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Small Towns,
una realidad urbana en la
Hispania romana

PEDRO MATEOS
MANUEL OLCINA
ANTONIO PIZZO
THOMAS G. SCHATTNER
(Eds.)

Volumen I



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TOWNS AND SMALL TOWNS IN THE NORTH OF LUSITANIA SINGULAR IMAGES OF THE CITY AS A SYMBOL OF POWER CIUDADES Y SMALL TOWNS EN EL NORTE DE LUSITANIA. IMÁGENES SINGULARES DE LA CIUDAD COMO UN SÍMBOLO DE PODER

PEDRO C. CARVALHO*, LÍDIA FERNANDES**, SOFIA LACERDA***

SUMMARY

This text presents an updated survey of some capitals of *civitates* located in the Portuguese area of Northern Lusitania, discussing the specific configurations of the urban and social landscapes developed after Augustus. The identified *civitates*, some of which were closer to the ocean and others more interior and rural, provide evidence of the application of specific models of Romanization, which both in form and content, and in larger or smaller scale, concentrate and project clear symbols of the power of Rome. The text analyzes the distinctive and recurrent architectural and decorative models used in these towns, some of which show a modest urban development in what concerns both the first period of monumentalization and later periods.

KEY WORDS

High Empire; Urban Landscapes; Architectural Decorations.

RESUMEN

Se presenta una síntesis actualizada sobre las capitales de *civitates* de la parte portuguesa del norte de la Lusitania. Se discuten los contornos particulares de estos “paisajes urbanos y sociales” formados a partir de Augusto. Las *civitates* identificadas, algunas de cara al Océano y otras más interiores y de acentuado aislamiento y ruralidad, revelan la aplicación de modelos específicos de romanización, los cuales, en la forma y contenido, en mayor y menor escala, concentran símbolos claros del poder de Roma. Se analizan los modelos arquitectónicos y decorativos distintivos y recurrentes de estas ciudades, las cuales presentan, en algunos casos, un sutil desarrollo urbano, sea en lo que respecta al primer momento de monumentalización, sea posteriormente.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Alto Imperio; Paisajes Urbanos; Decoración Arquitectónica.

1. INTRODUCTION

Under Augustus principate the Roman political geography took shape in these territories in the north of Lusitania. It was structured according to the *ciuitates* system, whereby each *territorium* was regarded as *ager provincialis* and *stipendiarius* and was split into *peregrinae* communities whose territorial limits were defined by their perimeter (*ager per extremitatem mensura comprehensus*), but without an internal *divisio* (Orejas & Sastre 1999). These *ciuitates* were essentially shaped as fiscal units depending on its *populi* and Rome for tax purposes. Their capitals were chosen and built to serve the interests of Rome, but most of them did not reflect the urban development and architectural features of other coastal and southern Lusitanian cities.

The final first century legal advancements were accompanied by public works programs, thus providing new equipment's to some of these cities, more consonant with the municipal status. This process, however, had yet to reach all cities alike: a direct relation between legal advancement and urban planning was not always the case, nor did some cities experienced real urban development, even after the Flavian dynasty and the Trajan era. The very concept of monumentalisation was not the same all over the empire or in the whole province of Lusitania. In the region under analysis, monumentalisation may refer solely to a singular building that stands out for being different from the indigenous models or a landmark in the landscape that reflects a new territoriality and new centres of power.

The Roman landscape in the north of Lusitania (the Portuguese part) presents unique outlines. In the fields, the farms, and not so much the *uillae*, were the most frequent dispersed settlements. These small rural units predominated mainly in inland and mountainous territories, where the ethnic-social substructure was predominantly indigenous (Carvalho 2007; in the case of Idanha, cf. Lacerda *et alii* 2019). The *civitates* capitals were, in turn, mostly small towns (or even *civitates sine urbe*), where traces of the monumentality and extensive urban environment typical of a Roman city are not to be found. These are markedly rural landscapes, although, even at the scale of northern Lusitania, there are differences between inland territories and the coastal ones – as in those closer to the ocean, urban settings are more extensive and elaborate¹.

2. CIVITATES CAPITALS

The architectural features and urban development of towns along the coastal strip are remarkable. In the first century, the area of *Conimbriga* and *Aeminium* would have approximately 20 hectares, considering the perimeter of the Augustan precinct walls. *Talabriga*, like *Conimbriga* and *Aeminium*

¹ This work follows on from other work already published (Redentor & Carvalho, 2017 and Carvalho & Lacerda, 2020) on the northern province of Lusitania and is part of the research project PTDC/HAR-ARQ/6273/2020: *The historical village of Idanha-a-Velha: city, territory and population in ancient times (first century BC - twelfth century AD)*, funded by FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia. This work was as well supported by FCT, through the individual research grant 2020.05896.BD.

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located along the important *Olisipo* road to *Bracara Augusta* (Lopes 2000; Mantas 2012) and having a privileged link to the ocean, could also form part of this group of cities. Still, the absence of current archaeological research in this ancient city enables this assumption. On the other hand, *Vissaium* seems to be the only inland city that shows signs of an extensive urban frame with public and private spaces not seen in other neighbouring heads of *ciuitates* (Fig. 1).

