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The Roman Republican Walls as a Way to Create the Hispano-Roman Identity in the Iberian Peninsula

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Abstract

The conquest of the Iberian Peninsula brought new models of apprehension of the landscapes and territories according to Roman models and ideology. This led to putting models of Hellenistic Roman architecture in the Iberian Peninsula. The brief examples we want to show are of the following cities:

Emporiae is the most relevant example of Greco-Roman contact in the peninsula. Tarraco was the praesidium and the first caput of Hispania. Corduba is the best example of Foundation Walls. Carteia was the first Hispano-Roman colony. We will see how the first Roman urban settlements of Hispania expressed the social changes and identity in the Roman Republican walls.

Keywords

Roman Republican Walls, Identity, Colonist & Colonized, Fortification, Iberian Peninsula, Hispania, Military Architecture.

Introduction: Change of functionality in Roman walls in the Iberian peninsula after the end of the military campaigns

Nowadays, military identity in the Roman context is a very important point in military works. The symbolism could be found in *scuta*, banners, helmets and many more elements that allowed the development of these concepts of social belonging inside a specific *legio* and a way to be recognized by them.

In this brief study we will see the possibilities of Roman fortifications in order to understand identity and ideological strategies of Romanisation through four cases (Figure 1). The Republican age in Hispania was characterized by a continued presence of a really important group of Roman-Italic tropes, always in movement (Pina 2011, 39). So, Roman constructions in these first centuries of Rome in the Iberian Peninsula had a high military and defensive component, and a *securitas* as the main function. All of this meant a strong change at the end of the Civil Wars, Cantabrian Wars and the *Pax Augusta*. At the end of the wars there wasn't a real change of demilitarized society because legions stayed in an urban context continuing with internal conflicts of the Empire, which were more political than military conflicts (4 emperors in a year, for example). Also, this social change meant a transformation in the main function of *securitas* to *dignitas*, rebuilding part of their structures for this cause. Melguizo and Moret (2007, 323), 'in paced zones of the Iberian peninsula in the imperial age since

29 BC with the *Pax Augusta*, these walls represented a system of values that expressed military and warily function which was the origin of legitimacy, it went through the horizon of the lived to the symbolic one as soon as war stopped being part of the social and politic praxis.' Inside these walls, ancient indigenous *castra* or *oppida* were included to develop a typical Roman urbanism in *colonia* and *municipia* using the two main forms to do it: *cardus* and *decumanus*.

Urban cities fortified linked with military conflicts: Greek, Roman and Carthaginian towns.

Municipium Emporiae

The city of *Emporion* is the unique Greek permanent settlement identified by archaeological evidence. Its origin was Phocian, which was built on the coast at the natural entrance to the Iberian Peninsula from the continental territories of Europe (Figure 2). The Roman camp was annexed to this city. This meant the entrance of troops to the Iberian zone (more specifically, *Indiketes* region). According to Pina (2011, 39), Romans arrived in this zone with the idea of establishing their domination over the territory, so this camp needed to be permanent and durable. A camp with plenty of silos near the *praesidium* occupied the zone of the Republican forum Aquilué *et al.* (2002, 11). Another important point of this complex was the tower near the gate. This tower was destroyed and also was a part of the east wall in order to join the camp with the Greek city (*Neapolis*). These three structures lasted approximately a century since their foundation. This occurred near the arrival of Scipions to the Iberian Peninsula or with the troops of Cato to cut an indigenous riot. In any case, the construction of the Republican Forum was dated, thanks to the filling of the silos, around the second half of the II century BC or at the beginning of the I century BC Aquilué *et al.* (2002, 36).

Finally, the economic activity started to be developed by focusing on the military Roman settlement that allowed the establishment of a civic community in a new hipodamic city plan. The city was divided in *insulae* of 35 x 70m (1 x 2 *actus*). The civic centre was dominated by a prostyle-tetraporticus surrounded by a porticus and cryptoporticus. We can see as well some imported patterns from Campania of aristocratic *domus* with *atrium* and *peristilum*. This is proof of how Italic people arrived and brought their cultural lifestyle model over to the ancient military camp.

