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NEW DIRECTIONS
IN EARLY MEDIEVAL EUROPEAN
ARCHAEOLOGY: SPAIN AND ITALY
COMPARED
ESSAYS FOR RICCARDO FRANCOVICH

edited by
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BREPOLS

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Sauro GELICHI - Richard HODGES

INTRODUCTION

L'importanza di Riccardo Francovich nell'archeologia medievale europea è indiscutibile. (A. Malpica Cuello, *L'influenza di Riccardo Francovich nel dibattito archeologico spagnolo*, p. 65).

Riccardo Francovich loved to travel. In some ways he was an archaeological grand tourist. He was a European intellectual, happiest tracking down Medievalists in Europe, and less at ease in the New World, though fearless in Manhattan and DC. For him grasping the world of European Medieval Archaeology stirred his passions. In particular, visiting excavations in France, Germany, Scandinavia or England opened his mind to a rational northern European approach to historical problem-solving and to variable methodologies of excavation. With these travels, too, came the opportunity to explore other cultures, their lifeways, quirks and foods. How (overly) organized were the English excavations! But did the English really drink rice and carrot wine (in 1981)? How extraordinary it was to find the Vikings in the Arctic on the Lofoten Islands? How devoted the French were to their wines in their wonderful countryside, but how quirky their archaeologists were some times. But of all his travels – made with increasing regularity at the expense of other travels – was his passion for Spain.

At dinner in his home in Antella he would describe extraordinary excavations and ferocious debates in the Iberian peninsula. Then, with a moment's thought, he would compare the political circumstances in Italy to those in Spain, and he would vehemently curse Italy's politicians and more. In post-fascist Spain Riccardo detected a political democracy that gave rise to the kind of Mediterranean archaeology with which he was comfortable. Yes, it was not as prissily correct as English archaeology, yet there was a huge romance in building a new history for a new country. Very soon he was hosting Spanish professors and then, inimitably, their students. Soon those students were finding their future with him in Siena, while they gently lured him ever more often to visit their home universities in Spain. Spanish archaeology, its great successes and great struggles, became a part of Riccardo's life¹.

¹ A. Malpica Cuello, *L'influenza di Riccardo Francovich nel dibattito archeologico spagnolo*, in *Riccardo Francovich e I Grandi Temi del Dibattito Europeo*, Florence, 2011, p. 65-72.

New Directions in Early Medieval European Archaeology: Spain and Italy compared, ed. by Sauro GELICHI and Richard HODGES, Turnhout, 2015 (Haut Moyen Âge, 24), p. 9-11.

This volume of essays began as a one-day conference held at the British School at Rome the day after Riccardo would have been 65 years old on the 11 June 2011. On that lovely day we remembered with good humour Riccardo's impact upon each and everyone of us. We were joined by his wife, Nicoletta Onesti Francovich, his daughter, Lisa Francovich and his two grand-children, making it a festive occasion as, at the same time, we explored the new directions that new archaeological discoveries were causing us all to consider. These essays have grown out of that happy and intellectually fruitful day. The book takes as its core theme a comparison of Italian and Spanish Medieval Archaeology, in each case challenging the status quo and attempting to move the boundary lines of our historical discussions ever forwards. Riccardo, for sure, would have welcomed some of this thinking, and with a smile and passion cursed other aspects! That's what made him so human, and both such a wonderful friend and teacher to all of us.

By taking this approach to Italy and Spain – two places most beloved by Riccardo – we are attempting to evaluate if the Medieval Archaeology of these two important Mediterranean countries, largely unfamiliar on the international stage, with their different 'histories' can be compared. To do this, we have chosen to examine a key moment in their formation – the passage from the Ancient World to that of the Medieval. Above all, thanks to the analyses of diverse forms of settlements, we believe these reflections will have great bearing on the social and economic structures of these two countries. This approach has highlighted not only the identification of singular conjunctures (the impact of the new 'barbaric' aristocracies on the social structures of the Roman world, the mode across which Islam was established, for example, in the peninsula as in Sicily), but also parallel evolutions at the macro-structural level (for example, in the events of the town and the countryside). Taking the paradigm of fragmentation as a basic starting-point that characterizes the western world after the fall of the Roman Empire, it is thought-provoking to address and compare these different circumstances within the covers of a book.

Articulated in two distinct geographical parts, the volume aims to touch upon many of the contemporary themes in the archaeological and historical debates today in these two Mediterranean countries. So for Spain the book surveys the circumstances after the dissolution of the Visigothic kingdom (Lauro Olmo), the impact of Islam on the organization of territory (Sonia Gutierrez) and the reformulation of the concept of the city (Antonio Malpica). These essays, however, can be viewed in parallel with the circumstances in the Christian kingdoms in the north (Avelino Gutierrez; Juan Antonio Quirós Castillo). Turning to it Italy as a kind of reflective mirror, there is an attempt to give form and to understand these same processes that appear to characterize even greater fragmentation. The essays comprise the Islamisation of Sicily (Alessandra Molinari) and Byzantine continuity in Calabria (Ghislaine Noyé), before passing to three

chapters that comprise a reflections upon early Medieval urbanisation (Richard Hodges), on new emerging settlements in the Adriatic Sea area (Sauro Gelichi) and end with one of the themes dearest to Riccardo, that of the reorganization of the countryside in Central-Northern Italy at the threshold of the year, AD 1000 (Giovanna Bianchi).

These essays offer comparative archaeologies in terms of themes, but above all else in terms of shared methods. The theoretical approach on a thematic basis has been strongly determined by the historical debates. These archaeologies, both conservative and innovative at the same time, is the price paid for an archaeology that is restlessly seeking to look forwards. Of course, each contributor recognizes that within these apparently national traditions a certain evolutionary commonality can be traced in the roots of those reports started precisely by Riccardo towards the end of the '80s and then firmed up in two episodes of joint reflections². Several contributors actively played a part with Riccardo in these volumes; others joined this imagined community a little later. The hope is that these essays offer, together with a homage to a friend and teacher, a profile of Medieval Archaeology of these two countries that, apart from being syntheses of new results, also provide a platform for further projects in the new millennium.

Finally, as we conclude this introduction, our thoughts return to that day in 2011 with the lectures that provided the starting-point for this book. As we have already noted, Nicoletta Onesti Francovich was with us and eagerly participated in the discussions. Riccardo's companion for four decades, she was a true friend to each of us, offering in equal measure hospitality and generous wisdom. Her passing in August 2014 has left a hole in our hearts, filled by many wonderful memories of Riccardo and Nicoletta at Antella, and as enthusiastic and thoughtful visitors to our projects.

² The first Hispano-Italian meeting organized at Granada in 1990 and the second meeting held at Siena in 1993, respectively *Coloquio Hispano-Italiano de Arqueologia Medieval*, Alhambra 1990, Granada, 1992, and E. Boldrini, R. Francovich (eds.), *Acculturazione e mutamenti. Prospettive nell'archeologia medievale del Mediterraneo* (IV Ciclo di lezione sulla Ricerca Applicata in Archeologia – Certosa di Pontignano (SI) – Museo di Montelupo (FI), 1993, Florence, 1995.

PART ONE

SPAIN

Lauro OLMO-ENCISO

THE MATERIALITY OF COMPLEX LANDSCAPES: CENTRAL IBERIA DURING 6th-8th CENTURIES A.D. *

The panorama of the landscape of the Iberian Peninsula during the VI century was defined by its heterogeneity and a process of changes. The changes that had begun at the end of the V century signified the metamorphosis of social organisation and its consequent reflection in the articulation of the peninsular space – crisis of the Roman *civitas* and urban transformation, the abandonment of the *villae* and appearance of new kinds of rural settlements etc. –. All of this as a consequence of the creation of a new early medieval landscape in urban and rural surroundings, which was consolidated throughout the second half of the 6th century AD¹. The last twenty years, which have meant a qualitative and quantitative leap in archaeological research have been fundamental to understanding this process. As a result, the debate is currently located in a more adjusted manner in investigating and researching social structures and their influence on the landscape.

This work is centered on analysing the central area of the peninsula, defined by the River Tagus basin (Fig. 1). In it, a variety of settlements – several types of cities, villages, farms, hilltop villages, monasteries, rural churches, aristocratic residences, together with evidence obtained on productive landscapes offer a complex panorama and connected with the set of changes that are considered

* This work was undertaken within the framework of the line of research of the Archaeology Department of the University of Alcalá from projects HAR2009 11627 «Construction and Dynamics of a mediaeval landscape» and HAR2013 44270-P «Construction of the mediaeval landscape: Agrosystems and climate change» of the State Plan of Scientific and Technical Research of the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of the Spanish Government.

¹ L. Olmo Enciso, *Recópolis: una ciudad en una época de transformaciones*, in *Id.*, *Recópolis y la ciudad en la época visigoda*, *Zona Arqueológica*, 9, Alcalá de Henares, 2008, p. 41-42; L. Olmo Enciso, *Ciudad y Estado en época visigoda: Toledo la construcción de un nuevo paisaje urbano*, in A. García, R. Izquierdo, L. Olmo Enciso, D. Peris (eds.), *Espacios urbanos en el occidente mediterráneo* (s. VI-VIII), Toledo, 2010, p. 87; L. Olmo Enciso, M. Castro Priego, *La época visigoda a través de la arqueología*, in L. García Moreno, L. Olmo Enciso, M. Castro Priego, A. García Sanjuan, J. Zozaya Stabel-Hansen, *711 Arqueología e historia entre dos mundos. Catálogo de la exposición*, Madrid, 2011, p. 54-55.

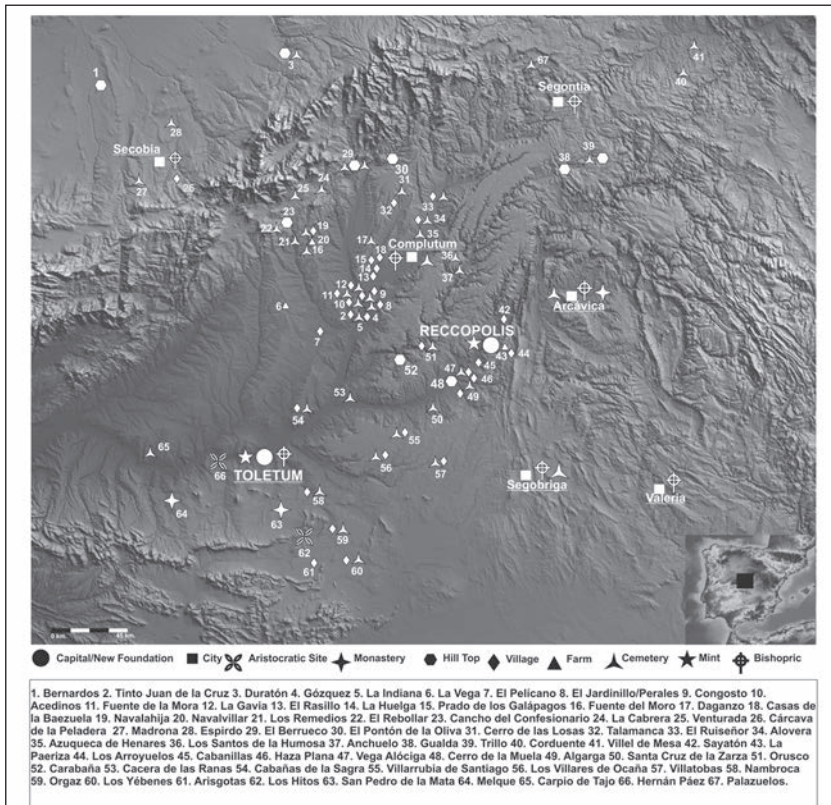


Figure 1. Settlements, archaeologically excavated, in the basin of Rio Tajo (6th-8th centuries).

in the western Mediterranean area. This area would, therefore, exemplify the already defended position on how in Mediterranean surroundings the degree of variability of guidelines of settlement is in this period much greater than that existing in central and northern Europe, as has been confirmed in the Italian case, when from the 5th century the landscape is characterised by the existence of notable regional diversity².

Up till now, research into urban and rural realities of this central area and of others has been carried out without bearing in mind the variables and the

2 R. Francovich, R. Hodges, *Villa to Village. The Transformation of the Roman Countryside in Italy, c. 400-1000*, London, 2003, p. 26; C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages. Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800*, Oxford, 2005, p. 508.

regional diversities. Concerning the rural surroundings, interpreting based on studying the village model has been carried out on a large enough territory, a macro-level approach, that exceeds in a great part the centre of the peninsula, including areas of the North. However, this territory covers different regions with a variety of settlements that offer a more complex casuistry than the sole presence of villages as an explaining factor of the fundamental changes that are contemplated in the landscape. The excessive extension of this territory and the focalisation of the analysis from the study of villages has meant that other forms of settlements have not been considered that indicate hierarchy models and, therefore, of social stratification of different intensities. Yet the same occurs when analysing the degree of urbanisation of this same territory, where the diachronic perspective offers data of great interest that show how the central area of Iberia has differences between its two geographic regions. In the Roman period the southern sub-plateau, and more specifically the river Tagus valley, was a more urbanised area than the northern sub-plateau, the Douro valley, that never had an urban landscape as dense as other peninsular areas. Something similar occurs during the period that is being analysed here, the 6th to the 8th centuries AD, where archaeological documentation shows differences between the cities of both areas and between the materiality present in them.

One should perhaps wonder if it is not necessary to go beyond interpreting the historical process based on the assumption of supposed existing dichotomies: us and them; peasants and elites; cities and rural settlements etc. These originate as a consequence of a binary perspective that responds to scientific apriorisms produced from the Eurocentric 'Western Gaze'. One thing is the dialectic reality existing between different groups or between observers and the observed and another thing is the fragmentation of social reality through the decontextualised study of elites or peasants, cities or villages etc., which are not, however, mutually exclusive. Especially when we are in an area which it is mainly linked with the complexity of transformation processes of the Mediterranean surroundings. I defended some time ago how the historical analysis vision of this period must bear in mind the heterogeneity of the Iberian Peninsula³. This is a key factor when investigating the period. Although the collapse of the late high Roman system in the 5th century affected in a determining manner the Mediterranean and European west with similar social transformation dynamics, however their levels of intensity were diverse and, therefore, the rhythm of their manifestations was not homogeneous. The Iberian Peninsular is an example of this, since the northern area, linked more

³ L. Olmo Enciso, *El reino visigodo de Toledo y los territorios bizantinos. Datos sobre la heterogeneidad de la península ibérica*, in *Coloquio Hispano Italiano de Arqueología Medieval*, Granada, 1992, p. 185-198.

closely to a group of changes that could be related to those of northern and central areas of western Europe, than the eastern and southern areas of more connected with similar processes of Mediterranean surroundings. In this sense, it should be remembered how Chris Wickham indicated the 'variability' of the paradigm that distinguishes the early medieval western european and mediterranean regions, or how Sauro Gelichi defended that the best choice to confront this problem was 'stress the variability'⁴. This is a fundamental factor when considering the analysis on the peninsular early medieval society. The response has to come from integrating the entire archaeological reality within a spatial framework in a landscape as an integrating scientific construction. It is therefore an analysis of archaeological data based on the landscape that allows understanding of how a dynamic social space overcomes paradigms and traditional scientific divisions.

I shall defend the regional scale as the most appropriate level to analyse this central peninsular area, This framework constitutes the key element in understanding the social dynamics of the period as it covers different types of settlements within regional geographic surroundings as is the river Tagus basin. Contextualisation within this framework of all the archaeological evidence, both in the rural and urban elements, offers an integrated panorama of a society in transformation. Therefore investigating and interpreting the contextualisation of the different types of empirical data obtained from regional investigation supposes bearing on the landscape character as a dynamic social construction with a complexity of meanings greater than has been interpreted until now. It is precisely the setting up of a dialectic relationship between these different types of data, contextualised in a regional scale, that underlines the existence of social stratification as a fundamental factor. However, the topic is more complex. Diversity of cultural forms, encountered in the archaeological record, suggest that the condition of stratification needs to be explained rather than assumed⁵.

Another fundamental element is understanding how these 6th and 7th centuries formed part of a new landscape that already defined the formation process of early medieval society. An interpretation for which the archaeological register, both urban and rural, is revealing as essential. The process of changes that created a new landscape had in rural surroundings one of its most determining manifes-

4 S. Gelichi, *La città in Italia tra il VI e VIII secolo: riflessioni dopo un trentennio di dibattito archeologico*, in A. García, R. Izquierdo, L. Olmo-Enciso, D. Peris (eds), *Espacios urbanos*, cited n. 1, p. 83.

5 R. Paynter, *Models of Spatial Inequality. Settlement Patterns in Historical Archaeology*, New York, 1982, p. 22.

tations with the end of the *villa*⁶ as a type of settlement and productive area and of the Roman tradition of the rural landscape. Various investigations has shown how, between the 5th and 7th centuries AD, deactivation of the Late Roman *villae* occurred and how, instead of them, there arose settlements and farms – with new domestic structures, productive spaces or storage areas – and also cemeteries. Most of these new realities were seated on stratigraphic contexts of levelling the old *villae*, a factor that invalidates interpretations based on supposed continuity. This is not something exclusive to the territories analysed here, since in Italy for some time and after dozens of prospection projects, not one case of the continuity of this type of Roman model of settlement has been found⁷. In fact, what the archaeological materiality in Iberia tells us is the difficulty of defending continuity when the *villa*, the fundamental element that organised the exploitation system and that constituted the material expression of a social model, had disappeared. These spaces are therefore fundamental, together with the appearance of new rural settlements, to understand the changes that occurred. This substantial shift, as has been well argued, affected power relations in rural environments⁸. As Francovich⁹ suggested, produced a transition process of a system of *potentes*, whose power was based on the possession of large estates to another of *possessors* whose power was based in the possession of plots of land. All that marked an inexorable process of abandoning the structure of the Roman settlement based on the *villa* and its substitution by new production units, the peasant households, organised as villages¹⁰.

One of the most significant contributions to the field of medieval archaeology in the last 20 years in different areas of Iberia has been the identification of a group of villages, farms and hilltop villages, whose appearance is detected from the end of the 5th century AD approximately. Their investigation has enabled compression of a historical subject, peasantry, which until then had remained practically non-existent for the archaeological register and that now has begun to be visible¹¹.

6 A. Chavarría Arnau, *El final de las villae en Hispania (siglos IV-VII)*, «Bibliothèque de l'Antiquité Tardive», 7, Turnhout, 2007.

7 R. Francovich, R. Hodges, *Villa to village*, cited n. 2, p. 21.

8 C. Wickham, *Framing*, cited n. 2, p. 481.

9 R. Francovich, *The hinterlands of early medieval towns: the transformations of the countryside in Tuscany*, in J. Henning (ed.), *Post-Roman Towns, Trade and Settlement in Europe and Byzantium*, vol. I, Berlin, 2007, p. 142 and p. 147.

10 R. Francovich, R. Hodges, *Villa to village*, cited n. 2, p. 21.

11 J. A. Quirós Castillo (ed), *The Archaeology of Early Medieval Villages in Europe*, «Documentos de Arqueología e Historia nº 1», Bilbao, 2009; J. A. Quirós Castillo (ed), *El poblamiento rural de época visigoda en Hispania. Arqueología del campesinado en el interior peninsular*, «Documentos de Arqueología Medieval nº 6», Bilbao, 2013.

Fundamental for this has been the awareness of a broad group of peasant settlements, thanks to investigations carried out mostly in the central (Fig. 1) and Catalanian¹² (Fig. 2) areas of the Iberian Peninsula¹³. From these studies an interpretation has been produced, as an explicative argument of this reality, on the existence of a 'village model' linked to a broad tradition of European research that has covered the contextualisation of peasantry from various perspectives in a wider interpretive construction of the reality of the period¹⁴.

Regarding rural surroundings of the central area of the peninsula, research has mostly focussed on studying a group of villages, whose interpretation would reflect the existence of a village model whose hegemony would be the explicative element of early medieval social reality¹⁵. Generally, they are open sites located on flat land or slopes and located depending on the exploitation of the economic resources of their environment. They all have common patterns: the existence of sunken huts made of a perishable material and, in some cases, with bases of masonry; and barely defined urbanism. The settlement model is defined by two types of villages, some with a stable morphology throughout their existence, such as the settlement of Gózquez (Madrid), and others with a pattern of extensive settlement represented by the village of El Pelicano (Madrid)¹⁶. These villages are formed by more or less compact blocks of domestic units with residential, productive and consumption functions. A series of agricultural plots have been identified in Gózquez that alternate with the areas

12 A. Vigil-Escalera Guirado, J. A. Quirós Castillo, *Un ensayo de interpretación del registro arqueológico*, in J.A. Quirós Castillo (ed.), *El poblamiento*, cited n. 11, p. 357-399; J. Roig Buxó, *Asentamientos rurales y poblados tardoantiguos y altomedievales en Cataluña (siglos VI al X)*, in J. A. Quirós Castillo (ed.), *The Archaeology*, cited n. 11, p. 207-251.

13 This Archaeological activity was due to the intense property development that occurred in Spain from the decade of the 90's. This allowed extensive areas to be excavated, but also the systematic elimination of the sites excavated. As a consequence of which, practically none of those mentioned in this text are conserved. I have already written about the disasters of this construction and infrastructure activity for the archaeological heritage, its management, its research, the responsibility of the administration and the lack of codes of practices in L. Olmo Enciso, *L'organisation de l'archéologie préventive en Espagne et ses effets induits sur la recherche*, «Archéopages. Nouveaux champs de la recherche archéologique», Janvier 2012, Institut National de Recherches Archéologiques Préventives, Paris, 2012, p. 42-46.

14 R. Francovich, R. Hodges, *Villa to village*, cited n. 2; H. Hamerow, *Early Medieval Settlements. The archaeology of Rural Communities in North-West Europe 400-900*, Oxford, 2002.; E. Zadora Rio, *Le village des historiens et le village des archeologues*, in E. Mornet (ed.), *Campagnes médiévales: l'homme et son espace*, Paris, 1995, p. 145-156; C. Wickham, *Framing*, cited n. 2.

15 A. Vigil Escalera, J. A. Quirós Castillo, *Un ensayo*, cited n. 12.

16 A. Vigil Escalera, J. A. Quirós Castillo, *Un ensayo*, cited n. 12, p. 369-370.

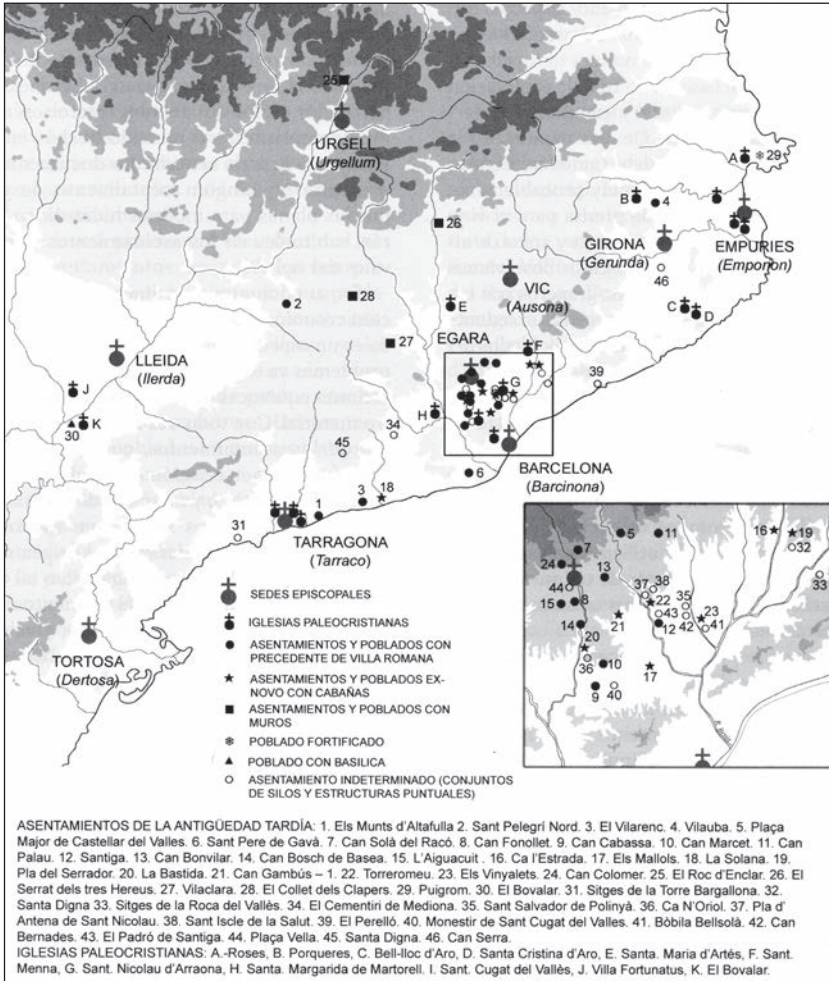


Figure 2. Types of settlements in Catalonia (6th-8th centuries)
 (J. Roig Buxó, *Asentamientos rurales*, cited n. 12, p. 213).

for residential use. These are also present in other villages of the centre of the peninsula that may reflect the system of organising the village plots¹⁷.

In view of these results obtained from excavating the villages, Vigil Escalera and Quirós Castillo have produced an economic framework articu-

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 382.

lated on several integrated systems of production, distribution and consumption operating at different scales¹⁸. At the heart of these peasant communities, the various types of productive activities would be resolved, the main one being agricultural production based on different crops, as well as the presence of animal husbandry together with other activities of supplying the population – forge and carpentry work, textile activities, building materials, obtaining fuel and some ceramic production. Beyond the village surroundings, there would be an exchange flow between villages aimed at the supply of materials that would evidence an inter-village reciprocity system based on integrating different complementary spaces at a district or regional level. A second series of vertical flows would be established between this village system and intermediate nuclei and urban centres, where the elites would act. It is argued that these flows would be two way: on the one hand with the presence in these villages of objects of representation and “exotic” products – imported ceramics, glass crockery, articles for personal adornment etc. and on the other, via vertical circulation of rents and services¹⁹.

From this table, these authors have presented a suggestive hypothesis aligning with the theories of Wickham²⁰ on village stability and agricultural production control by the peasantry. They consider this transfer of agricultural production to the hands of peasant communities as the transcendental change of the configuration of the early medieval landscape and as a fundamental element for a social understanding of the period. In fact, according to them, there is no evidence that the villages were completely dominated by large landlords, who perhaps only managed to condition a minor part of productive orientations. Anyway and accepting this interpretation, it must be indicated in this respect that there is a form of showing domain, which is the exercise of power via the control of resources²¹, which would make the physical presence of great landlords unnecessary in these villages to control the process of surplus appropriation. Therefore, it would be something else to define what was the percentage of agricultural production controlled by these large landlords, which, according to Wickham²² was small. However, the problem in this respect, that we currently have, from the archaeological

18 *Ibid.*, p. 386.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 376-377, 384, 386.

20 C. Wickham, *Framing*, cited n. 2, p. 264, 438, 537-543.

21 R. Paynter, R. H. McGuire, *The Archaeology of Inequality: Material Culture, Domination and Resistance*, in R. H. McGuire, R. Paynter (eds), *The Archaeology of Inequality*, Ed. Blackwell, Oxford-Cambridge, Ma. 1991, p. 10.

22 C. Wickham, *Framing*, cited n. 2, p. 536.

point of view, is the lack of documentation on the character and organisation of the productive landscape, of this period's agricultural system and not only that covering these villages, but the rest of the settlement structure. In any case, Vigil-Escalera and Quirós Castillo do assume the existence of elites and they differentiate them into two categories, corresponding to the rural and urban environments, being the latter the place where the aristocracies were articulated. They recognise that there are many markers that allow the existence of large landlords to be suggested in the Visigothic period in some regions of the peninsula, but they, with reason, defend the non-existence of a linear continuity between the large late Roman property and that of the Visigothic period²³. They also indicate the problem of the almost total ignorance about the centres of local power and warn that this invisibility of the elites in the rural territory analysed makes the research much more difficult.

All this interpretive scheme has an uncountable interest as it has a bearing on the evaluation of the peasantry as a determining historical subject and from that to have encouraged scientific debate on the period. However, the increase of research into these surroundings makes the question appear more complex, as in the area of the river Tagus basin there are data indicating a greater diversification of the agricultural and livestock exploitation. It can be seen in the northern area of the current province of Madrid, with a high density of rural sites between the 6th and 7th centuries, where another type of activity dedicated to metallurgical exploitation was the basis of its productive system and of the possible creation of different scales of distribution. Especially significant are two of the settlements, Navalvillar and Navalhija (Colmenar Viejo, Madrid) – separated from each other by a distance of 1000 m – linked to the exploitation of iron and to all its extractive production process, reduction of the ore and the forge of various utensils. All this work of reduction and post-production was carried out in areas and buildings dedicated to this activity which centralised all the productive system²⁴. The interest of these findings together with other recent ones in Iberia, is that they form part of a new archaeological evidence that are contributing to changing the interpretive framework that defends the irrelevance and the residual character of this type of exploitation in this period. In the Basque Country there is evidence from this period of activities that

23 A. Vigil Escalera, J. A. Quirós Castillo, *Un ensayo*, cited n. 12, p. 388.

24 F. Colmenarejo García *et al.*, *En busca de la magnetita perdida. Metalurgia del hierro y organización aldeana durante la Antigüedad Tardía en Navalvillar y Navalhija (Colmenar Viejo, Madrid)*, in *Actas de las X Jornadas de Patrimonio Arqueológico de la Comunidad de Madrid*, Madrid, 2014, p. 221-222, 225-226.

cover the entire production process²⁵ and the same occurs in the area of Galicia in the NW of the peninsula. Here paleo-environmental research from analysing several peats has documented for the 6th and 7th centuries a pronounced increase of lead contamination in the atmosphere due to mineral-metallurgic activities between the 6th and 7th centuries²⁶. The data indicates an appreciable density of small sized exploitations controlled by elites, represented by a series of ecclesiastical structures in these mining surroundings²⁷. In this respect, the possible relationship of these local powers with the Visigothic state has been indicated, given the wide dispersion of small mints in this mining area of the NW²⁸. Returning to the group of sites related to mining exploitation of the NW of Madrid, the closeness of all of them to a series of hilltop villages should be noted, among which it is worth emphasising the closest to Cancho de Confesionario (Manzanares el Real, Madrid), a place where the interpretation of the findings carried out indicates the existence of local powers. In this sense, it should be indicated that these settlements organised around the iron mining exploitation, with management methods and centralised transformation, all carried out by the resident communities, are integrated within the circuits of economic exploitation, with the consequent obtaining of surplus controlled by local elites. The challenge is to understand and interpret how this relationship could be inscribed on a larger scale of agreements between these local elites and the State and the scale and percentage of the state's participation in the appropriation of a part of the surplus generated.

Increasing research and the debate generated points towards a more complex interpretation of the rural space, since some of these peasant settlements have materials that seem to define the presence of elites. Wickham already stated that under the generic denomination of peasantry there lies hidden a much more complex social reality – dependant peasants, small property holders, *tenentes*,

25 A. Azkárate Garai-Olaún, I. García Camino, *El espacio circumpirenaico occidental durante los siglos VI al X d.C. según el registro arqueológico: algunos interrogantes*, in L. Caballero Zoreda, P. Mateos Cruz, C. García de Castro Valdes (eds.), *Asturias entre visigodos y omeyas*, «Anejos de AEspA, LXII», Madrid, 2012, p. 34.

26 Martínez Cortizas et al., *Paleocontaminación. Evidencias de contaminación atmosférica antrópica en Galicia durante los últimos 4000 años*, in *Gallaecia*, 16, Santiago de Compostela, 1997, pp 14-15.

27 J. C. Sánchez Pardo, *Sobre las bases económicas de las aristocracias en la Gallaecia suevo-visigoda (530-650 d.c). Comercio, minería y articulación fiscal*, in *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 44/2, julio-diciembre de 2014, p. 983-1023.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 1006.

salaried workers and slaves – in which would have to be included a village elite of wealthy areas²⁹. In fact and for this region of the centre of the peninsula, a series of variables of hierarchy can be highlighted archaeologically of certain peasant surroundings. Could be considered villages as Gózquez, with remains of horses and of materials with a clear differentiating character, such glass and north african imported pottery³⁰. The few number of fragments with which these goods are represented, is a datum that supports the argument, given that what is determining is the qualitative aspect that this represents and not the quantitative. In fact, up till now, such ceramics had only been found in rural areas of the central peninsula at this village of Gózquez in the La Vega farm and in the monastic centre of Melque³¹ And also in the unpublished contexts of El Congosto farm³². They could have been distributed from Toledo, which together with Recópolis, were the only two cities with a noticeable presence of consumer goods from several Mediterranean areas. The footprint of the elites can also be traced at other settlements of this central area, such as the case of the village of Tinto Juan de la Cruz, where an oval bronze shield was found together with two spearheads and other weapons related objects, dated between the 5th and the first half of the 6th century³³. A sword also appeared associated with broaches and belt buckles in the village of Arroyo Culebro (Leganés, Madrid)³⁴. Likewise, the presence of

29 C. Wickham, *Framing*, cited n. 2, p. 386.

30 A. Vigil-Escalera, *Cerámicas tardorromanas y altomedievales de Madrid*, in L. Caballero, P. Mateos, M. Retuerce (eds.), *Cerámicas tardorromanas y altomedievales en la Península Ibérica. Anejos del Archivo Español de Arqueología XXVIII*, Madrid, 2003, p. 375-376; M. Bonifay, D. Bernal Casasola, *Recópolis, paradigma de las importaciones en el visigothorum regnum. Un primer balance*, in L. Olmo-Enciso (ed.), *Recópolis*, cited n. 1, p. 102.

31 M. Bonifay, D. Bernal Casasola, *Recópolis, paradigma*, cited n. 31.

32 At this farm, various fragments have been located of late amphorae and some African goods without the types or goods being specified but it is supposed to represent a percentage of 0,5% in relation to the total number of fragments (A. Vigil-Escalera, *Granjas y aldeas altomedievales al Norte de Toledo (450-800 d.c.)*, in *Archivo Español de Arqueología*, vol. 80, Madrid, 2007, p. 259 and note 56.). Considering that the author quotes a total number of 7958 early medieval fragments and with the caution that this may suppose, we discover an appreciable sample and which is in consonance with what is presented at the previous sites.

33 R. Barroso Cabrera, et al., *Los yacimientos de Tinto Juan de la Cruz – Pinto, Madrid- (ss. I al VI d.C.)*, in *Estudios de Prehistoria y Arqueología Madrileña*, 11, Madrid, 2001, p. 202; J. Morín de Pablos, R. Barroso Cabrera, *El mundo funerario. De las necrópolis tardorromanas a los cementerios hispanovisigodos, Zona Arqueológica*, 11, Alcalá de Henares, 2010, p. 148-180.

34 E. Penedo Cobo, P. Oñate Baztán, J. Sanguino Vázquez, *El yacimiento visigodo del PP5, en el arroyo Culebro*, in J. Morín (ed.), *La investigación arqueológica de la época visigoda en la Comunidad de Madrid, Zona Arqueológica*, 8, Vol. II, Alcalá de Henares, 2007, p. 584-589, 591-592.

a *tremis* at the La Vega farm from Egica/Vitiza, of the Tarraco mint, a sword, ceramics related with the urban productions of Recópolis and Toledo as well as the appearance of horses, show a more complex materiality with respect to other rural peasant sites. These footprints of the elites are also present in cemeteries, such as the case of Daganzo de Arriba (Madrid), in a rural 6th and 7th century area³⁵. The existence of a family pantheon or grouped tombs should also be highlighted, formed by the burials 10, 11 and 12. There appeared in these a group of materials, formed by pieces of gold (2 rings, 2 earrings and a small plate), of silver (fragments of a sword sheath, the ferrule of a dagger, 1 necklace, 1 belt broach and 1 button), of bronze (a *bullae*, and a *patera*) as well as a sword and two lances. All these materials are difficult to interpret other than being representative of aristocratic elites living in rural areas. Likewise, in other areas of Iberia evidence has been located that points to the presence of elites in rural peasant contexts of that period. This is the case in the Catalanian area of the village of Aiguacuit (Terrassa, Barcelona) related to the Episcopal see of Egara, where there were found a bronze spur, a kidney-shaped belt buckle, a Keay-LIVB amphora and a significant group of glassware³⁶. Likewise in the southern sector of the western Pyrenees the presence of elites within the context of a stratified society has been confirmed. This would be evidenced by the presence of armament in proportions of 41% of the burials of some cemeteries and other types of grave goods items as well as the existence of cursive writing on a series of well worked and decorated by specialist artisans of funerary steles. These are all aspects that show a complex and stratified society, where some active elites were visible in the rural environment³⁷. They are all factors that help to consider a more complex society that has to be interpreted from a contextualising perspective.

But the landscape of this central area shows examples of other types of settlements that reflect a greater complexity of the organisation of the rural space. These are the hilltop villages, mentioned by written sources as *castra*, *castella*, ambiguous denominations terminologically when defining these settlements³⁸.

35 S. Fernández Godín, J. Pérez de Barradas, *Excavaciones en la necrópolis visigoda de Daganzo de Arriba (Madrid)*, «Memorias de la Junta Superior de Excavaciones y Antigüedades n.º 114», vol. 3, Madrid, 1931, p. 3-15.

36 J. Roig Buxó, *Asentamientos rurales*, cited n. 12, p. 222-223.

37 A. Azkárate Garai-Olaín, I. García Camino, *El espacio circumpirenaico*, cited n. 25, p. 331-342, 348.

38 R. Francovich, R. Hodges, *Villa to village*, cited n. 2, p. 30; S. Gelichi, *La città in Italia*, cited n. 4, p. 68; L. Schneider, *De la fouille des villages abandonnés à l'archéologie des territoires locaux. L'étude des systèmes d'habitat du haut Moyen Age en France méridionale (V^e-X^e)*

They arose in western Europe from the 5th century and are related with the dwelling of the elites³⁹. This interpretative line has been developed for the central area of Iberia considering these hilltop villages as authentic centres of political activity and with a regional fiscal function⁴⁰. They would be negotiation spaces between the local élites and the central authorities⁴¹, a situation that seems to have articulated the rural space in large sectors of the south of the Douro valley, bordering in the territory being analysed here. The materials found in a significant number of these sites, such as the exceptional group of slates, or their walls, has enabled these showing new ways of social control and the basis of local aristocratic power to be shown⁴². This function has similarly been confirmed in other areas of the peninsula, such as the case of Galicia in the NW of the peninsula, where they have been considered centres of production areas and examples of the territorial hierarchy and political control process⁴³. Archaeologically, there are relevant data in Catalonia, that even shows the variables present in these social control landscapes, in settlements close to cities, such as the cases of Sant Julià de Ramis (Girona), Puig Rom (Rosas, Girona), or in isolated interior areas such as Els Altimiris and Sant Martí de les Tombetes (Serra del Montsec, Lleida)⁴⁴.

siècle): nouveaux matériaux, nouvelles interrogations" in J. Chapelot, *Trente ans d'archéologie médiévale en France. Un bilan pour un avenir*, Turnhout, 2010, p. 137.

39 E. Zadora-Rio, *Le village des historiens et le village des archéologues*, in E. Mornet (ed.), *Campagnes médiévales: l'homme et son espace*, Paris, 1995, p. 145-156; R. Francovich, *The Beginnings of Hilltop Villages in Early Medieval Tuscany*, in J. R. Davis, M. McCormick (eds.), *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe: new directions in early medieval studies*, Padstow, 2008, p. 55-81.

40 S. Castellanos, I. Martín Viso, *The local articulation of central power in the north of the Iberian Peninsula (500-1000)*, in *Early Medieval Europe*, 13.1, p. 1-42.

41 I. Martín Viso, *Castella y elites en el Suroeste de la meseta del Duero postromana*, in R. Catalán, P. Fuentes, J. C. Sastre, (eds.), *Las fortificaciones en la tardoantigüedad. Élités y articulación del territorio (siglos V-VIII d.C.)*, Madrid, 2014, p. 251-252.

42 Most of these sites have not been archaeologically investigated and therefore a very small number of them offer a reliable archaeological register based on stratigraphic considerations. This mostly lacking stratigraphic sequences for the central area has influenced the interpretation greatly.

43 J. C. Sánchez Pardo, *Castros, castillos y otras fortificaciones en el paisaje sociopolítico de Galicia (siglos IV-XI)*, in J. Quirós Castillo and J. Tejado (eds.), *Los castillos altomedievales en el norte peninsular desde la Arqueología*, Bilbao, 2012, p. 29-56.

44 J. Burch et al., *Excavacions arqueològiques a la muntanya de Sant Julià de Ramis. 2. El castellum, Girona*, 2006, p. 36-38, 42-52; P. Palol, *El "castrum" del Puig de les Muralles de Puig Rom (Roses, Alt Empordà)*, Girona, 2004; M. Sancho i Planas, *Aldeas tardoantiguas y aldeas altomedievales en la sierra del Montsec (Prepirineo leridano): habitad y territorio*, in J. A. Quiros

In this respect, Brogiolo and Chavarría, had already defined the concept of elite and the significance of several of these *castella*, interpreting them as a fruit of State or aristocrat intervention⁴⁵. Chavarría, stresses the presence of the State as an explicative argument for some of these *castra*, such as Monte Cildá and Saldaña, where written documentation and evidence from coins transmit the presence of mints or that some of them have churches or are episcopal centres, all aspects that show their character of central places⁴⁶. In the area of the river Tagus valley, there are also examples, although scarcer, of this type of places such as Cancho del Confesionario (Manzanares el Real), Cerro de la Cabeza (La Cabrera, Madrid), Carabaña (Madrid), Dehesa de la Oliva (Patones, Madrid), El Raso (Candeleda, Ávila) and Gualda (Guadalajara)⁴⁷. The presence in Cancho del Confesionario of numeral slates or the existence of walls and a broad swathe of dwellings in Dehesa de la Oliva, where there may even have been significant buildings, as well as possible hierarchization of the cemetery of Carabaña, are elements transmitting the presence of elites. This consideration of some of these sites as landscapes of power, constitutes a crucial aspect to understand the articulation of the rural space. The appearance of numeral slates, such as the case of Cancho de Confesionario, supports this argument. It has already been indicated that these require a series of mathematical skills,

Castillo, *The Archaeology*, cited n. II, p. 279-285; A. Perich i Roca, *Arquitectura residencial urbana d'època tardoantiga a Hispania (segles IV - VIII dC)*, Tarragona, 2014, p. 190-193.

45 G. P. Brogiolo, A. Chavarría Arnau, *Aristocrazie e Campagne da Costantino a Carlomagno*, Firenze, 2005, p. 76, 82-85.

46 Chavarría Arnau, *¿Castillos en el aire? Paradigmas interpretativos "de moda" en la arqueología medieval española*, in *De Mahoma a Carlomagno. Los primeros tiempos (siglos VII-IX). XXXIX Semana de Estudios Medievales*, Estella, 2013, p. 156-157.

47 L. Caballero Zoreda, G. Megías Pérez, *Informe de las excavaciones del poblado medieval del Cancho del Confesionario, Manzanares El Real (Madrid). Julio, 1973*, in *Noticiario Arqueológico Hispánico*, 5, Madrid, 1977, p. 327-329; G. I. Yañez, M. A. López, G. Ripoll, E. Serrano, S. Consuegra, *Excavaciones en el conjunto funerario de época hispano-visigoda de La Cabeza (La Cabrera, Madrid)*, «Pyrenae» 25, Barcelona, 1994, p. 259- 287; S. Rascón, *La Antigüedad Tardía en la Comunidad de Madrid*, in *Boletín de la Asociación Española de Amigos de la Arqueología*, 39-40, Madrid, 2000, p. 219; A. Vigil-Escalera Guirado, *El asentamiento encastillado altomedieval de la Dehesa de la Oliva (Patones, Madrid)*, in J. A. Quirós Castillo, J. M^a. Tejado Sebastián (eds.), *Los castillos altomedievales en el noroeste de la Península Ibérica*, «Documentos de Arqueología Medieval n^o 4», Bilbao, 2012, p. 251-252, 255, 258-260; L. J. Balmaseda Muncharaz, *Ávila visigoda*, in J. Morín (ed.), *La investigación arqueológica*, cited n. 35, p. 240; M. A. Cuadrado Prieto, *El yacimiento hispano-visigodo de El Tesoro-Carramantiel, Gualda (Cifuentes, Guadalajara)*, in *Actas del Primer Simposio de Arqueología de Guadalajara*, Guadalajara, 2002, p. 501-508.

that were not within reach of any person of the period and it is situated as an item of fiscal accounting in the power scenery⁴⁸.

In the southern sector of the centre of Iberia, the city is characterised by a diversification of its landscape and functions. Years ago, I stated how excessive homogenisations would have to be overcome focusing the analysis in the framework of changes that were occurring in the Mediterranean and western European surroundings in which were integrated the different areas of Iberia⁴⁹. Most of the cities remaining active during the 6th century underwent profound changes that meant the transformation of the concept of *civitas*. In this context, the city of the period presented a complex panorama. Most that managed to survive the crisis of the Roman urban model were characterised by having a disperse and multi-nuclear structure. Urban disarticulation, the impoverishing of their landscape, the presence of empty areas, lower quality buildings and building technology as well as wooden construction were defining elements of this new situation, similar to the rest of western Europe⁵⁰. However, they kept their status of cities throughout the Visigothic period and were the central places of their territories and several of them were episcopal sees. But moreover, in the second half of the 5th and the first half of the 6th century there occurred on Iberia an urban impulse on the part of the Church and the State. This was contemporary with the consolidation of the Visigothic kingdom and is interpreted as an example of its initial success⁵¹. Urban revitalisation affected a limited number of cities, both episcopal and, this is novel, new State foundations. The landscape of both suggests a new urban ideal, a reflection of a new social model and transmits an ideological message reflected in urban topography. This policy of founding and renewal of cities is related to the tax collection capacity that the Visigothic State had in the period of its founding, as is transmitted by written sources and

48 I. Martín Viso, *La sociedad rural en el suroeste de la meseta del Duero (siglos VI-VII)*, in G. del Ser Quijano, I. Martín Viso (eds.), *Espacios de poder y formas sociales en la Edad Media. Estudios dedicados a Ángel Barrios*, Salamanca, 2007, p. 183; P. C. Díaz, I. Martín Viso, *Una contabilidad esquiva: las pizarras numerales visigodas y el caso de El Cortinal de San Juan (Salvatierra de Tormes, España)*, in P. C. Díaz, I. Martín Viso (eds.), *Between taxation and rent. Fiscal problems from late Antiquity to Early Middle Ages*, Bari, 2011, p. 221-250.

49 L. Olmo Enciso, *El reino visigodo*, cited n. 3.

50 A. Verhulst, *The rise of cities in northwest Europe*, Cambridge, 1999, p. 24; C. Wickham, *Framing*, cited n. 2, p. 652-654, 665-667; R. Francovich, *The hinterlands*, cited n. 9, p. 139 and 150; J. Henning (ed.), *Post Roman Towns*, cited n. 9, p. 3; S. Gelichi, *La città in Italia*, cited n. 4.

51 L. Olmo Enciso, *Consideraciones sobre la ciudad en época visigoda*, in *Arqueología y Territorio Medieval*, 5, Jaén 1998, p. 109-118.

in which the Church also took part and benefitted⁵². In fact, most of these episcopal cities, the same as Recópolis and Toledo, were economic centres and the base of the fiscal system and minted coins, the opposite of the other episcopal centres that did not have this function⁵³. It is clear that the urban activity of these cities and the displays of their power landscapes cannot be separated from its character as urban receptors of surplus, as will be argued later.

Undoubtedly, the maximum expression of the urban ideas of the Visigothic period was reached in the centre of the peninsula. This would be where the most determining material evidence would become visible of the urban image and function of the State, associated from its origin with an articulated tax system as was well reflected in Toledo and Recópolis. However, together with these, there was in the central area another series of cities that were episcopal centres such as Segóbriga, Ercavica, Valeria and Complutum, defined since the 6th century by a disperse habitat structured around small nuclei with buildings of wood or adobe⁵⁴. Some of these, Segóbriga and Ercavica, had representative religious buildings in their suburbs, but of all of them only the first has offered a minimum group of imported ceramics. Their character of episcopal centres served to maintain and make more cohesive a fragmented habitat resulting from the already mentioned urban destructureation process beginning in the 5th century. Therefore, these episcopal cities kept their role of central places, although the landscape differed from that of Toledo and Recópolis, and the displays of the elites were less determining. However, this contrast and the lower material visibility of the aristocrats is an element that also needs to be contextualised and on interpreting the hierarchisation of the landscape of this area of the centre of the peninsula, since it transmits the existence of different levels of scale in the location and representation of the elites.

The most obvious examples of the new urban landscape, consolidated at the end of the 6th century, would be the new urban developments of the capital city of Toledo from the second half of the 6th century AD and the founding *ex novo* by State initiative, of the city of Recópolis in 578 AD. In Toledo, in the suburban area of Vega Baja, in the second half of the 6th century, as is shown by the stratigraphic investigations undertaken, a new urbanisation process was developed promoted by the State, which levelled the previous late roman structures. This all caused the Visigothic period to be characterised by greater urban density of

52 Isidorus Hispalensis, *H.G.*, 51, 5; *Epistola Fisci barcinonensi*.

53 L. Olmo Enciso, *La ciudad en el centro peninsular durante el proceso de consolidación del estado visigodo de Toledo*, in J. Morín (ed.), *La investigación arqueológica*, cited n. 35, p. 252 and 260-262; L. Olmo Enciso, *Recópolis*, cited n. 1, p. 59-60.

54 L. Olmo Enciso, *La ciudad*, cited n. 54, p. 254-255 and 260-262.

the *suburbio toletano* and had as a consequence the acquiring of a new image for the kingdom's capital from the hierarchized urban programme that occupied a space of 90 hectares approximately. This urban development meant the construction of the palace complex and of the most important churches of the city (except the cathedral, located in the upper part of the old Roman centre) as well as a broad programme of buildings destined to dwellings and other uses and road organisation tending towards regularity. Urban diversification between the new power landscapes and the new residential spaces could be enlarged to the existence of production and commercial areas as appear to suggest the materials found. This is based on the appearance in the area closest to the palace complex of objects linked to these types of activities, weights, balance items, material imported from North Africa and the east, decorative ivory objects, evidence of a glass workshop. All of this indicates the presence of commercial and artisanal activities close to the palace within an urban scheme known in Recópolis and in other Mediterranean cities⁵⁵.

Contemporary with this new Toledo urban landscape, the city of Recópolis (Fig. 3) was founded in the year 578 AD. The written sources of its founding shows the exceptional importance given to this in the discourse on State consolidation and organising a fiscal structure⁵⁶. As an urban centre, Recópolis had a dynamic life for more than two and a half centuries, between the end of the 6th century to the first half of the 9th century, comprising the Visigothic and Early Islamic periods. The site topography enabled carrying out urban planning that was developed following hierarchisation of the urban space, defined from the group of palace buildings located in the highest point of the city (Fig. 4). This group of palace buildings, with current dimensions of 1.4 hectares, visible from all the city and part of the nearby territory, comprises three large buildings (the biggest 140 m in length) and a church built around a large square. The civil buildings have two floors, being the upper more representative with pavements of *opus signinum* and architectural decorative elements⁵⁷, whereas the lower with mortar and lime pavements must have been conceived for a more varied use. They were built of stone with ashlar and masonry work and with a lime plaster cladding. They had several functions related to representative, administrative, economic, storage and fiscal uses⁵⁸. Access to this palace complex was

55 L. Olmo Enciso, *Ciudad y Estado*, cited n. 1.

56 L. Olmo Enciso, *Recópolis*, cited n. 1.

57 *Ibid.*

58 L. Olmo Enciso, *Los conjuntos palatinos en el contexto de la topografía urbana altomedieval de la península ibérica*, in *II Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española*, Madrid, 1987, p. 346-352.



Figure 3. Aerial view of Recópolis.



Figure 4. Recópolis. The excavated area.

made through a monumental gate, which was communicated via the main street (Fig. 5). On both sides of this street, two large buildings housed shops and workshops destined to commercial and artisanal activities. Workshops for producing glass and goldsmiths have been found⁵⁹ and shops with consumer goods originating in the Mediterranean area⁶⁰. The dwellings comprise rectangular rooms of different functions – rooms, cooking areas – open to patios. They were constructed based on masonry bases and adobe walls, all clad, tiled roofs and pavements of lime mortar, similar to the lower floor of the palace building. Those of the second phase (2nd half of the 7th century), reoccupied part of the shop and workshop spaces as well as the previous dwellings and were built of the same materials, but with lower quality techniques and compressed clay pavements. Recópolis had two water supply systems, defined by the existence of an aqueduct and the presence of cisterns, a mixed system also present in other cities of the period such as Mérida and Tarragona⁶¹. The city was surrounded by a wall with towers in which the gates for entering the urban area were located coinciding with the natural accesses and which was made of masonry covered by lime mortar plaster⁶².

Recópolis was likewise a production and consumption centre. The presence of an area of artisanal activity with spaces destined to the production of glass and goldsmiths or the sale of consumer goods imported from the Mediterranean confirmed it. As a glass production centre, it had two workshops that worked until the middle of the 7th century at which time only one continued, which carried on operating during most of the 8th century, already in the early Islamic period⁶³. Its character as a receiving centre is supported by the presence of ARSW D type ceramics and amphorae and *spathia* from North Africa, which reflects the access of the elites of the city to Mediterranean consumer goods, which constitute up to now the most representative group of the Spanish interior⁶⁴.

59 A. Gómez de la Torre Verdejo, *La producción de vidrio en época visigoda: el taller de Recópolis*, in E. Baquedano (ed.), *711. Arqueología e Historia entre dos mundos, Zona Arqueológica*, 15, vol. II, Madrid, 2012, p. 257-280; M. Castro Priego, *Los hallazgos numismáticos de Recópolis: aspectos singulares de su integración en la secuencia histórica del yacimiento*, in L. Olmo-Enciso (ed.), *Recópolis*, cited n. 1; A. Gómez de la Torre Verdejo, *La muralla de Recópolis*, in L. Olmo-Enciso (ed.), *Recópolis*, cited n. 1.

60 M. Bonifay, D. Bernal Casasola, *Recópolis*, cited n. 31, p. 99-115.

61 L. Olmo-Enciso (ed.), *Recópolis*, cited n. 1, p. 54-55; Gurt i Esparraguera, I. Sánchez Ramos, *Las ciudades hispanas durante la antigüedad tardía: una lectura arqueológica*, in L. Olmo-Enciso (ed.), *Recópolis*, cited n. 1, p. 187-188.

62 A. Gómez de la Torre-Verdejo, *La muralla de Recópolis*, cited n. 60, p. 77-86.

63 A. Gómez de la Torre-Verdejo, *La producción de vidrio*, cited n. 60, p. 257-281.

64 M. Bonifay, D. Bernal Casasola, *Recópolis*, cited n. 31.

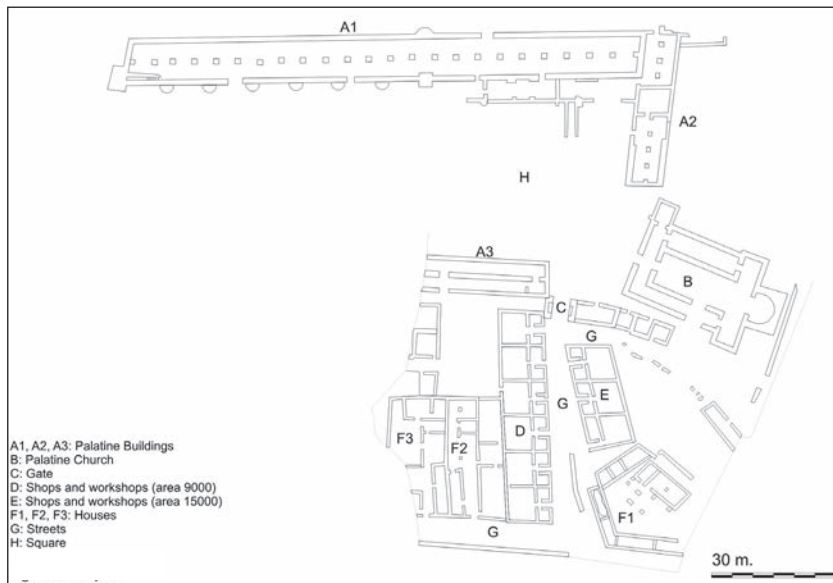


Figure 5. Recópolis.

The territory of Recópolis, likewise reflects a new rural landscape of similar characteristics to the rest of the centre of the peninsula and which supposes a change from the previous late roman. It comprises different types of settlements, fundamentally villages and farms, which are situated within a maximum radius of 3 kilometres, showing their relationship to the city. This is reflected by the presence in them of ceramics made on a wheel, as well as a fragment of an amphora Key 61 in a possible farm. Likewise, pollen analysis carried out in Recópolis and in two rural sites document a landscape for this period predominantly open, caused in part by heavy deforestation, under climatic conditions of a dry Mediterranean character. In this progressive installation of dry Mediterranean conditions, human activity seems to have played an important role in the area. In this landscape, the organisation of the agricultural system was based on polyculture, with cereal exploitation and also olive and vines with an appreciable presence of livestock exploitation.

However, to understand the success of this State promoted urban policy, the State's ability of fiscal coercion needs to be analysed, which made the existence of a system destined to satisfy the inherent tax collection needs indispensable. Therefore the study of coins carried out from stratigraphic contexts provides fundamental data to know the nature of this fiscal structure. The affirming process of the monarchy and of vindicating to its centralising wishes is archaeologically

documented between the years 576-578 AD with the beginning of the minting of *tremisses* by king Leovigildo, the founding of Recópolis and carrying out the new urban development in Toledo⁶⁵. This would be supported by the increased volume of *tremisses* in circulation (Fig. 6), which must be related to the fact that the sole power recognised to mint coins was the State⁶⁶. This clear sample of state monopoly on coin production⁶⁷, a fundamental element of the tax system, provided the fundamental element that helps to understand this model of State and its capacity of fiscal coercion. Initial success that would be materialised, between other initiatives, in the state urban planning present in Toledo and Recópolis.

In fact, the construction of Recópolis, with its wall, palaces and buildings, constituted a form of disciplining the landscape, this understood as a social space, and a clear demonstration of the exercise of power enabled through the control of resources. Urban planning meant the concept of discipline and through this the population becoming familiar with the orders of the elites. In this respect, it must not be forgotten how the spaces promoted by the dominant ideologies were also to ensure the cohesion of these elites⁶⁸. This aspect was also present in the founding of Recópolis – and we begin to intuit it in the new urban development of Toledo at the end of the 6th century – since its foundation demonstrates the wish to show the cohesion of the structure of the State and its ideological project expressed in a landscape of power enabled by the success of a fiscal structure. For that it is not a coincidence that this city houses political, administrative, and fiscal functions, the latter expressed by the mint and the storage spaces and all of them related with the management and administration of the productive surplus. These functions lasted, with different levels of intensity throughout the Visigothic period and the first century of the Islamic period.

From the middle of the 7th century, scenes of change and crisis in the group of cities characterised by its dynamism in the previous phase, are documented. A phenomenon of destructure occurs in this period and a cessation

65 L. Olmo Enciso, *Arqueología y formación del Estado en época visigoda*, in A. Perea (ed.), *El tesoro visigodo de Guarrazar*, Madrid, 2001, p. 380-381; L. Olmo Enciso, *Ciudad y Estado*, cited n. 1, p. 96.

66 M. Castro Priego, *El sistema monetario visigodo y su alcance regional: el ejemplo de la provincia Carthaginensis y la ceca de Toledo*, in A. García, R. Izquierdo, L. Olmo-Enciso, D. Peris (eds), *Espacios urbanos*, cited n. 1, p. 285-294; M. Castro Priego, *Absent Coinage: Archaeological Contexts and Tremisses in Central Iberian Peninsula (7th-8th centuries A.D.)*, in *Medieval Archaeology*, 59, forthcoming.

67 F. Retamero, *La continua il.lusio del moviment perpetu. La moneda dels reges, dels muluk i dels seniores (segles VI-XI)*, Barcelona, 2000, p. 127.

68 R. Paynter, R. H. McGuire, *The Archaeology of Inequality*, cited n. 21, p. 10.

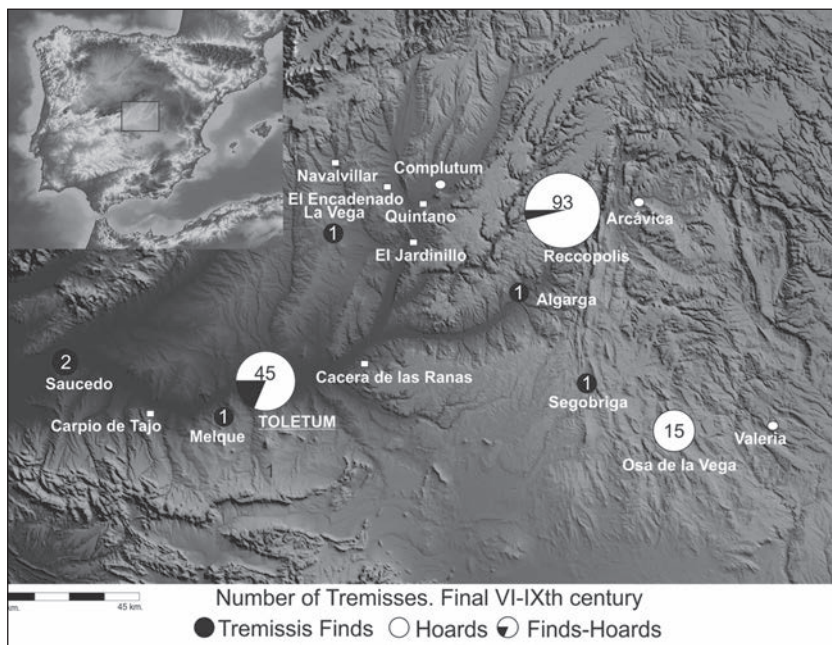


Figure 6. Tremisses in stratigraphic contexts
(M. Castro Priego, *Absent Coinage*, cited n. 66).

in urban activity, evidenced by written sources but especially obvious from archaeological investigation. This documents the ceasing civil activity by the Church and State in the city⁶⁹, that for the centre of the peninsula we could well document the case of Recópolis, with a loss in urban regularity, the transformation of most of the shops and workshops in dwellings as well as a worsening and simplification of building techniques. It is a phenomenon that must be related to the crisis of the Visigothic State as a fundamental cause to analyse this process. A factor that helps to understand the weakening of the State and its tax collecting capacity occurred throughout the second half of the 7th century. Then the average value of *tremisses* went from having 80% gold to a little less than 30% at the beginning of the 8th century as well as a lowering

69 L. Olmo Enciso, *Consideraciones*, cited n. 52; L. Olmo Enciso, *La ciudad*, cited n. 54, p. 261-262; L. Olmo Enciso, *The royal foundation of Recópolis and the urban renewal in Iberia during the second half of the 6th century*, in J. Henning (ed.), *Post-Roman Towns*, cited n. 9, p. 194-196; L. Olmo Enciso, *Recópolis*, cited n. 1, p. 58-60; L. Olmo Enciso, *Ciudad y Estado*, cited n. 1, p. 106-107.

of the weight with magnitudes similar to that of the gold content. Therefore with a monetary system in crisis⁷⁰, which affected a weakened tax structure notably in favour of an increasing process of feudalisation that occurred in the second half of the 7th century AD. These cities in crisis were what the Arabs found on their arrival in the peninsula in 711, but, however, they were still articulating centres of the territory as recent archaeological investigations have shown⁷¹.

Contemporary with this crisis that is shown in urban surroundings and in the tax collecting capacity of the State, a process of greater diversification can be situated in the pattern of rural settlements. This would be reflected archaeologically in the intensification of building of rural churches, the appearance of monasteries and the dating in this period of the most significant rural aristocratic residences. All this process, therefore, is coincident with the appreciable lessening of civil activity in the cities and it shows a phenomenon of greater attention and investment by the elites, fundamentally ecclesiastic, in rural surroundings⁷². A consequence of this was that in the 7th century, especially in its second half, the most relevant landscapes and architectures of power, churches, monasteries and aristocratic residences, were located in rural areas. The building of churches, which had begun to occur in the 6th century, intensified with their multiplication, especially in the 7th century⁷³. Within this new articulation of the rural space in the area being analysed here, the presence of monastic groups such as Melque (San Martín de Montalbán, Toledo), San Pedro de la Mata (Sonseca, Toledo)⁷⁴ or aristocratic residences such as Los Hitos (Arisgotas, Toledo) or probably Hernán Paez

70 F. Retamero, *La continua il.lusio*, cited n. 68, p. 101; M. Castro Priego, *Los hallazgos numismáticos*, cited n. 60, p. 139-140; M. Castro Priego, *El sistema monetario*, cited n. 67.

71 L. Olmo Enciso, *De Celtiberia a Santabariyya: la transformación del espacio entre la época visigoda y la formación de la sociedad andalusí*, in E. Baquedano (ed.), *711. Arqueología e Historia entre dos mundos*, «Zona Arqueológica nº 15», vol. II, Alcalá de Henares, 2012, p. 39-65.

72 L. Olmo Enciso, *Consideraciones*, cited n. 52, p. 116; L. Olmo Enciso, *The royal foundation*, cited n. 570, p. 193.

73 A. Chavarría Arnau, *El final*, cited n. 6, p. 227-228.

74 L. Caballero Zoreda, J. I. Murillo, *Notas sobre las cercas y murallas de Santa María de Melque*, in *Espacios fortificados en la provincia de Toledo*, Toledo, 2005, p. 258-268; L. Caballero Zoreda, *El monasterio de Balatalmeç, Melque (San Martín de Montalbán, Toledo). En el centenario de su descubrimiento*, in J. López Quiroga, A. M. Martínez Tejera, J. Morín de Pablos (eds), *Monasteria et Territoria*, «British Archaeological Reports International Series S1720», Oxford, 2007, p. 94-99.

(Arges, Toledo)⁷⁵ must be included. Although it is true that we have but few of these latter examples, and except for the case of Pla de Nadal (Ribarroja de Turia, Valencia), research up to the present does not offer sufficient interpretation of the characteristics of these significant sites. Chavarría, has indicated how the Councils in the 7th century reflected an increasing power of the aristocracy, but especially all the ecclesiastical hierarchy that was demonstrated from the founding of churches and monasteries as well as conflicts deriving from it between bishops and the nobility⁷⁶. All this also reflected an aspect of great importance, which is greater pressure from the elites in rural surroundings through the creation of new spaces of control. Within this, the beginning of ecclesiastical penetration in rural surroundings would play a fundamental role. Through Christianisation the peasantry would be attempted to be disciplined and to be integrated more in the ideological system and the social order defended by the elites. About the intensity of this phenomenon as well as the peasant resistance strategies the continuous literary references in the 6th and 7th centuries must be remembered on this problem as Martin de Braga “*De correctione rusticorum*”, or Valerio del Bierzo, and the proceedings of the Councils well document, denouncing pagan practices and rites associated with nature.

Everything analysed until now for the southern region of the plateau of Castile reflects a more complex landscape than that considered up to this time. Archaeological reality offers data on a dense network of peasant villages that characterise a landscape also integrated by centers of power – hilltop villages, ecclesiastical spaces, aristocratic residences, and cities of different ranks. Yet, in view of the analysis the system is revealed as more complex, as behind these classifications is hidden greater diversification. Contextualisation of them all in a landscape analysed at regional level, helps to indicate a series of fundamental aspects to understand the system of relationships developed in the period. Archaeological materiality reflects the presence of a stratified society that defines social formation of the period.

Vigil-Escalera and Quirós Castillo have recently pointed out the existence of elements of hierarchisation within the peasant settlement system through a more complex settlement structure than that initially indicated in what could have fitted residential enclaves of different categories. Defending the hegemony of the village model as an explicative element of the early medieval social reality

75 F. J. Moreno, *El yacimiento de los Hitos en Arisgotas. (Orgaz-Toledo). Reflexiones en torno a cómo ‘se construye’ un monasterio visigodo*, in *Anales de Historia del Arte*, 18, Madrid, 2008, p. 13-44.; A. Vicente Navarro, J. M. Rojas Rodríguez-Malo, *Hernán Paéz, un establecimiento rural del siglo VIII en el entorno de Toledo*, «Arse», 43, 2009, p. 287-315.

76 A. Chavarría Arnau, *El final*, cited n. 6, p. 224.

underlines the existence of a common superstructure comprising different landlords or property owners at whose warehouses would arrive most of the rents extracted from the territory.⁷⁷ In this way they assume the existence of elites differentiating them in two categories corresponding to rural and urban areas, and suggesting the possibility that these villages depended on urban elites. A line of argument that connects in some of its assertions with positions that Roig Buxó defended with respect to the articulation of a great part of the settlements excavated in Catalonia around two major episcopal centres: Barcino (Barcelona) and Egara (Tarrasa). This author also proposes that cereal surpluses would be destined to commercial activities or the payment of rent. This latter aspect is that which relates it to the already mentioned fiscal document of 592 AD, *De fisco Barcinonensi*⁷⁸.

Therefore, as this work has argued, there are elites, there is aristocracy and they are more visible than has been wised to be seen or interpreted up till now. But it is also evident that, as Wickham expressed, their economic capacity was more restricted and, therefore, their demand was less⁷⁹. The key point is accepting that, together with a majority predomination of the peasant landscape, as could not be otherwise as it is the most numerous demographic group of pre-industrial society, the system of vertical social relations must also have a bearing. And in this respect I wish to emphasize that the supposed lack of evidence regarding the complete control of the villages by landowners is not so transcendent. What is truly significant is accepting that there is a manifestation of domain, which is exercising power through the control of resources and this, as has already been mentioned, does not require a physical presence of the landlord in the village to control all the surplus production. Although, what is one of the problems? This has been partly noted by Wickham on wondering about the size of the land owned by these landlords⁸⁰. The reality is that we do not know the real productive organisation of the rural space, whose explicative framework has been developed from a small sample of villages, some of which with in-site productive lots. And these spaces are transcendental, as the study of these productive areas worked by the peasant groups, united with that of the transformation

77 A. Vigil Escalera, J. A. Quirós Castillo, *Un ensayo*, cited n. 12, p. 392.

78 J. Roig Buxó, *Silos, poblados e iglesias: almacenaje y rentas en época visigoda y altomedieval en Cataluña (siglos VI al XI)*, in A. Vigil-Escalera Guirado, G. Bianchi, J. A. Quiros, (eds.), *Horrea, barns and silos. Storage and incomes in Early Medieval Europe*, «Documentos de Arqueología e Historia nº 5», Bilbao 2013, p. 152.

79 C. Wickham, *Rethinking the Structure of the Early Medieval Economy*, in J.R. Davis, M. McCormick, (eds.), *The Long Morning*, cited n. 40, p. 23.

80 C. Wickham, *Rethinking*, cited n. 81, p. 24.

and storage spaces of the villages, are those that offer information about the creation of surpluses and their scale. It should also be considered that, although the major part of the surplus production comes from the agricultural system, this is not all of it, as other spaces reflect. An example of this is provided by settlements organised round the extraction of iron ore with a system controlled by the elites, who organised the process of obtaining and distributing the surplus, as can be seen in the NW of the peninsula and in the Madrid area. The surplus capacity of the cities must also be considered, which, although it was generally less than that of rural surroundings, it also existed. Especially in dynamic cities that had productive spaces as is reflected by the presence of artisans, traders etc. But all of this puts us before an ever more evident consideration, which is that there was surplus production taken by the elites, but through differing degrees of scale, something that archaeology is beginning to show.

And from the archaeological perspective, the question is, where did the surplus come from to produce the building in hilltop villages of walls and a hierarchised urban network; the construction of monasteries; the aristocratic residences; of rural churches; of urban episcopal centres; works of a great urban scope such as the new Toledo development or the founding of Recópolis? How is the presence of elites explained in peasant surroundings, manifested through a distinctive materiality with gold and silver objects, armament, with consumer goods from long-distance trade? The answer in the cases of Recópolis and Toledo is clear. It is the landscapes of power that express the visibility of an ideology and the visibility of the environment constructed around them and that contribute to showing spatially the consolidation of that power. But, how are these landscapes explained, carried out on broad swathes of land (Vega Baja in Toledo, 90 hectares, Recópolis, 25 hectares), with large-sized palace complexes (1,5 hectares in Recópolis and buildings 140 m long), with mints, walls, churches, ashlar constructions, aqueduct, cisterns and a restructuring of the road system? Moreover, their character of economic, fiscal and administrative centres has to be considered, confirmed by both Toledo and Recópolis having mints, the two most active mints in the central territory of the peninsula between the end of the 6th and the first half of the 7th centuries. But also for having the highest concentration of imported goods of the centre of the peninsula. An explanation has already been offered⁸¹, these cities express the visibility of an ideology and the visibility of the environment built around them, factors that contribute to their manifesting in space the consolidation of that power. But a key element that must be highlighted is of how these urban operations were possible thanks to their implying the concentration of surpluses. And this concentration had

81 L. Olmo Enciso, *Recópolis*, cited n. 1; L. Olmo Enciso, *De Celtiberia*, cited n. 72..

to largely proceed from those cities' areas of influence, that is the region being analysed here.

But the surpluses did not only have to go to those singular urban spaces. They also had to reach, although in smaller measure, cities such as Segóbriga, Arcávida, Valeria and Complutum. And although archaeologically in these, the examples are scarcer, the church of Segóbriga or the possible monastery complex of Arcávida are examples to be valued. However, the hilltop villages warrant special attention, intermediate centres from where the elites articulated the territory. Archaeology shows how, from the general consideration of these settlements as central places, a diversity of types and functions is manifest that characterises them. For this area, sites such as Cancho del Confesionario, La Cabrera, Carabaña (Madrid), Gualda (Guadalajara) are not the same as that located in the larger-sized Dehesa de la Oliva. The latter is defined by a wall enclosing an area of over 10 hectares, with a hierarchised organisation within it and the possible existence of areas reserved for the elites⁸² and all this landscape indicates their intervention in their building. This site of Dehesa de la Oliva presents a more complex category than the hilltop villages of the area and it is more connected to another type of similar settlements in other regions of Iberia, such as those of Monte Cildá, Saldaña, Auca, Amaya⁸³. This, together with the fact that this site originates in the 5th century, points to this type of hilltop settlements as centers of control and organization of the territory managed by local elites in a period prior to the consolidation of the Visigoth State. However, given the characteristics of these large-sized hilltop settlements, their morphology and their size, they must be considered urban centres. Visigothic legislation also indicates in this sense on transmitting how some of these *castra*, *castella* and *civitates* possessed attributions as administrative, judicial centres and those linked with tax organisation, as for the latter case is reflected in the *antiqua* (*L.V., IX, 2, 6*) of king Ervigio (680-687). All this indicates a more complex urban type organization that fits well in the heterogeneous framework that covers the denomination of city in this period. It is, however, equally transmitting the presence of a landscape organised by the elites and from their capacity to control surpluses to carry it out.

As a consequence the landscape of the centre of the Iberian Peninsula, from the second half of the 6th century and throughout the 7th, was developed from a stratified society model. Most of the base, in demographic and productive terms, rested in the peasantry who managed the work of the agricultural

82 A. Vigil-Escalera Guirado, *El asentamiento*, cited n. 48, p. 251-252, 255, 258-260.

83 A. Chavarría Arnau, *¿Castillos en el aire?*, cited n. 47, p. 156-157; S. Castellanos, I. Martín Viso, *The local articulation*, cited n. 41, p. 13.

system. Although in this period production was defined by generalization of an agriculture fundamentally of subsistence⁸⁴ that, however, had to destine a percentage to satisfy surplus obligations. This control of a part of the resources constituted a manifestation of domain by the elites. Through this control and even accepting that economic capacity of these was restricted⁸⁵, they managed to continue manifesting it as such. The archaeological register evidences this, which is analysed here and shows how one of the realities to consider is the existence of patterns of spatial inequality⁸⁶ in which elites and non-elites led different and unequal lives.

As a culmination, I wish to finish by quoting what Riccardo Francovich expressed about this period in one of his last works. He mentioned how new documents constructed from more sophisticated archaeological research allowed, on the one hand, to return to the sources with new interpretive tools and rewrite chapters of history that seemed consolidated and, on the other, it opens up a new path for this vast, but not unlimited, heritage of information comprising the archaeological areas and monuments of the early medieval age⁸⁷.

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84 R. Francovich, *The Beginnings*, cited n. 40, p. 60-61.

85 C. Wickham, *Rethinking*, cited n. 80, p. 10.

86 R. Paynter, *Models*, cited n. 5, p. 232.

87 R. Francovich, *The hinterlands*, cited n. 9, p. 150.

Sonia GUTIÉRREZ LLORET

EARLY *AL-ANDALUS*: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE PROCESS OF ISLAMIZATION IN THE IBERIAN PENINSULA (7th TO 10th CENTURIES) *

This paper tries to rethink the meaning of recent historical and archaeological research on early *al-Andalus*, which has been very dynamic in the last decades. The Arab-Berber conquest of Hispania in the year 711 AD had an important effect on Western Mediterranean history: the existence of an Islamic society in the Iberian Peninsula, known as *al-Andalus*¹, dated from that moment. Until recently, the story of this conquest was based only on short texts from Arabic and Latin sources, not always contemporary to the events described². Generally speaking, it seemed impossible to recognize and somehow rebuild the whole process from the archaeological records. Within the last few years, however, the connection between material culture and Islamization in the western Muslim world (in *al-Andalus*, Sicily and the Maghreb³) has been rein-

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1 The word *al-Andalus* refers to the Iberian territories that were part of the *dār al-Islām* (the “house of the Islam”) in the Middle Ages. It is therefore a geographic model that includes areas currently belonging to Spain, Portugal and, in an early stage, southern France. Its territorial limits changed and were reduced between the 8th and 15th centuries, and there is a very important consequence in the 17th century: the expulsion of the ‘Moors’ (Muslims that were forced to convert to Christianity in the 16th century). E.g., A. García Sanjuán, *El significado geográfico del topónimo al-Andalus en las fuentes árabes*, *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 33/1, 2003, p. 3-36.

2 A. García Sanjuán, *La conquista islámica de la península Ibérica y la tergiversación del pasado. Del catastrofismo al negacionismo*, Marcial Pons Historia, Madrid, 2013.

3 E.g., M. Marín (ed.), *The formation of al-Andalus. Part 1: History and Society*, «The Formation of the Classical Islamic World: Vol. 46», Ashgate Variorum, 1998; M. Marín (ed.), *Al-Andalus/España. Historiografías en contraste. Siglos XVII-XXI*, «Collection de la Casa de Velázquez 109», Madrid, 2009; J. Aguadé, P. Cressier, A. Vicente (eds.), *Peuplement*

New Directions in Early Medieval European Archaeology: Spain and Italy compared, ed. by Sauro GELICHI and Richard HODGES, Turnhout, 2015 (Haut Moyen Âge, 24), p. 43-86.

forced, and it has been stated that archaeology offers insufficiently explored opportunities that reshape the social and cultural debate, providing new evidence to reconsider the religious and linguistic aspects of the process (fig. 1).

It is therefore necessary to look beyond the year 711 and broaden the study to the 300 years spanning the 7th to the 10th century AD. This approach shows the real scale of a social and cultural transformational process that might go unnoticed from a more restrictive point of view, leading us on a futile hunt for continuities and interruptions. The role of archaeology in the construction of historiographical models of early *al-Andalus* is analysed, assessing recent progress and debates. Its contribution to different problems will be discussed here: the way we might recognize the Islamization process; the changes in lifestyle, production, and the organization of social space (domestic, urban, and rural); the characterization of rural settlements and the patterns of agricultural landscapes; the structure of markets; and cultural change, all understood through ceramics, currency, taxation and other topics.

While an approach restricted to the year 711 would reinforce the concept of social and material continuity, a wider point of view reveals important differences between Visigothic society and that of the Caliphate of Córdoba. Objects, spaces, landscapes, common practices and social meanings did change deeply over those three centuries. The 10th century shows us a homogeneous society with an intense Islamization in *al-Andalus*, which has little to do with the His-

et arabisation au Magreb occidental. Dialectologie et histoire, Madrid-Zaragoza, Casa de Velázquez, Universidad de Zaragoza, 1998; P. Cressier, *Archéologie du Magreb islamique. Archéologie d'Al-Andalus, Archéologie espagnole?*, in M. Marín (ed.), *Al-Andalus/España*, cited above in this note, p. 131-45; P. Cressier, S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *Archéologie de l'Islam européen. Sept siècles de présence arabo-berbère*, in J.-P. Demoule (ed.), *L'Europe. Un continent redécouvert par l'archéologie*, Gallimard, 2009, p. 146-157; Ph. Sénac (ed.), *Villa 2. Villes et campagnes de Tarraconaise et d'al-Andalus (VI^e - XI^e siècle): la Transition*, «Études Médiévales Ibériques», Méridiennes, Toulouse, 2007; *Id.*, *Villa 3. Histoire et Archéologie des sociétés de la vallée de l'Ebre (VII^e-XI^e siècles)*, «Études Médiévales Ibériques», Méridiennes, Toulouse, 2010; *Id.*, *Villa 4. Histoire et Archéologie de l'Occident musulman (VI^e-XV^e siècles) Al-Andalus, Maghreb, Sicile*, «Études Médiévales Ibériques», Méridiennes, Toulouse, 2012; *Id.*, *De Mahoma a Carlomagno. Los primeros tiempos (siglos VII-IX)*. Actas de la XXXIX Semana de Estudios Medievales, Pamplona, 2013; C. Aillet, *Les Mozarabes. Christianisme, Islamisation et arabisation en Péninsule Ibérique (IX^e-XII^e siècle)*, «Bibliothèque de la Casa de Velázquez 45», Madrid, 2010; E. Baquedano (ed.), *711. Arqueología e Historia entre dos mundos, Zona Arqueológica*, 15, 2 vols, Museo Arqueológico Regional, Alcalá de Henares, 2011; D. Valérian (ed.), *Islamisation et arabisation de l'Occident musulman médiéval (VI^e-XII^e siècle)*, Paris, 2011; A. Nef, F. Ardizzone (eds.), *Les dynamiques de l'Islamisation en Méditerranée centrale et en Sicile: nouvelles propositions et découvertes récentes*, «Collection de L'Ecole française de Rome 487», Roma-Bari, 2014.

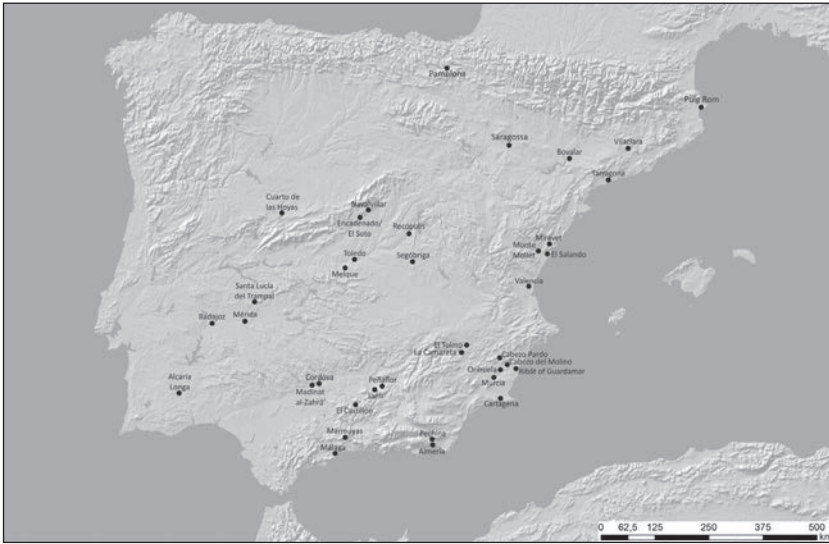


Figure 1. Sites in the Iberian Peninsula mentioned in the text.

pania that the Arab-Berber conquerors found at the beginning of the 8th century. A dialectical process transformed the society which predated 711, integrating both native people and Berbers inside the new Arab and Islamic guidelines for Andalusian society⁴.

The historiographical context of Spanish medieval archaeology

From a historiographical perspective, medieval archaeology is younger than traditional disciplines such as prehistory and classical archaeology. Its development is fairly new, including in connection to the ‘European’ concept of medieval archaeology, which appeared as such by the middle of the 20th century. In the Iberian Peninsula, its modern methodological practice began 30 years ago, while its academic recognition is even more recent and is not yet completely established.

However, an interest in medieval remains is old and can be traced back to the 19th century, even if the approach at that time was very different from what is now considered to constitute medieval archaeology. It was then the reflection of a concern for the magnificent monuments of *al-Andalus*, and of an orientalist

4 E. Manzano Moreno, *Al-Andalus: un balance crítico*, in Ph. Sénac (ed.), *Villa 4*, cited n. 3, p. 25.

interest integrating the 'arabesque' into national history, influencing the exotic image of Spain in the literature and art of that period. The Islamic archaeology of the 20th century was defined by different perspectives: the history of art, architectural conservation, and Arabism. The first approaches provided continuity to the concept of 'Spanishness' and referred to the terms 'Islamic Spain' and 'Hispano-Muslim'; two historiographical concepts which are currently out of date⁵.

By the end of the 1970s there was a change in the historiographical paradigm, mostly caused by academic relations with France and Italy⁶. Regarding France, the activity of the Casa de Velázquez, the French school in Madrid, was very important, and Pierre Guichard's thesis had a great impact, as well as his works with André Bazzana and Patrice Cressier about fortresses and rural spaces⁷.

5 M. Marín, *Reflexiones sobre el arabismo español: tradiciones, renovaciones y secuestros*, in *Hamsa. Journal of Judaic and Islamic Studies*, 1, 2014, p. 10-11; V. Salvatierra Cuenca, *La primera arqueología medieval española. Análisis de un proceso frustrado (1844-1925)*, in *Studia histórica* (Historia Medieval), 31, Universidad de Salamanca, 2013, p. 183-210.

6 E.g., the series *Castrum*, promoted by P. Toubert (Casa de Velázquez and École Française de Rome): A. Bazzana, P. Guichard, J.-M. Poisson (eds.), *Castrum 1. Habitats fortifiés et organisation de l'espace en Méditerranée médiévale* (Lyon 1982), «Travaux de la Maison de l'Orient 4», Lyon, 1983; G. Noyé (ed.), *Castrum 2. Structures de l'habitat et occupation du sol dans les pays méditerranéens: les méthodes et l'apport de l'archéologie extensive* (Paris 1984), «Collection de l'École française de Rome 105» – «Publications de la Casa de Velázquez», Série archéologique 9, Roma-Madrid, 1988; A. Bazzana (ed.), *Castrum 3. Guerre, fortification et habitat dans le monde méditerranéen au Moyen Âge* (Madrid, 1985), «Collection de l'École française de Rome 105» – «Publications de la Casa de Velázquez», Série archéologique 12, Roma-Madrid, 1988; J.-M. Poisson (ed.), *Castrum 4. Frontière et peuplement dans le monde méditerranéen au Moyen Âge* (Erice-Trapani, 1988), «Collection de l'École française de Rome 105» – «Collection de la Casa de Velázquez 38», Roma-Madrid, 1992; A. Bazzana (ed.), *Castrum 5. Archéologie des espaces agraires méditerranéens au Moyen Âge* (Murcia 1992), «Collection de l'École française de Rome 105» – «Collection de la Casa de Velázquez 55», Roma-Madrid-Murcia, 1999; A. Bazzana, É. Hubert (eds.), *Castrum 6. Maisons et espaces domestiques dans le monde méditerranéen au Moyen Âge* (Erice-Trapani, 1993), «Collection de l'École française de Rome 105/6» – «Collection de la Casa de Velázquez 72», Roma-Madrid, 2000; J. M. Martin (ed.), *Castrum 7. Zones côtières littorales dans le monde méditerranéen du Moyen Âge: défense, peuplement, mise en valeur* (Roma 1996), «Collection de l'École française de Rome 105/7» – «Collection de la Casa de Velázquez 76», Roma-Madrid, 2001; P. Cressier, *Castrum 8. Le château et la ville. Espaces et réseaux (VIe-XIIIe siècle)* (Baeza, Jaén, 2002), «Collection de l'École française de Rome 105/8» – «Collection de la Casa de Velázquez 108», Roma-Madrid, 2008.

7 E.g., P. Guichard, *Al-Andalus. Estructura antropológica de una sociedad islámica en occidente*, Barcelona, 1976 (reprinted 1995, Granada), (= *Id.*, *Structures sociales 'orientales' et 'occidentales' dans l'Espagne musulmane*, École des Hautes Études en Sciences sociales, Paris, 1977); *Id.*, *Les musulmans de Valence et la Reconquête (XIe-XIIIe Siècles)*, 2 vols, Damas, 1990

Guichard's idea of *al-Andalus* as an Islamic and oriental society broke with the prevailing view of cultural continuity, while the introduction of extensive archaeology opened up new methodological perspectives in the study of rural settlements. Later, a Marxist Italian influence had an effect on the study of material culture, settlements, and medieval territories, which is reflected in trends, debates, and publications⁸. Unlike the field of prehistory, which has been much more receptive to anthropological processual and post-processual trends, Iberian Medieval archaeology was initially linked to history as the fundamental analytical structure for medieval societies, influenced by the Annales School, Structuralism and Marxism.

The new legal framework for national heritage⁹ and the conferral of its management to regional governments increased the number of archaeological excavations in cities and public works. Archaeological research was no longer exclusive to museums, universities or the CSIC¹⁰. New social agents appeared: regional administrators, municipal technicians and independent professionals¹¹. There was a spectacular increase in the number of archaeological publications about Medieval and post-Medieval sites, although no mechanisms were established to develop research and dissemination, in contrast to France, where the *Institut national de recherches archéologiques préventives* (Inrap)¹² was created.

There has also been an important methodological renewal in medieval archaeology (open area excavation, the Harris Matrix, Geographic Information

(= *Id.*, *Al-Andalus frente a la conquista cristiana. Los musulmanes de Valencia (siglos XI-XIII)*, Universidad de Valencia, Valencia, 2001); *Id.*, *De la expansión árabe a la reconquista: esplendor y fragilidad de al-Andalus*, Granada, 2002 (= *Id.*, *Al-Andalus 711-1492*, Paris, 2000); A. Bazzana, P. Cressier, P. Guichard, *Les châteaux ruraux d'al-Andalus. Histoire et archéologie des huṣūn du sud-est de l'Espagne*, Casa de Velázquez, Madrid, 1988; P. Cressier, *Châteaux et terroirs irrigés dans la province d'Almería (X^e-XV^e siècles)*, in A. Bazzana (ed.), *Castrum* 5, cited n. 6, p. 439-54.

8 J. Bermúdez López (ed.), *Coloquio Hispano-Italiano de Arqueología Medieval. Colloquio Hispano-Italiano di Archeologia medievale (Granada, 1990)*, Universidad de Siena, Universidad de Granada, Patronato de la Alhambra y Generalife, Granada, 1992; E. Boldrini, R. Francovich (eds.), *Acculturazione e mutamenti. Prospettive nell'Archeologia Medievale del Mediterraneo (II Congresso di Archeologia Medievale italo-spagnolo, Siena-Firenze, 1993)*, All'Insegna del Giglio, Firenze, 1995.

9 Law 16/1985, June 25th, of the Spanish Historical Heritage.

10 The Spanish National Research Council (Consejo Superior de investigaciones científicas – CSIC).

11 The emergence of professional and preventive archaeology also increased modern and contemporary archaeology (post-medieval archaeology, industrial archaeology or archaeology of Capitalism), European names for the American phrase Historical Archaeology.

12 Created in 2002 applying the *LOI n° 2001-44 du 17 janvier 2001* on preventive archaeology.

System (GIS), archeometry, bioarchaeology, etc.). New points of view have become consolidated (archaeology of buildings, household archaeology), which have started a debate about the historiographical models for medieval art and architecture established by the Monumentalist school in the 19th century. Concepts such as ‘Visigothic art’, ‘Islamic’, ‘Mozarab’ or ‘pre-Roman’ have now been critically examined. The Umayyad Caliphate programmes for urban development and decoration, for example, are now explained as the original reflection of a newly triumphant Islamic society, and theoretical positions here are far away from the old Spanish ‘continuism’.

The social consequences are easy to see: in just a few years, a medieval archaeology that was previously scholastic, individual, intensive, taxonomic, positivist and monumental (churches, mosques, castles and fortresses, cemeteries, metalwork, ivory, carving...) has turned into an archaeology of teams that is extensive, methodological and theoretically renewed. A medieval and post-medieval archaeology has emerged, concerned with creating strict registers, more interested in contexts and processes than in objects, involved in heritage and town-planning problems, and open to dealing with matters such as the rural landscape, the acknowledgement of settlements and social change, production, and social and ideological spaces, etc. In short, we now have an archaeology in a constant dialectical relationship with the great historical problems of the past.

Conceptual perspective: Spanish medieval archaeology as archaeology of al-Andalus

In contrast to the rest of Western Europe, Iberian medieval archaeology has mostly been Islamic archaeology, at least until the 21st century¹³. The first conference on Spanish medieval archaeology, which took place in 1985, established the appearance of a new discipline in an academic world dominated by classic archaeology, Latin medievalism, and late-medieval and philological Arabism. In that context, the archaeology of *al-Andalus* shed new light on medieval studies and helped it to move beyond traditional interests, especially the study of castles and Visigothic cemeteries (which had much importance during the Franco regime)¹⁴.

13 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *La arqueología en la historia del temprano al-Andalus: espacios sociales, cerámica e islamización*, in Ph. Sénac (ed.), *Villa 4*, cited n. 3, p. 33.

14 Regarding medieval archaeology in Spain see, for example, M. Barceló *et al.*, *Arqueología medieval. En las afueras del “Medievalismo”*, Crítica, Barcelona, 1988; V. Salvatierra Cuenca, *The origins of Al-Andalus (the eighth and ninth centuries): continuity and change*, in M. Díaz-Andreu, S. Keay (eds.), *The Archaeology of Iberia. The Dynamics of Change*, TAG, Routledge-London-New York, 1997, p. 265-278; S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *Arqueología. Introducción a la historia*

The archaeology of *al-Andalus* underwent an incredible increase in the number of excavations, the quality of registers and methodological procedures, as well as in strategic research plans. The historical problems in the society of *al-Andalus* were very different from those in the rest of Europe during the Middle Ages (where the debate was about the origin of peasant settlements, the process of encastellation or ‘*incastelamento*’, and feudalism). Archaeological investigation in *al-Andalus* focused on the supremacy of the private over the public, urban predominance, agricultural landscapes, the connection between tribal society and the Islamic state, as well as production and commercial complexity.

Progress reached all fields, especially the historical context prior to the Arab-Berber conquest (the latter years of the Visigothic period in the 7th century and the creation of *al-Andalus* between the 8th and 10th centuries), with an undeniable qualitative leap in archaeological knowledge¹⁵. Ceramics became an accurate

material de las sociedades del pasado, Universidad de Alicante, Alicante, 1997, p. 53-75; J. A. Quirós Castillo, *Medieval Archaeology in Spain*, in R. Gilchrist, A. Reynolds (eds.), *50 years of medieval archaeology in Britain and beyond*, «Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 30», London, 2009, p. 173-189; M. Valor, A. Gutiérrez (eds.), *The Archaeology of Medieval Spain, 1100-1500*, Equinox Publishing, 2014. Regarding archaeology in al-Andalus (medieval Islamic archaeology in the Iberian Peninsula) with different approaches, perspectives, and evaluations, see Th. F. Glick, *From Muslim fortress to Christian castle. Social and cultural change in medieval Spain*, Manchester University Press, Manchester-New York, 1995 (= *Id.*, *Paisajes de conquista. Cambio cultural y geográfico en la España medieval*, Universitat de València, 2007, spanish translation adapted); P. Cressier, S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *Archéologie de l'Islam européen*, cited n. 3; *Id.*, *The Archaeology of al-Andalus. Building a new History*, Brill, forthcoming; J. L. Boone, *Lost Civilization. The Contested Islamic Past in Spain and Portugal*, Duckworth Debates in Archaeology, London, 2009; A. Malpica Cuello, *La arqueología para el conocimiento de la sociedad andalusí*, in *Historia de Andalucía: VII Coloquio ¿Qué es Andalucía: una revisión histórica desde el medievalismo*, Universidad de Granada, 2010, p. 31-50; E. Manzano Moreno, *Al-Andalus*, cited n. 4; S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *La arqueología*, cited n. 13; *Id.*, *Repensando la ciudad altomedieval desde la arqueología*, in F. Sabaté, J. Brufal (eds.), *La ciutat medieval i arqueologia: VI Curs Internacional d'Arqueologia Medieval*, «Agira 6», Pagès Editors, Lleida, 2014, p. 17-41; J. C. Carvajal, *The Archaeology of Al-Andalus: Past, Present and Future*, in *Medieval Archaeology*, 58, 2014, p. 318-339; A. García Porras, *Spain and North Africa: Islamic Archaeology*, in C. Smith (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*, Springer, London-New York, 2014, p. 6955-6964.

15 E.g., the series *Visigodos y Omeyas* from the Merida Institute – CSIC: L. Caballero Zoreda, P. Mateos Cruz (eds.), *Visigodos y Omeyas. Un debate entre la Antigüedad tardía y la Alta Edad Media*, «Archivo Español de Arqueología», *Anejo XXIII*, Madrid, 2000; L. Caballero Zoreda, P. Mateos Cruz, M. Retuerce Velasco (eds.), *Cerámicas Tardorromanas y Altomedievales en la Península Ibérica (Visigodos y Omeyas II)*, «Archivo Español de Arqueología», *Anejo XXVIII*, Madrid, 2003; L. Caballero Zoreda, P. Mateos Cruz (eds.), *Escultura decorativa tarde romana y alto medieval en la Península Ibérica, (Visigodos y Omeyas III)*, «Archivo Español

chronological and productive indicator; numismatics and the first studies on monetary circulation led to a fiscal characterization of the Umayyad Caliphate; architecture, sculptural decoration and, epigraphy were studied in a social context. Territories and peasant communities became historical subjects. Topics once invisible turned into focal points, such as the social meaning of fortresses, and the morphology of rural settlements and farming areas. Urban archaeology revealed the magnitude of town planning in *al-Andalus* compared to feudal Europe. Systematic archaeological investigation was carried out in some iconic medieval settlements. Medieval archaeology was added to universities' curricula. Magazines, books, conferences, and exhibitions multiplied. *Al-Andalus* turned into a 'fashion brand'. The beginning of the 21st century was the milestone of interest in *al-Andalus* as a contemporary historical subject¹⁶.

In just 30 years, the archaeology of *al-Andalus* has become key in creating a new medieval history of the Iberian Peninsula and, by extension, of the Mediterranean and Europe. Thanks to this, historical issues of great importance have been introduced and discussed, among them:

- An understanding of Visigothic society in the 7th century: city and organization of the territory in the early Middle Ages.
- A discussion of the possibility of an ethnic reading for material culture, social space or landscape (German, Berber, etc). The role of ethnicity and ethnogenesis in the debate on the interpretation of the end of antiquity.
- The creation of early *al-Andalus*, the material recognition of the conquest and Islamization. The possibility of an anthropological and cultural identification of the social agents.
- The Umayyad Caliphate in *al-Andalus* as the material expression of the victory of Islamic society.
- The organization of rural territory: castral territories, villages, and farming systems. The explanation of rural landscapes in *al-Andalus*.
- Social readings of built environments and domestic spaces.

de Arqueología», *Anejo XL*, Madrid, 2007; L. Caballero Zoreda, P. Mateos Cruz, M^a. Utrero (eds.), *El siglo VII frente al siglo VII. Arquitectura, (Visigodos y Omeyas IV)*, «Archivo Español de Arqueología», *Anejo LI*, Mérida, 2009; L. Caballero Zoreda, P. Mateos Cruz, T. Cordero Ruiz (eds.), *Visigodos y omeyas. El territorio, (Visigodos y Omeyas V)*, «Archivo Español de Arqueología», *Anejo LXI*, Mérida, 2012; L. Caballero Zoreda, P. Mateos Cruz, C. García de Castro (eds.), *Asturias entre visigodos y mozárabes (Visigodos y Omeyas VI)*, «Archivo Español de Arqueología», *Anejo LXIII*, Madrid, 2012.

16 A recent critical and appreciative analysis of the archaeological progresses in the creation phases of *al-Andalus* in S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *La arqueología*, cited n. 13.

- Material culture as the reflection of a complex society. Production and commerce.
- Ideology, image and word at the service of power.
- The impact of the feudal conquest. The transformations of space and productive relations.

Current trends: the retreat of al-Andalus

This interest in *al-Andalus*, however, was no coincidence. It was related to contemporary social and political changes in Spain, caused by the end of a long 'national-Catholic' dictatorship. A historical interest in the Islamic past and the resulting patrimonial 'valuation' can be explained by the consolidation of democracy in state which also contained autonomous regions and the acknowledgement of values such as multiculturalism and tolerance (which led to the historiographical myth of 'the three cultures'¹⁷), and the need to establish alternative historical explanations for the national identity of the centralist Spain. Many different Islamic remains were discovered and musealized, and 'Visigothic' topics were abandoned and changed in favour of *al-Andalus*.

In the past years, however, there has been an opposite tendency: the boom of medieval archaeology in the northern regions of the Iberian Peninsula that were not under the Islamic rule followed guidelines and trends very similar to those used in archaeology in the rest of Europe. This problem needs to be analysed and the causes pondered. Of course, generational change may have something to do with the stasis in Andalusian archaeology, but the explanation may not be so simple and obvious.

European construction supported important identity projects, such as the «Transformation of the Roman World AD 400-900: New Approaches to the Emergence of Early Medieval Europe» (1993-1998), by the ESF – European Science Foundation. Topics such as ethnogenesis, the barbarians and the Carolingian Empire became more important in the new historical descriptions of the creation of the European identity, opposed to 'other' historical realities. It seems that a new cycle has begun for Iberian medieval archaeology, increasingly pro-European and feudal¹⁸.

The scientific consequences are already visible: young Spanish researchers focus on non-Islamic topics (preferably from the early Middle Ages), while in the rest of the world, quite often only English-language essays are cited, which do not always display current knowledge, and distort or even ignore any archae-

¹⁷ Cf. M. Marín, *Reflexiones*, cited n. 5, p. 11.

¹⁸ J. A. Quirós Castillo, *Medieval Archaeology*, cited n. 14; M. Valor, A. Gutiérrez, *The Archaeology*, cited n. 14.

ological research written in other languages. The contributions made by the archaeology of *al-Andalus* are minimized or diluted by an analysis leaning towards a European perspective that ignores the areas that were, one way or another, part of the *Dār al-Islam* during the Middle Ages¹⁹.

With points of view that evade the complex and uncomfortable political present, there is a risk of building an archaeology which is accommodating and indulgent, but biased from the perspective of historical science. The knowledge of *al-Andalus*, one of the most complex societies that appeared in Western Europe after the end of the Roman Empire, as pointed out by Eduardo Manzano²⁰, provides a very necessary non-Eurocentric perspective. The archaeology of *al-Andalus* is not a finished phase. It still has a significant contribution to make to a rational and critical reconstruction of the Spanish history.

Early al-Andalus as a historical problem

However, the main problem when addressing the centuries between the Visigothic period and the Caliphate (7th to 10th centuries), both from historical and archaeological points of view, is precisely the great significance of the year 711, when the Arab-Berber conquest of Europe began. This historical fact represents a deep historiographical break clearly seen in the way research was approached from each side of this symbolic 'borderline'.

From the perspective of historical studies, the dichotomy between Latin and Arab sources concerning the medieval history of the Iberian Peninsula can be observed in two different, and many times divergent, historiographical traditions: academic medieval studies which disregarded archaeology, and the history of *al-Andalus* which, was tightly related to Arabic studies²¹.

From the perspective of archaeology, there was also a deep divide between the traditions of classic archaeology and medieval archaeology. The former had great academic prestige but did not extend further than late antiquity, including the Visigothic period as part of the process of Christianization. Medieval archaeology, on the other hand, was mostly Islamic and did not appear in the scope of universities, but in museums.

