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LATE ANTIQUITY IN THE CITY OF CAESAROBRIGA-ELBORA (TALAVERA DE LA REINA, TOLEDO): A REVIEW

ANTIGÜEDAD TARDÍA EN LA URBE DE CAESAROBRIGA-ELBORA (TALAVERA DE LA REINA, TOLEDO): ESTADO DE LA CUESTIÓN

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Resumen:

El conocimiento de la antigua urbe de *Caesarobriga* ha experimentado grandes progresos en las últimas décadas. Diversas intervenciones arqueológicas han permitido reconocer que la urbe, a partir del siglo III d.C., experimentó procesos de transformación de los espacios que alteraron la topografía urbana altoimperial. Sin embargo, aún es escasa la información disponible para realizar un análisis exhaustivo de las transformaciones urbanas y sucesos acaecidos durante la Antigüedad Tardía. De igual modo, se tendrá en cuenta la presencia y desarrollo del cristianismo, la cultura visigoda y la presunta identificación con la *Elbora* de la tardoantigüedad. Así pues, se intentará dar respuesta a una serie de interrogantes que ayuden obtener una mejor lectura histórico-arqueológica del presente sector oriental de la *Lusitania* durante la Antigüedad Tardía.

Palabras-clave: Lusitania, Cristianismo, Pérdida de las Hispanias, Conventus Emeritensis, Valle del Tajo.

Abstract:

The knowledge of the ancient town of *Caesarobriga* has experienced great progress in the last decades. Thanks to several archaeological campaigns, we know that the town, since the beginning of the 3rd century, underwent transformation and reconfiguration processes that altered the Early Empire urban topography. However, there is still very few information available to make an exhaustive analysis of the urban transformations and events that happened in *Caesarobriga-Elbora* during Late Antiquity. On the same way, we must bear in mind the existence and development of Christianity, Visigoth culture and the presumed identification with Late Antiquity *Elbora*. So, we will try to answer a series of questions that can help get a better historical-archaeological interpretation of this eastern sector in *Lusitania* during Late Antiquity.

Key Words: Lusitania, Christianity, The loss of Hispanias, conventus Emeritensis, Tagus valley.

I. Introducción

Caesarobriga, known today as Talavera de la Reina (Toledo), was the most eastern *Vettones* urban settlement located in the Tagus valley (Sánchez, 2007: 107-164). In the same way, it was in the eastern limits of the *Lusitania* and *Cataginensis* provinces, that matched approximately the limit between the *Vettones* and *Carpetani* (González, 1986, 87-93). The development of the city, allegedly founded *ex novo*, would revolve around a ford in the Tagus River (Mangas y Carrobles, 1992, 95-114), overcome by a bridge built between the 1st and 2nd centuries AD (Moraleda y Pacheco, 1991) that consolidated its geostrategic situation as nodal axis in a vast territory communication (Carrasco, 1995: 299-313; Carrasco, 2002: 75-85; Carrasco, 2003: 339-354; Pacheco, 2002: 53-74). One route would be route 25, which connected *Emerita Augusta* and *Caesaraugusta*, called *Alioitinere ab Emerita Caesaraugusta* (Fernández *et al.*, 1990: 155-164). Another would be the route that connected *Caesarobriga* with *Toletum* (Álvarez, 1992: 159-175) and, finally, a north-south direction route to cross the river Tagus and communicate both plateaus (Muñoz y Ruiz, 1993: 79-88).

The knowledge of the ancient settlement of *Caesarobriga*'s evolution and transformation has experienced great progress in the last decades thanks to archaeology. The different archaeological campaigns have showed us that the city, from the 3rd century AD on, underwent transformation and reconfiguration processes of spaces that altered the urban topography of Early Empire layout. Despite research and findings up to now in *Caesarobriga*, information available is still not enough to make an exhaustive analysis of the urban transformations and events that happened in *Caesarobriga-Elbora* during Late Antiquity (Fig. 1).

Other issues are added to those we intend to address in the present paper, like the Visigoth cultural presence in the city proved by archaeological evidence. On the same way, we must bear in mind the existence of Christianity and its development in Late Antiquity *Elbora*. So, we will try to give a coherent answer to a series of questions about an urban settlement with a large territory in order to get a better historical-archaeological interpretation of this eastern sector of the *Lusitania* during Late Antiquity.

Researchers have speculated about the possible existence of a *Vettone* pre-Roman settlement on the site that was later occupied by the Roman city, the alleged *Libora* or *Aebura* quoted by Tito Livio (García, 2007: 85-86). However, archaeological evidence has not provided enough elements to confirm this hypothesis.

The particle *-briga* can refer to a previous indigenous substrate (Albertos, 1990: 131-146). The denomination *Talábriga* appears in ancient sources identified with some cities of *Lusitania*, Portuguese territory and the province of Huelva. But no historical or epigraphic source identifies the alleged *Talábriga* with the current Talavera de la Reina (Villar, 1995: 153-188; García, 2006: 689-714).

Several archaeological campaigns carried out in the city prove that during Late Antiquity, the urban area goes through a series of significant changes. In this sense, we must refer to the SW sector of the city¹, where a thermal complex (Pacheco y Moraleda, 1997: 427-436) has been documented, a *domus* decorated with paintings (De la Llave, 2020, 87-107) and possible worship spaces, among which we find Hercules (Moraleda y Pacheco, 1998:

¹ It is ME-34 polygon, a space which currently corresponds to San Clemente, Entretorres and Avenida Fábrica de Sedas streets.

