵. It is known that the place remained inhabited during Late Antiquity, and that it was a Visigothic mint as a result of the discovery of a coin –whose whereabouts is unknown today– minted by Sisebutus in the 7th century.

⁵¹¹ SASTRE PRATS 1999, pp. 273-279.

⁵¹² DÍAZ ÁLVAREZ and GARÍN GARCÍA 1996, pp. 1125-1143; PÉREZ RODRÍGUEZ-ARAGÓN 1996, pp. 173-184.

⁵¹³ TEJERIZO GARCÍA and VIGIL-ESCALERA GUIRADO 2017, pp. 129-161.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 138.

⁵¹⁵ TEJERIZO GARCÍA and VIGIL-ESCALERA GUIRADO 2017, pp. 129-161.

In conclusion, the latest archaeological studies show that Castroventosa was fortified around the 5th century AD and history adds that the occupation of the area during the Early Medieval period was continuous⁵¹⁶ because in the 6th century it was a Suebian parish of the diocese of Astorga⁵¹⁷, and in the 7th century St. Valerius wrote that markets⁵¹⁸ continued to be held in *Bergidum*.

2.4.7. *A possible Roman fortification in Mansilla de las Mulas (León).*

The walled area of Mansilla de las Mulas (León) is located about 4 kilometres from the Roman Lancia, an unfortified city where the location of the pre-Roman town, *Lancia* of the *Astures*, is thought to have been located. This current uninhabited site that the *Antonine Itinerary* holds as a Roman settlement with the name of *Lance*, is reflected in subsequent documentation with medieval toponymic variants of Sublancia and Sollanzo. If during the Roman period new settlements were created in the León area based on the main communication routes between the northwest of Hispania and the areas of mining and exploitation and distribution of other economic resources, we cannot miss the fact that one of the main Roman centres of population that concentrated activity in this area that we are studying is precisely Lancia. In fact, a Roman tombstone studied by Burón Álvarez⁵¹⁹ has appeared in the town of Mansilla de las Mulas, despite the fact that most historians place the origin of the city in medieval times, a historical moment that has a relatively abundant documentation⁵²⁰.

Although the walls that currently shelter the population are medieval, its plan still preserves a fossilised outline of a Roman camp that could have originally been a bridgehead fortification. This helps to validate the hypothesis of the existence of a ford

⁵¹⁶ RODRIGUEZ GONZÁLEZ and DURANY CASTRILLO 1998, pp. 45-87.

⁵¹⁷ FLÓREZ 1859, p. 132.

⁵¹⁸ DÍAZ ÁLVAREZ 2008, p. 75.

⁵¹⁹ BURÓN ÁLVAREZ 1995, pp. 211-220.

⁵²⁰ See PLAN ESPECIAL CASCO HISTÓRICO (PECH) DE MANSILLA DE LAS MULAS, published in the Provincial Gazette (BOP) León no. 65, 20th March 2003; Mansilla seems to have its origin in the extinct township of Villamil, the *Villa-Lili* of probable Mozarabic origin as can be seen from the donation in this place by King Alfonso IV, El Monje, of a mill to the Monastery of Abellar (Canaleja de Torío), founded by the Bishop Cixila in the time of King Ordoño II. Likewise, the nearby Monastery of San Miguel de Escalada (in the municipality of Gradefes, but some 12 kilometres from Mansilla de las Mulas) also indicates the early repopulation of this area by Mozarabs. The first documented references to Mansilla appear in the year 956, and they speak of villas or working farm-houses in *Mansela*. The renown of *Mansela Mayor* diminished while that of *Mansela del Puente* grew. Mansilla del Esla stole importance from Mansilla Mayor. The *Carta Puebla* of Mansilla was awarded in 1181 on being granted the Fuero de Benavente in 1167, a document currently lost: see CORONAS GONZÁLEZ 2018, pp.32, 124.

across the River Esla⁵²¹ (the *Astura* of the old sources) in Mansilla which, in addition, is the only one for several kilometres and is close to its confluence with the River Porma a little further south. If we add to this the finding of the aforementioned epigraph, the presence of a Roman road that reaches Mansilla and the location of a Roman mansion – *Lance*– on a ploughed hill in front of this town, it is very likely that this passage over the River Esla was guarded by a Roman garrison.



Fig. 91. Current state of the walls of Mansilla de las Mulas (León).

⁵²¹ The association of a bridge over the River Esla and a Roman precinct for guarding it appears in other places like the locality in Zamora of Arcos de la Polvorosa (BRAGADO TORANZO, p. 16, mentions the Roman nucleus in Pozarcón referring to it as a place with a “villa atmosphere”) and in other Leonese rivers when defining the crossing point over the River Órbigo in San Juan de Torres (Cebrones del Río, León), site of the city of *Bedunia*.

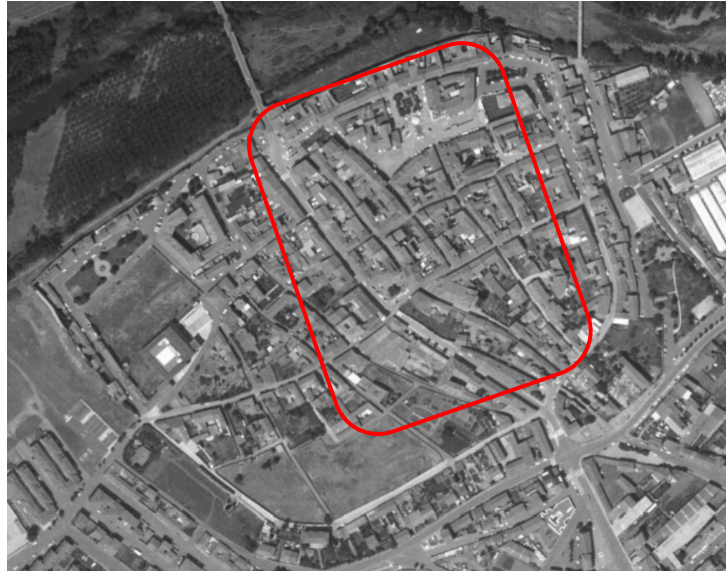


Fig. 92. Aerial view of the medieval fortification of Mansilla de las Mulas. According to the hypothesis that is proposed in this work, the Roman fortification would have occupied the northeast part of the walled precinct.

2.4.8. *The possible Roman fortification of Valencia de Don Juan (León).*

A similar case of a possible Roman camp associated to the River Esla, perhaps as a bridge-head, is the town of Valencia de Don Juan (León)⁵²². The *Castrum Coviacense* was populated by Cantabrians after the wars of conquest and its walls would resist the siege of the Visigothic king Theodoric II in the 5th century. This historical record we will mention later when we analyse the defensive systems of the Leonese kings, Alfonso III and Alfonso V.

As Millán Abad said, the remains of the Roman walls of Valencia de Don Juan are of lime and stone and were used as the foundation for the later walls. He also considers that the keep of the present castle was also built on the remains of the Roman wall, which suggests that "systematically, in the reconstruction and modification processes of the walls in Valencia de Don Juan, the oldest ones served as foundations or base for the next". In addition, he indicated that theses remains, which he provided several photographs of, lasted until 1946 on the slopes of the park "opposite the *frontón* court", but were destroyed that year. He also interpreted the toponym of Peña del Cubarro on the riverbank as the

⁵²² MILLÁN ABAD 1990, pp. 53-58, with a sketch of the Roman wall in Valencia de Don Juan. See also RODRÍGUEZ FERNÁNDEZ 1965, p.16: 10th century documents still state *el territorio Coviance in regione Cantabrae secus fluvio Estola* (Archive of León Cathedral, 2, donation of King Vermudo II to Munio Fernández).

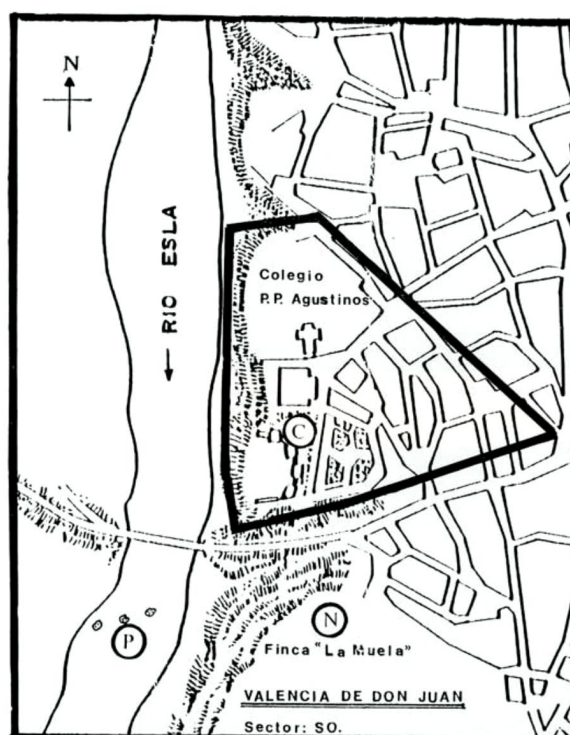
remains of the Roman wall which had fallen down from its original foundations. Following his information, some epigraphic remains from the Late Imperial period have appeared on the hill of La Muela in Valencia de Don Juan⁵²³. The same author considered Alfonso V as the king who re fortified Valencia de Don Juan, after its wall was destroyed by Almanzor.

Centuries before Almanzor in the year 409, the *Castrum Coviacense* fell under the domination of the *Suevi*, allies of the Romans at the time. The *Chronicle* of Hydatius (*Chron.*, 186) narrates that during Theodoric II's siege in 457, only the fortified *Castrum Coviacense* resisted the military advance: *Unum Coviacense castrum tricesimo de Asturica miliario a Gothis diutino certamine fatigatum auxilio dei hostibus et obsistit et praevallet*.

Fernández Rodríguez⁵²⁴ indicated that during antiquity the nucleus of Valencia de Don Juan was the main centre of the "Leonese Cantabria on the Esla", which reached southwards as far as Toral de los Guzmanes (León), based on a document published then for the first time (ACL, 2, 25th December 989): a donation from King Vermudo II to his loyal Munio Fernández of a piece of land that he located "*in territorio Coviance in regione Cantabriae secus fluvio Estola*". On subsequent pages, he lists several allusions found in documents from the Parish Archive of Valencia de Don Juan (APC 12, 36, 45,) to the old wall of the castle, or of Santa María del Castillo Viejo, which was called "the old wall", or "castle of the old wall". The queen of León, Doña Sancha and her husband, King Don Fernando, must have stayed there on 16th September 1054 when certain monasteries were summoned by them, as Bishop Diego de Astorga declared. A year later, in 1055, it was the seat of the Council of Coyanza. It was renamed in Early Medieval documentation as "Valencia de Campos" –capital of a *señorío*–, and "Villa de Don Juan" in the Late Medieval Period. He transcribes another diploma, dated 17th May 1447 (APC, 159) where the construction of "the new bridge" is mentioned, abandoning thus the Roman bridge, foundations of which the author saw emerging "a few metres east of the current one".

⁵²³ CAMPOMANES ALVAREDO 2018, p.136.

⁵²⁴ RODRÍGUEZ FERNÁNDEZ 1965, pp. 16, 18-30.



- (C) Núcleo castro prerromano.
- (N) Necrópolis.
- (P) Restos pilastras puente romano.

Fig. 93. The Roman wall of Valencia de Don Juan, according to M. A. MILLÁN ABAD (1990)

2.4.9. The Roman fortification of 'Castro de los Judíos' (Puente Castro, León).

This fort was a *Castrum Rege* in the 10th century. By that time the Leonese kings lived in an ancient Roman building within the walls of León. They used the dynastic name of "Flavios" and King Ramiro III still signed documents in the Roman manner: "*Ranimirus Flavius princeps magnus*"⁵²⁵. It was here where the Leonese Early Medieval Jewish quarter was situated and has been known since then as *Monte Aureo*, *La Mota*, *Mota del Castro* or *Castro de los Judíos*. It is located in a suburb of León in the current Puente Castro, over one kilometre away from the Roman *Legio VII* camp on a five-hectare flattened hill in the area of La Candamia, between the River Torío and the Barranco stream. It guarded from the southeast the access to the Leonese camp off the road that would later become the Way of St James Camino de Santiago. Although bibliography

⁵²⁵ MÍNGUEZ FERNÁNDEZ 1976. However, its authenticity is debatable.

barely refers to any Roman archaeological remains⁵²⁶, the author of this thesis has verified that they exist, in addition to the still unpublished presence of a possible Roman road whose surface remains (many medium-sized river stones and metal scraps) are evident even today in the eastern part of the hill next to a lane that runs parallel to the aforementioned stream.

As previously mentioned, the appearance of a Roman bridge⁵²⁷ over the River Torío in Puente Castro from the time of a first Roman occupation of the Leonese site has also been epigraphically confirmed. Consequently, it is very likely that a Roman garrison in this enclave of *Castrum Legionis* may have also existed prior to or contemporary with the military settlement of the first fortified precinct in León. It is worth remembering that archaeology has also documented the *vicus Ad Legionem* from Puente Castro. The electromagnetic prospections carried out by Kermovant⁵²⁸, from the University of Tours, have clearly detected a rectangular fortification in the northern section of the hill, an elevation above the rest of the *castrum*. This fortification, with a size of a *castellum*-type Roman military settlement, has a minor axis from east to west of approximately 60 metres wide, whilst it is not possible to calculate the length of the major axis in the images published. It appears surrounded by a ditch. Over a decade after the magnetic prospections⁵²⁹, it has been stated that, assuming even that these remains could correspond to a citadel, "it is too daring at present to advance hypotheses defining its uses and functions". Alternatively, a rather risky proposal was made: instead of considering that the Jewish *castrum* reused the area of the Roman fortification by filling in its moat, which seems the most coherent conclusion, it has been interpreted that the findings of Roman materials in the medieval Jewry, such as coins, a *fibula* and a surgical instrument, is because "[for the Jews] it became a great source and supply of materials".

⁵²⁶ ÁLVAREZ DE LA BRAÑA 1902, pp. 10-12; GÓMEZ MORENO 1925, p. 7; LUENGO MARTÍNEZ 1990, pp. 97-133; CASTAÑO GONZÁLEZ and AVELLO ÁLVAREZ 2001, pp. 299-303; AVELLO ÁLVAREZ and SÁNCHEZ-LAFUENTE 2015, pp. 205-231; MARTÍNEZ PEÑÍN 2007, pp. 123-138.

⁵²⁷ *CIL* II, 5690; RABANAL ALONSO and GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ 2001, p. 325, no. 301; ÁLVAREZ DE LA BRAÑA 1902, p. 9, no. 3; pp. 10-11, 18; MANGAS MANJARRÉS 1987, pp. 245-251.

⁵²⁸ AVELLO ÁLVAREZ and SÁNCHEZ-LAFUENTE 2015, pp. 209-210.

⁵²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 209.

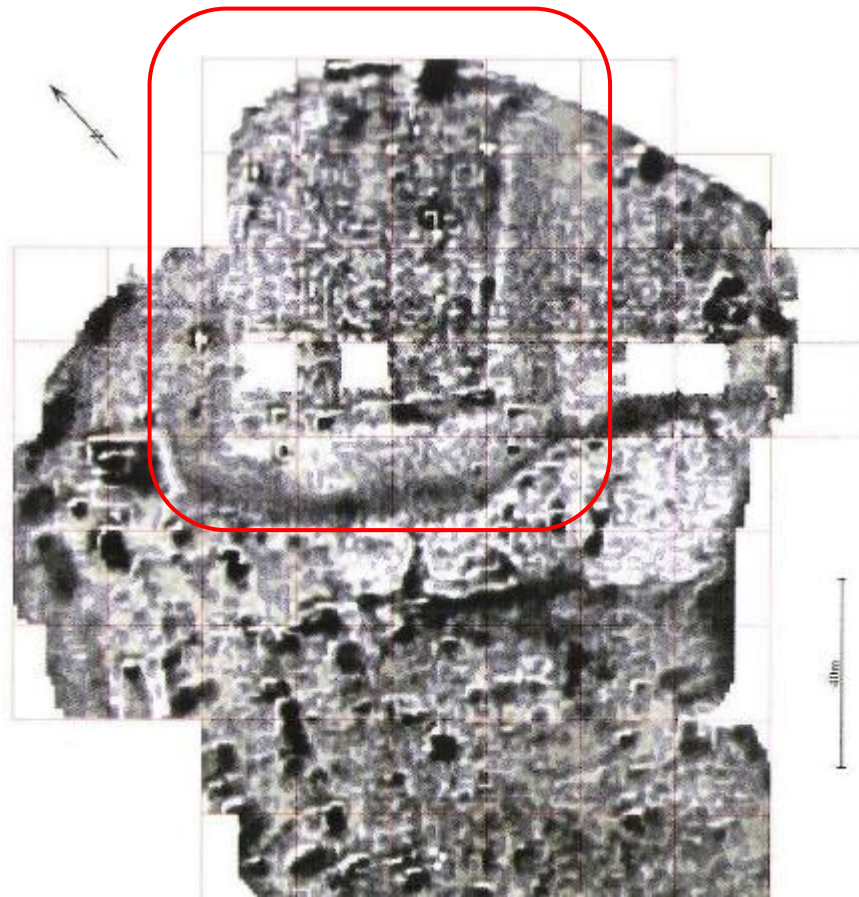


Fig. 94. Alain Kermovant's electromagnetic prospections in the *Castro de los Judíos* (León).



Surprisingly, no one has yet come to explain this map that shows a classic *castellum*-type Roman fortification. Puente Castro's fort is normally ignored in publications⁵³⁰ on Roman military settlements in León, even though the existence in the suburb of Puente Castro of the *vicus* has been made widely known, associated to the camp's *cannabae*, *Ad Legionem*. It appears to have been populated at least until AD 270⁵³¹, perhaps due to the transfer of the families of soldiers to the outskirts of the Leonese walled enclosure. As we have explained earlier, its abandonment could be related to the Plague of Cyprian which arrived from North Africa at that time.

And this continues to be the case despite the fact that in 1902, and with rather good judgment, R. Álvarez de la Braña wrote referring to the walls of Puente Castro's fortress, "*Castrum* of the Romans before the Hebrews dedicated it as their own castle" and he indicates that in 1893 among other materials there had been collected on the site, "several pieces of flat roof tile, two fragments of refractory brick, the remains of some undoubtedly Roman-made kiln because they conserved remains of carved letters of a Latin script (...) perhaps from the time of Emperor Augustus. It is probable that future investigations and new findings (...) will strengthen our well-founded thesis that the Castro de los Judíos, located near León, must have been a location during the conquest of the Latins, chosen by them for a fortified camp according to the rules of Roman military art. The site selected was certainly of great strategic importance given its location near the confluence of the two important rivers and at the foot of high slopes close to the Roman road, which would be extremely convenient to prevent enemy forces from crossing the bridge over the Torío". The author suggested that the Roman fortification of Castro de los Judíos was destroyed by Almanzor in the year 996 "when the invaders used their force to cross over the Torío to march towards the city [of León]". He further states that "once León was besieged by the violent troops of Almanzor, after a siege that lasted several months, it fell under the power of the Muslims who partially destroyed its strong towers and walls, as well as its four marble doors." In a footnote and with regards to this destruction, R. Álvarez de la Braña defends that it had to be *partial*, since the chronicles affirm that Almanzor's son, Abdemelich: "returned to León and laid siege and further destroyed its walls, which with no doubt had been rebuilt in a short time. He had to

⁵³⁰ CAMPOMANES ALVAREDO 2017, p.104

⁵³¹ MORILLO CERDÁN; SALIDO DOMÍNGUEZ and CABELLO DURÁN 2014, p. 117. The causes of the abandon of the *cannabae* do not seem to bear any relation to an invasion but possibly to a situation of health risk, as we explained earlier, perhaps due to the so-called "plague of Cyprian" (251-270).

abandon the siege because Count Don García soon arrived with all his troops and managed to defeat the Saracens in a pitched battle and drove them out of the territory of León."

This hundred-year-old interpretation, besides being documented historically, is archaeologically irrefutable. Even more so if we compare the shape of the ditches that appear on the map, to the south of the *castellum*, with the photographs of those perpendicular ditches but with different shapes in U and V located in Calle Serranos, León (Fig. 44 and 45). The similar construction type and the same lack of coincidence in size and shape between the perpendicular trenches may suggest that both Leonese camp structures may have been built in the same Late Republican period.

In conclusion, the archaeological finds discovered in the Castro de los Judíos indicate the existence of a Roman fortification of less importance compared to the Leonese legionary camp, probably a tower or a *castellum*, related to the first stages of Roman presence in this area, perhaps from the early times of the Augustan era. It is also very possible the site might have remained in use in the time of the *Suevi*, possibly even up to the time of the Leonese kings because, given its strategic location, if left unguarded it would have endangered the fortification of León. At least a small permanent military garrison should have continued to keep watch from the top of the Castro, a strategic point of control, over the access to León. It was, at the same time, populated by soldiers' families and civilians.

CHAPTER 3

Late roman hispania: context of an unnecessary refortification in león.

3.1. The uselessness of a Tetrarchic wall in León within the political and social framework of the time.

The thesis that the so-called Third Century Crisis would be at the origin of the re-walling of the settlements in the northwest of Hispania has ceased to be an argument in favour of the dating of the Leonese walls of *cubos* in this period, after the revision of current historiography.



Fig. 95. Map by J. A. Paz Peralta (2015), with the location of the main urban walls with solid *cubos* (semicircular towers) in the Iberian Peninsula: 1. Barcelona; 2. Zaragoza; 3. León; 4. Astorga; 5. Lugo; 6. Gijón; 7. Zamora; 8. Ávila and 9. Braga.

Indeed, it has been agreed for decades that the urban economic crisis began as early as the 2nd century and, in some cities, finances were already malfunctioning in the Flavian era (69-76). This crisis would in turn have caused that of municipal finances and would have worsened from Marcus Aurelius, as seems to follow on from the fact that after this emperor's government (from 180) the position of *curatores* became the norm. From it emerged a militarized state that was at the basis of Diocletian's reforms (284-305). He managed to differentiate the central and provincial, the military and civil administrations (except in the case of the prefects of the *praetorium*, who had both civil and military offices). To govern an empire of dimensions difficult to control, he established the Tetrarchy system that worked for a few years. Some of his innovations became permanent in the administrative hierarchy such as the prefectures, which held imperial power and below them twelve dependent dioceses. The dioceses were newly created and grouped together several provinces, increasing in number and administered by a *vicarius*.

Thus in 297, the diocesis Hispaniae was created depending on the prefecture of Gaul, with its capital in Merida. It included the *Baetica*, *Lusitania*, *Tarraconensis*, *Carthaginensis*, *Gallaecia* and *Mauritania Tingitana*⁵³² provinces, which had been previously reorganized between 284 and 288. The civil administration of these provinces was ruled by the provincial governors and the military by the duces. It was these administrative bodies (*praefectus urbi*, *praesides or iudex province*, *dux*, *vicarius or praefecto praetorio*)⁵³³ that applied imperial laws to financing public works in the second half of the 4th century. In the Theodosian Code (promulgated in the West in the year 439), there are a total of eight imperial constitutions in the fifteenth book⁵³⁴ with the title *De Operibus Publicis*, among them one that obliged public buildings to be restored before raising one *ex novo*⁵³⁵. With regard to León at that time, it is worth mentioning that the *Legio VII* camp possibly belonged to the *Conuentus Cluniensis*, since a *tabula* of the

⁵³² The Balearic province was created between the year 369 and the end of the 4th century according KULIKOWSKI, 2004, p. 82.

⁵³³ MALAVÉ OSUNA 2007, p. 58.

⁵³⁴ *C.Th.* 15, 1, 14; 15; 16,17; 19; 21, 27 and 29. The 17th constitution prohibited governors to authorize the construction of new buildings: *Si quid sinceritas tua his urbibus, quibus praeest, putaverit deferendum, instaurare antiquum opus rectius poterit quam novum inchoare.*

⁵³⁵ MALAVÉ OSUNA 2007, pp. 37-42, 136.

Concilium Conuentus Cluniensis kept in Rome and dated 13th April, 222, designates as patron C. Marius Pudens Cornelianus as legate of the *Legio VII Gemina*⁵³⁶.

In relation to the Third Century Crisis originating in the 2nd century, it should not be ruled out that some have interpreted some social emergency situations were the cause of an “economic crisis”, among them one widely spread in AD 165 in addition to the aforementioned Plague of Cyprian that passed from Africa to Rome between 251 and 270. When the Gallic legions conquered Hispania in 261 the territory was not isolated from the Empire, although it became part of the Gallic Empire (260-273). Earlier in 258 the Franks who plundered Gaul arrived in Hispania, reaching and razing *Tarraco* (Orosius VI, 23,7-8). However, if we stick to the meaning of the phrase, *Tarraco* would be on the limit of the area where looting occurred, so it does not seem that they reached the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula. After more than a decade under the Gallic Empire, Postumus lost Hispania at the hands of Claudius II the Gothic, who would die shortly after recovering it during the plague of 270, the same recurring Plague of Cyprian that this bishop of Carthage supposedly spread to Europe from North Africa. It is difficult for the economic situation in itself to have been decisive in the crisis, given that there was exceptional climatic stability in Eurasia between 100 BC and AD 200⁵³⁷, which would imply agricultural production being maintained and, therefore, taxes too. The increase in fiscal pressure⁵³⁸ was driven by the excessive increase in public spending to be able to maintain free bread in Rome, a political measure described by Lactantius as the origin of inflation that would lead to the financial and social collapse of Hispania later in the 4th century.

⁵³⁶ CURCHIN 2004, p. 90.

⁵³⁷ See McCORMICK *et alii* 2012, p. 174.

⁵³⁸ LACTANTIUS: Regarding the death of the persecutors, 7, he wrote at the beginning of the 4th century: “Taxes increased to an alarming degree; the number of those who received was higher than those who paid so that bankrupt colonists abandoned lands and fields remained uncultivated. Even worse was the fact that the provinces were divided into parts and that a great number of public workers and tax collectors were sent to the cities (...)”.



Fig. 96. The Late Roman Empire (AD 395-700), WEITZMANN 1977, p. 4.

Cañizar Palacios' observation⁵³⁹ on the role of Hispania in the Theodosian legislative compilation should be mentioned, indicating that despite containing various allusions to the Iberian Peninsula, it was ignored as a place of both publication and reception of constitutions. He attributes this to the “degree of relative tranquility that the Diocesis Hispaniarum holds during the 4th century, a circumstance motivated by being in an area certainly far from the main theatres of war of the time as well as far from decision-making both at political and military levels. So apparently the emperors did not question the loyalty of the territory, further even, they did not question its fidelity to the Theodosian dynasty after Theodosius' death in 395. The last norm that alludes to the Iberian Peninsula (*C.Th.* I, 15, 16) dates back to the year 401, during the reign of Arcadius and Honorius. Although contrary to the latest historiographical trends on the continuity of Hispania within the imperial administrative orbit, legal documentation suggests the process of progressive isolation suffered by the territory of Hispania with respect to the rest of the western part of the Roman Empire, a process begun in the previous century and continued in the 5th century AD”.

The truth is that until the middle of the 5th century Roman administration continued to exist in the Iberian Peninsula, although it had gradually merged with the ecclesiastical one⁵⁴⁰. There was still a hierarchy under the command of comites or counts

⁵³⁹ CAÑIZAR PALACIOS 2002, pp. 82-83.

⁵⁴⁰ CASTELLANOS GARCÍA 1998, pp. 167-174; FUENTES HINOJO 2008, pp. 316, 320-323.

in the provinces, with the prominent figures of the count of private goods –*comes rei privatae*– and the count of sacred liberalities. Some of these imperial liberalities were destined for public works in cities and were financed by the emperor's private treasury, they were sometimes even financed by the prefectural treasury. In our opinion, from the 4th to 6th centuries the treasury and monetary policy were different from what the most pessimistic historiography supposed, affecting the Roman military organization and its structures. Even when Emperor Romulus was deposed in 476 and the Roman elites decided not to replace him with another, this was not really an "end" to Rome because an imperial army continued to exist at that time in Dalmatia, a good example of regionalisation and decentralisation of power. Regarding the fortifications and urban walls, it is usually considered that these were left in the hands of the bishops as early as the 5th century⁵⁴¹. Christianity was at the origin of the change in mentality that had occurred in Roman society in the last two centuries, starting from the official conversion, which coincided with the fragmentation of political power.

In the case of León, it has not been clarified until now whether or not there was an episcopal see independent from that of Astorga from the mid-3rd century, when the Cyprian's aforementioned letter answering a letter from the previous Hispanic bishops Félix and Sabinus, gives us the names of Basilides and Martial as bishops of the Christian communities of León and Astorga and that of Mérida. We know from it that both had apostatised from their faith during the Decian persecution in 250 and then their respective communities deposed them and named Felix and Sabinus. One of the most interesting facts in this letter is related to the presence of a Roman official before whom Bishop Martial⁵⁴², procurator *ducenarius*, apostatised: *Martialis ... aclis etiam publice habitis apud procuratorem ducenarium optemperasse se idolatriae et Christum negasse contestatus sit*. Whether this procurator *ducenarius* had his habitual headquarters in Tarragona or in León was widely debated by G. Alföldy and A. Tranoy⁵⁴³, opting here for thinking that it is very likely that it was Martial, bishop of León, whose community demanded his return. R. Teja⁵⁴⁴ alludes to the administrative peculiarities of the existence,

⁵⁴¹ CASTELLANOS GARCÍA 2013; FUENTES HINOJO 2008, p. 321-327.

⁵⁴² TEJA CASUSO 1990, p. 118.

⁵⁴³ TEJA CASUSO 1990, p. 119. G. Alföldy defended the fact that the office of procurator of Asturias and Galicia disappeared due to the creation by Caracalla of a new province and, when it was eliminated it no longer worked. A. Tranoy proved that in the middle of the 3rd century it did exist and continued at least until Diocletian's reform, with financial and judicial functions in the mines.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 118-119.

at least since the Flavian period, of a Procurator *Asturiae et Callaeciae*, a procurator *ducenarius* with financial and perhaps judicial functions, whose headquarters was possibly Asturica Augusta. This would lead to the strategic Leonese territory becoming under Caracalla a new briefly existing province, broken off from the *Tarraconensis*, to which we have already alluded before, the *Hispania Nova Citerior Antoniniana*, which Diocletian would re-create enlarged. The truth is that the memory of Bishop Martial was perpetuated in León during the following centuries and a figure of Martial appears in the paintings of the Royal Pantheon of the Collegiate Church of San Isidoro, which perhaps refers to the memory of the patronymic saint of the possible first bishop of León. After this bishop of Astorga and León, we only know of a documentary mention of a bishop of León, Decentius, who attended the Council of Elvira (*Iliberris*, Granada) around the year 305. The bishopric of León then disappeared from documentation for more than four centuries.



Fig. 97. Figure of Martial *pincerna*, “cupbearer”, in the Royal Pantheon of San Isidoro de León, where the Leonese kings were buried from the 10th century.

3.2. The paradigm shift on the supposed crisis and ruralisation of Hispania

The camp in León continued being part of the Roman imperial structure at the end of the 3rd century, despite the evidence of a bloodless abandonment of the *vicus Ad Legionem* around the year 270 without being able to confirm the reason, but it is more likely to have been a consequence of the above mentioned epidemic than of an early barbarian invasion into the territory of León, an invasion giving rise to the destruction of the small-ashlar Roman wall, which neither History nor Archaeology have managed to prove. We know that the adjective *Pia* had been added to the name of the *Legio VII* at the

end of the previous century due to its supposed neutrality or loyalty to Septimius Severus in the face of the Clodius Albinus uprising and the civil war of the year 197. We know of some movements of legionary troops thanks to epigraphy, and we know from it and thanks to brick marks that it survived the following civil war of the year 238 without being dissolved because *tegulae* (tiles) and *lateres* (bricks) were still manufactured with stamps of the *Legio VII* under the governments of Gordian, Philip the Arab and Decius. Sources in this period have provided only indirect data regarding the *Legio VII Gemina*, such as that conveyed by the narrative previously discussed of the apostasy of Martial in the time of Decius. Around this time there is also a tombstone found in Talavera de la Reina (Toledo) by which we know of the existence of Annius Romanus, soldier of the *Legio VII Gemina Deciana Pia Felix* (AE 1976, 277) 545.

The reaction to the stage of anarchy involved a structural modification of the precepts of the Principality, and the reaction was an aspiration of serenity during the governments of Diocletian (284-305) and Constantine (306-337), when it has been assumed that the free market of the Late Empire was damaged by high taxes from an excessive state apparatus whose financial resources were largely devoted to military spending. This postulate seems partially invalidated by the new data provided by papyrological studies, which show that taxation was higher in the Early Imperial period, though being a more stable period. Until the year 297, the tax system was based on collective assignments of tax, and the amounts of the *annona* were fixed annually. This system had been modified by the Severi, and Diocletian combined it with a new taxation called *iugatio-capitatio*, a tax that is believed to be based on units of personal wealth (*caput*) and territorial wealth (*iugum*) requiring the elaboration of detailed censuses and land registers.

The currency had stabilized under Constantine and the new gold solidum led to an expansionary monetary policy and a general economic recovery in the 4th century that had a significant impact on restructuring the countryside. Throughout the western part of the Empire and also in Hispania, during the 4th and 5th centuries, the increase in consumption took place in the large peripheral villas with an autarkic economy⁵⁴⁶, far from the cities and the then capital Emerita Augusta, which is where it might be supposed trade had increased. This flourishing of the villas does not necessarily imply the

⁵⁴⁵ PALAO VICENTE, 2006, pp. 88-92.

⁵⁴⁶ CHAVARRÍA ARNAU 2007, p. 139: this author defines it as “regionalization of trade”.

ruralisation of Late Imperial Romano-Hispanic society, as has been interpreted by a historiographical current⁵⁴⁷, but rather shows a decongestion of the population perhaps due to the recurrent outbreaks that were hitting the cities, which nevertheless would continue to be administrative and financial centres. The mobility of the population can be placed in relation to that of the Hispanic troops: Palao Vicente⁵⁴⁸ has considered that it was possible then when the VII *Gemina* legion was divided and a part of it would have been sent to the East. As proof of this an epigraph found in Milan (*CIL* V, 5835) from the 4th century bears witness of a prefect of the *Legio VII Gemina*, Valerius Heraclianus, in which this legion is assigned the epithet of *Spaniae*. This name refers to the Byzantine Hispania of the time, but the truth is that in the careful collection of epigraphs by the same author (although in previous paragraphs) there is an epigraph about the same legion found inside a cave in Denia (*CIL* II, 3588) that shows us that the veteran *princeps vexillationis legionis VII Geminae Piae Felicis* C. Iulius Urbanus was sent there almost a century earlier by Decius Valerian, a likely governor of *Tarraco* during the reign of Maximinus, which would give a dating of around the year 238.

Regarding the decentralisation of the mentioned townships, the Early Imperial urbanization in *Gallaecia* had been multiform⁵⁴⁹. This theory of "generalised ruralisation" was contested by authors such as R. Portass⁵⁵⁰, who believes that the cities of the Northwest did not fit into this paradigm of ruralisation, since *Bracara Augusta* seems to have flourished during the Late Empire, *Lucus Augusti* maintained a certain prosperity, and in the territory of León *Asturica Augusta* retained its relevance as a crossroads of the great axis of communications created in the preceding centuries as a result of the mining industry in the Hispanic Northwest. The construction of other walled cities around these three capitals of *conuentus* is proof of a change in direction of state policy in this period. The same historian, in listing the known sources that could archaeologically and historically document the Third Century Crisis⁵⁵¹, subscribed to the opinion of A. Balil, who dated the erection of the walls with reused material between the years 270-310. N. Santos Yanguas⁵⁵² collected some cases such as that of *Clunia Sulpicia* (Coruña del Conde-Peñalba del Castro, Burgos), as well as the results of the first archaeological

⁵⁴⁷ WITSCHERL 2009, p. 474.

⁵⁴⁸ PALAO VICENTE, 2006, 92.

⁵⁴⁹ MORALEJO ORDAX 2018, p. 113.

⁵⁵⁰ PORTASS 2008, pp. 111-140.

⁵⁵¹ BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 1978, pp. 225-227.

⁵⁵² SANTOS YANGUAS 1986, pp. 151-175.

excavations of the Leonese Roman city of Lancia, which show that both seem to have been razed and burned during the last decades of the 3rd century, although *Clunia* was rebuilt and flourished during the 4th and 5th centuries. Signs of monumental building have also been found in *Complutum* (Alcalá de Henarés, Madrid) according to S. Rascón Marqués⁵⁵³. Added to this is the fact already shown that the flourishing of villas was not an exclusively Hispanic phenomenon, on the contrary, it was qualitatively less important than in other provinces of the Empire. Neither this decentralisation of the population nor the reforms of Diocletian and Constantine would have been decisive in the supposed division of the *Legio VII* proposed in the middle of the 3rd century. However, it does not seem to have been a novelty induced by a situation of generalized crisis but a *modus operandi* that could have been hatching since its creation due to being a legion with functions of police, maintenance and control of roads, construction of public works, garrisoned surveillance in cities and maintenance of *stationes*, *mutationes*, *praesidia*... A strategy was required that allowed it to act in very distinct places, so from first century cohorts it would have evolved to the *vexillationes* of the 3rd century, more flexible in their manoeuvring because they could mix cohorts or even *centuriae* of different cohorts, still stationed in Hispania at the end of the 4th century.

Returning to the economic situation in Late Antiquity, Kim Bowes⁵⁵⁴ has debated against the supposed crisis⁵⁵⁵ that the Empire would have suffered after the death of Severus Alexander and against those who considered that the Roman state never recovered from the problems of the 3rd century. The greatest of these was the political instability of the “military anarchy” stage that occurred between the death of Severus Alexander and the appointment of Diocletian (AD 235-284): of the 57 emperors –counting the illegitimate ones– who came to power in almost half a century, Galienus (253-268) was the only one to remain in power for more than a decade, and all of them died assassinated except Tacitus (year 276). The treasures hidden in the second half of the 3rd century contained coins from both emperors and later but contained few coins minted by the Gallic emperors (generally, Postumus and the Tetrici) in spite of the enormous increase of previous circulating currency because it had been devalued. Almost all the currency from those years found in the Iberian Peninsula comes from Italian mints, and in the year

⁵⁵³ RASCÓN MARQUÉS and SÁNCHEZ MONTES 2009, pp. 175-202.

