

# The Archaeology of Peasantry in Roman Spain

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Edited by  
Jesús Bermejo Tirado and Ignasi Grau Mira

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Margarita Sánchez-Simón

# ***Villae* and Farms: Early Imperial Rural Settlement in the Adaja-Eresma Basin (Central Roman Spain)**

**Abstract:** The information gathered, on the one hand, from the excavations carried out at the Roman *villa* of Almenara de Adaja-Puras and the archaeological analyses of various samples of sediment, starch and charcoal and, on the other, from the surveys carried out in the surrounding area, in a sector of the interfluvium of the Rivers Adaja and Eresma of approximately fifteen km<sup>2</sup>, provide new data on the rural occupation model of this particular sector of the territory in the *civitas* of *Cauca*. The characteristics of the archaeological finds associated with the deposits demonstrate that the occupation and exploitation of these lands was well established in the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD, although it is very likely that it would have been initiated earlier, judging from the discovery at Almenara-Puras of some early structures and imported pottery, including Italic *terra sigillata*.

**Keywords:** Early Roman Empire. Rural settlement. *Cauca*. Almenara de Adaja-Puras. Archaeometric analysis. Archaeological surveys.

## **1 Introduction**

The study of the distribution and characterization of rural settlements in a very specific area of the Northern Plateau, on the interfluvium of two tributaries of the River Duero, the Adaja and the Eresma, is part of the research that, together with C. García-Merino, we have been carrying out on the Roman villa of Almenara de Adaja-Puras (also known as La Calzadilla) and its closest surroundings. The analysed territory covers an area of about 15 km<sup>2</sup> around that well-known site in the province of Valladolid, extending across the municipalities of Almenara, Puras, Bocigas, Fuente Olmedo, Aguasal, Llano de Olmedo, Villeguillo and Coca in the province of Segovia (Figure 1).

In Roman times, *Cauca* (Coca, Segovia) was the urban establishment of reference.<sup>1</sup> The territory would have included these lands between the two rivers, lands that are characterised by their sandy soils (not very fertile from an agricultural point of view) and by a gently raised relief dotted with numerous wetlands (ponds and pools) and furrowed by low flowing streams. The land around the ponds offers

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1 Blanco-García (2010).

better conditions for cultivation and pastures. That is why, since prehistoric times, various human groups have repeatedly settled on their banks.<sup>2</sup> Another noteworthy feature of this physical environment is the presence of salt. The water in some of these lagoons, the largest ones to be precise, has a high salt content. Furthermore, the drying up of the smaller ponds in summer favours the precipitation of sodium, giving rise to areas known locally as *salgueros*.<sup>3</sup>

The Rivers Adaja and Eresma define this homogeneous geographical area that we have described very briefly. Several fords (some currently spanned by bridges) indicate crossing places that endowed this territory with good communications in ancient times, especially with *Cauca*.

It is in area that we carried out our research. Our starting point was the excavation carried out on the site occupied by the Late Roman *villa* of Almenara de Adaja-Puras. It revealed that the origin of the habitat was the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD or perhaps even earlier and that it underwent a profound transformation in the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD, when it became a *villa* settlement. It was completely renovated in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD and continued to be occupied until well into the 5<sup>th</sup> c. AD.<sup>4</sup> In the *villa*'s surroundings we carried out new surveys of the known sites dated between the early Roman period and Late Antiquity.<sup>5</sup> The combined analysis of all these data has allowed us to study the features, distribution and chronology of the settlements in greater detail (completing the previous information and correcting inaccuracies or errors) and to compare them with those of Almenara. As a result, we have succeeded in identifying a model for the occupation and exploitation of the territory in the early Imperial period.

## 2 Before the *Villa*: Peasant Sites in Adaja-Eresma Basin (1<sup>st</sup> c. BC)

The occupational sequence of the site began in the Neolithic and continued throughout recent prehistory,<sup>6</sup> becoming a stable rural settlement in the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD. Transformed into a *villa*, it continued to be occupied until the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> c. AD, at which point it was abandoned and the habitat moved to the adjoining area

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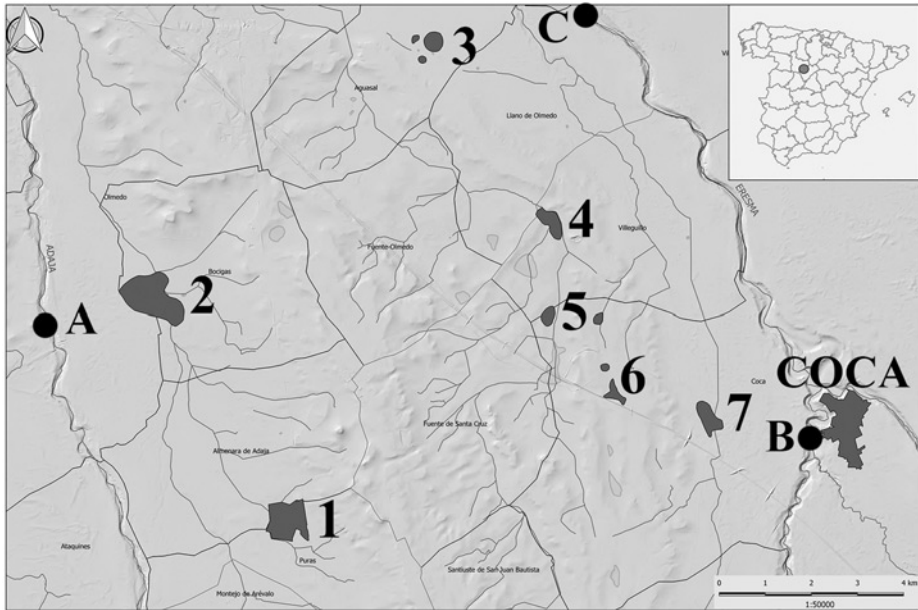
2 Quintana/Estremera (2015).

3 Calonge Cano (1995, 40–41).

4 García-Merino/Sánchez-Simón (2015); García-Merino/Sánchez-Simón (2017).

5 Between 2014 and 2018, together with J. Quintana-López, I worked on the project entitled “Study of the population and exploitation model of the agricultural landscape between the early Roman period and Late Antiquity in the southern countryside of the province of Valladolid”. The archaeological exploration tasks were carried out with the financial assistance of the Directorate General of Cultural Heritage of the Junta de Castilla y León.

6 Delibes/Herrán (2007, 101 and 194).



**Fig. 1:** Distribution of the Early Roman settlements of the Adaja-Eresma interfluvium in the study area. Sites: 1) Almenara de Adaja-Puras, 2) Las Corralizas-San Pelayo, 3) Grijota-La Dehesa-La Palomina, 4) Pozuelo-El Hoyo Meregil, 5) Bernaldos-Tornacarros, 6) Valderruedas-Bodon Grande and 7) Castrillo. Fords: A, B and C (Map: M. Sánchez-Simón y J. Quintana-López).

of Prado de La Vega-El Caballo.<sup>7</sup> Without doubt the best-known phase is the Roman period, especially the Late Roman *villa* that was completely excavated between 1998 and 2002, with interventions that led to the establishment of the *Museo de las Villas Romanas de Almenara-Puras*.<sup>8</sup> Since the inauguration of the museum, research has continued with new excavations, surveys and a series of archaeometric studies.<sup>9</sup> The joint interpretation of all these data has allowed us to point out various aspects, not only regarding the diachronic evolution of the habitat and its more accurate dating, but also how the settlement changed location during the different phases; how the different spaces were occupied; how the productive and residential areas were structured around the pools; and other issues related to the impact of the occupation on the physical environment.

The agricultural dedication of the settlement throughout its occupation is evident from the data provided by the different pollinic analyses, especially those

<sup>7</sup> García-Merino/Sánchez-Simón (2015); García-Merino/Sánchez-Simón (2017).

<sup>8</sup> Sánchez-Simón (2017).

<sup>9</sup> Different entities have collaborated in these studies, such as the Centre for Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Property of the Junta de Castilla y León, the CSIC, the University of Antioquia (Colombia), the Department of Anatomy and Radiology of the University of Valladolid and the Department of Prehistory, Ancient History and Archaeology of the University of Salamanca.

from a column collected in the so-called El Arroyuelo pond. In addition, for the Roman phase there is also complementary information from charcoal and starch samples that highlight it.

