HEADING WEST TO THE SEA FROM *AUGUSTA EMERITA*: ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD DATA AND THE *ANTONINE ITINERARY*

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ABSTRACT

The provincial capital of *Lusitania* plays a key role in the communications network of *Hispania*. The roads heading West were of great importance as they guaranteed a connection to the Atlantic Ocean and access to the maritime trade. The archaeological fieldwork that was undertaken in the region has enabled us to recognise direct and indirect evidence of these routes, presented here as a partial reconstitution of *Lusitania*'s road network. This cartography is confronted with the *Antonine Itinerary* description of these routes, highlighting numerous interpretation problems.

The provincial capital of Roman *Lusitania* plays a key role in the communications network of *Hispania*. Although its location on the major North-South route (*Vía de la Plata*) is well known and has been studied, the roads heading West were equally important, since they guaranteed a connection to the Atlantic Ocean and access to the maritime trade. The *Antonine Itinerary (AI)*[1] mentions three routes heading West from *Augusta Emerita* to the port of *Olisipo*. The first two join the river *Tagus* before reaching *Olisipo* (*viae XIV* and *XV*, according to Saavedra's classification[2]; while the third heads South-West through *Ebora* and *Salacia* (*via XII*).

The main issue of this written source (A1) regarding these routes is the identification of the listed *mansiones*, as well as the starting and ending points, namely Lisbon and Mérida. We can be certain of the locations of *Catobrica*, *Salacia*, and *Ebora*, on route XII, in contemporary Setúbal, Alcácer do Sal and Évora in Portugal[3]. On route XIV, the association of *Abelterio* with Alter do Chão (Portugal) has also recently been confirmed[4], and it seems to be consensual that *Budua* is likely to be identified with the place where the Botoa hermitage is found (Badajoz, Spain)[5]. On route XV, only *Scallabin* can

unquestionably be identified with Santarém (Portugal)[6]. The exact location of the remaining 14 *mansiones* is still uncertain, despite ongoing and vibrant discussions among scholars.

Another interpretation problem is related to the figures for the total distance between the starting and ending points and those that supposedly measure the distance of the intermediate points. In the case of these three routes, the figure for the total distance between *Olisipo* and *Emerita* is either short by a significant number of miles (routes XII and XIV), or exceeds the distance required to accomplish the route between those two points (route XV). Furthermore, the same inconsistencies are found when considering the distances between the scarce certain locations of intermediary *mansiones.*

There is no consensus among scholars regarding the explanation or correction of these "errors". We believe that the *AI* text is topologically correct although topographically inaccurate. Most of the attempts made to reconstruct these routes have focused on finding flaws in the text so that it can correspond more faithfully to the topography. However, our perception of space, and space representation, is not necessarily the same as those who used the Roman *itineraria*[7]. Bearing this in mind, our approach is based on archaeological field data

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[1] Cuntz, 1929.
[2] Saavedra,1914.
[3] Mantas, 2012:146-181 with updated bibliography.
[4] António and Encarnação, 2009.
[5] Rodríguez Martín, 2008: 429; Alarcão, 2006: 236.

[6] Arruda, Viegas, 1999.
[7] Salway, 2012: 204-210.

recovered in the region, in an attempt to find the flaws in our topographic interpretation of the *AI*, and hoping to find the topological key to understanding this written source.

The area represented in Figure 1 roughly corresponds to the region where we were able to collect direct and indirect archaeological evidence of routes XII, XIV and XV. We are bounded East by the border between Portugal and Spain, and on the West side we have chosen to present a reconstruction of route XII as far as *Ebora* and, for routes XIV and XV, around the only *mansio* we are able to locate with certainty: *Abelterio*. (Fig. 1)

The dots on the map represent the direct archaeological evidence of the Roman roads found in the territory: milestones and bridges. We have also included an *ara* consecrated to the *Lares Viales,* which we believe to be located at a significant point of route XIV (no. 14). This monument was found near a road, supposedly within the ruins of a temple[8]. Nowadays, nothing can be seen on site to indicate the existence of such a building, but there are irrefutable testimonies of a Roman settlement[9]. Some authors have identified this location as the *mansio Matusaro,* referred to in the *AI* [10]. A relevant issue with regard to the study of the roads in this area, is the overall lack of urban settlements in a vast territory to the West of the provincial capital. In all likelihood, most of the *mansiones* listed on these routes would have been small settlements, such as the one in Monte das Esquilas, albeit significant enough to be mentioned as nodes in the road network, but with discrete archaeological presence in the contemporary landscape.