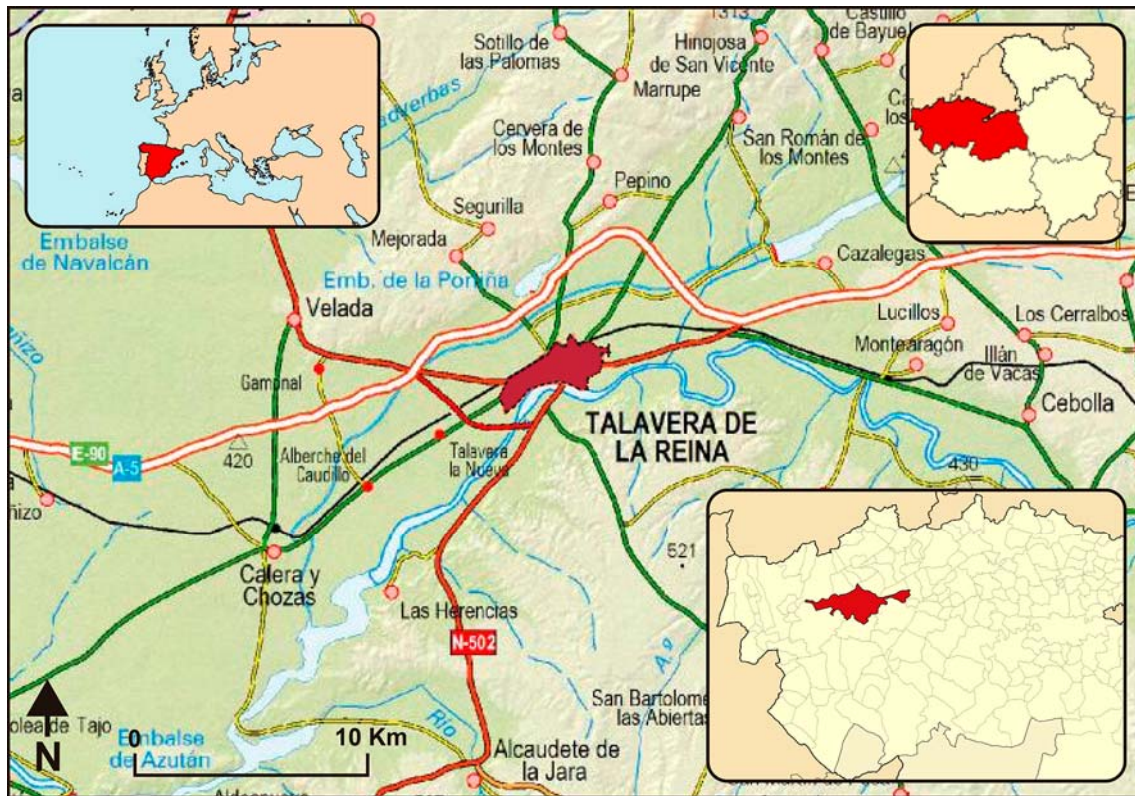


Figure 1. Location of Talavera de la Reina (Image: Autores).

58-61; Pacheco et al., 2001: 167-182). In this referred sector, we have been able to identify a reorganization of domestic spaces as transformation areas built with masonry walls of an inferior quality respect to those of the Early Empire period, as well as with *spolia* materials. This fact has also been documented in other places in the city as in Ronda del Cañillo, Plaza del Pan, among others.

Another question is if the urban area had any kind of fortified enclosure, a fact that local historiography has not clarified yet. Archaeological work carried out in areas like Entretorres–El Charcón, have proved that the defensive wall cuts or abuts levels associated to Antiquity. However, this fact does not confirm the possible existence of defensive features in some strategic areas, among which we can highlight *turris*, pits, palisades, among others (Fig. 2).

There is an extensive debate about the possible Roman origin of the city's

walls. While there are authors, like D. Urbina (2001), that do not hesitate to point out a rebuilding of the Roman wall around the 3rd and 4th century AD, S. Martínez, in his research on the fortified enclosure, demonstrates a foundation from the Emiral and Caliphal period (Lillo, 1998). Different archaeological campaigns give evidence that rule out an Early Imperial wall. However, it points towards a possible origin in the early 5th century AD. In this sense, the city may have witnessed the Alans arrival and the instability in Lusitania at the beginning of that century. The fact that the city indeed had a defensive wall is still unknown, although its geostrategic location, next to the administrative eastern border of *Lusitania*, must have been vital from a geopolitical perspective.

This may have made extremely necessary to build a defensive wall as fast as possible. In order to do so, the city's buildings and necropolis



Figure 2. Defensive walls in El Charcón area (Photo: Authors).

have been a source of constructive material (*spolia*). The city swallowed itself in order to be able to build these defensive structures, which were done in a great hurry, as we gather from its materials and constructive technique.

These defensive walls did not respect the configuration and boundaries of the previous city, but it fits perfectly to its topography, which was very useful. It turned out as a straight line following the river Tagus and a great arch that encloses the entire city. As for the wall itself, there were straight sections with semi-circular towers separated by the same distance. Nevertheless, future research should cover these issues to demonstrate the hypothesis.

Archaeological data indicate the existence of *suburbia* or peripheral neighborhoods that must have already existed during the Early Empire and continued in Late Antiquity. In this sense,

Puerta de Cuartos neighborhood, located in the western sector of the city, meets all these considerations, where we have proof of the existence of pottery production spaces (Moraleda y De la Llave, 2015: 501-508). Similarly, it is very likely, that there were other *suburbia* around the northern and eastern sectors out of the *urbs*, where, in addition, worship centers could have also existed linked to the phenomena of Christian conversion near the necropolis, as it happens in other places in *Hispania*, related to the new Christian urban topography that is generated since the 4th century AD (García, 1977-1978: 311-322; García, 1986: 97-114; Barral, 1993: 51-55; Gurt, 1995: 73-96; Gurt y Ribera, 2005: Gurt y Sánchez, 2010: 321-345; Sánchez, 2014; Fuentes, 2006: 257-289).

We have evidence of necropolis areas in the main accesses to the city. On the Southwest, around the mouth of

the Portiña stream and Olivares street (Pacheco, 2003: 285-292; Moraleda y Pacheco, 2011: 745-755); in the Northwest area, around Fernando de Rojas street (Barrio, 2011, 725-734); East-Southeast sector, around Cabeza del Moro and Alameda square and the Northeast sector towards Plaza del Reloj and San Francisco street (Moraleda, 2011: 735-744; Caballero y Sánchez, 2011: 705-724). It is therefore possible that some of these funerary spaces continued and were reused later, as it happens in San Francisco Street. With the Muslim invasion, the funerary area was moved eastwards, where we currently find the Jardines del Prado (Pacheco y Moraleda, 2007: 67-94).

Despite the still existing historical and archaeological gaps, we can confirm *Caesarobriga* was endowed with sufficient infrastructure to exercise an important political and economic role over a vast territory which, in turn, had an extensive network of different rural establishments, controlled, according to C. Pacheco, by fortified elements intended for their security (Pacheco, 2002: 53-74).

II. Introduction of Christianity

We should refer to the numerous gaps that exist regarding the process of Christianization of the eastern sector of *Lusitania*, despite the progress made in the province on this issue (Mateos, 1995: 239-264; Jorge, 2002; González and Velázquez, 2008). It seems that one could speak of certain signs of Christianity, as it might have happened in the *Ager Caesarobrigensis*, prior to the acknowledgement by Constantine and the celebration of the Nicea Council. Despite this, in the last decade, interesting interpretations and hypotheses for this case have appeared (Pacheco, 2007: 139-171; Pacheco, 2010). Leaving it aside, because it goes beyond the goals of the present paper, we will not address a state of the art on the primitive Christianity in *Hispania*

(Fernández, 2007: 427-458). However, we will address the arguments available in *Caesarobriga-Elbora* during Late Antiquity.

