



XACOBEO'99
Galicia

St. James



XUNTA DE GALICIA

*S*t. James

The Hope

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EXPOSITION

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General Commissioner for Xacobeo 99 Expositions
José Manuel García Iglesias

Commissioners

Francisco Singul
José Suárez Otero

Coordinator

Carmen Iglesias Díaz

Design

Macua & García-Ramos

Staging Directors

Ignacio Macua Roy
Marisa Martín Domínguez

Staging

Cándido Hermida, *Industrias*

Space Allocation

EMPTY, S.L.

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María García-Alén

Coordinator

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Graphic design and layout

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Coordinator

Marcelina Calvo Domínguez

Photography

Xalio Gil

Holy Land Museum Archive,
Gerardo Gil, Mani Movetón, Santos Cid,
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An Apostolic tomb in Compostela

THOUGHTS WITH REGARDS TO THE ARCHAEOLOGY
OF THE APOSTOLIC SEPULCHRE

José Suárez Otero

T Approaching the problem

he apostolic sepulchre is the fundamental reason why the Basilica in Compostela exists. It was discovered partly ruins at the start of the 9th century in the middle of an abandoned cemetery, and it became the backbone for the buildings that were linked to the cult of the relics that it contains. The fact that it was included in the subsequent churches meant that its state of preservation was in some way or another affected by them. So though at first it does not seem to have been substantially altered, the posterior intervention of Gelmírez in the 12th century and the modifications in the presbytery in the Renaissance and Baroque eras altered and hid the ancient funerary building for ever.

Various centuries passed until the intervention of the canon A. López Ferreiro uncovered the remains of the tomb and thereby allowed the investigation of the tomb to come to light. From this moment on, complex problems begin to arise, involving factors that have more in common with passionate controversy than with serene reflection. These factors are, for example, the legendary character of much of the information that has reached us, the importance of the faith that the Tomb inspires, the inaccuracy and vagueness of the historical sources, the limitation of the archaeological remains that have been preserved, and the importance of the presence and significance of the Tomb in its immediate surroundings.

The final result was the tendency to confuse the different aspects that surround this ancient architecture. All the pieces are valuable and they need separate, individual validation strategies and attention. The existence of a tomb with an ancient origin, the presence of the relics of the apostle and the whole problem regarding his transfer or the preaching of St. James in Roman Hispania are three different facts, to which the moment of the *inventio* was added —the discovery of the sepulchre as part of a complicated series of elements amongst which were oral traditions, historical sources, archaeological realities, supernatural manifestations and terrestrial needs or aspirations. This union has weighed too heavily on the investigation of the Tomb, forcing a univocal answer for all three facts to be searched for and, what has been even more serious in my opinion, joining together discussions that are very different, concerning philology, history and archaeology. As well as this, these factors are under pressure from a strong ideological controversy. A telling example of the consequences of this situation is the paradoxical unacceptance of the Romanesque origin of the sepulchral building, by the majority of the Spanish archaeologists dedicated to the ancient world, despite the clear evidence, (though its exact date and ultimate significance could be further investigated), and despite the evidence that has been researched by known specialists in this same archaeological field.

In the following pages, we will take a strictly archaeological approach, and we will join together the conclusions of some of the investigations carried out on this subject. We are not trying to prove or deny historical events that have no archaeological remains as these are out of our jurisdiction. The same goes for religious feelings that we do not believe to be part of the materialism and imprecision of archaeological routine. We will only try to illustrate some of the possible contributions of archaeology as a cognitive strategy for the identification and explanation of the said remains, avoiding prejudices that elude the limits of this investigation or that question the possibilities of it. This is, therefore, a rethinking of the Tomb from a strictly archaeological point of view and a way of placing it in its historical-cultural context.

The tomb and the origin of the apostolic cult

There were two events that were the determining factors in this. The first was, obviously, the discovery of the sepulchre at an unknown time in the first third of the 9th century. This event, which we know of thanks mainly to a collection of documents or chronicles written in the high Medieval era in Compostela, consisted of the discovery of a tomb, with surprising characteristics, forming part of a collection of ruins which were an expression of past life in interior Gallaecia, and that were abandoned and hidden by the vegetation. In this tomb, the presence of the relics of St. James the Apostle were recognised, which, once officially accepted, caused the appearance of the cult as well as the appearance of various architectural examples among which the Apostolic Mausoleum was a determining element. This is the first stage, in which the Tomb plays a very important part in the existence and even in the continuance of the worship that it created, as at this moment in time, the tomb and the relics seemed to be unseparable in terms of faith and religion.

The second key incident is the second concealing of the tomb. But this time it is not due to forgetfulness and the complicity of nature, but instead to the sanctuary itself in which the veneration of the Apostle takes place. We are referring to the intervention of Diego Gelmírez at the start of the 12th century. Because of his opinion on the new Romanesque sanctuary, that substituted the first architectural examples in which the tomb had still played a leading role, he destroyed the top part of the Mausoleum and concealed its lower part with the relics of the Apostle beneath the new presbytery forever. The Sanctuary, both as a depository and as the keeper of these relics, substitutes the Mausoleum as the reference point of the cult. The emotional effects of this substitution are illustrated by the testimony of the Cathedral's Chapter's protests against the changes that were taking place.

The intervention of Gelmírez began a long-lasting stage in which the apostolic tomb was no longer a necessarily immediate connection to Faith, although it carried on being a final reference in terms of relics. It also underwent the consequences of interventions that diminished its authenticity,

such as the work that was carried out in the presbytery to adapt it to the needs or tastes of the different eras, such as the lowering of the floor around the main altar, that affected the top part of the remains that were still preserved in the Mausoleum. It also suffered the consequences of being the object of constant investigation, which between the 17th and 19th centuries tended towards historical research —the work of Oxea, Bugarín, Castellá, Foyo, etc.— but would lack contact with the material reality of the object under study; and, in the words of Fray Joseph de Bugarín (1659) “...what was evidence then, is now only attraction or a faith that is more than human...”. However, these consequences were even more serious, in the sense that they caused the appearance of a series of mysteries surrounding the tomb and what it hid under the subsoil of the Cathedral. The building became full of tunnels and passages, and the tomb was converted into an exaggerated reality; if not even a subterranean Cathedral. It was a vision that surpassed popular ideology and was converted into one more cultural element. At the end of the 19th century and in this context, a decision was taken to search for the relics and, if possible, to rediscover the Tomb.

The rediscovery and the archaeological interpretation of the remains

We do not know the immediate causes of the decision promoted by the governor of the diocese, cardinal Payá, and backed by two members of the chapter of the Cathedral, López Ferreiro and Labín Cabello, who were also those responsible for this new task during 1878 and 1879. However, it is necessary to record it in a merely indicative way in terms of the specific trends in Faith and thought that enriched the Catholic Church at that time. The renewed interest in the relics of St. James is linked to the movement concerning the recovery of the bodies of the principal saints that seemed to begin with the remains of St. Francis of Assisi at the start of this century. This is also the case with the preoccupation with obtaining detailed knowledge of the biblical texts and the historical contexts of the evolution of the Church —in 1883 the files belonging to the Vatican became available to the researchers—, that had a clear effect on archaeological methods: the founding of the French Archaeological School in Rome, the intensification of archaeological excavations and the role played by the Biblical School of Jerusalem. This preoccupation is linked to the scientific development of the time and the wide diffusion of positivism as a model, with an important influence on historical research, both of which were clearly reflected in the Compostela case through the preoccupation of the scientific recognition of the identification of the relics. However, it is not surprising that the starting point in the search for the tomb of St. James was at that fantastic reality that centuries of concealment had aroused, and so the first work was directed towards finding the entrance of the supposed subterranean structures.

