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Urbanism in Iron Age Iberia

Two Worlds in Contact

ABSTRACT During the Late Iron Age two processes developed in Iberia: a process of growing demography and a trend towards nucleated settlements. Both processes ended in the appearance of large fortified settlements (oppida), well known through archaeology and written sources. As in other areas of Europe, there were probably substantial differences between settlements, in terms of geographical setting, size, form, and function. In the end, the first cases of urbanization at the end of the Iron Age are presented as changing and multi-faceted entities in space and time, with similarities and unique characteristics. We discuss this process and the insights we can glean from it. Two worlds, the Mediterranean in the east and south and the Atlantic in north and west, had contacts through inland territories and navigations. The exploration of the relationships between oppida, demography, social organization, and urbanization is considered in this paper.

KEYWORDS Iberia; Iron Age; urbanism; oppida; demography; settlement patterns.

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Introduction

In this paper we have tried to provide an overall review of urbanism in the Iberian Peninsula during the Late Iron Age (*c.* 500 BC to Roman times). We present recent data that we have organized according to three main areas: 1) the Iberian territories in the Levante and the south; 2) Celtic territories in central Spain and Portugal; and, finally 3) the northwest and the Cantabrian region (Fig. 8.1 — also see Fig. 8.3). The paper shows how the typical Iberian concept of cities, with evident urban or pre-urban structures dating from the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age and the stimuli of colonial Mediterranean agents, penetrated from the coastal Mediterranean regions to inland areas in the central Meseta (the Spanish Plateau), where old regional settlement traditions survived and which in some ways influenced the formation of new urban nuclei. The northern regions developed their own traditions, with roots in the Atlantic Bronze Age and Early Iron Age (*castro* culture), but opened up to influences from the Meseta, leading to late peculiar forms of urban organization.

As established by Barry Cunliffe (1995) some time ago, the unique location of the Iberian Peninsula between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea provided these lands of Western Europe with an area in which the tradition of mixed settlements was a general norm. Taking this pattern into consideration, we reveal that Mediterranean elements, autochthonous features, and Atlantic traits all existed in a complex relationship. As Martín Almagro-Gorbea

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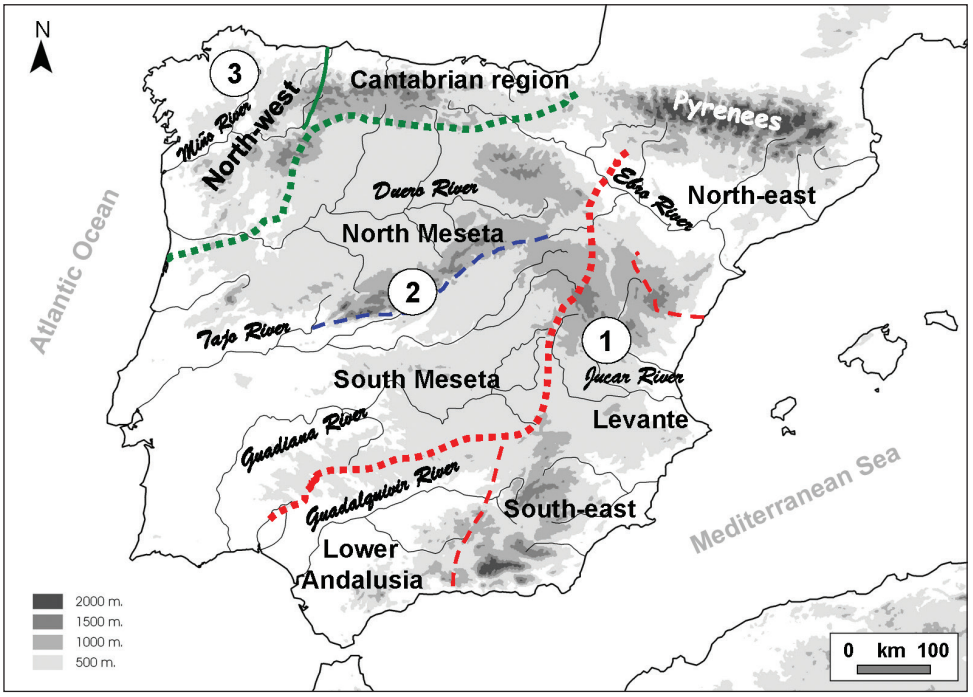

Figure 8.1. Map of the Iberian Peninsula with main regions, rivers, and the three cultural areas: Mediterranean, inland (Meseta), and north-west/north. Map by authors.

(1995) affirmed, a singular 'Mediterraneanization' process that conveyed the most important features of urban planning along an axis that ran from the south-east to the north-west can be recognized. The urbanism of the Iberian Peninsula is presented with Mediterranean connections, which in several aspects are close to those of urbanism in different western and central Mediterranean regions (Osborne and Cunliffe 2005; Garcia 2013), and with elements of Temperate and Atlantic Europe (Fernández-Götz 2018; Fichtl 2018; Moore 2017; Sharples 2014), although in an original and distinctive form, which deserves much more theoretical and empirical attention.

At the end of the paper we have presented several reflections on the complex concept of urbanism, which has increasingly gained interest in archaeological research (Cowgill 2004; Marcus and Sabloff 2008; Fernández-Götz and Krausse 2016), applied to the specific forms of Iberian Iron Age urban settlements.

This overview is relevant for several reasons. Firstly, it is valuable as Iberia has traditionally been neglected in European studies of Late Iron Age oppida. On the one hand, the Spanish language itself and the limited number of Spanish archaeological publications in other languages have acted as a 'refractory barrier' to knowledge; and on the other hand, the Iberian Peninsula has often been viewed as the European 'Wild West' and considered external to the main cultural developments on the rest of the continent. Secondly, it is useful because, in the Spanish academic tradition, the Iron Age has clearly been divided into two different, almost mutually exclusive areas: the Levante and southern Iberian culture and the Celtic interior and north. Thirdly, it is important because this is the first attempt to include all the Iberian oppida in the context of the Iron Age cultural traditions of Temperate Europe and the Mediterranean. In this respect, it offers a holistic overview of the oppida phenomenon on the Iberian Peninsula. Finally, it offers a comprehensive look at the current state of our knowledge of Late Iron Age oppida, including new insights and considerations that have not usually been made in traditional Spanish research, even in the most recent studies. The synthesis reviews the most important empirical data, offering at the same time comparative reflections on the complex concepts of oppida and urbanism.

In summary, this contribution constitutes a starting point for rethinking both the Spanish oppida and terms such as urban/urbanism and to carefully outline the terminology we use. This is because labels are not neutral; they relate to theoretical premises and in turn define how the empirical data become meaningful (Fletcher 2019).

Iberian Group (Eastern and Southern Spain)

The Iberian *populi* spread along the Mediterranean coast of the Iberian Peninsula from the Ampurdán to Lower Andalusia between *c.* 600 BC and the time of the conquest of Rome. Two main areas have been rec-

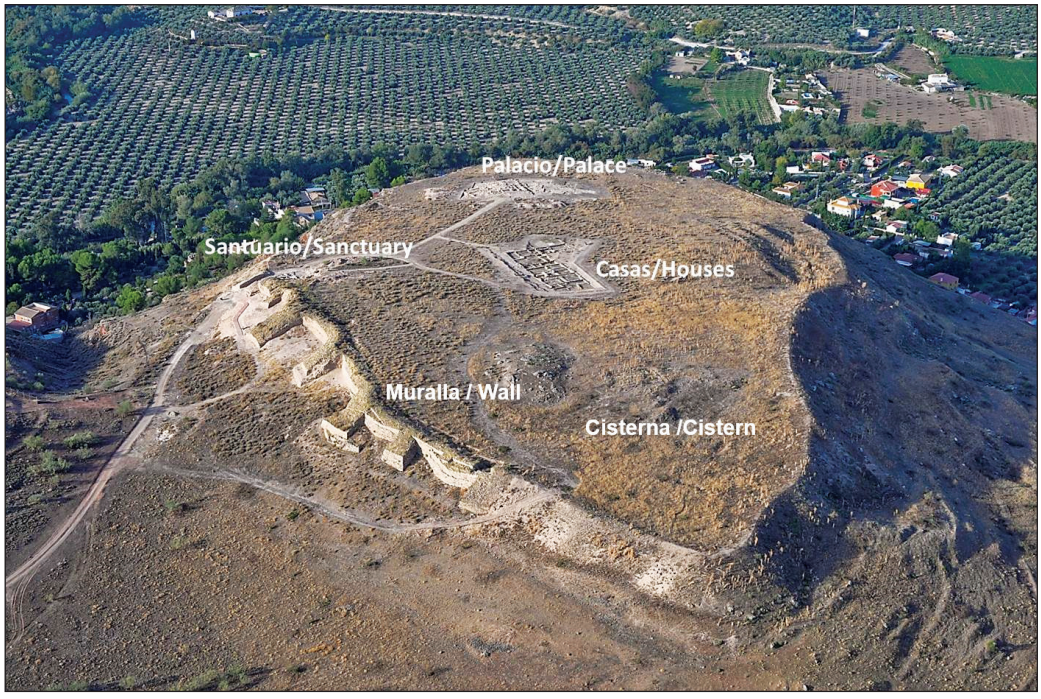

Figure 8.2. Aerial view of Puente Tablas (Jaén) oppidum. Courtesy of Instituto de Arqueología Ibérica. Jaén University.

ognized in this vast region: that of the north-eastern or northern Iberians (Sanmartí and Santacana 2005) to the north of the Júcar River (Belarte, Miró, and Noguera 2009; Belarte and Monrós 2015), the Lower Ebro and Catalonia, and the Levante (Bonet Rosado, Guérin, and Mata Parreño 1994; Bonet Rosado and Mata Parreño 2009), and the land occupied by the south-eastern Iberians (Abad and Sala-Sellés 2007, Grau Mira 2003) — the true core of Iberian culture — who spread into the southern lands of Iberia, basically Andalusia. The diversity of Iberian culture today is a well-known issue, although with common features that have been recognized since the first modern synthesis to the most recent (Arribas 1964; Ruiz and Molinos 1998; Aranegui 2012). The evolution of local substrates explains some differences, as the north-eastern Iberians had roots in the Late Bronze Age tradition of Urnfields (Ruiz Zapatero 2014) and the southern territories in the *Orientalizante* and Tartesian culture (Torres 2014). In both areas the influence of Phoenician colonialist agents (eighth–sixth centuries BC) — and later of Greek peoples — were, with varying intensities, decisive in the emergence of the Iberian peoples in the sixth century BC (Aubet 2006; Miró and Santos 2014; Sanmartí 2009a).

