

THE IMPACT OF THE ORGANIZATION OF TERRITORY IN A PROVINCIAL CAPITAL: THE COLONY OF *TARRACO* AND THE *AGER TARRACONENSIS*
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Abstract, keywords e riferimenti figure nel testo mancanti

INTRODUCTION: ANTECEDENTS AND OBJECTIVES

The ancient town of *Tarraco*, capital of the province of *Hispania Citerior*, has been the subject of various studies that have focused especially on the monumental aspects of the town (walls, forum, amphitheatre, circus). Additionally, some works of synthesis (Alföldy 1991; Dupré 2004) have recently taken a general approach to the significance of this Roman town. Nevertheless, the study of the rural area is practically non-existent, because apart from some approaches to sites like Darró (Vilanova i la Geltrú), El Vilarenc (Calafell) Els Munts (Altafulla), El Moro (Torredembarra), Centcelles (Constantí), La Pineda-Callípolis (Salou), Mas d'en Gras (Vila-seca) and La Llosa (Cambrils), practically the only advanced global study hitherto was that carried out by a team of Catalan and British researchers in the 1980s (Carreté, Keay & Millett, 1995). Later, a project to study the landscape in Baix Penedès (in the eastern part of the ancient *ager Tarraconensis*), between the years 500 BC and AD 500, was directed by J. Guitart, J.M. Palet and M. Prevosti, which resulted in one publication (Guitart, Palet & Prevosti, 2003). These studies, along with other works of synthesis (Keay, 2004; Id., 2006; Macías, 2005; López, 2006; Prevosti, 2007; Buffat, 2009; Prevosti, 2009) are practically the only contributions until now on the rural landscape of the *ager Tarraconensis* in Roman times.

Nevertheless, one particular aspect has been the subject of more specific study recently, that is, the production of amphoras related to the wine trade of *Tarraco*, mentioned by some ancient authors. Several scholars have published on this in the last few years (Miró, 1988; Revilla, 1995; Id., 2002; Id., 2007; Gebellí, 1996; Id., 1998; Id., 2007; Járrega, 1996; Id., 1998; Id., 2002; Massó, 1998; Id., 2001).

At present, an exhaustive study is being carried out on part of the *ager Tarraconensis*, specifically the zone located around the right bank of the Francolí river, included in the “*Ager Tarraconensis* Project (PAT). Study of the ancient archaeological landscape of the right bank of the Francoli river”. This project, directed by Josep Guitart and Marta Prevosti, will throw new light on the Roman landscape in this zone. The basic purpose of this project is to study the landscape in the territory of the ancient city of *Tarraco* in Antiquity (from 500 BC to AD 712).

The interest of this paper is a general approach to the Roman settlement of the whole *ager Tarraconensis*, with the purpose of understanding its evolution from the study of the patterns of settlement and the socio-economic circumstances that determined them.

THE AREA OF STUDY: THE AGER TARRACONENSIS

Although we do not know the limits of the *territorium* of *Tarraco*, without any doubt it included the present regions of the Camp de Tarragona (divided into the regions of Tarragonès, Alt Camp and Baix Camp). To the north, its limit could have been the Pont del Diable of Martorell (Baix Llobregat, province of Barcelona), the site of the *mansio* of *Fines* on the *via Augusta* (Alföldy, 1991: 50-51; Dupré, 1994: 252). On the coast, it included the bulk of the Garraf, including the present regions of the Alt and Baix Penedès and the Garraf. Towards the south, it adjoined the *territorium* of *Dertosa* in the Coll de Balaguer, near Vandellós. In the interior, although a vague limit in the mountainous zone between Valls and Montblanc has been assumed (Alföldy, 1991), it is possible that it also included the present region of the Conca de Barberà. This was, then, a great *territorium*, very appropriate for a provincial capital like *Tarraco*.

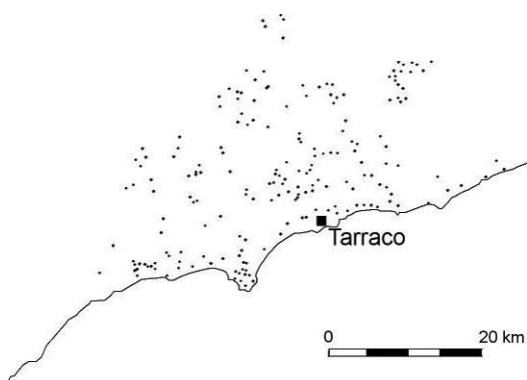
LATE REPUBLICAN TIMES AND THE ORIGIN OF THE VILLAS (SECOND-FIRST CENTURIES BC)

In the Iberian period prior to the Roman conquest, there seems to have existed a relatively small number of habitats, which we can attribute to the Iberian tribe of the Cessetans mentioned by Ptolemy. Some typical Iberian villages on high ground have been identified, like Santa Anna (Castelvell, Baix Camp), La Timba del Castellot (Riudoms, Baix Camp) and El Vilar (Valls, Alt Camp), as well as La Punta de la Sella (Salou) and Tarragona. However, few dispersed habitats are known, in contrast to the the succeeding period. Possibly, as Carreté, Keay and Millett (1995: 27) suggest, the two most important centres were the towns of El Vilar and Tarragona (possibly the old *Cesse* or *Cissis*). We would also suggest that, until now, the importance of the town of the Punta de la Sella has not been recognized, indeed it is virtually unpublished. This site, near the modern village of Salou, has been partially destroyed by a quarry, but it could have been even more important than the town of Tarragona, and we would not discard the possibility that it could be identified with *Cesse*.

The commercial routes could have been active from the fifth century BC, with a continuity into the Roman occupation. The importance of the Greek town of *Emporion* (Empúries) was great. The harbour of *Tarraco* was much more important later, in Imperial times; nevertheless, in Iberian times it could have been a harbour which had an important trade with Empúries. This trade could have continued after the Roman conquest in 218 BC, but the archaeological data shows an important increase of Italian products, especially wine transported in amphoras. In this sense, we acknowledge the great volume of Italic imports from the end of the second century BC found in the sites of the *ager Tarraconensis*. This volume of Italic imports seems to have been superior to what has been found in other nearby zones, which confers a special importance on the *ager Tarraconensis* in its relationship with Italy.

Carreté, Keay and Millett (1995) conclude that there was a strong continuity in the occupation between the Iberian period and Roman Republican times, with persistence of the density and the pattern of occupation, and no sign of an increase of rural production stimulated by the Roman presence. This situation, according to these authors, had to mean the coexistence of establishments of the Iberian tradition with the properly Roman ones.

This hypothesis must be reconsidered, since, in the Ibero-Roman or late Republican period (second to first centuries BC), a significant increase in the number of habitats throughout the Catalan coast is observed. This has been found in the north-east of Catalonia, in the region of Maresme (Olesti, 1995), as well as in the regions of Baix



1. Map of the Roman settlements of the Ager Tarraconensis

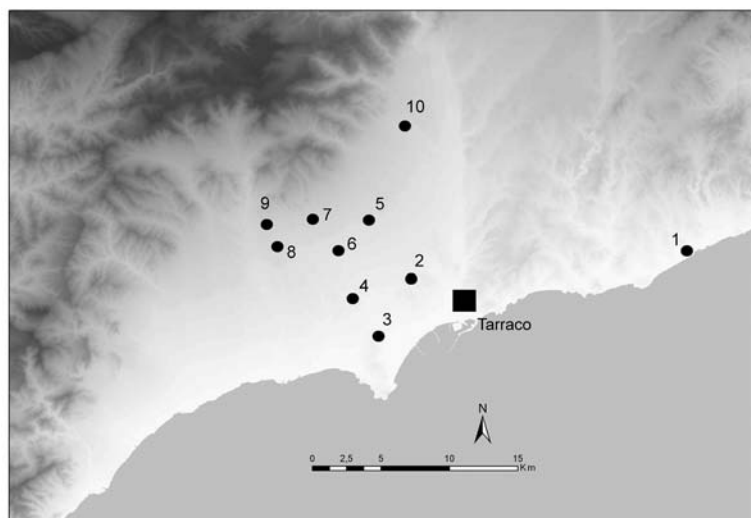
Penedès and Garraf (Revilla & Miret, 1995; Guitart, Palet & Prevosti, 2003; Prevosti, 2007). Baix Penedès and Garraf practically without doubt already belonged to the *ager Tarraconensis*. The studies that are being conducted in the zone, focused on Baix Camp and Tarragonès, also indicate in the same direction, being that, if during the late Republican period there was continuity of the Iberian habitats in the *ager Tarraconensis*, this was accompanied by a remarkable multiplication of the number of establishments.

