

Arqueologia da transição: entre o mundo romano e a Idade Média

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ANNABLUME

LIFE AND DEATH IN LAS PIZARRAS (SEGOVIA): FUNCTIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN LATE ANTIQUITY¹

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ABSTRACT – Through the analysis of the archaeological area, a suburban settlement located near the city of Cauca (Coca, Segovia), we will present the phase of changes that undergoes this Late Roman suburban settlement located near the city of Cauca (Coca, Segovia), which take place in the residential sector, its *pars rustica* also we will present the phase of changes that undergoes the funerary world; already away from the Roman farming activities related to the of changes that undergoes this Late Roman systematic archaeological excavation, the relevant data recorded permit us to set the different occupancy phases attested in the area of “Las Pizarras”, for the period which comprises the Late Antiquity.

KEYWORDS – villa, necropolis, habitat, transformations, production, Late Antiquity.

Resumen – Con el análisis del área arqueológica Las Pizarras, enclave suburbano situado en las inmediaciones de la ciudad de Cauca (Coca, Segovia), daremos a conocer la etapa de cambios sufridos por el conjunto monumental tardorromano a partir del siglo V d. C. De manera conjunta a estas transformaciones funcionales del sector residencial, su *pars rustica* atraviesa una serie de modificaciones en su gestión, convirtiéndose alternativamente en sede de actividades relacionadas con el hábitat, la producción y el mundo funerario, alejadas ya del sistema de explotación agraria romano. Gracias a una rigurosa y sistemática excavación arqueológica, los datos hablan por sí mismos y nos permiten contextualizar las diferentes fases de ocupación registradas en el área de Las Pizarras, para el período que comprende el final del mundo antiguo.

Palabras clave – villa, necrópolis, hábitat, transformaciones, producción, Antigüedad tardía.

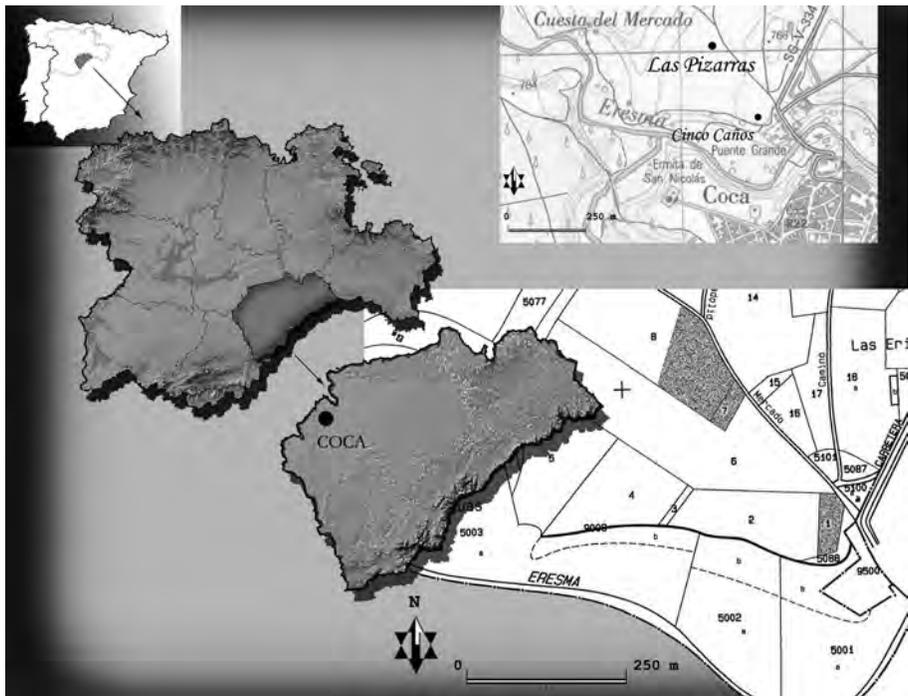
1. LAS PIZARRAS

Located in the north-western area of the Segovia province, the Late Roman residential complex of Las Pizarras is placed within the territory of the villa of Coca; which belongs to the Spanish autonomous region of Castile and León. This ancient *Vaccaean oppidum* is mentioned in classical sources where it appears in a few, although significant, occasions².

¹ This paper belongs to the General Research Project IEU053A11-1.

² *Cauca* appears mentioned in the works of Roman authors as *Appian*, *Pliny the elder* and *Frontinus*, related to the Roman conquest of Hispania, or *Zosimus* and *Hydatius*, when they refer the origin of Emperor *Theodosius The Great*.

Its toponym gives the name to an archaeological area placed at only 2 km from the urban centre, whose importance resides in the location of a Roman homestead of monumental character. The extent of this exploitation is becoming clearer year after year, in view of the fact that it has been the object of archaeological excavations and scientific studies since 2000. (fig. 1)



Due to the archaeological interventions, carried out during this period, under the research projects that have been taking place throughout time, the progress obtained have shown and provided interesting results³. Thanks to a rigorous process based on a precise contextualization of the archaeological remains, through an appropriate stratigraphic reading and its adequate recording and documentation; we have managed to record and classify the central sector of the *pars urbana* of an exemplar of singular monumental Hispanic architecture of the mid-4th century AD in the Iberian Peninsula. It comprises a Late Roman aulic complex with an aristocratic-style displayed both in its plans and constructions, as well as in the materials applied; a clear referent for rural Hispanic *uillae*, as a result of the

³ *Comprehensive Research Project Cauca* (1999–2009), *Research Project CYL-1A-40057.0002.01 Cauca: Las Pizarras* (2006–2009). Actually, the Project IEU053A11-1 *Scaena priuata ad Theodosiana tempora: palatial outlines in some Roman uillae from the North Plateau*.

scenographic resources and “show of wealth” expressed on it. However, the purpose of the present study is not the analysis of the data provided by Las Pizarras’ Roman *villa*⁴, but a thorough study of the modifications that the complex suffered in subsequent centuries; at the moment in which the homestead starts losing its original representative functions until its later complete extinction, and the reforms linked to it.

2. WHEN THE PROPERTY IS NEGLECTED

A careful look at the variety of uses the site went through according to the times, aimed at an adequate use of the structures, allow us to see the evolution concerning the alterations of the original building’s feature; an important fact that has marked the building’s history. This long process begins with a period of sequenced changes and transformations.

