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Legio VII Gemina and its Flavian fortress at León

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After *Legio X Gemina* moved to Carnuntum in A.D. 63, the Spanish garrison was left with one legion, *VI Victrix*, stationed in León, accompanied, according to Suetonius (*Galba* 10.2), by 2 *alae* and 3 *cohortes*. The Spanish troops played an active rôle in the uprising against Nero by Galba, governor of *Tarraconensis*. After *Legio VI Victrix* proclaimed him *imperator*, he proceeded to raise a new legion before moving on Rome. The new legion was numbered *VII*, following after its parent *VI Victrix*, and this was the origin of the future *VII Gemina*.[1] Two tombstones[2] found in Villalís allow us to establish the exact date on which *Legio VII* received its *insignia*: June 10, A.D. 68.[3] It was known at first as the *Galbiana* (Tac., *Hist.* 2.86 and 3.7, 10, 21) and *Hispana* (Tac., *Hist.* 1.6).[4] While *Legio VII* accompanied Galba to Rome, its parent, *VI Victrix*, remained in León, controlling the gold production in the northwest, on which the ambitions of successive candidates to the purple doubtless depended.[5] Only in the winter of 69/70 did *VI Victrix* along with other units leave Spain for the Rhine, as a result of the Batavian revolt under Julius Civilis, though some kind of garrison must have been left to watch the gold-mining districts.

Meanwhile, *Legio VII Galbiana* would be sent from Rome to the Danubian *limes*, and then, after Galba's death, it returned to Italy. Under Vitellius it went back to the Danube briefly, where it supported Vespasian and came to participate in the second battle of *Bedriacum* near Cremona. It was as a result of its heavy casualties in that battle that it received a contingent from an undetermined legion, which led to its name *Gemina* (Tac., *Hist.* 3.22),[6] for in 73-74 it was in Germania Superior with the epithets of *Gemina* and *Felix*.[7] It may have returned to Spain at the end of 74, but the first references to its stay there appear only in 79.[8] It took over the spot of the camp of *Legio VI Victrix* at León, and from then on its permanent operational headquarters would be León, which it abandoned on only a few occasions. This choice, in the same Asturian territory where the main troop concentration had settled in the Julio-Claudian period, and on the site of its parent's base, points to the continuity of military goals. The main missions of the army deployed here were to watch and control the gold mines (then working at full capacity),[9] maintenance of the associated roads,[10] and to give technical support with the

1 Among the abundant literature on the creation and history of *Legio VII*, see especially E. Ritterling, "Legio," *RE* XII.2 (1925) 1630-41; A. García y Bellido, "Nacimiento de la Legio VII Gemina," *Legio VII Gemina* (León 1970) 303-30; J. M. Roldán, *Hispania y el ejército romano* (Salamanca 1974) 201-4; P. Le Roux, *L'armée romaine et l'organisation des provinces ibériques d'Auguste à l'invasion de 409* (Paris 1982) 151-53. E. Matilla, "La *Legio VII Gemina* y León," *Lancia* 1 (1983) 263-71; J. M. Abascal, "La *legio VII Gemina*. Balance de investigación y perspectivas," in *Actas I Congreso Int. Astorga Romana* (Astorga 1986) 317-28; A. Morillo, *'Legio VII Gemina'. Los campamentos romanos de León* (León 2003) in press.

2 A third gravestone from Leon (García y Bellido, ibid. 324) may be added.

3 *CIL* II 2552 and 2554; F. Diego, *Inscripciones romanas de la provincia de León* (León 1986) 51-55, nn. 33 and 35.

4 A. Garzetti, "Legio VII Hisp(ana)," in *Legio VII Gemina* (León 1970) 331-36.

5 C. Fernández-Ochoa and A. Morillo, *La tierra de los Astures. Nuevas perspectivas sobre la implantación romana en la antigua Asturia* (Gijón 1999) 71-72; A. Morillo, "Conquista y estrategia. El ejército romano durante el periodo augusteo y julio-claudio en la région septentrional de la península ibérica," in id. (ed.), *Arqueología Militar Romana en Hispania* (Anejos de Gladius 5; Madrid 2002) 67-93.

6 Ritterling (supra n.1) 1630; H. M. D. Parker, *The Roman legions* (1928; 1993) 99-100.

7 *CIL* VI 3538; *CIL* XIII 5033 and 12167, 1-8.

8 Inscriptions of *Aquae Flaviae* and *Cornoces* (Orense): *CIL* II 2477, and *Inscripciones romanas de Galicia* IV 92, respectively.

9 C. Domergue, "Dix huit ans de recherche (1968-1986) sur les mines d'or romaines du nord-ouest de la

infrastructure and administration of the mines.[11] It wil also have performed other military, bureaucratic and policing functions, as well as troop recruitment, all requiring that its forces could deploy along the dense road network over a wide territory from its base at León (fig. 1).

At times in the 2nd and 3rd c. the troops making up *Legio VII Gemina* were required outside the province of Tarraconensis. They were in Germany in 88/89, in Britain under Hadrian, and in *Mauretania* under Antoninus Pius.[12] In the second half of the 2nd c. they probably repelled the invasion into *Baetica* of the *Mauri* tribes. But generally throughout the 2nd and first half of the 3rd c. *Legio VII Gemina* is very well attested at León. It is only from the middle of the 3rd c. that references become scarce, and in the last quarter of that century inscriptions to it on bricks and tile disappear. Nevertheless, it is possible that the unit might have remained at León when a new wall reinforced with semicircular towers was attached to the wall of the earlier Empire. The *Notitia Dignitatum* (XLII 1.25) implies that the *Legio VII Gemina* was still settled in its old legionary fortress at the beginning of the 5th c. A.D., while other auxiliary units attached to it were now spread across various posts in the north of Spain.[13] This *Notitia* probably refers to an earlier situation, possibly of the Tetrarchic era.[14]

New data on the legionary base of Legio VII Gemina

The creation of the city council of León in 1993 made it possible to centralize the archaeological information about the urban settlement, and new excavations in the core of the old city have provided remarkable new results about the Roman settlement in León. This information mainly relates to the fortress of *Legio VII Gemina* dating to the early Empire, the existence of which had long been known. First, beneath that fortress the remains of two earlier legionary camps dating to the decades following the Cantabrian Wars have been found; they date to the Augustan and Julio-Claudian periods and were occupied for at least 70 years by *Legio VI Victrix*. These discoveries have been discussed recently elsewhere.[15] Here we will concentrate on

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Péninsule Ibérique," in *I Congreso Int. Astorga Romana* vol. II (Astorga 1986) 33; J. Sánchez-Palencia, "Explotaciones auríferas en el *Conventus Asturum*," in *Indigenismo y Romanización en el Conventus Asturum* (Madrid 1983) 81; J. Sánchez-Palencia and M. D. Fernández-Posse, *La Corona y el Castro de Corporales* I. *Truchas (León), campañas de 1978-1981* (Exc. Arq. Esp. 131, Madrid 1985) 322-24.