The first step was guided by the last reliable indication concerning the Tomb. This was the existence, according to Ambrosio de Morales (16th century) of a small hole that led to the apostolic crypt from underneath the altar. This

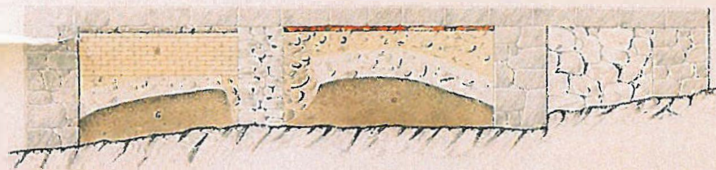


Apostolic shrine, brick tomb and excavation by M. Chamaro. 1950

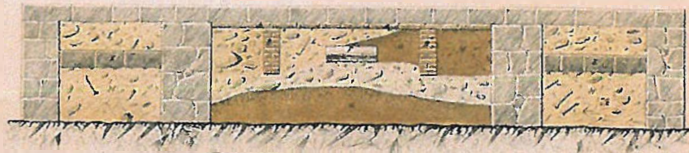
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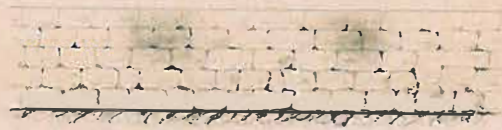
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ALZADO DEL MURO CD.



EXPLICACION

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Escudo



The rediscovery of the tomb: sections of the preserved remains

was the first mistake and it was one that was continually repeated, with a stone in the ambulatory, with the window of the apse of the crypt of the *Pórtico de la Gloria*, and in both of the investigations in the transept and in the presbytery. These investigations, fruitless in their final goal, were only able to prove the fantastical character of this starting point and in a few cases, to discover some information on the basilica of Alfonso III.

The definitive investigation occurred when the search concentrated on some stones that were beneath the altar, as once they had been lifted, the remains of the primitive sepulchral building began to appear. It was not, as was expected, a subterranean architecture, but instead some ancient filled structures, with the remains of a “*musivario*” paved floor and another with ceramic stones. These floors seemed to indicate the level between the two bodies, that articulated the height with a quadrangular building. There was hardly no evidence of such on the top one, as well as having the proof of also being horizontally fragmented into two different parts by a transversal wall, as well as by the quality of its paving. The lower one had a quadrangular shape, and it was also fragmented into two by the already mentioned transversal wall, but three of its sides were enclosed, creating a type of ambulatory around the building. The inside of this construction was filled with different layers of rubble, except for the presence of two rectangular niches made of brick against the walls of its western side. Later on, this complicated structure caused a re-assessment of the architectural interpretation —an apostolic crypt under the presbytery— that, nowadays, allows us to visit the apostolic tomb and worship the relics.

Despite the rediscovery of the tomb, the fundamental question had not yet been answered: the recovery of relics that were not where they were supposed to have been. The solution appeared when the remains were moved to the space immediately behind the main altar, the space would have been occupied by the *confessio* of Gelmírez’s time and of which there was some vague information, mainly within popular tradition. This information referred to the concealment of the remains of the apostle and his disciples, quite probably dating back to the time of the archbishop Sanelante and caused by the raids of Francis Drake. On the night of the 28th–29th of January 1879, a simple stone box was discovered in this area, and inside there was an urn —ossuary containing some disordered human remains. The following step was to carry out the analysis that would verify if these remains could be those that should have been found in the tomb and certify this information. This was a step that was very significant in the attempt to integrate Science and Faith. To do this, a Compostela university committee was summoned, consisting of Dr. Antonio Casares, professor of Chemistry of the Department of Pharmacy and the then university vice-chancellor, and Dr. Freire Barreiro, professor of Medicine, and Dr. Sánchez Freire, professor of Surgery, both in the Faculty of Medicine. This committee issued a report that confirmed that the remains, despite their fragmentation and deterioration, provided evidence of antiquity and that the original presence of the skeletons of three bodies could be detected, as well as



Detail of the apostolic shrine

perhaps the remains of others; bodies that corresponded to three males, which was then interpreted as the possible presence of the bodies of the apostle and his two disciples.

The apostolic mausoleum: an inspection

The excavations that were carried out at the end of the previous century by A. López Ferreiro uncovered what can now be seen in the form of a crypt underneath the main Altar of the Cathedral. The preserved remains gave testimony of the fitting-out of a space that was more or less quadrangular on sloping ground. This area was occupied by a demarcated enclosure on at least three of its sides by a stone wall. This enclosure had in its interior a square building, apparently closed on all its four sides. They both appear to be constructed of good quality granite stonework, which is arranged with alternating stones placed at right-angles, the second of which protrudes into the area.

In the inside of what appears to correspond with the lower part of a small building, it was divided into two halves by a masonry wall. The eastern half appears filled with earth and covered by a surface that preserved the remains of a mosaic with a type of vegetable decoration. It is in this part where tradition and the different interpretations of the area, locate the tomb of the apostle, and which today houses the urn that contains the relics. The western half is more complicated to define, perhaps because it underwent changes throughout its existence. In López Ferreiro's excavations it is presented as another filled-in area ending in a brick floor, that housed two brick tombs in the north and south, that were built into the walls of the building. These receptacles have been identified as the tombs of the two disciples that, according to tradition, brought the body of the Apostle to Compostela. But these tombs show traces of not always being under the ground, and below them, the remains of what would have been a previous floor level that is even lower to these sepulchral structures seems to have been discovered in recent excavations.

The reconstruction of the top part of this building presents more problems. This is the part that, according to the sources, would have consisted in the primitive altar where the relics were worshipped, but the sources are very unclear, and it was the part that was most affected by the development of the basilica, if it was not already very modified when it was discovered. There are basically two opinions in terms of the recent investigation, both which presume that that which we have just described is the first part of a more complicated building. One opinion is that there was a single top room, which was simpler, and the other opinion opts for a more complicated building with two floors, the low one was totally closed and vaulted, and the second was bigger and open to the exterior.

Archaeological aspects

When dealing with the Tomb of the Apostle, an aspect that undoubtedly often forgotten is the archaeological viewpoint. After years of descriptions,

interpretations and revisions of the preserved structures, there are only a few pages with no in-depth assessment regarding the archaeological remains that were exhumed, both in López Ferreiro's excavations, as in the explorations carried out by M. Chamoso Lamas. These remains are not particularly exceptional, but they are rich in a funerary context as they have been considerably modified in their complicated historical development.

