

THE MILITARY CONTROL OF THE MINING TERRITORY OF EASTERN SIERRA MORENA

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INTRODUCTION

The Roman conquest of the High Guadalquivir is a historical reference of the southern half of the Iberian Peninsula. The Second Punic War and the Roman civil wars which followed reveal the potential richness in ensuing archaeological manifestations which, in theory, must lie in the area. On the other hand, it should be noted that the High Guadalquivir was, from an economical point of view, of first strategic importance. The northern part of today's province of Jaén, in the heart of Sierra Morena, has always hosted substantial mining exploitations of silver, lead, copper and, less significantly, iron. These declined in the mid-19th century.

Copper mining and settlements devoted to the extraction and melting of copper are recorded to have existed in the Prehistory. However, the same has not yet been recorded in the area for the Iberian period, as the actual increase starts in the 2nd century BC. This runs against the data contained in the classical sources (mainly, Polibius and Livy), which show the strategic importance of the area for the Carthaginians (López Castro, 1995). Such was the interest that marriage agreements were made between Hannibal and Himilce, the daughter of the aristocrat ruling the town of *Castulo*, under whose control was the above mentioned mining area.

Research on the various settings of the Second Punic War prompted the assessment of several archaeological sites as actual locations of fights between the Carthaginians and the Romans in the late 3rd century BC (Bellón *et alii*, 2005). It also led us to question the role of other sites which have a marked strategic or military value, but which have been considered only from the functional (Ruiz Rodríguez, 2004) or territorial (Torres & Gutiérrez, 2004) points of view.

Our archaeological analysis of territory in the province of Jaén relies on the background work by A. Ruiz Rodríguez, M. Molinos, L. M^a Gutiérrez, M. Castro, T. Chapa, J. Pereira, F. Nocete, etc. However, the debate has not yet contemplated the inescapable issue of settlements with a link to the Roman conquest or the strategic control of territory in relation with the Roman conquest. Precisely, the debate on later stages (late 2nd century to early 1st century BC) focuses on the identification of systems for military control of routes, frontiers, or town limits. This is so to the extent that the field has become a reference in historiographic research thanks to the discussion

of the chronology, purpose or location of the so-called towers, citadels or small fortresses which lie all over the province (Fortea & Bernier, 1970; Moret & Chapa, 2004).

Lack of elements proper to a conquest in the archaeological records might be due to exclusively historical criteria, that is to say, might be related to the specific social circumstances of the High Guadalquivir. As argued by A. Ruiz Rodríguez and M. Molinos (1993), the Second Punic War and the ensuing Roman occupation was based on a policy of agreements with the local aristocratic elites which were very seldom punished by Rome, as in Iliturgi, and this because of the latter's political standpoint. Finally, the historiographic interpretations may have been influenced by the weight of *indigenism* in the global theoretical framework of mainstream research.

Recent research by A. Morillo in the north of the Iberian Peninsula related to the conquest of the area reveal a wide range of settlements of a clearly military nature. These settlements belong in the conquest process and show Rome's strategic and economic interests in the area to focus on the gold mining around Las Médulas (Morillo, 2003; Sánchez-Palencia, 2000).

The mining area of Sierra Morena hosts a number of sites known as *castilletes* (Spanish for "small castles") (Torres & Gutiérrez, 2004). Their design and inside plan may be linked to the military control of the mining territory ascribed to Castulo. Thus, sites like Salas de Galiarda, Los Escoriales, El Centenillo or Palazuelos may cast light on the process of implementation of the systems for territory management with respect to Rome's strategic interests. In a recent discussion at a meeting hosted by the French academic institute Casa Velázquez, A. Ruiz Rodríguez presented a view of this set of sites as totally different from the towers and citadels. The former are, however, the ones with the oldest records, some of which date as far back as the late 2nd century BC (Ruiz Rodríguez, 2004). Their structural design is intended to meet functional needs related with mining exploitation and its production processes, but also with trade of the extracted mineral or the management of a variety of settlement categories in more complex groups, as in El Centenillo. Be it as it may, their military nature might be explained in terms of a first stage of army-oriented Roman administration of the exploitation. Structurally, they are therefore considered as *castella* ("castles").

On the other hand, certain archaeological sites may gain special relevance considering the above theoretical factors and in the context of the revisional approach intended by this paper. One of such sites is Collado de los Jardines, in Santa Elena (Jaén). This is an ancient Iberian sanctuary which seems to have become a strategic key point for control of the pass between the plateau of Castile in the centre of the Peninsula and Andalusia in the south. This pass was crucial for the redistribution of the mineral extracted in Sierra Morena. Certain archaeological elements of this site hint towards the existence of the structure of a Roman military camp.

