

# Rome and Barbaricum

## Contributions to the archaeology and history of interaction in European protohistory

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Roxana-Gabriela Curcă, Alexander Rubel,  
Robin P. Symonds and Hans-Ulrich Voß



ARCHAEOPRESS ROMAN ARCHAEOLOGY 67





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ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD  
Summertown Pavilion  
18-24 Middle Way  
Summertown  
Oxford OX2 7LG

[www.archaeopress.com](http://www.archaeopress.com)

ISBN 978-1-78969-103-0  
ISBN 978-1-78969-104-7 (e-Pdf)

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Cover image: Waldgirmes. Life-size gilded bronze horse's head with phalerae depicting Victory and Mars

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Printed in England by Severn, Gloucester

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# Constructing identities within the periphery of the Roman Empire: north-west Hispania

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## Abstract

This paper aims to analyse the interaction and process of change that took place in the north-west of the Iberian Peninsula as the area came under the control of the Tarraconensis province during the administrative reorganisation of Hispania by Augustus. Following a general cultural description of the region, further detail will be offered of its integration into the *bracarensis conventus*. The unique characteristics of the local pre-Roman communities and their systems of power led to a particular evolutionary process in the region. After describing the main changes in the cities and the territories, we will highlight the negotiation processes underlying the adaptation to the Roman way of life, through which new places, new symbols and new narratives related to identity emerged.

**Keywords:** north-west Hispania, *bracarensis conventus*, Iron Age, cultural identity, acculturation

## Introduction

Based upon archaeological research conducted over recent decades that has been cross-referenced with the epigraphic record, this paper aims to assess the interaction and processes of change that impacted the north-western region of the peninsula between the late 2nd century BC and the late 1st century AD.

This region encompasses several areas of differing size. First, we will look at the entire north-west of the peninsula in order to highlight the cultural diversity that pre-dated the Roman conquest and identify the limits of the various territorial identities mentioned by Roman officials during the process of conquest. At a second stage, our analysis will focus on the region referred to as the *bracaraugustanus conventus*, so that we can then narrow our focus to the *Bracari* territory and the site where the city of *Bracara Augusta* was later established.

The period chosen is key to understanding the evolution of the indigenous communities starting at the moment when they first came into contact with Roman troops, around 138-136 BC, until the Flavian dynasty when Augustus's vision of organisational structure of Roman Hispania was fully consolidated.

We will analyse the changes that took place in the territorial and settlement organisation, the identity of both communities and individuals and the negotiations between the indigenous elites and the new Roman authorities. In order to fully understand these events, we need to describe the peculiar geographical features of the region, as well as the pre-Roman cultural entities at the end of the 1st millennium BC. We intend to point out the way indigenous communities structured different types of organisation and power, while mapping the various territorial identities. In reality, the gradual contact of the Roman authorities with the Iberian north-western communities created conditions conducive for change that emerged at variable rates of time and included several groups of participants. This transformation led to new habits, new needs and new prerogatives intimately connected to the leadership patterns of the various local regional elites as well as the Roman interests within the different north-western peninsular territories.

Considering the extent of the geographical area under study and the cultural diversity of Iberian north-western pre-Roman communities before the Cantabrian Wars, we will seek to individualise the territories, the indigenous identities and powers aiming to better understand the way the conquest and integration processes impacted upon the creation of new cultural identities. Ultimately, we are dealing with a period when the geographical area comprising the Iberian north-west was gradually included under Roman domain until its definitive administrative integration, as a consequence of the Augustan reforms that were only fully consolidated during the Flavian dynasty.

## **Territories and identities**

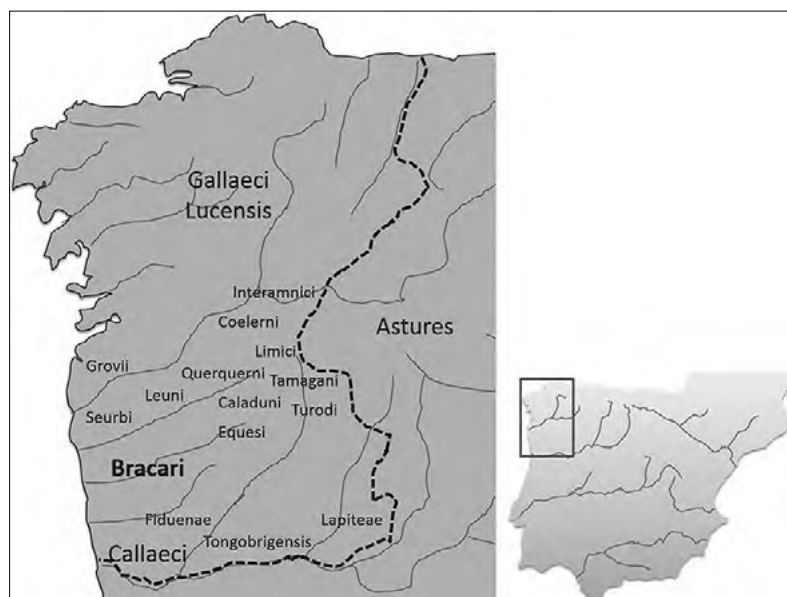
### ***Natural and cultural landscapes***

The north-west of the Iberian Peninsula has particular geographical attributes that distinguish it from other parts of the peninsula. It has a series of characteristic features (i.e. high mountains, plateaus, river valleys, lowlands, alluvial and coastal plains) that make up a fairly varied collection of landscapes and resources. This multiplicity reinforced the cultural and economic diversity of its pre- and proto-historic communities. Thus, the Iberian north-west displays a more fragmented and idiosyncratic geography than the more homogenous coastal regions, and the proximity of the ocean, which has played an important role within the overall development of the region, has favoured communications and has served as the easiest axis for the circulation of people, artefacts and ideas.