In the Early Iron Age the 'warrior aristocracies' of north-east Iberia and the sacred meridional monarchies (hierarchical societies) evolved into chiefdoms, and, according to some scholars, into pre-state chiefdoms or even 'archaic states' (Sanmartí 2009b, 155; Santos 1998). In all events, the oppida played a central role in settlement structure. The term 'oppida' in Iberian archaeological tradition, however, is multivocal (Fumado 2013) and therefore problematic (Quesada 2017, 533–35), and it has been used with different chronological values and is tied to several different meanings, other than solely for the classical oppida of Late Iron Age Central Europe (Fichtl 2018; Moore 2017). The term usually refers to generally large settlements (from 5–10 ha to more than 50 ha, depending on the regions) located in well-defended, high positions with fortifications, which are of an urban character (but not necessarily monumental and with regular layouts). They are defined by the presence of sanctuaries and public spaces, these being mainly storage and craft facilities (Quesada 2017, 534). Finally, oppida are also considered to be political and economic centres that control an area together with its rural population.

In southern Iberia, the lands of *Bastetani* and *Oretani*, the oppida were established with a distance that varied from 10 to 50 km between each other in the Guadalquivir Valley, with surfaces between 10 and 20 ha (Almagro-Gorbea 2014, 296). They comprise massive stone walls with square towers. The main problem is that the excavation area has been somewhat reduced, and so we are largely ignorant with respect to their internal organization, except for a few cases, such as Puente Tablas (Jaén), Cerro de la Cruz (Córdoba), and La Picola (Alicante). In these oppida the urban layout is irregular with rectilinear streets and houses, which share common walls and are organized in blocks. Street design

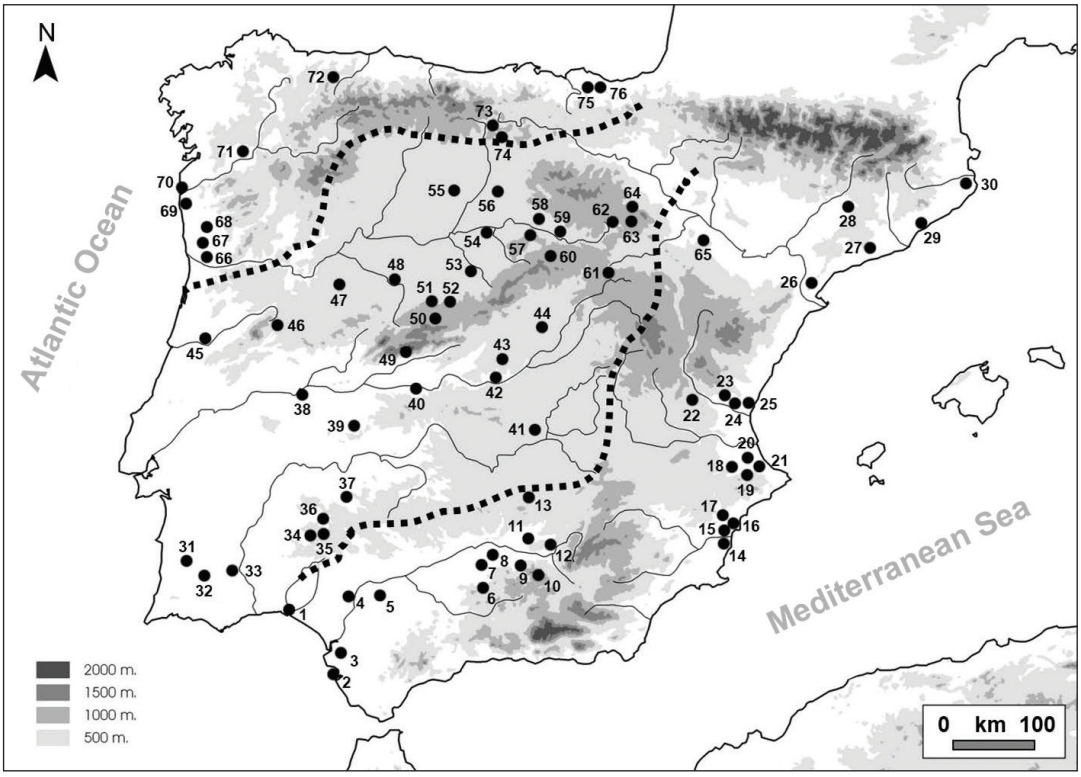

Figure 8.3. Map showing sites discussed in the text. Map by authors.

1. *Onuba* (Huelva)
2. *Gadir* (Cádiz)
3. *Hasta Regia* (Mesas de Asta, Cádiz)
4. *Ilipa* (Alcalá del Río, Sevilla)
5. *Carmo* (Carmona, Sevilla)
6. Cerro de la Cruz (Almedinilla, Córdoba)
7. Torreparedones (Baena, Córdoba)
8. Porcuna (Jaén)
9. Puente Tablas (Jaén)
10. El Pajarillo (Huelma, Jaén)
11. Cástulo (Linares, Jaén)
12. Úbeda la Vieja (Úbeda, Jaén)
13. Cerro de las Cabezas (Valdepeñas, Ciudad Real)
14. Cabezo Lucero (Guardamar del Segura, Alicante)
15. El Oral (San Fulgencio, Alicante)
16. La Picola (Santa Pola, Alicante)
17. *Ilici* (Elche, Alicante)
18. La Bastida de les Alcusses (Mogente, Valencia)
19. L'Alt del Punxó (Muro de Alcoy, Alicante)
20. *Saitabi* (Játiva, Valencia)
21. L'Hort de la Torre (Vilallonga, Valencia)
22. *Kelin* (Caudete de las Fuentes, Valencia)
23. Castellet de Bernabé (Liria, Valencia)
24. *Edeta*-Liria (Valencia)
25. *Arse-Saguntum* (Sagunto, Valencia)
26. Castellet de Banyoles (Tivissa, Tarragona)
27. Banyeres del Penedès (Tarragona)
28. Molí de l'Espigol (Tournabous, Lérida)
29. Burriac (Cabrera del Mar, Barcelona)
30. Puig de Sant Andreu (Ullastret, Gerona)
31. Garvão (Ourique, Beja)
32. Mesa do Castelinhos (Almodôvar, Beja)
33. Mértola (Beja)
34. Capote (Higuera la Real, Badajoz)
35. *Nertobriga Concordia Iulia* (Fregenal de la Sierra, Badajoz)
36. Cantamento de la Pepina (Fregenal de la Sierra, Badajoz)
37. Hornachuelos-*Fornacis* (Ribera del Fresno, Badajoz)
38. Castillejo de la Orden (Alcántara, Cáceres)
39. Villasviejas (Botija, Cáceres)
40. *Augustobriga* (Talavera la Vieja, Cáceres)
41. Palomar de Pintado (Villafranca de los Caballeros, Toledo)
42. *Toletum* (Toledo)
43. El Cerrón de Illescas (Toledo)
44. El Llano de la Horca (Santorcaz, Madrid)
45. *Conimbriga* (Coimbra)
46. Cabeço das Fráguas (Sabugal, Guarda)
47. Yecla de Yeltes (Salamanca)
48. *Salmantica* (Salamanca)
49. El Raso (Candeleda, Ávila)
50. Ulaca (Solosancho, Ávila)
51. La Mesa de Miranda (Chamartín, Ávila)
52. Las Cogotas (Cardeñosa, Ávila)
53. *Cauca* (Coca, Segovia)
54. *Pintia* (Padilla de Duero, Valladolid)
55. *Intercatia* (Paredes de Nava, Palencia)
56. *Pallantia* (Palenzuela, Palencia)
57. *Segontia Lanca* (Langa de Duero, Soria)
58. *Clunia* (Peñalba de Castro, Burgos)
59. *Uxama* (El Burgo de Osma, Soria)
60. Tiermes (Montejo de Tiermes, Soria)
61. Aguilar de Anguita (Guadalajara)
62. *Numantia* (Garray, Soria)
63. *Arekorata* (Muro de Ágreda, Soria)
64. *Contrebia Leukade* (Aguilar del Río Alhama, La Rioja)
65. *Contrebia Belaisca* (Botorrita, Zaragoza)
66. Monte Mozinho (Penafiel, Porto)
67. Sanfins (Paços de Ferreira, Porto)
68. Briteiros (Guimarães, Braga)
69. Santa Luzia (Viana do Castelo)
70. Santa Trega (La Guardia, Pontevedra)
71. San Cibrán de Las (San Amaro-Punxín, Orense)
72. San Chuis (Allande, Asturias)
73. Monte Bernorio (Pomar de Valdivia, Palencia)
74. La Ulaña (Humada, Burgos)
75. Gastiburu (Arratzu, Vizcaya)
76. Marueleza (Nabarniz, Vizcaya).

here exhibits a rationalization of urban space with a Greek influence.

Puente Tablas (Ruiz 2018) represents a medium-sized oppidum (6.5 ha) on the flat summit of a hill, surrounded by a powerful wall with bastions and dating to between the sixth and fourth centuries BC (Fig. 8.2). The central settlement core is organized in blocks of houses and parallel streets. To the south, separated by an empty space, the aristocratic area was established. It consists of several buildings, and one of them was probably used as the palace of a hierarch. This building was separated into a private sector and a working area with two wineries (Ruiz and others 2015). A large cistern was built in the northern part. The area of power was therefore intentionally segregated from the other communal areas. In conclusion, it seems clear that a previously constructed urban design existed there, a concept of space that was both integrated and organized in accordance with social and symbolic criteria.