The key to understand the problem of identities between Greek and Roman cities can also be appreciated through the walls. The Greek component in Ampurias stayed after

the construction and was closely linked with a Roman city. This city is an unusual way of converting a Roman military camp into a civil city in the Iberian Peninsula. In the other case, Romans converted ancient settlements or military camps in Roman cities, or destroyed the ancient settlement and created a new one in its proximity. There is no reason for keeping two different systems of fortifications. So we can assure, in the case of Ampurias, that the Greek settlement (including the cyclopean walls) was preserved not for its functional reasons but maybe because it could be seen as a 'relic'. This allied and friendly community, that helped the Roman troops, couldn't be punished by destroying its city and identity. Also, the Hellenistic past and the strong Greek identity of the city were used as a symbol of power.

Going back to the Roman wall (**Figure 3**), we can see some aspects of restructuration to a *dignitas* function. The technical aspects combine *opera quadrata* and *opera caementicia*, something that was quite frequent in the Roman military faces. Usually, this kind of work was more frequent in other places, for example, in the central and southern part of the Italic peninsula at the end of IInd century BC. This was linked to the enrichment of Italic dealers as we can see in *Ferentium* or in the rebuilt walls of *Trevi* and *Setia*. For this reason, the Roman walls of Ampurias can be seen as a purely Italic system of construction. Also, we can see a very common Roman symbol, a big phallus in the cyclopean wall, next to the main gate. In other Hispanic-Roman cities, like Cástulo or Caparra, proved that this icon was used as a protection symbol (Zarzalejos *et al.* 1988, 303). The polygonal work in the south face is directly linked to the idea of *dignitas*. This is the façade that we can see from the Via Augusta and it is a way of showing its power, even when the Amphitheatre and the Palestra were built hiding part of the walls.

Colonia Iulia Urbs Triumphalis Tarraco

The base of their resource supplies was from Tarraco during the first two centuries in which Romans were in the Iberian Peninsula. Tarraco was also the winter camp during the Celtiberian and II Punic Wars. For this reason, the Roman camp was located in the highest zone of the city during this period (III-II BC). Titus Livius said that Scipio arrived at this zone and conquered a Punic settlement near Cissis, which is the name of an indigenous town that could be established near or in the place where at the time Tarraco was located. The indigenous city of Tarraco has been proved by numismatic finds but the problem is that relevant finds of archaeological remains haven't asserted the real location of this city in the highest zone (Hauschild 1993, 138). Anyway, the Iberian presence has been demonstrated to be in the nearest zone of the Roman city.

Hauschild did the best research regarding the Roman walls of Tarraco. In his research he concluded that there were two construction phases. The first phase was dated at the beginning of the IInd century BC and is well known for its ceramic fragments of Campaniense A (Perez i García, 2011, 359) and reasserted by the construction techniques. The remains of this phase appear

only as a sketch of the entire perimeter but we can approximately reconstruct the whole plan. So we can assure that it was 5000m long with linked towers (Minerva, Arzobispado and Cabiscol towers) and that all of them were next to the gates (Perez i García, 2011, 361). The study of these towers has been the strongest point of research. Hauschild's study (1983, 51-70) of Minerva's Tower discovered the constructive techniques of these defensive towers. He found that these towers were influenced by Hellenistic models such as *Erys* in Sicilia (Hauschild 1983, 69). The base is a megalithic structure of six lines made with big regular stones (Menchón, 2009, 57). Over this base, the second part of the tower was constructed with a chamber, posterns and arrow-slits (Hauschild 1983, 69). Inside the tower, the stones are smaller and linked with lime mortar. This tower was named by the relief of Minerva (**Figure 4**), which has different proposals of reconstruction (Hauschild 1983, 70). We only have the bottom half part of it. Near this relief, we have a votive epigraph (Hauschild 1993, 143) dedicated by *M. Vibio*. Hernández Fernández (1998, 163) who did a systematic reconstruction of this *gens*. He proved that this family was Italic, and that they settled down in *Hispalis* (actual Seville). This is one of the most ancient Latin inscriptions in the Iberian Peninsula. It has been used to discover possible dialectal aspects of Latin due to the first Italic emigrants (Pena 1990-1991, 389-400; in Hernández Fernández). Nowadays, one of the most accepted theories is the Iberian influence in the construction of the walls. This is confirmed with some embossing and graphite located in the mark stonework (Menchón, 2009, 60), which is also the case with the *Carmo* walls. This proves that they used indigenous workers. There is also another theory that says that the relief of Minerva was possibly made by an Iberian sculptor (Menchón, 2009, 59). This is the arrival of the Hellenistic military architecture influences since the Phoenician age. Foreign technical models influenced the defensive system with the colonial workers (Prados 2007, 71).