The archaeological record shows that the western coastline of Asturias exhibited more cultural similarities with the Galician *bracarensis* region than with the inner Pontevedra province. Equally, coastline regions have always shared common features that are markedly distinct from inland mountainous areas (González Ruibal 2008: 907). On the other hand, the peninsular north-west played a strategic role as the link between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic regions. It was an important step on the ancient 'Atlantic Route' which had been active since the Bronze Age, long before the Romans made it the main supply route of the armies settled in the Germanic *limes* and *Britania* (Fabião 2005: 83-84).

This contrasting and fragmented geography also contrasts with a highly diversified human and cultural landscape, which was, however, unified by two major ethnic groups,

Figure 1. Pre-Roman political geography of the north-west of Iberia according to written and epigraphic sources.



the Galicians and the Asturians, both of which were made up of several *populi* (Bravo Castañeda 2007: 50). Some of these peoples had been mentioned by ancient geographers and historians while others only appeared in epigraphic sources (Figure 1). Nevertheless, the discovery of new inscriptions has contributed to a greater understanding of the north-western territory's pre-Roman human geography.

Despite the ethnic diversity of the Iberian north-west, the pre-Roman settlements were traditionally categorised as examples of the 'Castro Culture', with its characteristic hill forts and round, stone houses (Silva 1986; 1995: 505-546). However, archaeological research over recent decades has pointed toward greater heterogeneity in terms of topography, size and internal organisation, as well as in chronology (Martins 1997: 150-151). We are aware that the hill forts of the southern *bracarenensis* region were older than those of Galicia and Asturias, often dating back to the Late Bronze Age. They were also more common along the coastline and surrounding valleys than those in the inland mountain areas. The peninsular north-west was marked by greater cultural variety over time.

The material culture, specifically domestic architecture, ceramics and items of prestige, attests to the increase in cultural diversity during the second Iron Age. These features serve as meaningful indicators of the social variability that existed at this time and point to the different manners in which power was organised in proto-historic communities (Ayan 2008: 903-1003; Carballo Arceo and Fábregas Valcarce 2006).

Based upon this elaborate material culture several researchers have argued that the peninsular north-west can be divided into three socio-political regions: the 'heroic societies' of the north (Parcero Oubiña 2002); the 'house societies' that were typical of the southern and western areas (Gonzalez Ruibal 2006: 144-177); and the 'segmentary



societies' of inland Galicia territory and the Asturian mountains (Sastre 2002: 213-248). In the first, warrior status, cattle and jewellery provided the main ways to acquire and sustain power. The second category, arising mostly in the 2nd century BC, used the home as the prime symbol in the overall competition for power, as the house was where most of the material and immaterial social capital was invested in the form of jewellery, imported prestige goods and architectural ornaments, but also lands, positions and even genealogies (González Ruibal 2008: 909). Finally, the 'segmentary societies' are characterised by a lack of prestige goods and fairly homogeneous domestic architecture. No investment has been identified in marking social differentiation for these societies.

The geographical diversity and fragmentation of the peninsular north-west does in fact correspond to different cultural landscapes organised during the 1st millennium BC, particularly those from the Late Iron Age period, when the formation of distinct identities was identified and recognised by the Romans who distinguished clearly between the Galicians and the Asturians.

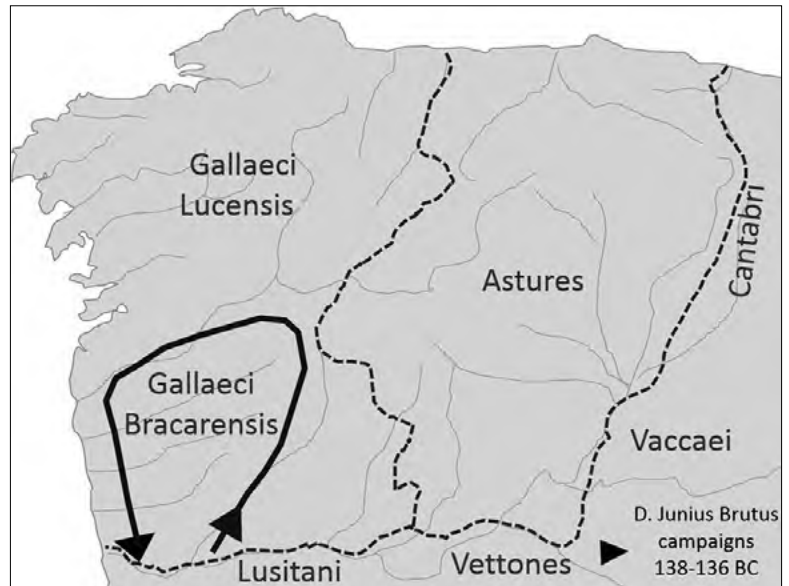
### ***Regional cultural identity: the Galician bracarensis region***