The structure consists of a large, walled irregular polygon shaped area. The design fits in with the terrain, using the slopes and the big rocks in the area, but overall enclosing the hill across which the traditional route linking the plateau and the Valley of Guadalquivir ran. The need for a strategic control of the pass may explain its fortification, but also does the control of the production of the mines lying only a few kilometres from it. The structure has been interpreted traditionally as an Iberian wall (Calvo & Cabré, 1919; Almagro, 1988), and it has a defense moat on its northeastern side. Recent research has totally ruled out any relation between this fortress and the Iberian sanctuary (Gutiérrez *et alii*, 2004) (Fig. 1).

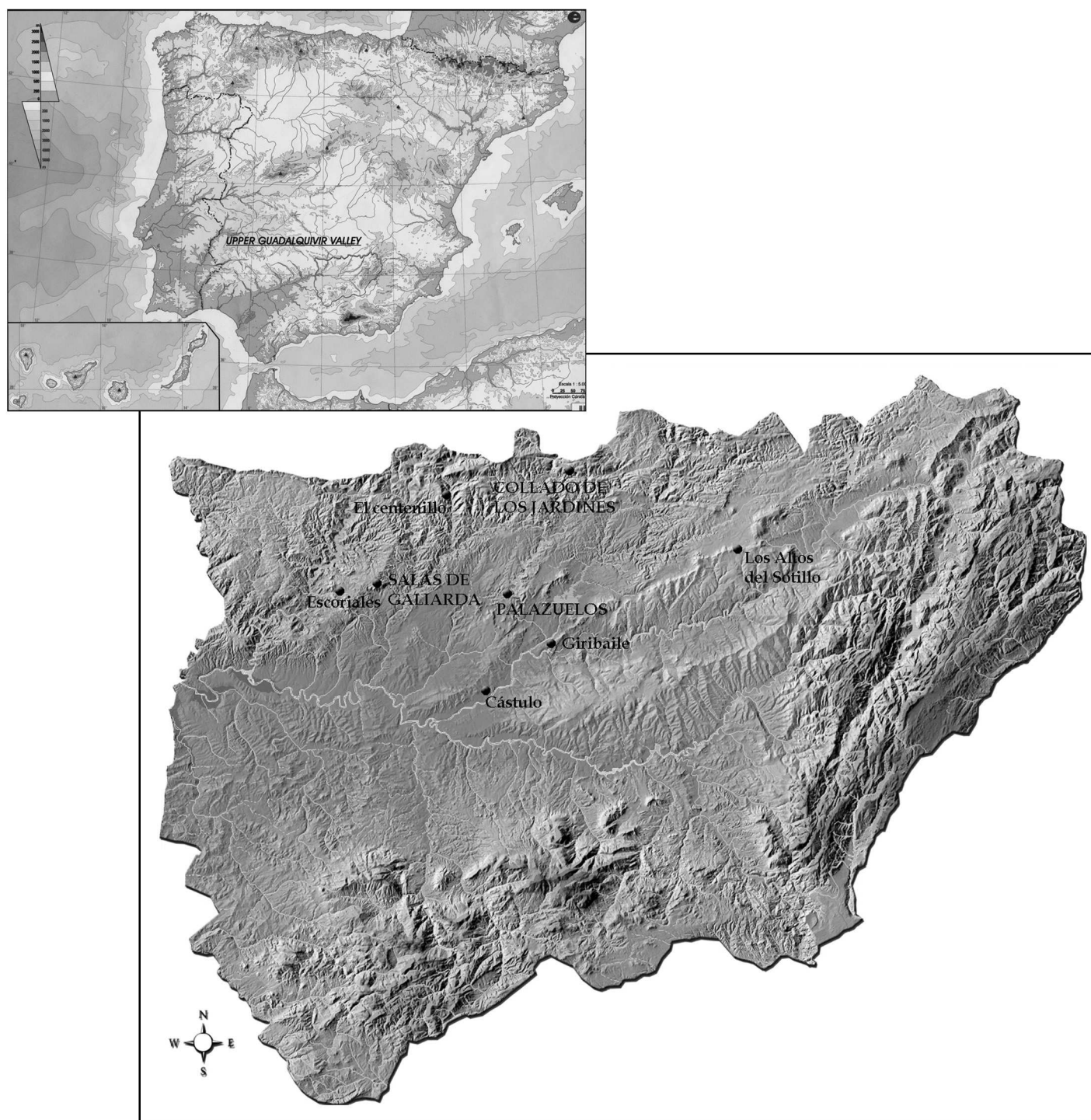


FIG. 1. Main sites mentioned in the text

THE *CASTILLETES*: *CASTELLA* IN SIERRA MORENA?