The numismatic

The numismatic component is perhaps the most well-known, particularly the collection that was discovered by López Ferreiro, but this was not due so much to its different pieces, but instead to the mistaken identification of two of them as Carolingian, and the possible historical implications of this identification. It is a collection of Medieval coins, which, since they were discovered, were interpreted as belonging to a long series ranging from the 9th century to the 16th century. However, except for one coin of Philip II, the collection is quite homogenous in terms of their historical date, that spans from the 10th century to an undetermined point at the start of the 12th century. Its composition is however quite heterogeneous, as it includes a long list of French feudal coins, two Andalusian coins and six pieces belonging to Alfonso VI of Castile and Leon.

In the first of these groups, the large amount of "pougeoises" coins stand out. This is because of the importance of minting in the south of France. It also contains two coins from Poitiers, and because these are an immobilised type belonging to Charles "the bald", they were confused with Carolingian minting, and, finally, it also consists of a diverse sample of minting from the Southeast of France: Toulouse, Narbonne, Albi and, perhaps, Arles. The chronology of these pieces is not always very precise given the character of the immobilised types that affects the majority; to which we must add a possible use of these coins during a longer time. However, many of them seem to date back to the second half of the 11th century and the first few years of the 12th century. In terms of Hispano-Moslem money, there are two dirhems from the final years of the caliphate, which indicates a *post quem* date, given that they would have still been in wide use in the subsequent years: the 11th century; the period of the first of the Moorish kings. Lastly, the Castilian coins belonging to the minting of Alfonso VI after the conquest of Toledo (1085). These are now being considered to be the start of the Castille-Leon currency, which continued to be in use until around 1109, the year that the aforementioned monarch died.

This is a sample of the money in circulation in the environment of the "pilgrimage to Santiago", and the areas that were affected by it, in the whole of the 11th century; though they do seem to be centred around the transition between this century and the 12th century. Despite the inexistence of the so-called Carolingian coins, this collection offers some important implications for acquiring knowledge on the evolution of the sepulchral building in the Medieval times, as well as the more that probable accessibility to it until Gelmírez intervened. This

then concerns a coherent time (1105–1110) with a *ante quem* date for the collection of coins. The beginnings of the European pilgrimage and the circulation of money in the north–western Hispanic environment also dates back to these times. The contribution of the explorations by Chamoso Lamas was different, as it exclusively contained pieces from the end of the 16th century and the start of the 17th century, and therefore, it directly deals with the changes that the Tomb underwent in the modern era: the construction of the baldachin.

Glass and stone. Rites and ornament

Some other pieces that are known, though studied in less detail, consist of the small collection of ornaments. These are various beads from a necklace, made of a vitreous paste or malachite, as well as a type of pendant made of glass and difficult to interpret: all of these underwent a posterior detailed treatment, as they form part of the articles on exhibition. These beads are from a late Roman funerary context: a burial ground, that was in general pre–Christian, and in use in the early Medieval times: a Visigothic necropolis in the Northern Plateau. In of Galicia, our knowledge this type or necklace is even more scarce and imprecise, but its presence in an early Roman necropolis has been verified, in other words around the end of the 3rd century to the 5th century AD. It is harder to define how the pendant was used. López Ferreiro indicated that it was part of a crystal clapper that, according to him, existed in Roman catacombs, but this has yet to be proved. The possibility that it was the central part of the bead necklace has also yet to be proved. It is even possible that what is now preserved could have been part of a more complicated original piece: the pendant has a small fractured area in its extreme bottom end that could have led to something else which we have not yet defined. Finally, there are two fragments of glass vessels in this collection that also belong to ancient works of art, with the Roman tradition, however their forms and dates have yet to be defined.

All these elements seem to indicate the use or re–use of the sepulchral building for funerary means in the late Roman Gallaecia, if not in the times immediately after this: ca. 4th–6th centuries. These are dates that corresponds with, according to some authors, the floor mosaic, although the Christian character of this mosaic contradicts with some of the objects that would have formed part of the funerary furnishings, that are far from the official Christian rituals. The possible solution is that the building was re–used for different reasons, in terms of the funerary traditions that pervaded at the time. We know of the existence of burials in the area surrounding the sepulchral building, from the 3rd century at least, from the gravestones that until the 16th century appeared, re–used, in the walls of the Cathedral or in its immediate surroundings and that we know of thanks to some of the most important examples of odepodic literature. We also know from the remains that appeared in the excavations in the subsoil of the basilica of Compostela, that this funerary use continued until the beginning of the Middle Ages, but with consolidated Christian rituals.

Ceramics

Lastly, there are the ceramic remains, that are scarcely represented by six small fragments. Three of these were found by López Ferreiro, of which two are made of good quality grey clay despite belonging to medium sized or large containers, with polished surfaces and burnished decoration with geometric motifs; the third belongs to a medium sized receptacle with a pot-bellied shape, made of a black clay that is rougher than the first two. It is difficult to place them into their cultural contexts, as due to their characteristics, they may belong to two very different moments. We may be dealing with left-overs produced by the removals of the end of the 16th century or of the 17th century; as the black clay belongs to the production of the low Middle Ages that lasts into the following centuries, and even to popular Galician pottery. The grey clay also has certain Medieval residues, however the pieces reflect the formulas of centuries later. We must not forget that these grey pieces present a strong likeness to certain varieties of common Roman ceramics from the first era (1st–3rd centuries), but we do not consider this to be the case.

In the explorations carried out by M. Chamoso Lamas, another three fragments from vessels appeared, as well as a series of ceramic remains with a constructive character. These remains are significant for the study of the historical evolution of the sepulchral building, as though in the previous ones we cannot know their precise context, now these remains appear on an archaeological horizon that because of their location is previous to the construction of the side loculi, where the tombs of the disciples of the Apostle were said to have been. However, again, the remains are not very significant. They are two fragments from the bottom of a vessel made of orange paste and polished clay and a simple finish. This can simply be part of the tradition of popular Roman ceramics, without the need to specify further. The third fragment is a small piece from a vessel with an unknown form, that reflects a different ceramic tradition which is more difficult to define: it may be a local piece from the beginning of the Middle Ages (ca. 5th–7th centuries) though we cannot discard previous eras. The constructive ceramics that appear to be linked to these fragments do not help us to determine the chronology of these remains, because of the even smaller amount of definite information on them. The appearance of “musivaria” evidence could however prove to be more clarifying. This appeared in the form of a collection of loose tesseras. This is because of the fact that these tiles may have belonged to the floor mosaic of the sepulchral building, which would mean that they date back even further as would the side tombs: a *post quem* date which would be appropriate for both of these would be at least from the end of the 4th century. But these tesseras may not have belonged to the so-called “pavimento II” of the Sepulchral Building, as we cannot discard another mosaic, either inside the building, or its the area around it: the discovery of tesseras is not an uncommon event in the areas around the building, as was proved in the excavations of the Southern Arm of the transept of the Cathedral or in the excavations in the Quintana square.