Though smaller when compared to the previous ones, the head of the *civitas Igaeditanorum*, the *splendidissima civitas* and *civitas Aravorum* were important and prominent in the group of capitals of the inland territories. Other capitals were also small cities, but some, particularly those closer to the Douro River, may have been *civitates sine urbe*: the sites of *Cobelci*, *Medubrigenses*, *Arabrigenses*, *Paesuri*, *Turduli Veteres* and *Banienses*, or even the *Lancienses (Ocelenses qui Lancienses)* and of the *Lancienses Transcudani*. In fact, there is a whole other group of *civitates stipendiariae* whose seat could only have been labelled by the presence of a public space, the forum, without other constructions (leisure, commercial, industrial, or housing purposes) that usually make up the city's neighbourhood – the *civitas Cobelcorum* is the most paradigmatic example of this setting without an urban form.

This may have been implicit in Pliny's use, in his *Natural History*, of the name of the *oppidum* for the coastal towns of the north of *Lusitania* down to the river Vouga (*Aeminium*, *Conimbriga* and *Talabriga*), while he reserved the ethnic name for the inland small towns and *civitates sine urbe*.

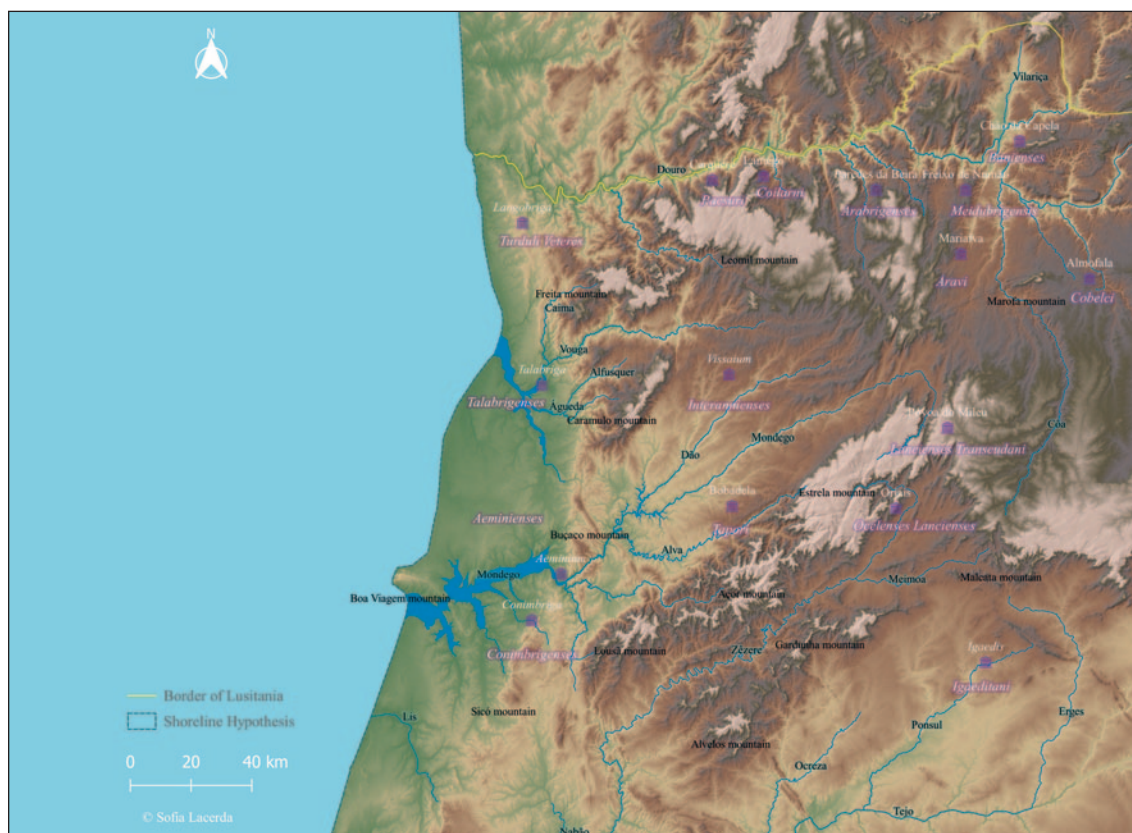


Fig. 1: Political geography of northern *Lusitania* (© Lacerda & Carvalho).

2.1. TOWNS

Situated about 11 miles from *Aeminium*, *Conimbriga* (Condeixa-a-Velha), an important settlement in the Iron Age, was a *civitas stipendiaria* at the time of Augustus. Its first forum dates from that period (Alarcão & Étienne 1977). In the Claudius-Nero period, the *porticus forenses* was refurbished and a basilica with a small *curia* was added (Alarcão *et alii* 2017). Under the Flavian rule, when the city was granted the *ius Latii*, the forum was completely dismantled and replaced with another structure. *Conimbriga* is the most excavated city in northern *Lusitania*, although only 4 hectares (about 16%) of the total urban area have been uncovered. Apart from the forum, it displays the public baths from the Trajan era and an amphitheatre, which is attached to the outer side of the wall and is yet to be excavated. Private buildings include the *domus* of the “Repuxos” (fountains) and of “Cantaber” (Correia 2013). In addition to the *insulae*, there are about 30 *tabernae* facing the streets. The city could have had between 5,000 and 6,000 residents. The first city wall, of an honorary nature, dates from the Augustan period and enclosed an area of about 22 hectares. By the 3rd century, the construction of the new wall significantly changing the urban structure of the city, reducing its perimeter to approximately 10 hectares (Correia & Alarcão 2008).