⁵⁵⁴ BOWES 2013, p.196 ff.; HOPKINS 1980.

⁵⁵⁵ ESMONDE CLEARY 2013, pp. 18-19; BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 1975a; Id. 1975b; Id. 1978.

274 the aurelianus appeared in circulation, a coin minted to try to rectify the monetary system without much success.

In conclusion, in the 3rd century the high levels of monetization and credit that had stimulated production and trade declined with the currency devaluation of the Severian period and subsequent financial inflation⁵⁵⁶, going from global imperial economic integration to the fragmentation of regional economies, which also occurred at the beginning of an evident demographic collapse⁵⁵⁷. Strabo (III, 4, 18) mentions plague epidemics in Hispania from centuries before, during Augustus' campaigns in the Cantabrian wars. In the *Vita Marcus Aurelius* of *Augustan History*⁵⁵⁸ the effects of the plague in Hispania were related to the diminishing number of soldiers and resources. A good analysis of the historical sources on Roman medicine⁵⁵⁹ indicates that the first outbreak of plague did not reach the Iberian Peninsula in the time of the Antonines and in fact there is no confirmed archaeological evidence of the epidemics of the 2nd and 3rd centuries in Hispania, although the epistolary relationship between Cyprian of Carthage and the Christian dioceses of Merida, Astorga and León is historically documented, which supposes the possibility that the Plague of Cyprian (251-270) reached the peninsular Northwest. However, and as we mentioned earlier, the weather during those centuries was so mild that paleo-climatologists have called the first three or four centuries of our era "the long classic optimum"⁵⁶⁰, specifying however that the conditions for the production of wheat in Egypt were worse between the years AD 155 to 299: the granary of Rome would need Hispanic production during those decades, which may be one of the causes of the proliferation of villas, without this implying a ruralisation of society but only an agrarian restructuring favourable to Hispanic landowners.

Regarding the Roman public works in the municipalities of the Hispanic Northwest, Ozcáriz Gil provides some relevant data when collecting the inscriptions of the milestones of the *conventus Bracaraugustanus* of the year 238, on which the future Emperor Decius appears. He could possibly have been appointed governor by the emperor Maximinus Thrax in 235 restoring "*vias et pontes tempore vetustatis conlapsos*" that this author attributes to a programme of unification of the Northwest and the Citerior.

⁵⁵⁶ KEAV 1981, pp. 451 ff.

⁵⁵⁷ GONZALBES CRAVIOTO 2007, p. 184, no. 10.

⁵⁵⁸ BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 1996, pp. 81-95.

⁵⁵⁹ ESMONDE CLEARY 2013, p. 21; ZARAGOZA RUBIRA 1971, p. 178.

⁵⁶⁰ See McCORMICK *et alii* 2012; BROOKE 2014, p. 189.

Although a large number of these stone monuments were erected in the three provinces of Hispania, their commemorative formulas are not the Early Imperial ones, and in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula they did not necessarily imply a true restoration of roads and bridges. Some of these 3rd century milestones are merely commemorative, perhaps to thereby display provincial loyalty to almost every new emperor. In their epigraphs the name of the emperor appears in the dative without a verb, so this could mean that the legionary "officials" quartered in León carried out these honorary epigraphs as part of their functions of custody of public works. As regards the fortifications, at least in the first third of the 3rd century, the walls of the *conuentus Bracarensis*, the *Lucensis* and the *Asturicensis* do not seem to have required notable public interventions.

Regarding the 4th century, another historiographical trend that J. Arce⁵⁶¹ saw inferred that despite the state economic recovery, there was no real prosperity in a relatively poor Hispania and that ancient sources have magnified evidence of economic activities such as the garum trade and ceramic industries, which were in reality small-scale trade. Arce's original hypothesis became unsustainable with new archaeological discoveries, such as the town of Carranque⁵⁶² (Toledo) built around the year 400, or the complex of several hectares in Cercadilla (Córdoba), which suppose the existence of fortunes capable of making this type of real estate investment. The theory of the relative impoverishment of Hispania is undermined by a qualitative comparison with other western Roman provinces: Britannia presents the highest concentration of archaeological findings of Late Roman villas –some one hundred and fifty–, while Hispania and Gaul on a second level have between sixty and eighty villas documented in each province, an abundance not shared by central Italy⁵⁶³. The correlation between the increase in the size and the number of villas and the relative impoverishment of Hispania in the 4th century is also unfeasible from this point of view.

The pattern of occupation of the villas in the interior of Hispania, some monumentalized, reveals continuity between the 2nd and 4th centuries, but most of them were gradually abandoned only at the end of the 5th century⁵⁶⁴. The magnificence of some villas appears mainly along the River Ebro valley, the upper River Tagus, the central area

⁵⁶¹ ARCE MARTÍNEZ 2009.

⁵⁶² FERNÁNDEZ OCHOA and ZARZALEJOS PRIETO 2017, pp. 191-204; ARCE MARTÍNEZ 2003, pp. 17-30.

⁵⁶³ BOWES, Kimberly 2013, pp.198-201.

⁵⁶⁴ BANAJI 2016; CHAVARRÍA ARNAU 2004.

of Lusitania and the valley of River Guadalquivir. The luxurious mosaics of the village of Fuente Álamo in Puente Genil, or the group of sculptures of El Ruedo in Almedinilla, both in the province of Córdoba, serve as examples. Also around the Via de la Plata in the Meseta: good examples are that of Almenara-Puras (Valladolid) and La Olmeda (Pedrosa de la Vega, Palencia), presumed consecutively to have belonged to *Flavius Sallustius, Praetorian* prefect of the *Tarraconensis* in the 4th century; then to the *Dux Asturius* mentioned by Hydatius as a general who repressed the *Bagaudae* in the middle of the 5th century, based on the discovery of a horse bit with the inscription *ASTURI VIVAS*; and even to the family of Theodosius, interpreting the mosaic medallions⁵⁶⁵ as imperial portraits. Such villas are scarcer on the coasts, including those of *Baetica* and *Tarraconensis*, where, however, the villas of Centcelles (Constantí) and Els Munts (Altafulla), both in Tarragona, stand out. Associated with oil production in the old *Carthaginensis* is the villa of Villaricos (Mula, Murcia), inhabited until the beginning of the 6th century.

Some other sumptuous rural estates have been documented in the northern peninsular area, such as the Roman town of Valdearados (Burgos)⁵⁶⁶, the villa of Las Musas in Arellano (Navarre), that of Fortunato in Fraga (Huesca) and La Loma del Regadío (Urrea de Gaén, Teruel). Even further north are those found on the Cantabrian coast: the villas in Veranes in Gijón (Asturias) or Santa María de Hito (Cantabria). There is also no lack of relevant examples associated with the communication routes of the Hispanic Northwest: the rich villa of Camarzana de Tera (Zamora)⁵⁶⁷ has been known since the 19th century close to the road that connected *Bracara Augusta* (Braga) and *Asturica Augusta* (Astorga), this last being a city with rich mosaics preserved in some *domus* and can be seen in situ, while other mosaic remains associated with villas are less well known (villa of Las Labaniegas in Campo de Villavidel, León) and in some cases they have been transferred to various museums, such as the Mosaic of Hilas and the Nymphs from the Villa Los Villares (Quintana del Marco, León)⁵⁶⁸.

⁵⁶⁵ CHAVARRÍA ARNAU 2008, pp. 93-122.

⁵⁶⁶ ARGENTE OLIVER 1979, pp. 45 ff.; *Id.* 1975, pp. 899 ff.; BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 1993, pp. 307-317.

⁵⁶⁷ REGUERAS GRANDE 1994, pp. 27-34.

⁵⁶⁸ In the province of León, *see* MARCOS FIERRO; REGUERAS GRANDE and YAGÜE HOYAL 1994; REGUERAS GRANDE 1993, pp. 75-82; BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 1985, p. 107. He gives information about the destruction of this Leonese mosaic.

If the relevance of the villas did not have an impact on urban decline, perhaps it did on the decline of aristocratic euergetism in the cities⁵⁶⁹, evidenced in Hispania from the 3rd century. This must have influenced the construction and repair of public works during that century and the next. Even so, during the Late Empire the financing of public works continued to have a mixed nature because the forced or compulsory private initiative was added to state initiative, not only by means of a declining patronage but above all with the obligatory and free contribution of citizens through the *munera* system⁵⁷⁰. The *munera* system could be *personalia*, *patrimonialia*, and *extraordinaria* or *sordida*. *Sordida* were a type of obligations consisting in diversified labour for the Roman administration, which, however, as we saw for the Early Imperial period, contracted public works with private entities through administrative contracts regulated by the *leges locationis*, issued by censors first and later by the Emperor or his delegates.

With regard to the peninsular political framework, even at the end of the 4th century in the time of Gratian (367-383), monumental honorific dedications to the emperor were still being carried out in the *Diocesis Hispaniarum* as shown by an epigraph dug up in Mérida ordered by Octavius Clarus, vicar of the Hispanic diocese⁵⁷¹. Circus games were also held in Zaragoza at a late date at the beginning of the 6th century (504), despite the fact that since the 4th century only festivals in the most important cities are documented⁵⁷², perhaps due to the impossibility of financing them. However, it is likely that the Church's position against the theatre had also been extended to the circus after the imposition of Christianity as an official religion in 380.

At that time in León, as in most of the Spanish *civitates*⁵⁷³, the process of Christianisation had led to the appearance of new constructions associated with the urban nucleus but outside the walled precinct near the ancient Roman access roads, where the martyrs were buried, around which monasteries, anchoretic hermitages and later suburbs arose, such as the early ones of San Marcelo, Santos Natalia and Adrián, San Claudio, San Pelayo, San Miguel, Santa María del Camino (later Santa María del Mercado) or San

⁵⁶⁹ By means of the payment of *summae honorariae* and donations: see MELCHOR GIL 1994, p. 336.

⁵⁷⁰ MALAVÉ OSUNA 2007, pp. 12-16.

⁵⁷¹ HIDALGO MARTÍN and MÉNDEZ GRANDE 2005, pp. 547-564.

⁵⁷² JIMÉNEZ SÁNCHEZ 2006, pp. 99-113. He refers to the Chronicles of Zaragoza and to Victor of Tunnuna.

⁵⁷³ FUENTES HINOJO 2008, pp. 327-328, gives as examples of Mérida and its basilicas -one of which, Saint Eulalia, was the origin of the most important suburb in the 4th century- and of Córdoba and the Monastery of Saint Acisclus, created in the 5th century reusing a possible palace of the Emperor Maximian Herculus in Cercadilla, 600 metres from the walls. Both monasteries were used as episcopal mausoleums in their cities.

Martín. Because the bishops had been buried since the 4th century in the extramural cemetery basilicas, these temples became relevant places of local worship that replaced the ceremonies of forbidden Roman worship in 391 (*C.Th.* XVI. 10. 12), adapting to them the new calendar (*C.Th.* II. 8. 22). It is known that at least while it was in Suebian hands the pagan celebration of the kalends of January was prohibited in the Leonese territory despite the fact that in other places such as *Barcino* they continued to be celebrated. However, the circus games were still maintained in Hispania as can be deduced from the lament of Pope Innocent about the ordination of bishops who had organized games⁵⁷⁴.

The economic, social and political transformations came after other larger-scale changes in the imperial administration, with the assignment of Hispania to the prefecture of Gaul and the creation of new provinces by the emperor Diocletian, which can be explained by his change of defensive strategy. The historiography of the late 20th century tried to explain the concentration of walled cities, villas and roads in use as well as the increase of currency circulation within the context of the probable existence of a supply route related to the military *annona* in western Hispania. C. Fernández Ochoa and A. Morillo Cerdán⁵⁷⁵ connected the multitude of fortified urban nuclei, in their opinion walled during the Tetrarchy, with the existence of military officials installed there to collect taxes in kind and transport them from Mérida to the ports of the Cantabrian Sea to reach Bordeaux, and from Tarragona to the Rhine border⁵⁷⁶. Although it has not been confirmed archaeologically, a diagonal route crossing the centre of Hispania from the capital *Emerita Augusta*⁵⁷⁷ passing through *Complutum* (Alcalá de Henares, Madrid) to *Caesaraugusta* (Zaragoza) could also have formed part of this proposed system. This same historiographical current includes these Hispanic routes in a trans-Pyrenean transport system⁵⁷⁸ leading to the Rhine border through a large number of strongholds dating from the late 3rd or early 4th century. These strongholds are also found in Aquitaine, Bordeaux, Bayonne, Périgueux, Poitiers and Saintes. Their functions would have been to store supplies safe from banditry and to centralize the imperial administration. This hypothesis could be underpinned by some of the changes in the provincial limits made in the time of Diocletian: the creation of the new provinces of *Gallaecia* in Hispania and *Novem Populaniae* in Gaul. Archaeologically, there could be a correlation between this Diocletian

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 337-338.

⁵⁷⁵ FERNÁNDEZ OCHOA; MORILLO CERDÁN and SALIDO DOMÍNGUEZ 2011, pp. 265-285.

⁵⁷⁶ See MORILLO CERDÁN 2006, pp. 33-74.

⁵⁷⁷ KULIKOWSKI, p. 75.

⁵⁷⁸ BOWES 2013, pp. 208-211.

annonaria route and the situation of some villas with huge granaries dating from that time, such as those of Liédena and Las Musas (Arellano), both in Navarre. Perhaps there could also be an association with the apparent fortification of other villas such as La Olmeda (Palencia), with external pseudo-towers⁵⁷⁹. A simpler explanation for the existence of both types of structures is possible since it connects with their storage capacity of agricultural products, a previous and necessary step for any large-scale commercial activity.

However, in *Baetica* there is no evidence of widespread fortification works or road maintenance. M. Kulikowski⁵⁸⁰ gives two arguments contrary to Morillo Cerdán's thesis: on the one hand, the lack of evidence of the specific role that the provinces of Hispania must have had in the *annona* and on the other hand, evidence that the concentration of Late Imperial walls in Hispanic cities occurs in the North and Northwest, while most of the provincial *annona* would have come from the south of Lusitania and *Baetica*⁵⁸¹, where the Late Imperial walls are scarce. Faced with "*annonaria*" theories, other historians such as K. Bowes⁵⁸² affirm that the increase in imperial presence in the centre and west of the Peninsula, reflected in the increase in bureaucracy, is directly related to that of currency circulation. This in turn would have its origin in the increase in taxes⁵⁸³ that would be paid mainly in money and not in kind as suggested⁵⁸⁴. All this despite the fact that the Theodosian Code (XI, 9.1) contains a constitution of 31st December 323 referring to Hispania which establishes tax obligations in the form of garments and horses. However, the monetary archaeological evidence indicates an unprecedented abundance never seen until then of coinage in rural areas of the north-west and centre of the Late Imperial Hispania, perhaps in relation to taxes or for the payment of local troops. Then, new army-related taxes emerged in cash such as the *aurum tironicum*. This allowed wealthy families and small landowners to pay thirty *solidi* per recruit in order to avoid conscripting their relatives. The *aurum tironicum* was used to hire mercenaries to replace the Romans. There was also the *susceptio vestium* that financed the complete military equipment of a soldier.

⁵⁷⁹ PALOL I SALELLAS and CORTÉS ÁLVAREZ DE MIRANDA 1974.

⁵⁸⁰ KULIKOWSKI 2010, pp. 109-110.

⁵⁸¹ The same researcher has suggested that the assignment of the new province of *Mauritania Tingitana* to the Hispanic diocesis might have been an attempt to replace the restructured garrisons in that province (see KULIKOWSKI 2004, pp. 72-76).

⁵⁸² BOWES 2013, pp. 208-211.

⁵⁸³ GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ 2006, pp. 381-395.

⁵⁸⁴ BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 1982, p. 34: assumes among others Rostovtzeff's hypothesis [M. Rostovtzeff, *Historia social y económica del Imperio Romano*, Madrid 1937] that the content in the amphoras carried to Rome the produce of the Imperial Treasury or its value in kind.

As we have just pointed out, in addition to the administrative and legislative reforms, provincial taxes were reorganized with direct state imposition on the estates. However, the fiscal autonomy of the stipendiary communities was maintained since they were a single taxable subject because, being collectives, they had very limited ability to modify them. As the *decuriones* had to collect taxes, and in their case anticipate them, the small Hispanic proprietors found themselves before the *decuriones* in conditions similar to those of colonists before a landowner who advanced the payment of their taxes. At that stage, with this direct imposition by the State, the *decuriones* were partly deprived of the task of distributing and collecting taxes⁵⁸⁵. Despite this, the communities continued to be responsible for the tax levy for their district, which they had to pay by means of a total *stipendium*⁵⁸⁶. According to J. Alvarado Planas, the Roman tax system lasted in Hispania throughout Late Antiquity both with regard to the types of taxes (*capitatio* and *iugatio*) and with their forms of management and spending. It was an expense that was structured in three parts of similar entity: local administration, generally supervised by the bishops (although this was not the case in León), state administration and military expenses⁵⁸⁷.

The common traditional historiographic interpretation of Late Imperial urban decline began to be understood in all its detail towards the end of the 20th century⁵⁸⁸. Hypotheses such as the end of Roman Hispania or the ruin and extinction of the Hispano-Roman municipality⁵⁸⁹ stopped being brought forward and new foundations were laid for understanding the transformation of the territory in Late Antiquity⁵⁹⁰ and explaining the Roman urban fortifications in southern Gaul. These were characterized by their position on hilltops, their small size and their relatively thin walls without foundation bases, for example in the region of ancient *Novempopulana* (Auch, Bazas, Pescar, Lectoure, Oloron-Sainte-Marie, Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges, Saint-Lizier and probably the military compound of Saint-Lézer, the *castrum Bigorra* of the *Notitia Galliarum*). This typology of walls has been interpreted as the result of the fortification of cities that operated as

⁵⁸⁵ This was also the case of the *minores possessores* according to the *C. Th. 12, De exact., 11, 7* (AD 383).

⁵⁸⁶ Although the *C.Th. 2, De exact., 11, 7* (of Constantine, AD 319) later limited the responsibility of *decurions* to their subordinates (*coloni* and *tributarii*), Constantine's fiscal laws differentiated country estates belonging to *possessores* holding less than a *iugum*; in general all estates -except those belonging to *decurions* themselves- paid taxes to particular *decurions* according to district, and those *decurions* were obliged to advance the tax of their district.

⁵⁸⁷ Small owners appeared registered in the *census* as "goods" belonging to the *decurions* (*censibus adscribere*, that is, *adscripticii*) and were probably treated as *coloni*; this differentiated both juridically and fiscally the *plebs rustica* and that of the *possessores*. ALVARADO PLANAS 2011, pp. 109-127.

⁵⁸⁸ PRIETO VILAS 1994, p. 203.

⁵⁸⁹ SÁNCHEZ-ALBORNOZ Y MENDUIÑA 1943.

⁵⁹⁰ FÉVRIER 1974, pp. 41-138; GARMY and MAURIN 1996, p. 200.

administrative centres, but the only well-dated fort of the mentioned South Gallic group⁵⁹¹ is that of Saint-Bertrand, whose walls were built in the first third of the 5th century. Also late are some fortified areas of the *Narbonensis*, such as those of Toulouse and Nîmes and especially that of Carcassonne, dated in the middle of the 4th century but highly restored, which was the only one of these walled enclosures built following the model of the north and centre of Gaul, with layers of foundations of large reused blocks and several semicircular towers, in addition to the fact that its limited surface area is located on a hill, making it more like the constructions in *Novempopulana*. Continuing north, the wall of Arles⁵⁹², undated, defended the southern face of the city. And in the town of Die in the valley of the River Drome, a tributary of the Rhone, its tower complex dating from the 3rd century surrounds an area of 23 hectares, an unusual size in southern France. Grenoble, *civitas* of the territory of the Allobroges, has a reduced enclosure also dated at the end of the 3rd century according to an epigraph of a door alluding to Diocletian and Maximian.

When the barbarian peoples were pushed towards Hispania from the German borders on their way through Europe, they found a trail of walled enclosures to conquer. They were an unrivalled source of practical knowledge about Roman fortifications, among others those of the cities of Le Mans⁵⁹³ or Périgueux⁵⁹⁴. This could be an argument in favour of one of the hypotheses considered about the construction of the walls of *cubos* in the Hispanic Northwest, among them those of the city of León: a Suebian refortification in the turbulent Hispanic 5th century after the Early Imperial wall of small ashlar was ruined.

3.3. The Late Imperial defensive system

After Diocletian's reform (284-305), expanded by Constantine (306-337), the Roman armies would be made up of two new kinds of troops, the *Limitanei* or *Ripenses* – an infantry that was mobilized in the border regions– and the *Comitatenses* or *Comitatus*, a body created later that moved with the emperor or to repel attacks, and with fiscal control functions. As already explained, during the Late Empire, the VII *Gemina* legionary camp continued to fulfil its administrative functions and engineering, construction, maintenance

⁵⁹¹ ESMONDE CLEARY 2013, p. 133.

⁵⁹² WHEELER, R.E. Mortimer 1926, p. 192.

⁵⁹³ Regarding the similarity between Le Mans and León, see NAVASCUÉS PALACIO 1990, pp. 19-20.

⁵⁹⁴ BLANCHE 1914, pp. 154-163.

and control of public works. As is deduced from the *Notitia Dignitatum*⁵⁹⁵ (*Not. Dign. XLII, 26*) and from historical sources such as the *Chronicle* of Hydatius, at the end of the 4th century and the beginning of the 5th its troops were still stationed in León⁵⁹⁶. We do not know whether they were under the direct control of the consul of *Callaecia* or the *praesides* of the *Tarraconensis*, in turn under the command of the *vicarius Hispaniarum*, who hierarchically depended on the *Praetorian* prefect of Gaul. What seems irrefutable is that at the beginning of the 5th century the fortification of the *Legio VII Gemina*, commanded by a prefect, was in use and was part of the Late Roman defensive strategy in the province of *Callaecia*, (*Not. Dign. Occ. XLII, 30*). There are also listed in this province four tribunes commanding their respective cohorts: the *II Flavia Pacatianae* in *Paetaonium* (Petavonium, Rosinos de Vidriales, Zamora), the *II Gallicae ad Cohortem Gallicam*, the *Lucensis* cohort in *Luco* and the *Cohors Celtiberiae* in *Brigantiae nunc Iuliobriga*⁵⁹⁷, which has previously been identified in this work with Ciudadela (La Coruña). Regarding the *Cohors I Gallica*, which in the Early Imperial period was "*equitata civium romanorum*", it was safely settled in the camp in *Aquis Querquennis* and in *Pisoraca*⁵⁹⁸ and, according to the known archaeological remains, the *II Gallicae* was quartered in the southern area of León during the 2nd century (possibly in the Valduerna region or around Galleguillos de Campos), but in the 4th century it became an infantry unit in the Northeast in *Veleia* (Iruña, Álava) according to the same source (*Not. Dign. Occ. XLII, 32*).

In addition to these troops, the *Notitia* lists among the troops stationed in the prefecture of Gaul at the end of the 4th or early 5th century a palatine legion of *Sabarienses*⁵⁹⁹ who might be at the enigmatic origin of the later historical region of

⁵⁹⁵ NEIRA FALEIRO, 2005, p. 42: this imperial administrative document would have been made up taking two others as a basis: one belonging to the end of Theodosius' reign (before the year 395) and another from the first decade of the 5th century (Stilicho's recension). He gives a date of final composition to between 425-429. The NOTITIA DIGNITATUM, Western Part, XLII, 26, mentions: prefect of the *Legio VII Gemina* in León. Tribune of the *Cohort II Flavia Pacatiana*, in Petavonium. Tribune of the *Cohort II Gallica*, in the same place as the *Cohors Gallica*. Tribune of the *Cohors Lucensis*, in Lugo. Tribune of the *Cohors Celtiberum*, en Brigantia, now Juliobriga. In the province *Tarraconensis*: tribune of the *Cohors I Gallica*, in Veleia.

⁵⁹⁶ NEIRA FALEIRO, 2005, p. 657; p. 177: a part of the *Legio VII Gemina* appears as *comitatensis* in the East. In Hispania he documents the troops of *Setp [...] seniores*.

⁵⁹⁷ AJA SÁNCHEZ 2002b, 25.

⁵⁹⁸ A tombstone kept in the Museo de los Caminos in Astorga, AE 1963, 28 (IRPLEon 227, ERPLEon 181) was dedicated to a soldier of the *Cohors I Gallica*, *Iulius Capitus*, by his *commanipularis*, *L. Decuminu*. It was from Luyego de Somoza, the same as the aforementioned epigraphs commemorating the Birth of the Eagles of the *Legio VII Gemina*.

⁵⁹⁹ This Savaria would be in the origin of the almost unknown region of Sabaria in Zamora, near the current Peñausende, whose parish church is dedicated to San Martin of Tours. Peñausende has an inventory of remains from medieval times in Fuente de la Huerta (see SEVILLANO CARBAJAL 1978, p. 222).

Sabaria (Zamora)⁶⁰⁰. The place name Sabaria or Savaria is repeated in another area of the Roman Empire whose settlers were of Suebian lineage: the *Colonia Claudia Savariensum* (*Amm. Marc.* XXX. 5, 14) was the capital of the Roman *Pannonia Prima* (Szombathely today in Hungary), founded in the year 45, where San Martín de Tours lived in the early 4th century. After the death of the Emperor Valentinian I, the Huns of Attila occupied Savaria between 441 and 445 and it was destroyed by an earthquake in 458. The *Notitia Dignitatum*, however, still mentions troops from Savaria, the *Lancearii Sabarienses*⁶⁰¹. Sabarian Roman troops might have been stationed in Hispania, part of the Gallic prefecture, at least before the most probable date when the *Notitia* (ca. 425-429) stops. That means that there is a possibility of a migratory movement of population from the annihilated Hungarian *Savaria* towards the Iberian Peninsula in the second half of the 5th century⁶⁰², perhaps as *laeti* or *gentiles*, with a statute similar to the colonate and with an obligation to defend the territory they occupied. The little studied Hispanic *Sabaria* could have been at any time thereafter a true “March” situated between the Suebian and Visigothic territories.

Medieval sources have recorded other missing names with the same probable military origin, such as a *Duodecimanus*⁶⁰³ or *Palatium* in the vicinity of Hospital de Órbigo (León). Another we have is in one of the two preserved versions of the *Parrochiale Suevum*, the *Liber Itaci* in Oviedo, which lists among the places corresponding to the diocese of Astorga a place between *Asturicam* and *Berizo* with the name of *Legio super Urbico*⁶⁰⁴. Given its location and its concise place name, it does not seem to correspond to the *Legio VII* headquarters between the Torío and Bernesga rivers. If this *Legio super Urbico* is the toponym of an old fortification of a Roman garrison, we would be in the same case as with the *Duodecimanus* in the vicinity of Hospital de Órbigo, as we will see later. We cannot even rule out that *Legio super Urbico* and *Duodecimanus* or *Palatium*,

⁶⁰⁰ *Sabaria* could be identified with the *mansio Sibarim* of the Via XXIV of the *Antonine Itinerary*, between *Helmantica* (Salamanca) and *Ocelo Duri*, or with Peñausende (Zamora); perhaps the toponym defined the region around the current region of Sayago.

⁶⁰¹ NEIRA FALEIRO, 2005, p.351; p. 338, mentions it as among the legions *palatinae*.

⁶⁰² SAN ISIDORO DE SEVILLA, 624 [1975] *Historia de regibus Gothorum, Vandalorum et Suevorum*, § 49, “*Aera DCVI, ann. III imper. Justini Minoris, Leovigildus adeptus Hispaniae et Galliae principatum, ampliare regnum bello et augere opes statuit. Studio quippe ejus exercitus, concordante favore, victoriarum, multa praeclare sortitus est. Cantabros namque iste obtinuit, Aregiam iste cepit, Sabaria ab eo omnis devicta est, cesserunt etiam armis illius plurimae rebelles Hispaniae urbes*”.

⁶⁰³ LUCAS DE TUY, *Chron. mun.*, III.60 10-15. “*Fafilea postea ad mortem uenit et in uilla, que est iuxta flumen Vrbicum, quam Duodecim manus appellant et alii nunc Palacium uocant, sepultus fuit*”.

⁶⁰⁴ SÁNCHEZ BADIOLA 2010, pp. 38-44.

both located on the banks of the Órbigo according to sources, refer to the same fortified precinct.

Despite the existence of a multitude of urban walled precincts in Hispania, the only fortified compound that could still be considered a legionary camp on the Iberian Peninsula was that of León, despite the existence of troops stationed in other barracks. Although recent historiography has generally interpreted the walled nuclei in relation to the Roman borders, this was not the case of León during Late Roman times, since its defensive function was conditioned by general instability, especially in the 5th century, rather than by the maintenance of borders far from the Leonese military headquarters.

Some recent publications call into question the purely defensive purpose of the Roman *limes* although not their capacity to protect. Roman border systems were a form of control open to commercial and human traffic by establishing military garrisons with a small number of troops relative to the size of the territory, although perhaps sufficient as a deterrent against minor assaults as well as for a quick reaction to slow down a large-scale offensive. However, it must be emphasized that this defensive capacity in Late Imperial León never appeared linked to a border situation, and being considered an already romanized area, the general strategic reflections that link defensive systems with Roman foreign policy cannot be applied to it either unless we take into account the eventual transfer of troops of Hispanic origin to the borders⁶⁰⁵. It is possible that some troops or *vexillationes* quartered in León moved to areas of conflict, but this does not give the Leonese camp a border character. This was not even the case when the *Suevi* settled in the area as federates of the Romans after the first decade of the 5th century, or for the almost 175 years in which the *Suevi* remained installed in the northwest of Hispania. Nevertheless, there are known frontier fortifications from that period such as that of Santa Eulalia de Tábara, north of the city of Zamora.

E. Luttwak⁶⁰⁶ summarized the succession of three strategies in the foreign policy of the Roman Empire. The first was hegemonic, expansionist and mainly subject to diplomatic coercion, the second attempted to secure the territory, even the most exposed

⁶⁰⁵ KARAVAS 2001, pp. 262-265. This author includes references to the presence of Hispanic troops on two little known European borders: the *limes Olbiopolitanus*, in the mid-1st century between the mouths of the Rivers Dniester and Bug in the northwestern coast of the Black Sea (today Moldavia and Ukraine). At the end of the 2nd century, it held the *Cohors I Hispanorum veterana* in Tyras; and the *limes Tauro-Skythiae*, south of the peninsula of Crimea between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. Around the mid-2nd century it was part of the province of *Moesia Inferior*. In Cárace in the middle of the 2nd century is to be found the *Cohors II Hispanorum et Aravacorum*. In Chersonesus, near the walled city, there is a fortification of 100x75 metres, which was temporary headquarters of the *Cohors II Lucensium*.

⁶⁰⁶ LUTTWAK 2016, p. IX-XI. Ref. ISAAC 1990; WHITTAKER 1994.

border areas, in part by means of lines of fortification that are still visible from Britain to Mesopotamia and the third was a "defence-in-depth" of a stratified border with regional and central reserve forces that safeguarded the Western Empire until the 5th century and the Eastern Empire for much longer. Hispania would be found in this third "defence-in-depth" strategy from the end of the 4th century, and the only *regional reserve forces* referred to by E. Luttwak would be in *Castra Legionis*, the camp of the only legion that remained in the Iberian Peninsula. In the same work, E. Luttwak defends his hypothesis and rejects the objections shown by B. Isaac and C.R. Whittaker, who explain systematic and widespread imperial border policy as a series of unrelated and impromptu reactions to local situations. Regarding the Leonese legionary camp, it should not be forgotten that, in general, the majority of the barbarian troops arrived in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula as allies of the Romans themselves at the beginning of the 5th century, which led to the initial coexistence of Hispano-Romans and *Suevi*. However, from the social dimension offered to the study of military systems in C.R. Whittaker's criticism⁶⁰⁷, what is interesting is how he considers as non-defensive the role of "border police" that the army carried out for the imperial administration in border areas and in provinces like Hispania. This administrative exercise of police control would be added to the rest of the duties of tax collection, inspection of weights and measures, commercial distribution, maintenance of public works, etc., of the *Legio VII Gemina*, which at that time had five centuries of continuous history in its camp in León, possibly augmented by *ex castris* levies.

Thus, the Late Imperial fortifications that in the 3rd century had become administrative and communication centres whose military strategy relied on the walls as resistance to an attack awaiting the arrival of more troops. The strategy that could prove useful in the 3rd century was left aside in the 5th in the face of prolonged sieges by barbarian invaders⁶⁰⁸. With respect to the legionary camp of León, the repercussions of a modification in this strategy might have been due more to the fact that it was the location of the headquarters of the only legion stationed in Hispania than to a change in tactics for an attack and the evolution of siege warfare. As a result it does not seem probable that León was re-fortified in the Late Imperial period. While it is true that there is an undeniable relationship between "garrisoned troops and walled cities"⁶⁰⁹, it does not seem

⁶⁰⁷ WHITTAKER 1994.

⁶⁰⁸ BRAVO BOSCH 2015, p. 83.

⁶⁰⁹ FERNÁNDEZ OCHOA; MORILLO CERDÁN and SALIDO DOMÍNGUEZ 2011, pp. 281-282.

too significant because most Roman cities had had a wall for centuries, whether they had troops or not.

A. Stilgoe⁶¹⁰ designed several models of defence systems in depth and chose to use the one proposed by Luttwak⁶¹¹ as representative of the time of the emperors Constantius and Julian (AD 353-363), although he corrects his conclusions regarding the supposed strategy from the time of Constantine that took into account an army with troops in permanent movement from the borders. According to Bravo Bosch, in the 4th century the troops did not include either country peasants or local provincial inhabitants⁶¹², but were made up of Romans and barbarians, sometimes federated. There were no peasants in the army but there were colonists forming private armies because during the 4th century, as has already been pointed out, there was a certain militarization of civilian life, which had a direct impact on the systems of defence. The role of Hispanic villas in the economy is undeniable but they also became one of the bases for defence in the Late Empire⁶¹³ at the root of militarization of civilian life confirmed by historiography. J. Edmonson has suggested that the villas of the province of *Gallaecia* and the Meseta might have replaced the role of the *castra* as a monumental expression of control over mining resources⁶¹⁴, perhaps because the Roman State faced the increase in operating costs by giving up its management to local owners. It is difficult to defend this hypothesis for the Leonese fortified nucleus, still occupied by legionary troops in the 4th century. The few remains of villas near the walled precinct, such as that of Navatejera (Villaquilambre, León), have provided no indication of any militarization. The resurgence of small-scale extractive activities and not only of precious metals has provided few archaeological and environmental remains, not comparable to the previous stage of state exploitation, making it even more difficult to test this hypothesis. Some data in its favour are provided by archaeological studies of materials from mosaics from León, Zamora and Palencia. An example is the variscite⁶¹⁵ found only in the tesserae of the mosaics of Late Ancient villas, while during the first centuries of Romanization this mineral was used for making personal ornaments.

⁶¹⁰ STILGOE 2006, p. 33.

⁶¹¹ LUTTWAK, p. IX-XI.

⁶¹² BRAVO BOSCH 2015, pp. 82-83.

⁶¹³ BALIL 1960, pp. 179-197.

⁶¹⁴ BOWES 2013, p. 211.

⁶¹⁵ Related directly to mining the vein of variscite in Las Cercas, in Palazuelo de las Cuevas (Zamora): see GUTIÉRREZ PÉREZ; VILLALOBOS GARCÍA and ODRIOZOLA LLORET 2015, pp. 165-181.

Regarding the metal mining of this territory, we have little evidence of archaeological stratigraphy that confirms its presumed abandonment and there is some circumstantial evidence that suggests its continuity⁶¹⁶ in the province of León in the regions of La Cabrera and El Bierzo with what might suggest the existence of mines under military supervision. Nor should we forget the relevance of the peninsular Northwest in the extraction of cassiterite, a mineral that provides tin⁶¹⁷, a scarce metal and necessary for bronze alloys. The appearance in cassiterite of tin and tungsten led to its exploitation in these mines in the first half of the 20th century, possibly destroying the remains of Roman mines in the Leonese region of El Bierzo as well as in the west of the province of Salamanca, in the provinces of Zamora and Orense and in the Portuguese district of Braganza. J.M. Blázquez Martínez⁶¹⁸ invalidated the hypothesis used a few decades ago that the lack of slave labour was the cause of the drop in profits from metal from León, a thesis that could not be sustained because from the beginning of the 2nd century the miners were free workers to a large extent. The mining operations in León raised another unknown in relation to the form of payment of the Romans to these free miners, a question that continues without being fully clarified, despite the various studies of Roman Law that have dealt with the matter marginally. Subsequently, R. Matías Rodríguez⁶¹⁹ has analysed the mines in León, concluding that, from the point of view of mining, their abandonment occurred due to exhaustion of the mine or lack of productivity. The same engineer has studied Roman gold mining in Alto Carrión (Palencia), and there are several works on the exploitations of the gold mining area in Vilalba in Lugo, and Pino del Oro in Zamora, etc., though precise timelines of mine abandonment are not available.

Whether the mining sites were completely abandoned or there was a change in their exploitation and profits, they are still unknowns that must be cleared, including a study of data whose interpretation perhaps should be reviewed in the light of current knowledge, such as that provided by the Roman villa of El Soldán (Santa Colomba de Somoza, León) which was investigated by Dr. J. Carro⁶²⁰, its excavator, in relation to the mines exploited by the Romans in Andiñuela.

⁶¹⁶ EDMONSON 1989, pp. 85 and 90.

⁶¹⁷ COMENDADOR REY; FIGUEIREDO; FONTE and MEUNIER 2014, pp. 25-28.