The relationship between both academic traditions was not fruitful. In practice, the year 711 was used to separate each perspective from both academic and

19 P. Cressier, S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *Archéologie de l'Islam*, cited n. 3.

20 E. Manzano Moreno, *Al-Andalus*, cited n. 4, p. 21.

21 E. Manzano Moreno, *Desde el Sinaí de su arábica erudición. Una reflexión sobre el medievalismo y el arabismo recientes*, in M. Marín (ed.), *Al-Andalus/España*, cited n. 3, p. 213-30; A. García Sanjuán, *La conquista islámica*, cited n. 2; M. Marín, *Reflexiones*, cited n. 5.

conceptual points of view. They even used different forms of dissemination for each study, as opposed to other European academic environments²². Nowadays, archaeology has been able to partly overcome that historiographic breakup of the Spanish early Middle Ages thanks to several different developments:

1. Within the last few years, early medieval ceramic production in most of the Iberian Peninsula has been identified, and the first synthesis of regional ceramics has appeared²³. One of the most important archaeological advances in the last decade was discovering stratigraphic sequences of continuity between the 7th and 9th centuries (for example, in early medieval town centres such as Valencia, Mérida, Cartagena, Recópolis or El Tolmo de Minateda/*Madīnat Iyyuh*), verified by numismatic and radiocarbon datings. Thanks to these sequences, the ceramic contexts could be studied (production, associations, residuality, etc.) and, as a result, ceramics from the 8th century could be dated for the first time²⁴. The identification of the material culture of the 8th century is a key to allow us to reject the presumed archaeological hiatus that justified a historiographical model based on a population break in the context of the conquest that took place in the year 711 (fig. 2).

In the historiographical discussion about Islamic society in *al-Andalus*, a stratigraphic and material break was considered as archaeological evidence of an intense tribal immigration, especially Berber, into the eastern part of *al-Andalus*, which took place between the 711 and the second half of the 9th century, before the Umayyad Caliphate²⁵. This compact emigration was thought to be responsible for the establishment of early peasant community networks and equally early communal refug-

22 A paradigmatic example is that of the CSIC journals: *Hispania* focuses on historical topics from the Middle Ages until the modern era; *Al-Qantara* (heir to the Arab studies magazine *Al-Andalus*) deals with classic Islamic civilization, though at times also accepts papers on Islamic medieval archaeology; *Archivo Español de Arqueología*, the journal of reference in the field of archaeology, focuses on antiquity, including late antiquity and the Visigothic period.

23 E.g., a state of play with references to previous bibliography in M. Alba calzado, S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *Las producciones de transición al Mundo Islámico: el problema de la cerámica paleoandalusí (siglos VIII y IX)*, in D. Bernal Casasola, A. Ribera i Lacomba (eds.), *Cerámicas hispanorromanas. Un estado de la cuestión*, Universidad de Cádiz, 2008.

24 A balance of the contextual perspective in the study of early medieval ceramics in the Iberian Peninsula in the beginning of the 8th century can be found in Caballero *et al.*, *Cerámicas Tardorromanas*, cited n. 15.

25 M. Barceló, *De la congruencia y la homogeneidad de los espacios hidráulicos en al-Andalus*, in *El agua en la agricultura de al-Andalus*, Granada, 1995, p. 26 and 38.

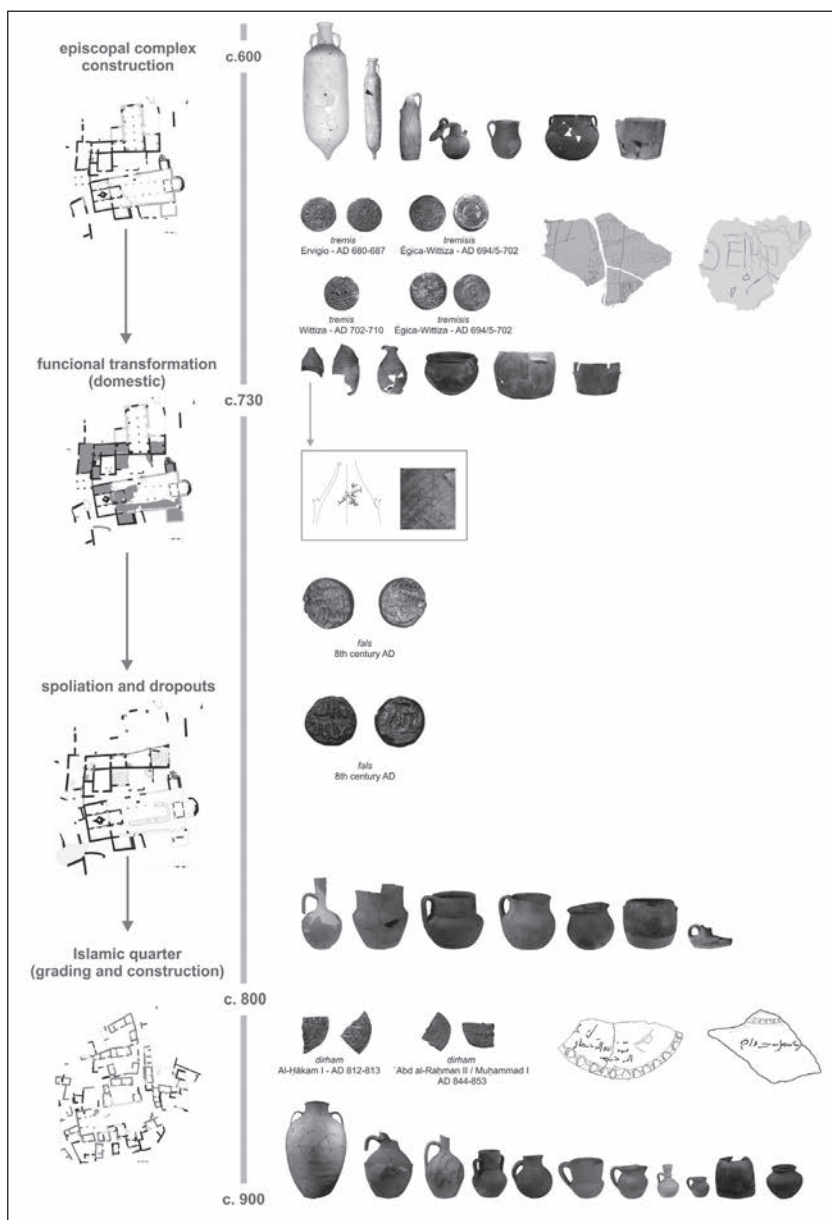


Figure 2. Stratigraphic sequence of the Episcopal complex in El Tolmo de Minateda (Hellín, Albacete) between the 7th and 9th centuries AD, with its architectural development and the associated ceramic, coins and graffiti contexts.

es²⁶, building on the approaches of Pierre Guichard²⁷. The chronology of this new social landscape is still a major argument in the history of early *al-Andalus*, but such an early dating cannot be automatically assumed to be widespread. Archaeology, indeed, has proved that the supposed emptiness of the 8th century was due to a lack of awareness of the archaeological register at the end of the 20th century and, therefore, is not a convincing argument in current historical discussion.

2. In connection to the previous discussion, the recent development of systematic archaeological projects in multilayered urban sites, in abandoned areas, and in rural cemeteries with horizontal stratigraphy is very important. The understanding of the city as a single archaeological site has opened a debate on urban living between the 6th and 9th centuries, in which the centrality of the archaeology can be seen. The discussion on the crisis of the antique city and the origins of the medieval city shows that researchers from northern Europe have a different perspective from those from the south. In other words, this discussion demonstrates the contrast between the early medieval 'European' and the 'Mediterranean' paradigms, especially regarding the analysis of the Islamic city in *al-Andalus*²⁸.

Regarding rural settlements, the development of extensive excavation strategies in professional archaeology has allowed the discovery of settlements (i.e. villages) with scattered patterns, built with perishable materials, in different areas of the Iberian Peninsula, especially in its northern half, during the 6th to 8th centuries. Thanks to these studies, new types of early medieval spatial occupation have been acknowledged, and long-standing historical problems have been reconsidered, such as Gothic settlement, the connection between cemeteries and peasant settlements, and the social status of their inhabitants²⁹.

26 M. Barceló, *Assaig d'identificació del rastre dels assentaments de la immigració berber més primerenca*, in M. Barceló (ed.), *El curs de les aigües treballs sobre els pagesos de Yabisa (290-633 H/902-1235 dC)*, «Quaderns d'Arqueologia Pitiüsa 3», Consell Insular d'Ibiza i Formentera, 1997, p. 9-28; M. Barceló, *Inmigración berbera et établissements paysans à Ibiza (902-1235)*, in *Castrum* 7, cited n. 6, p. 291-321.

27 P. Guichard, *Al-Andalus*, cited n. 7; *Id.*, *Els 'berbers de València' i la delimitació del País Valencià a l'alta edat mitjana*, in *Afers*, 7, 1988-89, p. 69-85.

28 S. Gelichi, *La città in Italia tra VI e VIII secolo: riflessioni dopo un trentennio di dibattito archeologico*, in A. García, R. Izquierdo, L. Olmo, D. Peris (eds.), *Espacios urbanos en el occidente mediterráneo (S. VI-VIII)*, Toletum visigodo, Toledo, 2010, p. 65-85; G. P. Brogiolo, *Le origini della città medievale*, in *PCA Studies*, 1, Mantova, 2011; S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *Repensando la ciudad altomedieval*, cited n. 14.

29 E.g., J. A. Quirós Castillo, *The archaeology of early medieval villages in Europe*, «Documentos de Arqueología e Historia 1», Universidad del País Vasco, Bilbao, 2009; J. A. Quirós Castillo (ed.), *Arqueología del campesinado medieval: la aldea de Zaballa*, «Documentos de Arqueología Medieval 3», Bilbao, 2012; *Id.*, *El poblamiento rural de época*

Organised rural cemeteries show a will to attach the rural community to the land, their role as a space for memories, and the possibility of acknowledging hierarchies in peasant settlement through distinctions in death, whether by including status symbols in the burial (e.g., 'representative' clothing or 'valuable' objects), or, on the contrary, by ruling out the access to any funerary rites (Christian or not) in the cemetery of the community. The discovery of adults and children that were thrown into silos (storage pits) and wells, together with animals and household waste, has opened an interesting debate on the social meaning of this practice, the possible menial or marginal role of those who suffered it between the 7th and 8th centuries, and its connection to the abandonment contexts in these early medieval settlements during the Islamic conquest³⁰.

3. The recent development of specific geoarchaeological, bioarchaeological, bioanthropological, and archaeometric techniques has opened a wide range of new possibilities for discovering the origins of people and plant species, food, farming practices, the characterization of material culture, etc. These new and critical archaeological registers have reconsidered the study of landscapes and agricultural archaeology, the history of production, or immigration and ethnicity from unsuspected points of view. The arguments about issues such as identity

visigoda en Hispania. Arqueología del campesinado en el interior peninsular, «Documentos de Arqueología Medieval 6», Bilbao, 2013; A. Vigil-Escalera Girado, J. A. Quirós Castillo, *Early Medieval rural societies in NorthWest Spain: Archaeological reflections of fragmentation and convergence*, in J. Escalona, A. Reynolds (eds.), *Scale and Scale Changes in the Early Medieval Ages. Exploring Landscape, local Society and the World beyond*, Turnhout, 2011, p. 33-60; J. A. Quirós Castillo, J. M. Tejado Sebastián (eds.), *Los castillos altomedievales en el noroeste de la Península Ibérica*, «Documentos de Arqueología Medieval 4», Bilbao, 2012. Cf. A. Azkarate, *Repensando los márgenes circumpirenaicos-occidentales durante los siglos VI y VII d.C.*, in E. Baquedano (ed.), *711. Arqueología e Historia*, cited n. 3, p. 241-253; A. Azkarate, I. García Camino, *El espacio circumpirenaico occidental durante los siglos VI al X d.C. según el registro arqueológico: algunos interrogantes*, in E. Caballero, P. Mateos, C. García de Castros (eds.), *Asturias entre visigodos*, cited n. 15, p. 331-352; A. Chavarría Arnau, *¿Castillos en el aire? Paradigmas interpretativos 'de moda' en la arqueología medieval española*, in Ph. Sénac, *De Mahoma a Carlomagno*, cited n. 3, p. 131-166; G. Ripoll López, *The Archaeological Characterisation of the Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo: the Question of the Visigothic Cemeteries*, in M. Becher, S. Dick (eds.), *Völker, Reiche und Namen im frühen Mittelalter*, «MittelalterStudien 22», München, 2010, p. 161-179.

30 A recent concise analysis of the problem in J. Roig Buxó, J. M. Coll Riera, *Esquelets humans en sitges, pous i abocadors als assentaments rurals i vilatges de l'antiguitat tardana de catalunya (segles V-VIII): evidències arqueològiques de la presència d'esclaus i serfs*, *Actes del IV Congrés d'Arqueologia Medieval i Moderna a Catalunya (Tarragona 2010)*, ACRAM, Tarragona, 2011, p. 75-82. Cf. S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *De Teodomiro a Tudmir. Los primeros tiempos desde la arqueología*, in Ph. Sénac, *De Mahoma a Carlomagno*, cited n. 3, p. 240-42.

differentiation in specific groups are now much more complex than “just the equation between artefact and ethnic group”³¹, with its social and cultural considerations, and even than bioarchaeological markers, which analyse origins and establish kinship (isotope determination, DNA analysis, etc). Proof of these benefits is the discovery of populations which immigrated during the conquest³², or the introduction of new crops and production strategies³³.

4. The development of epigraphic and numismatic studies, but especially their integration into stratigraphic sequences and archaeological contexts, allow a dialogue between writing, image, and materiality which opens new perspectives on the taxation system and the monetization of seals and coins, and which pays special attention to ideological aspects and literacy, and the Arabization and the religious Islamization of epigraphy and writing, including new forms of expressions such as *graffiti*. The creation of reference *corpora* and their contextualized treatment is one of the most productive fields of interaction between archaeology, medieval studies, and Arabic studies³⁴. In this regard, archaeology redefines the problem of the Islamization and Arabization process, and, at the same time, raises the possibility of recognizing it through the study of material culture³⁵.

31 S. Castellanos, *La sociedad hispana al filo del año 700*, in E. Baquedano (ed.), *711. Arqueología e Historia*, cited n. 3, p. 44.

32 E. g. M. P. De Miguel Ibáñez, *Mortui viventes docent. La maqbara de Pamplona*, in Ph. Sénac, *De Mahoma a Carlomagno*, cited n. 3, p. 351-375; E. Prevedorou et al., *Residential Mobility and Dental Decoration in Early Medieval Spain: Results from the Eighth Century Site of Plaza del Castillo, Pamplona*, in *Dental Anthropology*, 23/2, 2010, p. 42-51.

33 P. Ballesteros Arias et al., *Por una arqueología agraria de las sociedades medievales hispánicas. Propuesta de un protocolo de investigación*, in H. Kirchner (ed.), *Por una arqueología agraria. Perspectivas de investigación sobre los espacios de cultivo en las sociedades medievales hispánicas*, «BAR Int. Ser. 2062», British Archaeological Reports, Oxford, 2010, p. 185-202.

34 S. Gilotte, A. Nef, *L'apport de l'archéologie, de la numismatique et de la sigillographie à l'histoire de l'islamisation de l'Occident musulman: en guise d'introduction*, in D. Valerian (ed.), *Islamisation et arabisation*, cited n. 3, p. 63-102; A. Canto García, F. Martín Escudero, T. Ibrahim, *Monedas Andaluses*, «Catálogo del Gabinete de Antigüedades de la Real Academia de la Historia», Madrid, 2000; C. Doménech Belda, *Numismática y arqueología medieval: la moneda de excavación y sus aportaciones*, in *Actas XIII Congreso Nacional de Numismática “moneda y arqueología”*, vol. 2, 2008, p. 731-760; *Id.*, *El proceso de islamización en el Sarq al-Andalus a través de los registros monetales*, in Ph. Sénac (ed.), *Villa 3*, cited n. 3, p. 275-296; C. Barceló Torres, *La escritura árabe en el País Valenciano. Inscripciones monumentales*, Valencia, 1998; M. A. Martínez Núñez, *Epigrafía árabe*, «Catálogo del Gabinete de Antigüedades de la Real Academia de la Historia», Madrid, 2007.

35 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *El reconocimiento arqueológico de la islamización. Una mirada desde al-Andalus*, in E. Baquedano (ed.), *711. Arqueología e Historia*, cited n. 3, p. 192.

Islamization in al-Andalus: the archaeological evidence

Islamization and Arabization, understood as the progressive spread of Islam and of the Arabic language and culture, respectively, were analysed from different points of view³⁶. The aim is to establish a chronological sequence of the religious transformation, and also linguistic transformation on another level, as indicators of a deeper cultural process that leads to social homogeneity³⁷. However, due to the *longue durée* of the process, and its different pacing, intensity, historical circumstances, and geographical constraints, it is not possible to give a precise definition of the successive phases of Islamization, even more so when the sequences are built from documentary evidence that cannot be generalized to all the Muslim West in the Middle Ages.

With regard to *al-Andalus*, archaeology offers many possibilities that have still been hardly explored. It provides regional chronological indicators that add to the social and cultural dimension. In this respect, the development of a historical archaeology about the creation of *al-Andalus* reshapes the problem of the Islamization and Arabization process, while at the same time enabling its recognition through the study of material culture. In fact, the material register provides the most precise contemporary testimonies about the Islamic conquest (i.e., coins and seals), and its contribution to historical knowledge is widely acknowledged³⁸. It is possible that the archaeology of *al-Andalus* will soon be able to distinguish the conquest phase from the construction phase of a new society,

36 C. Aillet, *Islamisation et arabisation dans le monde musulman médiéval : une introduction au cas de l'Occident musulman (VII^e-XII^e siècle)*, in D. Valerian (ed.), *Islamisation et arabisation*, cited n. 3, p. 7-34; A. García San Juan, *La conquista islámica*, cited n. 2, p. 301-323; A. Nef, F. Ardizzone, *Les dynamiques de l'Islamisation*, cited n. 3.

37 Approximations to the Islamization phases through onomastics and lists of mullah names in R. Buillet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History*, Harvard University Press, 1979. For al-Andalus Cf. D. J. Wasserstein, *Where have all the converts gone? Difficulties in the study of conversion to Islam in al-Andalus*, in *Al-Qanṭara*, 33-2, 2012, p. 325-342; M. Fierro, M. Marín, *La islamización de las andalusíes a través de sus ulemas (S. II/VIII-comienzos S. IV/X)*, in P. Cressier, M. García Arenal (eds.), *Genèse de la ville islamique en al-Andalus et au Maghreb occidental*, Casa de Velázquez-CSIC, Madrid, 1998, p. 65-97; A. Fernández Félix, M. Fierro, *Cristianos y conversos al Islam en al-Andalus bajo los Omeyas. Una aproximación al proceso de islamización a través de una fuente legal andalusí del III/X*, in L. Caballero Zoreda, P. Mateos Cruz, T. Cordero Ruiz (eds.), *Visigodos y Omeyas*, cited n. 15, p. 415-27.

38 E. Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores, emires y califas: los Omeyas y la formación de al-Andalus*, Crítica, Barcelona, 2006; A. García Sanjuán, *La conquista islámica*, cited n. 2, p. 150-188.

or at least able to come up with and design the necessary research strategies that will achieve this aim³⁹.

Within the last decade, the problem of Islamization and its archaeological recognition has been proposed from different perspectives. From our perspective, the Islamization process reflects the establishment of an Islamic society as the dominant social formation over other tribal or feudal societies. The transition process was not totally reached until the 10th century, in parallel with its political expression in the Umayyad Caliphate⁴⁰. From this point of view, the Islamization process goes beyond the conversion to Islam ('religious Islamization') or the adoption of a new language ('linguistic Arabization'), and acquires a social and ideological meaning⁴¹. It is meaningful, for example, that while certain funeral registers show an early conversion to Islam in the 8th century, other material contexts (e.g., ceramics, domestic and urban spaces, epigraphy, etc) do not show a total social Islamization of the settlements until very late in the 9th century or even the 10th century. The completion of the process means the crea-

39 E.g., S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *La islamización de Tudmír: balance y perspectivas*, in Ph. Sénac (ed.), *Villa 2*, cited n. 3, p. 275-318; *Id.*, *Histoire et archéologie de la transition en al-Andalus: les indices matériels de l'islamisation à Tudmír*, in D. Valerian, (ed.), *Islamisation et arabisation*, cited n. 3, p. 195-246; *Id.*, *El reconocimiento arqueológico*, cited n. 35.

40 M. Ación Almansa, *La cultura material de época emiral en el sur de al-Andalus. Nuevas perspectivas*, in A. Malpica (ed.), *La cerámica altomedieval en el sur de Al-Andalus*, Universidad de Granada, 1993, p. 155; S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *La Cora de Tudmír. De la antigüedad tardía al mundo islámico. Poblamiento y cultura material*, «Collection de la Casa de Velázquez 57», Madrid-Alicante, 1996, p. 334-335.

41 Regarding the concept of the Islamic social formation, the most important contribution is M. Ación Almansa, *Entre el Feudalismo y el Islam. 'Umar Ibn Ḥafsūn en los historiadores, en las fuentes y en la historia*, Universidad de Jaén, Granada, 1997; *Id.*, *Sobre el papel de la ideología en la caracterización de las formaciones sociales. La formación social islámica*, in *Hispania*, LVIII/3, núm. 200, 1998, *passim*. Regarding Islamization as social construction, see also A. Nef, F. Ardizzone, *Les dynamiques de l'Islamisation*, cited n. 3, p. 7. On the contrary, Carvajal López believes that the concept of Islamic social formation is not operative in archaeology and wonders if it really has a clear materialization. He does not think that the material indicators proposed in our analysis are representative, but sadly he does not define the "differential processes of Islam materialisation" that he believes form part of the Islamization processes. See J. C. Carvajal López, *Islamización y arqueología. Reflexiones en torno a un concepto controvertido y necesario desde el punto de vista arqueológico*, in F. Sabaté, J. Brufal (eds.), *Recerca Avançada en Arqueologia Medieval. V Curs Internacional d'Arqueologia Medieval*, «Agira 5», Pagès Editors, Lleida, 2013, p. 134-135, 154-156; *Id.*, *Islamicization or Islamicizations? Expansion of Islam and social practice in the Vega of Granada (south-east Spain)*, in *World Archaeology*, 45-1, 2013, p. 109-123.

tion in *al-Andalus* of a totally Islamized society, uniform, that collectively assumed the new ideology regardless of the religion practiced or the language spoken, as happened with the Christian Mozarabs⁴².

Archaeology and conquest of al-Andalus

The Arab-Berber conquest of Hispania towards the year 711 is a historical event of elusive materiality which means nothing in the history of material culture. A specific event rarely leaves a recognizable trace in the materiality of objects, unless the purpose of making these objects indicates who, when, or why they were made. Such is the case of coins, inscriptions, or commemorative monuments, abundant during the Roman period, but almost non-existent in early *al-Andalus*. It is not until the 9th century, and especially the 10th century, that the first Arabic inscriptions show the exact date of monuments and religious objects.

The materiality of the year 711 can only be clearly seen in a few coins from the last Visigothic kings or already minted by the conquerors in the context of the conquest, and in some Arabic seals used in the distribution of booty or tax collection, as has been recently documented⁴³. Both have economic and ideological meaning; they show the premeditated nature of the conquest, the organization of a collection system, and the first evidence of the use of the Arabic language and of the name *al-Andalus* in the Iberian Peninsula⁴⁴. They are the most precise and reliable proof of the conquest process (fig. 3).

Apart from these few documents, material culture is only precise when a random disaster freezes in time the destruction of houses, objects and people. There is an example in the rural settlement of Bovalar, in Lérida, which has an interesting group of 20 *tremisses* that range from Egica (687-702) to Agila II (710-

42 In *al-Andalus*, the Romance language derived from Latin (the 'romandalusí' or southern Romance dialect) coexisted with the Arabic language in a decreasing bilingualism until the 10th century, cf. F. Corriente, *Gramática de los arabismos del iberorromance*, in *Diccionario de arabismos y voces afines en iberorromance*, Madrid, 2^a ed. ampliada, 2003; A. García Sanjuán, *La conquista islámica*, cited n. 2, p. 309-10.

43 A. Canto García, *Las monedas de la conquista*, in E. Baquedano (ed.), 711. *Arqueología e Historia*, cited n. 3, p. 133-143; T. Ibrahim, *Nuevos documentos sobre la conquista Omeya de Hispania. Los precintos de plomo*, in E. Baquedano (ed.), 711. *Arqueología e Historia*, cited n. 3, p. 145-161. A state of the issue in A. García Sanjuán, *La conquista islámica*, cited n. 2, p. 152-72.

44 The earliest proof to date was the bilingual dinars minted by the governor al-Ḥurr in 98H (716-17). The discovery of a counter-marked seal from this governor suggests an earlier chronology, maybe from Mūsá's or his son 'Abd al-Aziz's period, and is the first material proof of the use of the name *al-Andalus* in the context of the conquest. T. Ibrahim, *Nuevos documentos*, cited n. 43, p. 149.



Figure 3. 1. *Felus* in use during the period of the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula (A. García Sanjuán, *La conquista islámica*, cited n. 2, p. 476, fig. 4);
 2. Bilingual *Dinar*, 716-717 AD, (A. M. Balaguer Prunes, *Las emisiones transicionales árabe-musulmanas de Hispania*, Barcelona, 1976, p. 145, num. 48; A. García Sanjuán, *La conquista islámica*, cited n. 2, p. 476, fig. 6);
 3. Lead seal from Ruscino. Photographs courtesy of Ph. Sénac (R. Marichal, Ph. Sénac, *Ruscino: un établissement musulman du VIII^e siècle*, in Ph. Sénac (eds.), *Villa 2*, cited n. 3, p. 67-94.

713/14), found grouped next to the walls. The violent end of this possible monastery can be dated to the turbulent years of the conquest and attributed to two facts: this settlement was a closed area violently destroyed by a fire from which its inhabitants were able to flee but who had to leave everything behind, and the *limite post quem* provided by rare coins from Agila II from the mints of Tarra-gona and Zaragoza⁴⁵.

The conquest begins to materialize in new archaeological discoveries. A large Muslim cemetery with 190 tombs that are not superimposed and include both sexes, was excavated in the Plaza del Castillo, in Pamplona. The historical information on the presence of Muslims in the city was verified using absolute dating focused on the middle decades of the 8th century. The traumatic injuries in men, related to interpersonal confrontations, and the common knife wounds that resulted in death, suggest that these people were used to combat⁴⁶. The deliberate dental mutilations (upper front teeth) seen in both men and women, together with the strontium isotopes and oxygen found in the dental enamel, show that these were Islamized settlements of allochthonous origin, probably from North Africa, that arrived to Pamplona as part of family groups in the first generation of immigrants⁴⁷. For the first time, archaeology identifies the conquerors (soldiers and/or peasants) and helps recognize the first proof of an early instance of immigration, which imports cultural and possibly also ethnic identity markers (fig. 4).

On the other hand, the discovery of rings with Arabic epigraphs in Christian burial contexts in Pamplona and its surroundings (Argaray and the Casa del Condestable) raises interesting questions⁴⁸. The rings show typical Muslim religious inscriptions (e.g., “In the name of god”, “God is enough for me”, and “God is my lord”) in archaic Kufic characters. This evidence may suggest the complex relationships and alliances between the tribal elites and the conquerors, since their discovery in Christian tombs show that the buried Christians had the clear intention of displaying their connection with the Arab Islamic world.

45 P. de Palol, «*Poblat del Bovalar*» & «*Cojunt monetari del Bovalar*», in P. de Palol i Salillas (ed.), *Del romà al romànic. Historia, art i cultura de la Tarraconense mediterrània entre els segles IV y X*, Barcelona, 1999, p. 145-146, 343-345.

46 M. P. De Miguel Ibáñez, *Mortui viventes*, cited n. 32; J. A. Faro Carballa, M. García-Barberena Unzu, M. Unzu Urmeneta, *Pamplona y el Islam: nuevos testimonios arqueológicos*, in *Trabajos de Arqueología Navarra*, 20, 2007-2008, p. 229-284.

47 Prevedorou *et al.*, *Residential Mobility*, cited n. 32.

48 M. A. Martínez Núñez, *Epigrafía funeraria en al-Andalus (siglos IX-XII)*, «*Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez 41-1*», 2011, p. 185; M. P. De Miguel Ibáñez, *Mortui viventes*, cited n. 32, p. 354-355. Still being reviewed by both authors.

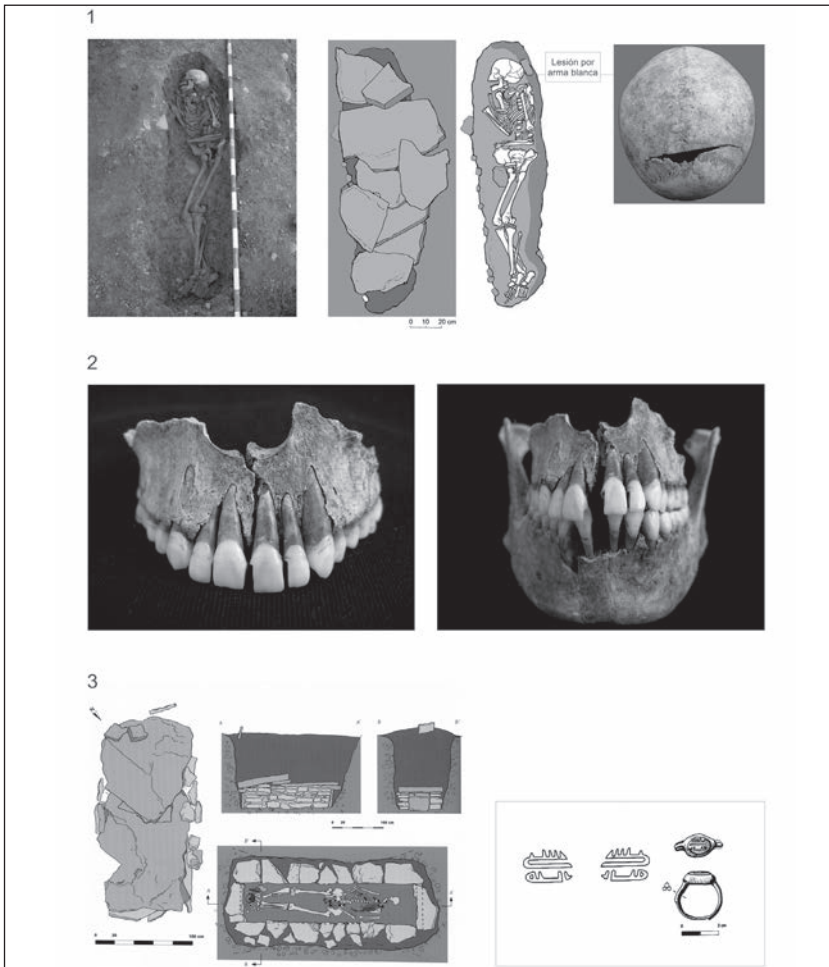


Figure 4. 1. Cemetery of Plaza del Castillo in Pamplona, burial 93, young man with evidence of violence, knife wound in the skull (J. A. Faro Carballa, M. García-Barberena Unzu, M. Unzu Urmeneta, Pamplona y el Islam, cited n. 46, p. 245-246, fig. 5, photographs and drawings courtesy of Trama S.L.); 2. Dental manipulation made by filing the upper incisors of an adult woman, grave 135, cemetery of Plaza del Castillo in Pamplona (M. P. De Miguel Ibáñez, Mortui viventes docent, cited n. 32, p. 368, fig. 17; photographs courtesy of María Paz de Miguel); 3. Christian burial (42). Cemetery of El Condestable in Pamplona. Ring with Kufic inscription (J. A. Faro Carballa, M. García-Barberena Unzu, M. Unzu Urmeneta, Pamplona y el Islam, cited n. 46, p. 265-266, fig. 45, photographs and drawings courtesy of Trama S.L.).

Surprising evidence, such as this in the cemeteries of Pamplona, is of inestimable value and reinforces the idea that in a relatively short period of time, archaeology will perhaps be able to approach specific historical issues with a degree of certainty inconceivable just a few decades ago.

Archaeological acknowledgement of Islamization

Either way, archaeology is key to understanding the deep transformation of behaviours and social practices that happened during the Islamization process over more than two centuries. It is also able to recognize the changes and continuities in the material culture of early *al-Andalus* which, if read sequentially and contextually, become social, cultural, and chronological indicators of that process⁴⁹. History is change, and change (technological, social, cultural, and ideological) can only be materially represented in the historical sequence through archaeology's main tool of analysis: the sequence of stratigraphic contexts.

Isolated objects have no absolute time. Their morphological and technological features can suggest a period in which they were manufactured, but only their context informs about the conditions of their use; their loss, their residuality, or their recycling; about their possible 'lives' and therefore about the periods of time. Good examples are the 'lyriform' belt clips, typologically assigned to the second half of the 7th century and the first years of the 8th century. The 'continuity' of these Visigothic clothing items shortly after 711 had already been shown in the example of Bovalar, previously mentioned⁵⁰, and also with that of Puig de les Murales de Puig Rom, in Rosas (Gerona), by association with another coin from Agila II⁵¹. However, when it is associated with coins in domestic spaces, such as in El Tolmo de Minateda in Hellín (Albacete), it becomes apparent that it was used in Islamized material contexts dating from the late second half of the 9th century⁵². The meaning is completely different here, since they appear in another type of material context that show Islamic cultural patterns in those who own or use them (fig. 5).

49 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *La islamización de Tudmir*, cited n. 39.

50 G. Ripoll López, *Materiales funerarios de la Hispania visigoda: problemas de cronología y tipología*, in *Gallo-Romains, Wisigoths et francs en Aquitaine, Septimaie et Spagne (Actes des VIF Journées Internationales d'Archéologie Mérovingienne)*, (Toulouse, 1985), Rouen, 1991, p. 111-132.

51 P. de Palol, *El castrum del Puig de les Murales de Puig Rom (Rosas, Alt Empordà)*, «Sèrie Monogràfica 22», Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya, Girona, 2004, p. 55-58.

52 Cf. S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *La cerámica emiral de Madinat Iyyub (el Tolmo de Minateda, Hellín, Albacete). Una primera aproximación*, in *Arqueología y territorio medieval*, 6, 1999, p. 78; *Id.*, *El Tolmo de Minateda en torno al 711*, in E. Baquedano (ed.), *711. Arqueología e Historia*, cited n. 3, p. 370.

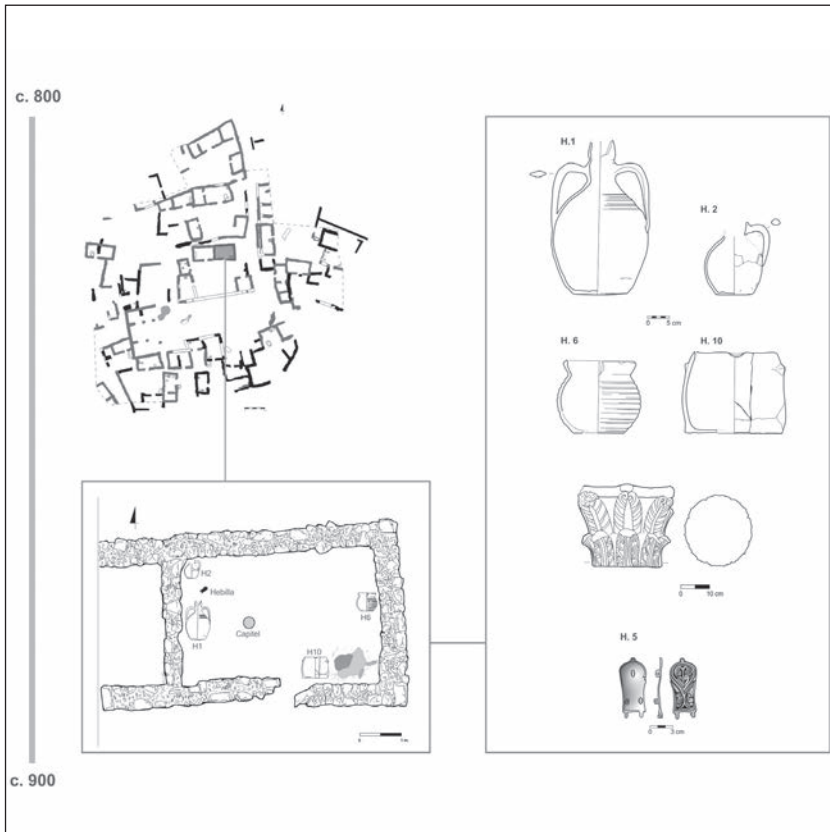


Figure 5. Household room with associated objects (IX century)
in El Tolmo de Minateda.

Sometimes, stratigraphic sequences can be more complex and exact than absolute dating. The cemetery of Encadenado/El Soto in Barajas (Madrid) is excellent example with two different periods of Christian use, with tombs that were reused, and an early Islamic phase which shows conversion in rural areas. Radiocarbon dating is here clearly in conflict with, and even contradicts, the confirmed archaeological sequence, casting doubt on the ability of radiocarbon dating to discriminate between generations in the archaeological contexts of the 8th century⁵³.

53 A. Vigil-Escalera Girado, *Sepulturas, huertos y radiocarbono (siglos VIII-XIII d.C. El proceso de islamización en el medio rural del centro peninsular y otras cuestiones*, in *Studia historica. Historia medieval*, 27, 2009, p. 113.

Archaeology can therefore contribute to the establishment of the differentiated chronology that Sophie Gilotte and Annliese Nef request⁵⁴, that matches in a general way the process seen in Tudmīr and other areas surrounding *al-Andalus*⁵⁵: a first phase in the second half of the 8th century when the conquerors promoted a limited Islamization according to their mainly fiscal interests (introduction of Islamic coins, establishment of the *jund*, etc.); a vague and uneven transformation process during the 9th century and, finally, the homogeneity achieved from the 10th century, when the state speeded up the ongoing processes, in a more or less spontaneous fashion.

The material sequences that explain a complex and multifaceted social process which takes shape during the Umayyad Caliphate are, for example, the introduction of Islamic coin and ceramic types that show new consumption patterns, commensality, and complex technology transfers; the creation of new agricultural landscapes; the development of domestic structures; the generalization of new funerary rites; or the spontaneous appearance of new forms of rural spirituality, as represented for example in the *Ribāṭ* of Guardamar⁵⁶, that were later redirected according to an official praxis.

Currency as an accurate indicator of Islamization

The coin is the expression and main instrument of the organizational skills of its legal issuer (the state) and, therefore, is one of the clearest indicators of the Islamization of the political and administrative structures in the heart of a highly monetized state⁵⁷. The dialogue between coins and archaeological context has important consequences for both numismatics and archaeology: the appearance of coins in a stratigraphic sequence diminishes the importance of its essential chronological value, but at the same time it contextualizes that sequence chronologically. The analysis of the Islamization process in *Sharq al-Andalus* through coin registers, recently addressed by Carolina Doménech⁵⁸, well sets out some of the achievements here: the association of Islamic coins (*fulus*) with late Roman and Visigothic coins (*tremisses*) in the sequences of El Tolmo de Minateda,

54 S. Gilotte, A. Nef, *L'apport de l'archéologie*, cited n. 34, p. 97-98.

55 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *Histoire et archéologie*, cited n. 39. See also S. Gilotte, *Aux marges d'al-Andalus. Peuplement et habitat en Estrémadure centre-orientale (VIII-XIII^e siècles)*, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, Vantaa, 2010, p. 245 ss.

56 R. Azuar Ruiz (ed.), *Fouilles de la Râbita de Guardamar I. El Ribâṭ califal. Excavaciones (1984-1992)*, «Colección de la Casa de Velázquez 85», Madrid, 2004.

57 S. Gilotte, A. Nef, *L'apport de l'archéologie*, cited n. 34, p. 66.

58 C. Doménech Belda, *El proceso de islamización*, cited n. 34.

Recópolis, and Vega Baja of Toledo⁵⁹ have been a key to understanding the evanescent material contexts of the 8th century. The wide use of Roman coins of the 4th century requires the review of the chronological values of these coin issues, which were usually in circulation in later contexts (Visigothic and Islamic). On the other hand, the fragmented Islamic silver coins (*dirhams*) that were brought into circulation of a time very close to their minting date, illustrate some very interesting monetization processes. These contextualized coins open new research perspectives that go beyond the volume, regularity, and fiscal meaning of the issues, while also addressing their circulating value⁶⁰.

The ideological change: Islamization and Arabization

The dissemination of Islam and the Arabic language are without any doubt two fundamental ideological expressions of the new society. The former can be seen in the appearance of specific religious buildings and their connection with the old buildings of worship, which were sometimes turned into mosques, as well as the adoption of the new funerary rite. The latter can be found in the incorporation of the new language in every form of writing. The state 'speaks' Arabic through its currency after the conquest, promoting an early linguistic Arabization whose material vehicle of expression, the epigraphy, is an effective indicator of an Islamized social environment, with a clear symbolic and propaganda value⁶¹.

However, the dominant position of Arabic as a language of communication can be physically seen first in spontaneous writing (*graffiti*), and at a later moment in commemorative and funerary epigraphy. These documents show that a

59 C. Doménech Belda, S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *Viejas y nuevas monedas en la ciudad emiral de Madīnat Iyyuh (El Tolmo de Minateda, Hellín, Albacete)*, in *Al-Qantara*, XXVII/2, julio-diciembre, 2006, p. 337-374; C. Doménech Belda, *Moneda y espacios de poder en el mundo visigodo. Los tremises de El Tolmo de Minateda (Hellín, Albacete)*, in *Arqueología y Territorio Medieval*, 21, 2014, p. 9-37; M. Castro Priego, *Los hallazgos numismáticos de Recópolis: aspectos singulares de su integración en la secuencia histórica del yacimiento*, in L. Olmo (ed.), *Recópolis y la ciudad en la época visigoda*, *Zona Arqueológica*, 9, 2008, p. 130-41; J. De Juan Ares, M^a. M. Gallego García, J. García González, *El conjunto numismático de Vega Baja*, in M^a. M. Gallego García et al., *La Vega Baja de Toledo*, Toletum Visigodo, 2009, p. 127-32.

60 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, C. Doménech Belda, *Coinage, context and social space. The High Medieval City of El Tolmo de Minateda (Hellín, Albacete, Spain)*, in G. Pardini, N. Parise, *Numismatica e Archeologia. Monete, stratigrafie e contesti. Dati a confronto. IWIN. Workshop Internazionale di Numismatica*, British Archaeological Report, forthcoming.

61 M. A. Martínez Núñez, *Estelas funerarias de época califal aparecidas en Orihuela (Alicante)*, in *Al-Qantara*, XXII/1, 2001, p. 45-76.

certain degree of Arabization and Arabic literacy was already present in the 9th century, though the Arabic language still coexisted with writing and language of Latin origin⁶². Early epigraphic proof is scarce and totally nonexistent in marginal and remote areas of the Caliphate of Córdoba, as in *Sharq al-Andalus*, in the east of the Peninsula. In this area, only a few commemorative and funerary examples have been discovered, written in archaic Kufic script and never prior to the Caliphate; here, they date to the second half of the 10th century. The oldest ones are possibly the foundation inscriptions of Ribat de Guardamar⁶³ and a set of funerary inscriptions found in the city of Orihuela⁶⁴. On the other hand, the degree of literacy across the Andalusian population is revealed more effectively thanks to a minor but very interesting assorted epigraphic set (mostly religious and magic, but also including spontaneous testimonies of presence, property, or authorship) carved in cursive letters on ceramics, buildings, or cave walls. Spontaneous writing on local pottery from El Tolmo (a religious formula and a workshop mark) suggests that the residents were already linguistically arabized in the second half of the 9th century, regardless of their genealogy⁶⁵, as hinted also by some inscribed columns found in Extremadura, on the western side of *al-Andalus*⁶⁶. Arabic writings found on the walls of the Visigothic rock hermitage in La Camareta (Agramón, Albacete)⁶⁷ or in Ribat of Guardamar⁶⁸ proves that the Arabic language was already dominant in the rural areas of *al-Andalus* during the 10th century (fig. 6).

Archaeological research on cemeteries shows that non-indigenous people who were already Islamized had settled in the area, as seen in Pamplona, but also shows the early conversion of indigenous people. Many cemeteries confirm a

62 See note 42.

63 C. Barceló Torres, *La escritura árabe*, cited n. 34, p. 125 and 128.

64 M. A. Martínez Núñez, *Estelas funerarias*, cited n. 61.

65 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *Cerámica y escritura: dos ejemplos de arabización temprana. Graffiti sobre cerámica del Tolmo de Minateda (Hellín, Albacete)*, in *Al-Ándalus. Espaço de mudança. Balanço de 25 anos de história e arqueologia medievais. Seminário Internacional Homenagem a Juan Zozaya Stabel-Hansen (Mértola, 2005)*, Mértola, 2006, p. 52-60; *Id.*, *Histoire et archéologie*, cited n. 39, p. 230-232.

66 C. Barceló Torres, *Columnas arabizadas en basílicas y santuarios del occidente de al-Andalus*, in F. Valdés, A. Velázquez (eds.), *La islamización de la Extremadura romana*, «Cuadernos Emeritenses 17», Mérida, 2001, p. 112.

67 I. Bejarano Escanilla, *Las inscripciones árabes de la cueva de la Camareta*, in *La Cueva de la Camareta (Agramón, Hellín-Albacete)*, «Antigüedad y Cristianismo X», 1993, p. 323-378.

68 C. Barceló Torres, *Los escritos árabes de la Rábita de Guardamar*, in R. Azuar Ruiz (ed.), *Fouilles de la Rábita de Guardamar I. El Ribât califal. Excavaciones (1984-1992)*, 2004, p. 135.

phase of ritual transition with a frequent coexistence or immediate succession of Christian and Muslim rites in the same funerary areas, keeping even the same tomb orientation. Some examples of this funerary proximity can be found until well into the 9th century in urban (Zaragoza, Segóbriga, Jaén, and El Tolmo) or rural areas, such as the aforementioned settlement of Encadenado/El Soto in

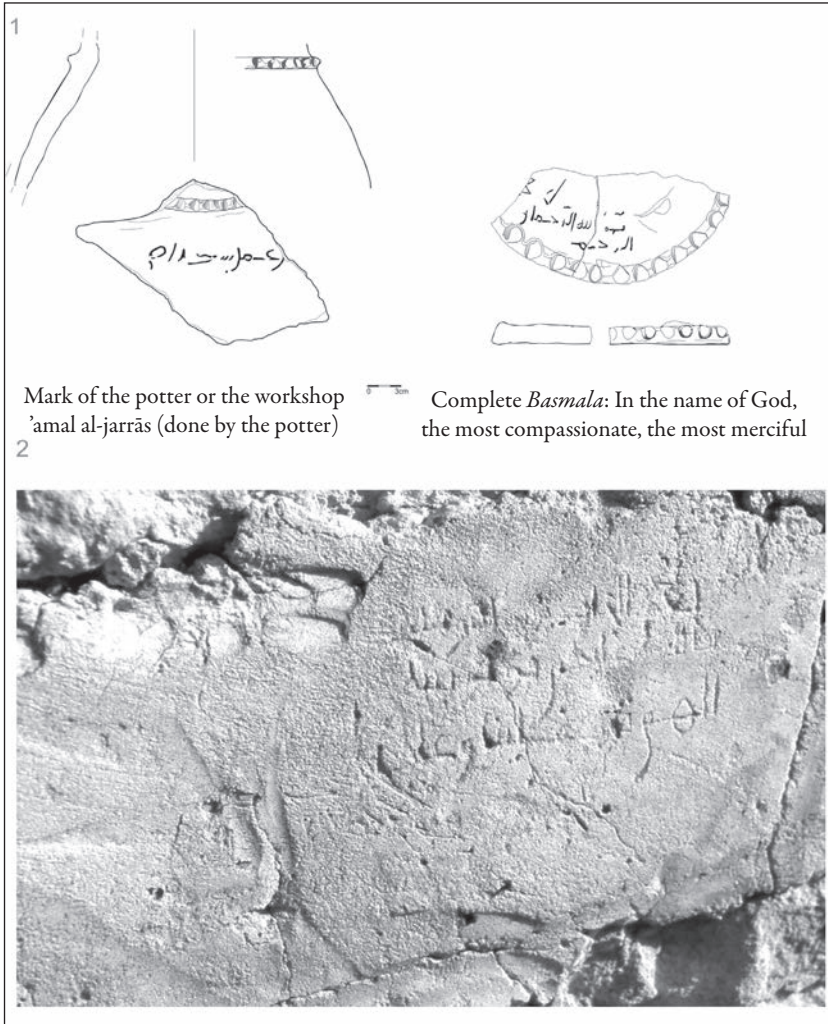


Figure 6. 1. El Tolmo de Minateda (S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *Cerámica y escritura*, citde n. 65); 2. Rábita de Guardamar (photography courtesy of R. Azuar).

Madrid⁶⁹. The permeability of the funerary spaces suggest that the conversion was generational and familiar, as the analysis performed on ancient mitochondrial DNA from Encadenado/El Soto seems to point out⁷⁰. These related individuals sometimes share the funerary space with their ancestors, even after their conversion, which illustrates an early conversion process corresponding to the 'innovators' or 'early followers' phase in the curve of R. Bulliet.

Nevertheless, we cannot rule out the possible presence of a Mozarab population in Islamized contexts, as proved by some Christian burials. Leaving aside the problem of Mozarab cemeteries in urban areas such as Córdoba or Mérida⁷¹, or some monasteries like the ones in Santa María de Melque (Toledo) or Santa Lucía del Trampal (Mérida)⁷², there is funerary evidence that confirm there were non-Islamized settlements in contexts of the Emirate period (8th-9th centuries). There are two significant examples found in two farmhouses located in the swampy mouth of the Segura river in Alicante: Cabezo del Molino in Rojales⁷³ and Cabezo Pardo in Albatera (Alicante)⁷⁴. The second one has been identified as the *Tall al-Khaṭṭāb* farmstead, which the Visigothic noble Theudimer gave as dowry for his daughter's wedding with a member of the Egyptian *jund* that had settled in the region of Tudmir (the south-eastern side of the Peninsula), after the treaty of capitulation of 713⁷⁵. Christian burials have been found in both farmhouses, one with three individuals in Cabezo del Molino, and a tomb with one single woman from the late years of the 8th century or the beginning of the 9th in Cabezo Pardo, in an area with silos. The meaning of these burials in an area populated by *muwalladūn*⁷⁶, where the Egyptian *jund* settled in the middle of the 8th century, opens up new interesting research horizons⁷⁷ (fig. 7).

The first mosques were built during the 8th and 9th centuries, sometimes coexisting with the old Christian churches and sometimes taking their place. Some-

69 C. Aillet, *Les Mozarabes*, cited n. 3, p. 124-127.

70 A. Vigil-Escalera Girado, *Sepulturas*, cited n. 53, p. 99.

71 S. Gilotte, A. Nef, *L'apport de l'archéologie*, cited n. 34, p. 76, n. 58.

72 L. Caballero Zoreda, *El monasterio de Balatnec. Melque (San Martín de Montalbán, Toledo). En el centenario de su descubrimiento*, in J. López Quiroga, A. M. Martínez Tejera, J. Morín de Pablos (eds.), *Monasteria et territoria. Elites, edilicia y territorio en el Mediterráneo Medieval (siglos V-XI)*, «BAR Int. Ser. S1719», 2007, p. 91-121.

73 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *La Cora de Tudmir*, cited n. 40, p. 358-360.

74 *Ibid.*, p. 354-355.

75 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *La materialidad del Pacto de Teodomiro a la luz de la arqueología*, in *eHumanista/IVITRA*, 5, 2014, p. 276-280.

76 A term that refers to converts to Islam.

77 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *La arqueología*, cited n. 13, p. 48-49 and 57 (fig. 5).

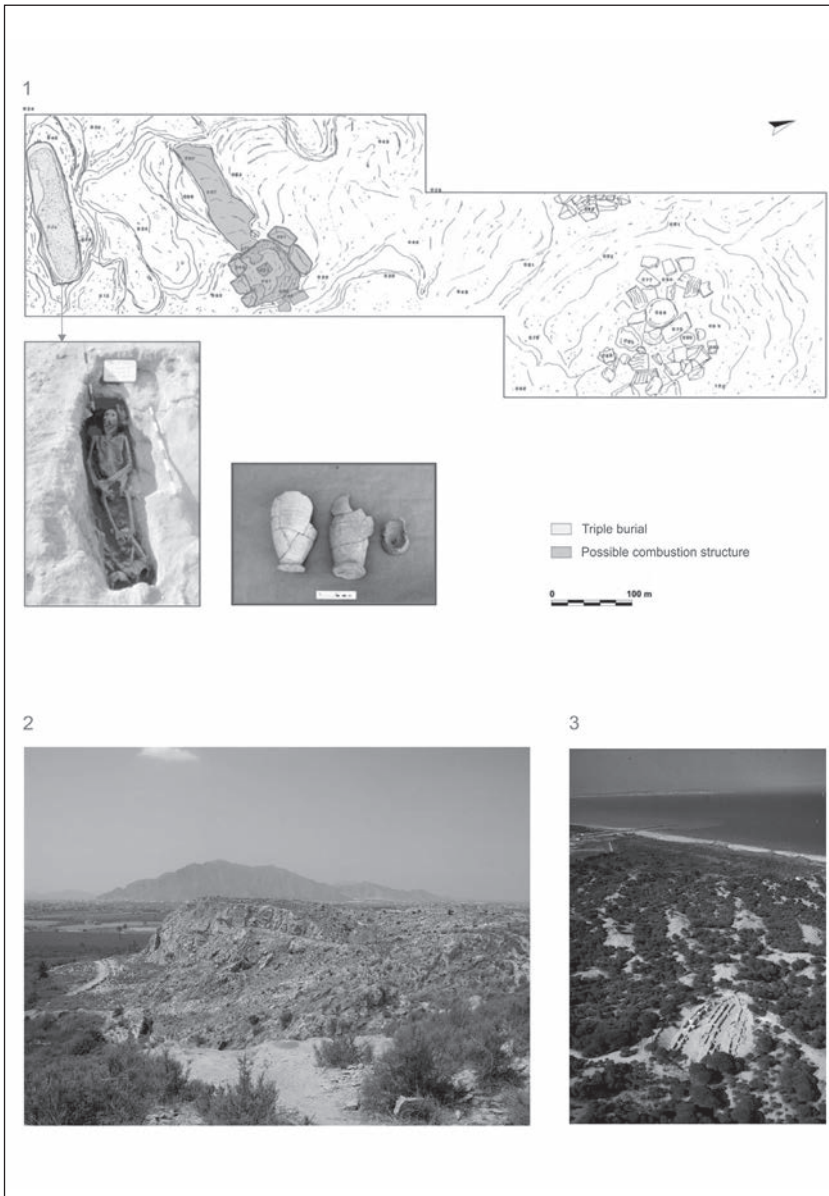


Figure 7. 1. El Cabezo del Molino (Rojales, Alicante), surveying excavation, pictures (left to right): grave with collective burial, arcades T32.1;
 2. View of Cabezo Pardo, Albatera, Alicante;
 3. Rábita de Guardamar (Alicante).

times, though, examples such as the basilica in El Tolmo, which was deconsecrated and turned into a domestic area, suggest there was no will to appropriate religious ‘memory spaces’, which were initially respected within the context of the Pact of Theudimer⁷⁸. The *Ribāṭ* de Guardamar was built by the end of the 9th century next to the mouth of the Segura river, in an area with small peasant settlements and far from any urban areas, and is a spontaneous portrayal of Islamization (though perhaps not orthodox enough, and reorganised later) which proves Islam had spread in the rural areas.

Ways to live in and organize space

The ways in which people lived in and organized space in the first centuries of *al-Andalus* are clear proofs of the Islamization process. The city is the space chosen to display ideology, and inspires the adoption of economic and social Islamic ways. It is also a fiscal space that plays a key role in the administrative organization of the territory. Archaeological excavations in different urban areas of Roman or Visigothic origin such as Valencia, Mérida, Córdoba, Recópolis, or El Tolmo de Minateda, prove that an urban destructuration had started far earlier than 711. Generally speaking, these cities were not abandoned suddenly during the conquest, but were at first used by the Arab conquerors in the process of establishing the new fiscal policy⁷⁹. This apparent continuity in the surviving cities, however, does not hide the fact that it was finally abandoned during the 8th century and replaced by a new completely Islamic urban reality that met different social needs, which was established between the 9th and 11th centuries. The topographic and functional breakup can be clearly seen in new spontaneous urban developments, such as *Bajjana* (Pechina); in the ones carried out by the ruling power, such as Murcia and Badajoz in the 9th century, or Almería and Madīnat al-Zahrā’ during the Caliphate; and also in the new constructions that appear over the remains of old Visigothic cities such as Valencia, Córdoba or Zaragoza.

The house is also a good indicator for the pace of the social Islamization process, which can be seen in the appearance of a new model of domestic architec-

78 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, J. Sarabia Bautista, *The episcopal complex of Eio-El Tolmo de Minateda (Hellín, Albacete, Spain). Architecture and spatial organization. 7th to 8th centuries AD*, «Hortus Artium Medievalium 19», Turnhout, 2013, p. 267-300.

79 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *From Ciuitas to Madina: Destruction and Formation of the City in South-East al-Andalus. The Archaeological Debate*, in M. Marín (ed.), *The formation of al-Andalus. Part 1: History and Society*, «The Formation of the Classical Islamic World 46», Ashgate Variorum, 1998, p. 217-264; P. Cressier, M. García Arenal, *Genèse de la ville islamique*, cited n. 37, *passim*.

ture far from Roman traditions: the ‘courtyard house’⁸⁰. The pattern is a compact domestic unit with specialized rooms surrounding the courtyard, highly centralized, and absolutely closed to the outside by an oblique hallway or *zaguán*, which defines Islamized societies all over the Mediterranean area from the beginning of the 9th century. The house has a complex layout where the bedroom, hallway, and latrine are separated, as happened in *Bajjana* in the second half of the 10th century, and an area for the kitchen slowly being introduced. In general, the diffusion of the model comes together with the gradual specialization of the spaces; the generalization of kitchens, warehouses and even barns; and the appearance in the 12th century of upper storeys, galleries, and decorated porticoes, always open to the courtyard instead of to the outside, due to the importance of preserving privacy (i.e. the control of women) (fig. 8).

The explanation that is generally accepted argues that this innovative Islamic model coexists with and slowly pushes aside other, simpler domestic patterns, made by the association of several monocellular rooms surrounding a large open space (added units shaping a ‘protocourtyard’⁸¹). In some cases, there is a gradual process of the addition of domestic units that might indicate that several related married couples lived in the same domestic unit. Archaeology proves that the problem is much more complex, since those simple household models can be found both in rural and urban late Visigothic and in early Islamic contexts. Fortified compounds (*castra*) have been discovered in non-Islamized contexts, such as in Puig Rom in Gerona; in rural settlements with a church (monasteries?) such as El Bover in Lérida; and in small open villages such as Vilaclara in Castellfollit del Boix in Barcelona, El Cuarto de las Hoyas in Salamanca, or Navalvillar in Madrid; and also in some very similar urban examples in Recópolis, El Tolmo de Minateda, Cartagena, and Mérida. They have also been discovered in chronologies that are Islamic without any doubt, as in the Córdoba suburb of Šaqunda, dating from between 750 and 811, after which it was permanently abandoned, and in some rural settlements related to either native or tribal populations: such is the case of some settlements in Castellón (Monte Mollet, El Sallando, or Miravet), El Castellón de Montefrío in Granada, Marmuyas in Málaga, Alcaria Longa in Mértola, or Peñaflor in Jaén, all with varied chronologies that spread from the 9th to the 11th century. As a result, the emergence of the completely Islamic household model is one of the best material indicators of the so-

80 Regarding this model and all types of classification of medieval domestic units, see S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *Coming back to Grammar of the house: social meaning of Medieval households*, in S. Gutiérrez, I. Grau (eds.), *De la estructura doméstica al espacio social: lecturas arqueológicas del uso social del espacio*, Publicaciones de la Universidad de Alicante, 2013, p. 255.

81 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *Coming back*, cited above, p. 254.

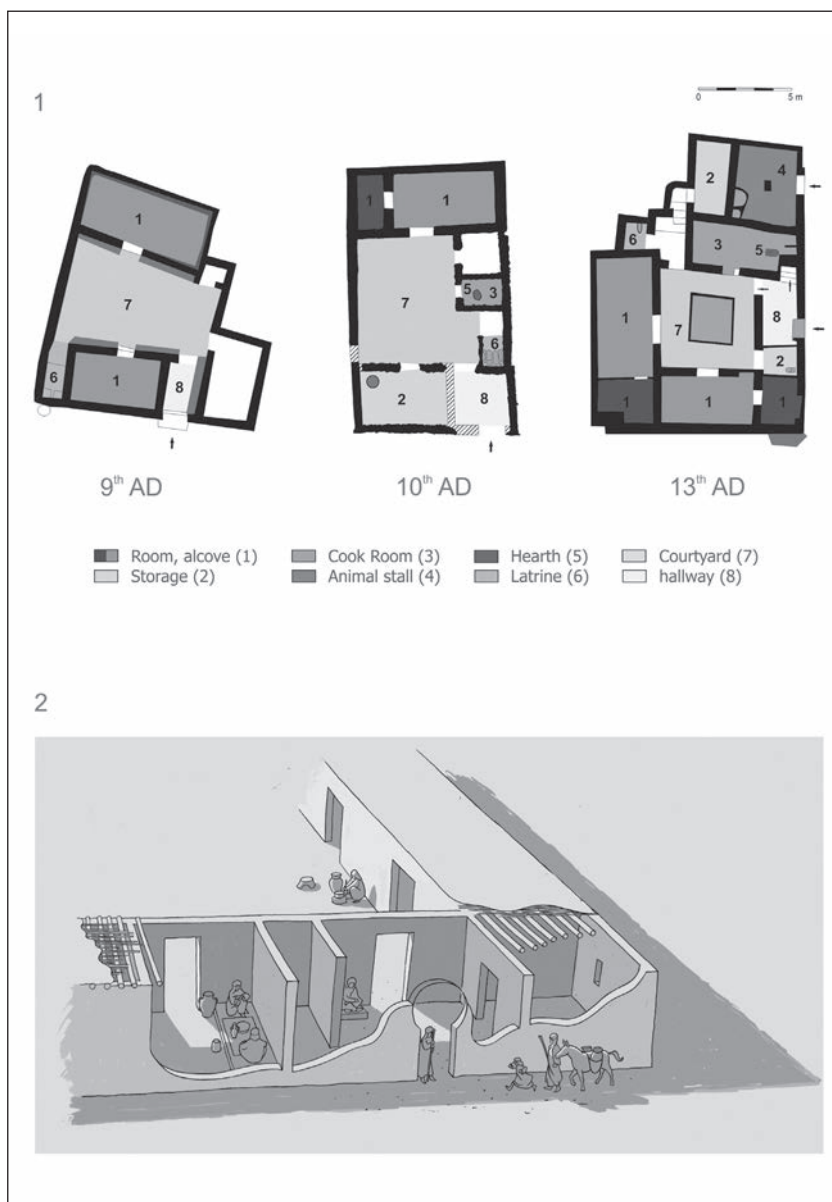


Figure 8. 1. The Islamic courtyard house and its functional specialization process: Bajjana/Pechina, Córdoba and Cieza.
 2.- Reconstruction of the social space in a large house in Castellar (Elche) (S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *Coming back*, cited n. 80, 253, fig 7).

cial change that took place; at the same time, its gradual generalization, which started in the 10th century, even in rural areas, led to a morphological and functional uniformity of domestic structures, which can be seen historically as the material expression of a society that was totally and uniformly Islamized.

Finally, another of the most important indicators of the Islamization process is the construction of an agricultural landscape with a network of settlements, fortresses, and hydraulic systems. The new historiographical model defined by Pierre Guichard in *Al-Andalus*⁸² was a genuine qualitative revolution in the historical studies of *Al-Andalus* and was of great importance in the process of conception of Andalusí society, now seen as tribal, cohesive, and stable over time. This historical explanation, of great conceptual power, began with the suggestion of an intense tribal immigration, especially Berber, which was ultimately responsible for the early creation of a network of peasant communities that owned their own lands, organized by farmhouses (*qarya/qurá*). These communities were able to design their agricultural spaces and their defended settlements, with a high level of autonomy from the state, only relating to them when paying taxes, and (from the perspective of the cities) seen as distant, though they could take part in the urban market to a certain extent.

A segmented social organization would require a profound breakup of the old landscape and would rely on an intense and early tribal immigration, which would be responsible for a new structure of local territories and a communal organization of peasant work processes. The concept of 'district' or 'castral territory' (a combination of fortress/*hiṣn*, castral territory and community, with the later addition of irrigation systems) was thus defined as the basic unit of territorial organization of Andalusí society⁸³ and the basis of a planned colonization process of rural areas⁸⁴. Nevertheless, the various systematic archaeological projects for the diachronic study of a territory undertaken since then, have not been able to date the initial chronology of the so-called 'castral territory' to a period earlier than the Caliphate, rather than connecting it to the early tribal colonizations of *Sharq al-Andalus* and the Balearic Islands. Clearly, there can be no historical explanation of the issues in this debate, such as the characterization and acknowledgement of the colonization, settlement, and organization patterns of rural territories during the Emirate, if there is no interaction with archaeology.

82 P. Guichard, *Al-Andalus*, cited n. 7.

83 A. Bazzana, P. Cressier, P. Guichard, *Les chateaux ruraux*, cited n. 7.

84 P. Cressier, *Chateaux et terroirs*, cited n. 7.

Ways to produce and consume: a new universe of forms

Archaeology has achieved some of its most important results with the study of production processes, going beyond the morphological and functionalist approach of early studies. Technological processes and the systems of the social organization of production have been a key to studying the pottery of medieval Islamic societies as a privileged indicator of the economic processes that characterize the Middle Ages. The Islamic conquest is part of a productive context common to all parts of the Western Mediterranean area at the end of the Antiquity: an environment dominated by regionalization and the crisis of trade in the Mediterranean, the increasing tendency toward self-sufficiency, and the simplification of production processes, now devoid of the specialization and standardization typical of earlier Roman productions. On the contrary, domestic production strategies that had been abandoned since prehistory are now readopted, such as simple methods of production and firing, and there is a strong revival of handmade ceramics. At the same time, the formal repertoire is greatly simplified, and purely local distribution and consumption patterns become widespread. Only simple and practical objects are kept, which show a noticeable continuity, such as pots and pans that seem to draw inspiration from African kitchen ceramics, the bowls with the shapes of Roman *Terra Sigillata* (African red slip), or vases and two handled bottles of Roman-Visigothic tradition. These ceramics without doubt tell us about long-lasting consumption habits of unclear origin, and they are very common in early Islamic contexts, a fact that reinforces that continuity.

One of the most interesting examples of this initial continuity (in fact it is an adaptation of objects found in pre-Islamic contexts) is handmade cookware, in cylindrical shapes with a flat base and horizontal handles, which is typical of the south-eastern area of the Iberian Peninsula, where they were also first included in a typology⁸⁵. These pots are already found in late Visigothic contexts from the 7th century and the beginning of the 8th; they then evolved during the 8th and 9th centuries and turned into the most typical kitchen object in the south-eastern area of *al-Andalus* during the 10th and 11th centuries, where they live on later in isolated cases (fig. 9).

Similar objects, with specific shapes and petrographic features, have also been documented in the late Roman ceramics of Africa, especially in the area of *Ifriqiya*, where they look similar to handcrafted bowls discovered in late Byzantine and post-Byzantine contexts from the second half of the 7th century and the

85 M. Ación Almansa, *Cerámica a torno lento en Bezmiliana. Cronología, tipos y difusión*, in *I Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española (Huesca 1985)*, IV, Zaragoza, 1986, p. 243-267; S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *La Cora de Tudmir*, cited n. 40, p. 73-79 (series M1 and M2).

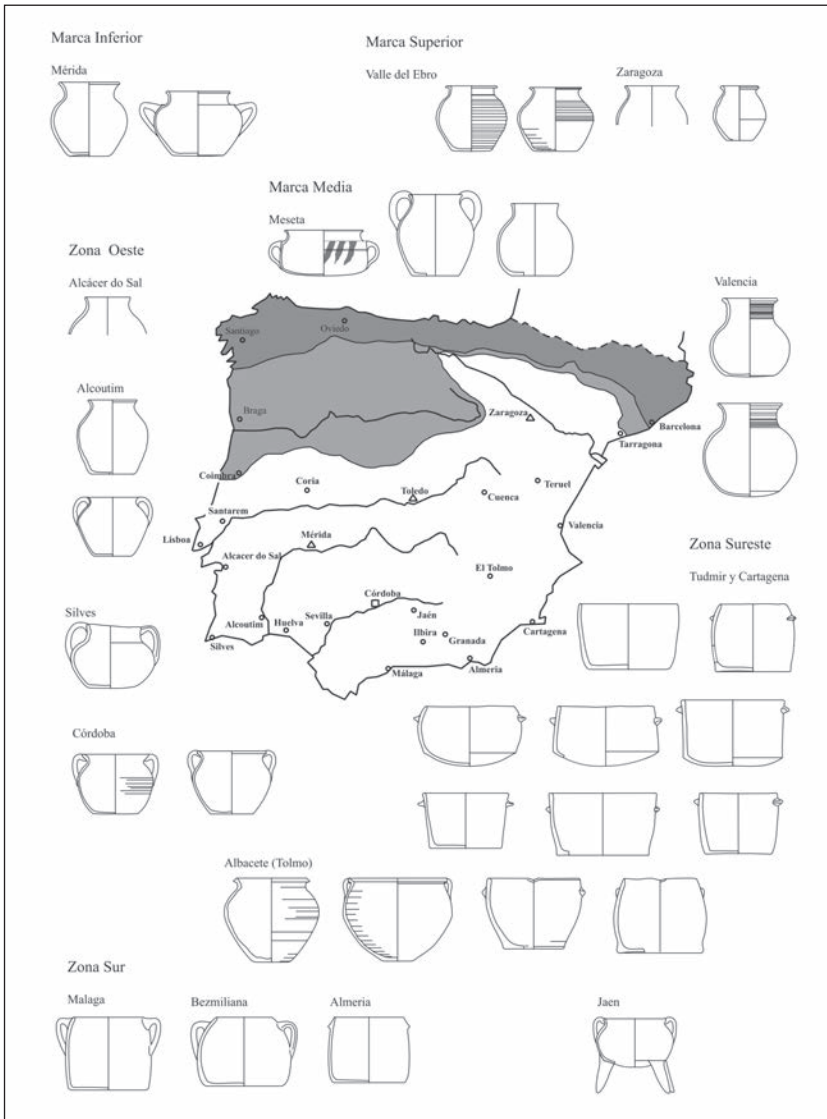


Figure 9. Examples of geographical distribution of cookware (VIII-IX centuries), resulting from the evolution of typical Visigothic forms, the influence of new Emiral contributions and regional developments. (M. Alba Calzado, S. Gutiérrez Lloret, Las producciones de transición al Mundo Islámico: el problema de la cerámica paleoandalusí (siglos VIII y IX), in D. Bernal Casasola, A. Ribera i Lacomba, Cerámicas hispanorromanas: un estado de la cuestión, 2008, p. 587, Fig. 1).

beginning of the 8th ⁸⁶. It seems clear that these objects evolved and remained in the area during the Islamic period ⁸⁷. It may be suggested that such cylindrical shapes, with or without a convex base, show the tradition of the forms (and possibly of the kitchen) of tall pots in African cookware, especially of the Hayes 197 form of classical African ceramic cookware studied by Michel Bonifay, which certainly has implications for styles of cooking as well ⁸⁸ (fig. 10).

Given the dynamics confirmed in the south-eastern area of the Iberian Peninsula and in *Ifriqiya*, where it also seems that this handmade ceramic production belongs to the pre-Islamic tradition, the case of Sicily raises new and intriguing questions that have been set out by Alessandra Molinari ⁸⁹. The handcrafted ceramics discovered on the island, in contexts from the end of the 10th and the beginning of the 11th century, are very similar to the Andalusian ones. They do not seem to evolve at all from late Antique pottery and they have not been found in Sicilian ceramic contexts from between the 8th and the first half of the 10th century, where other type of kitchen objects prevail, such as spherical pots. Other proposals link their discovery in Sicily to the migration of Berbers ⁹⁰, but the fact that we know little about Sicilian contexts from the 7th and 9th centuries prevents us from addressing the problem any accuracy as yet. The new datings of contexts from Palermo from the end of the 9th century and the beginning of the 10th do not shed any light on the origin of these objects. Handmade cookware does not appear in these urban contexts until the second half of the 10th century and the beginning of the 11th ⁹¹, and not until the end of the 11th and

86 Modelée C, Types 4 and 5; M. Bonifay, *Études sur la céramique romaine tardive d'Afrique*, «BAR International Series 1301», Oxford, 2004, p. 310–11.

87 M. Bonifay, *Études sur la céramique*, cited above, p. 305.

88 *Ibid.*, p. 223–225. For the high Middle Ages in the Maghreb, see P. Cressier, E. Fentres (eds.), *La céramique maghrébine du haut Moyen Âge (VIII^e-X^e siècle). État des recherches, problèmes et perspectives*, «Collection de l'École française de Rome 446», Rome, 2011.

89 A. Molinari, *La cerámica siciliana di età islamica tra interpretazione etnica e socio-economica*, in P. Pensabene (ed.), *Piazza Armerina. Villa del Casale e la Sicilia tra tardoantico e Medioevo*, Roma, 2010, p. 204–205.

90 F. Ardizzone. *Qualche considerazione sulle 'matrici culturali' di alcune produzioni ceramiche della Sicilia occidentale islamica*, in A. Molinari, A. Nef (eds.), *La Sicile à l'époque islamique. Questions de méthode et renouvellement récent des problématiques*, «Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge, 116/1», 2004, p. 191–204. Cf. A. Molinari, *La cerámica siciliana*, cited n. 89, p. 205, critical reflection on the ethnographic argumentation of this hypothesis.

91 Several works published in A. Nef, F. Ardizzone, *Les dynamiques de l'Islamisation*, cited n. 3, especially in F. Ardizzone, F. Agrò, *L'islamizzazione a Palermo attraverso una rilettura della ceramica da fuoco dei butti di via Imera*, p. 258–269; F. Spatafora, E. Canzonieri, *Al-Khālīṣa: alcune considerazioni alla luce delle nuove scoperte archeologiche nel quartiere della kalsa*, p. 243–244.

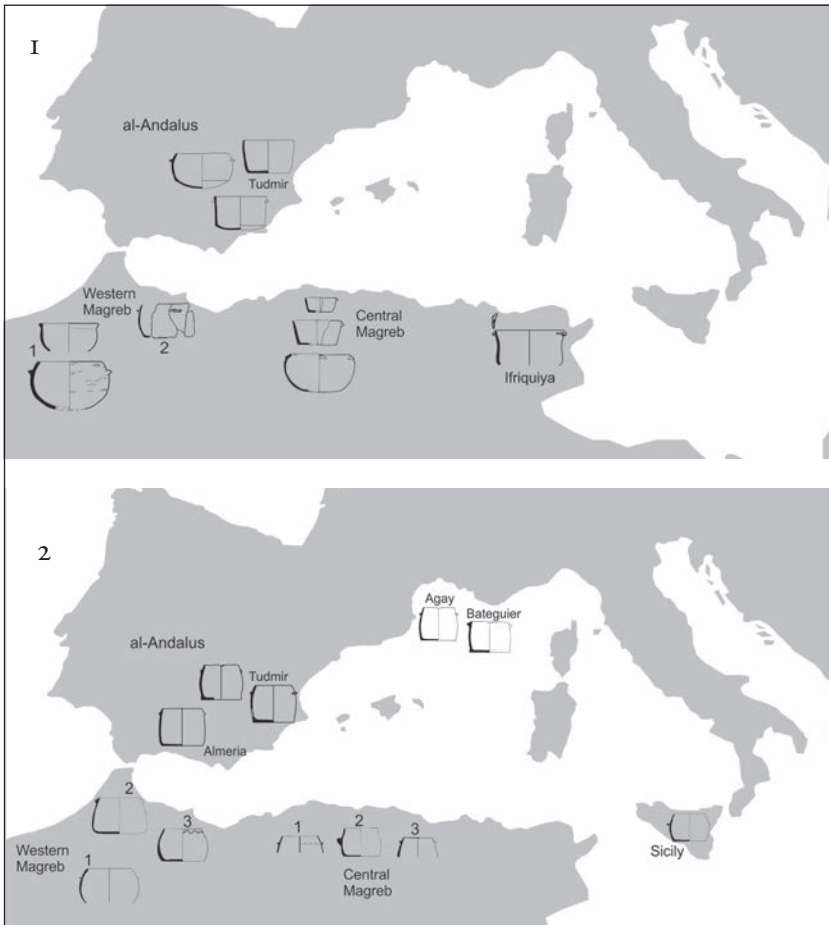


Figure 10. 1. Examples of geographical distribution of handmade cookware in the Western Mediterranean (7th-8th centuries): Tudmir (southeast of Spain), western Maghreb (1. Volubilis y 2. Ceuta.), central Maghreb (Sétif), Ifriqiya (M. Alba Calzado, S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *Las producciones de transición al Mundo Islámico:*

el problema de la cerámica paleoandalusí (siglos VIII y IX), in D. Bernal Casasola, A. Ribera i Lacomba, *Cerámicas hispanorromanas: un estado de la cuestión*, 2008, fig. 1; V. Amorós, A. Feli, *Volubilis (Walila) D'après les Fouilles de la mission Maroco-Anglaise*, in P. Cressier, E. Fentress (eds.), *La céramique maghrébine*, cited n. 88, fig. 5; S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *Al-Andalus y el Magreb: la cerámica altomedieval en las dos orillas del mundo mediterráneo occidental*, in P. Cressier, E. Fentress (eds.), *La céramique maghrébine*, cited n. 88, fig. 2; M. Bonifay, *Etudes*, cited n. 87, fig. 174.2).

the first half of the 12th in Agrigento⁹². In the case of Sicily, it is possible that the discovery of these objects, together with others such as the so-called 'Vandal' oil lamp or the bucket⁹³, is related to the innovative context that arrived on the island as part of a Mediterranean Islamic koiné of North African influence, probably coming from Tunisia/*Ifriqiya*. This example shows the complexity of a process which is not necessarily linear, and which can have rhythms and diverging directions in different spaces.

Conversely, the apparent continuity of certain objects is soon set against the addition, from the 8th century, of objects and ornaments foreign to the local tradition such as the *tannūr* (an oven from the East used to bake bread)⁹⁴, the waterwheel bucket (*qādūs/arcaduz*) and the vase with a cylindrical neck⁹⁵. These objects represent different cultural traditions and, more importantly, are proof of the introduction of new types of food and agricultural practices with irrigation⁹⁶. The generalization of a wheel-turned beaker, porous and with light colours, with a wide mouth, cylindrical neck and convex body, used for drinking (pitcher or *jarro*), is a good example of a ceramological interpretation of Islamization. This new type of beaker, present in the early contexts of the whole of *al-*

92 M. S. Rizzo, L. Danile, L. Zambito, *L'insediamento rurale nel territorio di Agrigento. Nuovi dati da prospezioni e scavi*, in *Les dynamiques de l'Islamisation*, cited n. 3, p. 365-367.

93 L. Arcifa, *Indicatori archeologici per l'Alto Medioevo nella Sicilia orientale*, in P. Pensabene (ed.), *Piazza Armerina*, cited n. 89, p. 123-124.

94 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *Panes, hogazas y fogones portátiles. Dos formas cerámicas destinadas a la cocción del pan en al-Andalus: el hornillo (Tannūr) y el plato (Tābāq)*, *Lucentum (Alicante)*, IX-X, 1990-91, p. 161-175.

95 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *El aprovechamiento agrícola de las zonas húmedas: la introducción del arcaduz en el sureste de al-Andalus (siglos VIII y IX)*, in *Arqueología y Territorio Medieval*, 3, Jaén, 1996, p. 7-19; *Id.*, *La arqueología*, cited n. 13, p. 264-269; L. A. García Blánquez, *Los arcaduces islámicos de Senda de Granada. Tipología y encuadre tipológico*, in *Arqueología y Territorio Medieval*, 21, 2014, p. 69-103.

96 G. S. Colin, *La noria marocaine et les machines hydrauliques dans le monde arabe*, «Hesperis XIV», 1^{er} trimestre, fas. I, 1932, p. 22-60; L. Torres Balbas, *Las norias fluviales en España*, in *Al-Andalus*, V, 1940, p. 195-208; R. J. Forbes, *Irrigation and drainage*, «Studies in Ancient technology II», Brill, Leiden, 1965, p. 1-79; T. Schiøler, *Roman and islamic water-lifting wheels*, Odense University Press, 1973; L. Menassa, P. Laferrière, *La Sâqia. Technique et vocabulaire de la roue à eau égyptienne*, El Cairo, 1975; J. Caro Baroja, *Norias, azudas y aceñas* and *Id.*, *Sobre la historia de la noria de tiro*, in *Id.*, *Tecnología Popular Española*, «Artes del tiempo y del espacio 6», 1983; Th. F. Glick, *Tecnología, ciencia y cultura en la España medieval*, Alianza Universidad, 1992; P. Cressier, *Hidráulica rural tradicional de origen medieval en Andalucía y Marruecos. Elementos de análisis práctico*, in J. A. González Alcántud, A. Malpica Cuello (eds.), *El agua. Mitos, ritos y realidades*, Granada, 1995; S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *La arqueología*, cited n. 13, p. 264-269.

Andalus, replaces the Visigothic carinated bowls used for drinking. Their introduction and generalization is one of the best material and chronological indicators of the cultural Islamization process, as evidenced by its discovery in rural areas of Madrid between the middle of the 8th century and the middle of the 9th, or its discovery in the oldest Islamic context on Majorca, establishing the moment of the conquest and colonization of the island⁹⁷ (fig. 11).

The process of the reorganization of markets begins at an early date and can be read through different indicators: the generalization of wheel-turned ceramics, the specialization of tableware and cookware, the addition of new ceramic series adapted to the new cultural traditions, the standardization of types and ornaments, and the introduction of the first monochrome glazes. They were manufactured in urban potters' workshops located in the south-east of *al-Andalus* (as in *Bajjana*/Pechina and Málaga) from the middle of the 9th century, and begins to spread together with other goods through other areas of *al-Andalus* and the Western Mediterranean, as shown by shipwrecks found in the south of France⁹⁸. A new universe of more homogeneous and original objects appears during the 9th century, all of them very Islamic, represented by some specific series of tableware (pitcher/*jarro* and jug/*jarra*), containers and transportation objects (large earthenware jars), cookware (marmites, pots, casseroles, ovens, etc), lighting and multipurpose wares (oil lamps, lids, basin or *alcadafe*, etc.); and some very characteristic decorative techniques become widespread, such as painting. A major change can be seen between the Visigothic objects produced during the second half of the 7th century and those found in Islamic contexts of the 9th century. The material culture is not the same any more, though the adaptation of certain objects shows the continuity of some consumption habits. Kitchenware shows this continuity, but other objects, especially tableware, show the great change that eating habits underwent (fig. 12).

The generalization of glazed earthenware with elaborate decoration (ceramics in green and manganese with an ideological plan to disseminate the image of a triumphant Ummayyad Caliphate), is proof of a complex market structure where urban workshops were in charge of the production process with great knowledge of the technological processes. Productive homogenization must be understood as material aspect of a uniform and Islamized society that did not lose power with the apparent political fragmentation of the Taifa kingdoms (fig. 13).

97 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *La islamización de Tudmir*, cited n. 39, p. 308.

98 C. Richarté, S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *Céramiques et marchandises transportées le long des côtes provençales, témoignages des échanges commerciaux entre le domaine islamique et l'Occident des IX^e-X^e siècle*, in *Colloque international "Héritages arabo-islamiques en Europe méditerranéenne (VIII^e-XVIII^e siècles)*, Marseille, 2015, p. 209-227.

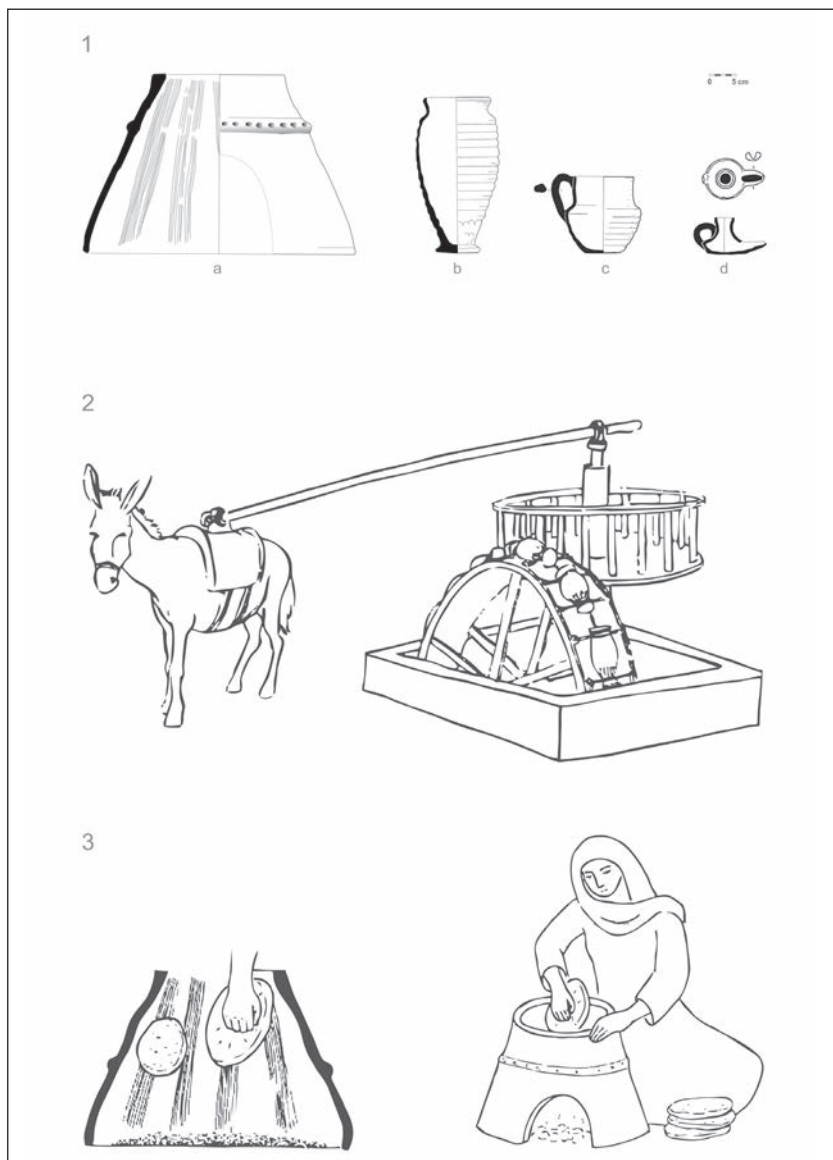


Figure II. 1. New forms: 1.a. Portable oven (*tannūr*), 1.b. Waterwheel bucket (*Arcaduz*), 1.c. Vase with cylindrical neck (*Jarro*), 1.d. Short-nozzled oil lamp, (*candil*); 2. *Sāniya* (water-lifting wheel draught by animals)
3. Portable oven use (drawings in S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *Panes, hogazas*, cited n. 94.

Conclusion: the material time of Islamization

The Islamization process can be sequenced and understood thanks to the archaeological approach. It is still difficult to characterize archaeologically the first years of the 8th century, whose material universe was in a pre-Islamic tradition. We can only materialize and recognize the pre-Islamic style thanks to the coins or some discoveries of unambiguous chronological meaning, and contextualized in a stratigraphic sequence, as in the cemetery of Pamplona. We must remember that without verified stratigraphic sequences, the early years of the 8th century cannot be identified from a material point of view, which forces the careful critique of superficial opinions. To this phase belong productions, constructions, and settlement patterns of Visigothic tradition. Funerary evidence shows that some types of concentrated rural settlements (villages) were abandoned, as well as the arrival of immigrants to the areas.

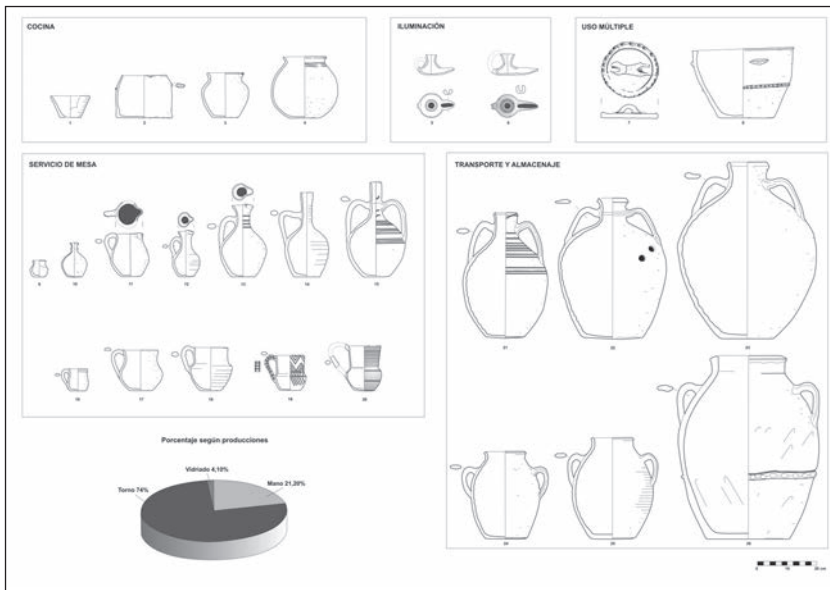


Figure 12. *El Zambo (Novelda, Alicante). 9th century. Cookware, lighting and multipurpose wares, series of tableware, and means of transport and storage. Handmade ceramics: marmites and pots (1-4), lid (7), basin (8), jar (26). Wheel-turned ceramics: oil lamp (6), bottle (10), pitchers (11-19); jugs and jars (21-26). Glazed ceramic: jar (9), oil lamp (6), pitcher (20). Painted decorations: 13, 15, 19 & 21.*

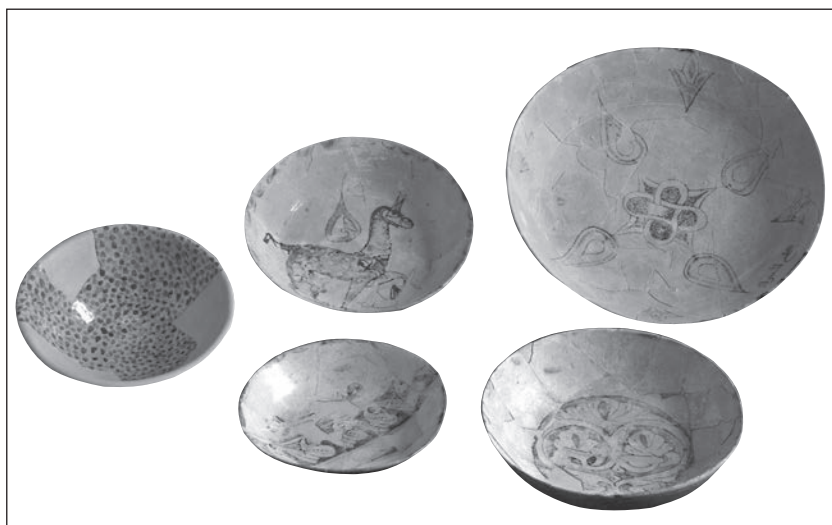


Figure 13. Glazed earthenware in green and manganese found in Madīnat al-Zabrā' (Córdoba), capital of the Umayyad Caliphate (photography courtesy of Antonio Vallejo).

The second half of the 8th century is marked by the gradual introduction of some material indicators (the vase with a cylindrical neck, the short-nozzle oil lamp, the *tannūr*, painted decoration, etc) that suggest, as they become widespread, the advance of the social Islamization process. Totally Muslim funerary practices, sometimes in Christian funerary spaces, are proof of the first conversions. The appearance of the waterwheel bucket suggests the adaptation of the technology that creates irrigated agricultural areas. These may mark the first networks of Islamized peasant settlement prior to its distribution inside castral districts. This is the moment when the first Islamic copper coins (*fals*), associated with abundant late Antique coins, are put into circulation.

The 9th century, especially its second half, shows a material homogenization process that is wide-spread: the registers are full of objects typical of the Emirate; the silver coin becomes widespread; domestic structures become more complex; and the reorganization of markets encourages the distribution of the first glazed earthenware manufactured in urban workshops, even reaching settlements located on hilltops, which proliferated in a period with social conflicts. Religious Islamization becomes widespread and the first spontaneous writings appear, a proof of rural Arabization.

Finally, the 10th century, probably its second half, shows a higher degree of social uniformity that can be seen in the standardization and specialization of

ceramics, and new, widely used, decorations with a completely Islamic ideological meaning. The 10th century opens up an entirely new scenario with bigger cities and their markets, where a new organization of the productive space (divided into castral territories and networks of farmhouses with an agricultural space) becomes widespread. This scenario lies within the period of peace and social control established by the Caliphate and partly explains its prosperity. Epigraphy becomes part of the funerary contexts and many coins are in circulation. The change from the 10th to the 11th century marks the end of the process: a uniform society that is highly Islamised. The most important aspect of the archaeological reading of the first years of *al-Andalus* is thus the possibility of establishing the rhythms and timeframes of the historical process that leads to the creation of a new society.

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THE EMERGENCE OF THE CITY IN AL-ANDALUS

The emergence and development of cities is a crucial element for our understanding of the commercial and fiscal structures in al-Andalus. The very existence of cities is dependent on a regular and substantial production surplus. On the other hand, this does not hold true with regard to the constant and even substantial exchange of goods. Cities do not only have an economic dimension, but also a political one, from which production surplus is controlled through fiscal policies.

Urban structures ‘qualify’ and determine the social structure. Production capacity, no matter how real, is not the city’s defining feature. The city’s main role is the articulation of the relationship between basic social structures and the political framework. The city organises space and territory and directs its economy.

Cities, in consequence, do not emerge spontaneously and autonomously, but do so in response to a set of environmental conditions, especially the need to control production surplus regularly and effectively. The analysis of the city is essential for the comprehension of the social structure as a whole but, conversely, the city cannot be understood in isolation from it.

This interlocking approach had not been adopted for the study of the city in al-Andalus until relatively recent times. I shall now attempt to examine the features of Andalusi society and determine the role played within it by urban structures.

Although the topic has received lots of attention in recent years – which has generated a huge bibliography that cannot be listed here in full – many of the questions set out in Pierre Guichard’s pioneering works are still awaiting answer. His analysis in *Al-Andalus*¹, although heavily reliant on his structuralist vision, laid down the basic principles for the understanding of the social structure of Muslim Spain. As he assertively claimed in this and his other works², the Andalusi world was qualitatively different from the Christian

1 P. Guichard, *Al-Andalus. Estructura antropológica de una sociedad islámica en Occidente*, Barcelona, 1976.

2 In this regard, the work published in response to Ignacio Olagüe’s *Les Arabes n’ont jamais envahi l’Espagne*, Paris, 1969 (translated into Spanish under a very different but no less provocative title, *La revolución islámica en Occidente*, Barcelona, 1974) needs to be highlighted: P.

New Directions in Early Medieval European Archaeology: Spain and Italy compared, ed. by Sauro GELICHI and Richard HODGES, Turnhout, 2015 (Haut Moyen Âge, 24), p. 87-109.

West. Feudalism is, in consequence, not a valid category in al-Andalus, as previously stated by P. Chalmeta³.

In order to gain a full understanding of the context of the discussion, it must be taken into consideration that what was really at stake, both inside and outside Marxist historiographical circles⁴, was the validity of the official Soviet doctrine on the sequence of modes of production (primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism). Naturally, the answer came from outside Soviet orthodox circles; although within this school some interesting attempts were made, they never crystallised fully⁵. As we shall see below, it was Samir Amin⁶ who elaborated a more comprehensive and highly influential conceptualisation, which is, however, still open to further enquiry.

Pierre Guichard's *Al-Andalus*, the epistemological foundations of which were far away from Marxism, was soon integrated into another historiographical trend that we may qualify as heterodox. Showing a remarkable ability to integrate disparate elements, he combined others' ideas with his own and so configured his thesis of the Andalusí state⁷. Guichard himself was quite explicit about the process leading to his conclusions:

The notions of 'Asiatic mode of production' and 'tributary society' were proposed in the course of the Marxist-inspired debates about 'Feudalism'; they were coined

Guichard, *Los árabes sí que invadieron España. Las estructuras sociales de la España musulmana*, in *Id.*, *Estudios sobre historia medieval*, Valencia, 1987, p. 27-71 (the original French version was published in *Annales E.S.C.* 6, November-December 1976, p. 1483-1513).

3 P. Chalmeta Gendró, *Le problème de la féodalité hors de l'Europe chrétienne: le cas de l'Espagne musulmane*, in *Actas del II Coloquio Hispano-Tunecino de Estudios Históricos*, Madrid, 1973, p. 91-115. This work took up the baton of a traditional debate about the nature of Feudalism and its analytic validity as a mode of production beyond Europe. This debate played a central role in historiography in the 1950s and 60s, and was still very much alive in the 1970s.

4 None of the authors cited so far could be labelled Marxists.

5 For an example, see the surprising Z. V. Udaltsova, E. V. Gutnova, *La genèse du féodalisme dans les pays d'Europe*, in *XIII Congreso mundial de Ciencias Históricas*, Moscow, 1970, translated into Spanish in M. Bloch *et al.*, *La transición del esclavismo al feudalismo*, Madrid, 1975, p. 195-220. Mention must also be made of A. D. Liublinskaya, *Tipologiya Rannevo Feodalizma v Zapadnoi Evrope i Problema Romano-Germanskovo Sínteza*, in *Srednie Veka*, fasc. 31, 1968, p. 9-17.

6 S. Amin, *El desarrollo desigual. Ensayo sobre las formaciones sociales del capitalismo periférico*, Barcelona, 1978.

7 A Spanish translation of his work is available: P. Guichard, *Al-Andalus frente a la conquista cristiana. Los musulmanes de Valencia (siglos XI-XIII)*, Valencia, 2001. The French edition, in two volumes, was published in Damascus in 1990-1991.

to design a kind of economic, social and political organisation based on two, antagonistic and complementary at the same time, elements: peasant communities that owned most of the land, and the ruling elite, which appropriated part of the surplus produced in their own lands and also in those owned by these peasant communities by virtue of their control of the state structures funded via taxes. Unlike Western feudal elites, however, this class does not essentially depend economically on its control over land and people. Land remains the property of the peasants, whose communities maintain remarkably stable socioeconomic structures, especially in comparison with the feudal West, where social structures are much more changeable and dynamic. In this regard, the 'tributary' structure is, from a socio-political point of view, organised around two basic pillars: the State and the local peasant communities, fundamentally connected through tax exactions⁸.

The reader may have noticed that no mention is made of cities in this quick summary. It could be assumed that its role is to be the point of encounter between the State and the rural communities. These communities lived scattered in rural *alquerías* (villages) which, according to some proposals, essentially depended on irrigated agriculture. In this sense, Miquel Barceló opened up an avenue of research aimed at answering a number of essential questions, including how work processes were organised within the *alquería*⁹. This, admittedly difficult, task has not yet been fulfilled. The idea is brilliant: it places the emphasis on the process of production within the peasant world, but it does not clarify the overall orientation of the agrarian economy. The practice of irrigation is, indeed, clearly predominant from a qualitative point of view, but it is only performed in combination with other practices. The understanding of internal productive mechanisms cannot be achieved if the complexity of the whole system is not duly taken into consideration.

We still need to unveil the process that led to the development of Andalusí society from these basic pillars, and discuss how it can be defined as a commercial-fiscal construct. This idea was first presented by Samir Amin, as Guichard himself confessed in an interview¹⁰, a fact that lies behind the language used to express it from a certain point in time and the structuralist

8 P. Guichard, *Al-Andalus frente*, cited n. 7, p. 42-43.

9 M. Barceló, *Visperas de feudales. La sociedad de Sharq al-Andalus justo antes de la conquista catalana*, in F. Maíllo Salgado (ed.), *España. Al-Andalus. Sefarad: Síntesis y nuevas perspectivas*, Salamanca, 1988, p. 99-112, especially p. 107.

10 A. Malpica Cuello, *Al-Andalus y la antropología histórica. Dialogando con Pierre Guichard, Fundamentos de Antropología*, 1, 1992, p. 64-73.

approach of his work *Al-Andalus*¹¹. As he humbly and sincerely admits, S. Amin was an essential influence for him¹².

Given this relationship between the analyses of Andalusi society¹³ and Samir Amin's work¹⁴, which goes much further than Guichard's, it is necessary to outline the main features of his formulation. The basis of tributary societies lies, according to Amin, in pre-capitalist societies. Pre-capitalist societies share a number of essential characteristics: "1) the predominance of a communal or tribute-paying mode of production; 2) the existence of simple commodity relations in limited spheres; and, 3) the existence of long-distance trade relations"¹⁵.

According to Amin, tributary society is the most common form of organisation in pre-capitalist societies, which K. Marx had already distinguished as a discrete category¹⁶. They evolve from previous communal societies¹⁷.

This is a rather large concept, which is later subdivided into three 'social families'¹⁸: 1. 'rich tribute-paying formations (based on large internal surplus)';

11 "When I published *Al-Andalus* I still did not know the works of Miquel Barceló, which were published later. I was ignorant of all the possible ramifications of tributary societies and of all the Marxist and neo-Marxist ideas in this regard. For this reason, these notions are absent from *Al-Andalus*. This came later. At the time, I was fundamentally influenced by historical anthropology" (A. Malpica Cuello, *Al-Andalus y la antropología*, cited above, p. 72).

12 "I read Samir Amin because Miquel Barceló, who was his editor and had written a prologue, more of an introductory essay, really, for him, sent it to me. It was like a revelation. At that point, facts that I did not understand before became suddenly clear. Samir Amin's approach to tributary societies was revealing and stimulating, and offered me the key to understand a number of facts that were known to me but that I could not fully comprehend before" (A. Malpica Cuello, *Al-Andalus y la antropología*, cited n. 10, p. 72).

13 Several researchers have based their work on Amin's theoretical notions, for example M. Barceló, *Ensayo introductorio*, in S. Amin, *Sobre el desarrollo desigual de las formaciones sociales*. Barcelona, 1974, and R. Pastor de Togneri, *Del Islam al cristianismo. En las fronteras de dos formaciones económico-sociales: Toledo, siglos XI-XIII*, Barcelona, 1985 (1st edition, Barcelona, 1975).

14 Especially S. Amin, *El desarrollo desigual*, cited n. 6.

15 S. Amin, *El desarrollo desigual*, cited n. 6, p. 14. (English translation: A. Samir, *Unequal development*, Harvester Press, Sussex, 1976, p. 17).

16 K. Marx, *Formaciones económicas precapitalistas*, México, 1971. Edition with introduction by E. J. Hobsbawn.

17 "The family of formations that is more widespread in the history of precapitalist civilizations is that of the formation in which the tribute-paying mode predominates. On emerging from primitive communism, communities evolve towards hierarchical forms. It is this evolution that gives rise to the tribute-paying mode of production" (S. Amin, *El desarrollo desigual*, cited n. 6, p. 16. = *Id.*, *Unequal development*, cited n. 15, p. 18-19).

18 S. Amin, *El desarrollo desigual*, cited n. 6, p. 17. = *Id.*, *Unequal development*, cited n. 15, p. 20.

2. 'poor tribute-paying formations (characterized by small internal surplus)'; and
3. 'tribute-paying and trading formations'.

Medieval Muslim societies are included in the third category. This category is characterised by long-distance trade, which does not result in the formation of a capitalist system¹⁹, probably due to a tendency towards hoarding and the obstacles posed to the pauperisation of labour.

On the other hand, the medieval Muslim world is a very large context, which can be subdivided into three main areas: the East, the area around the Nile, and the Maghreb. In all three, the dominant classes share a series of common features, including an urban character and a lack of direct involvement in agricultural management. Although obscured in Amin's work by long-distance trade, we must keep in mind that rural surplus plays an essential role²⁰.