Extant archaeological data from the southern and western region of the Iberian north-west, nowadays encompassed within Portuguese territory between the Douro and the Minho Rivers, as well as the southern and western part of Galicia, clearly demonstrate the cultural differences that distinguished this region from the inner mountainous ones. This regional identity had been developed since the Late Bronze Age and it was characterised by continuous maritime contacts with the Mediterranean that favoured Atlantic navigation throughout the 1st millennium BC. This contact intensified during the second Iron Age (González Ruibal 2004: 289-290) and is confirmed by Punic and Greek wares which have been found alongside other artefacts of prestige, such as Republican and neo-Punic Roman ceramics uncovered in several coastline hill forts (Gonzalez Ruibal *et al.* 2007: 43-74; Silva and Pinto 2001: 232-233). The regular contact between this region and the Mediterranean seems to have influenced its historical evolution and favoured its transformation into a unique socio-political organisation that González Ruibal (2006-2007: 144-177) has termed the 'house societies'.

This is precisely the region where large hill forts, generally between seven and 24 hectares, would be later constructed, although even larger settlements have been identified (Lemos 2009: 128-131). The location of these hill forts corresponds to the Augustan *bracaraugustanus conventus*, in particular its western area.

We are dealing with real urban settlements (*oppida*) developed during the 2nd century BC and reaching their peak during the following century. Although some authors argue that this type of settlement already represented a consequence of Romanisation (Sastre 2004: 99-110), others hold that that process only began with the *Decimus Junius Brutus* campaigns (Queiroga 2007: 169-179). Nevertheless, it is important to point out that their development occurred within an eminently indigenous context and clearly preceded Roman administrative control over the region, which only began to be felt from the year 19 BC onwards, following the end of the Cantabrian Wars. It seems inappropriate to

Figure 2. *D. Junius Brutus*' campaign itinerary (138-136 BC).



speak about Romanisation before the Augustan period, as it marked the beginning of the moulding of a true imperial identity, as has been argued regarding other regions of the Roman world (Woolf 1998: 176).

The characteristics of the pre-Roman settlements located in the Galician *bracarensis* area during its administrative integration into the Roman empire seemed to have been linked to social and economic processes of territorial reorganisation that occurred from the 2nd century BC onwards, perhaps following the *D. Junius Brutus* expedition to the region between 138-136 BC (Figure 2), which failed to cross the Minho River (Alarcão 1988: 8-9; Fabião 1993: 217-218). There are remarkable overlaps between the area pacified by *Brutus* and that where the *oppida* settlements were found. However, the changes in the *Callaeci Bracarensis* region during the 1st century BC need to be explained in terms of the wider organisational framework and the cultural traits of the regional communities which were distinct from those of other north-west peninsular peoples during the Late Bronze Age and whose identity was forged during the Iron Age (Silva 1999). On the other hand, the high population density in the Galician *oppida* seems to have resulted from synoecism processes that existed in other Iberian regions in the last two Republican centuries, which were clearly influenced by Mediterranean organisational models (Curchin 2004: 81). The rise of such large settlements, which served as central places, seems equally related to a hierarchical settlement pattern, with the *oppida* controlling smaller hill forts in valleys mainly dedicated to agriculture and livestock (Martins *et al.* 2005: 284). We highlight the similarity between these Galician *oppida* and similar sites from around the same period and in other parts of the peninsula, namely the Meseta, historically known as the Vettones land (Alvarez-Sanchis 1997), in the Rhine basin (Fernández Götzt 2011; Woolf 1993), or in southern England (Pitts 2010: 32-63; Pitts and Perring 2006: 189-212). These were large hill forts whose urban features arose as a consequence of rising population density resulting from the development



Figure 3. Plan of 'Citânia de Briteiros' (Guimarães).

functions. Some of them had vestibules, others served as granaries and others were dedicated to manufacturing (Figure 3).

These *oppida* included several public infrastructures. Public buildings for ritual bathing were one of the most common buildings in the *bracarensis* region. They often were comprised of an oven, a steam chamber, an antechamber and a patio (Lemos *et al.* 2008: 319-328; Silva and Machado 2007: 20-60). Another public building type, the round council house with bench seats along the walls, was described by Strabo. The best-known example is the council house of 'Citânia de Briteiros' which measured 11m in diameter (Lemos 2009: 131).