10 There is various evidence for building activity, including construction of a bridge in *Aquae Flaviae* (CIL II 2477).

11 Fernández-Ochoa and Morillo (supra n.5) 105.

12 Roldán (supra n.1) 203-4; Y. Le Bohec, *Epigraphica* 43 (1981) 160; id., *La Troisième Légion Auguste* (Paris 1989) 379; U. Brandl, *Untersuchungen zu den Ziegelstempeln römischer Legionen in den nordwestlichen Provinzen des Imperium Romanum* (Rahden 1999) 105. Their participation in Trajan's Dacian campaigns is still disputed: cf. N. Gudea, *Acta Musei Porolissensis* 8 (1984) 227-29; id., *Porolissum* I (Zalau 1997) 28-29, 46, 113, fig. 24; P. Le Roux, "Inscriptions militaires et déplacements de troupes dans l'Empire romain," *ZPE* 43 (1981) 119-200. A vexillation 1000 strong was in Britain under Hadrian (*ILS* 2726).

13 Fernández Ochoa and Morillo (supra n.5) 105.

14 A. Balil, "La defensa de Hispania en el Bajo Imperio. Amenaza exterior e inquietud interna," in *Legio VII Gemina* (León 1970) 601-20. Recently the date of the *Notitia* has been moved to the end of the 5th c.: M. Kulikowski, "The Notitia Dignitatum as a historical source," *Historia* 49 (2000) 358-79.

15 F. Miguel and V. García-Marcos, "Intervención en el patio del Centro Cultural Pallarés (León)," *Numantia* 4 (1994) 175-206; V. García-Marcos and F. Miguel, "A new view on the military occupation in the north-west of Hispania during the first century: the case of León," *Proc. XVI Int. Congress of Roman Frontier Studies* (Oxford 1996) 355-60; A. Morillo and V. García-Marcos, "Nuevos testimonios acerca de la Legiones *VI victrix* y *X gemina* en la región septentrional de la Península Ibérica," *Actes du deuxième Congrès de Lyon sur l'armée romaine* II (Lyon 2000) 589-607; V. García-Marcos and A. Morillo, "The legionary fortress of VI Victrix at León (Spain). The new evidence," in P. Freeman *et al.*, *Proc. XVIII Int. Congress of Roman Frontier Studies* (BAR S1084 II, Oxford 2002) 791-800; A. Morillo, V. García-Marcos and C. Fernández-Ochoa, *Imágenes de arqueología leonesa. Antonio García Bellido y el Noroeste peninsular en la antigüedad* (Valladolid 2002) 55-87; V. García-Marcos, "Los campamentos romanos de León," in Morillo (ed.) 2002 (supra n.5) 167-212.

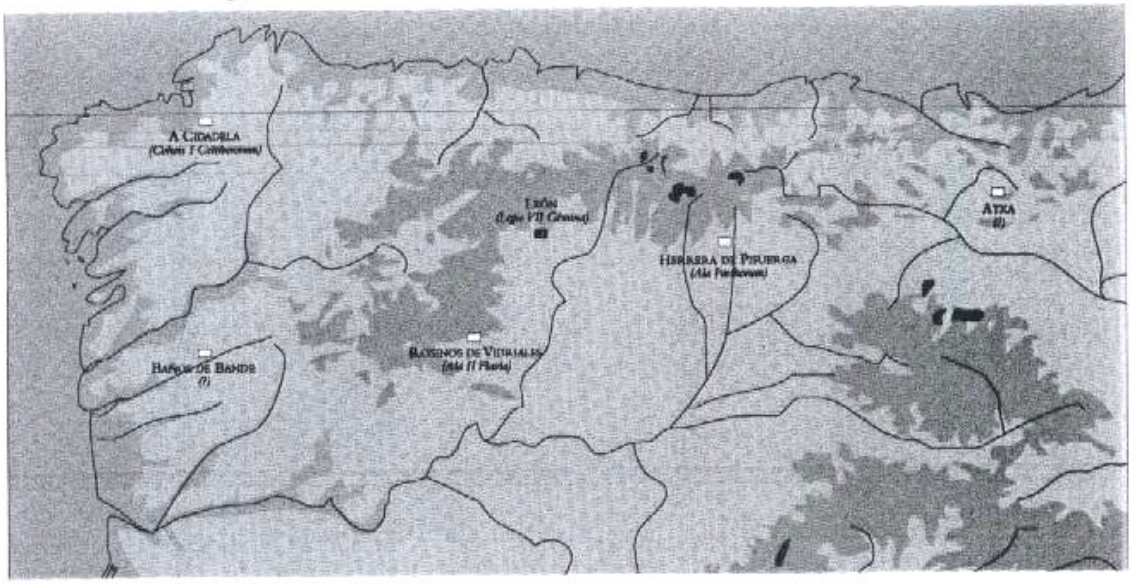

Fig. 1. Legionary fortresses and forts in Spain from *c.*A.D. 74/75 to the mid-3rd c.

the new information about the plan and defences of the fortress of *Legio VII Gemina*, datable to the Flavian period and used at least until the end of the 3rd c, when the Late Roman wall with semicircular towers was attached to the exterior of the Flavian wall. All of these fortresses were located close to the confluence of the Torío and Bernesga rivers.

Camp layout and internal arrangement

The basic outline of the fortress was already described accurately by García y Bellido,[16] who wrote that it is typically rectangular in shape (570 x 350 m) with rounded angles and encloses less than 20 ha, that being the typical size of single-legion camps. Due to the dearth of excavations in the modern town, it was more difficult to determine its internal arrangements. Yet the mediaeval town clearly betrayed the influence of the Roman fortress, with its rectangular plan, 4 gates, and the general layout of some streets.[17]

As a result of the discovery of some streets and of sewers beneath them, it is possible to begin to reconstruct the internal arrangements of the fortress[18] (fig. 2). It was laid out along the general lines of other forts of the Flavian period onwards[19] but the plan was not strictly followed since it shows a clear adaptation to the topography of the hill. The rectangle narrows towards the south, south of the two *portae principales* and especially on the E side, where the SE angle is flattened, and the longitudinal axis of the fortress as a whole is slightly displaced towards the northwest. The interior lies at an average elevation of 835 m asl and betrays a slight slope down to the west. The topography may have influenced the positioning of the *via principalis*, which is farther south than normal. A similar adaptation to the topography is seen in the underlying forts of *Legio VI*, the second of which (Julio-Claudian) will have influenced the internal layout of *Gemina*'s fortress, as has been shown from its defences.[20] A general shared tendency in the alignment of buildings and internal streets can be detected, though more precise details must await further excavations.