Aeminium (Coimbra), built on the site of a proto-historic settlement (Almeida *et alii* 2021), strategically located near the ocean, on the banks of an estuary and navigable river (Carvalho *et alii*, forthcoming) and on the main road that linked *Olisipo* to *Bracara Augusta* (Mantas 2012). It was promoted to capital of *ciuitas* in the Augustan period (Alarcão 2008). The first major urban renovation dates precisely from that time, around the turn of the era (Mantas 1992) and excavations revealed the presence of an Augustan forum (Alarcão *et alii* 2009). Decades later, in the Claudius period, this first forum was completely restructured (Alarcão *et alii* 2017), making space for a new building more in line with the importance of the city. The only remaining part of the Julio-Claudian forum is the cryptoporticus, on which the forum was built (Alarcão *et alii* 2009; Carvalho 1998). As mentioned by several classical authors (Plin. *HN* 4.113; Ptolemy *Geographia* 2.5), the importance of *Aeminium* in this westernmost part of *Lusitania* is undeniable, clearly demonstrated by the monumentality of its forum. Recent excavations have also revealed other remnants of the urban frame around the forum, such as sections of sewers, roads, and parts of private buildings, including a possible *fullonica* (Carvalho *et alii* 2010; Silva 2011). In the “Alta de Coimbra” area, not far from the forum, an amphitheatre and possibly a theatre are yet to be uncovered. *Aeminium* was surrounded by a wall and its size may have been of about 20 hectares (Alarcão 2008).

Talabriga, an *oppidum* referred to by Pliny (*HN* 4, 113 e 116), was probably situated in Cabeço do Vouga, near the Vouga River (Lamas do Vouga, Águeda) (Lopes 1995; Silva & Maia 2005; Alarcão 2004; Madahil 1941). The ruins identified as *Talabriga* remain largely unstudied. The apparent remains of the forum, built on a terrace buttressed by vaulted apses (Silva 2010), are small, limited by site’s topography under 50 meters in length, but display some monumentality. Like *Aeminium* and *Conimbriga*, this *oppidum* had a privileged access to the sea. The Aveiro estuary was quite wide and served as a gateway to some *civitates* south of the Douro River. In Cacia (Aveiro), in the mouth of the Vouga River at the time, a port is likely to have existed (Alarcão 2019: 239).

Vissaium was the Roman name of present-day city of Viseu (Fernandes *et alii* 2009) and the capital of the *civitas Interannienses* (Alarcão 2006; Alarcão *et alii* 2013), also referred by Pliny. Founded during the Augustan period, the city was built on a high hill where an important settlement of the Iron Age once stood (Almeida *et alii* 2007). The importance of *Vissaium* came from its strategic location, at the intersection of various roads that connected several northern Lusitanian cities (Vaz 1997). This centrality was reflected in its domestic architecture (Carvalho & Carvalho 2020) and in the monumentality of its public spaces. The grand forum was situated at the top of the hill, around the today Cathedral Square (Carvalho *et alii* 2020). The analysis of the present-day urban morphology allows us to pinpoint the location of a possible

amphitheatre, aligned with the longitudinal axis of the forum (*id. ibid.*). The precinct wall, apparently dating from mid-fourth century onwards, has revealed important sections with semi-circular turrets (Carvalho & Chéney 2007). This late walled perimeter could enclose an area of about 12 hectares, following a High Empire wall line that would enclose an area of about 20 hectares (Vaz & Carvalho 2009: 36).

2.2. SMALL TOWNS

Bobadela (Oliveira do Hospital) was the capital of a *civitas* founded during the Augustan period and was possibly developed as a municipality during the Flavian rule. We do not know the name of the city or of the *civitas* (would it be perhaps the city of the *Tapori*), only that it was called *splendidissima civitas* (Alarcão 2002/2003). The area of its urban frame would be approximately 4 to 5 hectares. Some elements of the forum were uncovered during excavations (Frade 2010), including a monumental arch that would have served as the main doorway. At the time of its foundation, a first forum should have been built, later replaced by a larger and more monumental one in the late 1st century, during the renovation works that also included the construction of a small amphitheatre with wooden seated sections (Carvalho & Silva 2018; Frade & Portas 1994). Archaeological excavations brought up part of a neighbourhood (*insulae*) at the back of the amphitheatre consisting of modest ground floor houses built when the city was founded (Frade *et alii* 1995). The remnants of a wall and a presumably Roman aqueduct could still be seen at sight in the 19th century.

Idanha-a-Velha (Idanha-a-Nova) was the capital of the *civitas Igaeditanorum* (Fig.2). It is likely that *Igaedis* was founded in the 30s decade of the 1st century BC (Mantas 1998 and 2006). The inscription from 16 BC (AE 1992 951), which records the gift of a sundial to the *Igaeditani* (to four *magistri* of pilgrim status who oversaw the city's affairs at the time) by a settler from *Emerita* (Étienne 1992), shows that *Igaedis* was the *civitas* capital when the Lusitania province was established (Redentor & Carvalho 2017).



Fig. 2: Idanha-a-Velha (*Igaedis*) capital of the *civitas Igaeditanorum* (© Manuel Ferreira / FLUC).