These were commonly encountered features of the *oppida* of the *bracarensis* region, although the 'Citânia de Briteiros' in Guimarães (Cruz 2015: 403-414; Lemos 2009: 131) and 'Citânia de Sanfins' in Paços de Ferreira, with an area over 15 ha (Silva 1999), are thought to be the prime examples, as they have been the most extensively excavated (Figure 3). These hill forts with their complex internal organisation, large size, high population density, and developed manufacturing, as well as the concentration of political, economic and ritual functions, can be considered as true 'indigenous cities' that were included within hierarchised social formations and persisted up until the Roman conquest. They stand in obvious contrast to the segmentary social structure common in the Asturias region (Sastre 2001; 2004: 99-110).

of trade, as well as the intensification of agriculture and manufacturing, together with growing social complexity and undeniable cultural landscape hierarchy (Collis 1996: 227; Woolf 1993: 224).

The *oppida* benefitted from great visibility over their surroundings and invariably included complex defensive systems, normally comprising several lines of walls (3 to 5). Internally, they were organised into a roughly orthogonal road structure with residential quarters occupied by family units (Lemos 2009: 130-131). These domestic areas were frequently interconnected by slab pavements unifying buildings with different

Another cultural characteristic of the *bracarensis* territory are the warrior statues which were distinct from artwork of the inland north-western peninsula (Calo Lourido 1994: 75-100). These sculptures, presumably associated with figures of the local elite (Silva 2003: 41-50), would most likely have been placed in the walls of the hill forts and may have represented heroic figures intended to protect the settlements (Silva 1999: 16). Some decorative elements on these statues appear in pre-Roman jewellery that was representative of the power of the local elite, as in the case of the *viriae* or the torcs, or even the round shields, the *caetra*, in front of the statues (Figure 4).

Equally, there was a close correlation between the motifs decorating the warriors' clothing, namely their tunics (Martins and Silva 1984: 34-35), and those decorating the sculpted slabs ('pedras formosas') of ritual bath buildings (Queiroga 1992: 25). The unique nature of Galician *bracarensis* regional art is also represented in the decoration of the house doors (Calo Lourido 1994: 70-80, 141-148; Silva 1986: 48-51), which attests to the significant investment the local communities made in the symbolic capital of their houses, as a way of highlighting social differences (Figure 5) (González Ruibal 2006-07: 383-401).

Today, it is commonly accepted that territories within the Galician *bracarensis* region were already pacified at the beginning of the Cantabrian Wars, between 29 and 19 BC, probably after the *Decimus Junius Brutus* expedition in 138-136 BC. Between that particular expedition and the Cantabrian Wars, a century passed during which the hill forts grew in size and population and were substantially reorganised, sometimes with an orthogonal plan that is thought to have been promoted by the Romans themselves (Queiroga 2007: 169-179).

Given the possibility that the territory between the Douro and Minho rivers remained under the control of the *Hispania Ulterior* province, due to the 138-136 BC military campaign, it does not seem credible that all the transformations until the end of the Cantabrian Wars can be explained without reference to a strong dynamism on the part of the indigenous communities. In reality, the campaigns of *Decimus Junius Brutus*, the pro-consul of the *Hispania Ulterior* province, together with the forthcoming expeditions of *Crassus* and *Julius Caesar*, both holders of identical provincial positions, failed to establish either any military



Figure 4. S. Julião Galician warrior (Archaeological Museum D. Diogo de Sousa, Braga).



Figure 5. Decorated door at Sabroso hill fort (Martins Sarmento Museum, Guimarães).

occupation of the territory or a Roman administrative structure. These events only took place following the Cantabrian Wars a century later. It was precisely throughout the 1st century BC that profound changes in the Galician *bracarenis* region were registered, including a profound reorganisation of settlements and significant economic intensification, all of which created favourable conditions for the development of more complex and diversified architecture and original artistic development. This resulted in the consolidation of the indigenous elites' political and the military power.

The conception of the *oppida*, including the complexity of their defensive systems (i.e. wall lines, trenches, turrets, and monumental doors), the hierarchical structure of the street network, the existence of statues on the walls, the public spaces and architecture and the decoration of some of the houses all stand as clear evidence of an affirmation and display of the power of the governing elite (Figure 5). These features further demonstrate the stark differences that existed between these communities and those of other interior and northern areas.

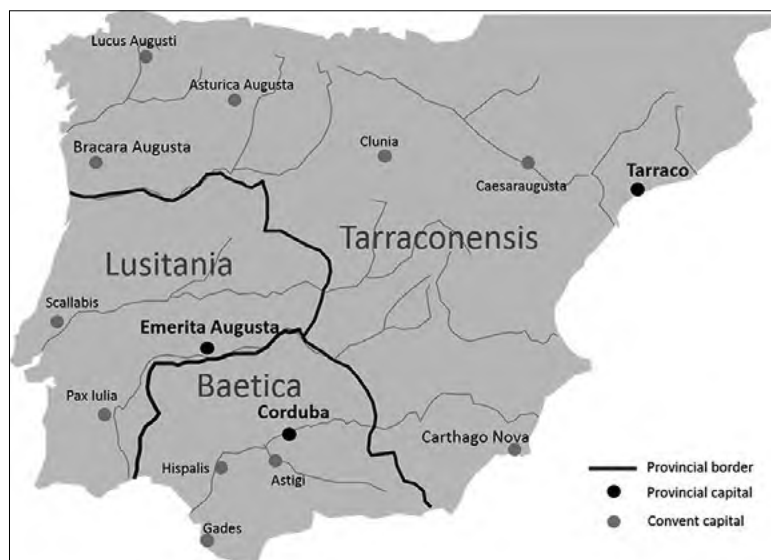
The original organisation of the *bracarenis* region, represented by the *Bracari* territory, contributed towards the original transformation that this region would undergo in consequence of Roman rule and that was in full effect by the end of the Cantabrian Wars in 19 BC.