On the other hand, although we do not know the details, we must consider that the changes experienced by the town of *Tarraco* itself could have had an important impact on the landscapes of the *ager*. It is known that, located in the harbour zone of the later Imperial city, was the Iberian town, possibly the ancient *Cesse* or *Cissis* (perhaps known also as *Tarraco*), whereas on the higher part of the hill a Roman military base was constructed, whose foundation is attributed by Pliny to the Scipios. Later, a new Roman town was created between both, perhaps by Scipio Aemilianus in the year 133 or 132 BC, after the war of Numancia, as has been suggested recently (Járrega, 2004). In any case, the town begins to provide some indications of a stable urban structure towards the year 100 BC (Díaz and Puche, 2001 and 2002; Macías and Remolà, 2004: 30-31). The status of this first Roman town remains unknown; perhaps it was a *civitas foederata*, as Cicero says, but it is not clear if this title was applied to the whole of the Roman town or only the ancient Iberian town, which perhaps was initially separated from the new Roman foundation (Járrega, 2004: 54-55).

We do not know if the centuriations in the *ager Tarraconensis* (Palet, 2003; Id., 2005; Id., 2007) were drawn up in this period, or if they are of later chronology. In any case, it seems that during the second, and a good part of the first century BC, the structure of indigenous landscapes remained the same, although the significant increase of the number of habitats could be due to the implantation of a Roman cadastre, as Arrayás suggests (2005). Nevertheless, this proliferation of late Iberian habitats in the second and first centuries BC is a general phenomenon on the Catalan coast, as can be observed in the region of Maresme (Olesti, 1995). For this reason, this expansion of the number of habitats seems to be due to other causes. Part of this could be causes of an economic kind, as is indicated by the large amount of Italic amphoras that appear in these late Iberian establishments in the *ager Tarraconensis*, in contrast to the slight presence of fine ceramics (Campanian, thin-walled pottery, red Pompeian ware). Generally they invite to us think that, between the end of the second century and the first half of the first century BC, a change of settlement took place, with a very remarkable dispersion of rural habitats.

The density of the settlement corresponds to one rural establishment per square kilometre (Carreté, Keay & Millett, 1995, p. 27 and pp. 273-275). Consequently it can be estimated that the territory of *Tarraco* could have had 3300 rural establishments in the late Republican period. The very limited areas of dispersion of materials, like the few excavated examples that are known, tend to indicate that these were very simple rural establishments, constructed in the Iberian tradition with the adoption of Roman elements such as the use of *tegulae*, *dolia* or mortar pavements. These establishments were definitively abandoned at the time of Augustus or a little later. Some of them seem to disappear already at the end of the second and in the first half of the first century BC, but the process was accelerated during the second half of this century, in Iulius Caesar's times (Guitart, Palet & Prevosti, 2003, p. 146).

On the other hand, our knowledge about the origin of villas in this area is problematic, we are unable to determine whether they originated in Roman Republican times or not. We must also consider that, from most of the villas of Imperial times, finds have been recorded of ceramics and other materials of both Italic origin (Campanian pottery A and B and, especially, amphoras) and (mainly) Iberian origin.



2: Map of the Roman kilns of the Ager Tarraconensis

Nevertheless, these materials almost always appear without context, and for this reason it is not possible to relate them to a particular type of habitat. For that reason, these materials can be explained by the existence of settlements of Iberian type during the late Republican times, preceding the Imperial villas, or perhaps in some cases they correspond to actual villas of late Republican date.

The possible existence of late Republican villas in the area of Catalonia is a very debated subject. Although the majority of scholars think that this model of habitat did not appear until the beginning of the Imperial period (Olesti, 1997), there are some significant examples (like the villa of Mas Gusó, near Empúries) where Republican-era villas have been identified. In fact, it is possible to support the existence of various villas of Roman Republican times along the Catalan coast, especially along the Roman route that was known in Imperial times as the *via Augusta* (Járrega, 2000, p. 292).

A well known example is the Roman villa of El Vilarenc (Calafell, Baix Penedès) in the eastern sector of the *ager Tarraconensis*. In this location a construction of regular plan and clearly of Italic inspiration (known as El Vilarenc 1, from the presence of a later El Vilarenc 2, of Imperial times) with luxury elements (wall paintings) has been reported (Revilla, 2000; Id., 2003). It consists of a building of rectangular plan, with a central courtyard provided with a colonnade porch of large dimensions (20 m in length by 3 m wide) (Revilla, 2003, p. 287). It also had an unusual decorative element, terracotta 'Campana' flagstones with architectonic decoration. However, it is not clear whether it corresponds to the first villa or the remodelling from the time of Augustus, because the stratigraphic context of these materials is unknown. The problem is that this construction cannot be dated with exactitude; an approximate dating is the second half of the first century BC.

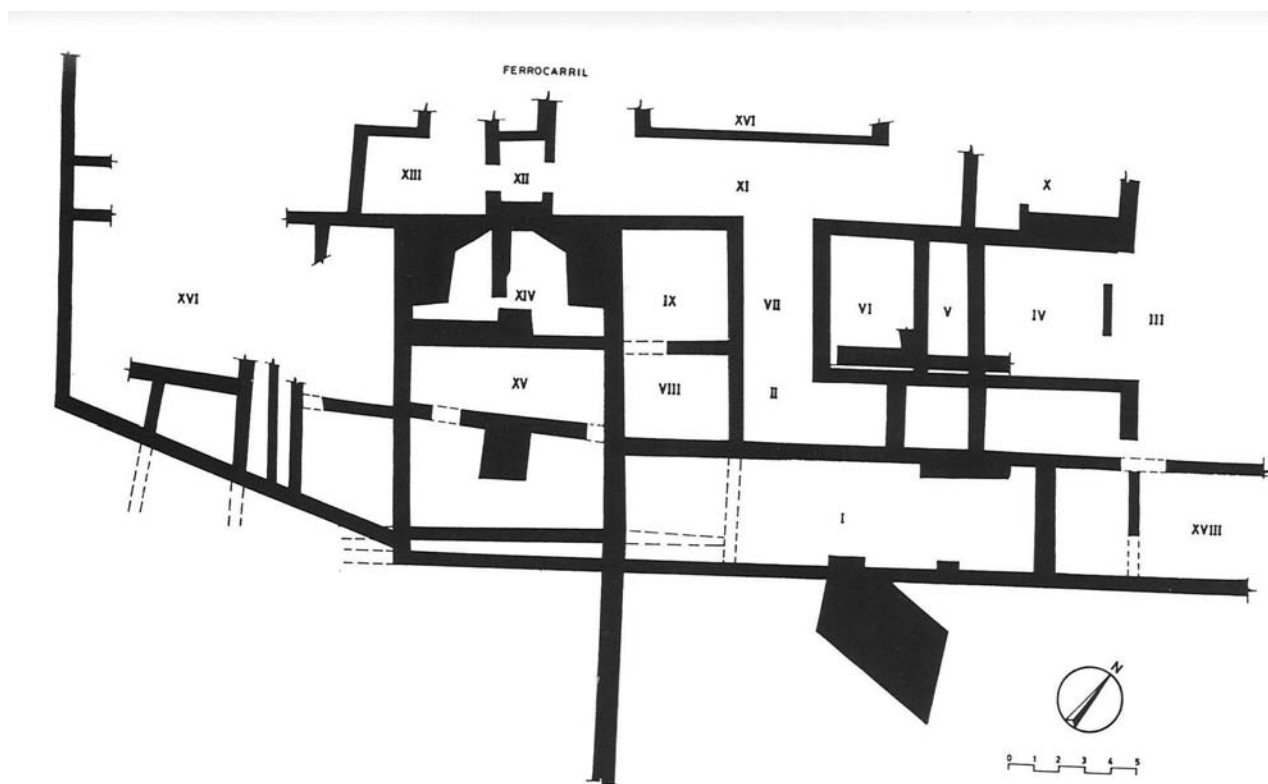
Another interesting case is that of the Roman villa of El Moro (Torredembarra, Tarragonès), of uncertain date (second half of the first century BC?). A thermal area is known, decorated with pavements of *opus signinum* with *tesselae*, which was modified with the compartmentation of some rooms. There were also some Tuscan capitals and five bases of Attic columns, corresponding to the southern façade of the building. This villa was destroyed by fire, which in spite of everything seems to have given the residents time to gather the utensils, since they were not found. The construction materials were not reused and would be covered by clays coming from the decomposition of the marines. The villa of Imperial times was constructed in the first century AD, without any architectonic relationship with the precedent villa.

