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***City and Territory in Hispania in Late Antiquity***

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1. The association between city and country is a recurring relationship in any textbook of ancient or early mediaeval history. In a more general way, in any study on pre-industrial societies it seems necessary to clear up the apparent contradiction between an eminently agricultural society, which bases most of its income on farm production and which, above all, measures its prestige and its power according to the land it possesses, and the existence of urban agglomerations, enormous residential areas whose productive nature is not always evident. The different positions on their relationship of interdependence, on the productive or parasitic nature of the city and its essential or non-essential role were synthetically expounded not many years ago by C.R. Whittaker;<sup>1</sup> therefore, we shall not dwell on this here.

The distinction between city and country, between the urban element and the rural element, had been surpassed in the law of the classic polis,<sup>2</sup> the city and its *chora*, its *territorium*, *ager* or *pertica*, formed an indissoluble unit that Rome extended and perpetuated throughout most of the territories of its Empire. The morphological or habitational difference did not in principle imply a contradiction; both formed part of a pre-established scheme, and to the city fell the lot of being the centre of political and religious activity and if the case arose, a centre of social exchange which included commercial activity. It was the symbolic centre where prestigious buildings were situated and which came to be the residential centre, either temporary or permanent, according to each case, of the economic elite which used its resources for monopolising power. The rural area, in most cases perfectly structured and articulated, although less sophisticated than the city, included peasant enclaves and *villae*, production units and temporary residence of the large landowners. The cities, with their different legal statutes and taxation levels fixed by the census were at the same time fiscal units, responsible to the central government for tax collection, the ultimate responsibility falling to the city government, members of the Curia. In the first and second centuries, when this model would have been at its height, most authors agree that the Empire was in practice an agglomeration of semi-autonomous cities, largely self-governed and at the same time tributaries of the State.<sup>3</sup>

The alteration of this model is interpreted in most of the available literature as a crisis or decline, when in the best of cases we should speak of a long evolution process intimately associated with the evolution of the Empire as a whole. Indeed, the first symptoms of this evolution were seen much earlier than the so-called crisis of the third century, abusively used as a polyvalent explanation for any change or alterations in the conditions of the early imperial "Golden Age". It was in the era of the Antoninuses, when the end of imperial expansion - which meant the loss of a source of income fundamental for maintaining the State and which had to be replaced by an

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<sup>1</sup> "The consumer city revisited: the *vicus* and the city", *JRA* 3, 1990, 110-118.

<sup>2</sup> Still suggested by L. Gernet, "Droit et ville dans l'antiquité grecque", in *Antropologie de la Grèce antique*, Paris 1968, 371-381.

<sup>3</sup> The bibliography is too extensive; F.F. Abbot, A.Ch. Johnson, *Municipal administration in the Roman Empire*, Princeton 1926, 197; M. Rostovtzeff, *Historia social y económica del Imperio Romano*, Madrid 1972, I, 387; R. Ganghoffer, *L'Evolution des institutions municipales au Bas Empire*, Paris 1963, 25; A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 384-602*, Oxford 1986 (=1964), I, 712; *Id.* *The Roman Economy. Studies in Ancient Economy and Administrative History*, Oxford 1974, specially 1-34 ("The cities of the Roman Empire") and 35-60 ("The economic life of the towns of the Roman Empire"). Much more recent and with an updated bibliography is J. Rich, A. Wallace-Hadrill (eds.), *City and Country in the Ancient World*, London-New York 1991, in particular the contributions by M. Millet, "Roman towns and their territories: an archaeological perspective", 169-189; M. Corbier, "City, territory and taxation", 211-239; A. Wallace-Hadrill, "Elites and trade in the Roman Towns", 241-272; G. Depeyrot, *Crises et inflation entre antiquité et Moyen Âge*, Paris 1991.

increase in home taxation - coincided with ever more centralist and authoritarian government practices culminating in the appearance of the *corrector* and of the *curator rei publicae*, imperial functionaries who in practice came to control urban finances and to apply criteria which ignored local peculiarities and privileges.<sup>4</sup>

Not all the cities were equal; the circumstances of each one, its location and above all, its size and the wealth of its territory, had created differences right from the beginning. A city with a large territory allowed the creation and consolidation of a powerful elite; if there was an abundance of public land, it ended up in the hands of this elite, which increased its influence.<sup>5</sup> However, in most cases, in medium sized or small cities the members of the municipal *curias* would have already had limited resources in the second century,<sup>6</sup> whereas the maintenance of urban public structures, of public spectacles and attention to an ever more numerous population was very expensive.<sup>7</sup> When the economic balance was altered, for example in the inflationary process experienced by the Empire at the end of the second century and beginning of the third century, municipal responsibilities, obligatory and voluntary, which were in principle an element of prestige, became too much to bear and many tried to abandon them.<sup>8</sup>

In traditional Roman ideology, the gentleman's occupation was farming, and although the image of *urbanitas*, good manners, was developed, as opposed to *rusticitas* and its rude ways, traditional morals became rooted in peasant values as opposed to the vices of the city.<sup>9</sup> This ideological background was still in force at the time when the economic and social changes of the third century displaced the city as the axis of Roman life. The large self-sufficient properties were more agreeable at a time when inflation was ruining the commercial operations which the large landowners had not always refused to participate in, the city had also become too much of a burden and immediately many of these powerful people forgot their obligations to the curia.<sup>10</sup>

2. This new situation did not mean the end of the city. Classical society had constructed all its juridical-legal, political and cultural network around the city. Classical religion was essentially the religion of the polis, and emergent, and from the third century omni-present, Christianity would construct its institutional network and its cosmology around the city, the county remaining as an ideal refuge which would be idealised and realised in practice through monastic life.

What is traditionally presented as proof of the crisis of the city in the Late Empire should perhaps be understood as the harsh struggle to redefine the city from an administrative point of view in relation to the demands of the State. The city was a fundamental pillar in the political re-establishment after Diocletian.<sup>11</sup> Socio-economic reality was increasingly less urban but the reorganisation of the State neither knew how to do away with it, nor could ignore the city itself as a

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<sup>4</sup> F. Grelle, *L'Autonomia cittadina fra Traiano e Adriano. Teoria e prassi dell'organizzazione municipale*, Napoli 1972, esp. 80ff.; Cl. Lepelley, *Les cités de l'Afrique romaine au Bas-Empire. I. La permanence de une civilisation municipale*, Paris 1979, 168-193; and of a general nature F. Jacques, *Le privilège de liberté. Politique imperiale et autonomie municipale dans les cités de l'Occident romain (161-244)*, Roma 1984.

<sup>5</sup> M. Corbier, *op. cit.*, 217ff.

<sup>6</sup> P. Garnsey, "Aspects of the Decline of the Urban Aristocracy in the Empire", *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, II, 1, 1974, 241.

<sup>7</sup> R. MacMullen, *Roman social relations, 50 B.C. to A.D. 284*, London-New Haven 1974, 142-5 ("Roman city financing").

<sup>8</sup> To avoid this, there was an attempt to impede the neglect of these duties that ended up marking their hereditary nature; however, it seems that such measures enjoyed relative success. Cf. R. MacMullen, "Social mobility and the Theodosian Code", *JRS* 54, 1964, 49-53.

<sup>9</sup>A. Wallace-Hadrill, *op. cit.*, 244-246.

<sup>10</sup> Of great interest is M.T.W. Arnheim, *The Senatorial Aristocracy in the Later Roman Empire*, Oxford 1972, 143-154 ("Nobles as Landowners"). Fourth century legislation is rich in constitutions reporting the flight of court clerks: *C.Th.* XII, 1, 6; 11; 13; 22; 24; 25; 40; 43; 49; 63 etc. Although inferring from it that many cities had disappeared or been reduced to villages, as considered by F.F. Abbot, A. Ch. Johnson, *op. cit.*, 198, may be an exaggeration.

<sup>11</sup> F. Jacques, *op. cit.*, 803.

physical fact. In this sense the State, which had to resort to new systems of taxation, still looked to the past with traditionalist nostalgia, demanded absolute loyalty from the cities, especially in fiscal matters, for which it reserved the designation of its principal magistrates, and in the middle of the fifth century was still legislating by taking into account the *curiales nervos esse rei publicae ac viscera civitatum* (*Nov. Maj.* VII, 1). It is also true that in this same period the municipal curias, or in a generic sense, the urban communities, were still endeavouring to mark their independence with respect to the central power,<sup>12</sup> in a phenomenon which may help us to understand their survival in extensive areas of the Empire once the latter had disappeared.

Thus, as opposed to the generally accepted idea of the crisis of the cities, we have the alternative idea of a new institutional system in accordance with the changing situation, both on the political level of the empire and on the socio-economic level.<sup>13</sup> The city would replace its political elite. If until the beginning of the fourth century *possessor* and *decurio* were considered synonyms (*Dig.* L. 12 -Calistr.; *C.Th.*, XII, 1, 4 and 6, *aa.* 317 and 318), by the end of the century and in the following century we find that the members of the curia belonged to a genuinely urban middle class, especially small landowners (Paull. Pell. *Euch.* 528 and 534) and merchants or artisans not connected with land-owning.<sup>14</sup> In Cassiodorus (*Var.* II, 77, 17; III, 9, 49; IV, 8; V, 9, 15-38) the *possessores* appear as clearly opposed to the curials; whereas the former were becoming assimilated to the senatorial aristocracy, which since 396 had been excluded from any municipal obligation (*C.Th.*, VI, 3, 2), the curials, theoretically included among the *honestiores*, were relegated in the social scale.<sup>15</sup>

This distancing of the landowners from urban life was not generalised; probably the large centres of political power, especially those associated with the emperor, such as Milan, Ravenna, Rome, Treveris, Arles, or with the prefects, vicars or provincial governors, such as Emerita or Tarraco in Hispania, - decision-making and still mainly commercial centres -<sup>16</sup> not only did not decline but rather found new splendour, and the great senatorial families continued to be interested in the future of these cities. However, in contrast, the medium sized and small cities, those which were outside strategic areas or privileged commercial circuits were to undergo a gradual enclosure, whose ultimate consequence was the rupture of the country/city system. The rupture of the unity between the city and its *territorium* paved the way for the mediaeval conception of the city, where the country, its elite and its values were excluded.<sup>17</sup>

Probably the factor which best contributed to maintaining in force the idea of the city as a central nucleus of public life and the fiction of the unity between the *ciuitas* and its territory was the ecclesiastic administrative scheme. In the case of Hispania the continuity of the old territorial limits of the cities and the diocesan territory seems to have been unanimously respected, and even in 666 a council held in Mérida heeded the demands of Idanha, claiming some territories of its diocese that Salamanca had received as compensation after the annexation by the Sueves of a part of its territory more than two hundred years before (c.8). The Church, an eminently urban

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<sup>12</sup> It is still totally in force, S. Dill, *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire*, London 1899, 227-281 ("The failure of the administration and the ruin of the middle class, as revealed by Theodosian Code"). Also R. Ganghoffer, *op. cit.*, 50-112; F. de Martino, *Storia della costituzione romana*, V, Napoli 1975, 209-211.