The fact that the Council of Elvira (Ramos-Lissón, 2005, 65-88) was held between the years 300-306 AD (Sotomayor, 2005: 137-155), immediately before the persecution orchestrated by Diocletian in 324 AD, with Conciliar proceedings that reflect a degree of organization sufficiently developed in which several bishops and ecclesiastical representatives addressed social, doctrinal and coexistence issues between Christianity and Paganism (Sotomayor, 2000: 189-199). However, thanks to the testimonies of Saint Ireneo (*Adversus Haereses*, 1,3) or Tertullian (*Adversus Judaeus*, VII, 4-5), we know of the existence of Christian communities in *Hispania* around 182-188 AD. However, we usually use Saint Cipriano's 67 epistle (Blázquez, 1991: 361-372) as a model to approach these potential Hispanic- Christian communities from the middle of the 3rd century and which gives news of the conflict between the Christians in Merida and León-Astorga with their respective bishops because of the persecutions carried out in times of Decius, around 250 AD.

As it has been said, the location of *Caesarobriga* in the route *Emerita-Caesaraugusta*, placed it in a privileged position to receive all kinds of cultural and religious trends, which included Christianity. In a progressive way, Christological ideas started to leave a mark on a society with an alleged high percentage of indigenous tradition, as we can infer by epigraphic testimonies found in the city and its territory (Abascal y Alföldy, 2015). In addition, the relative closeness of *Emerita* and *Toletum* would strengthen this phenomenon, because from the 3rd century on, Christian communities that already existed in times of Decius, led to consider that *Caesarobriga* kept some

kind of Christian contacts at those times. This should be added to other elements implied in the transmission of the new creed, as its dissemination among sectors of local aristocracy and the possible presence of the military (Fernández, 2000).

But its idiosyncrasy was fueled by the own internal inputs from a pre-Roman substrate that lasted through time and that fed from a myriad of indigenous cults associated with nature, like water, forests, mountains, etc., and among which are included: Ataegina, Urilouco (Urbina, 1994: 29-52), Aricona, Togoti (Seguido, 1989: 141-150) or Iscallis (Canto, 2001: 107-134) that would end up being acquired by Roman culture (Bonnaud, 2004: 385-419). In this sense, some rituals and sacred spaces were able to survive in collective imaginary throughout Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages until modern times under Christian rites (Pacheco, 2007: 146).

Regarding the city's Christianization, there are still many questions about which were the adaptation processes of ancient temples or basilicas into new religious local spaces. However, authors such as C. Pacheco have tried to delve into the matter by applying similar criteria already known in other places in *Hispania* or *Lusitania*. In this situation, there would be a proliferation of spaces dedicated to Christian worship associated to some *martyria* where people would worship some alleged saint or holy relics associated with it. This phenomenon was reinforced and made profitable when the place was also at the heart of an episcopal seat. It seems that it was already relatively widespread around the 4th century AD, when Prudencio confirms the Christian pilgrimage to the aforementioned *loca sacra*.

Throughout the Roman Empire, new Christian spaces have been documented, the so called *martyria*, places associated to the worship of a

martyr or saint. Some became important pilgrimage centers or were even part of an episcopal see and were used to make profit from the religious fervor, the tomb or relics it contained, aroused. This is a phenomenon attached to the introduction of the worship to saints and relics (Castellanos, 1999: 747-757; Castellanos, 1996: 5-21), very common where Christianity had been established in an effective way.

In the case of *Caesarobriga-Elbora*, up to date, archaeology has not been able to prove the existence of any space directly consecrated to Christian worship. Historiography has tried to relate the space where the Basilica of the Virgen del Prado is, as a place of worship to Ceres as we see in the survival of the local party of Mondas², during which offerings are made to the Virgin, like fruits, wax, flowers, among others, and that shows the ancient ritual of the *mundus cereris* held during spring in the *cerialia* (Spaeth, 1996; Marcos, 2000: 137-170; López, 2003: 75-85).

According to the Chronicles and Falsaria from the 16th and 17th centuries local historiographic tradition, in 602, Visigoth king Liuva II gives the city a Marian image for its support in the Arian fight³. Despite historiographic speculations and falsifications and inventions through history (Caro, 1992; Hobsbawn and Ranger, 2002), it is true that we do not know the process of Christianization and transformation that this ritual could have been through, in the case it existed. As for archaeology, it has not been able either to verify the existence of a temple, *nymphaeum* or

² In the Early Modern period, it was mostly known as the *Party of the Marriage of the Virgin* and *Bullfighting Party*. About the party there is an many bibliography.

³ It is worth mentioning the case of the Jesuit Roman de la Higuera, who spread false chronicles, becoming an invention of tradition that sought to justify the antiquity of Catholic tradition under the reformist Trent spirit.

any other kind of sacred space from ancient times around the place now occupied by the Basilica. To this, we add the lack of epigraphic testimonies to Ceres, which we have documented for other deities in the city and its territory (De la Vega, 1992: 335-348). However, the assumption that there was a *locum sacrum* in the surroundings is not entirely far-fetched when we consider the presence of elements that today go unnoticed as the existence of wild vegetation around Papacochinos stream that made the environment suitable to worship nature deities, as C. Pacheco suggested (Pacheco, 2007: 151) following the approaches of other authors like A.M. Canto in the case of El Saucedo. This idea of sacred space is reinforced by the existence in the immediate environment of a Muslim necropolis (Pacheco y Moraleda, 2007: 67-94) that in turn can be associated with a *musallá* or place of collective prayer and the *Musara* or an area for leisure and equestrian games (Pacheco, 2001: 13-38).

They are still many questions regarding the origin of Mondas. Comparative speculation applied by local historians from the 16th and 17th centuries led to a reinvention of the ritual that should be quarantined, using terms that referred to the ancient worship to Ceres-Démeter, the Munda-Monda (Pacheco, 2007: 152). In either case, what seems more convincing, as suggested by F.J. Flores (2001) and shared by C. Pacheco, is the regulation of the party since the 15th and 16th century with the articulation of the ordinances.