Initially, we will attend to the reduction of the space habitat in prejudice of the chambers of representation, which seem to have lost their original function and meaning. Along for an unspecified period, although relatively short, these environments suffer a marked deterioration. The so-called “spolia”, of eminently practical purpose, consisted in the recovery of those components that are likely to be employed again⁵, along with the consequent suspension of the services that, as a place of reception and appliance, provided these spaces. This change should have occurred within a relative and paused order, improper and nothing to do with a departure motivated by violent acts or with some discontinuity in the occupancy of the complex. This is evidenced by the archaeological materials found in those deposits sealing these stately environments, similar to those employed in the Late Roman living in of the *fundus*.

In accordance with the more recent chronology provided by the cultural remains from the deposits related to the dumping stage, the representation spaces became a dump⁶ in uncertain times at the beginning of the 5th century AD. Logically, these dates may be extended through time; depending on the durability of these ceramic products⁷. In any case, we must point out that the waste

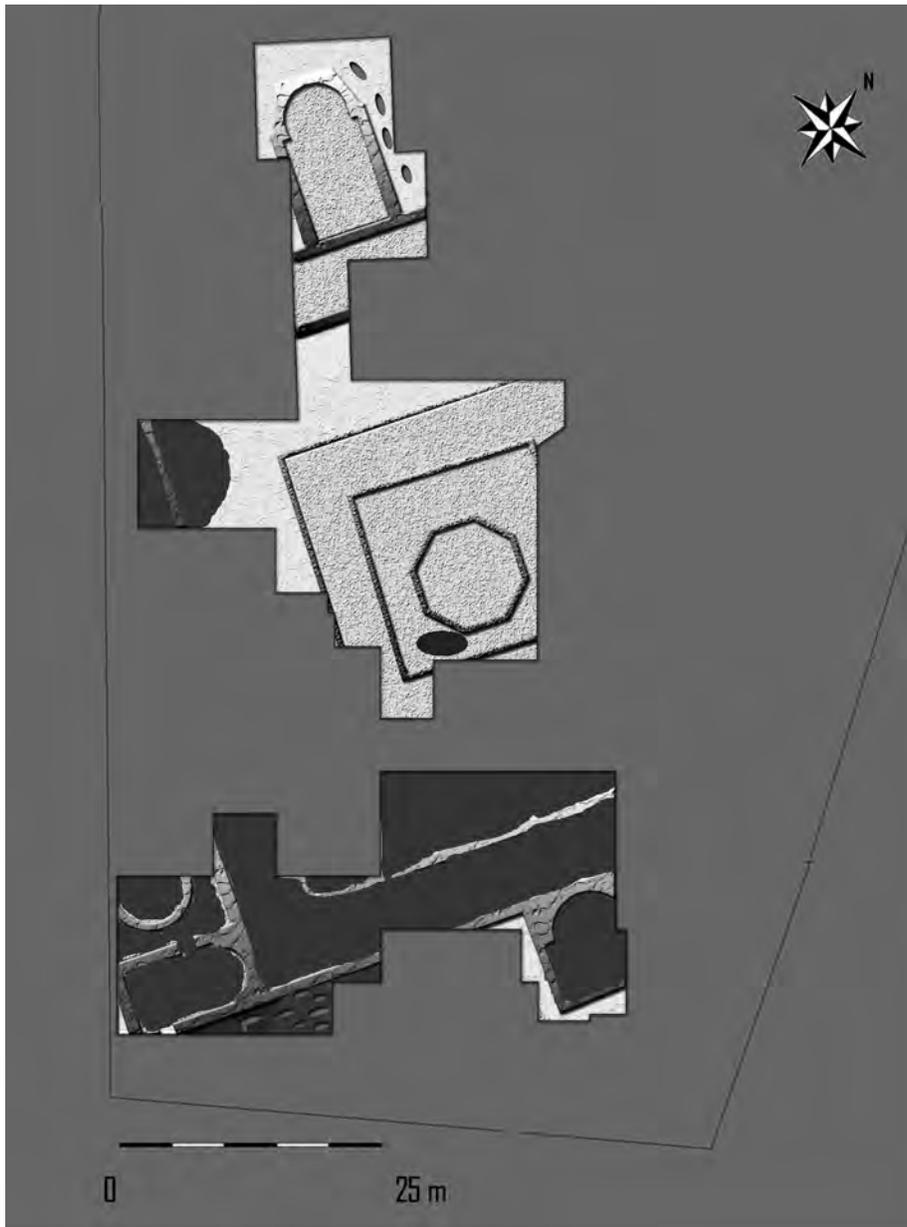
⁴ See Pérez & Reyes 2003-2009c; Reyes & Pérez 2011; Pérez *et alii* (2012) & Pérez, Reyes & Nuez 2012.

⁵ Specifically we attend to the Marmor extraction from the *parietes crustatae* and the *sectilia pauimenta* which originally coated the peristyle and central *stagnum*.

⁶ Pérez & Reyes: 2005a: 65; *id.* 2006: 23; *id.* 2007b: 159; *id.* 2008: 155; *id.* 2009a: 25-26; *id.* 2009b: 13.

⁷ It is impossible to adjust with greater rigor the dates of the ceramic tools to the point of math the historical facts. We usually commit the mistake of giving very little duration to products that were even clamped to extend its use; especially those with a raised prize due to the long-distance trade. Perhaps we should look, from a broader perspective, how the data provided for the ancient chronicles affect to those productions, which seem to reduce the area of production to a local scale, rather than try to explain the consequences. Generally, that kind of evi-

products' record becomes quite irregular, due to subsequent alterations that we will, partly, analyze and to the changes in the depth of the field; much more superficial as we move towards the known Western limit of the building (fig. 2).



dences is not registered in archaeological contexts, especially when the spaces are losing their sense until becoming deserted, with the end of the Roman productive system, closer to its end.