A small group of fortified mining towns lie in the easternmost side of Sierra Morena, specifically in today's mining districts of Linares and La Carolina, both in the province of Jaén. These towns include, at least, Palazuelos (in Carboneros), Los Escoriales (in Andújar) and Salas de Galiarda (in Baños de la Encina). They are known as *castilletes*, because they look, or rather, looked like "castles", for the monumentality of the remains which still exist. Hardly any part of the impressive image of these Roman-time fortresses remains today: some of these representative sites have become badly degraded by intense and sustained damage, for example, in Palazuelos¹ first by the modern mine and then by the dam of La Fernandina.

The first known research on these sites dates back to the 19th century, for example, the sketch plan of Palazuelos published by P. de Mesa & Álvarez in 1889, or the one of Salas de Galiarda by Mr. H. Sandars in 1905. Yet, most of the archaeological research focused on El Centenillo at the turn of the past century. El Centenillo is a town intended to host a renewed mining exploitation based on the ancient Roman works.

Research on *castilletes* and, in general, on their associated ancient mining waned along with the decline in the mining and metallurgy of Sierra Morena, which led to the closing-down of the mid-20th century. This is because a large part of the archaeological research was made by the same engineers who led the mining exploitation of that time. Lack of control over the archaeological works from that period makes it difficult to tell the number and importance of the surveys: the only data available are the ones contained in publications of the turn of the past century. Some of these appeared in renowned journals and one of them is of special significance: Mr. Horace Sandars' work is the cornerstone for proper understanding of later research by, for example, geologist Guy Tamain or Professor Claude Domergue, who surveyed Cerro del Plomo (Domergue, 1971).

Later attempts at resuming that research have been rare until the *Centro Andaluz de Arqueología Ibérica* started research on ancient mining and Roman occupation in Sierra Morena, barely a decade ago. Completed work this far is based on excavation and focuses on the assessment of the significance of *castilletes* in the historical process as outstanding elements of the archaeological heritage. In the current stage, these sites can be researched only based on surface surveys which yield data on their size, the design of the walls, or the building technique used for the remaining wall facings. Only occasionally, as in Salas de Galiarda, is it possible to identify remains which delimit rooms and which can be used as evidence to learn about the everyday life in the settlements.

This paper focuses on the analysis of archaeological documents available on two of these *castilletes*, Palazuelos and Salas de Galiarda, because they are the ones which best represent the idea of a fortified Roman settlement which we want to convey. Thus, unlike the usual procedure, which studies military camps and *castella* based on identification of the perimeter wall of which often only the plan can be studied, research is based here on the monumentality of remaining stretches of wall as the most distinct features.

Salas de Galiarda

The fortress lies on the high part of an outcrop seam. The somewhat square-shaped ground plan retains elevations over 2,5 metre high in its northern side. The well-known town's ground

¹ This has been identified by some scholars since the 17th century as Pozo Baebelo.

