

**ENGLISH TEXT  
SUMMARY**

**BARCINO, FROM A ROMAN COLONY TO A VISIGOTH SEDE REGIA, AN ISLAMIC MEDINA AND A COUNTY TOWN: AN URBS UNDER TRANSFORMATION**

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Barcelona is a Roman colony founded by Emperor August around 10 BC. By the late 3rd century and early 4th century, *Barcino* was an active and dynamic city, capable of undertaking major works, such as the construction of a new defensive wall comprising 76 towers, and of maintaining its sanitation and water supply network in operation. The topography of the city began a slow but ongoing process of transformation which resulted in the narrowing and occupation of some roads.

The Christianisation of the city was the motor of change. The centre of power moved from the forum to the north angle of the Roman town (next to the wall) where the first episcopal group was formed. In the 4th century Barcelona was an episcopal city. Through the written sources of that period we know the name of three bishops while archaeology has brought to light the first baptistery.

Barcelona was chosen as a *sede regia* at different times of the 5th and 6th centuries by the Visigoth state. This was probably a key factor in the enlargement of the early episcopal group and Visigoth centre of power in the city (preserved under the current cathedral and the square known as *plaça del Rei*) until occupying an extensive surface area. Archaeologically, we know about the baptistery, the reception hall and the bishop's palace, a cruciform church with its necropolis for "privileged" inhumations and a building which has been identified as the official residence of the Visigoth power, the palace of the *comes ciuitatis*.

Moreover, recent archaeological interventions have revealed the existence of another episcopal centre under the current Saints Just and Pastor Martyrs church, with archaeological remains of an early basilica and baptismal pool. This duality of groups is explained by the fact that Visigoths were Arians and therefore needed religious buildings suitable for the Arian worship by the elites and their families living in the city (people linked to the court, the administration and transferred soldiers).

Throughout the 5th and 6th centuries, the city continued to transform, the *domus* were compartmented to accommodate a large number of families,

the temple lost its function and the forum and other public buildings, such as the basilica, were dismantled.

There is proof of glass manufacturing in the city, with furnaces and slag levels at different points. Moreover, the architectural material from the dismantling of the Early Roman venues was used for the new constructions. The city was a permanent building site, "destroying in order to construct": in the second half of the 6th century important works were undertaken in the early episcopal group and centre of political power, and all these materials were incorporated into the new buildings as construction elements. The role of the bishop was decisive in this process that affected the city and the *suburbium*.

After the Muslim conquest, Barcelona became part of al-Andalus for almost a century (714-801) and the city was named Baršalūna. Archaeologically, this period is not very clear, but we can still speak of continuity of the centre of power (probably held by the Wali), we know of an area of Islamic necropolis and elements characteristic of this culture and of this political period have been discovered at different levels of the city, such as coins, ceramic pieces and bones with Arabic inscriptions.

During this period, it is highly likely that the cathedral became a mosque, but there is no archaeological data on this. In any case, levels of destruction have not been detected in any part of the city.

With the arrival of the Franks and the incorporation into the Carolingian Empire, the city went through a series of transformations. The appearance of silos or pits both inside and outside the city is well documented. It seems that the city was ruralised, something that had already begun during Late Antiquity. The dwellings shared space with rubbish dumps and there is evidence of areas used as stables.

The centre of power underwent some important transformations, such as the reuse of the cruciform church in *plaça del Rei* and the baptistery, the conversion of the bishop's reception hall into a *cellarium* and the construction of a palace for the counts using the structures from the Visigoth period

in the building of Visigoth civil power, the *comes ciuitatis*.

The Roman wall remained upright but the defensive towers had been gradually occupied by private individuals and incorporated into the houses built against the wall, usually one tower per house. The city gates became true urban castles, the place of residence and symbol of the local power: the bishop, the count and their representatives.

In the 11th century, the construction of a new Romanesque cathedral meant that all the area occupied by the episcopal/county centre again experienced a transformation. New buildings emerged, such as the hospital, the canonical school and the refectory.

In the 12th century, a new palace for the count was built over the Carolingian county palace, which would later be transformed into the Crown of Aragon's Royal Palace, which is currently preserved at ground level.

Barcelona had an important Jewish community. We do not know when Jews settled in the town, as the early references we have date to the 10th century. Physically, the Jewish area was organised in the north-eastern part of the Roman city, and in the Middle Ages it formed a dense network of alleyways where the Jewish population lived and had synagogues, schools, baths and specialised shops to buy kosher food. Archaeological interventions have brought to light some identifying elements of the Jewish population, such as a large number of small lamps, some of them used in rituals such as the *hanukkiyot*.

The presence of 13 large constructed silos stands out as they seem to have a meaning that goes beyond the private sphere. The silos, dating from around the 12th century and early 13th century, allowed storage of large amounts of grain which considerably exceeded the needs of the Jewish population. We wonder whether these silos were linked to the holding of censuses and to the role that some Jews played as city mayors.