To some extent, this stage confirms some changes in roman exploitations around *Cauca*, during Honorius' times. This phenomenon is also reflected in nearby *uillae* of *Aguilafuente* (Esteban, 2007, p. 166), *Almenara-Puras* (Merino García and Sánchez Simón, 2001, p. 110) or *Palazuelos de Eresma*⁸; aside the probable fire that destroyed *Los Casares*' (Storch, 2010, p. 368) although whose precision still needs an adequate confirmation and it has not yet provided chronological data. The absence, in the case of the latter example, of a wide publication on the subject, hinders both its assigned chronology and the way to verify whether this phenomenon is a pure coincidence, an isolated exception that breaks the rule described or, by contrast, turns out to be one clear example of those settlements that suffered a virulent end. Especially, because the total absence or minimum incidence of this type of evidence has become more obvious in the archaeological record (López Quiroga & Benito 2010: 291).

Returning to Las Pizarras, what happens in those areas without noble coatings such as those mentioned in the spaces of representation? Specifically, we refer the sector placed to the east of room 4 (Pérez & Reyes 2005a) or that one in the north of room 5, whose scarce stratigraphy⁹ was damaged by ploughing till practically destroy the Roman floors. In those places, where not structures have been detected despite probably were erected¹⁰, it is possible to register new practices, not necessarily related to the habitat but with the death: the burials (fig. 2).

3. FUNERARY CONVERSION

Until now, the cemetery associated with Las Pizarras' Late Roman villa is unknown, however, the spatial analysis of *Cauca's* territory reveals the existence of a funerary complex in the vicinity, the necropolis of Santa Rosalía (200 m, southeast of the site). This factor seems to confirm the existence of a roman entry road at the north of the city. Despite this cemetery belongs to the High empire, it is not possible to reject a survival of the burial rite in Late Roman times, according to the occupancy of the suburban *uilla*¹¹. If the owner had to choose any place in the area of the property, by closeness and tradition, Santa Rosalías' cemetery or a nearer place should be the best election. The preservation of these practices in Visigoth times over the upper area of Los Cinco Caños (Pérez & Reyes 2003: 220-21) seems to confirm it. Judging by the resources employed in

⁸ In this particular case, it still preserves the *balneum* until, finally, becomes a christian church (Izquierdo 1992: 89).

⁹ The lower height of terrain preserved in this area of the building, as a result of the descendant field level, strongly complicates the identification of spaces; in particular those non-delimited in extension sectors..

¹⁰ The real perimeter of some of these rooms is still unknown.

¹¹ Among the potsherds discovered, some of them point to a Late Roman cornology (Blanco 2002: 161)

the construction of the monumental complex, we assume that the mausoleum for the deceased, whose exact location is still unknown, must have been similar in both importance and characteristics.

By now, it is risky to establish the influence of Santa Rosalía in the transformation of the whiteboards in cemetery. Similarly, it is not possible to affirm or deny the associations of the new uses applied to the homestead with a cultural reconversion of the area yet. However, based on the evolution noticed in both the type and orientation of the burials, we can anticipate its endurance over time.

In absence of grave goods capable of providing chronological data on this subject, the oldest tombs seem to be those burials, which employed recycled constructive elements for the inner lining of the graves. The systematic study of the burial's typology exhumed, for this first phase of the necropolis, reveals three types. From the easiest ones, based on the simple grave, the record shows other more elaborated, applying different materials to their the inner lining, although not necessarily following this typological order. Finally, the last group, but not the latest, is associated with infant individuals, using the *imbrices*, as a sarcophagus (Pérez & Reyes 2005a: 85-86, fig. 9) (figure 3).



Neither we do discard different phases, or the latter expansion of an original nucleus – perhaps starting over the free-structure areas –, or low technical quality

floors; ruined by the continued use¹². The burials at the north of Room V seem to confirm it, as indicated both the great number and dimensions of Roman material employed in the grave structure and its protection, with marble slabs, roofing tiles (*tegulae, imbrices*) or bricks (*lateres*); which seem to bring closer their date of construction to the spoiling times from the Roman building. These materials are especially abundant and standardized in this area, both in the grave structures and as in the tomb covers (fig. 3); sometimes even employing the large marble plaques (*lithostrota*) removed from the original *opus sectile* pavements. At the moment, the four tombs group in the west zone of the villa (fig. 2), point in that direction¹³. Also data, as the most antiquity given to these burials respect the next phase in model cemeteries as Tarragona's (Amo 1979: 91-93), validate this theory.

Other sector similar to the recently described, in terms of resemblance and relationship, is located east of the southern corner of the peristyle (fig. 2); Pérez and Reyes 2005a: 81-98). As regards the care in lining the graves, certain differences are noticed. There is more variety in the range of materials used: now the construction debris and fragments of marble, of smaller size, are set vertically in the walls of the tomb, leaving the bottom free, where the corpses or the wooden coffins laid directly on the soil. Therefore, these classes of graves seem to be halfway between the previous group and the 6th century inhumations, practiced next to the building foundations once it finally finished the dumping stage. Additionally, the typology also looks like the burial practices developed in Visigothic times.

Broadly speaking, Las Pizarras' type 2 graves (lined with recycled debris elements; Pérez & Reyes 2005a: 84), is directly related to "type 2" graves described by A. Fuentes (1989: 248) in his study of the "Douro necropolises". The practical absence of grave goods is not a reason to discard its relationship to this cultural horizon, since this is not the first case of cemeteries defined by the absence or scarcity of these items (Abásolo & Pérez 1995: 299).

Considered the most common among the simple graves, Á. Fuentes (1989: 270-71) dates this "type 2" graves, especially in the 5th century, although he does not rule out their origin back to the mid-4th century, based on the funerary evidence found in other necropolis, like Tarragona's (Amo 1979).

In addition, it is essential to bear in mind the scarcity of grave goods to consider the second half of the fifth century as the starting date of Las Pizarras funerary transformation, according to the becoming less frequent inclusion of funerary offerings and personal adornments in the tomb, as it happens in the Olmeda's *villa* or Saldania's cemetery, nearby settlement (Abásolo 2010: 11).

¹² making the pit excavation easy.

¹³ The aerial photograph shows a high density of inhumation practices in the area.

Beside the absence of chronological data for adjusting the dates between such different uses of the site, nor we do have arguments against the close coexistence between the living and the dead and apart from the traditional Roman values; especially when it comes to a space out of use and similar examples are recorded in other parts of the Roman empire, as single grave goods. A. Chavarría (2007: 134) distinguishes an individual category for clusters up to 5 tombs, contemporary of the continued occupancy of these rural settlements over spaces neglected and coincident with the Las Pizarras' examples already described.