Thanks to these data, we know that there were pastures and that cereal crops became a permanent fixture from the Late Vaccaean phase (Late Iron Age), being well represented in the pond environment until the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD. In this same period, the presence of a livestock population in the vicinity of the inhabited areas is also indicated. In the landscape the species of evergreen and deciduous *Quercus* (holm oak forest, gall oak forest and oak forest) are present, along with *Pinus*, especially the *sylvestris* variety and the less commonly identified *pinaster*.<sup>10</sup> Regarding the latter, the analysis of charcoal samples from the early Imperial period demonstrates the use of cluster pine wood as fuel;<sup>11</sup> the exiguous representation of this species in the pollinic diagram can probably be explained precisely by it having been preferentially cut down for this purpose. We cannot rule out either that this variety of pine was also used as a construction material and for the manufacture of utensils and furniture.<sup>12</sup>

Obviously, cereals would not have been the only crop or the only vegetable species cultivated and/or consumed. However, the pollen analyses do not allow us to refine these data. Nevertheless, we would like to point out that the detection of grass starches (*Triticeae* and *Poaceae*, i.e. wheat and barley and possibly millet and oats) and legumes (*Fabaceae*) in vessels used in the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. phase<sup>13</sup> indicates their consumption in this settlement at least in that century. However, if we take into account the fact that *Triticeae* grains have been detected in a boat-shaped hand mill from prehistoric times, it is very plausible to consider that this was also part of the normal diet of the population during the early imperial period. The same applies to the harnessing of *Fagaceae*; starches from this family (perhaps from holm oak acorns) have been identified in prehistoric samples, as well as in those from the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD.<sup>14</sup>

Faunal studies are essential for learning more about agricultural activity.<sup>15</sup> However, we have no conclusive data except for the identification of ovicaprine and bovine bones.

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<sup>10</sup> López *et al.* (2009).

<sup>11</sup> Ruíz-Alonso (2010).

<sup>12</sup> The results of the charcoal and wood analyses from different functional and chronological contexts between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> c. AD infer the widespread use of pine, both as a fuel and for other uses (García-Merino/Sánchez-Simón (2015, 69 and 108).

<sup>13</sup> Aceituno/Lalinde (2011).

<sup>14</sup> Aceituno/Lalinde (2011).

<sup>15</sup> E. Álvarez-Fernández of the University of Salamanca is currently conducting the archaeozoological study.



### 3 The Early Imperial Phase

Although there are few elements from the occupation of Almenara in the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD, they are extremely interesting as they allow us to take the habitat back to a period that, we must remember, shows the impact of agricultural and livestock activities, especially cereal cultivation, in the pollinic diagram. It was probably a small settlement located in an area that underwent an intensive building activity in later centuries; therefore, there are only two pieces of evidence recovered *in situ*. Next to them we have a pottery assemblage found in a secondary position and spread across the excavated area. Although sparse, it influences the characterisation of the site in terms of material culture.

#### 3.1 Votive Deposit

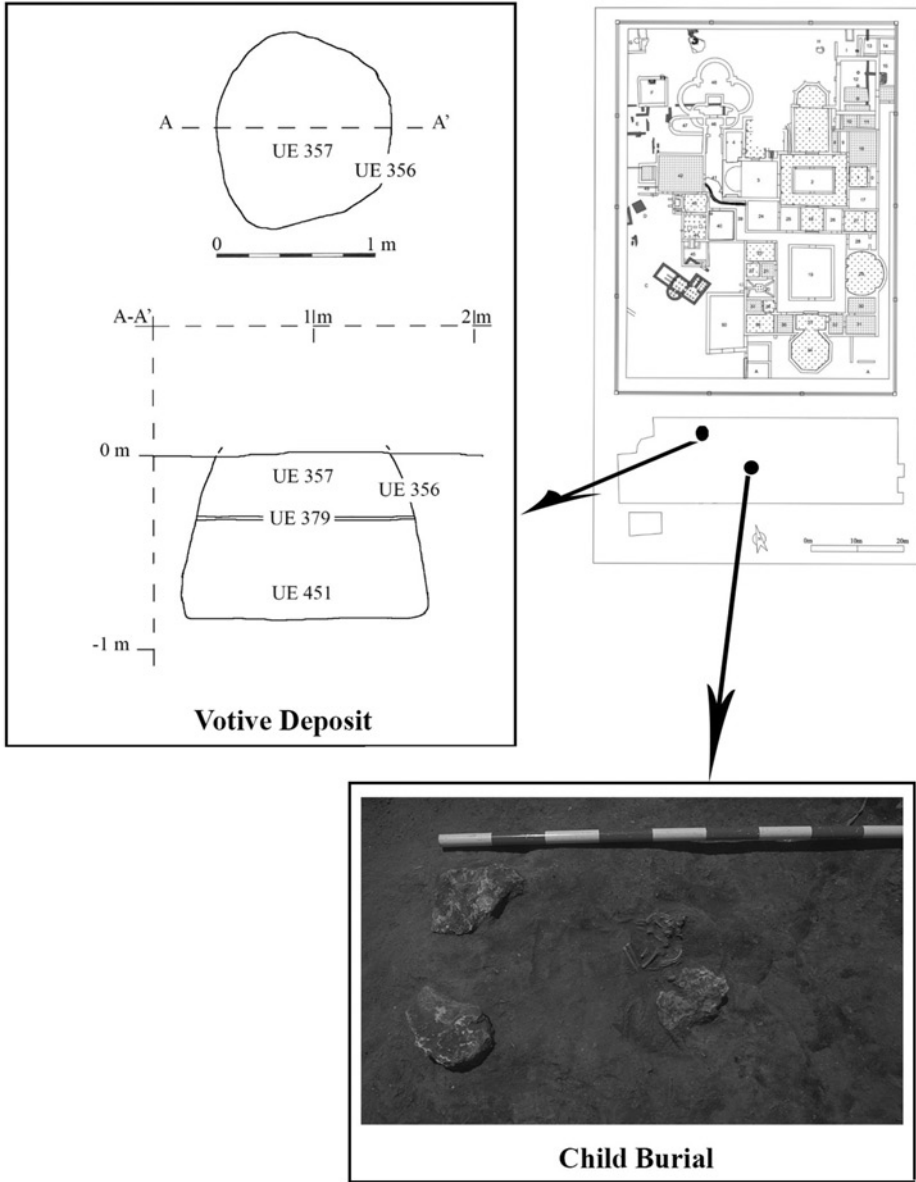
We interpret as a votive deposit the remarkable assemblage of pottery fragments found inside a negative structure with a flared profile (1.50 m in diameter at the base and less than one metre of preserved depth). The shape of the pit suggests that a silo was reused for the offering, although it may have been dug purposely for the rite (Fig. 2).

When it was excavated, two superimposed fills were detected; they were separated by a horizontal mortar surface that sealed the deepest part. The upper fill (30 cm of thick) yielded no remains, either pottery or bones; it only contained dark earth with an abundance of charcoal, as well as, to a lesser extent, fragments of limestone. However, the lower one (approximately 50 cm thick) yielded a pottery assemblage including a complete wheel-thrown common ware pot next to the selected parts of other ceramic vessels and, probably, meat offerings.<sup>16</sup>

Except for the pot used for firing, the pieces have been identified through selected fragments. From these it is inferred that the ritual involved smashing the pots, selecting certain parts of the base, wall and mouth, and their subsequent concealment. We can determine that in this specific case the following were offered: 1) the umbilical base (7 cm in diameter) of a small common ware vessel (Fig. 3, 5); 2) the base with umbo and part of the body of a large storage vessel whose outer wall was clad in clay, probably a system designed to keep the content (water) cool, as devised in relation to the purpose of the *dolia* of the “banquet room” of Pintia;<sup>17</sup> 3) the neck and umbo of an oinochoe with painted decoration (Fig. 3, 3); 4) the base and part of the body and the incurving rim of a low-foot cup (Fig. 3, 2); 5) the base and fragments

<sup>16</sup> When the pit was dug, the previous negative structures from prehistoric times were destroyed. The fact that the bottom of the pit was covered with the same soil that had previously been removed explains the finds of handmade pottery sherds in the fill, as well as different skeletal remains.

<sup>17</sup> Sanz *et al.* (2010, 604).