<sup>13</sup> R. Ganghoffer, *op. cit.*, 25-27.; M. Forlin Patrucco, S. Roda, "Crisi di potere e autodifesa di classe: aspetti del tradizionalismo delle aristocrazie", in A. Giardina (ed.), *Società Romana e Impero Tardoantico. I. Istituzioni, ceti, economie*, Roma-Bari 1986, 245-272 and 671-683. For an eastern example J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch. City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire*, Oxford 1972.

<sup>14</sup> R. Ganghoffer, *op. cit.*, 114-116. R. Teja, "Las corporaciones municipales romanas en el Bajo Imperio", *Hispania Antiqua* 3, 1973, 153-177.

<sup>15</sup> P. Garnsey, *Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire*, Oxford 1970, 280. P. Lepelley, "Fine dell'ordine equestre: le tappe dell'unificazione della classe dirigente romana nel IV secolo", in A. Giardina (ed.), *Società romana*, 227-244.

<sup>16</sup> For northern Italy see L. Cracco, *Economia e società nell'Italia annonaria. Rapporti fra l'agricoltura e il commercio dal IV al VI secolo*, Milan 1961, 84-86.

<sup>17</sup> A. Wallace-Hadrill, *op. cit.*, 243.

phenomenon, imitator of the monarchic forms of civil power and their organisational schemes, assimilated the *ciuitas* to the bishop's See and its *territorium* to the diocese, to the point that, over time, *ciuitas* would become a synonym of *urbs episcopalis*.<sup>18</sup>

Having reached this point, the study of the institutions of municipal government would interest us less than the search for the relationship or interconnection between the urban nucleus and its surroundings. It should be pointed out that the evolution of these institutions was inseparable from the fate of the Empire as a whole. If the *curator* was a first warning of imperial intervention, little by little the very meaning of urban terminology, which until then had defined different juridical categories, was lost. Very different previous realities were included under the term *ciuitas*, and *municipium* no longer defined a juridical capacity but rather a morphological characteristic, by its size, intermediate between the *vicus* or the *castellum* and the *ciuitates*.<sup>19</sup>

The loss of the juridical reference was another symptom of the sensation of "defencelessness" which must have beset the inhabitants of the cities of late antiquity, who, oppressed between the pressure of the *tyrannicus exactor* (Hydat. 40) and of the large landowners, resorted to figures such as the *defensor ciuitatis*.<sup>20</sup> The latter, first conceived as a defender of the weak, soon became an imperial functionary, assuming the functions of the *curator*, or else put himself at the service of the aristocracy.<sup>21</sup>

This *defensor* again marked the scale of relationships then established. The large landowners, who could not conceive their social promotion and honours outside the Roman system, created with their property and their actions the conditions for its disintegration. As these replaced the State as the defender of the inhabitants of the city and of the peasant communities,<sup>22</sup> the loyalty of the latter was re-routed towards their immediate protectors, who, at the first signs of weakness in the central power, usurped the jurisdictional functions and then the fiscal functions. This replacing of the justice of the Empire by that of the feudal lord,<sup>23</sup> and of the 'tax' linked to a strong, centralised state by 'feudal rent', prefigure the mediaeval world.<sup>24</sup>

3. The ancient city disappeared, then, only in the sense that those characteristics which made it peculiar, both in its morphology and in its political meaning and in the peculiar relationship it established with its rural territory, disappeared.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, in a great part of the western area, most of the urban centres have been continuously inhabited until today. In the centre and north of Italy, three quarters of the ancient Roman *municipia* were cities in the year one thousand,<sup>26</sup> and in the case of Hispania, despite the peculiarities that the Muslim invasion may have furnished, the percentage is very similar.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, VII, 61. Cf. J. Harries, "Christianity and the city in Late Roman Gaul", in J. Rich (ed.), *The City in Late Antiquity*, London-New York 1992, 77-79.

<sup>19</sup> For example in *C.Th.* XVI, 2, 16: *In qualibet ciuitate, in quolibet uico, castello, municipio; or C.Th.* XVI, 20, 3: *Per omnes autem ciuitatem, municipia, uicos, castella; cf.* Cl. Lepelletier, *Les cites*, 131.

<sup>20</sup> Still valid for consultation is E. Chenon, *Étude historique sur le Defensor Civitatis*, Paris 1889; V. Mannino, *Ricerche sul 'Defensor Civitatis'*, Milano 1984, provides nothing new.

<sup>21</sup> J. Harmand, *Le patronat sur les collectivités publiques des origines au Bas-Empire*, Paris 1957, 463.

<sup>22</sup> The *patrocinium uicorum* was probably of greater importance than the one brought to bear on the cities. Cf. F. de Zulueta, "De patrocinii vicorum, a Commentary on *C.Th.* XI, 24 and *C.I.* XI, 54", in P. Vinogradoff (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Social and Legal History*, I, Oxford 1909, 1-78.

<sup>23</sup> About the antecedents of this process J. Percival, "Seigneurial aspects of Late Roman State management", *The English Historical Review* LXXXIV, 1969, 449-473, esp. 468s.

<sup>24</sup> C. Wickham, "The other transition: from the ancient world to feudalism", *Past and Present* 102, 1984, 3-36.

<sup>25</sup> W. Liebeschuetz, "The end of the ancient city", in J. Rich (ed.), *op. cit.*, 1-5, who provides a splendid synthesis of the basic processes of that transformation.

<sup>26</sup> C. Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy. Central Power and Local Society 400-1000*, London 1989 (=1981), 80. Cf. M. Cagianò de Azevedo, "Northern Italy", in M.W. Barley (ed.), *European Towns. Their Archaeology and Early History*, London 1977, 475-485.

<sup>27</sup> A general vision, though perhaps somewhat superficial in J.M. Lacarra, "Panorama de la historia urbana en la Península Ibérica desde el siglo V al X", in *La città nell'Alto Medioevo. Settimane di Studio del centro italiano*

Any study on cities in Hispania during the Low Empire or in late Antiquity usually begins with the cross-references of the correspondence between Ausonius and Paulinus of Nola relating to the existence of ruined cities, such as *Bilbilis*, *Calagurris* or *Lérida*, which are contrasted with the prosperity of others such as Tarragona, Barcelona or Saragossa.<sup>28</sup> As Javier Arce has pointed out,<sup>29</sup> the literary context of the data and Ausonius' scant knowledge of Hispania make the information of little use and, in any case, the reference to some more or less prosperous cities is of no use for the object of our study. Furthermore, in the short term, any appreciation of the wealth or ruin of a specific city can be mistaken. This can be illustrated by an example from Italy: Hieronimus (*Ep.* 1, 3), in a reference from 374, presents Vercelli as a ruined city perhaps because of the demands to attend the troops advancing to the northern frontier, whereas in 396, Ambrosius (*Ep.* 63) gives us to understand that it is a flourishing city.<sup>30</sup> In an overall context of transformation, particular circumstances could affect each case differently.

From an archaeological perspective, however, the panorama seems similar; during the fourth century some cities saw their walled enclosure reduced (as could be the case of Valencia<sup>31</sup>), were partially abandoned (in the cases of Denia and Pamplona) or almost completely abandoned (the case of Italica and probably Clunia or Juliobriga), or saw how some of their more significant monuments fell to ruin without being restored (the case of the theatres of Baelo and Tarragona, or the basilica of the forum of Tarragona<sup>32</sup>). On the other hand, some cities gained importance as administrative centres after the provincial reform of 298, the case of Braga<sup>33</sup>, and in others, private urban residences were enlarged and embellished, as in Mérida, Córdoba<sup>34</sup>, Astigi or Complutum, and there were still cases of imperial officials involved in aedilician activity in the second half of the fourth century, as in the above mentioned Mérida or Conimbriga; it is even

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*sull'alto medioevo* (Spoleto 1958), Spoleto 1959, 319-357. For Muslim Spain, it must be pointed out that the Roman element was, in general, "gobbled up" by a new, genuine Islamic, morphology, but in most cases superimposed on the old Roman towns; cf. T.F. Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages. Comparative perspectives on Social and Cultural Formation*, Princeton 1979, 113ff., who follows in general the works by L. Torres Balbas, *Ciudades yermas hispanomusulmanas*, Madrid 1957; *Id.*, "Estructura de las ciudades hispanomusulmanas: La medina, los arrabales y los barrios", *Al-Andalus* 18, 1953, 149-177; S. Gutierrez Lloret, "De la civitas a la madina: destrucción y formación de la ciudad en el sureste peninsular: El debate arqueológico", in *Sociedades en Transición. Actas IV Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española. I. Ponencias*, Alicante 1993, 13-35, among others. For Christian Spain L. García de Valdeavellano, *Orígenes de la burguesía en la España medieval*, Madrid 1969. For the problem of the "transition" see F. Llobregat Conesa, "De la ciudad visigótica a la ciudad islámica en el este peninsular", in *La ciudad islámica*, Zaragoza 1991, 113-133; J. Arce, "La ciudad en la España tardorromana: ¿continuidad o discontinuidad?", in *Ciudad y comunidad cívica en Hispania: siglos II y III d.C.*, Madrid 1993, 177-184; J.A. Rubio Sacristán, "Las ciudades en la transición del mundo antiguo al medioevo", in *Homenaje a Emilio García Gómez*, Madrid 1993, 257-266; J. Giralt, F. Tuset, "Modelos de transformación del mundo urbano en el nordeste peninsular. Siglos V-XI", in *Sociedades en Transición. I*, 37-46.

<sup>28</sup> Aus., *Ep.* XXIX and Paul. Nol., *Ep.* X, who adds that in the south there are many others *egregias terris et moenibus urbes*.

<sup>29</sup> *El último siglo de la España romana: 284-409*, Madrid 1982, 86-88.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. L. Cracco Rugini, G. Cracco, "Changing fortune of the Italian city: from Late Antiquity to Early Middle Ages", *Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica* 105, 1977, 450.

<sup>31</sup> J. Pascual Pacheco, R. Soriano Sánchez, "La evolución urbana de Valencia desde época visigoda hasta época taifa (siglos V-XI)", in *Sociedades en Transición. Actas IV Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española. II. Comunicaciones*, Alicante 1993, 67-75.

<sup>32</sup> X. Dupré et al., *L'amfiteatre romà de Tarragona, la basilica visigòtica i l'església romànica. Memòries de Excavació*, 3, Tarragona 1990; J. Menchon, J.M. Macias, A. Muñoz, "Aproximació al procés transformador de la ciutat de Tarraco. Del Baix Imperi a l'Edat Mitjana", *Pyrenae* 25, 1994, 225-243.