Among the few early Christianity evidences in the city we must mention a tombstone dedicated to *Litorius*, found in an olive grove near the old monastery of the Holy Trinity around 1512 and that was used by local authorities as *inventio* for the identity and Christian antiquity of the city (Pacheco, 2007: 153). It is a fact applied elsewhere closely linked with the

spirit of the Counter-Reformation and that will have its impact in local scholars. In this sense, the description of the piece made by the chronicler F. García is as follows (García, 1560: fols. 15-17):

“En el año de mill y quinientos y doze cavando un hombre en una tierra suya que es de frente del Monasterio de la Santísima Trinidad un tiro de piedra de la Puerta de Toledo, donde quería hazer un pozo descubrió un cuerpo sepultado, el qualestava en una caja de mármol blanco a mas que medio estadio debaxo de la tierra, la caja es del largo de un ataut dentro de la qual se hallaron unos guesos que paresçían de mejor dispusiçión que la naturaleza al presente ordinariamente cría; estava cubierta con una piedra negra del grueso de una tabla de portada en esta piedra dençima en lo baxodella que estava (...) Este sepulchro fue trasladado a la hermita de Nuestra Señora del Prado extramuros de Talavera. Esta como entran en la dicha ermita por la puerta principal a la mano yzquierda junto a la escalera que sube a la tribuna y por que por las señales dichas paresçió ser christiano católico los cabildos de la cleresçía y el ayuntamiento congregado el pueblo lo pasaron a la hermita dicha donde esta y se vee manifiestamente”.

The tombstone will also serve some historians purpose to justify the homeland of the Holy Martyrs Vicente, Sabina and Cristeta (Fábrega, 1953; García, 1966; Riesco, 1995; Pacheco, 2010)⁴, when the dispute between Talavera and the Portuguese city of Évora on identifying *Elbora* still remained in the seventeenth century. So the cleric and scholar Gaspar de Lozano

⁴ His *passio*, work from the second half of the 7th century AD, indicates that they were natives of a town called Elbora. The identification has already been object of bitter disputes amongst hagiographers and historians.

(Rojas, 2004: 141-161; Pacheco y Rojas, 2006: 87-104), who maintained contact with Talavera between 1676 and 1696, wrote a laudatory about the martyrs in one of his works where he made use of the *Lauda Litorius*, among other arguments, identifying him as a member of the Roman Catholic army:

“The second testimony will give us the unique signs of this Eborá. It is from Marco Maximus, bishop of Zaragoza, who continued the *Chronicon of Dextro*, in the year 1509: Eborá in Carpetania Littorius Littorii ducis, quiago this captus est filius, famulus dei, vir catholicus in Domino quiescit.

En Eborá de la Carpetania, Litorio hijo del Capitán Litorio, a quien cautivaron los godos, siervo de Dios, y varón católico, descansa en el Señor. De fuerte, que en Eborá de la Carpetania nacieron los Martyres, y en Eborá de la Carpetania está sepultado Litorio. Luego en aquella parte donde pareciere el sepulcro de Litorio, será la Eborá de los Martyres. Pues este sepulcro, que dixo Marco Máximo, se halló en el año pasado de mil quinientos y doce en Talavera, cabando acaso cerca del Convento de la Santísima Trinidad para hacer un pozo. Este sepulcro es todo de mármol blanco muy fino, y fuerte, a modo de arca, cubierta con una piedra negra. Levantándola assí que se encontró, se hallaron unos huesos, y en la piedra, cortadas por la parte inferior unas letras con una cruz y a los lados Alpha y Omega en la forma siguiente:

LITTORIUS FAMULUS/DEI VIXIT
ANNOS, PLUS / MINUS LXXV.
REQUIEVIT / IN PACE DIE VIII/KAL.
IULIAS. AERA/DXXXXVIII/A+O

Litorio, siervo de Dios, vivió setenta y cinco años, poco más o menos, descansó en paz a veinte y tres de junio. Era quinientos y quarenta y ocho. Este sepulcro así que se halló reconociéndose ser de algún noble, y católico, como la grandeza de la

piedra y las señales de la Cruz, Alpha y Omega, con se distinguían los catholicos de los arrianos, manifestaban, se puso con veneración por orden del señor don Francisco Ximénez de Cisneros, arzobispo de Toledo, en la iglesia de Nuestra Señora del Prado, donde está cerca de la puerta principal que mira a poniente, a la mano derecha, junto a la pila de agua bendita, debaxó del coro, sobre un pedestral de piedra bien labrado, y debajo de un arzo, como lo he visto. En Eborá de la Carpetania donde nacieron los martyres está sepultado Litorio, según Flavio Dextro y Marco Máximo, porque en la Carpetania no ay más de una Eborá; la Eborá de la Carpetania donde está sepultado litorio es Talavera, como lo dice su sepulcro: luego la Eborá, patria de los martyres, es Talavera” (Lozano, 1726).

The tombstone has been referenced by other 18th century authors like F. de Soto (1722) or P.A. Bores and García de la Guerra (1768), who notifies it to the Royal Academy of History. Years later, J.M. de la Paz (1891) also quotes it in his research and F. Fita within the *Corpus of Latin Inscriptions from Talavera* that was published in the *Bulletin of the Royal Academy* (Fita, 1891, 43-49). Already in the second half of the 20th century, J. Vives will include it in his work on Christian Latin inscriptions (Vives, 1969, 24). From the morphological point of view, the *lauda* is similar to others known in the Lusitanian area in the 6th century AD, with important workshops in the nearest from Mérida (Ramírez y Mateos, 2000) (Fig. 3).

In any case, the discovery of the aforementioned *lauda* in the northeast part of the city, could have been done around a possible *locum sacrum* associated with a necropolis or *martyria* nearby, a fact quite laudable according to C. Pacheco's approach (Pacheco, 2007, 156). In this case, it would be a suburban space related to the road axis