**Fig. 2:** Almenara de Adaja-Puras Roman villa site. Plan of the excavated remains: a votive deposit and a child burial (CAD: M. Sánchez-Simón).

of the wall and of the rim of another cup, in this case with a high foot and decorated with a painted burgundy-coloured band (Fig. 3, 1); and 6) a part of the rim of a tiny cup of Italic *terra sigillata* Form 23.2.2, 8 cm in diameter at the mouth (Fig. 3, 4). This

last piece, dated between the second and third quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD,<sup>18</sup> marks the terminus *post-quem* of the deposit formation. Finally, we have the cooking vessel with a curved profile, a short neck, an everted rim, a groove on the shoulder and a base with a small pronounced umbo reminiscent of Rauda-type pots. It is 15 cm high, 17 cm at the mouth and 7 cm at the base. It shows signs of wear and fire marks (Fig. 3, 6).

With regard to meat offerings, the set of bone remains found is not explicit enough to distinguish what could have been offered and what would have been part of some of the prehistoric pits that were destroyed during the Roman period (the soil from which was used to fill in the bottom of the reused silo). Despite being aware of the inaccuracy involved in a hypothetical attribution of some of these bone remains to ritual practice, due to the conservation status, the leg of an adult ovicaprid specimen may have been introduced, as well as the part associated with the right hemimandible of an adult bovid, which would include the cheek portion, certainly a select piece of lean meat.

The difference between the top and bottom fill of the pit shows that there was no attempt to isolate those pottery elements chosen to be buried, probably because they were part of the ware used in the preparation, consumption and offering of the food. In this respect, the pot – the only complete vessel with evident signs of use – could perhaps have played a fundamental role in the heating or cooking of some component that was especially important. The presence of drink is attested by the pieces of a jug, bowls, cups and another tiny Italic cup, a type of foreign production that would undoubtedly have been unusual in the daily life of the inhabitants of this rural settlement.

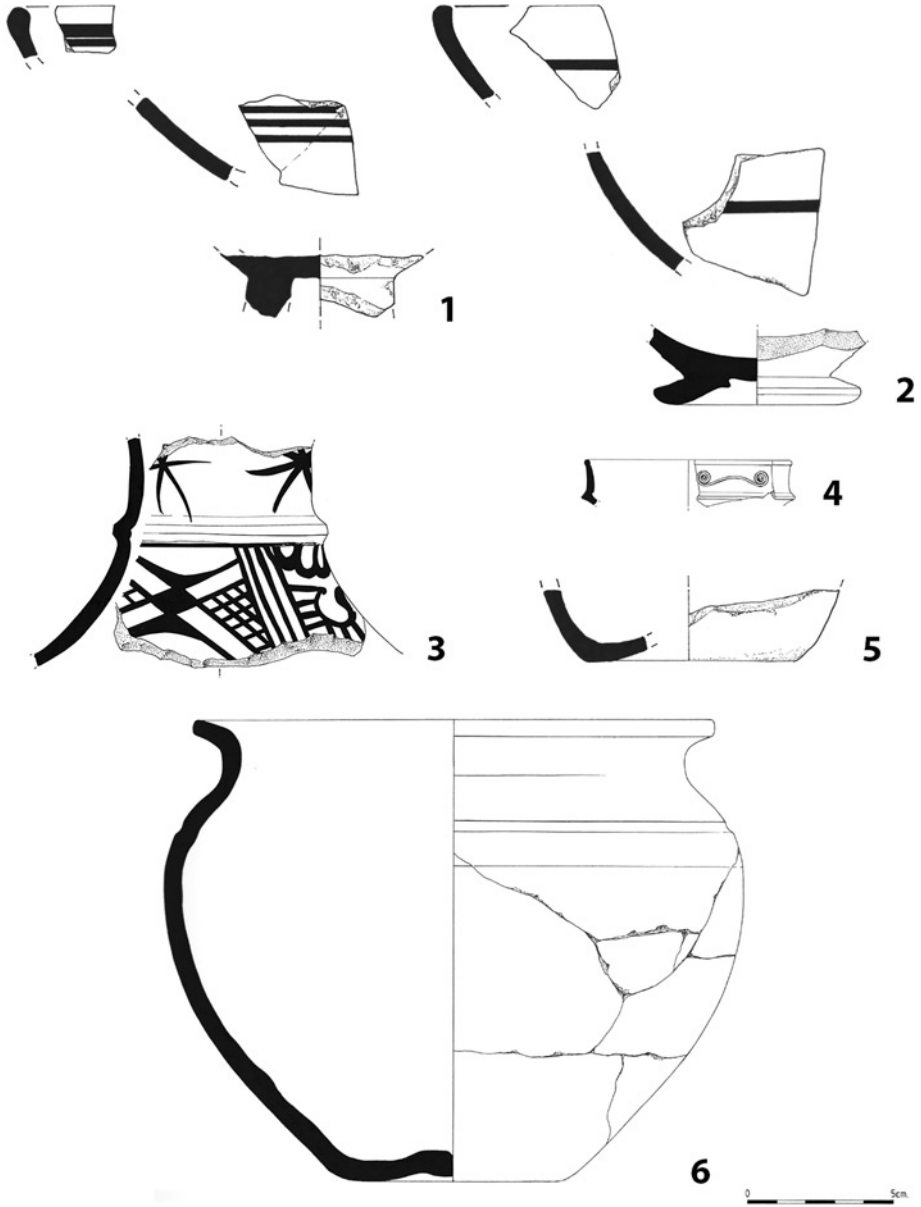
The pottery assemblage described is made up of objects designed to contain, decant and consume liquids, in addition to the pot. Regarding the latter, and although there are no data referring to its content, the fact that no associated bone remains were found and its small size leads us to believe that it probably did not contain pieces of meat with bone. The vessels that were thrown into this pit were part of the household goods characteristic of the conviviality rituals within the framework of interpersonal relationships. In fact, cups, jug, a dolium with an insulating layer and other similar vessels were found in the so-called “banquet room” of Pintia (Pardilla de Duero, Valladolid), a unique complex that provides valuable information about the context and tableware used in these events.<sup>19</sup>

Once the deposit was sealed with a mortar plate, more soil was thrown in. On this occasion it did not include pottery remains, but charcoal, perhaps from the fires lit during the event.

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<sup>18</sup> Ettliger *et al.* (1990, 92).

<sup>19</sup> Sanz *et al.* (2010, 603–607).



**Fig. 3:** Almenara de Adaja-Puras Roman villa site: pottery sherds from a votive deposit (original illustration: A. Rodríguez).

In this sector of the Central Meseta we similar practices dating from the early Roman period are not attested.<sup>20</sup> Rituals with offerings under the floors or thresholds of the peninsular Late Iron Age houses are well attested; these are pits containing vessels, utensils and bone remains of ovicaprids, suids or even equids. These sets of bones are sometimes accompanied by newborns. In certain examples, hearths have also been identified. All these vestiges are the expression of different commensality rituals, with magical-religious and social connotations that can have different propitiatory meanings related to the life cycle of the house and its inhabitants. They are closely associated with the foundation, renovation or change in use of the house, either to a specific practice in the religious festivities of the agricultural cycle that respond to various local or to regional traditions.<sup>21</sup> The characteristics of the finds we have described indicate that this propitiatory ritual must have taken place in the Julio-Claudian period, perhaps not very far into that phase, judging by the morphological features of the pot with painted decoration typical of the first decades of the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD and the absence of later forms. The presence of the Italic *terra sigillata* cup could emphasise this dating.

### 3.2 Child Burial

In the same sector of the site where the pit described above was documented, next to it, a perinatal skeleton was found placed in a foetal position. C-14 was used for dating;<sup>22</sup> the calibrated sample provides dates that range between mid to late 1<sup>st</sup>, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and even the early 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD. Given the breadth of the interval, to judge more accurately the time of the deposition it is necessary to consider that the skeleton was below an extensive deposit that contained pottery from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD. It is very likely that this burial ritual took place at an indeterminate time in the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD, a period in which the practice of burying perinatal and young children under the floors of houses is well attested in different urban centres, among them Pintia<sup>23</sup> (Fig. 2).

**20** At Pintia, a set of sacrificial deposits in a domestic context of a very different nature to those of the Almenara pit is attested for dates around the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD. These are burials of whole animals (newborn piglets, sheep and young dogs and cats) or parts of them (Alberto/Velasco 2003, 126).

**21** Grau Mira *et al.* (2015, 80–82) and Lorrío *et al.* (2014, 230–233).

**22** The C-14 analysis was performed on a fragment of the right femur in the Poznam laboratory. The dating provided was: Poz-63494 x 1880 x 30 BP (2.6% N, 9.5% C, 0.3% coll), which calibrated offers the following probability intervals: at 68.2% probability: AD 74 (59.3%), A.D. 140; AD 159 (3.0%) AD 166; AD 196 (5.9%) AD 208. At 95.4% chance: AD 66 (95.4%) AD 222. We thank J. Velasco-Vázquez and G. Delibes for providing us with this data.