At the site of La Clota (Creixell, Tarragonès), where a kiln for firing wine amphoras of Imperial times has also been found, a structure of regular plan was excavated dating from late Republican times, whose plan and construction technique (stone walls bound with mortar, pavements of *opus signinum*) can be considered clearly of Roman inspiration. This establishment dates from the end of the Republican period, without having a direct relationship with the later Imperial establishment.

In the villa of Mas d'en Gras (Vila-seca, Tarragonès) there are some hydraulic structures (canalizations and a cistern) datable to the second and first centuries BC, of evident Roman inspiration, but the characteristics of the habitat are unknown (Sánchez, 1996; Sánchez, Járrega & Olivares, 1999; Járrega & Sánchez, 2008). Some capitals and Attic bases were also found here, although without context, because they were reused in the constructions of Imperial times.

Another very interesting building is that constructed at an indeterminate time in the first century BC (perhaps in the second half) on the ruins of the Iberian town of Les Toixoneres (Calafell, Baix Penedès). It is clearly of Italic plan, with typological parallels in the Latium (Asensio, Morer & Pou, 2003, p. 274). It has been interpreted as a dependency of the nearby villa of El Vilarenc (probably, but we cannot be certain), dedicated to fishing, as is indicated by the finds of a large number of hooks and a deposit (*lacus*) that hypothetically could have been destined for the preparation of *garum* (Asensio, Morer & Pou, 2003, p. 278). This site was abandoned in the reign of Augustus or few years earlier, as is demonstrated by the finding of Campanian pottery B and amphoras of the Oberaden 74 and Dressel 2-4 forms, but without finding Italic sigillata.

Other sites present constructions of Roman Republican times, like Darró (Vilanova i la Geltrú), Castell de Cubelles (Cubelles) in the region of Garraf; Mas d'en Corts-Les Planes del Roquís (Riudoms-Reus); La Pineda-Callípolis (Vila-seca), La Llosa (Cambrils), Paret Delgada (La Selva del Camp), in the region of Baix Camp; and Els Plans d'en Jori (Montblanc) in the region of Conca de Barberà. They are in very poor state, but are of great value as evidence for the rural settlement in the *ager Tarraconensis* in late Republican times.

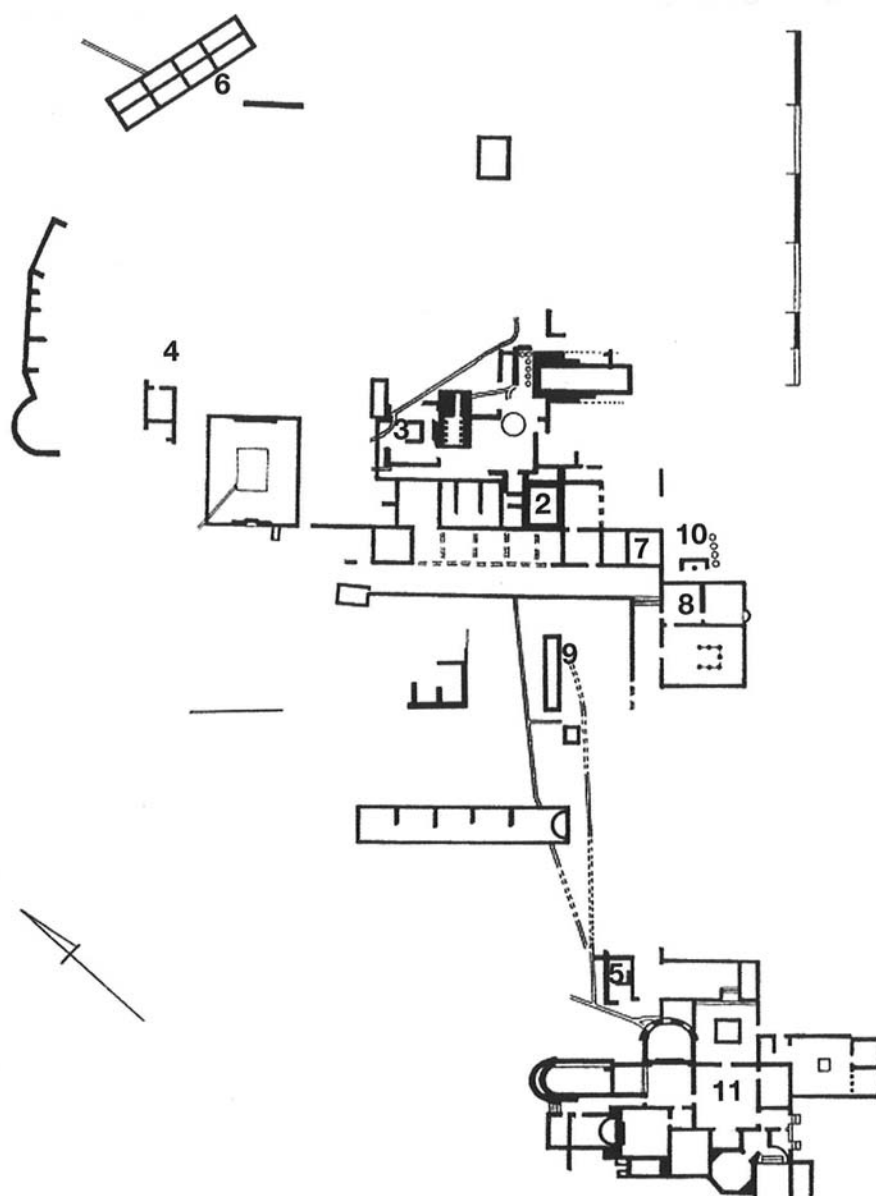


3. Villa of Adarró (Vilanova i la Geltrú, Garraf). Source: A. López, F.X. Fierro

Even less can be said about the Roman Republican phases of villas like Els Antigons (Reus), La Pineda-Callípolis (Salou) or La Llosa (Cambrils) where, as we have said, the late Republican period is attested only by the presence of materials of this time, without association with architectonic structures. Thus, we cannot know if they correspond to habitats of Iberian type that precede the villas of the Imperial Roman period, or if, on the contrary, in some cases they are villas that originated in late Republican times.

As we have seen, the villa of El Moro was destroyed by fire at an unknown moment (but probably towards the end of the first century BC), although there was time for its evacuation, evidenced by the lack of finds of significant material *in situ*. This destruction by fire could very well be accidental, but it could have some relationship with the warlike episodes related to the civil war between Caesar and Pompeius. It is possible to suppose that there could be some relationship with the well-documented abandonments of late Republican habitats (possibly *villae*) in the region of the Eastern Vallès (near Barcelona), where the establishments of Can Tacó (Montornès), Can Martí (Samalús) and Can Massot (Montmeló), all clearly of Italic inspiration, were also abandoned by the middle or second half of the first century BC (Járrega, 2000).

Perhaps in this context, it is also possible to consider the relationship that the Caesarian policy could have had with the structural changes occurring in the *ager Tarraconensis*. It is well known that Julius Caesar carried out an ambitious plan for the creation of colonies during the last months of his life (Járrega, 2007, pp. 65-68), that were later developed by the Emperor Augustus. On the other hand, it can be considered almost certain that it was Julius Caesar himself who promoted the town of *Tarraco* to the category of *colonia*, whatever was its previous legal category (Ruíz de Arbulo, 2002). Therefore, this fact could have had an impact on the arrangement of the *ager Tarraconensis*. It is very probable that the centuriation known in this zone corresponds to the Caesarian era, but is more probably Augustan (Palet, 2003; Id., 2005; Id., 2007). On the other hand, it is not impossible that the first Republican villas to which we have referred above (Vilarenc 1 and El Moro) were founded in the time of Caesar. It is also possible that viticulture began to experience important growth in this period. However, the lack of concrete datings of these deposits makes the confirmation of these hypotheses difficult. The existence of previous Iberian habitats is very probable, considering that some ceramics found in Mas d'en Gras and