<sup>33</sup> J. López Quiroga, M. Rodríguez Lovelle, "El mundo urbano en la *Gallaecia* (Conventus Lucense - Conventus bracaraugustano) entre la Antigüedad tardía y la Alta Edad Media (siglos IV-X)", in *Sociedades en Transición. Actas IV Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española. II. Comunicaciones*, Alicante 1993, 47-57.

<sup>34</sup> The magnificence of late ancient Córdoba has been highlighted in recent years, following the digging of the suburban site of Cercadilla; see R. Hidalgo Prieto, *Espacio público y espacio privado en el conjunto palatino de Cercadilla (Córdoba) El aula central y las termas*, Sevilla 1996.

possible that some then began to acquire commercial importance which would later become evident, the cases of Hispalis (Seville), Ampurias or Barcelona.<sup>35</sup>

In contrast, also in the fourth century, the development of residential areas in rural zones, on the properties of the large *possessores*, was unprecedented.<sup>36</sup> According to S.J. Keay,<sup>37</sup> the comparative analysis of archaeological material from the cities and from these rural residences, especially the study of the circulation of pottery, seems to reveal a rupture of the economic interdependence between country and city, each with its own economic and commercial circuits. However, it seems difficult to accept extremes such as the fact that the cities of the Bética or of the Spanish Levant systematically imported oil or grain from Africa, ignoring the surrounding peasantry, taking as a reference the distribution of African pottery or of late *terra sigillata hispanica*. Such a radical rupture is difficult to accept and we should not forget that social, economic and political events move dynamically whereas archaeological material is static.<sup>38</sup> In this sense we can put forward the case of Gijón, where the city seems to have controlled the commercial changes, not only regarding the *villae* within its *territorium* but even those from a wider area in the centre of Asturias.<sup>39</sup>

In any case these conclusions definitely support the idea that the rupture of the city/country unity is more important than the morphological evolution of each of them. Although, undoubtedly, in the long run a new morphology and new urban aesthetics meant an adaptation to a new functionality and a different way of life. We should consider that the space was structured according to the needs of the community; what ceased to be useful was abandoned or destroyed or was not reconstructed once it had been ruined. Because of this, at least in theory, an adequate knowledge of a city's morphology should give us information about its social and economic organisation.<sup>40</sup> In practice, it is not so simple.

4. In general, the evolution of the ancient city and the city/country relationship in the case of Hispania seems to conform to the general model of the western Empire in spite of the deficiencies in our documentation. The information we have from the written sources, beginning with the fifth century, seems to concur with that evolution, although the regional peculiarities and the new context brought about by the invasions and the end of the Western Empire make it difficult to present a single scheme. For example, our information on the fifth century comes essentially from Hydatius, whose knowledge only provides detailed information about the central years of the century and with special reference to *Gallaecia* and the north of Lusitania whereas archaeology, although essential for overcoming the depletion of interpretations based on written documentation, still does not provide us with sequences and contrastable information, studies of a regional nature or the possibility of comparisons among diverse areas. We still do not know the structures of the agrarian countryside and we know little about urban topographies and, although field research has multiplied in recent years,<sup>41</sup> the question arises as to whether archaeological prospection will be able to provide us in the long term with anything more than topographical information or knowledge of morphologies which should be contrasted with the literary material.

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<sup>35</sup> A general panorama, despite our still deficient archaeological knowledge, in S.J. Keay, *Roman Spain*, London 1988, 179-191.

<sup>36</sup> S.J. Keay, *op. cit.*, 191-201.

<sup>37</sup> *Op. cit.*, 190-191.

<sup>38</sup> M. Millet, "Roman Towns and their Territories: an Archaeological Perspective", in J. Rich, A. Wallace-Hadrill (eds.), *op. cit.*, 170.

<sup>39</sup> C. Fernández Ochoa, "Excavaciones arqueológicas en la ciudad de Gijón", in *Astures. Pueblos y culturas en la Frontera del Imperio Romano* (Catálogo de la Exposición), Gijón 1995, 212-225; *Id.*, *La muralla romana de Gijón (Asturias)*, Gijón 1997, esp. 259-265.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. D. Perring, "Spatial organization and social change in Roman towns", in J. Rich, A. Wallace-Hadrill (eds.), *op. cit.*, 273-276.

<sup>41</sup> The problems about archaeological research and our knowledge of late ancient Spain's topography in J.M. Gurt G. Ripoll, C. Godoy, "Topografía de la antigüedad tardía hispánica. Reflexiones para una propuesta de trabajo", *AnTard* 2, 1994, 161-180, with an extensive and updated bibliography.

Pliny's record (*Nat. Hist.* III, 6-33) had counted five hundred and thirty-three *ciuitates* for Hispania, an enormous number that had probably been reduced by the end of the fourth century or the beginning of the fifth, when the *Notitia Galliarum* lists one hundred and fourteen for the diocese of Gaul and the seven provinces, with a similar territory. In this sense, it should be noted that the number of episcopal Sees of the Visigothic Church, excluding the Narbonne See, would be around seventy. Despite this, the administrative fragmentation that Pliny's data seem to indicate, insofar as the Roman government had been very respectful with previous social entities and local structures of government, was again to become manifest with the disappearance of Roman power. The majority of the cities listed by Pliny would have become integrated as *vici* or *castella* within the territories of the larger cities and could later have become elements of disintegration, especially because it was very likely that these entities would have gone on acting as independent administrative units.<sup>42</sup> It should be noted that in the case of modern Spanish Galicia alone a minimum of 2000/25000 *castra* have been identified,<sup>43</sup> in many of which there is clearly a continuity of occupation in the Late Empire and during the time of the Sueve domination; however, they are not immutable realities, their evolution can be perceived even in the settlement ways we consider to be traditional.<sup>44</sup> But we must not forget that the case of both Galicia and Asturias is somehow peculiar. It seems that, from the very beginning, cities such as Lucus Augusti, Asturica or Bracara were born with the aim of serving as administrative centres.<sup>45</sup> The *castra* would have been integrated into these cities from the start. It must also be taken into account that the process through which some cities become included within others is of an early nature, as it is proved by the colonial foundations of Emerita or Caesaraugusta.

The Germanic invasions beginning in 409 were to mean a fundamental chapter in the subsequent evolution of city/country relationships in Hispania. It is curious that the chronicler Hydatius, a representative of urban and Christian ideology, defender of the established order and the interests of the lower imperial dominating class, when summarising the situation of Hispania in 410, should cumulatively equate the savagery of the barbarians with the oppression of the State, by means of the *exactor* and soldiers, as causes of the ruin of the Peninsula and depletion of the cities (*Chron.* 48). Even in the *extremitate oceani maris occidua* from where Hydatius was writing, as a representative of the urban aristocracy of a small city (*Aquae Flaviae*) he could not help but manifest with bitterness something which, as we have seen, was more than a mere literary *topos*,<sup>46</sup> the cruel exploitation to which the small cities were subjected.

This observation does not mean an acceptance of the new arrivals. Hydatius immediately notes that the barbarians enslaved the surviving inhabitants of *ciuitates et castella* (*Chron.* 49). This reference dates from 411; the chronicler may be referring only to larger and smaller dwelling sites; in this sense, it should be noted that the chronicler never uses the term *uicus* and only at the end

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<sup>42</sup> N. Mackie, *Local Administration in Roman Spain A.D. 14-212*, Oxford 1983, 23-24.

<sup>43</sup> A. Bohuier, *La Galice. Essai géographique d'analyse et d'interprétation d'un vieux complexe agraire*, La Roche-sur-Yon 1979, II, 1269; A. Tranoy, "Aglomerations indigènes et villes augustéennes dans le Nord-Ouest Iberique" in *Villes et Campagnes dans l'Empire Romain*, Aix-en-Provence 1982, 125-137.

<sup>44</sup> See F. Arias Vilas, "Apuntes sobre a ocupación do territorio na Galicia baixorromana: castros e vilas", in *Galicia: da romanidade á xermanización*, Santiago de Compostela 1993, 201-208; F. Pérez Losada, "Hacia una definición de los asentamientos rurales en la Gallaecia: poblados (*vici*) y casas de campo (*villae*)", in C. Fernández Ochoa (ed.), *Los Finisterres Atlánticos en la Antigüedad. Época Prerromana y Romana*, Madrid 1996, 189-197; T. Soeiro, "O esplendor do sur de Gallaecia", in G. Pereira Menaut (ed.), *Galicia fai dous mil anos. O feito diferencial Galego. I. Historia. 1*, Santiago de Compostela 1997, 213-236.

<sup>45</sup> See C. Fernández Ochoa, "La ciudad hispanorromana en los territorios septentrionales de la Península Ibérica", in M. Bendala Galán (ed.), *La ciudad hispanorromana*, Barcelona 1993, 224-245; A. Rodríguez Colmenero, "Cidades e urbanismo na Galicia Romana", in F. Pérez, L. Castro (ed.), *Arqueoloxía e Arte na Galicia Prehistorica e Romana*, A Coruña 1995, 87-103; M. Martins, M. Delgado, "Bracara Augusta: uma cidade na periferia do Império", in C. Fernández Ochoa (ed.), *Los Finisterres*, 121-127.

<sup>46</sup> A.H.M. Jones, "Over-taxation and the decline of the Roman Empire", *The Roman Economy*, 82-89.

of the chronicle (*Chron.* 247) does he mention *municipium Lais*.<sup>47</sup> However, a short time later, with reference to the year 430, he records that when the Sueve Hermericus was looting the interior regions of *Gallaecia* he ran into the opposition of *Plebem quae castella tutiora retinebat* (*Chron.* 91). This is the first in a series of references that show us the defensive and self-organising capacity that these smaller entities seemed to have.<sup>48</sup>

The more or less spontaneous or institutionalised nature that these defences may have had is difficult to pinpoint. In the Roman scheme, these *castella* and *castra* had very probably depended on larger civic structures and would have counted on some type of local council that we are acquainted with for other areas of the Empire,<sup>49</sup> and which are identified in the *conventus publicus vicinorum* of the Visigothic era,<sup>50</sup> where this kind of local council appears acting with regard to the problems of property demarcation (*LV X,3,2*), with regard to runaway slaves (*LV IX, 1, 8*) and, especially, with regard to stray or lost animals (*LV VIII, 3, 13; 15; 16; 4, 14; 16; 23; 5; 4; 6*). However, in the case of *Gallaecia*, Hydatius likewise alludes to the survival of indigenous communities that seemed to act with absolute independence. In one case, he alludes to the Auregenses (*Chron.* 202) who it seemed lived in the areas near the coast of Lugo and on three occasions (*Chron.* 233; 239 and 249) to the Aunoneses, who established contacts directly with the Gothic King and maintained a successful confrontation with the Sueves for three years.