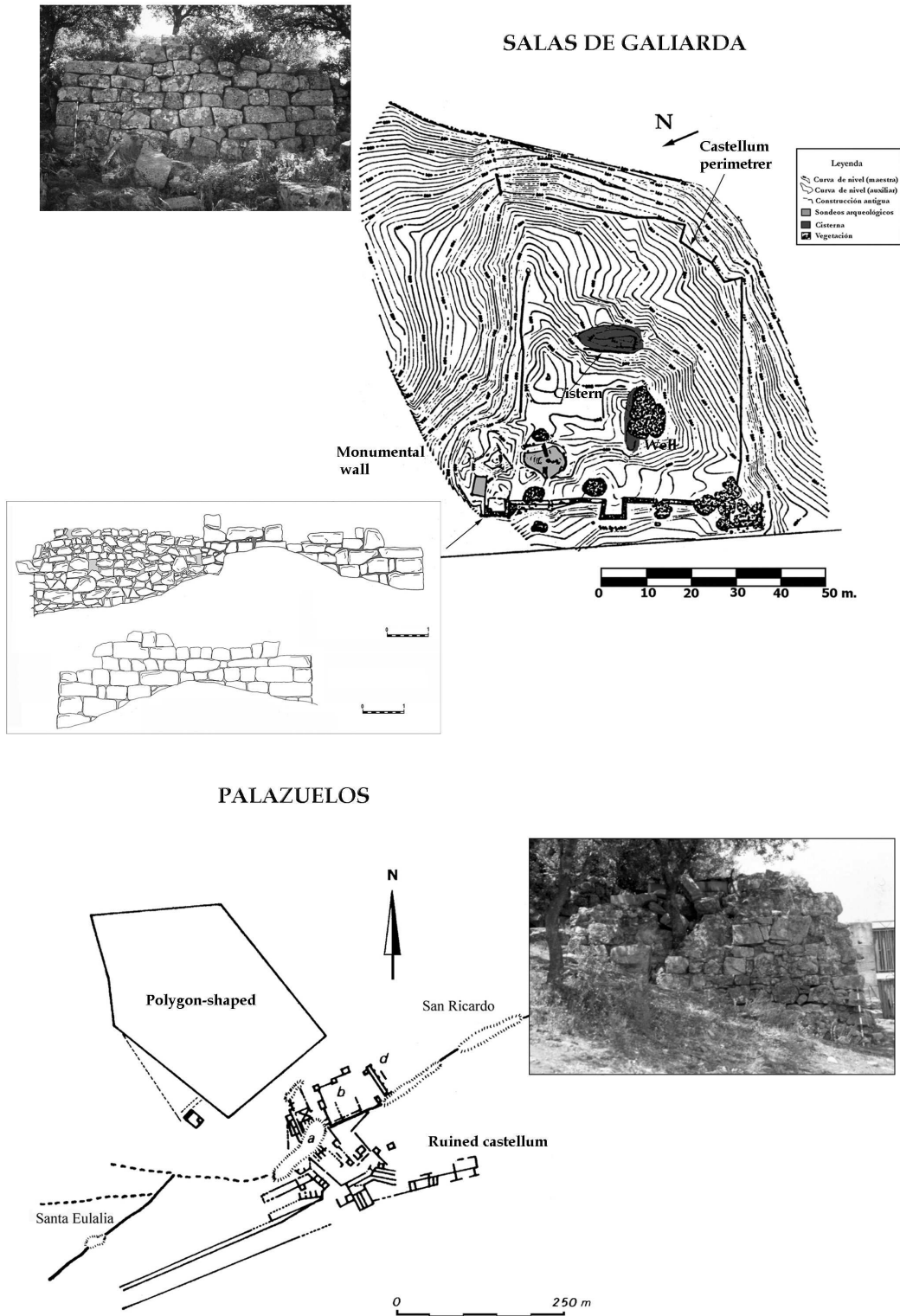


FIG. 2. Salas de Galiarda and Palazuelos. Plans, section and views of the walls

plan (Sandars, 1905; Corchado & Soriano, 1962; Gutiérrez *et alii*, 2003) always stands out for four elements: the fortified northern side, the seam, the well and the cistern (Fig. 2).

The fortified northern side is made of polygon-shaped stones and houses three big bastions, one at each end and another in the centre.

The mouth of the mine lies outside the enclosure. Over time it became filled up with waste materials. Of these, remains of the groved hammers used by the miners to extract and grind up the mineral are worthy of note.

The well and the cistern are the only known buildings inside the fortified enclosure.

Palazuelos

Lying near the settlement of *Castulo*, Palazuelos controls and dominates Los Altos de Valdeinfierno, renowned for their rich silver seam outcrops (Domergue, 1990).

It has been known to be a major mine for the significance of archaeological findings since the late 19th century (epigraphs, coins, etc., the most relevant being the renowned bass-relief of miners published in 1882 kept at the Bochum Museum), and for the hypothesized identification of Palazuelos as Pozo Baebelo, which supplied Hannibal 300 pounds of silver per day².

The ground plan published by P. de Mesa y Álvarez stands out for the identification of the extraction seams San Ricardo and Santa Eulalia (later re-used by German mining company Stolberg und Westfalia), the *castillete*, which becomes a central element in the plan, a large cistern and a polygon-shaped enclosure. The latter is hard to find on surface and for that purpose aerial photography is advised (Domergue, 1987) (Fig. 2).

As mentioned above, the recent history of these sites resulted in the loss of most of these elements. However, some have been re-used for new purposes, for example, the cisterns and the polygon-shaped enclosure are used today as stables for cattle.

Based on the above outline of the research data and circumstances, we will now focus on the interpretation of these *castilletes* as hypothetical *castella*. The latter will be understood here, in general, as fortified Roman settlements. This view deviates both from the classic notion of Iberian enclosures, as in the areas known as Campiña de Córdoba and Campiña de Jaén (Fortea & Bernier, 1970) and from their identification with the towers, watchtowers and fortified buildings discussed elsewhere recently (Moret & Chapa, 2004).

Therefore, the *castilletes* of Sierra Morena can be described as small-sized settlements of 0,2 to 0,3 ha, as in Los Escoriales and Salas de Galiarda, or of 0,5 ha as in Palazuelos. Their ground plans tend to be shaped as irregular squares and house a number of bastions which, as in Salas de Galiarda, may not be original to the first design of the fortress, and which apparently defend the least protected flanks of the settlement.