The primary public space of the city is a viewpoint over the temple's podium, on which the Templar Knights erected a keep. Recent excavations have allowed us to date the forum from the Augustan period (Carvalho 2009). The importance of *Igaedis* is also reflected in an exceptional epigraphic collection of almost 300 inscriptions (Sá 2007). The wall surrounds the current village along almost 900 m and marks the city's perimeter in the Low Empire, enclosing a small area of about 4 hectares. This walled strip, especially on the south side, was reduced, leaving out a good part of the urban frame, as shown by the two *domus* demolished for the construction of the wall, possibly at the final 3rd century (Carvalho *et alii* 2020; Cristóvão *et alii* 2020). Originally, in the High Empire the built-up area of the city would have been more extensive, possibly around 11 hectares.

Devesa/Marialva (Mêda) corresponds to the *civitas Arauorum* (Coixão 2006; Perestrelo 2003). All that is left of this city is the *podium* of the forum's temple, some (monumental) architectural elements scattered along the streets of the actual village, the remnants of what could have been the thermal baths, the stone wall of the dam that supplied water to the city, and an inscription dedicated by the *Aravi* in 120 or 121 AD to Hadrian (Encarnação 2014).

Orjais (Covilhã) could have been the capital of the *Lancienses Ocelenses* (Alarcão *et alii* 2013; Carvalho 2007). The Roman ruins found in this area are relatively significant, in the flattened land of Nossa Senhora das Luzes, near the Zêzere River. Still, they are not indicative of an extensive urban settlement. The temple of Orjais, consecrated to Jupiter and an indigenous deity (*Banda Brialeacui*), was built during the Flavian empire and is a unique piece of architecture in that it is built on a sharp hillside, outside the presumed urban area (Alarcão *et alii* 2013; Carvalho 2003). Being the main religious space of this *civitas*, this temple would overlook the supposed forum and houses, situated about 1 km away into the valley. While the temple offered a panoramic view over virtually all the *ciuitas territorium*, it could also be seen in the distance, from the open fields with scattered farms and a few *uillae*.

Póvoa de Mileu / Castelos Velhos, in the urban area of today's city of Guarda, would correspond to the capital of the *Lancienses Transcudani* (Carvalho 2005; Guerra 2007; Carvalho, *forthcoming*). This site clearly stands out in the whole region of Guarda due to relevant remains found therein: the ruins of important thermal baths from the 1st century AD, apparently public, the significant imported materials collected during excavations (Pereira 2012), and unusual (many of which even absent) in rural contexts in northern Roman Lusitania (Pereira 2012; Ramos & Pereira 2018), and the finding of a torso of a large *loricata* statue from the Trajan era, possibly representing an emperor (Gonçalves 2017: 154-155).

Torre de Almofala (Almofala/Escarigo, Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo) was the capital of the *civitas* of the *Cobelci*, as revealed by an altar dedicated to Jupiter by the *civitas Cobelcorum*, found in front of the remains of the forum's temple (Frade 1998 and 2010). The temple's *podium* and other incomplete walls are all we know of this *civitas* capital. Nothing else has been found or observed in this now depopulated area to indicate that an urban area once existed here. The presence alone of a forum would be enough to affirm it as the main public and civic space of the community of the *Cobelci*.

Freixo de Numão (Vila Nova de Foz Côa), close to one of the heads of navigation of the Douro River, may have corresponded to the seat of the *Medubrigenses* settlement, referred to by Pliny (HN 4 118) referred to as the *qui Plumberii* ("lead explorers") (Coixão 2017). Scarce evidence known in this settlement, though sufficient to propose this location, albeit questionable.

Paredes da Beira (S. João da Pesqueira) seems to have corresponded to the capital of the *Arabrigenses*. Along the village's streets and backyards ceramic findings, stone tiles, column bases and shafts, and a "berrão" can be noticed (Carvalho 2010). The findings are not significant, but still stand out in the region.

Cárquere (Resende) may have been the place of the *Paesuri*, referred to by Pliny (*HN* 4 113) as well as the inscription on the Alcântara Bridge (Alarcão, 2005). Again, there are no known urban remains of this alleged capital, but the suggestion is based on the various known epigraphic findings.

Fiães (Santa Maria da Feira) would have corresponded to *Langobriga*, the capital of the *Turduli Veteres*, mentioned by Pliny near the sea (*HN* 4 113) and by Pomponius Mela (*De Chorographia* III 1 8) (Alarcão 2019). The thesis that places it in an ancient castro (fortified settlement) seems to be confirmed by the *tesserae hospitales* of Monte Murado (Vila Nova de Gaia) (Silva 1983). Its coastal location could lead us to think that *Langobriga* experienced a particular urban development, but this cannot be guaranteed due to insufficient archaeological evidence.

Chão da Capela (Adeganha, Torre de Moncorvo), to the north of the Douro River, could have been the capital of the *civitas Baniensium* (Lemos 1993 IIA: 330-331, n.º 650 and Ib: 484-485; Alarcão *et alii* 2013; on the limits of Lusitania to the north of the Douro River, see Carvalho 2017: 247). The amount of evidence observable on the surface is considerable, with relevant findings that include five funerary *stelae*, though no traces of monumental constructions (Silva 2014). This site is located along the important route that connected Merida to the *via XVII* of the Antonine Itinerary (Carvalho 2017).

2.3. ARCHITECTURAL DECORATION

The group of architectural elements identified in this territory can be characterised by the overall use of the same raw material – granite – and the consistent choice of ornaments. When looking at the hundreds of capitals, bases, shafts, cornices, *pulvini* and other elements, a common denominator stands out, enabling to look at the territory as one single body with the same mental, social, and economic and political outlook (Fernandes 1997: IV volumes; 2008: 231-270).