**23** Sanz *et al.* (2003, 147).

### 3.3 Pottery Sherds from Late Vaccaean Productions

There is a set of twenty-nine sherds of the fine orange variety of wheel-thrown ware that corresponds to the Late Vaccaean production, understood as that which for typological and ornamental reasons can be framed between the post-Sertorian phase and the first decades of the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD.<sup>24</sup> All were found in secondary positions, as part of contexts associated with the subsequent occupation. These are pieces made with well decanted clays that give rise to hard, consistent pink, beige or orange pastes. They have painted decoration, mostly in black or dark brown, although some are polychrome (in ochre and dark red). Several types of vessels are recognised; mainly those with a globular or carinated body, everted rims and moulded walls marking necks and bellies; as well as bowls and other closed forms, such as jugs or jars (Fig. 4).

### 3.4 Imported Pottery Finds

Again stressing the early occupation of the site, there is an assemblage of imported pottery, all the pieces of which were found in later levels. Some were documented in the excavations of the 1970s and 80s;<sup>25</sup> the remaining ones are from the 1998–2002 excavations.

Seven *sigillata* fragments of Italic origin were identified. The piece that provides the earliest date is a Form 15 rouletted cup rim that was manufactured between 15 BC and 15 AD<sup>26</sup> (Fig. 5, 1). Others are later, between Tiberius and Claudius: a Form 4.6 slipware dish decorated with a dolphin and two fragments with *in planta pedis* cartouches<sup>27</sup> (Fig. 5, 3). Another probably very early piece, of which we only have a sketch, is an unvarnished bowl rim and with moulded decoration, possibly an “Aco”-type pot.

Also found were a few sherds of Gaulish *sigillata* from between the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD;<sup>28</sup> they are a vertical rim of a Drag 15/17 and two Drag 18 dishes. One is preserved practically complete and bears the seal of *Caratanus*, a craftsman who worked in the La Graufesenque workshops in the pre-Flavian period<sup>29</sup> (Fig. 5, 5). The piece has a diameter of 14 cm at the mouth and 7 cm at the base and a height of 3 cm. The CARATAV mark inside a rounded-edged cartouche bears the most common seal of this potter. It has been documented in Hispania (Belo), Germania

<sup>24</sup> Blanco-García (2015, 450–466).

<sup>25</sup> Delibes/Moure (1974, 27); Balado (1989, 5, 32–33, 35).

<sup>26</sup> Ettlenger *et al.* (1990, 78).

<sup>27</sup> Ettlenger *et al.* (1990, 58, 148).

<sup>28</sup> Morais (2015, 132).

<sup>29</sup> Sfecag (2019).

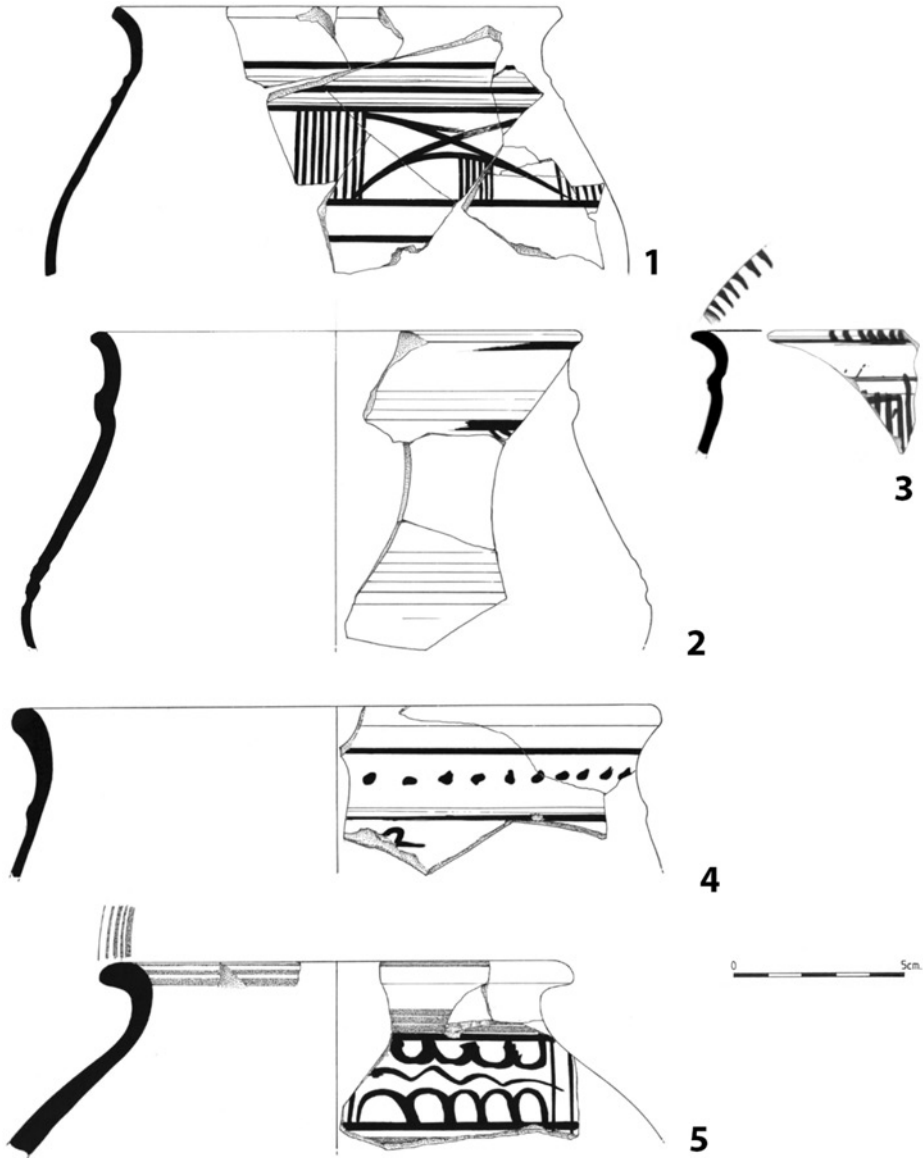


Fig. 4: Almenara de Adaja-Puras Roman villa site: pottery sherds from Late-Vaccaean productions (original illustration: A. Rodríguez).

(Rheinzabern), Britannia (Kent) and Gaul (Alesia, Fos-sur-Mer and La Graufesenque) on Drag 15/17, 18 and 18/31 dishes and Drag 27 cups, among other forms.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Sfecag (2019).

Also of foreign origin, although in this case manufactured in Baetica, is a whole piece; a Dressel 3 lamp known as the “Andujar type” with volutes and a scallop on the disc and a yellowish paste (Fig. 5, 4). These products were distributed throughout the Plateau, the north-west of the Iberian Peninsula and the Ebro Valley between the periods of Tiberius and Claudius.<sup>31</sup>

## 4 The Mid-Imperial Rural Habitat

Two occupied sectors separated by 150 m are recognised for this phase. We will refer to them as Zones A and B. Between them there is an area of easily flooded land that is completely unsuitable for building, but excellent for pasture (Fig. 6).

### 4.1 Zone A

Several test trenches dug in an area of approximately 0.3 hectares revealed structures and mud wall debris from the dwellings. Of particular note among the domestic evidence is a hearth on a clay plate, next to which there was large sandstone object, probably used as a bench. Other items were found on the floor around the stove, including a loom weight, a small bronze handle and several fragments of a possible pot. The absence of wall or ceiling remains suggests this kitchen was located outside. Another vestige is a hole (barely 40 cm in diameter and 30 cm in depth) that that may have been used to support a *dolium* in which the food of the dwelling could have been stored.

Judging by the nature of the collapses, the buildings that occupied this sector of the site had mud walls on shallow foundations of limestone masonry. The absence of tiles leads us to suggest that the roofs would have been made of plant matter. These features are indicative of a continuity of the construction techniques and materials of the pre-Roman phase. The pottery fragments associated with these debris are identified as TSH, from which some forms were recovered (7, 15/17, 27, 29, 35 and 37) with features typical of the Flavian period and the first decades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD (Fig. 7). In this respect, among the scarce decorated pieces, friezes of circles are mainly identified, although there are also some with metopes and even garlands. In addition, there are painted productions from the plateau (bowls and vessels that are mainly carinated), the TSHB (dish) and mainly common ware with storage vessels, pots, plates and bowls. A few fragments of fine ware and several loom weights and a several *pondi* were also found.