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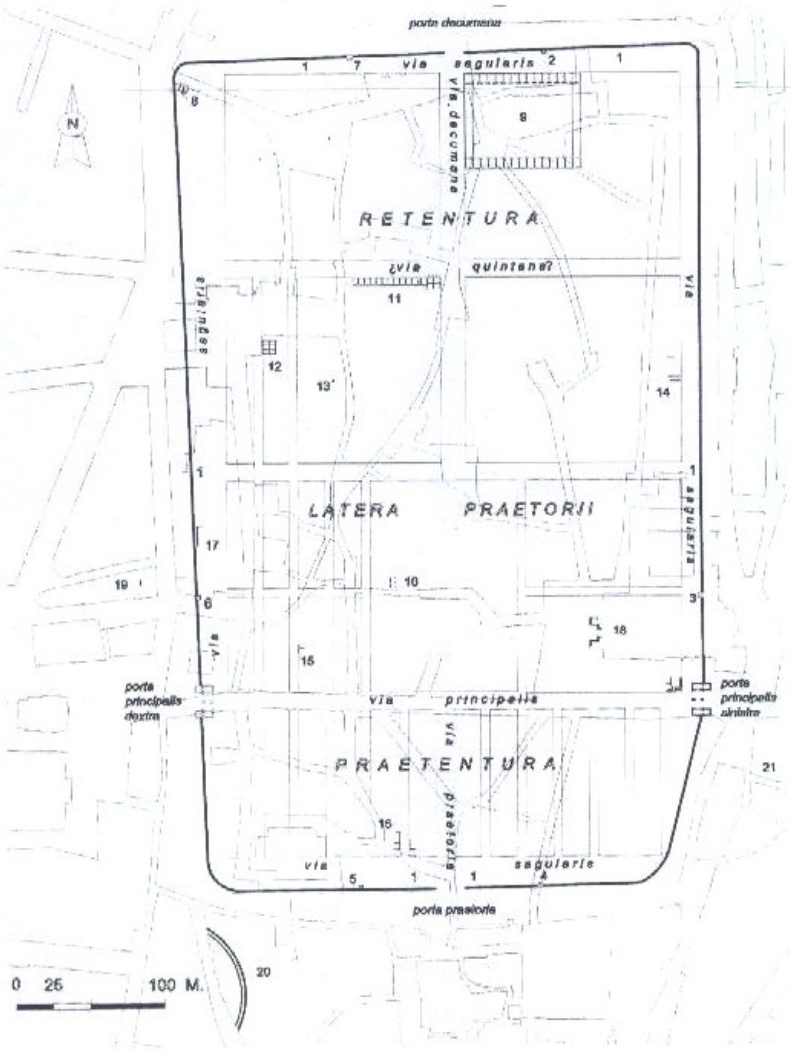
16 A. García y Bellido, "Estudios sobre la *Legio VII Gemina* y su campamento en León," in *Legio VII Gemina* (León 1970) 571-75.

17 Cf. A. Represa, "Evolución urbana de León en los siglos XI-XIII," *Archivos Leoneses* 45-46 (1969) 244.

18 J. M. Vidal, "Arqueología urbana en León: precedentes y aportaciones recientes," *Archivos Leoneses* 79-80 (1985) 365-80.

19 Cf. M. J. Jones, *Roman fort-defences to A.D. 117 with special reference to Britain* (BAR 21, Oxford 1975) 54-65; A. Johnson, *Roman forts of the 1st and 2nd centuries AD in Britain and the German provinces* (London 1983) 249 ff.

20 Morillo, García-Marcos and Fernández-Ochoa (supra n.15) 59-66; García Marcos in Morillo (supra n.15) 184.



1. Flavian wall
2-7. Internal towers
8. Cista limaria of the water-supply system
9. Storeroom with court yard
10. *Principia*
11. Indeterminate construction.
12-16. Barracks
17. Indeterminate construction.
18. Baths.
19. External construction.
20. Large vaulted gallery (cryptoportico?).
21. External constructions.

Fig. 2. Suggested plan of the fortress of *Legio VII Gemina*, with archaeological remains from this phase.

The internal arrangements follow the *per scamna* type, with buildings arranged in large sectors arranged parallel to the *via principalis*. Five such sectors have been detected. At the south, between the defences and the *via principalis*, would have been the *praetentura*, in which the scanty remains of building suggest a N–S orientation. This is where we would expect to find barracks arranged perpendicular to the *via principalis* and separated by secondary streets; perhaps other buildings fronted the *via principalis*. The central sector, between the *via principalis* on the south and the *quintana* to the north, shaped the *latera praetorii*. This is the most prominent and larger than usual due to the particular location of the *via principalis*. It is where the *principia* would have stood, as well as the *praetorium*, hospital, and tribunes' houses,[21] but almost nothing has so far been recognised here. At the E end of this sector are traces of a large bathhouse (fig. 2 no. 18), although the remains are scattered and its complete

21 This is the most common internal organization according to H. von Petrikovits, *Die Innenbauten römischer Legionslager während der Prinzipatszeit* (Opladen 1975) 64 ff.

Fig. 3. Inner side of N defences of fortress, showing two attached walls.

plan not yet clear. Several rooms with hypocausts are known beneath the sub-floor of the cathedral, and its S flank must have run along the *via principalis* close to the E gate. Next to that gate a room probably marking the SE corner of the bathhouse has been located; in its later phases it served as a large latrine.[22] In this block to the north of the bathhouse and further to the west are traces of barracks aligned *per strigas* (perpendicular to the *via principalis*) normally, these would have housed the first cohort.[23] More is known about the buildings in the *retentura* as a result of excavations conducted around Santa Marina, close to the N defences and not far from the position of the *porta decumana*. Here excavations have verified the existence of *Legio VII* structures on top of others belonging to the second fortress of *Legio VI*.[24] They appear to be part of a storeroom (fig. 2 no. 9), which has parallels in other fortresses, particularly the category of "storeroom with courtyard" in an off-centre position.[25] The rest of the cohorts would also have been housed here.[26]

22 García-Marcos ibid.

23 D. P. Davison, *The barracks of the Roman army from the 1st to 3rd centuries A.D.* (BAR S472, Oxford 1989) 44.

24 García-Marcos in Morillo (supra n.15) 185.

25 von Petrikovits (supra n.21) 85-86, fig. 20.