The bridges represent a solid argument when it comes to defining the routes. While the well known and studied[11] bridge of Vila Formosa (no.13) should unquestionably be considered a testimony of route XIV, a structure such as that of Barbacena (no.15) is less convincing when considering the building techniques alone. However, this is the very location where a funerary inscription was found[12], as well as archaeological evidence of a Roman site[13]. Indeed, the rural road that is served by that bridge is still used today by Catholic pilgrims and can be traced back to a number of ethnographic records[14]. (Fig. 2)

The milestones are, by far, the most reliable testimonies of Roman roads, however, they do have several interpretation problems. As exceptional monuments, milestones tend to be displaced and reused for other functions. Such is the case of the milestone in Estremoz, Portugal (no.1), that can be found, nowadays, supporting the holy water font in a medieval church. The presence of this milestone in a medieval urban settlement has been used as a strong argument by those who identify Estremoz as *Dipo*[15], the identification of which is refuted by authors who consider this *AI mansio* to be located within Spanish territory[16]. This dispute is also linked to the question of the "lack" of miles (or *mansiones*) on route XII. In fact, those in favour of *Dipo* being a "Spanish" location, argue that the figures regarding the *AI* miles should be read and added from East to West (or from *Augusta Emerita* to *Olisipo*) and not in the order by which they are listed in the *AI*[17], thus placing Evoramonte at too far a distance from the previous *mansio* (*Evandriana*, when coming from the East). Another milestone (no.3) may corroborate this interpretation, as its inscription indicates a number of miles that have clearly been counted *from* Mérida. Nevertheless, and once again, this milestone was brought to a museum in Lisbon, and its exact place of finding is also a bone of contention[18]. (Fig. 3)

We have brought these examples to emphasize the need to combine multiple layers of information when it comes to interpreting the so called "direct archaeological evidence" of Roman roads and its association with literary sources like the *AI*. The *AI* is undeniably a major reference for the study of the Roman road network, however it should be read using the archaeological field data recovered from the territory as a focal point.

By bringing this approach to the area of *Lusitania*, the recovered data has led us to reflect upon the conflicting road maps produced for these three routes of the *AI* and has hopefully contributed to clarifying some interpretation problems. It is also very important to consider other historical references from later times, adding together the layers of information so as to consolidate the reconstruction of the road network. A single reference from a medieval travel journal does not allow us to de-

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[8] Saa, 1956: 292-295.
[9] Carneiro, 2011: 281.
[10] Mantas, 2012: 171.
[11] Mantas, 2012: 168-169.
[12] Encarnação, 1984: 646-647.
[13] Almeida, 2000: 68-69.
[14] Almeida *et al.*, 2011: 194-195.