In addition to the data relating to the dwellings, we found evidence of the exploitation of resources. We documented a structure for which we were unable to establish

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31 Morillo/Rodríguez (2008, 415).



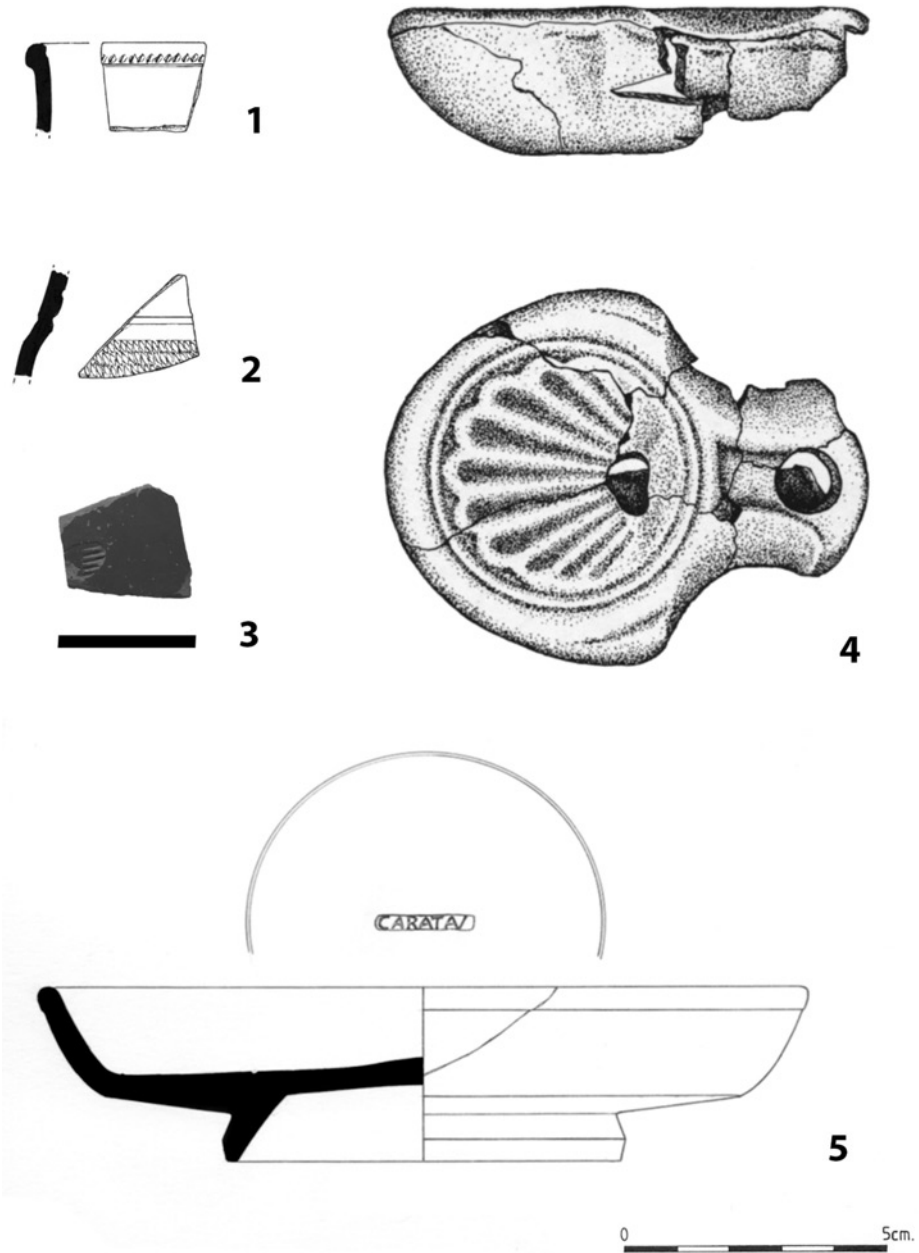


Fig. 5: Almenara de Adaja-Puras Roman villa site. Imported pottery finds: 1–3) Italic *sigillata*; 4) a Dressel 3 lamp; 5) Gaulish *sigillata* (original illustration: A. Rodríguez).



Fig. 6: Almenara de Adaja-Puras Roman villa site: zones A and B (M. Sánchez-Simón).

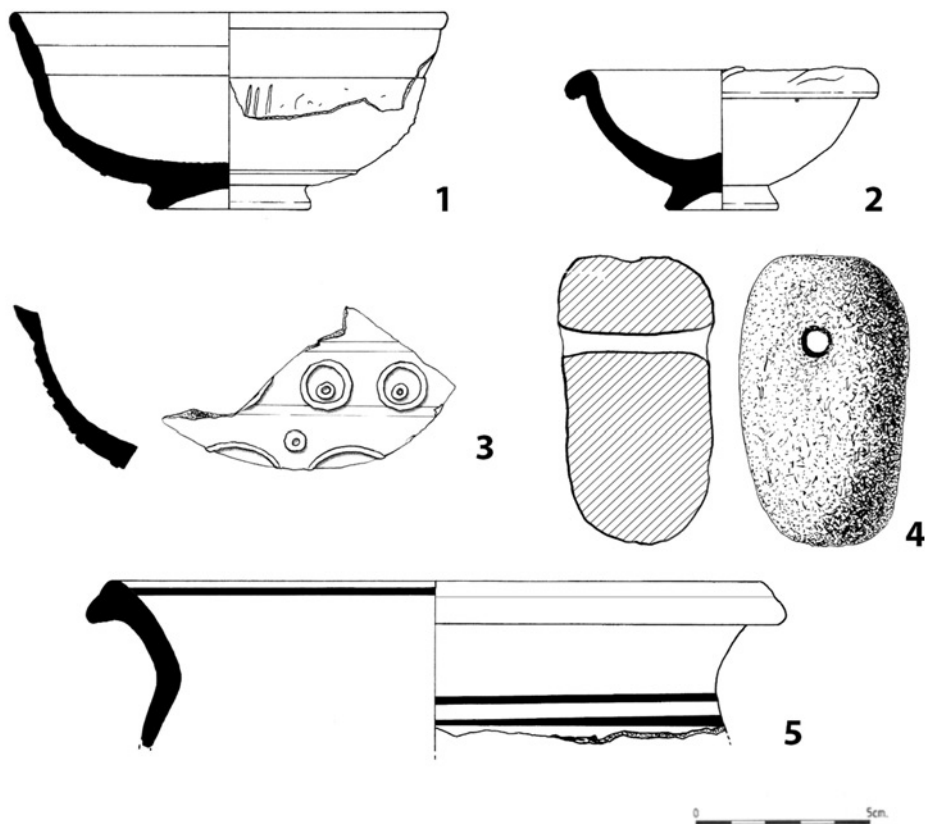


Fig. 7: Almenara de Adaja-Puras Roman villa site. Pottery finds: 1–3) TSH; 4) *pondus*; 5) painted production (original illustration: A. Rodríguez).

a specific purpose, except to indicate that it contained burned cluster pine charcoal,<sup>32</sup> probably the fuel used to obtain some product. It was circular in shape with a diameter of about 2 metres and a depth of some 20 centimetres and had mud-clad walls. The white colour of this plaster is indicative of its repeated and intensive use and the high temperatures reached. Finally, an 80-cm-diameter depression in the virgin land documented in another sector of Zone A may correspond to the mouth of a silo that was not excavated.

<sup>32</sup> Ruíz-Alonso (2010).

## 4.2 Zone B

The other sector occupied in these initial centuries was below the buildings of the Late Roman *villa*. The preservation of these remains has been compromised by the fact that they were built over throughout the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD. However, we can confirm an area of at least 0.3/0.4 hectares. In fact, only unaltered levels have been excavated in few areas in Zone B.<sup>33</sup> In addition to these sectors, structures, mainly cuts, and layers with debris or soil with abundant pottery fragments from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD have been identified elsewhere; however, the impact of the earth movements associated with this subsequent building activity does not allow us to link them with absolute certainty to the earliest habitat.