26 They may have been arranged alternately in 1, 3 and 5 *scamna* according to von Petrikovits' Type 2 and Davison's (supra n.23) Type B, which prevailed from the last quarter of the 1st c. A.D. and responded well to defensive needs, rather than to the distribution of barracks in more than 3 scamna, common in early camps with polygonal design.

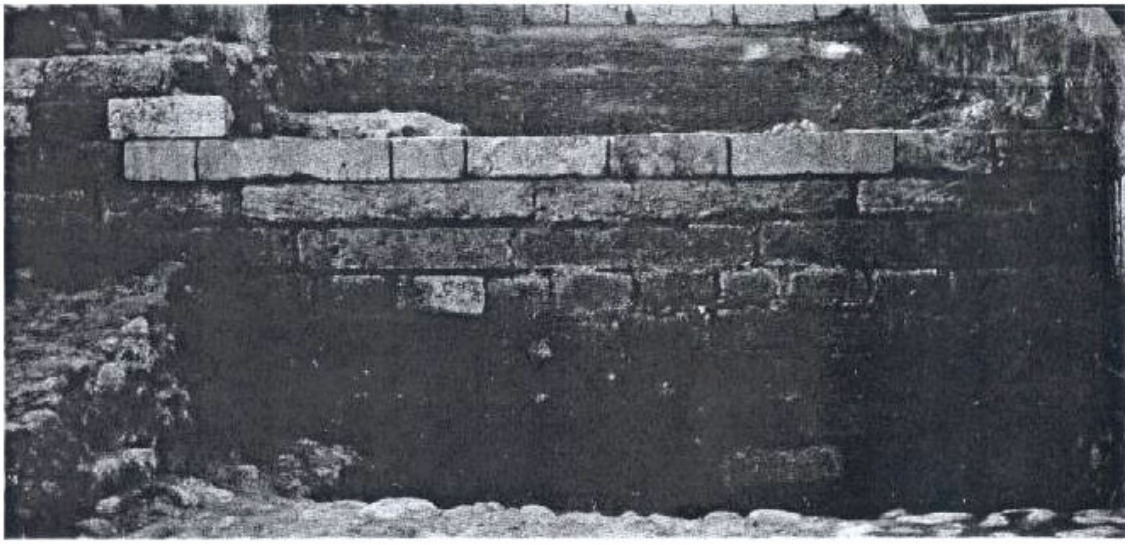


Fig. 4. Face of fortress wall on the W side, seen from the exterior.

The defensive system: the walls

The main archaeological evidence relates to the defences of this fortress. It follows the canonical model, rectangular in plan with oblong corners. Excavations conducted in the 1960s by A. García y Bellido[27] revealed that the Roman walls, strengthened on the exterior by semicircular towers, are actually made up of two abutting walls built at different periods and in quite different techniques (fig. 3). He argued that the original circuit was built in Flavian times and the later wall was built at the end of the 3rd c., and other scholars have followed him. Recently, E. Campomanes has made a detailed list of the spots where the earlier wall has been documented and has analysed its system of construction.[28] Comparing it with other sites, mainly military, he proposed an Early Imperial date. We can now narrow this down to the last quarter of the 1st c. There is no doubt that this fortress was walled on two occasions. Towards the end of the 3rd or beginning of the 4th c., as I. Richmond[29] and A. Balil[30] already pointed out, a Late Roman wall was attached to the outer face of the earlier wall (giving an average total thickness of 5.25 m), re-using many older building blocks and inscriptions in the process. León is part of a much wider phenomenon of wall reconstruction both across the empire and specifically in NW Spain where the major troop concentrations were located.[31]

The Flavian walls have been recognized on all 4 sides of the fortress.[32] Excavations at a large site close to Santa Marina, next to the inner face of the N wall, have helped resolve many questions about its type and method of construction. First, a trench was dug which resulted in dismantling the outer half of the rampart (earth-and-timber defences) of the Julio-Claudian fort belonging to *Legio VI*. Inside the new trench the wall foundations used medium and large quartzite pebbles mixed with worked clay, for a height of 0.8-1.0 m. The upper part of the wall has an external facing in *opus vittatum*, 30-32 cm thick, using roughly-cut sandstone

27 García y Bellido (supra n.16) 572-75.

28 E. Campomanes, "Algunas cuestiones en torno a la primera muralla de la *Legio VII Gemina*," *Lancia* 2 (1997) 129-48.

29 I. Richmond, "Five town-walls in Hispania Citerior," *JRS* 21 (1931) 93-94.

30 A. Balil, "La defensa de Hispania en el Bajo Imperio," *Zephyrus* 11 (1960) 192-93.

31 C. Fernández-Ochoa and A. Morillo, "Fortificaciones urbanas de época bajoimperial en Hispania. Una aproximación crítica," *Cuad. Univ. Autonoma Madrid* 18 (1991) 227-59 and 19 (1992) 336 ff.; iid., "La muralla de Iruña en el contexto de las fortificaciones urbanas bajoimperiales de la région septentional de la Península Ibérica," *Isturitz* 9 (= *1 Coloquio Int. sobre la Romanización en Euskal Herria*) (San Sebastián 1997) 738-39; iid. (supra n.5) 108; C. Fernández-Ochoa, *La muralla romana de Gijón* (Madrid 1997) 249-65.

32 García y Bellido (supra n.16) 572-75, figs. 4-14.

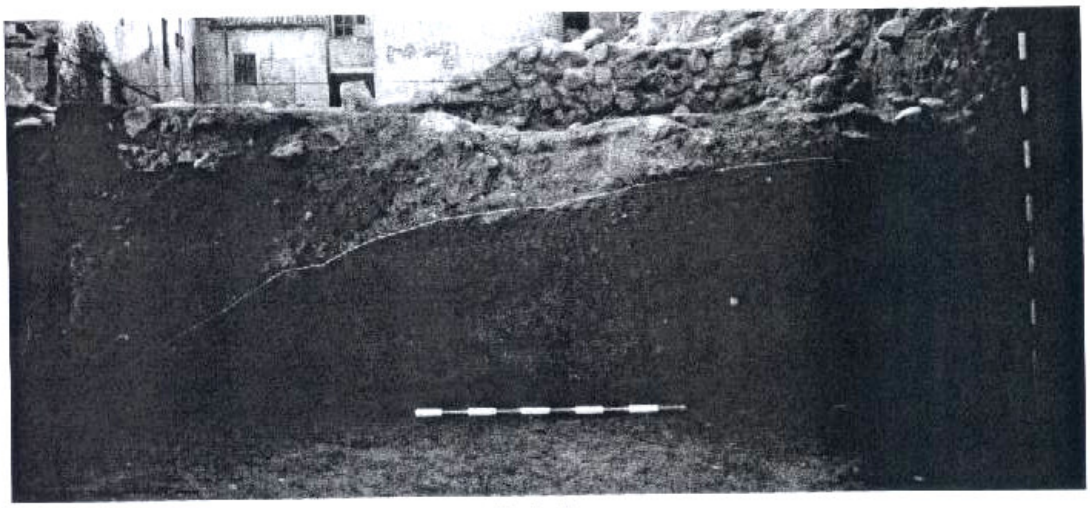


Fig. 5. *Vallum* (rampart) in the N part of the Flavian fortress.