These structures, which we shall call indigenous, absolutely outside of the administrative scheme of Roman tradition, will again be found in the sources from the sixth and seventh centuries. Here we are not so much interested in them as political entities - we shall not evaluate the scarce impact that the implantation of Roman administrative structures could have had in the North and Northwest of Hispania -<sup>51</sup> but they undoubtedly show us that an important part of Spanish territory was to react immediately to the disappearance of Roman power and that a part of the countryside was very soon to organise itself outside the urban structures. In these economically marginal areas of difficult access the Roman *ciuitates* had probably never managed to integrate their *territoria*, which moreover had a further reduced level of income; with the disappearance of coercive Roman power the *ciuitates* simply split into their constituent parts, which was further exacerbated by the fact that the Sueves, at least in the fifth century, proved to be incapable of organising local administrations, and when in the sixth century there was an ecclesiastical reorganisation of the territories of the realm, these peculiar realities were once again to become integrated and respected, as suggested by the *Parroquiale Suevum*.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Although at this moment the term *municipium* probably refers to a little village without any prestige; cf. Cl. Lepelley, "De la cité classique à la cité tardive: continuités et ruptures", en Cl. Lepelley (ed.), *La fin de la cité antique et le début de la cité médiévale. De la fin du III siècle à l'avènement de Charlemagne*, Bari 1996, 8.

<sup>48</sup> *Cron.* 171; a. 456, in relation to the repelling, by the crowd, of 400 *heruli* who reached the coast of Lugo in 7 ships; *Chron.* 175, a. 456, and 187, a. 459, in relation to the using of *Portumcale castrum* as a stronghold, first by the Sueve Maldras and later by the Warn Agiulfus; *Chron.* 186, a. 457, concerning the incapacity of the Goths to assault the *Couiacense castrum*, 30 miles from Asturica Augusta.

<sup>49</sup> Cl. Lepelley, *Les cites*, 132, n. 55bis, quotes a reference from the Council of Carthage of a. 403, c. 93: *...in singulis quibusque ciuitatibus uel locis per magistratus uel seniores locorum conueniant*.

<sup>50</sup> About the nature and scope of this local government institution, still valid for consultation is J. Pérez Pujol, *Instituciones sociales de la España goda*, Valencia 1892, II, 311-313.

<sup>51</sup> A. Barbero, M. Vigil, *Sobre los orígenes sociales de la Reconquista*, Madrid 1974, 11-103 ("Sobre los orígenes sociales de la Reconquista: cántabros y vascones desde fines del Imperio Romano hasta la invasión musulmana") and 141-95 ("La organización social de los cántabros y sus transformaciones en relación con los orígenes de la Reconquista"). Of a general nature F.F. Abbot, F. Ch. Johnson, *op. cit.*, 227, who state that the barbaric invasion caused in many areas the appearance of a tribal form of government, in which the village communities would hold a fundamental place.

<sup>52</sup> P. David, "L'organisation ecclésiastique du royaume suève au temps de Saint Martin de Braga", in *Études historiques sur la Galice et le Portugal du VIe au XIIe siècle*, Lisboa-Paris 1947, 1-82; P.C. Díaz, "El parroquiale suevum: organización eclesiástica, poder político y poblamiento en la *Gallaecia* tardoantigua", in *Homenaje al Profesor José María Blázquez*, VI, Madrid 1997, 25-37.



5. The situation just described is probably the least significant, in that it refers to areas where the Roman urban model, and the organisation of the territory as a function of that model, had arrived late and deficiently, where the rural world would have continued its life independent of the city.<sup>53</sup>

However, Hydatius, even from his provincial and local perspective, manages to give us a wider panorama on the reality of Hispania in the fifth century. This chronicler tells us of an urban network which apparently continued to function with certain vigour; in Hydatius' perspective, power and strength were still associated with the city: episcopal power, essential from his perspective as a bishop, but also the capacity to negotiate, to self-organise and defend itself and, perhaps, although this is more problematic, to carry on being a centre and reference point for its rural surroundings.

As *ciuitates* Hydatius identified Lemica, Cauca, Braga, *Pallantia* (Palencia?), Lisbon, Scalabis and Toledo, as *urbs* he recalled Lérida and Astorga, referred to the *municipium* Lais and gave no specific title to Tyriasso, Aquae Celenis, to his Episcopal See Aquae Flaviae, nor to cities as important as Lugo, Conimbriga, Seville, Saragossa or Mérida. The different titles probably no longer had any juridical significance at the time when Hydatius wrote this text, although they perhaps did recall some past reference or ancient honours, or, in the best of cases, differences in size.

The information he gives on them is not very significant: some reference to their churches, but without any description, to the authority of their bishops, such as Antoninus of Mérida who arrested a Roman Manichean named Pascentius in the city and expelled him from the province of Lusitania (*Chron.* 138), but in no case does civil authority seem to be deduced. Indirectly, we can deduce that their defences were more or less powerful. When, on returning from Theoderic's court, the Sueve Rechiarius sacked the *Caesaraugustanam regionem* (*Chron.* 142), we could perhaps suppose that he could not enter the city itself, but this is only a hypothesis. More concretely, we know that in Astorga and *Pallantia* (*Chron.* 186), Lisbon (*Chron.* 188), Conimbriga (*Chron.* 229) and Lérida (*Chron.* 142) the Sueves entered by deception, under pretext of peace or by surprise, whereas in the case of Lugo (*Chron.* 199) they took advantage of the celebration of Easter. These defences, the need for deception or surprise, meant not only walls or an easily defendable strategic position, which we can see from archaeology, but also an organisation of this defence, a political decision for which those ultimately responsible probably held power in the city.

Leaving aside Braga, where the Sueves seem to have installed their capital from an early date, or those cities that they occasionally occupied, in general the cities seemed to have their own power elite, who gradually accepted collaboration with the Sueves. The most interesting reference, and one of the most ambiguous, is that relating to Lugo (*Chron.* 199). Here, a sudden invasion of Sueves on Easter Sunday in 460 ended the lives of some of the inhabitants and that of its *rector*. This term had been used in low imperial legal literature in reference to the provincial governor,<sup>54</sup> and at the end of the sixth century it still had this meaning in some Merovingian references (Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc* VIII, 43); however, the possibility of a Roman provincial structure continuing to function in *Gallaecia* at that time, as E.A. Thompson would have it,<sup>55</sup> is not guaranteed by any other reference from Hydatius, nor does it fit the development of events. It is most likely that the term *rector* was being used here in the same sense that it would have in its subsequent development: "someone in charge of something",<sup>56</sup> in this case, the first magistrate of the city of Lugo. In 468 (*Chron.* 246) the city of Lisbon was handed over to the Sueves by a certain Lusidius,

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<sup>53</sup> A general panorama in A. Fuentes Domínguez, "La romanidad tardía en los territorios septentrionales de la península ibérica", in C. Fernández Ochoa (ed.), *Los Finisterres*, 213-221.

<sup>54</sup> *C.Th.* I, 16, 5; *C.I.* I, 40. Cf. A. Berger, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law*, Philadelphia 1953, 669.

<sup>55</sup> "The End of Roman Spain", *Nothingham Medieval Studies* 21, 1977, 12, for whom Roman law was also being applied and taxes collected.

<sup>56</sup> Du Cange, *op. cit.*, VII, 61.

*ciue suo, qui illic praeerat, tradente...* There seems to be no doubt; in this case, Lusidius is the person in charge of the city, and probably because he is its highest authority and not as delegate of an outside power.<sup>57</sup> Hydatius never used the word *curia* nor any other equivalent and any statement as to the way in which the urban councils of these cities were organised is now a mere hypothesis. The describing of Lusidius as *ciue* does not allow us to draw any conclusions as to his socio-economic links; the reference could be contrasted with that of *plebs* with which Hydatius defined those who defended themselves in rural surroundings, and situate him in an undefined position of leadership, without affirming, as K. F. Stroheker does,<sup>58</sup> his senatorial condition simply because the Sueve king subsequently put him in charge of an embassy before the Emperor Antemius (*Chron.* 245).

We could perhaps say something about who assumed political responsibility in that citizen's government. In the year 464 (*Chron.* 229) the Sueves entered Conimbriga by deception and took prisoner the family of the noble *Cantaber*, the mother and children. The chronicler tells us nothing about the reasons for choosing the members of this family and the only one that seems logical is that the above-mentioned *Cantaber* in some way headed the defence of the city against the Sueves. In contrast with the almost generalised archaeological poverty to which we have already referred, Conimbriga offers a well-studied sequence. If we review the material from the digs we find that three potter's marks on Spanish *sigillata*, probably late, have the name *Cantaber*.<sup>59</sup> The possibility that this may be the same family should be considered. What was its condition? If we accept as valid the model that we gave at the beginning of this study, perhaps *Cantaber* belonged to a family of artisans, with social importance and sufficient economic prosperity to reach a situation of pre-eminence in the city. It is true that the references we have for the times speak of small sized workshops and limited production,<sup>60</sup> but potters' marks with the same reference have appeared in Italica and Mérida and their origin in commercialisation from Conimbriga should not be ruled out.<sup>61</sup> *Cantaber* may, then, have been a member of a family of the urban aristocracy with artisan or commercial links, not excluding wealth in property, a large landowner, as could be derived from the term *familiam nobilem* used by the chronicler.<sup>62</sup>

Conimbriga was an important city; we have already pointed out that the model of the abandoning of cities by the large *possessores* was not universal.<sup>63</sup> In the same sense we have the hypothesis of P. David,<sup>64</sup> who considers that the church of *cantabriano*, mentioned in the *Parrochiale sueuum*, among those of the diocese of *Lamecum*, would have been built on a large property belonging to this family. Whatever the source of their resources, the pre-eminence of the family in the city did not end with the Sueve repression, nor with the destruction of the city in 467 at the hands of these same Sueves (*Chron.* 241), since a bishop named *Cantaber* attended the Council of Mérida in 666 in representation of the city.

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<sup>57</sup> F. Dahn, *Die Könige der Germanen*, VI, München 1885, 555; L. Schmidt, *Geschichte der deutschen Stämme: die Westgermanen*, München 1970 (=1915), 212, considered that he was at the head of the city in the name of the Gothic king.

<sup>58</sup> K.F. Stroheker, "Spanische Senatoren", in *Germanentum und Spätantike*, Zürich 1965, 76.

<sup>59</sup> L. Alarçao, R. Etienne (eds.), *Fouilles de Conimbriga. II. Epigraphie et sculpture*, Paris 1976, 131, n° 238a, 238b y 238c; Id. *IV. Les sigillées*, Paris 1975, 205, n° 378, 379 y 380.

<sup>60</sup> Though a quite earlier time, can be seen in A. Carandini, "Sviluppo e crisi delle manifatture rurali e urbane", in A. Giardina, A. Schiavone (eds.), *Società romana e produzione schiavistica. II. Merci, mercati e scambi nel Mediterraneo*, Roma-Bari, 1986, 249-260.