Among the oldest evidence there are some cuts located under Rooms nº 0, 1, and 17. There are six with elongated or pseudo-circular shapes and different sizes. Of the former, there are three lengths between 0.80 and three m, widths of 40 to 60 cm and depths of 20 to 40 cm. The pseudo-circular shapes have diameters of between 40 and 70 cm and depths of about 30 cm. All of them have in common their stratigraphic position, in that they pierce the sandy virgin soil and the walls are covered with a layer of clay that gives them greater consistency. Most of these pits did not yield chronologically significant pottery finds. Only one trench provided a set of pieces (mostly common ware pots and jugs, painted ware from the plateau area – bowls, cups, carinated vases and jugs – and three fragments of TSH, one of a lid); this *sigillata* allows us to attribute the assemblage to the early imperial period. All these cuts were filled in by a rammed soil floor from which several pieces have been identified. The layers of debris on this floor were identified from the pottery as being from the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD.

Another singular set of remains is a partially preserved negative structure. It is located in another sector where abundant evidence of this early Roman habitat have been recognised, south of the later dwelling. Although the remains are only partially preserved, part of a large 30–35-cm-deep cut can be clearly identified. Among the dark soil in it were abundant slag and iron (nails, plates and other indeterminate elements). Some of this slag has been analysed and the results indicate that it contains a high percentage of iron ore.<sup>34</sup>

In that same sector, to the south of the later dwelling, different layers with debris were excavated, as a result of the complete clearing of the site before the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD facilities were built. Next to the structural remains of those previous buildings (limestone masonry, river stones, *imbrices* and *tegulae*) there were numerous pottery sherds, 1,937 to be precise. This vessel assemblage is characterised by the predominance of common ware (59% of the total identified remains) with a formal repertoire of pots, jugs, bottles, plates, bowls and storage vessels. The painted ware from the

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<sup>33</sup> It should be borne in mind that this evidence was detected when digging below the soil of the urban pars in Rooms nº 0, 1, and 17, as well as outside. There may be more under the floors of other rooms that have not been raised.

<sup>34</sup> Pérez-García (2019).

plateau area (25%) includes tableware (bowls, cups, carinated vessels Types Ab. 1, 3b and 4, jugs and bottles) with painted decorations of metope compositions and geometric, plant and animal motifs, the last of these being much less common. TSH represents 15%. The shapes and decorations of the vessels are very characteristic of the chronology attributed to the assemblage (Fig. 8, 1–6). Vessel shapes 7, 8, 15/17, 18, 27, 29, 35, 36 and 37 were identified; bowl 37 being the most abundant, followed by plate 15/17, cup 27 and form 8. As for the decorative styles, we have the imitations with metopes and circles. Southern Gaulish Samian ware is also represented by a few sherds attributable –from their morphological features– to the Flavian Period (Fig. 8, 7). Together with the pottery, we can highlight the find of a pair of omega fibulae and a bracelet, all made of bronze, as well as a hinged iron key.

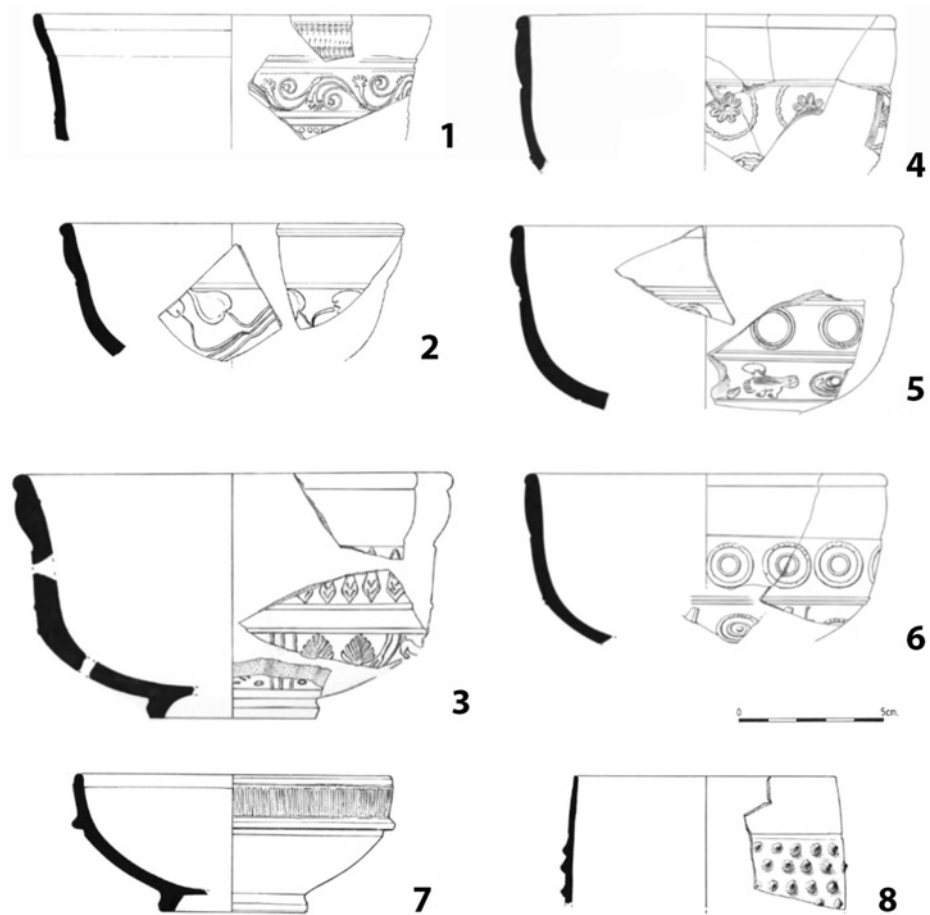


Fig. 8: Almenara de Adaja-Puras Roman villa site. Pottery finds: 1–6) TSH; 7) Gaulish *sigillata*; 8) Fine ware (original illustration: A. Rodríguez).

In addition to this evidence, as we have already commented, there are many stratigraphic units that contain early imperial pieces, however, we have not considered them as *in situ* contexts of those dates, but formed and/or reformed in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-century phase, when a construction suggests major alterations to part of the pre-existing stratigraphy. However, these sherds, which include *sigillata* productions, painted ware from the plateau area and, occasionally, thin-walled ware, are highly representative of the utensils used in the early imperial period. In general, their morphological features are the same as or complementary to those already described.

## 5 The Roman Rural Landscape of the Adaja-Eresma Basin

The early imperial settlement we have just analysed is contemporary with others that we have identified in this same sector between the Rivers Adaja and Eresma (Fig. 1). We have no more information other than that provided by the survey, so the documentation is obviously of a different nature and less abundant than that of Almenara. These deposits were examined in the 1990s, mainly based on the systematic analysis of previously known sites, to which work on new areas was added. From that decade to the present, the information has been complemented thanks to the interventions related, on the one hand, to the construction of road infrastructures and urban planning studies, and on the other, to research. Among the latter are the tasks we carried out specifically in the framework of the project for the population settlement analysis in the area.

Seven sites that are distributed near the banks of the rivers, separated from the channels by between two and three km: Almenara de Adaja-Puras, Las Corralizas-San Pelayo, Grijota-La Dehesa-La Palomina, Pozuelo-El Hoyo Meregil, Bernaldos-Tornacarros, Valderruedas-Bodón Grande and Castrillo. When surveying them, several areas were identified in each with a high concentration of building remains (mainly tiles and limestone masonry) and pottery from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cs. (especially TSH shapes 8, 15/17, 27 and 37 and moulded decorations of the metope and circle styles, together with painted pottery and fine ware<sup>35</sup>). They all continued to be inhabited in the Late Roman period (and therefore abundant remains from that period were also identified in the survey) and only a few (Almenara/Prado de la Vega-El Caballo, La Dehesa and Valderruedas) also in the Early Medieval period; the rest were abandoned. In contrast, this overlap, which is a circumstance that hinders the precise

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<sup>35</sup> To carry out this superficial characterization of finds, we relied not only on those collected in our surveys; but we also took into account the fragments deposited in the museums of Valladolid and Segovia, as well as those published mainly by other authors: Mañanes (2002) and Blanco-García (2005).

characterisation of the early Roman habitat, did not prevent us from clearly identifying the areas occupied in those first centuries. The interior of the interfluvium is empty; there are no other habitats in those initial centuries. Las Corralizas-San Pelayo, on the one hand, and Grijota and Castrillo, on the other, are close to three of the fords that are known respectively on the Adaja, the Eresma and the tributary of the latter, the Voltoya (Fig. 1, A-C). That of El Cantosal (Fig. 1, C) allows access to Coca (Segovia), the *civitas* of *Cauca*, to whose territory these lands would have belonged.<sup>36</sup>

This distribution indicates a preference for organising the geographical area around the rivers, prioritising occupation close to them rather than inland; in addition, it also indicates the routes of two roads, one by shore, to the right of the Adaja and another to the left of the Eresma. On the banks of the Adaja, the two habitats are separated from each other by about five km, a distance that is also maintained with respect to Grijota and Pozuelo; on the other hand, the separation is significantly shortened (two-three km) between the sites that are closest to *Cauca*, creating a denser network there. Crosswise to the interfluvium, the distances between them are homogeneous, between eight and ten km.