As we have not noticed a real coexistence between both the discharge and dumping stage and the construction's functional conversion into a cemetery, because they do not physically share the same parts of the ruined structures, it is not possible to determine if these two activities are synchronic or not. In view of the scarcity of chronological data available, we prefer to split them, at least, superficially. Therefore, we can asset an initial date for the funerary use of the *pars urbana*, not before the second half of the 5th century. Arguments such as 'a date never later to the second half of the 5th century for the waste contexts', the increasing paucity of grave goods in the Douro's necropolises for this chronology, or the spreading of graves over ruined monumental *villae* for this period, (Chavarría 2007: 137), seem to reinforce this appreciation. In fact, the funerary "invasion" of many of the Roman villas becomes fairly common in the 6th century, and not just for *Hispania* (López Quiroga & Martín Rodríguez 2000-2001: 153).

But, who decided to be buried here, and why? Unlike the garbage contexts contribute with many archaeological remains, we have not yet found proofs to establish a direct relationship between those people and the inhabitants of the suburban villa. On the other hand, the scarce finds, especially personal adornments, refer a long lasting Hispano-roman metalwork, endured over time.

It is not easy to establish the identity of the individuals deposited therein, especially when we almost have indicative elements of their origin or social status. Certain personal adornments¹⁴ (Pérez & Reyes 2005a: 91), provide some dates and a wide social background, although without any variations respect to the previous stage. We will not find items assigned to an elite group along this phase stage, nor in most of the burials of the following century.

Neither it has been established yet a distinction about different human groups: from an anthropological point of view, the earlier Late Antique inhumations mainly belong to a Caucasoid racial group, specifically, to the Mediterranean type (Herrerín & Reyes 2011: 112 and 132), while still there is no

¹⁴ As the iron awl and ring and the bronze earrings of circular section found at the eastern corner of the peristyle in 2003 archaeological campaign.

evidence of a Nordic specimen, typical of the Visigoth people. Perhaps the genuine inhabitants from Las Pizarras' plateau were those who, with their own work force, became their holders; or still maintained relations with the old or new owners who, for various reasons, reduced their exploitation to a purely economic nature one. In any case, these people, whose housing area is still unknown, were who decided to change a useless space, which had already lost its original sense, as the location for their final resting place: the ruins of the *fundus*.

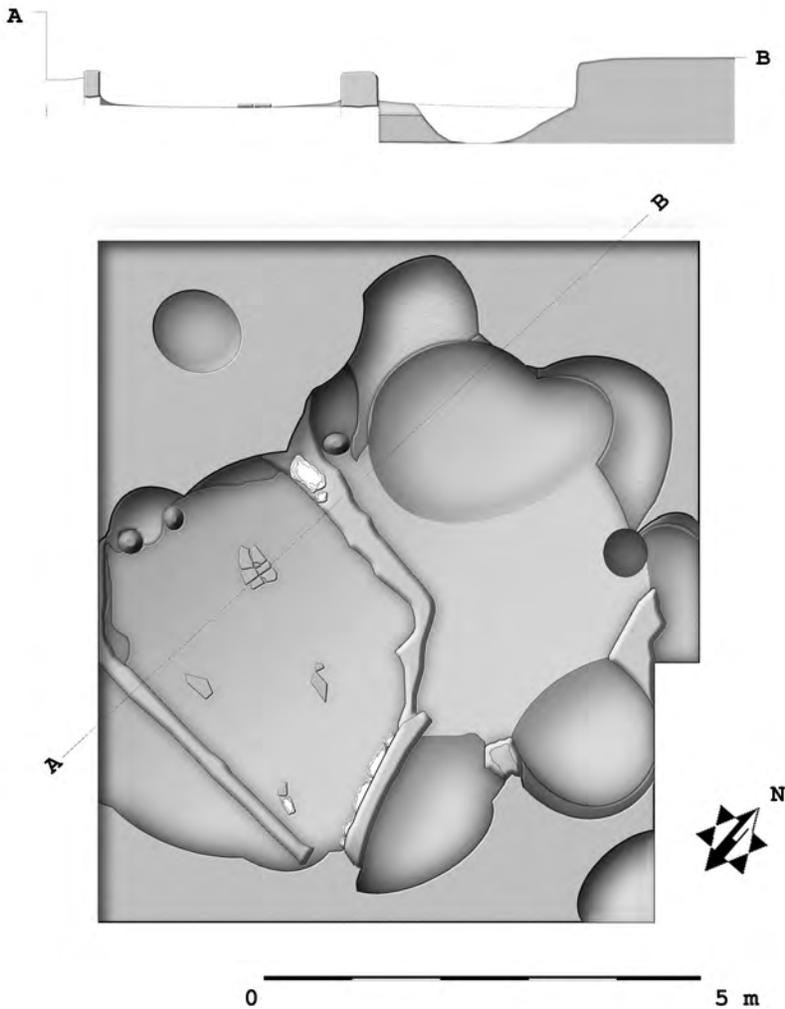
4. LIFE AND DEATH

The 6th century does not imply a decline, neither in the productive system nor in the occupancy of the area of Las Pizarras. In contrast to the previous phase, along this period it is possible to establish a relationship between the burials and the nearby domestic architectures, due to the discovery of a household unit, placed in the ancient *pars rustica* of the complex. This relatively short distance human displacement (200-300 m south) is not the only case recorded. Vega de Duero (Villabáñez, Valladolid) is a similar settlement, for what regards to the occupancy of previously marginal areas and the construction of semi-excavated structures in the ground, for the new residential area (Bellido Blanco 1997: 314). These patterns are more common than one might think. According to this, the recent analysis of the domestic architecture in the northwest area of the Iberian Peninsula (Tejerizo 2012) sets the principal line guides to understand the constructive typologies in early medieval village contexts. The archaeological campaign in 2000, focused on the nearby plot 1 (fig. 1), provided the discovery of a partially sunken-featured structure¹⁵ excavated (Pérez & Reyes 2003: 222), with an overall area of 40 m² (figure 4).