These social formations are divided into two social classes, which are determinant for their organisation. On the one hand, there is an urban elite reliant on commerce for their income; they spoke a common language, Arabic, and also shared an orthodox religious practice, Sunnism, which advocates the need to keep political and religious power in the same hands. This is a highly cultured social class that has wide connections due to their mobility, their religious obligations (pilgrimage) and their stress on education. On the other hand, there is a peasant class which works the fields and, preferentially, practises irrigation agriculture. Even if, in S. Amin's words "the peasantry enters little into the system and is subjected only episodically and slightly to the levying of tribute"²¹, what we know about al-Andalus suggests that, at least in this case, fiscality, which was naturally in the hands of the state, fundamentally relied on agricultural production.

The tax structure of the Emirate and Caliphate of Cordoba is quite clear in this regard²². This fiscal structure was drafted during the Emirate, but was

19 S. Amin, *El desarrollo desigual*, cited n. 6, p. 32.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

21 S. Amin, *El desarrollo desigual*, cited n. 6, p. 42 = *Id.*, *Unequal development*, cited n. 15, p. 47.

22 M. Barceló, *Un estudio sobre la estructura fiscal y procedimientos contables del emirato omeya de Córdoba (138-300/755-912) y el califato (300-366/912-976)*, in *Acta Historica et Archaeologica Madiaevalia*, 5-6, 1984-1985, p. 45-72. This has also been published in M. Barceló, *El sol que salió por Occidente. (Estudios sobre el estado omeya en al-Andalus)*, Jaén, 1997, p. 103-136. Citations will refer to this later edition. See also P. Chalmeta Gendrán, *El «señor del zoco» en España: Edades Media y Moderna. Contribución al estudio de la historia del mercado*, Madrid, 1973, and *Id.*, *Al-Andalus*, in A. Domínguez Ortiz (ed.), *Historia de España. Vol. 3, Al-Andalus: musulmanes y cristianos (siglos VIII-XIII)*, Barcelona, 1996, p. 8-113, especially p. 100.

consolidated only during the Caliphate. It seems that most of the State's revenue was collected through a stable, and to a large degree legal, taxation system, as demonstrated by the evolution of revenue: while in the 8th century the state revenue amounted to around 300,000 dinars, with al-Hakam I (796-822) the revenue rose to 600,000, to 1,000,000 with 'Abd al-Rahmān II (822-852), and to the enormous amount of 5,480,000 with the first Caliph, 'Abd al-Rahmān III. To this, the direct revenue levied on the Umayyad's family personal possessions (765,000 dinars) must be added. The vast majority of this revenue corresponded to taxes on agricultural production, and only 15% to the taxes on commercial activities.

How can we explain the extraordinary productivity of Andalusí agriculture? First of all, it must be stressed once more that the tax regime in force was fully legitimate, so the possibility that excessive taxes were being levied must be discarded. The reason must, therefore, be related to the very high agricultural productivity and the efficient operation of exaction channels.

We believe, at least as a working hypothesis, that this extraordinary productivity was achieved through the establishment of an irrigation-based agro-ecosystem, where irrigation played the major role but only as a part of a more complex agrarian system. Irrigation would have contributed to maintaining agricultural production at high levels while also promoting exchange. This would have required a fiscal system that laid a heavy stress on monetary circulation. The peasantry would use the market to sell their surplus (mostly, in an irrigation-based agricultural system, perishable goods) in order to attain the necessary cash to respond to their tax obligations.

In such a system, the city plays a crucial role: it is the control centre through which the agricultural surplus is channelled. It is the seat of political power, but it depends on the participation of the peasant world in order to function. On the other hand, the emergence of cities also highlights the promotion of hierarchies within peasant communities themselves. These class differences are often obscured by different mechanisms of cohesion that prevent the total disintegration of the peasant social structure, for example tribal forms of organisation. It is sometimes plausible to think that the development of the agrarian economy, based on the establishment of an irrigated agroecosystem, was only made possible through the operation of a higher rural class. This discussion is, however, well beyond the scope of this paper, which focuses on the emergence and development of the city in al-Andalus.

The emergence of the Andalusí city required the active participation of the political elites, their associated social classes, as well as the peasantry, because it was a city built on foundations that were very different from those of its historical predecessors. In al-Andalus, the instrumentalisation of agricultural surplus did

not take place after a process of confiscation and accumulation driven by the ruling elite; rather, it occurred due to the unequal participation of the peasant world in urban mechanisms²³. The need to acquire cash for the payment of tax was not the only reason behind this participation, however, because soon the circulation of goods became an important factor in itself.

In any case, before focusing on the specific example of al-Andalus, the main features of urban life in the wider Islamic world must be outlined. Although the differences between regions are considerable, it is necessary to establish a basis upon which to define a general model, which can later be compared to our specific case study.

The emergence of urban life in the Islamic world

Different paths led to the development of urban life in the Islamic world:

1. Cities which already existed before the arrival of Islam, sometimes a long time before. These cities often acted as efficient centres of well-developed territories. Obviously, these cities were undergoing a critical process of change, which generally manifested in a rupture of the links between the city and its rural hinterland and a general collapse of the exchange networks, including long-range commerce; this also resulted in the rupture of political links with the outside and subsequent territorial isolation. On the other hand, even when groups continued to inhabit old cities and rural settlements, their size shrank considerably, something that can be easily appreciated by superposing the plan of an early Islamic city onto that of the same city during antiquity.

Urban nuclei were undergoing a profound crisis, which is one of the reasons for their swift adaptation to the newcomers and their power structures. It is possible that the crisis of the ancient city and the collapse of its previous socio-political framework made it especially open to a new society that was not fully consolidated but was, in fact, in gestation.

Archaeology has helped to ascertain the dimension of the crisis which affected the city in Late Antiquity²⁴. If the rebirth of the city had depended on feudal society, as in northern Europe, the process would have been slower and more problematic.

Public places disappeared and were privatised (burials are found in former public places, for example the street or circuses). The road network was not maintained and was invaded by debris, houses and shops; as a result, streets

23 P. Chalmeta Gendrón, *El «señor del zoco»*, cited n. 22.

24 For example, among many, G. P. Brogiolo, *Le origini della città medievale*, Mantova, 2011. This work presents an up-to-date review of what is by now a very long debate.

were narrower and, sometimes, even completely blocked. Houses tended to group together in closed blocks more or less independent from one another. This resulted in the formation of veritable urban islands, separated by empty spaces where agriculture was often practised. This is the reason behind the frequent discovery of pockets of agricultural, organically rich black soil in urban archaeological sites.

Political buildings still existed, but not to the same degree as before. The *forum*, for example, was often abandoned and put to private use. The major marker in the transformation of the Late Antiquity into the early Islamic city was the construction of the central mosque, which operated from the outset as the centre around which the city life organised. In later periods, with the construction of multiple mosques, the Islamic city exhibited polycentric tendencies.

The *madīna* is therefore divided into two clear spheres, as pointed out by J. Cl. Garcin²⁵: the political and the urban. The relationship between them is articulated through the *aljama* mosque, which was an inviolable space ideal for political and economic (including commercial) interaction.

The starting point is, in consequence, the previous city, which was undergoing a severe crisis, to the point that the emergence of the Islamic city can be equated with a full rebirth, as pointed out by M. Acién, especially with regard to the private sphere:

The city is the place where the, essentially private, contract [between the State and its subjects] is put into effect; hence the nearly unanimous agreement among historians about the urban nature of Islam²⁶.

Urban life was known by the Arabs, who knew how to make use of pre-existing structures. But they did not just do this, they also transformed them to adapt to their own model. In his study of the example of Damascus, H. Kennedy stresses the importance of the actions undertaken by the new occupants in order to de-configure pre-existing spaces, which were subsumed in a deep crisis, and instil them with a new identity²⁷. This process was embodied in the transition between the forum and the mosque, from the large-scale baths to multiple small bath-houses.

25 J.-C. Garcin, *Les villes*, in J.-C. Garcin et al., *États, sociétés et cultures du monde musulman médiéval. X^e-XV^e siècle. Tome 2. Sociétés et cultures*, Paris, 2000, p. 129-171.

26 M. Acién Almansa, *Entre el feudalismo y el islam. 'Umar ibn Hafṣūn en los historiadores, en las fuentes y en la historia*, Jaén, 1994. A revised version, including an ample introduction, published in Jaén in 1997, p. 108.

27 H. Kennedy, *From polis to madina: Urban change in Late Antique and Early Islamic Syria*, in *Past and Present*, 106, 1985, p. 3-27.

Naturally, there are many possibilities, depending on the state that the occupied cities were in before the arrival of the Muslims invaders, on whether there was still a recognisable power structure, or on the ability shown by the invaders to integrate.

At any rate, the construction of the central mosque must be considered the foundational event of the Islamic city; the mosque plays a crucial role in connecting political power and the urban structures.

2. Cities created *ex novo* as urban settlements. These are the so-called *amsār* (plural of *misr*). These cities grew from a central nucleus, for which reason they have been defined as camp-cities²⁸. They had a series of common features, which reflected the social organisation of the group that created it. Initially, these cities were rather simple affairs based on tribal forms of organisation. This can be easily appreciated in the prevailing legal framework: conflicts and wills, for example, were resolved on the basis of tribal norms. They were territorially and politically well defined, being under the authority of a chief. Common elements in these cities were the mint, the treasure-house and even the booty-house, from which fiscal policies were implemented. They were also organised around two elements: a fiscal authority, in charge of the management of booty and surplus, and the *Dār al-Imāra*, the seat of the political authority. The urban structure was articulated around the tribes which, in some cases, also managed discrete rural areas.

The relationship between the different human groups within the city and between these groups and the political authority was channelled through a sacralised neutral space, the *aljama* Mosque, where the Friday prayers took place under the authority of the political leadership. The sacred nature of the space also extended to the commercial transactions that were carried out there.

These cities, therefore, began as embryonic settlements of the Islamic expanding armies and were not even walled at first. This kind of *amsār* was particularly common in Iraq (including Basra and Kūfa)²⁹ and also in Egypt (Fustāt)³⁰.

Topographically, these cities also reflected their tribal origins. This is, for example, the case at Kairouan, which was founded in 670. The inner city, which had a polygonal or pseudo-circular figure, was clearly divided into two zones

28 Cfr. H. Bresc, P. Guichard, R. Mantran, *Europa y el Islam en la Edad Media*, Barcelona, 2001, p. 40.

29 For Kūfa, see H. Djāit, *Al-Kufa. Naissance de la ville islamique*, Paris, 1986.

30 For Fustāt, see W. B. Kubiak, *Al-Fustat: Its Foundation and early Muslim Urban Development*, Warsaw, 1982 and Cairo, 1987. See also G. T. Scanlon, *Al-Fustat: The Riddle of The Earliest Settlement*, in G. R. D. King, A. Cameron (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East. II. Land use and settlement patterns*, Princeton, 1994, p. 171-179.

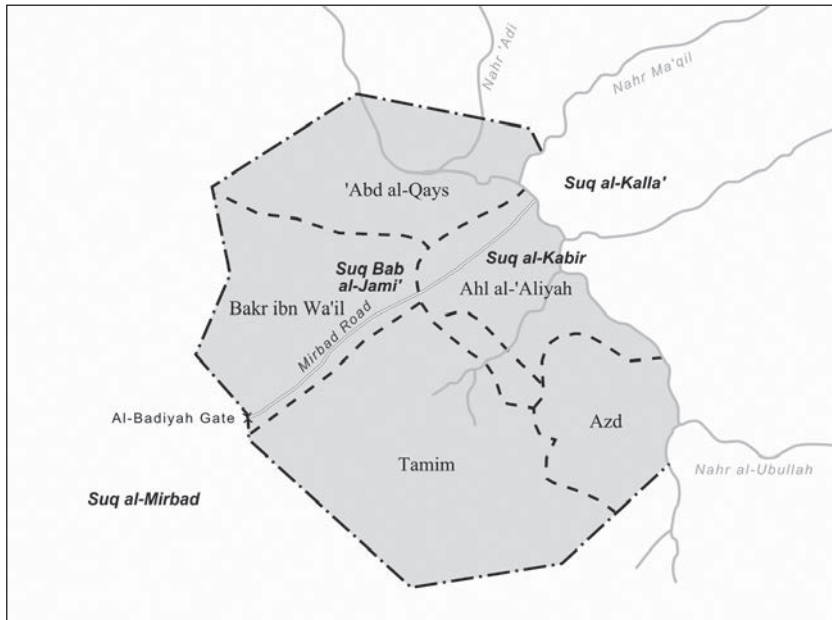


Figure 1. *Amsar Medieval Basra (Iraq).*

along ethnic and religious lines. The physical structure of the city, therefore, was determined by the political organisation³¹. Another example is Fes, which was created on the basis of the distribution of city quarters and agricultural lands among the different tribes:

When the construction of the city ended, it was surrounded by walls and gates, and the tribes settled. The Northern Arabs were granted the district between the Ifriqiya Gate and Iron Gate, in the neighbourhood of the people from Kairouan; next to them, the tribe of Azd and next to these, the Yahsub. The (Berber) tribes of the Sinhaya, Luwata, Masmuda and al-Sayjan were all given their own district and land, with orders to work it³².

The text is very eloquent: not only was the urban nucleus organised according to political divisions, but the hinterland as well, as a way to valorise it and ensure

³¹ M. Sakly, *Kairouan*, in J.-C. Garcin (ed.), *Grandes villes méditerranéennes du monde musulman médiéval*, Rome, 2000, p. 57-85, especially p. 67).

³² Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawd al-qirtās*, Ambrosio, Valencia, 1964, vol. I, p. 89-90.

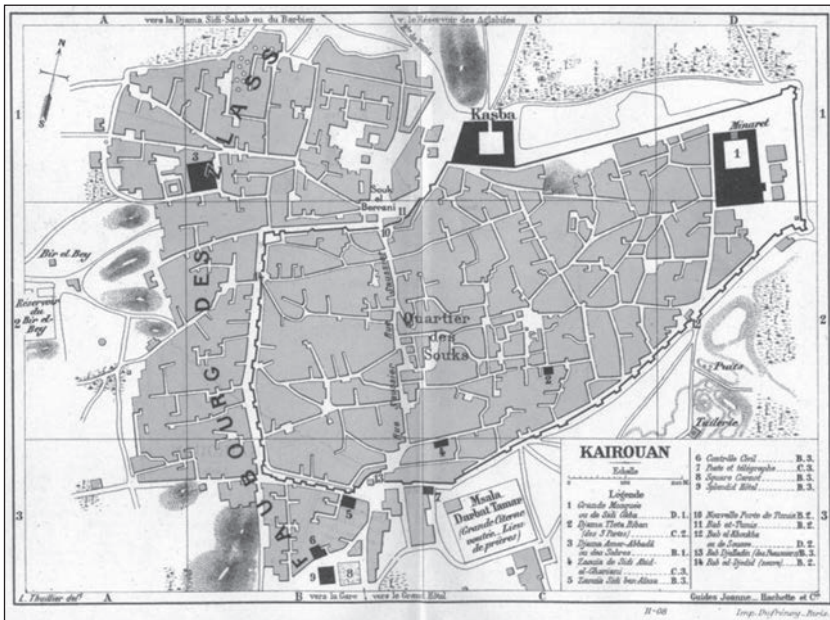


Figure 2. *Amsar Kairouan (Tunisia).*

the regular production of surplus. Indeed, although strictly speaking the term can be translated as ‘camp-city’, it also referred to the territory under the city’s control.

The above descriptions, naturally, only apply to this kind of settlement in their initial stage of development. In P. Guichard’s words, “le cadre d’une société arabe encore fortement marquée par une structure tribale, déterminant d’un type de ‘ville gentilice’”³³. This stage was of limited duration, and these cities soon became more complex, with the strengthening of their characteristically urban qualities and of their role as territorial centres.

In other words, whereas the city needs the countryside, the countryside can do without the city. Only in societies in which the productive surplus is regularly commercialised and the fiscal structure is supported by this mechanism does the city become an essential factor and the control of the countryside becomes in itself a justification for the existence of the city.

³³ P. Guichard, *Les villes d’al-Andalus et de l’Occident musulman aux premiers siècles de leur histoire*, in P. Cressier, M. García-Arenal (eds.), *Genèse de la ville islamique en al-Andalus et au Maghreb occidental*, Madrid, 1998, p. 37-52, especially p. 39.

3. Cities grown from non-urban settlements. In general, this phenomenon involved the creation of *husūn* (plural of *hisn*, understood as a fortification). Strictly speaking, the role of an *hisn* was defence, as is clearly demonstrated by its architectural features³⁴. Defence, however, also frequently implies the control of the surrounding territory and its settlements. The reality was therefore more complex than the architecture alone can reveal. The physical structure of the *hisn* projected the same duality that could be detected in the *madīna*³⁵: one area that signalled the political authority, called the tower or *donjon* (to use the classic French term), and the external precinct. While the former, which was always located high above, accommodated the military garrison under the orders of a governor, the latter was used by the local population, normally scattered around the surrounding territories in small settlements known in al-Andalus as *alquerías* (villages), so that the people could seek shelter in case of danger.

In consequence, some territories were controlled and governed (and taxed) from these *husūn/qurā* without the intervention of any urban nucleus, although it is also true that often these defensive structures ended up growing and acquiring an urban nature.

These are the basic paths leading to the emergence of cities in the Islamic world, although the possibilities are not limited to these. There are cases, for example in al-Andalus, of a group of *alquerías* deciding to appoint one of them as head of a given district, essentially by constructing an *aljama* mosque that would thereafter operate as the religious centre for the whole district. In such cases, these mosques soon acquired a strong commercial component. Eventually, the originally independent *alquerías*, between which empty, quasi-rural spaces existed, would join to form a proto-urban settlement.

This process was, naturally, discontinuous and did not always result in the germination of a city, but historically this was a common outcome, no doubt as a result of the need to channel and tax agricultural surplus, especially

34 A. Bazzana, *Éléments d'archéologie musulmane dans al-Andalus: caractères spécifiques de l'architecture militaire arabe de la région valencienne*, in *Al-Qanṭara*, 1, 1980, fasc. 1-2, p. 339-364.

35 For a seminal and comprehensive approach to the issue, see A. Bazzana, P. Guichard, *Un problème: château et peuplement en Espagne médiévale: l'exemple de la région valencienne*, in *Châteaux et peuplement en Europe occidentale du X^e au XVIII^e siècle*, «Flaran 1», 1980, p. 191-202; but especially P. Guichard, *El problema de la existencia de estructuras de tipo "feudal" en la sociedad de Al-Andalus (el ejemplo de la región valenciana)*, in R. Pastor et al., *Estructuras feudales y feudalismo en el mundo mediterráneo (siglos X-XIII)*, Barcelona, 1984, p. 117-145.

abundant in agro-ecosystems dominated by irrigation agriculture. Logically, the degree of urbanisation thus achieved was very uneven. As pointed out by E. Manzano:

The articulation of a tributary state needs urban control centres which, turned into rent-perceiving mechanisms, also play a role as markets, whose operation is, in any case, intimately connected with the needs of the State³⁶.

Leaving aside the use of the term 'rent', which does not seem appropriately chosen, it is clear that the role of the city is crucial to this form of social organisation. By presenting the problem in this light, it would appear that urban centres emerged simply to extract surplus, without playing an economic role of their own.

It is, therefore, necessary to explain the process leading to the formation of cities and to clarify their development within a social context in which rural communities played a central part, which can be understood as an obstacle to the formation and consolidation of urban settlements. The issue can only be approached if the limits of the relationship between the two major components of tributary and commercial social structures, the State and the rural communities, are constantly taken into account. Generally, the predominant role is attributed to the State, especially in some specific historical scenarios where a well-known drive towards urbanisation exists. This drive, however, does nothing but crystallise an ongoing process through, for example, the construction of an *aljama* mosque, which ultimately instils a settlement with an urban character. This foundational act, with the erection of a religious, and therefore sacred and inviolable space, also involves the generation of an area where conflict has no place and where exchange, which was indispensable to the channelling of agricultural surplus, plays an important part. This prevents us from ever divorcing the emergence of cities from the social dynamics. For this reason, when M. Ación refers to 'spontaneous cities', or cities created outside the margins of the political structure, he always warns that this is not the same as saying that they were created outside the margins of the prevailing social formation, because the rural communities could also contain the seed of the city³⁷.

³⁶ E. Manzano Moreno, *Relaciones sociales en sociedades precapitalistas: una crítica al concepto de "modo de producción"*, in *Hispania*, LVIII/3, No. 200, 1998, p. 881-913, especially p. 894-895.

³⁷ M. Ación Almansa, «Madinat al-Zahrā' en el urbanismo musulmán», in *Cuadernos de Madinat al-Zahrā'*, 1, 1987, p. 11-26, especially p. 16.

The rural world was also a structured, hierarchical construct, which was likely to cause in itself the emergence of control and exchange centres. Its role was essential to the formation of cities. Cities may have played an important part in the territorial organisation of the countryside, but they were totally dependent on it from an economic perspective.

The cities in al-Andalus

Leaving aside the theoretical considerations that we have been examining so far, it is time to focus on the historical reality of al-Andalus. The account of the conquest of Hispania by the Muslims is well known, and it was recently revisited historically, by A. García Sanjuán in a highly valuable critical volume³⁸, and archaeologically³⁹.

J. Ortega has sensibly pointed out the different criteria of those scholars working with the written record and those dealing with the archaeological record; while the idea does not specifically refer to al-Andalus, the truth is that it can be applied to this context without too much trouble:

While authors working with the written record tend to underline the importance of old urban centres in the transmission of the Classical cultural legacy and the continuation of their former institutional apparatus, archaeologists tend to stress the decrepitude repeatedly revealed by excavation⁴⁰.

This discordance is, obviously, caused by a fundamental difference of angle. The written texts are referring to spaces of power, which are difficult to apply a material expression to, while archaeological excavation simply reveals the material reality of the de-structuration and the crisis of the old urban centres. There are, however, two points that need stressing at this stage. First, decadence is also reflected in the written record. Second, despite this decadence, ancient cities remained the main point of reference because new cities did not arise right away. Indeed, *amsār* are markedly absent from al-Andalus (or at least they have not been detected), probably because the social structure was already consolidated.

³⁸ A. García Sanjuán, *La conquista islámica de la Península Ibérica y la tergiversación del pasado. Del catastrofismo al negacionismo*, Madrid, 2013.

³⁹ J. Ortega, *Una conmoción soterrada. La conquista musulmana de España desde el expediente arqueológico*, Zaragoza, 2014 (forthcoming). We wish to thank the author for allowing us to read the original manuscript. Citations will refer to the page numbers in the manuscript, since the volume is in press.

⁴⁰ J. Ortega, *Una conmoción soterrada*, cited above, p. 150.

Initially, the territory was organised around pre-existing cities, while the countryside transformed to adapt to a, fundamentally new, form of organisation. According to the written record, therefore, after the Muslim conquest of Hispania, the political authorities took their place in already formed urban centres, which seems to suggest that no separation between conquerors and vanquished existed, as illustrated by the absence of *amsār*. The conquerors simply took possession of unoccupied properties and lived alongside the established residents.

What seems clear is that the occupation was not only military in character: the men-at-arms were accompanied by their families. The excavation of Plaza del Castillo, in Pamplona, has been eloquent in this regard⁴¹, and osteological analysis of the human remains was undertaken⁴². It is not the only city where this kind of remains have been excavated⁴³.

The occupation also left a trace in the topographical distribution and architectural transformations. As one example, the re-use of ancient materials can be very revealing in this regard. For instance, the use of Roman ashlar blocks for the construction of Merida's city wall and *alcazaba* as late as the reign of 'Abd al-Rahmān II (822-852) could imply a lack of technical resources and, especially, specialised personnel.

The creation of a physical centre for the political authority must have been connected with the existence of an *aljama* mosque; the references to their construction found in the written record can be regarded as a foundational statement, although not in all cases can this be attested archaeologically. The connection between the *aljama* mosque and the citadel is, at any rate, essentially an Umayyad feature. In cities created at a relatively late date, for example Granada (11th century), the *aljama* was not particularly close to the *alcazar*: the latter was located on top of the hill, while the former was at the bottom of the plain, near the Darro River⁴⁴.

41 J. A. Faro Carballa, M. García-Barberena Unzu, M. Unzu Urmeneta, *La presencia islámica en Pamplona*, in P. Sénac (ed.), *Villes et campagnes de Tarraconaise et d'al-Andalus (VI-XI siècles): la transition*, Toulouse, 2007, p. 97-138; J. A. Faro Carballa, M. García-Barberena Unzu, M. Unzu Urmeneta, *Pamplona y el Islam: nuevos testimonios arqueológicos*, in *Trabajos de arqueología navarra*, 20, 2007-2008, p. 229-284.

42 On the osteological remains, see M. P. de Miguel, *La maqbara de la Plaza del Castillo (Pamplona, Navarra): avance del estudio osteoarqueológico*, in P. Sénac (ed.), *Villes et campagnes*, cited above, p. 183-197.

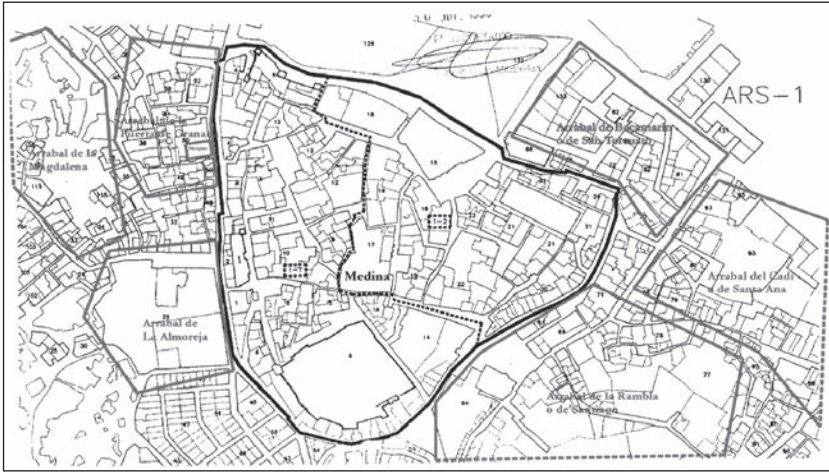
43 J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero, *Barcino, de colònia romana a sede regia visigoda, medina islàmica i ciutat comtal: una urbs en transformació*, in *Quarhis: Quaderns d'Arqueologia i Història de la Ciutat de Barcelona*, 9, 2013, p. 16-118.

44 A. Malpica Cuello, *La ciudad andalusí de Granada. Estudio sobre su fundación y consolidación*, in *Xelb*, 9, 2009, p. 281-295.

In any case, the new conception of the city is not only reflected in the public buildings connected with the political authorities, but also in the arrangement of private houses. Now, the traditional compact house is progressively replaced with increasingly complex houses constructed around a central courtyard. Sometimes, the transformations undergone by the cities were so substantial that it is nearly impossible to find traces of their former features. In some cases, it is the function of certain elements that is lost to us. In Guadix (Wādī Ash), to the east of Granada, the name (Acci-Guadix) is nearly all that remains of the former city, even if the Roman remains that are being excavated are simply spectacular. Something similar occurs in Almuñécar, on the coast of Granada, but here there are some differences. The Arabic authors attest to the presence of Roman structures, for example the aqueduct and a *castellum aquae*, but they admit to ignore what they were for. Should we consider this settlement as being occupied without interruption between Late Antiquity and the Muslim period? Some ideas may be illuminating in this regard. First, the critical situation that these cities were undergoing facilitated the settlement of new inhabitants, who often divided space according to their kinship-based filiations. Secondly, although political and administrative buildings were in a widespread state of abandonment and disrepair, they were still, in many instances, recognisable. In short, the process of urban reorganisation was not excessively complex; these cities offered ready-made centres for territorial control. The countryside, on the other hand, was progressively populated and articulated, and it became the foundation on which the urban centres stood.

Other cities emerged from non-urban settlements, generally *husūn* and *qurā* (plural of *qarya*), especially the former. Back in the day, M. Acién went as far as defining al-Andalus as 'a country of *husūn*'⁴⁵. The written sources, which account for the progressive and unstoppable Islamisation of the country, present the issue from a viewpoint in which the confrontation between different types of *husūn* features prominently. Some of these settlements were controlled by the State, while others were in the hands of insurrectional groups, in a process which is reminiscent of feudalisation. In any case, these settlements often developed into urban settlements. I shall only cite two examples, both of which were in the region of Granada: Guadix and Loja. Regarding Guadix, which we have already mentioned, was built around a high *alcazaba* and distinctly preserved the characteristic division into two

45 M. Acién Almansa, *Poblamiento y fortificación en el sur de Al-Andalus. La fortificación de un país de Husūn*, in *III Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española*, Oviedo, 1989, vol. 1, p. 135-150.



- Muralla
- Alhacaba
- Mezquita

- ▨ Recinto de la Alcazaba
- Baños

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Figures 3-4. Medieval Guadix (Spain).

parts (the seat of the governor and garrison and the lower quarters) until the 11th century, by which time it had already acquired an urban character. No extensive excavation has been possible to date, so more precision with regard to the pace of occupation and expansion is impossible. The city walls, which have been excavated systematically, are dated to the Almohad period⁴⁶.

Loja is also mentioned in the record as a former *hisn*, which is also reflected in its plan. Defensive remains dated to the Emirate and the Caliphate have been found in its upper district. The external wall and some parts of the *alcazaba* are dated to the Almohad and also the Nasrid periods, as indicated by the octagonal towers and the masonry-lined, packed-earth walls. It seems that by the 11th century it had already become a *madīna*, from which the control of a wide territory was exercised. The evolution of the settlement, during which it grew from an eminently defensive structure, is well known⁴⁷.

There is still plenty of work to be done concerning the development of a *madīna* from an *hisn*. The number of examples is substantial, and an examination of them should clarify the main features of the process. This would open up a deeper debate on the role of fortified settlements. In principle, it may be suggested that their original function was the collection of surplus, especially of livestock but also of agricultural produce. This function would not have clashed with their essentially defensive role.

Finally, some urban settlements developed from a rural nucleus, a *qarya*, which then became the head of a district in which several of these settlements existed. This is, for example, the case with the city of Pechina, as demonstrated by the written record. Thus, al-Rusāfī provides us with the following information:

[1] *Bayyāna* is [a city] in the *kūrah* or *Ilbīna* in al-Andalus. [2] It is said that the city (*madīna*) of *Bayyāna* was made up of two *alquerías* (*qaryatayn*): *Bayyāna* and *Mūna*, both of which depended on *Urs al-Yaman*, so called because *Urs al-Yaman* was granted to the Yemenites⁴⁸.

46 A. Malpica Cuello, *La ciudad medieval de Guadix a la luz de la arqueología. Reflexiones a partir de la intervención arqueológica en su muralla y en el torreón del Ferro*, in J. L. Castellano, M. L. López-Guadalupe Muñoz (eds.), *Homenaje a Antonio Domínguez Ortiz*, Granada, 2008, p. 599-620.

47 M. Jiménez Puertas, *El poblamiento del territorio de Loja en la Edad Media*, Granada, 2002.

48 E. Molina López, *Noticias sobre Bayyāna (Pechina-Almería) en el Iqtibās al-anwār de al-Rusāfī*, in *Revista del Centro de Estudios Históricos de Granada y su Reino*, 1 (segunda época), 1987, p. 117-131, especially p. 119.

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Torre del Homenaje | 6. Torre del Cubo | 11. Puerta del Jaufin |
| 2. Torre Ochavada | 7. Torre de Panes | 12. Iglesia de Sta. Maria |
| 3. Torre de Basurto | 8. Puerta de Archidona | 13. Puerta de Granada |
| 4. Aljibe | 9. Puerta Nueva | 14. Puerta de Alfaguara |
| 5. Puerta de la Alcazaba | 10. Puerta de Alhama | |

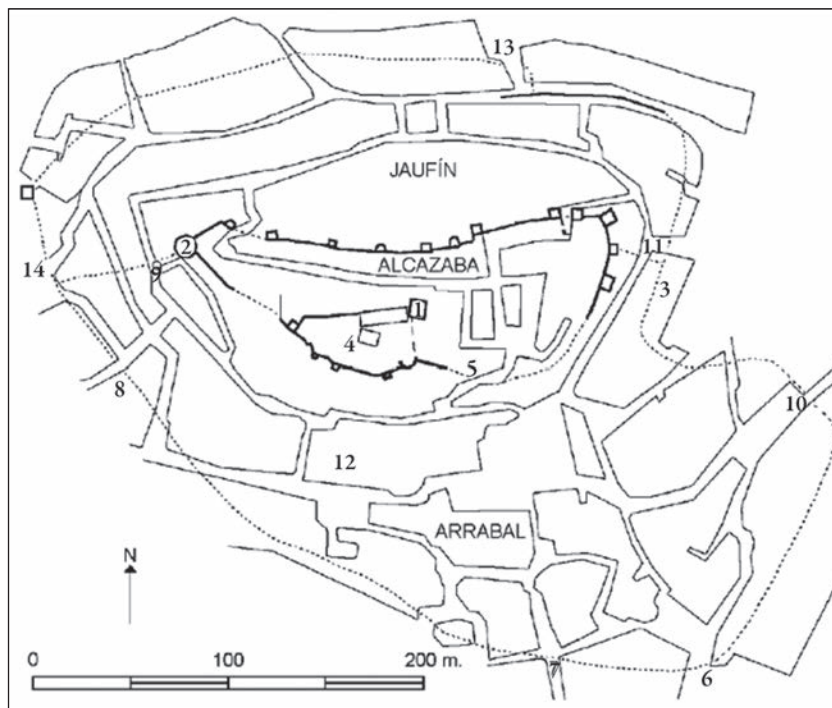


Figure 5. Medieval Loja (Spain).

On his part, al-‘Udrī, an 11th-century geographer from Almeria, wrote:

The city of Pechina possesses so many fruit trees that whoever is travelling towards it doesn't get to see the city until he's inside. In the past, this was the most important *alqueria* of *Guadix*, the seat of the main mosque and of the governor. It was divided into several disperse settlements until the arrival of the 'sailors' (*al-babriyyūn*)⁴⁹.

49 M. Sánchez Martínez, *La cora de Ilbīra (Granada y Almeria) en los siglos X y XI, según al-‘Udrī (1003-1085)*, in *Cuadernos de Historia del Islam*, 7, 1975-1976, p. 5-82, especially p. 48.



Figure 6. Madinat Ilbira (Granada, Spain).

Finally, al-Himyarī pointed out: “The main mosque of the district was near Pechina, which included several disperse districts”⁵⁰.

The texts are rather eloquent. The urban centre was formed from a number of rural settlements, which were later labelled ‘disperse districts’, in al-Himyarī’s words. One of them is referred to by al-Rusāṭī as *qaryat Bayyāna*; this was the seat of the governor and the main mosque, also according to al-‘Udrī.

This kind of urban settlement has hardly been investigated, and it is difficult to tell if there were more examples, other than Bayyāna. It seems plausible that there were, but this hypothesis is still pending confirmation. There is at least one more, although it is not quite as crystal-clear as the previous one; I refer to Madīnat Ilbīra, a site at which we have been working in recent years.

We already have a rough idea of the configuration of the urban structure of Madīnat Ilbira between the second half of the 9th and the early 11th centuries.

⁵⁰ É. Lévi-Provençal, *La Péninsule Ibérique u Moyen Âge: d’après le Kitāb ar-rawd al-mi’ār*, Leiden, 1938, p. 38 for the Arabic text and p. 47 for the French translation.

What defines this settlement as an urban nucleus? Essentially, three elements: the *alcazaba*, the main mosque, and at least one industrial and commercial district. In addition, the domestic nature of the site has also been proven beyond doubt, as a number of houses have also been discovered, which were distributed in neighbourhoods of varying population densities.

The excavation (carried out in different seasons – 2001, 2005, 2007 and 2009) and the survey, which was conducive to the listing of the site as a protected archaeological area, have already provided us with a good idea of the configuration of this *madīna*. The archaeological and written evidence seems to suggest that the *alcazaba* of Ilbīra was built in the 9th century, maybe as a result of the political situation created by Ibn Hafsūn's revolt⁵¹. This defensive structure controlled not only the settlement, but also its hinterland. Pottery analysis has been essential in the dating of the site to between the mid-9th and the early 10th centuries. On the one hand, glazed bowls (*ataifor*) are nearly totally absent, except for a couple of rare green and white fragments. In addition, there are no examples of the manganese green wares which became so popular in the 10th century⁵².

The activity on the site started as a rescue excavation in 2001, which was followed by the beginning of the project «La ciudad de Madīnat Ilbīra» (2005); later (2007 and 2009), the project was extended to the lower part of the site, where the urban nucleus itself was.

A number of important conclusions have resulted from the research carried out to date. These conclusions refer specifically to Ilbīra, but some extrapolations are plausible. We may conclude that the settlement became a *madīna* with the construction of the *alcazaba* and the main mosque, which probably occurred during the period of Muhammad I. These basic elements were the seat of the political authority, which was clearly demarcated by the presence of the mosque and neatly separated from the commercial and industrial quarters.

This, however, does not explain the emergence of the city, which seen in this light would appear to be the initiative of the political authorities alone,

⁵¹ The written sources indicate that the *alcazaba* of Ilbīra was taken by Ibn Hafsūn (892/893). See Ibn Hayyān, *Al-Muqtabis III*, ed. Antuña. Melchor, Paris, 1937, p. 105, translation by J. E. Guraieb, in *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, XXV-XXVI, 1957, p. 335. On the written sources and the city of Ilbīra, see Bilal J. J. Sarr Marroco, *La Granada zirí. Análisis de una taifa de al-Andalus del siglo XI*, Granada, 2009, p. 115-130.

⁵² J. C. Carvajal López, *La cerámica de Madīnat Ilbīra y el poblamiento altomedieval de la Vega de Granada*, Granada, 2008, p. 288.

even if this also had a religious dimension. Thus, we believe that a different approach is necessary if the social and economic processes leading to the emergence of the *madīna* are to be fully understood. An examination of the *kūrah* of Ilbīra reveals the operation of two different processes. On the one hand, the construction of a seed in the shape of a defensive structure in which, from the outset, two clearly distinguishable areas may be detected (the tower, where the political authority resided, and the albacar, which was used by the different communities scattered throughout the associated territory controlled from the *hisn*). This is also mirrored in the examples of Loja and Guadix, for example. On the other hand, the process of synoecism that brings together different rural settlements, can be appreciated in Pechina and, probably, also in Madīnat Ilbīra.

In conclusion, the city does not emerge from nowhere, but rather it emerges from the union of a number of pre-existing settlements located both in the hills and on the plain. However, for this process to have taken place, surplus had to be generated and, thereafter, commercialised. A degree of hierarchisation can also be appreciated, albeit not always explicitly. In this case, we rely on the presence of differences in ceramic assemblages. At any rate, this inequality remains very blurry, as a result of the prevalence of tribal forms of organisation, which are often hard to read. They seem, however, clearly represented in the alliances drawn between different tribal groups and the central government in Cordoba, and even in the attempts at social homogenisation, as shown by the example of the Banū Jālid, who played a dominant role in the *kūrah* of Ilbīra, as analysed by M. Jiménez, among others⁵³.

The combination of the interests of the State and of these groups caused the formation of cities in al-Andalus, which cannot, therefore, be regarded as the exclusive action of the State.

On the other hand, the confluence of social conditions was not enough to cause the emergence of urban nuclei: some demographic conditions were also necessary – a fact which is seldom taken into account. In cities, human groups that often came from rural settlements, which had their own mode of territorial organisation, grouped together. In the case of Ilbīra, it seems that there was a substantial proportion of non-Arabs, even non-Muslims, among the original settlers, which does not demand a process of immigration. If we follow this hypothesis, it would help us to solve the false problem of Elvira and also to understand the existence of two comparable, but not identical, nuclei such as Ilbīra, which was essentially Mozarab in nature but also had an Arab element

53 M. Jiménez Puertas, *Linajes y poder en la Loja islámica: de los Banū Jālid a los Alatares (siglos VIII–XV)*, Loja, 2010.

and a fully Andalusí material culture, and Granada, which was initially not a city but a fortress that was essentially inhabited by the Arabs.

Undoubtedly, this process involved serious changes in territorial organisation. Plausibly, migrations from outside al-Andalus took place, as illustrated by the members of the *ʔund*, who were distributed among the different *alquerías*. Their presence cannot be divorced from the economic dimension of these population units, and they cannot be considered parasitical with regard to the traditional resident groups. Similarly, these groups would contribute to the population of urban centres. After the stabilisation of urban life, the surrounding hinterlands would be deeply affected; it is likely that new rural settlements grew under the influence of the growing demand of urban markets, which would also help to channel agricultural surplus. In any case, the city remained the main nucleus in al-Andalus as far as territorial organisation is concerned, especially in later dates. Its economic potential made cities an autonomous reality, nearly independent in this regard from the State.

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THE OTHER SPAIN. THE FORMATION OF SEIGNEURIAL SOCIETY IN ALAVA*

One of Riccardo Francovich's most important academic objectives was the study of medieval societies through the archaeological record, confronting some of the strongest historical paradigms of the 70s and 80s, in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of Medieval Archaeology. Although he dealt with a range of topics, the formation of seigneurial powers around the year 1000 and the creation of rural communities in the early medieval period have been the key themes of his work. Indeed, he spent most of his academic life studying the 'incastellamento' model proposed by P. Toubert at the beginning of the seventies, showing how the formation of fortified settlements in the tenth and eleventh centuries was just one step in a lengthy process that began in the early Middle Ages. Moreover, he promoted an important number of archaeological projects in Tuscany that attempted to test the validity of these models, and even today this is the most studied region in southern Europe¹.

For all these reasons, these proposals have had an important impact on other regions and countries, and especially in Spain. The influence of Francovich on Spanish Medieval Archaeology, and in general the importance of Italian Medieval Archaeology in our country, has been widely commented by different scholars, and the joint Italian-Spanish Medieval Archaeology conferences held during the nineties demonstrate the strength of the links between the two national traditions². However during the last few decades Spanish Medieval Archaeology

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¹ Two of Francovich's most influential works are R. Francovich, C. Wickham, *Uno scavo archeologico ed il problema dello sviluppo della signoria territoriale*, in *Archeologia Medievale*, 21, 1994, p. 7-30 and R. Francovich, R. Hodges, *Villa to Village. The transformation of the Roman Countryside in Italy, c. 400-1000*, London, 2003.

² A. Malpica, *L'influenza di Riccardo Francovich nel dibattito archeologico italiano*, in *Riccardo Francovich e i grandi temi del dibattito europeo. Archeologia, Storia, Tutela, Valorizzazione, Innovazione*, Florence, 2011, p. 65-72.

has often tended to be identified with Islamic Archaeology, in part as a result of the academic weakness and limitations of medieval archaeological practice in northern Iberia (with the honourable exception of Catalonia). Hence, the comparison between a state-based society (al-Andalus) and a seigneurial one (medieval centre Italy) was conducted at a theoretical level stressing themes such as the formation of local and regional powers, craft production systems, the role of the cities and so on³. There has been, however, no overall evaluation and contrast between Italian and Spanish approaches to the study of seigneurial societies.

Fortunately, in the last decade the Medieval Archaeology of the 'Other Spain', as the editors of this book have proposed calling north-western Iberia, has seen important developments. I would like to point out three main factors that explain this. Firstly, the boom in rescue and preventive archaeology as a result of increased public works and building activity has allowed some very ambitious archaeological projects to be implemented, resulting in the discovery of new kinds of medieval site, particularly in rural contexts⁴. Secondly, new research projects led by academics and private archaeological firms have in recent years focussed on the analysis of medieval sites, exploring for the first time bioarchaeological and non-monumental evidence⁵. Finally, the increasing maturity of northern

3 Notice the absence of north-western Iberia from Chris Wickham's seminal study that attempted to framework the early medieval societies of Europe, C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages. Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800*, Oxford, 2005.

4 P. Ballesteros Arias, F. Criado Boado, J. M. Andrade Cernadas, *Formas y fechas de un paisaje agrario de época medieval: "A Cidade da Cultura" in 'Santiago de Compostela*, in *Arqueología Espacial*, 26, 2006, p. 193-225; J. A. Quirós Castillo, A. Vigil-Escalera Guirado, *Networks of peasant villages between Toledo and Uelegia Alabense, Northwestern Spain (5th-10th centuries)*, *Archeologia Medievale*, 33, 2007, p. 79-128; A. Vigil-Escalera Guirado, *Granjas y aldeas tardo-antiguas y altomedievales de la Meseta. Configuración espacial, socioeconómica y política de un territorio rural al norte de Toledo (ss. V-X d.C.)*, in *Archivo Español de Arqueología*, 80, 2007, p. 239-284; J. A. Quirós Castillo (ed.), *The Archaeology of early medieval villages in Europe*, Bilbao, 2009; J. A. Quirós Castillo (ed.), *El poblamiento rural de época visigoda en Hispania: arqueología del campesinado en el interior peninsular*, Bilbao, 2013; A. Azkarate, J. L. Solaun, *Arqueología e Historia de una ciudad. Los orígenes de Vitoria-Gasteiz*, Bilbao, 2013.

5 See I. García Camino, *Arqueología y poblamiento en Bizkaia, siglos VI-XII. La configuración de la sociedad feudal*, Bilbao, 2002; J. A. Gutiérrez González, *Procesos de transformación del poblamiento antiguo al medieval en el norte peninsular astur*, in B. Arizaga Bolumburu et al., *Mundos medievales, espacios, sociales y poder*, Santander 2012, vol 1, p. 599-614; M. Fernández Mier, *Arqueología Agraria del Norte Peninsular. Líneas de investigación sobre un paisaje multifuncional. El ejemplo de Asturias*, in A. García Porras (ed.), *Arqueología de la producción en época medieval*, Granada, 2013, p. 418-444; J. A. Quirós Castillo, C. Nicosia, A. Polo-Díaz, M. Ruiz del Árbol, *Agrarian Archaeology in northern Iberia: Geoarchaeology and early medieval land use*, in *Quaternary International*, 346, 2014, 56-68; C. Sirignano, I. Grau Sologestoa, P.

Iberian Medieval Archaeology has allowed for the discussion of all these new records in a wider historical context, overcoming old approaches based on the confirmation of historical trends or limited to empirical analysis. In central Italy this revision was based on the analysis of *longue durée* settlement patterns beginning with records of the castles of Tuscany, initially fortified villages which were the main scenarios where seigneurial forces first developed territorial power⁶. However, in north-western Iberia, archaeological records and their interpretation are more complex. Rescue and preventive archaeology have focussed on the analysis of early medieval rural sites. On the Duero plateau most such sites were abandoned before the High Middle Ages, while in the North, where there is evidence of long and continuous occupation, only the Basque Country has had a dense and reliable archaeological record until now⁷. On the other hand, other scholars have studied the formation of seigneurial powers trying to combine written and archaeological records in order to arrive at plausible scenarios for explaining the origins of well-documented high medieval societies⁸. However, there have been no serious attempts to merge both traditions and update the 'historical models' created in the last twenty years. Only a few of the many archaeological projects have been published while the written sources must be re-evaluated, particularly taking into account that new editions of important cartularies are

Ricci, M. I. García-Collado, S. Altieri, J. A. Quirós Castillo, C. Lubritto, *Animal husbandry during Early and High Middle Ages in the Basque Country (Spain)*, in *Quaternary International*, 346, 2014, p. 138-148. For a general overview see J. A. Quirós Castillo, *Early medieval landscapes in north-west Spain: local powers and communities, fifth-tenth centuries*, in *Early Medieval Europe*, 19.3, 2011, p. 285-311.

6 R. Francovich and M. Ginatempo (ed.), *Castelli. Storia e archeologia del potere nella Toscana medievale*, Florence, 2000; G. Bianchi (ed.), *Campiglia. Un castello e il suo territorio*, Florence, 2003; M. Valenti, *L'insediamento altomedievale nelle campagne toscane: paesaggi, popolamento e villaggi tra VI e X secolo*, Florence, 2004.

7 J. A. Quirós Castillo, *El poblamiento rural*, cited n. 4.

8 E. Pastor Díaz de Garayo, *Castilla en el tránsito de la Antigüedad al feudalismo. Poblamiento, poder político y estructura social del Arlanza al Duero (siglos VII-XI)*, Valladolid, 1996; J. J. Larrea, *La Navarre du IV^e au XII^e siècle: peuplement et société*, Bruxelles, 1998; M. Fernández Mier, *Génesis de un territorio en la Edad Media. Arqueología del paisaje y evolución histórica en la montaña asturiana*, Oviedo, 1999; I. Martín Viso, *Poblamiento y estructuras sociales en el norte de la Península Ibérica (siglos VI-XIII)*, Salamanca, 2000; J. Escalona Monge, *Sociedad y territorio en la Alta Edad Media castellana. La formación del alfoz de Lara*, Oxford, 2002; J. López Quiroga, *El final de la Antigüedad en Gallaecia. La transformación de las estructuras de poblamiento entre Miño y Duero*, Santiago de Compostela, 2004. For a recent general overview see J. J. Larrea, *De la invisibilidad historiográfica a la apropiación del territorio: aldeas y comunidades en la España Cristiana (siglos X y XI)*, in J. I. de la Iglesia Duarte (ed.), *Cristiandad e Islam en la Edad Media hispana*, Logroño, 2008, p. 169-208.

now available⁹. Discussion surrounding all this evidence needs new regional or subregional surveys stressing comparative approaches and working towards the goal of understanding the complexity of these records.

In this paper I intend to discuss the archaeological record of the so-called 'feudalization process' focussing on one of the best samples available: Alava province in the Basque Country. Although Alava is not the single most documented area in the North-west (León is), it benefits from having seen some major archaeological projects recently completed and published¹⁰.

1. *Early Medieval Alava*

Alava is the southernmost of the three provinces of the region known as the Basque Country, and is located in the upper Ebro valley (fig. 1). Into its 3,000 plus square kilometres a great amount of geographical variety is packed. Its central plain (the *Llanura Alavesa*) is a 30 x 50 km flattish area surrounded by moun-

9 In particular the Becerro Galicano of San Millán de la Cogolla which boasts an excellent new edition (<http://www.ehu.es/galicano/?l=en>) and the cartularies of Valpuesta (J. M. Ruiz Asencio, I. Ruiz Albi, M. Herrero Jiménez, *Los becerros Gótico y Galicano de Valpuesta*, Madrid, 2010).

10 The main sites are Zornoztegi (J. A. Quirós Castillo, *¿Por qué excavar en grandes extensiones? Arqueología de los despoblados alaveses y el estudio de la aldea de Zornoztegi (Salvatierra)*, in *Agurain 1256-2006. Congreso 750 aniversario de la fundación de la villa de Salvatierra*, Vitoria, 2011, p. 379-402); Zaballa (J. A. Quirós Castillo (ed.), *Arqueología del campesinado medieval: la aldea de Zaballa* Bilbao, 2012); Aistra (A. Reynolds, J. A. Quirós Castillo, *Despoblado de Aistra (Zalduondo)*, in *Arkeoikuska*, 9, p. 176-180), Bagoeta (A. Azkarate, J. M. Martínez Torrecilla, J. L. Solaun Bustinza, *Metalurgia y hábitat en el País Vasco en época medieval: el asentamiento ferrón de Bagoeta, Álava (ss. VII-XIV d C)*, in *Arqueología y Territorio Medieval*, 18, 2011, p. 71-89); San Andrés (R. Sánchez Rincón, *La evolución del hábitat en el yacimiento de San Andrés (Salinas de Añana, Álava). Primeras aproximación*, in *Estudios de Arqueología Alavesa*, 27, 2011, p. 217-228), Gasteiz (A. Azkarate, J. L. Solaun, *Arqueología e Historia*, cited n. 4), Santa Coloma (P. Sáenz de Urturi Rodríguez, *Memoria de las intervenciones arqueológicas realizadas en Astúlez: sondeos estratigráficos en los yacimientos de El Castillo y Santa Coloma (Astúlez, Valdegobía, Álava)*, in *Estudios de Arqueología Alavesa*, 27, p. 229-358), San Martín de Lantarón (J. A. Quirós Castillo, *Informe del proyecto Arqueológico de Lantarón 2012*, Unpublished report), La Llana (L. Gil Zubillaga, *Los silos de La Llana (Labastida, Álava): Memoria de las campañas de excavación de 1995, 1996 y 1997*, in *Estudios de Arqueología Alavesa*, 21, 2004, p. 281-310), Torrentejo (J. A. Quirós Castillo, *Informe del proyecto Arqueológico de Torrentejo 2014*, Unpublished report) y Dulantzi (J. A. Quirós Castillo, M. Loza Uriarte, J. Niso Lorenzo, *Identidades y ajueres en las necrópolis altomedievales. Estudios isotópicos del cementerio de San Martín de Dulantzi, Alava (siglos VI-XI)*, in *Archivo Español de Arqueología*, 86, 2013, p. 215-232).

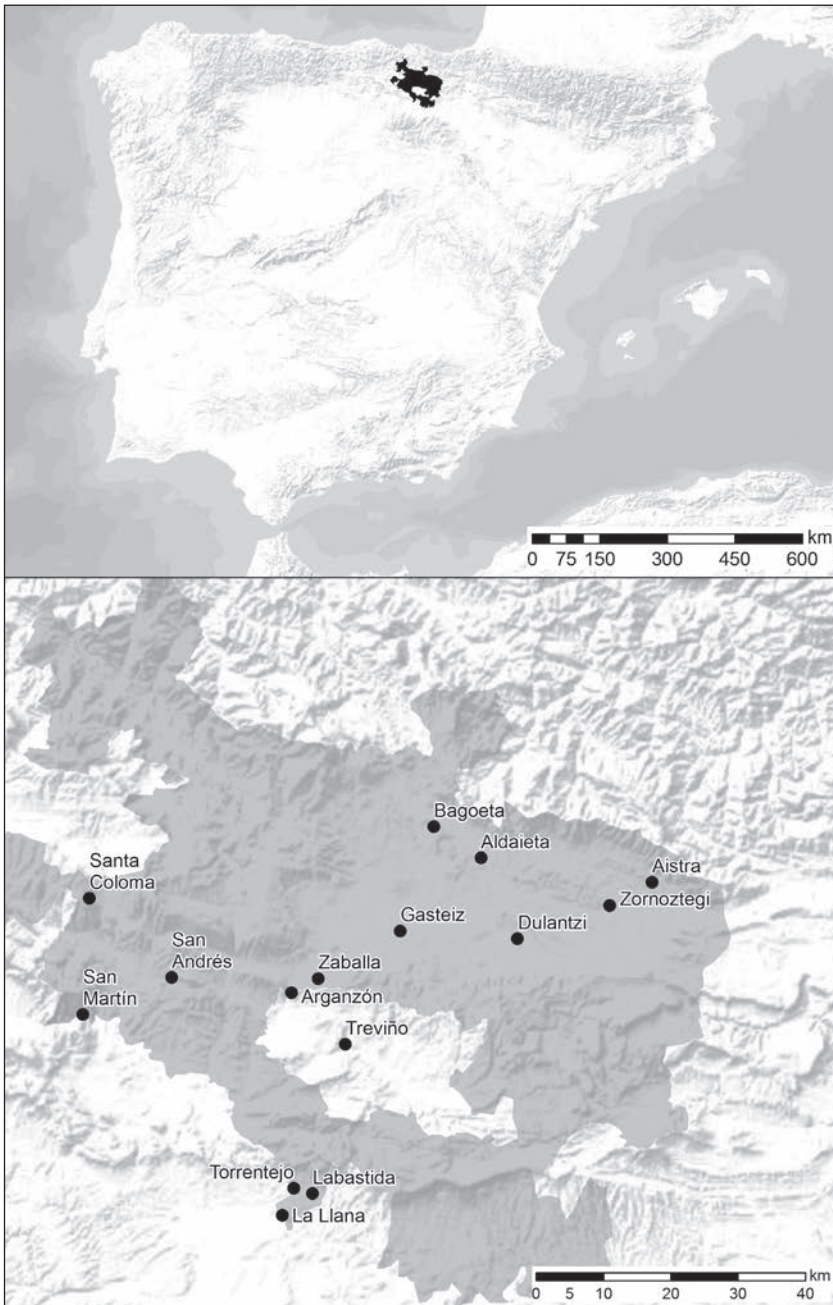


Figure 1. Map of Alava and the main sites mentioned in the text.

tain ranges, in the middle of which are both Vitoria, the modern capital of the Basque Country, and Armentia, an episcopal see active during the 9th-10th centuries. Presumably this was the heart of the County of Alava, documented from the tenth century onwards. In the narrow valleys to the west (*Valles Occidentales*), formed by the Omecillo River and its tributaries, the episcopal see of Valpuesta, coeval to Armentia, and the County of Lantarón were based. This area was very closely related to the Old Castile in the early medieval period. In the south of the province there is a mountainous area, in which several castles dating from the 11th-12th centuries are known, and the late medieval County of Treviño, nowadays a Castilian administrative enclave within Alava. Finally, the southernmost fringe of the province (the *Rioja Alavesa*) is in the depression formed by the Ebro valley, on the border with the Rioja region, and was part of the kingdom of Navarre until the late medieval period. Summing up, Alava was a crossroads subjected to the different political forces active in the area throughout the Middle Ages.

In addition to the above, recent archaeological discoveries made in Alava and its surroundings have attested to how this area was under the influence of al-Andalus at least during the eighth century. The *maqbara* found at Pamplona dated to the second half of the century and the ring bearing the inscription “Allah is Great” recovered at the Aldaieta necropolis (Alava) are the most significant recent discoveries¹¹. Moreover, there are suggestions in the written sources indicating the existence of local elites in Alava from the mid-eighth century, linked with the ruling dynasty of the kingdom of Asturias. In particular the late ninth-century *Chronicle of Alfonso III* illustrates how king Fruela I (757-768) was married to the Alavese Munia by around 760, and, later, her son Alfonso II (791-842) would be temporarily settled in Alava during his exile in 780. Actually, this political background could be related with the emergence of a network of villages and rural settlements during the eighth century, as has been archaeologically documented in recent years in different parts of the province¹².

From the ninth century onwards, new political agents emerged on the borders of Alava. To the east, the small kingdom of Pamplona was the most stable political structure during the early medieval period. In the west, the long process of the formation of the County of Castile, born as a dependent territory of the kingdom of Asturias, is documented from the last third of the ninth century. During the last decades of this century and the beginning of the tenth century

11 J. A. Faro Carballa, M. García-Barberena Unzu, M. Unzu Urmeneta, *Pamplona y el Islám: nuevos testimonios arqueológicos*, in *Trabajos de Arqueología Navarra*, 20, 2007-2008), p. 229-284; A. Azkarate, I. García Camino, *Vasconia, tierra intermedia*, Bilbao, 2013.

12 J. A. García de Cortázar, *El espacio cántabro-castellano y alavés en la época de Alfonso II el Casto*, in *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, 74, 1997, p. 101-120.

different ‘counties’ and central places linked to ‘counts’ are documented, including the Lantarón and Alava. Around 932 Fernán González, with the support of Ramiro II of León, was able to concentrate all these different territories and local powers in a unique and unified ‘County of Castile.’ From that time on Alava was closely associated with the County of Castile, even though the increasing influence of Pamplona becomes evident during the last decades of the millennium.

During the eleventh and twelfth centuries our territory was balanced between the realms of Pamplona – especially during the eleventh century – and Castile, by then transformed from county into kingdom, until definitively conquered by Alfonso VIII of Castile in 1200. This fluid political context favoured the emergence of new local powers and groups temporarily allied to central powers trying to impose their control over the territory¹³.

In summary, Alava, at the end of the Early Middle Ages and the beginning of the High Middle Ages, was an arena for political experimentation as a result of its location on the periphery of stable or stabilizing central powers¹⁴.

2. *The archaeological evidence of medieval Alava*

An as yet unpublished parchment drawn up in the Puebla de Arganzón on December 12th 1373 records how Fernán Pérez de Ayala – a member of one of the principal aristocratic lineages of Alava closely allied to Pedro I and Enrique II of Castile – or the sum of 120.000 maravedies sold a number of his properties to his son, the Chancellor Pedro López de Ayala. Among them are mentioned the fortified manor at Morillas, holdings in Subijana, Antezana, Añana and Cuartango and half shares in the monasteries of Tuyo, Fornillo and Zaballa¹⁵. We don’t know when Zaballa came into the hands of the Ayalas, though it seems likely that it was not too long before this, as it does not figure in any previous lists of the family’s estates. Thirty-nine years later, on September 7th 1412, Doña Leonor de Guzmán, the by then widow of Chancellor Pedro López de Ayala, granted the “lordship, jurisdiction, sales, rents and lands of the village of Zaballa” to the recently founded monastery of Badaya, a foundation that would be approved by

13 For a framework of the political history see G. Martínez Díez, *Álava Medieval*, Vitoria, 1974; G. Martínez Díez, *El condado de Castilla (711-1038). La Historia frente a la leyenda*, Madrid, 2005.

14 On the structure of central powers in early medieval Iberia see S. Castellanos, I. Martín Viso, *The local articulation of central power in the north of the Iberian Peninsula, 500-1000*, in *Early Medieval Europe*, 13, 2005, p. 1-42.

15 *Archivo Histórico de la Casa de Alba*, Ayala, Caja 344, n. 2. The document was discovered by R. Díaz de Durana.



Figure 2. General view of the abandoned village of Zaballa (Alava).



Figure 3. General view of Treviño Castle (Burgos). In the top of the hill the seigneurial sector (see the antennas); in the terraced slope the first peasant occupation associated with the old church of Santa Maria (nowadays the local cemetery). In the base, the royal foundation of Treviño.

Pope Benedict XIII the following year¹⁶. In 1414 an agreement was reached between Badaya and the town of Vitoria regulating pasturage rights in Zaballa and Subijana (a village dependent on Vitoria) in light of the monastery's new jurisdiction. Forty years later Zaballa had been completely abandoned in accordance with the policy of the Hieronymite monks of maximising income through tenancy agreements. Around 1478 the last three houses standing in the abandoned

16 http://www.docasv.es/es/ficha?reg_id=1164&texto=badaya&1413 (accessed Sept. 2014).

village were expropriated and demolished, though references are still made to the management of the estate during the sixteenth century, such as when in the 1520s all the vines were uprooted and replaced with wheat and flax plantations. Throughout the sixteenth century the tenancy contracts were periodically renewed, until the monks finally sold Zaballa in 1610¹⁷.

This case-study demonstrates how over the long-term seigneurial action has been decisive in constructing and modifying landscape and agrarian practice in Alava during the Late Middle Ages. In this case, the abandonment of a settlement was simply part of a strategy applied in a heavily seigneurialised area, as Alava was at that time. However, in reality, this was merely the final episode, and the only one illuminated by the written record, of a long history which had begun over a millennium before. Over the last few years Zaballa has been the site of an intensive preventive archaeological project in which it has proved possible to analyse medieval agrarian practice as an expression of the tension existing between seigneurial power and peasant communities¹⁸. Moreover, simultaneously several other archaeological projects in Alava have similarly focussed on the question of agrarian practice, regarding it as a key tool for the social analysis of cultural landscapes and the historical dynamics behind them.

In this paper, three main scenarios will be taken into account: the agrarian practices of early medieval communities, the nature of the transformations that took place during what is termed the process of feudalisation, and the consolidation of seigneuries during the High Middle Ages.

2.1. *Rural communities in the Early Middle Ages*

The study of peasant communities has undoubtedly been one of the preferred themes of early medievalists¹⁹. The numerous gaps in the archaeological study of the Roman peasantry has meant that analysis of the formation and articulation of peasant communities has been appropriated by medievalists. Although as archaeologists we are aware of the need to pay close attention to more recent pre-historical communities, the historical protagonism of post-imperial peasant communities is undeniable. The most recent studies have shown how a significant change took place in this period in the way that agrarian produc-

17 On Zaballa in the Late Middle Ages see J. R. Díaz de Durana, *Historia de un despoblado medieval en tierras alavesas: Zaballa durante los siglos XV y XVI*, in J. A. Quirós Castillo (ed.), *Arqueología del campesinado*, cited n. 10, p. 98-135.

18 J. A. Quirós Castillo (ed.), *Arqueología del campesinado*, cited n. 10.

19 See now I. Martín Viso, R. Portass, I. Santos Salazar (eds.), *Los "pequeños mundos": sociedades locales en la Alta Edad Media*, in *Studia Historica. Historia Medieval*, 31, 2013, p. 21-180.

tion was managed, in terms of the decentralisation and restructuring of the systems of production, storage, consumption and redistribution²⁰. In this context heterogeneous and highly diversified communities emerged, differing between themselves in terms of level of cohesion, and which came to be political agents interacting in complex ways with the powers that appear as the protagonists of the written records.

In the Basque Country the agrarian surroundings of some half dozen medieval sites have been identified and studied, and it is noticeable how they bunch into two quite distinct chronologies: two of them between the fifth and seventh centuries (Aistra and Abanto), the others from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries (San Andrés, Bagoeta, Zaballa and Zornoztegi)²¹. These datings, which are coherent with those found in other parts of north-western Iberia²², confirm the importance of early medieval communities in the construction of the agrarian landscape still visible today, a process which in terms of impact is comparable only with the modern introduction of American crops. However, this does not mean that the interpretation of such records is straightforward.

First of all, one aspect that needs to be taken into account is that the oldest terracing systems are on a relatively modest scale compared to what we encounter in later periods. Secondly, it is noteworthy that until now no terracing systems have been identified that can be regarded as coetaneous to the period of formation of the earliest villages that we have good archaeological records for²³. Thirdly, although it is true that the most consistent evidence for

20 A. Vigil-Escalera Guirado, *Los primeros paisajes altomedievales en el interior de Hispania: registros campesinos del siglo quinto d. C.*, Bilbao, 2015.

21 J. A. Quirós Castillo, C. Nicosia, A. Polo-Díaz, M. Ruiz del Árbol, *Agrarian Archaeology*, cited n. 5.

22 J. A. Quirós Castillo, *Oltre la frammentazione postprocesualista. Archeologia Agraria nel Nordovest della Spagna*, in *Archeologia Medievale*, 41, 2014, XLV, p. 23-37.

23 Unlike in Asturias at sites such as Villanueva de Santo Adriano (M. Fernández Mier, J. Fernández Fernández, P. Alonso González, J. A. López Sáez, S. Pérez Díaz, B. Hernández Beloqui, *The investigation of currently inhabited villages of medieval origin: Agrarian Archaeology in Asturias (Spain)*, in *Quaternary International*, 346, 2014, p. 41-55). Nonetheless, paleo-environmental samples obtained in Lago Arreo, Prados de Randulandia, Aistra and Gasteiz indicate the intensification of agrarian production from the eighth century onwards (B. Hernández Beloqui, *El entorno vegetal del yacimiento medieval de Aistra (Zalduondo, Álava) a través de su estudio paleopalínológico*, «Munibe (Antropología-Arkeologia) 62», 2011, 423-438; J. P. Corella, V. Stefanova, A. El Anjoumi, E. Rico, S. Giral, A. Moreno, A. Plata-Montero, B. L. Valero-Garcés, *A 2500-year multi-proxy reconstruction of climate change and human activities in northern Spain: The Lake Arreo record*, in *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology*, 386, 2013, p. 555-568; S. Pérez Díaz, J. A. López Sáez, L. Zapata Peña, L. López Merino,

the creation of socially structured and constructed field systems dates to the period between the tenth and twelfth centuries, such distributions should not be interpreted solely in terms of the intensification of production²⁴. On many occasions it has been observed how such field systems are related to the reconfiguration of a village's urban centre (San Andrés, Zornoztegi, Bagoeta, Zaballa), without this necessarily implying the enlargement of the cultivated area, although it does suggest a new approach to the management of these spaces. Moreover, the nature and characteristics of such changes to field systems are the result of action that we can regard as both planned and collective, since they completely remodelled the use of space in the village. Finally, it is worth noting that subsequent agrarian reforms in Alava have been so wide ranging that until now it has proved impossible to organically analyse the field system of a whole village, in contrast to successful studies of this type carried out in different Asturian villages (San Adriano, Vigaña, Banduxu)²⁵.

The archaeology of settlements affords us a new perspective on early medieval agrarian practices, particularly if we take into account the apparent coherence – though not necessarily simple correlation – across the north-west of the dating of field-systems and the earliest medieval villages. From the burgeoning evidence of a number of Alavese sites we see how by around 700²⁶ a number of Alavese villages had been created, without this necessarily meaning that they were created at this time.

The village, understood as the spatial manifestation of a stable community with sufficient resources to guarantee its reproduction, tends to be on rather a small-scale in Alava, generally consisting of a dozen or so domestic units. Nonetheless, from very early on we observe significant internal stratification in some

M. Ruiz Alonso, A. Azkarate, J. L. Solaun, *Dos contextos, una misma historia: paleopaisaje y paleoeconomía de Vitoria-Gasteiz (Alava) durante la Edad Media*, in *Cuadernos de la Sociedad española de ciencias forestales*, 30, 2010, p. 115-120.

²⁴ Nonetheless, on different occasions it has been demonstrated that there is no direct link between the construction of agrarian systems and the intensification of production (M. McClatchie, *Archaeobotany of Agricultural intensification*, in C. Smith (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*, New York, 2014, p. 310-318).

²⁵ M. Fernández Mier, J. Fernández Fernández, P. Alonso González, J. A. López Sáez, S. Pérez Díaz, B. Hernández Beloqui, *The investigation*, cited n. 23; I. Muñiz López, *El pueblo dormino. Banduxu (Proaza)*, unpublished PhD thesis, Universidad de Oviedo, 2014.

²⁶ In the absence of stratigraphic sequences or other archaeological markers it is impossible to provide more precise chronologies from the radiocarbonic readings that we have, see J. A. Quirós Castillo, *Las dataciones radiocarbónicas de yacimientos de época histórica. Problemas y experiencias de análisis en contextos de época medieval*, «Munibe (Antropología-Arkeología) 60», 2009, p. 313-324.

sites as has been shown in excavation of some new towns promoted by the Crown in High Middle Ages²⁷.

The study of agrarian practices in domestic environments can be structured around three different approaches. First of all, through the analysis of the medium and long-term strategic reserves whether held in barns or storage-pits, the latter being some of the most readily identifiable archaeological structures in early medieval sites²⁸. Indeed, for many sites such pits have been identified but not the corresponding homes or production areas. The presence of storage-pits in domestic contexts suggests the decentralisation of the system of redistribution of agrarian resources. In this sense it would seem to be no coincidence that the disappearance of the great *horrea* of the Roman period is coetaneous with the appearance of the earliest medieval storage-pits²⁹, or conversely that the high medieval dominance of towns and the creation of markets controlled on occasions by regional lordships coincided with the disappearance of such pits in many of the villages studied. Moreover, while it can prove difficult to determine the size of the space under cultivation or even of the domestic units on a given site, the dimensions of a storage-pit are easier to precise.

We also know that the early medieval peasantry of Alava possessed relatively abundant metal tools, as has been observed at sites such as Zaballa. Alongside these discoveries studies are under way into the more than 300 *haizeolak* (i.e., rural forges, literally 'wind-ovens') that have been identified so far (the number keeps rising) in the Basque Country and which prove that reduction ovens of this type were in use throughout the early medieval period in Vizcaya. In many cases the seams being exploited were situated in communal areas and this type of exploitation has been interpreted within the context of rural communities³⁰.

27 A. Azkarate, J. L. Solaun, *Arqueología e Historia*, cited n. 4. Indeed kingdom agency was based usually on the promotion of early well-structured sites: J. A. Quirós Castillo, B. Ben-goetxea, *Las villas vascas antes de las villas vascas. La perspectiva arqueológica sobre la genesis de las villas en el País Vasco*, in B. Arizaga (ed.), *El espacio urbano en la España Medieval*, Nájera, 2005, p. 147-165.

28 A. Vigil-Escalera, G. Bianchi, J. A. Quirós (ed.), *Horrea, barns and silos: Storage and incomes in early medieval Europe*, Bilbao, 2013.

29 A. Vigil-Escalera Guirado, *Los primeros paisajes*, cited n. 20.

30 J. Franco Pérez, *Tras las huellas de los primeros ferrones. Estudio, protección y valoración del patrimonio paleosiderurgico en Bizkaia*, in *Arkeoikuska*, 2010, p. 23-34; J. A. Quirós Castillo, *Dalla periferia: archeometallurgia del ferro nella Spagna settentrionale nell'altomedioevo*, in A. Molinari, R. Santangeli Valenzani, L. Spera (ed.), *L'archeologia della produzione a Roma, secoli V-XV* (Bari, 2015), forthcoming.

Thirdly, the bioarchaeological evidence found in places of residence reveals patterns of consumption and implies systems of production. This is one of the fields in which the limitations of historical archaeology in the south of Europe is most evident, although great strides have been made in recent years³¹. Although we are not yet in a position to critically evaluate the most recent findings, the first conclusion worth highlighting is that the primitivist paradigms that have informed the study of the rural communities of the northern peninsula from a range of perspectives and that have been the excuse for the supposed invisibility of those communities lack any sound basis. For example, the results of the isotopic analysis of the early diet of the rural communities of Alava are singularly significant. Analysis of the C and N markers of 113 individuals dating from between the fifth and the twelfth centuries has shown the prevalence of a mixed diet (C₃ plants and land animals) which completely excludes the dominance previously assigned to livestock. Moreover, the values for protein consumption ($\delta^{15}\text{N}$) indicate an inflection in the eighth century coinciding with the emergence of the villages³².

The archaeobotanical evidence is just as eloquent. In the early medieval sites that have been studied until now a tendency towards the diversification of production has been observed throughout the period, avoiding the sort of specialisation which would have made these communities vulnerable. It is, however, the case that we know virtually nothing of the *palatia* and of the residences of the territorial elite, which means we cannot extrapolate the patterns of consumption observed in the villages to such places. From the plant remains found in Zaballa and Zornoztegi we can make a case for characterising Alavese agrarian practice as one of a pattern of cereal crop rotation, over both short and long-cycles, alternating with both legumes and forage. Moreover, in Zaballa from the ninth-century onwards we also have evidence for the cultivation of the vine. All of this adds up to a system that requires an important social investment, in terms of both the creation and maintenance of the field system and in terms of its diversification, and thus is symptomatic of relative social and economic sophistication³³.

³¹ See issue 346 (2014) of *Quaternary International* dedicated to *Agrarian Archaeology in Early Medieval Europe*. J. A. Quirós Castillo, *Agrarian Archaeology in Early Medieval Europe: an introduction*, in *Quaternary International*, 346, 2014, p. 1-16.

³² J. A. Quirós Castillo, P. Ricci, C. Sirignano, C. Lubritto, *Paleodieta e società rurali alto-medievali dei Paesi Baschi alla luce dei marcatori isotopici di C e N*, in *Archeologia Medievale*, 39, 2012, p. 87-92.

³³ For Zaballa, J. A. Quirós Castillo (ed.), *Arqueología del campesinado*, cited n. 10; for Zornoztegi, I. Sopenana, L. Zapata, *Primeros resultados de los estudios carpológicos del despoblado de Zornoztegi (Salvatierra-Agurain, Álava)*, in J. A. Quirós Castillo (ed.), *The Archaeology*, cited n. 4, p. 437-445.

This agriculture was closely integrated with essentially static animal husbandry, which contemplated only short-range transhumance in search of summer pastures. According to Idoia Grau's recent PhD thesis, the livestock herds of these communities was similarly non-specialised, and was largely orientated towards agricultural needs. In Zornoztegi we find mainly cattle which were generally allowed to reach maturity, while in Zaballa the tendency was for sheep and goats destined for a variety of uses³⁴. From this evidence some indicators of great interest for understanding rural society can be gleaned. For example, the absence of the limbs from the swine analysed at Zornoztegi suggests that the choicest cuts were being used to obtain income, and a similar inference can be made from the kill-off patterns observed for cattle. Taken together, this suggests the dependent nature of at least part of this community. By contrast, in Aistra the kill-off patterns reflect production for local consumption, with a particularly high proportion of swine. Moreover, biometric analysis of the fauna reveals a notable decrease in the size of Alavese livestock from the eighth century onwards, indicating profound changes in husbandry practice. In fact, it would only be in the late medieval period that the average size of the animals matches what is observed in the late Roman period³⁵.

Taken together, all the evidence demonstrates the existence of a diversified and complex agrarian culture, in contradiction of the cliché which represents the early medieval Basque peasantry as socially and economically immature and nomadic husbandmen and shepherds with little or no knowledge of agricultural practice³⁶. The complex process of formation of the rural communities which we can trace with a high degree of precision from the eighth century onwards meant a significant break with earlier agrarian practices, characterised as they were by a higher degree of continuity with late Roman tendencies than had been thought until now. It is no coincidence that it is from this period onwards that we observe changes in patterns of alimentation, in the organisation of the landscape and in the size of domesticated animals. We also know that not all peasant communities

34 I. Grau Sologestoa, *The Zooarchaeology of medieval Alava in its Iberian context*, PhD thesis, University of the Basque Country, 2014.

35 I. Grau Sologestoa, *Livestock management in Spain from Roman times to the post-medieval period: biometrical analysis of cattle, sheep/goat and pig*, in *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 54, 2015, p. 123-134.

36 According to J. Henning, "One must speak of a conscious and selective continuity of Roman agriculture techniques" (J. Henning, *Revolution or relapse? Technology, agriculture and Early Medieval Archaeology in Germanic Central Europe*, in G. Ausenda, P. Delogu, C. Wickham (eds.), *The Langobards before the Frankish Conquest. An Ethnographic Perspective*, San Marino, 2013, p. 149-173).

were identical, and we have some clear signs of the extraction of rents, but overall what seems to dominate is the dynamic of peasant existence, relatively unconditioned by seigneurial factors.

2.2. *The formation of a seigneurial society?*

The process of feudalisation has without doubt been one of the themes most studied by medievalists in past decades, though it is not perhaps quite so fashionable at the moment. The fierce debate that erupted in the 1990s between 'models' which were often presented as being globally applicable has gradually subsided in recent years. The triumph of postmodern particularism, the availability of a growing number of evidential records and, of course, the crisis besetting French medievalism all mean that today postures tend to be more qualified and fragmented³⁷. Nonetheless, with the point of arrival – the hegemonic triumph of the feudal class – being recognised and agreed upon by all sides, the debate has centred almost exclusively on the processes which made possible the implantation of feudal society, and I feel there is still room for a profound revision of such a finalistic approach, and here the archaeological record could well prove decisive.

Returning to Alava, here too we observe the emergence during the tenth and eleventh centuries of forms of seigneurial control which interact in complex ways with peasant communities, although it remains to be seen whether in fact the implantation of these domains was as hegemonic as the surviving documentation seems to suggest and as some specialists seem to accept. Here we will centre our analysis of the archaeological record around two processes.

Firstly, around 950 a profound transformation of the village of Zaballa took place. In the sector 6000, which had been at the heart of the early medieval village, a church was built replacing what had until then been domestic living space, leading to the shifting of the dwellings to the nearby valley floor and the complete reconfiguration of the settlement. Without going into excessive detail, terraces for agrarian use were constructed on the valley slopes, and the water courses channelled in the valley floor where the domestic units were resituated. In short, both the village itself and the surrounding landscape were significantly remodelled. The church, with an elongated rectangular form plan, I think, in the light of recent discoveries, be identified as the main structure of the monastery of Zaballa, mentioned in 1087 in the text of a grant made to the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla by Elo Téllez³⁸, daughter of the Na-

³⁷ See for example J. J. Larrea, *De la invisibilidad*, cited n. 8.

³⁸ <http://www.chu.es/galicano/docu?d=664&l=es&tmp=1412012736345> (accessed Sept. 2014).

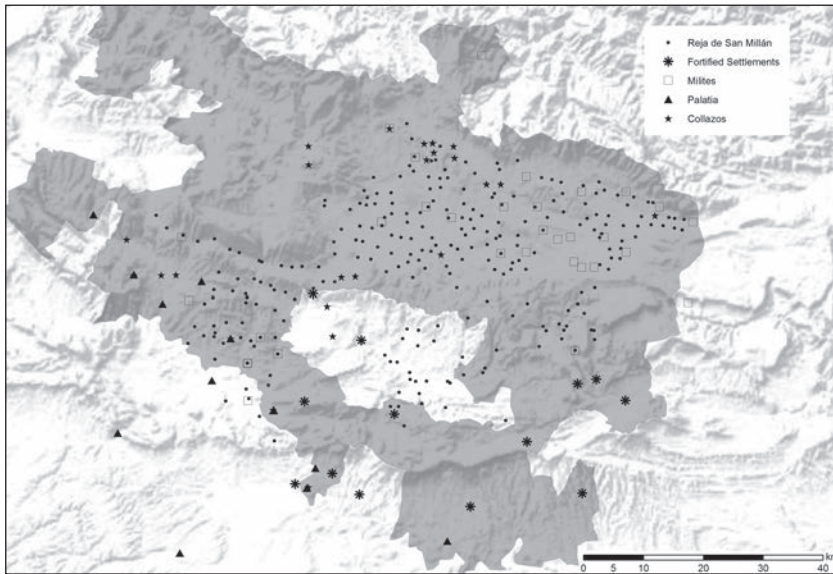


Figure 4. Map of documentary references to palatia, collazos, milites and of places cited in the 'Reja de San Millán'. The main fortified settlements are also represented.

varrese governor of the castle of Término. As I have already explained on other occasions, the most significant characteristics of the Zaballa seignury are the presence of a series of constructions for storing grain which, going by their size, can only be explained in terms of the accumulation of rents. Among others, we can cite two large storage-pits near the south-east corner of the church each with a capacity of between five and six thousand litres. Moreover, to the west of the church, the remains of a barn (E7) have been dated to the same period. In summary, we know that from the tenth century onwards a seignorial group from outside the village, without itself being resident in the settlement, had nonetheless managed to establish in it a private monastery and accumulate rents which would probably have been used as a speculative reserve to be turned to in case of bad harvests³⁹.

³⁹ As an example, see the monastery of San Pedro and San Pablo de Buezo in J. A. Quirós Castillo, *Silos y sistemas de almacenaje en el cuadrante noroccidental de la Península Ibérica en la Alta Edad Media*, in A. Vigil-Escalera, G. Bianchi, J. A. Quirós (ed.), *Horrea, barns*, cited n. 28, p. 176.

If we turn to the bioarchaeological record, however, we find that the productive strategies that can be inferred from it and from the consumption patterns it implies do not seem to differ significantly from the early medieval period. Both plant and animal remains once again indicate a model of agrarian production based on the principle of diversification, the absence of specialisation and the integration of animal husbandry. Among the few innovations observed are an increase in hunting, extremely rare in the peasant communities of the early medieval Basque Country, though found in centres of local power such as Aistra. We also see an increase in the presence of cattle, which is perhaps related to the expansion of agrarian production which can be inferred from the study of medieval field-systems.

Other archaeological evidence suggests that in the eleventh and twelfth centuries the community of Zaballa, far from being subject to all-embracing seigneurial power, was in fact made up of a number of heterogeneous social realities. The best examples are the late eleventh-century hoard consisting of some 29 coins hidden in a storage-pit in sector 3000, or the precious personal decorative objects found in dwelling E13. Moreover, it seems significant too that here we have the highest proportion of porcine remains found in any of the Alava sites in this period. In summary then, the presence of these richer peasants suggests that the expansion of seigneurial power that took place between the tenth and eleventh centuries did not penetrate hegemonically into the peasant communities even if these were the stage on which such intermediate forms of territorial domination were constructed. Or at least, in some communities there were a wider range of social and economical status, and as a consequence, there has been the conditions for the creation of client relationships and/or opposition against seigneurial powers.

The second process that exemplifies the impact of seigneurialisation on these communities are the castles associated with settlements which prosper during this period in the south of Alava. Treviño, situated some seven kilometres in a straight line from Zaballa, is one of the best examples that we have in Alava for analysing the process of *incastellamento* as it was defined by P. Toubert. In Treviño a fortified settlement has been identified on a hill-side below a seigneurial castle situated on a platform on the hill-top. The castle was founded in the tenth-century, and underneath it there are signs of Second Iron Age occupation. On the hill-top, surrounded by a deep ditch, a first phase of medieval occupation has been detected, consisting of large storage-pits similar in size to those found at Zaballa, although in this case there are signs that several of them were in use at the same time. Amidst the debris filling these pits we have found animal remains from young specimens, with a particularly high proportion of swine and ovicaprines. Isotopic analysis of the human remains found in the cemetery similarly confirms that the castle dwellers enjoyed a diet rich in meat proteins.

During the twelfth century the castle was remodelled on a monumental scale with the construction of imposing stone walls and buildings, including a castle-chapel.

We are yet to thoroughly explore the peasant sector of the settlement, although two separate occupation phases have been identified as well as a series of domestic sized storage-pits. In the absence of further excavation we lack significant bioarchaeological data for the study of the agrarian practices of the dependent community, although we do have archaeobotanical markers characteristic of a low standard of living.

In summary, we can infer that the lay family that founded the castle of Treviño managed to concentrate within an area of some 7000 m² a peasant community and, presumably, impose some form of very efficient seigneurial control. In fact, from the information we have it would seem that its capacity to capture rents was superior to that of the monastery of Zaballa, in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Although we are unable to analyse in greater detail the productive systems, from what we have the community living in the shadow of the lord of Treviño seems to have had a much lower standard of living than their equivalents in Zaballa⁴⁰.

Territorial analysis of the two processes that we have defined archaeologically is made possible by taking into consideration the written evidence which starts appearing significantly in our area from the tenth century onwards, and becomes more abundant in the high medieval period. On the map of Alava (fig. 4) we show all the places mentioned in a document known as the “Reja de San Millán”. Drawn up in 1025 by the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla, it is a list of more than 300 villages in which the monastery was claiming rents of either *rejas* (literally ‘iron bars’) or livestock⁴¹. We have also included

40 For Treviño see J. A. Quirós Castillo, *L’eccezione che conferma la regola? Incastellamento nella valle dell’Ebro nel X secolo: il castello di Treviño*, in *Archeologia Medievale*, 38, 2011, p. 113-136. Incastellamento processes similar to that seen in Treviño have also been detected in the castles of Arganzón and Labastida, see J. A. Quirós Castillo, *Early Medieval Incastellamento in Northern Iberia: fortified settlement in the Basque Country and upper Ebro valley (9th-12th centuries)*, in N. Christie, H. Herold (eds.), *Fortified settlements in Early Medieval Europe: Defended Communities of the 8th-10th Centuries*, Oxford, 2015, forthcoming.

41 <http://www.ehu.es/galicano/docu?d=790&l=es&tmp=1412013353107> (accessed Sept. 2014). Among the more important studies of this document are J. A. García de Cortázar, *La organización del territorio en la formación de Álava y Vizcaya en los siglos VIII a fines del XI*, in *El hábitat en la historia de Euskadi*, Bilbao, 1980, p. 133-155 and E. Pastor Díaz de Garayo, *¿Qué hay del crecimiento agrario altomedieval? Hábitat y paisajes agrarios (entre la imaginación y la lógica)*, in *Agurain 1256-2006. Congreso 750 aniversario de la fundación de la villa de Salvatierra (Salvatierra, 2011)*, p. 55-75.

the documentary references to *palatia* (centres of local aristocratic power), *collazos* (dependent peasantry) and *milites* (lesser aristocrats linked with certain places in the documentation)⁴². We also include those places where we have sufficient evidence to allow us to talk in terms of castles being founded along similar lines to what we have observed in Arganzón, Labastida or Treviño. What emerges from the resulting map is very important for understanding the political structure of Alava between the tenth and twelfth centuries and the main areas of seigneurial activity. In the south of the province, where the 'inhabited castles' are concentrated, San Millán failed or perhaps never even attempted to impose in the early eleventh century the rents mentioned in the *Reja*. Indeed, around Arganzón and Treviño the spaces missing from the text are quite pronounced. On the other hand, in the villages located in such areas, as is the case with Torrentejo (Labastida), the existence of solid seigneurial networks active at local level in the eleventh century is attested by both archaeological and documentary records, though there seem to be a range of interests and forces at work in this hamlet of the Rioja Alavesa.

By contrast, middle-ranking lords appear above all in the central Alava plain and in the west where references to both *milites* and *collazos* coincide in areas mentioned in the *Reja de San Millán*. As has been observed in the case of Zabalza, in this area the village is the context in which the strategies of seigneurial domination have been articulated, by exploiting mechanisms such as private churches and monasteries. On the other hand, the correlation between the *palatia*, often associated with more powerful aristocratic families, and the other parameters analysed is not so clear. In fact they are most common in the west, in the old County of Lantarón, while being almost completely absent from the central plain, and rare in the area of castles to the south.

In summary, in Alava the so-called process of feudalisation assumes forms that not only distance it from any idea of a feudal revolution, but moreover do not seem to have led to a significant authoritarian reorganisation of the mechanisms of peasant production. Undoubtedly the desire for rents is much higher than in earlier periods, and peasant autonomy is seriously threatened (and almost completely eroded in the case of the *collazos*). However, it is rare to find cases of villages

42 On the palatia see J. Escalona Monge, I. Martín Viso, *Los palatia, puntos de centralización de rentas en la meseta del Duero (siglos IX-XI)*, in A. Vigil-Escalera, G. Bianchi, J. A. Quirós (ed.), *Horrea, barns*, cited n. 28, p. 103-126; for the collazos see J. A. García de Cortázar, *La sociedad alavesa medieval antes de la concesión del fuero de Vitoria*, in *Vitoria en la Edad Media*, Vitoria, 1982, p. 87-114; and with regard to the milites, see J. J. Nieto Benayas, *Milites alaveses, 1017-1076*, in *La Formación de Alava. 650 Aniversario del Pacto de Arriaga (1332-1982)*, Vitoria, 1984, p. 777-789.

completely controlled by a single lord in the Alava plain but not in Ebro valley, and it would appear that the role of the village elites was still important within the internal dynamics of these communities. On the other hand, we have as yet very little information on the lordship structures within the area dominated by the inhabited castles, although all the evidence suggests that these central places would not become genuine hegemonic population centres earlier than the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. There are, moreover, scores of hamlets in the Rioja Alavesa inserted into social and political dynamics quite different to those of the inhabited castles. On a local scale the lordship of Treviño would have been much more effective than that of Zaballa.

The overall picture that emerges is a fluid one, and the equilibrium that could have made a lordship viable was always conditioned by a multiplicity of circumstances and historical agents, beginning with the peasant communities themselves. On the other hand, one of the most significant destabilising factors for the lordships themselves was the growing protagonism of the feudal monarchies through territorial alliances which gave place, amongst other initiatives, to the emergence of towns. Indeed, many of these royal towns were the result of the crystallisation of the seigneurial powers articulated around the inhabited castles.

2.3. Seigneurialisation in the High Medieval Age

Thus it seems wrong to analyse the process of seigneurialisation from a finalistic perspective, as if it were a process of growing intensity that reached its zenith and a point of stability around the year 1000. The reality was much more complex and fragmented. It is nonetheless the case that in Alava there was room for the consolidation of more hegemonic and brutal forms of seigneurial control, though this would only become a reality later on.

To see this we need to return to Zaballa, a village which was completely transformed between the late-twelfth and early-thirteenth centuries. Around the year 1200 Zaballa was reinvented as a seigneurial estate, in which are observed signs of both specialisation and an authoritarian reorganisation of production methods. The main archaeological indicators of all this are an important reduction in the number of inhabitants, a phenomenon that can perhaps be associated with the attraction of the new towns that were springing up; a significant simplification of the community's social structure when compared to what had gone before; and a substantial reorganisation of the village topography in three main ways:

- all of the dwellings on the valley floor were abandoned and some 10,000 m³ of earth were introduced in their place creating a new surface for agrarian use which went hand in hand with a general reorganisation of the field-system and the creation of new irrigation channels;

- a new and more compact residential area was constructed on the eastern slope, employing a meticulous and planned system of construction with dimensions similar to those seen in towns of the period;
- And finally, the church-monastery was also reformed, although it retained its role as a place for collecting rents.

The main innovation registered in this period is that over half of all the plant remains found in this sector are barley. Moreover, the animal remains indicate a significant increase in bovines, which can be associated with an increase in agrarian production.

Though no documents have survived that would enable us to put names to the instigators of these reforms, the very scale of the transformation of Zaballa meant a redimensioning of the village community which would to a certain extent condition its future.

When, in the mid-thirteenth century the aristocratic group so-called *Co-fradía de Arriaga* (literally, the *Brotherhood of Arriaga*) is first mentioned, large areas of what is now Alava were under the strict control of territorial lordships which penetrated into the everyday life of the peasant communities and which would become consolidated over the following century into equally strong jurisdictional lordships⁴³.

Both commercially and in terms of production, the context in which this process of seigneurialisation took place is also quite distinct from what we observed in early periods. From the thirteenth century onwards, the principle breeds of livestock once again attain the dimensions previously only seen in the Roman period, while domestic storage-pits disappear from the village dwellings of the peasantry, a phenomenon which indicates the existence of centralised stores and reserves, a dynamic quite different to that of family and even seigneurial storage-pits.

3. Discussion

Recent years have seen the completion of numerous archaeological projects in northern Iberia which provide us with an enormous amount of interesting data for the analysis of many basic aspects of medieval rural society which had until now remained invisible. However, we should not make the mistake

⁴³ On Álava in the Late Middle Ages and the role of the lords grouped together in the *Co-fradía de Arriaga* see J. R. Díaz de Durana Ortíz de Urbina, *Álava en la Baja Edad Media: crisis, recuperación y transformaciones socioeconómicas (c. 1250-1525)*, Vitoria, 1986; on the role of the minor aristocracy in this area see J. R. Díaz de Durana Ortíz de Urbina, *Anonymous Noblemen. The generalization of Hidalgo status in the Basque Country (1250-1525)*, Turnhout, 2011.

of thinking that such analysis is a straightforward task, the management and interpretation of this evidence poses a number of challenges, both conceptual and methodological, if only because, as has recently been suggested, archaeologists have arrived late on the scene⁴⁴. One of the main challenges we will have to face will be construction of broad and coherent grand narratives based on material culture rather than on written records, even when the latter are available⁴⁵. This focus has already provided us with positive results in areas such as north-western Europe and regions such as Tuscany, where a critical mass of archaeological interventions and analyses has enabled an alternative representation of the past to be constructed. The work of R. Hodges and H. Hamerow, or more recently that of C. Loveluck, are I believe good examples of this tendency⁴⁶.

In my opinion we are still a long way from being able to propose such grand narratives for northern Iberia, although there are certainly areas where we can shine some light on what was previously obscure, and I believe that this should be our objective for the next five years or so.

Nonetheless, three main problems potentially undermine this approach. Firstly, the lack until now of a critical mass of studies that have been elaborated, published and analysed, a shortcoming that has become more evident in recent years as, because of the economic crisis, archaeological activity has diminished. It is not clear when we will be able to undertake another project on the scale of the Zaballa one, but what is clear is that languishing on museum shelves and in the administration's archives there are a mass of notes, objects, sketches and photographs that await transformation into archaeological studies. This is the first line of work that we should focus on.

The second problem that is increasingly being noted in both Alava and in other parts of northern Iberia is the rhythm of destruction of archaeological deposits. Projects such as Labastida Castle, San Martín or Lantarón demonstrate the level of deterioration suffered by numerous archaeological sites in recent years. So high is the rate of destruction that it is possible that we are the last generation able to undertake in-depth archaeological analysis on a territorial scale.

44 C. Wickham, *Fonti archeologiche e fonti storiche: un dialogo complesso*, in *Storia d'Europa e del Mediterraneo IX*, Roma, 2007, p. 15-49.

45 C. Wickham, *Fonti archeologiche*, cited above, p. 40.

46 R. Hodges, *Dark Age economics. A new audit*, London, 2012; H. Hamerow, *Rural Settlements and Society in Anglo-Saxon England*, Oxford, 2012; C. Loveluck, *Northwest Europe in the Early Middle Ages, c. AD 600-1150. A comparative archaeology*, Cambridge, 2013.

The third challenge is more theoretical, and has to do with the relationship between History and Archaeology⁴⁷, and the different paradigms that have been constructed from the world of words and from that of material culture.

Looking beyond north-western Iberia, though, I would like to stress that the most significant conceptual and methodological challenge faced by historical archaeology is not the debate between History and Archaeology, but rather the relationship between Archaeology and the numerous disciplines with which it interacts on a daily basis, particularly Bioarchaeology, Geoarchaeology and Archaeometry. Bear in mind that the epistemological context has changed significantly from that which Medieval Archaeology met in its infancy in the 1980s and 1990s, when it was fighting to make itself heard academically and justify itself. These other disciplines have become firmly established within Geology, Biology and Prehistorical Archaeology and now boast theoretical foundations and methodological protocols that do not always readily coincide with the nature of the material evidence from the historical period or with our research agendas. Anyone who believes that by simply adding more and more ingredients a more succulent dish will be created will instead find that bitter, sweet and savoury flavours do not always blend well together.

In short, with the collapse of the post-processual paradigm, it has become all the more necessary to turn to holistic and integrative solutions which, in the case of historical archaeology mean going beyond the classic contraposition between History and Archaeology.

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⁴⁷ See the discussion in J. A. Quirós Castillo, I. Santos Salazar, *I villaggi medievali nell'Alto Ebro alla luce delle fonti scritte e dell'archeologia. L'emergere dei leader dei villaggi e l'articolazione dei poteri territoriali nel X secolo*, in P. Galetti, *Paesaggi, Comunità, Villaggi Medievali*, Spoleto, 2012, p. 257-279

José Avelino GUTIÉRREZ

THE OTHER IBERIAN PENINSULA: THE CITIES IN EARLY MEDIEVAL SPAIN*

The purpose of this study is to present the status of the question concerning research into early medieval cities in the north of the Iberian Peninsula during the period when the Hispanic kingdoms were being formed (from the 8th to the 10th centuries) and their relationships with other European areas, based on archaeological records, the main source of knowledge in this field in the spatial and temporal framework. The main reference point for the comparative framework of the early medieval Hispanic urban world is the contemporary north of Italy, in whose archaeological research Prof. Riccardo Francovich played an outstanding role. He is a European benchmark in historical renewal based on new focuses and knowledge provided by archaeology.

State of the art

Knowledge concerning early medieval cities in the north of the Peninsula is extremely scarce, above all when compared to Roman times; this is due both to the historical circumstances of a time of crisis and change and to insufficient research. The scarcity of written and material sources, together with the problems in defining what a city was – common to the whole west of Europe for this time – has traditionally led to an catastrophist and regressive image of the city, extended to the whole of early medieval society.

Thanks to the evident caesura of early medieval times, with the administrative and economic crisis and destructuring in the 7th and 8th centuries, pre-10th century written sources are very scarce. Archaeological sources have hardly been used to study the first medieval cities in the north of the Peninsula, despite their making up the main, if not the only source for discovering the morphology and nature of cities.

* This study was carried out within the framework of the «De Conventus Asturum a Asturorum Regnum. El territorio de la ciuitas Legione y el asentamiento de Marialba de la Ribera (León) entre época tardoantigua y medieval» (Plan Nacional MCINN ref. HAR2011-23106) research programme.

Hence the urban history of the north of the Peninsula has traditionally been written without the contribution of archaeological information, using basically and almost exclusively written documentation, thereby leaving broad gaps for the previous periods. The existence of cities in this period and place was denied for a long time, emphasising the abandonment of Roman conglomerates; it has also been described as a 'pre-urban' phase or stage for early medieval times before the urban rebirth in the 11th century and onwards¹, accepted by archaeologists when the archaeological information was not sufficient to propose a new, alternative concept².

Likewise, the perception and image of the medieval city acquired from these 10th- and 11th-century and later written sources, contrast sharply with what archaeology has recently revealed. As an example of this we could compare and contrast the idealised image given by C. Sánchez-Albornoz in his reconstruction of the capital of the kingdom of León from 10th and 11th century cathedral documents from the city with the material characterisation of spaces and buildings provided by archaeological excavations in recent decades³ – less idealised and more similar to the appearance acquired from late antiquity⁴. The documents written by the governing and ecclesiastical classes record activities and properties that cannot be extended to society as a whole, while archaeological information gives us a different image, not reduced to aristocratic residential sectors but rather extended to the whole urban fabric, including poor houses, agricultural spaces, funerary areas and craftsmen's workshops, which take up a larger surface area and give us a more modest profile than the aristocratic sectors.

1 C. Estepa Díez, *Estructura social de la ciudad de León (siglos XI-XIII)*, León, 1977; following E. Ennen, *Frühgeschichte der europäischen Stadt*, Colonia-Graz, 1953; *Id.*, *Les différents types de formation des villes européennes*, in *Le Moyen Âge*, LXII, 1956, p. 397-411.

2 J. A. Gutiérrez González, F. Miguel Hernández, *Génesis del urbanismo en la ciudad de León y su transformación en la Edad Media*, in F. Valdés (ed.), *La Península Ibérica y el Mediterráneo entre los siglos XI y XII. III. El urbanismo en los Estados Cristianos Peninsulares*, Aguilar de Campoo, Palencia, 1999, p. 43-90.

3 C. Sánchez-Albornoz, *Una ciudad de la España cristiana hace mil años*, 6th ed., Madrid, 1976 vs. J. A. Gutiérrez González, F. Miguel Hernández, *Génesis*, cited above, and J. A. Gutiérrez González, *Las fuentes arqueológicas informadoras del espacio urbano medieval: la ciudad de León como ejemplo*, in J. A. Solórzano Telechea, B. Arízaga Bolumburu (eds.), *El espacio urbano en la Europa medieval*, Nájera, 2006, p. 77-145.

4 J. A. Gutiérrez González, E. Campomanes Alvaredo, F. Miguel Hernández, C. Benítez González, P. Martín Del Otero, F. Muñoz Villarejo, F. San Román Fernández, *Legio (León) en época visigoda: la ciudad y su territorio*, in A. García, R. Izquierdo, L. Olmo, D. Peris (eds.), *Espacios urbanos en el Occidente Mediterráneo (ss. VI-VIII)*, Ciudad Real, 2010, p. 131-136.

The quantity and quality of the critical mass of archaeological records for the study of early medieval cities in the Hispanic kingdoms is still limited, due to both the historical factors pointed out above, and by inexperience in the setting up of administrative structures for archaeological management⁵, which limits and conditions the acquirement of quality data that can be used to make a significant contribution to historical debate on the subject in a European framework. In the last two decades, there have been more excavations deriving from the application of rules for preserving archaeological heritage. This has led to a greater amount of information being made available, although it has not yet been sufficiently processed for management or fully integrated into research on medieval cities. Some syntheses have been put together about late antique transformations (from the 5th to the 7th centuries), together with studies based on data from main cities that enjoy greater archaeological documentation, such as Ampurias, Gerona, Barcelona, Tarragona, Zaragoza, Valencia, Cartagena, Mérida, Toledo, *Recópolis* and Córdoba⁶. On the other

5 A. Azkarate García-Olaun, I. García Camino, *La ciudad, documento histórico: Reflexiones sobre la práctica de la arqueología urbana en la Comunidad Autónoma del País Vasco*, in *Kobie* (Serie Paleoantropología), 23, 1996, p. 141-161; I. Rodríguez, Temiño, *Arqueología urbana en España*, Barcelona, 1994.