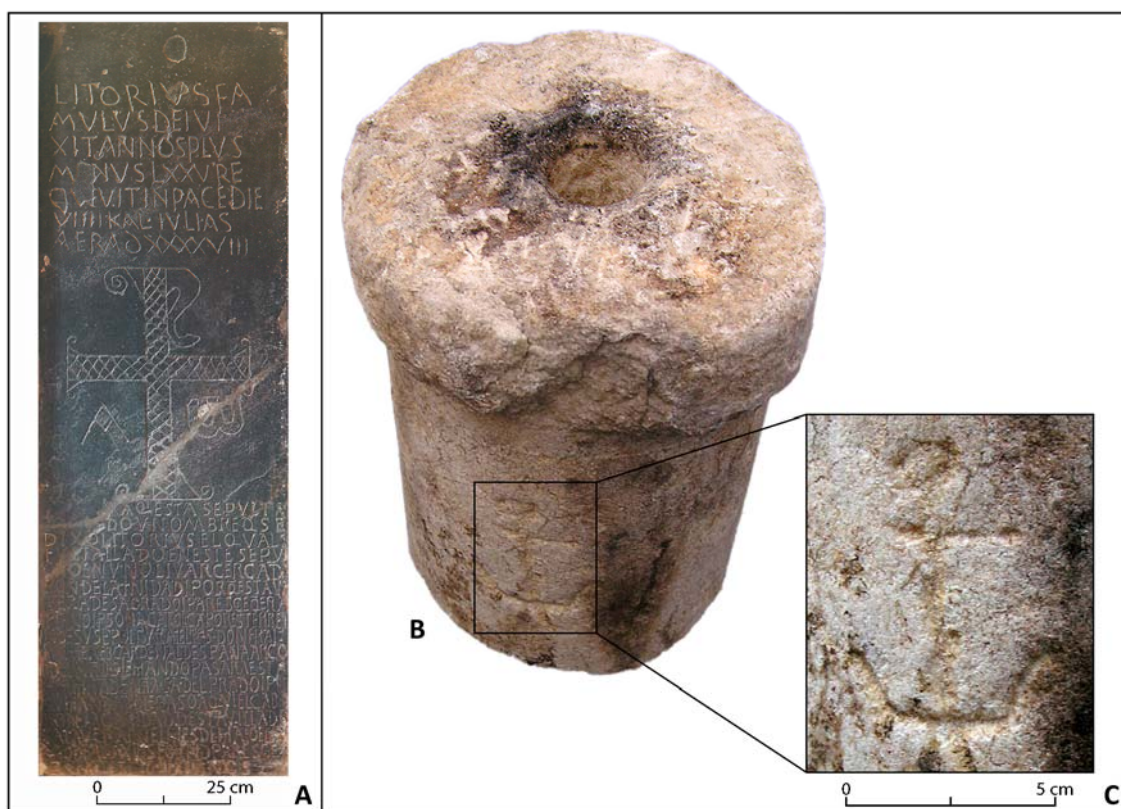


Figure 3. A: Litorio's tombstone (Photo: Autors); B: Shaft with engraved anchor; C: Detail of the engraved anchor (Photo: C. Pacheco).

that went, more or less, from San Francisco Street to the current Trinidad square, where during the Late Middle Ages, Puerta de Toledo was located (Pacheco, 2001: 125-136), the later, an element of great consideration concerning the importance that the aforementioned road axis acquired.

Other elements found in the city associated to a possible worshipping use are the fonts, one of them was found in 2006 during the campaign carried out by D. Portela in the old Hospital de la Misericordia, located in the current Plaza del Pan. It is carved in a reused greyish marble shaft and it is partially preserved. Its top part seemed to be square and had a rectangular edge, with several motifs carved in it: a spearhead shape that begins with a circle. After it has a longitudinal line which ends in a heart-shaped form. Next to the heart there is an "x" cross and beside it what appears to be the

beginning of another heart. According to D. Portela, this piece belongs approximately to the 7th century AD. Another one was found in the site located in the Plaza del Pan, nº 11 and 12 during 2004. It is also carved on a gray marble block and only keeps its upper part, partially. The edge presents linear motifs, in one of its corners there is a cup mark and in another a concave heart (Portela, 2013, 183-185).

Finally, we should mention the discovery in Lechuga street in Talavera (Pacheco, 2010: 632-659) of a shaft fragment with an engraved anchor in it. Christian symbolism of the anchor during early Christianity was associated to the concept of hope or as an equivalent of the cross (Bisconti, 2000: 105-106). In this sense, the anchor is often depicted in Christian gravestones in Roman catacombs until the 2nd century AD. Its representation leads to think in a moment previous to the Council of

Nicaea and the Constantinian period. From that time on, the monogram of Christ will be the reflection of the Christological image. However, it can also be a late representation of a symbol that, for unknown reasons, was able to continue in the alleged local Christian community. In addition, we can see in one end of the shaft a necking, with a circular opening in the central upper area with evidence of fire, which leads to think of a possible worshiping function of the piece (Pacheco, 2007: 162).

III. Decorative materials

Among the different archaeological materials found in the urban context of *Caesarobriga-Elbora*, we can only ascertain its Visigoth claim through decorative sculpture evidence.

It should be mentioned that not many decorated elements have appeared in a

specific archaeological context, despite of this, we believe that they are enough to establish a historical, stylistic and functional frame of these elements and lay out a series of issues that we will address now.

Given the purpose of this study, we will only mention the following elements: the pilaster from the Town Hall, the Basilica del Prado pilaster, the ones in Santa María La Mayor (Portela, 2013: 176-179), the pilaster from Ruiz de Luna's collection (Zamorano, 1974: 100; Portela, 2013: 179-180), the helical shaft and the acanthus capital from Ruiz de Luna's collection, the impost from San Francisco, 3 alley (Portela, 2013: 181-183), the *cimacio* from Huerto del Fraile (Urbina, 1997: 279) or the impost from El Perdon street, 1 (Pacheco et al., 2015-2017: 270-272) (Fig. 4).