It would not be right to finish this chapter without mentioning, if only briefly, a piece that, although it was not found in the sepulchral building, could



Intrusions in the apostolic tombs:
ceramics dating from after the Middle Ages

have belonged to it originally, and if conserved in its archaeological context, would be a key element in discovering the date of this building. We are referring to the piece known as “Ara de San Paio de Antealtares”, that was originally a Roman funerary plaque of exceptionally good quality. It is made of marble and had a detailed epigraph, which has unfortunately been lost, and it represented the confirmation of a funerary monument that must have existed at some moment within the 1st or 2nd centuries. Tradition has linked this piece with the primitive altar dedicated to the Apostle, and this could have indeed been its use in the first basilicas of Compostela before being passed on to Antealtares, perhaps with the aim of claiming the rights that this monastery had over the cult of the Apostle at a moment when, because of the construction of the Romanesque Cathedral, both these rights as well as the proper function of the altar were left open to question. In conclusion then, if we accept that there is a link between this piece and the sepulchral building, and that this link could be that these two have a common origin, we are therefore confirming that the funerary monument’s original date was some time around the 1st century.

An ancient context for the tomb

An archaeological context

The opinions on the Romanism of the Sepulchral Building were generally centred on the characteristics and conditions of the actual monument, sometimes with the added value of the documented information that exists on this subject. Some investigators have also taken into account the immediate surroundings, but, apart from a few exceptions, this was done in a vague way and with confusing, if not incorrect information—such as the case of the supposed thermal springs—or with simply indefinite information, such as was the declaration that some structures were Romanesque when they could well have been high medieval structures. However, the indirect arguments that are offered by the dispersed remains outside of the building, may provide a better guarantee when discovering the precise historical context of this architecture that, as we have already shown, has undergone many notable changes throughout history. We will now set out the considerations that have derived from the revision that we are carrying out of all the archaeological information available.

The oldest remains from around the Tomb, with the exception of a few possible prehistoric traces, are a collection of ceramic pieces belonging to a high imperial Roman environment: Hispanic “terra sigillata”, popular Roman ceramics and, to a lesser degree, indigenous ceramics, belonging to a late date in the Celtic culture. This indigenous scarcity contradicts the often repeated belief in the existence of a Celtic archaeological situation, that was proposed by the majority of the investigators that studied this subject. However, they did not have much success in terms of archaeological evidence, given that they were wrong on all the points that, according to these authors, were the likely places to house a pre-existent Celtic indigenous population. The information indicates, therefore, that at the very beginning of the occupation of the area, a Roman culture was firmly established.

We do not know the morphological characteristics, nor the size of this place, but the information we have indicates that it could have been a small nucleus located on the south–westerly hillside of the spur on which the modern Compostela is situated. With an important presence in the modern Quintana square, that could have then undergone a first adaptation in terms of a large–scale levelling out, with the aim of lessening the slope that seemed to have been avoided by placing the remains in areas where it was less steep; the areas that are today called Rúa do Vilar and Rúa Nova. One end of this nucleus was under the cathedral, perhaps connected with one of its main access routes, the one that joined it to Iria Flavia, and where there was a cemetery: a Mausoleum and funerary stones, a type of public building and/or some area dedicated to the cult: the altar of Jupiter. This first settlement seems to have dated from around half way through the 1st century to the start of the 3rd century. This could be specified further, though only on a basis of hypothesis, if we believe that this first occupation is linked to all the reformation process of the Flavia era and that it had clear influences on Iria.

The archaeological remains from this first settlement point towards a Romanised environment, if not a strictly Roman settlement, as we can see from the style of the products that have nothing in common with the indigenous world: a lot of Hispanic “terra sigillata” and popular Roman pottery, beside the “thin wall” and a few painted ceramic objects, versus a very small amount of Celtic pottery or pottery in line with the Celtic tradition. This scarcity, added to the fact that there is no evidence of imported pottery, that was so important in the case of Iria, suggests that the Compostela site was founded at a later date and thus indicates the difficulties in dating this in the first half of the 1st century. This is confirmed by the productions by Tricio that date back to the end of this century and throughout the following one, the “thin wall” of the studio of Melgar de Tera or the development of the popular products from Lugo.

The fact that this settlement possibly continued to exist in the low imperial era is supported by the local popular pottery of this era, as well as the scarce amount of coins or fine ceramics: late Hispanic “sigillata”, late painted products, or local fine ceramics, especially plates and red jars. The changes in the architecture also indicate the time that this settlement survived and its dynamism: it is possible to attribute the important building that was partially re–used in the high Middle Ages to this era. However, it does not seem to have lasted past the 4th century, as there is not any physical or material indications from the 5th century or later. To the scarce amount of late fine ceramics, we can add the lack of light sigillates, any local imitations of this or of the late Spanish sigillates, or the fine ash ceramics that was so common in late Roman *villae*. Regarding the popular pottery, there is a certain balance between the greys of the Roman tradition and those of the indigenous tradition, that, in contrast to the imperviousness of the first years, now becomes more apparent, demonstrating the cultural integration process caused by the Romanisation.

The location and characteristics of the expansion of the settlement in the 3rd and 4th centuries is harder to describe, due to the fact that the remains

seem to have suffered badly from the impact of the Medieval re-occupation. The majority of the remains appear in the area occupied by the Medieval necropolis, where important improvements were carried out, with notable changes in the dispersion of the earth. The opposite is the case in the Quintana square, where the ancient horizon seemed to be used for Medieval structures.

An essential question, though it may be difficult to answer, is the interpretation of the significance of this settlement. The modern tendency is to identify it with the roadway of Asseconia, that corresponded to the XIX roadway from Bracara to Lucus, but more information is needed on the stretch between Iria to Lucus. However, the doubts surrounding this theory do not invalidate the proposal of a link between the settlement in Compostela with the roadway network, as we should not forget the establishment of a secondary road network in the control and exploitation of the land. In this sense it is necessary to remember the strategic position of Santiago in communications in western Galicia, and between western Galicia with inland Galicia, as we can see from the Medieval placenames of the road network that left Santiago. This role as a possible road centre would have been essential for the development of Iria Flavia as a privileged access point for maritime commerce, as the passageway for the distribution of goods and the possible use of internal production.

The historical-cultural context

The contextual perspective for a probable Roman mausoleum is not only based on the immediate area, as the location proposed for the area where the mausoleum could be found indicates that the historical reasons for constructing the mausoleum were more than simply local. This was the inclusion of an important and relatively early culturalising process that was promoted by the Roman Empire. Both the creation of a terrestrial communications system adapted to Roman premises, as well as the even earlier appearance of a new nucleus that had a certain importance, prove a high degree of integration of the central-westerly area of Galicia in the Roman times. This is supported by archaeological examples such as the milestone of Calígula that appeared in Aixón, or the presence of pottery from the Augustus era, if not before, in Iria: italic "terra sigillata", painted pottery in the Hispanic-Roman tradition and even a few fragments of late "campaniense" pottery. Other examples, some of which are included in this exhibition, are the important silver coin collection —denarius— of Augustus and Tiberio de Ortoño, or the accumulation of epigraphic evidence in different places in this area. Apart from Iria Flavia, there are significant examples in Santa Comba, Bandomil, O Pino and A Baña. Some of the epigraphs could date back to an early date, as is the case with the marble funerary plaque found in O Son, an interesting place on the banks of the ria of Noia. They also enjoy the novelty of having Latin and even Greek names and their content or formula presents an important Roman or Romanised segment within the social environment: cfr. the veteran of the Legio VII who dedicated an altar to the Pietas not far from the modern day Compostela, in a place on the border of the municipal district of Ames.