6 E.g. the syntheses by S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *De la civitas a la madina: destrucción de la ciudad en el sureste de al-Andalus. El debate arqueológico*, in *IV Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española*, t. I, Alicante 1993, p. 13-36; *Id.*, *Le città della Spagna tra romanità e islamismo*, in G. P. Brogiolo (ed.), *Early medieval towns in the western Mediterranean*, Ravello 1996, p. 55-66; *Id.*, *La Cora de Tudmir. De la Antigüedad Tardía al mundo islámico. Poblamiento y cultura material*, Madrid-Alicante, 1996; *Id.*, *La ciudad en la Antigüedad tardía en el sureste y levante: la reviviscencia urbana en el marco del conflicto greco-gótico*, in L. A. García Moreno, S. Rascón (eds.), *Complutum y las ciudades hispanas de la Antigüedad tardía, Actas del I Encuentro Hispania en la Antigüedad Tardía: Alcalá de Henares 16 de octubre de 1996*, Alcalá de Henares, 1999, p. 101-128; J. Giral i Balaguero, F. Tuset, *Modelos de transformación del mundo urbano en el nordeste peninsular. Siglos V-XI*, in *IV Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española*, vo. I, Alicante 1993, p. 37-46; L. Olmo Enciso, *Consideraciones sobre la ciudad en época visigoda*, in *Arqueología y territorio medieval*, 5, 1998, p. 109-18; *Id.*, *Ciudad y procesos de transformación social entre los siglos VI y IX: de Recópolis a Racupel*, in L. Caballero Zoreda, P. Mateos (eds.), *Visigodos y Omeyas. Un debate entre la Antigüedad Tardía y la Alta Edad Media*, «Anejos de AEspA 23», Madrid, 2000, p. 385-399, *Id.*, *Recópolis y la ciudad en la época visigoda*, *Zona Arqueológica*, 9, 2008; *Id.*, *Ciudad y Estado en época visigoda: Toledo, la construcción de un nuevo paisaje urbano*, in A. García, R. Izquierdo, L. Olmo, D. Peris (eds.), *Espacios urbanos*, cited n. 4, p. 87-111; S. F. Ramallo Asensio, *Arquitectura doméstica en ámbitos urbanos entre los siglos V y VIII*, in L. Caballero Zoreda, P. Mateos (eds.), *Visigodos y Omeyas*, cited above in this note, p. 367-384; S. F. Ramallo Asensio, E. Ruiz Valderas, *Cartagena en la arqueología bizantina en Hispania: Estado de la cuestión, V Reunión d'arqueología paleocristiana hispánica*, Barcelona, 2000, p. 305-322; J. M. Gurt i Esparraguera, *Transformaciones en el tejido de las*

hand, cities in the north of the Peninsula from the 8th to the 10th centuries still remain almost unstudied; significant data is available for just a few cases, such as Santiago de Compostela, Oviedo, León, Zamora, Ampurias, Barcelona and Gerona⁷, and so it is difficult to draw up a synthesis about this time and space. These cities have therefore rarely been incorporated in European studies and syntheses on the subject⁸.

ciudades hispanas durante la Antigüedad Tardía: dinámicas urbanas, in *Zephyrus*, 53-54, 2000-2001, p. 443-471; J. M. Gurt i Esparraguera, G. Ripoll, C. Godoy, *Topografía de la Antigüedad tardía hispánica. Reflexiones para una propuesta de trabajo*, in *Antiquité Tardive*, 2, 1994, p. 161-180; J. M. Gurt i Esparraguera, A. Ribera (eds.), *Les ciutats tardoantigues d'Hispania: cristianització i topografia*, VI Reunió d'Arqueologia Cristiana Hispànica, 2003, Barcelona, 2005; J. M. Gurt i Esparraguera, I. Sánchez Ramos, *Las ciudades hispanas durante la Antigüedad tardía: una lectura arqueológica*, in L. Olmo (ed.), *Recópolis*, cited above in this note, p. 183-202; *Id.*, *Espacios funerarios y espacios sacros en la ciudad tardoantigua. La situación en Hispania*, in A. García, R. Izquierdo, L. Olmo, D. Peris (eds.), *Espacios urbanos*, cited n. 4, p. 15-28; *Id.*, *Episcopal Groups in Hispania*, in *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 30/3, 2011, p. 273-298.

7 J. Suárez Otero, *Apuntes arqueológicos sobre la formación del 'Locus Sanctus Iacobi' y los orígenes del urbanismo medieval compostelano*, in F. Valdés (ed.), *La Península Ibérica*, cited n. 2, p. 11-42; J. A. Gutiérrez González, *La ciudad de Zamora entre el mundo antiguo y el feudalismo: morfología urbana*, in *IV Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española*, t. 2, Alicante, 1994, p. 243-249; *Id.*, *Las fuentes arqueológicas*, cited n. 3; *Id.*, *Oviedo y el territorio astur entre Mahoma y Carlomagno (siglos VII-IX). El poder del pasado en el origen del reino de Asturias*, in *Actas XXXIX Semana de Estudios Medievales, Estella, 2012, De Mahoma a Carlomagno, los primeros tiempos (ss. VII-IX)*, Gobierno de Navarra, 2013, p. 377-433; X. Aquilué (ed.), *Intervencions arqueològiques a Sant Martí d'Empúries (1994-1996). De l'assentament precolonial a L'Empúries actual*, Girona, 1999; J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero, *La topografía del quadrant nord-est de Barcelona: el Palau Comtal*, in *Quaderns d'Arqueologia i Història de la Ciutat de Barcelona*, 2, 2006, p. 173-183; J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero, A. Nicolau i Martin, *Barcelona. Topografia del espai de poder a l'època carolíngia. El conjunt episcopal i la residència comtal*, in *Catalunya a l'època carolíngia. Art i cultura abans del romànic (segles IX i X)*, Barcelona, 1999, p. 100-106; J. M. Nolla et al., *Del fórum a la plaça de la Catedral. Evolució històrico-urbanística del sector septentrional de la ciutat de Girona*, Girona, 2008; J. M. Nolla, *La Catalunya Vella: de la caiguda de l'Imperi Romà a la fi del domini carolíngi. Una visió des de l'arqueologia*, in *Actes del IV Congrés d'Arqueologia Medieval i Moderna a Catalunya*, Tarragona, 2011, p. 27-45 respectively.

8 See the syntheses by G. P. Brogiolo, S. Gelichi, *La città nell'alto medioevo italiano. Archeologia e storia*, Roma-Bari, 1998; J. Schofield, A. Vince, *Medieval Towns. The Archaeology of British Towns in their European setting*, London, 1994 (repr. 2003); J. Schofield, H. Steuer, *Urban Settlement*, in J. Graham-Campbell, M. Valor (eds.), *The Archaeology of Medieval Europe. Vol. 1. Eighth to Twelfth Centuries AD*, Aarhus, 2007, p. 111-153 and C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages. Europe and the Mediterranean 400-800*, Oxford, 2005.

Regional differences and urban heterogeneity

However, in relation to the permanence and characteristics of early medieval urban life in the north of the Peninsula, we should point out the great differences that are evident. The whole cannot be considered as homogenous, either geographically or historically. From Galicia in the north-west to Catalonia in the north-east there are very diverse and contrasting geographical areas, from the high mountains and valleys in the Pyrenees and Cantabrian region to the plateaus and sedimentary plains in the valleys of the Duero and Ebro, and the complex relief in Galicia. The historical backgrounds in each region are also very diverse; on the one hand the Mediterranean coastline in Catalonia, where cities and secondary conglomerates made up the urban fabric of highly organised lands from Roman and early medieval times, many of which were refounded as centres of Carolingian and Catalan counts' political power, while on the other, in the extreme north and west, urban density had been much lower since Roman and Visigothic times and was further reduced in the time of the kingdoms of Asturias and León. In fact, the first political and religious centres (Cangas, Pravia, Oviedo and Compostela) had not been cities in antiquity and did not reach a level of urban life until later centuries; this is possibly why the power of Roman and Visigothic inheritance in the fewer cities that remained in the north-west, such as Lugo, Braga, León and Astorga, was felt in numerous material aspects.

Regional differences are also notable when it comes to archaeological research and the publication of syntheses. There is only a good number of excavations published and joint studies for the main cities in the north-east, such as Ampurias, Gerona, Barcelona and Tarragona⁹, while a great number of cities in the north and north-west of the Peninsula have only seen partial, unequal and insufficient publications for a complete historical reconstruction of the early medieval period; only a few, such as Pamplona, Burgos, León, Zamora,

9 X. Aquilué (ed.), *Intervencions*, cited n. 7; J. M. Nolla *et al.*, *Del fórum a la plaça*, cited n. 7; J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero (ed.), *De Barcino a Barcinona (Segles I–VII). Les restes arqueològiques de la plaça del Rei de Barcelona*, Barcelona, 2001; J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero, A. Nicolau i Martín, *Barcelona. Topografia*, cited n. 7; J. Menchón, *Tarragona a l'edat mitjana o la restauració d'una ciutat medieval sobre una seu episcopal visigòtica i una ciutat romana*, in *Actes del IV Congrés d'Arqueologia Medieval i Moderna a Catalunya*, t. I, Tarragona, 2011, p. 263–277; J. Menchón, J. M. Macías, A. Muñoz, *Aproximació al procés transformador de la ciutat de Tarraco. Del Baix Imperi a l'Edat Mitjana*, in *Pyrenne*, 25, 1994, p. 225–243; J. Menchón, I. Teixell, A. Muñoz, J. M. Macías, *Excavacions arqueològiques a la catedral de Tarragona (2000–2002)*, in *II Congrés d'Arqueologia Medieval i Moderna a Catalunya*, t. I, 2003, p. 121–128 respectively.



Figure 1. Map with the main early medieval cities cited in the text (J.A. Gutiérrez).

Oviedo and Santiago de Compostela have made some contributions, although not enough to formulate solid observations for the whole¹⁰. (Fig. 1).

The archaeological characterisation of the transition from ancient to medieval city in the north of the peninsula

Background: town planning in the earliest medieval times (from the 5th to the 8th centuries)

The low degree of urban life documented for early medieval cities from the 8th to the 10th centuries had started before this. The transformation of ancient cities and the transition to the medieval city started in the late Roman Empire, from the 3rd to the 5th centuries, in a lengthy process through late antiquity and the early Middle Ages (from the 5th to the 7th centuries), in which the

¹⁰ See contributions in F. Valdés Fernández (ed.), *La Península Ibérica*, cited n. 2; J. López Quiroga, *El final de la Antigüedad en la Gallaecia. La transformación de las estructuras de poblamiento entre Miño y Duero (siglos V al X)*, La Coruña, 2004.

disappearance of some functions and structures converged with the permanence and transformation of others. Towards the end of the early medieval period (from the 8th to the 10th centuries), when the collapse caused by the Islamic conquest had been overcome, a new dynamic urban process was seen, with new creations (*sedes regias, castra, suburbia*) although with different characteristics to those of antiquity, while at the same time the main trends towards disorganisation followed on from the previous period.

The material and functional transformation of post-Roman cities has gradually been defined in different western regions, showing that even with a wide variety of solutions, there were some common trends, such as reductions in population and occupied spaces, the privatisation and occupation of public and private buildings, which were replaced by simpler houses, leaving large empty spaces and crop fields on what were once residential areas, the break up of the urban layout, the end of hygiene services and water infrastructures, the profound transformation of buildings into new religious centres, especially episcopal, which made up new poles of attraction for the population.

Some synthesis studies have explained certain general characteristics of this process¹¹, dealt with in other chapters in this book, and which here we will simply summarize to show them as a background for the 8th to the 10th centuries.

¹¹ E.g. X. Barral i Altet, *Transformacions de la topografia urbana a la Hispania cristiana durant l'Antiguitat tardana*, II Reunió d'arqueologia paleocristiana hispanica (Montserrat, 1978), 1982, p. 105-132; J. Arce, *La transformación de Hispania en época tardorromana: paisaje urbano, paisaje rural*, in *De la Antigüedad al Medioevo, ss. IV-VIII*, Madrid, 1993 p. 227-233; J. Giralt i Balagueró, F. Tuset, *Modelos*, cited n. 6; S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *De la civitas*, cited n. 6; *Id.*, *Le città della Spagna*, cited n. 6; *Id.*, *La Cora de Tudmir*, cited n. 6; *Id.*, *La ciudad*, cited n. 6; J. M. Gurt i Esparraguera, *Transformaciones*, cited n. 6; J. M. Gurt i Esparraguera, G. Ripoll, C. Godoy, *Topografía*, cited n. 6; A. Fuentes Domínguez, *Aproximación a la ciudad hispana de los siglos IV y V de C.*, in *Congreso Internacional La Hispania de Teodosio*, JCL, 1997, vol. 2, p. 477-496; L. Olmo Enciso, *Consideraciones*, cited n. 6; *Id.*, *Ciudad y procesos*, cited n. 6; L. García Moreno, S. Rascón, *Complutum*, cited n. 6; G. Ripoll López, J. M. Gurt (eds.), *Sedes Regiae (ann. 400-800)*, Barcelona, 2000; S. F. Ramallo Asensio, *Arquitectura*, cited n. 6; J. López Quiroga, *El final*, cited n. 10; C. Wickham, *Framing*, cited n. 8; J. A. Quirós Castillo, B. Bengoechea Rementería, *Arqueología (III). (Arqueología Postclásica)*, Madrid, 2006, and monographs on cities such as Mérida, Toledo, Valencia, Cartagena, Barcelona, Tarraco and Gerona (P. Mateos Cruz, M. Alba Calzado, *De Emerita Augusta a Marida*, in L. Caballero Zoreda, P. Mateos Cruz (eds.), *Visigodos y Omeyas*, cited n. 6; A. García, R. Izquierdo, L. Olmo Enciso, D. Peris (eds.), *Espacios urbanos*, cited n. 4; J. Blasco *et al.*, *Estat actual de la investigació arqueològica de l'antiguitat tardana a la ciutat de València*, III Reunió d'arqueologia paleocristiana hispanica, Barcelona, 1994, p. 185-197; A. V. Ribera i Lacomba, M. Roselló Mesquida, *Valentia en el siglo VII, de Suinthila a Teodomiro*, in L. Caballero Zoreda *et al.* (eds.), *El siglo VII frente al siglo VII. Arquitectura*, in *Visigodos y Omeyas 4, Mérida, 2006*, Madrid, 2009, p. 185-203, S. F. Ramallo

The alteration of the imperial urban model in Hispania from the 3rd to the 5th centuries affected both the number and the layout of cities and the loss of functions and services in some of the main provincial capitals (*Ampurias, Tarraco, Italica, Lucus Augusti*); in contrast, others experienced greater vitality, such as Cartagena, Barcelona, Braga and Mérida, which substituted them and absorbed to a great extent their administrative and religious functions, and in which significant rebuilding is evident in public buildings and urban housing.

One of the main changes in the appearance of cities was the generalised construction of sturdy walls around the city with towers, which consequently led to changes in town planning: a new road layout, the centralisation and hierarchisation of spaces, dividing up plots of land and the size thereof, vertical as opposed to horizontal growth, the reduction in occupied areas, etc. The causes of the building of these walls, common to other parts of the Empire too, lie in both new military functions, the protection of the *annona* and defensive needs against social conflict and in the monumentalisation of the new main territorial centres¹². One common characteristic is the similarity of modulations in the construction of walls, sections, towers and gateways, usually with reused materials (ashlars, epigraphs, etc), which enables us to establish similar models or styles, especially in cities in the north of the Peninsula, where the army played a regular role. Some previous non-urban settlements took on from this time with urban appearance, with the building of walls, such as in Gijón, a previous port settlement, and León, a legionary barracks up to then¹³.

Asensio, *Arquitectura*, cited n. 6; S. F. Ramallo Asensio, E. Ruiz Valderas, *Cartagena*, cited n. 6; J. Beltrán de Heredia Berceo (ed.), *De Barcino*, cited n. 9; J. Beltrán de Heredia Berceo, A. Nicolau i Martín, *Barcelona*, cited n. 7; J. Menchón, *Tarragona*, cited n. 9; J. Menchón, J. M. Macías, A. Muñoz, *Aproximació*, cited n. 9; J. Menchón, I. Teixell, A. Muñoz, J. M. Macías, *Excavacions*, cited n. 9; J. M. Nolla et al., *Del fórum a la plaça*, cited n. 7), to mention just some recent examples, and in which previous bibliographies can be found.

¹² C. Fernández Ochoa, C. Morillo Cerdán, *Fortificaciones urbanas de época bajoimperial en Hispania. Una aproximación crítica*, in *Cuadernos de Prehistoria y Arqueología de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*, 18, 1991, p. 227-259; *Id.*, *Fortificaciones urbanas de época bajoimperial en Hispania. Una aproximación crítica*, in *Cuadernos de Prehistoria y Arqueología de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*, 19, 1992, p. 319-360; *Id.*, *The army and the urban walls in Late Roman Spain: defence and strategy*, in *The Roman Army in Hispania. An archaeological guide*, León 2006, p. 189-209.

¹³ C. Fernández Ochoa, *La muralla romana de Gijón*, Gijón, 1997; V. García Marcos, F. Miguel Hernández, *A new view on the military occupation in the north-west of Hispania during the first century: the case of León* (XVI Congress of Roman Frontier Studies), in W. Groenman-van Waateringe et al. (eds.), *Roman Frontier Studies 1995*, «Oxbow Monograph 91», 1997, 355-359, respectively.

Other physical changes can also be seen at this time, such as the general elevation of street levels, due to repair work, floors being placed on top of others, the reconstruction of buildings and large amounts of filling in for levelling, all of which frequently annul former buildings, which were demolished when the city walls were built¹⁴.

From this time we can also see a progressive loss of services and functionality, mainly the abandonment - total or partial - and the collapse of public services such as water, baths and certain official and recreational buildings (forums, basilicas, curias and praetoriums, theatres, amphitheatres etc), a trend which increased in the 6th and 7th centuries, just as it did in Gaul and Italy. The loss of administrative functions led to the non-use of curias, basilicas, temples and forums (as is recorded in Mérida, Tarragona, Braga, Lugo, etc). Some buildings, however, were maintained, as were some of the commercial functions in the forums (the importing of pottery and Mediterranean products is recorded) in some cities in the east and south-east of the Peninsula, such as Valencia - where the forum and curia were maintained in part down to the 6th century - Cartagena, Tarragona, etc¹⁵. The weakening of municipal authority is made clear in the lack of attention to public services (the collapse of the water supply and drains, and the appearance of pits, wells and rubbish dumps inside the walls), and in the control of building activity.

In a general and extensive way, a large number of public buildings and spaces (forums, temples, theatres), together with streets and private houses, were abandoned and usually taken over by rustic handicraft facilities (forges, ovens, presses), or by simple domestic constructions (made of wood, mud and reused materials), and sometimes to create dark earth, due to the reduction in inhabited areas, both inside the walls and out (evidenced in Valencia, Barcelona, Tarragona, Cartagena, Mérida, León, Astorga, etc). All this indicates a loss of functions and population, a lack of authority, control and planning in construction, which led to progressive unplanned growth, which was the main characteristic of early medieval cities¹⁶. This process was one of the main constants and progressively grew throughout the Middle Ages, as it did in many other cities in Italy and Gaul, constituting one of the main symptoms of urban degeneration, more noticeable even than in other cities in the Roman west¹⁷.

14 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *De la civitas*, cited n. 6; A. Fuentes Domínguez, *Aproximación*, cited n. II; V. García Marcos, F. Miguel Hernández, *A new view*, cited above.

15 A. V. Ribera i Lacomba, M. Roselló Mesquida, *Valentia*, cited n. II; S. F. Ramallo Asensio, *Arquitectura*, cited n. 6; J. Menchón, J. M. Macías, A. Muñoz, *Aproximació*, cited n. 9.

16 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *De la civitas*, cited n. 6; *Id.*, *Le città*, cited n. 6.

17 E.g. G. P. Brogiolo, S. Gelichi, *La città*, cited n. 8; J. Schofield, H. Steuer, *Urban Settlement*, cited n. 8, and C. Wickham, *Framing*, cited n. 8.

At the same time, the progressive Christianisation of urban topography is clear from the 5th and 6th centuries onwards. This is another of the main landmarks in late ancient cities, with the appearance of major episcopal centres (Barcelona, Valencia, Tarragona, *Egara*-Tarrasa, Ampurias, Toledo, *Ercavica*, *Segóbriga* and Braga, among others), made up of episcopal, funerary and martyrs' churches, baptisteries, cemeteries, bishops' residences and various other buildings (such as the hospital or *Xenodochium* in Mérida) inside or in the suburbs of cities raised to the category of episcopal sees¹⁸. In fact, it is the cities that became episcopal centres that show the greatest signs of vitality, while other Roman cities that had no bishop either languished or were abandoned. The majority of these episcopal centres were installed on the site of old privileged public spaces in the city, in or near the forum (Barcelona, Valencia and possibly Toledo), while others initially took up positions in the periphery, as happened in Tarragona, Ampurias, Lugo and Braga, before they were moved to areas of greater prestige in the Roman city, as is known to have happened in Tarragona.

Archaeological documentation has also shown that houses and business activities were grouped around these episcopal centres (Barcelona, Tarragona, Valencia, *Egara*), which were like poles of attraction and monumental and economic dynamics. In fact, this kind of episcopal centre, different from the classical city, concentrated and fortified, has been defined as a new model of 'ruralised' city¹⁹. And so at the same time as the decadence of certain services, buildings and classical institutions, other new ones emerged in contrast with a relative vitality, mainly promoted by the new religious aristocracy.

These building dynamics were accompanied by a revitalisation of political and administrative functions and commercial activity in the second half of the 6th century, more noticeable in cities on the Mediterranean coast such as Valencia, Barcelona, Tarragona and Cartagena, where a genuine "reurbanization" was defined over the remains of Roman public buildings²⁰.

18 X. Barral i Altet, *Transformacions*, cited n.11; J. M. Gurt i Esparraguera, G. Ripoll, C. Godoy, *Topografía*, cited n. 6; J. M. Gurt i Esparraguera, I. Sánchez Ramos, *Las ciudades*, cited n. 6; *Id.*, *Espacios funerarios*, cited n. 6; J. López Quiroga, M. R. Lovelle, *Consideraciones en torno al modelo de ciudad entre la Antigüedad tardía y la Alta Edad Media en el noroeste de la Península Ibérica (s. V-XI)*, in A. Rodríguez Colmenero (ed.), *Los orígenes de la ciudad en el noroeste hispánico. Actas del Congreso Internacional*, Lugo, 1999, p. 1319-1346.

19 J. M. Gurt i Esparraguera, G. Ripoll, C. Godoy, *Topografía*, cited n. 6; J. M. Gurt i Esparraguera, I. Sánchez Ramos, *Las ciudades*, cited n. 6; *Id.*, *Espacios funerarios*, cited n. 6; *Id.*, *Episcopal Groups*, cited n. 6.

20 S. F. Ramallo Asensio, *Arquitectura*, cited n. 6, p. 376-378.

These dynamics are perceived to a lesser extent in the interior and west of the Peninsula, where ancient cities like *Complutum*, *Segóbriga*, *Ercavica* and *Valeria*, despite having an episcopal see, entered into a process of decadence. In contrast, more vitality was evident at Mérida, *Recópolis* and Toledo, the main Visigothic cities. These revitalisations can be compared to the consolidation of the estate apparatus of the Visigothic kingdom, after the capital was fixed at Toledo, following a model of Byzantine inspiration, with the fiscal and commercial structure based on the city network²¹. In effect, excavations at the Vega Baja in Toledo show a careful and hierarchical town planning, with areas for the court, housing and commerce and handicraft²². These urban dynamics can also be seen in the foundation of new Visigothic cities like *Oligicus* (identified as Olite) and *Recópolis*. We could highlight the archaeological research in the latter, where regular planning and a notable spatial hierarchy are defined. There was a palace and a basilica, as well as a flourishing handicraft neighbourhood, all protected by a strong wall with towers and a monumental gateway²³; the link to the political programme of Leovigildus can clearly be seen, as in other Visigothic sees and cities²⁴. Likewise, the vitality of Cartagena, Valencia, El Tolmo de Minateda and *Bigastri* can be linked to the stabilisation of Byzantine power in the south-east of the Peninsula and the Visigothic state initiative to fortify land close to the Byzantines²⁵. The amount of administrative, military (with significant repair work on walls in Cartagena, *Bigastri* and El Tolmo), religious (in El Tolmo) and economic functions (as evidenced by the creation of handicraft quarters and the importation and distribution of Eastern Mediterranean and North African products, especially

21 L. Olmo Enciso, *Ciudad y procesos*, cited n. 6; *Id.*, *Ciudad y Estado*, cited n. 6.

22 J. M. Rojas Rodríguez-Malo, A. J. Gómez Laguna, *Intervención arqueológica en la Vega Baja de Toledo. Características del centro político y religioso del reino visigodo*, in L. Caballero Zoreda et al. (eds.), *El siglo VII*, cited n. 11, p. 45-89; L. Olmo Enciso, *Ciudad y Estado*, cited n. 6.

23 L. Olmo Enciso, *Ciudad y procesos*, cited n. 6; L. Olmo Enciso (ed.), *Recópolis*, cited n. 6.

24 L. Olmo Enciso, *Ciudad y procesos*, cited n. 6; G. Ripoll López, J. M. Gurt (eds.), *Sedes Regiae*, cited n. 11.

25 L. Abad Casal, S. Gutiérrez Lloret, R. Sanz Gamó, *El "Tolmo de Minateda". Una historia de tres mil quinientos años*, Toledo, 1998; S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *De la civitas*, cited n.6; *Id.*, *Le città*, cited n. 6; *Id.*, *La Cora de Tudmir*, cited n. 6; *Id.*, *La ciudad*, cited n. 6; S. Gutiérrez Lloret, P. Cánovas, *Construyendo el siglo VII: arquitecturas y sistemas constructivos en el Tolmo de Minateda*, in L. Caballero Zoreda et al. (eds.), *El siglo VII*, cited n. 11; S. Gutiérrez Lloret, L. Abad Casal, B. Gamó, *Eto, byyh y el Tolmo de Minateda (Hellín Albacete): De sede episcopal a Madina islámica*, in J. M. Gurt i Esparraguera/ A. V. Ribera (eds.), *Les ciutats*, cited n. 6; S. F. Ramallo Asensio, *Arquitectura*, cited n.6; L. Olmo Enciso, *Ciudad y Estado*, cited n.6.

amphorae and *terra sigillata* (TSA or African Red Slipe A), in Cartagena, Toledo and Tarraco), underwent significant growth at this time, held back to an extent by the process of urban deterioration²⁶.

In contrast, there was less urban dynamism in the north and north-west of the Peninsula, although the area was not foreign to this process. It was reduced to religious buildings, above all in episcopal cities like Braga, Lugo, Astorga and León, such as urban and suburban churches and baptismal and funerary spaces²⁷. We could highlight in this area the political and military functions, very visible in the construction of *oppida* and *castra* like Olite, Amaya, Monte Cildá, Bernardos, Tedeja, Tuy and other forts for territorial and fiscal control²⁸, no doubt related to the Visigothic conquest of the Suevi kingdom and military campaigns and attempts to settle in Cantabria and the Basque Country, the north plateau and Ebro valley, although these political and military centres did not enjoy a high level of town planning or economic activity.

The process was inverted, however, throughout the 7th century. The crisis in construction and the loss of the number, quality and functionality of buildings became greater; in *Recópolis* open spaces were closed off with low-quality buildings and the palace was partially abandoned²⁹. A similar process was observed in other Mediterranean cities that had experienced a certain growth in

26 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *De la civitas*, cited n.6; *Id.*, *Le città*, cited n. 6; S. F. Ramallo Asensio, *Arquitectura*, cited n.6.

27 J. López Quiroga, *El final*, cited n.10; J. López Quiroga, M. R. Lovelle, *Consideraciones*, cited n. 18; J. A. Gutiérrez González, E. Campomanes Alvaredo, F. Miguel Hernández, C. Benítez González, P. Martín Del Otero, F. Muñoz Villarejo, F. San Román Fernández, *Legio (León)*, cited n. 4.

28 J. López Quiroga, *El final*, cited n.10; J. Quintana López, *Amaya, ¿capital de Cantabria?*, in J. R. Aja Sánchez, M. Cisneros Cunchillos, J.L. Ramírez Sádaba (eds.), *Los cántabros en la Antigüedad. La Historia frente al Mito*, Cantabria, 2008, p. 229-264; J. M. Gonzalo González, *El Cerro del Castillo, Bernardos (Segovia). Un yacimiento arqueológico singular en la provincia de Segovia durante la Antigüedad Tardía*, Segovia 2006; J. A. Gutiérrez González, *Fortificaciones visigodas y conquista islámica del norte hispano (c. 711)*, in *Zona Arqueológica*, 15, vol. I, 2011, p. 335-352; *Id.*, *Fortificaciones tardoantiguas y visigodas en el norte peninsular (ss. V-VIII)*, in R. Catalán, P. Fuentes, J.C. Sastre (eds.), *Fortificaciones en la tardoantigüedad. Élités y articulación del territorio (siglos V-VIII d.C.)*, Madrid, 2014, p. 191-214; J. M. Tejado Sebastián, *Castros altomedievales en el alto Iregua (La Rioja): el caso de El Castillo de los Monjes*, in J.A. Quirós, J. M. Tejado Sebastián (eds.), *Los castillos altomedievales en el noroeste de la Península Ibérica*, Universidad del País Vasco, 2012, p. 163-192.

29 L. Olmo Enciso, *Ciudad y procesos*, cited n. 6; *Id.*, *Ciudad y Estado*, cited n. 6; L. Olmo Enciso (ed.), *Recópolis*, cited n. 6.

previous centuries³⁰. This loss of administrative and residential functions should be linked to the political crisis and social transformation of the Visigothic state³¹ in favour of the civil and ecclesiastical aristocracy, which became more powerful with the building of rural palaces in the east of the Peninsula, such as those at Plá de Nadal in Valencia, Villajoyosa and Los Alcázares, and of rural churches and monasteries in the interior and north of the Peninsula³².

The loss of urban vitality at this time was perhaps caused by the trend towards decentralisation and a lack of interest in urban life apparently shown by the elite in the last years of the Visigothic kingdom. The reason behind this fall in aristocratic activity in cities could also be the commercial crisis of the time, which put an end to imported products from the Mediterranean³³. The material impoverishment of the elite and the removal of their investment in building to their rural properties produced in any case less archaeological visibility of aristocratic sites and residences in cities.

As for domestic spaces from the 5th to the 8th centuries, excavations at cities like Barcelona, Tarragona, Valencia, Cartagena, Toledo, *Recópolis* and Mérida are enabling us to systematise a series of general characteristics, well expressed in the cases of Cartagena, Valencia and Mérida: the dismantling of the atrium-peristyle style of Roman house, by dividing them up into various room units and building new smaller houses with irregular rubble walls made of mud and sun-dried bricks, the reuse of ashlar and other architectural elements taken from older buildings, roofs made of branches and mud laid on top of a wooden pattern, earthen floors beaten with lime, drainage by means of culverts dug under the patio, family units around an irregular central patio accessed from the street and giving access to houses, dried clay houses with joint benches and circular wells dug in the ground and used as silos or rubbish dumps, handicraft facilities (ovens, basins) in the open patio, workshops (glass, metal) and corrals adjoining houses as well as hand millstones and oil presses for family production, hardened earth streets and alleys to access houses, mainly handmade or wheel pottery – although ceramics imported from Africa can still be found in the east

30 S. F. Ramallo Asensio, *Arquitectura*, cited n.6.

31 L. Olmo Enciso, *Ciudad y procesos*, cited n. 6.

32 E. Juan, I. Pastor, *Los visigodos en Valencia. Pla de Nadal, ¿una villa áulica?*, in *Boletín de Arqueología Medieval*, 3, 1989, p. 137-179; S. F. Ramallo Asensio, *Arquitectura*, cited n.6; S. Gutiérrez Lloret, P. Cánovas, *Construyendo el siglo VII*, cited n. 25; A. Chavarría Arnau, *Romanos y visigodos en el valle del Duero (siglos V-VIII)*, in *Lancia*, 6, 2007, p. 187-204.

33 P. Reynolds, *Spain, Portugal and the Balearics: 4th-7th century (Late Roman, Byzantine and Visigothic)*, in Ch. Bakirtzis (ed.), *VII^e Congrès International sur la Céramique Médiévale en Méditerranée*, Athènes, 2003, p. 571-85.

of the Peninsula well into the 7th century. Finally, in contrast with this domestic architecture, there are some larger buildings of the aristocracy³⁴.

In contrast to other European areas and contemporary rural settlements, both old Roman villas and new ones, no buildings of wood and clay have been discovered in the major cities remaining, at least not in a general or extended way³⁵, possibly because of the greater reuse of Roman structures and materials available. The only domestic structures built basically with posts and clay and wood can be found in settlements that were not initially urban but which ended up as urban centres towards the end of the Middle Ages, such as Vitoria and Oviedo (see below).

In summary, in the town planning of the early medieval centuries we can see processes of transformation and changes in the model of ancient cities similar to those in other areas of the post-Roman Mediterranean, where more deteriorated cities predominate while others emerge or were revitalised at some time during this period³⁶. Rather than a crisis and the total disappearance of urban life, we can classify this as a partial break, which did not affect all thriving cities in the previous period in the same way, or classical services, functions and buildings, leading to partial modifications which often differed within the same city. In general terms we can define a new classification and hierarchy of cities, with a main group of central places which bring together and maintain a large amount of hierarchical functions, whether political, military, religious or economic (fiscal, handicraft and commercial), with a high level of aristocratic constructions, especially episcopal, such as Barcelona, Valencia, Tarragona, Cartagena, Toledo, Mérida, Lugo and Braga, to give just some significant examples, another more numerous group of secondary centres, which maintained only a few of these characteristics (Gerona, Ampurias, *Eio-Tolmo*, *Begastri*, Peña Amaya, Astorga and León, among others with less archaeological documentation), while others are centres with no evident urban profile but with some central functions that

34 S. F. Ramallo Asensio, *Arquitectura*, cited n.6.

35 A. Azkarate, J. A. Quirós Castillo, *Arquitectura doméstica altomedieval en la Península Ibérica. Reflexiones a partir de las excavaciones arqueológicas de la catedral de Santa María de Vitoria-Gasteiz, País Vasco*, in *Archeologia Medievale*, 28, 2001, p. 25-60; A. Vigil-Escalera Guirado, *Cabañas de época visigoda: evidencias arqueológicas del sur de Madrid. Tipología, elementos de datación y discusión*, in *Archivo Español de Arqueología*, 73, 2000, p. 223-252; J. A. Quirós Castillo (ed.), *The archaeology of early medieval villages in Europe*, Universidad del País Vasco, 2009.

36 G. P. Brogiolo, S. Gelichi, *La città*, cited n. 8; A. Augenti (ed.), *Le città italiane tra la Tarda Antichità e l'Alto Medioevo*, Firenze, 2006; S. Gelichi, *La città in Italia tra VI e VIII secolo: riflessioni dopo un trentennio di dibattito archeologico*, in A. García, R. Izquierdo, L. Olmo, D. Peris (eds.), *Espacios urbanos*, cited n. 4, p. 65-85.

differentiate them from rural villages, such as the rural sees (*Egara*-Tarrasa, Ampurias, *Aquae Flaviae*-Chaves, Dumio, etc) and military centres and forts, *oppida*, *castella* and *castra* that are recorded in Visigothic times in the whole land and which in some cases enjoyed similar characteristics to secondary cities as far as walls, prestigious buildings and taking part in commercial networks for prestigious items are concerned (e.g. Ramis, Roc d'Enclar, Peña Amaya, Bernardos). However, not all of them were consolidated as urban centres in the following period after the critical situation in the 8th century.

The early medieval Hispanic cities (from the 8th to the 10th centuries)

**The north of the Peninsula in early medieval times: The impact of the Islamic conquest in cities*

In this area of the Peninsula, the 8th century is a notable breaking point with the past as the Arab-Berber conquest, which started in 711, worsened the crisis that had been evident in the last decades of the 7th century in the Visigothic state, and thereby the functional and material deterioration of its cities, which had started in the previous centuries. The collapse of the state apparatus broke up territorial articulation, contributing to great regional fragmentation and a significant rupture in the communication between its administrative centres, and between said centres and the rural surroundings. Not only did the crisis in Visigothic state organisation affect political and territorial administration, including territorial religious organisation in episcopal and parochial sees³⁷, but also economic, productive, fiscal and commercial structures, which were dismantled to a greater or lesser extent in conquered territory. Of these, the ones which remained in the subsequent times under the Umayyad Caliphate were progressively transformed or 'Islamised' – as recorded in other parts of this book – reordered and integrated into the administrative and economic apparatus of al-Andalus, although the Christian population retained some of its organisational traits in cities, such as certain episcopal sees and properties belonging to the Church and the aristocracy. For its part, the north of the Peninsula was profoundly affected, in both political and administrative disorganisation and in the economic structures of the countryside and cities.

³⁷ Of the 66 episcopal sees from Visigothic times that survived into the 7th century, in the 8th those in the north disappeared (8 in Gallaecia, 18 in Tarraconense); most were not restored until the 10th century while some of them disappeared permanently, and others were moved to new sees, such as *Iria* (transferred to Santiago de Compostela), *Auca*, *Rodas* and *Egara* (Albelda Chronicle XII, ed. J. Gil Fernández *et al.* (eds.), *Crónicas Asturianas*, Oviedo, 1985).

The impact of the Islamic conquest was probably hardly noticed at first in terms of the destruction of walls and buildings, as most cities surrendered, neither for the total abandoning of cities due to mass desertion of the inhabitants³⁸; it is said that certain major cities were abandoned, like Tarragona and Braga, as the bishops and people fled, although this situation was not usual. The greatest effects were due to the disorganisation of state and municipal administration, including the authorities' control over urban life and fiscal control over agricultural production. The flight of aristocrats and clergy who were hostile to their new governors, the loss of political power because of the installation of Muslim governors, and the confiscation of properties had greater effects on the governing class's capacity to maintain authority over both urban services and fiscal properties in the countryside. All this contributed to worsening urban deterioration, the lack of maintenance of public and private buildings, walls, churches, services and infrastructures, although not necessarily the mass abandoning or depopulation of cities and entire regions, as many historians have argued, accepting the catastrophic narratives in the literary sources quite literally.

As is well known, C. Sánchez-Albornoz's theory about the depopulation of the valley of the Duero was based on what is to be found in the Asturian chronicles, written in the late 9th century and the early 10th, on the desertification of the north of the Peninsula as a consequence of the Umayyad and Asturian military campaigns, and on the lack of documents and written sources for the region until the late 9th or 10th century. As has already been analysed in numerous historical, archaeological and philological studies, what happened was not the total desertion of cities and the countryside but rather the collapse of the governing aristocracy and of the centres that issued such written documents, which are not seen again in cathedrals, monasteries and royal courts until the late 9th or 10th century, when political, social and economic control was restored. Historians still call this the 'repopulation', a term coined by Sánchez-Albornoz as the response to 'depopulation'³⁹.

The administrative and economic disorganisation must therefore have had a greater effect on the continuity of urban and rural life than the actual Islamic conquest itself, or the subsequent raids by both armies, the Umayyad and the Asturian, whose purpose was both to obtain booty and impede the control,

38 P. Chalmeta, *Invasión e Islamización. La sumisión de Hispania y la formación de al-Andalus*, Madrid, 1994.

39 Discussion in J. A. Gutiérrez González, *Fortificaciones y feudalismo en el origen y formación del Reino leonés. Siglos IX al XIII*, Valladolid, 1995; *Id.*, *Dominio político y territorio en la formación del Feudalismo en el norte peninsular. Propuestas y reflexiones*, in *V Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española*, Valladolid, 2001, p. 629-655, among others.

occupation and reorganisation of the land under dispute in the north of the Peninsula, not the total emptying of the region⁴⁰. Sánchez-Álbornoz and other historians interpreted the stories of the Christian chronicles much too literally, as they did with those narrating how Alfonso I emptied the cities in the mid-8th century, took the population to Asturias and laid the fields waste, and how his successors, in the 9th and 10th centuries, took over and populated the cities and fields again, after finding them empty, churches destroyed, etc⁴¹. It is well-known how the court chroniclers of Alfonso III exaggerated the devastating effects of the crisis with a catastrophic vision in order to legitimise the reign of the Asturian kings as successors of the Gothic monarchs in their taking over cities and lands, together with the new property rights of the repopulating aristocracy, underlining the fact that the fields, forts, towns and cities were empty and had no owners⁴².

It is highly expressive that the Asturian chronicles describe the conquest of almost thirty cities, such as Lugo, Tuy, Porto, *Anegia*, Braga, Viseu, Chaves, Águeda, Ledesma, Salamanca, Zamora, Ávila, Astorga, León, Simancas, Saldaña, Amaya, Segobia, Osmá, Sepúlveda, Arganza, *Clunia*, Mave, *Auca*, *Veleia*, Miranda, Revenga, Carbonera, *Abeica*, Cenicero and Alesanco by Alfonso I in c. 740, together with castra and their villages, *castris cum uillis et uiculis suis*, which were in Muslim hands⁴³. Some of these had been episcopal sees in late Roman or Visigothic times in surviving cities in the north-west (Lugo, Tuy, Porto, Braga, Viseu, Chaves, Salamanca, Ávila, Astorga, León, Segovia, Osmá, *Auca*), hence the name *ciuitates*; of the rest most were proto-urban fortified centres in the north plateau and the Duero valley (Amaya, *Anegia*, Ledesma, Zamora, Simancas, Saldaña, Mave-Cildá), decadent cities (*Clunia*, *Veleia*) and lesser non-urban settlements in the Ebro valley, together with the villages that depended on the castra. All this makes up a very expressive image of the perception of the early medieval urban and rural landscape in the north and north-west of the Peninsula.

However, other interpretations are possible as opposed to this catastrophist reading of the written sources – interpretations of both the same written sources and also archaeological records – that force us to nuance the

40 P. Chalmeta, *Invasión e Islamización*, cited n. 38.

41 J. Gil Fernández *et al.* (eds.), *Crónicas Asturianas*, cited n. 37.

42 J. A. García de Cortázar, *La repoblación del valle del Duero en el siglo IX: del yermo estratégico a la organización social del espacio*, in *Actas del Coloquio de la V Asamblea General de la Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales*, Zaragoza, 1991, p. 15-40; J. A. Gutiérrez González, *Dominio político*, cited n. 39, among others.

43 See J. Gil Fernández *et al.* (eds.), *Crónicas Asturianas*, cited n. 37 (Rot. and Ad. Seb. 14).

rupture theories, at least as far as the radical depopulation of cities and the countryside in the north of the Peninsula is concerned. On the one hand, the chroniclers themselves allude to failed earlier attempts by Asturian monarchs like Ordoño I to take control of cities and fortifications like León and Astorga in the mid-9th century, against the resistance of the Muslim garrisons⁴⁴, which proves the permanence of population with a certain degree of military and administrative organisation to resist the Asturian campaigns. Moreover, other later Arabic sources also refer to the existence of population, who refused to pay tribute to their Umayyad governors even after the Muslim troops and governors had abandoned the cities and forts in the mid-8th century⁴⁵; and the necessary permanence of population and cultivated lands on the northern plains throughout the 8th and 9th centuries, which attracted raiders from both Córdoba and Asturias, providing them with food and plunder⁴⁶; and the failed expeditions to Pamplona and the Basque lands by Charlemagne in the late 8th century, in Muslim or local hands at the time, and the later conquests of cities by Charlemagne (Gerona 785, Barcelona 801) and Catalonian lands between the Pyrenees and the Ebro Valley, where Muslim power lasted longer. Even the late conquest of Tarragona, in the 11th century, makes us doubt the total desertification and abandoning of the city.

What happened in these and in other cities and lands in the north of the Peninsula was not desertions and general abandoning – apart from the *urbes* that had already been abandoned centuries earlier at the end of the Roman period, such as *Bilbilis*, *Contrebia Leukade* and *Veleia* together with other smaller towns – but rather a lack of power and also political, religious and economic disorganisation, with the subsequent partial abandonment of public buildings and aristocratic residences, when the authorities of the Visigothic kingdom fled. Part of the urban population who worked in the industrial and commercial fields must also have abandoned certain centres because of the reduction of their activity sustained by the public authorities, although the productive, commercial and fiscal shrinkage had already taken place before, at the end of the Roman empire and above all towards the end of the Visigothic kingdom. In fact, the role of cities as central places in relation to their functions of political, military and economic government had already decreased in the previous period – the 6th and 7th centuries – and they had been replaced by the new central places such as the *castra*, *oppida* and *castella* that are recorded in Visigothic times, like

44 C. Estepa Díez, *Estructura social*, cited n. 1, p. 114-115.

45 P. Chalmeta, *Invasión e Islamización*, cited n. 38.

46 P. Chalmeta, *El concepto de Tagr*, in *La Marche Supérieur d'Al-Andalus et l'Occident Chrétien*, Madrid, 1991, p. 15-29.

Castroventosa-*Bergidum*, *Coyanza*-Valencia de don Juan, Saldaña, Monte Cildá, Tedeja and Peña Amaya, among many others in the north of the Peninsula, as the result of the significant militarisation of the state apparatus and the exercise of power on a local scale over the territories of the Visigothic kingdom⁴⁷.

However, the above-mentioned texts, together with further archaeological proof of the persistence of population, both local and Berber, in cities and other settlements in the north of the Peninsula, forces us to adopt a different approach to certain historical assertions concerning the start of population organisation in early medieval times in this area. We should mention the archaeological proof related to the Arab-Berber military occupation of cities and fortresses like Lugo, León, Astorga, Zamora, Salamanca, Ávila, Pamplona, Barcelona, Tarragona, Castillo de Bernardos, Tiermes, Gormaz, Iscar etc⁴⁸, consisting of work on the Roman and Visigothic walls (Castillo de Bernardos, Gormaz), occupational constructions (León, Zamora, Pamplona, Barcelona, Bernardos), ceramic and numismatic findings (Lugo, León, Zamora, Pamplona, Barcelona) and Islamic funeral rites and objects in Pamplona⁴⁹.

The feudal conquest over the next centuries did not take place, therefore, in abandoned cities but rather in inhabited places, both old *urbes* (cities and towns)⁵⁰

47 J. A. Gutiérrez González, *Fortificaciones visigodas*, cited n. 28; *Id.*, *Fortificaciones tardoantiguas*, cited n. 28.

48 J. A. Gutiérrez González, *Conquista y ocupación islámica del Norte Peninsular*, in *Cristãos e Muçulmanos na Idade Média Peninsular. Encontros e Desencontros*, Lisboa, 2011, p. 105-120; J. Zozaya, H. Larrén, J. A. Gutiérrez González, F. Miguel, *Asentamientos andalusíes en el valle del Duero: el registro cerámico*, in S. Gelichi (ed.), *IX Congresso Internazionale Association Internationale pour l'Etude des Céramiques Médiévales Méditerranéennes*, Venezia, 2012, p. 217-229.

49 J. A. Faro Carballo, M. García-Barberena Unzu, M. Unzu Urmeneta, *La presencia islámica en Pamplona*, in Ph. Sénac (ed.), *Villes et campagnes de Tarraconaise et d'Al-Andalus (VI-XI^e siècles), la transition*, CNRS-Univ. Toulouse-Le Mirail, 2007, p. 97-138; J. A. Gutiérrez González, *Conquista y ocupación*, cited above.

50 The Asturian chroniclers attribute the first conquests and the repair of the walls of León, Tuy, Astorga, Amaya and many other forts to Ordoño I in 855 (Cr. Rot. and Ad Seb. 25; Cr. Alb. XV, II, J. Gil Fernández *et al.* (eds.), *Crónicas Asturianas*, cited n. 37), a highly expressive passage about the main political and military centres remaining to the north of the River Duero (J. A. Gutiérrez González, *Fortificaciones*, cited n. 39). From 866 to 910 Alfonso III consolidated Christian Asturian power over the old cities and episcopal sees of Braga, Porto, Orense, Viseu, Lamego (Cr. Alb. XV, 12, J. Gil Fernández *et al.* (eds.), *Crónicas Asturianas*, cited n. 37), Zamora, Toro, Simancas and Dueñas (Cr. Sampiro), and the forts of Pancorbo, Cellorico and Castrojeriz (*Ibidem*) in the east of Castilla, heavily disputed by the Emir's armies. The consolidation of the frontier on the Duero enabled from this time on urban reorganisation and the peasant and monastic settlement of the northern lands; expansion

and other power centres (*oppida, castella, castra*) and villages (*vici, viculi*), either under Islamic control in the lands of the *marcas* or borders, or in populations with local leadership to the north thereof, whose weakened power structures were not capable of producing new buildings or infrastructures (road, water and cleaning networks) or maintaining existing ones. Hence the scarceness of archaeological indicators and the aspect of urban deterioration in the archaeological record of occupational remains from early medieval times, as we will see below. Despite this, urban life did not completely disappear, as a good number of cities maintained some kind of population and central functions, whether political and military, religious or economic, regardless of how poorly this compared to levels in Roman times. The rare new establishments in early medieval times arose with the same archaeological profile as existing cities, as religious, political or military centres, but clearly differentiated from rural settlements.

** Towards a redefinition of the concept of the city*

Even though a certain level of urban life was maintained, it is equally true that the differences with Roman, Byzantine and Andalusí cities are evident. While the cities of al-Andalus and other Islamic states played a significant role in the state apparatus, both in the administrative, political and military, religious and economic fields, with thriving industry and commerce, and in the high population density and building quality, urban centres in the Christian kingdoms hardly played any major role at all in the production economy compared to their peers in al-Andalus. In essence, the earliest feudalism was by nature opposed to the classical urban system; the heir of the dismemberment of the Roman political and socioeconomic system, it tended more towards ways of collecting private tax on agricultural and family produce, as opposed to the classical, Roman, Byzantine and Islamic production and tax systems. The prevailing social groups, made up of a warlike aristocracy and the Church, obtained their wealth mainly from taxing peasant produce and from war plunder, rather than from urban production and commerce⁵¹. The first feudal

southwards of the Duero took longer (J. A. Gutiérrez González, *Fortificaciones*, cited n. 39, p. 86-134). In the northeast, Carolingian power south of the Pyrenees started in the 9th century (Gerona 785, Barcelona 801); the consolidation thereof was based on many other fortified territorial centres, the new capitals of territorial regions such as Ampurias, *Ausona*, *Vicus*, Urgell, Peralada, Besalú and Roda de Ter, as opposed to the area under Islamic control in the Ebro valley (J. M. Nolla, *La Catalunya Vella*, cited n. 7).

⁵¹ C. Wickham, *The other transition: from the Ancient World to Feudalism*, in *Past and Present*, 103/1, 1984, p. 3-36.

urbes or *ciuitates* therefore show a lower degree of population concentration, and less industrial and trading activity, restricted to the demand of the reduced aristocratic class of warriors and clergy. Urban social diversification was therefore different from Roman and Andalusí times, as there was a small artisanal and trading sector, and a predominantly agrarian profile in the use of land by a population that were mainly servants or dependant on the ruling social groups.

We should not therefore expect to find the same features and functions in early medieval cities as we do in Roman times; the application of the same criteria and the comparison of characteristics has led to the well-known conflicting standpoints in interpretation concerning the continuity or rupture of the classical city⁵². It has been made clear in recent decades that it is most unsuitable to apply the same parameters of urban life whose model is the classical city⁵³; the discussion as to whether there was continuity or rupture has also been shown to be sterile from this point of view, as the same arguments and archaeological data can be used in favour of both points of view⁵⁴.

From the catastrophist points of view, the ruin and deterioration of cities is undeniable; the functions and material forms that characterised Roman cities fell with the Roman Empire. Continuity was impossible for cities that no longer served the same political and economic system, even if the same population, some activities and some public spaces remained from before⁵⁵. The political, social, economic and religious changes also led to transformation in places where the corresponding administrative functions were centralised.

52 See the discussion in P. Delogu, *The rebirth of Rome in the 8th and 9th centuries*, in R. Hodges, B. Hobley (eds.), *The Rebirth of Towns in the West AD 700-1050*, «Council for British Archaeology Research Report 68», Oxford, 1988, p. 32-42; C. Wickham, *La città altomedievale. Una nota sul dibattito in corso*, in *Archeologia Medievale*, 15, 1988, p. 649-651; *Id.*, *Framing*, cited n. 8; G. P. Brogiolo, S. Gelichi, *La città*, cited n. 8, etc.

53 E.g. A. Carandini, *L'ultima civiltà sepolta o del massimo oggetto desueto secondo un archeologo*, in *Storia di Roma, vol. 3: L'età tardoantica. II. I luoghi e la cultura*, Torino, 1993, p. 11-38.

54 See discussion and status in R. Hodges, *Dark Age economics. The origins of towns and trade. AD 600-1000*, London, 1982; R. Hodges, B. Hobley, *The Rebirth*, cited n. 52; R. Hodges, D. Withouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne and the origins of Europe. Archaeology and the Pirenne thesis*, Oxford, 1983; B. Ward-Perkins, *Continuants, catastrophists and the town of post-Roman Northern Italy*, «Papers of the British School at Rome 45», 1996, p. 157-165; G. P. Brogiolo, S. Gelichi, *La città*, cited n. 8; C. Wickham, *Framing*, cited n. 8; S. Gelichi, *La città*, cited n. 36.

55 G. P. Brogiolo, *Problemi archeologici della continuità urbana in Italia settentrionale tra tardoantico e altomedioevo, Colloquio hispano-italiano de arqueologia medieval*, Granada, 1992, p. 129-132; S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *De la civitas*, cited n.6.

Hence there has been a search for new and different parameters and criteria to find and define medieval urban life, whether from the criteria of Biddle⁵⁶, more valid for emerging cities and *wicks* in the north of Europe from the 10th century onwards than for early medieval Mediterranean cities, where the emphasis has been placed more on social and economic transformations, such as population density and diversified manufacturing activities, different from rural activities⁵⁷.

More recently attempts have been made to overcome the difficulties involved in searching for criteria suitable for early medieval urban centres, different from those in ancient cities, and for other non-urban centres, such as some castles, monasteries and rural sees, which also concentrated economic activities (handicraft, markets or fiscal centralisation) but were not consolidated as urban centres. These new parameters revolve around the different use of public spaces with the creation of new poles of attraction, the effect of Christianisation in the reorganisation of urban space, especially in episcopal centres and churches with cemeteries; the creation of empty spaces, alternating dark earth, which shows a lack of control and planning, and residential “islands” around religious poles; constructions with technical and simple materials (wood, clay and reused material) and the role played by urban centres in relation to their territory, via the archaeological indicators of manufacturing and commerce⁵⁸.

The new definition and conceptualisation of the early medieval city admits a great variety of cases and evolutionary stages, diverse ways of creating centres that were or were not consolidated as cities (under the initiative of the public authorities, commercial *empori*), generating different categories of cities, whose archaeological traits were always different from those of classical ones.

Medieval cities are different from ancient ones; the topographical and functional structure remains – at least in part – but for a correct conceptualisation and characterisation we should look more at how they are different from rural settlements, and compare their features to the new centres of political and

56 Such as the existence of defence works, planned road networks, city houses, markets, mints, dense population, functions as a central place, legal and judicial autonomy, economic diversification, social differentiation, complex religious organisation (M. Biddle, *Towns*, in D.M. Wilson (ed.), *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, Cambridge, 1976, p. 99-150).

57 C. Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy. Central power and local society 400-1000*, London, 1981; *Id.*, *La città altomedievale*, cited n. 52; *Id.*, *Framing*, cited n. 8; R. Hodges, B. Hobley, *The Rebirth*, cited n. 52; G. P. Brogiolo, S. Gelichi, *La città*, cited n. 8; P. Arthur, *Naples. From Roman Town to City-State*, Roma, 2002; J. Schofield, H. Steuer, *Urban Settlement*, cited n. 8; S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *De la civitas*, cited n.6 and L. Olmo Enciso, *Ciudad y procesos*, cited n. 6.

58 E.g. G. P. Brogiolo, S. Gelichi, *La città*, cited n. 8; G. P. Brogiolo, N. Christie, N. Gauthier (eds.), *Towns and their Territories between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Age*, Leiden-Boston-Cologne, 2000; S. Gelichi, *La città*, cited n. 36.

military power, such as fortifications and new sites with profound religious significance. Specifically urban political, religious and economic activities were concentrated in early medieval Hispanic cities and are not frequently recorded in contemporary villages, or in centres of power (castles, royal centres, episcopal sees and monasteries), which might bring some of them together but not create a consistent, complex and diversified fabric. In the light of the data available today, it is clear that there was no continuity from the Roman to the medieval city, neither in the north of Spain nor in other post-Roman regions⁵⁹. But the trend nowadays is to observe the transformations and the new functions with their own archaeological indicators, which leads us to consider a new definition of the city, different from the classical model, and based on population density and specific economic activity (production and trading) different from the rural world, in both post-Roman regions and in the north of Europe⁶⁰.

**The early medieval Hispanic cities (from the 8th to the 10th centuries) – archaeological traits*

The destructuring trend that was emphasised in the 7th century continued, and even increased, in the following centuries (from the 8th to the 10th) when the cities of the northern Christian kingdoms hardly showed any signs of urban vitality that could be compared to classical times or to contemporary cities in al-Andalus.

The early medieval cities in the Christian kingdoms in the Peninsula showed the same signs of deterioration as in previous times, made worse by the political and military crisis in the 8th century. The written sources present a desolate and catastrophist panorama, with the Muslim conquest, the flight of the population (Visigothic authorities, bishops and the common people), campaigns by the Emirs, Asturians and Charlemagne, the retreat of the Berber troops and other warlike happenings. The vast majority of Visigothic sees disappeared, as the

59 R. Francovich, *Alcune tendenze passate e recenti dell'archeologia medievale*, in *Coloquio hispano-italiano de arqueologia medieval*, Granada, 1992, p. 15-25; G. P. Brogiolo (ed.), *Archeologia urbana in Lombardia: valutazione dei depositi archeologici e inventario dei vincoli*, Modena, 1984; *Id.*, *Problemi archeologici*, cited n. 55.

60 R. Hodges, B. Hobley, *The Rebirth*, cited n. 52; R. Francovich, *The hinterlands of early medieval towns: the transformation of the countryside in Tuscany*, in J. Henning (ed.), *Post Roman Towns, Trade and Settlements in Europe and Byzantium*, vol. 1 *The Heirs of the Roman West*, Berlin, 2007, p. 135-64; S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *De la civitas*, cited n.6; J. Schofield, A. Vince, *Medieval Towns*, cited n. 8; J. Schofield, H. Steuer, *Urban Settlement*, cited n. 8; C. Wickham, *Framing*, cited n. 8, S. Gelichi, *La città*, cited n. 36.

bishops fled northwards to sees such as Lugo and Mondoñedo, and they were not restored until the late 9th century or later. Based on the lack of written sources, most historians concluded that there was a political and administrative vacuum, and a population vacuum in cities and villages, not only in the Duero valley but also in large regions such as Navarra, Aragón and southern Galicia. Even today it is common to accept a total lack of urban life given the lack of new written sources until the late 9th century onwards, coinciding with the advance of the conquest and the ‘repopulation’ or take-over of Asturian kings in the north-west and Charlemagne in the north-east. It is possible that the political rupture of the state apparatus and the flight of civil and ecclesiastical rulers led to a significant decline in population in many northern cities, and consequently to the abandonment of administrative and religious buildings, together with aristocratic residences and their servants. We can even accept the abandonment of military centres (*castra*), but it is difficult to accept the total depopulation of all the cities described in the written sources as deserted when kings, counts, lords and monasteries took them over a long time afterwards (e.g. Tarragona and the cities mentioned in the Asturian chronicles).

Apart from the proof mentioned above against this, there are further arguments: the material composition of these supposedly abandoned places is not substantially different from that of others that were not considered abandoned; mainly the lack of proof of monumental construction (buildings, streets, infrastructures), houses built of very simple materials and with very simple techniques, and large open spaces for growing crops. However, the negative argument cannot be taken as conclusive or exclusive for abandoned cities, villages, castles and monasteries, as there is a similar lack of documents – written and material – for many other urban and rural settlements in later times, and nobody argues that they were completely abandoned.

The archaeological record in these cities is composed of poor-quality buildings and a simple and non-standard material repertory, typical of a population the majority of whom were non-aristocratic and somewhat “ruralised”; their constructions and business activities were more similar to those in the rural world than in ancient cities. Even in capital or leading cities (such as León, Astorga, Pamplona and Barcelona) recent archaeology has shown a poor material profile, with hardly any activity that could be classified as urban. There are just a few palace and religious buildings, amidst extensive but precarious housing and wide open spaces, previously built up but now used for dark earth for vegetable gardens, patios and corrals.

However, despite the impoverishment and deterioration of urban life, a good number of ancient cities survived, in fact the majority of those that had existed in the previous centuries. We should therefore nuance the catastrophist

and pessimistic vision. Not all early medieval cities were abandoned and the network was not broken up. What was produced was a vacuum of power and control in former Visigothic cities, as also occurred in the successive Asturian, Navarre and Carolingian kingdoms. The impoverishment and even the flight of the elite classes, who ceased to promote the building of monuments, urban manufacturing and commercial exchange, led to a lessening in archaeological visibility of the urban population.

**New patterns and ways in urban formation*

From the 8th and 9th centuries onwards both surviving cities and new ones acquired certain common traits and characteristics that differentiated them from the classical city by different means. Among the most significant models, we find on the one hand ancient cities that had survived from Roman times, with walled monumental enclosures physically defining urban areas inside the walls and those outside, where religious centres had sprung up (episcopal, funerary and martyrs' churches with cemeteries). Among these there are, on the one hand, cases showing greater rupture and abandonment, like Tarraco and Ampurias, where there was significant abandonment inside the walls and religious poles outside, not to mention the new political centre around the fortress of San Martí; while on the other hand, political and religious centres took over and revitalised the space inside the walls, as happened in Barcelona, where the greatest urban dynamics were to be found in the north-east sector around the bishop's and Count's residences, while in the rest of the city there were empty spaces and simpler dwellings. Military functions generated fortified extensions, such as the Frankish enclosure of Gerona. New buildings were founded around poles of religious (like in Compostela and Oviedo) or military attraction (such as Tuy, Zamora, Burgos and Nájera), initially non-urban, where economic and population growth (creating new quarters and extramural burgs) and the progressive endowment of functions (bishoprics and markets), infrastructures and council institutions consolidated them as cities later, in the 10th and 11th centuries, while at the same time some previous episcopal (*Egara*-Tarrasa) and military centres became decadent (Amaya, Tedeja, Bernardos, etc), and were not consolidated as cities.

Early medieval cities were founded or 'refounded' with a different meaning from classical cities, as centres of political, military and religious power, but not economic (apart from fiscal) power, at least initially. It was only growth from the aggregation of salesmen, craftsmen and others (servants, militia and clergy) who created quarters or *burgs*, and contributed to the generation of an urban profile. These signs of growth appeared first (in the 9th and 10th centuries) in

north-east Catalonia, which led to an economic boost in places with an ancient tradition (Gerona, Barcelona), while growth came later in the north-west: León in the 10th century when it became the capital of the kingdom of Asturias and León, suburbs or exterior quarters sprang up, but with an agricultural profile; the *vicus* or burg, with a trading profile, was only consolidated in the 11th century, boosted by the Pilgrims' Road to Santiago, as in other towns along the different pilgrimage routes (Jaca, Pamplona, Logroño, Nájera, Burgos and Compostela). In the 11th century, León still showed ancient archaeological trends (dark earth, vegetable gardens, empty plots of land, corrals, and pit silos, characteristic of previous unplanned growth).

** Cities with an ancient heritage and new cities*

Ancient heritage is evident in cities like Lugo, Braga, León, Astorga, Pamplona, Ampurias, Gerona, Barcelona and Tarragona, the main regional capitals that maintained administrative, military and episcopal functions in Visigothic times. The late Roman walled precincts were maintained, as were some monuments and public buildings, as baths, temples, government buildings or amphitheatres, unused and deteriorated, but partially reused. The water networks, forums, streets and non-aristocratic housing were more deteriorated and given very different uses from in late antiquity, such as simple housing, pit silos, work spaces for metals and crop growing.

Many other secondary or semi-urban agglomerates and smaller cities (*fora, vici*) had disappeared, because they had not managed to obtain an episcopal see or had lost it in Visigothic times (e.g. *Aquae Flaviae*, the see of bishop Hydacius in the 5th century, *Auca, Uxama, Rodas*); likewise, a large number of secondary Roman conglomerates that survived into Visigothic times but did not prosper as political or commercial centres in the Early Middle Ages were abandoned or almost so (Gijón, *Lancia, Iuliobriga, Flaviobriga, Tiermes, Veleia, Contrebia, Bilbilis* among many others from Galicia to Catalonia).

Among the main cities with quality early medieval archaeological records we could highlight Gerona, Barcelona and Ampurias in the north-east, Pamplona in the north and Santiago de Compostela, Oviedo, León and Zamora in the north-west.

The North-East: from episcopal cities to Carolingian cities

Roman cities on the Mediterranean coast in the north-east of the Peninsula have the most available archaeological records to aid us in understanding the different processes of evolution of ancient cities with diverse solutions:

continuity in late Roman cities and transformation in Visigothic times (from the 5th to the 8th centuries), especially the creation and monumentalisation of episcopal centres, whether inside the walls (Barcelona) or first outside and then inside (Tarraco in the 6th and 7th centuries, Gerona in the 9th); a reduction in the area occupied and significant residential abandonment of the Roman city (Ampurias), replaced by various different surrounding centres: episcopal centres, martyrs' basilicas, cemeteries, forts and Counts' palaces in the port centre of San Martí de Ampurias; and the creation of rural sees with no preceding urban centre (*Egara-Tarrasa*). The cases of Gerona, Barcelona and Ampurias can be taken as paradigmatic examples of the evolution of Roman cities in the early Middle Ages in Hispania.

Gerona is one of the best studied and most representative cases of the transformation of an ancient city into a medieval one (Figs. 2 and 3)⁶¹. The late Roman walls were still standing in late antiquity; the only documented construction *ex novo* is the *comes'* palace (c. 500) in the old forum area in the west, near the wall and north gateway, next to the *episcopium* outside the walls, in the martyr's church of St Feliu (6th or 7th century). Its military and political importance in the early Middle Ages was defined by Carolingian control of the area against the Muslims. The Carolingians took it in 785 and created a border or buffer zone, the *marca hispana*, together with the castles of Ullastret, Besalú, Peralada and *Ausona-Cardona*. The Frankish occupation was felt in 803 with the construction of the *castell de Gironella*, a 5,000 m² extension to the Roman walls (gaining 10% of the urban surface area) on the northern side, like a castle with towers on the eastern side, and which became the emblem of the city's strength⁶². Under the Carolingians (in the 9th and 10th centuries) it acquired a new significance as a city, different from the classical role: its major importance was political and military, the territorial capital of the county (the same as Ampurias, Barcelona, *Ausona-Cardona*, Vic, Peralada, Besalú, Roda de Ter, capitals of other counties or territorial districts with a fortified city, but which were not cities in the classical sense). In a way counties, with their fortified political and military centre, substituted the Roman *civitates*; they were not called *civitates*, a term reserved for old urban centres with late antique bishoprics⁶³. In Carolingian times the old *episcopium* was still outside the city walls; halfway through the 9th century a new one was built inside in a

61 J. Canal, E. Canal, J. M. Nolla, J. Sagrera, *El sector nord de la ciutat de Girona. De l'inici al segle XIV*, Girona, 2000; *Id.*, *Girona, de Carlemany al feudalisme (785-1057). El trànsit de la ciutat antiga a l'època medieval*, Girona, 2003; J. M. Nolla *et al.*, *Del fórum a la plaça*, cited n. 7; J. M. Nolla, *La Catalunya Vella*, cited n. 7.

62 J. Canal, E. Canal, J. M. Nolla, J. Sagrera, *Girona*, cited n. 61.

63 J. M. Nolla, *La Catalunya Vella*, cited n. 7.

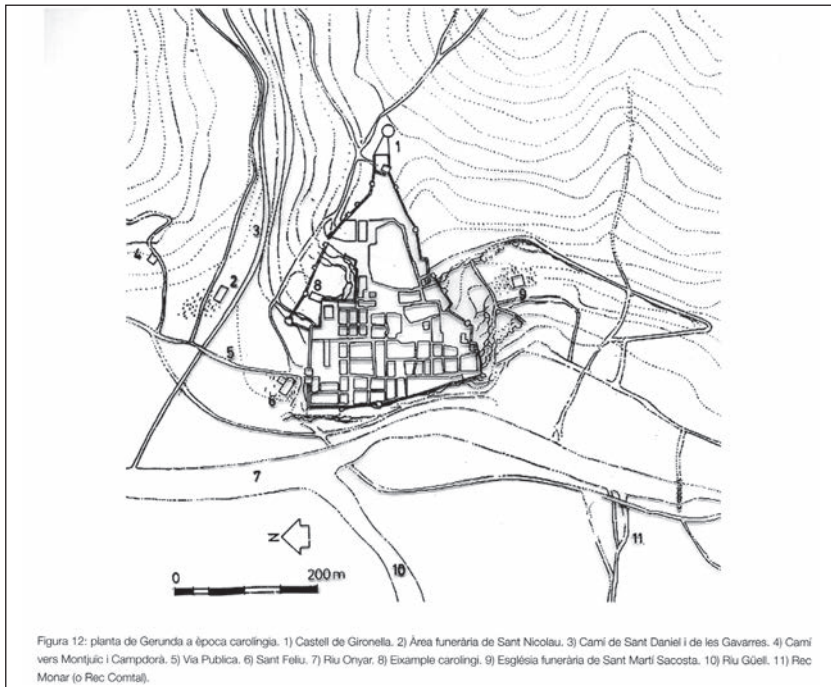


Figure 2. Gerona: layout of the early medieval city (J. M. Nolla et al., *Del fórum a la plaça*, cited n. 7).

privileged space, the new co-cathedral, built on the site of the old Roman temple. The city thus had two cathedrals, San Félix outside the walls and Santa María inside, although in the 10th century the latter became the sole cathedral while San Félix became a dependent abbey. At this time there was a significant remodelling or 'reurbanization' of the space around the cathedral, connecting the area inside the walls with the Carolingian extension by means of a public space and new street to the new gate that joined the two areas, together with the terracing, streets and clergy buildings, and a large storage house with large silo-pits (the cathedral *cellarium* to store harvests)⁶⁴; all this formed part of the episcopal quarter. A new palace was also built for the Count (recorded in recent excavations) near a gateway with another large storehouse on the ground floor. In this case it shows fiscal control of agricultural production by the Count's authorities⁶⁵. From the

64 J. M. Nolla et al., *Del fórum a la plaça*, cited n. 7, p. 64-91, 183-205.

65 *Ibidem*, p. 120-140, 183-205.

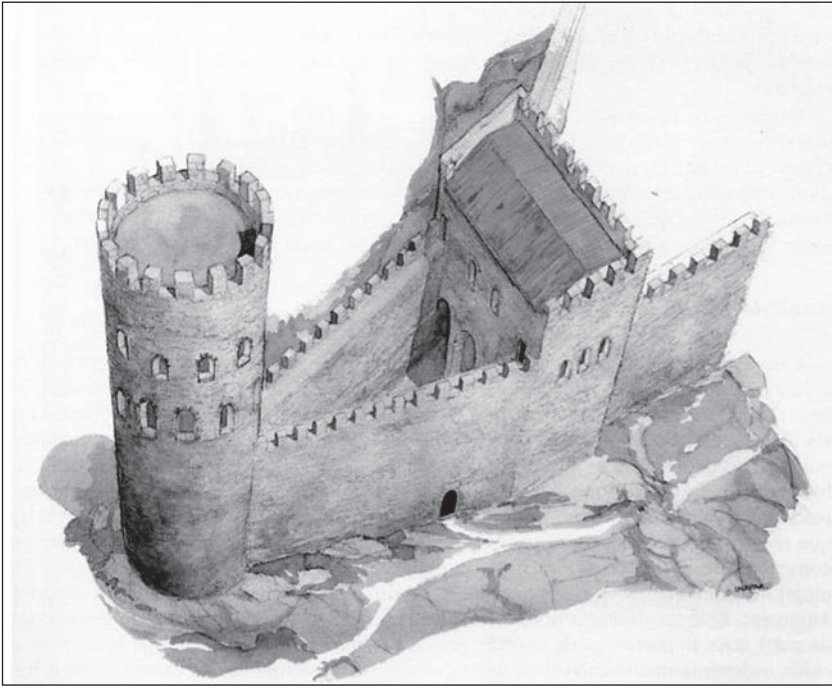


Figure 3. Gerona: graphic reconstruction of the Carolingian enlargement (J. M. Nolla et al., *Del fórum a la plaça*, cited n. 7).

10th century onwards urban development continued, transforming and reusing structures from the old forum space, building new churches (Sant Feliu, which also had a *cellarium* inside), the small chapels of Santa María de les Puelles and Sant Genís (possibly a palace chapel?) and the market area, near the cathedral steps. The old crypto porticos of the forum were then converted into *cellaria*. A new bishop's residence was also built in the 10th century, with a hospital for pilgrims and the poor. A synagogue is mentioned from the late 9th century, proof of the important Jewish quarter that was consolidated in the medieval city. In the second half of the 10th century the first Benedictine monastery was built outside the walls, Sant Pere de Galligants, on the site of an old Roman villa. Later, in the 11th century, the city underwent dynamic growth, with new suburbs, the new cathedral, a bishop's residence and other Romanesque buildings, such as the baths⁶⁶.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*; J. Canal, E. Canal, J. M. Nolla, J. Sagrera, *Girona*, cited n. 61; *Id.*, *El sector nord*, cited n. 61.

Barcelona is also a Roman city that was transformed into an episcopal city in the Late Antiquity (Figs. 4 and 5)⁶⁷. From the 5th to the 8th centuries it covered the same surface area as the Roman city (10 ha), although there were significant planning changes: public streets and spaces had been privatised as early as the fourth century, the forum was taken apart and plundered, new religious buildings and a necropolis sprang up in the *suburbium*, although the main transformation was the transfer of the nerve centre from the forum to the *episcopium*, in the north-east of the walled area. This became the new focus of religious, political and fiscal activity, the seat of political power (*comes civitatis*), and the royal seat for the Visigoths in the 5th century⁶⁸. In the late 6th century bishops held great power in tax collection (as can be deduced from the text *De fisco Barcinonensi* dating from 592) in the reign of Reccared. The episcopal centre lay at the far north-east of the forum in the 4th and 5th centuries, taking over part of the Roman road, on the site of an aristocratic *domus*⁶⁹. In the second half of the 6th century (CI4 AMS dated to 540-600)⁷⁰, coinciding with the designation of Barcelona as a royal seat, there was significant renovation, enlargement and the monumentalisation of the episcopal centre: reforms in the basilica, baptistery, reception hall and bishop's residence; a new martyrs' church (with relics under the altar) and a cruciform episcopal chapel with a portico and burial ground, and a new palace building – the residence of the civil governor, the *comes civitatis* – with a U shaped layout and new baths⁷¹. Abundant monumental material was reused in late antique buildings. All this clearly shows that the deterioration of classical structures, such as the forum, *domus* and handicraft workshops was accompanied and even caused by the rise of others, such as the episcopal centre, by means of a complex and planned construction programme, which broke away from the classical model⁷². By way of contrast, significant commercial and port activity was maintained, and products from

67 Barcelona in the Late Antiquity is the subject of exemplary archaeological studies in J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero (ed.), *De Barcino*, cited n. 9.

68 G. Ripoll López, *La transformació de la ciutat de Barcino durant l'antiguitat tardana*, in J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero (ed.), *De Barcino*, cited n. 9, p. 34-43.

69 No doubt by means of a donation from an aristocratic family that would thereby link an ecclesiastical career as a way to preserve its influence and properties (Ch. Bonnet, J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero, *Origen i evolució del conjunt episcopal de Barcino: dels primers temps cristians a l'època visigòtica*, in J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero (ed.), *De Barcino*, cited n. 9, p. 74).

70 *Ibidem*, p. 80-92.

71 *Ibidem*, p. 74-93; J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero (ed.), *De Barcino*, cited n. 9, p. 103-104.

72 J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero (ed.), *De Barcino*, cited n. 9, p.100-101.

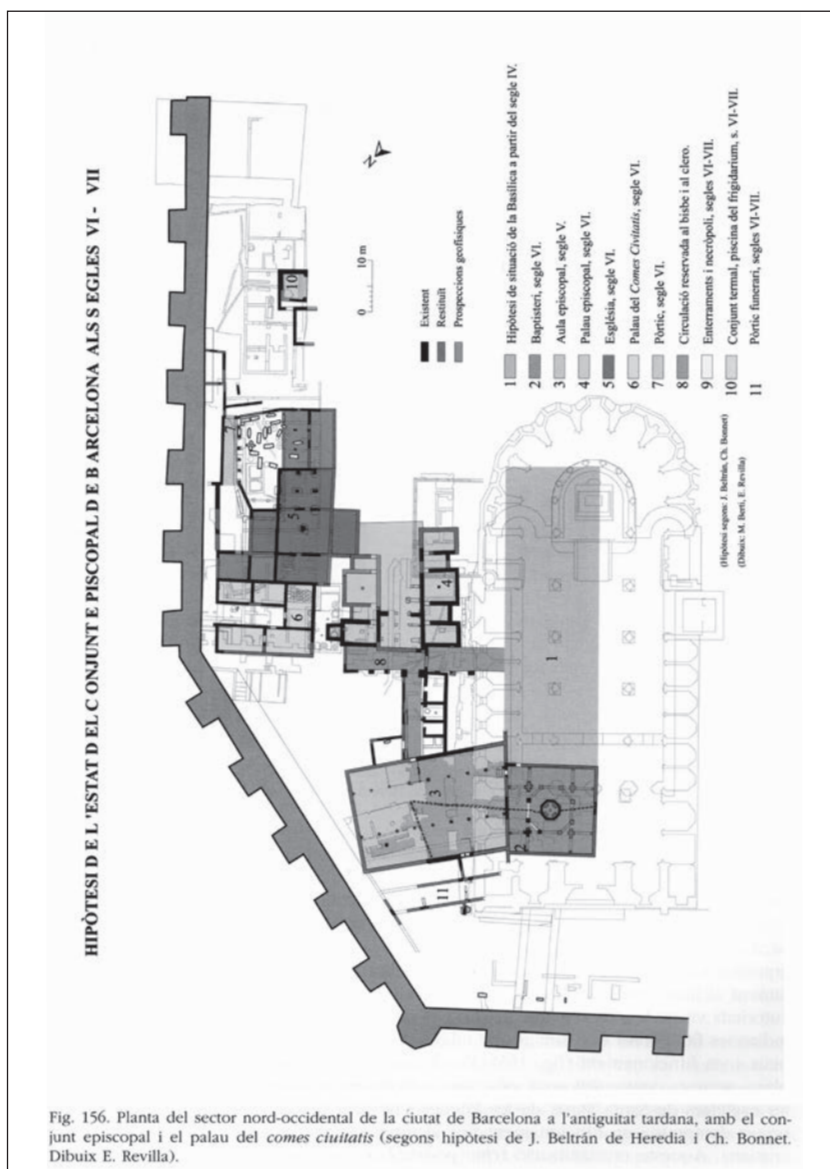


Figure 4. Barcelona: layout of the late antique episcopal palace complex (J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero, Continuitat i canvi en la topografia urbana. Els testimonis arqueològics del quadrant nord-est de la ciutat, in Id. (ed.), De Barcino a Barcinona (Segles I-VII). Les restes arqueològiques de la plaça del Rei de Barcelona, Barcelona, 2001, p. 96-107).

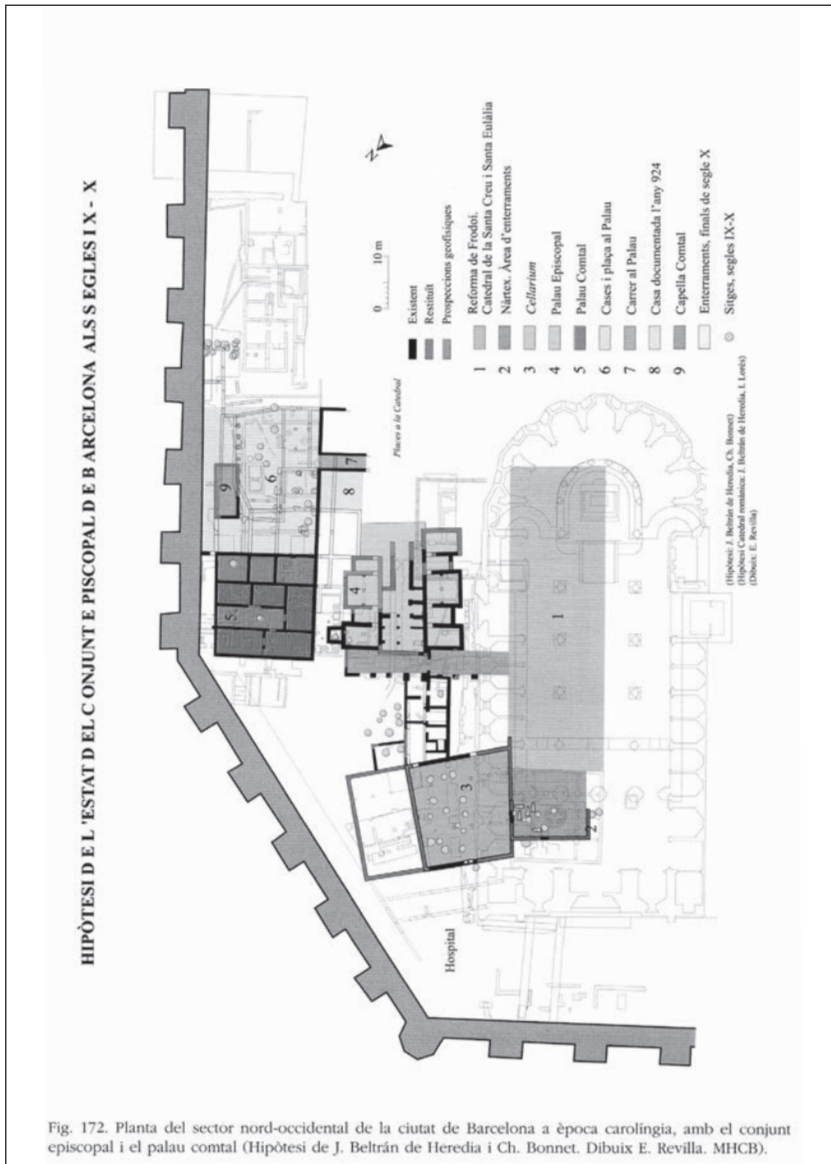


Figure 5. Barcelona: layout of the early medieval episcopal palace complex (J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero, Continuitat i canvi en la topografia urbana. Els testimonis arqueològics del quadrant nord-est de la ciutat, in Id. (ed.), De Barcino a Barcinona (Segles I-VII). Les restes arqueològiques de la plaça del Rei de Barcelona, Barcelona, 2001, p. 96-107).

the Mediterranean (pottery, metal, marble) were imported throughout the Visigothic period⁷³.

The Muslim conquest took place in the early 8th century. Archaeological evidence of structures and Andalusí pottery and bones has been found from the 8th and 9th centuries on the site of the old baths of a Roman *domus*⁷⁴. Not much is known about the impact of the Islamic occupation, although we could imagine that it did not involve traumatic upheavals, as the city capitulated by agreement. The Carolingian conquest (801) consolidated its importance as the centre of Christian territories against Islam. The city thus preserved the role of the late ancient city, governed by both bishops and Counts, maintaining the same urban characteristics and buildings as in the previous phase, with certain reforms in the bishop's residence, the audience room (now a storehouse or *cellarium*), the baptistery (converted into a cemetery), the cathedral (located under the Gothic cathedral, but not excavated); there were also reforms in the episcopal palace – just as in Gerona –; a large storehouse was built with 15 silos (pits) joined to the cathedral, in the old audience hall in the *episcopium*. The old cruciform church disappeared with this rebuilding, and was replaced by a new chapel and empty spaces, with dark earth and vineyards next to houses concentrated around the cathedral and the Count's residence, generating "urban islands" like those recorded in cities in Italy⁷⁵.

Ampurias had already deteriorated in late Roman times – the greater part of the *Neapolis* (the colonial city of the Phocaeen *Emporion*) and the Roman city were abandoned (Fig. 6)⁷⁶. From the 5th to the 7th centuries, some parts of the city were used as a necropolis, such as the old *agora*, and the transfer of the administrative centre to Sant Martí, the old colonial *Palaiapolis*, where the religious functions were also concentrated; it was an episcopal see from the early 6th century to at least the 8th, although the situation is under discussion: the location has been proposed at Sant Martí, although no archaeological remains of the church, baptistery or palace have been discovered⁷⁷, or at Santa Margarida, one of the late antique churches in the suburbs of the city, with

73 *Ibidem*, p. 106.

74 J. E. García Biosca, N. Miró i Alaix, E. Revilla Cubero, *Un context paleoandalusí a l'excavació de l'Arxiu Administratiu de Barcelona (1998)*, in *II Congrés d'Arqueologia Medieval i Moderna a Catalunya*, Barcelona, 2003, vol. I, p. 363-380.

75 *Ibidem*; J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero, A. Nicolau i Martín, *Barcelona*, cited n. 7.

76 See a complete and exemplary study in X. Aquilué (ed.), *Intervencions arqueològiques*, cited n. 7.

77 *Ibidem*, p. 389-422.

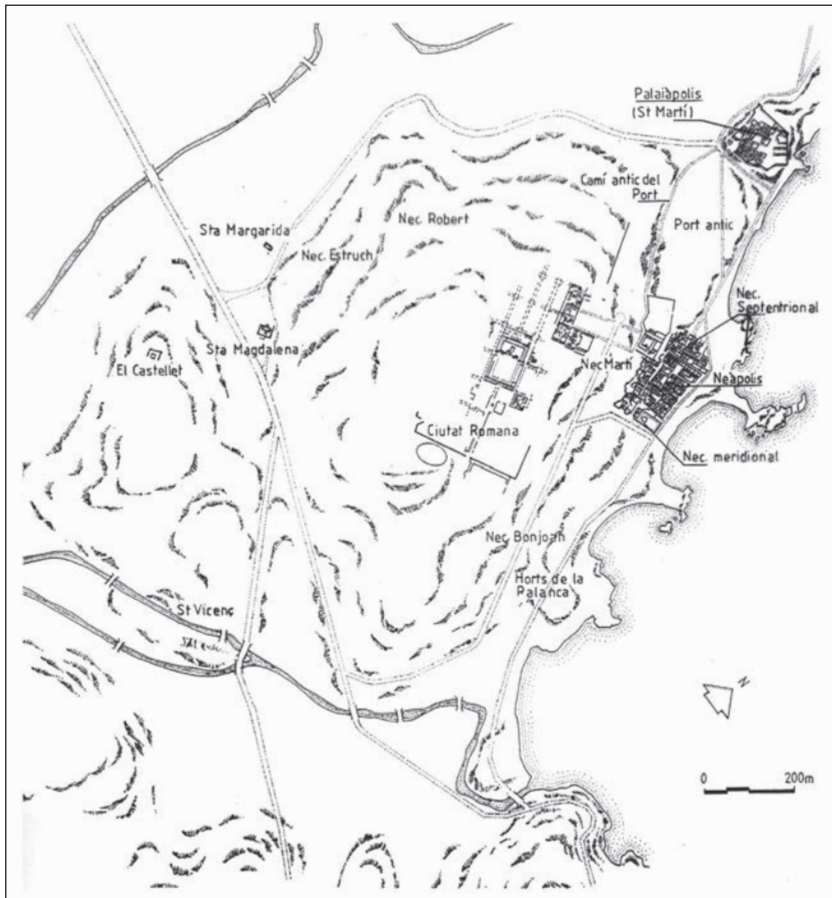


Figure 6. Ampurias: layout of the city in the late antique and early medieval period (J. M. Nolla, *La Catalunya Vella*, cited n. 7).

structures, burials and a baptistry from this time⁷⁸. Other burial grounds and churches were also built in the surroundings, with funerary monuments for martyrs. The seat of civil power (*comes civitatis*) was moved to the fortress of Sant Martí d'Empúries (the location is mentioned as *infra muros ciuitatis*). Protected by the fortress was the port, where significant commercial activity continued, as is shown by Mediterranean pottery (*terra sigillata*) and containers: TSA (African Red Slip D), TSGalica grey and orange-coloured, TSPhocaeen, TSHT, African,

⁷⁸ J. M. Nolla, *La Catalunya Vella*, cited n. 7.

Italic, Oriental and South-Hispanic amphorae, for transporting oil, wine and salted products⁷⁹. Not much is known about the urban layout and room structure, although various burials are recorded in ditches and amphorae, although it is not an organised burial ground, some remains of houses with earthen paving and clay homes, as well as silos for storing cereals in pits. The filling and use thereof enabled the identification of remains of food from a varied diet, composed of seafood and cattle⁸⁰; the great importance of cereals in the diet shows control over agricultural production in the land, which was well organised with churches and cemeteries.

Ampurias is a good example of a new model of 'ruralised' city in Late Antiquity, which continued into Carolingian and the Catalan Counts' times (from the 9th to the 11th centuries), in contrast to other towns such as *Egara*, Vic and other episcopal centres which – when they lost status as a see – were not consolidated as early medieval cities⁸¹.

There is no archaeological proof of the Islamic conquest or the earliest times of the Frankish conquest (785). In Carolingian times and under the Catalan Counts (from the 9th to the 11th centuries) the city acquired a significant military role in the *Marca Hispana*, and became the capital of the county of Ampurias until the capital was moved to Castelló d'Empúries halfway through the 11th century. However, little is known archaeologically about the signs of this political power: the castle, the Count's palace and the mint. The church of Sant Martí inside the walls replaced the episcopal centre outside (Fig. 7)⁸². Among the scarce evidence from these times is the ongoing use of the storage silos. In contrast there is no evidence of commerce, pottery is regional (10th-century spatulated grey); diets were similar to in the previous period (bovine, sheep and goats, pork, horse, anatidae, poultry, cereals). When the capital was moved, it lost its role in political administration and remained as a fortified place.

There is good archaeological evidence for Tarragona in Late Antiquity, although very little for the early medieval period⁸³. From the 5th to the 7th centuries there is abandonment, deterioration, filling in for vegetable gardens and new

79 X. Aquilué (ed.), *Intervencions arqueològiques*, cited n. 7.

80 Oysters, fish, deer, rabbit, beef cattle, sheep and goats, pork, horses, anatidae and poultry (*Ibidem*, p. 389-422).

81 J. M. Gurt i Esparraguera, G. Ripoll, C. Godoy, *Topografia*, cited n. 6; J. M. Nolla, *La Catalunya Vella*, cited n. 7.

82 Documented in 843, although with virtually no archaeological proof – just a plaque from the restoration in 926 and a 10th-century altar (X. Aquilué (ed.), *Intervencions arqueològiques*, cited n. 7, p. 423-427, J. M. Nolla, *La Catalunya Vella*, cited n. 7, p. 27-31, 40).

83 J. Menchón, J. M. Macías, A. Muñoz, *Aproximació*, cited n. 9; J. Menchón, I. Teixell, A. Muñoz, J. M. Macías, *Excavacions*, cited n. 9; J. Menchón, *Tarragona*, cited n. 9.

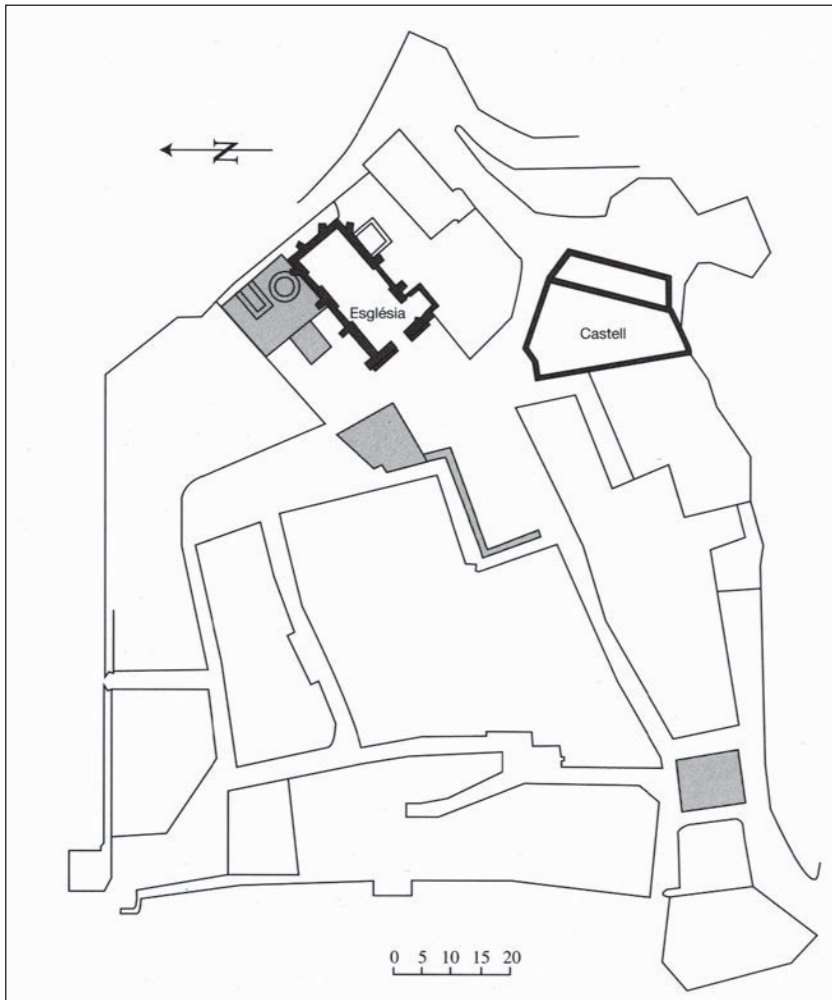


Figure 7. Ampurias: layout of the early medieval complex-(X. Aquilué (ed.), *Intervencions arqueològiques*, cited n. 7).

occupation in monumental political and religious buildings, aggravating the process of urban crisis that started in the 3rd and 4th centuries⁸⁴. Together with the reduction in population in the urban zone, the port area acquired newfound vitality with the development of the Christian centre, made up of a cemetery,

84 J. Menchón, J. M. Macías, A. Muñoz, *Aproximació*, cited n. 9, p. 226.

funerary basilica, baptistery and episcopal see hall; some porticoed monumental constructions have been recorded in the high city, together with the relative permanence of the Mediterranean commerce (amphorae and oriental pottery). From the 6th to the 8th centuries the activity and influence of the Church doubtless stands out in urban power, by means of a building programme for *episcopia* and churches with the subsequent urban transformation; the most significant event was the transfer of the episcopal see to the *temenos* of the imperial cult temple in the high part of the city. In contrast, classical town planning was profoundly disorganised from the 5th to the 8th centuries: the vaults from the circus were used as rooms and workshops; rubbish dumps and fillings spread out all over the high monumental area; cisterns and baths were built in the 6th century in the old imperial garden area⁸⁵.

In contrast, the identification of archaeological documentation from the 8th to the 12th centuries is very problematic. The apparent lack of data led to the traditional theory of total abandonment of the city until it was occupied by the Catalan Counts in the late 11th century. This theory is now difficult to accept, even though it is not possible to provide an alternative interpretation. It is plausible that Andalusian power was held until the 11th century – in fact there have been some construction findings in the monumental area –, either occupied by a surviving population with little monumental constructive activity, or restricted to areas that have not yet been located⁸⁶. What is evident is the loss of the old political role from Visigothic times in favour of Barcelona. The conquest and early reoccupation of the city and the restoration of the episcopal see took place after 1090, although archaeological data is scarce, showing the habitual reuse of some Roman monumental structures: the building of the bishop of Vic's castle in the old Audience Tower, and possibly a nearby church on the site of the circus. Urban planning only becomes more evident from the 12th century onwards: the Romanesque cathedral on the site of the Roman temple, a house with diaphragm arches in the Jewish quarter, etc⁸⁷.

The disintegration of the Roman city in the north

There were Roman urban centres in the north that survived, but very few with early medieval archaeological records. As a representative example, there is very little archaeological data from the ancient Roman city of *Pompaelo* (Pamplona) to show the post-imperial transformation; there was apparently a reduction in the population and urban space with the building of the late imperial walls,

85 J. Menchón, J. M. Macías, A. Muñoz, *Aproximació*, cited n. 9; J. Menchón, I. Teixell, A. Muñoz, J. M. Macías, *Excavacions*, cited n. 9; J. Menchón, *Tarragona*, cited n. 9.

86 J. Menchón, *Tarragona*, cited n. 9.

87 J. Menchón, *Tarragona*, cited n. 9.

giving rise to the population centre that was maintained until the expansion in the 11th century. Excavations at the Romanesque cathedral brought to light the remains of a Roman nymphaeum and an early medieval building, as well as some burials with materials from Visigothic times. The 8th century saw the early Islam occupation and stable settlement, from which time there are various necropolis and a large population centre of North African origin and exogenous materials that are clearly rooted in Islam, coexisting with the local population over various generations⁸⁸. The Muslim settlement must have been accompanied by a stable military contingent in the area, under an agreement with the local authorities, which would explain the rejection of the Carolingian campaigns until the 9th century⁸⁹. So far we have no new archaeological records from the capital of the Kingdom of Navarre from before the expansion and growth of the exterior burgs in the 12th century and later⁹⁰.

Ancient inheritance and new cities in the north-west of the Peninsula

León is one of the best archaeologically recorded cities in the north-west of the Iberian Peninsula, for both its Roman past and in particular, the transformation of the legionary camp into a medieval city (Fig. 8)⁹¹.

Excavations in recent years have uncovered walls from the early imperial military camp (from the 1st to the 3rd centuries): the successive walls of the *legio VI* and *legio VII*, diverse legionary buildings, streets, part of the baths, the amphitheatre and baths outside the walls and the craftsmen's settlement roughly 2 km south of the camp. At the end of the 3rd century a process of change started that radically transformed the military enclave; a large part of the legionary buildings were demolished, which points towards a substantial reduction in the military contingent. The army had erected the walls with towers joined to the external face. The parameters were similar to those of Astorga, Castroventosa,

88 J. A. Faro Carballo, M. García-Barberena Unzu, M. Unzu Urmeneta, *La presencia*, cited n. 49.

89 J. J. Larrea, *Construir un reino en la periferia de Al-Ándalus: Pamplona y el Pirineo occidental en los siglos VIII y IX*, in *Symposium Internacional: Poder y simbología en Europa. Siglos VIII-X*, «Territorio, Sociedad y Poder, Anejo 2», Oviedo, 2009, p. 279-308.

90 F. Cañada Palacio, *Pamplona s XI-XII: el origen de los burgos*, in F. Valdés (ed.), *La Península Ibérica*, cited n. 2, p. 187-204.

91 F. Miguel Hernández, *Desarrollo urbano preindustrial (siglo X a XVIII): el caso de León*, in *ArqueoLeón. Historia de León a través de la Arqueología. Ciclo de conferencias. Actas*, León, 1996; J. A. Gutiérrez González, F. Miguel Hernández, *Génesis del urbanismo*, cited n. 2; J. A. Gutiérrez González, *Las fuentes*, cited n. 3; J. A. Gutiérrez González et al., *Legio (León)*, cited n. 4.

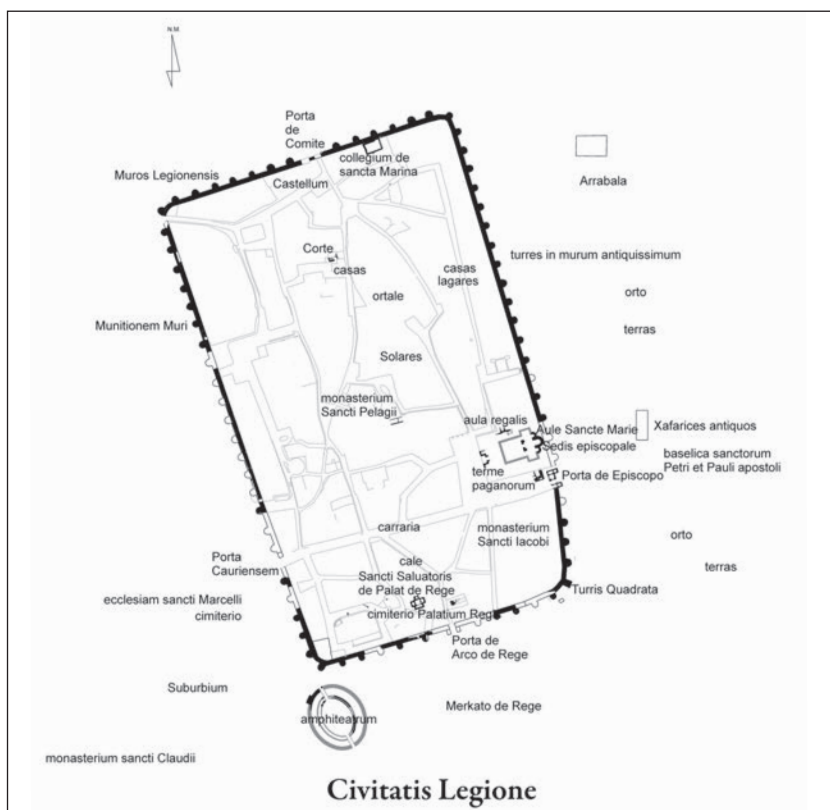


Figure 8. León: Location of late antique and early medieval structures (V. García Marcos with modifications by J. A. Gutiérrez González, E. Campomanes Alvarado, F. Miguel Hernández, C. Benítez González, P. Martín Del Otero, F. Muñoz Villarejo, F. San Román Fernández, Legio (León), cited n. 4).

Lugo, Gijón and other cities in the north of the Peninsula, in consonance with the military reforms of the tetrarchy⁹². In the following centuries, the demolition of the camp layout was intensified by means of the civil occupation

92 C. Fernández Ochoa, A. Morillo Cerdán, J. López, *La dinámica de las ciudades de la fachada noratlántica y del cuadrante noroeste de Hispania durante la Antigüedad Tardía*, in J. M. Gurt, A. V. Ribera (eds.), *Actas de la VI Reunión d'Arqueologia Cristiana Hispánica. Les ciutats tardoantiques d'Hispana: cristianització i topografia*, Valencia, 8-10 de mayo 2003, Barcelona, 2005, p. 95-120; C. Fernández Ochoa, A. Morillo Cerdán, *The army*, cited n. 12.

of old military buildings; some were taken apart while others were reused, some new houses were erected with reused materials; even the military streets and buildings were altered by filling in and digging holes, which no doubt marked out new plots of land different from the orthogonal layout. Some of the filling was dark earth, deliberate deposits with abundant organic material, which shows the agricultural use of spaces that had previously been inhabited⁹³. The sewage network stopped working and was completely filled up over time. However, in the 5th and 6th centuries fine ceramics from eastern Mediterranean workshops were still being used in these simple houses of poor appearance⁹⁴.

In the periurban area some monastic buildings and martyrs' churches were erected in Visigothic times (in the 6th and 7th centuries) over old late Roman necropolis dating from the 4th and 5th centuries. Churches were built in suburban areas on old *villae* such as Navatejera and complex buildings such as Marialba, made up of a *martyrium* or mausoleum, a cemetery, church and baptistery from the 5th to the 7th centuries⁹⁵.

In the early 8th century the *Legionem civitatem*, as it was then called, was conquered by the Muslims, who established a military garrison on the old Roman baths and the eastern gateway in the walls. This occupation is documented by new Andalusi pottery, exogenous and new in the repertory of local grey production⁹⁶. Findings of more Andalusi pottery in other cities and *castra* in the Duero valley likewise point towards an intensive Muslim occupation, more intense and stable than previously supposed, and a notable influence on regional pottery manufacturing⁹⁷.

After the desertion of the Berber troops halfway through the 8th century, the city was not emptied, as has traditionally been held, as the local population resisted and saw off various attempts at conquest by both Ummayyad and Asturian armies, apparently showing signs of insubmission and political autonomy, based

93 J. A. Gutiérrez González, F. Miguel Hernández, *Génesis del urbanismo*, cited n. 2, p. 50-53.

94 Plates of Phocaeen TS (*Late Roman C*), and from Atlantic Workshops in Gaul: carinated bowls (DSP and regional imitations of late Gaulish grey *terra sigillata*). There was still late Hispanic *terra sigillata* (TSHT) although regional manufacturing coarseware was more common: micaceous cooking and storage vessels and grey pottery (bowls with circular stamped and undulating incisions), and grey jars and pots painted with white lines, dating from the 6th to the 8th centuries (J. A. Gutiérrez González *et al.*, *Legio (León)*, cited n. 4, p. 132-134).

95 J. A. Gutiérrez González *et al.*, *Legio (León)*, cited n. 4, p. 135-136.

96 J. A. Gutiérrez González, F. Miguel Hernández, *La cerámica altomedieval en León: Producciones locales y andaluzas de Puerta Obispo*, in *Actas del VIII Congreso Internacional de Cerámica Medieval en el Mediterráneo*, Ciudad Real, 2009, t. I, p. 443-462.

97 J. Zozaya, H. Larrén, J. A. Gutiérrez González, F. Miguel, *Asentamientos*, cited n. 48.

on the powerful defence of the late Roman walls. It was only towards the end of the 9th century that the city was taken by the Asturian kings (Ordoño I and Alfonso III), who established their palace on the site of the old Roman baths⁹⁸. In the early 10th century the city was appointed capital of the Asturian kingdom by Ordoño II, and the royal court was transferred there from Oviedo. A large reurbanization programme was started, in which we could highlight various characteristic traits: the kings, court magnates and the religious (bishopric and monasteries) took large tracts of land inside the walls; royal and aristocratic palaces were installed in the main gates, streets and old buildings, together with the king's castle, bishop's church and monasteries with their houses and other dependencies. This physical implantation brought with it a notable hierarchisation of urban space. The new inhabitants displaced the old both spatially and socially and built over their old constructions. Suburbs were built from this time on, concentrating farmers and craftsmen together.