In addition to its relatively large size, the domestic unit is internally divided in two parts by a split wall dug on a sandy substrate. The foundations appear to have been laid in stone, as it is visible on similar structures inside the hut, and made walls. The southern sector, with slate flooring¹⁶, shows a rectangular layout and is defined by mud walls. The opposite area, with a noticeably harmed perimeter, shows a less uniform morphology. The surrounding pits, some of which have been partially excavated, and two confronted oval rooms cause this perception. It was paved with beaten clay, which renewed in -at least- one occasion. This area was reinforced by a post-hole near the eastern end, which, joined to the dividing wall, seem to illustrate a double slope roof.

¹⁵ At a first sight, the rectangular layout turns to oval due to the subsequent waste pits practiced on its perimeter and its incomplete exhumation, which does not allow to appreciate the final shape of the building.

¹⁶ A small number of slates were preserved.



It has also been possible to detect several refurbishments inside; as the paved room, east of the South sector, constructed over the former floors. Besides, the stone foundations of the new mud wall attached, imperceptible in the rest of the structures, point to that theory (figure 5).

In both environments, storage vessels still were found *in situ*: one of the small rooms preserved a ceramic container of these characteristics (eastern sector), while two more were preserved inside a pit practiced in the sandy geological substrate of the southern sector, along with other potsherds found over the remains of the slate floor. The residual preservation of the pavement makes difficult to set the location of the hearth, linked with a domestic use of the building, although we do not exclude the possibility of a communal function.



Using as a reference the essay for the Visigothic huts from south Madrid, we can identify the *caucensis* model¹⁷ with *Group A*, of oval huts, which is the most frequent. In particular with Vigil-Escalera's *type A-2* (Vigil-Escalera 2000: 232), who links them with a communal use, due to their complexity and larger dimensions exceeding those of a basic household unit; both in length and in width, which it doubles.

For what regards to the chronology, we hardly count with arguments to provide more accurate data due to the scheduled derelict of the sunken structures, apart from the pottery referred; with a traditional morphology and a virtual absence of edges that do not permit to adjust the dates.

Really, the subsequent use of this space determines the dates of the former occupancy. In this regard, the discovery of a group of ten burials¹⁸ (Pérez and Reyes 2002: 215-16 and 218-22) confirms the conversion of this sector in a cemetery, or the extension of the nearby necropolis of Santa Rosalía towards this area.

As many communities of this period show common readjustment patterns of domestic spaces to a varied uses, we cannot categorically deny a possible coexistence between the living and the death. This is particularly true especially for what regards the inland villas of the Iberian Peninsula, where the living and the death are relatively close, almost coexisting, as the deceased are no more seen as

¹⁷ The sunken hut measures 8 m length x 5,5 metres width.

¹⁸ No. 1-9 and 11, respectively.

contaminating elements (Chavarría, 2007: 131-132); it is, in fact, well known the trend towards the disappearance of these barriers in the cities of this time.

On this subject, the spatial analysis of rural settlement patterns, for the 5th to 7th centuries in the provinces of Salamanca (Ariño 2006), south of Madrid (Vigil-Escalera 2007), or ancient provinces as the *Carpetania* (López Quiroga & Benito 2001: 294 and following), reveal similar behaviour; especially in the smaller establishments, or peasant farms. Once these domestic units are derelict, they -or a part of them-, become transformed into a necropolis. Archaeological sites from Madrid province, such as El Encadenado / El Soto (Barajas), confirm this data. Besides, also there are burial areas associated with sunken huts, as provide the settlements of Soto Pajares/Casa de Venezuela¹⁹ (San Martín de la Vega) or Quintano (Mejorada del Campo; Vigil - Escalera 2007: 261-262).

A question arises with the discovery of the remains of a burial in the same space where the hut was previously constructed. It is not possible to determine whether this initiative responded to the conversion of a residential area into a necropolis, or to the extension of the burial area that coexisted with the ancient inhabitants, moved now to another area.

In this particular case, the chronology of the associated grave goods makes it possible to adjust the occupancy dates, although burial No. 10 is not, *sensu stricto*, a typical burial (Pérez & Reyes 2003: 221). We are dealing with a grave that was involuntary affected by the spoil of structural material in the medieval ages²⁰. It is important to highlight the fortuitous discovery of the funerary find, as the spoiling activity had left visible just the eastern half, dismantling the rest. The grave structure consisted on two opposite *imbrices*' coffin with no human remains inside (empty). A stone set vertically marked the head of the burial. In the north, there was a human skull of an adult placed upside down, with the needle of a belt-buckle placed over the cranial vault (figure 6).

The scutiform base needle²¹ was the only personal element found inside the tomb, with a triangular section and bent at the opposite end, appropriate for closing the buckle. It has to a 6th century chronology²² (Pérez & Reyes 2002: 229;

¹⁹ Vega, 1996.

²⁰ There discovery of human remains in the backfill (Unit 83) of the pit, probably from the damaged tomb, along with iron nails, plaques and a possible iron awl seem to be personal effects attached to the burial. The scarce data make difficult to determine if the tomb contained one or individuals.

²¹ Deposited in the Museo Provincial de Segovia (No. SG/5/00/88/1).

²² Although of uncertain origins shared by the hispanic Late Roman tradition and the german toreutic (Ripoll 1985: 39), there are pieces a typical german use and production, simple variations from the oval belt buckles (D-shaped), present from republican times (Méndez & Rascón 1989: 136). Our needle belongs to a second phase in the technique process, where the appendix of the buckle used to wrap around the stem of the snap is replaced by the inserted element directly on the rigid plate of the buckle. For this reason the chronology points to Carpio del Tajo necropolis, Level III (second half of the sixth century AD (Ripoll 1998: 372, fig. 2e).

vols. 3.3), perfectly compatible with the development of the funerary complex during the end of this century. The contribution of ceramic elements from a dump for pottery debris²³ helped to date end of the Late Antique settlement that sealed the sunken structures in the 7th century²⁴ and, at the same time, confirms the development of a new occupational activity in this suburban area: a ceramic workshop.



Depending on the transformations occurred in Las Pizarras, plots no. 7 and 8, everything seems to point towards a new relocation of the population towards the Roman ruins, sealing the Late Antique cemetery which, up to this date, it had developed there.