This is an interesting point of discussion. The plan and design follow the Roman rules, and this demonstrates that both the architects and engineers were Romans. But some specialists were surely Iberians with a high knowledge of the Roman culture. We can see that as a cultural hybridation or, as Bahbah would say, mimicry, as he said in his famous phrase 'almost the same but not quite' (1994, 86). Ambivalent situations between colonist and colonized (Romans and Iberians) creating mixed and transcultural forms, as we can see in these walls (nor exactly Roman, nor exactly Iberian). All of this is the material result of strategies and active processes of identities' construction (Gosden, 2004; van Dommelen, 2000 & 2006). The society changed to an integrate mode of identity in the earlier age of the city because, in this case, Iberians were allies, not enemies. The work of the other two towers is very similar to the way Minerva's Tower was built. We only have partial remains of these towers, but we can see the same feature of megalithic stones and chamber (Menchón, 2009, 74). This tower would possibly have been built by the same group of workers. There are two parts of the walls conserved,

which are linked to these towers because of the way they were built in the second phase. One of these parts is between Minerva's and Cabiscol's Towers, which is 100m long with a walkway over the wall of 6-7m width that connected both chambers. The other part of the wall, as well as being re-used for the second phase, stayed between Arzobispados' tower and Santa Barbara's bastion and it has a 4,4-5m width (Perez i García, 2011, 361). The second phase was dated in the half of IInd century BC (c. 150-125 BC) (Perez i García, 2011, 361). The need of more space *intra mura* determined the expansion of the Roman walls. This new part is characterized by a face of 6m width and 10-12m tall (Figure 5). It also has a base of megalithic stones (Menchón, 2009, 93) like in the first phase. This new plan of the wall used as a great part of the fortifications and it was extended to the harbour part. The sense of being strongly fortified was the need of protecting the capital of *Tarraconensis* province, and, more importantly, the military and commercial harbour. Without a doubt it is again a way to assert the *dignitas*, as we have seen in Ampurias, because in that age the zone of Tarraco was not a dangerous zone. The spectacular scenography of Tarraco, divided in terraces, would be an important sign of power for Roman identity. Technical constructions used in this phase were again megalithic stones for the base but, this time, a casemate system, which was used in the Hellenistic military constructions, quite common in Italic walls. Casemates were filled with sand and stones (Menchón, 2009, 94). In this new phase, the ancient towers were joined like in the first one. Also, five new towers were built but we don't have archaeological remains of those (Menchón, 2009, 95).

We can summarise by saying that in the first phase the influences of the indigenous culture were still present in the society and this allowed the combination of some of those forms with Roman military architecture. The walls expose the realities of the society, a situation of mimicry where the Iberian society was adapting its identity. The homogenization can be observed more clearly in the walls of the second phase where the indigenous aspects had disappeared in the public context.

Colonia Patricia Corduba

The clearest case of a foundational wall in Hispania is Colonia Patricia Corduba. The main functions of this city were to be a stable site for the governor, a winter camp and a fix military camp (Canto 1991, 850). So we can easily see the purpose of creating a strong fortification. These walls were built by a system of wall and embankment, as we can see for example in Veyes (Molina Mahedero & Valdivieso Ramos, 2007, 31). The Foundational wall was built in the half of the IInd century BC. This was dated by the remains of Italic amphorae Dressel 1A and Campaniense A. The polygonal form of the walls was 2,650m long and the external face was made with rustication systems (Molina Mahedero & Valdivieso Ramos, 2007, 32). The form was adapted to the topography and to the best way for protecting the city. It used the eastern and southern natural slopes, and a stream in the western part. Its extension was 47,6 hectares

of surface during the Republican age (similar to Italic colonies but larger than in the Iberian Peninsula). (Figure 6). It had four gates that were opened and oriented towards the cardinal points. We only know the location of the gates, but not the shapes. The North gate was located in Puerta del Osario and the south gate was located in C/ Blanco Belmonte. Between these gates was the *cardo maximus*. The other two gates were located in Puerta de Gallegos (east) and Puerta de Roma (east). The *decumanus maximus* was between these gates. The problem was that these gates weren't aligned, maybe because the original plan was in 'bayonet' shape or maybe due to the construction of the Imperial cult centre, which might have been decisive for changing the gate. We do not have too much information on the towers. We only know that one tower was linked to the Foundational walls, and that it had a semi-circular shape of 7m in diameter. Another squared tower was located in C/ Ronda de Tejares 13. This was dated c. 50-45 BC, at the same time in which Caesar's troops laid siege and conquered the city during the Civil Wars. This wall reveals the image of a colony that rises with a stronger military function and character. This was adapted to the topography to create a safe perimeter like in the Italic camps. The name of *Patricia* was used because the first settlers were born in Rome. Having all of this explained, we can affirm that this city was one of the best examples of Italo-Roman identity in the Iberian Peninsula.