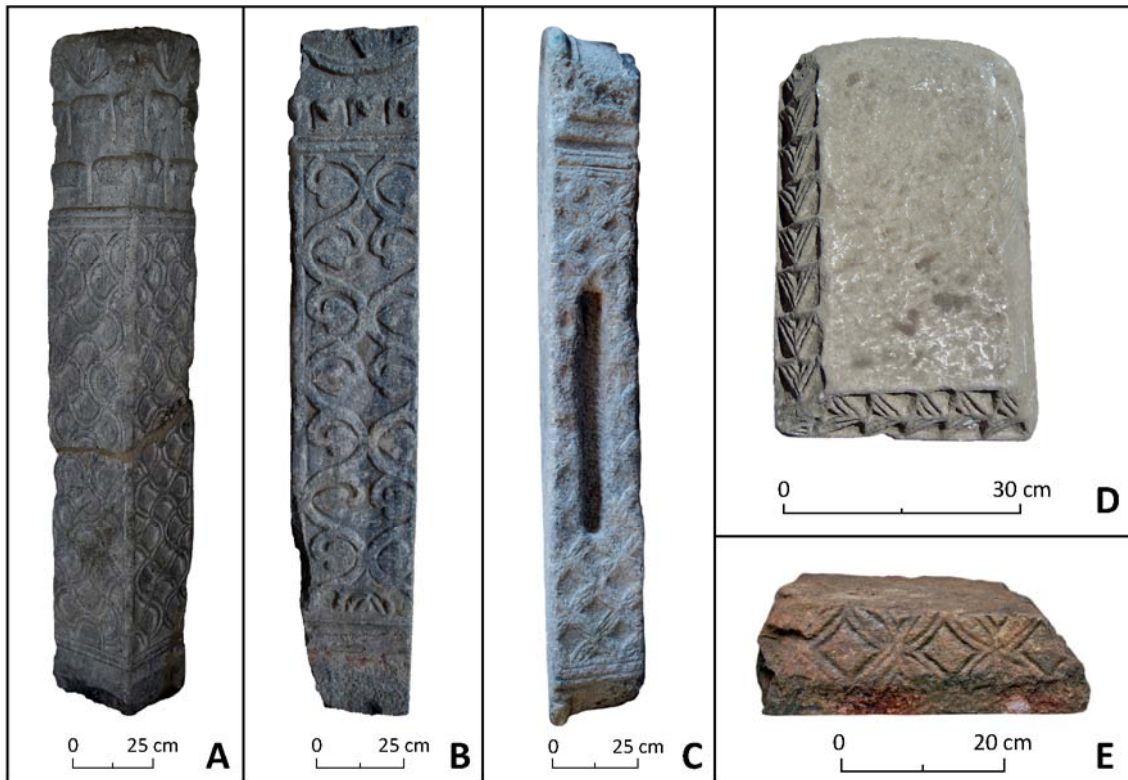


Figure 4. A: Pilaster from the Basilica del Prado (Photo: Autors); B: Pilaster from Santa María La Mayor (Photo: Autors); C: Pilaster from the Town hall (Photo: Autors); D: Impost from S. Francisco, 3 alley (Photo: D. Portela) y E: Impost from El Perdón street (Photo: C. Pacheco).

IV. Elbora's mint

Another interesting aspect is the Hispanic-Visigoth mint from *Elbora*, which has offered similar issues regarding its location. The last numismatic papers published in these recent decades generally agree on matching *Elbora* to Talavera de la Reina. Thus, D. Metcalf confirms such identification (Metcalf, 1988: 15-34). (Fig. 5).

Meanwhile, numismatic experts J. de Francisco and J. Vico believe this matter settled (De Francisco y Vico, 2006: 181-196): "parece que ha quedado demostrado que hay que localizarla en la actual Talavera de la Reina...los tipos de sus monedas son similares a los usados en esta última provincia, es más, podemos afirmar que los bustos reales de las cecas de Elvora y Toledo son prácticamente idénticas, tanto es así que si la leyenda de ceca ha desaparecido podría confundirse".

It seems that it is not one of the more frequently used mints, although there are authors like C. Pacheco (Pacheco,

2007, 166) who claim that it had a wide circulation. Despite this, the interesting thing is that their emissions were continued during several reigns. It is advisable to quote the findings of copies coined in *Elbora* in nearby places like Reccopolis (Olmo et al., 2006: 139), Toledo (Caballero et al., 2010; Pliego, 2012: 209-231) or even in Talavera itself (Moraleda, 1891: 529-531).

V. Territory

It is convenient to refer to other manifestations on late Antiquity in what is considered the *territorium* of *Caesarobriga-Elbora*, which must have been heavily populated with different models of rural settlements. However, we will focus on the known evidence linked to the Christian practice. It's a phenomenon already found in other places from *Hispania* and *Lusitania* (Sotomayor, 1982: 639-670; Cerrillo, 1995: 359-376). In this sense, we refer to the *Basilica* and the *Mausoleum*. Both elements are found in El Saucedo villa and in Las Vegas (La Pueblanueva).

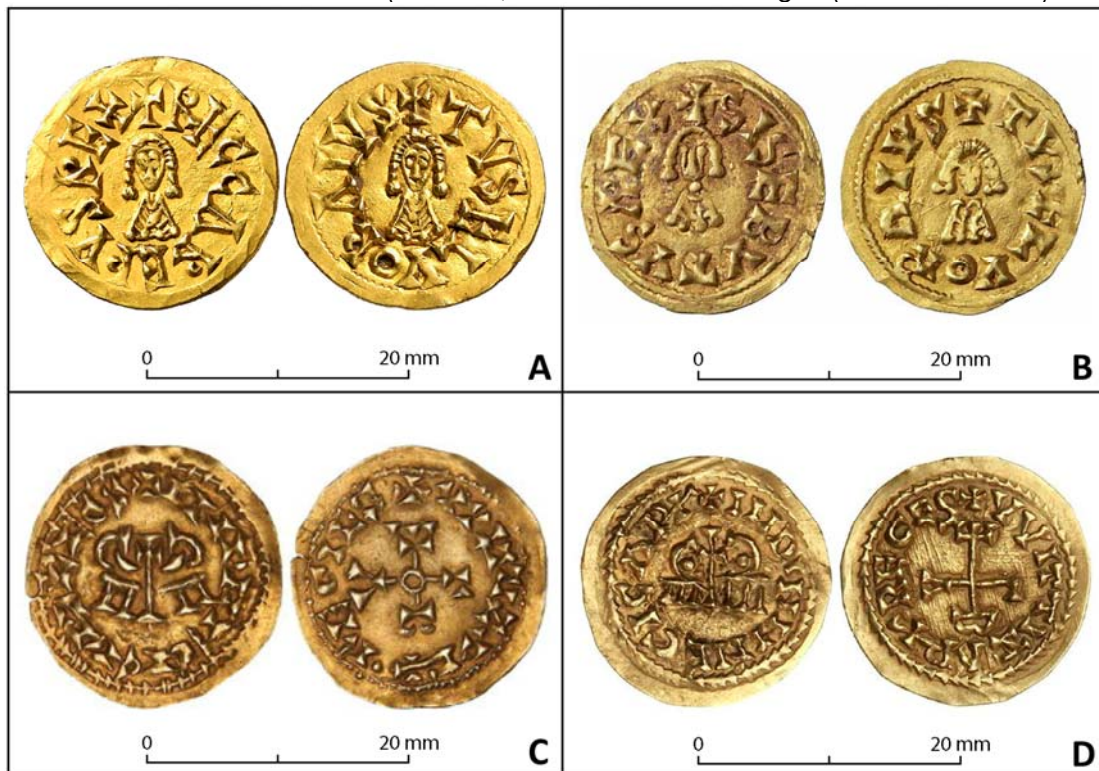


Figura 5. Triens coined in Elvora. A: Recaredus; B: Sisebutus; C: Witericus; D: Egica and Witiza (Photos: Private collections).