⁶¹⁸ BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 2006, p. 31.

⁶¹⁹ MATÍAS RODRÍGUEZ 2006, pp. 213-263; *Id.* 2008, pp 17-112.

⁶²⁰ CARRO 1934, pp. 33-36. He dug up the Villa of El Soldán in eight months in 1933 and considered it to be from the 1st century, despite his own surprise at the appearance of several horseshoe arches in the construction and one on the decoration of a ceramic made of *terra sigillata*; adapting his discovery to the chronology proposed, he considered those horseshoe arches to be the first used by the Romans in Hispania.

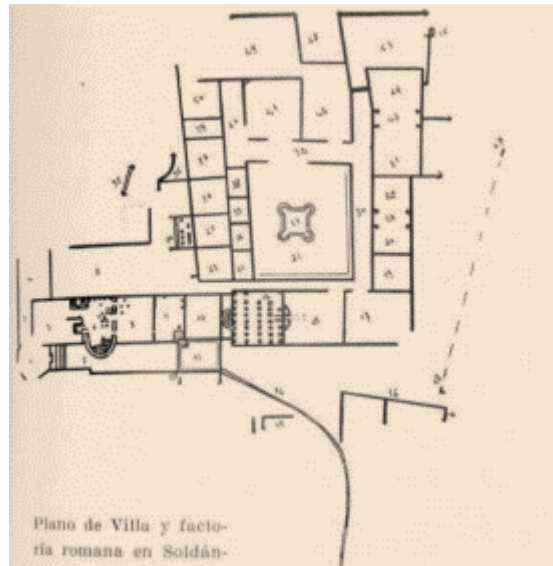


Fig. 98. Plan of the Villa El Soldán (Santa Colomba de Somoza, León), J. Carro, 1934.

Regarding the weakening of the power of the last emperors of the Roman West (455-480) related to ecclesiastical influence, the subject has recently been analysed by E. Sánchez Medina⁶²¹. Likewise, studies from the History of Law, such as the one already mentioned by J.L. Cañizar Palacios⁶²² on the Theodosian Code, provide us with very useful data for understanding the social transformations associated with the defence of the Empire. This researcher links to the military sphere the constitution *C.Th.* VII, 14, 1, which under the heading *De burgariis*, says:

"(...) The Augusti Arcadius and Honorius to Vincentius, prefect of the *praetorium* (...): It is our desire that the same norms be fulfilled in the case of the *burgarii*, as ordered by our law in reference to the muliones, so that, if someone dares in Hispania or in any other place seek or host *burgarii*, he will be responsible in the same way. A similar penalty will bind those who seek or house persons assigned to the manufacture of state clothing, their wives or children, or those whom we discover receiving property and things belonging to them. Given in *Mediolanum* (Milan) on February 19th 398".

Cañizar Palacios discusses the term *burgarius* in the title, which he says has been used to refer to "troops located in barracks outside cities with mainly police and surveillance functions on the roads, in border areas or even on the coast, as Godofredo indicated in his comment on this law. He also identifies the term "*burgi*", which has to do with these troops, either with dwellings that had towers or castles located in border areas, hence the name given to these troops. That is to say, in addition to the *limitanei* and

⁶²¹ SÁNCHEZ MEDINA 2017, pp. 103-120.

⁶²² CAÑIZAR PALACIOS 2002, p. 95.

comitatensi and those least mentioned in historiography but equally well-known the *laeti*, *gentiles*, *foederati* or *dediticii*, etc., we must refer to the *burgarii* if we want to know the reality of Late Imperial Hispano-Roman defensive systems”⁶²³.

Exceptionally, we have today an epistolary document, *De Laude Pampilonae* inserted in the Roda Codex (10th century), sent by the same emperor Honorius to his soldiers from Pamplona and dated around 420, in which reference is made to a *muneris resolutio*, saying it was the *Comes Asterius* (or *Asturius*) who imposed Roman authority on the *Suevi* in the years 418-419. It also contains a note stating that the letter was brought from Rome by the *militia urbis Pampilonensis* and that it should be sanctioned by the Sabinian *patricius*, who was *magister utriusque militiae* in 422. In addition, the text refers to a *comes ac magister utriusque militiae*, who, according to J. Gil⁶²⁴, must be the *comes* Constantius, the future emperor to whom Orosius alluded (VII, 42, 1-ss). He uses the spelling *Spania* to refer to the pacification of Hispania. But according to Hydatius (*Chr.* 91, 113) around the year 430 the Hispano-Romans still had the best forts, among which we suppose was that of León. Apparently in the early 5th century the Roman administration and army in Hispania functioned relatively normally. Until at least the second half of the 5th century, *Tarraco* continued to cling to its position within the orbit of the Western Roman Empire, as the discovery of an honorific epigraph dedicated to the emperors Leo I and Anthemius (467-472)⁶²⁵ shows, at a time when the imperial government was in the hands of the barbarian *magister militum* Flavius Ricimerus, who retained the *de facto* power in the Italic Peninsula for twenty years. Even after the proclamation of Anthemius, the marriage of Ricimerus to his daughter Alypia succeeded in prolonging his rule until his death in 472. Meanwhile in Hispania, the Roman military structure seems to have been maintained by generals such as Asterius, Castinus, Asturius or Merobaudes. The *Dux Provinciae Vincentius* seems to have been the last person to hold this position around the year 465, collaborating with the Bishop of *Tarraco* in the support of Roman legality. This seems to have been the same Vincentius who in the *Cronica Gallica* of 511 appears

⁶²³ CAÑIZAR PALACIOS 2008, pp. 95-113. Regarding the territorial organization of the Empire in the times of Diocletian and Constantine, see BRAVO, 1991; JONES, 1964, p. 42-52 and 373-377. As for the political and administrative organization in Hispania in the 4th century, see LOMAS SALMONTE, 2002, p. 19-40; ARCE 1997. The term “*castellum*” might indicate the headquarters of this troop of *burgarii*, and in relation to its presence in the north of the Peninsula see JIMÉNEZ FURUNDARENA, 1995, pp. 129-150.

⁶²⁴ GIL FERNÁNDEZ 1984, p. 185.

⁶²⁵ PÉREZ MARTÍNEZ 2014, pp. 117-138. RIT 100=II 4109=ILS 815. *CIL* II 2/14, 947.

supporting the claims of the opposite side, that of King Euric, in the *Tarraconensis* in the year 472⁶²⁶.

On the other hand, the *Notitia Dignitatum*, a document conventionally dated⁶²⁷ in 395 (more recently placed in the first decade of the 5th century), is the primary documentary source about the Late Roman army. As it specifies, at the end of the 4th century in Hispania there were Roman troops⁶²⁸, *limitanei*, in Lugo, León and Iruña (Trespuentes, Álava): the *Cohors Lucensis*, the *Legio VII Gemina* and the *Cohors I Gallica*. Of the other cohorts already mentioned above, the II *Flavia Pacatianae* was in *Petavonium* (Rosinos de Vidriales, Zamora); the *Cohors celtiberorum* was based in *Brigantiae nunc Iuliobriga*⁶²⁹, which this work has previously proposed to identify with Ciudadela (La Coruña), and the II *Gallica* in the hitherto unknown place of *ad Cohortes Gallicam*, which has many possibilities of being in the Leonese mining region of the Valduerna. However, its location in the lands of Sahagún (the Roman *Camala*) around Galleguillos de Campos near the Roman road that crossed the southeast of the province is not to be ruled out either. Galleguillos, besides being an ethnonym⁶³⁰, revealed a Roman necropolis found in 2017 with sixty burials from the 1st to the 5th centuries AD. In the same municipality there is mention still of a villa in a *pagus* called El Santo, whose bordering area carries the place name of Gordaliza, a name which has evolved from the medieval *Gordariga*⁶³¹. There the route of the Roman roads passed between two Augustan foundations, *Asturica Augusta* and *Caesaraugusta*, at a section that went from Benavente to Palencia⁶³².

⁶²⁶ PÉREZ MARTÍNEZ 2014, p. 131; *Chronica Gallica 511, ad ann. 472-473*.

⁶²⁷ The date is controversial: JONES and HUGH 1980, pp. 1211 ff. in 395; CHASTAGNOL 1967, p. 131, between 425-428, and ARCE MARTÍNEZ 2007, p. 198, in the first years of the 5th century. NEIRA FALEIRO, Concepción (1998): *La Notitia Dignitatum. Nueva edición crítica y comentario histórico*, Tesis doctoral, UCM, Madrid.

⁶²⁸ *Notitia Dignitatum Occ.*, XLII, 23-32; *Notitia Dignitatum Occ.* VII, 118-129.

⁶²⁹ AJA SÁNCHEZ 2002b, 25.

⁶³⁰ Going back to the much criticised but always useful “philological” Archaeology, the toponym “Galleguillos” might come from a non-documented and hypothetical “*Gallicanos*”, alluding to the origin of its inhabitants and, after centuries, it might have caused the repeated ethnonymic misunderstanding between Gauls and *Gallaeci*.

⁶³¹ *Gordariga* is a toponym documented for “Gordaliza” (del Pino), which might also have been evolved from *Ad cohortem gallicam*, (Adcortegalica, Agordegalica, Gordariga?); *documents from the Monastery of Sahagún*, doc. 616, year 961 donation of farmland in Gordariga in villa de Iuliano; doc. 994, 27 January 1059, donation of four aranzadas of vineyard in Gordaliza by Regina Cetiz; Colección documental de la Catedral de León, no. 1262, p. 557: “*Et adhuc concedo in uilla que uocatur Gordariza de Illis Matis illam diuisionem qui fuit de mea muliere comitissa domna Eilo cum monasterio Sancti Martini cum ómnibus suis appendiciis*”.

⁶³² MARTÍNEZ GONZÁLEZ 1874, p. 36.

Reviewing old bibliography concerning the *Notitia Dignitatum*, both the previously mentioned G. Panciroli⁶³³ and the rest of the commentators who wrote in Latin about this Late Roman document refer to the data provided by Madrucianus on the presence of a palatine legion of *laciarii Sabarienses*. While looking for the source we found an epic Germanic poem that with rhetorical license puts in the mouth of the Roman Gaudentius a praise poem to Madrucianus, a proper name that corresponds to a descendant of the *gentis Madruciae*⁶³⁴, a Suebian people, and perhaps in relation to the toponym Madridanos, a village bordering on Villalazán (both in Zamora), whose Roman camp at Albocela (El Alba) has been identified with the Roman settlement of *Ocelo Durii*. The archaeological site of El Alba is located in a straight line between Madridanos and a bend in the River Duero in the vicinity of a crossroads of Roman roads, whose strategic situation would require the presence of a stable military garrison. At the end of the 4th century or beginnings of the 5th it may have been the palatine legion of the *laciarii Sabarienses*, of possible Suebian origin, as we pointed out in previous paragraphs⁶³⁵. The rest of the military personnel would be reserve troops, and according to A. Balil⁶³⁶ from the 3rd century they would be distributed in five *comitatenses* and eleven palatine auxiliaries.

⁶³³ PANCIROLI, 1623, p. 37: in his analysis of the *Notitia Dignitatum* considers that the *Legio Palatina* of *laciarii Sabarienses* depends on the *Magistri Militum Praesentalis Occidentis*.

⁶³⁴ So it appears in the old poem compiled by Johann Engerd, ca.1583, *Madrucios libri tres [...] poema paraeneticum ad inclytum [...] Carolum Gaudentium liberum baronem Madrucium*: the narrator is Gaudentius, who addresses the author proclaiming himself “illustrious hero of the *gentis Madruciae* and your ancestor, of their blood”, which might refer to Gaudentius, son of the Roman general Aetius, of whose presence in Hispania Hydatius bears witness, the same as that of Merobaudes, *magister utriusque militiae* in Hispania after succeeding his father-in-law Asterius in 443 and possibly writer of the panegyric.

⁶³⁵ See notes 597-599.

⁶³⁶ BALIL 1960, p. 179.

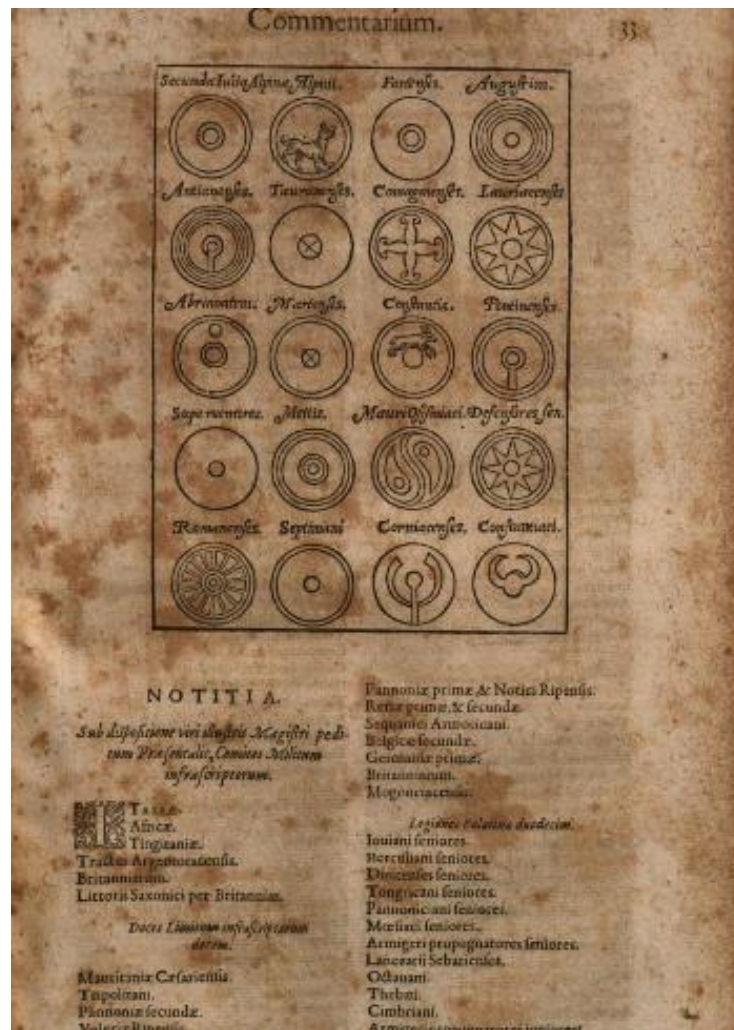


Fig. 99. *Notitia Dignitatum*, Guido Panciroli 1623, p. 33: the *Lanciarri Sabarienses* in the second column, line eight, among the twelve corps of palatine legions.

It should be borne in mind that these *limitanei* refer to a type of *limes* that in the 4th century did not exactly mean a border, and in the words of P. Poveda Arias⁶³⁷ "did not refer to either military structures, to a border organization, or to a fluvial limit, but served to designate a land area marked out within the limits of the Empire. From the 4th century onwards, the term *limes* would acquire an administrative conception by referring to the border districts under the command of a *dux*, but not to designate the border itself". The truth is that during Late Roman times, in the north of Hispania episcopal power achieved great influence as the *defensor civitatis* and as a maintainer of the city walls in which the presence of *burgarii*⁶³⁸ is also considered as part of this new defensive strategy.

⁶³⁷ POVEDA ARIAS 2013, pp. 1157-1160, numbers 7 and 13.

⁶³⁸ SÁNCHEZ-ALBORNOZ Y MENDUÑA 1943, p. 60.

3.4. The Late Imperial military structure and León

As we have already analysed with respect to the preceding stages, the changes in the military field generally had direct effects on the Roman fortifications and camps, although in the Late Imperial period no re-walling has been documented in the Leonese fortifications studied. It is probable that the evolution of the Leonese camp during this stage was also related to the modifications that affected its legal and social regime. For example, during the Severan dynasty, the principle of legality⁶³⁹ had been introduced into Roman military organization, in aspects such as the constitution of an exceptional penal regime for military crimes and offences in which there was no place for the republican *provocatio ad populum*⁶⁴⁰, which could not be invoked against the *imperium militae* of consuls and *praetors* in command of their troops. In addition, the emperor Septimius Severus authorized the *collegia*⁶⁴¹, military associations that at first had religious and especially funeral purposes, later extended to welfare. These *collegia* or *scholae* in general were differentiated according to the hierarchies and were dedicated to the common cults of the soldiers⁶⁴², among other activities related to the public validation of a shared military profession. Pérea Yébenes proposed the existence of a military *collegium* of horsemen of the *Legio VII Gemina* when interpreting, in the epigraph *CIL* II 2663 dated in the year 216, the expression "*in his actarius*" –among them [the riders] an *actarius*– as an indication of the membership of the *equites*. The military *collegia*, proud of the political relevance of the army, supplied workers to the Roman walls⁶⁴³, and later the citizens also became a workforce, as we have already seen when mentioning the *munera*.

⁶³⁹ BLANCH NOUGUÉS 2011. This jurist revised the military Roman legislation from Book VII of the Codex Theodosianus (*De re militari*), an organic legislation of 22 titles with precise laws about enrolment and promotion in the army, the *annona militaris* or provisioning of supplies to the army, rights and duties derived from the *hospitium* owed from citizens to soldiers, discharge and rights of veterans, etc., as well as norms of Penal Law concerning crimes and offences within the military sphere. Regarding military texts we must mention for its importance: *De rebus bellicis*, an anonymous work of the 4th century, *ref.* FORMISANO 2003, p.155 ff.; MENÉNDEZ ARGÜÍN 2009, pp.101 ff.

⁶⁴⁰ FERNÁNDEZ DE BUJÁN y FERNÁNDEZ, Antonio (2010) *Derecho Público Romano* 13, Cizur Menor, Navarra, p. 230.

⁶⁴¹ FRANCISCO HEREDERO 2011, p. 1; GOLDSWORTHY 2005, p. 50; PEREA YÉBENES 2013, pp. 221-246; *Id.*, 1999. CURCHIN 1991, p. 92: "(...) Some cities had a *collegium iuvenum*, a sort of paramilitary cadet corps for teenagers".

⁶⁴² PEREA YÉBENES 2013, pp. 221-246.

⁶⁴³ BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 1978, p. 238.

G. Alföldy⁶⁴⁴ alludes to the fiscal and economic privileges of soldiers in the 3rd century, giving a new argument against a crisis within the Late Imperial camps: the 225 *denarii* a year received as pay by a legionary in Augustus' time, had risen to 300 under Domitian, 500 under Septimius Severus and 750 under Caracalla, much higher than the increase in the cost of living. In addition, it was necessary to add to this salary the imperial donations which made it possible in the 3rd century for a soldier to be able to afford the votive or funeral monuments that only commanders could have ordered in the Early Empire. Centuries later, Justinian would limit the validity of military wills to those actually carried out in campaign and not to the ones that were granted while the soldiers were garrisoned or in a camp in peacetime. Saquete Chamizo and Velázquez Jiménez⁶⁴⁵ corroborate this way of testation within the *Legio VII Gemina*, regarding a centurion documented in Mérida whose three names, Caius Valerius Flavius, coincide with the name day on two other epigraphs located in Villalís (León), among them a Valerius Flavius, centurion of an auxiliary unit already mentioned, the *Cohors I Gallica equitata civium Romanorum*. He also mentions two other, Valerii Flavi, who do not have the same *praenomen*, but who also belonged to the VII *Gemina* legion and who were stationed in Africa for some time, according to the epigraphic information that we know⁶⁴⁶. These tombstones also offer us information regarding the origin of the soldiers who formed part of the Roman troops in Hispania. As Blázquez Martínez⁶⁴⁷ pointed out decades ago, the documentation reflects a higher percentage of North African and Eastern individuals than from Central and Northern Europe. However, it is necessary to clarify that in units with ethnonyms of Iberian origin the relationship of individuals with the initial geographical origin of their military units is lost after twenty or twenty-five years from their creation⁶⁴⁸.

During the Late Empire, fortifications were subjected to new types of construction, different from that of the first years of Romanization of society. The formation of *castella* or military colonies in border areas by army veterans⁶⁴⁹ made the soldiers landowners. On the other hand, the legal relationships of colonate are pertinent to

⁶⁴⁴ ALFÖLDY 2012, pp. 256-260.

⁶⁴⁵ SAQUETE CHAMIZO and VELÁZQUEZ JIMÉNEZ 1999, pp. 265-271.

⁶⁴⁶ SAQUETE CHAMIZO and VELÁZQUEZ JIMÉNEZ 1999, p.268, no. 19: "This is the case in *CIL* VIII, 12590 (*Carthage*) and 3245 (*Lambaesis*), of whom we do not know his rank but he must have belonged to the *Legio VII Gemina*, just as the deceased who named him as his heir". According to Y. Le Bohec, *La Troisième Légion Auguste*, Paris, 1989, 379, note 114, the *Valerius Flavius* mentioned in both inscriptions is the same person.

⁶⁴⁷ BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 1970, p.7.

⁶⁴⁸ PEREA YÉBENES 2006.

⁶⁴⁹ GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ 2006, pp. 387-388.

this study, since the residents in the *claustra* and *castella* were colonists, dependent on the *castellum*⁶⁵⁰ and were obliged to defend them and offer personal services, the *munera*. Even if most of the unskilled work was done by the inhabitants of a *civitas* as a *munus*, the necessary specialized work was expensive and the construction of the urban walls would be inconceivable with or without imperial financial help, if the *curias* had really become impoverished due to the Third Century Crisis. Without other data, the construction of walls is not a sign of urban decline but of vitality given the considerable investments in both labour and financial resources that they require. For example, it is known from the epigraphic documentation (*CIL*, VIII, 8,701. Ref. 8,702, 8,710, 8,777) that Alexander Severus built in AD 234 walls "*per colonos eiusdem castelli*" (that is *Castrum Vianense* in Mauritania), meaning that the walls were built by the colonists of the *castellum* itself. This provision had its origin, according to Weber⁶⁵¹, in the barbarian settlements made by Marcus Aurelius. In the 5th century the state of the colonate would reoccur with the establishment of barbarians who settled in the neighbouring provinces as colonists⁶⁵².

At that time some of the pillars of medieval feudalism were set up in Europe. Its structural origin was the proliferation of large estates⁶⁵³ in Late Antiquity, while in the case of León this point is debatable as the nobility continued to think of themselves for several centuries as subjects to a monarchy that in turn considered itself the Gothic heir of the Romans for in the 11th century King Alfonso VI would still be crowned emperor in the Visigothic tradition⁶⁵⁴. In the kingdom of León following in the wake of Saint Isidore of Seville in his *Sententiae* (1.3 C, 48), written towards 634, the concept of fatherland rather than territory was inextricably linked to the perception of being part of the *gens visigothorum*. Even at the end of the 12th century, we find in the Leonese documentation several diplomas in which a Catalan count, the Count of Urgell, *Venerabili domino Mauricio Comes urgellensis*, is at the service of the Leonese king as *Maiordomus regis et*

⁶⁵⁰ MAÑANES PÉREZ 2014, p. 27.

⁶⁵¹ WEBER 1982, p. 186, quoting Mommsen.

⁶⁵² *C.Th.* V, 4, I, 3 (Law of Honorius and Theodosius in AD 409.): "*Scyaras...imperio nostro subegimus. Ideoque damos omnibus copiam, ex preadicta gente hominum agros proprios frequentandi, ita ut omnes sciant, susceptos non alio iure quam colonatus apud se futuros*". After their submission, Honorius divided the *Scirii* as colonists among the great landowners.

⁶⁵³ FERNÁNDEZ OCHOA *et alii* 2014, p.112.

⁶⁵⁴ MORVÁN, 2012, <https://doi.org/10.4000/e-spania.21681>; SÁNCHEZ-ALBORNOZ Y MENDUIÑA 1976; ref. BARBERO DE AGUILERA and VIGIL PASCUAL 1978, pp. 354-404; GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ and SANTOS YANGUAS 1987; ASTARITA 2009, pp. 2-4.

*tenente turres Legionis, cathedram Legionis tenente*⁶⁵⁵, that is as lieutenant in the castle of León and its garrison of troops. Almost three decades later in 1208 the wife of Armengaudus (Armengol) VIII, Elvira Pérez (of Asturian origin), inherits the title of County of Urgel. She will appear in the documentation donating the *señorío* of Ordás, in the central Leonese mountains, to the bishopric. She would receive the title of *comitissa in Ordás*, and not *of Ordás*. In the kingdom of León it would not be until the 13th century when a hereditary title was merged with its territorial *señorío*⁶⁵⁶, perhaps because Late Antique large estates were scarce in that area.

Returning to Saint Isidore, in his *Etymologies* (15, 2, 6, 7) he distinguished by size and fortification the *castella*, *vici* or *pagi* of the *oppidum*, making clear the continuity of the typology of Late Roman fortifications. In the north of the Iberian Peninsula, new settlements had been set up in higher areas associated with the surveillance of strategic passes on communication routes during the 4th century, perhaps militarized posts in *castella* as indicated by the *Notitia Dignitatum*. At the beginning of the 5th century Paulus Orosius (385-420) describes how after the barbarian incursion into Hispania in 409, Didymus and Veridianus –relatives of the emperor Honorius–, marched *ad Pyrenaei claustra* to prevent the entrance of the generals Gerontius and Constans, son of the usurper Constantine III, at the command of his troops. Zosimus (VI, 5, 2-37)⁶⁵⁷ would refer to the troops recruited by the relatives of Honorius in Hispania as στρατιώται (*stratiotes*) soldiers, and for the camp as στρατόπεδον (*stratopedon*). This seems to refer to regular troops, and he mentions Terentius as general of the troops together with Constans, and as *Praetorian* prefect, Apolinar, and "other people holding the honour of various positions".

For the western Pyrenees a system of fortresses between Gaul and Hispania is recorded, placed above gorges of river courses, the *claustra* or *fauces*. Constantine's general, Gerontius, had proclaimed emperor another general, Maximus. Against this,

⁶⁵⁵ National History Archive: Eslonza, private documents, 77, document of December 1179, sale of a property in Moral of the River Porma, bestowed by Rodrigo Díaz in favour of Abbot Martin and his Monastery in Eslonza; National History Archive: Escalada, royal privileges, 3: new privileges granted to the Prior Diego and his Monastery of San Miguel de Escalada by King Fernando II in Benavente, the 20th of December 1180. Both documents were published by Vignau, quoted in FITA COLOMÉ 1897, pp. 498-500.

⁶⁵⁶ CANAL SÁNCHEZ-PAGIN 1981, p. 96.

⁶⁵⁷ OROSIUS, *Aduers.* VII, 40, 6: *Nam tyrannidem nemo nisi celeriter maturatam secrete inuadit et publice armat, cuius summa est assumpto diademate ac purpura uideri antequam sciri; hi uero plurimo tempore seruulos tantum suos ex propriis praediis colligentes ac uernaculis alentes sumptibus nec dissimulato proposito absque cuiusquam inquietudine ad Pyrenaei claustra tenderán.* Between the years 498 and 518: ZOSIMUS, VI, 5, 2-37. *Ref.* ARCE MARTÍNEZ 1982, pp. 76-78.

Honorius intervened sending his own general, Constantius, who quelled the rebellion in the year 411. Presumably *Legio VII* troops would then be found participating in these battles.

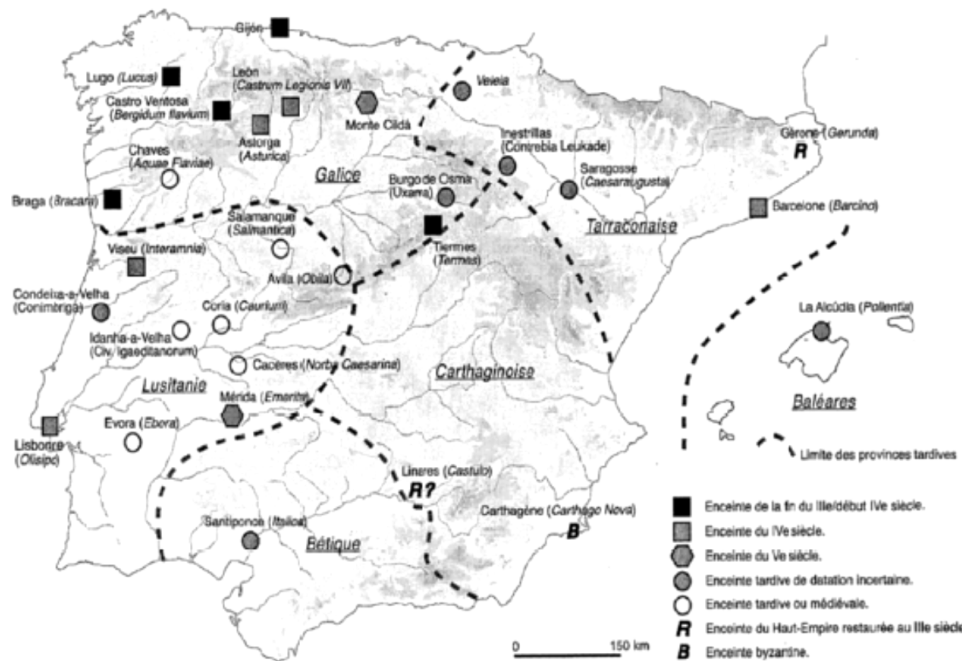


Fig. 100. Map of the Late Antique walled precincts in Hispania according to L. Brassous (2011)

Meanwhile, in the northwest of Hispania Suebians and Vandals divided the territory among themselves. A few years later, in the year 414, General Constantius also defeated Athaulf's barbarians in Gaul, forcing them to move to Hispania as well. On the other hand, in the north, around the great villas of the *Tarraconensis*, in the confrontations against the *Bagaudae* documented in the sources since the 3rd century, the Roman and ecclesiastical administration appear united. The *Bagaudae* movement⁶⁵⁸ has been interpreted by certain historiography as a social uprising against the most powerful landowning class in the Empire, the families of Emperor Theodosius and Bishop Damasus, whose private armies were supposedly made up in turn by peasants. According to Christian hagiography led by the *Chronicle* of Bishop Hydatius, it was explained as a popular reaction to religious attacks. The truth is that in the 5th century the *Bagaudae* reappeared in the documentation: in 449 Basilius and his troops plundered the Ebro Valley and killed Bishop Leo of Tarazona⁶⁵⁹.

⁶⁵⁸ SANZ BONEL 1999, pp. 1471-1486; SÁNCHEZ LEÓN 1996, pp. 187 ff.

⁶⁵⁹ BARENAS ALONSO 2007, pp. 75-100.

3.5. Late Roman León

As for the city of León, the defensive structures of the *Legio VII Gemina* must have survived because generalized levels of destruction have not been found archaeologically in Roman times. What had changed would be its legal situation, going from being a camp to an urban nucleus with a civilian or semi-civilian nature in a transition whose study has been the subject of a recent doctoral thesis. Thus, the contribution of E. López Alonso⁶⁶⁰ to the knowledge of the situation of the city population focuses on the relevance that the *cannabae* and the *vicus* of *Ad Legionem* had then acquired. There existed juridically a corporation called “*consistentes ad cannabas*” before it became a *municipium* some time in the first half of the 3rd century. This must have been approximately between the year 214, when *Legio* was named capital of the brief and hardly known province of *Hispania Nova Citerior Antoniniana*, and the year 254, when a letter from Saint Cyprian refers to the bishopric *Ad Legionem et Asturica*. In the opinion of part of current research⁶⁶¹, the Leonese enclave must have obtained a municipal statute before being named provincial capital for a short time. Two epigraphic findings seem to document it: the tombstone of the *lictor* *Popilius Respectus* of the 2nd century (IRPL, 1978) and that of the actor *Verna* from the Severan period (AE, 1992, 1003).

However, despite the centuries in which the *Legio VII Gemina* was stationed in León, the Roman epigraphs recovered in the city do not abound in the military sphere, perhaps because it was not necessary to indicate the obvious condition of the main population group that resided in it. The other group was made up of the civilian population, mostly relatives of the soldiers, of which there are some examples, such as the epitaph that C. Ennius Felix dedicated to his sweet wife Anetia Festiva in the 3rd century, the tombstone found on the wall of León by the *custos armorum* Lucretius Proculus, his wife, Valeria Ama, and his son Lucretius Proculus⁶⁶², dedicated by his wife’s father, Valerius Marcellinus (mid-2nd century) or the epigraph dedicated by Postumia Marcella to Aurelius, her *maritus pientissimus*⁶⁶³, with a poorly defined chronology also from around the 2nd century.

⁶⁶⁰ LÓPEZ ALONSO 2015, pp. 9, 190.

⁶⁶¹ LÓPEZ ALONSO 2015, p. 190. Ref. MARTINO GARCÍA 2017, pp. 83-91.

⁶⁶² CIL II, 2668.

⁶⁶³ AE 1928, 168.

Regarding the administrative situation of the territory of León after the territorial division in the Diocletian period (285-305), it would have changed to the new *Gallaecia* province, where the *Legio VII* would have continued to recruit Hispanics⁶⁶⁴ despite the fact that the new bureaucratic management had military implications for the principle of territorial conscription in the rest of the Roman provinces⁶⁶⁵. The militarization in the civil life of the Empire seems to have continued during the 4th and 5th centuries as reflected in the legislation issued, which promoted the construction *ex novo* or the restoration of public works⁶⁶⁶ ensuring the defence of the Empire of roads, bridges, ports, lighthouses, fortifications and walls.

Likewise, the progressive Christianisation⁶⁶⁷ of the *Legio VII* would have concluded after the proclamation of this religion as an official creed by Emperor Theodosius I on 27th February, 380 (*C.Th.* XVI, 2, 25) with the Edict of Thessalonica. However, the point of no return was a decade later, when on 24th February 391 (*C.Th.* XVI, 10, 10) Theodosius prohibited by decree the pagan rites in the city of Rome, extending the rule to all the Empire on 8th November 392 (*C.Th.* XVI, 10, 2). The direct archaeological repercussion of the prohibition of paganism is that, under the foundations of many 5th century churches, Roman temples appear destroyed by the initiative of some Christian bishops such as Theophilus of Alexandria. That may have been the case of the Royal Collegiate Church of San Isidoro in León, according to the pre-existing Roman architectural remains, as we will see later.

⁶⁶⁴ SANTOS YANGUAS 2007, pp. 175 ff.; PITILLAS SALAÑER 2004, pp. 15 ff.

⁶⁶⁵ BRAVO BOSCH 2015, pp. 82-83; ROLDÁN HERVÁS 1974, p.63.

⁶⁶⁶ MALAVÉ OSUNA, Belén (2007) *Régimen jurídico financiero de las obras públicas en el derecho romano*, Collection of "Monografías de Derecho Romano", Madrid, pp. 38-39.

⁶⁶⁷ CANTERA MONTENEGRO 2014; SOTOMAYOR Y MURO 1979.

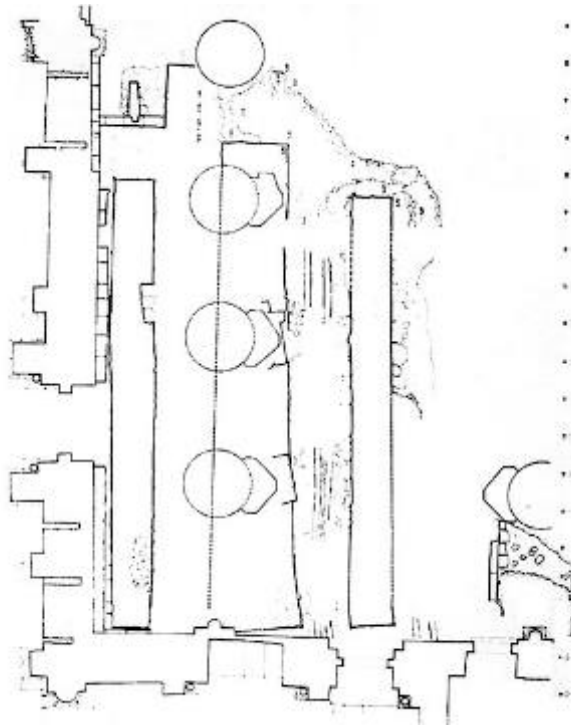


Fig. 101. Plan of the archaeological excavation carried out in San Isidoro by J. Williams in 1971 and published by the local press in 2008⁶⁶⁸.

The new situation is well reflected in the first conciliar norms of the Church⁶⁶⁹, and we must not forget the relevance of the doctrine of Priscilian, executed by the Roman civil power in 384 in the northwest of Hispania⁶⁷⁰. We have already mentioned the epistle of Saint Cyprian⁶⁷¹ to the Christian communities of León, Astorga and Mérida, which is usually supposed to bear witness to a first existence of the Bishopric of León, although some researchers dispute its authenticity⁶⁷². His *Letter 67* from the year 254 is addressed to the priest Felix and to the Christians of León and Astorga, and to those of Mérida and

⁶⁶⁸ WILLIAMS, John (2008) "A 1971 unpublished map shows the foundations of the Collegiate of San Isidoro", *Diario de León*, 12th April 2008 (article by Cristina FANJUL); ref. WILLIAMS 1973, pp. 171-184.

⁶⁶⁹ The territorial ecclesiastical organization in Spain was based on the Diocletian administrative divisions collected in canon 17 of the Council of Chalcedon (year 451) and canon 35 of the 4th Council of Toledo. The survival of the juridical *conventi* in *Gallaecia* was documented by Hydatius, who quotes those in Lugo (*Hyd., Chr.* 102, 194 y 202), Braga (*Hyd.,* 179, 214a), *Aguae Flaviae* (*Hyd., Chr.* 201) and Astorga (*Hyd., Chr.* 249). See THOMPSON 1982, p. 170; SÁNCHEZ-ALBORNOZ Y MENDUÍÑA 1972, p. 98, no. 199; PRIETO VILAS 1994, pp. 101-105.

⁶⁷⁰ MORÍN DE PABLOS 2005, p. 178. According to Hydatius' *Chronicle* (*Hyd. Chr.* 71) in 420 Gunderic, King of the Hasding Vandals, sieged the Suebian army of King Hermeric on the *Nerbasi* mountains, which he identifies with Leonese region of Arbás, near the Asturian border. But Gunderic did not reach his goal thanks to the intervention of the *comes Hispaniarum* Asterius (*Hyd. Chr.* 74) in command of an imperial army that forced the *Hasdingi* to withdraw to the *Baetica*. This Roman intervention means that either the *Suevi* were at that moment already *foederati* of the Romans, or that both then formed an alliance against the Vandals.