At Cerro de la Cruz (Quesada, Kavanagh, and Moralejo 2010, 84–86) the urban area reveals a system of perfectly straight streets, with regular squares. Communal facilities were paved with beaten earth and small pottery fragments. Cisterns have been documented outside the houses and more so inside them. All these features point to the existence of a central authority and strict planning.

In these cities the main buildings were the *regia* (small dynastic palaces), which were located in the strongest/highest area of the settlements, as has been identified at Torreparedones (Córdoba) and Cerro de las Cabezas (Valdepeñas, Ciudad Real), and in the dynastic sanctuaries at these sites (Almagro-Gorbea 2014, 296).

Most oppida in the Guadalquivir countryside and inland Granada are poorly known with respect to their internal anatomy. In Lower Andalusia, the area of the mythical Tartessos, the settlement of Phoenicians on the coast (*Gadir* and Huelva) stimulated *synoecism* and urban concentration. A rough approximation of population density estimated a figure of twenty people per square kilometre (Almagro-Gorbea 2014, 298). Large urban centres such as *Onuba*, *Ilipa*, *Hasta Regia*, and *Carmo* controlled the trade routes. In the following centuries, population growth, settlements with new foundations and well-defined land divisions led to a dense urban landscape almost throughout the entire Guadalquivir Valley by the time of Roman conquest at the end of the third century BC and the early second century BC (Armada and Grau-Mira 2018).

In the south-east, including the Upper Guadalquivir, the emergence of the oppida system arrived a little later, with small, fortified sites located mainly on the coastal areas and in inland river valleys. In the *Contestani* area, the settlement pattern was organized through oppida of a regular size (5–10 ha), possibly the residence of 'small kings', and which controlled modular territories with the help of small fortified sites and towers (Quesada 2017; Grau Mira 2019). Good examples are those of *Ilici* (Elche), El Oral (Alicante), and Cabezo Lucero (Guardamar, Alicante).

Figure 8.4. Oppidum of La Bastida de les Alcusses (Mogente): A. Reconstruction drawing. Museo de Prehistoria de Valencia; B. Aerial view of a sector. Museo de Prehistoria de Valencia.

La Bastida de les Alcusses (Mogente, Valencia) is the better-known example, dating to the fourth century BC (Fig. 8.4) (Bonet Rosado and Vives-Ferrándiz 2011). On the summit of a prominent elongated hill it covers 4.2 ha inside its walled enclosure and 1.5 ha in the surroundings, with more than 270 structures, although some of these were not houses. The robust, winding stone wall follows the contours of the hill crest and was finished off with square towers. A spectacular votive offering was made at the main western gate, and there are traces of wagon-tracks on the rock path. The urban layout is complex, with large houses (80–150 m^2) that are grouped in blocks and arranged on both sides of the central street that runs

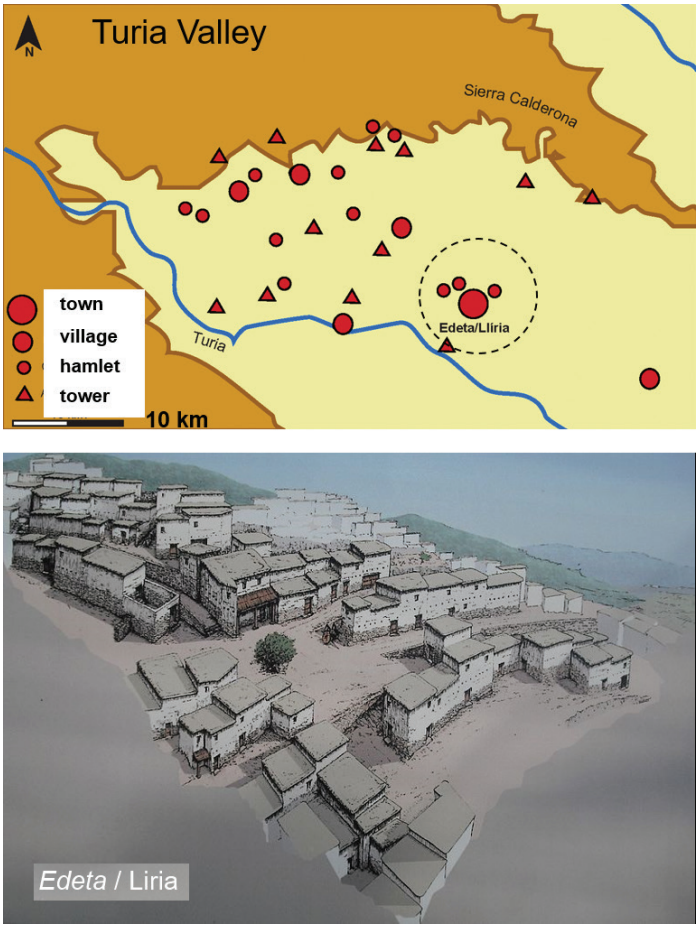

Figure 8.5. A. Settlement pattern of the Turia Valley in the Iberian period; B. Reconstruction of part of the town Edeta/Liria.
From Bonet Rosado and Vives-Ferrándiz 2011.

through the settlement. Perpendicular secondary streets and several squares emerge from the main street, one of which possesses a large cistern. A circular road skirts the inner walled perimeter. The road network and the houses follow the relief of the land. Sloping hillsides made the creation of terraces necessary, and staggered constructions were built on these landscaped features.

In the Upper Guadalquivir, the entire population was concentrated in oppida, establishing what has been called a 'polynuclear settlement model' (Ruiz and Molinos 2007). The town was the basic territorial unit, with powerful chiefs, who at certain times were able to create federations of townships, forming ties of clientele and alliances, as recorded in written sources (Ruiz 2008; Bonet-Rosado and Mata-Parreño 2015). During the fourth century BC several powerful Iberian towns colonized the river valleys in an expansive movement that saw the founding of dependent settlements, which in some cases left spectacular imprints on the landscape, as in Úbeda la Vieja (Jaén) by the Jandulilla River. At El Pajarillo (Huelma, Jaén) the elite built a dynastic monument, a long, high wall with sculptures alluding to the victory of the founding hero of the city. It stood on the highest visible place in the valley (Chapa and others 2006; Molinos, Chapa, and Ruiz 1998).

In terms of demography, although it is an area with a limited tradition in Spanish archaeology, the estimated population for Torreparedones (5.5 ha) has been calculated at around 750 inhabitants, which is most probably a conservative figure, while for Cástulo (45 ha) the numbers were most likely in the order of several thousands (Quesada 2017, 542).

In recent years a new interest in the 'periurban' areas (Belarte and Plana 2012) has emerged, in our case the consideration of constructions and other features outside the limit of the oppida, which in simple terms means beyond the walls. In the first ring, at around 1 km from the oppidum, there are industrial facilities, such as pottery workshops and stone quarries, and from the fourth century BC, cemeteries. Beyond this ring, and up to 2/3 km from the centre hydraulic infrastructures and agricultural fields are occasionally found. This is the 'domesticated nature' (Ruiz 2009).

The settlement pattern to the east, in the Levante, which is seen throughout the Turia Valley and other regions (Bonet Rosado, Mata Parreño, and Moreno Martín 2008), is hierarchical with paramount oppida and territories of 8–10 km in radius with varying levels of population living in subordinate nuclei (Bonet Rosado and Mata Parreño 2001). There are at least three categories of nuclei (Fig. 8.5): 1) villages which in many cases are fortified villages, such as Castellet de Bernabé (Llíria, Valencia), a small site (0.1 ha) which was occupied between the fifth and third centuries BC by an aristocratic family and their dependents (Fig. 8.6) (Guérin 2003), 2) hamlets, groups of houses with rural installations, such as L'Alt del Punxó; and 3) farmsteads, very small rural establishments of diverse morphology and function, which were probably the homes of nuclear families, with just a few huts, as in L'Hort de la Torre (Grau Mira 2019). As Ignasi Grau Mira (2019) acknowledges, inequality is at the heart of these agrarian communities that are scattered across the valley, as only certain families retained control of the land and its resources.

Between the Levantine oppida of the *Edetani* are *Arse-Saguntum*, *Kelin*, and *Saitabi* (Játiva), which are situated on hill-tops, so as to control trade routes. These cities do not usually surpass 8 ha and are separated at distances of between 30 and 70 km (Almagro Gorbea 2014, 310). In the centre of the territory is *Edeta*-Liria (10–15 ha) on a prominent hill, its small streets and houses adapted to the landscape that is