Colonia Libertinorum Carteia

Carteia is a well-known settlement of the Roman Age. Its most important characteristic is the condition of the first Latin colony outside the Italian Peninsula, as we can read in the classics. However, this city was a Phoenician and Punic settlement before the Romans (Roldán Gómez *et al.*, 1998, 32).

'There came also from Spain another embassy, from a new race of men. They, representing that they were the offspring of Roman soldiers and Spanish women, to whom the Romans had not been united in wedlock, and that their number amounted to more than four thousand, petitioned for a grant of some town to be given them in which they might reside. The senate decreed, that 'they should put their names on a list before Lucius Canuleius; and that, if he should judge any of them deserving of freedom, it was their pleasure that they should be settled as a colony at Carteia, on the ocean. That such of the present inhabitants of Carteia as wished to remain there, should have the privilege of being considered as colonists, and should have lands assigned them. That this should be deemed a Latin settlement, and be called a colony of freedmen.' (Titus Livius, *Ab urbe condita*, 43.4).

Carteia is a settlement populated by 'a new race of men' from Roman soldiers and Hispanian women. The Senate gave it the title of Latin colony. With such entitling, the population of this new colony asserted their role as a new element in a new context. If they went to the Senate it was in order to be grown and recognized as Romans in the new Hispania. Rome used in Carteia the same strategies as in the Italic Peninsula; it is the same model

that would be used in the 1st century AC with the generalization of Latin citizenship (Presedo Velo *et al.*, 1982, 20). In the first phases, most of the theories contextualize this in the Phoenician period (VIIIth century B.C.). It was built with very big blocks in the corners to consolidate all the construction. The other parts of the walls were made by smaller blocks and had an alternate course of stretcher and header bond, with deep foundations. It's very hard to follow this phase in the city because it was destroyed.

In the second phase, the most notable character of this phase is its monumentality. These walls were located over the remains of the Phoenician walls (**Figure 7**). We can see a very important rebuilt consecutive to the 1st phase. The rustication on the external face is very relevant in the blocks. As well, Casemates give a maximum thickness of 6.25m. These are documented in the IVth-IIInd centuries B.C. and are very similar to other Punic military constructions in the Mediterranean and the Iberian Peninsula like Cartagena (**Figure 8**) or el Castillo de Doña Blanca. These are interpreted like a reconstruction in the 2nd Punic War.

The third phase is the Roman one. This is related to the Roman conquest and the construction of the civic centre. All the buildings of this age are made with the blocks of Punic walls. One of the best examples of that is the temple located at the top of the hill, which was made with the characteristic rustication blocks. At the same time, the Punic walls were the foundation for the Roman's fortification. Here, we can see how the Romans devastated the ancient pre-Roman's remains after the siege, and created with the Roman's techniques and structures, all the new symbols of the city. We talked about this neo-Roman identity of the new people, and also the walls had to demonstrate that that was a colony, not an ancient Punic city. We have some hypothetical systems regarding the towers. These reconstructions want to show that the towers look like Tarraco's Tower. This would be an interesting point of study, mostly in Carteia, the first colony city out of Italy. This could show if this category was forced to be similar to the italic walls from the 2nd century B.C.

Conclusions

As we have seen, these four models of Roman walls lead to different ways of understanding the Romanization and different ways of identities. We can affirm that the way of interaction is different depending on the relationships between the Romans and the indigenous people. We must keep in mind that after the arrival of the Roman troops, the Iberian Peninsula (with more evident exceptions in the Mediterranean coast since we can consider it as an homogenized space) had less urban development than the Italic Peninsula and other Mediterranean regions (Pina 2011, 44). This meant putting an Italic model in most parts of the Peninsula. Goodman said the walls of Aosta, which are perfectly regular with towers in regular spaces, had a counterproductive system of protection compared to the irregular models of walls. The symbolic function is a very important point in these circumstances (Goodman,

2007, 60). That is completely comparable to some Iberian models, like in the case of Ampurias.