⁶⁷¹ TEJA CASUSO 2004, p. 305; *Id.* 1990, p. 123.

⁶⁷² QUINTANA PRIETO 1986, pp. 91 ff.

its deacon Elius in response to a previous letter. He alludes to two previous bishops from both communities, Basilides and Martial, without distinguishing their sees but clarifying that both were deposed for apostatizing during the Decian persecution in the middle of the 3rd century. Among the signatory bishops of the Council of Elvira (Granada) at the beginning of the 4th century was *Decentius episcopus Legionensis*, although it is possible that the see was attached to that of Astorga, since the *Legio-cannabae* would not meet the requirements of the bishoprics until its legal regime had changed. The central points of Christianity in the city of León were both the urban temples within the walls, as well as the funeral or martyrial churches outside the walled area, such as the chapel of the Christ of Victory or the church of Saint Marcellus⁶⁷³ respectively, both dedicated to the memory of the Roman centurion of the *Legio VII Gemina* Saint Marcellus⁶⁷⁴, who, according to the *Acts of the Martyrs*, had died in Tangiers in 298. Outside the walls was also the Monastery of Saint Claudius, one of the sons of Saint Marcellus, whose Late Roman necropolis was excavated at the end of the 20th century by González Fernández⁶⁷⁵.

In this social framework, the Late Roman army⁶⁷⁶ fought both internal conflicts and progressive external threats and its structure changed, but in the mid-5th century it continued to intervene in Hispania. U. Ruiz Espinosa proposes as the end date of the last imperial garrison in Hispania the year 438⁶⁷⁷ and P. Ubric Rabaneda⁶⁷⁸ picks up a quote from the chronicler Hydatius in relation to Requiarius, the Suebian King between 448 and 456 approximately, which literally alludes to “the Carthaginian areas that had been returned to the Romans”. For these Romans, whether they were in Byzantine *Spania* or in the Suebian Northwest, the restoration of old fortifications was more economically viable than building new defences⁶⁷⁹, since in general the existing walls were used for the strategic requirements of the Empire.

⁶⁷³ Founded by Ramiro I over a previous chapel in 850, his relics were transferred there in 1493, after being discovered during the conquest of Tangiers in 1471 by King Alfonso V of Portugal. RISCO, 1792. p. 62.

⁶⁷⁴ BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 2001, pp. 394-395. About the Acts of the Martyrdom of Saint Marcellus, see SÁNCHEZ SALOR 2006, pp. 3-15.

⁶⁷⁵ GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ 1994, pp. 107-126.

⁶⁷⁶ GOLDSWORTHY 2005, p. 7.

⁶⁷⁷ ESPINOSA RUIZ 2006, pp. 68 ff.

⁶⁷⁸ Hyd., *Chr.* 132 [140], 134 [142], 161 [168], 163 [170], 165 [172]); Iord. *Get.* XLIV, 232), 129 [137]. He minted coins with the legend IVSS RICHIARI REGE on its reverse. There are two of them extant. (*ref.* SUCHODOLSKI 1989, pp. 353-362).

⁶⁷⁹ RODRÍGUEZ LÓPEZ 2012, p. 17.

CHAPTER 4

THE WALL OF *CUBOS* IN LEÓN

4.1. Recent historiography on the wall of *cubos* in León

J. Mateo Marcos⁶⁸⁰ wrote about the supposed Roman Late-Roman wall of León, the wall of *cubos*:

"(...) The existence of towers (*cubos*) of a Roman origin has not been clearly confirmed or yet disputed today; we have followed the thesis of Gómez Moreno due to his undeniable authority, expressed in his "*Catálogo Monumental de España*" (Monumental Catalogue of Spain), according to which these towers (*cubos*) did not exist in Roman times as they were only built in the reconstruction carried out by Alfonso V. This theory, considering its source, is very valuable, although as the aforementioned author says, it is based basically on the similarity of the walls of León with those of the citadel of Vidriales. However, there are also some other valuable opinions that argue that the towers were built by the Romans based on the nature of the walls and on the example of many other fortifications designed at the time following the instructions of the Roman architect Vitruvius (1st century BC), as well as on the existence of a stone base in many of the towers that remain today of probable Roman origin".

Clearly, historiography⁶⁸¹ has tried to set aside the uncertainty regarding the Roman origin of the wall of *cubos* in León and sought to solve them by using imprecise epithets such as "Tetrarchic"⁶⁸² and rather confusing dates⁶⁸³ ranging from late 3rd century and early 4th century. Only an occasional researcher has ventured to date it well into the 4th century, but none has gone any further. Thus, it has been claimed, for example, that the "the exterior facing from the Early Imperial stonework has been used as a stone formwork. Indeed, the inside surface of the new walls is supported directly on the outer facing of the old Flavian wall, that of *opus vittatum*"⁶⁸⁴.

⁶⁸⁰ MATEO MARCOS, p. 15.

⁶⁸¹ GARCÍA MARCOS and MORILLO CERDÁN 2018, pp. 310, 312; RANILLA GARCÍA 2016, pp. 22, 46; MORILLO CERDÁN and CABELLO DURÁN 2017, pp.140-147; CAMPOMANES ALVAREDO 2017, p. 82; LÓPEZ ALONSO 2015, pp. 6 and 190; PONGA MAYO 2014, p. 22; ESMONDE CLEARY 2013, p. 128; MORILLO CERDÁN 2010, p. 472; PRADA MARCOS and VIDAL ENCINAS 2007, p. 601.

⁶⁸² GARCÍA MARCOS and MORILLO CERDÁN 2018, p. 314; GARCÍA MARCOS and MORILLO CERDÁN 2015, p. 108; MORILLO CERDÁN 2010, p. 471.

⁶⁸³ BRASSOUS 2011, p.276, shows the lack of exact dates in some cases and how "*certain archéologues séduits par cette théorie datent inmanquablement ces enceintes de l'époque tétrarchique et les ajoutent à la liste des prétendues murailles tétrarchiques qui sert alors à défendre la théorie globale*".

⁶⁸⁴ MORILLO CERDÁN 2010, pp. 463-477.

This inaccuracy over this point is precisely what explains the delay in dating the construction of the wall of *cubos* until after the 5th century through archaeological arguments such as those we have indicated above, and others derived from the analysis of historical documents and of Roman law that we will detail in following chapters. The wall of *cubos* could have not employed the pre-existing Early Imperial stone structure as a formwork, at least not in its entirety⁶⁸⁵, because the small ashlar facing was partly ruined and reduced to the height of a “short wall” in many parts at the time when the wall of *cubos* was attached to the fortification of the *Legio VI Hispaniensis*. Additionally, it would be inconsistent to consider that its stonework has a total thickness of about 7 ms (the new wall in addition to the old wall), since these walls function independently in terms of tectonic purpose, and above all, as evidenced, the wall of *cubos* does not grow in its upper part on the Early Imperial Roman wall. Furthermore, the constant repairs historically and archeologically documented while investigating the wall facings, have complicated the identification of the original parts of the wall, except from several sections of the enclosure, such as a part visible after 2009 in Calle Ruiz de Salazar.



⁶⁸⁵ The wall of *cubos* has appeared attached to the lower part of the Roman small-ashlar facing in some parts of its northern section, such as at the Casona de Puerta Castillo. Nevertheless, few metres away and in this same northern section, a breach between both walls has been documented in the excavation in the Archivo Histórico Provincial de León.

Fig. 102. Photograph published by V. García Marcos and A. Morillo Cerdán (2015). Overlapping wall and tower (*cubo*) with reused ashlar.

As a result of this, "the western section of the Tetrarchic wall, in the current Avenida de Ramón y Cajal, where the Roman masonry facing can be seen (...)"⁶⁸⁶ had been identified referring to the ashlar reused in the towers (*cubos*) of the wall—some with decorative mouldings— and funeral *cuppae* seen in various pieces at the base. It does not seem very probable that these constructive elements could have been used as *spolia* in a Roman military wall built in a non-war context. It was then within a context of peace that can be presumed because of the lack of fortifications in the nearby settlements and the fact that the wall of *cubos* left outside the fortified perimeter the *canabae* and the Roman amphitheatre, in use in the 3rd century. Likewise, archaeology has demonstrated that the nearby Roman settlements, such as the *vicus* in Puente Castro or Lancia, were not walled in the Tetrarchic era (or at any other time in their history). Given constructive proficiency and systematization widely demonstrated by the *Legio VII*, it seems improbable to have built a brand-new wall with such urgency during peacetime, using *spolia* from the base of the towers (*cubos*), using a rather non-Roman bonding.

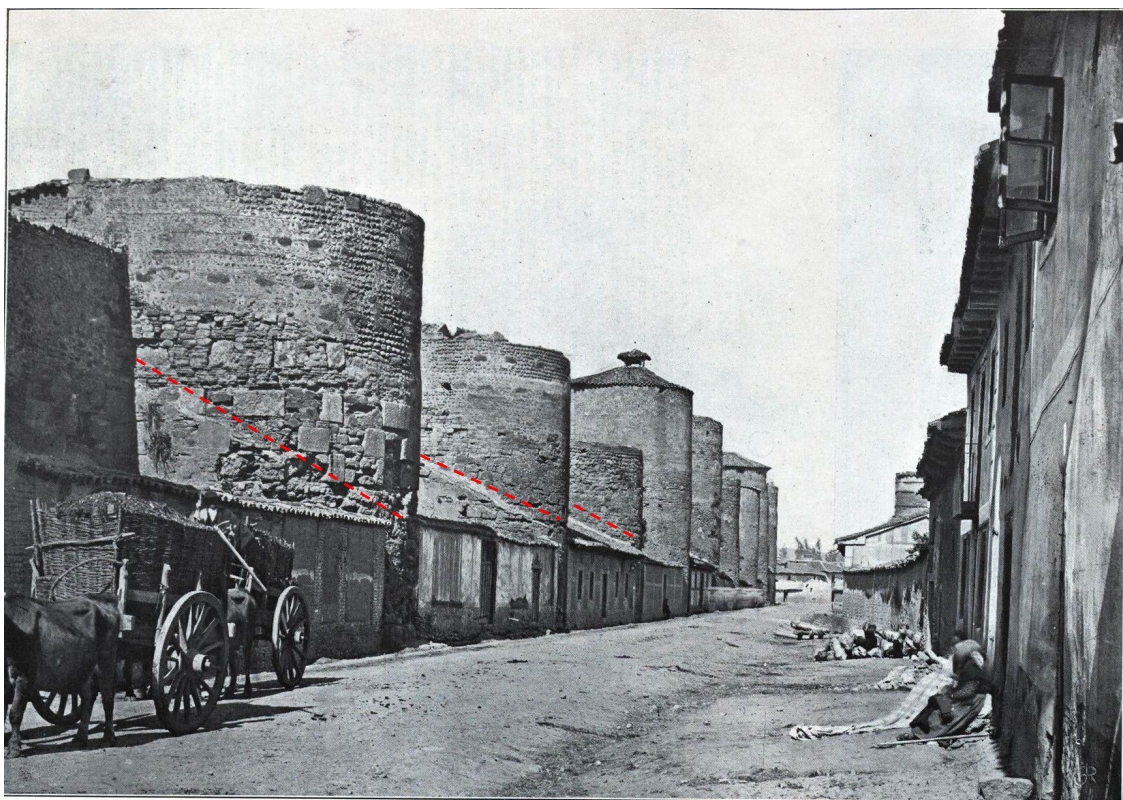


Fig. 103. Photograph of another tower (*cubo*) in the Avenida de Ramón y Cajal where moulding-finished ashlar are also reused in medieval masonry.

⁶⁸⁶ GARCÍA MARCOS and MORILLO CERDÁN 2015, p. 108, fig. 11.

The different construction techniques appreciated in the stonework of the wall of *cubos* correspond to various restorations, but it is not possible to guarantee its Roman origin, not even in the remains of the more regular *opus quadratum* of the ashlar, which appear in some sections of the lower part of the walls. The ashlar in the towers have been described as "projected as a spread-masonry foundation", but truth is that in the towers situated in Avenida de Ramón y Cajal there are some placed above circulation level and not on a foundation level, which rules out the possibility of their use in a hypothetical *ex novo* construction of the towers. Most ashlar in the towers (*cubos*) were reused during medieval reconstruction, at which time the plundering of Roman necropolis surrounding the outer-perimeter of León is possible.

The most outstanding feature of the medieval wall of *cubos* in León, which gives it its current name, is the reinforcement of its walls with *cubos*, which are U-shaped towers projected outwards from the wall with an average diameter of approximately eight meters and arranged every 15 metres approximately (between 13.05 and 15.90 metres). The Leonese walled enclosure must have had between 70 and 80 *cubos*, of which only 43 remain today. M. Ranilla García, in the *Plan Director de las Murallas de León* (Master Plan of León walls), calculated that there could have been 13 *cubos* in the northern section, another 13 in the southern, 22 in the eastern, 18 in the western and four more, one on each corner; the same architect literally indicated that "in most of them the upper part has been destroyed; only two in the eastern section (Avenida de los Cubos), with rectangular merlons with small arrow slits, maintain the original crenulation (from the High Middle Ages).



Fot. Laurent.

Fig. 104 J. Laurent's photograph of the eastern section of the wall of *cubos* (1925). In red, interfaces of destruction of the *cubos*.

Although we can see the square-shaped Roman towers situated at the corners and gates of the enclosure, old engravings such as this one that we include below by Francisco Javier Parcerisa⁶⁸⁷ published in 1855, show two square or rectangular-shaped towers between the *cubos*, currently unidentifiable. It is very likely that the angular-shaped towers in the current Calle de los Cubos shown both in the Parcerisa engraving and in the photograph of J. Laurent from the early 1900s (above) could be a vertical adaptation of the stonework creating an angular structure from the ultra-semicircular solid base of the *cubo*.

⁶⁸⁷ PARCERISA and QUADRADO 1855.

In Laurent's photograph we can appreciate the interfaces of destruction in three *cubos*, which are not reflected in the Parcerisa engraving that we show below. As this engraving was prior (1855) to the photography (1925), it could be assumed that the destruction could have occurred between these two dates. Nevertheless, it seems more prudent to think that the constructive variation was not appreciated by the artist.



Fig. 105 Engraving by Francisco Javier Parcerisa, published in 1855.

The recent publication (2019) of the doctoral thesis giving rise to this work refuted the Late Imperial chronology of the wall of *cubos* which has been officially acknowledged, arguing it was based on an accumulation of inaccuracies in the historical and archaeological interpretations made in the last two decades, mainly because the legal context had not been taken into consideration. Although the use of *spolia* has been well documented in the urban Roman world⁶⁸⁸, funerary monuments cannot be considered as

⁶⁸⁸ FREY 2015, pp. 6, 85, 87, 89, 90, 92,93-107, 109,110,113,114,119-121, 123-128, 181; GARMY and MAURIN 1996, p. 200. The authors analyse the Late Roman French city walls of Le Mans, Périgueux or Carcassonne, quoted as examples of defence against the invasions of the Franks and Alemanni and the internal conflicts in Roman Gaul from the mid-3rd century. The presence of *spolia* (architectonic fragments reused such as columns, entablatures, inscriptions and tombstones, and the less spectacular, bricks and stonework reused in the foundations and masonry) used to be interpreted as a reflection of fear and

spolia during the Late Imperial period, as they remained legally protected even in Justinian's compilation of Roman law. A political or religious justification in the use of Roman tombstones as construction material –as *spolia*– may not even be considered possible with the Edict of Thessalonica in 380 –which made the Christian religion official– but from the last decade of the 4th century, after the emperor Theodosius banned the rites of the old religion in 391 and 392. From the perspective of Roman Law, funerary monuments could have become *spolia* only at this time. For the same reason, we could add further legal considerations: the Theodosian Code (published in the year 439) included the aforementioned rule that determined the priority of restoring public buildings before the construction of new ones, a norm also in force in the Tetrarchic period.

In other words, even in the highly improbable case that the Leonese wall had been destroyed in some way, the law obliged to rebuild the walled compound instead of undertaking an *ex novo* public work. A century later, the Code of Justinian (published in 529) no longer recognized this priority of restoring over constructing new public works⁶⁸⁹, contrary to what happened with the preservation of funerary monuments, which remained legally protected by 6th century Roman regulations.

We should wonder why those Romans settled in León could have built a "Tetrarchic" wall, brand new but unnecessary, by reusing some funerary monuments just a few decades old as if they were *spolia*, as reflected in the chronology of the latest epigraphs found in the wall, some of which present formulas known since the mid-3rd century, but similar to some from the 4th century, such as the Euthanus plaque⁶⁹⁰. What archaeology shows *in situ* is that the *spolia* used in this part of the wall do not appear in the spread-masonry foundation of the *cubos*, but were used during a later reconstruction, as the previous photographs demonstrate.

This argument could be applied to the *spolia*, architectural material reused by the Romans, but not for the tombstones built into the stonework of the wall of *cubos*, as appears in several section cuts in Calle Ruiz de Salazar that we will study later. Roman funerary monuments were incorporated in the lime and stone mortar even in lower areas and in contact with the older Roman wall, on surfaces of the inner facing of the wall that

destruction and as a sign of the appearance of new Late Imperial cities, but the hasty raising of defences in the face of an enemy assault is nowadays widely discarded.

⁶⁸⁹ RODRÍGUEZ LÓPEZ 2012, p.97.

⁶⁹⁰ SÁNCHEZ-LAFUENTE PÉREZ, Jorge 2016, pp. 115-116. However, in the inventory on pp. 256-257, the author provides a chronology of the end of the 2nd century to beginnings of the 3rd.

has never been restored, rehabilitated or replaced. The presence of the tombstones⁶⁹¹ of recent ancestors in original areas of the wall of *cubos* is a strong argument for discrediting the dating during the Tetrarchy.

Going back to the legal interpretations, in Roman times construction materials such as column drums, capitals, ashlar, etc. were considered *spolia*, and were reused in public works by legal imposition. But legally tombstones and other funerary monuments were never considered *spolia* by Romans despite the fact their later use has been confirmed in some Hispanic walls built in times of emergency, before an imminent siege or war, as documented in those of Monte Cildá (Olleros de Pisuerga, Palencia) –an Early Imperial military compound abandoned between the 2nd and 4th centuries strongly refortified with *cubos*– at the beginning of the 5th century⁶⁹². But we should bear in mind that by then, after the change of the official religion and the prohibition of pagan cults at the end of the previous century, the cultural context would have shifted, perhaps even the legal consideration of epitaphs as protected funerary monuments. Only then the Romans themselves, now Christians, might have used them as *spolia*.

4.2. The Leonese wall of *cubos*

The wall of *cubos* outlay plan is, as far as we know, identical to that of the previous legionary fortress: from the castle's medieval wall, or 'Torres de León' –raised on two *cubos*– the wall turns down to the left along Calle Era del Moro and Calle Ramón y Cajal to Ruiz de Salazar, where it connects with the Rúa, continuing along Calle Azabachería to the Plaza Mayor; then up to the Cathedral and surrounding it to its left towards the Carretera de los Cubos and again, through Calle Carreras, it reached the northern gate or Puerta Castillo.

Characterized by the so-called *cubos*, with U-shaped floor plan attached to the facing wall, the wall of *cubos* preserves its square-shaped towers at the corners on foundations of large bossaged ashlar. We can find them at the western corners, at the northern corner between Calle Abadía and Calle Ramón y Cajal and, after the recent collapse of a *cubo* in 2017 in Calle Conde Rebolledo, almost at the corner with Calle Rúa, where the southwestern tower was supposed to be. The restoration of the *cubo* in this

⁶⁹¹ RANILLA GARCÍA 2016.

⁶⁹² BOHIGAS ROLDÁN 2011, pp. 37-60; IGLESIAS GIL and RUIZ GUTIÉRREZ 2007, pp. 5-7.

southwest corner in 2018 revealed an earlier construction. Under the *cubo*, with an ultra-semicircular plan, a quadrangular-outline construction appeared, replaced by a fan-shaped arrangement, possibly in medieval times. In 2019, after the publication of the doctoral thesis where we refute the Early Roman Imperial dating of the wall of *cubos*, a second archaeological excavation phase led by F. Muñoz Villarejo, whose conclusions have not yet been published, reached the lower levels under the *cubo* damaged in 2017. Here, the foundations of a square-shaped Roman tower appeared, confirming the thesis of a medieval chronology of the wall of *cubos*, as deduced from the photographs of the collapse of the *cubo* in Calle Conde Rebolledo taken by the author between 2016 and 2019.



Fig. 106. State of the *cubo* situated at the southwest corner of the wall (*cubo* S6, according to the Municipal Urban Planning Service) in 2016.

Fig. 107. State of the later filling of the upper body, of *emplekton* type, without lime mortar. *Cubo* S6 in southwest of the medieval walls, 2017.



Figs. 108 and 109. State of the *cubo* at the southwest corner of the medieval wall after it collapsed in 2017: we can observe the filling layer of the *cubo* overlapping the medieval facing of the wall.

The masonry of these 5.25-metre-thick walls was built using lime and stone *tapial*, lined with blocks from various origins including quartzite, limestone, sandstone or granite masonry⁶⁹³ and ashlar of reused materials on the exterior facings, twenty or so of which come from limestone tombstones of Hontoria type in the province of Burgos, since in León there are no resources of this kind of stone. The study of these stone building materials is essential to provide a chronological analysis of the wall of *cubos*, since the most relevant piece of information is that reused pieces mostly come from the recycling Roman funerary monuments, some of them with epigraphs dated in the second half of the 3rd century and others difficult to date due to the presence of horseshoe arches⁶⁹⁴ in them, or of other aforementioned epigraphic formulas pertaining to the 4th century, information that would delay at least a century, if not more, the likely dating of the wall. Nor can the date be confirmed of construction of the most irregular quartzite masonry courses, set in

⁶⁹³ VALDEÓN MENÉNDEZ 2016, pp. 323-331.

⁶⁹⁴ The first horseshoe arch known in the Iberian Peninsula has been located in a Roman temple in Lugo, in the Church of Santa Eulalia de Bóveda (Bóveda de Mera, Ancares-Courel). The remains of its vault present a funerary iconography characteristic of the 4th century AD: the *aviarium*, which are representations of birds in cages. Regarding the Roman tombstones found in the Leonese wall at the end of the 19th century P. Fita published some of these, reproduced in detail in FITA COLOMÉ 1881, pp.387-394, figure on p. 388.

lime and sand mortar. What seems quite possible is that the construction material could come from the mountain area some 40 kilometres north of León, as has been published⁶⁹⁵.

A theory has been discarded that the Leonese wall used an architectural system similar to that of the wall in Lugo to connect the wall of *cubos* with the Early Imperial wall, consisting of T-shaped interior stairs with an access platform and two structures to change level leading up to the walkway, since there is no archaeological evidence that indicates such similarity in any way. Access via stairs or ramps leading up to the top of each *cubo* from circulation level is more likely. The two *cubos* of the wall, one accessed from the patio of the school Nuestra Señora del Carmen in Calle Cardenal Landázuri, and the other recently refurbished in the surroundings of the northwest corner in Calle Avenida de Ramón y Cajal, reveal a solid stonework made of lime and stone mortar in the lower body of the *cubos* without there being any access system up to the structure.



Fig. 110. Inner facing of the *cubos* of the Leonese wall, empty in the upper part of the body. Playground of the school Nuestra Señora del Carmen, in Calle Cardenal Landázuri.

⁶⁹⁵ DURÁN CABELLO 2009, pp. 793-804.



Fig. 111. Photograph of two walls attached, the *cubos* and the Roman wall, in Calle Ruiz de Salazar (in the background, the 'Romantic' or 'El Cid' park). The small-ashlar facing of the damaged Roman wall is covered by an overflow of lime and stone mortar from the wall of *cubos* that hardened over the fissure between the two walls.

The archaeological stratigraphy of León's fortifications has provided a decisive *terminus post quem*: when the wall of *cubos* was attached, the previous small-ashlar wall was already destroyed, at least in many of its sections, possibly after the abandonment of the fortress by the Roman army, if it was indeed abandoned at all. It is more likely that the Hispano-Roman population remained occupying the site throughout Late Antiquity, and the remaining Roman elements successively incorporated Suebian, Visigothic and Mozarabic ones. Therefore, again, a new synchronic vision is required where the "administrative" disappearance of the *Legio VII* occurring in the 5th century should not be connected to waiving its fortification.

As indicated before, the wall of *cubos* of *Legione* was not a unique example among the Late Antique Leonese fortresses: according to recent archaeological reports, the enclosures of Astorga and Castro Ventosa were re-fortified in Late Antiquity with walls and ultra-semicircular towers (*cubos*). These fortifications also appear in the *Parrochiale suevum* in the 6th century, populations subjected by King Theodemir, as well as other fortified enclosures in the Suebian territory in the Northwest of similar typology, such as those of Lugo and Gijón, and very possibly the lesser-known primitive enclosures

of Braga and Porto. In all of them, archaeology shows a Hispano-Roman substrate that lasted up to the 5th century.

In conclusion, the typology and chronology of the Leonese wall of *cubos* do not correspond to what has been determined so far for those of the rest of the Roman urban settlements in the Northwest. If the troops of the *Legio VII Gemina* when they were stationed in León in the year AD 74 occupied the stone fortress built possibly previously by the *Legio VI Hispaniensis*, they would not have needed to build a new enclosure in the 3rd or 4th centuries. Given the building expertise that the *Legion VII Gemina* displayed⁶⁹⁶ both in Hispania and on the German borders and considering the pragmatism inherent in Roman architecture and military engineering, it is a more than probable hypothesis that the wall of their camp had the maintenance requirements necessary to last for more than the four hundred years its headquarters remained in this place. This is also underpinned by the rules of Roman law regarding the obligation to repair and maintain public works and walls, obliging them even to reuse their materials⁶⁹⁷, so it is difficult to consider a Roman force of troops showing such negligence that it would allow “their” wall to fall down, giving rise to the need to build a new one. Likewise, both the Latin literary sources and the archaeological remains bear witness to the behaviour pattern of the Roman army when it abandoned a camp, which was to render the fortification useless to prevent it from being reused, so it could be argued that the legionaries themselves could have destroyed the small-ashlar wall before leaving their fortress in León. This argument was partially invalidated by the possible transformation of the camp into a city at some point in the 3rd century, and although the documentation reflects the continuity of *Legio VII Gemina* in León in the Late Imperial period, it left several questions open relating to the presence or not of a permanent garrison in the city of León during the 4th and 5th centuries, which was to be expected given the continuity during those centuries of Hispanic Roman military logistics and provisioning, whose persistence has been assumed by 21st century historiography as well as that of administration between the 4th and 6th centuries⁶⁹⁸.

It is true that an unlikely possibility remains that the wall was razed during hypothetical barbarian raids in the 3rd century, however, it has not been documented that they reached León, or in the riots caused by the *Bagaudae* documented in the north of the

⁶⁹⁶ See FERNÁNDEZ CASADO 1979, pp. 47-84.

⁶⁹⁷ *C.Th.* XV, 1, 36, which ordered the reuse of all the materials left from the demolition of public buildings.

⁶⁹⁸ WITSCHERL 2009, p. 474.

Peninsula, but it is hard to believe that these invaders acted with such a lack of military "sense" that they attacked the only fortress with a legionary garrison in the whole of Hispania. In fact, historical evidence suggests that the barbarian raids of the 3rd century were limited to the East of Hispania and although it is true that the *Chronicle* of Hydatius narrates attacks in the Northwest that reached Braga, these were more than a century after⁶⁹⁹ the date for the customary chronology of the "Tetrarchic" wall. Likewise, the indications obtained from the multiple archaeological interventions within the Leonese fortress point in this sense, since no layers or interfaces of destruction or widespread fire have been found interrupting Roman occupation levels.

On the other hand, it seems unlikely that a Roman legionary of the *Legio VII Gemina Felix Pia* would reuse the tombs of his ancestors⁷⁰⁰ as construction material. And if the 3rd century tombstones were part of the filling of a "Tetrarchic" wall, that is exactly what would have happened against the will of the deceased considered as a *lex sacra*, which is a *lex privata*, without validity in civil law, but placed above it. The legal protection of graves in Roman criminal law has already been taken up by T. Mommsen⁷⁰¹. the *Digest* (year 533) still included in several of its norms sepulchral law as *lex sacra*, and therefore inviolable and eternal (D. 11.7.4.3; D. 1.8.6.4., Etc.). It might seem that the same legal corpus allows us to argue against the above, since in case of siege of a Roman enclave, the territory temporarily occupied by the enemy lost its sacred character; but only as long as it was occupied by the enemy (D.11.7.36.0), and it is clear that the tombs of the Romans, always outside the walls, recovered their inviolable character once the enemy withdrew. It is also evident that they could not rebuild the wall during that interval of attack and that the repair of the walls would have been after the withdrawal of the enemy, in which case, they could not use the tombstones, some from the previous generation, in the event of the wall of *cubos* having been built during the Tetrarchy.

⁶⁹⁹ VIGIL-ESCALERA GUIRADO 2007, pp. 239-284.

⁷⁰⁰ REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ 2002, p. 375.

⁷⁰¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 369-370. MOMMSEN 1899, pp. 18, 499-504. *Ref.* also D'ORS and PÉREZ-PEIX 1968, 1972 and 1975.



Fig. 112. Photograph of a reused gravestone on the wall of *cubos* in León, *in situ*.

All in all, we must not neglect the fact that from Trajan's time there had been legislation (D. 11.7.2.5-6) to distinguish between the concepts of the sepulchre, a sacred *locus religiosus*, the exact place where the remains rest, and the monument, tomb or any testimonial ordered to commemorate the deceased⁷⁰². Although it was considered a violation of the sacredness grievances we would now consider “minor” –such as covering a grave with earth (D. 43.24.15.2) or building a roof overhang whose vertical was on a tomb (D. 43.24.22.4)– whoever damaged the monument associated with the tomb without altering the sacred place only committed an offence (D. 47.10.27.0). The violation of a sepulchre could be denounced by anyone, not only by the heirs, and the punishments ranged from the sentence of work in the mines or deportation, to the death penalty for the slaves. The penalties for offences were less, and it is known that some were of economic sanctions because some of their owners protected the funerary monuments donating their potential benefit to the priestly college.

Although no 5th century Roman tombstones have been found in the Leonese wall, this can perhaps be explained by the adoption of Christianity as the official religion in 380 by Theodosius. Possibly the new cult spread starting from the *Legio VII* headquarters, which would have been reached by legionary units displaced to Africa, through the rest of the northwest of Hispania, from where it seems that Egeria left on her pilgrimage itinerary to the holy places (382-384). This change in mentality would affect, perhaps drastically, the Roman necropolis of the 5th century, which, as we have already seen, came to occupy spaces associated with relics of saints and martyrs, even within the walls. As an example, the five burials of that time (one of them a child burial) found in

⁷⁰² REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ 2002, pp. 369-370.

León in the vicinity of San Marcelo, during the excavation of the Casa de Socorro site and former hospital of San Antonio Abad (current Calle Arco de Ánimas), in an area outside the walls of the Roman wall but within the medieval fortification.



Fig. 113. Roman burials associated with the early Christian temple of San Marcelo (Calle Arco de Ánimas, 2, outside the walls of the Roman wall of León). On the previous level we find a coin of Claudius with a counterseal of the *Legio VI*. Photograph from the north⁷⁰³.

The overcoming of the historical dogma of urban decay in Late Antiquity has been replaced by a notion of territorial occupation that spread out from urban areas without becoming rural⁷⁰⁴, as deduced from the discoveries about Suebian, Visigothic and Byzantine walls in the Iberian Peninsula during the times of turmoil at the beginning of the 6th century, decades prior to the foundation of a stable Gothic kingdom by King Liuvigild. Liuvigild managed to bring most of the Iberian Peninsula together under a single power, inaugurating a historical period better documented in cases such as the walls of Ávila or Barcelona⁷⁰⁵. This is not the circumstance of the Leonese walls of *cubos*, which both in that period and during the rest of the Early Middle Ages have hardly any extant references in historical documentation, although they do in archaeological documentation⁷⁰⁶, until Christian and Arab chroniclers narrate the destruction to which they were subjected by Almanzor. The recent publication by Juan A. Paz Peralta on the walls of Zaragoza studied as a paradigm of military architecture in Al-Ándalus and its

⁷⁰³ FERNÁNDEZ ORDÁS 2003, *Intervención arqueológica en Cl. Arco de Ánimas 2, León*.

⁷⁰⁴ BOWES 2013, p. 197, no. 26.

⁷⁰⁵ Concerning Ávila, it is debated as to whether the second phase of the walls of Ávila were built by the Visigoths in the face of Suebian attacks in the 5th century or whether they were built between the 11th and 12th centuries (CÁTEDRA and DE TAPIA 2007, pp. 13-14).

⁷⁰⁶ GUTIÉRREZ GONZÁLEZ *et alii* 2010, p.133.

possible influence on peninsular fortifications, being erected in some cases and constantly rebuilt in others, opened a new spectrum of possibilities for interpreting the Late Roman or Early Mediaeval character of the Leonese walls.

In our opinion, the building of the last wall of *cubos* in León must be placed later, at least in the 5th century⁷⁰⁷, and the eventuality of its Late Medieval construction has been accepted but still without ruling out the possibility that it was the last of the great works of late Roman fortification⁷⁰⁸, perhaps because the Leonese fortress was the last Roman fortification of a legionary camp in this part of Hispania after the *Legio IIII Macedonica* left the Peninsula in AD 39 and the *X Gemina* in AD 63. León was still in the 5th century, the camp of the *Legio VII*. The last known prefect of this legion was Valerius Heraclianus, *praefectus legionis VII Geminae Spaniae*, according to his epitaph preserved in Milan (CIL V, 5835), usually dated back to the 4th century, despite the fact that the use of the word *Spaniae* refers to the following century.

It also appears in a Roman inscription, this one by now Byzantine, in the Provincial Archaeological Museum of Cartagena (inventory number 2912, *CIL* II 3420), which alludes to the *magister mil[itum] Spanie Comenciolus*, sent by the Byzantine emperor Mauritius to Hispania (it uses both forms to name Spain) against *hostes barbaros*, that is against the Visigoths of Reccared, who in turn had at his command then another Roman general, the Dux from Mérida, Claudius, as deduced from the *Chronicle* of John of Biclaro⁷⁰⁹. The epigraph of Comentiolus refers to the construction of a fortified door flanked by towers in the Byzantine wall of Cartagena, whose construction was dated between the years 580 and 620⁷¹⁰ in the archaeological excavation of Calle de la Soledad.

4.3. Suebians, Visigoths, Mozarabs and the walls of *cubos*

The end of the Roman administrative structures seems to have occurred between the mid-5th century and AD 585⁷¹¹. The evolution between the old Roman military and

⁷⁰⁷ RICHMOND 1931, pp. 86-100; see JÁRREGA DOMÍNGUEZ 1991; GUTIÉRREZ GONZÁLEZ and ARIAS PÁRAMO 2009, p. 759.

⁷⁰⁸ ESMONDE CLEARY 2013, p. 127.

⁷⁰⁹ ABASCAL PALAZÓN and RAMALLO ASENSIO 1997, pp. 447-450; CANTERA MONTENEGRO 2014, p. 301.

⁷¹⁰ GUTIÉRREZ LLORET 1993, pp. 13-35.

⁷¹¹ GARCÍA MORENO 1989, p. 455; *Id.* 1990, pp. 619-636. The latest epigraphic testimony found in the upper part of *Tarraco* (RIT 100), from the second half of the 5th century, alludes to the emperors Leo and Anthemius.

civil nucleus and the Suebian city of *Legione* was the result of a series of political fluctuations during the 5th century and was a step prior to the construction of new walls⁷¹², which would not serve to reinforce the pre-existing Roman walls, already ruined in many sections before building the wall of *cubos*, but rather to replace them.

The archaeological remains found so far⁷¹³ may be interpreted in this sense, as well as from an analytical study of attested literary and historical bibliography: the aforementioned letter of Honorius, *De laude Pampilone epistola*, to the soldiers of Pamplona, Hydatius' *Chronicle*, the *Books of Histories* by Gregory of Tours, Braulius of Zaragoza, and especially Isidore of Seville, and to a lesser degree, other chronicles such as the Byzantine *Chronographia* by John Malalas or the *Chronicon* of the Portuguese Visigoth John of Biclaro (589-591), Bishop of Gerona. These works show the profound change occurring in the old provinces of *Hispania* between the 5th and 7th centuries, including the creation of new political and ethnic entities⁷¹⁴ because new cultures from Suebians, Visigoths and Byzantines were being incorporated into the Hispano-Roman background existing in Iberia. Theodosius II compiled his *Codex Theodosianus* in 439, collecting constitutions alluding to Macrobius' administration as *vicarius Hispaniarum* (*C.Th.* XVI, 10, 15, January 29, 399) and, two years later, to his improper management (*C.Th.* VIII, 5, 58, December 9, 400). As already mentioned before, Empress Aelia Eudocia, wife of emperor Theodosius II, was reconstructing the walls of Jerusalem in the middle of the 5th century as Juan Malalas (491-578) wrote in his *Chronographia*. She will not be the only woman we will meet ordering the building of fortifications in the following centuries.

At this point, it seems appropriate to complement the description of this scene from Late Antiquity as an aside on Paleochristian and women's history in León, at the very origin of travel literature: namely Egeria's⁷¹⁵ pilgrimage from El Bierzo to The Holy Land at the end of the 4th century. The first mention is to be found in the *Epístola de*

⁷¹² GUTIÉRREZ GONZÁLEZ *et alii* 2010, pp. 132-133, reveals archaeological corroboration of the survival of the use of some imperial camp structures in León during the 5th and 6th centuries.

⁷¹³ JÁRREGA DOMÍNGUEZ 1991; MARÍN HERNÁNDEZ 2009, pp. 513-536.