### **New powers and identities**

#### ***A new political and administrative context***

Between 19 and 15/13 BC a new political reality emerged in Hispania. Three administrative provinces were subdivided into several juridical *conventus*, each one with their own capital (Figure 6). The same period witnessed the establishment of cities, with new ones emerging whenever necessary. This was a period of intense reform presided over by Augustus and

Figure 6. The administrative division of Hispania as implemented by Augustus.



focused on finding the best solutions for managing the wide and heterogeneous territory of the Iberian Peninsula, consolidating Roman power and ensuring the full integration of indigenous communities that were ethnically and culturally distinct. Surely this situation required extensive negotiation between the indigenous elites, the Imperial agents and the Emperor himself, as demonstrated by the ‘Bierzo’ Edict, or the ‘Bembibre’ *tabula*, dated to 15 BC (Grau and Hoyas (eds) 2001; Sánchez Palencia and Mangas 2000). It explicitly mentioned that the north-west region was included in the Transdurian province and governed by the *legatus* Lucio Sestio Quirinal, before its definitive merging with the Citerior province at an unknown time, which is believed to be placed between 16 and 13 BC (Syme 1970: 79; Tranoy 1981: 146), or between 12 and 7 BC (Alföldy 1969: 207).

This Edict of Augustus, signed in *Narbo Martius* (Narbona), reveals some hesitations regarding the organisation of the peninsular north-western region that also reflect an acknowledgement on behalf of Rome of the unique nature of this territory, in particular when compared to the regions included in the Lusitania and Citerior provinces. Equally, it shed some light on the provincial reorganisation of Hispania and the foundation of the Augustan cities. These dynamic processes inevitably involved compromises between the Roman authorities and the indigenous elites, as corroborated by the available epigraphic record (Dopico Caínzos 2009: 35). On the other hand, the ‘Bierzo’ Edict revealed that Augustus himself was directly involved in rewarding the *castellani Paemeiobrigensis*, going so far as to provide them with access to lands and perpetual immunity. This suggests Rome’s great interest in clearly defining the territories, which would be subject to taxes through negotiation processes between the local elites and the imperial representatives.

Epigraphic sources have shown that the creation of the Hispanic juridical convents was an Augustan initiative (Alföldy 2000: 177-205; Dopico Caínzos 2009: 31-35), rather than a result of a Flavian reform, as traditionally suggested (Tranoy 1981: 153). The *tabula Lougeiorum*

(Dopico Cainzos 1988) dating back to the year AD 1 supports this thesis. This document states that the *civitas* of the *Lougeiosex gente Asturum* established a hospitality pact with Caio Asinio Galo, belonged to the *Ara Augusta conventus* in the Asturias region, probably referring to an early division of the *Conventus Asturum* and corresponding to an acknowledgment of the differences existing between the *Astures augustanus* and the *transmontanus* (Alföldy 2007).

According to Pliny the Elder (HN. 3, 3, 18) the peninsular north-west was divided into three convents during Vespasianic times (*Bracaraugustanus*, *Lucensis* and *Asturum*). They were smaller than the other provincial *conventus*, including the Citerior, and their territories seemed to have been established according with the areas occupied by the three main pre-Roman ethnic groups of the north-western peninsula: *Gallaeci bracarensis*, *Gallaeci lucensis* and *Astures*. The capitals were represented by the three cities founded by Augustus: *Bracara Augusta*, *Lucus Augusti* and *Asturica Augusta*. Within the *Tarraconensis province* the *conventus* represented both juridical and religious divisions focused on the Imperial cult. They also carried out census-taking and taxation functions (Ozcáriz Gil 2009: 333-334) and were instrumental in organising the northern Hispanic territories, supporting Roman control and the urbanisation of the north-western region that had been initiated by Augustus.

The epigraphic record of the north-west refers mostly to either individual or collective pacts of hospitality established between the local people and the Roman citizens. These writings provide us with a dynamic vision of the processes of reorganization of the northern Hispanic region and the power negotiations at the early stages of its integration within the Roman Empire. We highlight the 'Monte Murado' *tabulae*, one from the year AD 7 and the other from the year AD 9, that signalled the establishment of client relationships between a Roman citizen and local people living at the hill fort (Silva 1983: 9-26). We are dealing with evidence of the early immigration of Roman citizens into the newly integrated territories, a fact which most likely encouraged the adaptation to new traditions as local people and Roman citizens started to enter into close patron-client bonds. Later, yet not less important, was the Astorga *tabula*, a juridical text referring to a hospitality pact established between two tribal groups (*gentilitas*) from the *Zoelae* people, the *Desoncos* and the *Tridiavos*, with the subsequent amendments highlighted and dating back to the year AD 27, in *Curunda*, and AD 152, in Astorga (CIL II: 2633).