The Roman walls are a very wide and a prestigious element of which we have been talking, and can be also related to the idea of *dignitas*. The walls can protect but they can also be seen as a point of reference for the society that they protect. The destruction of enemies' walls meant as well the destruction of their ideological ideas and identity. Romans thought that their enemies' walls could be destroyed or rebuilt, in order to join it as a Roman element. This was a way to provide territorial, social and cultural domination.

As an urban element, Roman walls were a line to demarcate their territory as a 'special space'. Goodman says that Roman walls helped to express the *urbanitas* and the *Romanitas* of a community, as they were understood as a monument for expressing their rights (Goodman, 2007, 60). These were only put in a purely Roman urban context because, as we have seen, the walls supposed to be the element that determined the entrance and exit to the city, and the plan of the streets. They were inserted in the city like most of the authentic expressions of Romanity.

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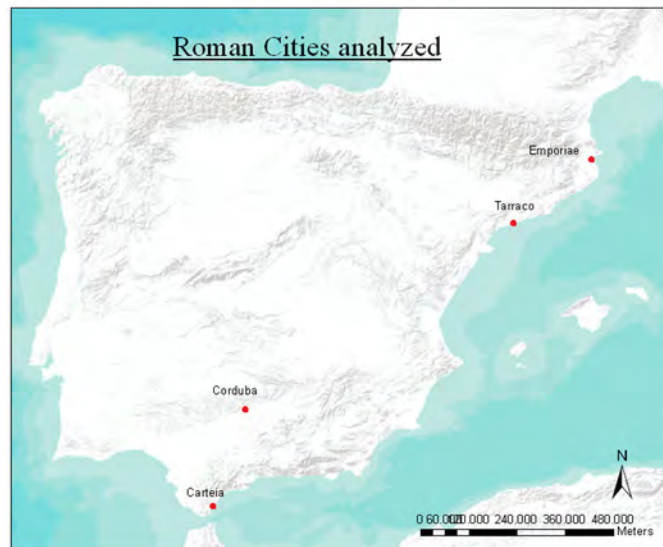


Figure 1: Map of the Iberian peninsula and the four Roman cities (drawn by author)



Figure 2: Greek Walls of Ampurias (photo by author)



Figure 3: Roman walls and Gate of Ampurias (photo by author)

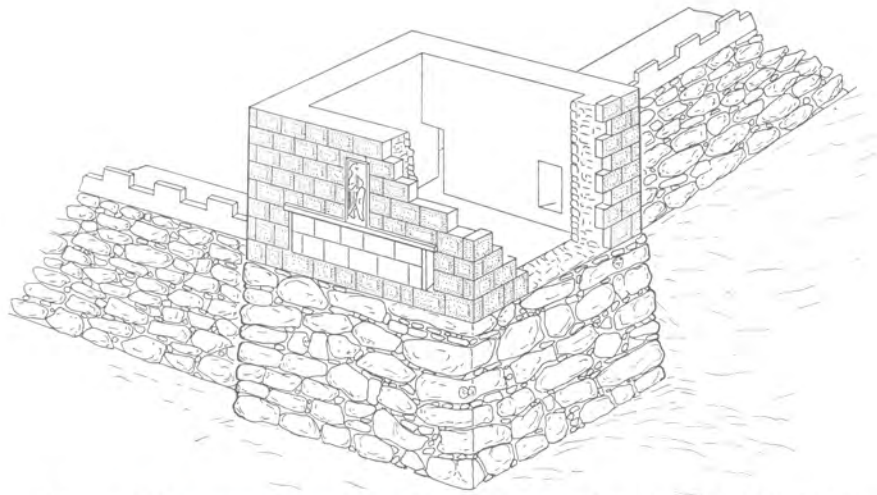


Figure 4: Reconstruction of The Minerva Tower (after Hauschild 1993, 143)



Figure 5: North face of the Roman walls (photo by author)



Figure 6: Roman Republican walls of Corduba (after Molina Mahedero & Valdivieso Ramos 2007, 35)



Figure 7: Casamatta of the walls of Carteia (after Roldán Gómez et al, 1998, 152)



Figure 8: Casamatta of the Walls of Cartago Nova, quite similar to Carteia (photo by author)