⁷¹⁴ POVEDA ARIAS 2013, pp. 1157-1158; *Ref.* CANTERA MONTENGRO 2014, p. 300, has interpreted it as an attempt to "break with the Romanist imperial ideology" with hints of "Hispano-Gothic nationalism".

⁷¹⁵ BARTOLOTTA and TORMO-ORTIZ 2019, pp. 47-63; ARCE PORRAS, 1996; CID LÓPEZ 2010; TORRES RODRÍGUEZ 1976.

Beatissimae Echeriae laude, a letter by Saint Valerius del Bierzo⁷¹⁶ dated 676 to the monks of the Monastery of Compludo, in Carucedo (León). The manuscript was discovered in Arezzo (Italy) in 1884, where Egeria is mentioned as *Echeriai*, also translated as *Eucheria*, relating her to *Eucherius*, uncle of emperor *Theodosius I the Great*, for which reason she would have possibly travelled with a military escort and safe-conducts that would have allowed her to travel from one *mansio* to another. Her asceticism has been associated to the Priscillianism that prevailed among the Christians of the Hispano-Roman Northwest at the end of the 4th century. The letter from Saint Valerius del Bierzo⁷¹⁷ providing news about Egeria to the monks of Carucedo seems to suggest that she had some relation with this place, making the pilgrimage of this Roman lady at the time coincide with the history of the Leonese “Thebaid”, dated in the first centuries of Christian monastic life. A recent archaeological discovery of the presumed monastery, where Egeria might have lived in the Valle del Silencio (Valley of Silence) in the Aquilanos mountains, would corroborate this thesis, also confirming the news found by modern historians in the documentation of the 13th century about the place of *Santochín*, identified as the ancient *Santa Eucheria*. The ideal of ascetic life as well as the attitude of Egeria, a daring traveller, seems to indicate that she could have been a cultured noblewoman and, perhaps, a follower of Priscillianism which, despite being considered a heresy, had a large following in Leonese lands and throughout the northwest of Hispania. It seems likely that the most educated noblewomen would have been attracted to this ascetic doctrine and explicitly proposes within its doctrine⁷¹⁸ the sexual equality of men and women in matters spiritual and the gift of prophecy, even proposing that men and women could pray together and allowed the participation of deaconesses in worship. Priscillianism defended individual reading of the apocryphal scriptures and the Bible, seeking the reformation of ecclesiastical structures and a spiritual revolution, since it suggested the asexuality of the Holy Spirit, who was neither male nor female. Furthermore, in order to become “perfect”, it prescribed behaviour practices inherited

⁷¹⁶ DE PADILLA, Francisco 1605, fol. 296: (...) *Eucheria*, y otra breue hitoria del Abad Donadeo; y de algunos milagros y reuelaciones de dos Monges llama Ambrofio de Morales refiere auer vito en la Santa (...). ARCE PORRAS, A. 1996, pp. 8-17. SUÁREZ FERNÁNDEZ 2015, pp. 139-166: mentions several cases of early medieval foundations for Hispanic women: *Anduies* built a basilica in Osma; *Minicea* founded and endowed the monastery of *Seruitanum* for the Abbot Donatus (560-70) upon his arrival from Africa, perhaps the first to follow a rule in Hispania; HERAEUS, W. (1939): *Silviae vel potius Aetheriae Peregrinatio ad loca sancta*, Heidelberg.

⁷¹⁷ DÍAZ Y DÍAZ 2006, pp. 229-245.

⁷¹⁸ CRESPO LOSADA 2009.

from the Pythagorean school such as the recommendation to walk barefoot, periodic retirement or fasting, chastity, vegetarianism... Its doctrine presents other mystical, gnostic and Manichean influences, of oriental and hermeneutical tradition, such as the belief in the magic of numbers, among which number fourteen was associated to the genealogy of Jesus. Priscillian was accused of being “*maleficus*” by the *Comonitorium* of Bishop Ithacius and of having illicit relations with the young Procula, daughter of his teacher Delphidius. To another woman, Amantia, he dedicated one of his treatises. The prefect Evodius condemned him to death in 385 as well as those who accompanied him to Triers: Euchrocia, Latronian, Felicissimus and Armenius. The persecution against the Priscillianists begun by Maximus reached Bordeaux, where it is known that the young Orbica was stoned. And it also reached Hispania, where the expropriation of Priscillian's followers' properties made for even more arrests until Maximus' death. His death led to a brief a period of peace and tolerance when the remains⁷¹⁹ of Priscillian, Felicissimus and Armenius were rescued from Triers. In the province of León, in the Basilica of Marialba de la Ribera, some testimonies have been found regarding Martyria in Christian worship from the end of the 4th century and throughout the 5th century⁷²⁰.

Whether Egeria was Gala's sister –Priscillian's wife according to Saint Jerome of Stridon– or a relative of Emperor Theodosius, her journey followed the footsteps of Saint Helen on her pilgrimage to Jerusalem, like other Hispano-Romans who would be acknowledged for their generous alms-giving and as founders of various monasteries in the Holy Land: Melania the Elder, daughter of the Consul Marcellinus and, years later, her granddaughter Melania the Younger, who was accompanied by her husband Valerius Pinianus. The idea of giving away one's immense fortune in works of charity and monastery building ties in well with Priscillian beliefs. Another wealthy pilgrim, contemporary to Egeria, was Poimения, a relative of Theodosius. According to Gonzalves Cravioto⁷²¹ she boasted of her wealth –and Moorish slaves– travelling to Egypt in her own ships on her long voyage to the Holy Land, where she apparently ordered the building of the Church of the Holy Ascension at the top of the Mount of Olives.

⁷¹⁹ GUERRA CAMPOS 1983 believes that they were buried in the hermitage of San Mamede in *Os Martores* (parish of San Miguel de Valga, Pontevedra). C. Fernández de la Vega proposes Santa Eulalia de Bóveda (Lugo).

⁷²⁰ BOWES (2006) pp. 73-95.

⁷²¹ GONZALVES CRAVIOTO 2003, p. 144.



Fig. 114. Mosaic photograph of the church apse of Saint George in Madaba (Jordan), 6th century AD: walled enclosure with *cubos* of Jerusalem, and the central and perimeter arched avenues, ordered to be built by the Empress Eudocia, belonging to the Theodosian Hispanic dynasty⁷²².

As we have seen before, Imperial Hispania shared with the Byzantine and later Visigothic *Spania*⁷²³ permeable boundaries that allowed cultural and economic exchange such as the handing on of military innovations⁷²⁴. In fact, the 6th century Byzantine Empire had great influence in Hispania, not only in territories under its sovereignty or cities such as those of Reccopolis, Valencia, Barcelona, Corduba⁷²⁵ and Emerita⁷²⁶ but also in the other cities of Hispano-Roman origin. The compilation of imperial constitutions in Justinian's Code is notable for its defence of the *res publica*, regulating public and private

⁷²² RODRÍGUEZ LÓPEZ 2012, pp. 14-15.

⁷²³ VIZCAÍNO SÁNCHEZ 2008, pp. 207-220, especially note 30 on the preceding bibliography and terminological problems on proto-Byzantinism, Byzantinism or late Justinian Romanity of the Hispanic southeast; VALLEJO GIRVÉS 1999, pp. 13-23. Regarding the term *Spania*: it already appears on the tombstone of the prefect Valerius Heraclianus (*vir egregius* of the equestrian order, and therefore, possibly from the 4th century) it refers to *Legionis VII Geminae* with the attribute *Spaniae* (CIL V 5835, Milán). JEFFREYS, E.; JEFFREYS, M.; SCOTT *et alii* 1986.

⁷²⁴ VALLEJO GIRVÉS 2012, pp. 7-8, 242.

⁷²⁵ RUIZ BUENO and VAQUERIZO GIL 2016, pp. 163-192.

⁷²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 175; VIZCAÍNO SÁNCHEZ 2009, p. 330.

works, including the urban planning of walls. Although what the Theodosian Code stipulated in a constitution about ordering the destruction of everything built on a public place⁷²⁷ was maintained, the constitutions in book XV of this Code regarding the prevalence of works to complete buildings or restoration of new buildings were not incorporated. But as we have seen when analysing the tombstone of Comentiolus in Cartagena (*CIL II*, 3420), in Byzantine *Spania* walls continued to be raised.

A year after coming to power, Justinian issued his first urban development constitution, possibly with the purpose of supporting the population in provincial cities, where governors were allowed to build but not acquire real estate, contrary to what was permitted in the capital, where the Prefect of the *Praetorium* was not allowed to build at all. Justinian's new constitutions also legislated on walls, aqueducts, bridges and cisterns, and on public financing with both public and private revenues: the regulation C. 1, 4, 26, pr., in AD 530 ruled the provision of funds in the cities for purposes such as the purchase of cereals, maintenance of aqueducts and public baths, bridges, roads or ports, as well as the construction of walls or towers. Three people with *auctoritas* were in charge of the distribution of funds in addition to the bishop, normalizing his participation as patron⁷²⁸ in the maintenance and construction of walls in the first half of the 6th century.

We could conclude from the above that the defence of Hispano-Roman cities had remained mainly in the hands of the Episcopate, whose relevance in Hispano-Roman politics and administration is evidenced in the figure of the chronicler Hydatius, highlighting the bishop's role in the origin and repair of Late Ancient walls also in Visigothic territory. It is worth noting that in many cases it was the bishops who left testimony of their work for posterity⁷²⁹. However, it does not seem to be the case for the city of León. It should also be taken into account that the western Roman Empire did not officially disappear until 476, with the overthrow of Romulus Augustulus by Odoacer, general of the Heruli, who proclaimed him king of Italy. Before this, Hispania witnessed turbulent events that led to this end, such as the usurpation of emperor Constantine III who tried to halt the influence of the Theodosians in his lands. He then moved to Hispania in 407, which possibly brought about the dispatch of troops to Honorius as the

⁷²⁷ *C.Th.* 8, 12 (11) 6, in the year 383 d. C.; RODRÍGUEZ LÓPEZ 2014, p. 291.

⁷²⁸ See PRIETO VILAS 1994, p. 204.

⁷²⁹ DÍAZ MARTÍNEZ 2011, p.83. BARENAS ALONSO 2007; ARCE MARTÍNEZ 2008, pp. 121-126.

aforementioned Roda Codex narrates. When the situation changed course, Honorius tried to remove Gerontius' command of the troops in Hispania. As a result, Gerontius supported the usurpation of General Maximus, who made himself emperor and governed from *Tarraco*. In 411 he signed a *foedus* or treaty with the Suebians, Vandals and Alans to fight with him in Hispania, whilst Gerontius battled against Constantine's troops.

4.3.1. *The Suevi*

In 409, according to the *Chronicle* of the Hispano-Roman Hydatius⁷³⁰, after the first barbarian invasion in the diocese of *Hispanie*, the Visigoths settled in the Castilian plateau and the Suabians and Vandals in the northwest of Iberia. All this happened with the complicity of the *magister militum* Gerontius whose aim was to seize power from the emperor and enable another general, Maximus, to be proclaimed *Augustus* of the *Diocesis Hispaniarum*. In 411, with the authorization of the usurper Maximus, these peoples would divide⁷³¹ the Hispanic provinces by lot. As a result of this, the western part of Asturias as well as the *conventus* of Gallaecia and *Bracara Augusta* would correspond to the *Suevi*

⁷³⁰ Regarding the Suebian sources, in addition to previous reports from Roman sources, among the Late Ancient chronicles we have used that of Hydatius of Limia, probably bishop of *Aquae Flaviae* (Chaves, currently Portugal) because, despite some minor chronological alterations, it is more precise than the *Historia de los Godos, Vándalos y Suevos* by St ISIDORE OF SEVILLE, whose versions, a shorter one from 619 and the extended version from 624, differ in the (Hispanic) eras when some events take place, as it also uses Hydatius as its main source. Both have been used as the basis for the interpretation of the role of León in Suebian history. Regarding Suebian historiography, Benito VICETTO PÉREZ can be considered a pioneer, who published in 1860 *Los Reyes Suevo de Galicia* in La Coruña; the German school influenced Iberian pan-Germanism from the work published in Berlin in 1894 by Theodor MOMMSEN, *Chronica minora saec. IV.V.VI.VII., Volume II. (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi, vol. 11.)*; from the current French school Pierre DAVID inaugurated the investigations in 1947, with a publication edited by the Institut Français in Coimbra, *Études historiques sur la Galice et le Portugal du Vie au XIIe siècle*; almost three decades after Alain TRANOY's first studies were published, appearing in the two volumes published in the Parisian collection *Sources Chrétiennes* (numbers 218 and 219), *Hydace, Chronique, vol. I, Introduction, texte critique, traduction., et vol. 2, Commentaire et index*. The new Spanish Suebian historiography then began in 1977 with the publication of *El Reino de los Suevo y Galicia Sueva* by Casimiro TORRES RODRÍGUEZ, which was followed by the work published in Salamanca by Julio CAMPS in 1984, *Idacio, obispo de Chaves*. His chronicle *Introducción, texto crítico, versión española y comentario*; and the complete monographic studies by Pablo C. DÍAZ MARTÍNEZ. The English school inaugurated its monographic studies in 1952 with Wilhelm REINHART's *Historia general del reino hispánico de los Suevo*; three decades later, E. A. THOMPSON continued his footsteps publishing in 1982 *Romans and Barbarians: The Decline of the Western Empire*, and R. W. BURGESS, who produced a new critical edition of Hydatius' *Chronicle* published in Oxford in 1993.

⁷³¹ The usurper emperor Maximus, who was the *de facto* ruler of Hispania and even minted coin from his capital in *Barcino* between 409 and 411, signed in 411 a *foedus* with the Suebians, Vandals and Alans. A year later, General Constantius sent him into exile and it seems that he tried again in 420 when the *comes Hispanorum* Asterius seized him, being executed in 422. (Hid., *Chr.* 40, 41); see RIPOLL LÓPEZ, 2000, pp. 377-379.

and the Hasdingian Vandals would become their immediate neighbours. According to the aforementioned letter from Honorius to the soldiers of Pamplona, a short time later during the two-year period in 418-419, the *comes* Asterius would have enforced Roman authority over the *Suevi*.

The Suebian king Hermeric held power in Hispania for approximately three decades between 409 and 438, and so he signed a *foedus* with the Romans in 411 and 438, as well as peace treaties, repeatedly broken by the *Suevi* according to Hydatius (Hid., *Chr.* 71), who describes here the breakdown of the agreement in 420 when the Hasdingian Vandal chieftain, Gunderic, surrounded the Suebian army of King Hermeric in the Erbasian mountains (... *inter Gunderic Vandalorum et Hermericum Suevorum reges, certamine orto Suevi in Nerbasis montibus obsidentur a Vandalis*, Hid., *Chr.* XL, 25). The location of these Erbasian mountains is yet unknown, although several authors⁷³² place them in the current province of León: some in the region of Arbás, on the border with current Asturias, whilst most situate them in the region of Babia, not far from the source of the River Sil or even in the region of El Bierzo. Gunderic did not accomplish his objective thanks to the intervention of Asterius, the *comes Hispaniarum*, together with the *Suevi* (Hid., *Chr.* 74), commanding an imperial army who forced the *Hasdingi* to retreat to the *Baetica* (*relicta Gallaecia ad Baeticam transierunt*). This Roman intervention implied either that the *Suevi* were already *foederati* of the Romans at that time, or that they allied against the Vandals⁷³³. A passage from the *Chronica Gallica* from 511 records a second usurpation of Maximus around 420⁷³⁴. These events could have influenced the reorganization of the Roman provinces taking place this same year when the future emperor *Constantius* held the position of *magister utriusque militiae*.

Returning to the chronicler Hydatius, his *Chronicon* demonstrates that in the year 430 the *Suevi* were defeated in *Callecia* by the Hispano-Roman *plebs* from the *castella*, which leads us to think of a lack of military structure, at least at that time and in this area, since Roman soldiers appear to have left the Iberian Peninsula a decade earlier. But let us take a look at what Hydatius (*Chr.* 40, 4) says literally: “*Suevi sub Hermerico rege medias partes Gallaeciae depredantes, per plebem quae castella tutiora retinebat,*

⁷³² See LÓPEZ QUIROGA and RODRÍGUEZ LOVELLE 1996, p. 427.

⁷³³ MORÍN DE PABLOS 2006, pp. 175-216.

⁷³⁴ *Chron. Gall.* a. 452, 8.

acta suorum partim caede, partim captivitate, pacem quam ruperant, familiarum quae tenebantur, redhibitione restaurant". Which means that the *Suevi* plundered the central parts of *Gallaeciae* where the *plebs*, or Hispano-Roman population, held on to the safest fortresses (he does not mention their location) around the year 430, and that these Hispano-Romans captured the assailants, killing part of the Suebians and taking the others captive, but when they had broken the peace these prisoners were returned. It is very likely that the population that held the safest fortifications in central *Callaecia*, capable of capturing and killing Suebian invaders, were not simple countrymen who dwelt in a *castellum*, but soldiers, perhaps legionary veterans whose families continued to live in the Roman fortified enclosures of León and Astorga. The following year, another Suebian siege attempt was frustrated at another unidentified place, which confirms Hydatius' reluctance to mention the name of the valiant defenders of the *castella*, despite his chronicle tending to provide as much information as possible. Hydatius' hesitation could be due to his theological or personal confrontation with the community of the place (or places), which, if it were León, would be a Suebian parish pertaining to the diocese of Astorga, some of whose bishops had been accused of Priscilianism in the early 5th century, such as Symphosius and Dictinius.

But between 430 and 431, Suebian plundering made the Hispano-Roman *Callaeci* ask for help, it is believed through an embassy of Bishop Hydatius to *Arelate* (Arles, France). This bishop would act as representative of the Roman population presumably in the absence of a public and military administration. Aetius sent the *comes legatus* Censorius⁷³⁵ as representative to the *diocesis Hispaniarum* accompanying Hydatius in 432, though he had to return to Italy with no results. Besieging campaigns by Hermeric continued in 433 and peace talks resumed, achieving an unofficial and provisional agreement in which it was not Bishop Hydatius who intervened but Bishop Symposius⁷³⁶. This agreement was partially ratified in 438 after Censorius' return to Hispania accompanied by a certain Fretimund in 437.

This same source documents in 438 a *foedus* between Rome and the *Suevi* under King Hermeric, which often goes unnoticed despite being one of the most notorious

⁷³⁵ The chronicler Hydatius does not define him as a *magister militum*, a military position that would entail the presence of an army, but rather as a *legatus* or ambassador; see SANZ HUESMA 2009, p. 67.

⁷³⁶ Its headquarters at the time is yet unknown, although it could have been the Suebian capital of Hermeric, *Bracara*. It could be Symphosius, bishop of Astorga, who attended the Council of Toledo in 400.

political events in the 5th century⁷³⁷. This second treaty between the *Suevi* and Rome regulated a settlement before General Aetius' imperial government which had taken place decades earlier in 411, when a pact considered illegal had been signed with the usurper Maximus.

St. Isidore of Seville⁷³⁸, in his chronicle of the Suebian Kingdom, described the campaigns of Rechila (441-448) and his son Rechiar (448-456) after a first period of government in the northwest of Hispania (411-585): starting from 438 Rechila invaded Mérida after a siege in 439 and Seville in 441 –it would be in the power of the *Suevi* until 458–, and Rechiar advanced occupying territories⁷³⁹ of the bordering provinces of *Lusitania*, *Baetica* and *Carthaginensis*, taking the cities of Mérida, Mértola and Seville from Roman imperial power. In 446 General Vitus was sent at the head of Gothic troops to halt the expansion, without succeeding because he was defeated. We have already noted that Mérida was refortified at the end of the 5th century, concretely in 483 if we follow the data provided by an epigraph (today unaccounted for) that was apparently built into Mérida bridge commemorating the repair of the bridge itself and the defences of the city. Amongst the dedications we find a Gothic *dux*, Salla, whose origin and presence in Mérida have been acknowledged as proof of Euric's domination over the city. This interpretation is also echoed by J. Arce Martínez⁷⁴⁰ who considers that the translation of “*dux* Salla” may change because it also appears associated to Bishop Zeno and other possible inscriptions commemorating different restorations or extensions. The reference to Euric's reign seems chronological and the allusion to Bishop Zeno is very clear as the works on the walls are attributed to him for his love for the country. Arce Martínez's reinterpretation even speaks of “restoration of the defences”. Though the transcription and translation that this author uses does not affirm this, it literally says: *patrie tantum creare munimen sumi sacerdotis Zenonis suasit amor*, “the love for his country of the high priest Zeno impelled him no less than to erect such great defences”. In other words, according to this inscription,

⁷³⁷ SANZ HUESMA 2009, pp. 59-75.

⁷³⁸ ST. ISIDORE OF SEVILLE, 624 [1975] *Historia de regibus Gothorum, Vandalorum et Suevorum*, § 8, “(...) *Inde Emeritam obsessam ingreditur atque obtentam proprio regno adsociat*”; § 86, “*Aera CCCCLXXVIII, Ermerico defuncto Reccila filius regnat annis Spali obtenta Baeticam et Carthaginensem provincias in suam potestatem redigit. Atque Emerita sub cultu, ut fuerunt, gentilitatis vitam finuit*”.

⁷³⁹ Regarding Ávila, it is disputable whether the second phase of the walls of Ávila were Visigothic due to the Suebian attacks in the 5th century or should be dated between the 11th-12th centuries (CÁTEDRA and DE TAPIA 2007, pp. 13-14).

⁷⁴⁰ ARCE MARTÍNEZ 2008, pp. 121-126.

Zeno did not restore the walls, he erected them: *creare munimen*, presumably with his money or that of the Church, since he did it out of love for the country in association with his role of *defensor civitatis* that Christian bishops had assumed in the 5th century, as we noted earlier.

In addition to this literal interpretation of the translation and in view of the plan of the enclosure of *cubos*, it does not seem that the Roman precinct could have been repaired in its initial form but expanded, since the roads at perfect right angles show the primitive Roman plan fossilized, from which the layout of the streets change course to connect with the city gates. The formal coincidence of the U-shaped walls of *cubos* with other walls of the peninsular Northwest is remarkable, such as the ones of León. Mérida was the Suebian capital after a siege in which its wall was destroyed, at least partially, but when the new one was made, the city became Roman once again.

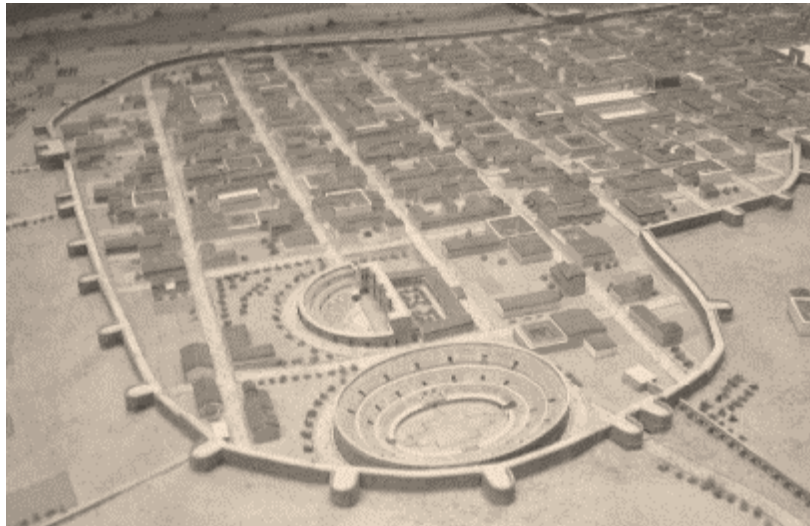


Fig. 115. Model of the wall of *cubos* in Mérida. National Museum of Roman Art, Mérida.

The royal seat of the *Suevi* in these years had to be Mérida since the king died there in 448, and also from there his successor Rechiar continued the campaigns in *Baetica*. His alliance with the Gothic king Theodoric I (that St. Isidore of Seville called Teuderedus) was sealed with the marriage of the Suebian and his daughter, a Gothic princess of the Balt dynasty whose name neither Hydatius nor Isidore mention. But we do have two earthquakes recorded in *Callaecia* in the years 450 and 453. He records the alliance with the Goths completed with another pact with the Romans, that of Avitus' imperial legate, Frontus, arriving in 452. He negotiated peace with the *Suevi* together with the *Hispaniarum comes*, Mansuetus, just as Justinian had done two years later, sent by

emperor Valentinian after Aetius' death. This is when Hydatius documents the return of the territories of the Carthaginensis by the *Suevi* to the Romans, whereas the old *conventus Cluniensis* remained in their domain.

This conquering advance could possibly be related to a new migratory wave of the *Suevi* willing to settle in Hispania. Here we can recall the *lancarii Sabarienses*, referred to in the *Notitia Dignitatis*, whose Suebio-Roman fellow citizens would have been forced to leave their homeland in *Pannonia Prima*, the Hungarian *Savaria*, devastated by the Huns (441-445) and destroyed by an earthquake in 458. In previous chapters we have proposed a new hypothesis: that a group of migrants from Sabaria, perhaps related to *lancarii* troops, could have arrived in the second half of the 5th century in the historical region of Sabaria (Zamora)⁷⁴¹ as *laeti* or *gentiles*, settlers with the obligation to defend their territory, which could have been a “March” between the Suebian and Visigothic territories. As we have already pointed out, the panegyric for the *Gentis Madruciae*⁷⁴² allows us to associate this Suebian population with a town in Zamora whose toponym *Madridanos* could have preserved the name of Sabaria that St. Isidore of Seville⁷⁴³ alluded to and where recent archaeological prospecting works have identified the existence of a Suebian settlement, like Castro del Viso⁷⁴⁴, for example, without forgetting that Benavente was still called *Malgrat* in his *Fuero* from 1167.

The advance of the *Suevi* was interrupted by the arrival of the Visigoths. They had remained isolated in Gallaecia from the mid-5th century after the defeat of the *Suevi* in 455 in the Leonese area around the River Órbigo⁷⁴⁵, 12 miles (*duodecim*) from the fortress of Astorga. The Late Roman wall of *Asturica Augusta* has been dated prior to the 5th century⁷⁴⁶ rather imprecisely and, as we have already mentioned when talking about the Late Roman troops, the presence of a place called *Duodecimanus* has been

⁷⁴¹ Notes 597 to 599.

⁷⁴² ENGERD, ca.1583, *Madrucidos libri tres* [...] *poema paraeneticum ad inclytum* [...] *Carolus Gaudentius liberum baronem Madrucium*: the narrator is Gaudentius, who addresses the reader by proclaiming himself "the famous hero of the Madrucian people, your ancestor, of their blood" and that, as we have already pointed out, could refer to Gaudentius, son of the Roman general Aetius, but also his father.

⁷⁴³ SAN ISIDORO DE SEVILLA, 624 [1975] *Historia de regibus Gothorum, Vandalorum et Suevorum*, § 49, “*Aera DCVI, ann. III imper. Justinii Minoris, Leovigildus adeptus Hispaniae et Galliae principatum, ampliare regnum bello et augere opes statuit. Studio quippe ejus exercitus, concordante favore, victoriarum, multa praeclare sortitus est. Cantabros namque iste obtinuit, Aregiam iste cepit, Sabaria ab eo omnis devicta est, cesserunt etiam armis illius plurimae rebelles Hispaniae urbes*”.

⁷⁴⁴ ARIÑO GIL; DIARTE-BLASCO; PÉREZ-POLO 2020, pp. 290-292.

⁷⁴⁵ DÍAZ MARTÍNEZ 2011, p. 82.

⁷⁴⁶ GUTIÉRREZ GONZÁLEZ and ARIAS PÁRAMO 2009, p. 759.

documented in the surroundings of Hospital de Órbigo (León), a name that could be due to the distance that separated this place from *Asturica Augusta* or to the numeral of a Roman maniple. Perhaps the *Chronicle* of Hydatius could have referred to a battle against a –*Duodecim*– maniple installed on the bridgehead of the River Órbigo which, as is usual under ancient defensive strategy, would be defended, or it could have possibly been named after the number of miles between Astorga and the site of the battle in the surroundings of the River Órbigo. One of the two versions conserved of the *Parrochiale suevum* is the *Liber Itaci* of Oviedo which lists amongst the territories corresponding to the diocese of Astorga a location between *Asturicam* and *Berizo* named *Legio super Urbico*⁷⁴⁷. The other commonly used version of the book, the *Liber Fidei* of Braga, in which *Astorica*, *Legio* and *Pesicos* appear, situates it closer to the west in the current province of Asturias (Cangas de Narcea) rather than in León where the Bierzo region mentioned in the *Liber Itaci* is located. The analysis of both texts can lead us to two opposing conclusions, with radically different implications:

– In the 6th century there were two *Legio* toponyms in the current province of León, one of which, *Legio Super Urbico* between Astorga and El Bierzo, is the only one that appears in the *Parrochiale suevum*; the other would be the *Legio* of the *VII Gemina* located outside the Asturian bishopric and the *Parrochiale suevum*, which renders highly likely the existence of a Hispano-Roman bishopric in León at that time; in this case, it would also open up the possibility of the *Legio Super Urbico* had a barracks in the *Duodecimanus* or *Palatium*.

– In the 6th century there was only one location called *Legio* and this parish was part of the Suebian diocese of Astorga, therefore the diocese of León would not exist then and the Leonese fortification would be under Suebian control, perpetuating an ethnic duplicity and a certain military status for the Hispano-Roman fortress, as the chronicles seem to indicate: Hydatius' *Chronicle* describes how this occurred in Lugo and that of St. Isidore states that the Visigoths conquered León from the Romans. If this had happened, the author of the *Liber Itaci* of Oviedo could have simply made a mistake when naming the river upon which the *Legio* stood.

⁷⁴⁷ SÁNCHEZ BADIOLA 2010, pp. 38-44.

Going back to the narration of Hydatius, in 457 the Visigothic king Theodoric II invaded the Northwest again and, according to the chronicler, contemporary to the events, only one vicinity in the south of León, the *Castrum Coviacense* (the Roman *mansio Comeniaca*, today Valencia de Don Juan) remained unconquered. The chronicles also reveal the name of the governor of the Suebian territories: *Aioulf* (or *Agriulf*), designated at that time by Theodoric II⁷⁴⁸, who in the end was eventually subjugated and sentenced to death in Porto for his disloyal administration. Although Hydatius narrates the siege of Palencia and Astorga in this campaign, he does not mention León (Hid., *Chr.* 186). Nor is León mentioned among the population attacked in 460 (Hid., *Chr.* 201) when he narrates how the Gothic army passed by “*Dactonium*” (Monforte de Lemos) towards Lugo, though now including the assault of Astorga. Centuries later, Lucas de Tuy (*Chron. Mun.*, III.63 23–26) provides us with more information about the city of León at that time: *Legionensem uero ciuitatem, condam capud regni Sueuorum, fame sibi subiugauerunt, multis Gallecorum in defensione ipsius urbis uiriliter obsistentibus hostili gladio trucidatis.*

After Rechiar's death, the *Suevi* broke up into two groups: followers of King Maldras sought refuge behind the walls of *Bracara*⁷⁴⁹, while Framta's group would possibly do so somewhere in the *conuentus* of Lugo⁷⁵⁰. The walls of Braga did not resist, and the *Suevi* fled to *Portum Cale* (Porto), a city that grew rapidly under their sovereignty in the 6th century, just as Braga also did and had to rebuild its walls again to become the capital of the *Suevi*. As for Lugo, according to Hydatius, the city suffered a siege at Easter in 460 and some of its inhabitants that the chronicler calls “*Romani*” were killed by the *Suevi*. What the chronicler does not clarify is whether the attack came from outside the walls or if it arose from within the city. But the attempts by the Goths to advance on Suebian territory were actually attempts of Roman reconquest, as happened in 461 with the troops of Sunieric and Nepotianus who tried to regain Lugo. They did not succeed and the *regnum* of the *Suevi* remained in the Hispanic Northwest for over a century, until 585. Thanks to the lists of queens that Padre Flórez⁷⁵¹ compiled in the 18th century, we can deduce that dynastic legitimation through marriage with the widowed queen was frequent,

⁷⁴⁸ IORD., *Get.*, XLIV. 233-234; HYD., *ChR.*, 180.

⁷⁴⁹ DÍAZ MARTÍNEZ 2011, pp. 160-161.

⁷⁵⁰ HYDATIUS, *Chronica*, 181-197. See LÓPEZ QUIROGA and RODRÍGUEZ LOVELLE 1996, p. 426; DÍAZ MARTÍNEZ 1987, p. 218. Maldrás' son Remismund also had to fight for the throne against Frumar and Rechimund, regaining the crown possibly with the help of his Gothic father-in-law, Theodoric II.

⁷⁵¹ FLÓREZ DE SETIÉN Y HUIDOBRO, E: (1761) *Memorias de las Reynas Catholicas, Historia Genealogica de la Casa Real de Castilla, y de León.*

a political strategy also used by Liuvigild, who married Goiswintha, Athanagild's widow, while his brother King Liuva reigned and only after this showed political power, as we know from John of Biclaro's *Chronicle* (*Chr. Bicl.* § 4). This document also sustains that in the year 573, Liuvigild, "after entering *Sanabria* he defeats the *sappi*, subdues the region and associates Hermenegild and Reccared with himself in the kingdom, both sons of his first wife" (*Chr. Bicl.* § 5). This brief paragraph from John of Biclaro unveils that Goiswintha's sons are his successors, possibly Athanagild's as well, so it would appear that Goiswintha not only legitimized Liuvigild's power as Athanagild's widow, but she would possibly also inherit dynastic rights, passing them on to her children. In fact, John of Biclaro warns that it was Queen Goiswintha who conspired in 579 so that Hermenegild would assume the tyranny (*Chr. Bicl.* § 6, 3). With this information in mind, it is easier to understand Liuvigild's murdering Hermenegild. He also indicates that this Visigothic king subdued the *sappi* from *Sanabria* in this year, which seems to be a reference to Sabarian people of Suebian origin who at that time had been in Hispania for a century and a half. The chronicler continues narrating Liuvigild's victories over the "usurper" peoples who occupied Amaya in Cantabria (574), also mentioning the *Aregenses* mountains in Orense where he captured the lord of the region, Aspidius, (575) and that he signed a peace treaty the following year with the Suebian king Miro. Even more interesting is the fact (*Chr. Bicl.* § 7) that in 584 Liuvigild rebuilt the walls of the ancient city of Italica, in Seville⁷⁵². One year later, he invaded the Suebian kingdom, which would pass entirely to the Visigoths by taking Andeca as prisoner. We know the name of the last Suebian queen Siseguntia, who was the first wife of King Miro and after his death in 583, when his son Eboric was deposed by Andeca, Siseguntia was forced to marry the usurper around 584, probably to legitimize the successor. She was the last Suebian queen as Andeca was tonsured by Liuvigild the following year, in 585, and although Malaric was proclaimed king in Galicia, the Dukes of Liuvigild defeated and imprisoned him, thus initiating the Gothic dominion in the Northwest of what was already called *Spania*.

In conclusion, during the 174 years that their domination lasted, the *Suevi* had to fortify their cities in some cases and to refortify them in others. They had time, skills acquired in their long journey from the German borders, materials –among others, *spolia*

⁷⁵² This data has been corroborated by archaeology in an intervention carried out in 2017 and reported by Rafael Hidalgo and Inmaculada Carrasco from the University of Seville Pablo de Olavide.

and Roman funeral monuments—, and reasons: the constant advance of the Visigoths and protection against other types of threats such as revolts of the *Bagaudae*. We know from Hydatius' *Chronicle* that the *Suevi*, in addition to having negotiated with the Romans, had also done so with the *Bagaudae*, Rechiar coming to an agreement with those of *Gallaecia* in the mid-5th century. Not so the Visigoths, perhaps more Romanized, because Frederik, a brother of King Theodoric, in alliance with Rome, exterminated the last *Bagaudae* in Hispania in 454.



Fig. 116. Gijón's medieval wall: two phases: Suebian and Astur-Leonese? fortification with *cubos*, superimposed on the original corner tower, possibly of Roman origin.

We even know to a certain extent about the Suebian territorial organization, thanks to one single source, the *Parrochiale Suevum*⁷⁵³, which gives a list of thirteen dioceses, their sees and parishes of each one of them existing at the time of the Suebian king Theodemir (559-570), to whom St. Isidore of Seville attributes the conversion of

⁷⁵³ Document dated after the Council of Lugo in 569, since it begins with a letter from King Theodemir to the bishops gathered there. It includes a total of 120 townships. Padre Flórez included it in (1859) *España sagrada: Contiene el origen y progreso de los obispados*, Vol. IV, 3^a Ed. Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid, cap. III and p. 132: *Ad Asturiensem Astorica, Legio, Bergido, Petra, Speranti, Comanea, Ventosa, Maurellos superiorum et inferiorum, Senvire, Francelloe, et Pesicoe*. See that it includes three Roman fortified enclosures in the Leonese province, later walled with *cubos*.

Arian *Suevi* to Catholicism⁷⁵⁴ with the help of Martin, Bishop of Braga and at the same time abbot of Dumium, a monastery located on the outskirts of this city. In this document the Christian community of *Legio* appears as a parish of the diocese of Astorga, which could indicate that the city of León had no bishopric at that time. However, this would not be the case if the name *Legio* referred to another *Legio*, that of Órbigo, unknown today, and that the Leonese camp of the Hispano-Roman *Legio* had a different status to the rest of the nearby Suebian parishes, precisely because its status as military ally had continued until then. We also know from the ecclesiastical documentation that the territorial organization around monasteries and secular churches in the Suebian area was already a reality in the mid-6th century⁷⁵⁵ and that it would survive in the region of León for another 500 years, continuing during the period of the Kings of León both in the see of León and in the Mozarabic repopulation of the Valley of the Duero.

Díaz Martínez⁷⁵⁶ explains the duplicity of the religious situation throughout the Suebian kingdom during its last stages as consequence of the Visigothic conquest, which would give rise to Arian and Catholic bishoprics in the strongholds bordering on Suebian domains (Lugo, Tuy, Porto and Viseo). In addition to the bishoprics, the archaeological findings in Galicia from the 6th and 7th centuries seem to confirm the stationing of new troops to control the strategic spots, especially those marked by the rivers Sil and Miño⁷⁵⁷.