<sup>61</sup> M.A. Mezquiriz, *Terra sigillata hispanica*, Valencia 1961, I, 21, 46, 62, 149, 164-165, 434 y 437; II, 8-9, 300 and 306; A. Balil, "Materiales para un índice de marcas de ceramista en terra sigillata hispánica", *Archivo Español de Arqueología* 38, 1965, 139-170, who also collects marks in the Tarraconensis, although we must not consider them here, as it is a common anthroponimic in that province.

<sup>62</sup> H. Strasburger, "Nobiles", *RE* XVII, 1, 785-791. Such is the link K.F. Stroheker, *op. cit.*, 76, attributes to it.

<sup>63</sup> P. Petit, *Libanius et la vie municipale à Antioche au IVe siècle apres C.-C.*, Paris, 1955, 352, considers that in fourth century the Western curial class still had a latifundistic composition, as opposed to the small and medium owners of the East.

<sup>64</sup> "L'organisation", 80.

6. Thus we see how the invasions of the fifth century set in motion mechanisms of organisation and defence of a local type which would accelerate an almost irreversible process of segmentation of power, a process of growing apart from any centralised power, which benefitted local manifestations associated to powers not emanating from distant and strange theorisation, but from near and immediate economical and coercive powers. It is true that this process was not new; the only active defence against the invaders had been headed by large landowners, relations of the Theodosian family who had resorted to their own troops (Oros. VII, 40, 5; Zos. VI, 4, 3) and who probably had their property in the north of Lusitania or in the west of the Tarraconense.<sup>65</sup> Liebeschuetz<sup>66</sup> considered that a fundamental change in the country/city relationship was the gradual militarisation of the country, and with it, the transfer of effective power to these large landowners with their own armies. We know that Teudi, a Goth whom the Ostrogoth Theoderic had sent to Hispania at the beginning of the sixth century, took an indigenous woman as his wife and recruited 2000 men from among the workers on his properties (Procop., *Bell. Goth.* I, 12, 50s.), which gives us an idea of the warfaring potential of the large landowners.

In Hydatius this situation is not yet completely evident. Apart from the references to the above-mentioned people, only a mention of the killing *aliquantis honestus natu* (*Chron.* 196) by the Sueves and a more precise one of *Palogorio uiro nobili Gallaeciae* (*Chron.* 219) could refer to that land-owning senatorial nobility. Palogorius seems to have headed some type of embassy to the Goth king Theoderic, but the ambiguity of the paragraph does not allow us to conclude whether he did so of his own accord, sent by the Sueve king or commissioned by one of the autonomous powers that Hydatius generically calls *Gallecos* (*Chron.* 220).

However, despite the marginal nature of *Gallaecia* and of the persistence of the primitive habitat, the Roman type agricultural colonisation would undoubtedly have reached areas of the province, especially the river valleys,<sup>67</sup> and the same surroundings, less Romanised, would not have remained unaltered, generating social differentiation and indigenous aristocracies. In 468, Hydatius' chronicle was interrupted, but when, a century later, we again recover the informative sequence, these large, self-sufficient properties emerged in the surrounding areas with great force. The sixth canon of the II Council of Braga, held in 572, denounced the churches built by private parties on their lands with the clear intention of benefiting from the offerings of the faithful. These churches, built according to the bishops *sub tributaria conditione*, are an example of the process of independence that these large properties experienced in practice in the religious sphere, to the scandal of the hierarchy.

Of even greater interest is the reference made by John of Biclaro (*Chron.* 9, 2, a. 575) to an *Aspidium loci seniore* whom Leovigildus had to confront on one of his campaigns for the annexation of the north-west. This Aspidius controlled the region of the *Aregenses montes*, probably on the borders of León-Orense, independently of the Sueve monarch, and the result of the victory is described in terms of any other military campaign: *Leovigildus rex Aregenses montes ingreditor, Aspidium loci seniore cum uxore et filiis captivus ducit opesque eius et loca in suam redigit potestatem*, a campaign important enough to demand the presence of the king himself. The lack of definition as to the Latin, indigenous or Germanic nature of this Aspidius does not alter the conclusion that can be obtained; the Germanic elite assumed the interests of the Hispano-Roman large landowners immediately and members of the old indigenous aristocracy

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<sup>65</sup> In this area, coincidental with the open territories of the Northern plateau, we can identify some *villae* of great wealth whose moment of splendour took place between about the middle of 4th. century and the middle of 5th. century. Cf. P. de Palol, *La villa romana de La Olmeda. Pedrosa de la Vega (Palencia). Excavaciones de 1969-70*, Madrid 1974, 203-205; J.L. Argente Oliver, *La villa tardorromana de Baños de Valdearados (Burgos)*, Madrid 1979, 125-126.

<sup>66</sup> "The end", 24-25.

<sup>67</sup> P. de Palol, "Problemas ciudad-campo en el Bajo Imperio en relación a la ciudad de Lugo", *Actas del Bimilenario de Lugo*, Lugo 1977, 157-167; F. Arias, M. Cavada, "Galicia Bajorromana", *Gallaecia* 3/4 (1977-78), 91-106.

were to likewise be transformed into owners of extensive territories, to a large extent at the expense of absorbing the old lands of the community.<sup>68</sup>

The information of the fifth century privileged the west of the Peninsula; however, John of Biclaro's chronicle mentioned above, which provides information about Liuva's ascent to power until the third council of Toledo, the years 568-569 approximately, shows how the process of multiplication of local powers, whether urban, agrarian indigenous or large land-owning, was a general process throughout the Peninsula. The pseudo-Isidorian chronicle reminds us that the power of Leovigild when reaching the throne extended to little more than Galia and Toledo.<sup>69</sup> In his campaigns to subject the Peninsular territories to his sovereignty, besides subjecting the Sueve kingdom, or the Aspidius mentioned above, he carried out campaigns against the Cantabrians (*Chron.* 8, 2; a. 574) and Vascones (*Chron.* 11, 3; a. 581) and against the Sappi who controlled the province of Sabaria (*Chron.* 7, 5; a. 573). The city of Asidona, situated close to the Byzantine area, was taken in 571 (*Chron.* 5, 3); this would point to a struggle against imperial forces, although such a circumstance was not recorded by the chronicler. The capture of Córdoba was followed by that of many *urbes et castella*, which was possible after killing *rusticorum multitudine* (*Chron.* 6, 2; a. 572), the same circumstances that seemed to surround the subjection of the unknown province of Orospeida (*Chron.* 11, 2; a. 577).

The nature of the power that opposed the Visigoths in each of these cases is a problem in itself. The resistance of the city of Córdoba may have been headed by the local aristocracy; however, the text seems to assume that the fall of the city and the death of the enemies (*Hostes*) was followed by the subjection of many *urbes et castella* and by the death of large numbers of *rustici* in the area. This term may allude to the rural militia of the large landowners, perhaps those who defended the provincial capital and who had formed a broad front against the Goths. The form in which this power and the supposed unity of interests was articulated is unknown to us. Something similar occurred in the case of Asidona, although John of Biclaro's text seems to point to a more limited phenomenon, more reduced in space. In both cases, we should keep in mind that the Visigothic advance towards the south of the Peninsula was slow, that it was far from their basic areas of settlement, that it had to compete with the influence of the Byzantines from the coast and that, therefore, conditions had been set up for the creation of independent structures, which in some cases may have been of a merely local nature and which, in others, as perhaps in Córdoba, may have replaced the old Roman provincial organisation.

For the time being, we shall not go into the struggle between Vascones and Cantabrians or against the unknown Sappi. In the case of Cantabria and Sabaria the author uses the term *provincia*; if we overlook the administrative meaning of the term, perhaps it had acquired the meaning of a territory of an ethnic unit or tribal area.<sup>70</sup> If the chronicler was using the terms with accuracy, this could refer to Orospeida, a term which in itself apparently involves the recovery of a primitive term unknown to us in the classic sources just as Sabaria is unknown to us.<sup>71</sup>

From the texts of Hydatius and John of Biclaro we can deduce the important role that the cities were acquiring as defensive centres. In many cases, their very survival depended on this defensive capacity, but their conversion into fortifications only guaranteed physical survival and had nothing to do with the dynamic concept of the city as organiser of the economic and political life of the surrounding area. However, this same element of self-defence seems to be present in those texts in

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<sup>68</sup> A. Barbero, M. Vigil, "La organización social", 189-190.

<sup>69</sup> *Chron. ps.-Isid* 14: *Leviba mortuo Leovigillus regnavit super Gascones et Yspaniam. caput regni eius Toletum. et debellavit castella (quae erasum?) extra dominium suum. et nichil amplius Gothi obtinebant nisi Gallias et Toletum.*

<sup>70</sup> J.F. Niermeyer, *Mediae latinitatis lexicon minus*, Leiden 1976, 867.

<sup>71</sup> It is possible that some of the areas named at this time with unknown terms had a different name in classical texts and that they recovered at this moment old tribal denominations, as in the case of Carpetania and Celtiberia in the Northern area of the Carthaginian, or the as yet unlocated Sabaria and Orospeida; cf. E. James, *The Origins of France. From Clovis to the Capetians 500-1000*, London 1982, 47.

relation to the *castra* and the *villae*, and was the necessary response within a context of insecurity and violence. Cities conceived exclusively as fortifications seem to be a phenomenon foreign to Visigothic society, with the exception of some frontier areas or the foundation of *Victoriacum* by Leovigildus<sup>72</sup> in the context of the struggles against the Vascones and whose subsequent fate we do not know.

7. Once the long unstable period of the establishment of the Barbarian peoples had been overcome and the almost complete unity of the Peninsula had been achieved by Leovigildus, the cities maintained a decisive role in Visigothic social life of the seventh century. On the one hand, Visigothic administration and political organisation were of a conservative nature and assumed the political and cultural function that cities had had in the Roman past. However, it is probable that the Visigothic administration based in the city was more artificial than real and that some cities, especially those with the capacity to maintain themselves economically sufficient and which had in some way preserved their own defensive and organisational capacity, the cases perhaps of Mérida and Córdoba, were in practice virtually autonomous with respect to the central power,<sup>73</sup> and this situation probably lasted throughout the whole of the history of the kingdom. For some time this political and cultural functionality had been undergoing transformation by Christianity. Most of the information we have on cities for the Catholic-Visigothic period is associated with information about its bishops; in the majority of cases the only reference to them is their mention next to the signatures of the bishops at the end of the councils.