Seam outcrops always lie near the settlement. In our view, this justifies the interpretation of these *castilletes* as mining settlements. They are a strategic resource for the possibility to retrieve silver mineral and should be defended accordingly. The *castilletes* thus seem to serve an important function as sites for tactical control.

It is in this sense that we believe *castilletes* could be viewed as *castella*: fortified sites smaller than military camps, that is to say, fortified mining settlements which serve a specific purpose in a specific location, in this case surveillance and control of silver seams in easternmost Sierra Morena. Further interpretation of these *castella* is extremely hard to develop for want of surveying

² Plin., *Nat Hist.* 33, 22.

and considering their military value. Therefore, at this stage it is only possible to approach *castilletes* based on their most monumental remains.

The building technique used for the walls varies. Polygon-shaped arrangement used for the northern wall of Salas de Galiarda is worthy of note. On the other hand, the few walls remaining in Palazuelos reveal a different building technique using irregular stone to create a form of dry-stone walling. The variation is probably related with the chronology and the materials available in each case.

The issue of the chronology of these settlements was purposely kept aside for this part of the paper. It is difficult to make an accurate estimate of their chronology, because the only data available come from prospections and sparse records of the findings. The oldest record is the one of the materials retrieved from Los Escoriales and Palazuelos, and it does not go beyond the late 2nd century or early 1st century BC. No chronological references of Salas de Galiarda are available, nor surface materials were retrieved inside the wall perimeter, because the archaeological deposits have remained unaltered for years as ground which is currently used for cattle farming.

Finally, the *castilletes* seem to belong in a settlement pattern proper to the highland and based on a network of mining sites and settlements which depend heavily on the exploitation of the rich seams which are so frequent in this part of Sierra Morena. This results in a dependence on the communications network with regard to the main economic activity to which the territory is devoted.

THE ROMAN SETTLEMENT OF COLLADO DE LOS JARDINES

Lying at the heart of Despeñaperros, the archaeological site Collado de los Jardines has been for centuries a mountain pass which, however secondary, linked Upper Andalusia with the Plateau through the rugged terrain of eastern Sierra Morena. This site has been occupied since the Prehistory, as can be seen from cave paintings in the shelter known as Cueva de los Muñecos (López Payer, 1986). It has also been admitted that it hosts one of the most representative sanctuaries of the Iberian culture.

According to the official records, it was discovered by chance in the early 20th century (Sandars, 1906), and it has gone through a number of excavations since then, the most relevant of which are the ones by the *Junta Superior de Excavaciones y Antigüedades* between 1916 and 1918. These stand out because they are the only structural and sequential record of the sanctuary (Calvo & Cabré, 1917/1918/1919) because of the sustained plundering and destruction which followed the discovery. This research laid the foundations for recent studies intended to define the historico-archaeological sequence of the site (Rueda *et alii*, 2003; Gutiérrez *et alii*, 2004). It is based on this evidence that we put forward the hypothesis that there may have existed a military camp of the late Republican era. This new stage of research identified a wide chronologico-cultural sequence starting, as mentioned above, in the Prehistory. The major activity band belongs to the Iberian period, specifically the mid-4th century BC. At that time, a major worship site has been recorded to appear. It was under the power of *Castulo* and was analogous to the one recorded in Los Altos del Sotillo (Castellar). It hosted regular activity until the 1st century, after which materials appear occasionally until well into the 4th century. The 9th century means another major period for the site, and a *hins* is recorded to have been found at the top and on the southern side of Cerro del Castillo.

Focus here is on the Iberian and Ibero-Roman periods for proper research on the identification of remains of a military camp of the late Republican period. It may have served the purpose of controlling both this traditional route and, ideologically, one of the sanctuaries of the territory of *Castulo*, as has been recorded by the documents of votive objects.

A settlement was recorded to enable the existence of the worship space in the Iberian period. This settlement was first thought to have been an *oppidum* of about 27 ha (Calvo & Cabré, 1919; Almagro-Gorbea, 1988), according to the wall perimeter. It was later reassessed as a settlement not larger than 4 ha (Nicolini, 1969) and its size is today estimated to have been about 1,50 ha (Gutiérrez *et alii*, 2004). The latter is based on a description of the site grounded on the analysis of the scattering of surface materials. The above mentioned walls appear to have been a stretch of 2729 m. They enclosed a large area, including the settlement (lying in Cerro del Castillo) as well as a part of the Roman paved road, but not the sanctuary: “los primeros vestigios se notan a unos 60 m de la cueva-santuario, siguiendo la dirección del saliente” (Calvo & Cabré, 1919: 46)³.