In the case of the *castella* defended from the Suebian midlands and in the hands of Hispano-Roman *plebs* even in the year 430, whose name Hydatius carefully omits, we will opt for the most probable hypothesis, namely that the places controlled by the Priscillianist bishops of Astorga, *Symphosius* and *Dictinus: Asturica* (Astorga), *Legio* (León) and *Bergido* (Castroventosa), were all in the current province of León, and all of them re-walled with *cubos* from the 5th century on. The question remains open as to when these *castella* passed into Suebian hands or if they ever did. The hypothesis that the Leonese wall of *cubos* is from the Suebian period seems more difficult to refute than to

⁷⁵⁴ ST. ISIDORE, *Historiae*, § 9021-24; LUCAS DE TUY, *Chron. mun.*, II.17 11-14: “[...] multis deinde Sueuorum regibus in Arrianam heresim permanentibus. Fuerunt ex tunc reges Sueuorum seducti nonaginta annis quorum actus et nomina hic minime describuntur, tandem regni potestatem era DC^a Theodemirus sucepit”; *Chron. mun.*, II.17 16-18: “[...] multa in ecclesiasticis disciplinis Gallecie regionibus catholica sunt institute”. Lucas de Tuy included the year of this event at the beginning of the reign of Miro, (*Era ADVIII*) not providing the source.

⁷⁵⁵ DÍAZ MARTÍNEZ 2011, p. 243.

⁷⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 246-247.

⁷⁵⁷ RODRÍGUEZ LOVELLE and LÓPEZ QUIROGA 1997, pp. 260-265.

prove, considering that typologically the walls of the Hispanic Northwest present certain undoubted similarities and that, as we know from the chronicles, the Portuguese walls of Braga and Porto did not resist the initial offensive. But if this were the case, the re-fortification would have been carried out in a city where the elements of the Suebian population coexisted with those of the Romans, as suggested by the Isidorian chronicler Lucas, Bishop of Tuy (c. 1238). He was an Augustinian Canon from San Isidoro in León who wrote his chronicle commissioned by the queen mother, Berenguela of León, based on the texts from St. Isidore, though introducing interesting information that St. Isidore had not provided.

In 585, one of the most studied periods by Early Medieval Spanish historiography⁷⁵⁸, Liuvigild annexed the Suebian kingdom to the Visigoths. St. Isidore recounts this episode a few years later, when in section 68 of his *Laus Gothorum* he wrote about the recent loss of the Suebian kingdom, associating it to a lack of experience⁷⁵⁹ in defence. With this text as his source, Lucas de Tuy (*Chron. Mun.*, II.68¹⁷⁻¹⁸) introduced a fundamental element in the narrative: Liuvigild's defeat of the Leonese Romans, proposing a new etymology for the city, *Leonem*, which lines before he had called "*Flos*"⁷⁶⁰: "*Romanos milites apud Legionem bello extinxit et ipsam eorum urbem cepit, quam ex suo nomine Leonem nominavit*". Despite being from the 13th century, Lucas de Tuy's affirmation regarding the presence of *romanos milites*⁷⁶¹ in *Legionem* was written in the Leonese palatine complex of San Isidoro, having at his disposal the best archives and libraries of the time, leading us to admit the high probability of continued military use of the Leonese Roman fortified compound until the end of the 6th century.

The same chronicler reports that, in a campaign prior to the occupation of the Suebian territory, "all the territory of the *Sabaria* was conquered by him [Liuvigild]"⁷⁶² in

⁷⁵⁸ GARCÍA MORENO 1989; *Id.* 1990, pp. 619-636; RIPOLL LÓPEZ and VELÁZQUEZ SORIANO 1995; ARANDA GONZÁLEZ 2014, pp. 71-95, specially p. 82.

⁷⁵⁹ CANTERA MONTENEGRO 2014, p. 211.

⁷⁶⁰ LUCAS DE TUY, *Chron. mun.*, I.11⁵¹⁻². He attributes the destruction and reconstruction of several western cities to the government and initiative of Trajan *natione Ispanus*, among them those of *Sublancia* and *Flos* (León), and refers to the news of the foundation of León.

⁷⁶¹ There are more references by Lucas de Tuy regarding attacks by the Romans (whom he differentiates from the Byzantines, naming these Greeks) in Hispania which are not included in his Isidorian source text: *Chron. mun.*, II.73¹²⁻¹³: *Sepe misit exercitum contra Romanorum insolencias eisq[ue] deuictis irruptionem in eorum urbibus fecit*, about Roman sieges in cities in Hispania.

⁷⁶² PUYOL Y ALONSO 1926, p.188 (*Chron. Mun.* XXVI, 10)

the expedition to conquer Aregia where he got as far as Cantabria. This shows that in 585, *Sabaria* was still a territory independent from *Suevi* and Visigoths.

4.3.2. The Visigoths

The author of the chronicle of Saint Isidore placed its date (years 615 and 616) with great precision: year 654 according to the Hispanic era, the fifth year of Heraclius' empire, the fourth of the reign of the "most glorious prince" Sisebut and 5,814 years from the time of Creation. Then it had been more than a century since King Euric (died in 484) had dominated opposition in the *Tarraconensis*. In 531, King Amalaric was assassinated by his own army, and his successor Theudis installed his court in Barcelona, with a military garrison that controlled the roads between *Spania* and Gaul and Italy. On the road between Barcelona and the crossing through the eastern Pyrenees is the fortified city of Gerona. Both their city walls seem an exception⁷⁶³ to the situation of instability found around *Tarraco*, with barbarian incursions at the end of the 3rd century and revolts by the *Bagaudae* in the following two centuries. Gerona⁷⁶⁴ has provided archaeological materials that are not so late (*terra sigillata clara*), from the early 4th century, in sealed layers of the wall, not repaired after the time of its construction. And in *Barcino*, archaeology has proven that at the end of the 3rd century or the first half of the 4th century, the Augustan walls erected by the *Legio IIII* were massively thickened and approximately doubled in height up to 9 or 10 metres and reinforced with towers. Ravotto⁷⁶⁵ reinterpreted the results of the archaeological excavations carried out during the second half of the 20th century at various points on the walls of Barcelona, dismissing the possibility of a late dating based on the 5th century numismatic findings from these archaeological excavations. Nevertheless, he himself describes well contextualized ceramic findings stratigraphically that validate the placing of the building of the Late Imperial wall later to the 5th century. They were fragments of amphoras dated between the middle of the 3rd and 5th centuries AD from the levelling layer prior to the construction of tower 33, located in the old Plaza

⁷⁶³ ESMONDE CLEARY 2013, pp. 127-133.

⁷⁶⁴ NOLLA BRUFAU and NIETO PRIETO 1979, pp. 263-283.

⁷⁶⁵ RAVOTTO 2009, pp. 263-65. The results of the archaeological investigations undertaken at that time dated the Late Imperial walls toward the end of the 3rd century. JÁRREGA DOMÍNGUEZ 1991 proposed a date in the 5th century AD based on the coin finds from archaeological excavations undertaken on different parts of the walls, seven of them in tower 11, excavated by Serra Ràfols in 1959. One of the coins is a siliqua dated 409 with the legend *Maximo Tiranus* minted by the already mentioned usurper in relation to the *foedus* signed by the *Suevi*.

Arrieros (current Plaça dels Traginers). However, he prefers to orient the interpretation of the results towards a date demonstrated –the 3rd century–, dismissing the arguments against it somewhat arbitrarily. The same archaeologist has published his doctoral thesis clarifying the interpretation of an epigraph (*IRC IV*, 67), which commemorates the construction of walls, towers and gates by *Caius Coelius*, son of *Atisius*, a quinquennial *duumvir*, referring to the legionary fortification and insisting⁷⁶⁶ on dating the Late Imperial wall⁷⁶⁷ in the 3rd century.

With regard to the northwest of the Peninsula, it was St. Isidore who described how in the time of Sisebut (612-621) the *Astures* and the *Rucones* or *Roccones*⁷⁶⁸ rebelled. After the early death of his successor Reccared II (621) they would be defeated during the following reign, that of Suintila (621-631), who also led victorious campaigns against the Byzantines⁷⁶⁹ and under whose reign the Goths reunited the entire peninsular territory by conquering the remaining cities that were still administered by the *Roman*⁷⁷⁰ army in Spain (“*urbes residuas, quas in Spaniis Romana manus agebat*”)⁷⁷¹.

The *Vita Fructuosi*⁷⁷², one of the sources for understanding the Visigothic *Gallaecia* of the 7th century, narrates the life of the monk Fructuosus, a monk in the so-called Leonese Thebaid of El Bierzo, in the monasteries of Compludo and San Pedro de Montes, and later Bishop of Dumium and metropolitan of Braga, whose biography was written by his disciple San Valerius. Fructuosus was the son of a duke, called the *dux*

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibidem* 2017.

⁷⁶⁷ Ref. PAZ PERALTA 2015, pp. 289-291: “The Late Imperial walls mostly follow a set plan which turns out to be a polyorctic plan, types of floor-plans, defences and distances measured technically at 100 feet, which are applied both on the western and eastern border, and in the urban walls of Gerona and *Baelo Claudia*, but not on the city walls of Barcelona, Zaragoza, in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula and in Aquitania, among others, where there are smaller sizes, approximately half”.

⁷⁶⁸ SAINT ISIDORE, *Historiae*, § 9021-24; LUCAS DE TUY, *Chron. mun.*, II.17: he takes as original source the Isidorian text but changes the word “rucones” for “vascones”. They were probably the same people who appear on the diploma under the name of *runcones* or *araucones*, a mountain people who in 572 also fought against Miro, the Suebian king whose territory (between Orense, Asturias and León and perhaps including parts of the region of Liébana) belonged to the diocese of Astorga according to the *Parrochiale Suevum*.

⁷⁶⁹ Lucas de Tuy when referring to Roman attacks makes a distinction from those of the Byzantines, calling them *Greek*: *Chron. mun.*, II.73₁₂₋₁₃: *Sepe misit exercitum contra Romanorum insolencias eisq[ue] deuictis irruptionem in eorum urbibus fecit*, about Roman raids on Spanish cities; *Chron. mun.*, II.75₂₋₄: *Antiquos Yspanos et Romanos sibi subditos una cum Gotis eiusdem conditionis esse instituit nulliusq[ue] captiui Christiani filium iugo seruitutis oprimi passus est*, about Recared’s actions towards the inhabitants of the Peninsula who were not Goths (Hispanics and Romans), whom he raised to the same level.

⁷⁷⁰ CANTERA MONTENEGRO 2014, pp. 228-229.

⁷⁷¹ ISIDORE, *Hist. Goth.*, 62, 4-6 refers to Suintila granting him the Roman title of *dux*.

⁷⁷² DÍAZ Y DÍAZ 1974; DÍEZ GONZÁLEZ; RODRÍGUEZ FERNÁNDEZ; ROA RICO and VIÑAYO GONZÁLEZ 1966.

*exercitus Spaniae*⁷⁷³, who made several ecclesiastical foundations in the *Gallaecia* province, some in the Leonese region of El Bierzo and, among them, a monastery in the still unidentified town of Castroléon⁷⁷⁴ along with the noble Theudigisel. He was from a noble family, perhaps a relative of King Sisenand and the Bishop of Beziers, to whom he dedicated poems, although his great work were two rules of monastic life, the *Regula Monachorum* and the *Regula Monastica Communis*. Fructuosus also appears as a signatory in the Acts of the X Council of Toledo, and as founder of the church of Montelios. Regarding the rest of the sources for Visigothic military history, in addition to the allusions to his army in some conciliar canons, such as the first canon of the VII Council of Toledo (646), there are mentions of an *exercitus Hispaniae* in the *Historia Wambae regis*, a chronicle by Saint Julian of Toledo on the Hispanic military campaigns between 673 and 680. In the *Insultatio*, a document where he reproaches the *Gallia Narbonensis* for its rebellion, the same writer points out the strength of *Spania* and the *Spanorum exercitus*.

Some Roman military institutions also survived during the High Middle Ages, as we have already seen in the case of the *duces* at the head of each province –with territorial powers that extended to judicial and fiscal administration– and the *comites civitatis*. It is also possible that in the second half of the 7th century the number of provinces increased to eight, since evidence⁷⁷⁵ shows two new duchies had separated from the *Tarraconensis*, one in *Asturica* (León) and the other in *Amaia* (current province of Burgos). The provinces were under the command of these dukes, *ordines* or *officia* in the kingdom who, under the command of counts and barons, formed the military hierarchy that directed the king's escort and troops of armies, clientele and entourages⁷⁷⁶.

Regarding the territory of León, Astorga, exceptionally, would be excluded from destruction by the Goths centuries later, according to the *Chronicle* of Lucas de Tuy⁷⁷⁷. We have already mentioned that *Asturica* was a stable episcopal see from ancient times, and that there is news of the existence of monasticism in the neighbouring region of El Bierzo from the 5th century, among them the possible status of Egeria as a nun is worth

⁷⁷³ VIÑAYO GONZÁLEZ 1966, p.174.

⁷⁷⁴ CANTERA MONTENEGRO 2014, pp. 273, 277.

⁷⁷⁵ CANTERA MONTENEGRO 2014, pp. 414-415.

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibidem* 2014, p. 277.

⁷⁷⁷ BARENAS ALONSO 2007, pp. 160-161. *See below* Note 700.

mentioning whose pilgrimage has already been alluded to previously. Novo Guisán⁷⁷⁸ indicates that in the 7th century, of twenty-three monks known throughout Spain, seven were from the León region of El Bierzo. One, the abbot *Flainus*, is mentioned on the Visigothic chancel arches in Santa Cristina de Lena (Asturias) and the same name was found in a funerary epigraph in Quintanilla de Somoza, dated by Gómez Moreno⁷⁷⁹ in the reign of Egica (687-702). Centuries later, this same anthroponym will be found in one of the most important noble families of the High Middle Ages, the Flaínez, a clear example of the neo-Gothicism of the Leonese aristocracy⁷⁸⁰. In the rest of northern León⁷⁸¹, in Asturias and in Cantabria, Saint Emilian (San Millán) preached before the conquest of Liuvigild. The *Chronica de Iohannes Biclarensis* narrates how this Visigothic king in 574 attacked the possible Cantabrian capital, *Amaia* (Peña Amaya) while advancing towards the Suebian kingdom of Galicia, an episode that is represented in an 11th century ivory from San Millán de la Cogolla (La Rioja).

At the end of the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo, Wittiza (694-710) ordered the dismantling and demolition of all the walls of cities and towns⁷⁸² to avoid seditions, which led to the conquest of many towns by the Muslims. However, in addition to those of Toledo, only the walls of León and Astorga⁷⁸³ were respected, either because these cities were still in the hands of Hispano-Romans or because they supported the winning faction of the dynastic struggle during which, according to the chronicler Lucas de Tuy and Archbishop D. Rodrigo, the death of *Dux Favila* (son of King Chindasuinth) took place at the hands of Wittiza, of whom Lucas de Tuy states that “he was buried in a town next to the River Órbigo that some called *Duodecim manus* and others, *Palacium*”⁷⁸⁴. As we have

⁷⁷⁸ NOVO GÜISÁN 1992, pp. 389-390.

⁷⁷⁹ GÓMEZ MORENO 1925, p. 132.

⁷⁸⁰ MARTÍNEZ SOPENA 1992, pp. 315-324; TORRES SEVILLA 1999, p. 133; PÉREZ 2008, pp. 89-107.

⁷⁸¹ In the Leonese mountain region of Babia the name of Saint Emilianus (San Emiliano) has survived as a toponym.

⁷⁸² MILLÁN ABAD 1990, p. 58; SIMONET Y BACA 2005, pp. 11-13. LUCAS DE TUY, *Chron. mun.*, III.61²⁵⁻²⁹). According to their interpretation Wittiza allowed the defences of Spanish cities to be destroyed (except for Toledo, León and Astorga) so that they would not resist his coming to power: *Itaque Vitiça datus est in reprobum sensum et muros cunctarum urbium sui regni subuertit, ne possent sibi resistere ciues, et ut eos ad sua scelera facilius inclinaret. Muri tamen Toletane urbis et Legionensis et Astoricensis integra remanserunt propter earundem reuerentiam ciuitatum*

⁷⁸³ LUCAS DE TUY, *Chron. mun.*, III.60¹⁰⁻¹⁵. As original source one may suppose the *Crónica de Alfonso III*: “*Hic Vitiça Fafilam ducem filium Cindasuindi regis, quem Egica rex illuc cum filio direxerat, uxore Vitice instigante, in capite calua percussit, unde idem Fafila postea ad mortem uenit et in uilla, que est iuxta flumen Vrbicum, quam Duodecim manus appellant et alii nunc Palacium uocant, sepultus fuit*”.

⁷⁸⁴ This last toponym evolved over the following centuries: in doc. Number 261 of Tumbo B in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, dated 1211, the King of León, Alfonso IX, made several donations

already pointed out before, the place name *Duodecim manus* could refer to a military troop or garrison (about 120 soldiers) in an area that is mentioned again and again for centuries as the scene of memorable battles, the River Órbigo in León.

The same chronicler Lucas de Tuy goes into more detail about the city of León: *Legionensem uero Ciuitatem, Condam Capud Regni Sueuorum, Fame Sibi Subiugauerunt, Multis Gallecorum in defensione ipsius urbis uiriliter obsistentibus hostili gladio trucidatis* (*Chron. Mun.*, III.63 23-26). And according to the report made by Lucas during Liuvigild's conquest of León, Hispano-Romans continued to inhabit León all through the Suebian period⁷⁸⁵.

Further north, the settlement of Amaya, which had been the capital of the Duchy of Cantabria during the reign of Erwig (around 680)⁷⁸⁶, suffered attacks by the Muslim conquerors in the years 712 and 714 before they reached Asturian territory. The *dux* from Cantabria would be a *dux provinciae* with delegation of royal power, who in turn would control the large number of counts⁷⁸⁷ that appear in Early Medieval documentation. These were in command of a lesser civil territorial demarcation that often coincides with the ecclesiastical, although the number of bishoprics appears to have been greater than that of counties⁷⁸⁸. We also know of the existence of *comites notariorum*⁷⁸⁹, administration officials trained in the Aula Regia in Toledo from the 7th century. As already noted, until the 13th century in the kingdom of León, *comite* was a title through which blood nobility was inherited but with no link to a territory.

What also seems possible is that some of these fortified *castella*-type compounds were ruled by members of the Hispano-Gothic nobility with some political

on account of the consecration of the same church of Santiago, among them 800 *stopi* of wheat “*ad mensuram hodiernam in Sancta Marina de Ripa de Orvego, in honor Palatii de Turgi libentissime*”, today's Leonese towns of Santa Marina del Rey and Palazuelo de Órbigo.

⁷⁸⁵ PUYOL Y ALONSO 1926, p.188 (*Chron. Mun.* XXVI, 23-25): “Mató los caualleros romanos en batalla cabo León y tomóles esa cibdad, la qual, de su nonbre, llamó León”.

⁷⁸⁶ LECANDA ESTEBAN 2010, pp. 229-238. According to the legend after the fall of Amaya, Duke Pedro and his Goths took refuge in Tejeda (Trespaderne, Burgos), a walled fortress dated between the 5th and 6th centuries: *Id.* 2002, pp. 683-692.

⁷⁸⁷ See PÉREZ 2008, pp. 89-107.

⁷⁸⁸ GARCÍA MORENO 1989, p. 327.

⁷⁸⁹ CANTERA MONTENEGRO 2014, p. 474.

independence⁷⁹⁰. In the border areas⁷⁹¹ with the Byzantines, in the East, the later *qura* of Theodemir, and under the Franks, the reused or built *ex novo* fortresses would be the model to be followed by the Leonese kings during the Reconquest. The shortage of studies on Leonese Visigothic fortresses in the north-eastern March of the Iberian Peninsula has improved in recent times⁷⁹² when it has been concluded that this dividing line would be an uncultivated and barren area, although not depopulated, and that it could count on some military compounds that acted as capitals of its territory, as would be the case of Amaya in Cantabria, Pamplona⁷⁹³ in the Duchy of the Ebro and *Victoriaco* (*Velegia*)⁷⁹⁴ in the Basque region, and beyond the Pyrenees, in Septimania⁷⁹⁵, Narbonne, Carcassonne and Nîmes.

Other less important fortifications are known from archaeology that could control strategic passes during the Visigothic period. Besides the documentary mention by Saint Braulius of a *castellum Bilibio* (Haro, La Rioja) in the Duchy of Cantabria, archaeological remains may be found of fortifications of this time in Monte Cildá (Olleros de Pisuergra, Palencia), Buradón (Álava) and Santa María de los Reyes Godos (Trespaderne, Burgos). In this last town, the fortress of Tedeja⁷⁹⁶ has *cubos* very similar to those of the late Leonese wall, the start of its Visigothic construction dated towards the end of the 5th or early 6th century.

At this point in its history León does not seem to have had any borders to maintain either, since the former Suebian territory of the Hispanic Northwest was integrated into the Visigothic kingdom, and the episcopal seats that were also mints such as Lugo, Astorga, León or Calahorra (La Rioja) did not form any border⁷⁹⁷. In essence, the Roman provincial division and its defensive system were maintained. This did not happen, however, with the architectural systems in new buildings, since the horseshoe

⁷⁹⁰ NOVO GÜISÁN 1992, p. 36.

⁷⁹¹ CANTERA MONTENEGRO 2014, pp.145-146. *Ref.* NOVO GÜISÁN 1992, pp.72-74, which invalidates the hypothesis of a Roman and Visigothic limes against the *Vascones*, *Cantabri* and *Astures*; in these last two cases due to their integration into the Visigothic Kingdom.

⁷⁹² MARTIN 1998, pp. 267-280; BARROSO CABRERA; CARROBLES SANTOS and MORÍN DE PABLO 2013.

⁷⁹³ MIRANDA GARCÍA 2009, p. 299.

⁷⁹⁴ CANTERA MONTENEGRO 2014, p. 299. The chronicler Juan de Bicláro dates the foundation of *Victoriacum* in 581: Juan de Bicláro (*Cr. Bicl.* § 6, 3) “*Leovigildus rex partem Vasconiae occupat et civitatem quae Victoriacum*”.

⁷⁹⁵ JAMES 1980, pp. 223-241. For the border of the *Vascones*: LECANDA ESTEBAN 2010, pp. 229-238.

⁷⁹⁶ LECANDA ESTEBAN and RUIZ VELEZ 2000, pp. 565-568.

⁷⁹⁷ CANTERA MONTENEGRO 2014, p. 416.

arch introduced from the East –this arch used as an essential part of the building and not as mere ornamentation–, and the *gradus*, a module of 0.80 metres which gradually replaced the Roman measurement system based on the foot, have been found in Hispanic Christian architecture since the 4th century, for example in the *Martyria* of Vegas de Puebla Nueva (Toledo) and the aforementioned Marialba de la Ribera (León).

An aside will allow us to briefly allude to the Visigothic origin of the Asturian monarchy: Queen Reccibergera. According to Padre Flórez in the book previously cited with the list of the queens of Spain, Reccibergera had four children, one of whom, Theodofred, would be the father of the last Gothic king, Don Rodrigo, while another, Favila, was the father of the first king of the Asturian dynasty, Don Pelayo. It is known that Queen Reccibergera endowed the Compludo monastery in the region of El Bierzo via a document dated 18th October, 646⁷⁹⁸. The relationship of matronage of Asturian queens with monasteries began then when entry of widowed queens into monasteries was institutionalized, in accordance with the Canons of the Goths in 683. Presumably they complied with this provision as an obligation but given the high probability that a widowed queen would be forced to marry a suitor to the throne, perhaps the choice of the convent was a well-accepted option. From the following Gothic queens, the names of the spouses of Chindasuinth's and Reccibergera's grandsons are known: Egilona was the wife of Don Rodrigo⁷⁹⁹ whose brief reign ended in 711. When Don Rodrigo died, she married Abdalaciz, son of the conqueror Muza. Gaudiosa was the wife of Don Pelayo, whose reign began in the year 718. The daughter of Pelayo and Gaudiosa, Ermisenda, would be the wife of Alfonso I, and mother of the first King Fruela, whose queen was Muniadona. Fruela's sister, Adosinda, would also be queen in 774, wife of King Silo, and both are

⁷⁹⁸ *In Codice Toletano legitur Reccesvintus; sed priorem lectionem retinendam putamus, quam edidit cl. Sirmondus ex Ms Bibliothecæ sancti Victoris Parisiens. confirmatque vetustissima Scriptura Asturicæ existens, ut docet nos Ambrosio de Morales, in qua Chindasvintus rex cum uxore sua Recibergera amplissimas donationes fecerunt, monasterio de Compludo in territorio Asturicensi sito, utroque eidem subscribente, Rege quidem priori loco, deinde Regina his verbis: Ego Recibergera Regina hanc seriem testamenti confirmo. Exhibet hoc monumentum Ill. Yepes, tom. II Scrip., XIII. Non ignoramus, prædictam Scripturam a nonnemine explodi quasi spuriam ac sublestæ fidei; sed ut gratis ei concedamus post annum 646. quem præsefert, fuisse confictam, certè quòd Recibergeram uxorem Chindasvinti appellat (quemadmodum et Eugenius noster in MS. Victorino supra laudato) non nisi antiquissimo innixus testimonio, vel traditione fecisse credendus est supplantator, quò suo commento fallacem veritatis vestem indueret.*, *Epitaphion in sepulcro Reccibergeræ reginæ* [LORENZANA, 1782, 33f. Anm. 2).

⁷⁹⁹ The *Chronicle* of Alfonso III gives other names for the Visigothic genealogy of Wamba: his successor Erwig gave his daughter Cifilona in marriage to Egica, a distinguished noble and relation of Wamba; Theodofred [son of Chindasuinth] settled in Córdoba, where he married a woman of aristocratic lineage by name Ricilon, who was the mother of Don Rodrigo.

listed as promoters of the construction of the Church of San Juan Evangelista in Pravia (Asturias), which would serve as a royal pantheon. Pelayo's son, Favila, had Froiliuba as queen from her coronation in 737, and two years later they consecrated the Church of the Holy Cross, which they carried on their banner. In the same year 739 the king died and this church became his pantheon. Although they had children, none of them was his successor on the throne and we also know the name of one of his daughters, Favinia, who was the grandmother of Charlemagne's wife, Hildegard. Then also began the special Navarrese genealogy of the Cordoban caliphs, which centuries later would give rise to an Abderramán III related to the ruling dynasty in Pamplona; the same Abderramán III of *Qurtuba* who would build a castle without a single *cubo* in Cadrete⁸⁰⁰ (Zaragoza) in 935, in his strategy to conquer the capital *Saraqusta* from the *Banu Tuyib*. The large number of captive women⁸⁰¹ that were brought to Córdoba from the kingdoms of León and Navarra by the Muslim raids reached its peak in the 10th century, and perhaps this was at the origin of the reverse movement of Cordoban Mozarabs towards the North, which may have been lived through by the migrant population as a return to their homeland.

4.3.3. *Kings of Asturias and León, and the Mozarabic settlers*

The third great period of the existence of the Leonese walled enclosure –after its foundation by the Romans and the 174 years as the heart of the Suebian kingdom– coincided with the settling of the city of León by the Christian Kings. In relation to the main milestones of the Later Medieval Period, the conquests of the Asturian dynasty⁸⁰² led to the recovery of the urban centres under Alfonso I (739-757)⁸⁰³, son of the Duke Pedro of Cantabria. Some centuries later at an undetermined date before 910, the *Chronicle of Alfonso III*⁸⁰⁴ narrated that King Alfonso I and his brother Fruela “took many cities by war, namely: Lugo, Tuy, Porto, Anegia, the metropolis of Braga, Viseo, Chaves, Ledesma, Salamanca, Numancia that is now called Zamora, Ávila, Astorga, León, Simancas, Saldaña, Amaya, Revenga, Carborárica, Abeica, Cenicero and Alesanco, and

⁸⁰⁰ SOUTO LASALA, J. A. 1996, p. 198.

⁸⁰¹ VIDAL CASTRO 2008, pp. 368-372.

⁸⁰² FERNÁNDEZ CONDE 2015.

⁸⁰³ SIMONET Y BACA 2005, pp. 214-219.

⁸⁰⁴ *Crónica de Alfonso III*, 1918 edition, presented by GARCÍA VILLADA, Z., Ed. Centro de Estudios Históricos, Junta para la Ampliación de Estudios e Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid; edition 1985, GIL FERNÁNDEZ, J. *Crónicas asturianas*, Oviedo, Universidad de Oviedo, pp. 151-188.

the castles with their villas and villages, also slaying the Arabs by the sword, and taking the Christians with them to their homeland”. Kings Fruela I (757-768) and his son Alfonso II (760-842) reconquered much of Galicia and the Basque territory (with an interlude of peace between the two under the reigns of Aurelio and Silo).

The oldest known document from the *Asturorum Regnum* (8th to 10th centuries) dating from the time of Alfonso II is the Diploma of King Silo (775), preserved in the Archive of the Cathedral of León, and among the signing witnesses to it there is still a name of Roman origin: Nepotianus. Another Nepotianus, *comes palatii*, would usurp the throne in the middle of the following century. Ramiro I (842-850) was the son of Bermudo I, the Deacon and grandson of the aforementioned Duke Pedro of Cantabria. He is remembered more as an architectural promoter than for his conquests, since during the few years of his reign, an Asturian pre-Romanesque style called “Ramirensis” emerged⁸⁰⁵ and building works were undertaken then that still survive today, such as the royal palace of Santa María del Naranco (Oviedo) or Santa Cristina de Lena, among others. However, he had to repel some Viking attacks in the coastal towns of Gijón and La Coruña in the year 844. As regards the Leonese capital, King Ramiro I⁸⁰⁶ began to repopulate León during a brief truce with the Muslims, because of internal problems and Norman attacks. This led to Abderraman II sending his son, Mohamed de Córdoba, to destroy the city in 846. Ordoño I (850-866)⁸⁰⁷ was governor of Galicia and later the first non-elected king of Asturias, inheriting the throne from his father Ramiro I. In this period between the 9th and 10th centuries, the first documented Mozarabic emigration from al-Andalus to the Kingdom of León took place according to the *Rotense* version of this *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, which narrates the reign of Ordoño I (850-866) and describes the reoccupation of the Duero Valley:

"In the era 888 [year 850], after Ramiro's death, his son Ordoño succeeded him to the throne. He was a moderate and patient man. He built walls around the formerly abandoned cities, that is, León, Astorga, Tuy and Amaya Patricia, put high gates on them and filled them with people, partly his own, partly with the ones who arrived from Spain (...)”⁸⁰⁸. The fact that the chronicler contrasts his people with the ones who arrived from Spain, along with the news that he transmits about the self-proclamation of Musa (a Muslim

⁸⁰⁵ BANGO TORVISO 1995, pp. 183-186. For some authors, the break with Late Roman material culture did not begin until the end of the 6th century although remains of it are still present at the beginning of the Early Medieval period: PÉREZ RODRÍGUEZ-ARAGÓN 1995.

⁸⁰⁶ MARTÍNEZ DíEZ 2011, pp. 103-104.

⁸⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 105.

⁸⁰⁸ SIMONET Y BACA 2005.

of Gothic origin, of the Banu Qasi lineage, "descendants of Cassius") as third king of Hispania after rebelling against the King of Córdoba and conquering Huesca, Tudela, Zaragoza, even placing his son Lupo to govern in Toledo. This hints at the territorial division of the Iberian Peninsula in the middle of the 9th century, which pivoted on two axes: the Visigothic kingdom of Asturias and *Spania* occupied by Muslims, the Caliphate of Córdoba, which the chronicler literally names in Byzantine fashion. Alfonso III (or perhaps Bishop Sebastián in his name) tells how Musa became strong in Albelda (La Rioja) and fortified the town, which Ordoño razed later. In addition, he provides us with information on the Banu Qasi's strategy of conquest and defence followed by their strategy of occupation, repopulating it with his people and also with Mozarabs who migrated from Córdoba. The territorial concept of Córdoba must be understood very broadly since, when the documents tell of Córdoba's Mozarabic monks or settlers, they could have come from anywhere in the Caliphate, namely from two thirds of the Iberian Peninsula and the Balearic Islands. Saying that the Córdoba Mozarabs repopulated León in the 10th century is a documentary certainty that does not exclude that these Mozarabs may have left their land in Mursiya (Murcia) or Turtuxa (Tarragona). The 10th century began with the long reign of Ordoño I's son, Alfonso III, who ordered a general history to be drawn up so as to continue that of San Isidoro, the aforementioned *Chronicle* of Alfonso III.

It is not in Alfonso III the Great's (866-910)⁸⁰⁹ own chronicle but that of Sampiro (end of the 10th century) which informs us that in 869 he married a princess from the Gothic royal family, Queen Jimena, from the Navarrese dynasty. He died in Zamora after a victorious campaign but before doing so, he doubled the territory of the kingdom, reaching the mouth of the Duero River in Porto and founded the city of Burgos. In 893 Alfonso III repopulated the Duero Valley, restoring the walls of Zamora⁸¹⁰ with the participation of Mozarabs, in this case from Toledo, and one of them, an *Agemí* of good economic position, financed the restoration of the walls, according to the Arab chronicler Ibn Hayyan (Oxford Codex, fol. 83). In that same year 893 the *Chronicle of Albelda* (or *Codex Vigilanus*)⁸¹¹ informs us of the construction of the walls of Coyanza (Valencia de Don Juan, León), the *Coviacense Castrum* that had resisted the assault of the Goths of Theodoric II in 457.

Millán Abad⁸¹² described five phases of evolution of the fortification of Coyanza starting from the Iron Age, including the later Roman wall, razed during the different Muslim campaigns, which was rebuilt by Alfonso III as a diploma dated 20th January 905 in the *Liber Testamentorum* of the Cathedral of Oviedo testifies. It indicates that the

⁸⁰⁹ BRONISCH 2006; *Id.*, 2007, pp. 67-110.

⁸¹⁰ MARTÍNEZ DÍEZ 2011, pp. 104, 111.

⁸¹¹ *Crónica albeldense*, 1985 edition, GIL FERNÁNDEZ, J. in *Crónicas asturianas*, Universidad de Oviedo, pp. and 151-188, specially vol. xv, p.180.

⁸¹² MILLÁN ABAD 1990, pp. 45-68.

castrum de Coiamka was already the centre of a wide territory; the place name *castrum* indicates its condition as a fortified enclosure, destroyed by Almanzor at the end of the 10th century. Sánchez-Albornoz analysed a diploma from the year 909 in which the king appears signing “*In dei nomine, commorantes in civitate Legione, troni solium residentes in sedem Oueto*”. That is, although the royal seat was in Oviedo, the king resided in León. The same scholar analysed the war campaigns of 882 and 883 that Alfonso III waged from León⁸¹³, which seems to support the fact that the fortified compound was operational at the time. In the mountainous area that divides Asturias and León, fortresses were left in old *castra* and hilltops in the hands of tenants or counts. According to the Pelagian version of the *Chronicle of Sampiro*, in 872 Alfonso III ordered the erection of a series of castles in the area of the mountains of León, among them Luna, Gordón and Alba⁸¹⁴. Gutiérrez González⁸¹⁵ linked what he calls the "feudal expansion of the Asturian monarchy" in the last decades of the 9th century, with the "genesis of the kingdoms of León and Castilla" after the royal court was installed in León in the early 10th century, recognizing the formation of a first León fortification system by Alfonso III. They formed three parallel lines of *castella* along the east-west direction of the Cantabrian mountain range⁸¹⁶: the first on its southern face, the second on the Meseta and the third just before the Duero River. This researcher also identifies the guidelines of the territorial expansion of Ramiro II and Ordoño III in León as far as the unstable border of the *Extremaduras* but, unlike Millán Abad, he ignores the reconstruction of the Leonese defensive system carried out by Alfonso V and focuses his interest on the later advances of Alfonso VI and Alfonso VII beyond the River Tagus, as well as the creation of the fortified *pueblas* (towns) during

⁸¹³ SÁNCHEZ-ALBORNOZ y MENDUIÑA 1979, p. 80. Something similar would happen in 945 when Ramiro II signed a donation to the monastery of Sahagún with this formula: “*Hic namque testamentum confirmatum est sub die tertia feria, in octava pasche, residente rex in Pretorium super illum balneum, Oveto*”. This seems to be a scribe’s *hapax legomenon* where he may have confused the royal seat in Oviedo with the royal palace built on the Roman baths in León, as there is no evidence of a *Pretorium super sillum balneum* in Oviedo but there is in León. *Id.* 1969, pp. 169-182

⁸¹⁴ Besides, the Early Medieval documentation shows fortresses between the 9th and 11th centuries in these areas in León: *Arbolio* (in 891, in Barrio de la Tercia), Cervera (in Vegacervera), Aviados, Acevedo, Valmartino, San Salvador de Curueño, La Valcueva, San Emiliano, San Martín de la Falamosa, Montuerto, *Castellum Collem* in Boñar, Peña Morquera (in Valdepiélago), Mesmino (in Tolibia de Abajo) *Aquilar* (Sabero), Riaño, Suero de la Reina, Castillo de Alion (Las Salas), *Peñafiel* (in Prioro-Mogrovejo), Castello Ferraria (Prioro), Castro Monteagudo (Fuentes de Peñacorada) and *Castrum Pelaii* (Valdoré), and fortified towers in Genicera, Lugueros, La Vecilla, Otero de Curueño, Puebla de Lillo, without mentioning others of clear High Medieval timing such as in Santa María de Ordás or El Castillo de Benal (Riello), but these may have been previous constructions.

⁸¹⁵ GUTIÉRREZ GONZÁLEZ 1992, p. 32.

⁸¹⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 34-35.

the reigns of Fernando II and Alfonso IX. He also mentions the border strip with Castile in the Infantado of Tierra de Campos, which was the matter of dispute with more or less intensity between León and the County of Castile for two centuries.