All the places in which these habitats are identified share the same feature, i.e. in each of the lots the distribution of the different areas in which archaeological finds are recognised is conditioned by the position of the wetlands.<sup>37</sup> Another common element is that, as the relief of Tierra de Pinares is gently raised, it is precisely on the hills next to the ponds where the buildings are located.

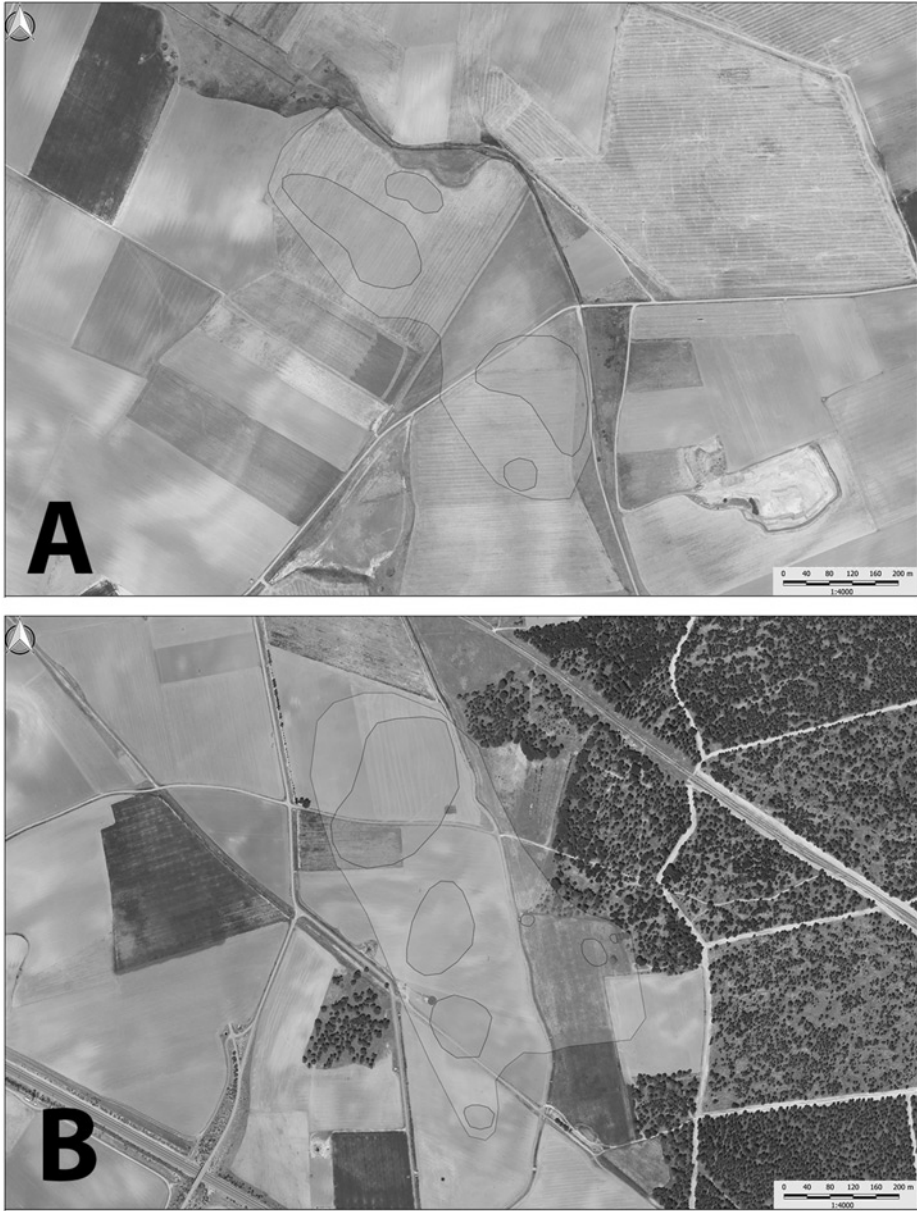
The area of each site is different because it depends on the number of recognised zones in which there is a concentration of early imperial finds (evidence of buildings and installations associated with the habitat) and the expanse of the ponds. Nor is their number homogeneous at each site, ranging from two (in the case of Bernaldos-Tornacarros) (Fig. 1, 5) and five (in Castrillo) (Fig. 9, B). As for the size of each of these areas with concentrations of remains, it is fair to say that they are not equal, varying between just less than one hectare to more than two, although there are also some very small ones of less than half a hectare. It is clear that these characteristics reflect a distribution between the farmhouse and the rest of the agricultural and livestock structures that is difficult to determine with just the survey data. That is why the information we have about Almenara is so illustrative, since it reflects that same organisation in two areas with evidence (Fig. 6, A and B) that is conditioned by hydrology and also provides data to show that they were occupied synchronously. Moreover, Almenara shows how one of the two sectors was abandoned during the early impe-

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<sup>36</sup> Blanco-García (2010).

<sup>37</sup> It is clear that the water conditions on these lands today are quite different from those of the past. The images from the so-called American flight that have been analysed for each site show there were more of these small ponds than are preserved today and that they were larger. Currently, many of those that are missing can be traced in areas of pasture or even in areas between pastures that are now under the plough.





**Fig. 9:** The Early Imperial settlements of: A) Pozuelo-El Hoyo Meregil and B) Castrillo (CAD: M. Sánchez-Simón and J. Quintana-López).

rial Roman period and was not reoccupied. That same circumstance is identified in Castrillo and Valderruedas, where one became uninhabited in each, while the rest continued throughout the subsequent centuries.



This distribution of settlements would have allowed an adequate management of the natural resources. As for these, it is true that, except for the pollinic and anthracological studies carried out on the Almenara samples, there is no further information to give us a concrete picture of the environment at any of these sites. However, the soil characteristics resulting from the homogeneous presence of wetlands and the proximity of the riverbank, make it very likely that they all had an agricultural and livestock orientation and dynamics similar to those of Almenara, including the exploitation of the pine forest. Another identified resource is salt. Some of the largest ponds known in this area are saline: Bodon Blanco, Laguna del Caballo Alba and Laguna de las Eras. However, the probable use of this mineral associated with manufacturing facilities of a certain entity has not left any identifiable mark in the surveys of the surroundings near the ponds. Moreover, except for Pozuelo (located about 250 m and 800 m north of two ponds, Salmoral and Laguna del Caballo Alba, respectively), there is no other habitat in the proximity of these saline ponds. Because it is a fairly abundant resource in Tierra de Pinares, it may have been exploited on a very local scale as a complementary activity to farming and stockbreeding. This “complementary” nature was continued until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by the people who inhabited the current population centres of this interfluvium.

The survey also revealed an area of activity associated with the transformation cycle of iron, a mineral that is not actually typical of the geology of the area, but is present in the mountainous foothills of Segovia province.<sup>38</sup> In Las Corralizas, a set of very dark coloured layers with sizes varying between 30 and 50 m<sup>2</sup> were identified in a very specific area of the site. Associated with these lands are pottery finds, including TSH from the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD, and a large amount of scoria. Analyses carried out on some of them revealed a high iron content, the result of a process in which high temperatures were not reached and therefore the reduction was not completed.<sup>39</sup> Due to this circumstance, the large percentage of metal, and the vast expanse of the dark spots on the land, the furnaces do not appear to have been installed in this sector of Las Corralizas for the reduction of iron ore, but possibly for another activity related to its transformation process that, pending archaeological excavations that would give us more information, remain undetermined. Perhaps a similar, although isolated structure is the pit described for Almenara, in which the results of the scoria analysis provide similar data. Similar evidence has also been identified in the survey of another site in the territory of *Cauca* (Navajuelo) (Domingo García/Nieva), located to the south-east of the *civitas*, about thirteen km away as the crow flies in an area of pine forest and ponds very similar to that of Las Corralizas<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> Martínez-Caballero/Santiago-Pardo (2010, 175).