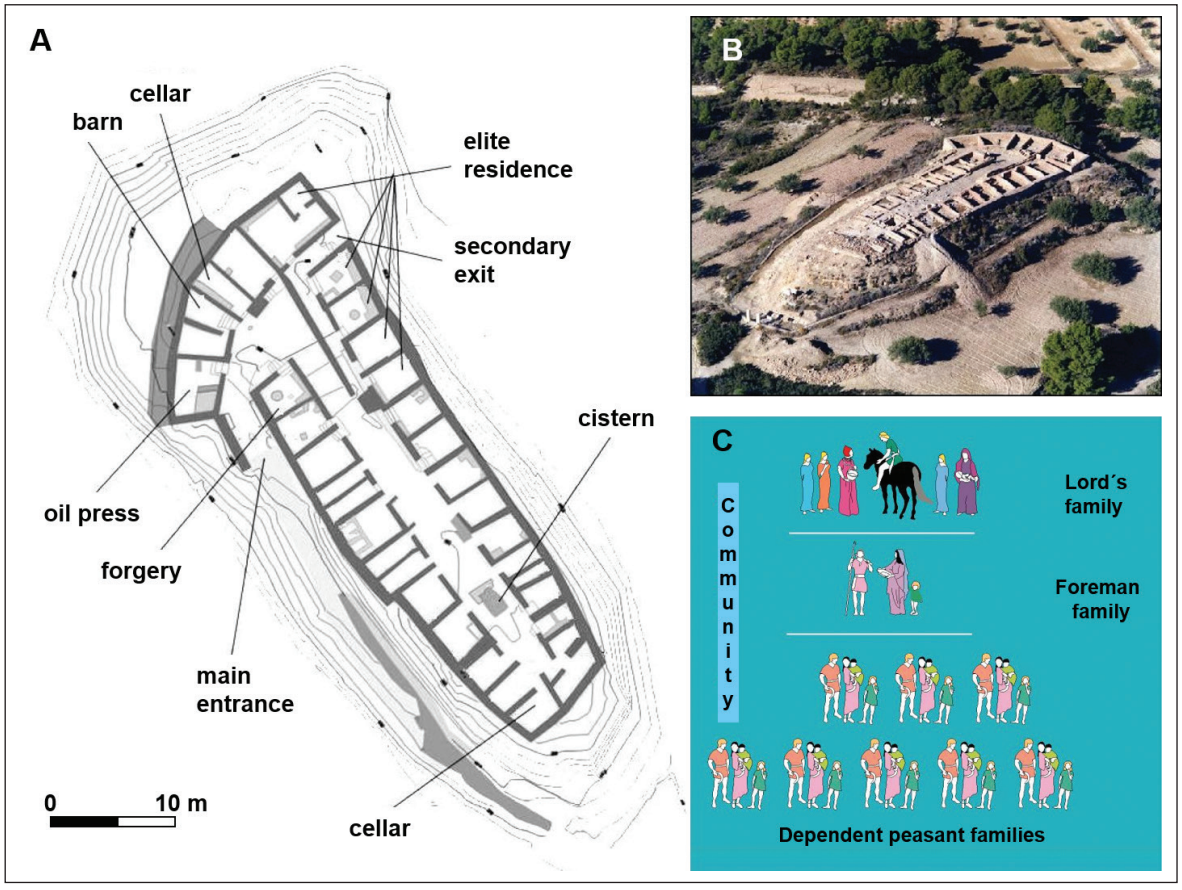

Figure 8.6. Fortified village of Castellet de Bernabé (Liria): A. Map of the excavated site; B. Aerial view; C. Proposal of the social structure of the living community. From Guérin 2003.

staggered in terraces with perpendicular alleyways ascending in ramps or stairs. Its estimated population came to some three thousand inhabitants.

Levantine communities are associated with a warrior society, a society with a warrior ethos, as is well demonstrated by sculptural and ceramic iconographies (as for example in Porcuna and Elche), weapons in sanctuaries, and cemeteries with a high percentage of tombs with arms, and which are referred to in classical written sources (Quesada 2017, 547–49).

The Iberians of the north-east, north of the Ebro River, developed a relatively 'weak' urbanism at a later date, although before the arrival of Rome. Many settlements had their origins in the sixth–fifth centuries BC, but only during the fourth century BC — with an important demographic growth — did urban centres see developments associated with the Hellenistic influence (Almagro-Gorbea 2014, 309). Oppida exhibit a common pattern with high positions, fortifications, and in some cases cisterns, as their only shared feature; apparently without public buildings, sanctuaries, or *regia* as in the southern area. However, in recent years, with increasing archaeological activity, new finds have revealed religious structures and public buildings in some of the largest oppida (4–10 ha), such as Castellet de Banyoles (Tivissa), Puig de Sant Andreu (Ullastret), Burriac (Cabrera del Mar), and Molí de l'Espigol (Tournabous; Fig. 8.7). Although in a more modest manner than in the southern lands of Iberia.

Fortifications had been general features since the sixth century BC, although in most cases they reveal a low poliorcetic complexity, as their walls were not intended to withstand numerous attackers, and the techniques of regular sieges and war machines or neuroballistic artillery were most certainly unknown, as was the general situation in all Iberian regions until the arrival of the Carthaginians and Romans at the end of the third century BC (Quesada 2017, 539).

The internal anatomies of the oppida are better known in Ullastret (12 ha), Castellet de Banyoles (4.4 ha), and Molí de l'Espigol (*c.* 10 ha; Fig. 8.7). In the latter, the urban layout is dense, with a majority of domestic structures, and these are laid out in blocks of houses or neighbourhoods that are separated by areas of transit (Principal and others 2007).

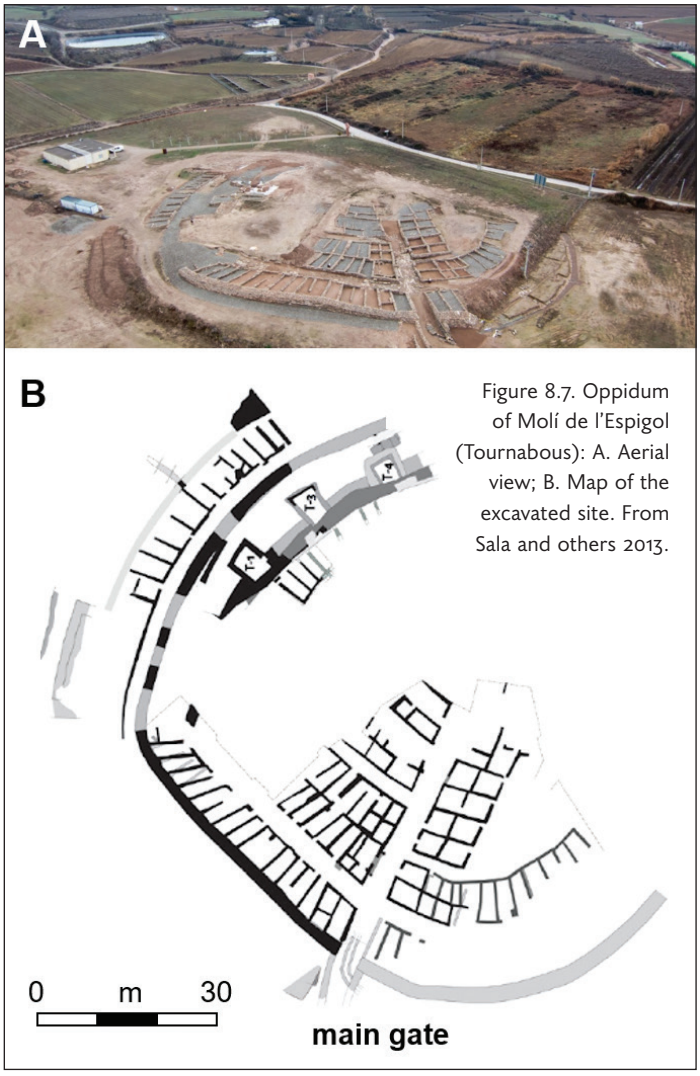

Figure 8.7. Oppidum of Molí de l'Espigol (Tournabous): A. Aerial view; B. Map of the excavated site. From Sala and others 2013.

New geophysical surveys are providing rather interesting results in Molí de l'Espigol, broadening the data recovered from both ancient and modern diggings (Sala and others 2013). The archaeological structures follow a typical Iberian urban planning structure (Belarte and Monrós 2015) with an organic, complex layout of narrow streets and groups of houses, together with a preconceived town planning system (fourth–third centuries BC). The main street was paved and provided with a sewage system to drain water and refuse away from the central public arena. Special structures were discovered in three aristocratic houses and a building for communal use. Surveys have discovered a suburban area close to the settlement that fulfilled artisanal functions, and which has fully confirmed the idea of a complex and rationally organized 'city', one that was developed according to a preconceived plan (Sala and others 2013, 258). It has also raised the question of possible geometrical symmetries between the northern and southern areas. On the whole, it could be taken as a wake-up call with respect to the powerful ability of multi-method geophysical surveys of this type (using magnetometry and dual-frequency, ground-penetrating radar) to reveal pre-Roman urban anatomies. This is the case with the recent discovery in 2018, by Joan Sanmartí and Jaume Noguera from Barcelona University and María Carmen Belarte from the Instituto Catalán de Arqueología Clásica, of a large Iberian town with regular layout and around two hundred structures in Banyeres del Penedès (Tarragona; Fig. 8.8).

Demography estimations are difficult to ascertain from simple surface-area criteria (Almagro-Gorbea 1987). However, the largest Catalan oppida, as Ullastret (Codina, Ruiz, and Sierra 2017) and Burriac, could have housed populations that ranged between 3600 and 4200 inhabitants (Sinner and Carreras 2019, 319). It was certainly a much larger population than in previous periods, and it is must be stressed that it was nearly as large as in Roman times (Sinner and Carreras 2019, 320).

One interesting point is the identification of measuring instruments, systems of architectural proportions, and standardized modules in some north-eastern Iberian sites, revealing knowledge about Mediterranean construction traditions. However, a foot measurement of 0.311 m seems to be an original Iberian creation (Olmos 2009). In all events, at the beginning of the second century BC, Iberian urban elites were integrated into Roman power structures, and the impact of Roman culture began to influence Iberian domestic and defensive architecture.

Summing up, and following the theoretical proposal of Arturo Ruiz (1994) regarding Iberian urbanism, there are two points that should be made clear: 1) the concept of Iberian urbanism cannot be interpreted in the same way as the classical concept of urbanism (the city) of other Mediterranean areas, since the Iberian city is first and foremost a space of *clientele* relationships and in no way a means for its citizens to engage in political practices, as in the Greek manner. 2) The territory is inseparable from the urban space of the oppidum. Therefore, its possible models — i.e. polynuclear with a concentrated population, as in the Alto Guadalquivir; hierarchical settlement pattern, as in the Levante; or micronuclear, medium/small centres with a scattered population, as in the north-east — are factors of the same system of relationships studied within the oppidum. Those elements that define the genealogy of the city

Figure 8.8. Plan of the Banyeres del Penedès town (Tarragona) after the geophysical survey conducted by Barcelona University and ICAC with SOT company <https://www.ccma.cat/324/descoberta-una-gran-ciutat-ibera-soterrada-al-penedes-comparable-a-la-d-ullastret/noticia/2864757/> [accessed 20 February 2020].

were present, at least in the third century BC in all the Iberian areas (Ruiz 1994, 154).

We therefore agree with the opinion of Ruiz (1994, 155): that the Iberian city must be defined as a scenario of social relations between *gentilician* aristocrats and the *clientele*, and not on the basis of the existence of an urban unit of citizens.