The majority of these cities, as we have already seen, came from the classical period; their *territoria* depended on them and from them the *comes ciuitatis* was charged with tax collection and the administration of justice,<sup>74</sup> aided by a series of minor functionaries.<sup>75</sup> This simplified scheme would have then definitively replaced the old Roman municipal scheme, which did not prevent the existence in particular cases of some type of autonomous citizens' body not linked to the central power.<sup>76</sup> In the city was the Episcopal palace; it was therefore the centre of the diocesan territory, encompassing the cathedral, and from there the jurisdiction of the bishop was administered over territories which generally coincided with those of the civil administration.<sup>77</sup> This did not imply an absolute dependence of these territories on the Bishop's dictates; the rural churches, and especially the monasteries, had effectively achieved patrimonial independence<sup>78</sup> but the disciplinary unity around the Episcopal authority kept alive the old administrative fiction of the city with its territory. In general these would be small cities which seemed to have withdrawn to limited areas, leaving others practically abandoned, as in the case of Tarraco.<sup>79</sup> The new Christian constructions seemed to have reordered the vital pulse of these cities, new public spaces, a reordering of the sacred hours<sup>80</sup> as a function of daily celebrations or of the annual calendar,

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<sup>72</sup> Ioh. abb. Bicl., *Chron.* a. 581, 11, 3.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. R. Collins, "Mérida and Toledo", 198-199.

<sup>74</sup> In the Visigothic laws, the *territorium* was still, "by definition", the judge's sphere of jurisdiction (*LV* II, 1, 18; 2, 7; 4, 5; III, 6, 1; IV, 4, 1; VI, 3, 7; 4, 4; VII, 1, 5; 5, 1; IX, 1, 6; 1, 21; 2, 1; XII, 1, 2; 3, 7; 3, 25-27).

<sup>75</sup> L.A. García Moreno, *Estudios sobre la organización administrativa del reino visigodo de Toledo*, Madrid 1974, 10-12.

<sup>76</sup> Of a general nature, C. Sánchez-Albornoz, "Ruina y extinción del municipio romano en España e instituciones que lo reemplazan", in *Estudios visigodos*, Roma 1971, 9-147 (=1943).

<sup>77</sup> The use of *territorium* as a synonym of episcopal diocese is also present in the Visigothic legislation (*LV* II, 1, 30; III, 5, 4; VI, 5, 13; IX, 2, 9; XII, 2, 3; 3, 12; 3, 20), as much as in the Councils' minutes.

<sup>78</sup> Such independence had been quite clear for the Hispanic Church at the Council of Ilerda, in 546. c. 3, which purposely gathered previous norms from the Councils of Agde, a. 506, and Orleans I, a. 511. This independence was the object of legislation throughout the 7th. century, and a law by Wamba (*LV* V, 1, 5) would precisely mark that separation; this law does not appear in the edition by Zeumer, but it does appear in that by the Royal Academy of History, *Fuero Juzgo o libro de los jueces*, Madrid 1815, 79. Cf. G. Martínez Díez, *El patrimonio eclesiástico en la España visigoda. Estudio histórico jurídico*, Comillas (Santander) 1959, 49-50.

<sup>79</sup> S.J. Keay, *op. cit.*, 212.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. CH. Pietri (ed.), *Le temps chrétien de la fin de l'Antiquité au Moyen-Age (III-XIII siècles)*, Paris 1984; R.A. Markus, *The End of the Ancient Christianity*, Cambridge 1990, 97f. For the Visigothic case J. Fernández Alonso, *La cura pastoral en la España romanovisigoda*, Roma 1955, 344-391.

elements that are more important than mere topographical renovation,<sup>81</sup> which, as we noted above, interests us more as a symptom than as a phenomenon in itself. Evidently, the extramural spaces must also be taken into account; there were churches and monasteries located in these areas and in some cases new districts had arisen. Around the monasteries there were economic and assistential centres of great importance in themselves. On a morphological level, these suburban surroundings, where part of the religious buildings were situated, supply the most evident impression of rupture in the evolution of the city of late antiquity, and perhaps here the religious stamp is more important than the morphological one, although it is very likely that these extra-urban complexes were walled, as seems to be deduced from Idisore's rule (c.1), which in the visual and defensive concept would make them similar to the city itself, now disintegrated into ever more isolated units.<sup>82</sup> The importance of these suburbs must have been proportional to the size of the cities and are thought to be important in the cases of Mérida and Toledo; in the case of the capital of the realm, some monasteries essential to the political and cultural life of the city and the kingdom would be situated there. We do not know to what extent the separation between the intramural space and the suburbs, or between city and country, may have generated diverse juridical or legal conditions.<sup>83</sup>

Evidently, the positive information that we have on these cities is very limited. Most of them are mere names; in some, prelates of renown carried out their activity and we can imagine them as important cultural centres, as is the case of Seville, Saragossa or Palencia. Regarding Toledo, we have some knowledge of activities related to its condition as Court,<sup>84</sup> and only for the case of Mérida can we construct a working model which also allows us to assess the level of relationship and interdependence between the city and the country. All in all, the example of Mérida may be exceptional; it had been the most outstanding city in Hispania during the Late Empire<sup>85</sup> and probably continued to be one of the most cosmopolitan and influential cities after the fall of the Empire and during the period of Visigothic dominion.<sup>86</sup>

From the information given in the *Vitae Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium (VPE)*, circa a. 600, and the acts of the Council of Mérida in 666 we glean the image of a renowned city, where the religious, political and cultural role to which we have referred is substantiated, and where economic life still seems to preserve a certain importance.<sup>87</sup> In the city there seemed to live, perhaps temporarily, noble Goths, owners of large fortunes, who even exercised political offices in other surrounding cities (*VPE* V, X, 1); some Lusitanian large landowners seemed to have had their residence in the city, or at least the city was still an important reference point for them, as seems to be deduced from the chapter on the rich senator who applied to Paulus in search of medical aid for his wife (*VPE* IV, II, 1). As a centre of pilgrimage, the remains of the martyr Eulalia were venerated there; the city received the constant visits of pilgrims whom the Episcopal church attended to, as well as the poor, whom it provided with food rations, and monetary loans when

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<sup>81</sup> Of a general nature, L.A. García Moreno, "La cristianización de la topografía de las ciudades de la Península Ibérica durante la Antigüedad tardía", *Archivo Español de Arqueología* 50-51, 1977-78, 311-321; *Id.*, "Las transformaciones de la topografía de las ciudades en Lusitania en la Antigüedad tardía", *Revista de Estudios Extremeños* 42, 1986, 97-114; X. Barral i Altet, "La cristianización de las ciudades romanas de Hispania", *Extremadura Arqueológica* III, Badajoz 1992, 51-55; J.M. Gurt, G. Ripoll, C. Godoy, "Topografía"; J.M. Gurt, "Topografía cristiana de la Lusitania. Testimonios arqueológicos", in A. Velazquez, E. Cerrillo, P. Mateos (eds.), *Los últimos romanos de Lusitania (Cuadernos Emeritenses 10)*, Mérida 1995, 73-95.

<sup>82</sup> For the parallel case of the Gaul, K. Böhner, "Urban and Rural Settlement in Frankish Kingdom", in M.W. Barley (ed.), *European Towns*, 193-195.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. C.G. Mor, "Topografía giuridica. Stato giuridico delle diverse zone urbane", in *Topografia urbana e vitta cittadina nell'alto medioevo in occidente (XXI Settimane di studio, Spoleto 1973)*, Spoleto 1974, 333-350.

<sup>84</sup> E. Ewig, "Résidence et capitale pendant le Haut Moyen Age", in *Spätantikes und Fränkisches Gallien. Gesammelte Schriften (1952-1973)*, München 1976, 368-373.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. R. Etienne, "Ausone et l'Espagne", *MAEH offerts a J. Carcopino*, Paris 1966, 319-332.

<sup>86</sup> R. Collins, "Mérida and Toledo: 550-585", in E. James (ed.), *Visigothic Spain: New Approaches*, Oxford 1980, 189-219, esp. 202-205.

<sup>87</sup> Of a general character, L. García Iglesias, *Aspectos económico-sociales de la Mérida visigótica*, Badajoz 1974.

requested (*VPE*, V, III, 4-9). Of some interest is the fact that Masona's distributions of wine, oil and honey reached *ciuibus urbis aut rusticis de ruralibus* (*VPE* V, III, 7). Outside of the hagiographic context, Mérida, as was probably the case of the most important cities in Hispania, was still the main centre for charitable redistribution in the area, and in this sense, an important reference point in this domain, halfway between the ideological and the economic. The relationship between the bishop and the martyr protectors of the city entailed a new element of urban solidarity and a new relationship with its inhabitants and with its rural surroundings; in the perception of P. Brown<sup>88</sup> this was a replacement mechanism which favoured communication between the city and its surroundings by converting the urban nucleus into a holy referent difficult to replace.

Moreover, the acts of the Council of 666 are susceptible to a reading which would bring us closer to the actual economic organisation of the properties of the diocese and which we could even consider to be associated with an "ancient" model in which the organisation and management of the properties was carried out from the city. The Church of Mérida was one of the richest in Hispania; its properties seem to have been the most important in the whole of Lusitania and the canons of the Council are largely, 11 out of 23, a collection of norms for the preservation and correct administration of that patrimony.

This reading shows us a large landowner resident in the city - the bishop - concerned with the profitability of his properties. It is true that there is no place in the text for details on the production or ordering of activities, but there is, for example, a clear concern that the *familia ecclesiae*, that is, the bishop's dependants, the producers on his properties, should not be reduced (canon 20), as well as a concern to prevent the patrimony being lost or dispersed (cc. 20 and 21). While recognising that the cases are not precisely the same, we get the impression that the local churches were conceived as estates or productive units, where the priest at the head was, for his direct dependants, *domino et presbitero* (c. 18), and if a priest received the donation of an estate or of an ecclesiastic property as a recompense for his work, it is clear that besides personal benefit, he should contribute to the increase of ecclesiastic patrimony (c.13). The image of the churches as centres of economic exploitation is equally evident when it is shown that the bishops will only take charge of their repairing if *mundiales res nullas habet* (c.16), which seems to have been exceptional and usually only occurred in churches built by the faithful and insufficiently endowed (c. 19). The bishops, like the large landowners of late antiquity in general, were more concerned about the rent than the exploitation, about the final result of the production than the productive process,<sup>89</sup> and the Council decisions point in this direction.

These properties, which steadily increased, produced rent, especially in the form of products but also in the form of money. From the acts of the X Council of Toledo, in 656, we know that the abbey-bishopric of Dumio obtained from its properties *inlaciones tributorum et pretia frugorum*. This income meant wealth and power for the Church, which in turn implied social projection, a greater presence in public life where alms, social assistance and buildings would be the most evident forms of that projection, as is shown in the text of the *VPE*. However, we must take into consideration the fact that the products of these properties could also participate in the urban market mechanisms, the same as those coming from other large properties.

The Church, the same as the lay large landowners, could be considered self-sufficient, could satisfy all its self consumption, especially when, given the dispersed nature of its property, production failure on any estate would neither affect the overall amount of the rent nor cause problems of shortage or scarcity.<sup>90</sup> But, moreover, these large landowners who, in general, due to their level of

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<sup>88</sup> *The Cult of the Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, Chicago 1981, 42-45.

<sup>89</sup> D. Vera, "Strutture agrarie e strutture patrimoniali nella tarda antichità: l'aristocrazia romana fra agricoltura e commercio", *Opus* 2, 1983, 509.