The period between 19 BC and the first years of our era witnessed profound changes in the overall organisation of communities across the different sub-regions of the peninsular north-west. The territory was still mainly populated with hill forts, although some had begun to be abandoned (Carvalho 2016: 181-183). Other areas saw new settlements established that were either dedicated to mining or to intensive agricultural production, as took place both in the inner Trás-os-Montes (Lemos 1993) and Asturias (Sastre 1998: 34). The western area of the *bracarensis conventus* witnessed the abandonment of the small and medium hill forts at low altitudes and the emergence of new forms of land use. In a first stage, villas and *vici* were constructed, tied to the road network system established in the Augustan period (Carvalho 2012: 151-153). The new secondary settlements (*vici*) mainly developed in the Flavian dynasty, in conjunction with new forms of agriculture and

livestock management in the villa sites. They made significant contributions towards the alteration of the rural landscape in the region.

In recent decades archaeology has revealed that cultural diversity in the north-western peninsula remained even after the region's integration into the Roman Empire. In general terms, we believe that the Iberian north-west was quickly and fully integrated within a new administrative structure created by Augustus and supported by the urban centres, the road network system and the intensive exploitation of resources (Martins and Carvalho 2011: 281-298). This political and administrative integration mainly favoured the elites, particularly in those areas lacking either military installations or imperial mining as, for example, in the Asturias.

The cities founded by Augustus on a classic model (*Bracara Augusta*, *Lucus Augusti* and *Asturica Augusta*) and that undertook political, religious and economic functions became the new centres of power (Martins *et al.* 2012; Rodríguez Colmenero and Covadonga Carreño 1999; Sevillano Fuertes and Vidal Encinas 2002). Despite having similar functions, equipment and monumental architecture, these cities displayed substantial differences in their structure and evolution as a consequence of the role they played in their regions and their social make up, which was rather diverse, as suggested by the epigraphic sources (Tranoy 1981).

We are aware that the new urban centres provided a setting for the promotion of the indigenous elites, whose leading role was greater in *Bracara Augusta* than it was in *Lucus Augusti* or *Asturica Augusta*. This has been suggested by epigraphy, but also by the data emerging from urban archaeological studies carried out in all three cities in recent decades. The combined research has enabled us to better understand the different urban cultural contexts, in which identity changes were taking place alongside the emergence of new powers.

### ***The specific characteristics of the bracarenis region***

Within the *Callaeci Bracarenis*, there was an important pre-Roman ethnic entity, known as the *Bracari* settled in the region between the Lima and Ave rivers, where dozens of hill forts have been identified, several of which are of large dimensions (Lemos 2009: 128-131). The Roman city of *Bracara Augusta* was set up at the very centre of this region (Martins 2006: 213-222; 2009: 181-221).

*Bracara Augusta* was the only civilian city founded in the peninsular north-west, while *Lucus Augusti* and *Asturica Augusta* were built from military camps (García Marcos and Vidal Encinas 1996; Rodríguez Colmenero 1995). *Bracara Augusta* is a city where the role of the local elites is best recognised and illustrated by the epigraphic monuments.

Archaeological research and systematic excavations conducted over the past four decades in Braga have demonstrated that the Roman city was an *ex novo* foundation, with an orthogonal layout aligned 19° N/NW with square city blocks measuring 156 ft on each side. This model was identified based on street remains and city porticos, but also by way of the orientation of buildings (Martins 2009: 190-192). Among the most important public



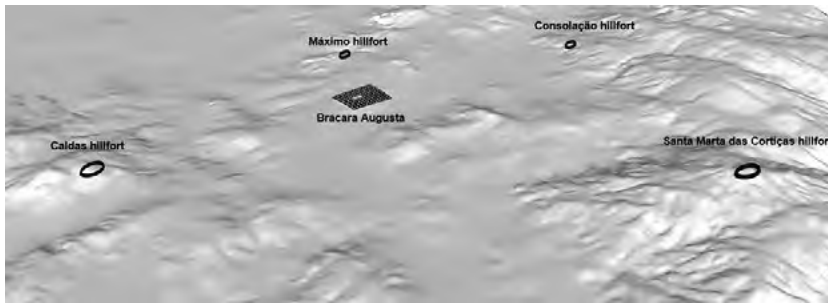


Figure 7. Pre-Roman hill forts around *Bracara Augusta*.

buildings are several baths (Martins 2005; Martins *et al.* 2011), a theatre (Martins *et al.* 2013: 29-68; Martins *et al.* 2014), and an amphitheatre (Morais 2001: 55-76).

The rural territory registered changes that accentuated the unique nature of the *bracarensis* region. The foundation of the city led directly to the early abandonment of several hill forts (Figure 7). However, some remained occupied throughout the 1st century AD, probably due to their strategic control over the road network, whose construction began in the Augustan period. Their continued usage, alternatively, may be due to the fact that they were associated with particular functions inherent to the new political, economic and social order (Carvalho 2016). Nevertheless, the survival of the pre-Roman hill forts owes very little to the pre-Roman social organisation, as they were gradually integrated into the *civitates* territories and became dependent on the new political power located in the *conventus* capital (Martins *et al.* 2005: 281-282).