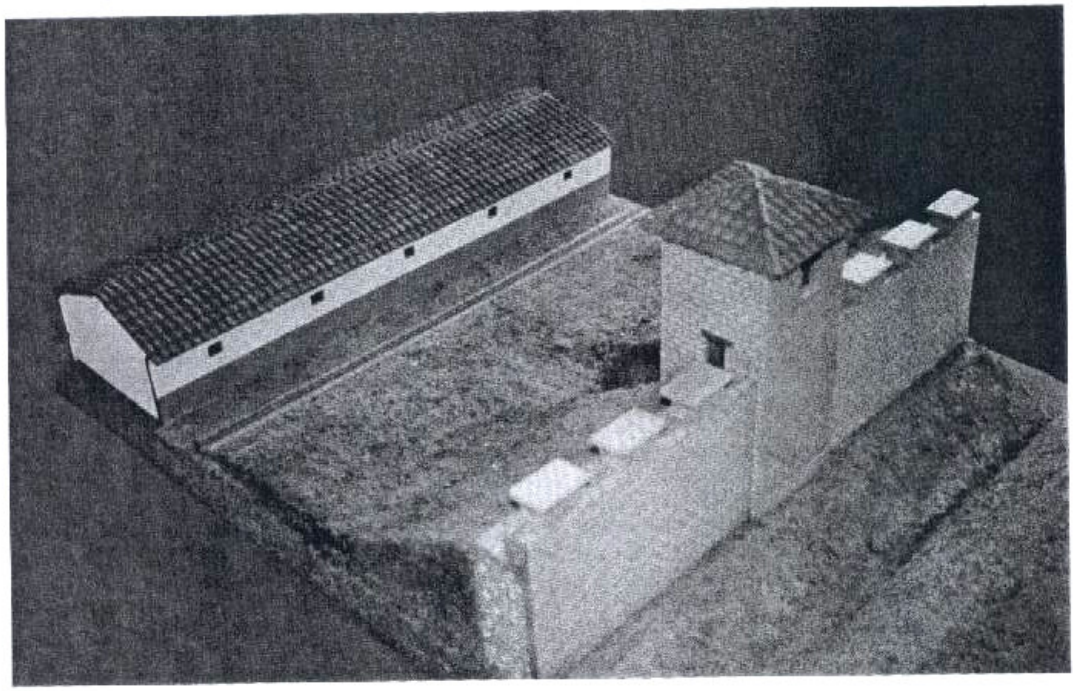


Fig. 6. Suggested reconstruction of the defences of the Flavian fortress.

blocks of variable length laid as headers and stretchers (fig. 4). The blocks were on average 14.48 cm in height (about half a Roman foot) and were cut with a slightly curved inner face to facilitate their attachment to the nucleus of the wall.[33] Thus the courses are 16-17 cm high with the good mortar edging to the joints.[34] The interior of the wall (1.8-2.0 m thickness, or

33 Campomanes (supra n.28) 135-38.
34 García y Bellido (supra n.16) 573.

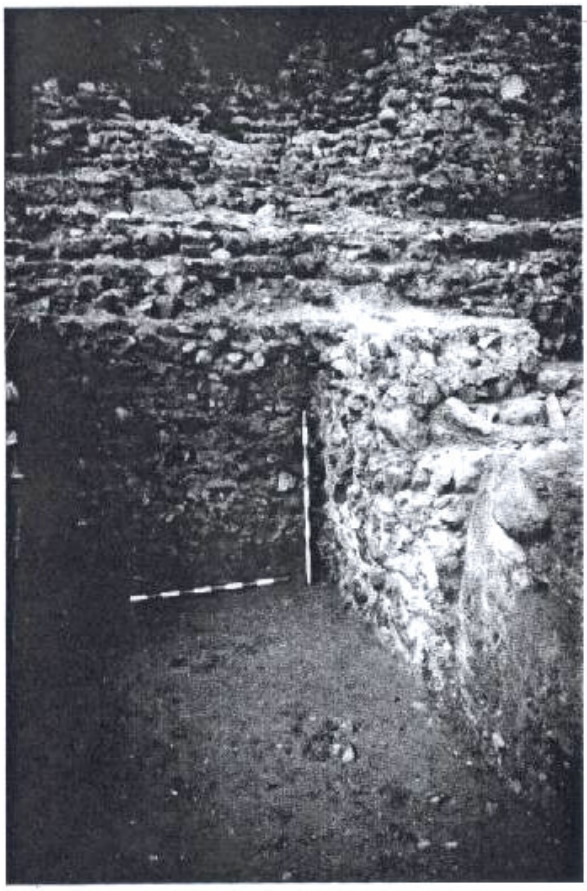


Fig. 7. Interval tower on the N wall of the Flavian fortress, seen from the Flavian wall.

about 6 Roman feet) was built of high-quality *opus caementicium* using small and medium-sized pebbles, mostly broken to facilitate mixing with the mortar, with small sherds of brick and small blocks of limestone and sandstone. The maximum preserved height of the wall is 4.25 m, which is probably not much less than its original height. Whereas the *opus vittatum* facing on the exterior acted as formwork, there was no similar element or frame on the interior. This is because there was an inner rampart up against the stone nucleus (figs. 5-6), as Campomanes had already suggested. The rampart would have been erected simultaneously with the outer facing and the intermediate space infilled with *opus caementicium*. This kind of design is the most common; stone walls on both faces are rarer at this period.[35] In Spain, the fort belonging to *ala II Flavia* at Rosinos de Vidriales has a single external facing,[36] like that at León. Double facing is found at the forts of Baños de Bande and Cidadela.[37] At León, the presence of the *vallum* of the earlier fort facilitated the construction of the ramparts, and the dismantling of its uppermost part could also have provided a large volume of earth for re-use.