The earliest records of this structure appear in the 1917 report. The following quotation is worth mentioning as a starting point for the authors' interpretation:

“Esta ciudad estaba amurallada en parte por riscos naturales y en parte por muros formados de piedras sueltas labradas en una sola de sus caras. Esta muralla artificial, de la que se conserva intacta la mayor parte de sus cimientos, se extiende en su lado Oeste-Norte en una longitud de 1.500 metros; no tiene figura regular, sino que se ensancha o estrecha, acomodándose al terreno que limitaba la población. No puede definirse con exactitud si esta muralla es obra de iberos, de romanos o de tiempos posteriores; es probable que todas estas gentes pusieran mano en ella, aunque su origen es casi seguro que fue anterromano” (Calvo & Cabré, 1918: 32)⁴.

Only a part of the original layout remains today. Therefore, the topographic plan drawn in the 1917 campaign is essential against the difficulties resulting from the preservation of the structural record, and so are the detailed metric and technical descriptions which allow a theoretical reconstruction of such a central element for understanding this archaeological complex as a military camp.

According to the graphic documents (Fig. 3), the wall zigzagged down all the way from the so-called acropolis on top of Cerro del Castillo towards the hill and then climbed up to Peñones de Raso Largo, where remains of a watch post were recorded. At that point, the wall turned off towards Silleta del Corzo, where another sentry box (“garita de vigilancia”) was recorded (Calvo & Cabré, 1918: 47). The wall turned again and met Peñón del Corzo, the major geographical element in the immediate surroundings and therefore a crucial strategic point where

“sólo existe un espacio de 35 metros de murallas. Presumimos que no se construyeron mas muros por este lado, ya que su especial topografía, de pendiente muy rápida, permitía la defensa natural del terreno con la ayuda de espeso bosque, todavía existente, y de los escalonados peñascos, a modo de baluartes” (Calvo & Cabré, 1918: 46)⁵.

³ “... the first remains appear about 60 m from the sanctuary-cave in the direction of the projection”.

⁴ “The town was enclosed partly by natural crags and partly by walls built with stones carved on one side. This artificial wall, most of whose foundations remain intact, is 1500 long on its west-north side; it is not shaped regularly, instead it becomes wider and narrower at times according to the terrain's limits on the settlement. It cannot be established with certainty whether the wall was built by the Iberians, by the Romans or by later inhabitants; all of these are likely to have contributed to the construction, although its origins are most probably pre-Roman”.

⁵ “... the wall is only 35 metres long. We assume that no more walls were built there, because the steep terrain, along with a still existing thick forest and the irregular bulwark-like rocks, meant a natural defense”.

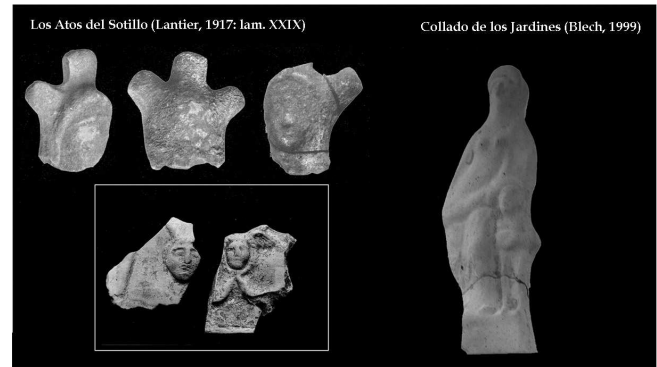
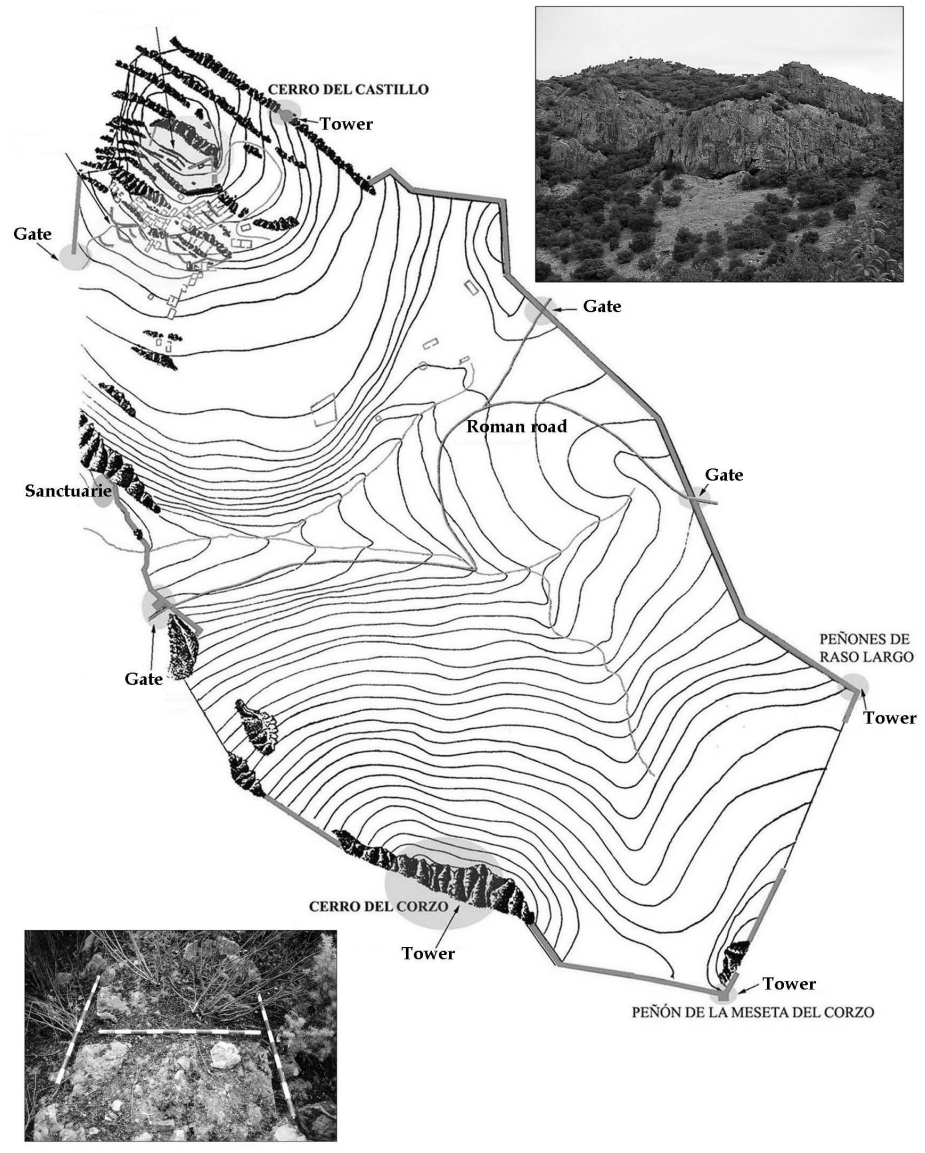