In the 12th century, Barcelona was a significant city that was moving in a direction that would lead it to become one of the most important cities in

### THE EARLY NEOLITHIC AND THE EARLY BRONZE AGE IN THE EXCAVATIONS OF THE EL LICEU NEW CONSERVATOIRE

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the Mediterranean in the 13th century, with a port highly active in trade activities. A city comparable to Genoa, Venice or Alexandria.

In recent years, El Raval district has provided a set of highly innovative and important data for the understanding of Barcelona prehistory. The site of El Liceu conservatoire, excavated over a surface area of more than 1,000 square metres and with a stratigraphic record of over 8 metres, has enabled us to confirm the existence of two occupations located in late prehistory. The most ancient corresponds to the Early Neolithic, specifically the horizon known as Developed Early Neolithic (late 5th millennium). Occupational remains correspond to a settlement with traces of combustion structures and other support elements and others more difficult to determine, along with the corresponding occupation strata. The analysis of the materials has enabled us to document the use of local lithic materials (jasper, quartz...) for the manufacturing of lithic tools. We have also been able to document the presence of a large set of ceramic pieces, comprising medium-sized utensils of spherical and semi-spherical shapes decorated with plain laces, some moustache-shaped, and falling well within the late period of the so-called post-cardial style with an incipient presence of elements which are considered indicative of the Middle Neolithic. The analysis of the biotic elements has enabled documentation of a significant contribution of animal proteins, mainly of ovicaprids/bovines and *Suidae* while the cinegetic activities, related to the deer and wild boar, have little effect on the archaeological record. The site also reveals a brief occupation documented during the Early Bronze Age and as a whole it must be related, by proximity and chronology, to the Caserna de Sant Pau.

### AN EXAMPLE OF APPLICATION OF THE "CARTA ARQUEOLÒGICA DE BARCELONA": THE VILLAS AND THE SMALL AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENTS. A FIRST RADIOGRAPHY OF THE TERRITORIUM

215

The Roman *civitas* was the *urbs* and the *territorium*; for this reason we cannot understand *Barcino* without speaking of its *ager*. The work in and occupation of the land were very important in the Roman period and leads us to the subject of production, property and consumption. This paper attempts to provide a brief description of the remains interpreted as Roman villas in the *territorium* of *Barcino*. There will be no reference to the *suburbium* of the colony as it has recently been studied.

Villas structure the territory around *Barcino*, as in all Catalonia, and can be defined as a habitat centre, intended for the management and exploitation of land. In the case we are dealing with we find several villas scattered through the *ager*, in which two types of venues stand out: in the *pars privata* the *balnea*, and in the *pars rustica* the *torcularia*. The foundation of *Barcino*, on a small hill beside the sea, entailed the Romanisation of its surroundings, the *ager barcinonensis*, its centuriation, and the transformation of the type of production and land property, which involved a social change. *Barcino* corresponds to an urban model and is reflected in its society of a clearly Roman appearance, which erased traces of the former inhabitants of the area and evolved into a new settlement model that we find in the countryside. It is difficult to speak of enlargements and hierarchisation of the sites, as there have been few large-scale excavations and most of the documentation is notes or small-scale research. They were probably large villas, such as Can Cortada, Pedralbes and La Sagrera villa, surrounded by small supporting rural centres, like those discovered in Can Gomis and Dante Street.

We have information on different points in which the presence of structures or material from the Roman period is documented but, because of the type of documentation preserved, it is difficult to ascribe them correctly; they could be villas or small agricultural enclaves.

We should note something that has conditioned the research: the type of documentation preserved is heterogeneous and disperse, most of the remains identified as villas are references old find-

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## THE LATEST STONE EPIGRAPHIC FINDINGS IN *BARCINO*

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ings although several archaeological interventions have been recently undertaken in which remains identified as Roman villas have been excavated. With all this varied documentation we have attempted to produce a short summary. Moreover, we should point out that the whole territory has not been studied with the same intensity; there are districts in which the presence of archaeological interventions is minimal, which leads to affirmations that are not totally corroborated. For instance, the whole area occupied by the current Eixample district has no remains from the Roman period. Is that mere chance or was the whole plain really not occupied? Only new discoveries can help answer this question. Most villas had continuity as farmhouses in the medieval and modern period, and we find a greater concentration of discoveries in the districts where until the 19th century their economy was based on agriculture and stockbreeding. When studying the villas we must consider their type of agricultural production. In the case of *Barcino* it is clear that we must speak of cereals, the vine and olive trees. However, it is difficult to identify the different types of exploitation given that there are no remains or those existing are difficult to interpret. As Cato notes: "By all means have an irrigated hayfield if you have water; if not, grow as much dry hay as you can." (M. Porcius Cato, *De agricultura*, VIII). We must point out that several remains of *torcularia* have been discovered, which confirms the cultivation of vine and olive trees. In relation to cereals, silos have been documented, but there is no archaeologically documented evidence of the cultivation of cereal, and neither have tools been recovered to suggest its cultivation and later production.