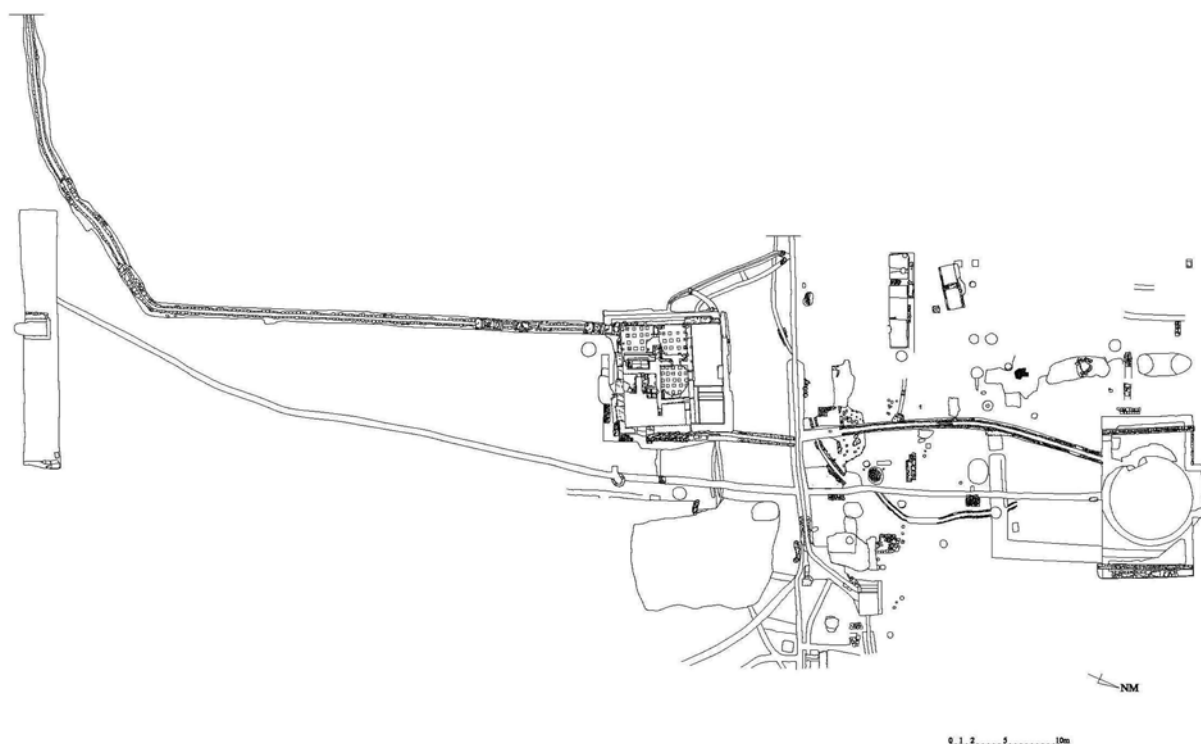


4. Villa of Els Munts (Altafulla, Tarragonès). Source: M. Berges. P. Otiña

Els Antigons (both later Imperial villas) can go back without problems to the second century BC, by which we do not know if the first *villae* are of the reign of Caesar or earlier. On the other hand, the evident diminution of the Iberian habitats towards the second half of the first century BC could also be related to the creation of the *colonia* of *Tarraco* and to the structural changes that it might have experienced. Perhaps we can attribute part of the centuriation to this time, as well as the appearance of the first villas. These had an ephemeral life for reasons that we do not know, and we cannot discard the possibility that they appeared sometime earlier.

THE EARLY EMPIRE. STUDY OF THE RURAL SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND THE VILLAS. HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION.

Although a good number of archaeological deposits of Roman times are known, the majority have only been identified from accidental finds or superficial prospections, and few have been the subject of excavation. Among them, we can mention those of Darró (Vilanova i la Geltrú), El Vilarenc (Calafell), Els Munts (Altafulla), La Pineda-Callípolis and Mas d'en Gras (Vila-seca), La Llosa (Cambrils), all of



5. *Villa of Mas d'en Gras (Vila-seca, Tarragonès)*. Source: E. Sánchez, R. Járrega, D. Olivares

which have been systematically excavated. On the other hand, some rescue excavations have been carried out in other deposits, like the villa of Repsol (La Pobla de Mafumet), Els Hospitals (El Morell) or Les Planes del Roquís (Riudoms). In these cases, the publications are irregular and not always very rigorous, with important differences between them.

In many cases it has only been possible to record the presence, more or less significant, of materials on the surface; in other cases, some remains of architectonic structures *in situ* have been documented, for instance, in the deposits of Mas dels Frares and Mas d'en Bosch (Constantí), Molins Nous (Riudoms), El Cogoll (Vila-llonga del Camp) or El Burguet (Alcover).

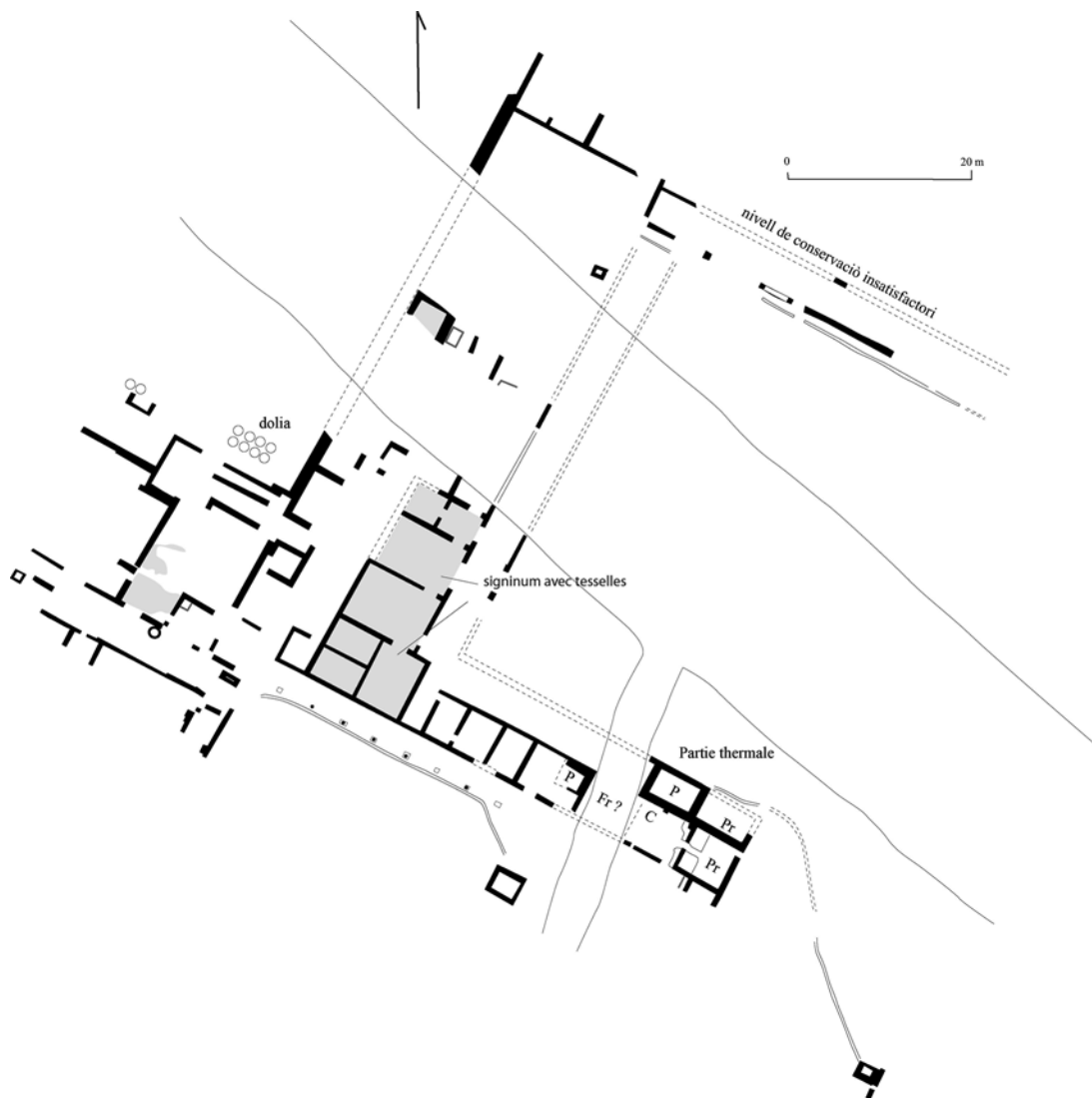
The archaeological data allows us to determine that the system of implantation of the Roman villa was consolidated in the *ager Tarraconensis* from the time of Augustus, and especially during the Julian-Claudian and Flavian periods (first century AD).

DYNAMICS OF THE VILLA IN THE AGER TARRACONENSIS

The concept of “villa” is a widely debated subject, not only for what we understand today by villa, but especially for what this concept meant for the Romans. In any case, we can limit the classification of villas to establishments that present certain characteristics of a *villa urbana*, like luxurious elements; wall paintings, architectonic decoration in marble, statues and mosaics.