At this point, let's analyse the evolution of the necropolis developed on the ruins of the Roman *uilla*, contemporary with the occupancy of the peasant farm placed in the southern area of the plateau (plot 1). The results of radiocarbon analysis obtained from the samples taken from some individuals, confirm the 6th century as the time in which occurs the extension of the cemetery. Its spatial organization was strongly conditioned by the Late Roman structures location, specially the orientation of the burials, determined by the villa's topography. We

²³ This kind of wasted material is tested by the ashes concentration, the degree of strain of some of the potsherds recovered, the unequal baking or the presence of slags in the context, along with waste pottery.

²⁴ The application of combed in wavy lines over the surface of the piece points to this chronology. However, the fragmentary state of ceramic remains makes difficult to date it.

are now witnessing the true conversion of the area into a necropolis, a time in which the burials invade the known area of the residential complex (figure 7).



The solution adopted now consists on a widespread practice: the realization of inhumation pits in the pavements of the peristyle, pond and courtyard, near the foundations of the Roman construction²⁵. The location of the graves, ignoring the architectural barriers, which involved the still standing structures, transformed completely into a cemetery the area of Las Pizarras. This phenomenon indicates that variations in the orientation confirms that the standing structures still were viewed, at least in part, to be chosen as a reference point. Probably, the hardness of the ancient pavement conditioned their peculiar arrangement, causing the linear expansion of the cemetery, rather than generating a denser area organized in rows of tombs. Now, the most popular type of inhumation is the *type 2* graves, as mentioned above, with a slight variation: relying on the Roman foundation, this becomes the pillar on which to base the consolidation of the

²⁵ Until 2005, few examples were recorded of this type of inhumations, specially of the latest ones, of which Burial no. 18 was the principal referent (Pérez & Reyes 2006: 21-24). Since then, new finds have evidenced the new practices implemented in this period.

funeral structure. Once more, the reused constructive materials are employed in the grave structure ²⁶ (figure 8).



²⁶ Flooring fragments, marble plaques, stones, bricks, etc.

Another common feature to all burials, together with the reuse of graves, resides in reaching the sterile levels in practising the pit; finding in some of them the skeletal remains of up to three individuals. We do not know if the explanation to this behavioural pattern lies in the family relationship between the deceased, or it is triggered by other causes, based perhaps on the optimization of the efforts and on the profitability of the burial area, that is thus generated.

Unlike other periods, the ending of funeral practices over the ruins of the monumental complex of Las Pizarras in the Visigothic period, are perfectly dated thanks to particular guide fossils of the 7th century. Findings of belt-buckles of Byzantine type, the so-called lyre-shaped belt plates, are present both in funerary contexts (Pérez & Reyes 2005a: 93 and 2009b: 118) and as part of the construction levels of a new habitat area (Pérez & Reyes 2008: 152-53), confirm it. Therefore, this is an example of a Late Antiquity necropolis that is rooted in the Late Roman world. In respect of its ending, the date provided by the material culture shows the seventh century as too soon, because these types are present in the final moments of the Visigoth period necropolis.

Judging by the presence of the same belt-buckles in the foundations and structural collapses of a new domestic environment, that will be analysed, the time interval turns out to be minimal; or it even coexists with the last moments of the cemetery.

5. ENCLOSURE I

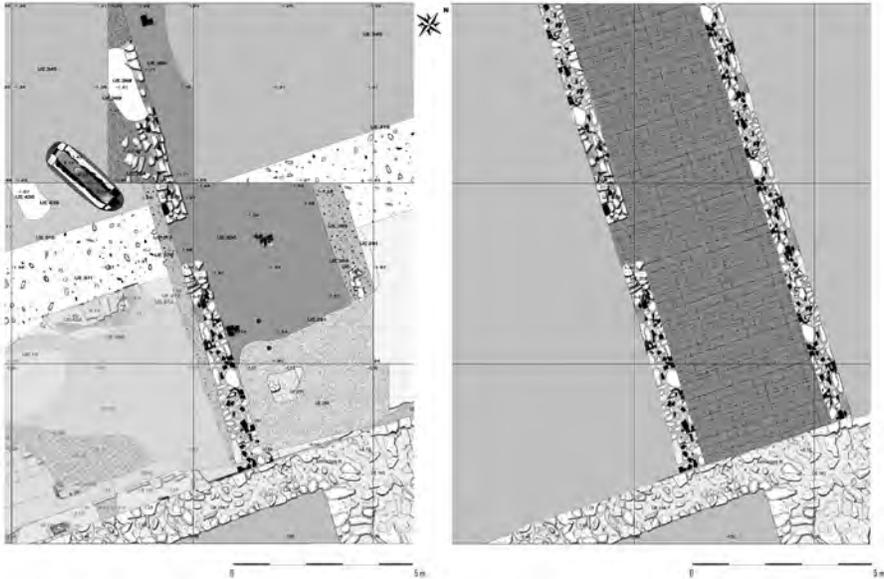
Thanks to the archaeological intervention in 2007, it was possible to discover a new functional transformation in the peristyle, changing from a funerary purpose towards a domestic reuse during Visigothic times (Pérez & Reyes 2007b: 52-54; 2008: 148-153). The stratigraphy defines an initial sequence as cemetery, and its subsequent conversion into domestic space, referred to as *Enclosure P²⁷*. This enclosure, built over the Roman ruins and the Late Antique burials, sealed the Roman and Visigoth sequences; according to the archaeological relationship generated by its founding construction, which cuts the previous contexts²⁸. Anyway, as we have seen, this fact does not necessarily imply the end of funerary practices in the nearby and, further apart, sectors.

Although it has not been already completely excavated, we can foresee a complex with a rectangular layout, which offers a minimum useful space of over 44 m². In other settlements, this factor gives them the label of “significant”

²⁷ The 2006 archaeological campaign provided data of a standing wall and the marginal remains of an habitat environment which seemed to divide the peristyle in two in a later period. The structure was referred to as “Sala III, *dividing wall*” (Pérez & Reyes 2007b: 52-53).