<sup>90</sup> D. Vera, *op. cit.*, 493-495.

rent, were immune to the fluctuations of the market, were, as suppliers of a city needing consumer goods, in a position to establish the rules of exchange and the prices themselves.<sup>91</sup> This speculative nature of the *possessores* dedicated to accumulating enormous amounts of farm products, especially cereals, in order to cause artificial shortages and thus control the market prices, had been denounced by Christian literature and especially by Ambrose, since the second half of the fourth century,<sup>92</sup> and the phenomenon was probably constant throughout late antiquity. Furthermore, the large dominions had their own law, *lex saltus*, since the Low Empire, their own norms of internal functioning and very probably their own market (*CI IV*, 6, 1), thus becoming centres of attraction for the peasant population of the area, which entailed a further element of distancing and competition with respect to the city.<sup>93</sup>

The council of Mérida's concern for the patrimony is repeated in the whole of the Spanish conciliar legislation, being in some cases (Seville I, Toledo IX or Toledo X, for example) the very reason for its summoning. Evidently, not all the dioceses were as rich, neither did all the cities follow the example of Mérida, but the city, the political and cultural centre, could be considered to have become an economic appendix of the country. However, one could object that the economy of the Episcopal church and that of the large lay properties had no reason to react to the same urban connections, or that, in the case of lay property, it would only be applicable to those in the immediate surroundings of the consumer cities. It is possible that some of the Episcopal cities harboured within their walls the same peasant population that went out to work the surrounding land, and, of course, some areas, especially the north-west of the plateau, should be studied almost as exclusively rural districts.

8. The country had also undergone transformations. These cannot easily be immediately perceived in what we could generically call the agricultural landscape. The Germanic invasion, as far as we know, did not imply a re-evaluation of country property; the Germanic invaders assumed without alterations the property concepts drawn up in Roman law,<sup>94</sup> and the division into thirds (*tercias*) to which the sources refer, whether they were real or only affected usufruct,<sup>95</sup> did not alter the morphological essence of property. Likewise, the process of concentrating country estates that seems to have become generalised at this time did not mean a change in the forms of exploitation, nor necessarily in the labour force; it basically meant that rents were deflected to the new landowner, who in most cases probably used intermediaries<sup>96</sup> over an accumulation of dispersed estates and peasant communities whose level of dependence is difficult to know exactly.<sup>97</sup> These peasant settlements would probably not have undergone great changes at this time. Isidore alludes to their nature as open agglomerations: *vicus autem dictus ab ipsis tantum habitationibus vel quod vias habeat tantum sine muris (...) Pagi sunt apta aedificiis loca inter agros habitantibus. Haec et conciliabula dicta, a conventu et societate multorum in unum (Etym. XV, 2, 12 and 14);* where *castrum* or *castellum* only added the condition of having been constructed on high ground (*Etym. XV, 2, 13*). These scattered peasant settlements in the countryside are recorded as dwelling

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<sup>91</sup> D. Vera, *op. cit.*, 516-518.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. L. Cracco Rugini, "Ambrogio di fronte alla compagine sociale del suo tempo", in *Ambrosius Episcopus. Atti del Congr. Int. di St. Ambrosiani*, Milano 1976, 5, 230-265.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. R. Ganghoffer, "L'Evolution", 203; M. López Campuzano, "Autarquía del fundus rural romano y producción de cerámica. Algunas consideraciones legales a propósito del Digesto", *Verdolay* 4, 1992, 133-137.

<sup>94</sup> E. Levy, *West Roman Vulgar Law. The Law of Property*, Philadelphia 1951, 87.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. W. Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans. The techniques of Accommodation*, Princeton 1980, 72-73 and n. 31, 206-207 y 221.

<sup>96</sup> It is probable that some lands were worked by *mancipia* at the command of a *villicus* or someone similar, either a freeman, a freedman or even a slave himself, or else were worked in an autonomous way by a dependent population that would even have slaves in their service. Cf. L.A. García Moreno, *El fin del reino visigodo de Toledo*, Madrid 1975, 119; for a different context but with comparable realities V. Recchia, *Gregorio Magno e la società agricola*, Roma 1978, 49, n. 153.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. J.A. García de Cortázar, *La sociedad rural en la España medieval*, Madrid 1988, 15ff, who considers that it is very difficult to find out what model of agrarian organisation prevailed in the Visigothic age.



units at least in *LV III*, 4, 17 and *IX*, 1, 21, where an interesting gradation seems to be registered: *civitas*, *castellum vicus aut villa*, alluding to *castra* in *XII*, 3, 2.

The functioning and organisation of these large properties is not always easy to reconstruct. No accountancy information, nor even a description, real or ideal, of these is available. However, we do have some information on how a part of these large properties was accumulated; this is the case of the large ecclesiastical and especially monasterial properties.<sup>98</sup> We have already noted how in one of the cases, that of the large Episcopal properties, the mechanisms for the accumulation and preservation of this patrimony were common issues in the councils of the Visigothic Church. Even so, an approach to the way in which these patrimonies were administered and to their links or isolation with respect to the more or less immediate surroundings, and in particular to the cities, can only be carried out based on monastic documentation and, in particular, documentation of its rules.

In this sense the Rule of Isidore (*circa a. 620*) is of special relevance. Here, the model presented responds to that of a large property in which the monastery properly speaking would be equivalent to the central part of the exploitation, similar to the property owners residence, exploited directly by a slave population; in the immediate surroundings there would be located a series of possessions from which consumer products for the monastery would have been obtained. An accumulation of estates, gradually more distant from the monastery and whose level of dispersion we do not know, would have been employed to gather rents. The running of the monastery would have followed schemes of self-sufficiency that we can describe as proper to the age but which in practice were universal and proper to any peasant economy, although in this particular case, in spite of the text's proclamation on the desirability of being far from the city, the monastery seems to have had a building in the city (c. 19) whose economic and commercial significance seems unquestionable,<sup>99</sup> a significance that could equally be applied to the references the text makes to coinage and to a monetary-based economy.

A comparative study of the different monastic sources shows us how the Peninsular reality was unequal and complex. Those coming from the Hispanic north-west show a peasant subsistence economy, where surplus was probably scarce, the properties more dispersed and poor, and a surrounding area where very primitive forms of property and probably of familiar structures can be detected and in which the city was an unknown phenomenon. In these surroundings, we even find references to small peasant properties.

However, this comparative scheme would probably not have been very different from the classical age except with regard to the concentration of property. Other novelties may be more indicative of city/country movement, of the change regarding the relational scheme that we are aiming to set up. In this sense, it is interesting to note the mechanisms for the Christianising of the countryside.

The Christianisation of the rural areas is a relatively late phenomenon. Until practically the fifth century Christianity was a genuinely urban phenomenon; however, it gradually began to encroach upon rural areas.<sup>100</sup> In reality, this can be interpreted as part of the loss of the entity of the city. The Visigothic councils show the Bishops' insistence on marking the supremacy of the diocesan church, that which exerts control from the city, as well as the jurisdictional unity of the diocese, just as they were seeking patrimonial unity; however, this does not mean that the situation was

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<sup>98</sup> Cf. P.C. Díaz Martínez, *Formas económicas y sociales en el monacato visigodo*, Salamanca 1987, 11-73 ("La formación del patrimonio monástico visigodo").

<sup>99</sup> The Council of Agde in A. 506, c. 38, had advised that the monasteries should have a house within towns, as a shelter in case of war. However, the context in which we are moving now has nothing to do with that interpretation.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. M. Sotomayor, "Penetración de la Iglesia en los medios rurales de la España tardorromana y visigoda", in *Cristianizzazione ed organizzazione ecclesiastica della campagna nell'alto medioevo (XXVIII Settimane di Studio. Spoleto 1981)*, Spoleto 1982, 639-670; M.I. Loring García, "La difusión del cristianismo en los medios rurales de la Península Ibérica a fines del Imperio Romano", *Studia Historica. Historia Antigua IV-V*, 1986-8, 195-204.

such. On the contrary, what can be deduced from the different testimonies is a constant struggle between the diocesan church and the increasing autonomy of the rural churches, whether they were parochial, founded at the initiative of the ecclesiastical structure itself, or private, that is, founded by private parties, generally by the large landowners on their domains.

The former may be indicative of a decentralisation of places of worship and a sign of the conquest of the countryside by Christianity. The latter also imply a privatisation of these activities. This means that virtual religious independence was added to economic self sufficiency; the large property became the very centre of worship. The Council of Elvira, at the beginning of the fourth century, had already assigned to the Christian *possessores* the responsibility for the beliefs of their dependants (cc. 40, 41 and 49), and the Theodesian code had considered that they were responsible for the orthodoxy of the religious practices of their dependants.<sup>101</sup> Imperial legislation had already distinguished in 388 between *ecclesiae publicae vel privatae* (*C. Th.* XVI, 5, 14) and 10 years later the construction of churches on the land of the large property owners and in the *vici* was considered something frequent (*C. Th.* XVI, 2, 33). In the year 400 a council held in Toledo distinguished the *intra civitatem* churches from those *in loco in quo est ecclesia aut castelli aut vicus aut villae* (c.5). In Visigothic Spain the religious legislation included the rights of property owners who founded churches, essentially in the patrimonial sphere, and although Episcopal authorisation was necessary for their consecration the property owners or their families were likewise charged with the designation of the priests responsible for the liturgy.<sup>102</sup> These churches received the donations of the faithful and therefore entered into competition with the diocesan churches, as shown when the Council of Braga in 572 reprovved the churches that these large landowners built with lucrative, tributary ends (c. 5). A concrete example of this kind of church is given by Valerio of Bierzo in his *Ordo Querimoniae* (circa a. 690), although the absolutely subjective biographical nature of the source means that his narration centres specifically on the personal conflict between Valerio and the landowner and his heirs.<sup>103</sup>

It should be taken into account that the monasteries that proliferated in rural areas likewise became transformed in practice into places of worship for the dependants of the monastery and for the population of the area,<sup>104</sup> and, just as in the previous cases, this led to a ruralisation of religious practices.

This phenomenon of the Christianisation of the countryside should evidently be foremost understood as part of the process of evangelisation and universal dissemination of Christianity, but while this was ongoing it adjusted itself to the new reality resulting from the change in the relationships between city and country: the rural churches maintained the unity of discipline and jurisdiction with respect to the diocesan church located in the city, but in practice they lived outside the city and probably struggled to free themselves from its control.

This Christianisation of the countryside undoubtedly implied a morphological change as important as that which the city was undergoing and, just as occurred there, it implied a change in life style and functionality. Classical munificence had been an essentially urban phenomenon, associated with the existence of impoverished urban masses; this role was now taken up by the Bishops. However, in addition, the monasteries in rural areas were to carry out that same function that until that time had been genuinely urban; the monastical rule informs us of charitable

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<sup>101</sup> *C.Th.* XVI, 5, 21; 36; 40; 54; 56 y 57. As well as *C.Th.* XVI, 2, 33 and 5, 14, which gather the rights of the owner over these churches built on their estates.