The agricultural character of most of the establishments is attested by the presence of *dolia*. On the other hand, in some establishments a level of undeniable luxury can be observed, as is indicated by the presence of mosaics (Paret Delgada), sculptural elements (Els Antigons, Mas d'en Toda, Vilar de la Font de l'Albelló) and architectonic elements (like the *balnea* of Mas d'en Gras or Mas dels Frares).

Concerning the spatial distribution of the settlements, between Constantí and Reus there is an especially dense area, with distances in some cases of only 250 m (Mas dels Frares and Sant Llorenç). Another zone of concentration is located more to the north, between La Selva and Vilallonga del Camp, where there was a group of villas along the stream known as Riera de La Selva. To the south, another zone of concentration is detected, along the *via Augusta* and the line of the coast. The majority are located a short distance from the route, the reason for this must have a relationship with the development of these establishments.



6. Villa of La Pineda, Callípolis (Salou, Tarragonès). Source: J.M. Macías

There is an absence of Roman establishments in a wide zone located between Cambrils, Vinyols i els Arcs and Riudoms, and to the north of Constantí to La Selva. This could be due to several factors, but it seems that it is a real absence, as is reflected in the small number of villages in these areas in medieval times and even now.

It is surprising to find only a small number of wealthy villas on the coast, with the exception of Els Munts of Altafulla, La Pineda-Callípolis (Vila-seca) and La Llosa (Cambrils). However, in the interior there were some villas with luxurious elements (sculpture, marbles); El Vilar de la Font de l'Albelló (La Selva del Camp), Mas d'en Toda (Riudoms), Els Antigons (Reus), Mas dels Canonges (Tarragona) and perhaps also Villa Ceres (Tarragona).

Considering apart the precedents mentioned above from late Republican times, it can be said that the implantation of the model of agricultural exploitation based on the villa was developed in the time of Augustus, approximately towards the change of Era. A remarkable phenomenon is the lack of a clear continuity between the few examples of late Republican villas that we have mentioned above, and the new establishments of Imperial times. In El Moro (Torredembarra), in La Clota (Creixell) and Mas d'en Gras (Vila-seca), as well as in Mas d'en Corts-Les Planes del Roquís (Riudoms-Reus), the buildings of Republican times were left and were replaced by others of new plan in Imperial times. We do not know if this could imply some change of ownership or, on the contrary, indicates an important capacity of renovation on the part of the previous proprietors.

Another different case is that of the villa of El Vilarenc 1, where the late Republican building was replaced by another, dated to the beginning of the reign of Augustus (around the years 20–10 BC), which maintains the basic structure of the previous building, although with important functional remodellings, like the establishment of a small baths facility (Revilla 2003, pp. 288–292). The nucleus denominated El Vilarenc 2, nearby, although it is documented by old and poorly reported excavations, corresponds to a baths and is a probably more modern building, because it seems that El Vilarenc 1 did not survive much in time after the age of Augustus, whereas El Vilarenc 2 must have been of Imperial times.

Generally, the well known evidence indicates that an important diminution of habitats took place in Augustan times compared with the preceding period. This is probably to be explained as the result of a process of concentration of the property; thus, in the region of Baix Penedès (in the eastern sector of the *territorium* of *Tarraco*), whereas establishments of late Republican times constituted 60 per cent of the total of those studied, those datable to the time of Augustus and the first century AD were just 24 per cent (Guitart, Palet & Prevosti, 2003, p. 146).

On the other hand, we must consider the changes that occurred in the urban nucleus of *Tarraco* during the Augustan period. It is well known that this city was the base chosen by Augustus to direct his wars against the Cantabrians and Asturians in the years 26–25 BC, with the personal presence of the emperor. Although it seems probable that the rank and title of the *Colonia Iulia Urbs Triumphalis Tarraco* was conceded by Caesar (although perhaps developed during the Second Triumvirate), probably the reign of Augustus was the period of important development of the provincial capital, although there is no archaeological data for this time. However, it seems that the Roman theatre was built in the time of Augustus or, in any case, in Julian-Claudian times (Pensabene, 1994, pp. 313–315).

We must consider, within the hypotheses referring to the implantation of one or several centuriations in the *ager Tarraconensis*, that the presence in the plots III and IV of the centuries formed by parcels of 20 by 15 *actus*, probably dates to the Augustan era. This is because the module of 15 *actus* corresponds to the centuriations of this time, as is found in other cases known in the Latium and Campania in Italy, as well as in the *territoria* of *Barcino* (Barcelona) and *Caesaraugusta* (Zaragoza) in Spain (Guitart, Palet & Prevosti, 2003, p. 150).

In other cases, we can only date, in an unspecific way, the construction of the villas to the first century AD; for example, the villa of El Moro (in its Imperial phase) and that of La Pineda-Callípolis. There is also the initial phase of the villa of Els Munts at Altafulla. In the second century a luxurious maritime villa was built there, but in the first century the site was occupied by a much more modest structure associated with productive activities, as is indicated by finds of certain deposits for liquids, a press and some *dolia*. Greater precision seems to be offered by the findings from the villa of Mas d'en Gras, since, although the archaeological elements of this phase are very scarce, everything points to the villa of Imperial times having been built towards the middle or the second half of the first century, probably in the reign of Nero or Vespasian.

In spite of the shortage of archaeological evidence, the general image of the rural establishments in the first century AD (even those that we can consider to be villas) is of a general modesty of construction, clearly associated with a quite important productive activity, as is indicated by the presence of *lacus*, *dolia* and presses. Unfortunately in many cases we cannot date these, because most are accidental finds, without archaeological excavations having been carried out. Nevertheless, it seems that this is the general aspect of the villas of the *Tarraco* region during the first century AD, probably associated with large-scale viticulture, as we shall see later.

Returning again to the urban nucleus of *Tarraco*, the Julian-Claudian times were without doubt a period of great development. This is indicated by the construction, in the reign of Tiberius, of the temple of Augustus, which is mentioned in ancient sources. Although its location is debated, it seems that it was placed in the highest part of the city (Macías *et alii*, 2007). On the other hand, in the *forum*, which dates from Republican times (as is indicated by the remains of the Capitol of this time, located recently; see Ruíz de Arbulo, Vivó & Mar, 2006) there was an important remodelling, with the construction of a basilica (Mar, Ruíz de Arbulo, 1987) which, judging by the sculptural programme that decorates it, seems to date from the reign of Caligula or Claudius (Koppel, 1986). In the higher quarter of the town were found some structures of unknown purpose (but probably of governmental function) which

lay buried under the complex of public buildings of Flavian times. These were supposed to have been Augustan buildings (Dupré & Subías, 1993), but it seems more possible that they were built in the time of Caligula (Piñol, 2000). The epigraphy and the official sculpture in the city allows us to reaffirm the importance of this period.

Anyway, as is well known, the greatest height of the fortunes of the city of *Tarraco* seems to be the Flavian period, because at that time an ambitious project was carried out that affected all the upper part of the city, with the construction of a terraced compound. At its highest level was a public space, probably surrounding the temple of Augustus (built previously, in the time of Tiberius, as indicated above). On the intermediate terrace (destined to be the *Concilium Provinciae Hispaniae Citerioris*) was located the widest *forum* in the whole of the Roman Empire (TED'A 1989), and finally, in its lower part (and bordering the inhabited area of the city) was a monumental *circus*. These constructions gather Hellenistic schemes and they could also have been inspired by the *templum Pacis* built by Vespasian in Rome. The *Tarraco* complex also seems to have been initiated at the time of Vespasian, with the *circus*, the latest element, being of the reign of Domitian. However, the beginning of the project could perhaps have been planned before, in the Julian-Claudian era. Although we do not have any written sources about it, there is no doubt that this ambitious architectonic programme is the fruit of an imperial initiative.

In the *territorium*, the important constructional dynamics of the city must have been reflected in the rapid proliferation of villas. Although many existed at the time of Augustus, everything seems to indicate that they became more general throughout the Julian-Claudian period and in the Flavian period, as perhaps the findings of the villa of Mas d'en Gras seem to suggest.

The Flavian period also corresponds with the development of luxurious elements in the villas, like the generalization of baths. Although they appear in Republican times (such as at El Moro) or the Augustan period (El Vilarenc 1), baths seem to become general in the villas starting from the end of the first century. An example is the baths in the villa of Mas d'en Gras, which may date (approximately) from this time. Indeed, these baths have the original feature of taking advantage in their construction of the existence of a cistern corresponding to the previous phase of the villa.