Central and Western Iberia

By the third–first centuries BC, two processes developed in western and central Iberia: the first was an expanding demography, and the second was a trend towards nucleated settlements. Several communities had grown considerably and had become economically more active than the majority of their neighbours. They became the large Vaccaean, Vetton, Lusitanian, Celtiberian, and Carpetani oppida known from archaeology and mentioned by classical sources (Almagro-Gorbea 1995; Álvarez-Sanchís, Jimeno, and Ruiz Zapatero 2011; Lorrio 2014). These were societies, at least some of them, that could be labelled as 'tribal states' (Collis 2008).

They possessed urban settlements and a hierarchical society, apparently dominated by a military aristocracy, as burial evidence suggests. However, they also possessed numerous characteristics that distinguished them from other contemporary sites (Almagro-Gorbea and Dávila 1995; Álvarez-Sanchís and Ruiz Zapatero 2019). Extensive fieldwork and site excavation still needs to be undertaken in order to achieve a better understanding of how they functioned. The process involved in transforming these communities into more complex ones still raises a number of questions. Not all these oppida were founded at the time of the Roman conquest. Archaeological evidence demonstrates the existence of settlements that were already important centres in the Early Iron Age (Álvarez-Sanchís and Ruiz Zapatero 2014), which means that interregional trade had already become established during this period. This makes it necessary to reconsider the traditional explanations about the genesis of these sites, placing them into a longue-durée perspective (Fernández-Götz 2018).

Celtiberia was a large area in the interior of the Iberian Peninsula and the first reference to it is made within the context of the Second Punic War, in Polybius's (III. 17. 2) narration of the siege of *Saguntum* in the spring of 219 BC. From this date onwards, information about Celtiberians is plentiful and varied, as they were one of the key players in the various wars and battles that took place throughout the second and first centuries BC, which culminated in the destruction of *Numantia* by the Roman general Scipio Africanus in 133 BC. Other Celtiberian towns in the highlands of the Duero Valley, emerge at this time: *Uxama*, Tiermes, *Arekoratas*, *Segontia Lanca*, *Clunia*, and *Contrebia Leukade*, to name just the most famous (Lorrio 2005; Burillo 2007). Most of

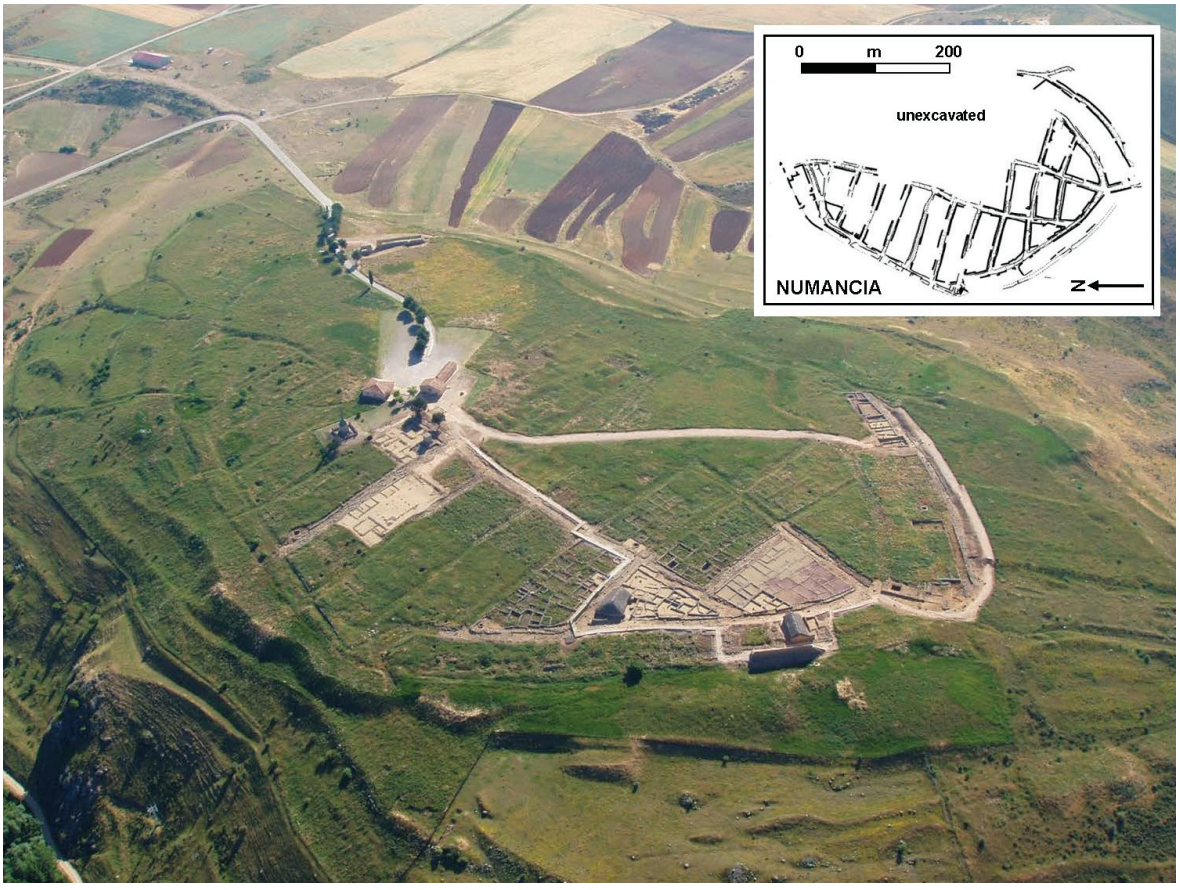

Figure 8.9. Aerial view of Numancia and map of its urban plan. From Jimeno 2011.

the population was based in rural areas, and as such the cities were small settlements, many of them with surfaces between 7 and 15 ha. The layout of these oppida, protected with powerful walls, is orthogonal, with intersecting street systems, in a model that seems to expand the old scheme of the so-called 'settlements with central space' without public monumental architecture and with a densely occupied intramural area, given that residential areas occupied much more surface area than public spaces (Ruiz Zapatero 2011). The houses that were rectangular in design and with a tripartite internal division were attached to each other, forming neighbourhoods. The absolute population is not easy to calculate, however, in Numancia (Fig. 8.9), at just over 7.5 ha, a population of about 1500 inhabitants has been estimated (Jimeno 2011, 256–58). The Celtiberian cities were autonomous city states that were endowed with councils, magistrates, and assemblies, with military chiefs who were appointed during periods of conflict. The Celtiberian model was in fact characterized by an intricate network of fortified villages and minor rural entities that accommodated the majority of the population and the urban aristocracies (Burillo Mozota 2011).

Political and ideological/religious buildings are not very common, but Martín Almagro-Gorbea and Alberto Lorrio (2011, 155–66) have investigated the oppida from an ideological/religious point of view. Among other things, they argue that the ancient sanctuary of Tiermes in Celtiberia was proof of the existence of a 'founder hero' of the oppidum. This founder hero was represented in Tiermes as well as in other Celtic cities as the mythic figure of a *Teutates* divinity. It is a complex explanation, but one that is attractive, due to its marked ability to reveal the profound social and political structure of Celtic communities with *rex* or *rix* holding the paramount position on a social pyramid. Some oppida should be clearly associated with legal foundation rituals.

In the mid-Tajo Valley, in the interior regions of Carpetania, the emergence of fortified settlements, as El Llano de la Horca (Santorcaz, Madrid; Fig. 8.10) (Ruiz Zapatero and others 2012), also points to the emergence of hero-warriors and reveals glimpses of new systems of alliance that clearly suggest the arrival of turbulent times, conflicts, and competitions, exposing the instability and precariousness of political power (Urbina 2000). This is reflected in the bas-relief from the urban shrine of El Cerrón

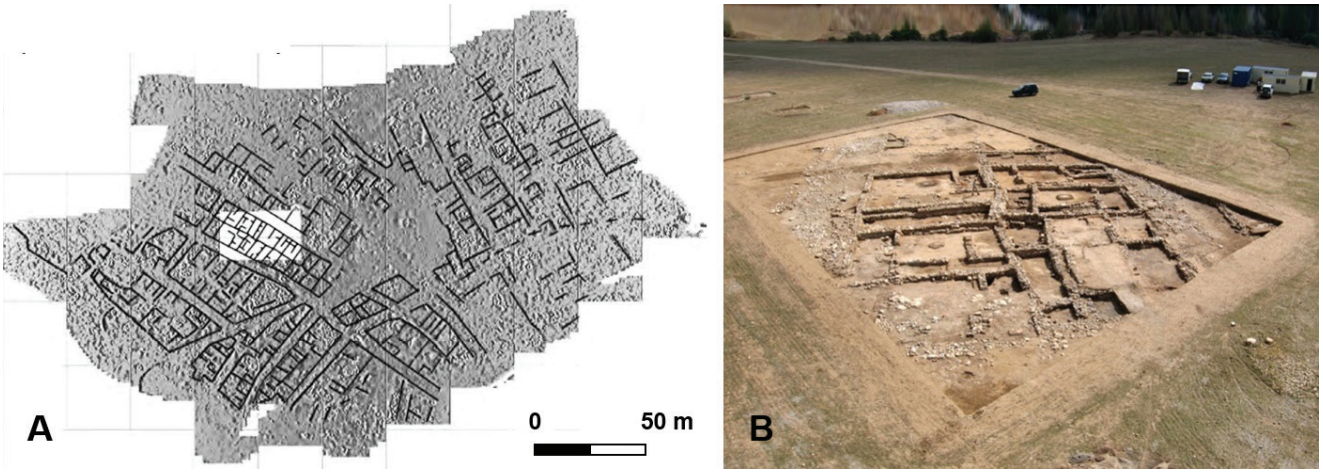

Figure 8.10. El Llano de la Horca (Santorcaz): A. Geophysical survey with streets and structures; B. Reconstruction view. From Ruiz Zapatero and others 2012.

de Illescas (Balmaseda and Valiente 1981), which features a depiction of what may well have been a heroic scene of a founding father. However, the communities of this period in the central Tajo Valley never reached the levels of power centralization and social hierarchy experienced by some of their neighbours (Torres 2013, 658–61; Azcárraga 2015).