²⁸ In 2007 archaeological campaign, a Late Antique grave good was discovered underneath the southern wall, which was kept in reserve, by obvious reasons (Pérez & Reyes 2008: 152).

environment; as it is the case of certain structures, as the building E.15, from the village of Gozquez, San Martín de la Vega, Madrid (Vigil-Escalera 2009: 210). We know neither if the *Enclosure I* had more internal structures, nor if the discontinuity in the southern wall corresponds to the entry area. In such a negative case, its current appearance could be a direct result of the stratigraphic gap generated by the extraction of building material during the later stages of spoliation (figure 9).



As the basis of this Late Antique architecture, the foundations were laid on the same constructive elements that were part of the Roman villa²⁹, with mud walls. This uneven foundation technique, based on the available resources, demanded a constructive practice which could ensure the consistency of the complex: the strength that the ancient buildings provide guaranteed its stability, especially when the binder used for the assemblage does not provide the same cohesion and permanence as the lime or other mortars.

An extra reinforcement was devised for the mud walls: it was provided by a parallel line of posts arranged at a suitable distance from the walls, especially in those sectors where the stability of the foundations was not guaranteed. Paving reveals an elaborate technique that has hardly been preserved. It consists of a layer of hardened clay and mud that serves as preparation bed for slate paving. The virtual absence of slates, as it also occurs with the roof tiles, may indicate a

²⁹ Slate stones, limestone, *laterician* material, *marmor*, etc.

planned abandonment that foresees their dismantlement, with the intention to use the materials in future buildings.

The homonymous enclosure of the village of Hernán Páez, Toledo, shows similar features. Although with a lasting ending, slightly later in the eighth century, it is still linked to settlement patterns typical of a rural domestic architecture and it still reflects the tradition, inherited by generations, of recycling those items, which are suitable to be reused (Vicente & Rojas 2009: 292 and 305).

Another parallel is the *site D* of the Arroyo Culebro's archaeological site, Leganés (Madrid; Penedo *et al.* 2001: 130), where the archaeologists interpreted the absence of many structures as the direct result of spoiling the stone material. This phenomenon is a constant, especially reflected in those places with a Roman tradition, in which the former use of durable materials makes them attractive and necessary for later constructions. The preservation of the toponym that identifies the *caucensis* site, Las Pizarras, is a clear example of its use as a building materials quarry, from the transformation of the complex, in the 5th century. These are not just two isolated examples. It is in fact a common pattern to apply to, practically, the majority of Roman settlements; because of the savings that the development of such activities implies.

In the absence of fireplace evidence, it is not possible to affirm a domestic use of this context, even though there are indicators, such as embellish the paving, which seem to attest it. Nevertheless, its only partial excavation requires keeping this hypothesis, until the excavation is complete.

Lastly, a final point to stress about *Enclosure I* is its dating. In addition to the finds suitable of giving a chronology to the complex, there are other elements that reinforce a 7th century chronology; as, for example, the constructive trend. This type of buildings, with a stone foundations and of predominantly residential use, begins to replace those with a sunken base, from the second half of the 6th century, although it seems to be widespread during the first half of the 7th; as A. Vigil-Escalera (2009: 216) points out for the region in the south of Madrid. The dates seem to fit perfectly for what regards to Las Pizarras.

More uncertain is setting a date for the end of this structure. In the absence of archaeological remains, suitable of providing a date for the exact moment when *Enclosure I* was derelict, it appears that it does not exceed the 7th century, or it just about reaches the beginnings of the next century. The stratigraphy provides no signs of activity from these dates until the new functional transformations of the space: the final structural ruin of the complex defines the first sight of no activity; joined to the practical absence of archaeological evidences of a date later than the 7th century³⁰. Perhaps we are witnessing the population relocation

³⁰ Enclosure I did not provided any remains in the layer which indicates the abandonment phase; between the floor and the collapsed walls.

towards new sectors still to be clarified or, on the contrary, they moved to the city in times of uncertainty.

Judging by the following registered activity, with the reopening of its “quarry”, life returns to Las Pizarras. It is the beginning of a systematic spoiling of the, so far preserved, stone material from its walls and collapsed structures and the development of a new medieval necropolis which invades now the areas free of structures and seems to indicate the presence of a nearby parish, according to the high density of recorded burials³¹.

But this is not the last human activity recorded in the plain of the Eresma’s river before its conversion into agricultural land. At the end of the middle ages, we assist at the creation of a new domestic architecture³², whose constructive technique separates it, in chronological terms, from *Enclosure I*. The extensive excavation works undertaken for its construction seems to verify it, since in its realisation, the evidences of the previous housing and burial phases were eliminated up to reaching the strength of Roman structures. At the same time, it strengthens the link of this suburban area with the city of *Cauca*, by constituting the formative germ of its historic suburb, so-called *Arrabal del Mercado*, name by which this area will be known until almost mid 20th century (Blanco 2008: 175).

With the new data, the research of human occupancy in the area of Las Pizarras brings forward a century the origin of the suburb of *Coca*, until this moment identified with the granting of a free market³³, concession of Henry IV in 1466.

6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The scientific contributions provided by the archaeological work carried out, mainly, during this past decade and from those others which are still in study³⁴, are shedding a light on the rural landscape patterns during the transitional period³⁵. With this term, we refer to that which follows the Late Roman period and, as its name implies, refers to a phase of changes, which – until recent times –

³¹ Pérez & Reyes, 2007b : 49-50; 2008 : 139-148; 2009b : 127-128.

³² *Enclosure II* (Pérez & Reyes 2009b : 121-125).

³³ Rodríguez Martínez 1998: 215.

³⁴ For an Status of the issues, see Blanco *et alii* 2009 and Gonzalo *et alii* 2010.

³⁵ In this sense, the earlier contributions of E. Ariño & J. Rodríguez Hernández (1997), M. Fernández Mier (1999) o A. Chavarría (1996) for the provinces of Salamanca, Asturias o specific sectors of the ancient Roman provinces (*Tarraco*) respectively, based on contrasted data, jet have serviced as a necessary precondition for the latter essays that in a general way have provided a particular vision of the rural landscape changes for this period. Lately, we must cite the works of I. Martín Viso (2000), J. Gurt & J. Palet (2001), M. V. Calleja (2001), E. Ariño (2006), A. Orejas (2006, coord.) or A. Vigil Escalera (2007 y 2011). Another feature reflected by contemporary bibliography analyses the structural and functional transformations occurred in the Western Roman Empire *uillae* during the 5th to 8th centuries López Quiroga & F. Rodríguez Martín, 2000-2001; López Quiroga, 2004; Gutiérrez González, 2008 y 2010; Chavarría, 2001,

has been reflected in an anonymous and individualised way; as they are general tendencies applied to a basic level of family households, or small agglomerations. As A. González Gutiérrez (2008: 221) describes “of social groups not integrated in the state policies” whose study is revealing their true transformations in regards of people’s lifestyle; with a settlement patterns and organization and socio-economic structures which gradually begin to separate from the productive system of the ancient world, anticipating the patterns of the medieval feudal model.