FIG. 3. The Roman settlement of Collado de los Jardines. Plan and votive baked clays: Minerva (Los Altos del Sotillo) and Venus (Collado de los Jardines)

The highest areas revealed structures for checkpoint “de varios departamentos que sirvieron de resguardos para vigías o centinelas” (Calvo & Cabré, 1918: 46)⁶. This point and Silleta del Corzo are separated by a 90 m. gap where no remains of wall were found.

The wall lay down again from this enclave towards the hill, where a gate flanked by two towers must have kept guard of the Roman road. The last stretch snaked down towards the cave cliff and ended approximately 60 m from it, so the sanctuary must have lain outside the limits set by the wall. The northeast side was partly protected by the rough terrain, so the wall was built at stretches. This is the only record available of a circular tower built between the rocks of Cerro del Castillo.

The variations recorded along the wall are worth special mention. As a result of them, the wall appears as a quite heterogeneous structure whose defining feature is adaptation to a varied terrain which is steep and rough at times, and smooth at other times. Specialists roughly describe two different building systems beside the natural defense provided by the terrain:

“junto al Peñón de Raso Largo, guardan entre sí cierta homogeneidad en el orden constructivo; están hechos con grandes bloques; los muros se elevan en sentido vertical; son de espesor de cerca de dos metros, y su interior está relleno con tierras y piedras” (Calvo & Cabré, 1918: 47)⁷.

Yet, the building system changes in the stretch up to the cliff, and a wall line was described as follows:

“elevaba, verticalmente, unos 80 cm para servir de antepecho; no pasaría de 70 cm su espesura terminal; y por el exterior se construyó en pronunciado talud, el cual fue reforzado con las tierras extraídas de un foso de tres metros de anchura, abierto al pie de la muralla; elevándose con ello, por fuera, su altura total. Dichos muros se edificaron con simples lajas, pizarrosas por lo regular, que buzaban hacia el interior de la obra, montando, alternativamente, una sobre la otra en las hiladas superiores, las cuales se sujetaron con otra hilada de piedras centrales. El corazón de las paredes lo constituían rellenos de pequeñas piedras y tierras” (Calvo & Cabré, 1918: 48)⁸.

According to the specialists, the different systems served strategic purposes, because this area, the hill, was more difficult to defend.

None of the building systems described in the research of the early 20th century can be recognized today. The remains and stretches of the original wall which still stand show a rather homogeneous building technique: approximately 1-metre thick walls made of medium-size stones and filled with gravel were recorded in the best preserved points. Although the remains are

⁶ “... several rooms used as shelters for sentry or sentinels”.