There is evidence for at least three towers on the interior of the defences. They are rectangular (3.5 x 4 m) and survive to a height of 2.7 m (figs. 6-7); on their interior they measure only 1.4 x 2 m. For the most part they project inwards. They project only 0.20 m in front of the line of the walls where, on the external face, only the upper course could be seen due to the attachment of the late-antique wall. As is clear from the construction technique, towers and wall were erected simultaneously, but at a certain height (possibly determined by the greatest elevation of the rampart) the wall was attached to the sides of the tower. The external face of the towers shows remains of limestone ashlars, perhaps associated with footings projecting from the wall-walk where the entrances to the towers were located. Some changes to the towers were made over time: a small room was attached to the front part of the interior, perhaps in the late 3rd or early 4th c., when the interior towers lost their defensive rôle.

Between the *portae principales* and the north corners, on the long sides of the fortress, we may restore 6 towers, some 60 m apart, although so far only one has been found on each side. On the short sides of the fortress, we would expect two towers in each stretch equidistant between

35 As is found at London and York (Jones [supra n.20] 100), or at Mirebeau, the most complicated of all (M. Reddé, *Le camp légionnaire de Mirebeau* [RGZM Mainz Monog. 36, 1995] 46).

36 S. Carretero, Mª V. Romero Carnicero and A. B. Martínez, "Las estructuras defensivas del campamento del *Ala II Flavia* en *Petavonium*," *II Congreso de Arqueología Peninsular* IV (Zamora 1999) 185 and 191.

37 J. M. Caamaño, "La presencia militar romana en Galicia: los campamentos," in *El mundo romano en Galicia* (Museo de Villalba, Monog. 11, 1994) 37 and 40; id., "Sondeos arqueológicos en la muralla del campamento romano de Cidadela," *Gallaecia* 16 (1997) 270-71.

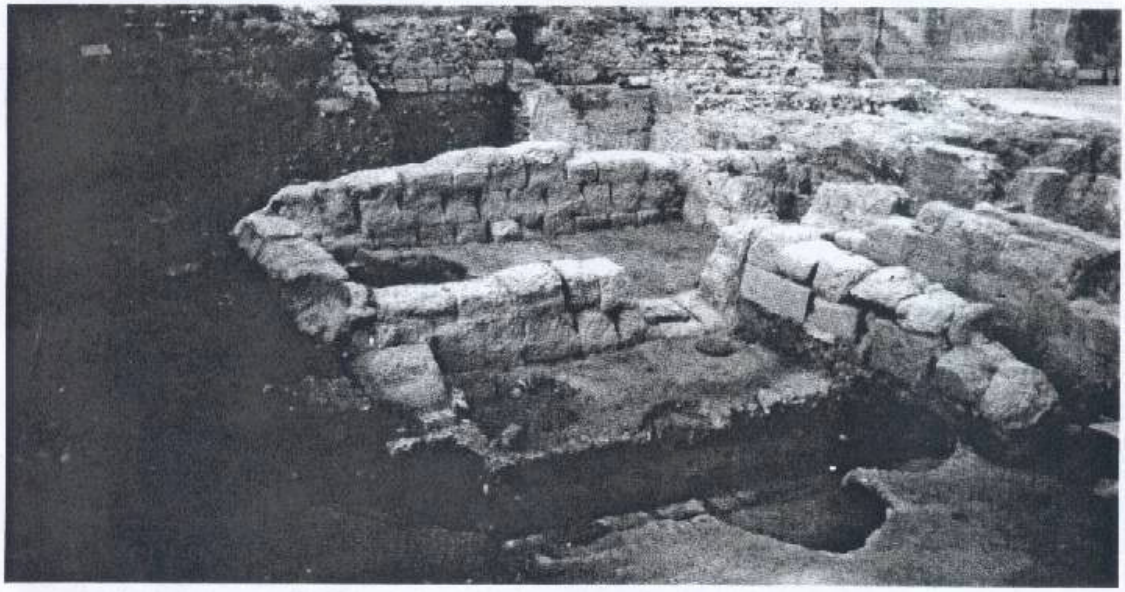


Fig. 8. *Porta principalis sinistra*, general view.

the corner and the main gate. There is no evidence as yet of towers at the corners, but an old mention by M. Gómez-Moreno[38] seems to point in that direction.

The gates: the porta principalis sinistra

Recent excavations have revealed the main gate on the E side, the *porta principalis sinistra*. The gate was flanked by two large rectangular twin towers (measuring 12.80 x 5 m externally). Only the northern tower could be completely excavated (fig. 8) since the south tower lies beneath the street, although the edges of that tower could be defined.[39] The towers project 4 m beyond the wall line but they project 5 m in front of the gate because the gate is recessed 1 m behind the line of the wall. Access to the towers from the wall-top was by way of passages defined on both ends by roof-supporting arches of 4-m span, held on one side by pilasters attached to the tower's walls and by large pillars in the centre (the furthest one measures 2 x 1.46 m, the inner one 2.6 x 2 m). The gate itself had double-leaf doors, as shown by the 4 marble door-jambs of the outer openings which are still *in situ*. One of these preserved the pivot-hole and iron shoe reinforced with a lead ring to facilitate turning and prevent rapid wear.

Because the topography slopes down to the east, some special measures were needed, particularly for the towers. The N tower has thick foundations of *opus caementicium* to support the *opus quadratum* walls, which were 0.7 m thick and composed of large ashlars arranged irregularly as headers and stretchers, most dry-laid without any trace of iron cramps, although in some cases the joints were reinforced with seams of mortar. To strengthen the stability of the N tower, some of the lower ashlar courses are *c.*10 cm wider on each side, and the ashlars on the E face gradually increase in height in order to reach a level surface on which the upper wall could be erected. The outer face of most of these ashlars is heavily rusticated, although not all of their faces were laid in the same plane.

The N tower was entered through a gate (1.2 m wide) located on its S side. The interior of the tower is divided in two by a partition wall (85 cm wide, 130 cm max. height) set at right-

38 M. Gómez-Moreno, *Catálogo monumental de España. Provincia de León (1906-1908)* (Madrid 1925) 24; Campomanes (supra n.28) 133.

39 An archaeological crypt has been built here to preserve these remains of the N tower and to allow a view of part of the bathhouse.