The Vaccean oppida of the middle Duero Valley had a particular system of land occupation, one characterized by large towns (from 5–20 ha to more than 40 ha) that were built some distance from each other (up to one or two days' travel) and with extensive uninhabited areas between them (Sacristán de Lama 2011). Each town would have had a well-planned urban layout and controlled modular territories of 400–500 km². Later references by Tacitus and Appian to Roman military campaigns, not against the Vaccaei, but against specific towns such as *Cauca*, *Intercatia*, and *Pallantia* (Fig. 8.11A), are also relevant. These large towns must have been very striking in appearance, due to their wood and adobe defensive walls and their cyclopean fosses enclosing between 1500 and 5000 inhabitants. Archaeological evidence, especially from the oppida of *Pintia* (Padilla de Duero; Fig. 8.11B) and *Cauca* (Coca), indicates that their interiors comprised a regular organization with complex layouts of roads, blocks of rectangular houses built of adobe with shared rear areas, and doors and gates opening onto two streets (Sanz Mínguez and Velasco 2003; Blanco 2018). All this implies a very different urbanism to that of the neighbouring Vetton towns, with their extensive, but largely unoccupied areas that lacked a standardized urban layout.

The immediately adjacent urban area was occupied by industrial activities. These zones can be recognized from the accumulations of earth filled

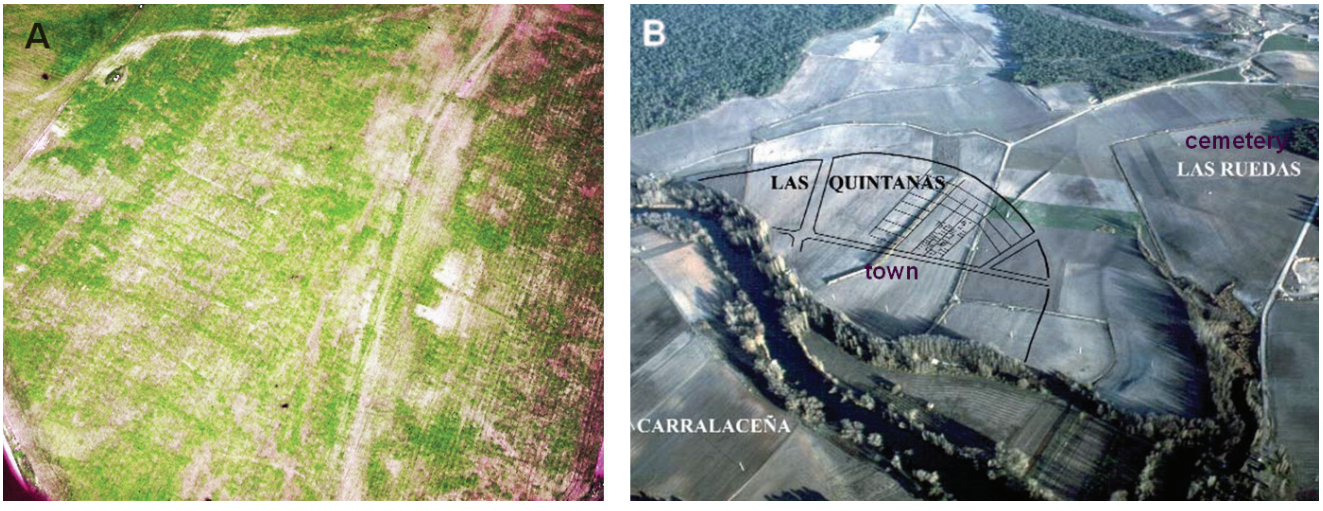

Figure 8.11. A. Partial aerial view of *Pallantia* (Palenzuela). From Sacristán de Lama 2011; B. *Pintia* (Padilla de Duero). From Sanz Mínguez and Velasco 2003.

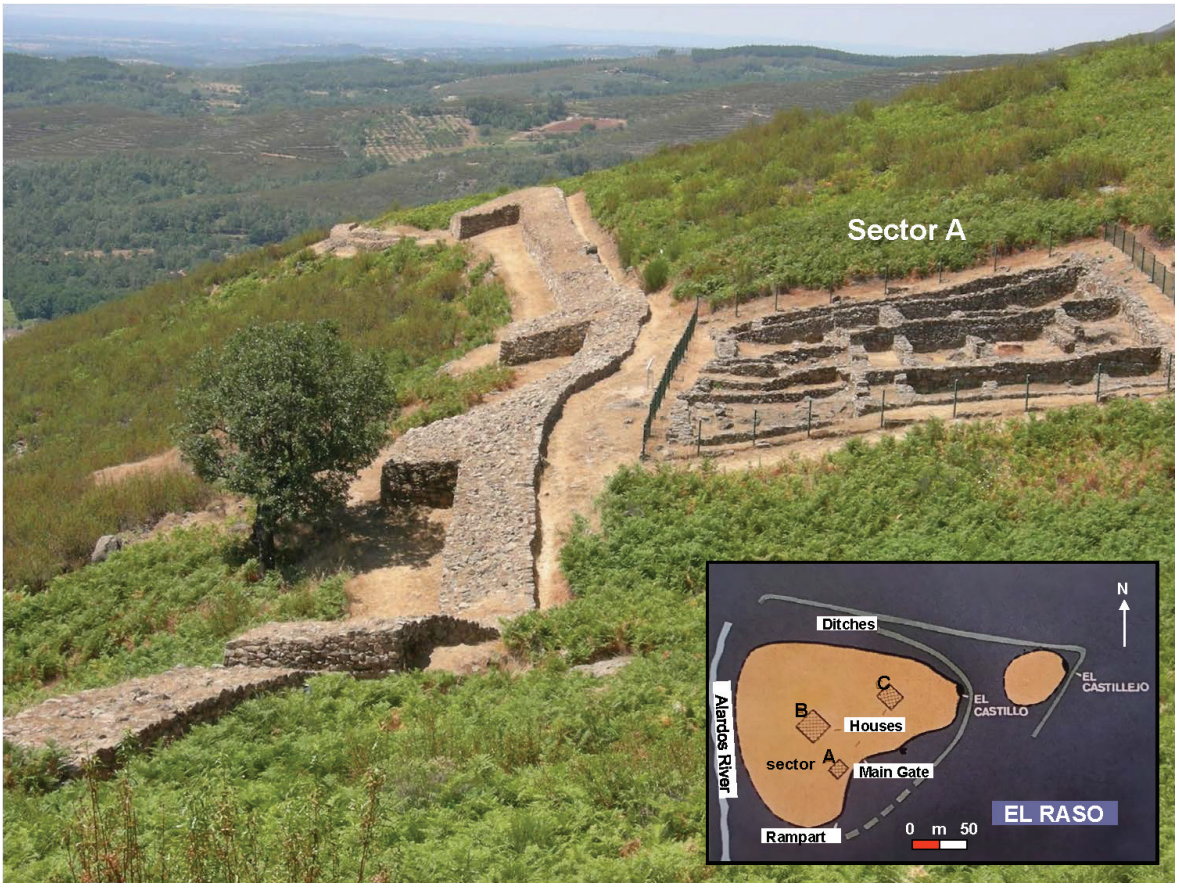

Figure 8.12. The oppidum of El Raso (Candeleda), next to the Gredos mountain range, preserves the remains of a dozen towers, houses, and stone walls. Photo and map by Jesús Álvarez-Sanchís.

with ashes, bones, slag, adobe, and pottery. These immense rubbish dumps reveal the existence of pottery workshops and other industrial installations, including areas for milling grain and weaving textiles. There is also evidence of fairs and markets that would have brought in a stream of people with their livestock and other goods to the towns. The markets were located on the peripheries of the large oppida, and the people attracted by them would have been another incentive to produce a goods surplus for trade. In other extramural areas it is common to find the dumped demolition rubble from ruined houses or from the construction and repair of the town defences. Generally linked with Vaccean groups, it has been recognized in other western sites (Chapa and others 2013; Rodríguez-Hernández 2019, 188–99). Anyway, the existence of houses outside the walls leads us to believe that the walled enclosures were not indicative of permanent danger and instability. In times of conflict, the population would have been able to take refuge in the towns, as there would have been sufficient free space to accommodate them.

The Lusitanians and Vettones occupied a large area of territory in western Iberia, a largely mountainous landscape that contained several areas of well-protected, fertile valleys (Álvarez-Sanchís 2000; Rodríguez-Hernández 2019). Their main population centres, such as Las Cogotas (Cardeñosa), Yecla (Yecla de Yeltes), Castillejo de la Orden (Alcántara), and Villasviejas (Botija), covered areas of around 5–15 ha from the fourth century BC. A short time later these centres were to expand to a much greater size, such as Salamanca (20 ha), captured by the Carthaginian general Hannibal in 220 BC, El Raso (20 ha; Fig. 8.12), and Ulaca in Solosancho, which reached 80 ha (Fig. 8.13) (Ruiz Zapatero 2005). These large settlements stood out due to the colossal nature of their defences, with stone walls some 4 to 8 m wide, mighty towers, and bastions at their entrances. The entrances were often preceded by fosses and *chevaux de frise*, i.e. large areas of stone spikes with sharp edges, hammered into the ground and designed to hinder any attacks by hostile forces. The defences also endowed the towns with a symbolic value of ostentation and power (Berrocal-Rangel and Moret 2007). Only a small part of the population lived within these oppida, the largest of which probably had populations of no more than 800 to 1500 inhab-