Although reliable dates are not known (due to the lack of archaeological excavations), possibly in the second half of the first century AD the building known as El Vilarenc 1 was completely abandoned. The *villa* denominated El Vilarenc 2 was constructed, close to El Vilarenc 1. It seems there was a shift in position of the same residence, although it is also possible that there were two different ones. El Vilarenc 2 was a more luxurious villa than El Vilarenc 1, provided with *balnea* of a quite elaborate plan (known only from excavations conducted in the year 1883, without recording of stratigraphy). Three great cisterns (discovered in 1967), supplied the villa with water, but apparently not the baths, because the cisterns were at an inferior level (Revilla, 2003, p. 286 and pp. 294-296). Next to the *balnea*, the presence of a *pars rustica* is suspected, with the possible plinth of a press and the finding, in 1883, of some *dolia* that could have comprised part of a warehouse (Revilla, 2003, p. 294).

THE AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY AND THE VILLAS

The written and archaeological sources allow us to examine the economic base that was the motor of the activity of the rural establishments in the *ager Tarraconensis*. The best data is that for the production and commercialization of wine. Nevertheless, other forms of agriculture existed without a doubt, although they are not mentioned in the sources. To explore this, as well as to assess the importance of the cattle ranch, analyses of carbon, and plant and animal materials, among others, will be of great interest.

Grape growing must have been very important in the first century, because an important wine production is documented. The wine of *Tarraco* is mentioned by different authors from the first and second centuries (Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* XIV, 71; Martial, *Epigrammae* I, 26.9; VII, 53.6; XIII, 118; Silius Italicus, *Punica* III, 369370; XV, 177, and Publius Annius Florus, *P. Anni Flori orator Vergilius ac poeta*).

From the archaeological point of view, we know of several deposits of liquids (*lacus*) that could have been used for wine production, but perhaps also for other necessities: Mas d'en Bosch (Constantí), El Velòdrom (Montroig), Camí de la Pedra Estela-Pòrpores (Reus), La Burguera (Salou), Barranc de Sales (La Selva del Camp); Mas d'en Bertran (La Selva del Camp); Paret Delgada (La Selva del Camp); El Vilar de la Font de

l'Albelló (La Selva del Camp) and El Vilar de la Quadra del Paborde (La Selva del Camp). Is it true that some of them could have been cisterns, but it is difficult to determine. All of them lack dating elements.

There is a possible precedent for this production in late Republican times: amphoras of Dressel 1 form (some with Iberian seals) have been found in the region of the Alt Camp, in the zone of Fontscaldes and Valls (Carreté, Keay and Millett, 1995: 80 82, 160, 165, 257 258 and 277; Adserias and Ramón, 2008) in the interior of the *territorium*. There is no certainty about the production of these amphoras in the region, although their abundance and concentration in the same area make it probable. We do not know either the scale of the trade in the wine packaged in these amphoras. Logically we can suppose that they went towards the port of *Tarraco* for export, although we need further archaeological data that would allow us to study this question. The possible production of the Dressel 1 form in the factories of the eastern area of the *ager Tarraconensis* (Darró, El Vilarenc and Tomoví) is not clear either, although this possibility has been suggested (Revilla 1994, p. 116).

There is little archaeological evidence for the production of amphoras for wine in the *ager Tarraconensis* in the reign of Augustus and it is only indicated by the presence of the Oberaden 74 form (typical of Augustan times) in the centre of production of La Canaleta (Vila-seca, Tarragonès), associated with the seals PHILODAMUS and SEX.DOMITI. The latter is also documented in the factory of L'Aumedina (Tivissa), near the Ebro river, not far from Tortosa. The reason for this duplication raises an interesting question for us, because we do not know if this Sextus Domitius was the possessor of a *fundus* where the wine was cultivated (in which case, he would have had several properties in this region), the tenant or manager in charge of the ceramic factories, or the retailer of the wine. In addition, it seems to be that, as in other cases, he could be a foreign personage who did not reside in the region (Pena, 1998). If he were the *possessor*, it could indicate that, during the turbulent times of the Second Triumvirate, some personages took control of the property of ample lots of land outside Italy, although probably this situation did not last for a very long time (Járrega, 2009).

In the eastern area of the *ager Tarraconensis*, in the centres of Darró, Tomoví and El Vilarenc, there was also production of amphoras of Pascual 1 form. This may indicate that possibly the production of amphoras in this area began previously, in the Augustan era.

The supposed production of the Pascual 1 form in the *ager Tarraconensis*, corresponding to the Augustan and Tiberian periods, is not supported, in our opinion. Probably, the amphoras of the forms documented here come from other centres (especially from Laietania, in the region near Barcelona), as the study of their physical characteristics and their seals indicates. The production of amphoras for wine probably did not began in the central zone of the *ager Tarraconensis* until (at least) the end of the Augustan era or in the Tiberian era. This is indicated by the abundance of the factories (especially in the region of the Baix Camp) where amphoras of the Dressel 2-4 form and, in smaller quantities, Dressel 7-11 were made.

The most represented form is the Dressel 2-4. In the central zone of the *ager Tarraconensis*, its production appears at the end of the reign of Augustus or in the reign of Tiberius; its circulation is especially well attested from the reign of Tiberius until that of Nero. Although the written sources that mention the wine of *Tarraco* are mainly of Flavian times, from the archaeological point of view there does not exist any reliable evidence for this time. Nevertheless, there must be some continuity, because a later production is documented into the third century.

The finding of large amounts of waste pottery materials in deposits at Mas de Gomandí (Riudoms) and Mas d'Antoni Corts-les Planes del Roquís (Riudoms-Reus) attest the existence of kilns for the production of amphoras (Dressel 2-4 and, in few amounts, 7-11 forms), apparently in significant volume.

We know some actual centres of production. In the eastern zone of the *ager* (actually in the regions of Garraf and Baix Penedès), there are the kilns of Darró (Vilanova i la Geltrú), El Vilarenc (Calafell) and Tomoví (Albinyana-Banyeres-Santa Oliva). Some of those, as we have previously said, began production earlier, in Augustan times. In the central area (actually the regions of Tarragonès, Alt Camp and Baix Camp), we know the centres of La Clota (Creixell, Tarragonès), Vila-sec (Alcover, Alt Camp), and a special concentration in the region of Baix Camp: La Buada, El Brugar and Els Antigons (Reus), Mas d'en Corts-Les Planes del Roquís (Riudoms-Reus) and Mas de Gomandí (Riudoms).

Most of this production did not have pottery stamps, with few exceptions (GALLIC, SILVAN...), which differentiates these amphoras from those of the earlier Augustan era well attested in La Canaleta

and the production centres of the *ager Dertosanus*, in the area of the Ebro river. It is difficult to understand the diffusion of the amphoras of the *ager Tarraconensis*, and hence, of the wine of *Tarraco*, which, it appears from ancient texts, was exported to Rome. This diffusion was initially oriented to the south of *Gallia* (Oberaden 74 form), but from time of Tiberius or Claudius it seems to have been carried to Rome, and also towards the south (Cartagena and Carthage).

There is a problem of interpretation about the ownership of the product and its commercialization: did the possessor of the *fundus* market the wine, or was the business conducted by *figlinae*, or was it even rented to them by the system of *locatio* or *conductio*? It is very difficult to answer these questions now, because we have little evidence about the stamps, and we know very few names of the proprietors of the villas.

We also know that the kilns produced not only amphoras, but also common pottery, *dolia* and construction material (*lateres*, antefixes...). The production of *dolia* also informs us about the agricultural activity, because we can relate it to the storage of wine, oil or cereals. Which product, unfortunately, we cannot determine due to lack of analysis. The *dolia* had a very variable capacity, from the warehouse with eight *dolia* and two jars reported in La Pineda-Callípolis (Vila-seca), to the almost 100 *dolia* of La Burguera (Salou).

Since the *ager Tarraconensis* had a long coastline, we can suppose an important exploitation of marine resources. This is supported by the production of Dressel 7-11 amphoras (Els Antigons, La Buada, Mas de Gomandí), a form traditionally associated with the salt fish production. There have been no tests on the content of those found in this zone, however. There is the problem of the distance to the coast from the known places of manufacture of the amphoras (especially in Tivissa, more to the south and far to the interior, where the production of this type of amphoras has been too documented). Indeed, it seems probable that the Dressel 7-11 amphoras could have transported wine or any other products, fruits, for example.

Without leaving the subject of the amphoras, and although the superiority of the production of the *ager Tarraconensis* is overwhelming, the presence of Baetican amphoras (especially Beltrán 2) in a significant amount of deposits indicates a certain amount of commerce with the south of *Hispania* in the area of *Tarraco* (mainly of salted fish).