⁷ “... next to Peñón de Raso Largo, they show some building homogeneity; they are made of big stones; the walls rise vertically; they are approximately two metre thick, and are filled with sand and stones”.

⁸ “... risen vertically approximately 80 centimetre as a parapet; the total thick would not be over 70 centimetre; externally, it was built on a steep bank reinforced with material dug up from a 3-metre wide pit at the foot of the wall; the outer height was therefore higher. These walls were built with mere slabs, usually slate, leaning inwards and overlapping in the higher layers, which were in turn fitted with a layer of stones in the centre. The walls were filled with gravel and sand”.

few and are, in general, in poor condition, the inner and outer faces can be traced up as they climb towards Peñones de Raso Largo.

However, a number of historical conclusions can be drawn from the structural analyses. These conclusions are based on the assumption that the structure formed by the wall is not part of an Iberian *oppidum*. This is grounded on the fact that no *oppidum* as such ever existed, instead it was only a small settlement on top of Cerro del Castillo, and which was used as a strategic checkpoint for communication routes and as a settlement closely connected with the sanctuary. The settlement was deeply transformed by Romanization, which took place at the time when the sanctuary was used. Very few of the materials retrieved can be linked to this site. They are some pottery fragments of Campanian pottery A related with Italic crates, and a coin

“encontrada en las piedras del cimiento de una de las casas ibéricas exploradas. Es un as de la familia Titina... Pertenece al individuo de ella M. Titino Curvo, pretor en 178 antes de J.C.” (Calvo & Cabré, 1918: 37)⁹.

This coin is one of the few remains which are associated with a hypothetical permanent Roman settlement. Foundry works are confirmed by the abundant slags associated with remains of *meta* and *catillus*, which belong to rotary mills so frequent in mining settings, especially in the late Republican time (Domergue *et alii*, 1997).

One of the hypotheses which we entertain is in the framework of Romanization of the space and worship. Specifically, it defines this wall as associated to a Republican-time military camp. It must have been intended for control of a mountain pass which, although secondary, led to the eastern mining area of Sierra Morena, and also for control of the sanctuary of Collado de los Jardines as a destructuralizing ideological component of the territory of *Castulo*. This process was recorded to be parallel to a similar sanctuary in Castellar. Territorial research and analysis of the votive items of both sanctuaries suggest a worship continuity, even if within the framework of a new political and religious model based on the breakdown of many of the Iberian-time ideological forerunners. It is in this context that architectonic restructuring of the sanctuary can be explained (Ramallo, 1993). This explanation is closely associated with the disregard of the Iberian bronze votive offerings, which are the main votive category of the former worship and elements for socio-political cohesion proper to the territory of *Castulo*.

The processes for channeling religious worship in both sanctuaries expressed themselves in votive groups of items, specifically in a category of materials made with baked clay. This group comprehended a wide range of *palliati* (figures wearing the Roman *pallium*), female small heads and busts, male headless figures and, above all, the representation of several Roman deities like Minerva, Venus and Mercury; all were local creations limited to a small geographic territory within the High and Medium Valley of Guadalquivir (Blech, 1993; Marín Ceballos *et alii*, 1984). They are also evidence of the introduction of a cultural model based on the differentiation and association of three Roman deities with very specific functionalities.

Major difficulties arise as a result of the decontextualization of these materials. Our approach to the channeling of these iconographic materials and of the practices for which they were intended is very limited and stylistic and analogical analyses based on materials retrieved from other contexts are then needed. Such is the case of deity Minerva. Within these representation

⁹ “... retrieved from foundation stones of one of the Iberian houses surveyed. It is an as of the Titina family... coined by the gens of Pretor M. Titinio Curvo in 178 BC”.

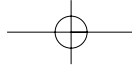
parameters, it occurs in the High Valley of Guadalquivir between as late as 1st century BC to as early as the mid-2nd century AD (Castro *et alii*, 1993), although the oldest prototypes may date back to the late 2nd century BC (Marín Ceballos *et alii*, 1984). The comparison with the votive items of Castrejón de Capote, in Badajoz, is even more interesting. In this case, the same association between Roman deities made of terracotta has been recorded to date back between the early 1st century BC and the late 1st century AD (Berrocal & Ruiz, 2003).

The military and political control of the earliest stages of Romanization are combined at that time with the interest for control on the ideological component too. This has an evident strategic nature, and can be applied to other cases, like El Pedrosillo (Casas de Reina, Badajoz), a Republican military camp in western Sierra Morena associated with a well-known mountain pass which was also linked to a pre-Roman sanctuary (Rodríguez Martín & Gorges, 2006).

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