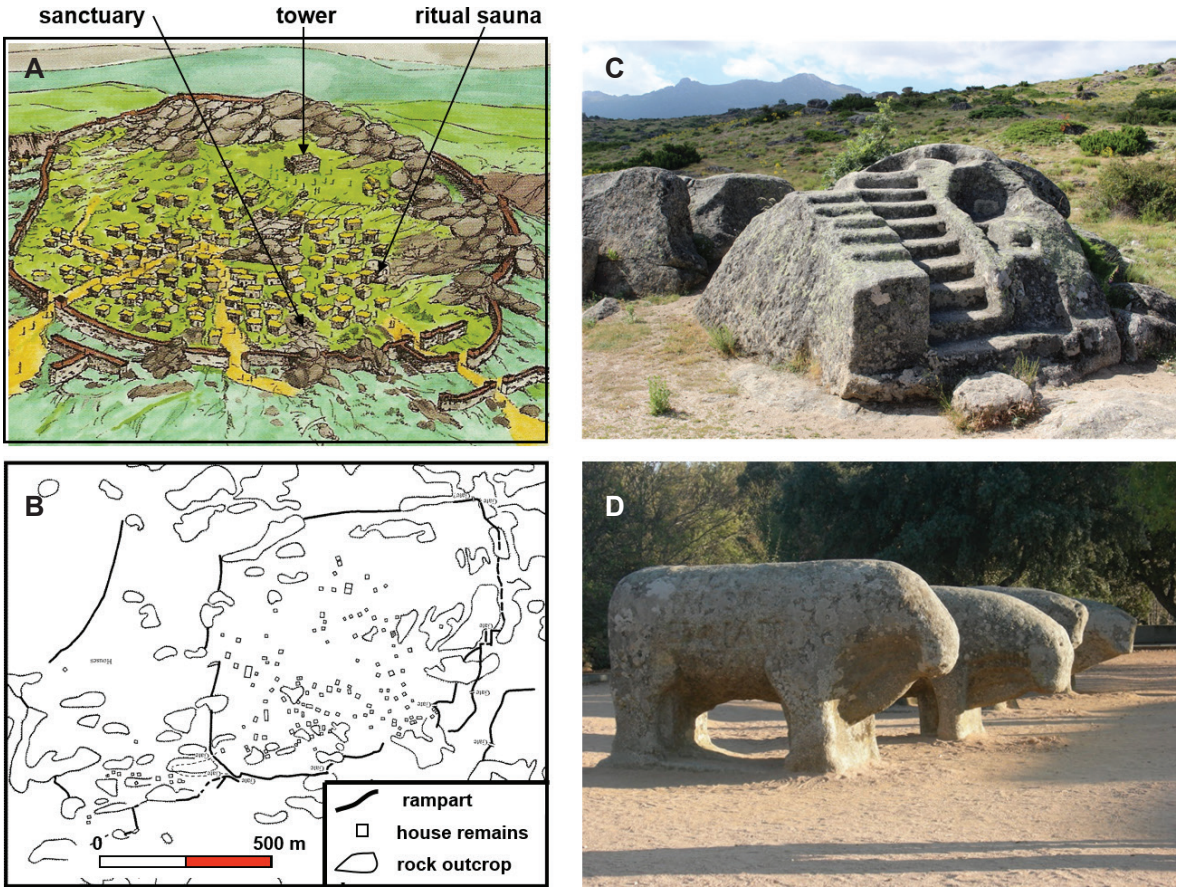

Figure 8.13. Oppidum of Ulaca: A. Reconstruction view. Illustration by authors; B. Plan of the settlement. Courtesy of John Collis; C. The sanctuary with 'altar' for animal sacrifices. Photo by authors; D. Vettonian sculptures of bulls, over 2.75 m long, generically known as 'Toros de Guisando' (El Tiemblo, Ávila). Photo by authors.

itants (Álvarez-Sanchís and Ruiz Zapatero 2001). They were home to people whose predecessors, barely four or five generations earlier, had formed small villages on the same sites. Most people continued to live in small rural settlements or on farms. These places had no complex structures, and their inhabitants would have spent most of their time working the nearby land, taking care of the livestock, and producing food.

The interior organization of the towns was determined by their topography (Ruiz Zapatero and Álvarez-Sanchís 1995; Ruiz Zapatero 2018). The houses, which had square or rectangular ground plans of between 50 m^2 and 250 m^2, were grouped irregularly against the walls or seeking protection between large rocks. They were made of stone and adobe, using thick layers of broom, elder, or gorse as roofing material. The houses were scattered, following no specific urban layout other than an adaptation to the water courses and footpaths that crossed the sites. Some of the inner areas of the settlements provide sparse evidence of occupation and were probably used as pasture or livestock pens. The number of people living together permanently is a good reference for discussing the urban concept and large settlements with low population densities, such as Ulaca (*c.* twenty people per hectare), which could fit well into the idea of low-density urbanism (Fletcher 2009; Moore 2017). Further west, we have no evidence of any large sites, but occupation seems to have been denser, with small but heavily fortified sites (Martín Bravo 1999, 201–15; Álvarez-Sanchís 2000, 76–79). In *Conimbriga*, at least from the third century BC, regular streets do exist. The streets were later maintained, and they served to delimit houses with central courtyards that survived into the first Roman construction phase (Correia 1995, 249).

The entrances to the urban centres were also places impregnated with symbolism and ritual staging. The sculptures of bulls and pigs, the famous 'verracos' of granite that are found throughout the mountainous areas of the interior, such as the 'Toros de Guisando' (Fig. 8.13D), were also an identity element in the oppida of western Iberia (Álvarez-Sanchís 2000, 75–80). Their meaning seems to be related to the protection of livestock and villages and the demarcation of pastures and territories (Álvarez-Sanchís 1994; Ruiz Zapatero and Álvarez-Sanchís

2008). Public buildings were rare, although Ulaca did possess a rock shrine (Fig. 8.13C) and a ritual sauna building, probably reflecting its supra-local religious significance as a tribal centre (Ruiz Zapatero 2005, 15–19). In fact, it may well be that the pre-existing ritual significance of the mountain on which Ulaca is located explains the choice of site for the development of the oppidum, as also suggested for other sites in Temperate Europe (Fichtl 2005; Fernández-Götz 2014). It is a phenomenon with important concomitances in other Lusitanian sanctuaries, such as Cabeço das Fráguas (Guarda), with buildings intended for the worship of divinities and a unique Latin inscription with words identified as being in the Lusitanian language, describing a *suovetaurilium* of pre-Roman origin (Tovar 1985).

The south-west of Iberia, south of the Tajo Valley, also underwent significant changes in the Late Iron Age (Correia 1995). The emergence of oppida is interpreted in different ways: as a result of external demographic contributions (Arruda 2005) or of growth of the local population (Fabião 2001). In all events, in the region where the ancient sources locate the *Celtici*, small fortified settlements such as Capote (Higuera la Real), Mesa do Castelinhos, and Mértola now emerged. They had stone walls and hinged stone barriers, although the origin of these defensive systems dates back to the Late Bronze Age. The central street of Capote featured a room for community use, with a continuous bench and a central table. Inside were the remains of a ritual group banquet held around 150 BC, intended for more than two hundred people, in which people drank and ate abundantly (Berrocal-Rangel 2005). Other votive deposits (Garvão, Ourique) and altars with rock-carved stairs (Cantamento de la Pepina, Fregenal de la Sierra) — a type of sacred space evident in western Iberia — are also known.

As of the fourth century BC social structure became increasingly more complex, and the cemeteries reveal clearly established power relationships (Ruiz Zapatero and Lorrio 2007). Outside the oppida and settlement gates were cemeteries with stone tumuli, stelae, and pit cremation tombs. Some of those burial grounds excavated are emblematic: Aguilar de Anguita (Guadalajara), one of the most ancient cremation necropoleis found in Celtiberia, and La Mesa de Miranda (Chamartín, Ávila) with some 5000 and 2300 graves respectively (Lorrio 2014, 223; Baquedano 2016). The cemeteries contain several rich burials with weapons and fine bronze jewellery. However, the extremely opulent aristocratic burials found in other areas of Temperate Europe, such as northern Gaul, are generally absent, suggesting the existence of a less hierarchical society. Farther to the south-east, in those regions open to and bordering on the Mediterranean, the cemeteries show definitive differences in grave goods that reveal processes of social hierarchy. This is evident in a small number of cemeteries, such as at Palomar de Pintado (Toledo), which has a relatively long sequence, thus allowing an excellent overview of social change: the emergence of new chiefs with unstable power bases that had to be continuously defended and negotiated within the communities of the time (Pereira and Torres 2014). In all events, the erection of tumuli or stelae as highly visible landmarks in the landscape suggests that some of the dead had once been important ancestors whose commemoration by future generations was important. It is, however, also true that notions of memory and descent are not always aligned. Some communities practised rituals that left no trace, especially at the western part of Iberia — perhaps by exposing their corpses to the forces of nature and to scavenging animals, or by throwing bodies or ashes into rivers (Ruiz Zapatero and Lorrio 1995; Sopeña 2008).

The process which may have occurred is only partially understood, but it is clear that different types of society could have lived together in these times. Some villages, especially in the Iberian area, evolved into state formations with public buildings, sanctuaries, mints, and legislative texts. The idiosyncrasy of the Celtiberians is also manifest in their currencies, which originated from the Iberians in types and metrology, and in their writing, which was adopted from the Iberians in the second century BC and which sometimes shows the existence of complex political and legal institutions, as evidenced by the laws written on bronze to be publicly displayed in *Contrebia Belaiska* (Botorrita, Zaragoza) (Beltrán 2005). Other communities remained in more egalitarian structures that were based on kinship systems. From Graeco-Roman sources we know that both types of communities had popular assemblies and 'councils of elders'. The *devotio*, in which an oath linked the fate of the warriors to that of their chief, and the *hospitium*, where pacts between cities or individuals allowed transit through the territory and ensured a non-hostile reception, were singular institutions.

In the first century BC the relationship between Roman demand, increased production, and the development of the oppida was evident. The population was larger than before the Roman conquest, and the cities also became larger and more complex than those settlements that had preceded them. The accumulation of wealth would have attracted an increasing number of people, and this must have seriously destabilized family and property relation-

ships. Social distinctions ceased to be as marked as they once were in the cemeteries, although these divisions became far more visible in the settlements. Numerous hoards of metal were buried for the first time, particularly in the form of silverware, jewellery, and coins, which were hidden in pots inside houses or near the settlements.

The growth experienced by some settlements in this period has also been associated with migrations from the surrounding regions, perhaps in the form of small groups (Lorrio and Ruiz Zapatero 2005). A Celtiberian mint found in the oppidum of Villasviejas (Botija, Cáceres) demonstrates that Celtic people were moving to the south (Burillo Mozota 2007, 305–08). One of the cemeteries found there dates between the second and first centuries BC and confirms the presence of iron weapons that probably came from central-eastern Spain (Hernández and Martín Bravo 2017). In addition, new geophysical surveys are providing rather interesting results that strongly point towards a Roman presence in the final stage of the life of this settlement (Mayoral and others 2019). Towers and enclosures of cyclopean construction linked to the control of the territory appear at this time in the south-west, and these were most probably linked to this phase of change (Mayoral 2018).