The strictly Roman condition, in terms of the opposition, not of mixed race, but of the indigenous race, of many of the support of these inscriptions consists of a direct reference for the apostolic building. Through these supports the relatively common presence of funerary monuments is verified, at least in the 1st to the 3rd centuries together with the more simple examples reflected in the abundant funerary stones. Though we do not know the actual shapes —different types of mausoleums, sepulchral buildings, in the form of an altar, etc.— the truth is that they are located within a clear funerary and artistic context in the case of Compostela; a context strengthened by the funerary plaque that is known nowadays as the “Ara de S. Paio de Antealtares”.

In conclusion, the Sepulchral Building is part of a collection of funerary examples within the Roman tradition, at the same time as and because it belongs to a nucleus that formed part of a territorial re-organisation process and a cultural change towards a Roman bias. By analysing all available information, we can see that this process seems to have begun with the change of era, but it intensified in the second half of the 1st century and it may possibly be related to the important reforms that occurred in the flavia era.

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MOSAIC REMAINS FROM THE APOSTOLIC EDIFICE.
 CIRCA 4th OR 5th CENTURIES A.D. VARIOUS MATERIALS.
 SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA. CATHEDRAL MUSEUM.

These remains were discovered by López Ferreiro and Labín during the exploration which they would carry out in the edifice during the years 1878 to '79, more specifically as a result of the investigative probe performed in 1878 beneath the main altar and which would lead to the re-discovery of the apostolic tomb. They appeared scattered over the upper section of what, in the end, would constitute that which remained of the ancient sepulchral building which was beginning to be uncovered, proving to be a section corresponding to the destroyed flooring of the aforementioned building: the flooring of the eastern half, of the two halves into which the building was divided and which was supposed to contain the tomb of the Apostle. Thanks to the emergence of some fragments which were located in the vicinity of the surrounding walls—the deteriorations affected the centre of the structure—, part of the original design could be reconstructed, that which corresponded to the edges of the arrangement.

We are dealing with a decoration featuring successive bands which adapt themselves to the surface which is to be covered and which can be defined, from the outside moving inwards, as: strip of intertwined circles, white strip, lotus leaf frieze together with loose leaves framed by crenellated edging, finally a sequence of a dark edging and two light ones which would surround the centre of the arrangement and where it was considered the tomb of the Apostle would be placed. All of this information is available thanks to those who took part in the find, to a greater or lesser degree, especially López Ferreiro and the members of the History Academy F. Fita and A. Fernández Guerra, because what has actually been preserved has been reduced to this scarcely revealing sample and a collection of loose fragments. The discovery of new fragments during the excavations carried out by Don Manuel Chamosa in 1950 cannot be directly connected to this mosaic, given that they were brought to light in a supposed lower level, and therefore a previous one, to the level designated to the mosaic flooring and to the ceramic tiles which occupied the previous section of the building: unless these two floorings were not contemporary and the second was constructed with the mosaic which had already been destroyed, a possibility which needs an investigation which we do not have room for in this work.

The interpretation of the mosaic is subject to the various limitations to the information regarding its discovery: we do not know all the precise details of the conditions in which the discovery was made, and the remains moreover were already quite deteriorated because of previous works in the area of the main altar. Notwithstanding, every author accepts the arrangement of the flooring in so far as the known architectural context and the funerary, even Christian, characteristics of the layout, with or without the central sarcophagus mentioned by López Ferreiro and even if there is doubt or disagreement regarding the identification of the body which is buried. The matter over which there is the most discrepancy, leaving to one side any question of faith, is the chronology of this mosaic, for which basically three different alternatives have been put forward. The first is the thesis supported by F. Acuña Castoviejo and it can be regarded as deliberation which catalogues the work as a paleo-Christian piece and suggests dates which lead to the 4th century or periods somewhat after (5th or 6th centuries); this reasoning is based on a framework of study of the Roman mosaic remains in the northwest of Hispania which is strictly archaeological. Another, defined by I. Millán González-Pardo, has some similar references within the rest of the Roman context and points to an earlier chronology, around the 2nd century A.D.; a point of view which is put together from a detailed review of the controversy surrounding the apostolic edifice and its possible function as the holder of the remains of the Apostle St. James.



Finally, some authors, which rely more on suggestion rather than reasoning, raised the possibility that we could be dealing with an upper-medieval work, a contemporary of the first 'compostelan' basilicas and built on a par with these, in accordance with the mosaic floorings of the period, not only within a European-Christian frame of reference but also Hispanic-Muslim; this third option is supported by specialists in upper-medieval artwork and with regards to the study into its 'compostelan' expressiveness.

J.S.O.

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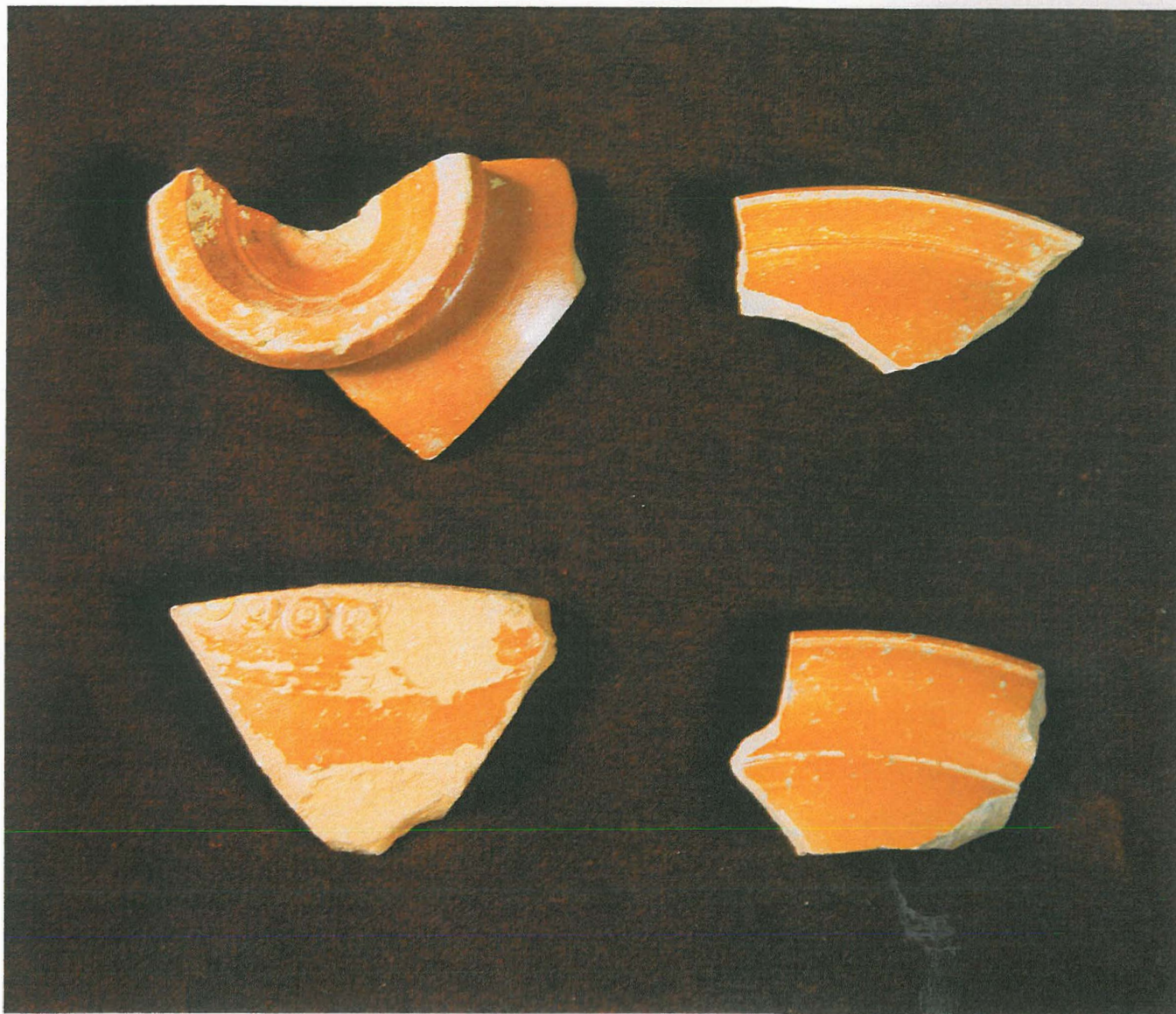
A ROMAN SETTLEMENT IN COMPOSTELA.
 1st TO 2nd CENTURIES A. D. POTTERY. VARIOUS SIZES.
 SANTIAGO. CATHEDRAL MUSEUM.