With respect to the *pars urbana* of the villas, we must emphasise that the *balnea* are highly represented, which also happens with the *domus* in the interior of the colony. There is no doubt that in *Barcino* and in its *ager*, water and bathing have a major significance that requires further research.

We must particularly mention that on the hill of Montjuïc, a place densely inhabited in the Roman period with

its sides cultivated, two villas have been documented in two different crest lines and distinct centres of agricultural exploitation, as well as the presence of a quarry from which the ashlar to build the city and some villas were extracted. In short, the *territorium* of *Barcino* was occupied by several types of agricultural exploitation and houses of the elites of the colony, their location corresponds to the road network and most buildings were located on the small hills surrounding the plain and its valleys, shaped by the different torrents, and until today no remains have been discovered in the plain itself.

Publication of eight inscriptions from the colony of *Barcino*. Some are complete and others fragmentary inscriptions but all of them are interesting because of the place they were found and their content, albeit limited in some cases. Once again it was clear that all fragments must be collected as they are only apparently insignificant. They were found both in the old district and outside the walls. In the first case, they are honorific inscriptions (there is no new votive inscription) for public places in the city, possibly the forum. The first of these inscriptions tells us about a new magistrate, the father of another known magistrate, of the Calpurnia *gens* and we realise again the influence of some families in the municipal government of *Barcino*. Although it is a new finding made in the church of Santa Maria del Pi, it is an inscription that was removed from its original place to be reused first as an altar pillar and later as a construction element. Out of the inscriptions found *extramuros*, which have a funerary character (no. 2, 3 and 6), two plaques are especially eloquent: the one found in Hospital Street, which refers to three figures, possibly with family ties, and the one found in the territory of *Barcino* (La Sagrera villa), quite old and with a clear relation between former slaves and free individuals, which reveals the open character of the *barcinonense* society in the early decades of the life of the Roman colony, which had a highly productive *ager*.

## A VAULT PAINTING FROM LATE ANTIQUITY IN THE BARCELONA BAPTISTERY

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quarhis 217

During the 1979 excavation, remains of paintings were discovered by the baptistery pool, in the current Museu d'Història de Barcelona. The composition as a canvas tapestry was made using the fresco technique on a white background and featured a binary decoration alternating vegetable and floral motifs.

The paintings were fixed to a flat support for exhibition, from which they were detached in 1990, when the archaeological subsoil underwent a reorganisation. During this process it was discovered that the paintings had a slightly concave exterior profile and a mortar width ranging from 1.5 to 10 cm, which made them suitable for adaptation to a curved surface.

This, along with their decoration motif – carpet-style type, which forms part of the net or continuous relationship decoration system characteristic of polychrome ceilings and vaults – enables us to categorise them within the vault architecture. There are no remaining marks of wire netting fences or other type of support, which could be explained by the manipulation they underwent when being adapted to a flat panel during their exhibition in the 1980s.

The paintings have been archaeologically dated to the second half of the 6th century. A study conducted by the Polytechnic University of Catalonia has explained the architectonic reality of the baptistery at that time based on the geometric calculation of the construction elements currently conserved. According to the study, there was possibly a dome over the baptismal pool and a square ambulatory covered by a barrel vault that must have surrounded the central canopy.

The type of decoration leads us to suppose that the paintings presented here were located in the ambulatory surrounding the pool, as the continuous relationship decoration, because their characteristic repetition and uniformity was typical of passageways. The fact that they feature a very soft curvature indicates that they possibly formed part of a false ceiling adapted to the vault, a technique already known in Roman times.

The paintings feature two types of alternating motifs. The first is a concentric

and circular pattern and is defined by a circular and ear-shaped vegetal border, with four equidistant flowers pointing outwards, surrounding a central fleuron. The second type of motif shows a central square from which four large front view flowers emerge and some palmettes which link them to the first set of motifs. The grid is complemented by a third element, a dentil disk, which separates all the motifs and acts as the unifying axis of the grid. We can see differences in the mode of application of the painting, in which there are either blank spaces or small formal modifications in the design of the motifs, which can only be noticed with a more exhaustive observation of the composition. We can also see the use of the chiaroscuro and chromatic gradation with the objective of providing overall volume.

The ongoing relationship decoration, of Hellenistic origin, was highly present in the painting of the Roman period. It was mainly used in ceilings and vaults and widely employed in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. During the Early Roman Empire we observe continuity in its use while in the 5th and 6th centuries, given the scarcity of pictorial testimonies in Western Europe, we can trace its existence because of its significant use in mosaics. In the Eastern Mediterranean some examples from this period can be found in churches in Cappadocia or Egypt, or as painting applied to wooden boards that were fixed onto walls and ceilings, also in the context of Coptic culture.

The paintings in the Barcelona baptistery were in use from its creation in the second half of the 6th century until the 9th century, when the building was dismantled. Their design prevailed for a long period of time. The lack of similar pictorial examples in the Iberian Peninsula which can be dated to Late Antiquity lends them a testimonial value of great importance.