However, the agrarian nature of the area inside the walls was still in the majority, archaeologically characterised by filling and dark earth, domestic storage pits and silos for cereals, simply built houses made of stone, clay and wood. Even though the monastic and magnates' houses took up more and more space from the 10th century onwards, they did not put a complete halt to the spontaneous growth that had covered the Roman layout in the previous centuries. What is more, even though they involved more solid prestigious buildings (churches and palaces with masonry, sculptured ornaments etc), they were accompanied by agricultural installations: wine cellars, vegetable gardens, wells, storehouses, dovecotes, etc, all in an enclosure (*corte*), which divided up plots even more and broke up the old orthogonal layout. This peculiar urban enclosure system consisted of a kind of monastic and aristocratic settlement that was inherent to the early medieval feudal economy, evidencing certain similarities to what has been recorded in certain Italian cities and castles (*curtense* system). The process of aristocratic installation and hierarchisation brought with it a greater social differentiation between noble buildings and popular ones. The former grew and were materially superior, while the latter became fewer, although they were still in the majority both inside and outside the walls. In the archaeological records the simplest features predominate, typical of a non-privileged building technique and use of space, which augments the archaeological perception of the archaic, poverty and continuity of the trend of unplanned destructuralism⁹⁹.

98 F. Miguel Hernández, *Desarollo urbano*, cited n. 91; J. A. Gutiérrez González, F. Miguel Hernández, *Génesis del urbanismo*, cited n. 2.

99 J. A. Gutiérrez González, F. Miguel Hernández, *Génesis del urbanismo*, cited n. 2; J. A. Gutiérrez González, *Las fuentes*, cited n. 3.

In summary, the characteristic material traits of Late Antiquity (from the 5th to the 7th centuries), the breakage with the ordered network, a lack of attention to public infrastructures (the sanitation network, baths, the amphitheatre) and the transformation of military spaces into private buildings with crop growing areas and only scarce monumentality, all prevailed until the urban renovation in the 11th century and later, when the accumulation of wealth by the feudal classes reached such a level that they were able to reinvest the surplus in urban construction. Improvements, rebuilding, enlargements and new churches, palaces and walls from the 11th century onwards, and increased power and control over the city in the end promoted, from the 12th century on, not only constructive renovation and more non-agricultural activities (craftsmen specialising in building and other induced trades) but also the renovation of classical urban functions: labour and social diversification, fiscal control, and hence the creation of a new urban model, known as the medieval urban renaissance (Fig. 9)¹⁰⁰.

New foundations in the north-west of the Peninsula: cities or sacred places

Throughout the early medieval period no new classical cities were founded in the north of the Iberian Peninsula *ex novo*, i.e. cities with the whole range of services, functions and buildings characteristic of Roman, Islamic or Byzantine cities. We do find, however, certain new religious and military foundations – initially with no urban activity – which were poles of administrative, economic and population attraction to a sufficient extent as to generate a later urban nature in the 11th century and afterwards.

The most outstanding cases are Santiago de Compostela and Oviedo, in the north-west, both of which were founded as religious centres and as a form of the Asturian monarchy's ideological statement. Both were founded on the site of an old Roman settlement whose nature was different from the rural area: a necropolis and a late Roman *mansio* in the case of Compostela and a sacred place in the case of Oviedo. In the early 9th century, under the reign of Alfonso II, both were consolidated as religious centres and played an important role in the Asturian monarchy's religious and political policy in opposition to al-Andalus and other Christian kingdoms, and even entered into relations with the Carolingian court.

The construction of two successive funerary basilicas over the supposed tomb of the apostle St James converted Compostela into a major pilgrimage centre in western Christendom. After the first 9th-century basilicas, built successively by the Kings of Asturias Alfonso II and Alfonso III, and the adjacent monastery

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*.

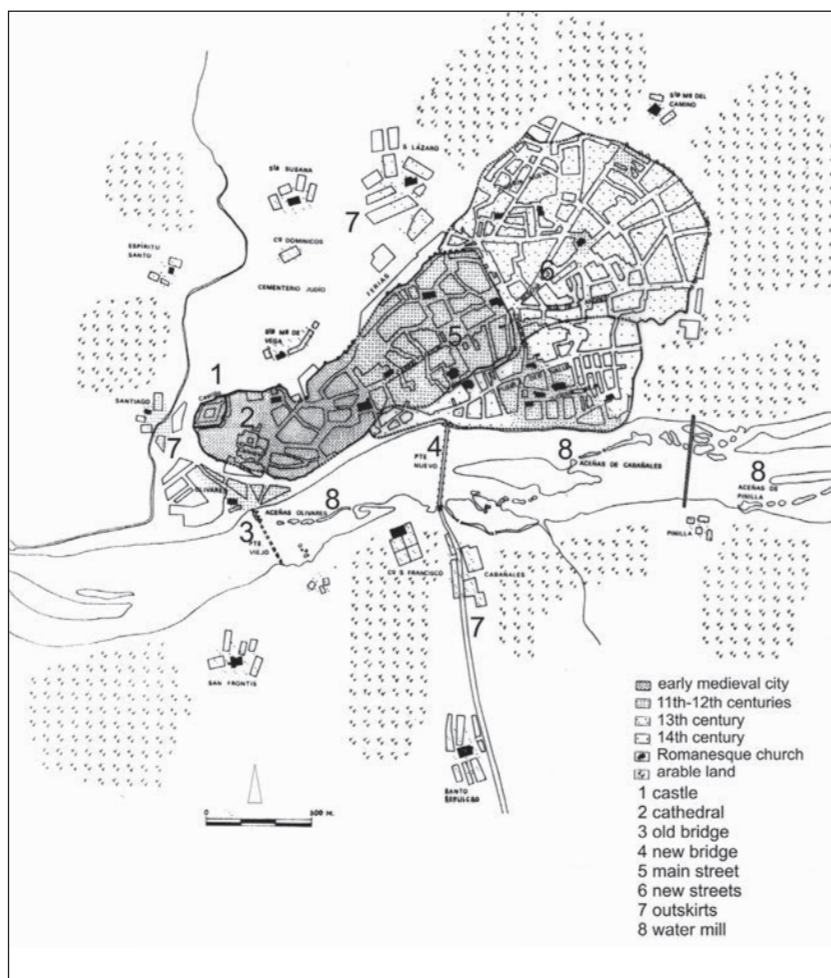


Figure 9. Zamora: the early medieval city and the late medieval expansion (J. A. Gutiérrez González, *La ciudad de Zamora*, cited n. 7)

of Antealtares, the episcopal constructions followed (church, baptistery and residence), a cemetery and domestic annexes (various silo-pits show the existence of very simple room structures, with a distinctly rural aspect). The whole original centre was surrounded by a first wall in the second half of the 10th century, c. 960, under bishop Sisnando II, with a surface area of 3 ha; the wall was 1.80 m high with towers measuring 6.20 x 4.90 m, a ditch and gateways,

all documented in the excavations inside the Romanesque cathedral and its surroundings¹⁰¹. The large numbers of pilgrims generated further infrastructures throughout the 10th century, such as a hospital for pilgrims and the poor, new churches and monasteries, and a commercial and handicraft population that settled and created merchant *burgs* or quarters (*vicus francorum*, *vico novo*), constituting the *villa burguensis* in the suburb of the *locum sacrum*. In the 11th century the granting of the “apostolic” archbishop’s see and the promotion of the international Jacobean pilgrimage propitiated a great growth in population and the development of commerce and handicraft, which gradually consolidated and extended the urban conglomerate. The *civitas Iacobi* or *urbe Compostella*, as it was called from this time, matured as a medieval city, taking over the functions of a religious centre, the archbishop’s seignury and a dynamic craftsmen and commercial centre. The morphological configuration was virtually consolidated with the construction of the second walled enclosure by bishop Cresconius (c.1060), endowed with towers, a ditch and seven gateways, covering 30 ha. Inside, the city underwent great growth and ecclesiastical aggrandisement in the 12th and 13th centuries, especially under bishop Diego Gelmírez (1110-40), when the Romanesque cathedral was enlarged, various parish churches were built, as were a new bishop’s residence, a hospital for the poor and pilgrims, as well as diverse streets, squares and urban houses¹⁰².

In Oviedo in the mid-8th century a significant religious centre was built, consisting of groups of basilicas and monasteries, in the style of a *hierapolis*¹⁰³ on the site of an old Roman *locum sacrum* made up of various nymphaea and possibly temples, which had already been demolished in the early Middle Ages¹⁰⁴. The profound religious significance of the place influenced the choice

101 M. Chamoso Lamas, *Noticias de las excavaciones arqueológicas en la Catedral de Santiago*, in *Compostellanum*, I, 2, 1956, p. 5-48; I, 4, p. 275-328; J. Guerra Campos, *Exploraciones arqueológicas en torno al sepulcro del Apóstol Santiago*, Santiago de Compostela, 1982; J. Suárez Otero, *Apuntes arqueológicos*, cited n. 7; *Id.*, *A arqueoloxía na Catedral de Santiago. Novas intervencións e novas perspectivas. Archaeology at Santiago’s cathedral. New interventions and new perspectives*, in *Del documento escrito a la evidencia material*, Santiago de Compostela, 2007, p. 141-169.

102 F. López Alsina, *La ciudad de Santiago de Compostela en la Alta Edad Media*, Santiago de Compostela, 1988.

103 J. Uría Riu, *Cuestiones histórico-arqueológicas relativas a la ciudad de Oviedo de los siglos VIII al X*, in *Simposium sobre cultura asturiana de la Alta Edad Media*, Oviedo, 1967, p. 261-328.

104 R. Estrada García, *La villa medieval de Oviedo a la luz de las excavaciones*, in C. E. Prieto Entrialgo (ed.), *El mundo urbano en la España cristiana y musulmana medieval*, Oviedo, 2013, p. 303-337; J. A. Gutiérrez González, *Oviedo*, cited n. 7.

of the primitive sacred *Ovetao* as the royal seat by Alfonso II towards the end of the 8th century, replacing previous seats that had been installed in old *vici* or the semiurban Roman conglomerates of Cangas and Pravia, which were not consolidated as urban centres. This political and religious centrality seems to have been the outstanding function at both places, Oviedo and Compostela, not initially conceived as cities, but designed with a role that was clearly different from rural settlements and military centres; high-quality constructions were originally the basilicas, monasteries, episcopal residences and in Oviedo the castle and royal palaces too; government action and the search for ideological prestige was underlined in Oviedo by the monumental epigraphy of Alfonso III, commemorating the building of the castle, palace and defences for the treasure in the church of San Salvador¹⁰⁵. This political and religious centre was surrounded by wooden huts, whose post holes and remains of hearths are the only proof of a non-aristocratic population, no doubt domestic servants and craftsmen serving the local aristocracy. There is less archaeological knowledge about the rest; some Roman water installations were kept, such as the impressive nymphaeum of Foncalada, which was also restored by the Asturian monarchs. New commemorative epigraphs were placed on the facade, while another 4th-century nymphaeum had already been destroyed, sacked and cut down by the huts¹⁰⁶. A first wall protected this first religious and political centre, the main *central place* in the rural territory of Asturias, where no other urban centre survived from the Roman past. The episcopal see granted in the 10th century reinforced the city's central role and converted it into a *civitas episcopal*, although the transfer of the royal court to León early in the next century slowed down later growth¹⁰⁷.

Oviedo and Santiago de Compostela are highly representative cases of the creation of a new model of early medieval cities related to the late antique foundations of 'ruralised' episcopal centres with no initial urban centre as *Egara* and Ampurias had. However, in contrast, the religious foundations of Oviedo and Compostela were consolidated as medieval cities by becoming centres of political and economic functions in addition to the initial religious and ideological purposes.

Other minor settlements of Roman inheritance in the north-west, with certain magical or religious connotations, such as bath springs, had been

105 F. Diego Santos, *Inscripciones medievales de Asturias*, Principado de Asturias, 1993, p. 37-38, 103-105.

106 R. Estrada García, *La villa medieval*, cited n. 104.

107 J. I. Ruiz de la Peña, S. Beltrán Suarez, *Los orígenes del poder episcopal sobre la ciudad de Oviedo en la Edad Media*, in *En la España Medieval*, vol. 30, Madrid, 2007, p. 65-90.

episcopal sees and fortified Visigothic cities, like Orense, Tuy, Chaves, Lamego, Viseu and *Anegia*, but were not consolidated as cities in the early Middle Ages¹⁰⁸.

The north-eastern centres of Vic, Tarrasa and Seu de Urgell, are possibly similar cases – important episcopal centres created in Late Antiquity, with no Roman precedents and a concentration of religious buildings and uses (churches, episcopal residences, cemeteries, baptisteries), which were not consolidated as cities in the early Middle Ages¹⁰⁹.

New urban foundations with military origins

Another group of new early medieval foundations was created from military centres that focused administrative functions in their territories and acted as hierarchical poles that attracted new functions (policital, religious, economic and others) and non-military population. Places like this had already been founded in Visigothic times, such as Zamora, *Bergidum*, Tuy, Olite and Peña Amaya, important as Visigothic military centres and which concentrated further functions, such as a see, parishes and mints, like *Bigastri* and El Tolmo de Minateda in the south-east. However, not all of them were consolidated as early medieval urban centres, as in the cases of *Bergidum* and Peña Amaya. Other castles such as Burgos, Nájera and Castrojeriz were also created with military functions by the Counts of Castilla who depended on the Asturian kingdom throughout the 9th century, in the expansion into the Duero valley; in the same way, Besalú, Ullastret, Peralada, Esquerda-Roda de Ter, Cardona and Olérdola were important military centres and territorial centres in the Frankish-Carolingian and Catalanian expansion in the north-east. Some of these early medieval military foundations (like Zamora, Burgos and Nájera) concentrated population and economic, political and religious functions, and were later consolidated as cities from the 11th century onwards. This process bore certain similarities to the Tuscan *incastellamento*, while others did not prosper as urban centres (Amaya, Castrojeriz and Ullastret, among others) and either remained as military centres or disappeared as *central places* once the scene of war moved further southwards.

Among the centres that were consolidated as early medieval cities we could highlight Zamora and Burgos. Zamora already enjoyed certain central functions

108 A. M. de C. Lima, *Povoamento e organização do território do Baixo Douro na época da monarquia asturiana*, in *Symposium Internacional: Poder y simbología en Europa. Siglos VIII-X*, «Territorio, Sociedad y Poder, Anejo 2», Oviedo, 2009, p. 227-259; J. López Quiroga, *El final*, cited n.10.

109 J. M. Nolla, *La Catalunya Vella*, cited n. 7; M. G. García, A. Moro, F. Tuset, *La seu episcopal d'Ègara. Arqueologia d'un conjunt episcopal cristià del segle IV al IX*, Tarragona, 2009.

in Visigothic times, such as a mint and parochial see. We know only some remains in the church of San Ildefonso; it was probably a Visigothic fortress, like Tuy and Orense in the north-west. The place was conquered by Muslims and later by the Asturian king Alfonso III at the end of 9th century. The military citadel became an important political and economic centre in the kingdom of León, together with the nearby Toro, in the 10th century, which promoted and consolidated its urban character¹¹⁰. There are visible remains of this time on the walls and wicket close to what later became the Bishop's Gate, on the bridge over the River Duero, known at the time as the frontier river. The castle and the cathedral of the new see were grouped together inside, along with the churches of San Isidoro and San Idelfonso. Both in the high area of the citadel and in the river plain abundant evidence of early medieval occupation have been recorded, consisting mainly of holes and remains of very simple floors and homes, built of wood and clay; numerous pieces of Andalusí pottery have come to light in pit fillings and waterwheel wells, which indicate a notable presence of craftsmen and peasants from al-Andalus, although under the control of the Christian Leonese authorities¹¹¹. From the 11th century onwards the city was still the main fortified place in the kingdom of León, the base of military operations for the conquest of al-Andalus, and one of the major political and economic centres in the region. The concentration of functions and population led to great urban growth, as shown by the successive walled enclosures and the multiplication of Romanesque churches (Fig.9)¹¹².

Burgos was another early medieval military foundation, created by Counts from Castilla during the process of political and military reinforcement in the Duero valley, together with other castles (Ubierna, Roa, Clunia, Peñaranda and Gormaz, among others) which also enjoyed hierarchical functions in their territories (known as *alfoces*). The first *castrum* was located on the top of a hill, where remains of a building, pits and Andalusí pottery from the 10th and 11th centuries have been found¹¹³; later growth and downhill expansion gave rise to

110 J. A. Gutiérrez González, *La ciudad*, cited n. 7.

111 H. Larrén Izquierdo, *La evolución urbana de la ciudad de Zamora a través de los vestigios arqueológicos*, in F. Valdés (ed.), *La Península Ibérica*, cited n. 2, p. 93-118; H. Larrén Izquierdo, J. Nuño González, *Cerámicas pintadas andalusíes en la ciudad de Zamora*, in *Al-Ándalus. Espaço de mudança. Homenagem a Juan Zozaya Stabel-Hansen*, Mértola, 2006, p. 244-255; J. Zozaya, H. Larrén, J. A. Gutiérrez González, F. Miguel, *Asentamientos*, cited n. 48.

112 J. A. Gutiérrez González, *La ciudad*, cited n. 7.

113 O. Villanueva Zubizarreta et al., *Burgos en torno al año mil. Relaciones entre la Villa Condal de Castilla y al-Andalus*, in *Al-Ándalus*, cited n. 111, p. 256-65; J. Zozaya, H. Larrén, J. A. Gutiérrez González, F. Miguel, *Asentamientos*, cited n. 48.

non-military quarters (*burgs*), the embryo of the medieval city in the 11th century. The original *castrum* was maintained as a royal castle, no longer in the urban centre in the valley, where craftsmen's quarters, churches and the cathedral of the capital of the kingdom of Castilla all sprang up.

Conclusions

Despite the scarce empirical baggage we have for the historical reconstruction of the early medieval city in the north of Hispania, it is possible to make a start on a list of certain general trends, which basically open up doors for future study. Lines of interpretation are supported by the progressive knowledge brought together for late antiquity in all the post-Roman west, and in comparative analyses, based on the most detailed studies carried out in other areas of Europe for the same time, such as Italy, or in the world of Islam, like al-Andalus.

Archaeological studies in recent decades in western Europe have redefined the concept of the early medieval city, replacing previous traditional paradigms that centred on decadence and rupture with Roman town planning with new criteria on the early medieval urban model, where not only the transformation or permanence of the urban layout and buildings, the road network and infrastructures, and the administrative functions of ancient cities are evaluated, but also the creation of new central places and the role they played as poles of attraction for fiscal, administrative and religious functions as well as population devoted to non-agricultural activities, but to manufacturing and commerce.

The standardisation, to an extent, of these criteria for the evaluation of archaeological indicators enables us to carry out analyses in areas where these matters have not been much developed, as is the case in the north of the Iberian Peninsula. In some areas where there were less ancient cities, such as the north-west, the existence of cities in the early medieval period had even been denied before the late medieval rebirth.

In the north of the Peninsula, where there was a significant degree of diversity and heterogeneity, the evolution of ancient cities in the early medieval period (from the 5th to the 7th centuries) can now be valued by following the analyses carried out in some western Mediterranean zones, for which more studies and syntheses have been drawn up; we can perceive better the traits that define an evolution similar to that in other post-Roman areas: a reduction of inhabited space, partial abandonment of monumental and administrative buildings, a lack of attention to water infrastructures, the loss of the road network, reoccupation and simpler building styles, concentration around the religious poles both inside the walls and out, and above all the increase in functions that gave rise to other urban models such as those known as city forts, where defence was the

main element, the role of the political, religious and fiscal centre, the residences of the elite classes and the market place. The church's growing importance in urban topography also generated a model for the episcopal city, in some cases in preeminent urban centres from late antiquity (like Barcelona) and in other cases with a less urban and more ruralised aspect, such as *Egara-Tarrasa*, Ampurias, *Ercavica*, and *Segóbriga*¹¹⁴. Hence from the 5th to the 8th centuries some classical cities experienced more ruptures with their Roman past: Ampurias, Tarraco, while others like Barcelona stood out in the regional panorama.

The destructuring trend from Late Antiquity continued in surviving cities, and even increased in the following centuries (from the 8th to the 10th), when ancient cities disappeared as political and legal centres and those that survived hardly showed any signs of urban life in comparison to classical times or contemporary cities in al-Andalus. Among these, some experienced greater destructuring, such as the paradigmatic case of Ampurias, where the division into various urban centres gave rise to the fortified centre of Sant Martí. In other cities we see greater continuity in the use of space in the Roman enclosure inside the walls (Barcelona, León, Lugo, Astorga) but with profound functional and material transformations, empty spaces and housing concentrated around churches; others were extended with fortifications (like Gerona) where a new town planning was introduced. In these cases, the habitual construction of churches and cathedrals in the early Middle Ages on the site of old temples and Roman sacred places is highly expressive, as is recorded in Gerona, Tarragona, Pamplona, León and Oviedo¹¹⁵.

And yet what stands out most in this period is the formation of new central places, radically different from classical paradigms. On the one hand, pre-eminence corresponds to the numerous castles and fortified cities that took on the role of territorial centres with evident military functions, from the counties in Catalonia to the extreme north-west. On the other hand, new conglomerates arose around sacred spaces (Oviedo, Santiago de Compostela) and became poles of attraction for population and new activities, which consolidated them as cities. However, not all these new central places developed into medieval cities; when the political and military functions that had promoted them disappeared, they were abandoned or remained as castles. The ones that prospered as cities were those in which new functions and activities were concentrated (bishopric, royal residences, residences for the aristocracy, handicraft and commercial sectors).

114 J. M. Gurt i Esparraguera, G. Ripoll, C. Godoy, *Topografía*, cited n. 6, J. M. Gurt i Esparraguera, I. Sánchez Ramos, *Las ciudades hispanas*, cited n. 6; *Id.*, *Espacios funerarios*, cited n. 6; J. M. Nolla, *La Catalunya Vella*, cited n. 7.

115 J. A. Gutiérrez González, *Oviedo*, cited n. 7.

There were no new urban foundations from *emporion* or *wics* as there were in the north of Europe and Italy; places like *Emporion*-Ampurias and *Rodas*-Rosas on the coast of Catalonia and Gijón on the Cantabrian shoreline seemed to be going this way in Late Antiquity, but they were not consolidated in the early Middle Ages and had to wait until the late Middle Ages to become small coastal towns with some central functions.

In some of the most preeminent political capitals (Gerona, Barcelona, Pamplona, Burgos, León and Zamora) there was progressive growth from the aggregation of craftsmen's and commercial suburbs in the 10th century and onwards. This trend became more pronounced in the following centuries, driven by the attraction of population and new commercial activities along the different Pilgrims' Roads to Santiago de Compostela. These *burgs* (salesmen and craftsmen whose activities gradually diversified in urban social sectors) made up suburbs in other cities and small towns thanks to the Pilgrims' Road to Santiago in the following centuries (Jaca, Estella, Pamplona, Logroño, Nájera, Burgos, Carrión, Sahagún, León, etc), thereby contributing to later urban dynamics.

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PART TWO

ITALY

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**'ISLAMISATION' AND THE RURAL WORLD:
SICILY AND AL-ANDALUS.
WHAT KIND OF ARCHAEOLOGY?***

When attempting to interpret the growing mass of archaeological data relating to Sicily in the Islamic period, but also trying to design new research in this historic and geographic space, it seems ever more necessary to return to the lively theoretical debate that took place in the 1980s and 1990s. The Italian-Spanish colloquia¹ which were held in Granada and Siena in those years provided a valuable opportunity to examine the direction in which research in these countries was heading and they have undoubtedly contributed to later developments in medieval archaeology. This is certainly true for me personally and for the research that I have promoted in Sicily. I shall begin this contribution, written in affectionate remembrance of my teacher Riccardo Francovich, and also in memory of Manuel Acién and Miquel Barceló, with a very brief review of the essence of their insights, especially in terms of the argument I wish to develop. I would like to emphasise succinctly how much of what they have put in place is still valid, not least in terms of the increase in archaeological data and the evolution of the debate among historians, and conversely how much is being re-evaluated. I believe in any case that the informed resumption of this debate is beneficial, in particular for formulating a series of questions addressed to the archaeological record. I shall therefore summarise the main findings of archaeological research into early medieval and medieval Sicily in the second part of this essay. Finally my concluding remarks will attempt to outline what future research concerning Byzantine, Islamic and Norman Sicily may contain, that is, an agenda for a region of the Mediterranean that recent studies increasingly show to have been of central importance.

* The translation of this text from the Italian is by M. Hummler. I would also like to thank E. Manzano Moreno and S. Carocci for reading and commenting on this text. However, I remain responsible for any mistake.

¹ VV.AA., *Coloquio hispano-italiano de arqueología medieval*, Granada, 1992, and R. Francovich, E. Boldrini (eds.), *Acculturazione e mutamenti. Prospettive nell'Archeologia medievale del Mediterraneo*, in *Atti del Secondo Colloquio Italo-Spagnolo di Archeologia Medievale (Siena-Montelupo, marzo 1993)*, Florence, 1995.

I. Reflecting on our teachers

Without presuming for a moment to present the whole story of Islamic archaeology and the topics it addresses, and even less the rural world in general, I would like to recall the ideas that, in my view, were the most powerful in the debate of the 1980s and 1990s and which were associated to prominent scholars whose life sadly ended too soon. The necessity to study the rural world as a fundamental key for understanding the social fabric as a whole, and the indispensable part archaeology plays in this, were at the core of the thinking and the fieldwork – though in very different geographic and historic areas – of Riccardo Francovich and Miquel Barceló. In those days the discussion confronting ‘feudal’ to ‘islamic’ society was fundamental, in particular within studies devoted to al-Andalus, to establish the differences between one social system and the other, one might say especially for constructing an ideal type of Islamic society. A further and crucial point of contact between these two scholars, who in other respects were very different from each other, was their conviction that a social history of techniques was essential; too often indeed had research been tainted by the ‘myth of origins’, without any attention being paid to the social context that had adopted and used these self-same techniques.

For Riccardo Francovich archaeological research offered a perspective on the history of rural settlement that was utterly different from that which could be reconstructed from the written sources (which are too sparse and elusive in the early Middle Ages). In his eyes recognising the widespread appearance of hill-top settlements before the advent of seigneurial rule (*signoria*) as a spontaneous initiative of the rural communities was one of the main achievements of archaeology². The long-term archaeological investigations at the Rocca San Silvestro and the mining and metallurgical activities connected to the site gave him the opportunity to illustrate through archaeology ‘the feudal mode of production’, for example in a seminal article written with C. Wickham³. Current research is identifying more fluid and more dialectical trajectories in settlement transformations, and understanding the processes governing the formation of territorial feudal rule is beginning to take shape; but hammering home the necessity to build a solid and sophisticated archaeological foundation on the basis of precisely defined research aims is one of Riccardo’s fundamental legacies.

² See R. Francovich, R. Hodges, *Villa to village. The transformation of the Roman countryside in Italy, c. 400–1000*, London, 2003, for a summary.

³ R. Francovich, C. Wickham, *Uno scavo archeologico ed il problema dello sviluppo della signoria territoriale: Rocca San Silvestro e i rapporti di produzione minerari*, in *Archeologia Medievale*, 21, 1994, p. 7–30.

For M. Barceló it was working out the modes of extraction and redistribution of the agricultural surplus that constituted the key to understanding past societies⁴. In terms of archaeological research this involved putting the agricultural systems, the fields and the species cultivated at the centre of the enquiry, as well as tying these tightly to the study of settlement areas. For Miquel this was of primary importance for apprehending the transformations from Visigoth to Islamic society, and through the latter those of Christian-feudal society. An important trait of Islamic society was the establishment of irrigation agriculture, which, given the high initial investment to lay out the fields and organise the workforce and the types of plants to cultivate (many of which were perishable), could only succeed if the peasant groups organised their work autonomously, free of any feudal type of ties. This conception of the central role played by the organisation of agricultural work became closely bound up with ideas on the social structure of al-Andalus outlined by P. Guichard in his seminal essay of 1976⁵. The Islamic invasion would have entailed a rapid transformation of the social structure of a considerable part of the Iberian Peninsula, brought about by the establishment of a social grouping of clan-tribe type which was very different from the social structure in place in Visigoth times. The speed of this transformation would have been helped by large-scale immigration specifically of Berber tribes from North Africa. The organisation of rural settlement would also have been heavily determined by this type of social structure. The *alquerias* settlements (small open nuclei) based on clan-tribe entities, and the enclosure of hilltop refuges independently built by the peasant community were the necessary corollary of this new social organisation⁶. Thus a clan-tribe social structure, new techniques and agricultural produce, a settlement system including *hişn-alquerias* (defended and open settlement) are all elements tightly connected with, and strongly determined by, a massive influx of Arab-Berber Muslim populations. Fieldwork by the group who referred to M. Barceló was

4 The titles M. Barceló, *Quina arqueologia per al-Andalus?*, in *Coloquio hispano-italiano de arqueología medieval*, Granada, 1992, p. 243-252, and *Id.*, *¿Por qué los historiadores académicos prefieren hablar de Islamización en vez de hablar de campesinos?*, in *Archeologia Medievale*, 19, 1992, p. 63-73 are a good illustration of this stance. For irrigation agriculture, see M. Barceló, H. Kirchner, C. Navarro, *El agua que no duerme. Fundamentos de la arqueología hidráulica andalusí*, Granada, 1996. See also M. Barceló, F. Sigaut (eds.), *The making of feudal agricultures?*, Leiden, 2004.

5 P. Guichard, *Al-Andalus: estructura antropológica de una sociedad islámica en Occidente*, Barcelona, 1976.

6 A. Bazzana, P. Cressier, P. Guichard, *Les châteaux ruraux d'al-Andalus. Histoire et archéologie des hişn du sud-est de l'Espagne*, Madrid, 1988.

thus largely engaged in establishing procedures designed to analyse agricultural irrigation systems, especially those that are still extant. The criticism levelled at such a clear-cut model of social transformations tied to Islamisation has been quite considerable and the methods of hydraulic archaeology have not entirely resolved on the basis of archaeological evidence the dating of the irrigation of the first plots. Be that as it may, an integrated study of settlement and production sites (agricultural as well as artisanal) is one of the topics where investigation remains essential, as is the study of the new agricultural techniques linked to the expansion of the Islamic world. We shall return to these questions later in this essay. At a theoretical level, the model that I have always found the most controversial among M. Barceló's models is the ethnic determinism that invariably associated being Berber with a tribal social structure and with agricultural practices of a specific type. On these topics, the archaeological literature has made decisive strides especially in the last two decades⁷.

The social Islamisation model proposed in these same years by M. Acién⁸ is very different and overall it has attracted a substantial following. First, his studies of emblematic figures like 'Umar ibn Ḥafṣūn give an indication of the importance the local indigenous aristocracy retained in the first phase of Muslim domination. The establishment of the Islamic social organisation of al-Andalus followed a complex sequence, concluded only with the establishment of the caliphate. For Acién the Islamic social system, in which ideology carried much weight, was characterised "*por la hegemonia de lo privado a nivel abstracto y por la preeminencia de lo urbano a nivel concreto*"⁹. Archaeologically the hegemony of the private would have been visible in the forms of the houses or in the urban topography influenced by familiar structures. The history of settlements would also have followed a non-linear sequence, with a first phase of Islamic domination which saw, if anything, an increase in hilltop sites of various types – the

7 I would refer to A. Molinari, *Migrazione, acculturazione, convivenza/confitto, stato ed economie: problemi di metodo nell'archeologia della Sicilia islamica*, in P. Sénac (ed.), *Histoire et archéologie de l'Occident musulman (VII^e–XV^e siècle)*, *Al-Andalus, Maghreb, Sicile*, Toulouse, 2012, p. 241–274, where I have discussed this theme in connection with Sicily.

8 E.g. M. P. Acién Almansa, *Entre el feudalismo y el Islam: 'Umar Ibn Ḥafṣūn en los historiadores, en las fuentes y en la historia*, Jaén, 1997, and *Id.*, *El final de los elementos feudales en al-Andalus: fracaso del "incastellamento" e imposición de la sociedad islámica*, in M. Barceló, P. Toubert (eds.), *L'Incastellamento. Actes des Rencontres de Gérone (26–27 novembre 1992) et de Rome (5–6 mai 1994)*, Rome, 1998, p. 291–305.

9 M. P. Acién Almansa, *Entre el feudalismo*, cited above, p. 107: "by the hegemony of the private at an abstract level and the pre-eminence of the urban at a concrete level".

hiṣn (plural *huṣūn*)¹⁰. The model of districts dominated by castles in which fortified sites coexisted with open sites (*hiṣn+alquerias*) would only have been fully established with the caliphate.

From a theoretical point of view we can see how distinguishing an 'Islamic social system' from a 'feudal system' on the basis of their differences would get complicated, for example as a result of developments in the debate about the feudal world among historians, for which it has become essential to define the exact semantic context in which the term is employed¹¹. Moreover, the utter complexity of the feudal world, whose appearance is much discussed with respect to the manner and timing of its establishment, the types of powers exercised, the various forces at work and the 'pervasiveness' of the phenomenon, makes it extremely difficult to define unequivocally the concept of seigneurial feudalism (*signoria*)¹². The best framework, proposed by C. Wickham (2005), for the concepts relating to the diverse forms of statehood, such as the distinction between *tax-based* and *land-based* states requires us to use new interpretative categories. In the end it cannot be said that seigneurial feudalism should always and necessarily be considered in opposition to developments in the urbanised sphere¹³. These observations naturally do not mean that understanding and underlining the deep differences between societies encountered in the conquest and 'reconquest' phases are being disregarded: nonetheless we need to renew the basis on which our arguments are founded.

The need to avoid the ambiguous use of the term 'Islamisation' was very much present in the discussions about al-Andalus of the 1980s and 1990s, when it was stressed that such Islamisation did not in itself coincide with religious Islamisation, or linguistic Arabisation, but did comprise the (rapid or slow) establishment of Islamic social systems (which themselves are a matter of debate). Recently the emphasis has been particularly on how cultural and religious change, the appearance

10 E.g. M. P. Ación Almansa, *El final*, cited n. 7, and *Id.*, *Poblamiento y sociedad en el al-Andalus: un mundo de ciudades, alquerias y huṣūn*, in J. I. de la Iglesia Duarte (ed.), *Cristiandad e Islam en la Edad Media hispana*, Logroño, 2008, p. 141-168.

11 Wickham returns to these terms with his customary clarity (C. Wickham, *Le forme del feudalesimo*. In: *Il Feudalesimo nell'Alto Medioevo*, «Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo 47», 2000, p. 15-46.

12 A summary of the debate can be found in S. Carocci, *Signoria rurale e mutazione feudale. Una discussione*, in *Storica*, 8, 1997, p. 49-91; how this debate affected archaeological research is illustrated in the monographic section of *Archeologia Medievale* 2010.

13 E.g. M. E. Cortese, *Aristocrazia signorile e città nell'Italia centro-settentrionale (secc. XI-XII)*, in M. T. Caciorna, S. Carocci, A. Zorzi (eds.), *I comuni di Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur*, Roma, 2014, p. 69-94.

of new elites and the creation of new forms of state organisation must not be seen as distinct processes but as very closely connected¹⁴. Overall it must nevertheless be acknowledged that the term is used very loosely; therefore, as we shall see, it is essential to clearly define what it means to identify traces of 'Islamisation' in the archaeological material available to us. Personally I hold the view that it is difficult to construct an ideal type of Islamic social formation and that so far the attempts made in this direction have not resulted in less ambiguity; above all it has not had the heuristic value that it should have had. Instead a comparative reading of the social and cultural transformations that took place in the countries which, starting from different initial situations, were to become part of that world labelled the Islamic world, seems preferable. Such an approach does of course not imply eliminating the religious conversion from the discussion, a topic of great importance for understanding the changes that occurred in the countries that were to become Muslim; rather, we should highlight how religious Islamisation and linguistic Arabisation promoted a remarkable social mobility, especially in the phases immediately following the conquest¹⁵. To consider aspects of the overall social fabric in such a connected manner (forms of state, nature and wealth of the aristocracy, levels of cohesion and autonomy of the peasant communities) and economic aspects (means and volume of exchange, urban development) together with overarching themes such as migration and cultural change constitutes in my opinion one of the more interesting challenges¹⁶.

Returning to the fundamental achievements and legacy of archaeological research in the 1980s and 1990s, it seems to me that the social articulation of the peasant world is an area of research where archaeology still has much to achieve. One aspect which researchers on al-Andalus have quietly agreed on is to regard Andalusian society as not possessing 'feudal lords'¹⁷, and I have recently suggest-

14 Most recently A. Nef, F. Ardizzone (eds.), *Les dynamiques de l'islamisation en Méditerranée centrale et en Sicile: nouvelles propositions et découvertes récentes*, Bari-Rome, 2014, which contains a number of essays on this subject, in particular A. Nef, *Quelques réflexions sur les conquêtes islamiques, le processus d'islamisation et implications pour l'histoire de la Sicile*, in A. Nef, F. Ardizzone (eds.), *Les dynamiques*, cited above in this note, p. 47-58. The voluminous literature addressing the topic of Islamisation is constantly growing; e.g. J. F. Haldon (ed.), *Money, power and politics in early Islamic Syria: a review of current debates*, Farnham, 2010, and D. Valérian (ed.), *Islamisation et arabisation de l'Occident musulman médiéval (VI^e-XII^e siècle)*, Paris, 2011.

15 E.g. C. Cahen, *Les peuples musulmans dans l'Histoire médiévale*, Damascus, 1977.

16 Manzano followed a similar approach (E. Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores, emires y califas. Los Omeyas y la formación de al-Andalus*, Barcelona, 2006).

17 For a summary of this subject, see A. García Sanjuán, *El concepto tributario y la caracterización de la sociedad andalusi: treinta años de debate historeográfico*, in A. García

ed that this was also the case in Islamic Sicily¹⁸. This does not necessarily mean that the social composition of the peasantry was egalitarian, but rather that the conditions for the emergence of forms of seigniorial rule, either of an estate type or of a territorial type, may not have been met. While the importance ascribed to tribal organisation at the heart of al-Andalus has been much revised¹⁹, the question of the relationship between the peasant communities and the State through taxation remains central. It seems to me of equal relevance to investigate in what measure agriculture was 'commercialised', feeling the effects of the growth of towns, or not, and to ascertain the degree of self-sufficiency of peasant communities or on the contrary whether they were tied into an exchange network. The quantity of archaeological data at our disposal, both in Spain and in Sicily, has greatly increased in the last few years. But further efforts must be made to interpret this evidence, and above all it is necessary to plan future research which clearly sets out questions and objectives, and this includes an open-minded re-evaluation of past research.

2. Sicily in the 6th to 13th centuries: recent advances

The archaeological data available for medieval Sicily are of uneven quality in terms of the research themes outlined here (Figs. 1-2). Nonetheless more and more projects are oriented towards understanding phenomena over the *longue durée*, even if not specifically targeting the post-Roman periods. Intensive excavations have been conducted on hilltop site with major phases dating to Antiquity (e.g. Iato, Entella, Segesta, Rocchichella di Mineo), hilltop sites with mainly medieval occupation (e.g. Monte Kassar, Brucato, Calathamet, Castellaccio di Campofiorito), undefended sites of different kinds (e.g. Villa del Casale/Piazza Armerina, Sofiana, Kaukana, Contrada Colmitella, Milocca, Contrada Sarace-

Sanjuán (ed.), *Saber y sociedad en al-Andalus: IV-V Jornadas de Cultura Islámica, Almonaster la Real, Huelva*, Huelva, 2006, p. 81-152. C. J. Carvajal, *The Archaeology of Al-Andalus: Past, Present and Future*, in *Medieval Archaeology*, 58, 1, 2014, p. 318-339, is an overview of the archeology of al-Andalus.

¹⁸ A. Molinari, *Le ricerche nel territorio di Segesta-Calathamet-Calatafimi: ripensando ad un ventennio di ricerche nella Sicilia occidentale*, in A. Nef, F. Ardizzone (eds.), *Les dynamiques*, cited n. 13, p. 327-340.

¹⁹ E.g. E. Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores*, cited n. 15, p. 129-139 and M. P. Ación Almansa, E. Manzano Moreno, *Organización social y administración política en Al-Ándalus bajo el emirato*, in F. J. Fernández Conde, C. García de Castro Valdés (eds.), *Poder y Simbología en la Europa Altomedieval. Siglos VIII-X, Symposium Internacional. Territorio, Sociedad y Poder*, «Anejo 2», Oviedo, 2009, p. 331-348.

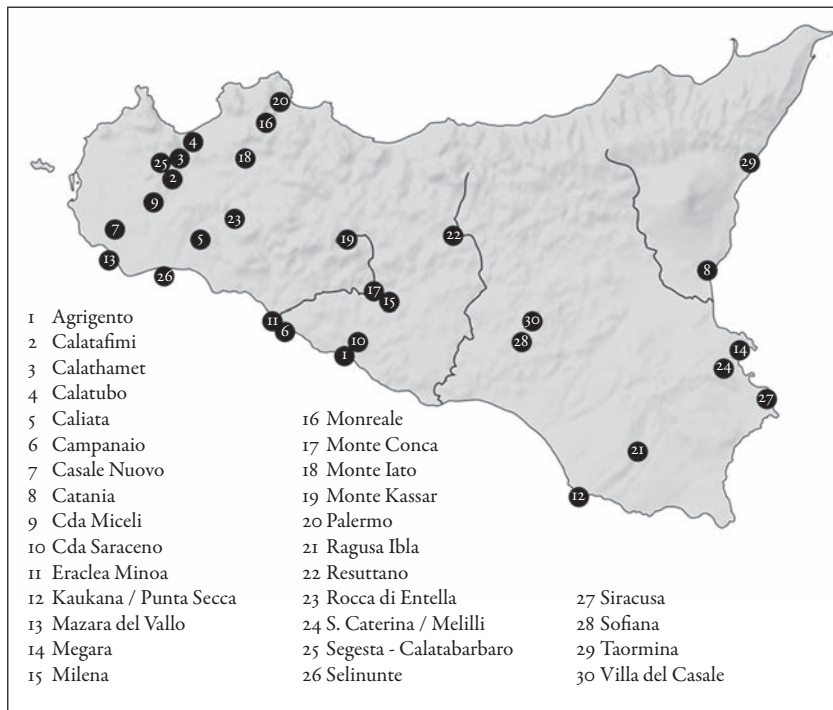


Figure 1. Map of Sicily with sites mentioned in the text.

no, Calliata, etc.) and there have been many systematic surface surveys²⁰. In cities where occupation has been continuous archaeological investigations have been unfortunately dominated by rescue interventions, which in the best of cases are merely reported in summary preliminary reports. Nevertheless in some centres and especially in Palermo, the analysis of stratigraphic sequences excavated in the 1980s and 1990s has been producing over the last few years highly interesting results, especially concerning ceramic assemblages²¹.

In the rural world the significance for the early medieval period of certain nodal points located in particularly favourable locations along the main axes of communication in valley bottoms or on hill sides is emerging with some clarity.

20 For the most recent data, see A. Nef, F. Ardizzone (eds.), *Les dynamiques*, cited n. 13, with references published so far.

21 E.g. the contributions on Palermo in A. Nef, F. Ardizzone (eds.), *Les dynamiques*, cited n. 13.

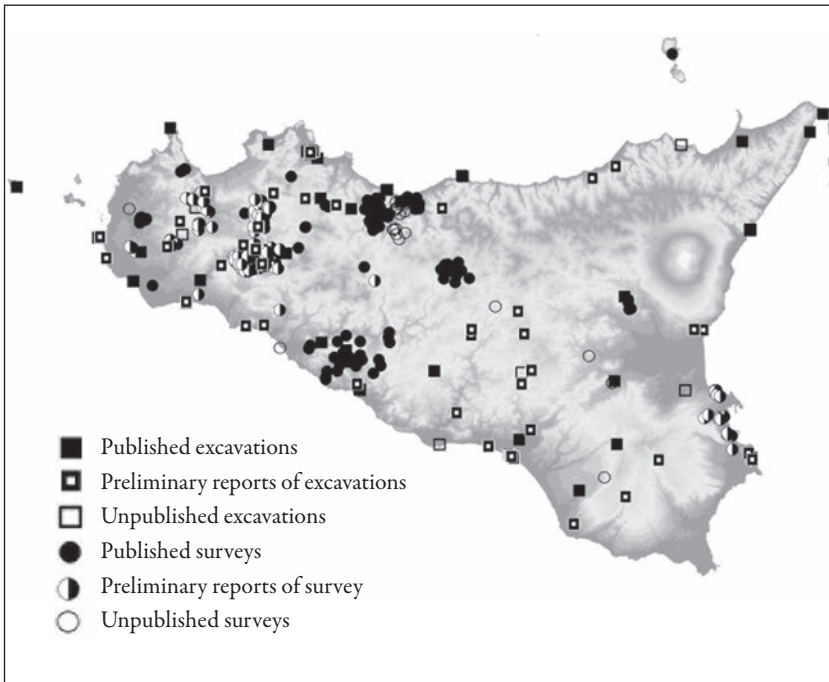


Figure 2. The state of archaeological research in post-roman Sicily (after C. F. Mangiaracina).

These centres, for which it would be appropriate to use the term *agro-town*²², frequently contain substantial evidence of late Roman but also early medieval and medieval phases. These agro-towns are found in Sicily in the east (e.g. Sofiana, Fig. 3)²³, in the centre (e.g. Casale San Pietro, Fig. 5)²⁴, and the west (e.g.

22 R. J. A. Wilson, *Sicily under the Roman Empire: the Archaeology of a Roman Province, 36BC-AD535*, Warminster, 1990, is among the first to apply this term to the Sicilian situation, in his monograph on Roman Sicily.

23 See E. Vaccaro, *Sicily in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries AD: A Case of Persisting Economic Complexity?*, in *Al-Masaq*, 25, 2013, p. 34-69; *Id.*, *Re-Evaluating a Forgotten Town using Intra-Site Surveys and the GIS Analysis of Surface Ceramics: Philosophiania-Sofiana (Sicily) in the Longue Durée*, in P. Johnson, M. Millett (eds.), *Archaeological Survey and the City*, Oxford, 2013, p. 107-145.

24 See S. Vassallo, *Il territorio di Castronovo di Sicilia in età bizantina e le fortificazioni del Kassar*, in M. Congiu, S. Modeo, M. Arnone (eds.), *La Sicilia bizantina: storia, città e territorio: atti del VI convegno di studi*, Caltanissetta, 2010, p. 259-276. A new research campaign in the area of Castronovo di Sicilia was initiated in 2014, directed by M. Carver and the author.

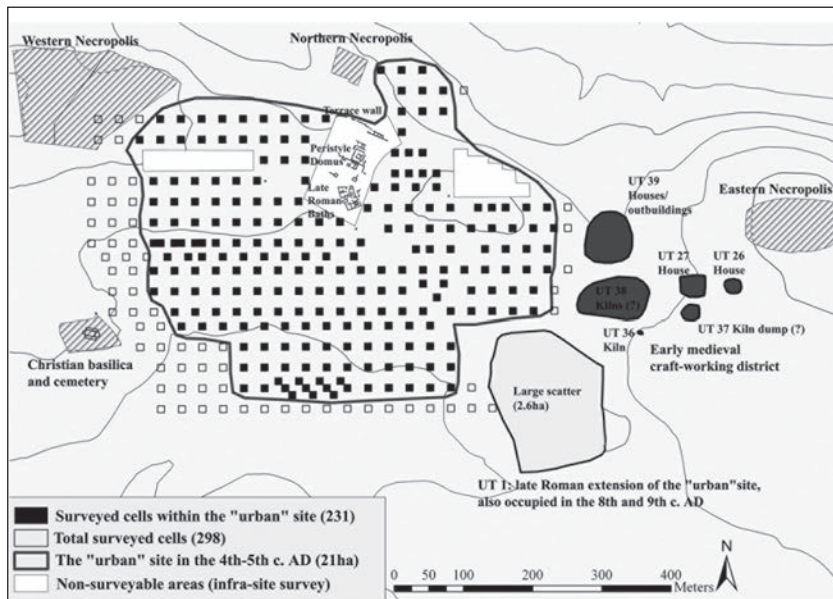


Figure 3. The site of Sofiana (Mazarino)
(after E. Vaccaro, *Re-Evaluating*, cited n. 22).

Acquae Segestanae)²⁵. Though more often recognised in surface surveys, these sites are beginning to be systematically excavated (Sofiana and Casale San Pietro). The exceptionally large site of Sofiana has been estimated to have spread over more than 20 hectares in late Antiquity, to shrink to some 11 hectares in the Early Middle Ages, which is still remarkable. This type of settlement nearly always contains religious buildings of a given allegiance and traces of non-agricultural production. If the hypotheses of V. Prigent (forthcoming)²⁶ are correct, then these agro-towns could coincide with the *condumae* cited in the letter of Gregory the Great; these refer to places where farmers of diverse status, but also the *conductores* of the large estates of the Church of Rome resided. The evidence for occupation in the 6th to 12th centuries of the large *villae* founded or extended in the 4th century is sparse; therefore the relationship between the control centres of the large

25 See A. Molinari, I. Neri, *Dall'età tardo-imperiale al XII secolo: i risultati della ricognizione eseguita nel territorio di Calatafimi*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Age*, 116/1, 2004, p. 109-127.

26 V. Prigent, *Le grand domaine sicilien à l'aube du Moyen Age*, in *L'héritage byzantin en Italie (VIII-XII siècle). IV. Habitat et structure agraire*, (Rome, 17-18 décembre 2010), forthcoming.

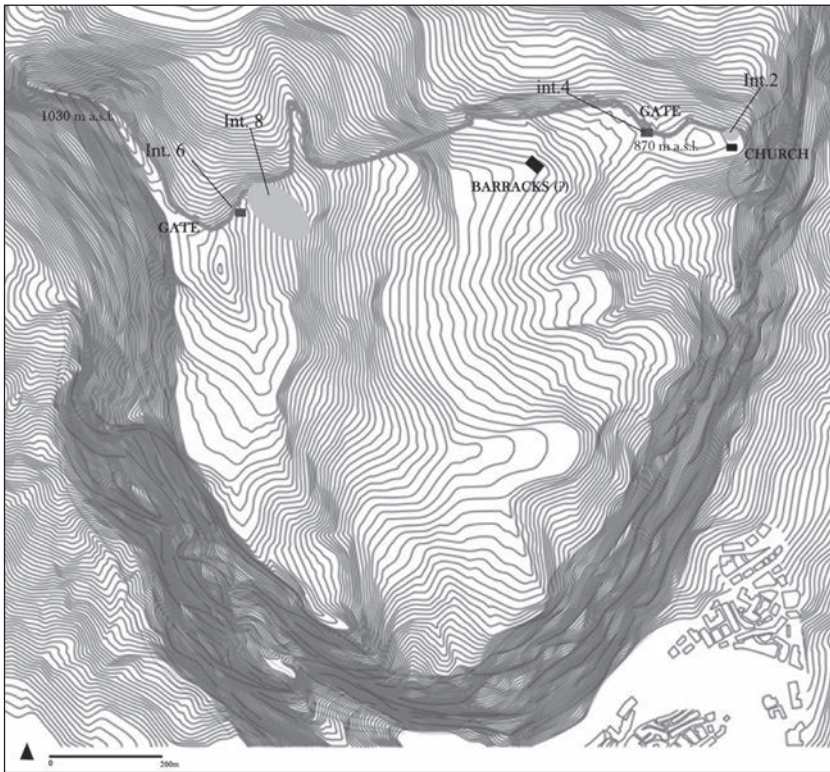


Figure 4. General plan of Monte Kassar (Castronovo di Sicilia).

estates and the large *vici/agro-towns* under discussion remains to be investigated²⁷. In any case, though they are clearly the main points of reference within vast rural landscapes, the latter never became episcopal seats (which remained firmly in cities²⁸), in contrast to other regions of southern Italy (especially Puglia²⁹). Moreover,

27 It would appear that the *villae* were in crisis and that their central territorial role was subsumed by the large *vici*.

28 See V. Prigent, *Palermo in the Eastern Roman Empire*, in A. Nef (ed.), *A companion to medieval Palermo: the history of a Mediterranean city from 600 to 1500*, Leiden, 2013, p. 11-38, and *Id.*, *L'évolution du réseau épiscopal sicilien (VIII^e-X^e siècle)*, in A. Nef, F. Ardizzone (eds.), *Les dynamiques*, cited n. 13, p. 89-102.

29 See most recently G. Volpe, *Città e campagna, strutture insediative e strutture ecclesiastiche dell'Italia meridionale: il caso dell'Apulia*, in *Chiese locali e chiese regionali nell'alto medioevo, Settimane di studio della fondazione centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo*, 61, 2014, p. 1041-1068.



Figure 5. The area of Casale San Pietro.

they do not appear to have been mentioned in chronicles of the Islamic conquest, which primarily record the towns and a few fortresses³⁰. It therefore seems that the agro-towns did not have prominent administrative roles, and they remained 'quasi-urban' in character. However, the size of these establishments and the nature of their material culture indicate extended, complex communities, well integrated in supra-local exchange networks, and not autarchic centres. Up to the 7th century, the large undefended nuclei appear to coexist with a diversity of establishment: *villae* occupied in a manner very different from that of the 4th-5th century and smaller village sites almost never located on high ground.

The 8th century sees a further contraction of settled nuclei almost everywhere in Sicily. However, it is always the agro-towns that exhibit signs of major continuity. At Sofiana again, a large area has been identified close to the settlement; it is characterised by a remarkable number of kilns producing amphorae dateable to the 8th-9th century³¹. The presence of fortified settlements of diverse configurations, on the other hand, is a more controversial subject. Monte Kassar³² is at

30 E.g. L. C. Chiarelli, *A History of Muslim Sicily*, Santa Venera, 2011, p. 337-338.

31 See E. Vaccaro, *Sicily*, cited n. 22, and *Id.*, *Re-Evaluating*, cited n. 22.

32 S. Vassallo, *Le fortificazioni bizantine del Kassar di Castronovo di Sicilia: indagini preliminari*, in C. Ampolo (ed.), *Immagine e immagini della Sicilia e di altre isole del*

present a rather isolated case; it is located at an altitude of 1030m asl (Fig. 4) and overlooks the present-day settlement of Castronovo di Sicilia in the middle of the island, on important N-S and E-W communication routes. It consists of an extensive stretch of defensive wall, 3 m wide on average and 2 km long, with 11 towers and two main entrance gates along it. In some sections a further external wall is also recognisable. The area it encloses is around 90 hectares, and the interior appears to have been occupied by settlement and buildings only in a tiny part of the whole. In particular the area immediately adjacent to the internal face of the fortifications appears to have been occupied more intensively. The chronological elements so far available seem to indicate a construction date between the end of the 7th and the beginning of the 8th century. The area inside the wall does not seem to have been occupied after the 9th century. The military and public nature of this fortified site appears at present to have been its main characteristic. In the plain below Monte Kassar the large agricultural settlement of Casale San Pietro (Fig. 5), located along a major ancient road axis that links Palermo to Agrigento still today, does not seem to have had any break in occupation, at least from late Antiquity to the Norman period. The archaeological data available for the whole of Sicily do not currently allow us to perceive a generalised trend in the occupation of sites on high ground³³.

On the whole therefore – and unlike in al-Andalus – there seems to be no evidence for proto-seigneurial fortifications or for small nucleated independent hilltop centres³⁴, either in late Byzantine times or during the long period of the Islamic conquest which was carried out, as is well known, over a protracted period between the first quarter of the 9th century to the first few years of the 10th³⁵. The principal new elements that have recently begun to emerge from surface

Mediterraneo antico, Atti delle seste giornate internazionali di studi sull'area elima e la Sicilia occidentale nel contesto mediterraneo (Erice, 12-16 ottobre 2006), Pisa, 2009, p. 679-698; *Id.*, *Il territorio*, cited n. 23. A new research campaign on Monte Kassar (Castronovo di Sicilia) was initiated in 2014, directed by M. Carver and the author.

33 L. Arcifa, *Romaioi e Saraceni intorno all'827. Riflessioni sul tema della frontiera*, in S. Modeo, M. Congiu, L. Santagati (eds.), *La Sicilia del IX secolo tra bizantini e musulmani. Atti del IX convegno di studi*, Caltanissetta, 2013, p. 161-182, gives a summary of the known dates.

34 For a summary of *huṣūn*, see for example: M. P. Ación Almansa, *El final*, cited n. 7; *Id.*, *Poblamiento*, cited n. 9; S. Gutierrez Lloret, *La arqueología en la historia del temprano al-Andalus: espacios sociales, cerámica e islamización*, in P. Sénac, *Histoire*, cited n. 6, p. 33-66.

35 See A. Nef, V. Prigent, *Guerroyer pour la Sicile (827-902)*, in S. Modeo, M. Congiu, L. Santagati (eds.), *La Sicilia*, cited n. 31, for the long conquest period.

surveys (e.g. in the areas of Entella, Agrigento and Sofiana³⁶) consist of a proliferation of very small sites, frequently located in marginal zones but not necessarily protected, whose occupation phases date exclusively to the 8th–9th century. In the complete absence of systematic excavations, it is however impossible to pronounce on their exact nature.

It is in the course of the 10th century that the main innovations in settlement occur: the numbers of non-defended villages increase, the already existing centres (e.g. the agro-towns) are renewed and extended, the small dispersed nuclei disappear, and settlements on high ground are attested, including on hilltops previously occupied in Antiquity but abandoned for centuries (e.g. Iato and Entella³⁷). The 10th century, especially the second half of that century as we shall outline later, represents a time of true economic and demographic boom for Sicily; a variety of factors have contributed to this situation, among which the establishment from 948 CE onwards of a stable dynasty of emirs with powers over the whole island. The 10th-century sites located on high ground appear to be adjacent to or replace the *agro-towns* (which had been relatively complex sites throughout the Early Middle Ages) as territorial centres. This seems to have been the case of Entella and Calathamet³⁸ (in eastern Sicily). The latter site apparently rose to pre-eminence in relation to *Acquae Segestanae* located in the plain below. Overall however, this is not a phenomenon that can be considered as generalised over the whole of Sicily. Therefore for the 10th century but especially the second half of that century the prevailing settlement model

36 A. Corretti, A. Facella, C. Mangiaracina, *Contessa Entellina (PA). Forme di insediamento tra tarda antichità e età islamica*, in A. Nef, F. Ardizzone (eds.), *Les dynamiques*, cited n. 13, p. 341–350; M. S. Rizzo, L. Danile, L. Zambito, *L'insediamento rurale nel territorio di Agrigento: nuovi dati da prospezioni e scavi*, in A. Nef, F. Ardizzone (eds.), *Les dynamiques*, cited n. 13, p. 351–364; E. Vaccaro, *Re-Evaluating*, cited n. 22.

37 For Iato see H. P. Isler, *Monte Iato*, in C. A. Di Stefano, A. Cadei (eds.), *Federico II e la Sicilia dalla terra alla corona. Archeologia, architettura e arti della Sicilian età sveva. Catalogo della mostra (Palermo, dicembre 1994-aprile 1995)*, Palermo, 1995, p. 121–150, and most recently A. Alfano, V. Sacco, *Tra alto e basso medioevo. Ceramiche, merci e scambi nelle valli dello Iato e del Belice destro dalle ricognizioni del territorio*, in *Fasti on line. Documents and research*, Folder-it-2014-309, p. 1–48. Available at <http://www.fastionline.org/docs/FOLDER-it-2014-309.pdf> [accessed 6 March 2015] with references; for Entella see A. Corretti, C. Michelini, M. A. Vaggioli, *Frammenti di Medioevo siciliano: Entella e il suo territorio dall'altomedioevo a Federico II*, in P. Pensabene (ed.), *Piazza Armerina. Villa del Casale e la Sicilia tra tardoantico e medioevo*, Roma, p. 147–196 and A. Corretti, A. Facella, C. Mangiaracina, *Contessa Entellina*, cited n. 34

38 E. Lesnes, J. M. Poisson (eds.), *Calathamet. Archéologie et histoire d'un château normand en Sicile*, Rome, 2013.

is one that sees the coexistence of villages and undefended settlements with defended settlements on high ground, albeit fewer. These fortified sites were apparently permanently occupied by a civilian population, unlike those of the Byzantine period. Domestic buildings organised around courtyards and blind alleys, in which large pottery assemblages have been recovered (e.g. Entella, Calathamet, Iato) are datable to this period. I shall return at the end of this section to the problems connected with the evolution of the social structure from the Byzantine to the Islamic era; here let us note how the establishment in the 10th century of a settlement pattern based on the coexistence of open and fortified settlements recalls in outline the *ḥiṣn+alquerias* organisation of al-Andalus, although there it came into being by following a completely different path. Let us recall briefly the variety of possible functions the *ḥuṣūn* of the full Islamic period may have fulfilled, as have been suggested in Spanish discussions: places of contact between the State and the peasant communities (in the opinion of the researchers of the Casa de Velasquez), *refugium* sites entirely managed by the peasant communities (in M. Barceló's view), sites with a complex and differentiated history, which became centres of districts with scattered open settlements only under the caliphate (according, for example, to M. Acién³⁹). On the other hand E. Manzano⁴⁰ has pointed out that the existence of districts dominated by castles, in the sense of structures supporting an administrative organisation, can only be identified in a few specific regions of al-Andalus. I suspect, in a nutshell, that the model of '*ḥiṣn+alquerias*' in the Iberian Peninsula in Islamic times has been much weakened by the layers of meaning that have accrued. A comprehensive re-evaluation based on a broader use of the archaeological data would therefore be of great interest. It seems however quite clear that the *ḥuṣūn* had a diversity of roles in the 8th, 9th and 10th centuries. In Sicily the appearance of hilltop sites coincides significantly from a chronological viewpoint with the strengthening of the Islamic State and with what is recorded in epigraphic and narrative sources. I refer in particular to the well-known prescription of 967 CE of the Fatimid caliph al-Mu'izz reported by al-Nuwayrī⁴¹, which contains precise instructions addressed to the Sicilian emir Ahmad. In short, the caliph orders that the population of the island should no longer live scattered over the landscape but in fortified centres provided with Friday mosques with a pulpit. This prescription has been interpreted as indicative of a clear will to improve the

39 See for example S. Gutierrez Lloret, *La arqueología*, cited n. 32; A. García Sanjuán, *El concepto*, cited n. 16, for a summary.

40 E. Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores*, cited n. 15, p. 433-437.

41 M. Amari, *Biblioteca arabo-sicula. Testi*, vol. 2, Torino-Roma, 1880-81 (re-edition Catania 1982), p. 546.



Figure 6. The Termini Imerese inscription
(after R. Giunta, *L'epigrafe*, cited n. 41).

efficiency of Sicily's tax and administrative systems, to achieve its full Islamisation, and to ensure fidelity to the Fatimid dynasty⁴². Moreover the application of this edict would put order into the rural settlements, and in so doing establish the presence of military detachments inside the district centres. To this we should add the important epigraphic evidence from Termini Imerese (Fig. 6) dated to around 951-961 CE⁴³, which cites the construction of a building (probably a fortress) by a certain Gawhar the Sicilian, namely the general of al-Mu'izz

42 Most recently L. C. Chiarelli, *A History*, cited n. 28, p. 108-109.

43 See R. Giunta, *L'epigrafe in arabo di Termini Imerese*, in A. Bagnera (ed.), *Islam in Sicilia. Un giardino tra due civiltà. Sezione Archeologica. Archeologia dell'Islam in Sicilia, Catalogo della mostra*, Gibellina, 2012, p. 16-19.

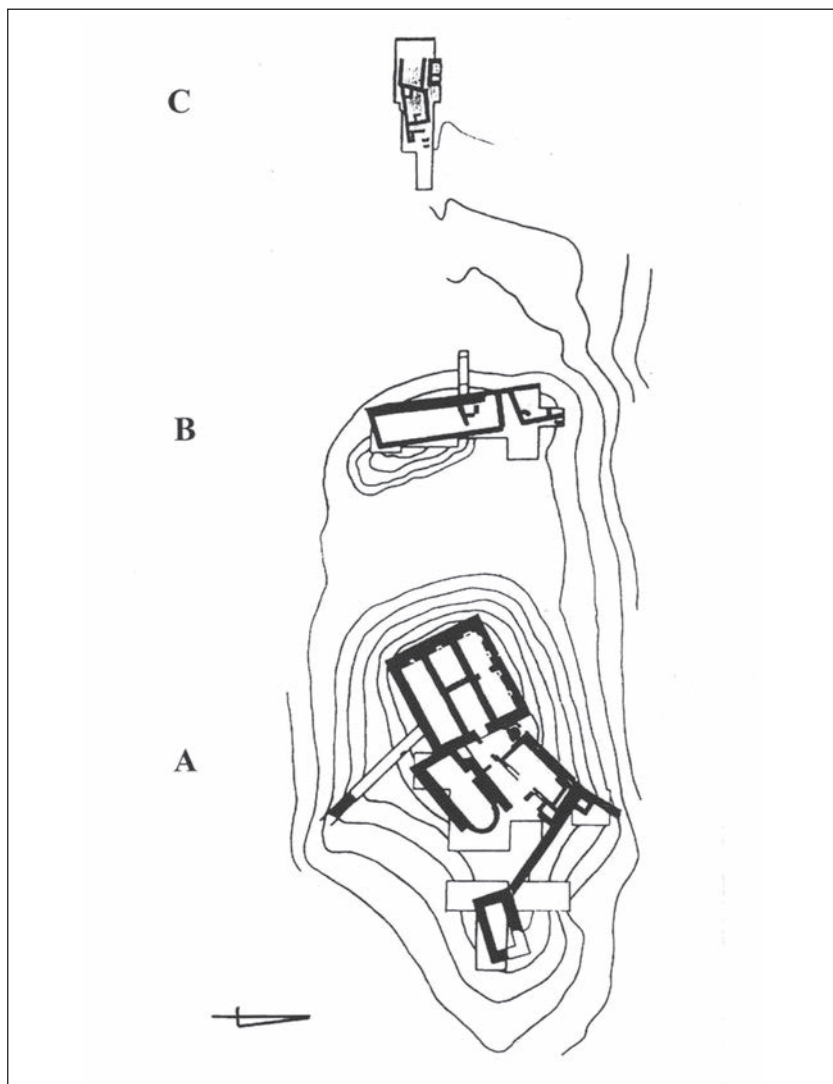
who founded Fatimid Cairo in Egypt. Recent investigations carried out in the Trapani hills⁴⁴ tend, on the contrary, not to ascribe much importance to the role of the State; instead, Rotolo and Civantos see in the occupation of the 10th and 11th-century hilltop site of Pizzo Monaco, located immediately above the open village of Baida-Testa d'Acqua, an independent initiative of the Muslim peasant community. Pizzo Monaco could represent a fortified granary or an enclosure used as a *refugium*. Excavations are however only in their initial stages. In the context of this research the models of M. Barceló are taken up in a fairly explicit manner and adjusted to this specific area: it is suggested that the territory was seriously depopulated in the Byzantine period and repopulated around the 10th century by immigrants who organised themselves in villages close to the main sources of water; further, they chose the site of Pizzo Monaco as a stronghold, collective granary and *refugium* for the communities that lived in the most accessible zones. It seems to me, however, that this type of research could have a tendency to provide clear answers before concrete results have begun to emerge.

For hilltop sites of the Islamic period the problem, in terms of the archaeological evidence, resides in the first place in identifying the topographic layout and the type of structures that these sites may have had, as has so often been stressed from as early as the 1980s⁴⁵. A recently excavated site illustrates the kind of interpretative problems encountered: El Molon⁴⁶ in the vicinity of Valencia, dated to between the 8th and 10th century. This site has an interesting tripartite layout: an area dedicated perhaps to grain storage and other activities connected with the manipulation of agricultural produce, a refuge enclosure without domestic structures, and a settlement area with two mosques. None of the zones is explicitly seigneurial. We shall briefly return to the grain deposits; with respect to the configuration of El Molon, we may however ask whether it is possible to establish if the fortifications were actually built by the peasant community, or whether a public element was involved (degree of specialisation of the workforce, complexity of the works undertaken, etc.), or both (construction by the local community carried out under coercion from the State). Moreover it would be most interesting to establish who made up the permanent population of the *ḥiṣn*: were they farmers who cultivated the

44 See A. Rotolo, J. M. Martin Civantos, *Spunti di riflessione sull'insediamento di epoca islamica nel territorio dei Monti di Trapani*, in A. Nef, F. Ardizzone (eds.), *Les dynamiques*, cited n. 13, p. 309-316.

45 See A. Bazzana, P. Cressier, P. Guichard, *Les châteaux*, cited n. 5.

46 A. J. Lorrio, M. D. Sánchez De Prado, *El Molón (Camporrobles, Valencia). Un poblado de primera época islámica*, in *Lucentum*, XXVII, 2008, p. 141-164. The site is also cited in example by S. Gutierrez Lloret, *La arqueología*, cited n. 32.



*Figure 7. General plan of the site of Calathamet
(after E. Lesnes, J. M. Poisson (eds.), Calathamet, cited n. 36).*

surrounding land, or were they individuals who, for the sole fact that they inhabited a fortified site, were on a higher rung of the social ladder? Were they delegates from the central power, civil servants, or military personnel? In Sicily the hilltop site of Calathamet (Fig. 7) excavated in the 1980s by the Ecole

française de Rome is the only site where it is possible to recognise in the occupation phases of the 10th century a bipartite separation between the settlement and the summit area, cut off from the rest of the plateau by a ditch. The latter cannot have had any seigneurial kind of connotation in Islamic times, a connotation that it will acquire only after the arrival of the Normans. In the other cases mentioned (Entella and Iato) only settlement zones are known. In Sicily the structure of the houses, the layout, and the kind of material culture found in the fortified villages do not seem to differ from what is known from villages in the plain (e.g. the village built over the Villa del Casale⁴⁷). Overall it is necessary to refine the understanding, within their various phases, of the topographic articulations of upland sites. In any case it seems that the idea of an autarchic management entirely in the hands of independent peasant communities is not tenable, although admittedly the archaeological evidence is far from abundant. It is however clear that the definition of real and actual seigneurial areas in the interior of fortified sites will only emerge in the Norman and Swabian period, as the excavations of Calathamet and Segesta (Figs. 7 and 9⁴⁸) have clearly shown. As amply illustrated in other places⁴⁹, the encounter between profoundly different social structures will lead to another clean break in the Islamic settlement pattern in the course of the 12th century, involving the abandonment of many undefended sites and the creation of extended hilltop villages.

The examination of the systems necessary for storing grain, the granaries and storage pits constitutes a line of research in the study of the rural world that is showing much promise⁵⁰. Variations in size, location, construction techniques and the shape of pits excavated in the ground or the bedrock can provide indications of the methods of extracting surplus from farming production. In Tuscany it has for example been suggested that a variation in the location and nature of grain deposits is related to the evolution of power of a seigneurial type⁵¹. For Sicily studies are based primarily on written sources,

47 See P. Pensabene (ed.), *Piazza Armerina*, cited n. 35; P. Pensabene, C. Sfameni (eds.), *La villa restaurata e i nuovi studi sull'edilizia residenziale tardoantica*, Bari, 2014.

48 A. Molinari, *Segesta II. Il castello e la moschea (scavi 1989-95)*, Palermo, 1997.

49 E.g. A. Molinari, *Paesaggi rurali e formazioni sociali nella Sicilia islamica, normanna e sveva (secoli X-XIII)*, in *Archeologia Medievale*, 37, 2010, p. 229-246.

50 See for example the various essays in A. Vigil-Escalera Guirado, G. Bianchi, J. A. Quirós Castillo (eds.), *Horrea, barns and silos. Storage and incomes in early medieval Europe*, Bilbao, 2013.

51 See G. Bianchi, *Sistemi di stoccaggio nelle campagne italiane (secc. VII-XIII): l'evidenza archeologica dal caso di Rocca degli Alberti in Toscana*, in A. Vigil-Escalera Guirado, G. Bianchi, J. A. Quirós Castillo (eds.), *Horrea*, cited n. 48, p. 77-102.



Figure 8. Piazza Armerina, Villa del Casale. General plan showing the phases dated to late Antiquity and to the Middle Ages (after P. Pensabene (ed.), *Piazza Armerina*, cited n. 35).

whereas archaeological evidence is so far still relatively scarce⁵². A few of the better studied cases illustrate the potential of this type of testimony for our island too, especially if it is sufficiently closely associated to what is known about the structure of property and taxation. An enormous granary has recently been identified at the Villa del Casale near Piazza Armerina⁵³. It consists of two three-aisled buildings built in a phase that goes back to the 4th century located immediately behind the monumental entrance. They are an appropriate illustration of buildings dedicated to the accumulation of cereals in a large Late Roman *latifundia* estate villa. In the Byzantine period the type of structure that can be expected may perhaps have changed with the transformation in the public taxation systems (for example depending on the proportion of taxation in kind as opposed to taxation in money) and the organisation of the army⁵⁴. In the context

52 A full and comprehensive summary of the data is given by L. Arcifa, *Facere fossa et victualia reponere: la conservazione del grano nella Sicilia medievale*, in *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Moyen Age*, 120/1, 2008, p. 39-54.

53 P. Pensabene, C. Sfamemi, *La villa*, cited n. 45.

54 V. Prigent, *Le stockage du grain dans le monde byzantin (VII^e-XII^e siècle)*, in *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Moyen Age*, 120, 2008, p. 7-38.

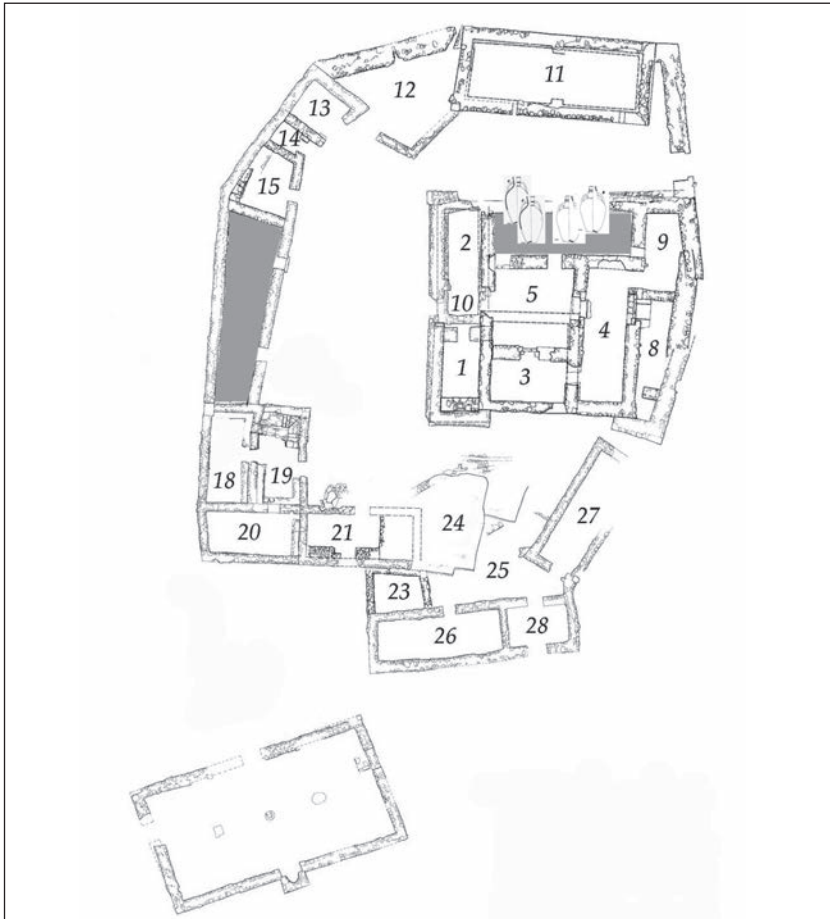


Figure 9. Segesta: the building phases in the area of the acropolis.

of the new excavations of the large fortified site on Monte Kassar, one of the research objectives consists of verifying the possible presence of State-controlled storage of produce. The identification by magnetometry of buildings up to 30 m in length offers a most interesting perspective. Be that as it may, the evidence for the Late Byzantine period is very diverse. The site of Contrada Colmitella⁵⁵

⁵⁵ M. S. Rizzo, D. Romano, *I butti del villaggio rurale di Colmitella (Racalmuto AG)*, in *Archeologia Postmedievale*, 16, 2012, p. 99-107; M. S. Rizzo, L. Danile, L. Zambito, *L'insediamento*, cited n. 34.

in the region of Agrigento, recently excavated in advance of roadworks, is a farming village with occupation phases dated from at least the 7th century up to the 12th century. The settlement contains a concentration of more than 80 grain storage pits in an area that is distinct from the settled area (Fig. 10). These pits were not all used or dug at the same time, and they were also abandoned at different times. However, the continuous use of the same part of the site and the same location for the pits are particularly noteworthy. Indications are that the pits belonged to single families but were all located in a communal area. In the Islamic village that was built over the Villa del Casale too, numerous grain storage pits have been recorded, many of which are concentrated in a central area of the settlement⁵⁶. This location in a particular sector of a settlement and not in the vicinity of individual houses appears to be a significant factor but it can be interpreted in different ways. For example, given that it is thought that in the Islamic period (as well as in the subsequent Norman period) the peasant communities of Sicily were collectively subjected to taxation on grain⁵⁷, a similar location of storage pits could, in my opinion, correspond well to a need for reciprocal control within peasant families of the same community. In other geographical contexts the concentration of storage pits in the same area has instead been interpreted as a sign of intensifying control over the peasantry on the parts of landowners and landlords⁵⁸. It seems therefore that the interpretation of storage pits requires access to far more comparative data. A last Sicilian example will be used to illustrate the changes that can be revealed by the study of grain deposits. On Monte Barbaro at Segesta in the Trapani region the area occupied by the town in Antiquity was permanently reoccupied in the 12th century (i.e. the Norman period) by an extensive village provided with a mosque. I have interpreted the birth of this village as a response by the Islamic peasant population to the growing pressure exerted by Norman domination. In this phase of the site's sequence buildings of seigneurial type are apparently absent, while a small fort with such connotations is built (in connexion with a church) around the beginning of the 13th century. Monte Barbaro is riddled with artificial cavities, whose chronology and function it has not been possible to investigate systematically. We can however note that one of the houses completely excavated on the slope of the mountain in recent years (Trench V) was partly rock-cut, with three spaces opening onto a small courtyard, in the centre of which there were storage pits

56 Pensabene personal communication.

57 A. Nef, *La fiscalité en Sicile sous la domination islamique*, in A. Nef, V. Prigent (eds.), *La Sicile de Byzance à l'Islam*, Paris, 2010, p. 131-156.

58 See in particular S. Gelichi's conclusions in the volume edited by A. Vigil-Escalera Guirado, G. Bianchi, J. A. Quirós Castillo (eds.), *Horrea*, cited n. 48, p. 217-223.

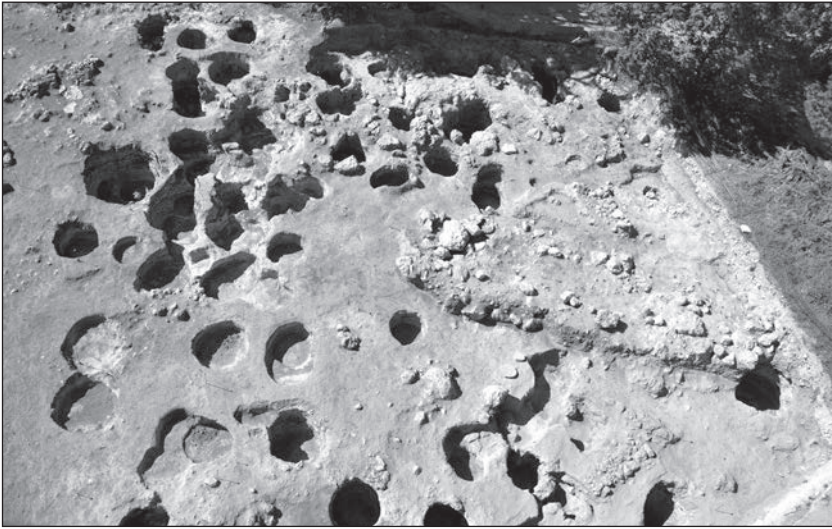


Figure 10. *Contrada Colmitella: area with grain storage pits*
(courtesy of M.S. Rizzo).

suitable for domestic use⁵⁹. The house remained in use up to the middle of the 13th century. In the seigneurial residence separated from the rest on the highest point of Monte Barbaro the deposits of agricultural produce are quite different in nature at the beginning of the 13th century. The lords' granaries were located in a remarkably large space immediately in front of the entrance to the central keep (Fig. 9). Furthermore, the storage space for liquid produce was located in one of the rooms of the ground floor, as attested by large quantities of amphorae. The differences seem to me sufficiently eloquent to show the potential of such archaeological indicators.

Recent research is refining the typological sequences of early medieval Sicilian ceramics, although it is at present far more developed in the eastern part compared to the western⁶⁰. Nonetheless the re-examination of the excavated stratigraphic sequences from Palermo is making the phases between the late 9th and the 10th century clearer, allowing us to better define the city's productions⁶¹.

59 See A. Molinari, *Segesta II*, cited n. 46, p. 104, fig. 159.

60 E.g. L. Arcifa, *Nuove ipotesi a partire dalla rilettura dei dati archeologici: la Sicilia orientale*, in A. Nef, V. Prigent (eds.), *La Sicile*, cited n. 55.

61 Numerous articles on Palermo can be found in A. Nef, F. Ardizzone, (eds.) *Les dynamiques*, cited n. 13.

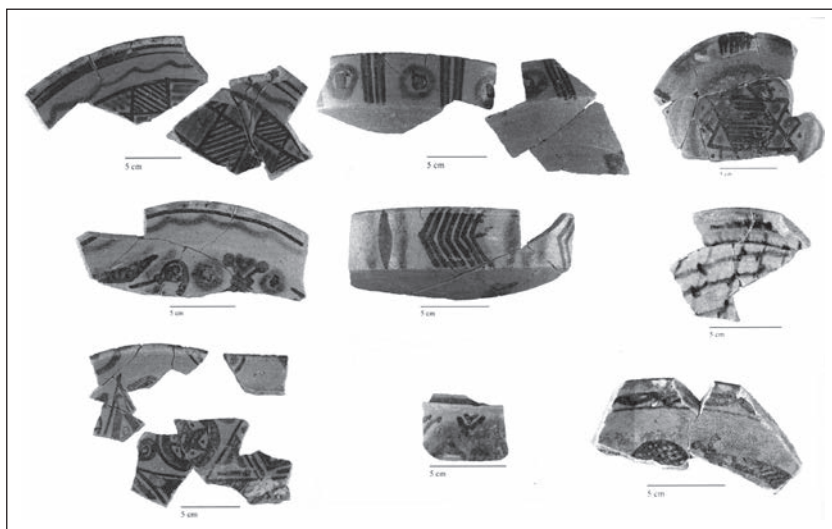


Figure 11. Painted and glazed pottery from Palermo (first half of the 10th century, after Aleo Nero C., Chiovaro M. (2014), Piazza Bologna (Palermo): osservazioni su alcuni contesti di età islamica entro il perimetro della “Madinat Balarm”, in A. Nef, F. Ardizzone (eds), Les dynamiques, cited n. 13, p. 247-258).

Palermo seems to be producing, earlier than the rest of the island (perhaps from the end of the 9th/ beginning of the 10th century), pottery whose forms, decorative motifs, techniques and functions are completely new compared to previous traditions and closely paralleled in North Africa (Fig. 11). The painted glazed tablewares, the vessels used to transform sugar, the *noria* containers and a whole new range of transport and dispensing vessels are the main novelties. An aspect which it is extremely important to highlight is how the ceramics produced in Palermo are consistently found all over the island from the second half of the 10th century onwards, albeit in varied proportions⁶². These are either fine tablewares or easily identifiable amphorae painted red, of good quality and quite standardised. They provide a clear framework for the part played by the capital in disseminating new lifestyles – at first adopted by the urban elites closely connected to the Emir’s court – as a manufacturing centre of prime importance. Further, the internal exchange networks are all significantly linked to Palermo.

⁶² E.g. A. Molinari, *La ceramica siciliana di età islamica tra interpretazione etnica e socio-economica*, in P. Pensabene (ed.), *Piazza Armerina*, cited n. 35; A. Alfano, V. Sacco, *Tra alto e basso medioevo*, cited n. 35.

Finally, it must be emphasised that the amphorae from Islamic Sicily are being identified with increasing frequency all over the Tyrrhenian sphere, from North Africa to Provence, with particular concentrations in the area of Salerno or in centres like Pisa⁶³. Moreover, the repertoire of Sicilian amphorae forms consist of a discrete range of shapes (there are at least three fairly distinct types), which suggests a specialisation in the products transported.

Bioarchaeological research concerned with the Middle Ages is characterised, on the other hand, by a general backwardness compared to elsewhere, or attempts made only sporadically, for example in studies of plant remains or animal bones⁶⁴. There are however a number of systematically excavated cemeteries dated from the Byzantine to the Swabian period, which have been the subject of osteological or palaeopathological analyses; on the whole these studies have mainly been confined to the examination of burial rites⁶⁵. To date there has been no archaeological research centred on field systems, on irrigation systems or on the building stratigraphy of the horizontal mills that are still extant. In essence we do not have any information about the working environment of the peasants, about the types of plants cultivated, or about the food consumed. The only indicators that we have in large measure are the ceramic forms related to cultivation or to the transformation of produce: *noria* vessels and the containers used for refining sugar⁶⁶. Although the data at our disposal are so far quite sparse and, in general terms, unequally distributed over the island, it is already becoming clear that the earliest and greatest concentration of such finds is in Palermo. The *noria* vessels (connected to a specific way of lifting water from wells) and the sugar containers certainly appear in stratified levels in Palermo at the very beginning of the 10th century⁶⁷. The sugar containers, especially, are found in large quanti-

63 See A. Molinari, *La ceramica siciliana di X e XI secolo tra circolazione internazionale e mercato interno*, in S. Gelichi, M. Baldassarri (eds.), *Pensare/Classificare. Studi e ricerche sulla ceramica medievale per Graziella Berti*, Firenze, 2010, p. 159-171, with references.

64 In any case there are very few fully published excavations relating to the medieval period.

65 E.g. A. Bagnera, E. Pezzini, *I cimiteri di rito musulmano nella Sicilia medievale. Dati e problemi*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Age*, 116, 2004, p. 231-302; R. Di Salvo, *I Musulmani della Sicilia occidentale: aspetti antropologici e paleopatologici*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Age*, 116, 2004, p. 389-408.

66 For a comprehensive and well-documented summary of the processes of sugar cultivation, transformation and trade, see M. Ouerfelli, *Le sucre: production, commercialisation et usages dans la Méditerranée médiévale*, Leiden, 2008; S. Tsugitaka, *Sugar in the Social Life of Medieval Islam*, Leiden/Boston, 2015.

67 I refer again to the contributions on Palermo in A. Nef, F. Ardizzone (eds.), *Les dynamiques*, cited n. 13. I also benefited from personal communications with C. F. Mangiaracina on the recent finds of the area of Via dei Mille in Palermo.

ties here, and so far they have not been recorded on other sites. *Noria* vessels have also only very rarely been recovered outside the city. Equally there are at present no parallels in other parts of Sicily for the impressive *qanat* network (which in all probability goes back to the Islamic and Norman period⁶⁸) that has been investigated in Balarm (Palermo) and which stretches over some 10 km. The recovery of the containers used to produce sugar (conical and cylindrical forms, see Fig. 12) is not only direct archaeological evidence that sugar cane was cultivated in Sicily as early as the 10th century, it also proves that it was systematically transformed into actual sugar. The written sources further tell us that sugar from Palermo was not just consumed locally but in all probability also exported beyond the island of Sicily. A report of 945 CE relating that a Sunni *faqih* from Qayrawan had refused to eat some sweet dishes because they had been made from sugar produced in the Sicilian estate of the Fatimid caliph⁶⁹ provides eloquent illustration. The size of the conical containers so far recovered could indicate that the sugar produced in Sicily was of the more refined type which was cooked three times. All these archaeological indicators point to Palermo and its aristocracy as playing a central role in the promotion of the 'agricultural revolution' that took place in Islamic Sicily. In any case Sicily can be placed side by side with Egypt and Syria amongst the earliest sugar producers in the Mediterranean. In order to understand the importance and the impact of this true 'industry' we must remember that it is not solely the cultivation of sugar cane that is new and complex, but the whole process, which requires the extensive use of a specialised workforce, water, and above all fuel.

As I have already touched on, urban archaeology in Sicily has largely been responding to rescue situations and has been managed almost entirely by the relevant authorities (*Soprintendenze*). In general we can note that there was no spontaneous emergence or foundation of new towns of either ceremonial or commercial type during the Islamic period. However, the configuration of the most important urban centres changed quite markedly. For the entire Byzantine era it was Syracuse and Catania that were the most vital centres, as attested for example by the high proportion of imports recovered there⁷⁰. After the Islamic

68 The *qanat* are underground tunnels that capture and transport water from an aquifer. They could have been related to agriculture but could also have served as aqueducts for the urban water supply. For Palermo, see P. Todaro, *Il sottosuolo di Palermo*, 2 vols., Palermo, 1988.

69 L. C. Chiarelli, *A History*, cited n. 28, p. 216.

70 E.g. L. Arcifa, *Trasformazioni urbane e costruzione di una nuova identità: Catania nell'altomedioevo*, in G. Volpe, R. Giuliani (eds.), *Paesaggi e insediamenti urbani dell'Italia meridionale tra Tardoantico e Altomedioevo: materiali e problemi per un confronto: atti del secondo seminario, Foggia, Monte Sant'Angelo, 27-28 maggio 2006*, Bari, 2010, p. 233-252; V. Prigent, *Palermo*, cited n. 26.

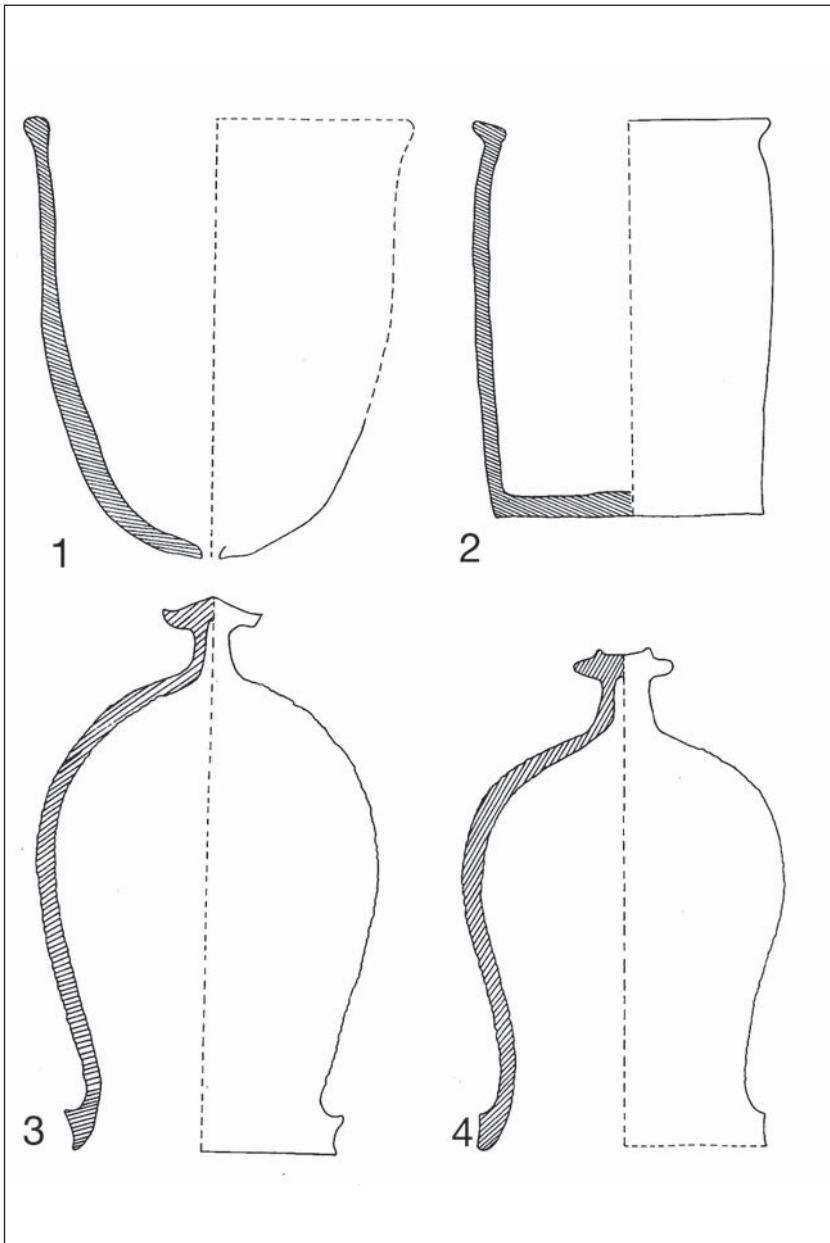


Figure 12. Sugar containers recovered at Maredolce (Palermo, 12th-13th century, after A. Tullio, *Strumenti per la lavorazione dello zucchero a Maredolce* (Palermo), in *Archeologia e territorio*, Palermo, 1997, p. 471-479).

conquest, as we have already begun to see, a careful re-reading of the narrative sources and a re-evaluation of older excavations are increasingly revealing the key role played by the *Medina Balarm*⁷¹ from an economic as well as a cultural perspective. In the course of the 10th century Palermo developed on an impressive scale, as attested by both written sources and archaeological evidence. As the seat of government and centre of the Islamic aristocracy, it played a leading part in the 'Islamisation' of Sicily; indeed it seems that the main changes in the material record (including new forms of agriculture) happened here earlier than elsewhere. Tenth-century Palermo became a poly-nuclear city, including the Punic city still encircled by its defensive wall, the fortified citadel of the Khalsa erected in 937 CE by the Fatimids in the surroundings of the port and arsenal (still unknown in terms of its material remains), and vast populous quarters long left unenclosed. Mazara del Vallo too, which had been a simple *vicus* in Late Antiquity, was to acquire a new importance in Islamic times. For example, it is mentioned as an important port in the many documents kept in the Cairo Geniza⁷². Unfortunately little is known of its urban sequence. Its workshops however do not appear to have had the same success or the same importance as those of Palermo, as shown by the analysis of the pottery from the rural site of Casale Nuovo; though very close to Mazara, it had a far higher proportion of ceramic products from Palermo than from Mazara. A new systematic research campaign in Agrigento is beginning to throw light on the deep transformations that this ancient and immense city underwent from as early as the Roman period⁷³. The transformation of certain houses into production structures of agricultural type already in the 3rd century CE seems particularly relevant. In the 5th century considerable deposits of refuse and/or alluvium are documented in many areas of the city, although the lower part of the town continued to be inhabited up to at least the 8th century, albeit less densely. The main problem is that we know very little of the acropolis area of the ancient city, i.e. the present-day historic centre. Thus we do not know

71 A. Nef (ed.), *A companion*, cited n. 26, and the many contributions in A. Nef, F. Ardizzone (eds.), *Les dynamiques*, cited n. 13.

72 Some information on Mazara is given in A. Molinari, *La ceramica*, cited n. 60; see also A. Nef, *La Sicile dans la documentation de la Geniza cairote (fin X^e-XIII^e): les réseaux attestés et leur nature*, in D. Coulon, C. Picard, D. Valérian (eds.), *Espaces et réseaux en Méditerranée, VI^e-XVI^e siècle*, Paris, 2007, p. 273-292, for Sicily in the Geniza documents, with references.

73 Among the more recent studies, see M. S. Rizzo, M. C. Parello, *Abitare ad Agrigento in età tardoantica ed altomedievale*, in P. Pensabene, C. Sfameni (eds.), *La villa*, cited n. 45, p. 113-122; F. Ardizzone, E. Pezzini, *La presenza di cristiani in Sicilia in età islamica: considerazioni preliminari relative a Palermo e ad Agrigento*, in A. Nef, F. Ardizzone (eds.), *Les dynamiques*, cited n. 13, p. 281-300.

when the higher part of the city assumed the central role that it undoubtedly had at the time of the arrival of the Normans, who built an enormous new cathedral of fortified aspect. In the case of Agrigento too the Islamic phases may have contributed to a profound modification of the urban fabric. The entire lower part of the *polis* of Antiquity seems to have been occupied only sporadically in Islamic times but it did include production activity, in particular pottery kilns.

3. *What kind of medieval (Byzantine, Islamic, Norman-Swabian) archaeology for Sicily?*

The evidence available to us for reconstructing the dynamics of the social and cultural transformation that took place in Sicily between Byzantine and Swabian times reviewed here – perhaps occasionally stretching a few interpretations – poses a certain number of questions and requires us to set out a new agenda for future archaeological research into the Sicilian Middle Ages. Moreover, we should reconnect with the debate about al-Andalus which has been renewed in recent years⁷⁴ and take into account the harvest of new data that is emerging from other parts of the Islamic world⁷⁵. The potential offered by bioarchaeology and the new techniques available for studying the landscape (e.g. LiDAR) further contribute to the renewal of the themes and strategy employed by research.

A first set of questions is closely connected with migration, Islamisation, transformations in the social structure, and their archaeological visibility. In general terms, immigration into Sicily, for example from North Africa, should not be a new phenomenon brought about by the Muslim conquest. However, the replacement of the aristocracy by a ruling group strongly associated with a new cultural and religious profile, the immigration of farming communities, and generally the high level of social mobility⁷⁶ which followed the Islamic conquest identify the 9th and 10th centuries as being of special interest. As has

74 See for example the recent overviews by A. García Sanjuán, *El concepto*, cited n. 16; E. Manzano Moreno, *De Hispania a al-Andalus: la transformación de los espacios rurales y urbanos*, in *Città e campagna nei secoli altomedievali, Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo*, 56, 2009, p. 473-494; *Id.*, *Al-Andalus: un balance crítico*, in P. Sénac (ed.), *Histoire* cited n. 6, p. 19-32; M. P. Acien Almansa, E. Manzano Moreno, *Organización*, cited n. 18; S. Gutierrez Lloret, *La arqueología*, cited n. 32.

75 See the texts on Egypt and North Africa in A. Nef, F. Ardizzone (eds.), *Les dynamiques*, cited n. 13; J. F. Haldon (ed.), *Money*, cited n. 13, for Syria.

76 The reading of Islamisation in terms of social mobility is already clearly present in the writings of C. Cahen (e.g. C. Cahen, *Les peuples*, cited n. 14).

recently been summarised by L. Chiarelli⁷⁷, we should probably think of immigration as a process that was differentiated by social class and extended over time. Furthermore, the strong and constant influx of immigrants especially from North Africa reveals a marked demographic expansion particularly visible in the course of the 10th century. The dynamics at work after the Norman conquest of the 11th century are every bit as complex, and they have been at the centre of much recent work⁷⁸.

As for the data currently at our disposal for understanding the dynamics operating within settlements and fortified sites, it does not appear that the urgent need to defend a site played a determining part in the transformation of settlements. An unresolved question concerns the social stratification in the countryside and the presence of the so-called rural elites in the Byzantine and Islamic period⁷⁹. Neither period shows signs of the emergence of a type of settlement or residence that could be connected with a form of social pre-eminence. On the other hand, a tendency towards the early establishment (at least from the 5th century onwards) of village communities which could be very extensive (e.g. the *agro-towns*) can be identified with some certainty. Continuity from the 7th to the 12th century of grain storage on the site of Contrada Colmitella would suggest persistence in the coordinated (not exactly 'collective') management of the cereal production surplus within peasant communities, and perhaps also in the manner of its extraction. The integration of a new aristocracy and of new communities in the Sicilian landscape should thus be linked to the presence of peasant communities already well established and organised within this landscape. Hence it would be of interest in situations like Colmitella (which it would be desirable to publish in full) to have the opportunity to observe over the long term the changes, the persistent patterns in lifestyles, and the use of resources by such a community.

The themes relating to the taxation systems and landownership in Byzantine and Islamic times are closely linked to immigration and Islamisation; a number

77 L. C. Chiarelli, *A History*, cited n. 28, p. 144-161.

78 E.g. J. Johns, *Arabic administration in Norman Sicily: the royal diwan*, Cambridge 2002; A. Molinari, *Peasaggi*, cited n. 47; A. Nef, *Conquérir et gouverner la Sicile islamique aux XI^e et XII^e siècles*, Rome, 2011; S. Carocci, *Signorie di Mezzogiorno. Società rurali, poteri aristocratici e monarchia (XII-XIII secolo)*, Roma, 2014.

79 M. Kaplan, *Les élites rurales byzantines: historiographie et sources*, in *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Moyen Age*, 124/2, 2012, p. 299-312; C. Picard, *Les élites rurales du monde musulman méditerranéen: les enjeux historiographiques*, in *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Moyen Age*, 124/2, 2012, p. 313-325.

of authors have recently tackled these themes⁸⁰. The fundamental point that agricultural taxation remained substantially unchanged, that is, based on the size of the arable land and not on fluctuations in produce, has been maintained. What did change was the efficiency with which tribute was demanded. The idea, which goes back to M. Amari⁸¹, that the Islamic conquest put an end to the large *latifundia* estates is under much discussion today. Moreover, the Muslim conquerors were faced with property structures that had gone through considerable change, especially during the 8th century. With the island's estrangement in that century from the Church of Rome, the imperial lands or at any rate those in the public domain were to become the greater part of the cultivatable land⁸². For the 10th century the testimony of al-Dawudi is particularly eloquent, allowing us to glimpse an extreme differentiation in the ways land was owned; this took place either at the time of the Islamic conquest, or following sustained migration, or when uncultivated land was put into production. The replacement of the Fatimids by the Aghlabids, with different views of the Islamic law, would also play a part. As already seen, we know that a Fatimid caliph of the 10th century was producing sugar on his Sicilian estates. In addition, part of the invading army, the *jund*, acquired full ownership of land already at the time of conquest. In Norman times some Muslim landowners were known to still own large tracts of land. Still in the Norman period the so-called *giaride* of Monreale were, according to A. Nef, lists of farmer-owners who collectively complied with taxation of their land. It remains however quite unclear what type of taxes was imposed on produce in Islamic times, whether this was tribute or revenue or mainly the former, although this must have been rather variable. Money must have been involved in at least part of the taxes. The opinion of De Simone (2014), according to whom fiscal imposition – at first accommodating hybrid arrangements and therefore based on favours and extortion – was at the root of the disintegrations of the Islamic domination over Sicily, gives an idea of the complexity of this theme.

Even though there are rural place-names in Sicily that may go back to Arab and Berber tribes, the presence of communities that owned or cultivated land

80 E.g. A. Nef, *La fiscalité*, cited n. 55; *Id.*, *Conquérir*, cited n. 76; L. C. Chiarelli, *A History*, cited n. 28, p. 233-245; A. De Simone, *In margine alla fiscalità islamica in Sicilia*, in A. Nef, F. Ardizzone (eds.), *Les dynamiques*, cited n. 13.