Other than the surviving hill forts, new open sites of the *vici* type emerged mostly along the road network but also nearby mining and thermal water resources (Carvalho 2016), representing real secondary cities. New farming settlements following upon the Italian model (*villas*) also emerged and they were numerous in the outskirts of *Bracara Augusta*, alongside the roads and across the valleys (Carvalho 2016).

Studies in the surrounding rural region have revealed the profound changes that impacted upon the agrarian landscape, linked to the implantation of a Roman cadastre that indicates the land divisions and boundaries that were laid out to control land use and subsequent taxable income. Important evidence of this practice was provided by two *cippi* land markers found near Braga that provided the boundaries of one *centuria* with around 20 *actus*, 16° N/NW, coinciding with the orthogonal layout of the Roman city (Carvalho 2016; 2012: 154).

### ***Bracara Augusta and the construction of new identities***

Based upon available archaeological data, we can state that the development of *Bracara Augusta* followed the urban and architectonic patterns of any Roman city. It adopted a classical language that established the context where the local residents were able to develop their new cultural identity. Roman models in the cities and the territories demonstrate the population's conformity with new forms of power and the adoption of cultural elements

of Roman origin. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the negotiation that focused on establishing new identities for the indigenous communities living in the city.

One of the privileged spaces where new identities could be displayed was the Roman style house which commonly including a peristyle (Magalhães 2010; Martins *et al.* 2012). The *domus* offers us fertile evidence regarding the processes of representation and social emulation. The structures included colonnades, porticos for circulation and peristyles that served as settings for both living and presentation, where conversation and debates took place. They were also linked to nature by way of gardens, while human activity was represented by dining rooms and reception areas (Magalhães, 2010; 2013: 13-30). Equally, the house was the main space of articulation between the public and private domains, the former represented by reception areas, while the private areas were exclusively for family use.

The vast majority of *domus* known to have existed in *Bracara Augusta* date to the mid 1st century AD and the Flavian dynasty. We are certain that several *domus* owners were of indigenous origin. They had acquired, throughout at least two generations, the ability to understand the language of their new residential areas of clear Hellenistic influence, a circumstance that enabled them to take full advantage of the spaces. The urban epigraphic record (Tranoy and Le Roux 1989-90: 224-225) has documented that the vast majority of city residents were of indigenous origin, some of whom had come from the regional hill forts, as noted in several inscriptions exhibiting an inverted C, indicating *castellum* or *castrum* (hill fort) (Pereira Menault 1983: 169-192).

This predominance of indigenous residents within the city, as well as their roles as political and religious leaders, well documented by epigraphic record, differentiated *Bracara Augusta* from *Lucus Augusti* and *Asturica Augusta*, where the key social players were linked with the military and the administrative sectors. However, it is important to point out that the indigenous elites represented in the honorific, votive or funerary inscriptions of Braga, corresponded to a privileged segment of the hill fort population who were able to negotiate their relocation to the city. This appears to have taken place before the years 4 and 3 BC, when, on the birthday of *Paulus Fabius Maximus*, Augustus received the gift of a statue, of which only the pedestal remains (Le Roux 1975: 155; Tranoy 1981: 328). This is the first known monument dedicated to the Emperor by the *bracaraugustanus*, the new civic community settled in *Bracara Augusta* that was already using the city name.

The early date of the Augustan statue pedestal, as well as the two other missing statues, contribute to our understanding of the importance that monuments and writing had acquired as representations of the power of the new indigenous elite (Woolf 1994: 84-98). Writing made reference to a certain type of privileged knowledge that formed the basis of a powerful narrative, the (re)negotiation of identities, showing off the power of families and individuals and displaying positions of status.

The process of constructing a new identity was especially visible in the funerary world, where new rituals, symbols and narratives emerged. Both monuments and writing were used by the indigenous elites not only as symbols of their newly emerging power but also



Figure 8. Funerary monument of an indigenous family (*Caturus* son of *Camalus*, *Meditia* daughter of *Medamus* and *Medamus* son of *Caturus*, *Culaeciensis*) (Archaeological Museum D. Diogo de Sousa, Braga).

as a way to negotiate their identities and their status. The necropolises at *Bracara Augusta* included monuments evocative of the identity of the dead, representing an ideal setting for analysing the cultural changes emerging between the end of the 1st century BC and mid 1st century AD (Braga 2010; Braga 2014).

It is known that the pre-Roman population of peninsular north-west cremated their dead, as did the Romans. However, the indigenous funerary rites were carried out privately as opposed to the habit of the Romans, who publically marked the identity of the deceased with *arae*, *stelae* or tombstones that were placed near the graves with the names inscribed. These practices, which can be translated into a newfound visibility for the dead, were adopted and the funerary spaces were monumentalised through the presence of buildings and epigraphic elements representing new narratives supported by the written word alluding to the indigenous elite's genealogies (Figure 9).