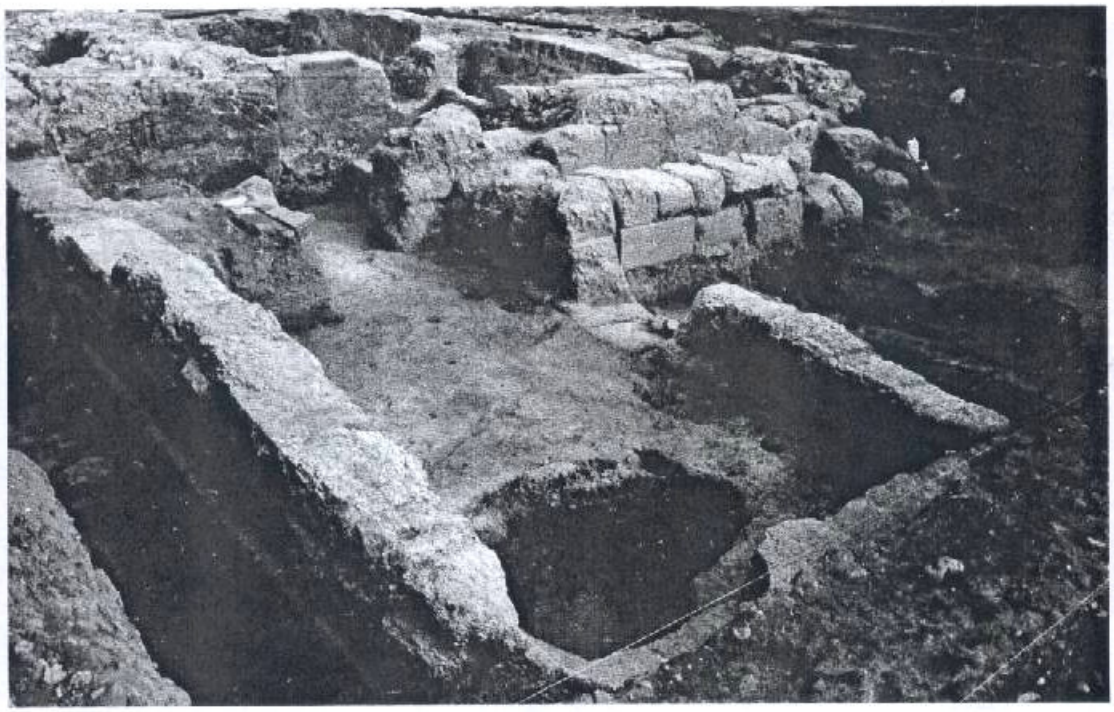


Fig. 9. N guard-chamber of the *porta principalis sinistra*, seen from the W.

angles to the long sides (fig. 9). An opening (1 m wide) through it connected the two spaces. The floor surface shows clear traces of hearths, especially near the walls.

The gate underwent major changes in the late 3rd or early 4th c. when the new defences were added. Most of the gate structures were dismantled, apart from the two projections which were integrated into the new walls. As a result of the new wall, the towers were set slightly back from it. Further, the northern of the two entrance passageways was closed by a wall 90-110 cm wide which re-used large ashlars, with mortar reinforcing the joints, from elsewhere in the structure. A single entrance opening would strengthen defence and is a common feature elsewhere.[40] At the same time, the level of the stret was raised. At the end of the 4th or in the early 5th c, the closed entrance was reinforced with an ashlar wall, more careless in appearance than the earlier one.

Chronology and typology of the Flavian defences at León

The Flavian legionary fortress at León is probably the oldest Imperial stone fortress to survive in the Spanish provinces.[41] The replacement of timber and earth defences by stone was particularly common from Trajan onwards, but there are examples in the last quarter of the 1st c. A.D. or even earlier, from Claudian times.[42] They include an important phase on the Rhine, prompted by the Batavian revolt of Julius Civilis in 69-70, where the legionary camps at Mainz, Bonn, Strasbourg and Neuss (in some cases already provided with stone defences) saw

40 E.g., at Rosinos de Vidriales (Carretero *et al.* [supra n.36)] 189), and some auxiliary forts on northern frontiers, such as Housesteads, Birdoswald, South Shields, Pfünz, Osterburken and Tülln.

41 A. Morillo, *Lucernas romanas en la región septentrional de la Península Ibérica* (Monographies d'Instrumentum 8, Montagnac 1999) 333-34; id. (supra n.5); id., "Neue Forschungen zu römischen Lagern der iulisch-claudischen Zeit in Nordspanien," *BJb* 200 (2000) forthcoming; García-Marcos (supra n.15) 186.

42 T. Bechert, "Römische Lagertore und ihre Bauinschriften. Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklung und Datierung kaiserzeitlicher Lagertorgrundrisse von Claudius bis Severus Alexander," *BJb* 171 (1971) 210 ff; Jones (supra n.20) 97-100; Johnson (supra n.20) 66-70; J. Lander, *Roman stone fortifications* (BAR S206, Oxford 1984) 20-22 ff.