<sup>102</sup> *Conc. Tolet.* III, a. 589, c. 19; *Conc. Tolet.* IV, a. 633, c. 33; *Conc. Tolet.* VII, a. 646, c. 4; *Conc. Tolet.* IX, a. 655, cc. 1-2. The rights of the owner are equally protected in *LV* 4, 5, 6. It is still necessary to turn to M. Torres López, "El origen del sistema de iglesias propias", *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español* 5, 1928, 83-217; R. Bidagor, *La "Iglesia propia" en España. Estudio histórico-canónico*, Roma, 1933.

<sup>103</sup> The text in C.M. Aherne, *Valerio of Bierzo. An ascetic of the Late Visigothic period*, Washington, 1949, 60-109.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. P. C. Díaz, "El monacato y la cristianización del NO hispano. Un proceso de aculturación", in *Cristianismo y aculturación en tiempos del Imperio Romano (Antigüedad y cristianismo VII)*, Murcia 1990, 531-539.

activities and attention to the sick or to pilgrims within this new context. Simultaneously, the very construction of monasteries or the adaptation of old *villae* as such created a new religious geography in the countryside, of which the rural churches formed a part. Testimony of the proliferation of these rural centres of worship are not as significant as in neighbouring Gaul but probably, just as there, their numbers increased unreasonably, with all that this implied in terms of difficulties in maintenance and correct application of the liturgy.<sup>105</sup> It is not by chance that the most relevant Visigothic remains persisting today are these rural churches, whose association with religious buildings set up on the large properties or on monastery grounds are still the object of discussion.<sup>106</sup>

9. Another three aspects at least were to mark the virtual independence of the country with respect to the city during the Visigothic period: taxation, the army and the meting out of justice. All these were mediated by the changing essence of the State during the same period. In the first place, we should point out the ever-decreasing role of taxation as opposed to private rents. To the extent that the majority of taxable subjects could live under the protection of a large landowner, the latter became responsible to the administration for the payment of that taxation, if not the actual administrator of the taxation, in what was to become a progressive confounding of public and private functions;<sup>107</sup> evidently this led to the loss of the universality of taxes and of course the centralised reference of the same which traditionally had the city as the gatherer of taxes. In this aspect as well, a schism occurred between the city and its *territorium* in something that had been essential in the classical conception.<sup>108</sup> As we have already affirmed, the city and its *territorium* were still conceived of as a unity, at least for the exercising of judicial powers and as a synonym of the bishop's diocese; in this sense, *civitas* and *territorium* may be synonyms (*LV XII*, 3, 20), or clearly both elements of a unity (*LV XII*, 1, 2: ... *nec de civitate vel de territorio annonam*), with regard to the manifestation of ancient realities, in force from a legal and administrative perspective. However, on some occasions this term seems to be more assimilated to a geographical reality, a physical space (*LV IX*, 2, 8; *XII*, 3, 2; 3, 21), thus acquiring a more neutral character, generally understood as appellative without legal allusions, without implying an indissoluble unity with the city of reference; this would be the case, for example, of the references *terra terrantonensi*, *terra barbotano*, *terra hildardensi*... in Vincent's donation document to the monastery of Asán (Huesca) dated in 551.<sup>109</sup>

This should be associated with the fact that the Goth army was that of the large land owners; already in the Low Empire the largest part of the State budget, demanding a ruthless fiscal infrastructure, was the army. The gradual privatisation of military functions, the substitution of a regular army with a whole array of private armies, did away with one of the basic reasons for the existence of that centralised power, which, as we have noted, was articulated around urban structures. Military power was now in the hands of the large landowners and the defence of Visigothic Spain depended on the loyalty of these, as manifested in Visigothic laws, especially the military laws of Wamba (*LV IX*, 2, 8) and Ervigio (*LV IX*, 2, 9). From their rural strongholds, the

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<sup>105</sup> In Carolingian Gaul rural churches proliferated in such a way that at the beginning of 8th. century the demolition of a part of them was decreed. Cf. A.A. Settia, "Pievi e capelle nella dinamica del popolamento rurale", in *Cristianizzazione*, Spoleto 1982, 445-446.

<sup>106</sup> J.N. Hillgarth, "Popular religion in Visigothic Spain", in E. James (ed.), *Visigothic Spain*, 45, considers that the abundance of Visigothic churches in the Northern Plateau, generally in non-urban surroundings, must be linked to this phenomenon of "private churches". A systematic study of these churches in C. Godoy, *Arqueología y liturgia. Iglesias hispánicas (siglos IV al VIII)*, Barcelona 1995, 149-337.

<sup>107</sup> A. Barbero, M. Vigil, "Algunos aspectos", 130. Más recientemente J. Durliat, "Les Nobles et l'impôt du IVe au VIe siècle", in F. Vallet, M. Kazanski (eds.), *La Noblesse Romaine et les chefs Barbares du IIIe au VIe siècle*, Condé-sur-Noireau 1995, 15-22.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. C. Sánchez Albornoz, "Ruina y extinción", 62ff., with reference to Cassiodorus, *Var.* V, 39 and to the *Epistola de Fisco Barcinonensi*. Of a general character J. Durliat, *Les finances publiques de Diocletien aux Carolingiens (284-889)*, Sigmaringen 1992, esp. 95-187 ("Les royaumes romano-germaniques").

<sup>109</sup> "La donación de Vicente al monasterio de Asán y su posterior testamento como obispo de Huesca en el siglo VI. Precisiones para la fijación del texto", *Cuadernos de Historia Jerónimo Zurita* 47-48, 1983, 59-64.

large Visigothic landowners became their own fiscal officers (it is not insignificant that the *Lex Visigothorum* do not include even one law referring to tax collection<sup>110</sup>) and had their own armies; they could therefore ignore the rest of the world.

The legal and jurisdictional extent of the powers of the large landowners was a general phenomenon of the period. These large landowners were to acquire, although the *Lex Visigothorum* is sometime remiss at recognising it, juridical power over the inhabitants of their possessions, mostly a dependent population. The phenomenon is not always documented directly and accurately, but the function of the *villicus* carrying out judicial actions on properties of the Crown could have found its counterpart in the sphere of the large private properties.<sup>111</sup> Thus, although in *Lex Visigothorum* the exclusive nature of royal law, and its application by the King's agents, were established with precision,<sup>112</sup> in practice it seems that a punitive seigniorial law applied to the masses inhabiting their dominions came into effect. The individual rights of these masses were limited by their dependence, which ignored possible original legal rights and particularised differences.<sup>113</sup> The serfs, whipped extensively by their lords (*LV IX*, 2, 9); a reference to an exemption from punishment for a lord who had caused the death of a serf when applying a just punishment (*LV VI*, 5, 8), or the difficulties of dependants in denouncing abuses by their lords (*LV V*, 7, 11 and 17) may be proof enough of the seigniorialisation of justice. Moreover, if the only norm applied in a territory is that of the *dominus* and his *actores*, it is likely that the legal norms applied would soon become private and divorced from the royal code.<sup>114</sup> The same situation was to occur in the ecclesiastical sphere, where the councils themselves were obliged to set limits on the overstepping of authority by the Bishops, as was the case of the one held in Mérida in 666, whose canon 15 recognised the capacity of the Bishop to carry out justice on the members of the *familia ecclesiae* but warning that they should set limits on their anger and avoid the extreme of amputating limbs. These same limitations were repeated in the XI Council of Toledo in 675 whose canons 6 and 7 again prohibit all mutilation and prohibit the Bishops from dictating sentence in any crime punishable by death. In any case, the role of the Bishop as judge in the sphere of his subjects and dependants is implicit in the Visigothic conciliar legislation and the same council of Mérida mentioned above established an entire grading of penalties that the Bishop could apply to his subjects as a function of their legal or social category (c. 17). This privatised jurisdiction also seems evident in the sphere of the monasteries, where apart from the existence of an individual rule dictating behaviour, in itself it implied an alternative criminal code. Official justice, set forth in *Lex Visigothorum* and applied from the city by the King's agents, *comes* or *iudes*, would therefore soon fail to cover large rural spaces, which in this aspect had also become independent of the city, and even, from the perspective of Episcopal justice, the cities themselves.

10. The great transformation was essentially concluded; the essential change in the country/city relationships in the transition from antiquity to the mediaeval world was not so much the great technical transformation of the former, which never occurred, nor the formal disappearance of the latter, but rather an alteration of the scheme of relationships and reciprocal influences that defined the former with respect to the latter. In practice, city/country unity broke down, the *territoria* became independent from the control of the city, the State functionaries acted from the city on a rural area which, despite administrative schemes, was regulated by its own mechanisms. The country acquired its own morphology and in the end the city remained as a consuming appendix unable to exist without the country, but which the country could well afford to ignore. The countryside maintained its own mechanisms of defence; it shaped itself into production units whose self sufficiency led them to do without the city market place over which they imposed,

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<sup>110</sup> Cf. L.A. García Moreno, "Estudios", 55; P.D. King, *op. cit.*, 89-91.

<sup>111</sup> P.D. King, *op. cit.*, 102 y n. 170.

<sup>112</sup> *LV II*, 1, 5 and 11. Cf. C. Petit, "Consuetudo y mos en la *Lex Visigothorum*", *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español* 54, 1984, 242-244.

<sup>113</sup> C. Petit, "Consuetudo", 250-251.

<sup>114</sup> C. Petit, "Consuetudo", 252.

where necessary, their own market criteria. Christianised, it could do without the city as a reference regarding the orientation and channelling of its religious activities and, although the Bishops did everything possible to capitalise on the devotion to Saints and relics, even in this field they may have been faced with competition from the rural churches, especially from the monasteries. Even in the application of the law or the collection of taxes, which signified the exercise of royal sovereignty, the weakness of the centralising powers permitted a practical autonomy that was definitive.

The cities did not collapse all of a sudden, on the contrary they endured in Visigothic Spain, when the kingdom's administration was still built upon its theoretical strength, as centres for tax collection and sees of law courts; of course, they were strengthened as centres of Episcopal power<sup>115</sup>, but socio-economic logic prevailed: economic power, even military force, had now moved to the countryside. The *territoria* could, definitively, ignore the fact that they had a city.

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<sup>115</sup> Although for Gaul, the reading of the essays collected in C. Lepelley (ed.), *La fine*, specially: B. Beaujard, "L'évêque dans la cité en Gaule aux Ve et VIe siècles" (127-145); J. Durliat, "Évêque et administration municipale au VIIe siècle" (273-286); S. Lebecq, "Le devenir économique de la cité dans la Gaule des Ve-IXe siècles" (287-307); E. Magnou-Nortier, "Du royaume des *civitates* au royaume des *honores. Episcopatus, comitatus, abbatia* dans le royaume franc" (311-344), can be suggestive.