81 M. Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*, 3 vols, (2nd ed.) Catania, 1933-37.

82 E.g. V. Prigent, *Les empereurs isauriens et la confiscation des patrimoines pontificaux d'Italie du Sud*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Age*, 116/2, 2004, p. 557-594; *Id.*, *La Sicile byzantine, entre papes et empereurs (6^{me}-8^{me} siècle)*, in D. Engels (ed.), *Zwischen Ideal und Wirklichkeit: Herrschaft auf Sizilien von der Antike bis zum Spätmittelalter*, Stuttgart, 2010, p. 201-230.

collectively is not discernible at present⁸³. This leads us to the other theme that is central to understanding this period, namely that the social and economic context favoured the establishment of new plants and new agricultural techniques; indeed a great many historical, archaeological and linguistic elements exist on this subject, for Sicily too⁸⁴. As already mentioned, for M. Barceló the connexion between tribal organisation and the new irrigative type of agriculture was mainly based on the fact that the perishable nature of some of the new produce would make it impossible for landlords to accumulate a surplus. Further, it was especially consumption within the tribe itself that would have motivated it to cultivate these new plants. A targeted archaeological research strategy is needed, as we shall see, to better understand the dynamics that led to the establishment of the new agricultural regime, to work out who promoted it, and the manner in which it spread. At present, the historical and archaeological elements at our disposal appear to converge, indicating that it was the highest levels of the social hierarchy (e.g. the Fatimid caliphs) and the urban aristocracy or the Emir's capital, Palermo, who promoted the innovations. As is well documented, for example in the Swabian period⁸⁵, the authorities themselves were in a position to encourage the immigration of farmers who were expert in cultivating specialised crops. At present it is difficult to evaluate how widely the new agriculture of Islamic times spread into regions away from Palermo, and to estimate in what proportion the new crops changed compared to traditional crops. The pressure to innovate may have been due either to social emulation relative to the new alimentary regime of the Islamised urban elites, or to the degree to which agriculture was commercialised in relation to urban development (especially in Palermo) and the dense local and international exchange network; the latter is well illustrated by ceramic data and written sources, such as the documents kept in the Cairo Geniza⁸⁶. The eventual transformation of the agricultural systems after the Latino-Christian 'reconquest', which comprised, for example, greatly expanded viticulture, is also an important aspect recently re-emphasised by the Catalan team. In addition to the social repercussions such a re-conversion entailed, the differences in the respective food cultures reflected in the choice of crops must not be overlooked. A close scrutiny of all the elements that archaeology can contribute to the discus-

83 This is perhaps what can be read between the lines of the new research on the Trapani hills: see A. Rotolo, J. M. Martín Civantos, *Spunti di riflessione*, cited n. 42.

84 Again, see L. C. Chiarelli, *A History*, cited n. 28, p. 213-222.

85 E.g. M. Ouerfelli, *Le sucre*, cited n. 64, p. 149-179.

86 For Sicily, see most recently A. Nef, *La Sicile*, cited n. 70.

sion of food, cuisine, forms of conservation and storage of agricultural surplus will become all the more necessary. Would the arrival of a type of agriculture that permits to cultivate either summer crops (e.g. sugar cane or citrus fruit) or winter crops result in improving nutritional levels in peasant communities too? Did this happen for men and women equally?

The sum of the insights gained so far, which have matured thanks to theoretical discussions and the increase in the data at our disposal, suggests the research strategies to be adopted in future. An intensive study of the landscape, designed to understand transformations and resilience over the *longue durée*, seems to be the approach to be preferred. Following the *modus operandi* advocated by Riccardo Francovich and the more recent literature on archaeological methods⁸⁷, a close examination must necessarily include the following: the identification of the general dynamics of settlements; systematic excavation of areas selected on the basis of a careful evaluation; analysis of artefacts as indicators of living standards, cultural practices, manufacturing processes and exchange systems. The study of field systems and of agricultural practices, in addition to that relying on a historical approach of regressive type and the study of place-names, can in some cases be successfully associated with LiDAR-based surveys. Above all it is through large-scale bioarchaeological projects that we need to plug the gap in our knowledge. In this domain a fundamental requirement will be to have at our disposal a sample base as broad as possible in terms of chronology but also topography. The analysis of botanical remains offers, as has been noted, great potential for the study of ecosystems. With respect to the more specific research theme that comes under the heading 'agricultural revolution', there are serious limitations linked to the poor archaeological visibility of many of the new plants⁸⁸. Recent work has however identified citrus fruits, for example in the excavations of Pompeii⁸⁹. It seems to me that the fundamental intuition of M. Barceló was not so much an interest in identifying individual plants but to seek to understand in its entirety the agricultural system within the social and cultural

87 E.g. M. Carver, *Archaeological Investigation*, Abingdon/New York, 2009.

88 E.g. H. Kirchner (ed.), *Por una arqueología agraria: perspectivas de investigación sobre espacios de cultivo en las sociedades medievales hispánicas*, Oxford, 2009; N. Alonso, F. Antolín, H. Kirchner, *Novelties and legacies in crops of the Islamic period in the northeast Iberian Peninsula: the archaeobotanical evidence in Madīna Balagī, Madīna Lārida, and Madīna Turtūsa*, in J. A. Quiròs Castillo (ed.), *Agrarian Archaeology in Early Medieval Europe. Quaternary International*, 346, 2014, p. 149-161.

89 G. Fiorentino *et al.*, *AGRUMED: the history of citrus fruits in the Mediterranean. Introductions, diversifications and uses*, in *Antiquity* 88. Project Gallery 339, 2014, available at <http://antiquity.ac.uk/projgall/fiorentino339/> [accessed 8 March 2015].

context that created it. I would suggest that it is the overall diversity and quality of the food available in the different historic periods, the manner in which it was prepared, and particularly the variations in nutritional levels through time and above all within the social context that could be of greatest interest. The integrated analysis of plant remains, animal and human bones could contribute greatly to this enquiry. The analysis of the stable isotopes of some elements like carbon or nitrogen in human bones can open new interpretative perspectives; for example, given that some plants introduced by the new agriculture like sugar cane contain high levels of the C_4 carbon isotope, do they influence the composition of human and animal bones⁹⁰? The opportunity to compare a large quantity of bone samples from different contexts – urban/rural, Byzantine, Islamic, Norman-Swabian, male/female etc. – will enable us to monitor fluctuations in the diet; a case in point is Segesta in the 12th–13th century, where two separate but contemporary cemeteries were excavated, following Islamic and Christian rites respectively⁹¹. In addition, the study of stable isotopes in human bones together with a DNA analysis could contribute to comprehending, in the case of specific contexts, whether there were possible (but not necessary) links between migration and other changes within the archaeological record.

Looking to the future and recalling the past in the most ‘non-partisan’ manner possible seems the best way to undertake a kind of research that allows us to improve cognitive processes and to obtain results that are more than ever relevant today.

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90 See M. M. Munde, *Exploring Diet and Society in Medieval Spain: New Approaches Using Stable Isotope Analysis*, PhD dissertation, University of Durham, 2010; M. M. Alexander *et al.*, *Diet, Society, and Economy in Late Medieval Spain: Stable Isotope Evidence From Muslims and Christians From Gandía, Valencia*, in *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 156/2, 2014, p. 263-273 on the interpretative problems these analytical techniques pose.

91 See A. Molinari, *Segesta II*, cited n. 46.

Ghislaine NOYÉ

THE STILL BYZANTINE CALABRIA: A CASE STUDY*

The story of Byzantine Calabria is not well-known, especially when compared to the Sicilian case¹; nevertheless most of the island natural resources also abound in the nearby continental province whose agricultural potential is not insignificant, even if somewhat limited by mountains extent. Such a prolonged historiographical misunderstanding is in large part due to the scarcity of written sources: the works of Cassiodorus² and pope Gregory the Great³ throw light on the second half of the 6th century. But there are only fragmentary and scattered mentions about the two following centuries, that didn't draw the attention of the researchers until recent reinterpretations of a few passages about Byzantine tax system, three in the *Liber Pontificalis*⁴ and one in *Theophane*⁵. In the field of archaeology, to limit the overview to the South of Italian Peninsula, similar programs⁶ of excavation or survey as those of

* Abbreviations: *Var.* = A. J. Fridh, *Magni Aurelii Cassiodori Senatoris opera. Pars I: Variarum libri XII*, (*Corpus Christianorum, Series latina*, 96), Turnhout, 1973; *Ep.* = D. Norberg (ed.), *S. Gregorii Magni registrum epistularum libri I-XIV*, (*Corpus Christianorum, Series latina*, 140-140 A), Turnhout 1982; *L. P.* = L. Duchesne (ed.), *Le Liber pontificalis*, I, Paris 1955; *G. Goth.* = O. Veh (ed.), *Prokop Gotenkriege*, Munich, 1966 (*Rusculum-Bücherei, Prokop*, II); *Theophane* = C. de Boor (ed.), *Theophanis chronografia*, I, Leipzig, 1883; *Vie de Pancrace* = A. N. Veselovsky, *Iz istorii romana i povesti. II. Epizod o Tauri Menii apokrificeskom zitii sv. Pankrabitija*, dans *Sbornik otdelenija russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti*, 40, 1886, p. 73-110.

1 C. Morrisson, *La Sicile byzantine: une lueur dans les siècles obscurs*, in *Numismatica e antichità classiche (Quaderni Ticinesi)*, 27, 1998, p. 307-334.

2 *Var.*

3 *Ep.*

4 *L. P.*

5 *Theophane.*

6 See for example: G. Volpe (ed.), *San Giusto. La villa, le ecclesiae. Primi risultati dagli scavi nel sito rurale di San Giusto (Lucera): 1995-1997*, «Scavi e ricerche, 1», Bari, 1998; G. Volpe, M. Turchiano (eds.), *Faragola 1. Un insediamento rurale nella Valle del Carapelle. Ricerche e studi*, «*Insulae Diomedea*». Collana di ricerche storiche e archeologiche, 12», Bari, 2009; G. Volpe, M. Silvestrini, *L'abitato altomedievale di Faragola (Ascoli Satriano)*, in

New Directions in Early Medieval European Archaeology: Spain and Italy compared, ed. by Sauro GELICHI and Richard HODGES, Turnhout, 2015 (*Haut Moyen Âge*, 24), p. 221-266.

the Foggia⁷ or Lecce⁸ Universities are sorely lacking. Concerning the Early Middle Ages, we can only mention the study of the Lombard settlement in the north-west part of the country, conducted by the University of Cosenza⁹. The programs of classical archaeology managed by the University of Geneva around Crotona¹⁰, and the survey and excavations carried out by the University of Paris I in the region of Laos/Marcellina¹¹, also include a medieval part.

Even significative artefacts as coins or seals which are usually to be found in the museums are not so common: it could mean a lack of administrative activities associated with a relatively lethargic government, but this argument *ex silentio* does not concord with the strong interest demonstrated by the Empire for this marginal dominion until the Norman conquest. And the strategic, even undeniable, interest presented by the region cannot alone explain this commitment. Indeed the great fortifications of all kinds, from strictly militar to urban, which have been located and studied already confirm the scale of Byzantine investments in the military field. The circulation of Calabrian wine amphorae in the whole Mediterranean Basin is now on a well-known phenomenon, but the

G. Volpe, P. Favia (eds.), *V Congresso nazionale di Archeologia medievale (Foggia-Manfredonia, 2009)*, Firenze, 2009, p. 284-295.

7 G. Volpe, M. Turchiano (eds.), *Paesaggi e insediamenti rurali in Italia meridionale fra Tardoantico e Altomedioevo*, in *Atti del Primo Seminario sul tardoantico e l'Altomedioevo in Italia meridionale (Foggia, 12-14 febbraio 2004)*, «*Insulae Diomedae*. Collana di ricerche archeologiche, 4», Bari, 2005; G. Volpe, *Per una geografia insediativa ed economica della Puglia tardoantica*, in *Bizantini, Longobardi e Arabi in Puglia nell'alto medioevo. Atti del XX Congresso internazionale di studio sull'alto medioevo (Savellettri di Fasano [BR], 3-6 novembre 2011)*, Spoleto, 2012, p. 27-57.

8 P. Arthur, G. Fiorentino, M. Leo Imperiale, *L'insediamento in Loc. Scorpo (Supersano, LE) nel VII-VIII secolo. La scoperta di un paesaggio di età altomedievale*, in *Archeologia Medievale*, XXXV, 2008, p. 365-380; P. Arthur, B. Bruno, *Il complesso tardo-antico ed alto-medievale dei SS. Cosma e Damiano, detto Le Centoportie, Giurdignano (LE). Scavi 1993-1996*, «Collana del Dipartimento di Beni culturali. Università del Salento, 17», Martina Franca, 2009; P. Arthur, *Per una carta archeologica della Puglia altomedievale: questioni di formulazione ed interpretazione*, in *Bizantini, Longobardi*, cited n. 7.

9 G. Roma (ed.), *Necropoli e insediamenti fortificati nella Calabria settentrionale. I. Le necropoli altomedievali*, Bari, 2001; G. Roma (ed.), *I Longobardi del Sud*, Roma, 2010.

10 The site of the 'great enclosure' and episcopal see of Cerenzia is being studied under the direction of Aurélie Terrier, as part of a doctoral thesis.

11 G. Aversa et al., *Recherches archéologiques à Laos-Marcellina*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Antiquité*, 123, 2011, p. 320-330; V. Amato et al., *Recherches archéologiques à Laos-Marcellina*, *ibid.*, p. 313-321; G. Aversa et al., *Recherches archéologiques à Laos-Marcellina (Calabre, CS). Campagne de fouilles 2011*, in *CEFR. En ligne*.

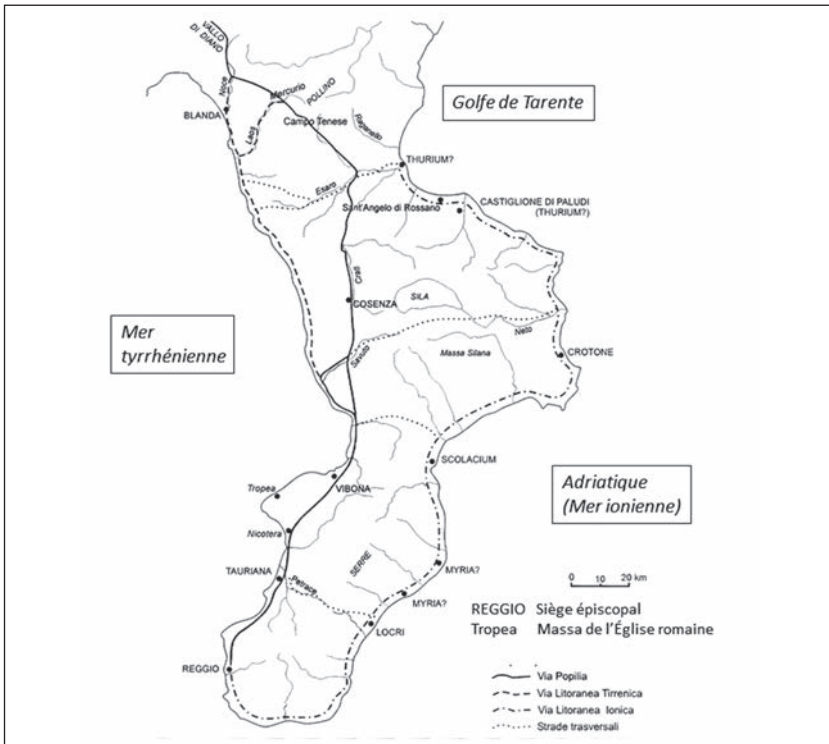


Figure 1. Roads, episcopal sees, massae.

importance of cereal was also considerable from the 6th century¹². Finally, the metallurgy of the region was essential for coinage and weapons as well as the wood and the resin for buildings; now most significantly the mining and the construction of ships are constantly attested during the whole Byzantine period.

The following pages deal with some problems discussed at present, as the evolution of fiscality and army in Southern Italy and the relationship between the state and the elite, ecclesiastical and secular, from the 6th to the 8th century; they propose a new rereading of some written sources regarding the political and economic events in the light of archaeological data.

¹² G. Noyé, *Economia e società nella Calabria bizantina (IV-XI secolo)*, in A. Placanica (ed.), *Storia della Calabria medievale. I. I quadri generali*, Roma, 2002, p. 577-655, with bibliography; G. Noyé, *Economia e insediamenti nell'Italia meridionale tra VII e X secolo*, in J.-M. Martin, A. Peters-Custot, V. Prigent, *L'héritage byzantin en Italie (VIII^e-XII^e siècle)*. 4. *Habitat et structure agraire* (Rome, 17-18 décembre 2010), forthcoming.

Such a territory as the present region of Calabria doesn't exist in Late Antiquity: *Bruttium*¹³ and *Lucania* were forming a province defined by a similar geomorphology and devolved on supplying Rome with meat, wine, wood and resin¹⁴. The first Lombard invasion did not, as one uses to assert, end with the creation of a fixed boarder along the Crati river: as said below the limit between the duchy of Benevento and the Byzantine dominion often changed and was never linear anyway in the Early Middle Ages. The significant topographic realities were rather the rural estates and the *saltus*, the strategic passages and the hinterlands of some cities.

The way we grasp the *Bruttium* when it was conquered by Justinian closely depends on the sources of the 6th century: the Ostrogoths were not physically present in Southern Italy and the capital cities were situated in the North. The government merely maintained civilian peace in the South to ensure the good working of the *annona*, and the connections with the rest of the peninsula, especially the movements of civil servants¹⁵. Nevertheless, protecting the rear of the Ostrogothic army on its way to Reggio Calabria became quite necessary under the threat of commander in chief Belisarius to arrive from Sicily¹⁶. Cassiodorus' letters bring to light the local administration wrong running, the near actual autonomy of the great *possessores* and *conductores* and the contrasting relationship of the latter with the *rustici* or *coloni*¹⁷.

Procopius gives a snapshot of urban and rural settlements faced to the war and the natives' frame of mind in front of the belligerents. Even when he didn't

13 Ancient name of the present Calabria which will be replaced in the mid-7th century (see G. Noyé, *Economia e società nella provincia Bruttiorum-Lucaniae dal IV secolo alla guerra greco-gotica*, in P. Delogu (ed.), *Le invasioni barbariche nel meridione dell'impero: Visigoti, Vandali, Ostrogoti (Cosenza, 24-26 luglio 1998)*, Soveria Mannelli, 2001, p. 321-350: p. 321, n. 1).

14 G. Noyé, *Les villes des provinces d'Apulie-Calabre et de Bruttium-Lucanie du IV^e au VI^e siècle*, in G. P. Brogiolo (ed.), *Early medieval towns in the Western Mediterranean (Ravello, 1994)*, «Documenti di archeologia, 10», Mantova, 1996, p. 97-120; G. Noyé, *Le città calabresi dal IV al VII secolo*, in A. Augenti (ed.), *Le città italiane tra la tarda Antichità e l'alto Medioevo. Atti del Convegno (Ravenna, 26-28 febbraio 2004)*, Firenze, 2006, p. 477-517.

15 G. Noyé, *Aristocrazia, «Barbari», guerra e insediamenti fortificati in Italia meridionale nel VI secolo*, in C. Ebanista, M. Rotili (eds.), *Atti del Convegno Aristocrazia e società tra transizione romano-germanica e altomedioevo (Cimitile-Santa Maria di Capua Vetere, 14-15 giugno 2012)*, 2015, p. 7-27, with bibliography.

16 *Var.* XII, 4, 5 and 14.

17 G. Noyé, *Les Bruttii au VI^e siècle*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, 1991, p. 505-551; G. Noyé, *Social relations in Southern Italy*, in S. J. Barnish, F. Marazzi (eds.), *The Ostrogoths from the migration period to the sixth century. An ethnographic perspective*, «Studies in Historical Archaeoethnology, 7», San Marino, 2007, p. 183-202.

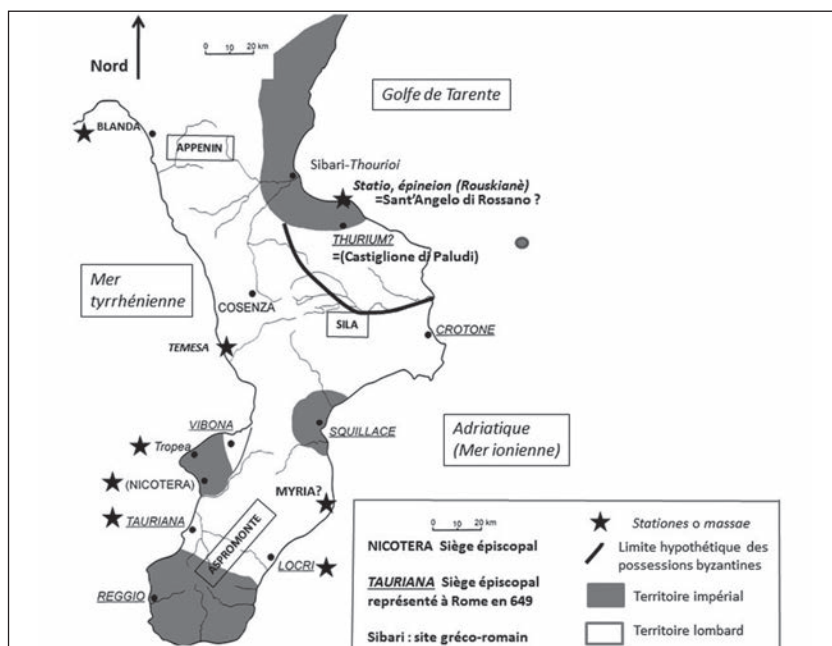


Figure 2. Calabria after the first Lombard invasion.

personally witness the events, the telling of military operations reconstitutes a most lively picture of some aspects of the landscape seen from this specific angle and of the underway transformation of the habitat, towards a major fortification and a concentration of the local people. The southern society is evolving before our very eyes with the commitment of the ecclesiastical and secular elite by Constantinople side, the militarization of the aristocracy and the devastations made by the two parties in a few strategic areas.

Towards the end of the century, Gregory the Great's epistolary is concerned with forwarding, from the *massae* of *Bruttium* and Sicily until Rome, the foodstuffs, wine and wheat¹⁸, as well as the wood for the timberworks of the great urban basilicas¹⁹. Indeed, the good working of incomes and taxes' administration in the pontifical estates is quite necessary for this somewhat colonial stand-

¹⁸ L. Ruggini, *Economia e società nell' "Italia annonaria". Rapporti fra agricoltura e commercio dal IV al VI secolo d. C.*, «Studi storici sulla Tarda Antichità, 2», 2nd ed., Milan, 1995; L. Cracco-Ruggini, *Vicende rurali dell'Italia antica dall'età tetrarchica ai Longobardi*, in *Rivista storica italiana*, 76, 1964, p. 261-286.

¹⁹ *Ep.* IX, 125, 126, 127 and 128.

point²⁰, but moral considerations as the well-being and salvation of all kinds of farmers and owners, from the big leaseholders to the little tenants and slaves of the Roman Church can all the same be found in those documents²¹ where one catch sight of a more egalitarian society than in the near non-ecclesiastical territories²². Finally the Pope's incredible administrative activity is aimed at the safeguard of religious service and charities thanks to the preservation of the churches' *ministeria*, and at the earthly security of the believers by means of fortifying the episcopal sees and paying the ransomes for the Lombards' captives, with in the background the hope of converting the last-mentioned²³.

Calabria is partitioned in sectors, or 'basins' in Paolo Delogu's own well-chosen word²⁴, which are superposed at different levels but not perfectly lined up. The political and administrative sectors have been yet referred to; from a geo-morphological point of view, three extensive mountaineous areas dominate the landscape but there are also a few isthmian, inner or coastal plains. The heights, which take up almost the whole space became a very large fiscal *saltus* after the Roman conquest, and, for this reason, a determinant factor in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages' society: these public estates were usurped by private local rich owners or by families of the Roman senatorial class²⁵, but the major part was probably offered to the Roman Church in the 4th century and later. So the extension of the *saltus* accounts for the oldness and the considerable size of the Saint Peter's *patrimonium* which didn't leave much public territory to the Empire. The Tropea *massa* which already produced a high income

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ep.* I, 42; *Ep.* VI, 4 (Sicily).

22 *Ep.* I, 42; *Ep.* I, 70; G. Noyé, *L'économie de la Calabre de la fin du VI^e au VIII^e siècle*, in *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes*, 2, 2014, p. 322-377: p. 329-330.

23 *Ibid.*; for Rome: *Ep.* V, 36; *Ep.* V, 46; *Ep.* V, 59; for Calabria: *Ep.* V, 9; *Ep.* VII, 35. For the negociation: *Ep.*, VI, 33.

24 *Prospettive sull'economia del VII-VIII secolo*, Communication at the Seminar «Économie et société en Italie de l'invasion lombarde aux assauts musulmans» (Rome, 7 dec. 2013), organized by the École française de Rome, the CNRS-UMR 8167 Orient Méditerranée, the Laboratoire d'excellence «Religions et sociétés dans le Monde Méditerranéen», the Newton International Fellowship Alumni, and the École nationale des chartes.

25 P. G. Guzzo, *Tracce archeologiche dal IV al VII sec. d. C. nell'attuale provincia di Cosenza*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, 91, 1979, p. 21-39; P. G. Guzzo, *Il territorio dei Bruttii*, in A. Schiavone (ed.), *Società romana e produzione schiavistica. I. L'Italia: insediamenti e forme economiche*, Roma-Bari, 1981, p. 115-135; G. P. Givigliano, *La topografia della Calabria attuale in età greca e romana*, in AA. VV., *Calabria bizantina. Istituzioni civili e topografia storica*, Rome, 1986, p. 75-80; M. Paoletti, *Occupazione romana e storia della città*, in S. Settis (ed.), *Storia della Calabria antica. Età italica e romana*, Roma-Reggio Calabria, 1994.

to the Papacy in the middle of the 4th century²⁶ was most certainly due to a Constantine's donation.

The revengefull aggressiveness of the Gothic king Totila against the meridional big landowners who had betrayed him despite of his kindness towards them²⁷, had weakened this social group as well as the Senators; the Justinian *Pragmatica sanctio*, which restored the juridical status of land property with the aim of reestablishing taxes²⁸, was not sufficient to halt the decline of the Calabrian aristocracy²⁹. It is not easy to estimate who were the principal beneficiaries of this situation, but even so, wine amphorae are a driving thread. In the second half of the 6th century, the morphology of the famous Keay LII began to evolve³⁰: this seems to indicate a reorganization of the containers production, which first depended on the great *villae* flanked by kilns and private *vici* which provided the labour force. In a second time, the use of a new kind of amphora, similar to the oriental types, from the beginning of the 7th century could reveal that the state had taken control of the production, with the setting up of new workshops in the cities³¹ controlled by his officials and had imposed to the taxpayers this only wear for the transport of the wine *annona*; at this moment, the Lombards had finished exterminating the local aristocracy³². The other beneficiaries of this annihilation were the *coloni* who got back the property of their plots, first included in the *massae*, and above all the papal estates which certainly annexed or received lots of lands in donation. The imperial authorities thus reinstated profitable direct links with the peasant fiscal communities, except in the limits of the St Peter's patrimonium, a situation which became more and more unbearable with the development of the demografic and economic crisis in the second half of the 7th century.

26 L. P. I, XXXIII, Life of Silvester (314-335).

27 G. got. I, 15; G. got. III, 6. The Ostrogothic kings, who besides took advantage of these measures, had lowered the taxes and spared them the burden of steady garrisons.

28 *Pragmatica sanctio pro petitione Virgilii*, in R. Schöll (ed.), *Corpus Iuris Civilis, III, Novelle*, Berlin, 1928.

29 The easiness and speed of the Lombardic conquest from 590 on is a significant symptom, which the military engagement of Constantinople in the eastern part of the Empire is not sufficient to explain.

30 'Substitute' or 'granddaughter' of the Keay LII: G. Noyé, *Economia e società*, cited n. 12, p. 586-587; G. Noyé, *L'économie de la Calabre*, cited n. 22, p. 354-357.

31 P. Arthur *et al.*, *Formaci medievali ad Otranto. Nota preliminare*, in *Archeologia Medievale*, 19, 1992, p. 91-127.

32 See *supra* n. 15 and 17.

In the northwest of the actual regione Calabria, the coastal mountain range, in the continuation of the Appenin, was still covered with established forests towards the end of the 6th century³³; the highlands were devoted to the summer pasture of the herds, but the Lombard invasion certainly disorganized the transhumance system towards the large Sibari plain³⁴, which the Byzantine kept under their domination. On the other hand, the intensive cutting of wood in the southern part of the same mountains and in the hinterland of *Vibona's* arsenal and harbour during the Republican and Imperial times³⁵ had exhausted the resources of the Poro's mountaineous massif which therefore, besides the traditional marine economy, was from that moment dedicated to cereal grains³⁶.

In the northeastern part of the *Bruttium*, the Sila massif, almost a third of the province, was the field of the cattle breeder and of the pitch working³⁷, connected to the Ionian coast³⁸. Even if Rome had exploited very systematically the resin from the very start, and despite the destructive nature of this activity, the pine forests didn't appear to be extinct thanks to, as one supposes, the depopulation of the area from the Late Antiquity³⁹. A local fleet was constructed in the *Bruttium* after the middle of the 7th century⁴⁰, and then restored one hundred

33 See *supra* n. 19 for the whole section.

34 E. Gabba, *La transumanza nell'Italia romana: evidenze e problemi. Qualche prospettiva per l'età altomedievale*, in *L'uomo di fronte al mondo animale nell'altomedioevo. XXXI Settimana di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo (Spoleto, 1983)*, I, Spoleto, 1985, p. 373-389.

35 G. Schmiedt, *Antichi porti d'Italia*, in *L'Universo*, 45, 1965, p. 337; G. Lena, *Vibo Valentia. Geografia e morfologia della fascia costiera e l'impianto del porto antico*, in *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, classe di lettere e filosofia*, s. 3, 19-2, 1989 (= *Giornate di studio su Hipponion-Vibo Valentia*), p. 583-607; A.-M. Rotella, F. Sogliani, *Il materiale ceramico tardoantico e altomedievale da contesti di scavo e dal territorio nella Calabria centro-meridionale*, in L. Saguì (ed.), *Ceramica in Italia, VI-VII sec. Atti del convegno in onore di J. Hayes (British School-American Academy, Rome, 1995)*, «Biblioteca di archeologia medievale, 14», Firenze, 1998, p. 769-776.

36 G. Noyé, *Quelques observations sur l'évolution de l'habitat en Calabre du V^e au X^e siècle*, in *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici*, n. s. 25 (XXXV), 1988, p. 57-138: p. 89-91.

37 See *supra* n. 25.

38 Then called Adriatic: F. Giunta, A. Grillone (eds.), *Iordanis De origine actibusque Getarum*, «Fonti per la storia d'Italia, 117», Rome, 1991; *Var.* XII, 15; *Vie de Pancrace*.

39 A. Giardina, *Allevamento ed economia della selva in Italia meridionale: trasformazioni e continuità*, in A. Schiavone (ed.), *Società romana*, cited n. 25, p. 87-119. Cassiodorus does not mention the pitch among the wealth of the province, but neither does it for the wood (*Var.* VIII, 31).

40 *L. P. I*, LXXVIII, p. 344. See the comment *infra*.

years later⁴¹; and an arsenal was still working at Rossano in the 10th century⁴². In this area, some imperial estates remained, especially around Crotona⁴³, and in the north of the city where some observation military posts, each of them held by a few aristocratic hellenized families and their entourage, were set up along the coast, probably by Constantinople, during the 6th and the 7th centuries⁴⁴. The *massa Silanis* appears in a written source only at the beginning of the 8th century, but this belated date is probably due to the vicissitudes of the documentation's handing down⁴⁵. The agricultural zones were numerous in the massif and on its edges, farmed by *vici* as Botricello⁴⁶ or, later, Santa Severina⁴⁷, while Crotona, seat of public managers, revived in Late Antiquity thanks to the neighbourhood of the *massa*⁴⁸. The southern part of the peninsula is occupied by the Serre chain where horse-breeding was well attested and by the Aspromonte where extended the estates of the Reggio's Church and those of a few *gentes* as the *Aurelii*⁴⁹.

As one can see, and in a very predictable way, the geomorphological areas concurred with the types of property conduction, but they were significant exceptions. Thus the Tropea's *massa* included part of the wooden northwestern mountainous chain but also the whole massif of Poro, converted to farming and the *massa Nicoterana* was expanding in the river Mesima valley⁵⁰, covering its northern hillsides and their vineyards⁵¹. The last papal *massa* is

41 See *infra*, about the measures of Leo III, in 732-733.

42 G. Giovannelli (ed.), *Bios kai politeia tou osiou patros emôn Neilou tou Néou*, Badia di Grottaferrata, 1972, c. 60.

43 P. G. Guzzo, *Il territorio dei Bruttii dopo il II sec. d.C.*, in *Calabria bizantina. Istituzioni civili e topografia storica. Atti VI e VII Incontri di studi bizantini (1981-1983)*, Roma, 1986, p. 109-120: p. 114; G. Noyé, *Le città calabresi*, cited n. 14, p. 505 and n. 133.

44 R. Spadea, *Crotona: problemi del territorio fra tardoantico e medioevo*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, 103, 1991, p. 553-573; G. Noyé, *Economia e insediamenti*, cited n. 12.

45 F. Russo, *Regesto vaticano per la Calabria*, I, Roma, 1974, n° 83, p. 43.

46 M. Corrado, *Alle origini della Chiesa calabrese. La Basilica di Botricello*, Reggio Calabria, 2014.

47 F. Cuteri, *L'insediamento tra VIII e XI secolo. Strutture, oggetti, culture*, in R. Spadea (ed.), *Il castello di Santa Severina: ricerche archeologiche*, Soveria Mannelli, 1998, p. 49-91.

48 The road which permitted to bring the harvests from Sila to the littoral was restored: G. Noyé, *Le città calabresi*, cited n. 14, p. 505-506

49 G. Noyé, *Economia e società*, cited n. 12, p. 583.

50 G. Noyé, *Quelques observations*, cited n. 36, p. 91-92.

51 Still attested in the 11th century: A. Guillou, *Le brébion de la métropole byzantine de Région (vers 1050)*, Città del Vaticano, 2012; G. Noyé, *Economia e società*, cited n. 12, p. 587.

incidentally mentioned at the very end of the 6th century regarding the penance of the Nicotera's bishop⁵² but was probably enlarged already in the course of the same century thanks to the offerings of the local *possessores*, in this period of their own splendour. Thus the grapewine cultivation still thrived along the Tyrrhenian and especially the Ionian coast south of Catanzaro's isthmus in the second half of the 6th century, within the ecclesiastical and aristocratic *massae*, but also more and more, as suggested below, around little landowners grouped together in villages.

A constant phenomenon in this period is the weight of the elite's action on the natural environment according to its direct economic interest: so one can observe the frequent transformations of the Calabrian landscape. Vineyards were certainly developed by the *possessores* as long as the *Bruttium*'s wine wasn't heavily taxed by the *annona*⁵³, but from the 5th century, when Rome temporarily lost her traditional granary of Africa, Sicily and certainly also *Bruttium* intensified cereal farming spurred on by the senatorial and local great landowners, in the Salines valley for examples⁵⁴; and the same happened in the papal and probably also in the public *massae* at the beginning of the 7th century when the pope took care of Rome's food supplies, especially after the definitive loss of Africa.

But the principal wealth of Calabria was composed of the metal deposits⁵⁵ especially the precious ones, some of them exploited at least from the Greek Antiquity, as the copper and tin mines of Temesa at the mouth of the Savuto river⁵⁶ or the silver of Longobucco⁵⁷. They were enough important and easy to work for

52 *Ep.* VI, 40.

53 G. Noyé, *Les villes des provinces*, cited n. 14, p. 101-103.

54 Cassiodorus surprisingly mentions wheat head of the province's productions (*Var.* VIII, 31; *Var.* XII, 15); G. Noyé, *Economia e società*, cited n. 12, p. 587-588; for the Salines: V. Saletta (ed.), *Vita S. Phantini confessoris a codice vaticano graeco n. 1989*, Roma, 1963, fol. 196^v, l. 115 sq.

55 N. Novelli, R. Veneziano, *Mineralizzazioni cuprifere ed attività metallurgica in Calabria*, in C. Giardino (ed.), *Archeometallurgia: dalla conoscenza alla fruizione (Atti del workshop, 22-25 mai 2006, Cavallino, LE)*, «Beni Archeologici; Conoscenza e tecnologie, Quaderno 8», Bari, 2011, p. 267 sq; A. Quercia, *Forge e ferro nell'Italia meridionale in età romana, ibid.*, p. 193 sq.

56 M. Guarascio, *Un contributo di dati e metodi della ricerca geomineraria in archeologia: il caso di Temesa*, in *Temesa e il suo territorio (Perugia-Treviso, 1981)*, «Magna Grecia, 2», Taranto, 1982, p. 125-142; F. Cuteri, *Risorse minerarie ed attività metallurgica nella Sila Piccola meridionale e nella Pre-Sila del versante tirrenico. Prime osservazioni*, in G. De Sesti Sentito (ed.), *Tra L'Amato e il Savuto, II. Studi sul Lametino antico e tardoantico*, Soveria Mannelli, 1999, p. 193-317.

57 We don't have any source about the silver mines until the 11th century (in the life of Gioacchino di Fiore, *AA. SS.*, mai 7, p. 113) but a survey program is currently underway on

arousing the interest of the successive political northern or eastern dominations. In Roman times, the goldfields of the northeastern coastal chain and of the Crati basin were certainly operated⁵⁸ and supplied goldsmith work especially in some great Tyrrhenian *stationes*⁵⁹.

Under the Ostrogothic rule, Cassiodorus ordered to search presumed goldfields and silverfields within the limits of the royal *Massa Rusticana* in order to dig pits and build furnaces⁶⁰. It appears likely that this mining area was located in the south of *Bruttium*, next to the Calabrian estates of the *Aurelii*. Indeed, the main extractive pole of precious metal was included in the nearby chain of the Serre⁶¹, in the continuation of the Sicilian mountains which stand in the hinterland of Taormina in the northeastern part of the island, and appear to have the same geological configuration⁶². Another important iron and copper mining area was situated in the Southern Aspromonte which imported tin from the non-distant mouth of the Savuto river, and produced bronze near Reggio⁶³ and in some *stationes* along the meridional coast⁶⁴.

This metallurgy was, at least partly, controlled by the State in the Late Empire⁶⁵: the existence of a *comes metallorum* heading a specific administration in *Illyricum* in the 4th century shows the importance of the whole region from that point of view. Justinian inherited directly the large-scale public mining district managed around the capital of the province, and in the whole Southern *Brut-*

argentiferous galena of the site; analysis have already shown that it was exploited before Roman times.

58 P. G. Guzzo, *Due crogioli per oro da Scalea*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Antiquité*, 87, 1975, p. 69-79.

59 G. Noyé, *Economia*, cited n. 13, p. 590, with bibliography.

60 *Var.* IX, 3.

61 G. Noyé, *Les recherches archéologiques de l'École française de Rome sur la Calabre médiévale*, in *Comptes rendus [de l']Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, novembre-décembre 1997 [1999], p. 1069-1100: p. 1082-1083; G. Noyé, *Economia e società*, cited n. 12, p. 590-591; G. Noyé, *L'économie de la Calabre*, cited n. 22, p. 346-348.

62 V. Prigent, *La Sicile byzantine (VI^e-X^e siècle)*, PhD thesis, Université de Paris IV-Sorbonne, 2006, p. 967-972.

63 A. M. Ardovino, *Edifici ellenistici e romani ed assetto territoriale a nord-ovest delle mura di Reggio*, in *Klearchos*, 19, 1977, p. 75-112; F. Cuteri, *Risorse minerarie*, cited n. 56.

64 *Decastadium* for example: L. Costamagna, *La sinagoga di Bova Marina nel quadro degli insediamenti tardoantichi della costa ionica della Calabria*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, 103, 1991, p. 611-630.

65 The fiscal furnace excavated at Reggio Lido occupied an ex-public monument (G. Noyé, *Les villes des provinces*, cited n. 14, p. 98-99)

*tium*⁶⁶, an area which was never durably conquered by the Lombards, even if the kilns of the Reggio Lido took cover in the surrounding wall of the city at the end of the 6th century. Such an organisation coexisted in Late Antiquity with little individual or collective leasehold ironminings paying the *ferraria praestatio* or *metallicus canon*⁶⁷; and iron working was probably still widespread in the region during the Early Middle Ages⁶⁸. But one can observe a public tendency to control at least the manufacturing of weapons and armours that is still attested in the capital of the duchy in the 7th and 8th centuries⁶⁹; and furthermore all the slags of iron smelting and transformation have been discovered on the major fortified sites of the same period, at Tiriolo⁷⁰ and *Scolacium* for example⁷¹.

In the 6th and 7th century, probably after the Gothic war, silver discshaped 'bratteate', plated with gold, as well as conical silver earrings commercialized along both Tyrrhenian coasts up to Lucania, Apulia and Albania, were manufactured in such southern sites as Siderno⁷² and especially Reggio⁷³. It is difficult to determine the public or private nature of this specific activity but the decoration of the 'bratteate' with hellenized religious designs as the Three Wise Men or Saint Georges and the fact that the earrings were clearly imitated from Sicilian models reveal the birth of a new aristocracy, composed of some surviving hellenized members of the old elite and of civil servants and officers emigrated from the eastern part of the Empire, for whom the local craftsmen were working. In this particular case the objects served as a vehicule for oriental and Sicilian forms and simbols, with a function of acculturation similar to the ipotetical part of the 'circus glass vessels' which circulated in the whole

66 The CJ is strictly taken up from the CT about the mining legislation: S. Wryonis, *The question of the byzantine mines*, in *Speculum*, 1962, p. 1-17: p. 2; R. P. Maschke, *Mining*, in A. Laiou (ed.), *The economic History of Byzantium from the seventh to the fifteenth century*, I, Washington, 2002, p. 115-120: p. 115.

67 R. P. Matschke, *Mining*, cited n. 66, p. 117.

68 Some traces of reduction that were excavated at Paleapoli could also simply indicate a forge: C. M. Lebole di Gangi, *Saggio nell'abitato altomedievale di Paleapoli*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, 103, 1991, p. 575-598.

69 *Vie de Pancrace*, p. 103-105.

70 G. Noyé, C. Raimondo, A. Ruga, *Les enceintes et l'église du Monte Tiriolo en Calabre*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, 110, 1998, p. 431-471; F. Cuteri, *La Calabria nell'altomedioevo*, in R. Francovich, G. Noyé (ed.), *La storia dell'altomedioevo italiano (VI-X secolo) alla luce dell'archeologia* (Siena, 1992), Firenze, 1994, p. 339-359.

71 G. Noyé, *Les recherches archéologiques*, cited n. 61, p. 1082-1083.

72 *Ibid.*; R. Spadea, *Crotone*, cited n. 44, p. 553-573; see *supra* n. 45.

73 See *infra*, and n. 78.

Roman Empire at the beginning of our era. From the Byzantine conquest, the relations, administrative first but also economic and cultural after, with the next island were very close, especially under Constans II: the duchy of Calabria, created by this Emperor, was brought under the jurisdiction of Sicily⁷⁴ and one moved easily across the Strait of Messina.

The presence of the precious metal explains the wealth of the Calabrian episcopal sees who hoarded them in form of *ministeria* from the 5th century on. Those sacred vessels or liquidities became an object of envy first for the impoverished local *gentes*⁷⁵, then for the Lombards who picked them up thanks to pillage or ransoms. Again in the following century, Constans II, according to the *Liber Pontificalis*, seized them in the South when he came down to Sicily⁷⁶.

Thus the Calabrian metals, which most probably also contributed to supply the minting in Syracuse⁷⁷ called Constantinople's attention, and are certainly among the reasons of the Byzantines' determination to keep the Southern Peninsula under domination. Afterwards Reggio remained the nerve center of gold which was worked in the city as well as silver in the 7th and 8th centuries, and then ensured its wealth⁷⁸. The Sicilian monetary workshop took shelter in its walls after the fall of Syracuse in 878⁷⁹ and, in occasion of a raid, the Muslims found stocks of precious metal after taking the harbour in the very beginning of the 10th century⁸⁰. I think that the actual commitment of

74 V. von Falkenhausen, *La dominazione bizantina nell'Italia meridionale dal IX al XII secolo*, Bari, 1978, p. 6-7. They are clearly displayed by the literature, as the hagiographies of St Pancras (*Vie de Pancrace*, p. 82) and St Phantin (*Vita S. Phantini*, cited n. 54, p. 58).

75 G. Noyé, *Social relations*, cited n. 17, p. 191-193; G. Noyé, *Aristocrazia*, cited n. 15, p. 8-9.

76 L. P. I, p. 346; L. Bethmann, G. Waitz (eds.), *Pauli Historia Langobardorum*, in *MGH, SSrL*, V, II, p. 12-187: p. 149-150.

77 C. Morrisson, V. Prigent, *La monetazione in Sicilia nell'età bizantina*, in L. Travaini (ed.), *Le zecche italiane fino all'unità*, 2 vol., Roma, 2011, p. 427-434; V. Prigent, *Le «mythe du mancus» et les «origines de l'économie européenne»*, text of the Oxford Medieval History Seminar, 2011.

78 *Vie de Pancrace*, p. 103-105.

79 D. Castrizio, *La zecca bizantina di Reggio dopo la conquista araba di Siracusa*, in B. Kluge, B. Weisser (eds.), *XII. Internationaler Numismatischer Kongress Berlin 1977. Akten*, II, Berlin, 2000, p. 859-861; D. Castrizio, *I ripostigli di Via Giulia (RC) e del Kastron di Calanna e la zecca bizantina di Reggio sotto Basilio I e Leone VI*, in *Revue Numismatique*, 158, 2000, p. 209-219. It operated until 912: S. Cosentino, *Storia dell'Italia bizantina (VI-XI secolo) da Giustiniano ai Normanni*, Bologna, 2008, p. 205.

80 Ibn al-Atir, in A. A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, *La dynastie macédonienne (867-959)*, 2, *Extraits des sources arabes traduits par M. Canard*, «Corpus Bruxellense historiae byzantinae, II, 2», Bruxelles, 1950, p. 129-162: p. 141.

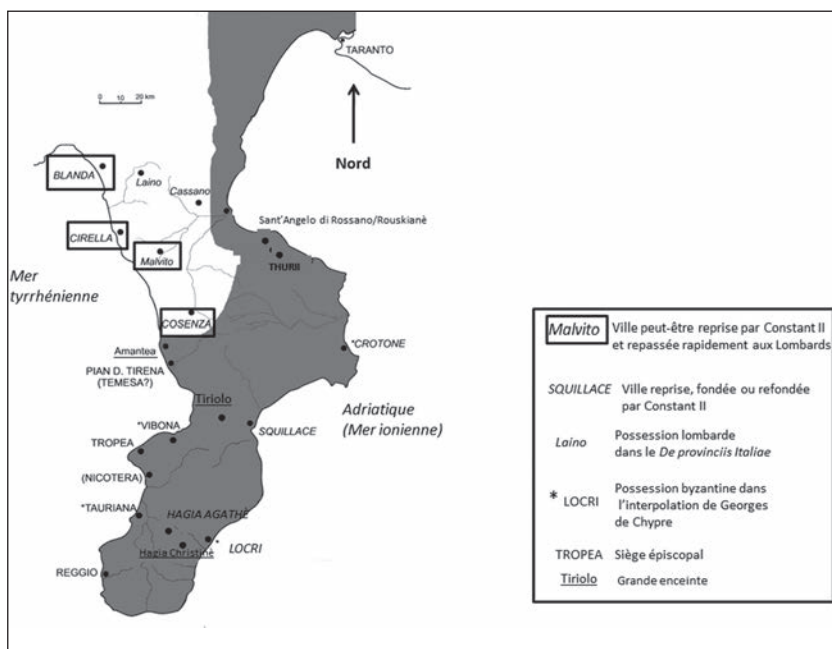


Figure 3. Calabria after the campaigns of Constant II.

the Empire in Italy from the mid-6th century is at the moment one of the main new data concerning this period thanks above all to archaeology, and that it was maintained until the mid-11th century, but progressed in fits and starts according to the military difficulties on the Eastern Byzantine front. However each time the general political situation permitted it, Constantinople returned in force with her troops and architects.

Going back to the beginning, the Greeks found a very particular situation in 536 in the field of Calabrian urban settlement: Cosenza was the only inner center, which had developed along the *Via Popilia*. The other few towns⁸¹ were all located on the coastal roads at the end of the main isthmian itineraries in the littoral valleys: the *phourion* of *Thurii* south of the Sibari plain⁸², Crotona and Locri on the boundary of the Sila and of the Serre, *Scolacium* and *Vibona*

81 Only seven in the *Bruttium*.

82 Procopius speaks first of *Thourioi* in geographic descriptions based on literary sources: G. got. I, 15; G. got. III, 24; G. got. III, 28. At that moment, the see has already been transferred from the original plain site on a fortified height: G. Noyé, *Aristocrazia*, cited n. 15; *infra* n. 140.

on each edge of the Catanzaro isthmus and Reggio in front of the Strait. All those cities were episcopal sees which can be called 'public sees'⁸³; but only Reggio and Crotona were still major harbours, the equal of Tarentum; the others were defunctionalized following the evolution of the natural context (especially silting)⁸⁴.

The inland and the rest of the coast turned on the main country settlements, *stationes* for the most part; some of them were ex-towns, others had sprung up during Late Antiquity around either the *praetoria* or the major *villae*. Those sites housed other episcopal sees of which the rural character is specific of the Southern Peninsula, in the Apulian Tavoliere for example⁸⁵. They were divided in three categories, according to their presumed belonging to a public settlement as for the *Blanda statio*, to a great aristocratic *villa* as *Tauriniana*, Locri-Quote San Francesco and *Myria*⁸⁶ or to the pontifical *massae* (Nicotera and next Tropea). The second ones could claim an 'aristocratic' nature and for this very reason would be assaulted and severely damaged during the first Lombard invasion⁸⁷. The third ones, located in the patrimony of the Roman Church can be properly called 'papal' and confirm the 'fiscal' origin of

83 The sees appear randomly in the epigraphs and in the papal correspondence from the 4th on, some of them (Crotona and Cosenza) only in the 6th century, but all certainly exist in the 5th century (G. Noyé, *Quelques observations*, cited n. 36, *passim*; G. Noyé, *Villes, économie et société dans la province de Bruttium-Lucanie du IV^e au VII^e siècle*, in R. Francovich, G. Noyé (eds.), *La storia dell'alto medioevo*, cited n. 70, p. 693-733; p. 695-697.

84 G. Noyé, *Quelques observations*, cited n. 36, p. 78-87 and 99; S. Marino, *Copia/Thurii. Aspetti topografici e urbanistici di una città romana della Magna Grecia*, «Fondation Paestum. Tekmeria, 14», Paestum-Atene, 2010.

85 The best example is San Giusto: see n. 6; G. Volpe, *Città e campagna, strutture insediative e strutture ecclesiastiche dell'Italia meridionale: il caso dell'Apulia*, in *Chiese locali e chiese regionali nell'alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 2013), *Atti della LXI Settimana di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo*, 2, Spoleto, 2014, p. 1041-1068, and tav. I-XIX.

86 About the great villa-palace of Casignana: V. De Nittis, *La villa romana di Casignana. I balnea, l'aula basilicale e la galleria frontale tra due torri*, in *Polis. Studi interdisciplinari sul mondo antico*, 2, 2006, p. 295-315; G. Bruni, *Palazzi di casignana near Locri: a palatial residence in Late-antique Calabria*, in *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 24, 2011, p. 481-497; generally: P. Pensabene, C. Sfameni (ed.), *La villa restaurata e i nuovi studi sull'edilizia residenziale tardoantica. Atti del convegno internazionale del Centro Interuniversitario di Studi sull'Edilizia abitativa tardoantica nel Mediterraneo (Piazza Armerina, 7-10 novembre 2012)*, «Insulae Diomedea. Collana di ricerche storiche e archeologiche, 23», Bari, 2014.

87 G. Noyé, *Les Bruttii*, cited n. 17, p. 544-548; G. Noyé, *Economia e insediamenti*, cited n. 12.

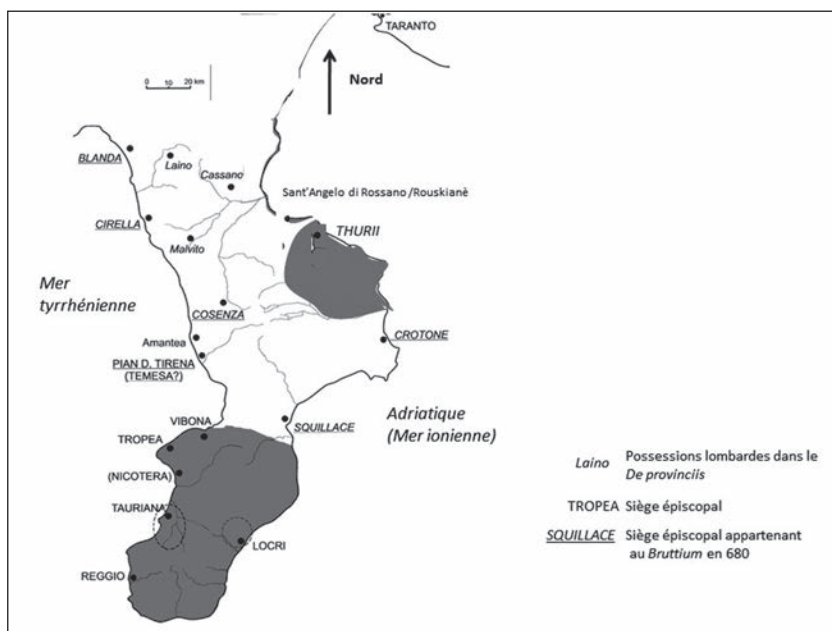


Figure 4. Calabria after the second Lombard invasion.

the rural bishopric⁸⁸; they appeared soon as rivals of the imperial creations, as Tropea in front of the neighbouring 'public' *Vibona*. *Thurii*, an urban see that was probably included in the *Massa Silani*, was also competed by the 'public' Rossano at the beginning of the 8th century.

Some of these religious settlements were fortified in some way, as one deduces from the appellation *praetorium* which is the case of San Giusto/*Carmignano* in Capitanata, thanks to a defensive morphology (Quote San Francesco)⁸⁹ or the presence of soldiers (*Tauriana*). Anyway in the second half of the 6th century all the local clergy was strongly related to the Byzantine sphere of

88 M. De Fino, *Proprietà imperiali e diocesi rurali paleocristiane dell'Italia tardoantica*, in G. Volpe, M. Turchiano (eds.), *Paesaggi*, cited n. 7, p. 691-702.

89 G. Noyé, *Le città calabresi*, cited n. 14, p. 504-505; G. Noyé, *L'espressione architettonica del potere. Praetoria bizantini e palatia longobardi nell'Italia meridionale*, in J.-M. Martin, A. Peters-Custot, V. Prigent (eds), *L'héritage byzantin en Italie (VIII^e-XII^e siècle), II. Les cadres juridiques et sociaux et les institutions publiques*, «Collection de l'École française de Rome, 461», Rome, 2012, p. 389-451: p. 406-409.

influence⁹⁰: he was involved as well as the Roman Church in the fortification campaign promoted by the Imperial authorities and, wherever it was possible, he took refuge behind the city walls to the *nobiles'* side during the first Lombard invasion.

Disembarking at Reggio, Belisarius was certainly surprised by the small number of the fortified centers in Southern Italy, which followed from the scarce urbanization: the only ones in Sicily, *Apulia*, *Bruttium* and Campania were the provincial capitals, Syracuse⁹¹, Reggio⁹², Otranto, Benevento⁹³ and Naples⁹⁴ and few others cities, Palermo⁹⁵ and Lylibea⁹⁶ in the island, and Cuma on the mainland⁹⁷. Some settlements were protected by a fortress as the late antic *Scolacium*⁹⁸; others, following *Thurii* example, had already moved on nearby heights, gradually leaving the coastal sites for various reasons, security or environment's degradation. This fact was first to the advantage of the imperial army in his advance towards north: Belisarius easily conquered the *Bruttium* after defeating the army sent by king Theodahad⁹⁹; only the fortified Benevento and Naples, the latter defended by a strong garrison, had to be besieged. But the situation quickly reversed.

The imperial army, composed of disparate contingents including mercenaries, was an invasion troop, lacking local support and, for wanting fortified strongpoints, Belisarius couldn't leave soldiers on the spot in such a way that the country was easily reconquered by the Ostrogoths as soon as 542-543. The Otranto's *phourion*, hold by the only Greek *stratiôtes* remained in the South, was blocked in 544: because of the organic, and moreover logical relation between steady garrison and retrenchment, that besides is empha-

90 Some bishops fled to Constantinople: G. Noyé, *Les Bruttii*, cited n. 17, p. 544.

91 F. Giunta, A. Grillone (eds.), *Iordanis*, cited n. 38, p. 137.

92 G. Noyé, *Le città calabresi*, cited n. 14, p. 489-490. The wall of brick erected at the turn of the 4th and 5th century was rebuilt with reused materials after being burnt by Alaric. The town was then called *oppidum* (M. Simonetti (ed.), *Tyrani Rufini Prologus in omelias Origini super Numeros*, Turnholt, 1961 [CCL, 20] p. 285), until the beginning of greco-gothic war (F. Giunta, A. Grillone (eds.), *Iordanis*, cited n. 38, p. 137). See *infra* n. 000 and 000.

93 The existence of the wall is deducted from its destruction by Totila.

94 Naples is besieged by Belisarius (G. got. I, 8: τὸν περίβολον εἰς τὰς πύλας).

95 G. got. I, 5: τῷ περιβόλῳ, τὸ τείχος.

96 G. got. I, 3, l. 17: τὸ ἐν Λιλυβαιῶ φρούριον.

97 G. got. I, 14.

98 See *infra*, p. 21 and 123.

99 G. got. I, 8. A lot of Gothic soldiers joined him without fighting.

sized by Procopius¹⁰⁰, the open cities were not to be kept¹⁰¹. The commanders in chief John and Valerian complained about the absolute lack of strongholds between Otranto and Ravenna for storing their provisions¹⁰². Furthermore the number of the troops dispatched by Constantinople was not sufficient, so that necessarily the natives would be involved in the defence of their own territory: then rallying the local population meant ensuring her a major security, which would have guaranteed her faithfulness.

As he did elsewhere, but in this particular case during the course of the war already, Justinian built walls around the towns located at strategic points and these first achievements were nevertheless considerable: Procopius, even if he had already left Italy at that moment, describes precisely the complexity of the entrenchments edified around Taranto¹⁰³ and archeology has revealed the high technical level of the wall built at the same time around Crotona¹⁰⁴. But perhaps it was not sufficient, and the particular conditions of the execution could partly explain the capture of the city by the Lombards half a century later. Anyway, the hinterland of the two ports was devastated during the Gothic war because of a long siege¹⁰⁵, as succeeded also for the *phourion* of *Thurii*¹⁰⁶. But concerning this matter it is worth emphasizing the fact that damages to Calabrian economy and settlements were much more limited than everywhere else in Italy.

Three other fortification campaigns were then conducted, each at fairly regular intervals, the first between the end of the war and the coming of the Lombards, the second towards the middle of the 7th century on Constans II initia-

100 So the inhabitants of the *chôria* of *Bruttium* explained to Belisarius that they can surrender because the Ostrogoths, they also hated, were absent from the province; this fact is related to the absence of fortification around their settlements (G. got. I, 8: τῶν τε γὰρ χωρίων ἀτειχίστων σφίσιν ἐκ παλαιοῦ ὄντων, φυλακὴν οὐδαμῆ εἶχον).

101 Belisarius, who did not find any ὄχύρωμα when accosting τῷ Κροτωνιατῶν λιμένι, moved away from the city when the imminent arrival of the enemy was announced (G. got. III, 28); in the same situation, an imperial contingent based on Brindisi (G. got. III, 18: πόλιν ἀτειχίστον), fled into the nearby forest (G. got. III, 27).

102 G. got. VIII, 22.

103 A part of the isthmus is completely surrounded by a wall and isolated on both sides by a moat: G. got. III, 24.

104 G. got. III, 28 and 30; C. Raimondo, *Aspetti di economia e società nella Calabria bizantina: le produzioni ceramiche del medio ionio calabrese*, in A. Jacob, J.-M. Martin, G. Noyè (eds.), *Histoire et culture dans l'Italie byzantine*, «Collection de l'École française de Rome, 363», Rome, 2006, p. 407-443: p. 528.

105 G. got. III, 30; G. got. IV, 26 (Crotona); G. got. III, 39 (Reggio).

106 G. got. III, 23.

tive, and the last in the first half of the 8th century. The following Byzantine initiatives, after spelling the Muslims and retaking the southern provinces of the Peninsula at the end of the 9th century, were above all administratives and religious¹⁰⁷. And one should wait the third quarter of the 10th century to see again the Greek authorities managing a real fortification campaign in Italy¹⁰⁸.

Thus the Empire did invest a lot of money in stones and mortar in this boarder province for defensive works that took different forms depending on location and requirements because pragmatism was a Byzantine constant rule. The walls of Benevento and Naples, razed by Totila in 542-543 to deprive the *Romaioi* of all logistical support¹⁰⁹, were rebuilt and then strengthened by flanking towers¹¹⁰, polygonal in both cases¹¹¹. North, the curtains of Sant'Antonino di Perti castrum were reinforced at the same moment with similar or rectangular towers¹¹². Thanks to the peace, real foundations or simple 'urban refounding' were planned and completed, as for the Byzantine Squillace, on the promontory of Santa Maria del Mare, in the district of the present Staletti¹¹³, whose creation is particularly well-known from two letters of Gregory the Great (of 698 and 703¹¹⁴); it was also probably the case at the time of Salerno¹¹⁵.

107 G. Noyé, *Byzance et l'Italie méridionale*, in L. Bruebaker, *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?*, Aldershot, 1998, p. 229-243.

108 G. Noyé, *Economia e insediamenti*, cited n. 12.

109 G. got., III, 6 and 8.

110 In Naples, two towers go back to the 6th century (P. Arthur, *Naples, from Roman Town to City State: an Archaeological Perspective*, «Archeological Monographs of the British School at Rome, 12», London, 2002, p. 37, figs. 3-4), one more precisely towards the end or the beginning of the same century: L. Tomay, *Benevento longobarda: dinamiche insediative e processi di trasformazione*, in G. D'Henry, C. Lambert, *Il popolo dei Longobardi meridionali (570-1076). Testimonianze storiche e monumentali (Salerno, 28 giugno 2008)*, Salerno, 2009, p. 119-147: p. 121 and n. 12.

111 In Benevento one pentagonal (the 'Rocca dei Rettori', precisely dated by an excavation) and another one of the same shape probably in the Sacramento area: L. Tomay, *Benevento longobarda*, cited above, p. 63).

112 T. Mannoni, G. Murialdo (eds.), *S. Antonino: un insediamento fortificato nella Liguria bizantina*, «Istituto internazionale di studi liguri. Collezione di monografie preistoriche ed archeologiche, XII», Bordighera, 2001, p. 91-134.

113 Excavated by the Ecole française de Rome in collaboration with the Soprintendenza archeologica della Calabria: G. Noyé, *Les recherches archéologiques*, cited n. 61; G. Noyé, *Economia e società*, cited n. 12, p. 625-629.

114 *Ep.* VIII, 31; *Ep.* XIV, 9

115 G. Noyé, *L'espressione architettonica*, cited n. 89, p. 421, sq.

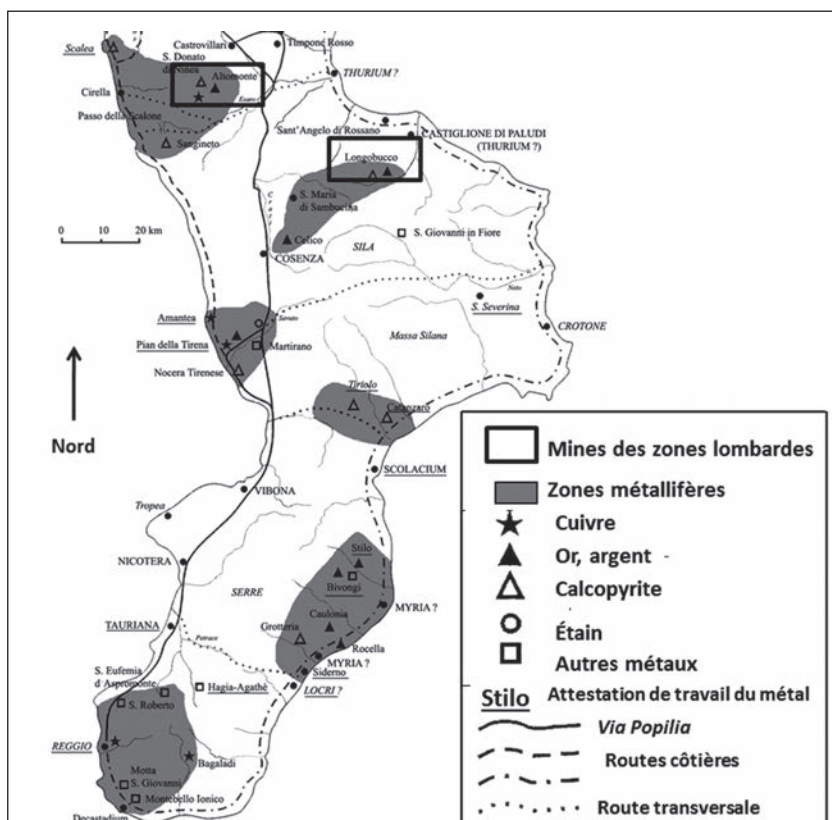


Figure 5. Mines.

As always in the Early Middle Ages, those complex were perched on the heights with powerful natural defenses but the castra of the sixth century are characterized by the choice of strikingly strategic sites, which often reoccupied pre-Roman fortified settlements¹¹⁶. In line with the policy adopted during the conflict¹¹⁷, the main ports of the Ionian coast should maintain the communications with eastern Mediterranean, for the arrival of reinforcements and officials; golden coinage, food and horses were supposed to be available on site. Also the

¹¹⁶ This systematic return on the height occupied in the 'protohistoric' times is particularly common in central and southern Gallia, where the phenomenon is attested by archaeological and written sources.

¹¹⁷ Taranto and Crotone are the best examples.

Tyrrhenian sea route towards Rome had to be protected and screened by steps as *Vibona* and Salerno. The scelted sites were so successfull that they survived until the Norman conquest: the *castrum* of *Scolacium* commanded the whole Gulf of Catanzaro, from Capo Colonna at north until the headland of Stilo at south; it housed the episcopal clergy and its ministeria and resisted the first Lombard attack¹¹⁸. Later, it succumbed but only once when it was weakened by the crisis of the 680s, but in 1071, it was the last stronghold taken by the Normans¹¹⁹. The site of the citadel of *Vibona*, controlled the plain of the River Mesima and the Tyrrhenian coast from Capo Palinuro to Messina and was reoccupied during the Norman conquest after a period of abandonment¹²⁰.

There were three types of fortified cities: the simplest one was the citadel inherited from the late Antiquity's model of the Roman imperial sites but this set of buildings, which could rise in the center of the town as in *Thurii*¹²¹, or in a suburb¹²². Sometimes it protected one part of the famous 'città ad isole' as *Scolacium*¹²³, where it grew with time. In Reggio, at the beginning of the Gothic war, the wall or *peribolos* seemed to include only a part of the urban center, which Procopius refers to as φρούριον ἔν, followed by the place name (ἔν 'Ρηγίω¹²⁴); the rest of the town is left unprotected or 'open', which could explain why the Ostrogothic army camped out in the neighbourhood¹²⁵. The second model is the wall which surrounds the whole city: that is the case of Crotona¹²⁶, of the *phrou-*

118 *Ep.* V, 9.

119 *G. Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae comitis et Roberti Guiscardi ducis fratris sui*, E. Pontieri (ed.), «Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, V-1» Bologna, 1927, LXXVI-XXVII, p. 24.

120 G. Noyé, *Le città calabresi*, cited n. 14, p. 510-511.

121 Probably within the public baths: G. Noyé, *Le città calabresi*, cited n. 14, p. 494.

122 *G. got.* I, 8: φρούριον ὃ ἔν τῷ προάστειῳ ἔστιν (in Naples).

123 G. Noyé, *Le città calabresi*, cited n. 14, p. 501; G. Noyé, *L'espressione architettonica*, cited n. 89, p. 414-416.

124 *G. got.* III, 37 et 39; in the ὀχύρωμα, only a little contingent of soldiers, being smaller in number, is forced to surrender.

125 The fact is not specified by Procopius (*G. got.* I, 8: ἔς 'Ρήγιον), but can be deduced from Iordanes (F. Giunta, A. Grillone (eds.), *Iordanis*, cited n. 38, p. 137: *ubi E. accessisset Regium oppidum castra composuit*).

126 *G. got.* IV, 25: Defence is provided jointly by the inhabitants of the city and by the *stratiotai*.

tion of *Thurii*¹²⁷, perhaps situated on the Castiglione de Paludi hilltop¹²⁸ and of Acerenza¹²⁹; to describe it Procopius uses simply the term Φρούριον, followed by the genitive of the place name¹³⁰. Nevertheless, the concept of a peripheral device, not a centripetal defense, must spread in the South with the arrival of the Byzantines also for political reasons, i. e. the protection of the whole urban population: at the end of the war, all the inhabitants of Reggio appear to be besieged which means that the entire city had been fortified¹³¹.

But the most sophisticated pattern of *castrum* or *phourion* was the double enclosure as in Otranto where a citadel (τοῦ ἐν Δρυσῶντι φρούριου) existed inside the wall (Δρυσῶντος τὸ φρούριον)¹³². This structure, always referred to by the word *praetorium/praitorion*, had a bright future in Byzantine Italy: it was a founding element for the creation of a city, according to the canonical processus described in the *Vita* of the mythical hero *Tauros*, which is inserted in the hagiography of Saint Pancras of Taormina¹³³. Whenever the topography consented, the *praetorium* of the 6th century took the form of a high city or acropolis, protected by the steep slope as well as by its own wall, which was connected to that of the town, situated below. At Salerno and *Vibona*, this defensive system must go back to the second half of the century since none of these places is mentioned in the telling of the military events of the Gothic war¹³⁴. In the first case, Mount Bonadiès, a promontory 200 meters high which overlooks the city at north, is currently occupied by a latest castle which includes a proto-byzantine *turris maior*¹³⁵; it can be as-

127 G. got. III, 30, after the surrender of the city, Totila confiscate all their property to the *Italiotes*.

128 See *infra* n. 140.

129 G. got. III, 24.

130 G. got. III, 26.

131 See *supra* n. 105.

132 G. got. III, 10 and 6. In 544, only the garrison stationed in the φρούριον of the city is starving while the inhabitants of the rest of the town are free. Some remains of the surrounding fortification which protected also the port were found: G. Noyé, *Les villes des provinces*, cited n. 14, p. 110 and n. 192.

133 Between the end of the 7th and the beginning of the 8th century: F. Angiò, *Tauro, Taureana e le Saline*, in *Rivista storica calabrese*, 18, 1997, n. 1-2, p. 61-69.

134 Procopius never mentions these two cities, even if both were fortified in Roman imperial times.

135 Pour la fouille de la *turris maior*: P. Peduto, *La turris maior di Salerno*, in *Scavi medievali in Italia 1996-1999. Atti della seconda conferenza italiana di Archeologia Medievale (Cassino, 16-18 Dicembre 1999)*, p. 345-352: p. 258; for the overall plan: A. Di Murro, III. *Salerno tra i secoli*

sumed that this tower was originally flanked by other buildings and that Arechis I merely restored it¹³⁶. In its present state, the stonework enclosure which protects the castle from the hinterland is divided in two arms that deviate downwards to surround the town itself: such a plan is very similar at that of *Scolacium* and could have the same dating.

The 225 meters long acropolis of *Scolacium*, the only one excavated so far, is settled on the top of a promontory and flanked by a small platform overlooking the steepest part of the slope which has its own surrounding wall. Its organisation, which has been preserved in its 11th century state¹³⁷, strictly keeps the precepts of the contemporary military architecture treatises¹³⁸. The absolute rule is a close adaptation to the ground and the builders took advantage, whenever they could, of the natural defenses and of any oldest military structures to strengthen the fortification while reducing the cost of masonry¹³⁹. There was nothing new about this option: the site of Castiglione de Paludi, powerful stronghold of the *Brettii* where the urban center of *Thurii* was probably transferred in the first half of the 6th century already had the same requirements¹⁴⁰. The *castrum quod Scilacium dicitur* was founded on *muris pristinis*, which had given its name to the *Mons Castellum* where Cassiodorus built his *monasterium Castellense*, a little after 555¹⁴¹: there was a three meters broad dam wall which barred the birth of the

V e XI, in *Id.*, *Mezzogiorno longobardo. Insediamenti, economia e istituzioni tra Salerno e il Sele (secc. VII-XI)*, Bari, 2008, p. 100-126; p. 101.

136 G. Noyé, *L'expression architectonique*, cited n. 89, p. 416, p. 417-419 and p. 425-435.

137 Even if some parts have been destroyed; the maximum width is 115 meters.

138 E. Amato, J. Schamp (eds.), ΠΕΡΙΚΙΣΜΑΤΩΝ/ *De aedificiis. Introduction, traduction, commentaire, carte et index de D. Roques*, in *Hellenica*, 39, 2011; H. Loechly, W. Ruestow (eds.), *Das Byzantiner Anonymus Kriegswissenschaft*, «Griechische Kriegsschriftsteller. II, Die Taktiker, 2», Leipzig, 1885; G. T. Dennis, *Three Byzantine Military Treatises. Text, translation and notes*, «Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, 25 = Dumbarton Oaks Texts, 9», Washington D. C., 1985; D. Roques, *Les constructions de Justinien dans Procope de Césarée: document ou monument?*, in *Comptes rendus [de l']Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, 142, 1993, n. 4, p. 989-1001.

139 See *infra* Tiriolo.

140 The site of the *phourion échurôtaton* besieged by Totila, had been fortified by *oi palai Romaioi* (G. got. III, 28). The surrounding wall and the towers, still a few meters high could be easily adapted under the direction of architects, which involves the intervention of the elite (G. Noyé, *Aristocrazia*, cited n. 15).

141 P. Courcelle, *Le site du monastère de Cassiodore*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome*, 55, 1938, p. 259-307; M. Cappuyns, s. v. *Cassiodore*, in *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques*, XI, Paris, 1939, col. 1357-1358; A. Van de Vyver, *Les Institutions de Cassiodore et sa fondation à Vivarium*, in *Revue bénédictine*, 53, 1941, p. 80-88; A. Van de Vyver, *Les*

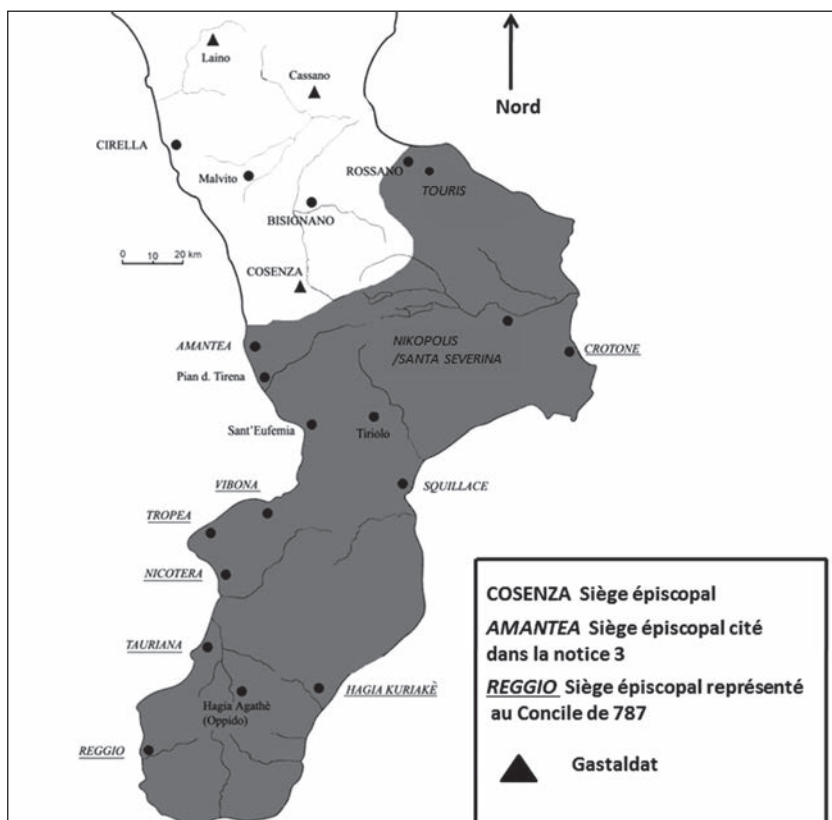


Figure 6. Calabria at the end of the 8th century.

spur and a square flanking tower dating back to the 4th century b.C.¹⁴². A wall from the same time was also used as a basis of protobyzantine enclosure at Tiriolo, on the Catanzaro Isthmus and at Dara, a previous square tower has been inserted in the defensive sistem¹⁴³.

Institutiones de Cassiodore et sa fondation à Vivarium, dans *Revue bénédictine*, 53, 1941, p. 80-88; F. Bougard, G. Noyè, *Squillace (prov. di Catanzaro)*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, 98, 1986, p. 1195-1212; p. 1195.

¹⁴² *Supra* n. 113.

¹⁴³ The plan alternates U-shaped and rectangular towers: M. Whitby, *Procopius description of Dara (Buildings II, 1-3)*, in Ph. Freeman, D. Kennedy (eds.), *The defence of the roman and byzantine East*, «British Institute of archaeology at Ankara, Monograph, 8-BAR, IS, 297/2», Oxford, 1986, p. 737-783; p. 739-740; the datation is the beginning of the 6th century.

The most striking aspects are the display of the fortification together horizontally and vertically, and the quality of masonry techniques. Everything is conceived for slowing down the enemy's progress: the *téichos* is preceded by a ditch, excavated in a natural depression, and by an outer wall formed from an accumulation of enormous boulders. The thickness of the wall is notable (two meters), a character which appeared essential for the security¹⁴⁴ and, wherever the ancient masonry is missing, the two meters high foundations are directly built into the bedrock. Two towers stand at each end of the front wall and two others on both sides of the main entrance¹⁴⁵; this arrangement, and their U-shape can be dated at the 6th century and here is to be found the same attention devoted to the flanking buildings¹⁴⁶. The walkway was based on pointed stone arches and large pilars, which were supported by the inner part of the carefully leveled pre-Roman wall and also used as buttresses.

Only in the excavated area (70 x 50 meters), the construction site operated a lime kiln surrounded by ten basins to extinguish quicklime and to mix mortar; together with the homogeneity of the whole fortification, it suggested a quick and expensive work, achieved in a short time, especially if one adds to it the urban wall which, according to the survey, was around 1,2 kilometers long. We can assume the intervention of 'central' architects (from Constantinople), many men employed for excavating the bedrock and transporting the materials, specialized craftsmen for the lime, quarrymen, stone cutters and masons, woodcutters and carpenters. The tribune – military commander – *Viator* of Otranto had imposed before 599 some heavy and various burdens *longinquis angariis multisque dispendiis* to the *habitantes castris Callipolitani* (Gallipoli): this fortification, which doesn't appear during the Gothic war and whose inhabitants are still called *rustici*, was relatively recent, so one may suppose that these excessive charges and loads were related to the fortification of the site, especially to the transport of materials¹⁴⁷.

The infrastructures of communication, supply and storage were also emphasized: a densely populated and busy port, inserted in the trade network, was con-

¹⁴⁴ Many restauration works attributed to Justinian precisely consisted in strengthening oldest walls.

¹⁴⁵ As in Palmyra (H. Seyrig, *Antiquités syriennes*, in *Syria*, 27, 1950, p. 229-252, p. 241), Amida and Cyrrhus (D. Van Berchem, *Recherches sur la chronologie des enceintes de Syrie et de Mésopotamie*, in *Syria*, 31, 1954, p. 254-270: p. 262 and 268).

¹⁴⁶ There were probably two levels above the ground floor.

¹⁴⁷ *Ep.* IX, 206 and 207.

structed below, reusing Roman ruins¹⁴⁸. Hydraulic structures were set up at the same time as the fortification: a channel which brought the water from the nearby mountain, entered the acropolis crossing the ancient quadrangular tower and a little postern, and divided inside in three branches that ran in various directions; finally some great silos were excavated in the rock ground. It is impossible to know whether grains from the fiscal *coemptio* were stocked in the reserves of the city, and if so, which part was intended for the garrison. According to the life of *Tauros*, a *praitôrion* of the 8th century also included storehouses for the wheat supplied by the farmers of the neighbourhood; but at that time the meso-byzantine tax in kind probably existed.

These works concerned the towns: thus it was also an urbanizing campaign. In the Christian imperial order, the city seat of God as state's servants, was the keystone of the political and administrative construction¹⁴⁹. Both authorities were indeed represented in the acropolis/*praitôrion* of *Scolacium* by two large basilical buildings. The first one was a rectangular edifice (10 x 20 meters) composed of a vestibule and, at a little higher level, a big hall which could be a public *aula* and/or a courthouse; the second one was a church. The Holy See and the bishops, whose interests these operations deserved in the spiritual and material point of view (for the reasons already given), participated in the movement of urban fortification and provided the building land because of the general scarcity of public properties: the *castrum* of Gallipoli was built on an estate belonging to the homonymous pontifical *massa*¹⁵⁰.

In the same manner, the new *Scolacium* stood *in solo iuris monasterii* [*Castelliensis*], which had conceded *factis libellis* to the *habitantes castris* the plots required for the construction of their houses against a yearly rent (*solutium*), which the latter stopped paying in 598¹⁵¹. The same monastery abbot had offered, as an *exenium*, to the bishop John of *Scolacium*, a large piece of land (600 feet) located inside the walls for building a church, but the surface exceeded the dimensions of the edifice which was then being constructed;

148 G. Noyé, *Scavi medievali in Calabria, A: Staletti, scavo di emergenza in località Panaja*, in *Archeologia Medievale*, 20, 1993, p. 499-501. The painted in fresco apse of a great church has been excavated, and part of the related cemetery; the find of coins has been reported. The port was still working in 1059 when the two last high-ranking Byzantine servants of the thema went on board to get back to the capital, after the surrender of the city (*supra* n. 119).

149 The byzantine walls of *Vibona* included the administrative and religious areas of the city (G. Noyé, *Le città calabresi*, cited n. 14, fig. 5 and p. 511).

150 *Ep.* IX, 206; *Gregorius Occilani tribuno Ydrontino* (599, iul.): *scitis etenim quod locus ipse ecclesiae nostrae sit proprius*.

151 *Ep.* VIII, 32: the monks complained to Gregory the Great.

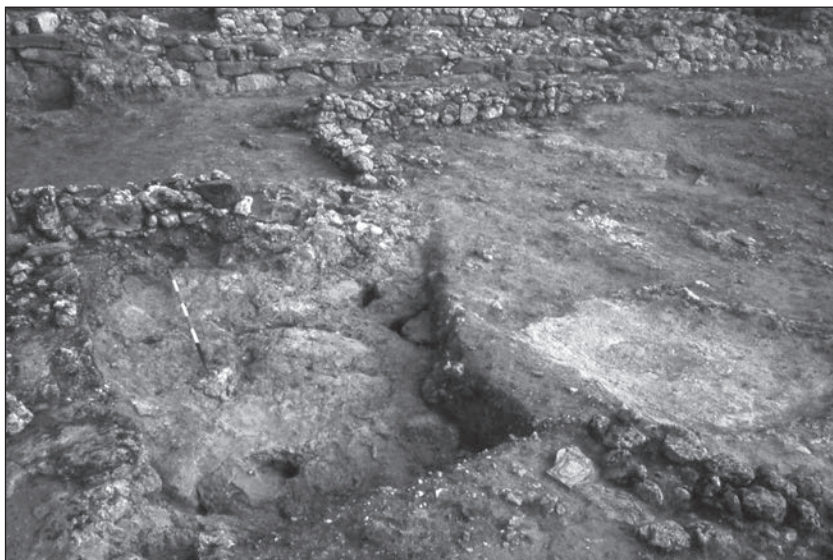


Figure 7. Limekiln for the building of Byzantine Scolacium.

thus the pope ordered the bishop to return the unused land. At north-ovest of the acropolis, a 8,60 meters large edifice stretched over 40 meters in lenght, parallel to the defensive curtain; the apse, thus more or less orientated towards the east, had been destroyed by late constructions. Masonry was similar to that of the fortification, with squared limestone ashlar and rough-hewed granit rubble stones assembled in horizontal courses, and the corners were reinforced with calcarenite blocks carefully cut; thus the building combined quarrying and reusing techniques. The groundfloor, which had been only once restored after a fire, was paved with terracotta quadrangolar slabs (cm 40 x 22) as the little church of San Martino of Copanello¹⁵². A narthex was demarcated by a line of twin columns, with local blue granit barrels and many sepulchral empty graves, parallel to the lateral walls, were excavated in the bedrock, as well as a large baptismal font; two other 6th-7th centuries tombs have been brought to light outside along the north wall. We may assume that this baptismal church or *ecclesia* was the *basilica* of Pope Gregory's letter and thus built only a few years after the *praetorium*: in 603, the bishop conse-

¹⁵² Related to the *Vivariense* of Cassiodorus: F. Bougard, G. Noyé, *Squillace au Moyen Âge*, in R. Spadea (ed.), *Da Skyllation a Scolacium. Il parco archeologico della Roccelletta*, Roma-Reggio Calabria, 1989, p. 215-229 and tav. XXIII.



Figure 8. The occidental tower on the acropolis of Byzantine Scolacium.

crated the edifice which was just finished, with the Pope's permission, and dedicated it to the Virgin Mary¹⁵³.

The episcopal see was soon translated, a founding act for the birth of a city and the general movement was stimulated by appointing bishops who had been driven out of their original region as John of *Scolacium*, who had been translated in 592 from his *Lissitana civitas* situated in *Illyricum* and previously taken *ab hostibus*¹⁵⁴. It is worth emphasizing the fact that the desertion of the Greek-Roman old towns was very gradual: the excavation of the episcopal complex of *Thurii* revealed that a few houses were still occupied in the 6th century, while a limekiln, installed in an hypocauste was working; also at *Scolacium*, even if the *forum* was partly abandoned, at least two urban nuclei survived in the 7th century¹⁵⁵.

In the 6th and still in the 7th century, the movings of people from one region to another were very frequent in the Mediterranean. Among the numerous cases, one can remember the dispersal of the Greek population to evade the Avar invasion: the inhabitants of Patras settled in the Reggio district (Καὶ ἡ μὲν τῶν Πατρῶν πόλις μετῴκησθη ἐν τῇ τῶν Καλαυρῶν χώρᾳ)¹⁵⁶. The Empire behaved as a demiurge state, displacing important human groups for political, military and demographic reasons, related to the security. Belisarius, according to a written source, probably dated between 650 and 680, took away a part of the inhabitants *civitatumque Calabria* to deport them in Naples¹⁵⁷. Still during the Gothic war, the construction of the fortifications around Taranto was enough to win loyalty of the population living

153 *Ep.* XIV, 9. In the 13th-14th centuries, the S. Maria de Veteri Squillaccio monastery, where the community of san Martino had been transferred, still preserved the memory of this dedication and of the Byzantine city. On the upper urban platform, the little medieval church of Santa Maria del Mare, rich in Romanesque remains in the 1930s but nowadays disfigured, is the only still visible vestige (G. Noyé, *Les recherches archéologiques*, cited n. 61, p. 1072, with the sources and bibliography).

154 *Ep.* II, 32; the city is *Lissus*, located near Durazzo on the Adriatic coast.

155 G. Noyé, *Le città calabresi*, cited n. 14; C. Raimondo, *Le città dei «Bruttii» tra tarda Antichità e Altomedioevo: nuove osservazioni sulla base delle fonti archeologiche*, in A. Augenti (ed.), *Le città italiane*, cited n. 14, p. 519-558; C. Raimondo, *Il rapporto tra città e campagna in Calabria tra V e VII secolo: le nuove indagini archeologiche a Scolacium e nel suo territorio*, in G. Volpe, M. Turchiano (eds.), *Paesaggi e insediamenti*, cited n. 7, p. 567-584.

156 I. Duicev (ed.), *Cronaca di Monemvasia*, «Istituto siciliano di studi bizantini e neoellenici. Testi e monumenti. Testi, 12», Palermo, 1976, p. 12, l. 92-93.

157 Source used by the Beneventan historian Landolf Sagax in the 10th century: A. Crivellucci (ed.), *Landolfo Sagace, Historia miscella*, «Fonti per la storia d'Italia, 49-50», Rome, 1913, XVIII, 16.

in the whole Gulf, suggesting that at least a part of her had been transferred¹⁵⁸. In the *castrum* of *Gallipolis*¹⁵⁹, the residents were *rustici* who had no desire to stay and their tendency to run away confirms that the concentration had been compulsory and recent: their duty was to guard the wall and furthermore the local authorities could keep them under control from a fiscal point of view. At the same time, Gregory the Great mentioned the inhabitants of the *massa Nicoterana* and not of an omonymous urban center and their bishop seems to be partly itinerant, which confirms that the phenomenon of demographic concentration is not yet completed¹⁶⁰.

Most of the times, it is quite impossible to know the feelings of ordinary people through the written sources: in that case, the reasons why the *rustici* ran away from the *Callipolitanum castrum* are easy to guess, first of all, the grouping made the fiscal misuses easier for the local authorities (*si in aliquibus incompetentibus angariis vel oppressionibus affliguntur, locum ipsum deserunt*)¹⁶¹; secondly it became perhaps too complicated for the farmers to cultivate the territory, a distance problem which will grow with the construction of *castra* on the top of real 'eyries' in the 8th century, as will be the case for Gerace; one should imagine the existence of some temporary earthen huts forming little hamlets in the countryside.

For his part, Pope Gregory the Great encouraged the inhabitants to reside steadily in the *castra*¹⁶² for two main reasons: the enemy would take easily an abandoned fortification¹⁶³ and capture the unprotected *rustici*. It was vital to save the money which the Lombards picked up thanks to the ransoms and to save the Christian themselves: no more *ministeria* and no more believers meant no more cult and no more religion. Also the bishops had to be scolded, as *Pimenius* of Amalfi who gave the bad example wandering through the country: it had been referred back to the Pope that *in ecclesia sua residere non esse contentum sed foris per loca diversa vagare. Quod videntes alii nec ipsi in castra se retinent sed eius exemplum sequentes foris magis eligunt habitare. Et quia hoc agentes ipsi potius ad suam hostes depredationem invitant*¹⁶⁴.

158 See *supra* n. 103.

159 *Habitantes loci* (*supra* n. 147).

160 *Ep.* VI, 40: in 596, while bishop *Proculus* has gone away for repenting (*Ep.* IX, 121), there is a tragic lack of *presbyter* in the diocese.

161 *Ep.* IX, 206 and 207: *Gregorius Saviniano episcopo Callipoli* (599, iul.); the last tribune of Otranto *multa se hactenus illicita pertulisse; homines Callipolitani castris, in quo te propitiantes Domino esse constituimus sacerdotem, gravibus diversorum molestiis*.

162 *Ep.* IX, 206: *ipsi pauci qui illic rustici remanserunt*.

163 *Ibid.*: *et, quod non optamus, hostibus datur illum occasio pervadendi*.

164 *Ep.* VI, 23.

The conditions of the walls guard seem to vary according to the strategic importance of the fortress: there was a hierarchy of *castra*. Siponto¹⁶⁵, Otranto¹⁶⁶ and perhaps Reggio¹⁶⁷ were held by military detachments but the same tribune was in command of at least two of them, Otranto where he was based and Gallipoli. The percentuale of African amphoras on the acropolis of *Vibona* points out a preferential line of trade with the Maghreb¹⁶⁸, which could mean a fiscal supply for a military unit, as for the globular amphoras of Sant'Antonino di Perti¹⁶⁹.

On the other hand, imported tableware and amphoras were rare at *Scolacium* where a specific local form was produced for the transport of foodstuffs¹⁷⁰. The two towers of the acropolis which have been excavated were inhabited; the one which flanked the main entrance had a maltar ground, on which was installed a hearth; an inner wood stair led to the first floor level. The main tower, larger and higher, was perhaps the residence of a notable; it seems therefore that the defense was in charge of some fairly wealthy citizens living on the acropolis. At least one house of the same size leant against the inner side of the surrounding wall and was equipped with a certain comfort, as a wooden doorway; another one was built near the administrative edifice. Private masonry techniques were often the same as those of rural dwellings, with a lower wall made of rough-hew clay-linked rubble stone and a mud elevation. Later two large accommodations probably related to a garrison will replace the houses against the curtain in the 10th century, when the *praitōrion* is reinforced.

The town itself occupied two platforms¹⁷¹ staggered on the slope; its cemetery was located in the south-west corner of the lower part and included

165 In 599: *Johannem virum magnificum tribunum* (Ep. IX, 113); *Gregorius Iohanni tribuno Siponti* (Ep. IX, 175).

166 Stable presence of a tribune at the end of the 6th century, *Viatore (ex tribuno Ydrontinae civitatis)* before 599 (Ep. IX, 206), then *Occila (Gregorius Occilani tribuno Ydrontino, Ep. IX, 206)*.

167 Presence of an excubite (Ep. IX, 90).

168 P. Arthur, P. Peduto, *Un edificio bizantino extra moenia a Vibo Valentia*, in M. T. Ianelli, G. P. Givigliano (eds.), *Hipponion-Vibo Valentia: la topografia (carta archeologica)*, «Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa» (Giornate di studio su Hipponion-Vibo Valentia), classe di lettere e filosofia, s. 3, 19, 1989.

169 G. Murialdo, *Le anfore di trasporto*, in T. Mannoni, G. Murialdo (eds.), *S. Antonino: un insediamento fortificato nella Liguria bizantina*, cited n. 112, p. 255-299.

170 C. Raimondo, *La ceramica comune del Bruttium nel VI-VII secolo*, in L. Sagui (ed.), *Ceramica in Italia*, cited n. 35, p. 531-548; C. Raimondo, *Aspetti di economia*, cited n. 104.

171 For the Romanesque little church of the upper platform, see *supra* n. 153.

graves of the 6th and 7th century, covered with large terracotta humpbacked slabs with local little jugs inside¹⁷². It seems clear that the inner urban space could accommodate a lot of people, and not only the inhabitants of the Romano-imperial city of *Scolacium*.

The disorders and the wars of the 6th century benefited the Roman Church, through the attraction exerted on the people by its protection¹⁷³ and the *massae* certainly took advantage of the Lombard invasion to gain aristocratic estates. The opposition between ecclesiastic and imperial interests appears already at the end of the century, especially from the tax point of view: Pope Gregory sent to the bishop of Gallipoli a copy of the privileges once granted to the homonymous *massa*, which had been trampled under foot by the tribune of Otranto¹⁷⁴. In addition it is clear that if the harvest or the vineyards had been destroyed in the turmoil of the invasion, the *rustici* could not pay both normal *pensiones* and exaggerated taxes. The rivalry of the Roman Church with Constantinople would become more and more serious with the military and financial crisis of the following century, as well as the public requirements for wood and probably metal.

The original distinction between the various categories of episcopal sees became then a real opposition. In the Byzantine conception, the bishops were straightly subjected to the Emperor, a serious source of difficulties in the event of conflict with the papacy. So the diocese of Tropea was to be created by the Pope in the 7th century, to replace Nicotera¹⁷⁵ in front of the episcopal see of *Vibona*, city attended by two courts which, once lost its economic importance, would be all the same maintained by Constantinople until the confiscation of the papal estates as a public administrative and religious center¹⁷⁶. The same happened for the bishopric of Rossano, created in the beginning of the 8th century by the imperial authorities,

172 Some of these materials and of the grave goods have been observed on the slope where they had been thrown when the present village of Calabriamare was built some years before the survey.

173 The ex-prefects Gregory and Roman request the favour of the Pope's recommendation (*Ep.* IX, 89; *Ep.* IX, 126).

174 *Ut quicquid pridem male gestitum cognoscitis, iudiciaria debeatis emendatione corrigere. Quia et exemplaria tibi privilegiorum ecclesiae de scrinio nostro ad hoc fecimus dari. Here reappears the care for the homines totius Callipolitanae massae: Vires, quid praestare de sua pensione ecclesiae utilitatibus valeant, caute cognoscere ac secundum vires suas ad persolvendum quemque disponere* (*Ep.* IX, 207).

175 Which temporarily disappeared for unknown reason.

176 Its harbour was not functional any more, because of the of the acculation of alluvions caused by the deforestation in the hinterland.

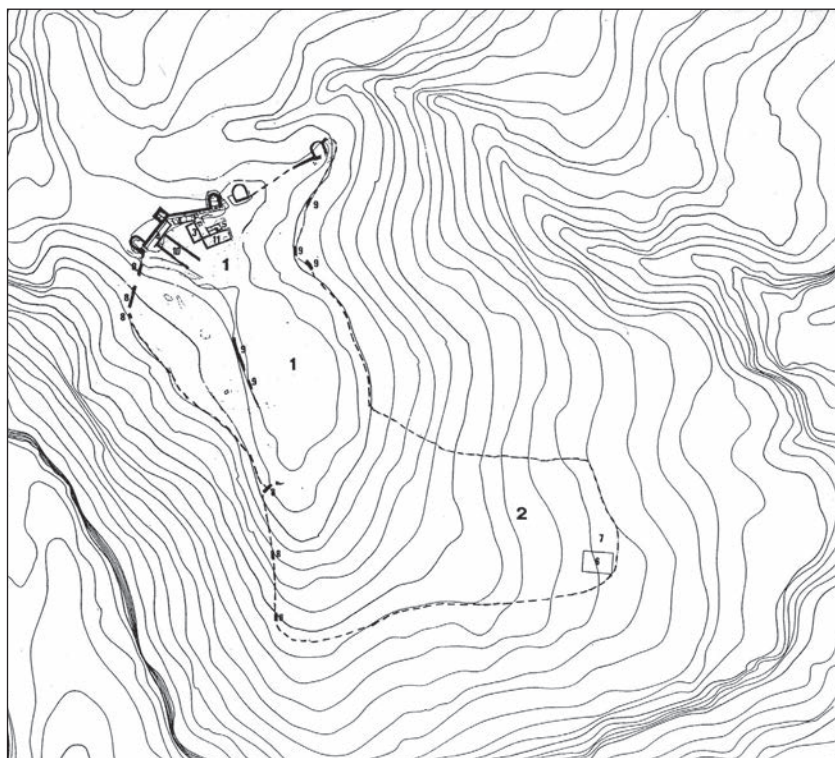


Figure 9. Plan of Byzantine Scolacium.

probably when the city was 'refounded' on the medieval and present site, after being taken away from the Lombards: it was a challenge to the nearby 'papal' see of *Thuri*, which was probably included in the *massa Silani* and would also disappear just after¹⁷⁷.

The Lombards conquered almost the whole *Bruttium*, as they did for the *Apulia*, except the southern end of the peninsula, the Poro and the block formed by the Gulf of Taranto and the northern half of the Sila¹⁷⁸. In accordance with an historiographical consensus, the border between Beneventan and Byzantine territories was already fixed then along the river Crati; but at that time, the idea of a linear frontier was not compatible with the types of war then prevailing. The Lombards certainly occupied some agricultural lands, as the most

¹⁷⁷ G. Noyé, *Aristocrazia*, cited n. 15, p. 14-15.

¹⁷⁸ I don't intend to treat this question, see lastly G. Noyé, *Economia e insediamenti*, cit. n. 12.

fertile territories next to the duchy of Benevento: the valleys of the northwestern Appenin and the Crati basin, but they had probably already infiltrated them peacefully¹⁷⁹ among pastors who could not imagine taking arms to defend the distant *possessores* goods and *conductores*. They were also interested in the Ionian ports and took Crotona. But along the Tyrrhenian coast, they seem to have mainly searched spoils all over the territory, launching attacks upon the ecclesiastical and aristocratic rural properties; the distructions indicate that they did not actually intend to settle in the area¹⁸⁰. And it is likely that they spared both Roman Church *massae* of Tropea and Nicotera, where the wealth was not so ostentatious and the conditions of the *rustici* all in all better.

Finally they generally picked up the *ministeria*, currency and precious metal thanks to the capture of the people out of the fortified cities and to the ransoms of *nobiles*. Constantinople kept only, with the above mentioned territories, the hinterlands of the strongest *castra*, as Siponto¹⁸¹ in Apulia and *Scolacium* or *Vibona*. This situation is confirmed by the authentic part of geographer Georges of Cyprus¹⁸² the life of *Tauros* in the hagiography of Saint Pancras, which is inspired by the Calabrian case in the second half of the 7th century¹⁸³. We cannot exclude that a Lombard principality, which could also cover part of the Serre chain, existed for a while north of Reggio in the Salines valley¹⁸⁴.

This disaster, especially when compared to the fierce resistance that was opposed to the Ostrogoths half a century before, was due to the military absence of Constantinople whose forces were monopolized on the eastern front. But other factors did play: indeed the defensive system of the South was still based on the old social hierarchy, when the powerful *possessores* were capable of leading their own dependents. The

179 The phenomenon is suggested by the excavation of some rural necropolis (G. Roma, *Necropoli e insediamenti fortificati*, cited n. 9)

180 The reconquest was next easy for Constant II.

181 *Ep.* III, 40; *Ep.* IX, 19; *Ep.* IX, 113.

182 Written between 591 and 603, it places only Squillace and Reggio in the imperial obedience: H. Gelzer (ed.), *Georgii Cyprici descriptio orbis romani*, Leipzig, 1890, p. 28-29 and 90-91; E. Honigmann, *Le Synecdémos d'Hierocles et l'opuscule géographique de Georges de Chypre*, Bruxelles, 1939, p. 51-52; P. F. Kehr, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum, Italia Pontificia X. Calabriae-Insulae*, ed. by W. Holtzmann, D. Girgensohn, Zürich, 1975, p. 9-11 and 118. The appellation is still *Brittîôn* or *Brettania*, as in *Ep.* IX, 124-128.

183 M. Van Esbroeck, U. Zanetti, *Le dossier hagiographique de S. Pancrace de Taormine*, in S. Pricoco (ed.), *Studi della Sicilia e tradizione agiografica nella tarda Antichità. Atti del Convegno di studi (Catania, 1986)*, Catania, 1988, p. 155-171.

184 G. Noyé, *L'économie de la Calabre*, cited n. 22, p. 337-339.

formers were weakened¹⁸⁵; the latter, still latin, did not support a state which was not able to protect them and more over they took advantage of the fact that the social pyramid was beheaded. From that moment, *Bruttium* differed from Sicily.

The first wave of Lombard invasion marked the transition from a wealth accumulation phase in the form of lands and slaves, but also of gold and silver, hoard in form of *ministeria* and jewelry, to a redistribution phase. A good amount of lands and precious metal was drained to the palace of Benevento, which justifies the expansion and then the stability of the ducal power in the two following centuries, such as the wealth of the Lombard monasteries. It is well-known that the next half-century was particularly difficult for Constantinople who had a desperate need of wheat and gold¹⁸⁶. One solution, already adopted in the past, was a heavy reliance on Sicilian grain which would have been fully absorbed by the capital¹⁸⁷; in that circumstance, the contribution of the *Bruttium* was clearly essential for the needs of Rome thanks to the papal administration, and also for local armed forces¹⁸⁸. For the supply of gold, there were two solutions, a classical one was to increase the minting, which meant intensify the extraction of local precious metal, another one was to recuperate, thanks to the taxes, the gold coins accumulated by the Roman Church and the landowners. This operation was realized separating the *adaeratio* from the *coemptio* which would be paid reusing old bronze *folles* with a countermark¹⁸⁹. In this field too, the mining of *Bruttium* was needed more than ever and, fortunately, the gold deposits were located in the saved southern territory. Only a part of the precious coinage paid to officers and civil servants was taken out of the circuit through the funeral deposits (the basic tendency leded to hoard)¹⁹⁰ or pumped into the local economy as evidenced by the gold coins found on the urban sites¹⁹¹; thus it

185 Those captured at Crotona were not able to pay their ransom (*Ep.* VII, 23).

186 After the loss of its traditional granaries and because of the coast of war.

187 Despite the abolition of civic *annona*, the Emperor always cared supplies of the city and of Rome: V. Prigent, *Le rôle des provinces d'Occident dans l'approvisionnement de Constantinople (618-717). Témoignages numismatique et sigillographique*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, 118, 2006, p. 269-299.

188 G. Noyé, *L'économie de la Calabre*, cited n. 22, p. 361-363.

189 V. Prigent, *Le rôle des provinces d'Occident*, cited n. 187.

190 The wealth of the graves excavated north of Crotona was surprising in a general context of economic crisis (for the excavations: R. Spadea, *Crotona*, cited n. 44).

191 At Centocamere (Locri) were found coins minted in Syracuse: G. Noyé, *Le città calabresi*, cited n. 14, p. 512-515; for the coins of Paleapoli (a gold coin and some *folles*): C. M. Lebole di Gangi, *Saggio nell'abitato altomedievale di Paleapoli*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome*, 103, 1991, p. 575-598: p. 580); for the *phourion* of *Thurii* (G. Noyé, *Aristocrazia*, cited n. 15, p. 14).

probably helped to initiate the formation of a new aristocracy. But at least a part of the taxes was still payed in cash under the reign of Constans II¹⁹².