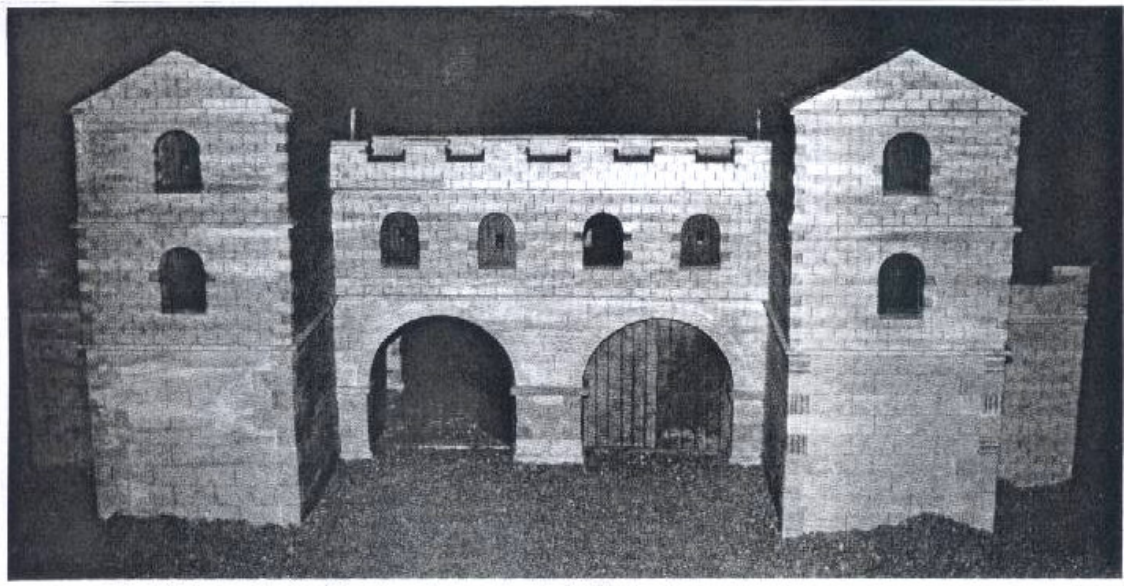


Fig. 10. Suggested reconstruction of the *porta principalis sinistra.*

their defences replaced or repaired with more solid ones. The changes in Germany probably influenced León, since *Legio VII Gemina* had been moved to Germania Superior in precisely those years. The latest techniques developed along the Rhine-Danube *limes* in the early Flavian period will have been followed in the construction of the fortress at León, for when it returned to Spain it seems to have reproduced a schema familiar to it at first hand in Germany. The thickness of the stone wall at León is 1.8-2.0 m, slightly thicker than the average for legionary forts, which is usually 1.2-1.5 m.[43] The maximum preserved height of 4.25 m is probably close to the original height up to the wall-walk, above which the parapet and merlons would have risen to *c.*6-6.5 m; at the fort of Wörth in Germania Superior, dating to the early Empire, the total height fluctuated betwen 5.8 and 6.4 m.[44] The towers positioned at intervals along the defences follow the typology and dimensions that were in common use in the late 1st c. A.D.

The fortress at León may then have become the reference-point for other Spanish forts of auxiliary units. The forts at Baños de Bande,[45] where *Cohors I Gallica* may have been stationed from the last quarter of the 1st c. A.D. onwards, and at Cidadela,[46] the home of *Cohors I Celtiberorum* from the early 2nd c., show the same kind of defences. On the Iberian plateau in the late 1st c. A.D., the fort of *Ala II Flavia* at Rosinos de Vidriales was provided with a stone wall with intermediate and angle towers, replacing the earlier *vallum.*[47]

The *porta principalis sinistra* at León raises rather different typological issues. One is the rather unusual compartmentalization of the guard-chamber, seen previously in the S gate at

43 Jones (supra n.20) 100. Inchtuthil's defences were 1.4-1.5 m thick: L. F. Pitts and J. K. St. Joseph, *Inchtuthil. The Roman legionary fortress* (Britannia Monog. 14, 1985) 61-71.

44 Johnson (supra n.20) 70.

45 A. Rodríguez Colmenero, "Aquis Querquennis: quince anos a carón," *Larouco* 1 (1991) 127; A. Rodríguez Colmenero and F. Herves, *Aquis Querquennis. Campamento romano y ciudad-mansión viaria* (Bande 1994).

46 Caamaño 1994 (supra n.37) 37-44.

47 Carretero *et al.* (supra n.36) 192.

Vindonissa, dating to 53/54,[48] and in the Augustan city gate at Aosta.[49] More important is the fact that the two flanking sections of the León gate show a marked external projection (fig. 10). In the 1st c. A.D. such towers barely projected beyond the line of the walls, but in the 2nd c. they advanced markedly, acquiring a greater defensive rôle.[50] Most earlier towers flanking fort gates followed timber examples where the layout was predominantly square and towers projected only slightly.[51] However, in a few cases, such as the fort of *Legio X Gemina* at *Noviomagus*,[52] there is already a slight projection with respect to the wall line. From Trajan and Hadrian onwards, reconstructions in stone extend to the rest of the northern frontiers the tendency for towers to project. It is seen, for example, at *Eburacum* and at *Brigetio* on the Danube.[53] Its occurrence in auxiliary forts seems to come later, in the last third of the 2nd c. and later,[54] when this type, with either straight or rounded profiles, prevails. The gate at León has a straight profile across the front and the closest parallels are found in the N gate of the legionary fortress at *Brigetio* and the E gate of *Carnuntum*, both dating after 170. Other parallels are found in the N gate of *Thamusida*, dated after 166, both main gates at *Porolissum*, and the four gates at Valkenburg, dating to Marcus Aurelius, and at Niederbieber, dating after 186.[55] Th W gate at Xanten, again dating after 170, should be included too, even though in this case it has a civilian character.[56] The closest parallel to the gate at León, however, is the *porta principalis sinistra* of the nearby auxiliary fort at Baños de Bande, which shows almost the same layout and dimensions and must have been directly influenced by León.

In brief, the formal and typological parallels point to a date in the mid-2nd c. or later for the gate at León, despite the fact that it is part of a Flavian fort. We suspect that an earlier gate at this spot had been completely disassembled. Unfortunately, the stratigraphic evidence is not available to prove the former presence of a Flavian gate. Because this remained the traditional entry-point to the city, the archaeological levels have almost totally disappeared. The precise chronology of Baños de Bande is also unclear. Nevertheless, the possibility cannot entirely be ruled out that this gate might belong with the Flavian defences.[57]

The defences at León should have been completed by one or more ditches around the walled perimeter, but the Late Roman wall, which is of typical military construction, almost certainly used these for part of its foundation trench, and its own ditch layout probably erased the ditches of the 1st c. The changes experienced by the cities of N and NW Spain from the middle of the 3rd c. onwards are likewise reflected in León's military wall and the nearby *canabae*. By then the fortress was carrying out new military functions assigned to the forces in the Iberian peninsula within Rome's global strategy.[58]

University of León (A.M.); City Council of León (V.G.M.)

48 Bechert (supra n.42) fig. 2, fig. 12.

49 T. Rebecchi, "Les enceintes augustéennes en Italie," in *Les enceintes augustéennes dans l'Occident romain* (Nîmes 1987) 146, fig. 25.

50 This solution which was already used in urban fortifications, with towers flanking the gates, only came later to military architecture. Military stone-built gates of the Claudian period appear at Vindonissa and at Neuss, the latter having clear precedents in the Augustan town gates at Arles, Fréjus and Aix (see Bechert [supra n.42] 210-17, fig. 1 no. 2, fig. 2 nos. 2 3; Rebecchi, ibid. 134, fig. 7), but they are not adopted definitively on military sites until the Flavian forts on the Rhine *limes*.

51 E.g., the gates at the legionary camps of Neuss and Bonn or the auxiliary forts at Hedderheim, Okarben, Wiesbaden and Hofheim (Bechert ibid. 218-27, figs. 5 6); Lander (supra n.42) 22-30, figs. 9-10.

52 Bechert ibid. 222-27, fig. 6.

53 Bechert ibid. 227-36, fig. 6.

54 Bechert ibid. 236-29; Johnson (supra n.19) 92; Lander (supra n.42) 67 ff.

55 Bechert ibid. 248-50, 252-54, figs. 12-14; Lander (supra n.42) 92-105, figs. 82, 86-87.

56 Berchert ibid. 258-59, fig. 13.

57 The most recent analysis of the stratigraphy, made while this article was in press, allows us now to suggest that this date was constructed in Flavian-Trajanic times.

58 Fernández Ochoa and Morillo (supra n.5) 102-8.