At present, El Saucedo is the best-known example that shows the evolution of a *villa* converted into a place of Paleo-Christian worship (Castelo et al., 2000: 87-101). Part of the ancient *villa* is transformed into basilica during the last third of the 5th century or early 6th AD. Regardless of certain problems that have come up when correctly interpreting worship spaces of the basilica building, which include a baptismal font with double staircase (Ramos, 1992: 105-110; Arribas, 2000: 104), the conversion of old residential rooms into a space of liturgical celebration, was documented in the 7th century AD. According to the approach taken from the research team, it is possible that the basilica exists due to the Christianization of a previously sacred place (Castelo et al., 2000: 93), where worship to the nymphs may have been taking place⁵ (Fig. 6).

The fact that at the end of the 5th century AD a place of Christian worship is built in a rural settlement, gives us a rough idea of the spread of Christianity in the eastern sector of *Lusitania* and its connection with the rest of *Hispania* (Ubric, 2004: 133 y ss.). C. Pacheco relates this phenomenon with *Caesarobriga* presumed recovery process that began in the 4th century AD. However, we understand that it is a risky statement, waiting as we are for new data to help us contrast this

approach more precisely (Pacheco, 2007: 160).

Other elements of Christianization of the area are certain objects or pieces with Christian symbology that have appeared in El Saucedo villa itself. In this sense, it is worth mentioning the finding of an openwork bronze plaque with the monogram of Christ -Chi Ro-, which could be a possible breastplate or a metal stud from a horse brake or the Chi Ro engraving on a game counter (Aguado et al., 2003: 52-59).

Meanwhile, the octagonal mausoleum in Las Vegas (La Pueblanueva) is another important example of Christianity spread through the territory (De la Llave y Escobar, 2017: 26-45). Though the mausoleum's crypt had been discovered in the 1870s, with the recovery of a magnificent example of early Christian sarcophagus with the apostles depicted. This exceptional sculptural copy with all the apostolate finely carved on the front face, has been dated to the 4th century at the time of Theodosius, and coming from a Lusitanian workshop with marble from Estremoz (Vidal, 2008: 247-281; Vidal, 2016: 195-210; Vidal y García-Entero, 2015: 414-415). However, it was not until the last decades of the 60s and 70s when the German Archaeological Institute in Madrid carries out several archaeological campaigns to document new evidences (Hauschild, 1967: 332-352; Hauschild, 1969: 296-316; Hauschild, 1978: 307-339). The results confirmed the consolidation of a villa in which his possessor had converted to Christianity and had prepared his monumental funerary space nearby.

To these rural establishments we must add other isolated findings in the territory belonging to Late Antiquity as cemeteries or isolated graves (López, 2011: 127-145).

Another phenomenon that took place in our rural area from the 5th century on, is monasticism. In this area of study

⁵ It is worth mentioning the CIL II 894 inscription dedicated to the nymphs found by the Jeronymite monk Alonso de Ajofrín in 1649 near El Saucedo and La Alcoba farm, in a site where two water sources, known as El Piojo and Tejada, existed. It had already been described by the monk in his manuscript on the History of Talavera, extended version from brother Andrés de Torrejón's one. P. García de Bores also presents this in *Antiquities from Carpetani Elvora today Talavera de la Reyna* (1762), locating it 200 steps away from the house of La Alcoba, owned by the Jeronymite monastery of Santa Catalina. Also studied by Hübner for CIL; (Fita, 1893: 253-256; Canto, 2001:107-134).



Figure 6. A: Overview of Las Vegas mausoleum, November 2016 (Tagus Foundation); B: Front view of the apostles sarcophagus (Á. Martínez).

we do not have clear evidence during Late Antiquity. However, we know the case of San Antolín, around Valdelacruz estate and which is mentioned in late medieval sources. According to testimony from the 18th century, it was not unusual to find antiquity or late antiquity materials in the area (De Soto, 1722: fol. 137). In either case, it is in this place where tradition says there was a former Benedictine monastery and that at the beginning of the 12th century it was moved to Talavera (Pacheco, 2007: 168).

VI. *Caesarobriga idem Elbora*

Identifying *Caesarobriga* with Late Antiquity *Elbora* is a historiographical issue that has stretched over several centuries. Among other reasons, it should be mentioned: the explanation of early Christianity in the city, the seat of the Visigoth mint, knowing the extent of Goth impact on the city, among others.

The historiographical review demonstrates the traditional association of *Elbora* with the Portuguese town of Evora, either by toponymic similarity, archaeological evidence in ancient times and its status as episcopal see. However, in the last decades new research has appeared that offer a critical review of this case. In this sense, the theories of Vallejo Girvés (1991: 25-32) have been gradually accepted by most of the scientific community, where the *Elbora* mentioned at the Council of Elvira is the city that appears associated with the *passio* of Santa Leocadia and the Holy Martyrs Vicente, Sabina and Cristeta, the latter associated with the persecutions ordered by Diocletian and Maximian in *Hispania* being Dacian the *praeses* that gives effect to it (Garrido, 1987: 68-70; Galán, 1992: 383-408; Tovar, 1992: 433-462; Pérez, 2005: 167-182).

In the proceedings written in the fourth century AD due to the

Eliberritanum Concilium, there is a reference to Quincian who appear as bishop *Elbora* on behalf of his Christian community. Alongside *Legio* (Leon), *Toletum* (Toledo), *Emerita Augusta*, *Caesaraugusta* and *Ossobona* (Faro), also appear.

The name place *Elbora* is quoted for the second time as a place located between *Toletum* and *Emerita Augusta*, from which we infer that the editor of *Santa Leocadia's passio* (Riesco, 1995: 41-47) and the Holy Martyrs (Riesco, 1995: 215-225) identifies this city as the martyred brothers birth place (Pacheco, 2007: 164).

However, historiography shows a different interpretation about it. The controversy seems to have originated in the sixteenth century, when Bartolome de Quevedo, prebendary and choirmaster at Toledo Cathedral, published an apology of the Holy Martyrs in which he mentions their "Talaveran" origin. In return, the Portuguese scholar, Andrés de Resende, sends a letter to Quevedo justifying that the holy brothers came from Évora (Soares, 1988). Not long after, Resende would be answered by Dr. Bartolome Frias de Albornoz defending the merits of Talavera. Since then, the debate has been open to all kinds of speculation.

In this sense, Father Flórez identifies *Elbora* with the Portuguese city, without any doubt (Flórez, 1758). On the other hand, Van Hecke, responsible for the *passio* in the *Acta Sanctorum* series, chooses Talavera⁶, among his reasons the itinerary *praesides* Decius must have done from *Caesaraugusta-Toletum-Elbora-Emerita*.