There is also significant evidence of craftwork: brickworks were found at Mas d'en Corts-Les Planes del Roquís (Riudoms-Reus), Mas de Gomandí (Riudoms), La Buada (Reus), in the region of Baix Camp, and Tomoví and El Vilarenc in the region of Penedès. They produced construction materials, even antefixes. In El Velòdrom (Montroig), and in the mentioned sites of Mas d'en Corts-Les Planes del Roquís and Mas de Gomandí, finds of moulds of *terra sigillata hispanica* probably correspond to a production of minor importance. There was also production of common pottery, as we know from the sites of La Llosa (Cambrils) and Els Antigons (Reus).

Palynological studies carried out in the eastern zone of the *ager Tarraconensis* (actually the region of Baix Penedès) are of great interest for our knowledge of the vegetal landscape and agricultural activities in Roman times. Thus, in Baix Penedès the presence of olive trees has been detected, also cultivated vines, cereals, hemp and chestnut trees, as well as a less important incidence of cattle ranches, located in the interior by the presence of salt marshes on the coast (Riera, 2003, p. 310).

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE VILLA SYSTEM

The second century AD corresponds with the height of the villa system. It was the phase of enrichment of great villas like that at Els Munts (Altafulla), where the villa of the first century AD was demolished and replaced by a luxurious coastal villa, with a great *balnea* and perhaps with a *mithraeum* (Tarrats & Remolà, 2007, pp. 101-102). The *balnea*, in general, were in the angles of the buildings of the villa (La Llosa, Centelles), with *praefurnia* on the outside of the building, whereas, in the case of La Pineda-Callípolis it occupies the whole southern wing, near the sea (Macías, 2005, p. 84). Sometimes there were atypical but very functional solutions, like that at Mas d'en Gras, where the baths were installed by reusing the space of one ancient cistern (Sánchez, Járrega & Olivares, 2000; Járrega, Sánchez, 2008).

Also in the second century AD, the process of concentration of habitats continued. In this respect, the example of the eastern zone of the *territorium* of *Tarraco* (in the present region of the Baix Penedès)

is instructive. As mentioned above, 60 per cent of all the sites recorded there were late Republican, 24 per cent were Augustan and first-century AD, those of the second century represent only 16 per cent (Guitart, Palet & Prevosti, 2003, p. 146). This may correspond with an increase of the wealth of the municipal elites. This situation is reflected perfectly in the honorary epigraphy, with an increase of *flamines* in *Tarraco* detected at time of Hadrian and throughout the century, as well as the refoundation of the villa of Els Munts, turned into a sumptuous coastal villa in the days of Antoninus Pius.

Other villas provide signs of important activity during this period. A good example is the important remodelling of the villa of Darró (Vilanova i la Geltrú), in the eastern sector of the *ager Tarraconensis*, where a new and luxurious villa was constructed in the reign of Trajan (López *et alii*, 1992). In the same area, the villa of El Vilarenc 2 must also have been a site of important activity, indicated by the finding of a domestic rubbish dump with materials of the second and third centuries (Revilla, 2003, p. 296).

The epigraphy has provided us the names of some of the owners of these villas in the second century. Thus, C. Valerius Avitus, born in *Augustobriga*, was the proprietor of the villa of Els Munts and arrived in *Tarraco* to be a *duumvir*. Lucius Minicius Apronianus, proprietor of a villa located between El Morell and the river Francolí (Alföldy, 1975: n. 918, 23), held the aedile positions, from *quaestor* to *duumvir quinquennalis* and *flamen* in the time of Trajan. He dedicated statues to the *genius* of the *colonia* of *Tarraco* in that city and to Apollo in the baths of Caldes de Montbui (Barcelona). Both men were rich personages of the local aristocracy of *Tarraco*.

In the villa of Centelles (Constantí) was found the pedestal of statue with an inscription dedicated to a *sevir augustalis*, Marcus Fulvius Musaeus, by his wife (Alföldy, 1975: n. 906). Therefore, Fulvius Musaeus was probably the proprietor of this villa in the second century. The possible proprietor of the villa of Darró (Vilanova i la Geltrú) in the second century was C. Clodius Aemilianus, who dedicated to some unknown divinity a votive altar that was reused in the hermitage of Sant Gervasi, immediately adjacent to the villa (López *et alii*, 1992). This personage is also known in the epigraphy of *Tarraco* (Alföldy, 1975, n. 932).

All this indicates the importance of the elites of *Tarraco* during this period. However, we should not overestimate the role of these elites in the property of the villas, as has been suggested (Revilla, 2002; Id., 2003; Id., 2007), because most have not been excavated, and probably most of the establishments were more modest than those mentioned before.

In the urban nucleus of *Tarraco*, this situation is reflected well with the construction, probably in the time of Trajan (or perhaps Hadrian), of an amphitheatre paid for by one of the wealthy *flamines* (TED'A, 1990, pp. 130-132). It is probable that there was an increase of foreigners in *Tarraco*, as is also apparent from the epigraphy: among the *flamines* of the second century were personages coming from a number of different Hispanic towns (*Gerunda*, *Saguntum*, *Saetabis*, *Carthago Nova*, *Palma*, *Osicerda*, *Consabura*, *Ercavica*, *Segobriga*, *Segontia*, *Intercatia*, *Flavia Augusta*, *Aquae Flaviae*; see Alföldy, 1975). One example is the Caius Valerius Avitus mentioned above, who came from *Augustobriga* (Muro de Agreda, Soria) in *Hispania*. He was transferred to *Tarraco* (where he was *duumvir*) by order of the Emperor Antoninus Pius, and was the proprietor of the coastal villa of Els Munts, which had been rebuilt previously (in the first half of the second century) by another well-off personage who is unknown to us. It also reflects a change of property (since evidently Valerius Avitus was recently arrived in *Tarraco*), probably by means of purchase. This is a phenomenon little studied in our area (without a doubt, due to the difficulty posed by the shortage of epigraphic evidence) unlike other similar areas, for example, in Italy (Marzano, 2007).

THE CHANGES OF THE THIRD CENTURY

The reign of Septimius Severus saw the abandonment of some villas in the surroundings of *Tarraco*, including Mas dels Canonges (Tarragona) and Mas d'en Gras (Vila-seca). However, at the same time, a clear continuity is observed in other villas, like those of Els Hospitals (El Morell) or La Pineda-Callípolis (Vila-seca). There are also clear signs of wealth, as in the villa of Els Antigons (Reus), which was equipped with a rich *nymphaeum* decorated with statues (Koppel, 1993: 221, 224; Koppel, 1995: 46-47; Koppel and Rodà, 1996: 152; Chaves, 2002; Koppel, 2005). The villa of Darró also experienced an important series of remodellings around AD 220-240, with the painting of additional murals and mosaics (López and Fierro, 1990; López *et al.*, 1992). Not far from Darró, in the villa of El Castell

(Cubelles), around AD 200–210, four great cisterns related to several pipes and deposits were constructed, as well as a mosaic that could have corresponded to a *nymphaeum* (López, Caixal & Fierro, 2004).

This contrast needs some explanation, but so far we cannot determine it with certainty. The abandonments of the beginning of the century could be due to the confiscations of Septimius Severus against the local aristocracy, who had shown preference for its rival, Clodius Albinus, a conflict that we know cost the head of the provincial governor, Novius Rufus, and some senators of *Tarraco* (*Historia Augusta, Vita Severi*, 13.7). However, the continuity in other villas and the important renovations they experienced seems evidence for a process of enrichment on the part of their proprietors, which is probably the result of a concentration of property. It is possible, therefore, that the confiscations of Septimius Severus gave rise, during the government of this emperor and his successors, to a process of monopolization on the part of those members of the elite not punished by Severus, at the cost of those who had been.

On the crisis of the third century we have unequal information: the villa of Els Munts (Altafulla) was (at least, in a large part) destroyed by fire (Tarrats *et alii*, 1998; *Id.*, 1999; Tarrats & Remolà, 2007, p. 104), corresponding with the incursion of the francs towards the year 260 (probably in 264), which caused serious destruction in the urban nucleus of *Tarraco* (Járrega, 2008). However, other villas of the territory seem to have continued without problems.

LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE END OF THE VILLA SYSTEM

A diminution of habitats is observed between the Early Empire and Late Antiquity, at a rate that varies between regions. For example, in the area of the Baix Penedès, this continuity seems to be much smaller, 27 per cent of the total of documented sites (Guitart, Palet and Prevosti, 2003: 152; Prevosti, 2007: 74). We must consider that superficial prospections can miss the presence of Late Antique materials, which are usually less abundant. In any event, the diminution of the number of establishments after the third century (whether more or less considerable) is very clear; the interpretative problem is centred on determining if it must be the result of a process of concentration of property (as seems to have happened in the Early Empire) or to a depopulation process, or to a combination of both circumstances.

In this period, there are a few cases of villas of great dimensions; specifically, those of Centcelles (Constantí), Darró (Vilanova i la Geltrú) and apparently Castell de Cubelles (Guitart, Palet and Prevosti, 2003: 154). At Centcelles, a monumental domed structure was built, which has been the subject of controversy, including the suggestion (although improbable) that it was used as an imperial mausoleum (Hauschild & Arbeiter, 1993; *a contrario* Warland, 2002). The villa of Darró was the subject of an important remodelling, with the construction of a probably upper floor next to the *peristilum*, and the construction of an *oecus* with pentagonal head decorated with flagstones of *opus sectile*, as well as a vestibule decorated with columns and Corinthian capitals. Part of the *pars rustica*, that apparently was very extensive, has also been identified (López & Fierro, 1990; López *et alii*, 1992). In the villa of Castell de Cubelles, in the second half of the fourth century, a reconstruction of the cisterns took place, and an arcade was constructed to support an upper floor (López, Caixal & Fierro, 2004).

Probably it is necessary to add to these the villas of Paret Delgada (La Selva del Camp) and La Pineda-Callípolis (Salou), as well as that of Els Hospitals (Morell); these last are not buildings of great proportions, but the existence of mosaics and *balnea* in this era are indications of relative luxury. According to Macías and Menchón (2007), there seems to be a certain rich concentration of these Late Antique villas (Centcelles, Els Hospitals, Paret Delgada) along the route that goes towards the interior of the country, to *Ilerda* and *Caesaraugusta*. It is possible that it has some relationship with the importance of lines of communication and transport routes that allowed the rich villas of the interior of *Hispania* to be supplied with products that possibly arrived from sea ports connected to the road network. On the other hand, we should not forget that the villas of La Pineda-Callípolis and Darró are on the coast, which allows us to distribute the geography of the rich Late Antique villas on at least two axes, the main Roman road that goes towards the interior of the country and the marine front, that was not far to the main coastal road, the so-called *via Augusta*.

Although there is a clear diminution, there is also a significant presence of establishments that continued to be active during the Late Antique period, even at quite late dates, like the sixth and seventh centuries. This allows us to address the problem of the end of these establishments and their continuity with the settlement pattern of Early Medieval times.

Probably in this period took place the abandonment of the territorial structure based on centuriation, and the appearance of new patterns of establishment occurred in Late Antiquity (Guitart, Palet & Prevosti, 2003, p. 154). In addition to the previous establishments that continued to be occupied (without excavations we cannot know if they could still be considered *strictu sensu* villas or not at this time), it appears other new ones were created, like that located in the church of Sant Miquel de Calafell (Guitart, Palet & Prevosti, 2003, p. 153) and La Solana (Cubelles, Garraf), that were villages totally different from the villas, and probably without a single proprietor. On the other hand, a certain continuity of at least some aspects of the villa system is detected, as is indicated by the continuity of the use of the *balneum* of the villa of La Pineda-Callípolis until at least the sixth century (Macías, 2005, p. 82).

The increase of the cattle ranches has been related hypothetically with the location of these establishments and the layout of the seasonal migration routes, which can be observed at this time (Guitart, Palet & Prevosti, 2003, p. 154). These villages are very simple, consisting of groupings of cabins with significant use of perishable materials (wood). They evidently no longer have anything to do with the villas, and they recall, from a typological and functional point of view, the Iberian establishments of Roman Republican times that we have seen previously. The presence of fireplaces and silos emphasizes the agricultural and functional character of these establishments.

Palynological studies conducted at some points of the Catalan central coast allow us to document an important process of deforestation (caused by fires) in Late Antique times (Riera, 2003: 310), thus can suppose that there could have been an increase in cattle ranches. Possibly, this model can also be confirmed in the *ager Tarraconensis*.

On the other hand, it has been suggested that in Late Antiquity there was a generalized process of depopulation of the countryside of the Camp de Tarragona, so that when, in the year 1117, Count Ramon Berenguer III conquered the city of Tarragona from the Muslims, the territory was practically uninhabited. This hypothesis is possibly excessive, because the Arabic names of some actual villages (like, for example, Alforja or Almoster) allows us to suppose that there was a certain continuity of occupation.

All these elements point towards the definitive disappearance of the system of the villa, that was based, in the *ager Tarraconensis*, it seems, on the centuriation of the city of *Tarraco*. A new period was opened, during Visigothic times, of ephemeral duration, with the Islamic conquest in the eighth century and the later reconquest of the twelfth century, that would form a totally different reality.

CONCLUSIONS

Concerning the Iberian population substratum previous to the Roman conquest, few villages are known in high places on the hills, mainly El Vilar (Valls), Santa Anna (Castellvell), La Timba del Castellot (Riudoms) and, on the coastline, La Punta de la Sella (Salou) and that located in the urban site of Tarragona, probably the same *Cesse* or *Cissis* mentioned in the ancient written sources.

During the Ibero-Roman or Roman Republican period, there was a great expansion of small agricultural habitats (farms), a phenomenon common to other areas of the Catalan coast. There was, in places, a great density of settlements (one per square kilometre), as well as a large amount of imports of Italic amphora (in contrast to little Campanian pottery), which demonstrates the importance of the harbour of *Tarraco* at this time.

The implantation of a Roman town in *Tarraco* next to the Iberian nucleus, which seems to date to the last quarter of the second century BC, can be related to this era.

The moment of appearance of the first villas is at issue according to the Italic models, but we can mention the cases of El Vilarenc 1 (Calafell), El Moro (Torredembarra), La Clota (Creixell) and Mas d'en Gras (Vila-seca). It is not possible to establish their specific chronology, although is very probable that they correspond to the Caesarian period, in which case could bear relation to the implantation from the centuriation of *Tarraco*. All of them are found on the axis of the *via Herculea*, the route that led from Rome to Cadiz.

The time of Augustus is, in any case, the period in which the model of the villa was definitively implanted in the *ager Tarraconensis*. These villas are located by preference on the coastline, along the *via Augusta* and in certain zones of high agricultural potential (Constantí, Reus, Riudoms and La Selva del Camp).

Throughout the first century AD the model of the villa was consolidated. The villas of this era were always of modest character, with a clearly agricultural purpose, as is demonstrated by the finding of presses, deposits (*lacus*) and warehouses of *dolia*.

The wine of *Tarraco* was at the height of its commercial success in the first century AD, during the Julian-Claudian period, as is indicated by the diverse kilns of amphoras. Nevertheless, there are also indications of the cultivation of olives, as well as cereals.

In Flavian times, and specially during the second century, there appears a great series of villas (Els Munts, El Vilarenc, Darró, La Pineda-Callípolis, Els Antigons), and a generalization of the luxurious elements (*balnea*), which probably indicates a concentration of the population and an increase of the role of the elites of *Tarraco*, without implying the disappearance of other more modest centres.

Under Septimius Severus, the abandonment of some villas (Mas dels Canonges, Mas d'en Gras) occurred, whereas others (El Castell de Cubelles, Els Antigons, Els Hospitals, La Pineda-Callípolis) experienced an important development. These apparent contradictions seem to reflect an increase of the concentration of property, that could partly be caused by the traumatic effects of the civil war between Clodius Albinus and Septimius Severus.

The crisis of the third century had a relatively important effect on the *ager Tarraconensis*, as is shown by the destruction by the francs of the villa of Els Munts (probably in AD 264).

In Late Antiquity, the diminution of the settlements is significant, although probably not uniform. There was a process of concentration of the settlements, at the same time as the modesty or poverty of the rest of the agricultural population was accentuated, as is indicated by the luxurious appearance of the villas (Darró, Castell de Cubelles, Centcelles, La Pineda-Callípolis, Paret Delgada), which probably corresponds to the increase of the economic capacity of the elites, in contrast to the rest of the population.

At the end of Late Antiquity other types of habitat appear (like La Solana de Cubelles) that move away from the Roman model of the villa, recalling from the functional point of view the Iberian farms of the late Republican period. At the same time, the order based on the centuriations had to give way, forming the bases of the medieval landscapes.

It is a matter for debate if a generalized process of abandonment took place during the period of Muslim occupation, although the Arab place-names of some villages allow us to suppose that the population did not completely disappear.

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