Anyway the logical revival of small property produced a society with little marked gaps and to which will be adapted the local defense thanks to a new kind of fortifications i. e. the high up 'great enclosures'¹⁹³. Some of the inland largest mountain peaks defended by steep rocky, were fortified from the 7th century by building a wall on critical sides, and sometimes reinforcing the highest point with a fortress. These strongholds controlled large tracts of lanscape and roads, and served as points of support to military units and as refuge for the inhabitants of the nearby villages or *chôria*. The 'great enclosure' of Tiriolo for example, in the middle of the Catanzaro' isthmus, commanded both Ionian and Tyrrhenian coasts and was composed of three juxtaposed parts: at the end of the ridge, a fortress reused a Brettian wall, against which were supported two sorts of barracks, aquipped with wooden benches and pits for amphorae. This new territory control sistem, largely spread in the Western Byzantine Mediterranean, was named *kastron*¹⁹⁴ or *kastellion*¹⁹⁵ by the written sources of the 9th-10th century. Other examples are the tabular summits of squat heights at Amantea and Pian della Tirrena/*Termesa*, that controlled the mouth of the Savuto river and the Tyrrhenian Sea Route, the isthmus of Catanzaro and the minings of the whole area.

In such a context, the resort of Contans II to Sicily is more than normal, but the importance of the Southern Peninsula in his reign has been understated on the base of the *Liber Pontificalis*¹⁹⁶ and of Paul the Deacon¹⁹⁷. Unlike the biased pon- tificical and Lombard written sources, the iconodule hagiography of Saint Pancras and the archaeological and numismatic evidence can provide a guiding line to understand his action. Constant II certainly reconquered the occidental coast of Calabria when he made his way from Naples to Sicily, as he did in Apulia

192 According to Agnellus of Ravenna: S. Cosentino, *Storia dell'Italia bizantina*, cited n. 79, p. 159.

193 G. Noyé, C. Raimondo, A. Ruga, *Les enceintes et l'église du Monte Tiriolo*, cited n. 70.

194 Tiriolo: G. Noyé, *La Calabre entre Byzantins, Sarrasins et Normands*, in E. Cuzzo, J.-M. Martin (eds.), *Cavalieri alla conquista del Sud: studi sull'Italia normanna in memoria di Léon-Robert Ménager*, Roma-Bari, 1998, p. 90-116; *Hagia- Agathè* in the Salines valley: G. Noyé, *Puglia e Calabria dall'888 agli anni 960: Longobardi, Arabi e «bizantinità»*, in M. Valenti, C. Wickham (ed.), *Italy, 888-962; a turning point (Poggibonsi, 4-6 dicembre 2009)*, «IV Seminario internazionale del Centro interuniversitario per la storia e l'archeologia dell'alto Medioevo, 4», Turnhout, 2013, p. 169-214: p. 198.

195 G. Noyé, *La Calabre entre Byzantins, Sarrasins et Normands*, cit. *supra*, p. 93-94.

196 *L. P. I*, LXXVII, p. 343-344.

197 L. Bethmann, G. Waitz (ed.), *Pauli Historia Langobardorum*, in *MGH, SSrL*, p. 12-187.

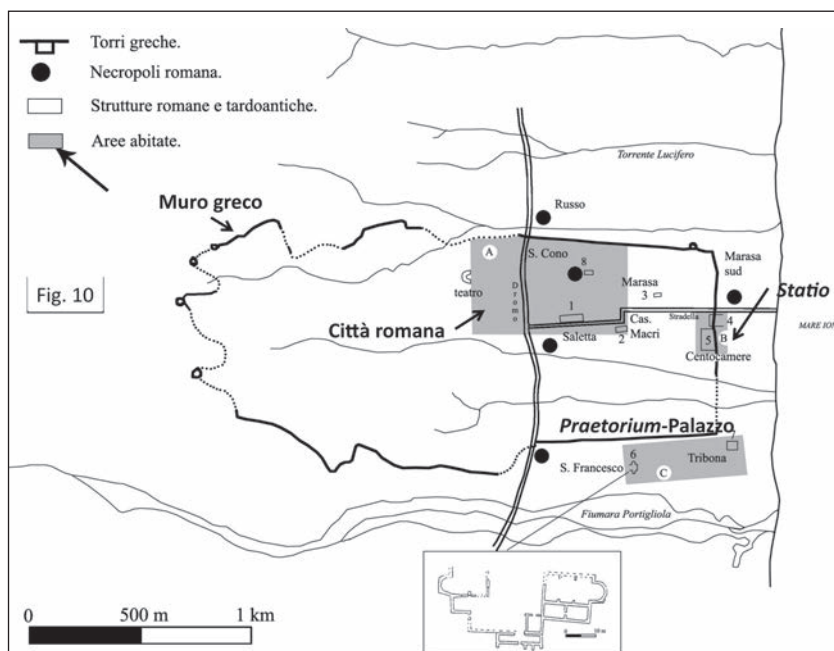


Figure 10. The area of Locri in Late Antiquity.

a little before, but without coming up against Lombard strongholds as Acerenza and Benevento; nevertheless this latin region probably returned soon to the Lombard duchy. Then either the Emperor continued his way up the south-east coast of the region, which is not likely, or he organized later some successful expeditions from Sicily to regain Locri and Crotona¹⁹⁸. In the same period, the term Calabria – first under the form *Καλαβρίας τῆς κάτω* – began to designate the southern part of the province, remained under Byzantine rule¹⁹⁹ while *Bruttium* or *Brettia* was reduced to the northern part which belonged to Benevento.

198 The interpolation of Georges of Cyprus, written between 650 and 680, takes his military Calabrian campaigns in account since it locates in the Byzantine area both these towns together with *Tauriana* and *Vibona* (E. Honigmann, *Le Synecdémos d'Hieroclès*, cited n. 182, p. 53, n° 600).

199 The first mention of Calabria with this signification is in the chronicle of Monemvasia (*Cronaca di Monemvasia*, cit. n. 156, p. 12, l. 93), then in 650 concerning the life of pope Martin (P. Jaffe, *Regesta pontificum romanorum ab condita ecclesia ad annum MCXCVIII*, ed. by G. Wattenbach, S. Loewenfeld, D. Kaltenbruner, P. Ewald, Leipzig, 1885-1888, 2079 [1608]; *Pauli Historia Longobardorum*, cited n. 196, V, 11).

This double appellation, first political, appeared on the occasion of the Roman Council of 680²⁰⁰ and was an exact reflection of the situation after the death of Constans II²⁰¹.

The Sicilian gold minting became more than it had ever been²⁰², and the precious metal requirements account for the Emperor's interest in Sicilian but also in Calabrian mining (the coins included more than one kind of gold), which is emphasized by the Life of Saint Pancras, particularly if the Emperor's acts inspired the author as well as local literary traditions when he wrote the passage dedicated to *Tauros*. For this reason Constans II endeavoured to strengthen his positions on the mainland and above all in Southern Calabria, where fortified cities, except Reggio, were almost absent. He therefore resumed the urbanization policy, where it had been left, filling the gaps that were created by the wars but, sign of the new social and military situation, he cared as much about *chôria*. He probably built the 'great enclosure' of *Hagia-Christinë*, 'refounded' *Tauriana* and perhaps founded *Hagia-Agathè* in the rich valley of the Salines²⁰³; the procedure, reported in the life of Tauros about Taormina, included new elements in comparison to the end of the 6th century: il *praitôrion* for example shelters an arsenal and a treasure. On the opposite coast the fortified residential site of *San Francesco*, which appears to be still occupied and gained perhaps the quality of *palatium* thanks to some imperial visit, focused a group of settlements south of the Greek and Roman city of Locri, among which Paleapoli might correspond to another urban 'refoundation'²⁰⁴.

It is clear that Constans II and the other Byzantine authorities were then more concerned about the Tyrrhenian land and sea roads towards Naples and Rome, and about the vicinity of the Lombard than about the Arab threat in Italy: a sort of *limes* was then created across the Catanzaro isthmus, which included *Scolacium* at east, as a rampart protecting Southern Calabria and Sicilia against possible attacks from Benevento. Indeed this fortified line would soon be able to stop the second wave of the Lombard invasion at the end of the 680s

200 G. Minasi, *Le chiese di Calabria dal quinto al duodecimo secolo*, Napoli, 1896, p. 111; F. Russo, *Regesto vaticano per la Calabria*, I, Rome, 1974. The bishops of Cosenza, *Temesa*, *Scolacium* and Crotona are belonging to the *Bruttium* while Locres, Tropea, *Vibona* and *Tauriana* belong to the Calabria.

201 See below.

202 V. Prigent, *La Sicile byzantine*, cited n. 62, p. 967-972; V. Prigent, *Le rôle des provinces d'Occident*, cited n. 187, p. 288; C. Morriçon, V. Prigent, *La monetazione in Sicilia nell'età bizantina*, cited n. 77, p. 430.

203 G. Noyé, *L'économie de la Calabre*, cited n. 22, p. 341-342.

204 G. Noyé, *Le città calabresi*, cited n. 14, p. 512-515.

and would retain its effectiveness until the 10th century. The building of the great enclosures of Amantea and Temesa should probably also be attributed to Constans II because of his politic plan, and of his fiscal and military measures. If so the operation probably included a transfer of hellenized population to culturally reinforce the *limes*: the bishop of *Temesa* was sent by the Pope to Constantinople in 679-680 because he spoke Greek²⁰⁵.

Two other steps, straightly related to the campains which we just mentioned seemed then necessary: the reorganization of the tax sistem and the creation or reinforcement of the local fleet. [Constans II] *tales afflictiones posuit populo seu habitatoribus vel possessoribus provinciam Calabriae, Siciliae vel Sardiniae per diagrafa seu capita atque nauticationes per annos plurimos, quales a seculo numquam fuerunt, ut etiam uxores a maritos vel filios a parentes separarent*²⁰⁶. This passage of the *Liber Pontificalis* has been recently the key point of some studies which didn't take sufficiently into account the local context and the Latin of the Chancery. The *nauticationes* were not a simple system of men and ships requisition, but must be interpreted as a taxation similar to the one imposed to all port cities of the tema in 965, that caused a rebellion led by Rosano: those settlements had to finance and to carry out the construction of a given number of ships²⁰⁷ and most likely, in the 10th as well as in the 7th century, had thus to provide not only materials but also know-how and manpower²⁰⁸. The last part of the sentence refers certainly to the recruitment of crews²⁰⁹: Calabrian people were traditionally shipowners and sailors and so will be until at least the Norman period²¹⁰. *Annos plurimos* could be understood as a recurrence of these measures, or at least of the recruitment, for sev-

205 L. P. I, LXXXI, p. 350.

206 L. P. I, LXXVIII, p. 344.

207 At that time *chelandie*: G. Giovanelli (ed.), *Bios kai politeia tou osiou patros emôn Neilou tou Néou*, Badia di Grottaferrata, 1972, c. 60.

208 G. Noyé, *L'économie de la Calabre*, cited n. 22, p. 352-353.

209 C. Zuckerman, *Learning from the enemy and more: studies in "dark centuries" Byzantium*, in *Millenium*, I, 2006, p. 1091.

210 J.-M. Martin, G. Noyé, *Les façades maritimes de l'Italie du sud: défense et mise en valeur (IV^e-XIII^e siècle)*, in J.-M. Martin (ed.), *Castrum 7. Zones côtières littorales dans le monde méditerranéen au Moyen Âge: défense, peuplement, mise en valeur (Rome, 1996)*, «Coll. de l'École française de Rome, 105/7- Coll. de la Casa de Velázquez, 76», Rome-Madrid, 2001, p. 467-519: p. 500; V. De Bartholomaeis (ed.), *Storia de'Normanni di Amato di Montecassino*, «Fonti per la storia d'Italia, 76», Roma, 1935, V, 26-27; D. P. Waley, *Combined operations in Sicily*, in *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 22, 1954, p. 118-125.

eral years because of the military circumstances²¹¹. Given the lack of public *saltus*, in Calabria but perhaps also in Sicilia, the project certainly required many pieces of tall trees from the papal *massae*: carving boards is an activity which 'eats' a great quantity of wood and is very expensive.

This great fleet would be next also necessary for facing up to the Arab threat²¹²; anyway it probably deserved the credit²¹³ of recapturing from the Lombards the Calabrian coastlines before and after the temporary reconquest of Archis I, and especially the cities of Amantea²¹⁴ and Crotone²¹⁵ already in the beginning of the 8th century. But the concurrence between the needs of ship-building and those of religious edifices became certainly stronger: indeed the Calabrian *trabes* were still carried to Rome about the end of the 7th century²¹⁶ and at the beginning of the following century²¹⁷. The city seemed to be highly dependent on the wooden resources of the South, as shown by a letter of Hadrian I to Charlemagne, where the Pope asked the Emperor to intervene with the Duke of Spoleto because he lacks building materials for the churches' roofs²¹⁸. And the local religious or military edifices also needed a lot of wood.

In the *Liber Pontificalis seu* clearly means 'or' and express an equivalence, while 'vel' means 'and', thus an accumulation; so *diagrafa*, even if the the Greek word may have another meaning, is in this text the equivalent of *capita* that is to say the units of the sharing of the incomes, the old *jugatio*/

211 As in the Arab system which could have inspired the tax according to C. Zuckerman, (*Learning from the enemy and more*, cited n. 209, p. 297); but for others historians, it is hardly likely that Constant II should draw inspiration from the Arabs (S. Cosentino, *Constans II and the Byzantine navy*, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 100, 2007, p. 577-630).

212 Constans II was the only emperor would took part in a sea battle, and was fully aware of the importance of the Arab fleet (S. Cosentino, *Constans II and the Byzantine navy*, cit. *supra*).

213 But the fleet sent in western Mediterranean against Carthage perhaps had a part in those operations.

214 V. Prigent, *Les évêchés byzantins de la Calabre septentrionale au VIII^e siècle*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, 114, 2002, p. 931-953: p. 935 (seel of a bishop).

215 V. von Falkenhausen, *La dominazione bizantina nell'Italia meridionale dal IX al XII secolo*, Bari, 1978, p. 8.

216 L. P. I, LXXXVI, p. 375 [...] *et trabes fecit de Calabria adduci et quae in eadem basilica vetustissimas invenit renovavit*. It is the Basilica of St-Paul, under Sergius I (687-701).

217 L. P. I, XCI, p. 397. *Hic maximam partem basilicae beati Pauli apostoli quae ceciderat, allatis de Calabria trabibus cooperit. Sancti Laurentii pariter ecclesiam foris muros sitam, quae trabibus confractis ruinae iam erat vicina, reparavit* (under Gregory II, 715-731). See also the list driven up by Vivien Prigent (*Les évêchés byzantins de la Calabre septentrionale au VIII^e siècle*, cited n. 214, p. 588).

218 *Codex Carolinus*, ed. W Gundlach, dans *MGH, Epistulae*, 3, Berlin, 1892, n° 65, p. 593: [the wood] *in nostris finibus minime reperitur*.

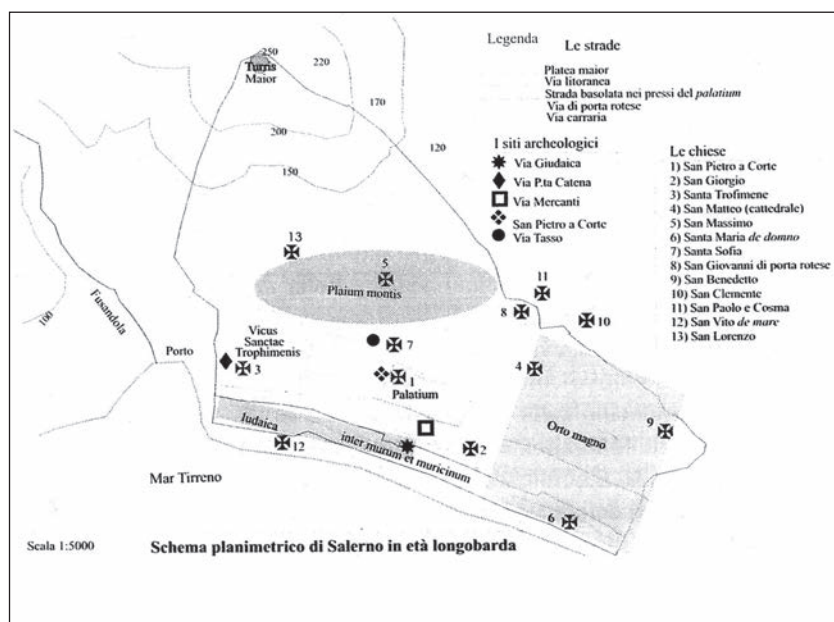


Figure 11. Plan of Lombard Salerno.

capitatio. Therefore, without being necessary to suppose a transformation of the tax system, the expression simply designs an updating of the fiscal registers which was justified by the chaos of the Lombard invasion and by the social crisis. Given the dismantling of large parts of the autocratic estates and the long Lombard occupation of some territories, the Imperial authorities had to create new administrative tools to collect the tax. And this 'rearrangement', rather than 'reform', was indispensable to finance the war and fortification effort led by the emperor; so far as it is possible to judge, according to the financial public problems the operation gave also the opportunity of increasing the amounts²¹⁹, which was a later reason for the Roman Church to hate the figure of Constans II.

Thus one is forced to the conclusion that the actions of Constans II in Calabria, which probably included the creation of the duchy, followed a logical order in a reasoned and comprehensive perspective. Thirty years later, reductions of tax were given specifically to the papal estates; they were organized in two

219 In this case, for the ecclesiastic *massae*.

parts which concerned first Sicily and Calabria perhaps in 682-683²²⁰, then *Brittius* and Lucania in 686-687²²¹; the term *Brittius* was then taking a geographical meaning. The Papacy tore from the Empire the abolition of a good number of tax units, and the same rebate was next extended to the rest of the patrimony; by the way the term *annonacapita* connoted the Late Antiquity. Moreover if *coemptum frumenti* had referred to the new Byzantine property tax, its total abolition in those years would have meant that in 682-683 the pontifical southern *massae*, the more productive ones, would have not supply any wheat to the State, which would have created a severe crisis. Thus the text must be related to the exceptional *coemptiones*, i. e. the quantities of grain required outside the normal schedule or in addition to the tax, which caused large coast to the payers and became increasingly regular.

The presence of *kommerkiarioi* in Sicily in the second half of the 7th century (from 652-654 according to the only seal which has been precisely dated²²²) was probably due to the necessity of organizing the *coemptio* of the grain for Constantinople, and its storage and transportation in the eastern Mediterranean. But these characters did not manage a tax in kind, not more than their counterparts – and predecessors – of Africa. The general recession of monetary economy from Constans II, which should have accelerated the evolution towards the medieval *sunone*²²³ was highly attenuated in Sicily²²⁴ and the second quarter of the century saw a radicalization of the collection of property taxes in gold in the island; such a rapid turnaround would therefore be amazing.

We can assume that the officials of the Roman Church of *Brittius* and Lucania, to protest against the tax burden, had blocked all payments so that the *militia* did take hostages in the ecclesiastic *familia* of these patrimonies, and also in Sicilia. They won their case in turn and Justinian II gave the order to release the detained people²²⁵. It was not the first time the *militia* retaliated against the pa-

220 L. P. I, LXXXIII, p. 366: *Et alias divales iussiones relevans annonacapita patrimonium Siciliae et Calabriae non parva, sed et coemptum frumenti similiter vel alia diversa quae ecclesia Romana annue minime exurgebat persolvere* For the date of this measure: S. Cosentino, *Storia dell'Italia bizantina (VI-XI secolo)*, cited n. 79, p. 158-159.

221 L. P. I, LXXXV, p. 368-369: *Huius temporibus pietas imperialis relevavit per sacram iussionem suam ducenta annonacapita a quas patrimonius Brittius et Lucaniae annue persolvebat.*

222 V. Prigent, *Le rôle des provinces d'Occident*, cited n. 187.

223 J. Haldon, *Synônè: re-considering a problematic term of middle byzantine fiscal administration*, in *Byzantine and modern greek studies*, 18, 1994, p. 116-153.

224 C. Morrisson, *La Sicile byzantine: une lueur dans les siècles obscurs*, cited n. 1, p. 333-334.

225 *Itemque et al iam iussionem direxit ut restituantur familia suprascripti patrimonii et Siciliae quae in pignere a militia detinebantur.*

pal possessions²²⁶, but yet in 650, the soldiers of Rome began to side with the Holy seed. This meridional episode announcing the events of the 720s showed that the local *militia* would not oppose to a similar act of aggression in case the tax would be newly blocked; but in the 680s, the relations of Constantinople with the Pope had greatly improved.

In 722-723, in front of a huge tax burden, Gregory II blocked again the payment of taxes; but the imperial real answer took place ten years later with the fiscal measures of Leo III, that are still object of an extended historiographic debate. First of all, they are known through a Greek source which makes the comparison with the *Liber Pontificalis* delicate. According to Theophane, “Τότε ὁ θεομάχος ἐπὶ πλείον ἔκμανεις Ἄραβικ τε φρονήματι κρατυνόμενος φόρους κεφαλικοὺς τῷ τρίτῳ μέρει Σικελίας καὶ Καλαβρίας τοῦ λαοῦ ἐπέθηκεν²²⁷. Τὰ δὲ λεγόμενα πατριμόνια τῶν ἀγίων καὶ κορυφαίων ἀποστόλων, τῶν ἐν τῇ πρεσβυτέρῃ Ῥώμῃ τιμωμένων, ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις ἔκπαλαι τελούμενα χρυσοῦ τάλαντα τρία ἡμισυ τῷ δημοσίῳ λόγῳ τελεῖσθαι προσέταξεν, ἐποπτεῦν τε καὶ ἀναγράφεσθαι τὰ τικτόμενα κελεύσας ἄρρενα βρέφη, ὡς Φαραώ ποτε τὰ τῶν Ἑβραίων²²⁸”.

The two sentences clearly refer to different subjects or realities, first the third of Sicilian and Calabrian population and afterwards specifically the heritage of the Roman Church. As the papal *massae* might include two thirds of the population, we can assume that both measures were complementary. In the first part, the terms *phorous kephalikous* could refer to a new realty, the future *kapnikon* of the first half of the following century, but it could also correspond to the *capitatio* of Late Antiquity; the fact that Theophane mentions an increase would plead for the second hypothesis.

The second part indicates that henceforth the patrimonies of Saints Peter and Paul will pay the tax directly to the public treasury: it puts end to the traditional autopragi²²⁹ and thus removes much of the Pope's means of action in the South. In the same way, the registration on the roles of tax is certainly related to one or the other type of capitation, but not necessarily the new *kapnikon*: any-

226 In 639, the *milites* of Rome, swayed by the *chartouliarios*, besieged the Lateran because they were not payed: V. Prigent, *Les empereurs isauriens et la confiscation des patrimoines pontificaux d'Italie du Sud*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, 116-2, 2004, p. 557-594.

227 I think that *tô tritô* is related to *laou*.

228 *Theophane*, p. 410, l. 9-16.

229 As emphasized by S. Cosentino, the autopragie was due to a concession which is simply taken away (*Storia dell'Italia bizantina*, cited n. 79, p. 160). See above the copy of the privilege of the local *massae* sent by Gregory the Great to the bishop of Otranto.

way the removal of the inner fiscal management of the *massae* obliges the State to set its own tax register. Another fact is also clear even if it is implicate: while eliminating any possibility of having the tax blocked and terminating the 'stand-of' between the Pope and Constantinople about wheat and other commodities, the operation is very profitable to the public administration.

The gains probably served to strengthen the local fleet of Constans II which had been very active: from 703, the conquest of Tunisia allowed Kairouan to hold regular expeditions against Sicily, which were intensified from 727 to 732²³⁰. Eleven seals of drongaires were identified for both provinces in this period, and two Arab fleets were intercepted in 733 and 734²³¹, but a direct link between those victories and the reform of Leo III seems difficult from a simple chronological point of view. Next the Byzantine ships regularly patrolled along the coasts especially the Ionian one, but the internal difficulties experienced by the Aghlabites allowed Constantinople to establish peaceful relations with them²³².

Leo III o who per him paid particular attention to the defense and real integration of Southern Italy in the Empire, designing an articulated military and cultural program, that gave a central role to the city and the aristocracy in the framework of the theme. In fact from 722, the recovery of papal patrimony became most necessary and would be followed by a campaign of hellenization of those territories and generally of the whole provinces. The transfer of Calabrian and Sicilian bishoprics to the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople was not only a retaliation, but also and perhaps mainly, the beginning of a conversion process of the local churches to the customs and culture of the eastern ones²³³. If we go back to the typology of bishoprics we have outlined above, only the 'pontifical' ones remained really problematic for Byzantium²³⁴: the issue was resolved with great flexibility, but always thanks to the successful trio formed by town, strategic site and bishopric. Thus the new see of the recently founded Ros-

230 G. Noyé, *Economia e società*, cited n. 12, p. 621; V. Prigent, *Les empereurs isauriens et la confiscation des patrimoines pontificaux d'Italie du Sud*, cited n. 226, p. 567.

231 Those victories occur too early for them to be the result of the 732/733 measures, whose application probably demanded a while.

232 P. Guichard, *Les débuts de la piraterie andalouse en Méditerranée occidentale (798-813)*, in *Revue d'histoire de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 35/1, 1983, p. 55-76; L. Cracco-Ruggini, *La Sicilia fra Roma e Bisanzio*, in R. Romeo (ed.), *Storia della Sicilia*, III, Napoli, 1980, p. 3-94.

233 In 722-723: V. Prigent, *Les empereurs isauriens et la confiscation des patrimoines pontificaux*, cited n. 226, p. 563-565.

234 The two categories 'aristocratic' and 'public' were combined into the urban mold.

sano evicted that of *Touris* after the Notice 3, while the 'public' *Vibona*, which had lost its port, became unuseful besides Tropea²³⁵; two urban centers were created, one in the *massa* of Nicotera on the present strategic site²³⁶, where the episcopal see was restored and the other in the great enclosure of Amantea²³⁷. Both this new *kastron* and that of Rossano reinforced the new Lombard border which finished settling on its 'canonical' line along the Crati basin in the second half of the 8th century and would not change until the end of the 9th century. This situation appeared in the Notice 3 and the conciliar list of 787²³⁸.

How some urban centers went from a domination to the other is not surprising if we observe what was happening in the East of the Empire. The numerous military campaigns, often with substantial means, did not lead to any stable result when the army withdrew: a garrison left alone in a hostile or simply alien environment quickly slaughtered and the local aristocracy was very versatile. These actions were only demonstrations of power and provided tributs, and they ended up depleting the country; indeed the last years of the 7th century were marked by an economic and demographic crisis, which would culminate with the pest in 745²³⁹.

The urban centers, often *ex-chôria*, now stood a little inland either because of the first Arab raids on Sicily and/or because they were considered as frameworks to reinitiate an agrarian recolonization. A good part of the lands in the ex-papal *massae* was conceded to the *militia* and the problem of her pay that became acute was resolved in this way while the new elite was developing. A good example is provided with the case of Santa Severina, in the heart of the Sila, which became the seat of an archbishop before the Notice 3 under the symbolic name of *Nikopolis*²⁴⁰. A building campaign was originally promoted together by a high dignitary, spatharocandidat²⁴¹, and the bishop; it touched the cathedral and the baptistery. A small single-aisled church was edified under the present castle and

235 G. Noyé, *Aristocrazia*, cited n. 15, p. 15.

236 G. Noyé, *Quelques observations*, cited n. 36, p. 92.

237 V. Prigent, *Les évêchés byzantins de la Calabre septentrionale*, cited n. 214.

238 P. F. Kehr, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum, Italia Pontificia X. Calabriae-Insulae*, cited n. 182, p. 93 and 109; J. Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum Ecclesiae Constantinopolae*, critical text, introduction and notes, «Géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin, I», Paris, 1981, p. 31-33.

239 *Theophane*, 422.

240 V. Prigent, *Les évêchés byzantins de la Calabre septentrionale*, cited n. 14, p. 939-947.

241 Who would have first made a career at Reggio and in Sicily (*ibid.*).

became the center of a cemetery where a notable was buried²⁴². Finally the title of eparch, which appears on one of the inscriptions *in situ*, might indicate that the city was the center of a district where resided the official in charge of administering²⁴³. Alongside the *militia*, some elements of the *tagmata* were stationed in Calabria (at Tropea for example) towards the middle of the 8th century²⁴⁴.

The date of the confiscation of the patrimonies has been dated by V. Prigent in 742, under the pontificate of Zachary, but I am not sure that we should give it a precise moment. It is likely that the process was long and complicated since in practice it was necessary to manage large areas and to collect rents instead of the ecclesiastical administrators. Probably the effects of this measure began to be felt in 742, through the scarcity of precious metal which was probably also due to the loss of mines.

In conclusion, the presence and action of Constantinople were real in the South Peninsula and much larger and more diversified than it is generally supposed, even if the phenomenon knew regular eclipses. Despite the fact that the Lombard wars were extremely long and complex, Calabria participated in wheat shipments, to-wards Rome certainly, but perhaps also towards Constantinople and in the intense exchanges between the two sides of the Mediterranean basin²⁴⁵. Its metals, the gold for the coinage and the iron and bronze for arms and currency, were determining in the interest Byzantium constantly brought to the province. The traditionally 'dark ages' are rich in social and economic events and a theoretical gap in the Southern Italian story had been filled by archaeology which is the only way to interpret correctly the scarce written sources.

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242 For the excavation, see F. Cuteri, *L'insediamento tra VIII e XI secolo*, cited n. 47.

243 G. Noyé, *Byzance et l'Italie méridionale*, cited n. 107, p. 240-241.

244 As in Sicily: V. Prigent, *Topotérètes de Sicile et de Calabre aux VIII^e-IX^e siècles*, in *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography*, 9, 2006, p. 145-158.

245 M. Mc Cormick, *Bateaux de vie, bateaux de mort. Maladie, commerce, transports annonaires et le passage économique du bas-Empire au Moyen Âge*, in *Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra tarda Antichità e alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 3-9 aprile 1997), «Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 45-1», Spoleto, 1998; M. Mc Cormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, c. 300-c. 900*, Cambridge, 2001.

Richard HODGES

THE IDEA OF THE POLYFOCAL ‘TOWN’?: ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE ORIGINS OF MEDIEVAL URBANISM IN ITALY

The same mental suburbs slip from youth to age,
In the same house go white at last ---
The city is a cage.

C. Cavafy, *The City* (L. Durrell, *The Alexandria Quartet*, London 1962, p. 201)

Italian conservatism maintained classical core ideals, and thus, by extension, the concept of urban living for its elites, through the greatest economic crises in the history of the peninsula. These ideals were still operative in the period of economic revival and acute political decentralization, which can be clearly seen in the eleventh century at latest.

C. Wickham, *Framing the Middle Ages*, Oxford, 2005, p. 655-56.

What was in Lawrence Durrell’s fertile mind as he freely translated Cavafy’s 1911 canonical poem about Alexandria to emphasize the incarcerating effects of urban living¹? Was he really thinking of a city or a cage, or of his own human condition? Cavafy’s poem², we might suspect, was intended to describe utterly different things than urbanism and its constraints. ‘Cityness’, to use the word coined by Chris Wickham³ to define a medieval urban mentality, is a complex concept that is more than the sum of the historical and archaeological sources combined. Yet the origins of the medieval city and the idea of it have been viewed through the prism of our modern, post-peasant lens. This is especially the case in Italy, where its 12th-century medieval communes have been interpreted as a cornerstone in the rise of the medieval European community. These communes “embodied by the driving and creati-

1 Using his own free-form translation, Lawrence Durrell employs the poem to embellish the first of the four Alexandria novels; see also <http://eastvillage.thelocal.nytimes.com/2011/05/31/the-city-is-a-cage/>.

2 C.P Cavafy, *Collected poems*, translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, ed. by George Savidis, Princeton, 1992, p. 28.

3 C. Wickham, *Framing the Middle Ages*, Oxford, 2005, p. 595.

New Directions in Early Medieval European Archaeology: Spain and Italy compared, ed. by Sauro GELICHI and Richard HODGES, Turnhout, 2015 (Haut Moyen Âge, 24), p. 267-283.

ve bourgeois forces of society”⁴ – their ‘cityness’ being institutionally different from circumstances in Byzantium – are traditionally regarded as the platform on which the modern European project was constructed. The historiographic assumption is that this project has roots in antiquity, as Wickham, cited above, maintains. It is an assumption that is now challenged by the archaeological evidence for the 7th-9th century phases of Italy’s towns assembled over the past thirty years, although paradoxically Italy’s archaeologists are still caged by a national argument that ignores the import of the evidence they themselves have excavated.

This essay, then, in memory of Riccardo Francovich, an archaeologist and historian who recognized and frequently challenged the commanding rhetoric of the text when concerned with urbanization⁵, aims to review the debate about the idea of the city and to ask why Italian medieval archaeologists have resisted confronting the evidence before them.

Seeing past de Chirico

An enduring expression of the Italian city is eloquently presented in Giorgio de Chirico’s painting, *Gli Archeologi* (1927). Two faceless phantoms grasp a collage of fragments of monumental Rome. Lacking expression, these figures are the oracles of an ancient city’s art, architecture, epigraphy, and archaeology. This picture speaks to an archaeologist of Cavafy’s generation, just as it continues to speak to archaeologists and historians in de Chirico’s homeland (and abroad)⁶. Recently, Andrea Carandini put this oracle into words: “e attraverso la parvenza immaginaria della città che il mondo classico resta intellettualmente ed emozionalmente vivo”⁷.

Carandini’s living city has not been entirely welcomed in the recent textbooks on Italian medieval urban archaeology. Its ideology essentially is at odds with Brogiolo and Gelichi’s *La città nell’alto medioevo italiano*, an important, pioneering book⁸, and continues to disturb Brogiolo in his most recent book

4 M. Boone, *Cities in late medieval Europe: the promise and the curse of modernity*, in *Urban History*, 39, 2012, p. 331.

5 G. P. Brogiolo, *L’archeologia urbana tra un passato certo e uno future imprevedibile*, in AA. VV., *Riccardo Francovich e I Grandi Temi del Dibattito Europeo*, Florence, 2011, p. 33-40.

6 Cf. C. Wickham, *Framing*, cited n. 3, p. 605-656.

7 A. Carandini, *L’ultima civiltà sepolta o del massimo oggetto desueto, secondo un archeologo*, in A. Schiavone (ed.), *Storia di Roma*, III, t 2: 11-38, Turin, 1993, p. 37.

8 G. P. Brogiolo, S. Gelichi, *La città nell’altomedioevo italiano*, Rome, 1998, p. 42.

about medieval urban origins⁹: However, any discussion of this ideology is absent from Augenti's descriptive, student text-book¹⁰, and Cirelli's recent overview¹¹. As Brogiolo and Gelichi have shown, the excavated evidence of the early medieval city, unearthed thanks to modern methodologies, takes an entirely different form to that envisaged by Carandini, wherein origins in the Emperor Augustus's marble realm frame a living continuity. In fact, modern archaeology has unearthed exactly the opposite. It illustrates powerfully the collapse of these ancient marble realms in the 6th and 7th centuries and shows that in certain cases, there was an episode of indisputable ruralisation associated with minimal production and consumption largely limited to the Church. During this 7th- to 9th-century episode old urban centres, if they were still occupied, were managed by a coalition or collection of small but separated entities. There was a distinct "lack of homogeneity", as Wickham has observed¹². In many respects rural in character rather than urban in the ancient or high medieval sense, this episode of urban living was nevertheless the precursor of the new communes of the 10th or 11th centuries. By definition the town in this era of ruralisation was a polyfocal place or to use the accurate term defined by Italian archaeologists – *città ad isole*¹³. More to the point, this 'city' was not a town in the strict sense of any conventional definition, which of course begs the question of what 'cityness' was in this period and indeed if it even existed¹⁴.

How might these polyfocal towns be defined? These places comprised disparate, unconnected ('spatial destructuring')¹⁵ communities occupying a common location defined as a place in antiquity, as opposed to unitary settlements integrated by public works (and infrastructure) managed by a civic authority such as existed in antiquity and, once again, from the mid to later 11th century onwards.

For the archaeologist working with material sources wherein size (measures) matter, these places resembled an archipelago of islands or oases comprising principally aristocratic or episcopal residences that formed a coalition of settlements within otherwise largely deserted urban landscapes often characterized by sterile

9 G. P. Brogiolo, *Le origini della città medievale*, Mantova, 2011, p. 215.

10 A. Augenti, *Città e Porti dall'Antichità al Medioevo*, Rome, 2010.

11 E. Cirelli, *Le città dell'Italia del nord nell'epoca dei re (888-962 AD)*, in M. Valenti, C. Wickham (eds.), *Italia, 888-962: una svolta*, Turnhout, 2013, p. 131-48.

12 C. Wickham, *Framing*, cited n. 3, p. 599.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 652-653.

14 R. Hodges, *Dark Age Economics: a new audit*, London, 2012, p. 91-95.

15 C. Wickham, *Framing*, cited n. 3, p. 652-653.

black earth¹⁶. Architecturally, of course, the aristocratic and ecclesiastical residences occupied small footprints in this period¹⁷. The small *curtis*-like nuclei within the ruined Forum of Rome and the Largo Argentina, Rome¹⁸, for example, are undoubtedly the most obvious illustration of this phenomenon, but even Venice, an archipelago of settled and unoccupied islands in the 9th century, conformed to the same dispersed, spatial arrangement¹⁹. Rarely if ever are artisanal or rural peasant communities attached to these isolated residences. According to Paola Galetti, the secular buildings found in these 'oases' conform to a new model: compact in volume with upper storeys but without either internal courtyards or outer peristyles²⁰. Civic or collective works such as the making of street grids or even simple roads (like those found at Frankfurt at this time, as well as those regularly renewed in the 'North Sea' emporia)²¹ are largely absent²². The timber wharfs at Comacchio along with the canalized river operations in this part of the river Po delta might be defined as rare examples of substantial investments for the common, that is public, good. Diego Calaon estimates the ecological implications: "if it is calculated that the port of Comacchio had a maximum extent of 75,000 sq. m. . If it is assumed that the port was realized (including timber warehouses) within the arc of one year, we must estimate the felling of 110,000- 120,000 trees, or about 300 a day"²³. Nevertheless, these were modest public works, perhaps orchestrated by a bishop, compared, for example, to the timber jetties at late 8th-century Dorestad or, indeed, the huge operations in the later 9th to 11th centuries to construct timber quays at Venice. La Rocca, on the other hand, has demonstrated, urban space and identity was defined by the existence of ancient public works, principally fortifications, albeit often in need of refurbishment, as well as periodic ritual events contained episodically within these fortifications²⁴. Evidence of the renewal of urban defenses remains rare before the mid to later 9th century, the major exception

16 Cf. G. P. Brogiolo, *Le origini*, cited n. 8, p. 131-134.

17 E. Cirelli, *Le città*, cited n. 10.

18 Cf. G. P. Brogiolo, *Le origini*, cited n. 8, p. 175.

19 E. Cirelli, *Le città*, cited n. 10.

20 P. Galetti, *Tecniche e materiali da costruzione dell'edilizia residenziale*, in A. Augenti (ed.), *Le Città italiane tra la tarda antichità e l'alto medioevo*, Florence, 2006, p. 72-73.

21 R. Hodges, *Dark Age*, cited n. 13, p. 92.

22 C. La Rocca, *Residenze urbane ed elites urbane tra VIII e X secolo in Italia settentrionale*, in A. Augenti (ed.), *Le Città italiane*, cited n. 19, p. 57.

23 D. Calaon, *Ecologia della Venetia prima di Venezia: Uomini, acqua e archeologia*, in *Hortus Artium Medievalium*, 20, 2014, p. 813.

24 C. La Rocca, *Residenze urbane*, cited n. 13, p. 55-66.

appearing to be Prince Arichis's fortifications around Benevento in the later 8th century²⁵. Conspicuously, the material culture is impoverished and significantly, coin finds are exceptionally rare²⁶. Not until the mid 9th century is there a modestly diverse range of pottery types (including the first glazed wares), while metalwork is uncommon, as is glassware. This poverty stands in contrast to the description of a rich (ecclesiastical) material culture in the *Liber Pontificalis*, and the rich church furniture in the form of sculpture, glass and stone mosaics, and paintings.

Polyfocal communities with their distinctive attributes constitute a definable archaeological model, and in many cases, a stage in the process of medieval Italian urbanization and indeed a widespread European settlement form in the early Middle Ages²⁷. Polyfocal towns were administrative central-places first and foremost where exchange, if it existed, was anchored in cosmological terms around the Church with its inalienable relics. These places were nodes in highly contracted exchange networks where the circulation of goods was modest and coins were scarce²⁸. Being imaginary places, as Frans Theuws has brilliantly illustrated in the case of early medieval Maastricht²⁹, these ancient centres differed significantly from, for example, the large urban (non-place, largely undocumented) centres known as emporia³⁰. These places, nonetheless, sustained a level of regional engagement that differed from their roles in antiquity, and differed again from their roles in the High Middle Ages. Perhaps, we may ask, it was because of this regional continuity (masking a functional discontinuity), that these polyfocal communities, with their specific invented and imaginary histories, provided the bases for the revival of towns in the 10th and 11th centuries?

A surviving selection of written and visual sources exist to help us make sense of the archaeological evidence. Let us look briefly at three different examples,

25 M. Rotili, *Benevento fra tarda antichità e medioevo*, in A. Augenti (ed.), *Le Città italiane*, cited n. 19, p. 321-322; G. P. Brogiolo, *Le origini*, cited n. 8, p. 99-100.

26 A. Rovelli, *Gold, silver and bronze: an analysis of monetary circulation along the Italian coasts*, in S. Gelichi, R. Hodges (eds.), *From One Sea to Another. Trading Places in the European and Mediterranean Early Middle Ages*, Turnhout, 2012, p. 267-296.

27 Cf. G. Davies, *Early medieval "rural centres" and West Norfolk*, in *Medieval Archaeology*, 54, 2010, p. 89-122.

28 A. Rovelli, *Coins and trade in early medieval Italy*, in *Early Medieval Europe*, 17.1, 2009, p. 75.

29 F. Theuws, *Exchange, religion, identity and central places in the early Middle Ages*, in *Archaeological Dialogues*, 10, 2004, p. 121-38; *Id.*, *Where is the eighth century in the towns of the Meuse valley?*, in J. Henning (ed.), *Post-Roman towns, trade and settlement in Europe and Byzantium. Vol. 1. The heirs of the Roman West*, Berlin, 2007, p. 153-164.

30 F. Theuws, *Exchange, religion*, cited above.

treating each with caution in terms of their intended reception, their histories and memories.

Using the *Liber Pontificalis* Paolo Delogu has interpreted 9th-century Rome, for example, as essentially a papal city, inhabited by aristocrats, dependent economically upon subsistence strategies rather than the extensive commercial strategies of the Roman or Byzantine empires³¹. Many historians like to point out how exceptional Rome is. For example, Walter Pohl “Rome is a concept, and one of the most complex and even bizarre ones in the history of mankind”³². But, is it so bizarre? This town served a singular ideological function. Through its network of churches and monasteries, in effect it was principally articulated as a European pilgrimage destination. Investment was directed at its churches, first in conspicuous restorations by Pope Hadrian I in the later 8th century, then in building new churches by Popes Leo III and Pascal I in the first quarter of the 9th century³³.

The second illustration is a poem written by Paul the Deacon in the late 8th century. Writing from the hilltop fastness of the monastery of Monte Cassino, with its renascent living conditions, Paul bemoans the circumstances at (ancient) Aquileia:

Once a city of nobles, you have become a yokel’s cave,
Formerly a royal city, you now survive as a hovel for paupers...
(*The Destruction of Aquileia*³⁴, trans. P. Godman, Poetry, cited n. 33, p. 107)

For someone cushioned by monastic life, is this not an accurate description of the extant material remains pertaining to the later 8th and 9th centuries found by archaeologists in numerous Italian cities³⁵? This is not a question of an optimi-

31 P. Delogu, *Rome in the ninth century: the economic system*, in J. Henning (ed.), *Post-Roman towns*, cited n. 28, p. 105; *Id.*, *Giampiero Bognetti, storico della civiltà*, in P. Delogu (ed.), *Le Origini del Medioevo*, Rome, 2010, p. 256.

32 W. Pohl, *History in fragments: Montecassino’s politics of memory*, in *Early Medieval Europe*, 10, 2001, p. 346.

33 Brogiolo describes it with a composite formula comprising (1) a system of defenses; (2) and central administration; (3) a network of churches dependent upon a bishop; (4) a suburb; (5) a continuous relationship with the countryside; (6) a system of cemeteries. This formulaic analysis surely obfuscates the function and physical form of Rome in this period (G. P. Brogiolo, *Le origini*, cited n. 8).

34 P. Godman, *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, London, 1985, p. 107.

35 Cf. G. P. Brogiolo, S. Gelichi, *La città*, cited n. 7; G. P. Brogiolo, *Le origini*, cited n. 8.

stic versus a pessimistic interpretation³⁶; it is a literary model that finds resonance in the detail of small timber and stone structures associated with which were limited material remains.

Much the same might be said of the 9th-century illustration of Verona, attributed to Bishop Raterio. This shows a monumental townscape comprising two rings of towered walls, an amphitheatre, grand palaces and the Ponte di Pietra. Even if it represents a kind of ideal reality, containing a monumental centre, it is an interpretation rooted in the imaginary thinking of the era because it shows no ordinary dwellings or indeed seigneurial or palatial buildings that are in proportion to those now known from excavations in Italian towns³⁷. As a picture then it is not in any way an exact portrait of a place but instead a rendering of the notional as opposed to exactly drawn palaces within an ancient city filled with ruins from that era. The picture, then, evokes a civic continuity, perhaps intentionally, yet the detail obfuscates a polyfocal occupation of a once great riverside town.

These three visions of urban life conjure up, as the extant archaeology does, a less coherent vision of town life that, aside from the ancient monumental remains, is undoubtedly rural in its character. Primitive, lacking in production, and characterized by a miscellany of political forms, nonetheless these were defined spaces sharing and shaping language and discourses in and about them. These were spaces defined too by invented, imaginary and registered histories and memories³⁸, or as Frans Theuws³⁹ has compellingly argued, by 'tournaments of value' (citing Appadurai's concept⁴⁰) which through the instruments of ritualized events acquired historical status. Italo Calvino put it more poetically: "Sometimes different cities follow one another on the same site and under the same name, born and dying without knowing one another, without communication among themselves. At times even the names of the inhabitants remain the same, and their voices' accent, and also the features of the faces; but the gods who live beneath names and above places have gone off without a word and outsiders have settled in their place"⁴¹.

36 B. Ward-Perkins, *Continuists, Catastrophists, and the towns of Post-Roman Northern Italy*, in *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 65, 1997, p. 157-76.

37 G. Bianchi, *Building, inhabiting and "perceiving" private houses in early medieval Italy*, in *Arcuologia de la Arquitectura*, 9, 2012, p. 197-214.

38 M. Augé, *Non-places: Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*, London, 1993.

39 F. Theuws, *Exchange, religion*, cited n. 28.

40 A. Appadurai, *Introduction*, in A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge, 1986, p. 3-63.

41 I. Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, London, 1997, p. 30-31.

The historical idea of the 9th-century town, therefore, between the 9th and 21st centuries and the material remains themselves could not be more different. The thrust of the contemporary paradigm emphasizes urban continuity mitigated by the limited ‘buying power’ of the urban elite⁴², whereas the archaeology indicates that these were centres of consumption on a miniscule scale. These places define an episode of discontinuity apparent to their contemporary observers and equally apparent in the archaeological record.

A short history of Italian urban archaeology

“La crisi dell’Archeologia urbana in Italia non ha peraltro origine da carenze teorico-metodologiche; è anzi da rimarcare positivamente la sua indipendenza dalla storiografia basata sulle fonti scritte che offrono un’immagine distorta dell’evoluzione della città tra tardo antico e alto Medioevo”⁴³.

Before the 1980s when the urban archaeological experience of northern Europe first arrived in Italy, the archaeology of towns was transacted through the prism of a combination of the texts and monumentality. Most historians preferred to assume (and some still do) that the textual descriptions of Italian early medieval towns specified a reality instead of some kind of abstract access, however indirect⁴⁴. This textual history, from the ground-breaking studies of Henri Pirenne, has had an extraordinary authority that owes much to the vivid and splendidly confected late 19th- and 20th-century restoration of early Roman and Renaissance cities in Italy⁴⁵. More recently historians have been more analytical about the textual sources. “Through positivist ideology or pragmatic short cuts, this ‘real world’ tends to acquire a coherence and self-evidence that is reminiscent of nineteenth-century reconstructions of damaged medieval buildings or paintings”⁴⁶.

Civic monumentality in the form of ancient street grids, fora, city walls, and masonry buildings constituted the ‘cage’, which both Italian and foreign archaeologists found as irresistible as the tourists. Unlike their classical precursors, medieval towns were defined by their origins: their matrix was ancient, and their tacit history was essentially defined by continuity. In this way, archaeologists unwittingly pursued an urban story that owes something to the de Chirico phan-

42 C. Wickham, *Framing*, cited n. 3, p. 674.

43 G. P. Brogiolo, *L’archeologia urbana*, cited n. 5, p. 36.

44 W. Pohl, *History in fragments*, cited n. 31, p. 346.

45 Cf. M. Boone, *Cities*, cited n. 4.

46 See above, note 43.

toms of the inter-war period when large state-sponsored excavations portrayed so much of the early urban story of the peninsula. The impact upon medieval archaeologists of this positivist approach can be detected in the pioneering stratigraphic excavations at Torcello, where in 1961 the 'father' of Italian medieval archaeology, Gian Pietro Bognetti, provided archaeologists from communist Poland under the tutelage of Withold Hensel with the opportunity to excavate the *emporion méga* described by the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus in the 10th century⁴⁷. The project, cut short by Bognetti's untimely death, was very successful, but only in hindsight. At the time the *emporion* was not found, but the discovery of a glass furnace was some compensation. The glass furnace obfuscated the need to question the meaning of the celebrated source that had given rise to the project in the first place. In hindsight the excavations revealed stratigraphic discontinuities between early and late antiquity, as well as between late antiquity and the 9th century that now conform to a historical narrative for Venice and the upper Adriatic sea region that has begun to be given a larger shape⁴⁸.

The aspiration of the new urban excavation methodologies of the 1980s attempted to escape the metaphorical cage, at least in terms of identifying, first, the rich archaeology of late antiquity, and then, almost like magic, the elusive remains of the 8th to 10th centuries. In 1998 Brogiolo and Gelichi asked questions that characterized the first generation of urban archaeologists in Britain and France. What was the scale of urban decline⁴⁹? Did commerce determine urbanism⁵⁰? What was the role of artisans in urban process⁵¹? To what extent were the changes in the countryside with the rise of the *curtis* related to urban development⁵²? The new models, it has to be said, were drawn from the extant historical overviews⁵³. Excavations in Abruzzese small towns, in Brescia, Comacchio, Grosseto, Florence, Lucca, Naples, Otranto, Padova, Pavia, Pescara, Ravenna,

47 L. Leciejewicz, E. Tabaczynska, S. and Tabaczynski, *Torcello. Scavi 1961-62*, Rome, 1977, p. 2 and 289-294.

48 Cf. A. J. Ammerman, *Venice before the Grand Canal*, in *Memoirs of the American Academy of Rome*, 48, 2003, p. 141-158; S. Gelichi, *Flourishing places in north-eastern Italy: towns and emporia between late antiquity and the Carolingian age*, in J. Henning (ed.) *Post-Roman towns*, cited n. 28; S. Gelichi, C. Moine (eds.), *Isole fortunate? La storia della laguna nord di Venezia attraverso lo scavo di San Vincenzo di Ammiana*, in *Archeologia Medievale*, XXXIX, 2012, p. 9-56

49 G. P. Brogiolo, S. Gelichi, *La città*, cited n. 7, p. 41.

50 *Ibid.*

51 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

52 *Ibid.*

53 *Ibid.*, p. 155-165.

Rimini, Rome, Venice and Verona, when taken together form a substantive body of information⁵⁴. However, notwithstanding Brogiolo and Gerlichi's exhortation to publish these excavations ("the archaeologist has a great responsibility: being difficult to overcome the specifics of the excavation report, even when well done, of a very specialist and limited report"⁵⁵), few have done so. As a result the discourse that has taken shape is invariably confined by a combination of positivist interpretations of the textual history shaped by the modern Italian civic ideology described above.

How might the discourse be advanced making use of the archaeological evidence in all its diverse forms? In his analysis of the 9th-century Norwegian emporium of Kaupang, Dagfinn Skre has provided an approach to urban evolution to explain the origins of towns in western and central Scandinavia at this time⁵⁶. Essentially, Skre elaborated Karl Polanyi's substantivist model, placing the management of exchange at the heart of urban process: "The connexions between society, culture social norms and economy are so complex that absolute linkages between specific combinations of the basic conditions cannot be postulated. Skre attached 'importance to whether trade is intra-regional or inter-regional, whether it is open (with popular involvement in trade) or closed (with only certain groups having access to trade), on whether local stratification is high or low, and on whether national circulation [of goods] is strong or weak"⁵⁷.

Skre develops his post-substantivist model for the rise of urbanism (leading to market-places) and long-distance trade in Scandinavia by challenging the typology of emporia described in *Dark Age Economics* either as Type A or Type B⁵⁸ and devising a new typology. This is as follows:

	PERMANENCE	TRADE	CONTEXT
1. Central-place markets	Seasonal	Inter-regional	Central place
2. Local markets	Seasonal	Intraregional	Independent?

54 A. Augenti, (ed.) *Le città italiane*, cited n. 19; cf. C. Wickham, *Framing*, cited n. 3, p. 644-645; see also E. Cirelli, *Le città*, cited n. 10.

55 G. P. Brogiolo, S. Gelicchi, *La città*, cited n. 7, vii.

56 A. Augenti, *Città e Porti*, cited n. 9, p. 124-127.

57 D. Skre, *Post-substantivist towns and trade AD 600-1000*, in D. Skre (ed.), *Means of Exchange. Dealing with silver in the Viking Age*, Aarhus, 2008, p. 335.

58 R. Hodges, *Dark Age Economics*, London, 1982; though see *Id.*, *Dark Age Economics: a new audit*, cited n. 13.

	PERMANENCE	TRADE	CONTEXT
3. Nodal markets (Type A in <i>DAE</i>)	Seasonal	Long-distance, inter-/intra-regional	Border area?
4. Towns (Type B in <i>DAE</i>)	Permanent	Long-distance, inter-/intra-regional	Border area

- Type 1 were multi-functional complexes conforming to Walter Christaller's term 'central place'⁵⁹, with plentiful evidence of trade as well as craft production.
- Type 2 appears less easily distinguished from Skre's types 3 and 4. Many of these places were beach sites. Pre-eminently contexts for long-distance trade, there presently appears to be an "absence of clear central-place features in the localities"⁶⁰, although this may be due to the nature of archaeological investigation.
- Types 3 and 4, Skre proposes, equate to the two different types of emporia described in *Dark Age Economics*⁶¹ as Types A and B.

Skre's analysis is not so much post-substantivist as an important (archaeologically-based) elaboration of the definitions of trading-places and earliest market-places in the passage from a society with embedded relations towards a medieval society where economic relations were ultimately disembedded.

Where might the polyfocal 'towns' found in early medieval Italy fit into this Scandinavian model? Here is one suggestion. Skre defines central-place markets as "aristocratic residences with political, religious and juridical functions for their surrounding territories"⁶², associated with which is evidence of crafts and inter-regional trade. Are the polyfocal towns not complex versions of such places with palpably low commercial activities (that is minimal circulation, consumption or movement of goods) and limited regional reach in the 8th and 9th centuries? In Skre's typology, of course, these are seasonal trading places, different in character from seasonal local markets where long-distance traded goods are rare. He distinguishes these two types from seasonal nodal markets – landing and beach markets connected to long-distance trade networks, similar to Comacchio at the

59 W. Christaller, *Central Places in Southern Germany*, Englewood Cliffs, 1966, p. 14-26.

60 D. Skre, *Post-substantivist towns*, cited n. 56, p. 338.

61 R. Hodges, *Dark Age*, cited n. 57, p. 50-52.

62 D. Skre, *Post-substantivist towns*, cited n. 56, p. 337.

mouth of the river Po⁶³. He also draws a distinction with towns with permanent infrastructure and both long-distance and local trade networks⁶⁴. In sum, the Italian polyfocal town might be viewed as a significant, permanent variant of Skre's seasonal central-place market. Defined by its regional and inter-regional economic circumstances, it nevertheless was a precursor of a fully-developed market-driven system.

This is a step towards drawing an economic distinction between places that operated within economic networks wherein buying power was the pre-eminent characteristic and places that were defined as political centres as opposed to centres of production.

Other towns?

Apart from the *urbes extinctae* (ancient towns that mostly never became medieval ones)⁶⁵ that in rare cases sustained a successor elite settlement, there are two other categories of early medieval urban community to consider. First, there are those places that evolved into nucleated urban communities by the 8th or 9th centuries. Second, there are the new planned towns.

The first category approximates to Skre's type 3, nodal markets, that is seasonal markets for inter-regional trade, such as the earliest emporia in north-west Europe. Arguably, Comacchio, the trading settlement at the mouth of the river Po was one of these⁶⁶. Essentially monopolistic, controlled centres, Comacchio and other similar emporia and beaching-sites (like the site near Follonica, Tuscany found by Lorenzo Marasco but unpublished) principally controlled riverine corridors and served restricted trading zones as opposed to Mediterranean-wide networks. Three trading zones have been recently identified for later 7th- to 9th-century Italy by Petralia⁶⁷: (i) around the upper Adriatic Sea, articulated by seasonal markets at Comacchio, perhaps Ravenna, and ultimately, Venice; (ii) around the western coast of Italy – the Tyrrhenian Sea, articulated by the extraordinary market at Rome; (iii) the western Byzantine network encompassing the Beneventan ports of Gaeta,

63 S. Gelichi, *Flourishing places*, cited n. 47.

64 See above, note 59.

65 Cf. E. Cirelli, E. Fentress, *After the rats: Cosa in the Late Empire and Early Middle Ages*, in N. Christie, A. Augenti, *Urbes Extinctae. Archaeologies of Abandoned classical towns*, Farnham, 2012, p. 97-114; N. Christie, *Urbes Extinctae: archaeologies of and approaches to abandoned classical cities*, in N. Christie, A. Augenti, *Urbes Extinctae*, cited above in this note.

66 S. Gelichi, *Flourishing places*, cited n. 47.

67 G. Petralia, *Modelli del cambiamento per l'Italia altomedievale. Note per una discussione*, in *Bollettino Storico Pisano*, 74, 2005, p. 467-478.

Naples and Salerno and including the Sicilian ports of Catania and Syracuse as well as Malta⁶⁸. To these might be added, a fourth trading zones encompassing the southern Adriatic Sea, articulated by a seasonal node at the Byzantine stronghold of Otranto⁶⁹. The scale of commerce in these trading zones, however, should not be exaggerated, as the archaeological evidence is minimal by comparison with the data from, for example, the Baltic Sea or North Sea⁷⁰.

Perhaps the most contentious issue is the size and urban character of Ravenna, part of Petralia's upper Adriatic sea trading zone. Cosentino⁷¹ argues for a well-populated urban administered centre, effectively proposing that it belonged to the class of regional urban administrative centres such as Amorium or Thessalonika in the Byzantine Empire⁷². The archaeology certainly does not support this⁷³. 'La città invisibile', as Cirelli calls it⁷⁴, suffered significant reduction in every way before a later 10th-century urban revival that is consistent with other Adriatic Sea ports⁷⁵. Apart from the apparent invisibility of the 8th- to 9th-century town, its earlier outpost, Classe, clearly failed by the later 7th to 8th centuries⁷⁶, as commerce and the circulation of goods originating in the eastern Mediterranean declined then ceased. Ravenna like Rome, we must suspect, was a ruralized community occupied by myriad, diverse polyfocal communities vested with limited economic resources. Clearly, more excavations are needed.

Town life, however, did not disappear entirely in parts of the northern Mediterranean. A few urban communities, for examples, charged principally with re-

68 Cf. A. Rovelli, *Gold, silver and bronze*, cited n. 25.

69 R. Hodges, *The Adriatic Sea in European perspective*, in S. Gelichi, R. Hodges (eds.), *From One Sea to Another*, cited n. 25, p. 207-234.

70 A. Augenti, *Città e Porti*, cited n. 9, p. 159-160.

71 S. Cosentino, *Politica e fiscalità nell'Italia bizantina (secc. VI-VIII)*, in A. Augenti (ed.), *Le Città*, cited n. 19, p. 37-54; *Id.*, *Ricchezza e investimento della chiesa di Ravenna tra la tarda antichità e l'alto medioevo*, in S. Gelichi, R. Hodges (eds.), *From One Sea to Another*, cited n. 25, p. 417-440.

72 E. Ivison, *Amorium in the Byzantine Dark Ages (seventh to ninth centuries)*, in J. Henning (ed.), *Post-Roman towns*, cited n. 28, p. 24-59.

73 Cf. E. Cirelli, *Ravenna: Archeologia di una città*, Florence, 2008, p. 141-165; *Id.*, *Le città*, cited n. 28.

74 E. Cirelli, *Ravenna*, cited above, p. 141.

75 A. Staffa, *I centri urbani dell'Abruzzo adriatico fra tarda antichità ed altomedioevo*, in A. Augenti (ed.), *Le Città*, cited n. 19, p. 345-476.

76 A. Augenti, *A tale of two cities. Rome and Ravenna between 7th and 9th century AD*, in S. Gasparri (ed.), *774. Ipotesi su una transizione*, Turnhout, 2008, p. 175-198; *Id.*, *Città e Porti*, cited n. 9.

gional administration, guided the Byzantine Empire. Amorium is the best-known example, subjected to extensive archaeological investigations⁷⁷. Sicily, a western Byzantine province, certainly continued to sustain its productivity and with it a circulation of goods, articulated from the 820s onwards by currency (unlike mainland Italy) and urban central places, towns in Skre's schema described above.

The Sicilian hilltop site of Philosophiana is a good example of this. The small *vicus* for the palace at Piazza Armerina in later Roman times, with its origins in the late Republic, became a substantial centre by the 9th century covering as much as 20 hectares⁷⁸, three times the size of Comacchio, for example. Similar nucleated market-places throughout the island, apart from the port-mints at Catania and Syracuse, made Sicily attractive to Aghlabid merchants in North Africa. While its urban life was undoubtedly much reduced, Mid Byzantine Sicily, nevertheless sustained small towns – Dagfinn Skre's local markets, seasonal places perhaps prefiguring permanent towns – that attracted emulation by 9th-century elites in Rome and in Campania. These were surely abstract models for two mid 9th-century projects, *Centocellae* and *Sicopolis*, planned towns.

Little is known as yet about these two planned towns. Leopolis, *Centocellae* founded on a high hill in northern Latium by Pope Leo IV (847-55)⁷⁹, occupies an earlier Etruscan site. Its purpose, according to the *Liber Pontificalis* was to serve as an urban bastion in the northern reaches of the papal state against the Arab incursions. Apart from a founding inscription and its defensive wall, there is little evidence that this was more than a refuge as such in the 9th century, before it obtained an explicit urban character with civic characteristics in the 11th or 12th centuries⁸⁰. As a refuge, then, it conformed to a contemporary Carolingian formula to confront mobile raiders that had become a serious menace by this period. Its most obvious parallel was the walled Leonine city of Rome. This was designed to protect the population of the papal estates following an Arab attack on the town. However, an alternative interpretation was that the Pope was transferring resources away from investments in the town's churches and demonstrating an intention to define an urban centre instead⁸¹. Another comparable, but largely unexplored example is *Sicopolis* near Capua, founded at much the same time, and again more of a statement of political intent as opposed to an expression of new urbanism.

77 E. Ivison, *Amorium*, cited n. 71.

78 E. Vaccaro, *Sicily in the 8th and 9th centuries: a case of persisting economic complexity?*, in *Al-Masaq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean*, 25, 2013, p. 34-69.

79 G. P. Brogiolo, *Le origini*, cited n. 8, p. 127.

80 *Ibid.*

81 S. Gibson, B. Ward-Perkins, *The surviving remains of the Leonine Wall*, in *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 47, 1979, p. 30-57; G. P. Brogiolo, *Le origini*, cited n. 8, p. 100.

Conclusion

Undertaking theoretically informed interpretations of social meaning does not equate to abandoning rigorous data collection and analysis, which still remain at the core of our approach to the past. Archaeology's potential for a unique contribution to the wider study of the past and the human condition lies not in our exhaustive knowledge of material culture, but rather in our ability to elucidate the material dimensions of social behavior and understanding. Thus, the focus of our studies should not be only medieval things, or buildings, or landscapes, but the relationships that were generated between people, the material world and social structures⁸².

The idea of the city in any period cannot be divorced from the present. Most now agree that "historical sources continually refer to a reality beyond text, and so does the modern historian; it is this 'contextual referent', and the continuous tension between text and context that is constitutive of historical method"⁸³. In Anglo-American historiography the new ancient (and medieval) meta-historians seek to "identify fluidity, connectivity, individual action, and a rural-urban continuum" as opposed to the "fixity, boundaries, institutions and cities"⁸⁴. So, turning to the recent historiography of the early medieval town in Italy, is it consistent with global, or even extra-regional analyses? How do modern textual communities – an active force in the historical process and a process of self-definition – account for the city in the 9th century⁸⁵?

Certain Italian historians have not been hoodwinked. Cinzio Violante expressed a profound scepticism⁸⁶ about the reductive linearity of medieval progress. Underpinning his critique of urban historians like Henri Pirenne is that history has no capacity to be a guide in making choices about the future. Beyond this historiographical issue is an Italian national one, to which its archaeologists are understandably not immune. Given the high methodological standard of urban archaeology since 1980, why have Theuws' analysis of Maastricht⁸⁷ or Skre's

82 A. McClain, *Theory, disciplinary perspectives and the archaeology of later Medieval England*, in *Medieval Archaeology*, 56, 2012, p. 131-70.

83 W. Pohl, *History in fragments*, cited n. 31, p. 346.

84 I. Morris, J. G. Manning, *Introduction*, in I. Morris and J. G. Manning (eds.), *The Ancient Economy. Evidence and Models*, Stanford, 2005, p. 19.

85 J. Moreland, *Archaeology, theory and the Middle Ages*, London, 2010, p. 276-301.

86 C. Violante, *La fine della grande illusione. Uno storico europeo tra guerra e dopoguerra, Henri Pirenne (1914-1923)*, Bologna, 1997.

87 F. Theuws, *Exchange, religion*, cited n. 28; *Id.*, *Where is the eighth century*, cited n. 28.

study⁸⁸ of Kaupang been ignored? The answer, surely, is that Italian archaeologists belong, of course, to an imaginary community⁸⁹ in which, as the contemporary historian Paul Ginsborg has observed, the first steps in the 1980s to transform Italy's social matrix based upon the family with the aim of replacing it with civic values in line with many north-west European countries has failed under the weight of distrust and cynicism towards the state, though the successful fight to honour the 'external constraint' of entering Europe and with it monetary union has just succeeded⁹⁰. Put bluntly, it is not in the interests of Italy's archaeologists, especially those dependent upon communes for funding of archaeological projects, to challenge the nationalist model of urban continuity.

Of course, this uncomfortable conclusion begs the question as to why archaeologists have accepted the dramatic collapse of the ancient city, but diffidently embraced the polyfocal successor town? The answer is that, notwithstanding the indisputable scale of collapse in late antiquity, there is a profound need to seek uninterrupted continuity for elements of that ancient civic world. Andrea Augenti skillfully assesses this, putting an emphasis upon the regional context of urban centres: "the vast majority of cities are 'pluristratified', signifying places in which people persisted and re-settled, places which retain a role a role in a regional landscape, meaning that a city's space may be occupied continuously, if in differing ways with differing emphases, or in phases of discontinuous use"⁹¹. This thread of continuity at regional or local level, however thinly woven and tenuous, provides a connection between the world of Octavian and the communes of today.

The idea of the 9th-century polyfocal town, then, is a profound provocation for Italians and their modern identity in Europe. It compels historians to reassess the century-old argument that the origins of the celebrated status of the burgher, a member of a free and independent urban community, with his civic values in the European *Sonderweg*⁹². For these city-dwellers, 'cityness' was defined in its earliest iteration by a coalition of households and monasteries occupying, invariably, ruined ancient cityscapes – a fragmented, culturally impoverished collectivity – as opposed to some common civic materiality. By the standards of the North Sea emporia of this period where streets and tenements were defined,

88 D. Skre, *Post-substantivist towns*, cited n. 56.

89 B. Anderson, *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism*, London, 1983.

90 P. Ginsborg, *Italy and its discontents, 1980-2001*, London, 2001, p. 323-332.

91 A. Augenti, *Concluding remarks. A tale of many (lost) cities: past, present and future*, in N. Christie, A. Augenti, *Vrbes Extinctae*, cited n. 64.

92 M. Boone, *Cities*, cited n. 4, p. 348.

there was in fact almost a rejection of ancient urban forms. This is the intriguing starting-point for the long genesis of the Italian communes.

This failure to embrace and define the polyfocal form as an important social and economic episode pre-figuring the Italian urban narrative is more than a struggle between positivists and post-processual archaeologists, and between those defining the town of the historians and the town of archaeologists. At its heart this issue begs serious questions about Italy's place in European and global archaeology, and above all, about the nationalism of its archaeologists. In short, the superficial methodological observations of best urban archaeological practice are betrayed by an inherent social conservatism when it comes to engaging with the theoretical meaning of the evidence. As Cavafy in Durrell's free-form translation asserted: the city is a cage.

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SOCIETIES AT THE EDGE: NEW CITIES IN THE ADRIATIC SEA DURING THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES (8th-9th CENTURIES)

Land of cities?

During the Roman time, Italy was a land of cities. The cities had administrative functions, but also economic and commercial. The existence of the cities (and also of an urban society) was ensured by an agricultural surplus; and the urban connections were based on a terrestrial communication system, large and efficient.

This system of cities, or based primarily on the city, went into decline fairly quickly. This did not mean the abandonment of the cities, only a their transformation. Already in Late Antiquity many cities were deeply changed, not only in their institutional characteristics, but also in the material and structural aspects.

Archaeologists have investigated this transition (or these transitions), and they wondered what had become of the old cities, what is their social, economic and institutional role¹. The answer is not easy, partly because the different archaeology into each single urban centre. Thus, our overall impression you can see in a map, where is photographed a situation that has never been true, at least synchronically (it is a map drawn by Ward Perkins several years ago and which reproduces the north of Italy) (Fig. 1)².

Observing this map we can see, however, three main urban macro-processes: in some parts of the northern Italy the ancient cities generally survived; in other parts, they disappeared almost entirely; in others they were replaced by new foundations. All three of these macro-processes are interesting to study, because

1 About the urbanism in Early Medieval Italy and the archaeological approach see: G. P. Brogiolo, S. Gelichi, *La città nell'alto medioevo italiano. Archeologia e storia*, Rome-Bari, 1998; A. Augenti (ed.), *Le città italiane tra la tarda Antichità e l'alto Medioevo. Atti del convegno* (Ravenna, 26-28 febbraio 2004), Florence, 2006; N. Christie, A. Augenti (eds.), *Urbes extinctae. Archaeologies of Abandoned Classical Towns*, Farnham and Burlington, 2012; G. P. Brogiolo, *Le origini della città medievale*, Mantova, 2011.

2 B. Ward Perkins, *The towns of northern Italy: rebirth or renewal?*, in R. Hodges, B. Hobley (eds.), *The rebirth of towns in the West AD 700-1050*, London, 1988, p. 16-27 and Fig. 6.

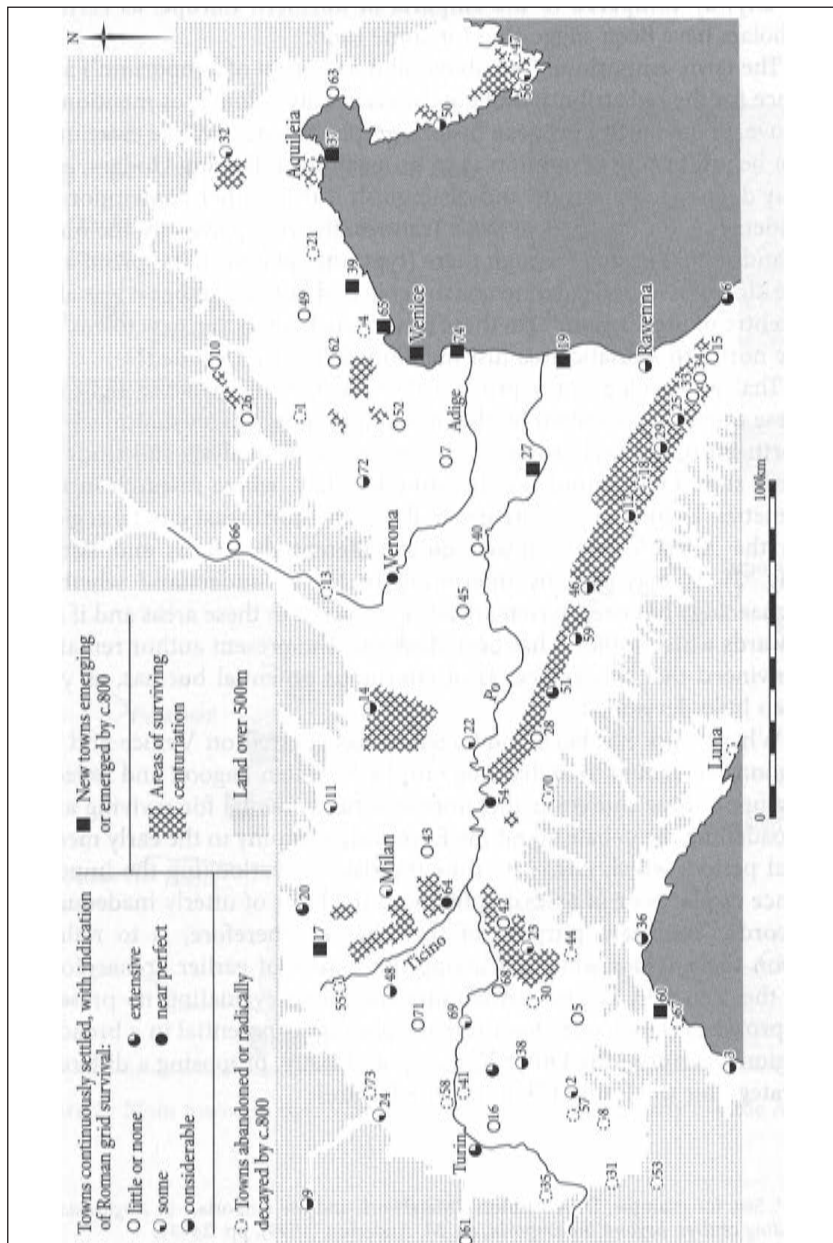


Figure 1. Roman towns and new towns in northern Italy, c 300-800 (by B. Ward Perkins, *The towns*, fig. 6).

they assume a profound change in the arrangement of settlements. However, on this occasion, I focused my attention on the new phenomenon, because it seems the most promising: the new emerging settlements as expression of a new process of urbanization of the northern Italian peninsula.

When and what. The northern Adriatic arc between eighth and ninth centuries: a new settlement organisation

We have seen that during the Early Middle Ages the entire span of the north Adriatic seems to be affected by a different historical processes of settlement compared to the north of the peninsula. In this area new settlements of urban type were founded, especially along the coast (in the lagoons or in the estuaries of large rivers like the Po, for example). Now, I wish to discuss in detail two of these emerging areas with new types of settlement: the Venetian lagoon and the lagoon of Comacchio (Fig. 2).

This process took place between the eighth and ninth centuries and had as its final result the birth of Venice. There have been various traditional explanations for this phenomenon. The most common is that the people would be migrated to the islands of the lagoon for fear of the barbarians. In this way, each settlement in the lagoon would be more or less direct heir of a city in decline and then abandoned in mainland. But this is a simplistic and mechanical explanation, which refers to a traditional historical topics³.

Also, this explanation trivializes the functions of the places where these settlements were (qualifying them as passive spaces) and does not explain the real reasons that led to these new situations, the rise of this new settlement.

The analysis of the ecosystem of the lagoon of Venice, ie the environmental conditions, seems to indicate a change between the fifth and sixth century A.D.⁴. At that time, a worsening climate would have resulted in strong marine ingression. This may have contributed to a more intensive exploitation of salt. However, these environmental changes may have been more significant in an indirect form.

3 C. La Rocca, "Castrum vel potius civitas". *Modelli di declino urbano in Italia settentrionale durante l'alto medioevo*, in R. Francovich, G. Noyé (eds.), *La storia dell'Alto Medioevo Italiano alla luce dell'archeologia*, Florence, 1994, p. 545-554.

4 A. J. Ammerman, C. E. McClennen (eds.), *Venice before San Marco. Recent Studies on the Origins of the City*, Hamilton N. Y., 2001. See also S. Gelichi, *Venezia tra archeologia e storia: la costruzione di un'identità urbana*, in A. Augenti (ed.), *Le città italiane*, cited n. 1, p. 164-169.

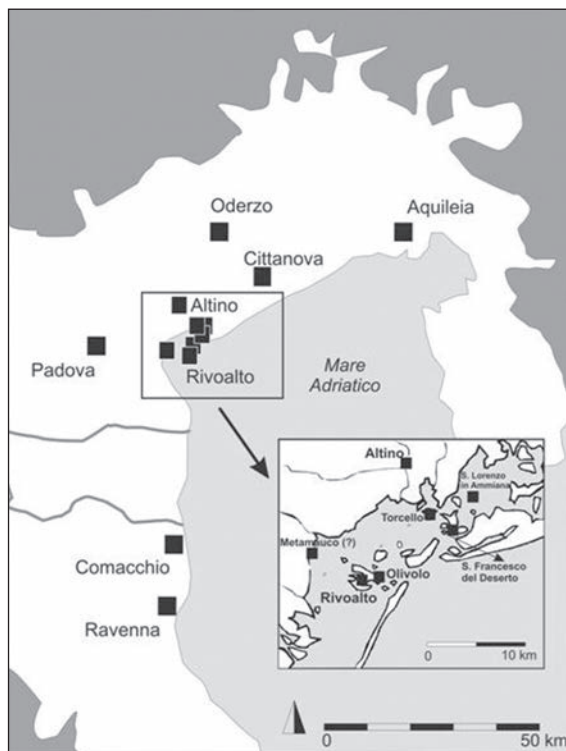


Figure 2. The northern Adriatic arc and the main places mentioned in the text.

We see the situation in detail. The most important ancient city near the lagoon, ie Altino, was not abandoned in a sudden⁵. However, landslides have brought about the burying of its channels and have weakened the use of its port facilities, so that its maritime functions were moved to the lagoon. These processes had to trigger a mechanism of proliferation of small settlements, which recognize a specific commercial function and also an itineraria function, which are the most visible evidence in the northern lagoon during this period⁶.

⁵ For further details about Altino (and, in particular, its urban configuration) see: A. Ninfo, A. Fontana, P. Mozzi, F. Ferrarese, *The Map of Altinum, the Ancestor of Venice*, in *Science*, 325, 2009, p. 577; M. Tirelli (ed.), *Altino antica: dai Veneti a Venezia*, Venice, 2011; and G. Cresci Marrone, M. Tirelli (eds.), *Altino dal cielo: la città rivelata. Lineamenti di Forma urbis, Conference Proceedings Venice 2009*, Rome, 2011.

⁶ S. Gelichi, C. Moine (eds.), *Isole fortunate? La storia della laguna nord di Venezia attraverso lo scavo di San Lorenzo di Ammiana*, in *Archeologia Medievale*, XXXIX, 2012, p. 9-56

On the archaeological point of view, these processes are associated with two types of significant data. The first is the presence of a stable form of settlement, documented by residential buildings in wood with base in stone and broken bricks and by wooden waterfronts. The second is represented by the presence of appreciable quantities of imported pottery and Mediterranean amphorae, numerically out of scale with the likely size of the lagoon population during this period and its ambiguous social configuration (vd. *infra*). This type of objects, instead, could be explained by a new functional specificity of these places at this time. A letter of Cassiodorus, written in 537-538 to the *Tribuni Maritimorum* of *Venetiae*, would be a confirmation⁷. This letter required that Ravenna, the new capital of the Western part of Roman Empire, had to be supplied with grain, wine and oil of the Istria. This document presents interesting motifs of ambiguity. On the one hand, in fact, describes a lagoon environment devoid of permanent settlements and / or centralized, inhabited by people dedicated to fishing and cultivation of salt, living in a sort of Eden and in an almost pan-egalitarian way. In addition, it confirms the important role that the endo-lagoon road had taken over the terrestrial road (not only for safety but also for greater speed and comfort in the links). If really the harbor of Altino gradually enters into crisis at this time, then you understand how the movement of settlements and infrastructure into the lagoon can be explained as the result of a delegation of tasks to most favorable areas.

The next step in the northern lagoon seems marked by a process of selection and concentration. Some of these small settlements are abandoned and others evolve. This seems to occur between the sixth and seventh centuries, a time when Altino loses almost all its urban prerogatives and, at the same time, other settlements such as Torcello and Olivolo consolidate their role (they become seats of ecclesiastical power)⁸. And this is also the time when the written tradition tells us about the creation of the first ducal power in Cittanova during the eighth century.

7 Cass., *Variae* XII, 24. About this famous document see R. Cessi (ed.), *Documenti relativi alla storia di Venezia anteriori al Mille. I. Secoli V-IX - II. Secoli IX-X*, Padua 1942, doc. n. 2, p. 2-4. In general, about this text of Cassiodorus and its interpretation see A. Carile, G. Fedalto, *Le origini di Venezia*, Bologna, 1978, p. 179, and L. Cracco Ruggini, *Acque e lagune da periferia del mondo a fulcro di una nuova "civitas"*, in L. Cracco Ruggini, M. Pavan, G. Cracco, G. Ortalli (eds.), *Storia di Venezia. Dalle origini alla caduta della Serenissima. I. L'età ducale*, Rome, 1992, p. 72.

8 The bishopric of Torcello was established around the first quarter of the 7th century; on the contrary, the bishopric of Olivolo between 774 and 776. See G. Cuscito, *L'Alto Adriatico Paleocristiano*, in G. Caputo, G. Gentili (eds.), *Torcello. Alle origini di Venezia tra Occidente e Oriente*, Venice, 2009, p. 32-49.

Also what is happening in a lagoon far south, that of Comacchio, it is very instructive. The archaeology has specifically shown, in this case, that the developments of the settlement were very rapid⁹. The first traces of occupation are of the late sixth century, but by the second half of the seventh one has the perception of a stable settlement, already strongly oriented from the economic point of view – and a related community sufficiently structured so to establish itself as a partner of Lombard king, as evidenced by the famous ‘Capitulary of Liutprandus’¹⁰. In this document, to represent the community there is not a bishop, but a priest and some aristocratic members (presumably local); a community that self-represents itself with specific skills and attitudes (the maritime skills) and that appears sufficiently sophisticated (at least to consider some objects from excavations)¹¹. A society located in a kind of gray space that is neither totally outside, but not directly dependent, as we would expect, from the public power or from the control of the high aristocracy (in this case represented by the exarch and the Archbishop of Ravenna).

A little what, with other times and in the different modes, seems to be the case also for the emerging aristocracy of the Venetian lagoon between the seventh and eighth centuries. Through the analysis of what happens in the lagoon of Venice, it is understandable that these are places of natural resources (fishing, salt), but also as places suitable for the construction of new opportunities. The isolation and marginalization, among other things, may have played an active role in encouraging the development of new economic initiatives and new attitudes in the maritime sense.

9 S. Gelichi (ed.), *L'isola del vescovo. Gli scavi intorno alla Cattedrale di Comacchio*, Florence, 2009; *Id.*, *Venice, Comacchio and the Adriatic Emporia between the Lombard and Carolingian ages*, in A. Willemsen, H. Kik (eds.), *Dorestad in an International Framework. New Research on Centres of Trade and Coinage in Carolingian Times*, Turnhout, 2010, p. 149-157; S. Gelichi, D. Calaon, E. Grandi, C. Negrelli, *The history of a forgotten town: Comacchio and its archaeology*, in S. Gelichi, R. Hodges (eds.), *From one sea to another. Trading places in the European and Mediterranean Early Middle Ages, Proceedings of the International Conference (Comacchio 27th-29th March 2009)*, Turnhout, 2012, p. 169-205.

10 About the Capitulary: L. M. Hartmann, *Zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte Italiens im frühen Mittelalters Analekten*, Gotha, 1904; M. Montanari, *Il capitulare di Liutprando: note di storia dell'economia e dell'alimentazione*, in *La civiltà comacchiese e pomposiana dalle origini preistoriche al tardo medioevo, Comacchio 1984*, Bologna, 1986, p. 461-475

11 On the ecclesiastical situation in Comacchio during the 7th-8th century see: S. Gelichi, Lupicinus presbiter. *Una breve nota sulle istituzioni ecclesiastiche comacchiesi delle origini*, in G. Barone, A. Eposito, C. Frova (eds.), *Ricerca come incontro. Archeologi, paleografi e storici per Paolo Delogu*, Rome, 2013, p. 41-60.

Why? New settlements, new societies and new economies?

We tried briefly to illustrate the changes between the fifth and eighth centuries in two lagoons of the arc in the northern Adriatic and we have tried to identify how these processes have occurred. Now we must ask why this happened and, more importantly, whether the emergence of these new settlements means that there is a different kind of economy, creating a different urban network and, at the same time, a different kind of society.

Let's start with the last question. A very interesting document, from this point of view, is the so-called *Pactum Lothari*, a text by 840, which describe a previous situation (eighth century) about boundaries between the first ducal seat (Cittanova) and the surrounding areas. Contrary to traditional explanation, it is a text which some scholars define convincingly as purely 'rural'¹². The interest of the parties, that is, is always essentially addressed to the ownership and management of the land.

A comparison with this document could be recognized in the archaeological record for the first ducal center known in the lagoon (or rather, in the peri-lagoon): namely Cittanova¹³. Survey and small shovel test (or small trenches) have demonstrated the existence of a scattered settlement located along a canal, but still divided on regular land plots. Cittanova, therefore, seems to best represent a place in social change and economic: the expression of an aristocracy linked to the land but also facing an exchange economy based on trade (demonstrated by the existence of the docks located just along the canal and by various kind of exotic merchandise).

A similar process could be seen in Comacchio, specially if we consider the environmental reconstruction recently proposed¹⁴.

12 S. Gasparri, *Venezia fra i secoli VIII e IX. Una riflessione sulle fonti*, in *Studi veneti offerti a Gaetano Cozzi*, Venice, 1992, p. 3-18

13 S. Salvatori (ed.), *Ricerche archeologiche a Cittanova – Heraclia. Campagne 1987-1989*, in *Quaderni di Archeologia del Veneto*, V, 1989, p. 67-112; D. Calaon, *Cittanova (VE): analisi GIS*, in R. Francovich, M. Valenti (eds.), *IV Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia Medievale*, Florence, 2006, p. 216-224. For a more recent interpretation of the settlement processes in the Cittanova area during the Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages see S. Cadamuro, A. Cianciosi and C. Negrelli, *Nuove comunità lagunari tra l'età di transizione e l'altomedioevo: i casi di Jesolo e Cittanova*, in S. Gelichi (ed.), *Costruire territori/Costruire Identità. Lagune archeologiche a confronto nell'Alto Medioevo*, Venice, 2014, *Reti Medievali*, 2015, forthcoming.

14 See A. A. Rucco, *L'ambiente e l'uomo nell'entroterra comacchiese tra VII e X secolo d.C.*, in S. Gelichi, E. Grandi, C. Negrelli (eds.), *Un emporio e la sua cattedrale. Gli scavi di piazza XX Settembre a Comacchio*, forthcoming; *Id.*, *Dalle "carte" alla terra. Il paesaggio comacchiese nell'alto medioevo*, in S. Gelichi (ed.), *Costruire* cited n. 13. See also S. Gasparri, *Un placito carolingio e la storia di Comacchio*, in *Fare lien. Aristocratie, réseaux et échanges compétitifs. Mélange en l'honneur de Régine Le Jan*, Paris, 2015, p. 179-190.

These data, however, should not in my opinion tarnish other traits that seem peculiar to these communities and their new economies, namely the establishment of maritime skills. They describe them in the course of the eighth century, as in a moment of transition. Not surprisingly, even recently, I try to compare these phenomena with the phenomenon of emporia in northern Europe, with which it has many features in common¹⁵. So we will see later, if and original features such as these settlements produce the same in terms of material structure.

But in what economic system do these new centers?

An exceptional document, already mentioned and which refers of Comacchio (the so-called 'Capitulary of Liutprand'), helps us in this regard. This document, dated to the first quarter of the eighth century concerns a covenant with the inhabitants of Comacchio (mentioned here for the first time) and the Lombards, for the opportunity to trade along the river Po and some of its tributaries. The *Comacleses* are required to pay certain duties in a range of ports or *stationes* along these rivers. Through this document, therefore, we know that people of Comacchio came up the main river Po to Pavia (the capital of the Kingdom) and they paid duties in salt, money, oil and spices. The traceability of these products is not always easy: the salt is probably carrying by bales (or directly loaded on the boat and then covered), the spices are not as well documented archaeologically. Further details can be had from the coins and, above all, from the amphoras they could carry oil and wine. And, in fact, a better and sophisticated archaeology began to highlight some of these indicators.

Recent research into both Comacchio that in the Venice lagoon are showing more and more evidence the spread of these amphorae still in the eighth and ninth century. Amphorae whose traceability is also found inland¹⁶ (Fig. 3).

¹⁵ S. Gelichi, *The eels of Venice. The long eight century of the emporia of the northern region along the Adriatic coast*, in S. Gasparri (ed.), 774. *Ipotesi su una transizione*, Turnhout, 2008, p. 81-117; *Id.*, *The future of Venice's past and the Archaeology of the North-Eastern Adriatic Emporia during the Early Middle Ages*, in J. G. Schryver (ed.), *Studies in the Archaeology of the Medieval Mediterranean*, Leiden, 2010, p. 175-210. Very important on this subject is C. Negrelli, *Anfore medievali in Dalmazia: una prospettiva mediterranea*, in S. Gelichi, C. Negrelli (eds.), *Adriatico altomedievale (VI-XI secolo) Atti del Convegno*, Venice 2015, Florence, forthcoming.

¹⁶ S. Gelichi, C. Negrelli, *Anfore e commerci nell'alto Adriatico tra VIII e IX secolo*, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, 13/2, 2008, p. 307-326; *Id.*, *Ceramiche e circolazione delle merci nell'Adriatico tra VII e X secolo*, in *Actas del VIII Congreso Internacional de Cerámica Medieval*, Ciudad Real – Almagro 2006, Ciudad Real, 2009, p. 49-62.

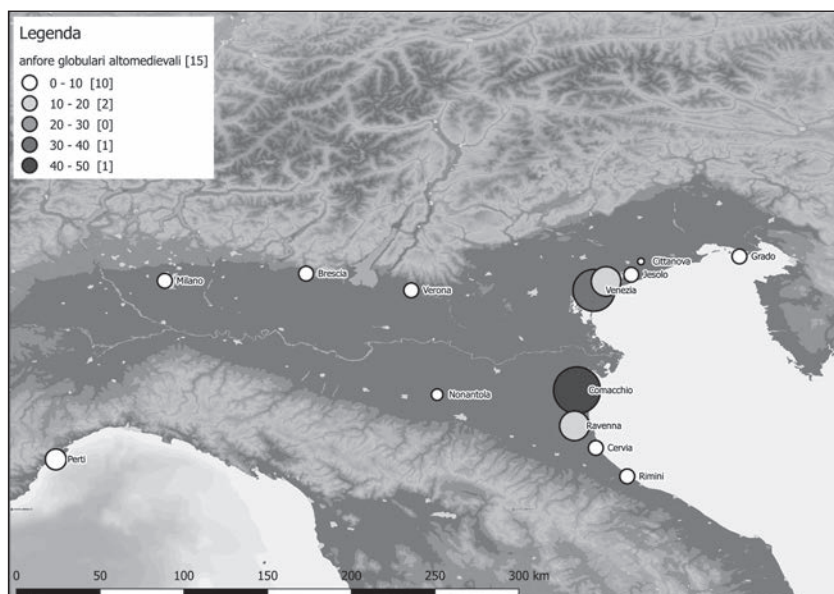


Figure 3. Distribution map of the globular amphorae in the northern Italy (by Claudio Negrelli).

These amphorae can introduce us in a different way to interpret the economic and commercial situation in the Po valley. But, where do these amphorae come from? What were they carrying? And who were the consumers of these commodities?

First, such containers, that follow extremely uniform shapes (but with very different ceramic fabrics), could have come from the eastern Mediterranean, in particular from Syria-Palestine and the Aegean (although possible imports from Pontus cannot be excluded) (Fig. 4). Such containers, by virtue of their uniformity, may have been sent directly from a single centre, which would presumably be the capital of the Byzantine Empire, backed up by comparisons with some archaeological contexts coming from Saraçhane in Istanbul studied by Hayes¹⁷.

The analysis of their contents revealed wine until now; but we can also suppose oil and *garum*.

Another interesting category of pottery comes from Comacchio. It is pottery with fine fabric: generally jugs with two handles (similar to a small amphora) and flat base. The minero-petrographic analysis does not exclude a local production (Fig. 5). We can assume that these small bi-handled jugs serve

17 J. W. Hayes, *Excavations in Saraçhane in Istanbul, Vol. II*, Princeton, 1992, p. 61-79.

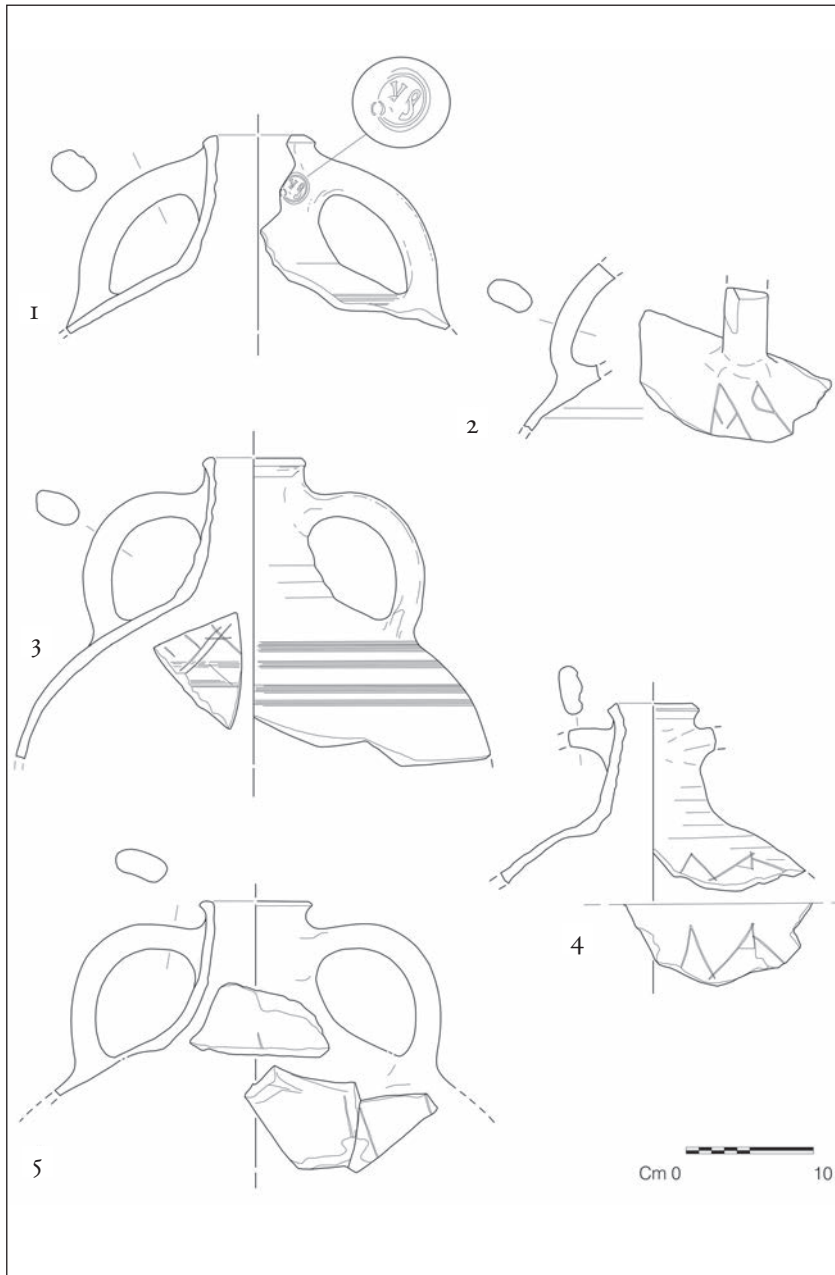


Figure 4. Globular amphorae from excavations in Comacchio.

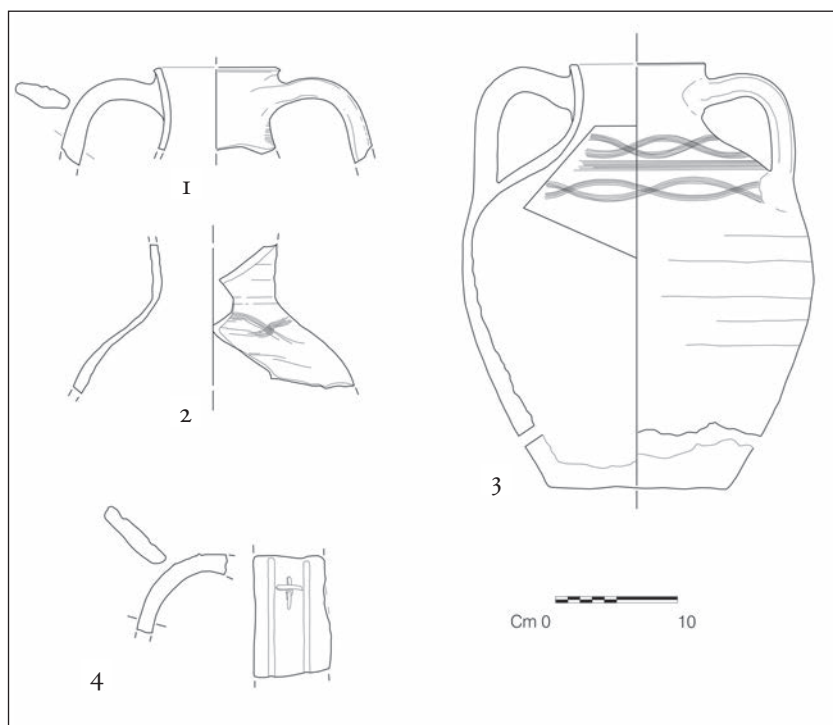


Figure 5. Local (?) jugs with two handles (or amphorae) from Comacchio.

to transport goods along the river routes. So, we can assume that goods coming from outside (the Adriatic and Mediterranean) in globular amphorae were then partially transferred into smaller containers (Fig. 6). This fact also explains the large number of globular amphorae found in Comacchio; and, meantime, would also explain the presence of these small containers in the inland territories (Fig. 7).

Finally, let us try to answer the last question about the beneficiaries of these amphorae. Does the amphorae evidence correspond with the suggested trading of luxury goods for a limited *élite*? Contrary to what was expected, the quantity of archaeological evidence which was found especially in Comacchio is of a magnitude that we would not have imagined until recently. It reveals that there were still, during the 8th century, active trading relations with the Byzantines: a process that seems neither sporadic nor accidental. Indeed, the economic picture must have changed drastically and the creation and development of these emporia is, in my opinion, a very precise material testimony to this. The number of round amphorae of Mediterranean origin, but above all the very existence of

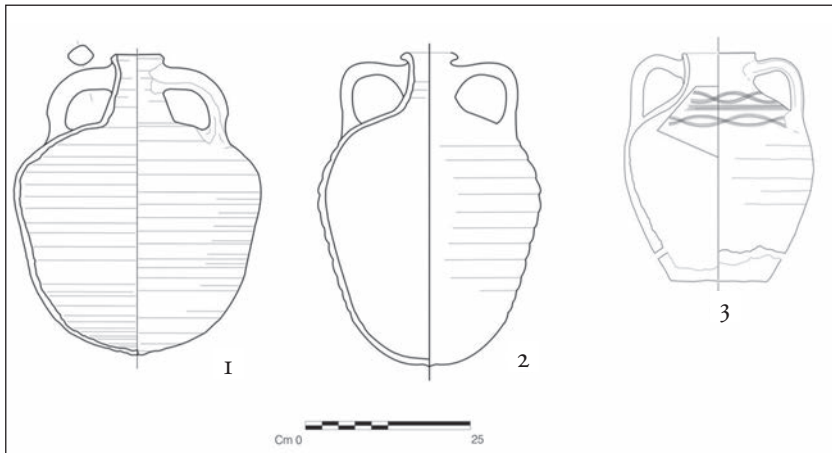


Figure 6. A comparison between the imported globular amphorae (1-2) and the hypothetical local production (Comacchio) (3).

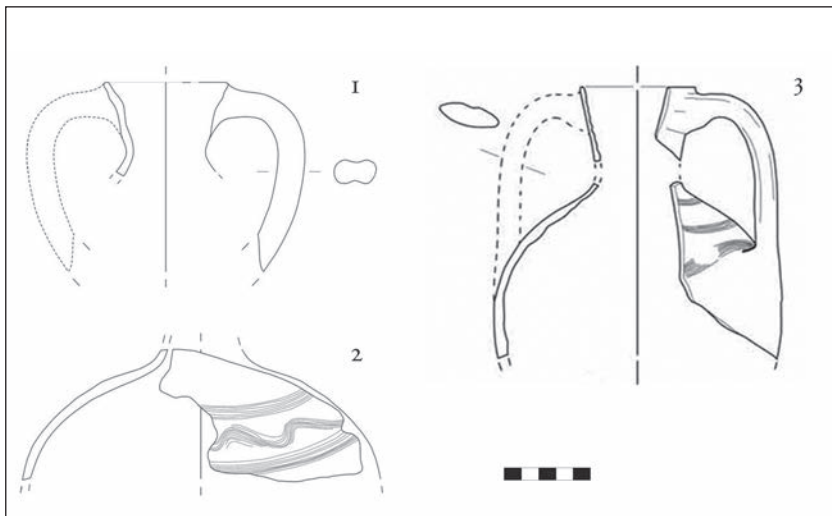


Figure 7. Imported jugs with two handles (or amphorae) of North Italian production (Comacchio?) found in the monastery of Nonantola (MO) (by Lara Sabbionesi).

sites like Comacchio, their uniqueness, the extent and complexity of their infrastructures, is by no means justifiable for the circulation of a few luxury goods limited to a restricted *élite*.

Unfortunately we have no archaeological information on the boats that came to Venice and Comacchio nor of those boats which, from these places, went up the rivers. However, it may be interesting to note the dramatic increase of boats made from tree trunks found in these areas (in Italian 'monossili')¹⁸. Generally attributed to the prehistory or Roman times, subjected to analysis were found to be generally of early Middle Ages.

Living at the edge: histories at the end (a happy end?)

Let us summarize. Three main phenomena are found in this portion of the northern Adriatic between late antiquity and the early Middle Ages.

The first important phenomenon concerns changes in the mode of communication; ie more and more endo-lagoon (therefore coastal) communications, on one side, and those on the rivers on the other, than terrestrial communications.

This phenomenon produces the establishment and the rise of new settlements in lands previously uninhabited or sparsely populated; in places, however, where no settlement of urban character existed. These new settlements, such as those of the lagoon of Venice and Comacchio, were very similar in topographical characters, in the material structures and in the 'material culture'; in few words they produce new identities and an accentuated specialization in maritime sense. The definition of these settlements as emporia, at least in an initial phase, is therefore not incorrect.