Coastal towns, in particular *Conimbriga* and *Aeminium* stand out in this broader analysis for their greater constructive and decorative diversity. The sculpture ornaments in both locations provide a clear example, defining a rich image repertoire of good quality, with tributes to the imperial family from early periods (Nogales Basarrate & Gonçalves 2004: 285-338) (Fig. 3).

Architectural decorations naturally follow the ornamental modernisation, showing diverse models which originated from the prototypes used in the *Augusta Emerita* province. This is more evident in *Conimbriga* where many decorative elements are preserved (Gonçalves 2017: Vol. II).

The use of better-quality marble and limestone became customary in a second period, as evidenced in the Corinthian order used in the Flavian *forum* of *Conimbriga*, following the marbling process that started in Merida and spread to the remaining province, replacing the old tradition of using stucco coated with local stone (De la Barrera Antón 2000). In *Conimbriga*, however, granite artefacts with their original stucco coating were found, revealing a republican tradition, as well as hundreds of polychrome stucco fragments in friezes, capitals or cornices (Fig. 4). Other artefacts were found, such as imported ornamental rocks, like the *opus sectile* in “serpentinite” (old green) from Greece. But the most represented marbles come from Estremoz, Rio de Moinhos or Porto de Mós (Correia 2003), as evidenced by the statues, suggesting specific orders of a public and especially private nature, confirmed by the colossal head of *Augustus*, in Alentejo marble and attributed to the early *Claudius* era (Gonçalves 2017: n.º 2). These materials reveal knowledge of the popular ornamental crafts, testified by the constructive morphologies and mosaic flooring, particularly relevant in *Conimbriga*.

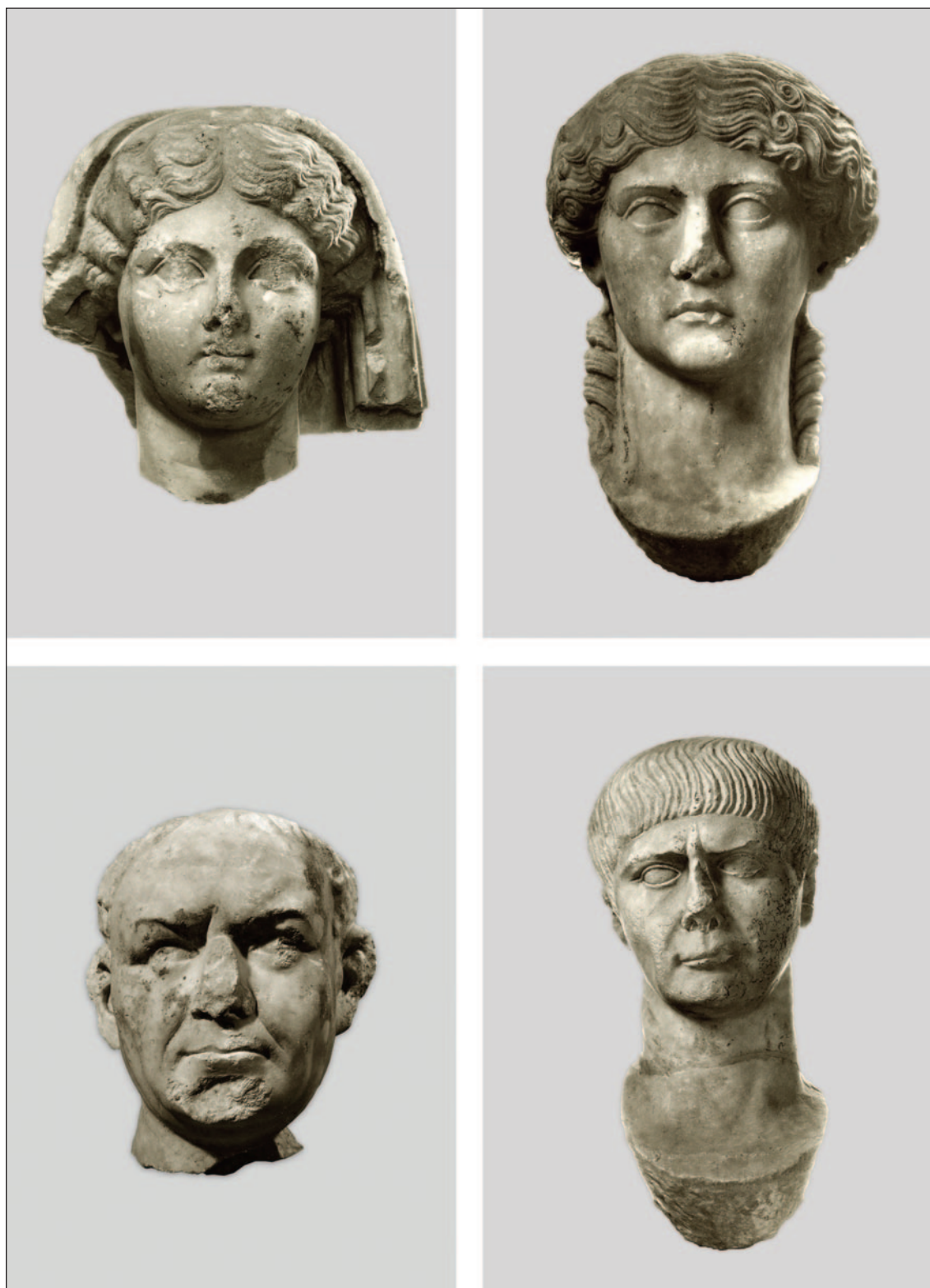


Fig. 3: Portraits of the imperial family from *Aeminium* / Coimbra (left to right: Livia, Agripina the Major, Vespasian, Trajan) (© DGPC / MNMC).