Selection of Roman pottery from the upper imperial period (I-III centuries) originally from the archaeological registry of the Cathedral's subsoil and surroundings. The example which has been chosen was brought to light by Don Manuel Chamoso during a series of investigative soundings carried out in the 'Plaza de la Quintana', quite near to the 'Puerta Real' of the Cathedral. They represent the most ancient perspectives of the Roman occupation (circa the end of the 1st century to the end of the 2nd century) and they are the best preserved examples from this period.

Fragments of luxury crockery of italic tradition, already produced on the peninsula more specifically in the pottery workshops of Tricio in La Rioja. We are dealing with crockery made in moulds from selected and purified clays which are covered in a characteristic red varnish, or in corresponding colours. These examples before us correspond to the borders of the shapes conventionally referred to as Dragendorf 36, and a fragment from a lower section that could belong to any of these two examples; the frequent association of the pieces leads us to believe that they form part of a stencilled dinner service —cup and plate— to which one could add the fragment from a lower section of the body of a decorated bowl similar to the Dragendorf 37 kind. Another two grey coloured fragments with polished surfaces and polished decorations, correspond to just as many cups, small and medium in size respectively; and the first with a closed form similar to a jug, the form of the second is not as precise. Another fragment of light coloured paste indicates an imitation of the 'terra sigillata' similar to Dragendorf 27, but manufactured according to simpler procedures. Finally, a small fragment featuring a flexible decoration comprising horizontal braids, located on what must have been the upper section of the belly of a container with an unknown shape, corresponds to the traditional pottery of the area, which follows the examples of the indigenous culture from the Iron Age.

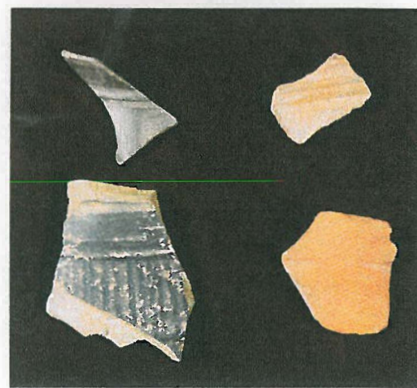
We have before us a small example of the wide ranging archaeological evidence of the Roman occupation located in the actual site of the cathedral buildings and their immediate surroundings. The selection is relevant to luxury pottery, which was fundamentally based on the production of Hispanic *terra sigillata* from the pottery workshops of La Rioja, but to which examples of painted Hispanic-Roman ceramic are added, possibly originally from the 'meseta' region of Castile or examples of the so-called "paredes finas", which on the whole originate from the production carried out in what today is the county council of Melgar de Tera, in Zamora. Pottery for everyday use is also included, still within the scope of a tradition which can be regarded as being part of the Roman, and which may possibly correspond to the earlier period of introduction of said tradition into the pottery of the urban framework in the north-west, above all, on account of its proximity and social and administrative origin, in Lucus Augusti. Finally, we add some of the scarce examples of the presence of products from the local pottery tradition, whose roots are deep in the 'castreño' world of the Iron Age, but the examples of which we have here are from a late period —1st century B. C. / 1st century A. D.— of that style of pottery.

The collection is representative of the pieces which can be found in the archaeological registry of the Cathedral; it also corresponds to the requirements brought about by certain habits and/or tastes which are classified as being unquestionably Roman, we can therefore guarantee that they serve the needs of a population of Roman origin or which has been very Romanized. These



circumstances point to a strong and early Romanization of the area, certified by the presence of an important centre of population in Iria Flavia —the origin of which is slightly earlier: at the end of the 1st century B. C. or at the beginning of the 1st century A. D.— or by the establishing of the Roman road network: a milestone from the times of Caligula in the vicinity of Compostela. A process of culturalization during which the arrival of foreign settlers coming from a Roman cultural background would not be uncommon, a fact which appears well documented in the inscriptions of the area; these people would bring with them everyday habits, aesthetic preferences and demonstrations of ideology which would need to be carried out by means of practices foreign to those which were available in the indigenous way of life.

J.S.O.



BEADS BELONGING TO A NECKLACE AND PENDANT.

CIRCA 4TH AND 6TH CENTURIES. VITREOUS PASTE, GLASS AND MALACHITE. VARIOUS SIZES. SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA. CATHEDRAL MUSEUM.