The first to establish the royal headquarters –and not only a residence– in the city of León was Alfonso III's son, García I (910-914) so at that time the Leonese walls must have been in good condition. During his short four-year reign, and in order to secure the line of defence established by his father on the River Duero, he repopulated various cities in Burgos (Roa, Osma, Haza and *Clunia*) and in Soria (San Esteban de Gormaz). His successor, now crowned King of León, was Ordoño II (914-924), re-conqueror of La Rioja.

At an imprecise moment after the establishment of Christianity in León, an "Aula Regia" was built on top of the old baths, a fact recounted by the chronicler Sampiro (who died in 1041), pointing out that three old houses were reused for it near the wall. This relationship between the wall and the royal buildings leads to another association between ancient fortifications and Gothic cathedrals that can be found throughout Europe, especially in France and Spain⁸¹⁷, as we saw in a previous chapter. In 916, diplomas describe the solemn dedication of the new cathedral built by Ordoño II over the old royal palace. As seen in the figure below, the 1884 plan of Demetrio de los Ríos reflects the floor plan of that first cathedral under the later Gothic work.

⁸¹⁷ NAVASCUES PALACIO 1990, pp. 17-66.

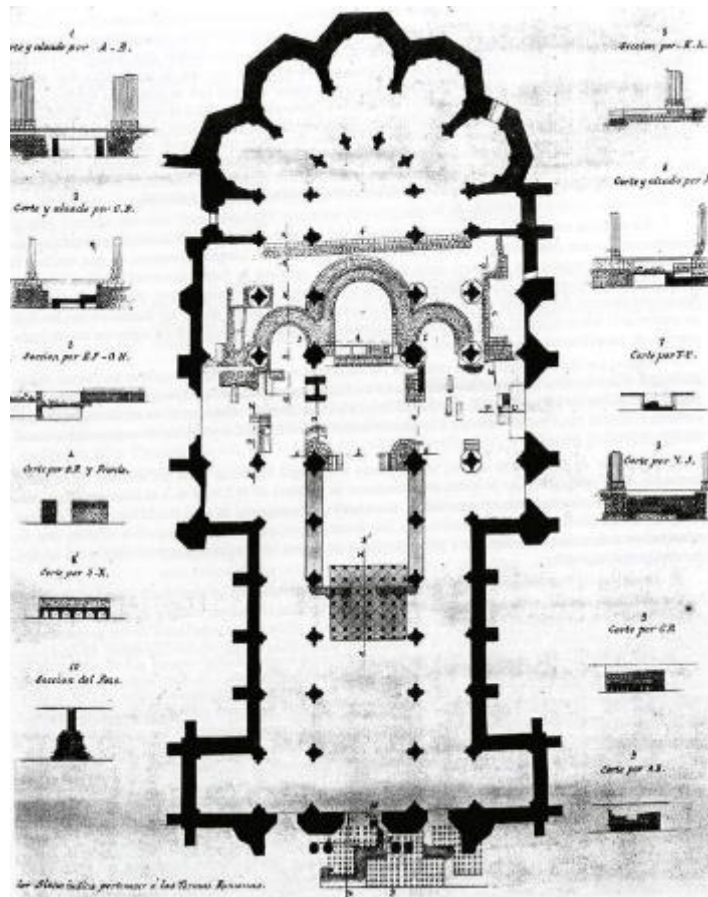


Fig. 117. Plan of the cathedral of León on top of the Roman baths, according to Demetrio de los Ríos and Serrano (1884). In the central part, the floor plan of the Romanesque cathedral underneath the current Gothic style.

Regarding the history of the Leonese wall, in that same year 916 documentation mentions the Puerta del Conde [*trans.* Count)⁸¹⁸, currently known as Puerta Castillo, due to the gate being on the northern wall of the Castle⁸¹⁹, held by a count mentioned in documents from the first half of the 10th century. Later Medieval Diplomats named the castle indistinctly with that name or with that of Torres de León, a plural that would already imply the current configuration of the building, reusing two *cubos* from the late wall. Likewise, archaeology has shown that prior to the construction of the castle, they took advantage of two pre-existing “towers” and the section of wall located between the

⁸¹⁸ MORAIS VALLEJO 2005, pp. 135-160.

⁸¹⁹ It would be the so-called Torre del Conde, in the north of the city. In Roman times there was a cistern there into which the water conduit supplying León flowed. Furthermore, in this period the Torre was a prison. Ordoño II held there the Castilian counts after the defeat of Valdejunquera (920), and Ramiro II held his brother Alfonso IV de León (931) prisoner there as well as the count Fernán González (943-935).

two. It is precisely in this section, when the Towers were rebuilt, the crack between the Roman wall and that of the *cubos* was filled in.

Ramiro II⁸²⁰ maintained power for two decades (931-951) during which he managed to reconquer Soria and defeat the Muslims in the battle of Simancas (Valladolid) on 1st August 939 and the subsequent rout of Alhándega (Soria)⁸²¹. This warlike campaign was crucial to stopping the Caliphate of Córdoba expanding towards Europe, allowing the immediate repopulation in the areas south of the River Duero: Salamanca, Ledesma, Baños, Rivas, Peña and Sepúlveda (Segovia). King Ramiro II commissioned Fernán González⁸²² to recolonize the area, the same count of Castile who in 932 had become independent from the Kingdom of León, making the Cea and Valderaduey rivers a border line in Tierra de Campos⁸²³. This limit would be fortified during the civil war between Ramiro II and his brother Alfonso IV (supported by the Banu Gómez and the Ansúrez) to contain the Castilian advance allied with the Navarrese dynasty against one of their sons and successors, Ordoño III (the other was Sancho I).



Fig.118. Cruz de Peñalba, Mozarabic goldsmith's piece made in brass (aurichalcum), with an inscription of Ramiro II on the back. León Museum.

⁸²⁰ One of Ramiro II's supporters was Count Flain, mentioned by the Arab chronicler Ibn Hayyan in the *Muqtabis*: PÉREZ 2008, pp. 89-107.

⁸²¹ Ramiro II donated a cross to the monastery in Peñalba commemorating this victory.

⁸²² RODRÍGUEZ FERNÁNDEZ 1998, pp. 92-94.

⁸²³ GUTIÉRREZ GONZÁLEZ 1992, p. 37. IBN HAYYAN, [trans. 1981] VIGUERA and CORRIENTE, p. 244.

After the death of Ordoño III in 956, as his son the future Vermudo II was still a child, Sancho I *el Craso* acceded to the throne. The following year, Sancho's overweight condition prevented him from leading the defence of the city of León against Muslim pillage. As a result, the Castilian Count Fernán González, in agreement with part of the Galician nobility, crowned Ordoño IV despite the opposition of the city of León, and Ordoño entered León by force. Sancho I took refuge with his grandmother Toda from Navarra, who used her relationship with Abderramán III to obtain medical aid for him, in exchange for some border posts⁸²⁴.

King Sancho I is of great interest because he founded the monastery of the Cordoban martyr Saint Pelagius⁸²⁵ in León around 966. Saint Pelagius' relics were brought back by Sancho and would later be transferred to Oviedo. The relevance of its construction, built in the interior part of the western section of the wall, taking advantage possibly of an existing tower, lies in that it replaced the former palatine complex of San Salvador de Palat de Rey as a court monastery. This was also the origin of a new royal legal institution, non-existent in other medieval European monarchies, namely the *Infantazgo de San Pelayo*⁸²⁶, a wealthy manor whose patrimony was destined for unmarried infants or widowed queens as long as they were still emancipated. It was returned to the Leonese crown, generally upon the marriage of its owners without being able to be disposed of but could be increased with generous donations. After the murder of Sancho I, the boy king Ramiro III had two consecutive female regencies: that of his aunt Elvira Ramírez "the nun" and that of his mother Teresa Ansúrez, sister of the Count of Monzón, both supported by warring factions of the nobility. Elvira inherited the immense prestige of her father, besides the inheritance of the Infantazgo, and during her decade-long government she signed some diplomas as *Regina*⁸²⁷. Also noteworthy is the fact that her nephew, Ramiro III, was still given the title of King of León in the Byzantine

⁸²⁴ CEBALLOS-ESCALERA 2000, pp. 85, 98-99, 106-107.

⁸²⁵ *Crónica de XX reyes*, Libro III, Cap. XVIII.

⁸²⁶ The Infantazgo de San Pelayo was a juridical institution created at that time in history in the Kingdom of León guaranteeing the patrimony of women from the royal family, making them owners of their dominions while they remained unmarried. This would allow them to choose if they wished to enter into a policy of royal marriage alliances and so marry, or not have to do so. Their economic independence favoured artistic and architectural patronage in the Kingdom of León. Only some parts of Ibn Hayyan's work, the most important Andalusian historian of the period (d. 1076), has survived intact but all of it was used as a source by the North-African analyst Ibn 'Idhari, who wrote in 1313.

⁸²⁷ SÁEZ and SÁEZ, 1990, pp. 136-137, doc. 352, Archive of the Cathedral of León, 109, archive of the Monastery of San Antolín: sale of land in Coyanza dated 25th February 962.

way: *Ranimirus Flavius Princeps magnus basileus unctus* (Ramiro Flavio, great prince, anointed *Basileus*⁸²⁸). The kings of León were still considered, to all effects, Romans. Despite the fact that the kingdom was in female hands during the first decade, Islamic historiography⁸²⁹ narrates the continuous *fortifying* work (it is not clear if it means literally fortifying the city or reinforcing royal power) in León by the reigning infanta, Elvira Ramírez, as well as military exploits such as the defeat that the lieutenant San Rosendo inflicted on the Vikings on the Galician coast in 968, or the withdrawal of the siege of the castle of San Esteban de Gormáz (Soria) in 975 that led the Infanta Elvira to leave the regency in the hands of her sister-in-law, Queen Teresa. Teresa had to face a wave of Muslim raids led by the lieutenant of the boy Caliph Hisham II, the vizier *Abu'Amir Muhammad ben Abi 'Amir al-Ma'afiri*, called al-Mansur, the victorious Almanzor of Castilian heroic deeds. The wars for the Leonese throne between Ramiro III and his cousin Vermudo caused the latter to have to pact with forces from the Caliphate in order to keep his own troops, and when Ramiro III died, the Galician and Portuguese nobility managed to impose their candidate on the throne. Failure or breach of commitments made with Córdoba would favour the new policy of King Vermudo II. Both Western historians of Christian tradition⁸³⁰ and the Muslim ones agree that during the reign of Vermudo II (985-999), Almanzor devastated the Leonese cities in several waves (984-998). Most of the historians describe in detail how Almanzor devastated the walls of León and Astorga, and also those of many other towns.

⁸²⁸ CANTERA MONTENEGRO 2014, p. 480.

⁸²⁹ CODERA Y ZAIDÍN 1917 [reed. 2005], p. 248: "(...) the Banu Gómez, Señores of Álava and the castles, along with others, who surrounded the castle with an army of 60,000 men, and even said to be more, an army consisting of a host of infidels sent by their King Ramiro ben Sancho ben Ramiro, leader of their coalition, the aid sent to them considering it late and weak for the purpose, claiming they were powerless and reproaching them when they could not take the castle. As a result, he had gone there from his seat of court, the city of León (...); he had gone there with a boisterous army, accompanied by his aunt, the unfaithful Elvira, the one who had broken the pact, the one who did not cease to strengthen it and seek its continuation; her spirit induced him to error in declaring the war, and he reached them with the son of his brother (Ramiro III), camped among the soldiers. (...) With this (with the presence of Doña Elvira) the spirit (of the Christians) was strengthened".

⁸³⁰ LINEHAN 1993, p. 81; GUTIÉRREZ GONZÁLEZ 1992, p. 37

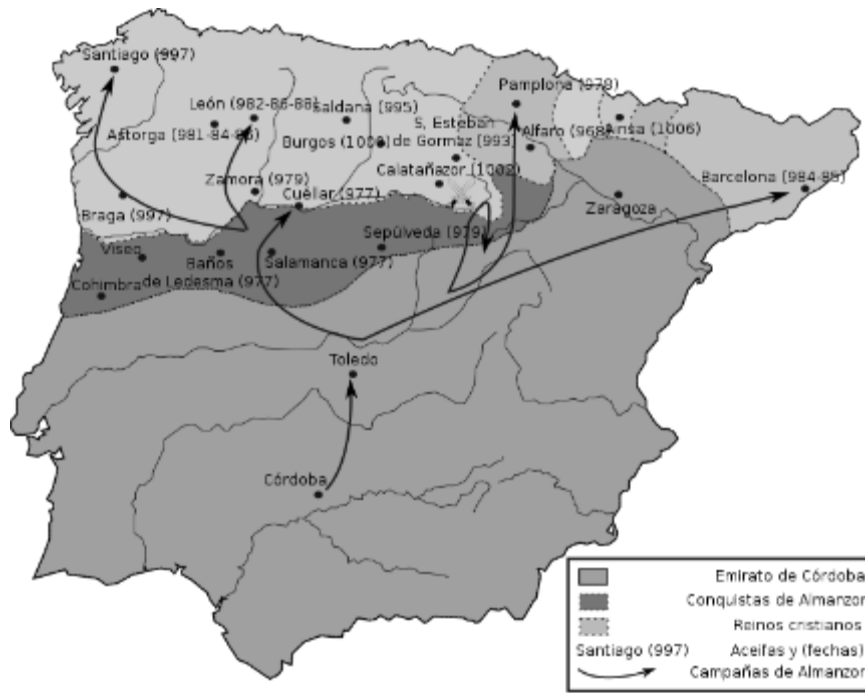


Fig. 119. Map of Almanzor's campaigns at the end of the 10th century

In this sense, Millán Abad⁸³¹ associated the destruction of Coyanza with those of Sahagún and San Pedro de Eslonza, Astorga and León by Almanzor, whose death in 1002 weakened the government of Al-Andalus allowing Alfonso V to restore its defences. Coyanza and Sahagún would serve to control the territory between the Cea and Pisuerga rivers that the Leonese kingdom disputed with the County of Castile –still in existence– and also as centres of the conquering and repopulating advance southwards. He gives a fairly approximate date for the re-fortification of Coyanza in the first twenty-eight years of the 11th century, based on a document of donation from the town of Coyanza and its "old castle" by King Alfonso V to his daughter Doña Sancha, within the aforementioned institution of the Infantazgo of León.

⁸³¹ MILLÁN ABAD 1990, p. 64. This researcher reached these conclusions via the information provided in a letter of donation from Doña Urraca of six churches in Coyanza to the diocese of Oviedo on 2nd December 1118, some of which the letter places inside the walls and others outside. Comparing this with the situation of the churches inside the walls at the time of Alfonso III, the old church of San Salvador, which was inside the enclosure, is now outside.



Fig. 120. Image of the castle of Valencia Don Juan on the east bank of the River Esla, around 1928, with remains of the wall that has disappeared.

When Almanzor destroyed the ancient walls of the city of León, he left only one tower standing on the northern section⁸³². This destruction of transcendental relevance for the history of the Leonese fortifications led Vermudo II (985-999) to transfer the capital to Astorga at least between 988 and 995, so it cannot be doubted that after this episode the city of León and its walls were rebuilt. Vermudo II died and was buried in Villabuena del Bierzo in 999⁸³³ so it is probable that on that date León was not yet fortified.

Alfonso V began his reign around the age of five (999-1028), so the regency remained in the hands of his mother Queen Elvira García⁸³⁴, sister of Count Sancho de Castilla, while her son was raised in Galicia by his tutor, Count Menendo González, whom

⁸³² FERNÁNDEZ ORDÁS 2001, *Intervención arqueológica en el Archivo Histórico Provincial*, included in the project of works, improving the access, functionality and evacuation of the building. Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte. (Unpublished report. Servicio Territorial de Cultura, Junta de Castilla y León); FERNÁNDEZ ORDÁS; GÓNZALEZ FERNÁNDEZ 2001, *Lectura muraria de la Cerca Medieval de la ciudad de León*, (Unpublished report. Servicio Territorial de Cultura, Junta de Castilla y León); *Id.* (2001) *Intervención Arqueológica en la Urbanización de las Calle Las Cercas de León, Ayuntamiento de León* (Unpublished report. Servicio Territorial de Cultura, Junta de Castilla y León); *Id.* 2001, *Informe del Seguimiento y Documentación Arqueológica en la Urbanización del espacio público con salida a la calle Puerta Moneda anejo a la Cerca Medieval en León*, (Unpublished report. Servicio Territorial de Cultura, Junta de Castilla y León).

⁸³³ RODRÍGUEZ GONZÁLEZ and DURANY CASTRILLO 1998, pp. 70-71: the name of the place at that time was *Palacio* and in the 11th century the toponym Villabuena del Bierzo started to be used. In 972 Vermudo II donated this town of *Palacio* to the Monastery of Carracedo.

⁸³⁴ FLÓREZ 1859, p. 3-6; PEREZ DE URBEL 1952, pp. 344- 345, paragraph 30 in the Silense recension.

the king calls in a document, still in Roman fashion, "*dux* of Galicia, who was my *vicarius*". He began to govern as a teenager at the age of fourteen in the year 1008, when the Galician count died, and he came of age. After his previous supporter had died, the Curia Regia established a new legal framework, a major change, with the promulgation of the Fuero de León of 1017⁸³⁵, which was decreed in a *concilium* gathered in the Cathedral in León in the year 1020. This Fuero has been deemed the legal sanction of a singular Leonese proto-feudalism. For centuries Alfonso V has been considered the promoter of the construction of the wall of *cubos*⁸³⁶ but, with the revisionist tendencies of the end of the 20th century, the Leonese wall of *cubos* went from being considered a medieval wall to a Late Roman one during the Tetrarchy, with weak arguments and typological conjectures continually repeated. This important construction work by Alfonso V has been dismissed due to its poor quality⁸³⁷ because the documentation has been interpreted as the wall having been made out of *mud and wood*⁸³⁸.

The role of the women in the royal line of León, the first Spanish queens in their own right, has also been underestimated, like in the case of Alfonso V's daughter, Sancha I of León, whose work as promoter and patron of Early Medieval construction is well known, but her marriage to King Ferdinand I has relegated her importance in history for centuries; or her great-great-granddaughter Queen Urraca I, whose governments are often

⁸³⁵ *DECRETA ADEFONSI REGIS* and *FUERO DE LEÓN* in CORONAS GONZÁLEZ, 2018, p. 39: "(...) with the news of Vermudo II's inquiry carried out through his executioners after the devastation suffered in the times of Almanzor, p.61: [Decreta] XIII And when King Vermudo occupied his oppressed kingdom, his executioners travelling the length of his territory, (he ordered), he who was *iunior* to serve within the jurisdiction and he who was under the *behetría* to go where he wished. But the lands that were not taken as part of the jurisdiction, no inquiries are to be made; p. 71: (...) [Decreta] XXI We also order that the city of León, which was depopulated by the Saracens in the days of my father King Vermudo, let it be repopulated by means of these *Fueros* given below and that may these *Fueros* never and in perpetuity be infringed. We order therefore that no *iunior*, barrel-maker, weaver [he who uses a winnowing fork (...)] and comes to dwell in León, let him not be taken therefrom; p. 75: (...) [Decreta] XXVIII Every man [among the] inhabitants of the places written below in Santa Marta, in Quintanillas de Vía de Cea, in Cien Fuentes, in Villa Áurea, in Villa Feliz and in Las Milleras, and in Cascantes, in Villavelite, and in Villar de Mazarife, and in Valle de Ardón and in San Julián, as a result of the battles held with the Leonese, let them come to León or receive and make judgement and in time of battle and war, let them come to León to guard the walls of the city and restore them as citizens of León, and let them not pay gate tolls for the things sold therein. [Decreta] XXX All the dwellers therein and those outside the walls of the said city, let them have and use always one same Fuero, and let them come on the first day of Lent to the Chapter of Santa María de Regla and set up the measures of bread, wine and meat and the price of their labours in order that all the city may have justice made that year.

⁸³⁶ ÁLVAREZ DE LA BRAÑA 1902, p. 5.

⁸³⁷ WILLIAMS 2011, p. 426, Note 54.

⁸³⁸ GUTIÉRREZ GONZÁLEZ 1992, p. 37: "The later reconstruction of the walls and gates of the city of León "*of mud and wood*" by Alfonso V, according to the chroniclers, could not have been of great sturdiness, judging by the ease with which Fernando I entered the city in 1037".

ignored, overlapping with those of her husbands or children. And not only the women of the royal family endowed economically with the fabulous patrimony of the Infantazgo de San Pelayo were underestimated but also countesses such as the powerful Doña Sancha, *comitissa* in León who, before her violent death in 1045, appears in the documentation founding the Monastery of San Antolín or endowing work in the Cathedral; or her antithesis, Countess Estefanía Ramírez, daughter of Count Ramiro Froilaz who endowed the Cistercian Monastery of Santa María de Carrizo de la Ribera (León) after widowing in 1174 with the death of her husband Count Ponce de Minerva, who a few years earlier had founded another Cistercian monastery, that of Santa María de Sandoval⁸³⁹.

On the other hand, the use of the towers on the medieval walls of León by high nobility and the church was common practice⁸⁴⁰ throughout the Middle Ages, through a union fruitful for both its occupants and for the defence of the city. In this context, it is necessary to cite a diploma from the Archive of the Cathedral of León that records the creation of a palace using two *cubos* on the wall⁸⁴¹, a palace located in the vicinity of the southern gate of the Roman enclosure, on its flanking towers, and which some authors have identified with the Castle or Torres de León⁸⁴². On 28th September 1011, Munio Fernández and his wife Elvira founded the Monastery of San Juan Bautista in León (Archive of the Cathedral of León III, doc. 701)⁸⁴³ “*intus municione muri (...) et in ipso solare stant duas turres in murum antiquissimum*”. This implies that the wall of *cubos* was already completed or restored during the regency of Queen Elvira García (999-1008), in the time of Alfonso V, and that at least some towers of the ancient Roman wall were still standing a thousand years after their construction. Although the documentation describes the signing of a peace between Christians and Muslims in Sahagún in 1003 that would last until 1005, it also describes a new attack by Abd-al-Malik on León in 1004⁸⁴⁴, which

⁸³⁹ MARIÑO VEIRAS 2008, p. 131.

⁸⁴⁰ SÁNCHEZ-ALBORNOZ Y MENDUIÑA 1965, p. 163: “Its Roman walls, which had resisted the weight of almost ten centuries, were pulled down; (...)”.

⁸⁴¹ RISCO 1792, p. 143. Padre Risco mentions that in the first twenty years of the 11th century they were rebuilt and several new buildings were built, pointing out that among them there was *a sumptuous palace on a plot that had two towers from the old wall*, built by Count Munio Fernández and his wife Doña Elvira; FLÓREZ, 1859, p. 11. Padre Flórez states that the monastery bordered on the gate of Arco de Rege and the Monastery of San Salvador, and this makes us believe that in effect neither Almanzor nor Abdemelic threw down the walls of León in their entirety; MORILLO CERDÁN and CABELLO DURÁN 2017, p. 16.

⁸⁴² MORAIS VALLEJO 2005, pp. 135-160.

⁸⁴³ RUIZ ASENCIO 1990a, pp. 252-254; SÁEZ, E. and SÁEZ SÁNCHEZ, C. 1990; PÉREZ 2014, pp. 17-18; GALVÁN FREILE and TORRES SEVILLA 1995, pp. 9-30.

⁸⁴⁴ PUENTE LÓPEZ 2010, p. 153. MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ 1981, pp. 121-126: “*filius eius [Almanzor] nomine Adamelchi regis uinit cum agarenis multis et cum christianis exiliatis, obseditque ciuitates scilicet*

would leave the city depopulated for five years, so the year 1011 remains the possible *terminus ante quem*. Even today, if we look at the base of the Torre de San Isidoro or Torre del Gallo, built on a previous quadrangular base of the wall between two *cubos*, we realize that the section of this wall is superimposed on the masonry of the quadrangular based tower. This is why, in addition to the *Legio VI* mark on one of the ashlar of the masonry on its lower body, hitherto unpublished and described above, it seems clear that the origin of the tower is Roman. The first body from the base upwards also shows a different angle from the expected right angle formed by the tower when joining the wall of *cubos* into which it is integrated. Because it was previous to the section of the wall, the second body of the tower had to be turned by means of a triple step offsetting successive courses. The tower of San Isidoro might have been built on the basis of the previous Roman fortification, perhaps a flanking tower of an entry gate to the Roman camp.

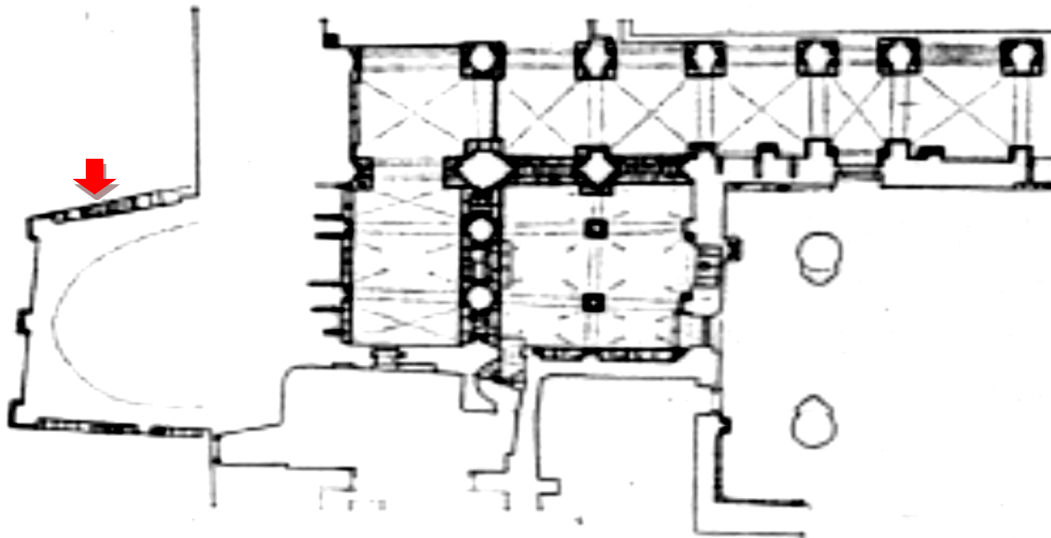


Fig.121. Plan of San Isidoro attached to the wall, published in 1973 by J. Williams⁸⁴⁵. In red, the location of the ashlar in the tower of San Isidoro, with the brand “VI”, still not researched.

Legionem et Astoricam et cepit eas. Omnisque turres Astorice destruxit aliquantum turres uero Legionis precipitauit, sed portas eius a fundamento destruxit”; as well as taking many prisoners before returning to Córdoba, the city was left depopulated for five years: “*et memorata urbs Legio stetit depopulata ferre V annis*”.

⁸⁴⁵ WILLIAMS 1973, pp. 171-184.



Fig. 122. Photograph of the base of the tower of San Isidoro (León) of Roman origin to which a section of the medieval wall is attached. Ashlar position with *Legio VI* mark [*hispaniensis*].

Archaeological studies also refer to the aforementioned Roman past of the so-called Torre del Gallo of the Royal Collegiate Church attached to, and at the same time forming part of the wall of *cubos* at the back, and historiography adds data about its

*arcisterium*⁸⁴⁶, previous to the Collegiate of San Isidoro. It was ruined by Almanzor and then rebuilt by King Alfonso V (999-1028), who had the remains of his ancestors moved there and where he himself decided to be buried⁸⁴⁷. In addition to restoring this ecclesiastical complex, this monarch claimed for himself the refortification of the city of León, which is described as building the gates of the walls in wood and earth⁸⁴⁸. The historiographical interpretation of this construction *ex luto et ligno* also merits review. Continuing in the same historical context, the documentation shows us that a few years later, Count Munio Fernández's daughter, Countess Sancha Muñiz, inherited the Monastery of San Juan Bautista and also founded two others in the city of León, those of San Salvador and San Antolín donated to the cathedral while still living, while that of San Juan Bautista, erected by her father Count Munio Fernández would be handed over to the see by her sister-in-law, Countess Utrozia⁸⁴⁹, after the violent death of Countess Sancha in 1044. In the northwest corner of the Roman wall, a church also dedicated to San Juan Bautista together with the adjoining Monastery of San Pelayo were the origins of the later San Isidoro, founded in 1063 and which remains today situated in the northwest corner of the walled enclosure. The relevance of this diploma is that it points to the construction of the wall of *cubos* before the time lapse between 1080 and 1100. This is the date given for the fortification with *cubos* in León by Juan A. Paz Peralta⁸⁵⁰ in a comparative study of the walls of Zaragoza, estimating them as a paradigm of military architecture in Al-Ándalus⁸⁵¹, but built at a later date than the wall of *cubos* in León. All in all, the thesis of J.A. Paz Peralta has marked a before and after in the studies of ancient and medieval Hispanic fortifications, for the brilliant association with Aquitaine polyorctic influence and, in general French influence, transmitted through the Christian kingdoms. However, the consideration of Zaragoza as a paradigm must be qualified as well as its possible

⁸⁴⁶ *Arcisterium* was used to describe an Early Medieval Leonese Church institution. A text can be found dated 1st March 1028 that, quoting Antonio López Ferreiro (1899), C. Sánchez Albornoz published in Appendix to the *Historia de Santiago*, no. 217: Doña Teresa, Vermudo II's daughter, mentions a "*corte mea propria quam habeo intus murus civitatis legionis ad portam quam dicunt de comité ad partem aquilonis non procul acisterio sci. Pelagii martiris et sci. Iohannis baptiste, do atque offero uobis ipsam cortem cum Ecclesia ibi constructa sci. Emiliani cum casis, superatis, orto concluso et intus puteus et arbores fructuosas...*", doc. 93 from the Tumbo A of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela; LUCAS ÁLVAREZ 1998, Teresa appears also in the docs. 90 and 94 and signed in 66 (1028).

⁸⁴⁷ FALQUE REY 2009, p. 275 (CC, CM, LXXIV) IV, 43.

⁸⁴⁸ FLÓREZ 1859, pp. 19-21.

⁸⁴⁹ RUIZ ASENSIO 1990, Vol. III, doc. 1010.

⁸⁵⁰ PAZ PERALTA 2015, p. 277.

⁸⁵¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 289-291.

influence on the peninsular fortifications that were either being erected or constantly rebuilt because, as we demonstrate here, the wall of *cubos* in León is at least half a century before the date he proposed, for he contends that it was already built in the time of Alfonso VI, *Imperator totius Hispaniae*. He was the most powerful monarch in the Iberian Peninsula leaving aside the “political, military, scientific and cultural importance of the Taifa of Zaragoza during the rule of al-Muqtadir”. But it should not be forgotten that when the wall of *cubos* was erected, the Zaragoza Taifa did not as yet exist. And it is true that the medieval walls of *cubos* might well have developed from the Umayyad desert palaces although it should not be forgotten that these in turn derived from the Roman fortifications on the border area, known as *limes arabicus*. On the other hand, both if Zaragoza was conquered in the year 1067 by a nobleman of the Leonese Díaz lineage, Rodrigo Díaz (the *Campeador* of the *Cantares de Gesta*⁸⁵²), or if it was conquered in 1081 by the successor of Al Muqtádir Al-Mutamán with the help of the same Sidi (lord) –who was at the service of this Banu Hud king until 1086–, it is possible that the Leonese wall was the model which Zaragoza imitated, and not the other way around.

Bishop Lucas de Tuy was commissioned around 1238⁸⁵³ to write a world history by another queen of León, Berenguela, wife of Alfonso IX⁸⁵⁴. This chronicle –which was used as the source for the moment in question by the one already reviewed by Sampiro– would soon be translated into Castilian, perhaps at the end of the same 13th century. That Latin original text was perhaps the reason for a misunderstanding that has been repeated in Leonese historiography to date: the construction of "mud and wood" (*Chronicum Mundi*, ff. 153r-153v.): “...reedificauit omnes portas eiusdem ciuitatis ex luto et ligno, et dedito el bonos foros”. Thus, using the edition of the *Chronicum Mundi* prepared in 1926 by Julio Puyol⁸⁵⁵ we are interested in the following paragraph, from chapter XLIII:

"But King Alfonso ordered a council with the bishops and counts and their authorities in the era of one thousand and fifty-eight [year 1020]; [and] populated the city of León, which, as was said, had been depopulated by Almançor, King of the Moors; and he built again all the gates in that city of mud and linen; and gave them good privileges."

⁸⁵² Concerning the genealogy of El Cid in the noble Leonese Flaínez family, see TORRES SEVILLA 2002, pp. 343-360.

⁸⁵³ JÉREZ CABRERO 2006.

⁸⁵⁴ CUEVAS ALLER (2017) in the *Diario de León* 19-09-2017.

⁸⁵⁵ PUYOL Y ALONSO, J. (1926) *Crónica de España por Lucas, obispo de Tuy*, Ed. Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid,

If we use an archaeological methodology to verify the excellent translation of J. Puyol, we find that in this version that has come down to us from the *Chronicon mundi*, the English expression “lost in translation” is appropriate to define what happened in that period with the Latin versions. Such can also be deduced from reading the interesting article by M. Castillo Lluh⁸⁵⁶ about Alfonso X's translations: the meaning is sometimes diluted, when it is not changed completely due to the translator's lack of knowledge, or that of the secondary copyists. Lucas de Tuy described the construction materials of San Juan Bautista with the words *ex luto et latere*. However, for the walls he uses the words gates, mud and wood (*sic*) according to the translation. Regarding the expression of mud and wood, Julio Puyol translates it this way but makes it clear in a footnote that the word used by Lucas de Tuy is not "wood", but "linen": the Lucas de Tuy original text (or that of a later copyist) that author handled stated “mud and linen”. It is obvious that linen as a construction material for the gates in the wall is not appropriate, so J. Puyol interpreted the text in an intelligible way, perhaps without realizing that there could have been a misinterpretation of the word “linen”, which in the original, *ligno*, could have derived from the Latin word *linleo* (nominative “linleum”) neutral noun, which means canvas [in Spanish *lienzo*] or cloth. Lucas de Tuy could well have described a stretch [in Spanish also *lienzo*] of rammed earth or concrete formwork, using this term in a broad sense, of materials that set from the liquid state, and hence the expression “mud”. This would also fit with the reference to the gates, these being the wooden formwork, since archaeologically, we do not know more associated mud and wood building materials in the Leonese wall other than that of the *vallum* of the first Roman wall, built a thousand years before the one built during the reign of Alfonso V. On the wall of around the year 1000, according to Lucas de Tuy, gates were rebuilt on the wall in “mud and linen (*sic*)”, which, for construction work, makes little sense: perhaps a copyist, lacking basic knowledge of carpentry and masonry, did not know how to articulate the order of the Latin words, and by changing "gates" in the sentence, he could have said that "the walls were rebuilt with wooden gates and mud". That means with wooden formwork in which the mud was set, which seems to indicate a formwork technique that perfectly matches the remnants of concrete overflows⁸⁵⁷ that have been documented in the *cubos* of the wall. Along with this hypothesis of exchange of terms, another alternative hypothesis may be

⁸⁵⁶ CASTILLO LLUCH 2008, pp. 289-320; *Id.* 2006, pp. 497-508.

⁸⁵⁷ CANIVELL GARCÍA DE PAREDES 2013.

proposed: that the translation of “mud and linen” could come from a wrong transcription of “*lodo ex lino*”, perhaps a *hapax legomenon* instead of “*lodo ex linteo*”, “mud canvas”, the mud referring probably to the wet consistency of the formwork of *calce et lapidibus*⁸⁵⁸, materials with which Lucas de Tuy himself must have referred to said period walls of Alfonso V, according to the translation that has come down to us from the Lucas de Tuy’s *Chronicle* through the “España Sagrada” by Padre Flórez, who perhaps had a different edition of the *Chronicon Mundi*. It is usually interpreted that Lucas de Tuy would use the expression *calce et lapidibus* for the repair works on the wall of Alfonso IX. What is not usually considered is the very high probability that the repair, to avoid a collapse of the entire wall, would use the same process and building materials as the previous masters of works.

In addition to this relevant elucidation of a long-held error⁸⁵⁹ to minimise construction undertaken during the reign of Elvira García and her son Alfonso V, we can extract from this text two other testimonies that support this thesis. In the first place, Lucas de Tuy says about this king that he “populated the city” of León⁸⁶⁰, at a time when there was a very clear difference between “city” and “borough”, as both Spanish and French historiography has pointed out. And “populating” had implicit a series of legal and urban circumstances, among which the provision of walls was important. Therefore, Lucas de Tuy does not refer to the medieval boundary walls⁸⁶¹ of the city of León, but to the walls that replaced the ancient Early Imperial Roman walls. The question that still remains is if in this new construction of the wall, the *cubos* were erected *ex novo*, or if these *cubos* were already present on a previous wall and razed by Almanzor. The recent discovery⁸⁶² of one of the towers on the southern gate of the Leonese camp, in Calle Platerías 7, where archaeological research has not detected any construction phase between that of the Early Imperial ashlar tower and the Later Medieval stage built around the 10th-11th centuries. It seems that at present, this is an argument in favour of a High Medieval construction of the wall of *cubos*. On the other hand, in this same paragraph, Lucas de Tuy attributes the

⁸⁵⁸ MUÑOZ VILLAREJO *et alii* 2013, p. 316.

⁸⁵⁹ MUÑOZ VILLAREJO *et alii* 2013, pp. 313-327.

⁸⁶⁰ Alfonso V’s epitaph in San Isidoro in León emphasized this merit: “*Hic iacet rex Adefonsus, qui populavit Legionem post destructionem Almanzor dedit bonos foros, fecit ecclesiam hanc de luto, latere. Habuit praelia cum sarracenis, et interfectus est sagitta apud Viseum in Portugal, fuit filius regis Veremundi Ordonii. Obiit era M sexagesima quinta, tertio nonas maii*”. (MARTÍN LÓPEZ, 2004, p. 953).

⁸⁶¹ BENITO RUANO (1978), pp. 25-40.