Fig. 4: Architectural elements from *Conimbriga*: local stone tuscan capital with an inscription and architectural elements with polychrome stucco (© Lídia Fernandes).

The remaining territory does not follow this diversity of decorations and presents a more restricted and cohesive range of decorations. This singularity is witnessed in technical and stylistic options initially adopted when the *civitates* were monumentalised, and does not change throughout the Roman period. Four centuries during which the standards set in the Augustan period are maintained, followed, respected, copied and recovered thereafter. The starting point for defining this framework is the use of the architectural orders, particularly their capitals, since they are easily identifiable (Gutiérrez Behemerid 1992). Nevertheless, the remaining architectural elements also confirm this consistency (Fernandes 2008: 231-270).

All these *civitates*, except some for which we have no information (due to the lack of or reduced number of materials), exclusively use the Tuscan order and/or the Ionic order, equal as for their materials, techniques and morphologies (Rosada 1970-1971: 65-121). The constituent parts of both orders are the same, as their dimensions and morphology, the only difference being the presence of two *pulvini* (on opposite sides) in Ionic capitals. The Ionic order is used simultaneously with the Tuscan order from which it directly originates.

However, it should be borne in mind that what is left today is only erase their stone nucleus which was coated with stucco. Therefore, the observable linearity and simplicity is only apparent. In fact, we do not know what these pieces may have looked like at the time, they would have a stucco coating, in turn elaborately decorated and painted. The Ionic capitals of the Roman theatre of *Mettelinum* give us a clear snapshot of their appearance, enabling us to relate the morphology of the underlying stone block (Guerra Millán *et alii* 2014, Mateos Cruz, Picado Pérez 2011: 13-23)) with the stucco decoration. Nonetheless, we believe that the analysis of the preserved stone can give us some clues from the systematisation of the carvings. These capitals always include a plain square *abacus*, a torus shaped *echinus*, a high concave neck (*hypotrachelium*) and the *summus scapus*.

The morphology and technique of these carved and stucco coated local materials can be traced to late Republican traditions, well identified in *Augusta Emerita* (De la Barrera 2000). It is not surprising that

this way of building and ornamenting was replicated throughout the territory under its jurisdiction, especially at an early stage of urban planning. However, the capital soon upgraded its decorative repertoire, giving way to new workshops, to the Corinthian order and the marble.

This change of ornamental paradigm would not be followed in the north of *Lusitania*, there are no upgrades or replacement of previous architectural orders. This aspect seems to be essential to the analysis of the architectural decoration of these *civitates* and might be related to the peculiarities of occupation and exploration of the territory. In fact, in our opinion, the Tuscan order and its unique derivation in the Ionic order, as well as the widespread use of stucco has been an underrated and unknown aspect. In *Igaedis*, more than 70 capitals are registered, all of which in one of the two orders (Fig. 5). Although on a smaller scale, the same decorative framework can be applied to Bobadela (Fernandes, 2016-2017: 149-184), *Vissaium*, Orjais, Póvoa de Mileu, Almofala and Freixo de Numão or to smaller sized *civitates* such as Meimoa, Sabugal, Centum Cellas, or Penamacor.

Due to their small size, many of the examples found would belong to modest buildings. Although it is difficult to estimate the chronology of these examples, some must be dated after the 1st century AD, demonstrating that, in the case of private architecture, this architectural order continued to be use when the Corinthian order became the favourite throughout the empire. The models are clearly Italic, with the carvings and *ornamenta* showing a precise *modus operandi*: workshops would specialise only in applying the stucco, using models that circulated throughout the empire, while the heart of the pieces was carved by unskilled labour. The Ionic order, which at first followed the technical features of the Tuscan order, may have been elected for the emblematic buildings.

If we look at funerary monuments, such as the stelae or the crowns with *pulvini* from Idanha-a-Velha, we can see that the technique is the same. There are almost 300 specimens of funerary inscriptions, corresponding to facing plaques, most of which were meant to be applied in mausoleums. Only ten of these specimens use marble. There are about 50 *pulvini* in *Igaedis* and in its surroundings about 60. These numbers evidence the intense and widespread work of workshops in the vicinity of the *civitas* capital.

In short, the use of the new material – marble – from the mid-1st century AD onwards became the norm, replacing the previous decorative technique that used stucco coated local stone. However, while this



Fig. 5: Some tuscan capitals from Idanha-a-Velha (above, and the ionic capital on the right photo below) and some ionic capitals from Bobadela (© Lídia Fernandes).

new material extracted from the quarries of the Estremoz anticline from the beginning of the 1st century AD was quickly adopted in the provincial capital, as well as in the southern region, it did not attract much attention in the northern part of the province (Fernandes 2020: 535 – 570).