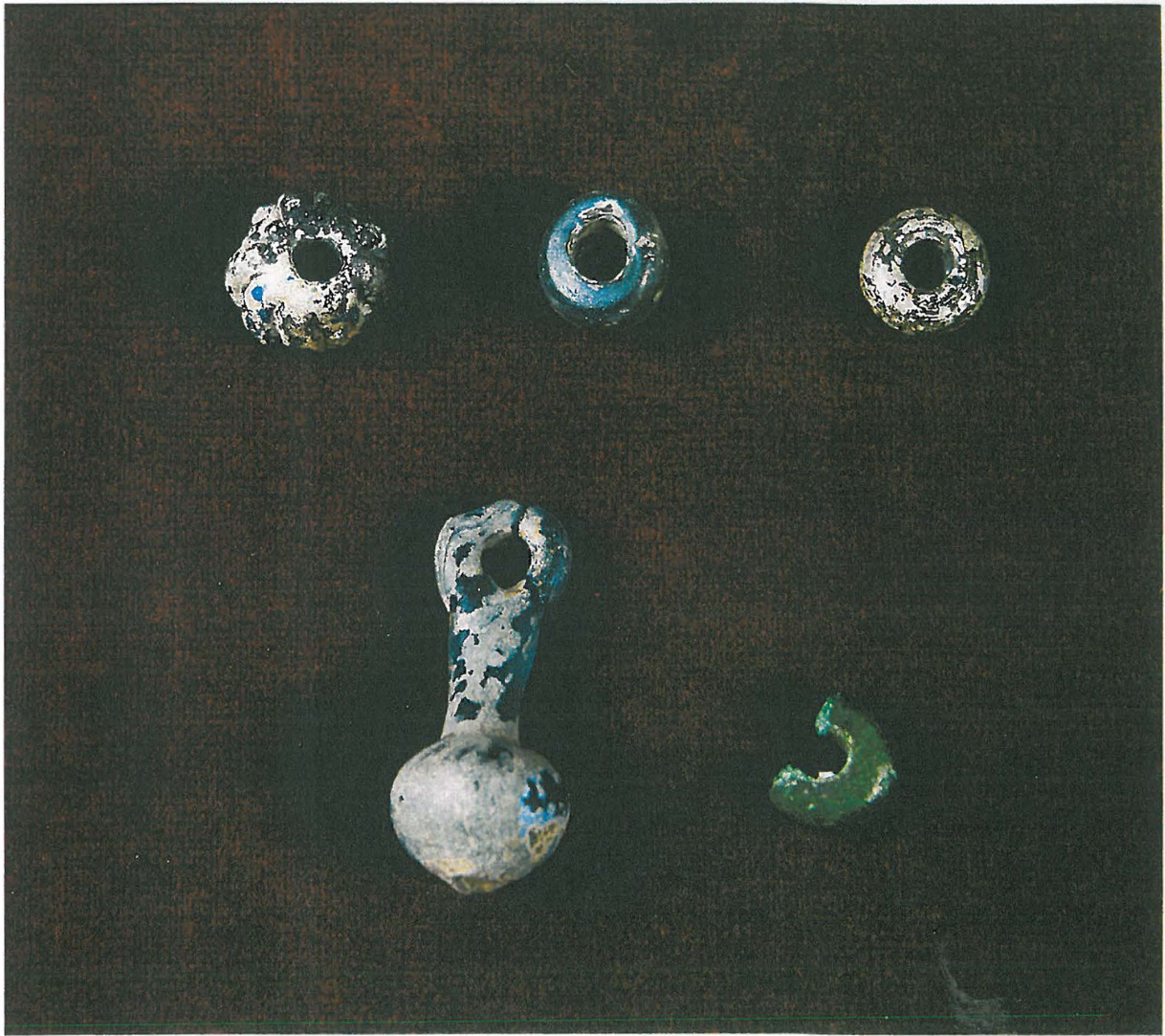
This group of pieces made of vitreous paste and malachite makes up the collection of objects which are the most representative of the relatively scarce archaeological register of the apostolic Edifice. They were found in most part during the investigative excavations carried out by López Ferreiro between 1878 and 1879. We have before us three beads made of vitreous paste, one of them is cylindrical and bears ovolo decoration, another is somewhat discoidal in shape and with grooves over the outer surface, and the last is shaped like a truncated cone even though its definition is rather irregular. Another two beads made of malachite, one being slightly discoidal and with a wide central hole and the other of a very reduced size, were added to the previous examples after they were discovered during the excavations of the edifice by D.M. Chamoso in 1950. To all these pieces another curious glass object is adjoined, it is shaped like a pendant (44 mm in length) and comprises an arch, from which it is hung, a cylindrical body and a globular end which seems to be somewhat braid-shaped.

The collection seems to correspond, at least in so far as the beads are concerned, to a necklace, perhaps a unique piece which would have to be related to some of the uses of the edifice as a funerary space. The chronology of this type of piece is problematic because of its extensiveness, with temporal limits which start as of the 4th century, at least, and last until the 7th, with the added inconvenience of the scarce information regarding their introduction and evolution within the Galician environment. In the areas near Galicia, such as the north of the plateau of Castile, they appear in late-Roman burial enclosures (3rd to 4th centuries) or in Hispanic-Visigothic necropolises.

With regards to the pendant, since the times of López Ferreiro, it has been identified as being the clapper of a small glass bell. This investigator corroborated this opinion, using known examples from within the framework of Roman catacombs, assigning to it a paleo-Christian specification and a funerary function. Notwithstanding, its use as a central piece for a necklace cannot be dismissed, in this case the same necklace to which the beads belonged. Faced with this questionable identification, any chronological hypothesis seems precarious, but if one accepts its association with the beads, be it directly —as parts of the same necklace— or indirectly —offerings or instruments connected to the burial ritual—, we estimate the chronology to include both the late-Roman and the upper-medieval periods: an intrusion into the edifice of a funerary nature which is difficult to identify.

J.S.O.

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CONSTRUCTION CERAMICS FROM ROMAN TIMES AND THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES.
 IMPRECISE CHRONOLOGY BETWEEN THE 1ST CENTURY AND THE 7TH CENTURY A.D.
 FIRED CLAY. SEVERAL SIZES.
 SANTIAGO. CATHEDRAL MUSEUM

Ceramic construction remains, whose technical characteristics point to the ancient world and, on occasions, the High Middle Ages too, are frequently found throughout the cathedral's subsoil. Practically all of the archaeological excavations carried out in the cathedral and its surroundings have uncovered the remains of characteristic flat Roman tiles, generally very fragmented, with their typical rectangular form of flanged longer sides and occasionally with marks or signs. A lot less frequent are the bricks, prismatic but differing in size and production process. There are also some paving stones, generally square-shaped and not very thick, but also rectangular and thick; they were basically used for paving purposes but were occasionally used instead of bricks, e.g. in arches. The last two kinds mentioned are more difficult to define chronologically, due to their cultural ubiquity; this problem is made worse in the case of the remains of curved tiles, sometimes Roman *imbrices* but mostly the result of the medieval introduction of this system of covering.

The appearance of these remains mainly takes place within the archaeological horizons representing the destruction, and occasionally also the mixture and moving, of older ones. This is reflected by the dispersion of the findings, as well as in their conservation, generally with important alterations of their original state. We therefore find them in the digging that took place around the apostolic shrine from the High Middle Ages onwards, in the filling in of Romanesque cathedral, of the 12th century, or even in the filling in of the present-day cloister, built in the 16th century. The remains on display here are from a tip located in the lower part of the cloister's southern wing and probably represent the moving of materials due to construction work inside the cathedral; these materials were recovered in 1987 inside the present-day Cathedral Museum, in excavations carried out by G. Meijide and E. Rey in the room known as the "bucheria" and forming part of an accumulation of rubble that arose after the construction of the Renaissance cloister: their relatively good condition shows that they are from an area that had not previously been altered much and were moved directly to the context in which they finally appeared.

However, these ceramics also appeared as part of ancient structures in their original location. In such cases, we are faced with two possibilities. The first one arises when the pieces make up or help to make up structures that for which they were not originally designed, becoming material re-used in a different time from their primary context and involving the destruction of such. Examples of the re-use of these materials are found in the funeral context, in which, on the other hand, it is easier to distinguish them; medieval tombs that re-used bricks or tiles to build walls for which other kinds of materials were normally used. They were appear as having been re-used in constructions, along with stones that have often also been re-used



from previous structures: this is the case of walls of imprecise chronology, but also of water channels from the High Middle Ages.