Meanwhile, L.A. Garcia has affirmed for some time (García, 1993: 227-245; García, 2004: 24, nota 25; García,

2005:179) the correspondence of *Elbora* with Talavera claiming that (García, 2005: 179): "La identificación de la *Elbora* bajo imperial y visigoda con Talavera de la Reina y no con Evora resulta un hecho difícil de discutir". To this author we have to add the contributions and statements made so far by C. Pacheco (2007 y 2010) that from our point of view are quite convincing. Despite the general acceptance there are still some authors who choose the Portuguese city without any kind of reasoning, like C.M. Jorge (2002: 99 y ss.).

Conclusions

The information addressed so far shows us a number of considerations and answers that allow us to approach the city of *Caesarobriga-Elbora* during Late Antiquity.

As we have seen, the testimonies from the *Concilium Iliberritanum* lead us to accept the presumed existence of a Christian community, at least since the final years of the third and early fourth century AD, a time when the city was supposed to have an episcopal see or at least was considered that way. To this, we must add all the references to *Elbora* within the journeys made by Decius during his persecutions. Other events that must have had some impact on the territory are Avila becoming an episcopal see and the development of Priscillianism (Chadwick, 1978; Blazquez, 1981: 68-121; Escribano, 2003: 399-480). In this sense, during the First Council of Toledo, held in 400 AD, his doctrines and his followers were convicted, once Priscilian was executed in the year 385 in Trier. The fact that the *passio* of Vicente, Sabina and Cristeta martyrs links *Elbora*, as their birthplace and place of departure of the Saints, and Avila as final destination and martyrdom; is quite significant (Rodríguez, 1965: 781-797). Despite of being a work created between the seventh and eighth centuries AD, related

⁶Acta (28 de octubre) Ss. *Vicentii Sabinae et Christetae Fratrum Martyrum Abulensium in Hispania*, Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina, 8620.

to an earlier tradition, it could have been employed by the church to reaffirm Catholic orthodoxy against antitrinitarian Arianism in the studied area (Lynch y Galindo, 1950; Díaz, 1957: 453-465; Díaz, 1966: 515-528; Díaz).

Regarding urban topography in relation to a possible episcopal see or areas of worship, we have no archaeological data. It is true that significant progress has been made in recent decades, but we can only intuit the existence of forum area around the current Plaza del Pan. Therefore, with no data, it is risky to address issues about the occupation and reoccupation of sacred spaces related to Christian worship. Similarly, archaeological materials have not provided enough data on the impact it must have had in the city the construction of *Emerita* as the capital of the *Diocesis Hispaniarum* (Mateos, 2000: 491-520). Meanwhile, archeology has certified changes in the urban planning during Late Antiquity, same as happens in other cities in *Hispania* (Gurt, 2000-2001: 443-471). However, the lack of information for the city is partially made up in its surroundings, so that the presumed existence of an episcopal see justified the existence of a well-organized Christian community both in the city and its *territorium*, as you can see in some nearby rural establishments mentioned above, like El Saucedo and Las Vegas de San Antonio.

If these deductions that have been explained are confirmed, we must assume that the above mentioned Elvora mint was located in the area occupied now by Talavera.

The fact that the name *Caesarobriga* was omitted in the Antonine Itinerary has been a topic discussed for decades, which is justified by some as an omission or mistake by medieval copyists. Moreover, the mismatch at distances provided by this itinerary has raised several hypotheses in an attempt

to give a satisfactory solution to these problems: the possible omission of some mansions like *Lebura* (Fernández et al., 1990: 157; Fernández et al., 1990: 17; Mangas, 2012: 201 y ss.) or *Caesarobriga* (Carrasco, 2012: 152; Arias, 1987: 125-126, 367-368).

Meanwhile, in the *Ravennatis Anonymi Cosmographia*, references are given in relation to the road network of the area in question. This source is dated in the 7th century (Roldán, 1975: 111 y ss.), but does not provide the distances between a mansion and other, recording only their names. Nevertheless, the source includes an interesting reference to the present case, it is the reference to *Lebura*, located halfway between *Toleton* and *Augustabria*.

Regarding to the identification of *Lebura* there is still an open debate that explores issues related to its identification and correspondence with the current Talavera (Mangas et al., 1992: 246-247; Carrasco, 2003: 351-352; Mangas, 2012: 212).

Meanwhile, some authors are recently considering the possibility that *Aebura* can really be *Augustobriga* (Talavera La Vieja, Cáceres) (Martínez, 2012: 64). Authors such as A. Tovar (1989: 323-233, 235), exclude its identification with the *Aebura* quoted by Livio (XL, 30, 3-4; XL, 32, 5; XL, 33, 1). However, A. Schulten would see it as a perfectly possible equivalence (1935: 212). Meanwhile, J. Mangas and J. Carrobes say "...que los argumentos para identificar *Libora*=*Aebura* o bien otro topónimo análogo no solo son válidos por razones paleográficas, sino que responden mejor al contenido de los textos antiguos" (Mangas y Carrobes, 1998: 246). In relation to this, there are various interpretations as to its name (Holder, 1904: 1871; Hubschmid, 1960: 468; Menéndez, 1968: 54, 58, 173; Tovar, 1989: 229; Villar, 1993: 292-294; Villar, 1995: 217; Villar, 2000: 23, 135, 310, 358,

393, 425; Jiménez, 1986: 69-71; García, 2004: 82-83; García, 2007: 318-319). In this sense, the arguments exposed in this paper and the acceptance of some of the mentioned approaches, lead us to assume that in all probability the reference *Lebura* is closely related to the referred Late Antiquity *Elbora*.

Worth mentioning, given the characteristics of this paper, that it has been decided not to address the status of the issue related to the possible identification of the bishopric of *Aquis* with *Caesarobriga-Elbora* or a nearby rural settlement⁷.

Consequently, the amount of information available nowadays, almost certainly suggests that *Caesarobriga* corresponds to Late Antiquity *Elbora* and, once produced the Islamic conquest, its name is changed to *Talabira*. This change in its name, along with the similarity between *Evora* / *Elbora*, will cause, during the Middle Ages, confusion regarding their identifiers in the *Chronicon Mundi* of Lucas de Tuy (Martínez, 2012: 61-73).

However, despite the progress achieved in recent years, we only have very scarce references and some archaeological materials that, although they lead us to defend that *Caesarobriga* and *Elbora* were the same place, in no case allows us to draw more conclusive theories until more accurate testimonies come by.

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⁷ It is planned to be addressed in future papers.

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