In this sense, there was an important identity shift when the indigenous population adopted the Roman funerary practices and began to mark graves with epigraphic monuments both in urban and rural areas (González Ruibal 2006-2007; Sastre

2007). However, the nature of the inscriptions in Braga revealed that these did not refer to undifferentiated sectors of the population, but rather to people of indigenous origin who had become fully integrated into the urban elite and who sought recognition through their funerary practices. Part of that recognition came from the presence of *stelae* but also through the re-creation of the rich iconography of the *bracaraensis* region in the pre-Roman period represented by *lunulae*, circles and cords (Figures 9 and 10). These symbols allowed those indigenous elites of *Bracara Augusta* who had already merged with the urban aristocracy to reaffirm their relationship with their past, while simultaneously transmitting their new identity and status via the use of Roman funerary monuments and



Figure 9. Statue pedestal honouring Augustus (Martins Sarmento Museum, Guimarães).



Figure 10. Funerary monument honouring a descendant of *Bloena* with indigenous origin (Archaeological Museum D. Diogo de Sousa, Braga).

writing (Woolf 1994). In this sense, the necropolis served as a new context for representing and negotiating identities.

It is worth pointing out the uniqueness of the funerary and the symbolic worlds of *Bracara Augusta* that were marked by monuments like *stelae* and how they differed from those in other peninsular north-western cities where plaques and *arae* dominated (Tranoy and Le Roux 1989-90). These types of monuments, much more common in the Italian universe, were rather used by the vast majority of prosecutors and senior officials who managed the gold mining at 'Bierzo' living in *Lucus Augusti* and *Asturica Augusta*. Contrary to what took place in *Bracara Augusta*, those northern cities failed to witness the rise of a powerful indigenous group. For that reason, funerary inscriptions in Braga served as first-hand testimonies to the overall understanding of identity changes occurring among the urbanised pre-Roman and indigenous population, who had adopted the Roman way of life.

Funerary inscriptions of Braga give testimony to the progressive affirmation of the private and singular character of death in Roman society, and the necropolises became the new narrative spaces, replacing the previous spaces represented by the houses and hill forts where the symbolic capital of indigenous communities was traditionally accumulated (González Ruibal 2006-2007). While the indigenous houses had often demonstrated the differentiated power of its residents, through its exceptional decorative motifs, this role was now taken over by decorated funerary monuments and texts (Woolf 1994).

Special mention should be given to the extraordinary changes in mentality registered in the indigenous community's way of life that resulted from the integration of the peninsular north-west into the Roman world (Sastre 2007). This process affected perceptions of space and time, turning identity negotiation into a need that seemed to clearly give priority to the funerary spaces. In the case of *Bracara Augusta*, this process took place between the Augustan and Flavian periods.

## Conclusions

In recent decades archaeology has demonstrated that the peninsular north-western territory remained culturally diverse after its integration into the Roman Empire. This was a natural consequence of the social organization of pre-Roman communities and of the expression and nature of the different sub-regional cultural identities. As we reject the existence of a single 'castreja' identity during the Iron Age we also refute the idea of a monolithic 'Roman cultural identity' which might serve as a benchmark against which to measure the greater or lesser degree of change of the local populations. In fact, the Roman acculturation of this region, i.e. the process of creating a provincial culture, was neither peripheral nor incipient, as some have argued, nor was it the mere result of the imposition of macro-economic policies that determined the forced transformation of segmentary or heroic societies into a tax-based society.

The archaeological record has revealed the assimilation of a set of technological changes associated with cities, while the road network system, the new settlement patterns and the new forms of land and resource usage dismantled the previous organizational structure and indigenous powers. In some regions, and in a similar way as the western part of the *bracarensis conventus*, the pre-Roman elites perpetuated their power by inserting themselves into the new Roman political and social order, adopting Roman culture and its living standards. On the other hand, the archaeological record elucidated the negotiation processes inherent to the construction of new identities, initially linked with funerary spaces and writing adopted in the creation of new genealogical narratives. Nevertheless, we are not dealing with the construction of a Roman identity but rather with a newly miscegenated one combining both Roman and indigenous elements and reinterpreting them in a new political, social and economic context.

Available data suggests that indigenous societies endured substantive cultural changes with their integration in the Roman Empire that were processed at different rates. These alterations were fully dependent on the regional cultural traditions and were mainly determined by the use of a distinct material culture that was gradually imposed and negotiated, reinterpreted and integrated into the daily life of the indigenous communities. This is a polymorphous process, in which indigenous communities took on a leading role. The archaeological record, more expressive when it comes to the practices and traditions of the urban elites, has demonstrated that the indigenous population was not limited to the assimilation of the Latin culture or the Roman technologies and way of life. It underwent cultural transformations that changed its vision of landscape, society, economics, religion and death. The understanding of a new social and cultural order that put its imprint not only on the concept and use of space but also on the meaning and use of time, demanded

the construction of new genealogies and new narratives which can be clearly seen in the funerary contexts, although further research is still needed to fully understand this complex process.

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