⁸⁶² MORILLO CERDÁN and CABELLO DURÁN 2017.

creation of the Church of San Juan Bautista (“he also built the Church of Sant Juan Bautista in this city *ex luto et latere*”), literally in clay and brick, despite that, as we have already seen, the documentation indicates that in 1011 a monastery of the same name was founded by Count Munio Fernández, who later fell out of favour with Alfonso V, losing the royal prerogative to occupy the *cubos* of the wall with a monastery of his own property, a circumstance that the chronicler omits, attributing the foundation to the king himself. The lack of coin minting by the Leonese kings before Alfonso VI makes it difficult, with current data, to obtain accurate archaeological dating⁸⁶³.

Assigning a later date than the traditional medieval timing to the wall of *cubos* has one last argument against it in the well-documented “building in stone” of royal constructions by the Asturian-Leonese monarchy, which appears to link up with the Visigothic groups “*domus regiae-domus Domini*” like in Reccopolis (Zorita de los Canes, Guadalajara) or the Asturian sites of Santa María del Naranco and Oviedo. Perhaps there might also have been palaces associated with the current Asturian churches of Santa Cristina de Lena, Santullano or San Salvador de Valdediós⁸⁶⁴.

As an epilogue, a reference to the later influence of the Leonese fortifications beyond the Iberian Peninsula: namely in the 12th century the castle of Toron was built as part of the border strategy of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem⁸⁶⁵. Rodrigo González de Lara built it, according to the *Chronica Adefonsus Imperatoris* (*Chr. Adef. I*, 48.5)⁸⁶⁶, vassal of the Leonese Emperor Alfonso VII. Before leaving in 1137 for the Holy Land, he had been the castle-keeper of the Torres de León in 1126 (*Chr. Adef. I*, 3)⁸⁶⁷. Faced with

⁸⁶³ FUENTES GANZO 2007, p. 54.

⁸⁶⁴ RODRÍGUEZ LÓPEZ 2017.

⁸⁶⁵ KEDAR 2017, p.57, publishes the ground plan of the Castle of Latrun, whose similarity with the Panteón Real in San Isidoro is striking.

⁸⁶⁶ MAYA SÁNCHEZ, A. (1990): *Chronica Adefonso Imperatoris*, p. 172: “Comes vero Rodericus Gundisalvi, posquam osculatus est manum regis et amicis suis valere dixit, peregre prefectus est Hierosilimis, ubi et commisit multa bella cum Sarracenis fecitque quoddam castellum valde fortissimum a facie Ascalonie quod dicitur Toron, et muniuit eum valde militibus et peditibus et escis tradens illud militibus Templi”. PÉREZ GONZÁLEZ, M. (1997) *Crónica del emperador Alfonso VII: introducción, traducción, notas e índices*, Ed. Universidad de León, pp. 78, 199.

⁸⁶⁷ “Post multas autem colloquutiones rex ad eos, qui adhuc in turribus rebelles erant, duos comites praedictos, Adefonsum et Suarium, cum Didaco episcopo misit dicens: “Pacifice vos suscipiam et eritis magni in regno meo, si turres michi sine bello tradideritis”. At illi, qui in turribus erant, postquam se turres non reddere multoties iureiurando asseruerunt, hunc et regnare super se nolle se adiecerunt. Cor autem eorum erat spem habens in comite Petro Laurentii et in fratre eius Roderico Gonsalvi Castellanis, qui guerram potius quam pacem cum rege sese habere malebant.” In the same chronicle, Alfonso Jordán appears in 1126 helping his cousin Alfonso VII to accede to the throne upon taking the Torres de León and handing them over.

the traditional identification of Toron of the Knights with the ruins of Latrun (*Toronum militum*) halfway between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, M. Ehrlich published a new hypothesis in 2015 proposing its identification with the ruins of the castle in Summil, in the nearby territory of the Roman *Eleutheropolis*, the *Beit Guvrin*⁸⁶⁸ or *Gibelin* of the Crusaders (25 kilometres from Ascalon, in present-day Israel)⁸⁶⁹, recognizing Count Rodrigo González de Lara⁸⁷⁰ as its builder. The place name Turón is repeated in León, Asturias, Granada and Málaga as well as Toron in the Kingdom of Jerusalem and with it, the presumed locations of the castle. R. Martínez Ortega's philological proposal⁸⁷¹ places it south of Beirut (current Lebanon), on the left bank of the Wadi Haeir, identifying it with “the old *Tibnin* of the Arabs, the *Teron* of the Crusades, *Turinum* and *Turo militum* of the old maps”. W. M. Thompson⁸⁷² noted in 1888, in his unrepeatable *The Land and the Book*, that the castle of Tibnin “figures in the wars of the Crusades, by whom it was called Toron”. Whatever the location of the Toron built by Count Rodrigo González, the castle was handed over to the Templar Order and seems to have been contemporary with that of Krac des Chevaliers⁸⁷³, in the hands of the Knights Hospitallers of Saint John of Jerusalem from 1150.

In León at that time other new walls began to be built surrounding the southern suburbs of the city, starting with the fortification of the Barrio de San Martín, the Plazas del Pan, the Tiendas and La Picota, and the new Jewish quarter, whose gate in Cal de Moros is still in the apsidal layout of this wall, fossilized in the city map of León, and whose south-eastern section would form part of the Late Medieval boundary walls. But that is another story...

⁸⁶⁸ Beit Guvrin and Eleutheropolis appear identified on the map of the Holy Land published by Rev. W. McClure THOMPSON, (1888), *The Land and the Book*, London, after 30 years as missionary in Syria and Palestine. In fact, he identifies also *Betogabra* and *Gath* with *Eleutheropolis*. V. PIANA, and CARLSSON, 2016, p. 69; PIANA 2016; pp. 437-459. PIANA 2006, pp. 173-191; PIANA and CURVERS 2004, pp. 333-356; CURVERS and STUART 2004, pp. 9-20. In general, historiography has considered the Frank, Hugo de Saint Omar, as the founder of Toron around 1105 and years after he became *Señor* of Toron, whose first holder was Onfroy or Humphrey I of Toron.

⁸⁶⁹ Near the Castle of Summil there was a Frankish settlement, *Casale Sancti Salvatoris*.

⁸⁷⁰ FERNÁNDEZ DE NAVARRETE 1986, p. 9: who identifies him with Rodrigo González de Girón.

⁸⁷¹ MARTÍNEZ ORTEGA 1998, pp. 139-140. He gives the location of Toron according to the British Encyclopedia in Tibnin basing it on the fact that the *Crónica de Alfonso* does not say that Toron “is near” Ascalon, but uses the expression *a facie*, “in the face of”. Tibnin is 78 kilometres to the south of Beirut (Lebanon).

⁸⁷² THOMPSON W. McClure 1888, *The Land and the Book*, p. 210.

⁸⁷³ Krak des Chevaliers, Qal 'at al-Ḥiṣn.



Fig.123. Aerial photograph of León (around 1960), with the first extension of the fortified enclosure to the south, in apsidal shape, fossilized in the urban framework of the city.

CONCLUSIONS

The critical reinterpretation of the archaeological discoveries of recent years has opened a debate that should not be considered closed with this work. Based on a direct reading of the sources, it offers primarily a new reasoning for the data that Strabo provides (III, 4, 20). Two decades after the integrative theory of C. Fernández Ochoa, the contextualization of the advances of Roman military deployment in *Asturia Cismontana* at the end of the 1st century BC has changed the interpretation of this text. Several dozen camps of conquest related to the Cantabrian and Asturian Wars have been discovered, mostly in mountain areas between the current provinces of León, Orense, Lugo and Asturias, controlling strategic mountain passes between the gold mining area and the coast. The known data indicates that the legionary advance was made from the banks of the Duero northwards, in a south to north direction and not from the east of the Peninsula as various hypotheses had proposed, leaving aside the strategically unlikely fact that they would be pushing the still not subjected native population to concentrate precisely in the richest gold areas of Hispania. The military initiative could have spearheaded from the navigable section of the River Duero, where a concentration of Roman camps has been confirmed in connection with the conquest of Asturian territory, between the current provinces of Zamora and León in the years 26-25 BC, with two bases well defined and almost equidistant from the Asturian fortification of Arrabalde (Zamora), the probable capital of Lancia:

– One from around Rosinos de Vidriales (Zamora), a *castrum hibernum* in *Petavonium* and a probable *castrum aestivum* in Valmoro (Cunquilla de Vidriales). In the same province of Zamora, camps in Los Tesoros (Villaveza del Agua), San Adrián (Granucillo) and the hamlet of El Priorato (in Arcos de la Polvorosa, on the River Esla) as well as Villalazán (Madridanos).

– Another from Castrocalbón (León), with several *castra aestiva* enclosures, in which the *Cohors IIII Gallorum*, an auxiliary unit of the *Legio X Gemina*, was quartered. To the Northwest in La Cabrera, seasonal campsites are known in the municipality of Truchas, with a documented camp in Valdemeda (Manzaneda) and another in Quintanilla

de Yuso. To the Northeast, another campaign site was built in Huerga de Frailes (Villazala, León), on the left bank of the River Órbigo. Its location is strategic because within a radius of 15 kilometres from Castroalbón are the aforementioned archaeological sites of Las Labradas (Arrabalde) and Rosinos de Vidriales, both in the north of Zamora. In the south of the province of León, the gold mines of Castrocontrigo, the Asturian city of *Bedunia* (San Martín de Torres), the Roman camps of Villamontán de la Valduerna, and the village of Villalís de la Valduerna, associated with the gold deposits on the River Duerna and the foundation of the *Legio VII Gemina*. In Castroalbón, the existence of consecutive camps and at very close quarters had been interpreted diachronically or as a result of camp building practices. Their successive closures were attributed here to the Roman military strategy of not abandoning a camp in the hands of the enemy. It has been proposed that from there they would advance in a south to northwest direction to secure the León mining area of La Cabrera. It would continue along road XVII (Braga-Astorga) to the Villamontán de la Valduerna barracks (León), and would cross Los Ancares from south to north (between León, Asturias and Lugo). From the northwest of the current province of León, there are several non-exclusive possibilities:

a) An advance of the military initiative occurred in the west to east direction, with remains of *castra* found at both ends of the Sierra de los Ancares:

– to the North, in the camps of La Recacha and A Granda das Xarras (placed there for controlling natural mountain passes in the Sierra de los Ancares, between the provinces of Lugo, León and Asturias).

– to the South of the mountains, half-way between León and Lugo, those of the Serra da Casiña (Valverde, Balboa, León) and Campo de Circo or Cortiña dos Mouros, located between the Leonese villages of Castañeiras and Fontodoliva (Balboa) and Porcís (Cervantes), a village in Lugo province.

b) The conquest of the territory was carried out in an east to west direction penetrating into Galicia. In this case we also find a *castrum aestivum* a day's march away: The Monte dos Trollos camp (O Páramo, Lugo) located on a hill near a natural ford of the River Miño. The latest dating of the more than twenty Roman camps found so far in this area goes back to 19 BC.

c) Some alternatives have been considered for the advance of a third front towards the Via de la Mesa in the centre of Asturias, with a vanguard in the Navia River basin. Camps have been located in El Mouro (Grau-Miranda), El Pico el Outeiro (Taramundi, Vilanova d'Ozcos), A Pedra Dereta (Bual-Castripol) and El Chao de Carrubeiro (Bual). The Llaguezos, Curriechos and Carraceo roads have been found on the Via de La Carisa, and in the upper basin of the River Narcea there is a possible mountain camp in El Castiellu de Valláu (Cangas de Narcea), to which must be added the camp in Monte de Moyapán in the Sierra de Carondio (Ayande).

This partially validates Schulten's thesis because both the stable and the temporary camps were part of a combined (though not simultaneous) initiative of conquest in the Northwest, in the Astur-Cantabrian area between the years 29 and 19 BC. However, Syme's thesis, which practically excluded Galicia from the conflict, seems unlikely after the discoveries of the camp in Lugo, associated with the *Legio VI* and prior to the founding of the *urbs Lucus Augusti*, and the discoveries regarding the Roman conquest of the Sierra de El Caurel, between León and Galicia, and the Vilalba gold mines southeast of Lugo, whose control would be exercised from Roman camps such as those of *Aquae Querquennae* (Portoquintela, Bande, Orense), Cidadela (Sobrado dos Monxes, Coruña) and O Cornado (Negreira, Coruña). There was another spearhead of simultaneous penetration through the province of Orense, with marching camps in Penedo dos Lobos (Manzaneda) and Cabeza do Pau (Petín), in addition to a double one in Chaira da Maza (Lobeira). The hypothesis of a conquering advance also from west to east is endorsed by Roman camps in the province of Lugo in Monte de Ventín (Pol) and A Penaparda (A Fonsagrada) and three precincts in Cha de Santa Marta (Láncara, Sarriá, Lugo), where the troops would have gathered before heading towards the *Mons Medulius* mentioned in classical sources, the mines in Las Médulas del Bierzo in León.

The paradigm shift concerning the strategy of conquest of the territory of the *Astures* from the Southwest serves as an argument in the debate over the *Provincia Transduriana*, supposedly created temporarily by Augustus in 15 BC, as well as over the location of some Asturian and Roman population nuclei. This is the case of the capital of the Asturian *Lancienses* that historiography identified with the Roman *Lancia* (Villasabariego, León), an unfortified town that the *Antonine Itinerary* names as *Lance*, origin of the medieval toponyms of *Sublancia* and *Sollanzo*. It has been recognised for

more than a decade that this Lancia, a precinct without any vestige of fortification, has very few important pre-Roman remains. For this reason, this work adheres to the theory of N. Santos Yanguas who identified this capital of the *Astures* with Las Labradas (Arrabalde, Zamora), a hypothesis that archaeology has validated by confirming a double fortification there. Furthermore, the concentration of Roman camps in its surroundings during the Asturian wars in Rosinos de Vidriales (Zamora) and Castrocalbón (León) support this identification.

On the other hand, the medieval origins of some fortifications have been revised, those in the middle course of the River Esla, in the Leonese *Cantabria*, whose origin has been clearly shown to be Roman: Mansilla de las Mulas and Valencia de Don Juan (León) would form part of the military strategy to build bridgeheads with newly planned settlements on the main routes between the mining areas of the Northwest and the rest of Hispania. The same Roman strategic origin has been claimed for the medieval Castro de los Judíos, in the Leonese suburb of Puente Castro, reinterpreting the published archaeological data: the northern end of the hill holds houses of a *castellum*-type construction, which appears to have survived for a long time. The evolution of Astorga (León) was also analysed based on the results of a new archaeological excavation by the author: in Calle Obispo Alcolea there are three phases of fortification prior to the medieval walls of *cubos*. It is often claimed that the *Legio X Gemina* was quartered in the *Asturica Augusta* site before it became an *urbs*, but archaeological evidence seems to break the diachronic version based on the sources. Traces have appeared of several successive defensive enclosures in order to protect the hill. A synchronic hypothesis has been brought into the debate that a section of the *Legio X Gemina* was possibly quartered in the city of *Asturica Augusta* during the early years of the Empire. Astorga was the centre of the territorial organization of the Hispanic Northwest uninterruptedly until the middle of the 5th century and would be the seat of a Suebian bishopric in the following century. The analogies of its medieval wall of *cubos* with the Leonese one and with that of Castroventosa (Cacabelos, León), whose walled enclosure –with *cubos* in part of its irregular layout– have recently been dated between the 5th and 6th centuries AD. Lugo would be another of the Suebian bastions in Late Antiquity, enclosed in walls of *cubos* similar to the Leonese ones, leaving much of the Roman city outside the walls. By briefly reviewing the rest of the Roman fortifications in *Callaecia*, the revision of the Ciudadela

camp (Insúa, Sobrado dos Monxes, La Coruña) has led to propose the identification of this place as a permanent settlement of the *Cohors I Celtiberorum Equitata*, interpreting the “*Brigantiae, nunc Iuliobriga*” of the *Notitia Dignitatum* not as a transfer of the cohort from La Coruña to the *Iuliobriga* in Cantabria, but as a change of name from *Brigantiae* to *Iuliobriga*, which could be the Late Roman name for the Ciudadela camp.

The conclusions about the origins of the walls of León have developed remarkably after the historical and archaeological study of their evolution up to the year 1000, defending the possibility of a synchronic hypothesis that goes beyond the diachronic interpretation of four supposed Roman camp phases in the Leonese fortresses: only three are documented, two of them being Roman. Concerning the current interpretation about the construction of the first camp attributed to the *VI Victrix* legion, it has been concluded that it cannot be said whether it was the *Legio VI Hispaniensis* (the *VI* still did not carry the epithet *victrix*) that built an *ex novo* camp on the site of León. If it should be the case that the *Legio VI* had been quartered in full in *Lucus Augusti* during the years 25 and 24 BC, this date would then be the *terminus post quem* for its transfer to León. Although archaeological remains of the *Legio VI* have appeared occupying the León camp early on, such as coins with a re-stamping, there is evidence of several legions in the province of León during the Asturian Wars, quartered in temporary camps during their advance and in stable fortified compounds thereafter. These legions were the *X Gemina*, the *VI Hispaniensis*, the *V Alaudae*, without ruling out the quartering of troops from several of these legions simultaneously in the same barracks, or a short-lived presence of troops of the Augustan legions, I and II.

In León, the wooden and earth remains of the *vallum* have been interpreted so far diachronically as corresponding only to a first phase, Augustan or León I, of two successive ones made of earth. The second, defined as Tiberian or León II, whose wooden structure would fit between two supposed slopes made of sods, was a double-lined *agger* according to an imaginative interpretation that “suspects” a second facing of sods. The archaeological reality does not allow for this interpretation in two phases, because what has been documented is the footprint of a structure formed by two wooden fences with an interior land fill in the supposed Augustan phase of León I. However, in the so-called Tiberian phase or León II remains of only one low clay-block wall have been recovered, which could actually be the *agger* of phase I. What has been interpreted as an interior

padding of 80 centimetres width between the two facings may be no more than a deposition layer after having used the *agger*. The second refutation of this conclusion concerning the existence of a second earthen wall, made of *tapines* or sods (in short, earth and grass), is due precisely to its composition, ruling out the use of sods with a living green cover for a wall or *vallum*. For while a grass cover can hold together a thin block about 10 centimetres thick and hold up a height of less than 80 centimetres in of the possible *agger* of the *Legio VI*, this type of structure using *caespites* could never have resisted the thrusts from a *vallum* measuring several metres. Even less probable is the tectonic resistance of two supposed wall faces of sods (remembering that only archaeological remains of a single structure of earth blocks with plant remains between them have appeared) that would withstand thrusts of an interior infill for a hundred years until the arrival of the *Legio VII* in León.

In view of all of the above, a synchronic hypothesis has been proposed. Against the two presumed successive phases of walling (a first phase of double wooden wall with earth filling and another second phase carried out with the addition of two supposed walls made up of sods on both sides of the previous one), it should be considered that possibly only a single phase of the wall of wood and earth existed, a *vallum* with its corresponding *agger* (this, indeed, of clay blocks). This interpretation is supported by G. Carter's theoretical model for the Scottish *vallum*, although adapted to the findings of León's wooden structures and earth, where no double wooden posts appear but simple ones, and where what has been identified as grass from the sods can be defined as organic plant remains among the compacted clay-blocks of an *agger*.

Three new probable hypotheses are proposed concerning the primitive defensive system of León, all theoretical models based on a wall accompanied by a ditch and an *agger* made of compacted earth blocks:

1. That the primitive *vallum* was formed by a visible wooden palisade structure on its exposed face, attached to an earth embankment, perhaps by means of timber braces that connected them on higher levels, and whose rear part was also lined with wood. The only wall layer clearly of clay blocks –about 80 centimetres high– would be the *agger* associated with this *vallum*, both belonging to the same construction phase.

2. That in the primitive *vallum* the timber remains of the two palisades below ground level do not correspond to the total height of the aerial structures above the level

of circulation, but to a framework structure (two respective horizontal struts, two cofferdams or formwork, some type of box-shaped provisional enclosure), to support the thick clay-soil filling while it set. The palisade model could have been that of stretcher and header logs represented in Roman sculptural iconography, as developed for the British wall by G. Carter.

3. That in the primitive Leonese *vallum* the timber remains of the two palisades do not relate to the total length of the fortified compound, but to one tower attached to the wall, a type that is also represented in Trajan's column.

The panorama becomes even more complex with respect to its builders, after checking the account of the conquest of the Asturian territory from Roman historical sources, which show three legions under P. Carisio's military command. Epigraphs such as that of the *primus pilus* Sabidius make it clear that the VI *Hispaniense* and X *Gemina* legions were under the same command for several years, as happened with the X *Gemina* and the V *Alaudae*. Veterans of these legions shared retirement in Mérida and Zaragoza from 25 BC. After the departure of the *Legio VI* from León almost a century later, at the time of Galba's uprising in AD 68 and because the sources do not mention that another legion replaced it, the Leonese camp would be abandoned or with a minimal garrison until the year 74. Of the legions formed by Galba in that year, we do not know where the I *Adiutrix* was and we know that the VII *Galbiana* was recruited in *Clunia* and took six years to be quartered in León. We know that a Roman army in the 1st century would not leave an empty camp standing in the territory of the *Astures*, officially conquered by Augustus, but where a few years earlier the *Legio VI* had put down a rebellion, according to the epigraph of the *primus pilus* Marcus Vettius Valens. This could be the cause of the intentional disassembling of the first camp structures, corroborated in the archaeological excavation of Calle Serranos 39-41 in León. For all these reasons, between AD 70 and 74, the Leonese camp could have remained unused and unoccupied, or had been reduced in size to be occupied by a smaller unit, perhaps members of the *Legio X Gemina*, who had returned to Hispania between AD 68 and 70, or by the other legion formed by Galba, the I *Adiutrix*.

Contrasting archaeological data and historical sources this work has made use of inescapable "military" logic when analysing another synchronous hypothesis: namely, whether the permanent camp in León continued to be used, although the sources have

omitted this fact, in a conquered but not totally pacified area in occupation phase, the previous wood and earth defences could (perhaps *should*) have been maintained while a new stone wall was erected, so as not to leave the troops unguarded. Given that the ditch of a smaller primitive fortification seems to have been made intentionally unserviceable, it is possible to say that a temporary wood and earth defence was used during the construction of the Early Imperial small-ashlar wall. A re-reading of the Roman military iconography in Trajan's Column has contributed to comparative analysis. It shows the coexistence of a timber *vallum* during the construction of a stone ashlar wall. Therefore, the first Leonese fortification was not necessarily razed while erecting the second wall, the Early Imperial small-ashlar stone wall. Taking all this into account about the first wood and earth fortification, the layout of the next enclosure should not be called León III, but rather León II.

The publication of an unpublished brand mark of the *Legio VI* on an ashlar on the Tower of San Isidoro points to this legion as the builder of the first stone small-ashlar wall in León. Although it has been considered built by the *Legio VII* in the Flavian era, the truth is that it could have been raised before AD 68 by the *Legio VI*, since this legion's constructive capability has been verified: after leaving its León camp in AD 68, it set about to re-fortify *Novaesium* III (Neuss) in stone on the *limes germanicus inferior* around AD 70, and then in early 2nd century Britannia in *Eboracum* (York). The proposal attributing to the Romans the lower platform of the Tower de San Isidoro, as well as the discovery of an ashlar marked with a "VI", and the confirmation of the presence of an arch in the old stretch of the wall beside the tower, lead us to open up one more hypothesis: the presence of six gates in the Leonese small-ashlar wall, as can be seen in the British camps of *Cilurnum* (Chesters) and *Ambloganna* (Birdoswald). During this period of stone wall construction, it cannot either be ruled out that several military units participated in its construction. Despite the fact that the bricks sealed in León used as building material always held a *Legio VII* seal, marks of the legions on *tegulae* and bricks became widespread from the time of Claudius; however, in urban excavations in León, strata have appeared composed almost exclusively of such unmarked materials.

It is beyond doubt that the *Legio VII Gemina* was the legion quartered for several centuries in the camp in León. It is prudent to say that the *Legio VII Gemina* erected the stone small-ashlar wall of the Early Imperial camp is a possible hypothesis, but not the

only one, or the most likely. From current understanding, it is more feasible that the first Leonese stone wall was built by the *Legio VI*, the old Hispanic legion that may have also built the earth fortification. The possibility of other troops intervening in its construction is more remote, perhaps the *Legio X Gemina*. We know that when the camp was occupied by the *Legio VII Gemina*, its building and engineering interventions were common throughout the northwest of Hispania, as an example, the Padrão dos Povos gives evidence of its work in the construction of the Trajan Bridge over the River Tâmega in *Aqua Flaviae* (Chaves, Portugal), and we know of their collaboration with the *Ala II Flavia Hispanorum civium romanorum* at the camp in Rosinos de Vidriales, (Zamora). These building functions, road maintenance and engineering structures would be the basic task of the soldiers from the *Legio VII Gemina* and the strategic location of the Leonese fortress for purposes of control, one of the main reasons for their permanence until the 5th century. For this reason, although it was quartered in León, it maintained detachments in the Leonese gold mining areas, but also in those of Lugo, Salamanca and northern Portugal, as well as in *Veleia* (Iruña, Álava), providing protection and administrators to provincial governors and equestrian procurators. In addition, it supplied personnel to the *portoria* of *Tritium Magallum* (La Rioja) and *Lucus Augusti* (Lugo), and to the *statio* and possible *portorium* in *Segisama* (Burgos).

To understand the origin of the later wall of *cubos* in León (León III), it is necessary to understand the paradigm shifts in the last decades in Late Imperial Roman history, reinterpreting the scope of the barbarian invasions of the 3rd century and their repercussion in the northwest of Hispania. In León, urban archaeology has refuted widespread destruction of camp structures in late Roman times, supporting the historiographical trend that limits the 3rd century barbarian invasions to the East of Hispania. It has been found that nearby Roman civilian settlements, such as that of *Lancia* (Villasabariego), were not walled in the 3rd or 4th centuries. It has been ruled out that the Leonese wall of *cubos* was built during the Tetrarchy or that it bears some relation to the Anglo-Saxon strategic model of *defence in depth*, which would explain the walls of the late 3rd century or the beginning of 4th within a global context of urban wall building for the survival of Roman administration at a time of instability. Likewise, in the Leonese case, the geostrategic hypothesis has been invalidated, which explained the “Tetrarchic”

urban refortifications in the northwest of Hispania within an imperial programme of provisioning from the military *annona*.

Furthermore, archaeological findings and historical documentation record the presence of Roman troops in the 4th and 5th centuries, according to the *Notitia Dignitatum* in León, Lugo and Iruña (Álava) and according to the Epistle of Honorius from around 420 also in Pamplona. The exceptionality of the Leonese case is the fact that it was the only permanent Roman legionary camp in the provinces of Hispania for more than five centuries and for that reason its walls were perhaps the last to be renovated. In the 5th century the inside of León's walled enclosure was not strictly “urban”, it was still a Roman camp in which the *Legio VII Gemina* was still garrisoned. At least a large part of the civilian population, as in the early days of the *Legio VI*, still inhabited the *cannabae* outside the wall, once the *vicus* of *Ad Legionem*, in the León suburb of Puente Castro, had been abandoned. In the year 254 an epistolary document cites *Ad Legionem* as the episcopal co-see with *Asturica Augusta*, and archaeology dates the abandoning of this *vicus* around 270 with no signs of violent destruction, perhaps due to an epidemic of proven African origin at that time in Europe, the Plague of Cyprian. It cannot be assumed that when the *vicus* of *Ad Legionem* lost its population, its inhabitants would take the episcopal see with them to the *Legio VII Gemina* camp. Consequently, it is vain to deduce the municipality of the Roman barracks and that this new legal condition would motivate the late Roman urban re-walling.

For the legal contextualization of camp fortifications, the implications of the characterization of Roman walls as *res sanctae* and the inviolability of Roman funerary monuments have been studied. Both these circumstances make it highly unlikely that the Roman legionaries of the *Legio VII* reused the tombs of their ancestors as constructive material in a supposed “Tetrarchic” wall that, in addition, could not even have been erected in circumstances of war emergency or siege. The legal transformation of the Roman tombstones into *spolia* had to take place after the year 380, when Theodosius I promulgated the Edict of Thessalonica and declared Christianity the official religion of the Empire, and later laws prohibited pagan rites (year 391 in Rome, and 392 in the rest of the Empire). Although from the dozens of Roman tombstones found in the masonry of the *cubos* wall no epigraphs have been dated after the 4th century, this was not due to the abandonment of the camp by the Romans before that date, but to the change of funeral

customs that implied a radical change in confronting death and its ritual: the conceptual transition from Roman necropolis to Christian cemeteries, built around relics of saints and martyrs, even within the walls.

This legal impossibility of using Roman funerary monuments as building material for the wall of *cubos* until at least the end of the 4th century does not imply that we should totally discard that the wall of *cubos* in León may be the last of the great Late Roman defence works in Hispania, but it does delay the viability of its being erected until a date later than the mid-5th century. Beyond that date, it seems unlikely, although feasible, that the walls would remain unchanged after the documented attacks at the beginning of the 5th century in the region of León by *Suevi*, Goths and perhaps *Bagaudae*. That is why the contingency of a medieval construction of the wall of *cubos* has been accepted, which would not reinforce the existing legionary walls but would replace them functionally. As the urban archaeological remains after 2009 show, the Roman construction with small ashlar was already in ruins when the wall of *cubos* was built, so the latter could not have been erected without a separate formwork, nor was it attached to the previous one to gain thickness.

Despite the increase in rural settlement in the villas, both this Leonese fortification and the nearby Roman cities survived beyond Late Antiquity as the main cultural and political power, with increasing authority of the bishop as *defensor civitatis* integrated into the Roman administration from the 3rd century. Both sources and archaeology confirm the continuity of the Hispanic-Roman population in the fortresses of León and Astorga during the 5th century, as well as their interaction with the new elements of the surrounding Suebian population, who in the 6th century would have been assimilated into Roman *Callaecia*. At that time, a Suebian bishopric had already been created in Astorga, on which the parish of *Legio* depended, perhaps assimilated as a former diocese whose last documented bishop was Decentius around 305. This makes it impossible to uphold the hypothesis of a collaboration in León between the Hispanic-Romans and the power of the bishop for maintaining the urban walls.

The Theodosian Code also reveals the presence of *burgarii* in Hispanic cities. This adds variations to the Late Imperial defensive system. As a legislative body, the *Chronicle* of Hydatius shows that the Roman administration in Hispania still continued into the 5th century, and that when the *Suevi* reached the northwest of the Peninsula, they

did so federated to the Romans, so their plundering and looting were considered a breach of treaties. The current hypothesis is that the Romans remained in the Leonese fortresses for part or all of the Suebian domination, perhaps in compliance with the *foedus* signed with Rome in the years 411 and 438.

In first place we have studied the likelihood of attributing the refortification of León to this period of the Suebian kingdom, set up in the northwest of the Peninsula for almost 175 years, with its throne established in *Bracara* in the middle of the 5th century. The *Suevi* had sufficient time to fortify their cities in some cases and refortify in others. They had the necessary skills for city wall building acquired while journeying across Europe besieging Roman fortresses, and with the abundant stone available they would certainly have used Roman tombstones as *spolia*. Furthermore, they had reason to refortify the cities they conquered: the advance of the Visigoths and the threats of Hispanic-Roman rebellions as well as banditry from the *Bagaudae*. Even Mérida, for a time subject to the *Suevi*, was refortified in the 5th century.

Let us branch off from this to study Late Roman troop formations mentioned in the *Notitia Dignitatum* in the Prefecture of Gaul, to which Hispania belonged from the end of the 4th to the beginnings of the 5th century. Following principles of philological archaeology, often disregarded, this leads us to propose the theory of the presence of the palatine legion of the *Sabarienses* inside the limits of Suebian territory, and of a later migration of the population from *Savaria panonia*, once destroyed, to *Sabaria* in Hispania in the second half of the 5th century. They migrated, perhaps, as *laeti* or *gentiles*, turning their little known territory into a “*March*” between the territory of the *Suevi* and the Visigoths until they were conquered by Liuvigild. In the same way, the *gens Madrucia* could have repopulated the areas in Zamora around Madridanos or *Malgrat* (Benavente).

The Isidorian chronicler Lucas, Bishop of Tuy (c. 1238) refers to the conquest of the fortress of León by Liuvigild in 585, pointing out that it was defended by Romans, so it seems that they never left León. But on the other hand, comparing this data with the *Parochiale Suevum* that describes the territorial church division at the end of the 6th century, mentioning León as a parish church in Suebian territory, the literal reading of the sources appears contradictory, unless we take into account the description of the situation of Lugo according to the *Chronicle* of Hydatius: what we cannot know is whether the Romans of León, like those of Lugo, shared the city with the *Suevi*. However, we must

remember that the parish of *Legio* to which the *Parochiale Suevum* refers does not correspond to the present León but to *Legio super Urbico* that appears in another version of the document, the *Liber Itaci* from Oviedo. With this in mind, the walled enclosure in León could well have been inhabited by Hispanic-Romans within a Suebian setting.

Legione was not an isolated case among Late Antique Leonese urban fortresses. Astorga and Castro Ventosa were refortified with walls of *cubos* in Late Antiquity, just like other cases of wall building inside Suebian territory in the Northwest: Lugo, Gijón and possibly the original enclosures of Braga and Porto. They all appear in the *Parochiale Suevum* as towns subject to King Theodemir. Based on documentation, it seems probable that León was one of the Roman fortresses in the northwest of Hispania inside Suebian territory that remained within the power of the Hispanic-Romans during the 5th and 6th centuries. It remains an open question as to when these *castella* passed into Suebian hands or if indeed they did so. The hypothesis stating that the Leonese wall of *cubos* was built in the Suebian period is more difficult to refute than to prove.

Territorial occupation in Late Antiquity started from Roman urban areas as can be deduced from discoveries in the Suebian, Visigothic and Byzantine walled enclosures in the Iberian Peninsula during the confusing period at the start of the 6th century, in the decades prior to the founding of a stable Gothic kingdom by King Liuvigild, a historical period better documented in cases such as the walls of Ávila or Barcelona. This is not the circumstance of León's walls of *cubos*, which in that period scarcely appear in historical documentation until Christian and Arab chroniclers narrated the destruction to which they were subjected by Almanzor. J.A. Paz Peralta's publication studied the walls of Zaragoza as a paradigm of military architecture in Al-Ándalus and its possible influence on the peninsular fortifications that were being erected in some cases and constantly rebuilt in others, thus opening up new possibilities of interpretation for the Late Roman or the Early Medieval origin of the Leonese walls.

The *terminus ante quem* of the construction of the Leonese wall of *cubos* (León III) is given by the Early Medieval documentation that mentions this wall in use after its destruction by Almanzor in 997. The solution is in the northern third of this wall: in the Torres or Medieval Castle, both in the archaeological excavation that documented the intentional filling in of the break between the Roman wall and the wall of *cubos*, and in the first documentary mention of the so-called Puerta del Conde or Puerta Castillo (916),

especially in the diploma that mentions the creation of another palace using two *cubos* of the wall. In 1011 Munio Fernández and his wife Elvira founded the monastery of San Juan Bautista in León “*intus municione muri*”. This implies that the wall of *cubos* was already finished in the time of Alfonso V. In conclusion, on this wall of *cubos* it seems more accurate to vindicate the old medievalist theses of Padre Risco, Padre Flórez, Gómez Moreno, Sánchez-Albornoz and Mateo Marcos, supported by the reinterpretation of the archaeological data of these walls and the comparative analysis of other urban fortified enclosures with *cubos*, such as those of Zaragoza, Barcelona, Astorga, Lugo, Gijón or Ávila, and not continue to assume the proposal of Roman dating by Sir Ian Archibald Richmond (1931) for a group of five urban walls in *Hispania Citerior* (Barcelona, Zaragoza, Lugo, León and Gerona) in the 3rd or early 4th century. Despite being only a proposal and recognizing that his argument was merely typological, since at that time the only walls dated between the 3rd and 4th centuries were those of Gerona, his opinion has been largely followed when assigning the Leonese wall of *cubos* to that period.

We also vindicate the important construction work of the Queen regent Elvira and her son Alfonso V, disregarded because of their hypothetical scarce importance and because, according to the documentation, this king "rebuilt all the gates of the city in *mud and wood*", which was the translation of the Latin expression "*reedificavit omnes portas eiusdem civitatis ex luto et ligno*" used by the chronicler Lucas de Tuy, and which we have proposed to interpret as a wall made with a formwork of wooden doors and lime and stone slurry, or *mud*. After the death of Vermudo II, who had already been forced to move the court to Astorga around 995 due to Almanzor's destruction of the walls of León, the widowed Queen Elvira García ruled between 999 and 1008 and would have at her disposal the patrimony of the Infantazgo de San Pelayo, so she would have the financial means to carry out a building scheme as great as the wall of *cubos*. Like the *Suevi*, Queen Elvira had materials: first the *spolia*, including in that category the eroded Roman funerary monuments, then the stone from nearby quartzite quarries in León. She also, like them, had her reasons: both the constant advance of the Muslims and as protection against internal threats from the County of Castile. It is very possible that after the last destruction by Almanzor in 997, Queen Elvira, after assuming the regency in 999, promoted the construction of the walls of *cubos* around the year 1000, and that, when Alfonso V took

over the government in the year 1008, he continued the work started by his mother by refortifying the rest of the destroyed walls in Coyanza, Astorga, etc.

When the wall of *cubos* in León were erected, the Taifa of Zaragoza did not yet exist, so its walls could not be the model to be copied and in any case, the original model of the medieval wall of *cubos* is to be found in Roman military architecture, whether due to its evolution from the Umayyad palaces of the desert, as Paz Peralta postulates, or that in other European fortifications, which the Suebian and Visigoths had learned from during their journey from the German borders through Gaul delving into the sphere of Carolingian influence, as would be the case of the Leonese refortification undertaken during the reign of Alfonso V.

Since the state of the question about the first thousand years of the Leonese walls does not allow us to give a definitive answer, reflective doubt is a clear necessity in this case. So too is avoiding hypercriticism and misunderstanding correlation with causality.