Finally, some examples seem to have been found in their original position, forming part of the structures for which they were designed. It is not always easy to correctly distinguish such cases since the remains of disappeared structures could have been used to make other *ex novo* ones, in which these ceramics are used in a similar way: in paving, an arch, a tomb, etc. Furthermore, the customary uses of these ceramics, although going back to the ancient past, were still widespread in the High Middle Ages, as shown by the pre-Romanesque Asturian architecture, which should be taken well into account due to its presence in Compostela, except for the tiles whose use cannot have been before the 7th century A.D. Examples of possible or even probable conservation *in situ* are the remains of ceramic paving stones in the apostolic shrine, the brick tombs late ancient and early medieval cemetery, the remains of arches or paving of the building structures found below the southern arm of the transept in Compostela's present-day basilica.

J.S.O.

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DENARIUS FEATURING EMPEROR TIBERIUS.
14-37 A. D. SILVER.
SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA. CATHEDRAL MUSEUM

This coin was part of a collection comprising more than five hundred denarii featuring Augustus and Tiberius—according to the estimates of those who found it between 550 and 600—. It was discovered in Ortoño, a village within the parish of S. Juan de Ortoño (Ames County Council), in the vicinity of Santiago. This collection, hardly recognized because it had practically been lost altogether, was brought to light inside a ceramic container, the characteristics of which seemed to distinguish it from the indigenous pottery, hidden in a small pit carved out of the base rock and covered by a stone slab. The coins are exclusively denarii and a small number are fragmented; five variations are present, two belonging to Augustus and three to Tiberius, bearing images of each of them, as youngster and as adult, respectively. These last characteristics establish the concealment at a time around the years 30 to 50 A.D.

The piece we have before us is part of the variations belonging to Tiberius, which features the head of the emperor on the front, at a advanced age already; looking to the right, and on the back is his wife Livia, sitting with a lance in her right hand. The standard of preservation is rather good, except for a certain deterioration on the back. It comprises the only piece of this important compilation which is available today; for according to the information we have at our disposal, it was scattered among private collections, either directly or by means of the antique market.

This treasure-trove could be another good indication of the level of Romanization that the area was submitted to in the first century A.D.. Such an important accumulation of silver coins from such an early period, has only come about in the north-west of Spain, in relation to the large urban centres or gold-mining industry in eastern Gallaecia, even though there is some evidence to suggest that the coast may have also been involved in the arrival of this Roman currency; for example of the hoard of sixty denarii from Cálago (Vilanova de Arousa, Pontevedra). We must not forget either that the presence of coins from the beginnings of the empire has also been registered in other enclaves in the vicinity of Ortoño, such as the examples from Iria and Castro Lupario; these cases, together with the early development of Iria as a Roman style urban centre which grew out of nothing, lead us to the conclusion that the treasure-trove from Ortoño was simply an indication of the Roman cultural promulgation in the area and not just an isolated incident connected to the trade contact between the local inhabitants and those from the Mediterranean.



It is rather more difficult to hypothesize as to the actual reasons behind such an important accumulation of silver coins, as well as what brought about their concealment. Regarding the former, we would have to understand the key economic and social conventions which were established in order to coordinate the process of Roman culturalization of the area in question. By this we mean the type of economic activities which developed and how the local inhabitants would integrate themselves into these. In so far as the actual fact that the pieces were concealed, it does not seem to be on account of a period of instability, keeping in mind the chronology and the painstaking effort with which it seems to have been carried out; however, it does bear some similarities to the concealment of objects of special quality which were performed in a ritualistic manner, towards the end of the period of rural culture, in those times in which the influence of Romanization begins to be clearly felt.

J.S.O.

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FUNERARY PLAQUE FROM BRANDOMIL.

CIRCA 2ND CENTURY A.D. GRANITE.

WIDTH: CIRCA 130 CM. (PRESERVED 115 CM); HEIGHT: 66 CM; THICKNESS: 20 CM.
ZAS (A CORUÑA)

Funerary plaque in the shape of a pediment which would have formed part of a funerary structure, a type of mausoleum or something similar. Unfortunately, the piece was discovered separated from its original archaeological context, and therefore we do not have any of its characteristics, not even its exact location: it was brought to light as a part of the filling material for a wall of a house which no longer exists. Nonetheless, we do have at our disposal the fact that it was part of the rich context of Roman inscriptions in the surroundings of Brandomil, if not in the village itself, given that the vast majority of the finds had gone on to form part of the walls of the houses built there. The piece is triangular in shape and bears in a good standard of preservation, except for a small loss of its lower right corner, hardly affecting the inscription, which is of good script and easy to read, except for the last letters: D(is) M(anibus) S(acrum) / Fabricius / Saturninus / an (orum) XV HIC SEP(ultus) ES(T), according to the drawing produced by Luis Monteagudo before the aforementioned loss. Establishing a chronology for this piece is somewhat more difficult, but bearing in mind the formal and epigraphical characteristics, one could put forward a date around the second century A.D.. Another feature which should be taken note of is the presence of the Latin style onomastics, in the content as well as in the presentation, which indicate the Roman, or very Romanized social background.

In wanting to describe a possible Roman context for the apostolic mausoleum, we have chosen this piece from Brandomil, principally because of its prominent memorial character. Its shape and dimensions leave no room for doubt as to its correspondence to the type of tomb which needed a specific, although not easily determinable, architectural configuration; this separates it from the simpler and more conventional procedures which were propagated throughout the north-west of Spain, based on the presence of the funerary stele driven vertically into the ground next to the burial, be it by means of incineration or interment, the latter being more common during the lower Roman period. The absence of other remains from this burial structure, which may still be in their original location, does not permit its definition. A definition which, moreover, proves to be more difficult if we bear in mind the variety of this type of complex funerary procedure within the Roman system and which is also reproduced in the actual Spanish environment —mausoleums in the shape of altars or with various staggered levels, tower-shaped monuments, tombs in the shape of temples, funerary enclosures, etc— and if, on the other hand, we take into account the fact that up to now there are no known details of the examples, which we know to have existed in Gallaecia because of the preserved epigraphic remains. In spite of all this, it is possible to indicate in this case, the existence of a tomb inside a small building, perhaps in the style of a temple, of which we conserve the pediment of its façade.

All things considered, the funerary plaque in the shape of a pediment from Brandomil bears witness to the existence of funerary mausoleums during the upper imperial Roman period in the north west of Gallaecia. Moreover, it achieves this by associating it to a type of prerequisite which features a series of invariables —important epigraphic collections, the presence of a foreign population, non-indigenous cultural representations— which guaranteed its important role in the Romanization of the area and its function within the



Drawing of the piece before its current deteriorated state. Courtesy of Luis Monteagudo

social and economic reorganization of the same. We are referring to the secondary centres of population with regards to the communications network which began to be established as of the definitive establishment of the Roman empire in the north west of Spain, above all the system of roads which would sometimes be linked to activities appropriate to ports, as for example Iria or Brigantium. This possible explanation as a *mansio viaria* is the basic link which exists between Brandomil, identified with the "Grandomiro" of the *Via XX per loca maritima*, and Compostela for which various authors put forward its identification with Asseconia, on the *via XIX*; it is a link which would explain the existence of complex funerary mausoleums in both places.

J.S.O.

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