Who created these settlements? About Venice, recently Michael McCormick argued that: Venice was certainly not founded by a king¹⁹. I agree with this position and, I might add, even Comacchio was certainly not founded by a king (or by an Emperor). Indeed, the emergence of these new settlements seems to be favored by being in a 'gray zone', far enough away from the centers of power strong (such as Ravenna, for example, concerning Comacchio); or they have

¹⁸ On this type of boats in general: M. Bonino, *Le imbarcazioni monossili in Italia*, in *Bollettino del Museo Civico di Padova*, 72, 1983, p. 51-77; S. Medas, *Le imbarcazioni monossili ritrovate nei laghi e nei fiumi italiani*, in M. A. Leva Binaghi (eds.), *Le palafitte del lago di Monate. Ricerche archeologiche e ambientali nell'insediamento preistorico di Sabbione*, Gavarate, 2003, p. 30-38.

¹⁹ M. McCormick, *Where do trading towns come from? Early Medieval Venice and the northern emporia*, in J. Henning (eds.), *Post-Roman Towns, Trade and Settlement in Europe and Byzantium. Vol. 1. The Heirs of the Roman West*, Berlin-New York, 2007, p. 44.

arisen in times of temporary difficulty of these centers (or of the powers that be). Would seem to prove it the fact that, for example, in Comacchio is established a seat of diocese after the 'Capitulary of Liutprand'²⁰; then after that the community of Comacchio existed and had established stable and lasting relationships with the Lombards for the commercial use of the rivers.

Location, therefore, as a space for new opportunities. This does not mean, automatically, that these communities were moving completely outside of a power system or were not the product of the local aristocracy linked with public power. And, at the same time, it does not mean that this process has been immediate, that is, that away from wealth based on land ownership to a wealth asset-based on the sea, is solved in a short time.

Can you compare these new centers with the cities? The question of ambiguous, because it is necessary to establish precisely what it was a city in this period; or categorizing when a settlement is perceived as a city in the Italy of the eighth and tenth centuries²¹. It is easier to determine whether these places had the aspiration to become anything resembling a city. Comacchio declined definitely in the early ninth century and had no way, no time, to create a chronicle tradition-narrative that would tell the story and would revealed its aspiration. In contrast to what happened in Venice. Towards the end of the tenth century the deacon John wrote the first major history of Venice and helped to develop the first functional repertoire of topical places for the reconstruction of an identity, an identity that is urban²².

These new Adriatic settlements were the protagonists of a reorganization in economic structures in northern Italy, first of all during Byzantine-Lombard time, then during the Franco-Carolingian period. It is in this context that their trajectories must be read and interpreted.

There are three possible models that archeology has been able to outline.

The first model is that of centers functional in the international trade, in the long distance trade. Their existence, and therefore their boom, would then be independent (or at least not necessarily dependent on) from the economies of the surrounding areas²³.

20 See S. Gelichi, Lupicinus, cited n. 11.

21 S. Gelichi, *La città in Italia tra VI e VIII secolo: riflessioni dopo un trentennio di dibattito archeologico*, in A. García, R. Izquierdo, L. Olmo, D. Persi (eds.), *Espacios urbanos en el Occidente Mediterráneo (s. VI-VIII)*, Toledo, 2010, p. 65-85.

22 S. Gelichi, *L'archeologia nella laguna veneziana e la nascita di una nuova città*, in *Reti Medievali*, XI, 2010/2, p. 1-31.

23 This model has been conjectured by Frans Theuws: F. Theuws, *River-based trade centres in early medieval northwestern Europe. Some 'reactionary' thoughts*, in S. Gelichi, R. Hodges (eds.), *From one sea*, cited n. 9, p. 25-45.

The second model is that of functional centers mainly to the local economy (regional or inter-regional), an economy which ends almost exclusively in the area of the kingdom, first of all Lombard and then Carolingian. This model involves instead a simultaneous growth of the agrarian economy, the production of a surplus and the creation of a group of settlements directly connected with this system.

The third and last model, finally, is a mixed model. These centers are primarily functional to a local economy but, at the same time, they tend to also develop relations with the Mediterranean trade. In this model, it is very likely that emporia such as Venice or Comacchio were pivot points in which goods coming from outside (conveyed by merchants, therefore, not local); and from which, however, the same goods departed for the interior, conveyed this time from local merchants²⁴.

The story seems to tell us that there has been an evolution over time and it is a story of competitions at various scale. This third model, mixed, seems typical of the eighth century and early ninth. Since the beginning of the ninth, and especially after the Peace of Aachen, the policies of the Carolingian rulers seem to bring about change.

At the beginning of the ninth century, Venice is the place chosen by the ducal family of Partecipazi as the permanent; in the same place where still is Venice; not by chance that it is period when Venetians coined a denarus in the name of Louis the Pious.

What caused this final choice? Location McCormick writes²⁵. In effect, the location was certainly more functional to the economic interests that had moved from the capital of the kingdom (Pavia) to the capital of the empire (ie Aachen). But you could add the fact that the lagoon of Venice was chosen as the seat of the Byzantine power, to which was linked the presence of a very important fleet (at least according to what they tell us the written sources). A fleet that was necessary for the subsequent and decisive step, which is to transform this place under another economic sense: a place from which the ships moved to the Adriatic and then Mediterranean Sea. And here begins the true story of a unique and extraordinary city, ie Venice.

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²⁴ For an intriguing theoretical model of such type see: P. Horden, N. Purcell (eds.), *The Corrupting Sea. A study of Mediterranean History*, Oxford, 2000; R. Hodges, *Adriatic Sea trade in an European perspective*, in S. Gelichi, R. Hodges (eds.), *From one sea*, cited n. 9, p. 230-254.

²⁵ M. McCormick, *Where*, cited n. 19.

Giovanna BIANCHI

ANALYZING FRAGMENTATION IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES: THE TUSCAN MODEL AND THE COUNTRYSIDE IN CENTRAL-NORTHERN ITALY*

1. Formation and development of the Tuscan model

In this article, reference will be made to rural areas in central and northern Italy, which were part of the Lombard kingdom in the early medieval period. They were later included in the Frankish kingdom, and then, during the 10th century, became part of the Ottonian dominions. The chronological time period in question will range from the 7th to the 11th centuries.

The interest of Italian medieval archaeologists in a study of rural contexts, in the sense of analyses of settlement dynamics in relation to economic and socio-political history, developed in the course of the 1970s¹. Riccardo Francovich was, right from the beginning, one of the leading figures in this new trend, and a reference to the origins of his academic career is important to understand the processes of formation of that interpretative model of rural areas in Tuscany which later had a big influence on the debate on rural transformations in the early medieval period, and which, in this article, will serve as a backdrop to our whole narration.

In 1972 Francovich took part in a conference held at Scarperia, a small town near Florence. Many people see this conference as the real founding meeting of modern Italian medieval archaeology². The papers given at the conference were published, the following year, in a monographic edition of the periodical *Quaderni Storici*. The title, *Archeologia e geografia del popolamento*, fully reflected the new approach to the study of rural areas proposed by a group of academics com-

* Translated by Gavin Williams.

1 For an overview of medieval archeology in the last 40 years, see S. Gelichi, *I quarant'anni di Archeologia Medievale e l'archeologia in Italia negli ultimi quarant'anni*, in S. Gelichi (ed.), *Quaranta anni di Archeologia Medievale in Italia. La rivista, i temi, la teoria, i metodi*, Firenze, 2014, p. 11-20.

2 A. Augenti, *Medieval Archaeology in Italy: From Prehistory to the Present Day*, in R. Gilchrist, A. Reynolds (eds.), *Reflections: 50 year of Medieval Archaeology*, London, 2009, p. 131-154.

New Directions in Early Medieval European Archaeology: Spain and Italy compared, ed. by Sauro GELICHI and Richard HODGES, Turnhout, 2015 (Haut Moyen Âge, 24), p. 301-333.

prising historians, archaeologists, and geographers, that intended to address the analysis of rural landscapes by means of an interdisciplinary research program, also aided by the use of applied science³.

In that same year, Francovich published his degree thesis on castles in the contado of Florence in which these remains were analysed in relation to both economic and social history, and in relation to their material remains, by means of an in-depth survey detailing their position in the rural space, and to their internal structure and layout⁴. In this type of methodological approach, Francovich was very much influenced by the teachings of his own teacher, Elio Conti, whose important theories regarding the development of castles on pre-existing rural settlements, and the hypotheses relating to possible early medieval settlement concentrations⁵, were a reference point also in formulating his archaeological model.

The study of castles was one of the themes privileged by the modern study of medieval archaeology in Italy, which was in its infancy, and debate over the process of their formation was contributed to considerably by the publication of the well-known research by Pierre Toubert, in which population and land exploitation in the territories of southern Lazio, connected to the monasteries of Farfa and Subiaco, were analysed in relation above all to the appearance of fortified settlements, which Toubert suggested developed as of the 10th century at sites where there was no pre-existing settlements⁶.

As of 1974, the newly-founded periodical *Archeologia Medievale*, which Francovich was one of the founders of, became a reference point for the publication of research connected to the new direction taken by medieval archaeology in Italy. Indeed, one year after its foundation, this same journal published the first negative evidence, by Tim Potter, relating to early medieval wooden structures existing prior to castles themselves⁷. However, these traces were derived from fairly small-scale field research. What distinguished Francovich's activities at this time (and later on), and what made him stand out in field re-

3 M. Quaini, *Geografia storica o storia sociale del popolamento rurale*, in *Quaderni Storici*, 24, 1973, p. 691-745; T. Mannoni, H. Blake, *L'archeologia medievale in Italia*, in *Quaderni Storici*, 24, 1973 p. 833-860.

4 R. Francovich, *Geografia storica delle sedi umane. I castelli del contado fiorentino nei secoli XII-XIII*, Firenze, 1973.

5 E. Conti, *La formazione della struttura agraria moderna nel contado fiorentino I: la campagna nell'età precomunale*, «Studi Storici 51-55», Roma, 1965.

6 P. Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, Roma, 1973.

7 T. Potter, *Recenti ricerche in Etruria meridionale*, in *Archeologia Medievale*, II, 1975, p. 215-236.

search, almost uniquely, was the number and size of field investigations that he carried out at castles in Tuscany. These began with Scarlino, where pre-existing material from the early medieval period, dating before the castle, began to give substance to his interpretive model, as stated in his article⁸ for the Cuneo conference in 1981. The Scarlino excavation was followed by excavations at the castle of Montarrenti (fig. 2), in which Francovich's ideas were backed up and discussed with Richard Hodges, with whom he shared the role of excavation director. This excavation, which was followed by an important conference in 1988, allowed the model to take on a more complete shape⁹. In the proceedings of that meeting, Scarlino and Montarrenti were not only taken as an example of long-standing settlements, as of the 7th century, in opposition to Toubert's model, but the survey conducted in the area around Scarlino fleshed out the model with considerations regarding the surrounding area. Indeed, here a clear transformation was detected in ancient landscapes in the 7th century, with the definitive disappearance of the scattered or agglomerated settlement on the plain, which was followed by the population moving to settlements in the hills. These upland settlements were later transformed into castles¹⁰. In the following years, thanks to the fact many other excavations were begun at abandoned sites, or sites that were still inhabited, situated in south-western Tuscany and in the province of Siena, connected to important, large-scale research projects, Francovich was able to test his model in other contexts, and refine it further¹¹. This was expressed in its most complete form in the 2003 book written together with Richard Hodges¹², although the main interpretive keys are also summed up in articles that appeared between 2002 and 2008¹³.

8 R. Francovich, *Scarlino: un castello della costa Toscana fra storia e archeologia*, in R. Comba, A.A. Settia (eds.), *Castelli. Storia e archeologia*, Torino, 1984, p. 149-188.

9 R. Francovich, M. Milanese (eds.), *Lo scavo archeologico di Montarrenti e I problemi dell'incastellamento medievale. Esperienze a confronto*, 1990, Firenze.

10 R. Francovich, R. Hodges, *Archeologia e storia del villaggio fortificato di Montarrenti (SI): un caso o un modello?*, in R. Francovich, M. Milanese (eds.), *Lo scavo archeologico*, cited above, p. 15-38.

11 For a more detailed chronological history of Francovich's research relating to Tuscan castles, see G. Bianchi, *Archeologia della signoria di castello (X-XIII secolo)*, in S. Gelichi (ed.), *Quaranta anni*, cited n. 1, p. 157-172.

12 R. Francovich, R. Hodges, *Villa to village. The transformation of the Roman countryside in Italy, c. 400-1000*, London, 2003.

13 R. Francovich, *Changing structures of settlements*, in C. La Rocca (ed.), *Italy in the Early Middle Ages*, Oxford, 2002, p. 144-167; *Id., Villaggi dell'altomedioevo: invisibilità sociale e labilità archeologica*, in M. Valenti, *L'insediamento altomedievale nelle campagne toscane. Paesaggi*,

In its definitive form, the model sought answers especially to the issue of the organization of population sites and their economic characteristics, with special attention paid to the relationship between forms of power and the exploitation of local resources. Specifically, emphasis was laid on a clear break that took place in the 7th century, with the definitive end of ancient landscapes, and the spontaneous relocation of groups of people to sites on higher ground, to which the formation of the first wooden settlements was connected. Agglomerated settlements, preferably in a hilltop position, were the most widespread type of settlement not only in early medieval Tuscany. Reconstruction, via archaeology, of a landscape shaped by man, marked by small habitation nuclei, often located in *curtes* contexts attested to in documents, brought a strongly new element compared with historians vision of written documents, inclined as they are to identify the *curtes* system as a form of scattered settlement, both as regards the *massaricum* and the *dominicum*. The relationship between the settlement itself and the local resources also appears to have been at the foundation of an early interest by the élites in these new settlement centres which, between the Lombard and the Carolingian periods, seems to have led to a hierarchization of these spaces, with a view to controlling certain production cycles. Transformations and possible economic growth appear therefore to be linked to an incisive early intervention by the élites in the administration of these settlements. In addition, in the model, churches and monasteries remained in the background of these processes; indeed, their relationship with hill-top villages was seen in dialectical terms, with the definitive success of hill-top sites, demonstrating how profitable the investment by the landed seigneurship was¹⁴.

Subsequently, using mainly findings from the excavations he directed at Poggibonsi and Miranduolo¹⁵, Marco Valenti further underlined the features of agglomeration of rural structures. In the case of Miranduolo, he claimed contiguity between the *dominicum* and the *massaricum*. Furthermore, again setting out from the aforementioned excavations, great emphasis was laid on the role of the élites in the economic government of these settlements, identifying distinctive material traces above all in spatial hierarchies, in the size of the residential dwell-

popolamento e villaggi tra VI e X secolo, Firenze, 2004, p. 9-21; *Id.*, *The beginning of hilltop villages in early medieval Tuscany*, in J. R. Davis, M. McCormick (eds.), *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe*, Aldershot, 2008, p. 55-82.

14 R. Francovich, *Changing structures*, cited n. 13; R. Francovich, R. Hodges, *Villa to village*, cited n. 12; R. Francovich, *Villaggi dell'altomedioevo*, cited n. 13.

15 M. Valenti (ed.), *Poggio Imperiale a Poggibonsi. Il territorio, lo scavo, il parco*, Cinisello Balsamo, 2007; *Id.*, *Miranduolo in Alta Val di Merse*, Firenze, 2008.

ings, and in the type of diet. The élites outlined by Valenti, especially setting out from evidence from Miranduolo, were apparently very pervasive in their control of the resident community, ever since the Carolingian period, while the main role of the community itself was to contribute, in a hierarchical way, and having a distinctly subject status, to the enrichment of the dominant personage who oversaw the settlement.

2. *Other forms of rural population. Northern Italy*

From the brief overview in the previous paragraph, it is clear that Francovich's original intention as regards castles from the middle centuries of the medieval period gradually shifted towards the phases prior to actual, systematic castle formation. In this, Francovich followed a trend that manifested itself on a large scale as of the 1990s, on the part of other medieval archaeologists in Italy, who focused much of their research on the early medieval countryside, and more recently going further back to look into the complex phenomena associated with the transition from the Late Antique period to the medieval period. At the 1992 conference, organized in Siena by Francovich and Ghislaine Noyé the papers presented, later published in the form of proceedings¹⁶, reflect the great ferment in the discipline regarding themes having to do with an analysis of early medieval rural landscapes, and also the considerable progress made by research at the time. This made it possible to draw up regional syntheses (especially in relation to central northern Italy), and initial pictures describing production and trade. Other important meetings were the seminars organized by Gian Pietro Brogiolo, devoted to specific issues relating to rural contexts, and also meetings focusing on the reconstruction of material culture, with special reference to pottery assemblages, vital for refining tools for placing excavated stratigraphies in their correct chronology¹⁷.

From the numerous investigations that continued in northern Italy in the following decades, a more complex and varied picture emerged compared with that set out under the Tuscan model. This diversity can be attributed to factors

16 R. Francovich, G. Noyé (eds.), *La storia dell'altomedioevo italiano (VI-X secolo) alla luce dell'archeologia*, Firenze, 1994.

17 G.P. Brogiolo, L. Castelletti (eds.), *Insedimenti fortificati e contesti stratigrafici tardoromani e altomedievali nell'area alpina e padana*, in *Archeologia Medievale*, XVII, 1990, p. 7-56; G.P. Brogiolo (ed.), *Edilizia residenziale tra V e VIII secolo*, Mantova, 1994; *Id.*, *Città, castelli, campagne nei territori di frontiera. Secoli VI-VII*, Mantova, 1995; *Id.*, *La fine delle ville romane: trasformazioni nelle campagne tra tarda antichità e alto medioevo*, Mantova, 1996; L. Paroli (ed.), *L'Italia centro-settentrionale in età longobarda*, Firenze, 1997.



Figure 1. Map of northern Italy showing location of some sites mentioned in this article: 1. S. Agata Bolognese; 2. Nonantola; 3. Comacchio; 4. Nogara; 5. Bovolone; 6. Verona; 7. Brescia.

associated with both the local political context under investigation, and the research strategy. The part of Tuscany on which the model was built relates mainly to a portion of the original Tuscia, positioned in an area bordering on the Byzantine territories, but one completely marginal to the centres of early medieval power as represented by northern Italian cities, especially Lucca. The centrality of this area, as we shall discuss below, is based on the specificity and wealth of its natural resources. However, this was not enough to create here, at least up until the 10th century, that social stratification, with resultant diversified settlement solutions that are found in the north and in the Po valley area, where we see a greater influence by man in shaping the natural environment, dotted with towns and cities both ancient and newly-founded, including the various capitals of the kingdom that alternated over the centuries.

Furthermore, the excavations directed by Francovich were concentrated, in almost all cases, at hill-top sites, the location of the castles of the middle centuries of the medieval period. This excluded the potential information from a stratigraphy connected, for example, to the excavation of villas, baptismal churches, or sites on the plains lower down.

In the north, systematic field-walking involved large sectors of the eastern area (the area of Garda and Trento, and the Verona plain) and Emilia Ro-

magna, while excavations, either area excavations or otherwise, were focused especially on Roman villas, churches and oratories, Late Antique castles, and necropolises. These necropolises have yielded grave goods, and many burials were often associated with aristocratic figures. By contrast, research strategies have rarely focused on the excavation of wooden settlements from the full early medieval period, with the result that, for northern Italy, we have a greater mass of data for the settlement sequences between Late Antiquity and the 8th century, while there is less data relating to population organization between the 9th and 11th centuries.

In northern Italian rural landscapes, unlike Tuscany, an important role was played by public-founded castles in the Late Antique period, which began to appear as of the end of the 4th century. These were connected to a complex system, interconnected with urban settlements, whose purpose was not only defence but also control of local roads and rivers¹⁸. In the early medieval period, some of these castra retained a central role in population dynamics, becoming large, densely-populated nuclei, representing alternatives to urban sites, and the seat of new secular and ecclesiastical powers that exercised juridical and administrative functions there. In the surrounding rural area, between the 6th and the 8th centuries, we find various kinds of settlement solutions which, having been the subject of numerous overviews in recent years¹⁹, we shall mention only briefly here: reoccupation of parts of villas abandoned during the 6th century; settlements founded near Roman sites; newly-founded settlements; and settlements that grew up around churches built in the Late Antique period, sometimes on top of the remains of villas. In short, a considerable variety of settlement solutions, having several urban sites or associated with a scattered form of habitation, on low-lying land or on hill-top sites, often accompanied by clear material remains that bear witness to the presence, in a rural context, of members of medium-to high-ranking *élites*. The dynamics governing the transformation of anthropic landscapes, compared with the Roman period, also vary from one area to the next, often on the basis of the relationship between these population sites and the Late Antique castra-style sites, or larger towns, or road and river arteries themselves.

18 G.P. Brogiolo, S. Gelichi, *Nuove ricerche sui castelli altomedievali in Italia settentrionale*, Firenze, 1996; G.P. Brogiolo, *Costruire castelli nell'arco alpino tra V e VI secolo*, in S. Gelichi (ed.), *Quaranta anni*, cited n. 1.

19 R. Francovich, *Changing structures*, cited n. 13; G.P. Brogiolo, A. Chavarría Arnau, *Aristocrazie e campagne nell'Occidente da Costantino a Carlo Magno*, Firenze, 2005; S. Gelichi, *Alla fine di una transizione? L'Italia settentrionale nel primo Alto Medioevo tra città, villaggi e economie*, in *Territorio, Sociedad y Poder*, 2, 2009, p. 143-158; M. Valenti, *Archeologia delle campagne altomedievali: diacronia e forme dell'insediamento*, in S. Gelichi (ed.), *Quaranta anni*, cited n. 1.

These were more stable than in the past, for example, in eastern Liguria and in the area around Garda studied by Brogiolo, connected to the *castra* of Sirmione and Garda, and to the cities of Brescia and Verona, where field-walking surveys attest to a kind of settlement pattern involving several urban sites, and that arose in continuity with the system of villas and the later baptismal churches that were built on top of villas. By contrast, in the area of Verona, only near cities has a continuity of the Roman population been found, while in the low-lying plains settlement was more unstable, and was marked by nuclei that were later included in the great royal *curtes*²⁰.

In northern Italy, as well as rural churches²¹, a significant influence in population organization has been ascribed to monasteries, beginning with those of Lombard foundation. This importance has been underlined by archaeologists especially by reference to written documentation, since excavations of early medieval monasteries have often been limited to small-scale test trenches which have only made it possible to draw conclusions regarding the internal organization of space in the monastery itself. As well as the well-known case of S. Vincenzo al Volturno, situated in a part of the Italian peninsula lying outside our field of inquiry, an exception to this kind of approach is represented by the monastery of Nonantola, studied by Sauro Gelichi (fig. 1). Field-walking in the area surrounding the early medieval monastery, situated on the same site as the later monastic institution of the central medieval period, has established how influential was the action of the newly-founded monastery in the reorganization of settlement patterns. Indeed, after its foundation, which took place in the mid-8th century, the surrounding area saw the complete disappearance of the type of scattered settlement, datable to the 5th and 6th centuries, that was a descendent from the earlier land divisions. This was replaced by a settlement type marked by agglomerated hubs, also including the settlement situated at the centre responsible for administration, at the abbey²².

The case of Nonantola underscores the importance played in general by monastic institutions in shaping or managing rural settlements. On the other hand, one of the most important pieces of research in the last decade involves a community, and later on a bishop. The story of Comacchio has now been amply recounted and discussed by Sauro Gelichi in several publication contexts, and

20 G.P. Brogiolo, A. Chavarria Arnau, *Aristocrazie e campagne*, cited n. 19, p. 111-126.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 127-150.

22 S. Gelichi, M. Librenti, *Alle origini di una grande proprietà monastica. Il territorio nonantolano tra antichità e alto medioevo*, in T. Lazzeri, L. Mascanzoni, R. Rinaldi (eds.), *La norma e la memoria. Studi per Augusto Vasina*, Roma, 2004, p. 25-41.

therefore it is known also to the international academic community²³. The importance of the excavated sequences is connected with the identification of a settlement at the mouth of the Po which, as of the later 7th century, was used as an important trading post for inland transportation, and transport to the cities of the Po valley area, of a series of products that were not just local, such as salt, with some products probably also coming from the Middle East, as attested to by finds of specific amphora-style containers (fig. 1). Accordingly, this evidence attests to the presence, at least in the Adriatic area, of trading intersections and distribution points, comparable to the emporia in the north of Europe, that were already active in the 8th century, a period previously seen by many academics as a time of stagnation in the Po valley's economy. Moreover, the findings from the Comacchio excavation suggest the existence of complex systems in apparently marginal areas, such as lagoon zones, where Venice would later stand, a key site for trade in the Carolingian period. The reconstruction of the habitation and trade context of Comacchio also reflects the important role played by the community itself, which was well-defined in terms of its identity, as can also be inferred from the well-known Capitulary by Liutprand, entered into by the king with the people of Comacchio themselves.

The role of communities also returns in the recent publication of the Nogara (fig. 1) excavations, which also saw an investigation of the 9th and 10th century sequences²⁴. The case of Nogara also becomes interesting in that it testifies to an example of population evolution in the lower Verona plain, which we referred to above, marked, between the 7th and 8th centuries, by non-continuity with the Roman pattern, and that was often located within holdings subject to tax. Its possible link with royal holdings explains the investments in manpower and skills that allowed the creation of a small hamlet in a marshy area. According to Saggioro's plausible hypothesis, the community also took part in these works, dating to the beginning of the 9th century, but characterized by a more significant phase later on during that century, before the site became a castle. Indeed, the actions required to create an agglomerated habitation constituted an essential binding agent for the creation of a community identity, within a context that was devoid of socially dominant individuals.

The recent publication of the excavation at Crocetta, near S. Agata Bolognese (fig. 1), takes us to a context at the height of the 10th century, and testifies to what

23 Most recently: S. Gelichi, D. Calaon, E. Grandi, C. Negrelli, *History of a forgotten town: Comacchio and its archaeology*, in S. Gelichi-Hodges R. (eds.), *From one sea to another. Trading places in the European and Mediterranean Early Middle Ages*, Turnhout, 2012 p. 169-206.

24 F. Saggioro (ed.), *Nogara. Archeologia e storia di un villaggio medievale (scavi 2003-2008)*, Roma, 2011.

the Nogara excavation was unable to establish, namely the effects of the action of powers that were politically more pervasive, and private, on a small community that lived on a mound by a rivers, surrounded by a ditch²⁵. Furthermore, the two main phases of the site exemplify the action of two differing kinds of power: the first having a lower political profile, representative of those élites existing around families of medium to high rank; and the second relating to aristocratic groups connected to the powerful Canossa family. The effects of the different forms of power can be seen in the site's two different vocations: agriculture, when this was linked to the first form of power; and crafts and trade, in the second case, with trading relating to an extra-regional and Mediterranean horizon. The influence of a stronger political player has also been seen in the restructuring of the site of Piadena. Here, as in the second phase of S. Agata, we see a certain regularity in the layout, associated with the 10th century castle ceded by the bishop of Cremona to the monastery of S. Lorenzo. Similarly, a 9th-10th century reoccupation has been documented at the site of Bovolone (Verona), where excavations identified traces of an organized settlement, the construction of water channels, and fortifications surrounded by a ditch²⁶. In the recent monograph published in *Archeologia Medievale*²⁷, focusing on rural settlements in the central medieval period, it emerges that, in other parts of northern Italy too, evidence that can be identified with the initial phases of castle formation can already be recognized from the end of the 9th century, becoming more substantial during the following century. A further monograph, published in the latest edition of the same journal, on the subject of fortifications made of perishable materials, highlighted the fact that wooden features on top of possible motte and bailey structures, or mounds, or within systems of ditches and water channels are also characteristics found in many parts of mainland Italy, from north to south, therefore adding to the list of known kinds of castle-type fortifications, too often linked to the stereotype of stone-built hill-top castles²⁸. Moreover, the examples in the Verona and Bologna areas, above all, further stress the strategic nature of marshy areas, and bear witness to the type of settlement response that contemporary people, and the powers of the day, were able to give.

25 S. Gelichi, M. Librenti, M. Marchesini (eds.), *Un villaggio nella pianura. Ricerche archeologiche in un insediamento medievale del territorio di S. Agata Bolognese*, Firenze, 2014.

26 For a summary: G.P. Brogiolo, A. Chavarría Arnau, *Aristocrazie e campagne*, cited n. 19, p. 121-126.

27 A. Molinari (ed.), *Mondi rurali d'Italia: insediamenti, struttura sociale, economia. Secoli X-XIII*, in *Archeologia Medievale*, XXXVII, 2010, p. 11-284.

28 A. A. Settia, L. Marasco, F. Saggioro (eds.), *Fortificazioni di terra in Italia: motte, tumuli, tumbe e recinti*, in *Archeologia Medievale*, XL, 2013, p. 9-190.



Figure 2. Map of Tuscany showing location of sites mentioned in this article.

3. Rethinking the Tuscan model: the Colline Metallifere

As already stated, the first data necessary for the construction of the Tuscan model were gathered during the excavations at Scarlino castle, situated just inland from the coast (fig. 2). Later, research shifted to the Siense area, to the castle of Montarrenti, before then returning to the coastal area, at the same time, with the excavation of the well-known castle of Rocca S. Silvestro. Over the following years, a lot of archaeological research was commenced in this part of the Tuscan Maremma, that today is circumscribed within the district known as the Colline Metallifere. In the gradual definitions of the model, however, including in recent years, data relating to these excavations (except for Scarlino) have been a background for further refinements, based especially on findings from excavations in the Siena area (Montarrenti, Poggibonsi, Miranduolo, Staggia).

This is despite the considerable number of sites excavated in the Colline Metallifere: eight castles, four of which have been excavated on a large scale²⁹, while excavations at the remaining four involved the highest part of the sites in question³⁰. Of these eight castles, seven have early medieval phases, and three (Rocca San Silvestro, Rocchette Pannocchieschi, and Cugnano) are also linked to the exploitation of silver-bearing minerals. In addition, there have been excavations at two early medieval and late medieval monasteries³¹, at one rural canonical complex³², and in the centre of Piombino³³ and at Montieri³⁴, the location of the

29 Rocca S. Silvestro: R. Francovich, *Rocca San Silvestro*, Roma 1991; Donoratico: G. Bianchi (ed.), *Castello di Donoratico. I risultati delle prime campagne di scavo (2000-2002)*, Firenze, 2004; Cugnano: J. Bruttini, G. Fichera, F. Grassi, *Un insediamento a vocazione mineraria nella Toscana medievale: il caso di Cugnano nelle Colline Metallifere*, in G. Volpe, P. Favia (eds.), *V Congresso nazionale di Archeologia Medievale*, Firenze, 2009, p. 306-312, and G. Bianchi, J. Bruttini, J. A. Quiros Castillo, F. Ceres, S. Lorenzini, *La lavorazione del metallo monetabile nel castello di Cugnano (Monterotondo M.mo): lo studio delle aree produttive dei secoli centrali (XI-XII secolo)*, in F. Redi, A. Forgiione (eds.), *Atti del VI Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia Medievale*, Firenze, 2012, p. 644-649; Rocchette Pannocchieschi: F. Grassi (ed.), *L'insediamento medievale nelle Colline Metallifere (Toscana, Italia): il sito minerario di Rocchette Pannocchieschi dall'VIII al XIV secolo*, Oxford, 2013.

30 Campiglia: G. Bianchi (ed.), *Campiglia. Un castello e il suo territorio*, Firenze, 2004; Suvereto: S. Ceglie, M. F. Paris, F. Venturini, *Le storie della Rocca di Suvereto tra alto e basso Medioevo attraverso le nuove indagini archeologiche*, in C. Marcucci, C. Megale (eds.), *Il Medioevo nella provincia di Livorno. I risultati delle recenti indagini*, Pisa, 2006, p. 117-130; Rocca degli Alberti: G. Bianchi, F. Grassi, *Sistemi di stoccaggio nelle campagne italiane (sec. VII-XIII): l'evidenza archeologica dal caso di Rocca degli Alberti in Toscana*, in G. Bianchi, J. A. Quiros Castillo, A. Vigil Escalera (eds.), *Horrea, barns and silos. Storage and incomes in Early Medieval Europe*, Vitoria, 2013, p. 77-102; Scarlino: R. Francovich, *Scarlino I. Storia e territorio*, Firenze, 1985.

31 S. Quirico a Populonia: G. Bianchi, R. Francovich, S. Gelichi, *Scavi nel monastero di S. Quirico di Populonia (LI). Campagne 2002-2006*, in *Notiziario della Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Toscana*, 2, 2006, p. 277-278; S. Piero a Monteverdi: R. Francovich, G. Bianchi, *Prime indagini archeologiche in un monastero della Tuscia altomedievale: S. Pietro in Palazzuolo a Monteverdi Marittimo (PI)*, in R. Francovich, M. Valenti (eds.), in *Atti del IV Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia Medievale*, Firenze, 2006, p. 346-352;

32 S. Niccolò a Montieri: G. Bianchi, J. Bruttini, F. Grassi, *Lo scavo della Canonica di San Niccolò a Montieri (GR)*, in *Notiziario della Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Toscana*, 8, Firenze, 2012, p. 564-567.

33 G. Berti, G. Bianchi (eds.), *La chiesa di S. Antimo sopra i Canali. Ceramiche e architetture per la lettura archeologica di un abitato medievale e del suo porto*, Firenze, 2007.

34 B. M. Aranguren, G. Bianchi, J. Bruttini, *Montieri (GR) Archeologia urbana: l'intervento in via delle Fonderie*, in *Notiziario della Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Toscana*, 3, 2007, p. 435-441.

original castle. In recent years, excavation has also begun at a low-lying fortified site, at Vetricella, situated on the plain below the town of Scarlino³⁵. Alongside the excavations, there were field-walking surveys involving six municipal districts (Campiglia, Scarlino, Populonia, Massa Marittima, Montieri, and Monterotondo Marittimo). Furthermore, all these sites stand within an area that, as well as featuring primary resources, such as woodlands, pasture-land, and coastal salt-works, is marked by the presence of metal-bearing deposits rich in mixed sulphides that can be mined for silver-bearing metals to make coins³⁶.

These research studies, many of which were directed by this writer, will be the cue for a reflection on the Tuscan model. In the model drawn up by Francovich, the 7th century is pointed to as a cut-off point, marking the shift from a settlement pattern mostly on low-lying land, including in scattered form, to agglomerations in the hills, as a result of a spontaneous movement by the local population, who it is thought occupied sites not involved in the previous range of habitation sites. In this connection, the findings from the recent survey in the area around Monterotondo M.mo are particularly significant, because they relate to an area inland from the coastal territory, and thus an area that was more involved in the phenomena of synoecism at upland sites, envisaged by the model³⁷.

In this area, as well as attesting to the now well-known frequency with which a certain number of low-lying sites were abandoned during the 7th century, the survey also identified continuity of occupation at a hill-top site (Castiglion Bernardi) and at other sites, on the plains and at higher elevations (Paterno, S. Regolo and Bagno del Re). These sites, referred to in documentary sources from the 8th century onwards, are the outcome of a phenomenon of selection and centralization dating as far back as the Late Antique period, and they later had an important role in early medieval population dynamics in this area. A large number of these belonged to a large territorial enclave that merged with the royal lands³⁸. However, a similar evolution of population patterns can also be seen, in

35 L. Marasco, *La Castellina di Scarlino e le fortificazioni di terra nelle pianure costiere della Maremma settentrionale*, in *Archeologia Medievale*, XXXIX, 2013, p. 57-69.

36 M. Benvenuti, G. Bianchi, J. Bruttini, M. Buonicontri, L. Chiarantini, L. Dallai, G. Di Pasquale, A. Donati, F. Grassi, V. Pescini, *Studying the Colline Metallifere mining area in Tuscany: an interdisciplinary approach*, in *9th International Symposium on Archaeological Mining History*, MuSe -Trento, 5-8th June 2014, p. 261-287.

37 E. Ponta, *Dinamiche di formazione e trasformazione del paesaggio fra Tarda Antichità e Altomedioevo. Il caso di Monterotondo Marittimo (GR)*, Master's degree thesis, 2011-12.

38 Regarding the presence of figures representing public powers in this area, see R. Farinelli, *I castelli nella Toscana delle 'città deboli'. Dinamiche del popolamento e del potere rurale nella Toscana meridionale (secoli VII-XIV)*, Firenze, 2007, p. 66-69.

even more accentuated form, in the coastal area, in particular on the plain below Scarlino castle, where the findings of the 1980s' survey had helped to compile the Tuscan model³⁹. Indeed, recent surveys have provided a far more variegated picture than that formulated in the past, also thanks to today's more detailed understanding of early medieval ceramic wares. A series of low-lying and higher-altitude sites have been identified here that feature a layout with several major agglomerated nuclei, and a settlement continuity ranging from the Late Antique period to the 10th century⁴⁰. These also include the site near the farm known as Aione, first identified in the 1980s, and revisited today as a larger piece of evidence featuring phases included between the 7th and 9th centuries. The group also includes the site at Vetricella (fig. 3), which we will also discuss later on, which has residual pottery dating to the 8th century, showing possible, older phases of occupation than the more evident phases of the following centuries at this site.

Property is known in this area belonging to senatorial aristocrats. These holdings may well have merged in the early medieval royal land-holdings. Meanwhile, some of the sites identified have clear traces of manufacturing, especially connected with the processing of ferrous and non-ferrous minerals⁴¹. The continuation of the Late Antique settlement pattern of agglomerated nuclei also for the initial centuries of the early medieval period, on the plains and in upland areas, would therefore seem to be connected with the presence of the numerous royal estates. As such, this could be explained in terms of a general reorganization of public property relating to sites having a markedly productive nature. In the early medieval period, such sites were connected especially to the exploitation of mineral, agricultural and woodland resources, as well as the saltworks found throughout this coastal area, marked by lakes and marshes⁴².

At the same time as the development of this latter settlement pattern, new upland settlements were formed by communities which apparently thereby constituted that "biological mass" referred to in the Tuscan model⁴³.

39 C. Cucini, R. Francovich, R. Parenti, *Dalla 'villa' al castello: dinamiche insediative e tecniche costruttive in Toscana fra tardoantico e bassomedioevo*, in R. Francovich, M. Milanese (eds.), *Lo scavo archeologico*, cited n. 9, p. 47-78.

40 L. Marasco, *Archeologia dei paesaggi, fonti documentarie e strutture insediative in ambito rurale toscano tra VIII e XI secolo. Nuove indagini archeologiche sul comprensorio costiero dell'Alta Maremma*, PhD thesis, Scuola di Dottorato di Ricerca Riccardo Francovich, Università degli Studi di Siena, XXII ciclo, 2013.

41 L. Marasco, *La Castellina*, cited n. 35; *Id.*, *Archeologia dei paesaggi*, cited n. 40.

42 G. Bianchi, *Lords, communities and mines: some considerations setting out from the Tuscan context*, in *Italy and Medieval Europe. A fest in honour of Chris Wickham*, forthcoming.

43 R. Francovich, *Villaggi dell'altomedioevo*, cited n. 13, p. XIV.



Figure 3. Aerial photo of site of Vetricella before archeological excavation (photo: Laboratorio di Archeologia dei Paesaggi e Telerilevamento, University of Siena).

In some cases, these settlements arose at sites occupied in the Hellenistic period but later abandoned (Rocca degli Alberti, Cugnano). In others, they were established on hill-top sites featuring sequences ranging between the Hellenistic period and the full Imperial period (Scarolino), or with long continuity of habitation throughout the Classical and Late Antique periods (Donoratico). The faint traces of life referring to the 7th century at these settlements seem, nevertheless, to indicate small-scale settlements, populated only by small groups of people⁴⁴.

The presence of large public estates and of strategic resources (especially minerals) in this area would, therefore, have bestowed a considerable variety on settlement patterns in the early centuries of the early medieval period, within a landscape marked by centralized low-lying and upland sites. These often formed

⁴⁴ A possible early form of public administration mining resources makes it doubtful whether there was spontaneous settlement, as per the model, at the two mining sites recently excavated at Rocchette Pannocchieschi and Cugnano. Initial occupation phases at these sites date to the start of the 8th century. Also, unlike other hill-top sites, they may have arisen as part of a more targeted public land management strategy aimed at exploiting silver-bearing minerals (G. Bianchi, *Lords, communities*, cited n. 42).

on, or near, Late Antique sites, alternating with hill-top settlements that may or may not have been the product of a spontaneous initiative by the population. This picture is therefore richer than that set out under the Tuscan model, in which, ever since the 7th century, hill-top sites were preferred. Indeed, the new data indicate that the 7th century, at least in this area, cannot be thought of as marking a total break with the previous settlement patterns but, rather, as the phase of initial formation, or reoccupation, of upland sites.

In the 8th century, as attested to in documents, also, some of these hypothetical public estates holdings had already been distributed to political figures of a certain importance. For this geographical area, Lucca was the city that was looked to, since the ancient town of Populonia, despite being the seat of a bishopric, does not seem to have exercised political action beyond the territory of the promontory of Populonia itself. At this point in time, an élite was present in Lucca and in Tuscia marked by a supra-regional horizon, featuring large-scale estates and strong ties with secular power⁴⁵. The main protagonists in our area belonged to this social fabric. Indeed, in the Val di Cornia area documents begin to attest to holdings linked to the bishops of Lucca as of the 8th century. These holdings were situated near the royal possessions, or partly overlapping with them, and indeed these are still well-attested in this century⁴⁶. Some of these possessions, as the documents tell us, were situated near the lake of Piombino, not far from one of the ports, Falesia, of Roman origin, that was still active in this period⁴⁷. Further north, in the mid-8th century, there arose one of the most important monasteries in central-northern Italy: S. Pietro in Palazzuolo at Monteverdi⁴⁸. One of the three founders, Walfredo, a Pisan aristocratic who probably also held public office, was one of the most significant representatives of this regional élite.

In this territory, as well as the public authority, these were the two main political entities that governed an underlying society that was fairly complex, composed of small land-holders and lease-holders coming under both the bishop of Lucca and the monastery, as well as the royal system. It is not easy to imagine how these socio-political levels worked, but an example may help to understand them. In the hinterland, in the modern-day town of Monterotondo M.mo, not

45 S. M. Collavini, *Spazi politici e irraggiamento sociale delle élites laiche intermedie (Italia centrale, secoli VIII-X)*, in Ph. Depreux, F. Bougard, R. Le Jan (eds.), *Les élites et leurs espaces: mobilité, rayonnement, domination (du VI^e au XI^e siècle)*, Turnhout, 2007, p. 319-340.

46 R. Farinelli, *I castelli*, cited n. 38.

47 G. Bianchi, *Dalla progettazione di una chiesa alla definizione degli assetti abitativi della Val di Cornia tra XIII e XIV secolo*, in G. Berti, G. Bianchi (eds.), *La chiesa di S. Antimo*, cited n. 33, p. 385-412.

48 R. Francovich, G. Bianchi, *Prime indagini*, cited n. 31.

far from one of the most important centres controlled by the bishop in Lucca, S. Regolo in Gualdo, excavations on the hill-top have revealed traces of an apparently open space designed mainly for the treatment and, above all, the storage of cereals (fig. 4). These cereals, belonging to several different species, were stored in eight storage silos of a certain size, dug into the virgin rock. This evidence has been interpreted as the remains of agricultural activity, conducted between the 8th and the early 9th centuries, by a small rural community, probably marked by a minimum form of social differentiation⁴⁹. Only later, between the 9th and 10th centuries, was this community subjected to a more incisive control, represented in material terms by a large defensive wall to seal off this area, where a granary was built, above the storage silos.

A few kilometers away, in a hilly area, there stood the village of Paterno. This is not testified to by archaeological evidence, but it is well attested to in documentary sources. Here lived a group of small landowners, freeholders with few assets held outright, and no subordinates. There are documentary traces of this small section of society, because in the mid-8th century many of them made a cycle of donations to the nearby church of S. Regolo to get its patronage. The S. Regolo in Gualdo church held the relics of the saint after whom the building was named. Between 770 and 778 the figure of S. Regolo took on renewed importance thanks to the bishop of Lucca himself, who sponsored worship of him, appropriating to himself the following that he attracted. This operation was followed by the relocation of the saint's body to Lucca, and a short time later, after 810, the same bishop began to choose the rectors of the church from among members of his own entourage, instead of from among members of the local élites. Simone Collavini claims that this is indicative of the rise in Carolingian-era Lucca of a new kind of urban élite, called the diocesan élite, whose fortune was the result of links with ecclesiastical offices and with the dukes⁵⁰. The bishop's choice of the new rectors allegedly coincides with the first identification of the diocesan élite in the countryside, which, as in other places too, here helped the formation of their estate holdings via the guarantee (as in the case of S. Regolo) of incomes and new links with local society. As of the 9th century, there was no longer any trace of the small élites of Paterno, and it is possible, as Collavini suggests, that this social fabric was gradually transformed from small land-owners to leaseholders. We can therefore imagine the community that came under the site of Monterotondo, excavated by us, as having a social composition similar to that of Paterno, and the group of storage silos as representative of a collective organization, despite being ruled by some personage who was slightly more eminent

49 G. Bianchi, F. Grassi, *Sistemi di stoccaggio*, cited n. 30.

50 S. M. Collavini, *Spazi politici*, cited n. 45.



Figure 4. Rocca degli Alberti (Monterotondo M.mo): detail of storage silos during excavation.

than the others locally. We do not know whether the construction of the enclosure, that led to the elimination of the silos, may have been the physical result of a marked change in the system of local powers, as happened at Paterno. In any event, we can imagine similar processes at other sites, too, of which there is no longer any documentary or physical trace. While events such as those affecting the inhabitants of Paterno nipped the aspirations of local society in the bud, on the one hand, on the other hand it is likely that at other sites they activated ties of dependence on the newly-forming diocesan elites, paving the way for possible upward mobility also on the part of the local population. At any rate, one thing emerges clearly from the documents: the increased concentration of wealth at these sites did not mean that this élite group became more established in rural areas, and indeed, they continued to live in the cities.

In the Tuscan model, the stronger role by the élites (urban or local) appears, in physical terms, to have led to a process of hierarchical differentiation between spaces, which apparently took place in the Carolingian period above all. The case of Montarrenti⁵¹, with a hill-top palissade and an inhabited area below (fig. 5) seems to be the

⁵¹ R. Francovich, R. Hodges, *Archeologia e storia*, cited n. 10; F. Cantini, *Il castello di Montarrenti, lo scavo archeologico (1982-1987). Per la storia della formazione del villaggio medievale in Toscana (sec. VII-XV)*, Firenze, 2003.

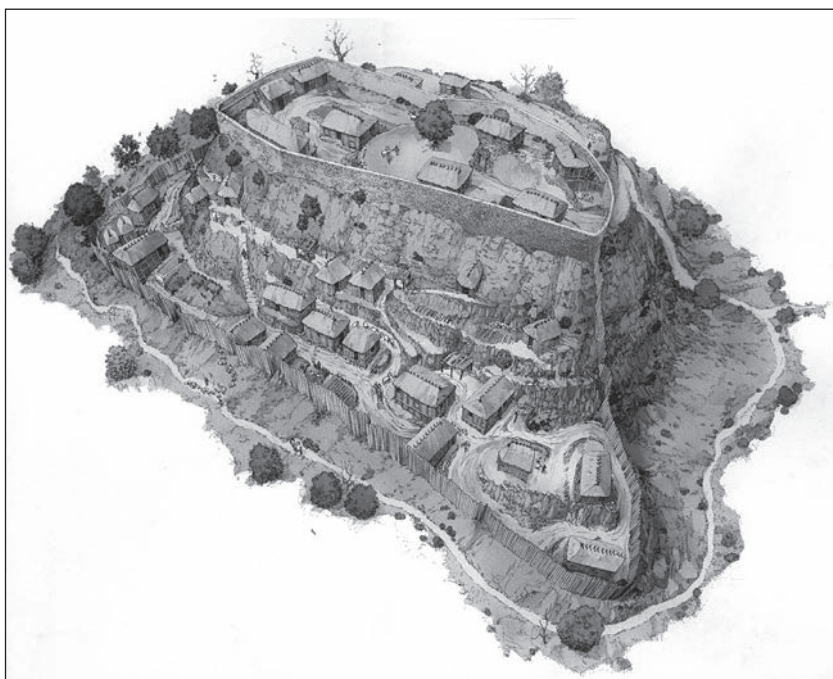


Figure 5. Reconstruction of village of Montarrenti between 8th and 9th centuries (graphics: INK-LINK Florence). F. Cantini, *Il castello di Montarrenti*, cited n. 51.

clearest example of this process, in support of which, in the various overviews⁵², many of the sites included in the area under examination are mentioned. In actual fact, excavation findings for the Colline Metallifere area are not so clearly comparable with those from Montarrenti. At Scarlino only the hilltop area was excavated, and it is hard to suggest with any certainty the presumable internal layout of the habitation zone lower down⁵³. The same is true in the case of Monterotondo M.mo⁵⁴ and Campiglia M.ma⁵⁵. Moreover, at the latter site, the first definite remains of ordinary dwellings date to the later 9th century, as at Suvereto. At Donoratico⁵⁶, the clearest 8th-

52 M. Valenti (ed.), *Miranduolo*, cited n. 15.

53 L. Marasco, *Archeologia dei paesaggi*, cited n. 40.

54 G. Bianchi, F. Grassi, *Sistemi di stoccaggio*, cited n. 30.

55 G. Bianchi (ed.), *Campiglia*, cited n. 30.

56 R. Francovich, G. Bianchi, *Capanne e muri in pietra. Donoratico nell'alto medioevo*, in *Il Medioevo nella provincia di Livorno. I risultati delle recenti indagini*, in C. Marcucci, C. Megale (eds.), Pisa, 2006, p. 105-116.

9th century remains are found in the lower part of the area of flat ground, which was only enclosed by a defensive wall between the end of the 9th and the 10th centuries. There are no evident traces of this hierarchical division at the mining site of Rocchette Pannocchieschi, either, barring the presence of huts in the higher part of the settlement⁵⁷. The only evidence that can be interpreted as showing a clearer hierarchical division is at the other mining site of Cugnano, where huts have been found at the top of the site, and a sort of small ditch, bordering the lower terrace dating to before the 10th century⁵⁸. However, we cannot extrapolate more generally from a case such as this, since it is very likely that, in the first few centuries of their existence, these small sites that arose in the vicinity of mineral deposits were part of a system of mineral exploitation that was directly controlled by public authorities, with rules that may have differed from those applying to other habitation sites.

Thus, while indicating transformations in these habitation areas, including with site expansions compared to the 7th century phases, archeological findings do not show clear signs of a hierarchical organization of space, nor a material culture rich in socially representative indicators.

This seems to indicate, in these rural areas far from the cities, a materially less incisive action by outside political players or their representatives, and, by contrast, a more incisive role on the part of the rural communities themselves. In this phase, when the urban elites gradually acquired new powers, these rural communities were probably, in a certain number of cases, protagonists in the form of free landowners, or also concession-holders, when it came to transformations within these small agglomerations of houses. However, it is likely there was some social stratification, albeit not in any accentuated form (there is little evidence for this in the material culture of these habitation sites) also within these communities, but such stratification had scant aspects in common with the physical location of the urban élites. The social rise of the diocesan élites seems to be played out on the urban scene, not in rural society. As a result, it still seems too soon for the advent in these rural areas of those symbols of power that were only present later on, and linked to a more evident hierarchy of spaces, and a resultant greater degree of organization in the way land was used. In this part of Tuscia, the shift from the Lombard kingdom to the Carolingian period was not marked by clear changes in settlement patterns. In low-lying areas, there were still many of the sites we mentioned above; upland villages certainly became more densely populated, and structured, while the only exceptions as important transformations were connected to two important secular and religious centres.

57 F. Grassi (ed.), *L'insediamento medievale*, cited n. 29.

58 J. Bruttini, G. Fichera, F. Grassi, *Un insediamento*, cited n. 29.

The first case is represented by the La Vetricella site⁵⁹. According to the excavators, the presence of 8th-9th century ceramics is evidence that this low-lying site was already established. The site features an unusual, artificially raised mound surrounded by a system of ditches that allowed it to be connected to the lake, and with access to the gulf of Follonica. Vetricella is a particular kind of site, and its exceptional, anomalous nature, when compared to all the other villages in this area, is attested to above all by finds from the later settlement phase, corresponding to the 9th and later 10th centuries. In this latter phase, indeed, there was a large building in the middle of the mound, and the material culture of this period identifies this site as mainly having a vocation for trade and commerce, as well as overseeing productive activities attested to by the presence of numerous pieces of metal slag. Vetricella is strategically positioned at the end of a valley within the original royal estates. Here, the river Pecora valley gave the mining areas a natural outlet to the sea. It is thus plausible to suggest that the site was established with a view to a more complex public strategy for mining and trading in local resources, especially mineral resources, which were subsequently transported by sea to Lucca, setting out from the nearly maritime ports⁶⁰.

The presence of royal lands in this same area is still attested to in 937, for that matter, as can be inferred from the dower of Hugo of Provence to his wife, Berta, and their daughter Adelaide. Together with other *curtes* in northern Italy and in northern Tuscia, they received a gift of property in the area near Vetricella, called Cornino in the documents. As recently underlined⁶¹, this deed had a highly political significance, since the *curtes* that were made over involved lands that were strategic for the kingdom, just like the Cornino lands, situated inside an area of possible transit also for metals used for coinage, needed to make silver coins.

Excavation at the S. Pietro in Palazzuolo monastery, standing on the slopes of the hill where the castle of Monteverdi is later attested, have revealed that, in the 9th century, a large corridor abutted by long buildings was renovated⁶². This corridor (fig. 6), comparable to corridors at the S. Vincenzo al Volturno monastery in terms of its size and monumentality, was part of an architectural system that probably overlooked an open space, where there was a large well, found below approximately three metres of secondary deposit. The first decades of the 9th cen-

59 L. Marasco, *La Castellina*, cited n. 35; *Id.*, *Archeologia dei paesaggi*, cited n. 40.

60 G. Bianchi, *Lords, communities*, cited n. 42.

61 G. Vignodelli, *Berta e Adelaide: la politica di consolidamento del potere regio di Ugo di Arles*, in T. Lazzari (ed.), *Il patrimonio delle regine: beni del fisco e politica regia tra IX e X secolo, Reti Medievali*, 13, 2, 2012.

62 G. Bianchi, G. Fichera, *Scavi nel monastero altomedievale di S. Pietro in Palazzuolo*, in *Bollettino Soprintendenza Archeologica della Toscana*, 3, 2007, p. 435-440.



Figure 6. Monteverdi M.mo: corridor of monastery during excavation.

ture were marked, for this monastery by extra-regional contacts with the most important monastic institutions of the day⁶³. Moreover, it is plausible that S. Pietro in Palazzuolo was one of the Carolingian royal monasteries, although there is no documentary confirmation of this. This moment in time, the start of the 9th century, was also when the *Vita Valfredi* was compiled. This was designed to construct the cult of the founder and the first abbot, within a plausible context of development of the monastery which is also evidenced materially. From documents, we know that, as well as possessing a string of properties in other parts of Tuscia, the monastery also had lands in its own district. These included the *curtis* of Castagneto (the location of which can be identified with the modern-day town) close to which the site of Donoratico has been excavated, a site plausibly believed to have stood within the monastery's holdings. At this site, excavations have revealed, in the 8th and 9th century phases, the presence of huts, although these are associated with a habitation phase that was not substantial⁶⁴. It is thus possible, in the case of Monteverdi, to suggest that it followed a process of establishment similar to that

63 R. Francovich, G. Bianchi, *Prime indagini*, cited n. 31.

64 R. Francovich, G. Bianchi, *Capanne e muri*, cited n. 56.

of S. Vincenzo al Volturno, a process focused very much on the monastery site itself, in the Carolingian period, and only later concentrated on restructuring its rural holdings, which were later transformed into castles⁶⁵. The material evidence from Donoratico relating to the end of the 9th and the 10th centuries, which we shall discuss below, incline us toward this interpretation.

Apart from these aforementioned two cases, in the 8th century and in the Carolingian period, compared with the Tuscan model, there are therefore no clearly visible signs at sites in this area of a highly structured social hierarchy, as the outcome of a localized intervention by the urban elites that were beginning to appear.

Linking the points made by Wickham to our area, this Carolingian-style rural world with villages linked both to public power and the large-scale landowners, and also to the nascent diocesan élites but not necessarily dominated by these powers, was the salient feature of this small sector of the rural world⁶⁶. This took place in an extremely changing historical and site context, including as it did, within it, cases such as the aforementioned case of Paterno, but also with episodes of mobility from one place of residence to another, attested to in the documents, and symptomatic of a status that cannot be placed in relation to the local people being very much subordinate to possible new, coercive powers⁶⁷. The picture provided by material data and documentary data depicts the local communities as still being pre-eminent, and becoming the driving force for transformations at their own habitation sites, albeit within a delicate and complex relationship with the old powers and the new rising powers, which led to more or less successful outcomes, and determined the success (or otherwise) of local societies, and of the sites themselves. The gradual expansion of upland concentrated nuclei is perhaps due to the activities of these communities, which were also able to exploit the local territory, adopting techniques of cultivation that seem to mark continuity with the Roman world⁶⁸. These communities prob-

65 K. Bowes, K. Francis, R. Hodges, *Between text and territory. Survey and excavations in the terra of San Vincenzo al Volturno*, London, 2006.

66 C. Wickham, *L'eredità di Roma. Storia d'Europa dal 400 al 1000 d.C.*, Bari, 2014, p. 605-606.

67 R. Farinelli, *I castelli nella Toscana*, cited n. 38, p. 87-89.

68 This is what emerges, for example, from an analysis of the cereals contained in the 8th and early 9th century silos at Rocca degli Alberti. Here we find a prevalence of wheat, indicative of a high level of agricultural specialization. This allows us to suggest a sort of continuity in the typical crop farming systems of the Roman world, V. Pescini, *Analisi carpologiche: studio dei contesti produttivi e di stoccaggio altomedievali a Rocca degli Alberti (Monterotondo M.mo)*, Master's degree thesis, Università degli Studi di Siena, 2012-13.

ably formed the locomotive for development of this area, including its economic development. As a result, this area saw the most evident changes in the post-Carolingian period. Thus, the role of these micro-societies and their actions, in this interpretation of the material evidence, would take on more importance than in the past, as has also been found more recently in the case of other areas, especially in northern Europe⁶⁹. The action of the leading powers and authorities (the state, the bishop of Lucca, the monastery of Monteverdi M.mo) led, in any case, to a general overarching control over much of the society in this area, thanks in part to the use of property concessions, as is well documented in the case of the bishop of Lucca⁷⁰. There is an undoubted tendency by these supreme powers to control some of coastal areas, where we find a *curtis* belonging to the bishop of Lucca, properties that came under the Monteverdi monastery, and above all possible sites connected with the public power, although we are yet to fully understand how lively their trading contacts were, by comparison with general Tyrrhenian traffic. The presence of strong church and public powers in this area, with their associated trading activities, may also have influenced a certain complexity of the material culture, given that, between the 7th and mid-11th centuries, we see here the activities of specialist pottery workshops distributing products to some local sites, as well as the presence of small industrial workshops supplying several sites, alongside more common domestic production, within the sites themselves⁷¹. Accordingly, ecclesiastical power and the development of centralized low-lying and hill-top hamlets were not two opposing and distinct elements, as claimed under the Tuscan model⁷², but two sides of the same coin. Indeed, it was above all from relations with these powers that the diocesan élite groups strengthened their position, élite groups that were the protagonists of the major transformations at the end of the 9th to 10th centuries.

For in this period, in the area under consideration, we find evident large-scale interventions that, in some cases, changed almost radically the way the previous upland nuclei were organized. The end of the 9th century, and the 10th century, saw the construction in Donoratico (fig. 7) of a massive stone outer walls, and the enclosure, also in stone, of an internal portion of the site connected to

69 R. Hodges, *Dark Age economics. A new audit*, London, 2012; C. Loveluck, *Northwest Europe in the Early Middle Ages, c. ad 600-1150. A comparative archaeology*, Cambridge, 2013.

70 R. Farinelli, *I castelli nella Toscana*, cited n. 38.

71 The presence of trade networks, and contacts with urban centres such as Lucca, especially in relation to mining silver-bearing minerals, could justify the presence, for example, at the site of Rochette Pannochieschi, of some particularly valuable finds (F. Grassi (ed.), *L'insediamento*, cited n. 29).

72 R. Francovich, *Changing structures*, cited n. 13.



Figure 7. Reconstruction of site of Donoratico between end of 9th and 10th century (graphics: Mirko Buono).

the presence of a residential tower, as well as the construction of a small church on the top of the site⁷³; at Monterotondo M.mo a large-scale stone boundary wall delimited the area occupied earlier by the silos, above which a granary was built⁷⁴. At both sites, the presence of installations for mixing cement (fig. 8), along with those found at important construction sites in northern Europe, suggests the presence of highly skilled construction workers, who did not come from the local technical context. They were probably brought in to these sites by a high-ranking authority that it is believed, with good reason, may be identifiable with the monastery of Monteverdi. The site of Monterotondo M.mo may also be connected to that monastery in this phase⁷⁵. At Campiglia we have just now recognized evidence of a hill-top village composed of a nucleus of huts (fig. 9), similar to the situation at Suvereto⁷⁶. At Scarlino in this phase the hill-top church was built, and the outer, stone-built defensive wall, with the presence

73 G. Bianchi, N. Chiarelli, G. M. Crisci, G. Fichera, D. Miriello, *Archeologia di un cantiere curtense: il caso del castello di Donoratico tra IX e X secolo. Sequenze stratigrafiche e analisi archeometriche*, in *Archeologia dell'Architettura*, XVI, 2012, p. 34-50.

74 G. Bianchi, F. Grassi, *Sistemi di stoccaggio*, cited n. 30.

75 G. Bianchi, *Miscelare la calce tra lavoro manuale e meccanico. Organizzazione del cantiere e possibili tematismi di ricerca*, in *Archeologia dell'Architettura*, XVI, 2012, p. 9-18.

76 G. Bianchi (ed.), *Campiglia*, cited n. 30.

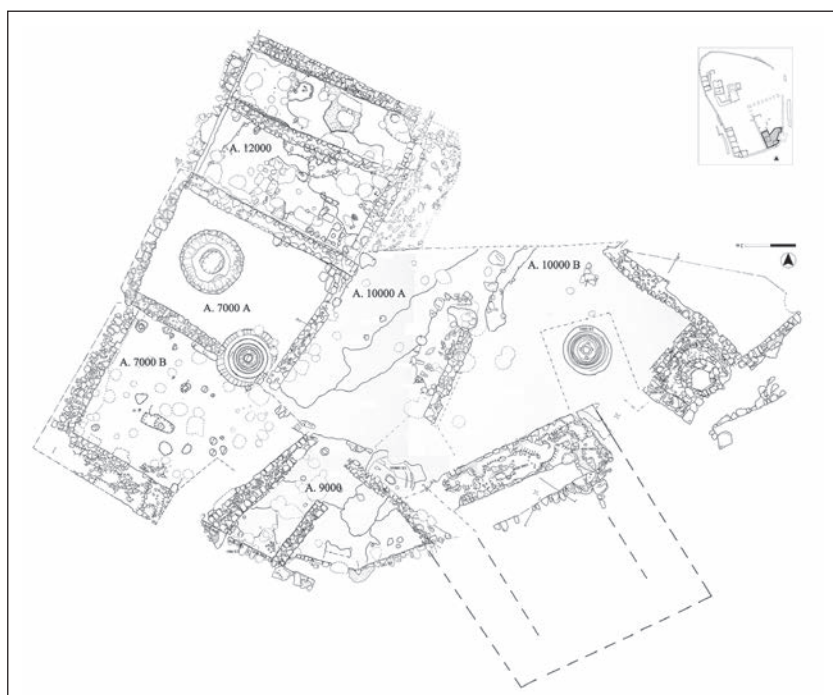


Figure 8. Donoratico: ground plan showing location of three mortar-mixing installations relating to late 9th-10th century construction work.

of a new arrangement of huts inside⁷⁷. On the low-lying area below there were, in this period, the most important material remains of the site of Vetricella⁷⁸, mentioned earlier. This existed side by side with a system of small, surrounding nuclei. A larger population is also demonstrated inside the mining site of Cugnano and Rocchette Pannocchieschi⁷⁹.

It is therefore clear that we are looking at an important reorganization of low-lying and upland sites. However, this does not correspond to a process that was uniformly linked to the same players. The individuals who provided

77 On the basis of Marasco's re-elaboration (L. Marasco, *Archeologia dei paesaggi*, cited n. 40), the activities dated in previous editions to the full Carolingian period are to be moved to this phase (late 9th century).

78 L. Marasco, *Archeologia dei paesaggi*, cited n. 40

79 M. Benvenuti, G. Bianchi, J. Bruttini, M. Buoniconti, L. Chiarantini, L. Dallai, G. Di Pasquale, A. Donati, F. Grassi, V. Pescini, *Studying the Colline Metallifere*, cited n. 36.



Figure 9. Campiglia M.ma: reconstruction of 10th century hill-top village (graphics: INK-LINK Florence). G. Bianchi (ed.), *Campiglia. Un castello*, cited n. 30.

the impetus for these transformations, which in some cases were on a truly massive scale, and therefore hard to associate with the initiative of the local communities by themselves, can be identified with the protagonists already present on the scene. The Monteverdi monastery for the sites of Donoratico and perhaps also Monterotondo M.mo, the public power perhaps for the Vericella site and perhaps also for the development seen at Cugnano and Rocchette, within the context of a common strategy for controlling the mining area. In other cases, it is possible that the representatives of the diocesan élite from Lucca, already mentioned, were beginning to take action on this stage, meaning that this élite group formed a stronger, double connection with these lands, perhaps promoting or backing the development of some sites, as in the case of Campiglia M.ma, Suvereto (later connected to one of these diocesan elite families, the Aldobrandeschi) and Scarlino (attested to as an Aldobrandeschi *curtis* at the end of the 10th century).

Such an incisive intervention by the leading political powers seems to be connected with the need to intercept local resources in a more structured way,

via a greater control over production. This may be the explanation behind the granary inside the enclosed space of Rocca degli Alberti⁸⁰ or the enclosure of the internal space at Donoratico, where it is assumed craft and manufacturing activities took place⁸¹. Thus, it is possible that, for many pre-existing communities, especially those living in places subjected to major transformations, the shift was not painless, and it certainly ushered in greater processes of increasing social hierarchy. It is difficult to say how strong this hierarchical push was, and the indicators do not seem so evident. The size of the huts in this area does not seem to reflect major social differentiation. The large hut at Donoratico, dating to this period, was used as a place for craft activities, such as spinning, while the tower overlooking the zone was probably where the person in charge of the site lived⁸². The Scarlino hut is not big enough to be clearly distinguished from the other huts. It is different from them only in possibly being longer (estimated length: around 3 mt). The finds from this structure, thought to indicate strong social hierarchy (for example, the remains of a silver pin, or a disc brooch made in Alto Adige), are likely to have circulated in an area that was partly subject to the control of public powers, and in any case marked by trade and exchange that passed through the nearby ports and harbours⁸³. At the aforementioned sites, there are no signs of social hierarchy in pottery finds or remains associated with diet. One may therefore imagine possible processes of an increasing hierarchical social organization involving the local representatives of the powers, although without radically transforming the material culture. This is indicative of the fact that, at least in our area, the city still remained the preferred place of residence of the élites, since they would certainly have determined a marked change in register of the material culture⁸⁴.

80 The Montarrenti granary itself, previously dated to the full Carolingian era, under the excavation chronology reconstructed by Cantini, could actually be dated to the later 9th century, and be associated with this transformation phase (F. Cantini, *Il castello di Montarrenti*, cited n. 51, p. 30).

81 The large amount of «scattered glaze» pottery, still unpublished, found in this masonry-built internal space, would suggest the possible presence of a pottery kiln, although no archaeological remains of this have been found.

82 The almost total destruction of this tower has not allowed excavation of its internal stratigraphy, or possible recovery of finds attesting to the material culture of its inhabitants. However, no clear markers of social hierarchy have been found in the collapse and abandonment layers around the building or near the hut (or in its habitation strata).

83 For a discussion of how amounts of valuable finds in areas near trading points have often been overestimated by archaeologists, in support of the hypothesis that they are clear markers of social hierarchy, see most recently C. Loveluck, *Northwest Europe*, cited n. 69, p. 55, 73.

84 On the other hand, a strong sign of power can be seen in the large stone building at the Vetricella site, but, as we have written on several occasions, while its suggested link with public

Thus, with regard to the Tuscan model, the biggest transformations in this area seem to be delayed from the Carolingian period to the following period, also being linked to the political climate connected with the new kings of Italy, in which conditions were created that were more favourable for the first processes of privatization of certain rights. The most incisive action by the superior powers seems to be visible in the more wide-scale planning, or re-planning, of sites, with special attention upland sites, within a policy of greater exploitation of local natural resources which, rather, implied the formation of a hierarchy of sites rather than a social hierarchy (one need only think of the difference in scale of the sites of Donoratico and Campiglia M.ma, figs. 7-9). The fact that urban élites became more established was, thus, linked to a structured relationship with the estate holdings, but without this involving a strong and coercive presence of these individuals at the sites themselves. However, it is clear that the individuals put in charge of locally managing the interests should be recognized as that new social stratum which, during the 11th century, formed the ranks of the *milites* and *visdomini* of the future lords of the castle.

With the construction of new stone-built outer walls, these site transformations can be interpreted as traces of the first castles, albeit inside an economic system that was basically unchanged since the previous periods, featuring tithes and agricultural rents that had probably crystallized.

As of the mid-11th century, with the collapse of the Marca di Tuscia, it was the combination of these outmoded forms of land exploitation, now unable to pursue greater productivity for farmers, and the absence of central state powers, able to ensure economic support for the now-formed urban aristocracies, which led to urban elites becoming physically widespread in and around this area⁸⁵. This process took place especially between the end of the 11th century and the first half of the 12th century, and had, as a tangible result, the construction of hundreds of castles throughout the wider region. As in our particular area, in most cases these were established on top of previous early medieval sites. It was only at this moment in time, also following the widespread recognition of seigneurial rights, that the signs of the élites became clearly legible not only in the material culture but, above all, in the presence of the new seigneurial stone-built residences,

powers, and with the system of processing and distributing ferrous and silver-bearing minerals, especially, can be corrected, it is only natural that in this period, also marked by a greater demand for these products, there should be greater incentives for control over it (L. Marasco, *Archeologia dei paesaggi*, cited n. 40).

85 G. Bianchi, S. Collavini, *Risorse e competizione per le risorse nella Toscana dell'XI secolo*, in *Atti del convegno La compétition dans les sociétés du haut Moyen Âge*, Roma 3-5 ottobre 2013, forthcoming.

which were erected at the highest point of the sites. This was the point of arrival of a long process involving the formation of private-sector powers which was able to physically come into being also thanks to the fact the élites got constantly richer in the previous centuries, thanks to a double connection with the activities of rural communities. Medium- to high-level élites, newly-formed or long-standing, took part in this process, and the castle became a necessary symbol for competing in the social and economic spheres, decreeing the definitive success of upland sites in this area, thereby crystallizing the landscape shaped by man, right up to the modern era.

The shift from public and private powers is, for that matter, clearly noticeable in the history of the sites connected to silver mining, ie sites that were most sensitive to control by the central powers.

At Rocchette Pannochieschi and Cugnano, only in the later 10th century and in the 11th century do we see signs of a seigneurial presence that led to the construction of stone-built outer walls, and a differing organization of the transformation and trade in the mineral⁸⁶. On the plain of Scarlino, where it is thought there were agglomerated settlement sites connected to trade between the coast and the hinterland, controlled by the public authority, in the 11th century we see their disappearance, or a change in their *raison d'être*, as in the case of Vetricella where, in this century, the large building was covered over with new stratigraphies, and the site was abandoned once and for all in the 12th century⁸⁷.

From this time on, there began a new history in which the main protagonists were the local seigneurships and the cities, with their recently-formed *comuni*, within a more or less dialectical relationship, and a highly complex relationship, that led to very different outcomes between one part of Tuscany and another.

4. *The strength of the Tuscan model*

More recent research, and the updating of data, are defining key historical shifts and site transformations for this area. Although these are peculiar to an area on the margins of the main urban centres, they have more points in common with the rest of central and northern Italy.

Between the 7th and 10th centuries, we see here, and elsewhere, greater variability in settlement patterns compared to previous assumptions. The upland nuclei that formed as of the 7th century on pre-existing sites, or as virgin sites, alternated with population nuclei on low-lying land both immediately inland from the coast and deeper in the hinterland. Many of these latter sites, some

86 G. Bianchi, *Lords, communities*, cited n. 42.

87 L. Marasco, *La Castellina*, cited n. 35.

of which arose in continuity with previous Late Antique sites, probably stood within royal estates or within the holdings of important political players, and their location was connected with the exploitation of resources connected both to coastal wetlands and to open plains and the hinterland. The strategic position of some of these sites along main road and river arteries, connecting the inland region to the coast, allows us to link these settlements also to the production cycle of silver-bearing minerals present in the inland hills, and to their transportation by sea to Lucca, within a system of public control of these operations. The coast, dotted with small landing-stations and two Roman ports that were still operative throughout the early medieval period, therefore played an important connecting role between this part of the rural world and the main city that was looked to, Lucca, being marked in these centuries by a lively level of trade and exchange that can be clearly glimpsed from the written sources, but that still have little evidence attesting to them in the physical record. This is because, up until today, most research has focused on the inland area. The interpretation of the physical remains leads one to imagine, between the 8th and the 9th centuries, the existence of communities that were not particularly large, but well-organized, in the exploitation of agricultural resources and woodlands and pasture, within a natural landscape, especially along the coast, that was gradually more characterized by forest growth compared with the late Imperial period⁸⁸. The archaeological record for these communities, linked to large land-owners or the public authorities, does not show signs of great internal social differentiation. This confirms the probable absence in these places of representatives of the major powers in society, who still resided in urban contexts throughout the Carolingian period.

Relations with the latter powers, however, allowed the communities themselves to probably implement gradual internal changes to their habitation sites, in line with a process that has analogies with the small community that operated at the site of Nogara⁸⁹, which we discussed in our second paragraph. These communities, also active at mining sites, were the locomotive force for the development of this area. This led, as of the end of the 9th century, to a greater interference on the part of the higher powers in the management of agricultural resources, with the gradual rise and localization of socially more significant individuals, in a way similar to the situation at the Modena-area site of S. Agata, at Crocetta⁹⁰. The

88 G. Di Pasquale, M. Buonincontri, E. Allevato, A. Saracino, *Human-derived landscape changes on the northern Etruria (western Italian coast) between Ancient Roman times and the Late Middle Ages*, in *The Holocene*, 24, 2014, p. 1491-1502.

89 F. Saggioro (ed.), *Nogara*, cited n. 24.

90 S. Gelichi, M. Librenti, M. Marchesini (eds.), *Un villaggio nella pianura*, cited n. 25.

formation of more structured population sites as of the start of the 10th century, identifiable with the first castles, connected to more or less latent forms of the exercise of private powers, has very many comparisons between this area and the rest of central northern Italy, especially with the process in which eminent political figures were the lead figures in these initial changes, figures who were later followed by forms of seigneurship having a lesser political profile. The greater encouragement and rationalization of agricultural resources, connected to this initial form of castle formation, coincided, in the 11th century, with the start of olive tree cultivation, followed by chestnuts for use as food⁹¹. The 11th century represented here, as elsewhere, the interface between an economy that was still linked to the system of *curtes*, that was very widespread in the area under examination, and the full establishment of the seigneurial powers in the 12th century, which led not only to the definitive success of upland sites, but also to several methods of exploitation of the same resources, which are yet to be fully understood⁹².

Compared to the original Tuscan model, this recent interpretation highlights a number of points that were previously absent from the model, or that were part of a hazy background: the variability of settlement patterns at least up until the threshold of the 11th century, with a prevalence, but not a predominance, of upland sites; a strong role played by ecclesiastical authorities (monastic, and the bishopric) in moulding settlement patterns, and the associated political and social dynamics; an important role played by public authorities, at least in exploiting the important resource of silver-bearing minerals, up until the 11th century; an important role by the rural communities themselves, and the small rural elites, in the development of upland habitation centres and in the exploitation of agricultural resources between the 8th and 9th centuries; a stronger presence on the part of urban or local elites, with related signs of hierarchization, as of the end of the 9th century, and therefore no longer in the Carolingian period.

Despite this, the strength of the Tuscan model, as formulated by Francovich, and which can still be applied successfully to sites in the Siena area⁹³, remains unchanged. This is because it is founded on highly important achievements: having physically proved, thanks to the ceaseless promotion of archeological research at a large number of sites, that which was only a hypothesis for Conti, namely the constant pre-existence of upland early medieval hamlets underneath castles dating to the middle centuries of the medieval period, which were a vital prerequisite for the formation of local seigneurships; having identified in agglomer-

91 G. Di Pasquale, M. Buonincontri, E. Allevato, A. Saracino, *Human-derived landscape*, cited n. 88.

92 G. Bianchi, S. Collavini, *Risorse e competizione*, cited n. 85.

93 M. Valenti (ed.), *Miranduolo*, cited n. 15.

ated settlements the peculiar and successful aspect of settlement dynamics ever since the early medieval period; having given material and archeological findings prominent importance over documentary sources, especially discussing and putting forward new hypotheses concerning the pattern of the curtes system; having highlighted the way in which the socio-economic aspect, linked to the exploitation of natural resources, and not just the political and institutional aspect, was at the foundation of processes of transformation of seigneurial powers; having drawn up a historical reconstruction of rural areas for a period (8th-11th centuries) for which there are still no such large-scale interpretations anywhere in Italy, interpretations based on such a wealth of material data; having sought constantly to inform the public at large of these findings, forcefully promoting various kinds of development and promotional projects; and having set in motion a debate, and put together an exceptional basic interpretative key to be adopted, debated, or supplemented.

Without the formulation of the model, this and many other articles would never have been written. Moreover, the ability of the model to generate ideas is one of the great legacies left to us by Riccardo Francovich.

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THE ECONOMY OF ITALY AND SPAIN IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

Ten years ago, the archaeology of early medieval Italy was far more developed than that of Spain. It was significant in major urban excavations, particularly in northern Italy, and also in rural excavations and field surveys. Although there were here some major concentrations – Riccardo Francovich's Tuscany was by far the best studied region of Italy, a model for the whole Mediterranean – it was also the case that there was good work on nearly every Italian region, with the Marche, Umbria and Basilicata the only major blank zones. In Spain, the regions with good work were rather less numerous; the east coast and Andalucía dominated, with work only just beginning in most inland regions, with some significant exceptions. Today, Tuscany is still the type-region for Italy, with a more complex patterning than ever, but there has been new and important systematic work in (in particular) the Veneto and Romagna in the north, in Lazio in the centre and in Sicily in the south, which offers new models, as the articles in this book clearly show. Spain, however, has transformed its archaeological base, and, although some of the major areas of study ten years ago are still the same, particularly the Valencia-Alicante-Albacete region and Andalucía, new ones are now powerful, such as Álava, and some parts of the north-west; these allow us to recognise a much more developed and authoritative set of regional variations than the tentative ones which could earlier be set out. Again, this is reflected in the articles in this book – not least in their confidence of approach. The panorama of studies is new and different; not much of what is in these pages, in Italy and Spain alike but especially in Spain, could have been said a decade ago. It is not that every new development is fully reflected in the pages of this book, as we shall see; but we have enough here to allow us to see what has happened to our understanding of the changing economies of each of Italy and Spain in the last decade: what new things we can say, and what new tasks face us, as we try to build a composite picture of each of these very variegated territories, and as we try to compare them.

What I want to do here, very summarily of course, is to sketch out what the picture was of each of Italy and Spain was ten years ago, and then to offer my own view of the additions to that picture, in a comparative framework, adding

New Directions in Early Medieval European Archaeology: Spain and Italy compared, ed. by Sauro GELICHI and Richard HODGES, Turnhout, 2015 (*Haut Moyen Âge*, 24), p. 335-345.

a few critical remarks. Riccardo, I think, whose methodological and scientific example, energy and enthusiasm, and essential practical advice directly inspired all of the authors of this volume, would have wanted to do the same.

In the early 2000s, the picture we had of early medieval Italy was of acute regional and micro-regional variation. The focus of work was on what happened when the political structures of the western Roman empire broke up, which happened in Italy quite rapidly in the mid to late sixth century, with the Gothic wars and the confusion of the Lombard partial conquest of the peninsula. It was fairly clear that in most of Italy the economy became simpler, not just in the sixth century, but progressively across the next two centuries as well, with a low point in the eighth century; but also that each region went its separate way, with very little communication between them. Broadly, the north of Italy seemed to have a fairly simple exchange economy by then, although basic levels of urbanism survived in the network of Roman cities in the Po plain (with greater crisis in the eastern Veneto and parts of Piemonte). Tuscany was similar, but its patterns of exchange and openness to the outside world were less reduced – and here we had already the evidence of new hill-top settlements, studied by Francovich's Siena school, which showed a level of locally-based autonomous reorganisation by the seventh century. Lazio and the south seemed to have more complex economies, something which was very visible in Rome itself, notwithstanding its precipitous population decline from imperial-period levels, but also in the networks of ceramics circulating along all the southern coasts (especially Campania, Calabria and Puglia), which reached inland at some points too; but, outside Rome and Naples, perhaps with less focus on cities. What happened after 850/900 was, however, not wholly understood in most places, except in southern Tuscany, where the development of fortifications and of a visible hierarchy inside rural settlements, a process of signorialisation that is to say, was already extensively studied. How Italy got from a set of fragmented and materially simple (even if also urbanised) regions to the vibrant and complex economy of 1200 or so was almost totally unclear¹.

Spain, for its part, could be seen to have had quite as regionalised an economy, but in this case one largely inherited from the Roman empire, in which the interior of Spain was never as fully integrated with the Mediterranean world as most or all of Italy was; this regionalisation was furthered by the political disunity of the peninsula for most of the period between 450 and 580. Inland Spain was already moving towards a much simpler economy before 500, earlier than Italy, although

¹ See the bibliography in C. Wickham, *Framing the early middle ages*, Oxford, 2005, p. 481-8, 644-56, 728-41; for a key synthesis for Tuscany, see M. Valenti, *L'insediamento altomedievale nelle campagne toscane*, Firenze, 2004.

the coast remained closely integrated with the Mediterranean until the Visigothic conquest of Cartagena in the 620s. The century and more of Visigothic unity and a relatively strong state did not, however, reverse the regionalisation of the economy; rather the opposite. Ceramic production was highly fragmented by 700, with the abandonment of wheel-thrown pottery in some micro-regions, something hardly ever seen in Italy. Urbanism remained strong in some places (perhaps stronger than in Italy), particularly parts of Andalucía and neighbouring centres such as Mérida, and new cities were founded such as El Tolmo de Minateda and Recópolis, but north of Toledo it was by now notably weak, and stayed so for some centuries. The Arab conquest was hardly visible in material terms, although it was already becoming clear that after 850 or so, in al-Andalus but not yet in the north, the scale, quality and regional distribution of ceramic productions were increasing substantially. The tenth century was generally recognised as being a high-point for Andalusi urbanism, as shown in the then recently-excavated western suburbs of caliphal Córdoba and also impressive palaces such as the long-known Medina Azahara, but the countryside of that period was not well-studied, apart from some field surveys in the south, and the study of public or collective fortifications (*ḥuṣūn*) west of Valencia and south of Granada².

What the research of the last decade has done is not to change these broad pictures, which indeed I think will remain valid for the foreseeable future. Rather, it has deepened our knowledge of them, extending them, duly nuanced, to more regions; and also, above all, it has allowed us to focus in on some elements of the picture which were not fully understood a decade ago, so as to create a richer picture of some specific and significant developments, not least in the second half of the early middle ages, less studied previously. Many of these recent developments are discussed in the articles in this book, so their importance will already be apparent to the reader³. Some are not: advances in the archaeology of exchange are mostly not covered here (see below); nor is the archaeology of the end of Roman villas⁴ or of churches⁵, or that of major type-

2 See the bibliography in C. Wickham, *Framing*, cited n. 1, p. 488-95, 656-65, 741-58; for *ḥuṣūn* see A. Bazzana, P. Cressier, P. Guichard, *Les châteaux ruraux d'al-Andalus*, Madrid, 1988. One significant survey is that of J. C. Castillo Armenteros, *La Campiña de Jaén en época emiral (s.VIII-X)*, Jaén, 1998.

3 For Italy see also S. Gelichi (ed.), *Quarant'anni di archeologia medievale in Italia: Archeologia medievale, numero speciale*, Firenze, 2014.

4 See for Spain A. Chavarría Arnau, *El final de las villae en Hispania (siglos IV-VII D.C.)*, Turnhout, 2007.

5 See for an Italian survey V. Fiocchi Nicolai, *Archeologia medievale e archeologia cristiana*, in S. Gelichi (ed.), *Quarant'anni*, cited n. 3, p. 21-32.

sites such as El Tolmo or Medina Azahara (both known beforehand, as already stated, but by now far more fully studied) or, now, Toledo⁶, or some important regions with a large amount of new work, both urban and rural, such as Lazio (again, see below). But the crystallisation of our knowledge of Andalusī archaeology is very visible in the contribution here by Sonia Gutiérrez; the varied patterns of urban development in both northern and southern Spain can be seen in her article and those of Antonio Malpica and Avelino Gutiérrez; the importance of the new work on the northern Adriatic coast is clear in the articles of Sauro Gelichi and Richard Hodges; the same is true for Sicily (Alessandra Molinari) and Álava (Juan Antonio Quirós); and the renewal of the problematic of rural settlement is set out by both Quirós and Giovanna Bianchi. I do not wish here to repeat what each of these authors says about their field – their own articles do that admirably already. What I want to do, rather, is to discuss some of what I see as the implications of that work. Here I will add in some observations about exchange patterns, particularly in Italy, and also the regional case of Lazio. These do, indeed, seem to me to be representative of the key directions of travel of the last decade.

Recent excavations in Comacchio and Venice, and the rethinking of the history of the deltaic and lagunar coast from Ravenna up to Grado, have transformed our understanding of what was going on in northern Italy in the eighth and ninth centuries. Discussions of what was going on along this coast have characterised some of the most significant conferences of recent years, and the view, argued by Gelichi here, that both Comacchio and Venice can usefully be seen as *emporía*, i.e. operating along the lines of the new towns of the North Sea in the same period, is a powerful one, which I would accept, and indeed have accepted⁷. These two towns offer important case studies in what it took to become a city in early medieval Italy, in that the first failed to do so and the second succeeded, but not in all respects at once: exchange vitality, administrative and ecclesiastical centrality, urban planning, demography and finally monu-

6 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *Histoire et archéologie de la transition en al-Andalus: les indices matériels de l'islamisation à Tudmir*, in D. Valerian (ed.), *Islamisation et arabisation de l'Occident musulman médiéval (VI^e-XII^e siècle)*, Paris, 2011, p. 195-246; A. Vallejo, *Madīnat al-Zabrā'*, Sevilla, 2004; J. M. Rojas Rodríguez-Malo, A. J. Gómez Laguna, *Intervención arqueológica en la Vega Baja de Toledo*, in L. Caballero Zoreda et al. (eds.), *El siglo VII frente al siglo VII. Arquitectura*, Madrid, 2009, p. 45-89.

7 See S. Gelichi (ed.), *Comacchio e il suo territorio tra la tarda antichità e l'alto medio evo*, in *Uomini, territorio e culto dall'antichità all'alto medioevo*, Comacchio, 2007, p. 365-689; S. Gelichi, R. Hodges (eds.), *From one sea to another*, Turnhout, 2012; cf. my own conclusion there, p. 503-511, with some comments on definitions, and also below, n. 11.

mentality came in in almost the opposite order to the Italian norms of the period elsewhere. The development of these two towns, and by implication others (and the continuing exchange role of Ravenna as well), also however poses the question of whom, actually, was this exchange for. The cities of inland northern Italy, although politically central and – although often polyfocal as Hodges stresses – in many cases large by early medieval standards, do not seem for the most part to have had much access to Mediterranean goods. This is so even if there are more eighth- and ninth-century globular amphorae found in them than used to be the case, and Gelichi's citation of smaller amphorae in Nonantola is also suggestive that different containers may have been used to push goods inland. This sort of analysis has recently been generalised with some important conclusions by Federico Cantini, who shows that there was actually, as it now appears, a fall-off of amphora imports into inland northern Italy in the ninth century and later, although it is also the case that local ceramic productions increased in complexity and geographical range in the same period⁸. The point here is threefold. First, the scale of interregional, and even intraregional, trade which has so far been identified was not actually huge before 1000, even though it was by now regularly greater than that visible around 700. Second, the role of the ports in it, and imported goods themselves, was not preeminent; economic development was based on internal exchange above all, as it almost always is. But, third, what happened in the ports, so particularly dependent on exchange as they were until Venice became a political centre in its own right, is nonetheless a good proxy for gaining a sense that *something* was happening; and also in determining what the pacing of economic change was. The causes of the rapid upturn of exchange and urbanism in the centuries after 1000 in northern Italy should not be, and is not, the main concern of scholars studying the previous period, but it is a legitimate thing to study all the same, and we are beginning for the first time to get a sense of how it might have worked. This is where the work done on Comacchio and Venice is so important: both as a sign of local vitality and as a proxy, an *indicatore indiretto*, for activity elsewhere, which previously we had little or no understanding of.

Sicily is much the same in these respects, but perhaps till more so. Ten years ago it was a blank on the archaeological map after about 450, with the exception of a handful of rural sites; as to urban archaeology, all we had was rumours about unpublished finds in Syracuse (and they stay as rumours, sadly). Today, the density and interest of archaeology there is notable; among others, Catania, Piazza Armerina, Agrigento, Palermo add to the list, as Molinari shows here with a full bibliog-

8 F. Cantini, *Produzioni ceramiche ed economie in Italia centro-settentrionale*, in M. Valenti, C. Wickham (eds.), *Italia, 888-962: una svolta?*, Turnhout, 2013, p. 341-64.

raphy, and we must also include Malta, whose startling finds are a proxy for Sicily's external relations too⁹. A story-line for Sicily's economic and settlement history can now be constructed for this period, as was impossible before. There are plenty of problematic points still – the notable lack of relationship, for example, between the apparently community-focussed agro-towns of the archaeologists, and the apparently fragmented societies on the enormous *massae* of the papacy around 600, as shown in the letters of Gregory the Great¹⁰. But there is now material which we can deal with on the island. And this is where the parallelism with Venice comes in: it is easy to see why this matters for the history of the island, which was also the largest and richest in the Mediterranean; but Sicily is also the central point for all Mediterranean exchange in every period, if there is any exchange for it to centre, so it too is a proxy. In that context, it is important to stress, as was hard to stress a decade ago, the network of finds of globular amphorae in the Ionian sea, which linked Malta, eastern Sicily and the Terra d'Otranto with western Greece – and by extension north-west to Rome, north to Venice as we have just seen, and east to the Aegean. It is indeed likely that at least some of the vitality of Comacchio and Venice in the eighth and ninth centuries simply derived from an exchange motor situated rather further south, in core Byzantine territories. I have elsewhere argued for the centrality of the Ionian sea for the Byzantine empire in this period, using these amphorae as a guide, so I will not repeat myself here¹¹. But what recent work is now also beginning to show is the sharp shift in orientation which marks the next stage in Sicilian history, marginalising the east and privileging the west. It becomes clear from the Palermo finds, cited by Molinari, how closely Arab-ruled Sicily in the tenth century was by now linked to Tunisia again, after three centuries of relative distance, with the importation into western Sicily of intensive agricultural practices (irrigation, sugar) which had previously only been known in the southern Mediterranean, and, once again, north-south ceramic links, replacing the east-west ones of the previous period.

The bounce visible in the Palermitan economy in the tenth century has little visible parallel in north-central Italy in the same period. Like the Ionian economy of the previous two centuries, it brings into focus the fact that a tax-raising state, as both the Byzantines and successive Arab dynasties had, was capable of generat-

9 B. Bruno, N. Cutajar, *Imported amphorae as indicators of economic activity in early medieval Malta*, in D. Michaelides, P. Pergola, E. Zanini (eds.), *The insular system of the early Byzantine Mediterranean*, Oxford, 2013, p. 15–30.

10 Gregory the Great, *Registrum epistolarum*, in P. Ewald, L. M. Hartmann (eds.), *Monumenta Germaniae historica, Epistolae*, I–II, Berlin, 1887–99, esp. 1.42, 2.38, 13.37.

11 See the conclusion to J.-M. Martin, A. Peters-Custot, V. Prigent (eds.), *L'héritage byzantin en Italie (VI^e-XII^e siècle)*, III, Roma, 2015.

ing far greater concentrations of wealth, and thus demand, and thus agricultural and artisanal innovation and exchange, than did land-based states such as the Kingdom of Italy in the north. The economic activity visible in Palermo in this period has partial equivalents only in one central-northern Italian city, Rome¹²; and our attempts to develop our understanding of the Roman economy are made all the more urgent by the realisation that this single, even if large, city, with only a regional hinterland and no tax-raising base, can be compared with the great fiscal centres of the tenth century, Constantinople, Cairo and Córdoba as well as Palermo. But it also makes more difficult another old question: about the extent to which the commercial upturn of the central medieval Mediterranean was really dominated by north Italian cities. North Italian archeology by now gives us a better idea of the structural bases of the eventual upturn there, as we have just seen. I would add, although it is outside the period of this book, that central medieval rural archaeology, which shows a real material change only in the twelfth century in north-central Italy, while putting in doubt the traditional dating of the upturn, at least as it transmitted outwards to the countryside, at least shows how that transmission worked materially¹³. But whether, and how far, and why, it is the case that the north came to outmatch the south in the development of this upturn is an important task for the future, and Sicily is one of the prime locations for the resolution of these problems – as is also Rome, and, I hope in the future, Naples and some of the central-northern cities themselves too.

Turning to Spain: what is very visible in Sonia Gutiérrez's article here, as also in her other recent syntheses of her own research and that of others¹⁴, is the remarkable shift from a fairly simple and fragmented economic system in al-Andalus in the eighth century to a tenth-century (and later) economic system which seems to be productively sophisticated, integrated in exchange terms, and capable of targeted interventions both in the countryside (irrigation, the planning of *huṣūn*) and cities (a widespread monumentality, with craftsmanship of some sophistication, which was also borrowed, it can be added, by church-builders in the north¹⁵). We knew this in its broad lines a decade ago, but the extent

12 See for surveys R. Meneghini, R. Santangeli Valenzani, *Roma nell'altomedioevo*, Roma, 2004; C. Wickham, *Roma medievale*, Roma, 2013, p. 145-220; A. Molinari et al. (eds.), *L'archeologia della produzione a Roma, secoli V-XV*, Roma, 2015.

13 See above all the articles collected in A. Molinari (ed.), *Mondi rurali d'Italia, in Archeologia medievale*, XXXVII, 2010, p. 11-281.

14 See for example S. Gutiérrez Lloret, *La mirada del otro*, in A. Molinari et al. (eds.), *L'archeologia della produzione*, cited n. 12.

15 See e.g. M. A. Utrero Agudo, *A finales del siglo IX e inicios del X*, in L. Caballero Zoreda et al. (eds.), *Asturias entre Visigodos y Mozárabes*, Madrid, 2012, p. 125-45.

of it, and also its pacing (a definite shift of gear after 850 or so, even though this was the period of the *fitna*), is now much clearer. It is not surprising that Molinari here looks to Spain for her major comparators. But there are differences. Sicily in 750 was, as was always likely but is now evident, more economically complex than most of al-Andalus; even if recent work on the southern suburb of Secunda shows how rapidly Córdoba was already expanding in the late eighth century, and Mérida, too, was developing fast by the early ninth¹⁶, there were too many other parts of the Arab emirate where very simple economies predominated. Conversely, although Sicily developed, probably rapidly, in the tenth century, by 1000 it was almost certainly al-Andalus which was the most complex political and economic system west of Egypt. Sicily, however, had a fiscal system all through; Arab Spain did not at its outset, and had to invent it. It was already visible in the eighth century, but early Arab fiscal structures were by no means complex, and the money available to the state was over ten times greater in the tenth (Malpica)¹⁷. This has to have prominence in our explanations for al-Andalus's economic buoyancy. Malpica stresses the dialectic between top-down political interventions and bottom-up collective protagonism when it comes to the numerous foundations of new cities in the later ninth and tenth centuries. This is important, and the stress laid on strong local communities in the last generation of historiography of both Muslim and Christian Spain is – finally – coming to influence studies elsewhere in Europe too, as Molinari among others shows. The mechanics of social and economic change will in the future be much more comprehensible as a result. But the resources of the fisc (to use a technical term which is anachronistic for al-Andalus but useful) were crucial too; and large-scale accumulations of wealth, which were in the economic systems of our period always major drivers of all economic activity, derived directly from these fiscal resources. Future structural analyses of the remarkable changes in southern Spain in the tenth century will confront the internal complexity of these economic and political relationships, as they are already beginning to do – starting from the key insights of the late Manuel Acién¹⁸ but going beyond them. They will also have

16 J. Murillo *et al.*, *Madīnat Qurtuba*, in *Cuadernos de Madīnat al-Zabrā'*, V, 2004, p. 257-90; P. Mateos Cruz, M. Alba Calzado, *De Emerita Augusta a Mérida*, in L. Caballero Zoreda, P. Mateos Cruz (eds.), *Visigodos y Omeyas*, Madrid, 2000, p. 143-68.

17 Discussed in detail in E. Manzano Moreno, *Conquistadores, emires y califas*, Barcelona, 2006, p. 293-311, the best current overall synthesis.

18 M. Acién Almansa, *Entre el Feudalismo y el Islam. 'Umar ibn Hafṣūn en los historiadores, en las fuentes y en la historia*, 2nd edn., Jaén, 1997; *Id.*, Poblamiento y fortificación en el sur de al-Andalus, *III Congreso de arqueología medieval española, Actas*, I, Oviedo, 1989, p. 137-50.

to confront the trickier question of what happened after 1000, when the Taifa kingdoms fragmented al-Andalus politically, but not – as it seems – economically; and after 1100, when the Almoravids and Almohads reunited most of the south, but Spain did not, perhaps, match the protagonism of the most active parts of the Mediterranean by then. The archaeology here tells us less so far, and it will be much needed as we move on to new problems.

When we move north into Christian Spain, however, most of what we see is new, both in urban archaeology (Avelino Gutiérrez) and the countryside (Quirós). The north-west did not see all that much of the economic upturns discussed for other regions, at least not before 1000, but we can now see that there was at least a tentatively developing urbanism, after a near-total break, by the tenth century. As for the countryside: Álava now presents itself as a model for steady rural change, even in the absence of macroeconomic transformations. It is not the only one – there is interesting work in several areas of the Cordillera Cantábrica, for example, and elsewhere too¹⁹ – but a developing critical mass of work there is coming to make it the type-region for the north. Quirós's framing of the Zaballa excavation shows again the salutary force in Spanish historiography of the imagery of rural collective action, which has animated much historical analysis in the north for some time²⁰. But his emphasis on the practical forms of signorialisation shows also the influence of the Senesi: the way a growing lordship reshaped the village, not immediately but from the eleventh century onwards (Quirós is one of the few writers here to go past 1000), is convincing and thought-provoking. Here the dialectic between lordship and community is presented in concrete terms, in ways which will, I hope, influence a document-based debate which is already powerful in this region.

Which brings us back, inevitably, to Francovich's Tuscany, and to Bianchi's innovative synthesis of the differences and similarities between Tuscany and the Po plain in the patterns of rural settlement, in the complex articulation between concentrated and dispersed settlement, and in the changes in these patterns as different regions, with different paces, moved towards the *incastellamento* process. Here the innovation lies less in the very newest work she presents for

19 A. Azcarate Garai-Olaun et al., *Arqueología de la alta edad media en el Cantábrico Oriental*, in *Actas del congreso internacional: Medio siglo de arqueología en el Cantábrico Oriental y su entorno*, Vitoria, 2009, p. 449-500; J. A. Quirós Castillo (ed.), *Vasconia en la alta edad media, 450-1000*, Vitoria, 2011; J. A. Quirós Castillo, J. M. Tejado Sebastián (eds.), *Los castillos altomedievales en el noroeste de la Península Ibérica*, Vitoria, 2012.

20 Basic works here are A. Barbero, M. Vigil, *La formación del feudalismo en la Península Ibérica*, Barcelona, 1978; S. Castellanos, I. Martín Viso, *The local articulation of central power in the north of the Iberian Peninsula (500-1000)*, in *Early Medieval Europe*, XIII, 2005, p. 1-42.

her own field of study in the Colline Metallifere – there is much, but this is Tuscany, and most of it is more than a decade old – but in the way in which she links it with work in northern Italy which is either newer or only very recently synthesised (indeed, much of this new synthesis appears only here) into a more complex model for settlement change than we have so far seen. This is the direction all rural comparative studies must go in the future, as more micro-regions become available for comparative study. Obviously, the problematic of *incastellamento* does not fit all of them (not al-Andalus, for *ḥuṣūn* were quite different); but the problematic of the changing nature, and the pervasiveness²¹, of signorial power is one which is relevant to most rural areas in most periods, and can be studied more directly by archaeologists than by all but the luckiest documentary historians. Álava certainly fits this, as we have just seen. As noted earlier, the study of signorialisation has underpinned research on concentrated sites (including, above all, fortified sites) from the beginning, not least in Tuscany, but a recognition of the different ways it actually worked on the ground is equally crucial, and newer. The degree to which lords managed in practice to dominate surpluses also fits into the macroeconomic argument which I am invoking where possible here, about the extent to which there were greater accumulations of wealth as the centuries moved on, and what relation this had to demand and thus exchange; but in practice the answer here, as becomes increasingly clear, is that it is rare that such concentrations of rural wealth are really important before 850/900²², and that their practical effect on production and exchange is often not until after 1100. This too is relevant for the wider questions about Italy's changing role in the Mediterranean, raised above.

All these directions are wholly positive. I would only take my distance, I think, from the concept of 'islamicisation' raised in the context of al-Andalus, as for me its cultural content is fuzzy at the edges, once one sets aside its primary religious meaning, which is hard to discern in excavation (except in mosques and cemeteries – and here the Pamplona excavation stands out for its clarity, even if it is not any sort of sign of the islamicisation of Navarre²³). I am not sure that irrigation is particularly 'islamic', for example, and personally I would prefer to see discussions of the undoubtedly increasing influence of north African technologies and

21 S. Carocci, *Signorie di Mezzogiorno*, Roma, 2014, p. 61-62, 464-467 and *passim*, develops this concept very effectively.

22 See, for Tuscany, M. Valenti, *Insemediamento e strutture del potere in Italia centrale: il caso toscano*, in M. Valenti, C. Wickham (eds.), *Italia, 888-962*, cited n. 8, p. 267-300.

23 M. P. De Miguel Ibáñez, *Mortui viventes docent. La maqbara de Pamplona*, in P. Sénac (ed.), *De Mahoma a Carlomagno. Los primeros tiempos (siglos VII-IX)*, Pamplona, 2013, p. 351-375.

cultural practices in both Sicily and al-Andalus more in terms of interregional influence and, as Sonia Gutiérrez puts it, homogeneity, than to attach it to the label of a religion. I am here in agreement with Molinari; but I would further add that one element of ‘islamicisation’, stressed in particular by Acién, that is to say that it brought a world in which local, lordless, communities faced the state directly, seems to me implausible if proposed as a model for all the Islamic lands of the west. A rich and strong state does not have to mean no large private landowners, even if they do not have the privatised politico-judicial rights and powers which became common in the Christian west after 1000 – you can, that is to say, have *signori* without *signorilizzazione*. The question is an empirical one: how rich were they, how locally powerful and (again) pervasive, how much in a position to re-direct and develop local settlement structures, and the patterns of demand and exchange; and one would expect this to be microregionally different, as Bianchi and Marco Valenti have shown for Tuscany, and as Quirós is showing for Álava. The wealth of the material culture of the Islamic world will, I think, soon help to make this clear in archaeological work there too; and that will then enable us, when comparing the Islamic and the Christian worlds, not just to be struck, as we increasingly have to be, by the wealth of the former by comparison with the latter before 1000, but actually to compare their internal structures too, as lords (and rulers) on the one hand and local communities (and local élites, and less organised local societies) on the other interacted, dialectically, to produce patterns of varying realities everywhere.

That is for the future. So is the next frontier, the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when the economies of the Mediterranean changed considerably (even if not always in ways that current grand narratives take for granted; archaeology will be vital here). But, although not everything on the horizon is serene – crises of funding face us now, and not all current fashions in model-building are helpful ones, as several of our authors show – I think that the archaeological work of the current millennium, in Italy and Spain, has much that we can justifiably be proud of.

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