The previous materials and construction techniques continued to be used perhaps because the armies were more active near the mining operations, or by choice of the local oligarchies. While one could think that these regions were isolated or far from the decision-making centres of power, this idea must be put into perspective. In fact, we have seen the same situation in *Olisipo*, where the original scenic facade made of local stone coated with stucco is maintained (Fernandes 2014: 1435-1437; Fernandes & Nogales Basarrate 2018: 432-455; Fernandes 2020a; Fernandes, Cachão, Fernandes, Pimentel, Ribeiro 2019: 149-191). The idea behind these decisions was to preserve more meaningful symbolic values that convey an Italic *traditio* that will mark the territory in the early period of Romanisation. There was no lack of knowledge of central imperial decorative trends, but rather a deliberate restriction to a limited number of ornamental options, applicable to both public facilities, somehow an unusual situation, and to private contexts.

3. DISCUSSION

In the last two decades of the 1st century BC and the first decade of the 1st century AD, these territories were redefined in the Roman way. The Augustan period refers to the first territorial organisation (Redentor & Carvalho 2017), as documented in the milestones of Alfaiates (Sabugal) and Argomil (Pinhel), dated between 23 and 20 BC, marking the first major connection from *Augusta Emerita* across *Caurium* to the northern interior of Lusitania and to the territories beyond the Douro River; the *termini augustalis* of Salvador (Penamacor), Peroviseu (Fundão), Guardão (Tondela) and Ul (Oliveira de Azeméis), erected between 4 and 6 AD to demarcate the territories of the newly created *civitates* (forming part of a broader group of contemporary *termini*, identified in the Salamanca and Ávila provinces); or even the inscription of the *orarium*, dated 16 BC, showing the close relation with the newly established provincial capital (*Augusta Emerita*) and the symbolic setting of the time of the *civitas Igaeditanorum* to the official time of the empire. This Augustan political-administrative geography defined the ground for the establishment of the *civitates* capitals and for the gradual renovation of urban spaces, at different paces and scales. Some of these capitals, such as those of the *Igaeditani* and the *Cobelci*, were probably founded *ex nihilo*, while others – the majority – such as *Aeminium*, *Conimbriga*, *Talabriga* and *Vissaium*, were built on important Iron Age settlements.

The political geography of the northern interior of *Lusitania* was consolidated in subsequent decades. Some urban centres were renewed and monumentalised in the mid-1st century, for example, *Aeminium*, as witnessed by the construction of a new (Claudian) forum erected on an enormous cryptoporticus. Further to the north, near the Douro, the *termini augustalis* of Goujoim (Armamar) (*AE* 1979 331) and S. Pedro de Balsemão (Lamego) (*CIL* II 6199), dated 43 AD, show a continued intervention in terms of political-administrative planning. In the last decades of the 1st century, between the Flavian Empire and the Trajan era, following the municipalisation process, the main public spaces or even the urban centre of some cities were renewed. A new forum was built in *Conimbriga* where the previous one once stood. In Bobadela, the forum was totally rebuilt to be more in accordance with the new status of the city, and an amphitheatre was erected. In *Igaedis*, the forum was remodelled, including at least the construction of a new staircase to access the temple and of a portico flanking it. A temple was built in Orjais, in a *sui generis* location, on a hill overlooking the purported capital. Between the Trajan and Hadrian periods, the urban development was consolidated in some cities: large public thermal baths were built in *Conimbriga* and the findings in Póvoa do Mileu (a statue of a possible emperor) and in Marialva (an inscription in homage to Trajan) seem to denote some urban public work. However, even though we find new or renovated public buildings in all

these cities, they preserve the architectural decoration of the time they were founded, a unique feature of urban settings of the northern *Lusitania*.

The cities of *Aeminium*, *Conimbriga* and possibly *Vissaium* stood out in northern Lusitania. In the context of the province, these cities were medium sized, of more than 20 hectares. The first two faced the coast, while *Vissaium* was an inland city, albeit with a strategic geographic position inherited from its proto-historic past. The landscapes of the ocean-oriented territories tend to show a more urban profile. The coast in the Coimbra and Aveiro region changed considerably since the Roman era, showing a more receding coastline. Cities such as *Conimbriga*, *Talabriga* and, above all, *Aeminium*, had a very close relationship with the ocean. This favoured the contact with the dynamic commerce enabled by the maritime routes and would have certainly been one of the reasons for the urban development of these cities, especially that of Roman Coimbra.

The heads seats of the *civitas Igaeditanorum*, the *splendidissima civitas* and the *civitas Aravorum* were smaller in size, but their public centre was monumental and their construction development (in particular in the case of *Igaedis*) gave them a distinctly urban profile throughout the 1st century AD. They may have corresponded to a *parua oppida*, a term used by Pomponius Mela (*Chor.* 2 90 and, especially, 3 5) for small and native urbanised towns at the service of the Roman administration. Although *Igaedis*, in particular, was a relatively small city, with a distinct archaeology due to the great number of epigraphs, *pulvini*, capitals and other architectural elements found, it was nonetheless relevant, as it claimed to be the most important city between the Tagus and Douro rivers in the current Portuguese hinterland. It also had an immense *territorium*, also featuring some *vici*. This prominence, and the monumentalisation of the city, benefitted from the wealth afforded by the gold mines in this *territorium*, as in the case of the *splendidissima civitas* and the gold found in the Alva River (Sánchez-Palencia & Currás Refojos 2017). Private fortunes would have been invested in public works through the good deeds of notable figures like *Caius Cantius Modestinus* (Mantas 2002).