Our small contribution aims to show the different patterns of human settlement and the evolution of a specific suburban sector, dependent from the *territorium* of the Roman city of *Cauca*. Since Late Roman times, the monumental complex was intended for create a visual effect and a monumental impact among their visitors, combined with the accustomed exploitation of the land for a usual homestead³⁶.

Until the present, our knowledge of the villa and their subsequent uses comprises the eastern wing of the peristyle, some of the rooms attached to it as well as the central courtyard, core of the complex. We also have evidence, in part, of the functions assigned to the eastern end. Once some of the rooms loose sense, specially the representation ones, the *pars urbana* will have various functional transformations related to a residual habitat of the complex, a Hispanic-Visigothic necropolis and a domestic environment in the aftermath of the Late Antiquity.

Over time, the settlement will pass through diverse transformations according to the way of life and the funerary practices of their people, in transition towards new patterns closest to the medieval times, whose actions have left their indelible marks in the archaeological record.

Proofs of *uillae* with subsequent transformations are recurrent; in fact, they have already been object of analysis (Chavarría 2006: 29-30; id. 2007, 129-133). Villa del Val³⁷ (Alcalá de Henares) and the Roman villa of Tinto Juan de la Cruz³⁸ (Pinto) are those that have provided more data on the type of new habitats overlying the structures; regardless of the order established among the various activities that took place in them. Moreover, they resemble more similarity in construction with Las Pizarras, with respect to the building a domestic architecture of ephemeral materials which overlies the solidity of the previous constructions.

From the 6th to 7th centuries, the roman villas old installations lost their original function, without any prejudice to their use for any other purposes; especially funerary ones (Chavarría 2004: 82), invading the residential complex. For Las Pizarras’ villa, these changes occur a century before, sharing new uses in

2004 o 2007, or García Merino, 2010; among others). This helps to initially complete the rural panorama of Late Antiquity for the Iberian Peninsula.

³⁶ Applying the well-known surplus-tributary production system.

³⁷ In particular, the reform of the Auriga’s room (Rascón *et alii* 1991).

³⁸ Site No. 10 (Barroso *et alii* 2001).

different areas, dumping with burial practices. Nevertheless, it is not strange the coexistence of those activities in these times; it might be most common than we ever thought. In fact, nearby villas show similar tendencies, as Aguilafuente (Segovia), whose roman structures also suffered a conversion in a cemetery³⁹. Villa de Vegas de Pedraza, and the possible funerary chapel of Ventosilla/Tejadilla (Regueras 2010: 295) are some parallels. Thus, we can confirm the election of Las Pizarras' plateau along the historical times as an habitat place, combined with funerary practices.

Regardless of the name given to the domestic settlements of rural pattern, focused on an eminently agricultural production, there are certain resemblances in respect of the technical construction of the villages and farms, clearly different to the Roman tradition. The analogies in the layout adopted and their evolution, the uses of the land or its coexistence with the funerary contexts, between others, takes us to rural occupancy patterns widely studied, as the surrounding area of the city of Toledo. It is characterized by offering a mosaic of settlements on plains, near watercourses, with an eminently agricultural vocation related to intensive cultivation spaces (Vigil-Escalera 2009: 208), although these sites are furthest from the urban center.

However, certain common features force us to take into account the progressive autonomy of Las Pizarras plateau respect the city of Cauca, which is still occupied, as refers domestic environments recorded in Coca, as the courtyard house discovered in the area of Los Azafranales in 1999 (Pérez y Reyes 2007a: 170). Another argument in favor of certain independence is the funerary one; reflect of a collective behavior and always related to the residential area, following them in their short relocations, as we have seen. Another confirmatory arguments are determined by the maintenance of the, still in use, traditional cemeteries of Roman tradition of El Cantosal, El Tinto⁴⁰ o Santa Rosalía; always we consider in the last case its enlargement towards Los Cinco Caños area in these times (figure 10).

We find ourselves facing a new example of population continuity, according to the rural patterns of the period and the consequent displacements in search of better sanitary conditions (Ariño 2006: 335). All these features are the beginning of the break with the characteristic roman rural settlement system in favor of new forms of occupancy, in its gradual evolution towards the feudal system.

Gone are the evidences of a monumental architectonic model, away from the simplest households that, for quite some time were reflect at a less scale of the imperial power. Once the aristocratic aspirations of the rural properties have

³⁹ Dated in the second third of the 6th century and the beginnings of the 7th (Lucas & Viñas 1977: 251).

⁴⁰ See Lucas de Viñas (1971 and 1973) and J. F. Blanco (2002: 162); respectivamente.

finished, a new model of peasant settlement starts to reorganize on them (Isla 2001: 19), ignoring completely the roman authority.



In a state of fragmentation and disarticulation of the traditional Roman institutions in favor of the peasant exploitation of the land (Blanco *et alii* 2009: 284), we assist to a re-adjustment process of the settlement patterns and the rural exploitation towards a new context, where the progressive implantation of the ecclesiastic structures could play an important role in the management of the ancient big properties, urban and rural (López Quiroga y Benito, 2010: 302 y 293). In our particular case, preference for the *pars urbana* as a cemetery from the mid-5th century, can confirm the cultural conversion of the building; becoming the west sector of the complex as the core zone, due to its layout and earliness. Far away to confirm it in absolute terms, we must remain in expectation of future archaeological interventions that will connect the isolated sectors of the complex and allow to reach definitive conclusions.

Finally, along the time, the settlement pattern reflected in more than two centuries and related to new forms of rural exploitation will become the original germ of the so-called suburb of Coca, which until now only was known by written references, assured by the closest urban center, still relevant.

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