<sup>39</sup> Pérez-García (2016).

<sup>40</sup> Tejerizo-García (2014).

## 6 Discussion

The geographical area on which we focused our analysis is characterised by a countryside of gently undulating relief, sandy lands with a fairly low edaphic potential and an abundance of ponds around which are distributed extensive pastures and fields of easier tillage. It is those pools that, during the prehistoric phase, attracted the various human groups that settled in their vicinity, and on a recurring basis, their villages.<sup>41</sup> In the transition from the Soto to the Vaccaean phase there appears to have been a systematic abandonment of most of these sites, so that also in the lands south of the Duero, the “towns without villages” settlement model is recognised.<sup>42</sup> The *civitas* of *Cauca* (Coca, Segovia) did remain inhabited and was the reference centre. Having emerged at the beginning of the First Iron Age, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC it became a large and populous *oppidum*. After the vicissitudes of the conquest, it continued to be the most important centre of the old Vaccaean territory south of the Duero, both during the Empire and in later centuries.<sup>43</sup>

As indicated above, during the Vaccaean phase (4<sup>th</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> c. BC) no settlement is identified anywhere in this interfluvial territory and its surrounding areas. However, finds made at certain sites (either during surveying or in excavations, although in secondary contexts) allow us to give a certain nuance to the pre-Roman settlement model in this characteristic area south of the Duero, opening up the possibility that it may have been some other type of establishment associated with the exploitation of agricultural and livestock resources, perhaps at a later stage of the Second Iron Age.

In Roman times this territory belonged to the *municipium caucensis*. For the early Roman phase we know of seven stable settlements of an evident rural nature:<sup>44</sup> Almenara de Adaja-Puras, Las Corralizas-San Pelayo, Grijota-La Dehesa-La Palomina, Pozuelo-El Hoyo Meregil, Bernaldos-Tornacarros, Valderruedas-Bodon Grande and Castrillo (Fig. 1). They can clearly be attributed to this period thanks to the pottery finds, especially the well-represented TSH. We also know that the distribution of these habitats prioritised, on the one hand, occupation along the banks of the Adaja and the Eresma facing the interior of the interfluvial, and, on the other, proximity to the fords. The case of Castrillo, a site close to the road to *Cauca*, is particularly significant. It is clear that the positions of these sites indicate itineraries along the

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<sup>41</sup> Quintana/Estremera (2015).

<sup>42</sup> Sacristán (2010); Sacristán (2011).

<sup>43</sup> Blanco-García (2010).

<sup>44</sup> This area has also been the subject of analysis and publication by V. Cabañero-Martín as part of a larger study (Cabañero-Martín (2015)). Our proposal for a territorial occupation model offers clear differences from the hypothesis of that researcher in relation, on the one hand, to the initial chronology of the occupation of the interfluvial and, on the other, to the inclusion of some sites in this period. The latter is the result of a thorough review of all available documentation, new surveys carried out and the review of all the finds deposited in the Museums of Valladolid and Segovia.

banks, as well as other transversal routes between the rivers, for which their coincidence with the later cattle routes is indicated.<sup>45</sup>

Due to the distribution of the sites, the rural properties exploited from each one did not cover large areas. In addition, the characteristics of the surrounding physical environment meant it was not necessary to travel long distances from the farmhouse to make use of the forest, the pastures or the farmland, as all these resources were generally within a distance of between three and five km. In terms of what the main resources may have been, from the various archaeological analyses carried out in Almenara we can extrapolate an evident agricultural and livestock orientation, with cereal and leguminous crops, the presence of a livestock population and forest use. The fact that these settlements produced surpluses is well exemplified in so far as all of them yield finds of imported goods that could only have been obtained by purchase or barter on the market.

These distances are indicative of short-range dynamics for the commercialisation and transportation of the agricultural, livestock and artisanal products generated by the farms and/or people. They are typical of local market networks with routes that are easily transitable in just a few hours. *Cauca*, without doubt, would have been the main reception and distribution point for a trade in goods that may even have come from other parts of the empire. Undoubtedly, of great significance is the presence in Almenara at the beginning of the early imperial Roman period of imported pottery such as Italic *sigillata* and, later, southern Gallic ware, Hispanic ware, fine ware and the lamps supplied from *Cauca*, where they are attested in the 1<sup>st</sup> c. BC.<sup>46</sup> Particularly important is the information derived from the find of a lamp, since it shows that in Julio-Claudian period the territory of *Cauca* was receiving a type of product that was associated with Baetican oil. The oil also probably reached the area, although to date we have no other evidence than this lamp.

This trade would not have been aimed exclusively at *Cauca*. The fords on the Adaja would also have offered the possibility of supplying other markets west of the interfluvium, and the prolongation of the paths along the river banks would have facilitated this trade. In fact, these itineraries have been considered when discussing the route of the roads that would have linked *Cauca* with *Obila* (Ávila) and *Septimancia* (Simancas, Valladolid) in Segovian territory.<sup>47</sup>

The presence in Las Corralizas-San Pelayo of significant evidence of an activity related to iron transformation makes particular sense in this organisation of broader networks. And, although we cannot yet characterise this type of installation very well, we know that there is a similar one in another sector of the territory of the *municipium*; this was at the Navajuelo site and it was in operation at the same time, judging by the finds made during the survey.<sup>48</sup> We believe that both of these (and

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<sup>45</sup> Blanco-García (2010, 238–240).

<sup>46</sup> Blanco-García (2010, 227).

<sup>47</sup> Blanco-García (2010, 238–240) and Cabañero-Martín (2015, 160–162 and 165–167).

<sup>48</sup> Tejerizo-García (2014).

others that may hypothetically be found in future surveys) would not have emerged merely on the initiative of populations whose economy was based on agriculture and livestock; they were more likely to have been the result of a larger-scale planning for which a certain investment and organisation would have been needed to ensure the arrival of the raw material and the collection and commercialisation of the resulting product.

With regard to how the hamlet was organised in each of these rural centres, both the data from the excavations in Almenara and those from the surveys indicate the important role played by the pools in this regard and the coexistence of several areas with constructions separated by them. It has also been detected at certain specific sites that some of the areas were abandoned during the first centuries of the Empire.

From the finds associated with all these sites it is clear that the occupation and exploitation of the interfluvium was perfectly configured in the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD, a period in which the use of TSH was widespread. This is corroborated by the morphological and decorative characteristics of the *sigillata*. However, thanks to the excavations carried out in Almenara, it has been possible to recognise the prior existence, at least at this site, of a stable habitat in the first half of the century. This is very new information and provides reliable evidence on the initial chronology of the occupation and management of this part of the territory of the *municipium caucensis*. It is true that there are only data for one of the seven enclaves, but it is also the only one on which a full and extensive programme of excavations, surveys and archaeometric analyses has been carried out. Similar research at the other sites would probably provide us with matching data. Pending that research, as a hypothesis to be corroborated, it could be considered, in general terms and surely with different dynamics, that the emergence of the rural settlement network was prior to the Flavian period and may be related (at least in part) to *Cauca's* need to expand the area for attracting resources at times of a greater need for security, populating a space that does not seem to have been occupied in the centuries before the conquest. Given that absence of a previous habitat, it should be understood that the initiative to occupy this sector of the *ager* would have been strongly promoted from that city. Other issues for which there are no data refer to the fact that in this distribution and organisation of habitats in the interfluvium area there was some sort of hierarchy or dependence between them, and, if this is the case, of farms or small villages, as well as the land tenure and land exploitation. Without doubt, there are currently more questions than answers.

Finally, it should be noted very succinctly that all these settlements continued with the same distribution and entity between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> c. AD and that a new one was established inside the interfluvium (Fuente La Reina-La Olma) and another associated with a ford near Almenara (Coto de Santa María). It is true that in certain cases (Almenara and Valderruedas) we have detected the abandonment of some of the hamlet areas in the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD, but that did not mean the end of the site. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD the *villa* in Almenara was established on these lands and perhaps another

in Pozuelo.<sup>49</sup> As a consequence, it is very likely that there was a change in the way of managing the interfluvial resources between the Adaja and Eresma rivers; but not, either in the general or the internal distribution of the settlements, beyond the cases mentioned in which one of the areas with constructions was abandoned.

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<sup>49</sup> Cabañero-Martín (2011, 122).

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