[15] Alarcão, 2001; Mataloto, 2010.
[16] Almagro-Gorbea, *et al.*, 2009; Gorges and Rodríguez Martín, 1999.
[17] Almeida *et al.*, 2011:194-195.
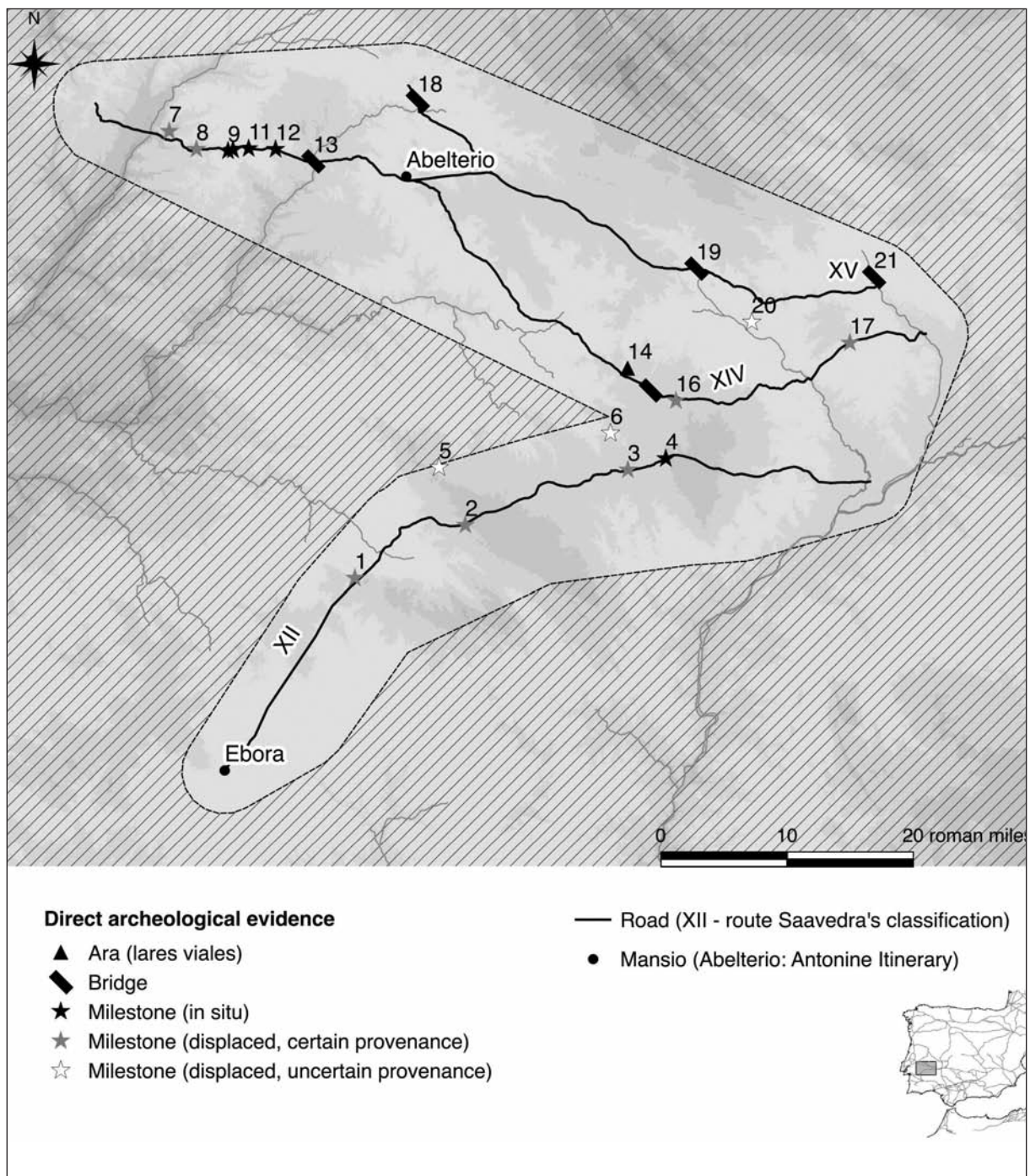[18] Alarcão, 2006: 233-234.

Fig. 1. Direct archeological evidence of roman roads: 1. São Marcos, Estremoz (IRCP 674); 2. Senhora dos Mártires (IRCP 675); 3. Herdade de Alcobaça (IRCP 670, 679); 4. Alcarapinha; 6. Torre do Curvo (IRCP 664); 7. Monte do Barata (IRCP 668); 8. Nossa Senhora dos Prazeres (IRCP 666a); 9. Fonte da Cruz 1; 10. Fonte da Cruz 2; 11. São Marcos, Ponte de Sor; 12. Monte da Coreia; 13. Ponte de Vila Formosa; 14. Monte das Esquilas (HEp 3, 1993, 487); 15. Ponte de Barbacena; 16. Barbacena (IRCP 661, 663); 17. Desfesa de São Pedro (HEp 2, 1990, 822); 18. Ponte do Chocanal; 19. Ponte das Escarninhas; 20. Reguengo; 21. Ponte de Nossa Senhora da Enxara.

termine that a Roman road passed through a certain location and, by the same token, neither does a single Roman milestone. Nevertheless, if, in a certain location, we can establish the provenance of a milestone, and find references to that place in medieval and modern travel itineraries, plus archaeological evidence of a nearby Roman settlement, and even modern or contemporary military maps representing that spot as being relevant in the road network, then perhaps we may more accurately determine that that was one of the nodes of the *AI* routes.

Fig. 2. Ponte de Nossa Senhora da Enxara (Campo Maior, Portugal), over the river Xévora on route XV (nº21)-

Fig. 3. Monte da Coreia (Ponte de Sor, Portugal), milestone found *in situ* on route XIV.

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