These and other findings indicate the relevance of an oligarchy, surely few but wealthy and enjoying their status in society (Mantas 2002). This was one of the forms of management in the Augustan era: the transfer of new administrative powers to the elite, through which territorial power was exercised. This is all the more relevant given that these territories were rich in raw materials, requiring a controlled exploitation method. This situation, however, needed to be refined upon the arrival of Italic populations which directly controlled the mining exploitations, a practice accompanied by troops stationed in the area.

The capitals of the *Ocelenses Lancienses* and the *Lancienses Transcudani* would be even smaller and the capital of the *Cobelci* would be a *civitas sine urbe* – a phenomenon known in other eminently rural provincial contexts (Oller Guzmán 2014; Olesti Vila 2014). A little further north, along the Douro River, where the density of *civitates* capitals was superior and was more difficult to ensure the sustainability of their small territories and their elites, this urban frailty seems to be even more significant. The urban development of the seats of *Medubrigenses*, *Arabrigenses*, *Coilarni*, *Paesuri* and *Banienses* (Carvalho & Lacerda 2020) would be incipient, and only the presence of a forum would reveal their profile as a capital. They had few residents as most of the population lived on the outskirts, scattered across the fields densely occupied, primarily by farms. Even so, these would be the locations *par excellence* for the affirmation of these communities public and civic spaces. At the scale of the territory, the public space was constructed as a staged area, revealed as the most significant mark of the empire. And where the image that each *ciuitas* portrayed of itself was also reflected, in the extent that each community is both constituted and represented by the spaces and constructions it creates.

Compared to other more southern and coastal regions, the urban landscapes of northern *Lusitania* were characterised by medium and, above all, small towns. The urban perimeter of some of these cities reduced in size towards the Low Empire (from about 22 to 10 hectares), such as the known example of *Conimbriga*. It was also the case of *Vissaium*: from about 20 to 12 hectares. The urban perimeter of *Igaedis* was also probably reduced from about 11 to 4 hectares in the final 3rd century, enclosed by a new wall, erected on private buildings, and using architectural materials (*spolia*) from the High Empire city, in particular the one that was cut down and dismantled because it remained outside the walled precinct. In these cities, in order to build the city wall, most of the blocks immediately outside had to be demolished, including the mausoleums and funerary enclosures of the 1st and 2nd centuries. Considering only the walled perimeter, it seems to have been a tendency for even the towns to become smaller in the Low Empire.

The proto-historic heritage, the lack of a pre-Roman urban tradition, and the way in which the local aristocracy, limited by economic and financial vulnerabilities, adhered to evergetism and became part of the new Roman political framework explain the unique features of these “urban landscapes”. As already mentioned, the involvement of the army in the construction of these territories was crucial: opened roads, defining territories, technically controlled gold mines, and designing and executing public works in the cities. This military matrix is a mark of the occupation of these inland territories and, to a large extent, may justify some, if not many, of the observed construction options.

These were essentially rural territories, where the power of Rome and the public and private practices found a stage and were represented in different ways. In essence, capitals originated from the legal-administrative and tax business carried out in these places, and not so much from other services. These political centres were chosen based of their strategic position in the territory – often an inherited one – consolidated by the fact that they were situated along a natural passageway, henceforth imperial itinerary. The centrality of these cities was, in some cases, manifested by a (single) monumentalised public area – the forum. These *civitates* capitals projected themselves as symbolic places of power, with the forum as the primary public space intended for gatherings, meetings and representations, concentrating the demands of the Roman rule and represent the power of the empire.

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Las ciudades pequeñas/*Small Towns* de la Península Ibérica son la abrumadora mayoría de las aproximadamente 400 ciudades que en época romana existieron en Hispania, es decir casi una quinta parte de las aprox. 2000 ciudades del Imperio Romano entero. De ahí que resulta de interés como punto de partida y base de estudio para la investigación, a pesar de las dificultades de definición. Mientras que los intentos anteriores buscaban utilizar el término en su calidad de clasificador para poder elaborar una jerarquía de asentamientos, y así asignar a cada uno de ellos su lugar en la clasificación y de esa manera describir sus propiedades correspondientes, aquí se propone la utilización del término *Small Towns* solo en su calidad de aspecto diferenciador con vistas a las capitales de provincia y de *conventus*, manteniendo toda su imprecisión para asentamientos con o sin trama urbana extendida, en un sentido amplio y genérico sin condicionantes ni jurídicos ni políticos.

Las *Small Towns* suelen y pueden tener, con alguna variedad, características urbanas como edificios sacros y públicos, una muralla defensiva y casas urbanas. Sin embargo, suele observarse una desproporción entre la edificación pública y sacra por un lado y la privada por el otro en el sentido, de que la primera tenga una clara predominancia sobre la segunda tanto en calidad como en cantidad. Por otro lado les suelen faltar a las *Small Towns* otros criterios importantes habituales de los centros mayores como son la alta densidad de población, altos estándares de calidad, un cierto grado de diversificación económica, un plan urbanístico de circulación. Esas características ausentes son compensadas, por el otro lado, con un elemento del que se nutre a través de la carga generada por la (excesiva) edificación sacra y pública, y que le proporciona aquel atributo, que resume en sí la esencia de los centros mayores, que es la más típica y la que más los destaca: un exceso de significado.

La temática de desarrolla en unas 50 comunicaciones que permiten una buena visión y matización tanto en su alcance geográfico como jurídico, urbanístico, arquitectónico, económico, social y religioso. Se trata de la aportación hispánica al problema discutido en las demás provincias romanas.

JUNTA DE EXTREMADURA

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