One of the most outstanding aspects in terms of settlement patterns is the growing importance of those cities that were located on land suitable for growing cereal crops or in areas where iron, tin, and copper could be mined. While the equation 'Roman demand for food and raw materials = intensification of agricultural and mining output' is an excessively simple explanation, at least it has the virtue of emphasizing the influence of an important factor in the organization of the territory. Some oppida survived as Roman cities: Numancia, Tiermes, *Cauca*, *Salmantica* (Salamanca), *Augustobriga* (Talavera la Vieja), *Toletum* (Toledo), *Conimbriga* (Coimbra), *Nertobriga Concordia Iulia*, etc. Others did not endure over time and their population declined, as did their economic activities.

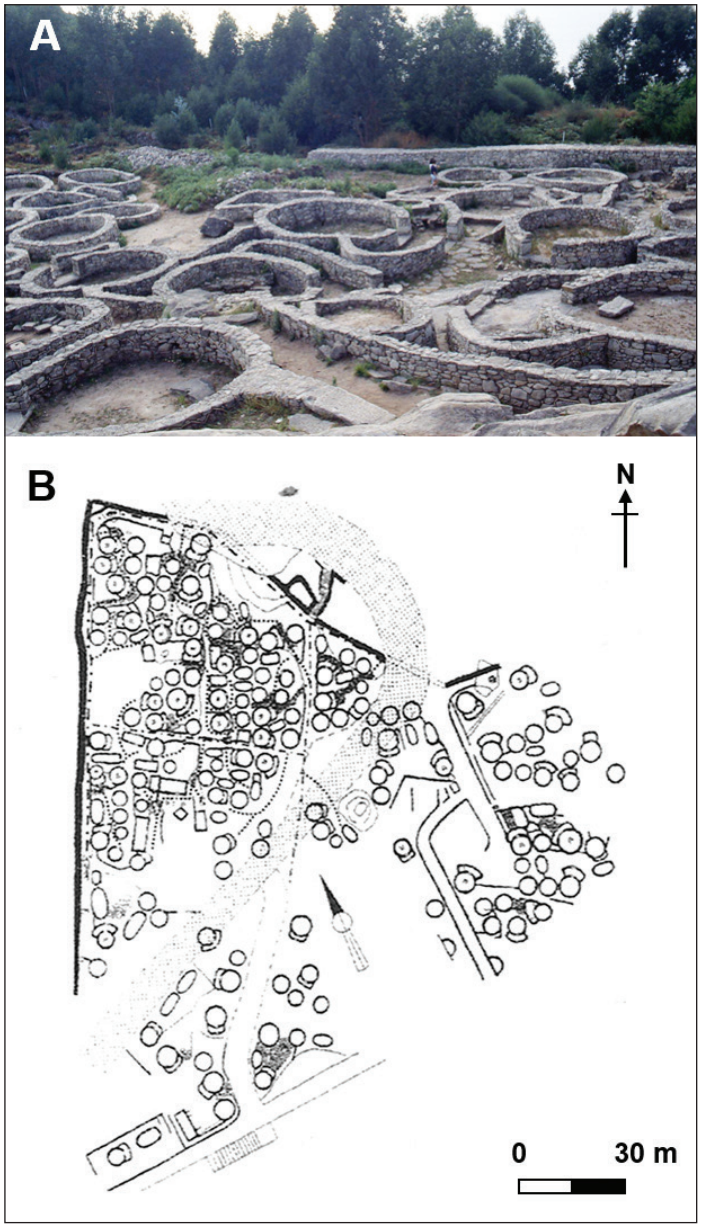

Figure 8.14. Walls and internal structure of Santa Trega oppidum. A. Photograph courtesy of Alberto J. Lorrio; B. Drawing after González Ruibal 2006–2007.

North-West and the Cantabrian Area

Traditionally, the emergence of the oppida in the north-west has been considered a result of the Roman conquest at the time of Augustus. However, a thorough review of the available evidence has allowed us to place the appearance of these central places between the end of the second and the first centuries BC (González Ruibal 2006–2007, 328–49). On the other hand, to the east of the Cantabrian region the development of the oppida was even earlier, from the third century BC onwards (Torres-Martínez 2011, 277). Many of these large fortified settlements were the result of *synoecism* processes (González Ruibal 2006–2007, 338–48), while others were formed from the remarkable growth of a *castro* (hill fort) during the Late Iron Age (Torres-Martínez 2011, 277). The main factors that explain the origin of these agglomerations are the growing contact and tensions with the Mediterranean powers, population growth, an increase in production, the tendency towards more hierarchical political

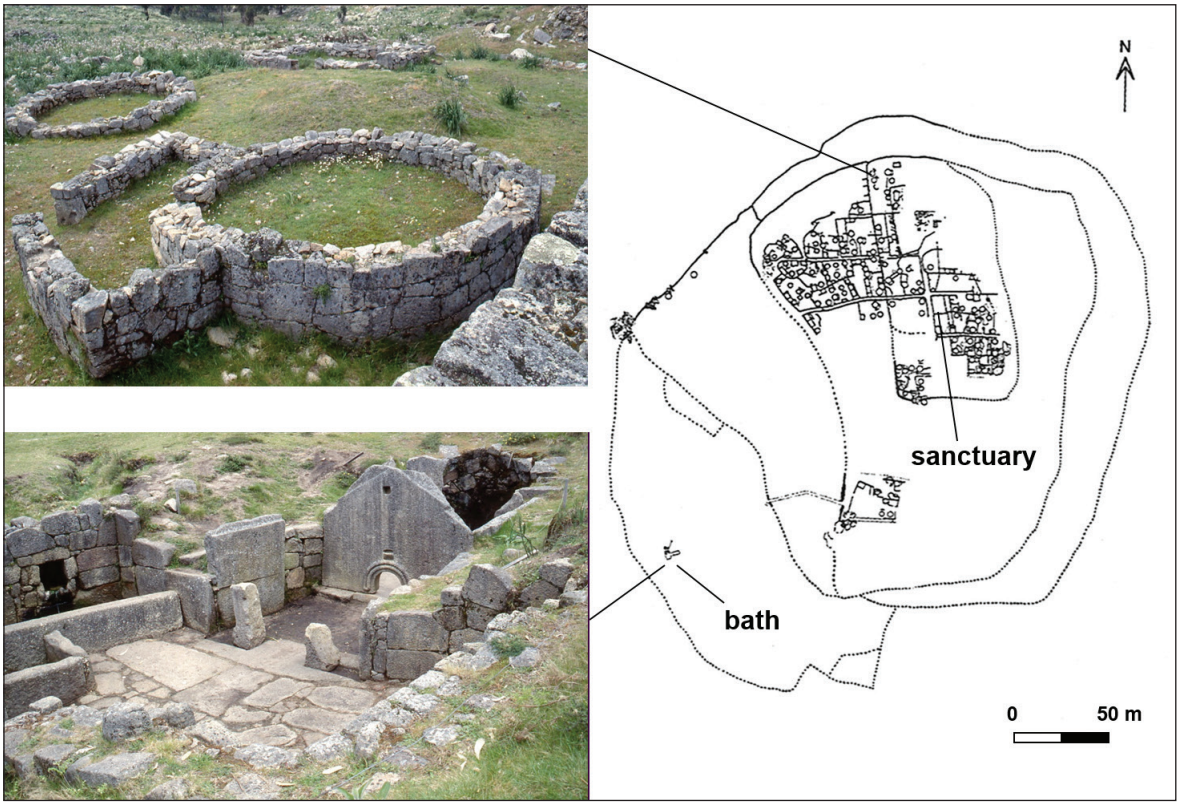

Figure 8.15. Plan of Sanfins and a view of some houses and the sauna.
Drawing after Silva 1986; photograph courtesy of Alberto J. Lorrio.

forms, and the generalization of inter-community conflict (González Ruibal 2008, 921).

However, it is necessary to consider that most of the north and north-west of Iberia were refractory areas to the urban phenomenon. In this sense, they were largely regions without oppida, in which the population continued to live in small nuclei (*castros*, villages, and farms) throughout the Iron Age (Marín 2011, 526–43; Torres-Martínez 2011, 276–80). Thus, several authors have suggested the existence in a large part of the north-west of 'societies against the oppida' or 'societies against the state' (understood as a power relationship) (González Ruibal 2006–2007, 347; 2012; González García, Parcero, and Ayán 2011; González García 2017). These communities developed a series of mechanisms to obstruct the growing social divisions and avoid large population concentrations. In mountainous areas, 'deep rural societies' (González Ruibal 2012; Marín 2011, 558–67) or 'segmentary societies' (Sastre 2002) were especially successful in avoiding hierarchical organization and the appearance of central places (Sastre and Sánchez-Palencia 2013).

In those areas with oppida, urban sites occupy conspicuous places that are visible from the surroundings. Such visibility would be reinforced by the construction of massive artificial defences (Parcero and others 2007, 221). They also occupy prominent locations with excellent visibility over the territory, and strategic control over the main communication routes (Torres-Martínez 2011, 276–84). However, these strategic factors would not be the only ones taken into consideration when establishing such large, fortified settlements. The chosen locations, in many cases, were places with a sacred significance, which had been frequented regularly for a very long time (González Ruibal 2006–2007, 349). This would be the case, for example, in San Cibrán de Las (San Amaro-Punxín, Orense), where the existence of religious ceremonies and/or assemblies has recently been postulated to have emerged at a stage prior to the founding of the oppidum (Álvarez González and others 2017).

The construction of the fortification systems of these central places involved the investment of a huge amount of resources and collective work. By the end of the Late Iron Age, the construction of walls reached an unprecedented level of monumentality, no doubt due to their defensive and their symbolic function (Parcero and others 2007, 225). Among the most common construction systems is the double wall with its compacted filling of earth and stones, as in the case of the Monte Bernorio oppidum (Pomar de Valdivia, Palencia) (Torres-

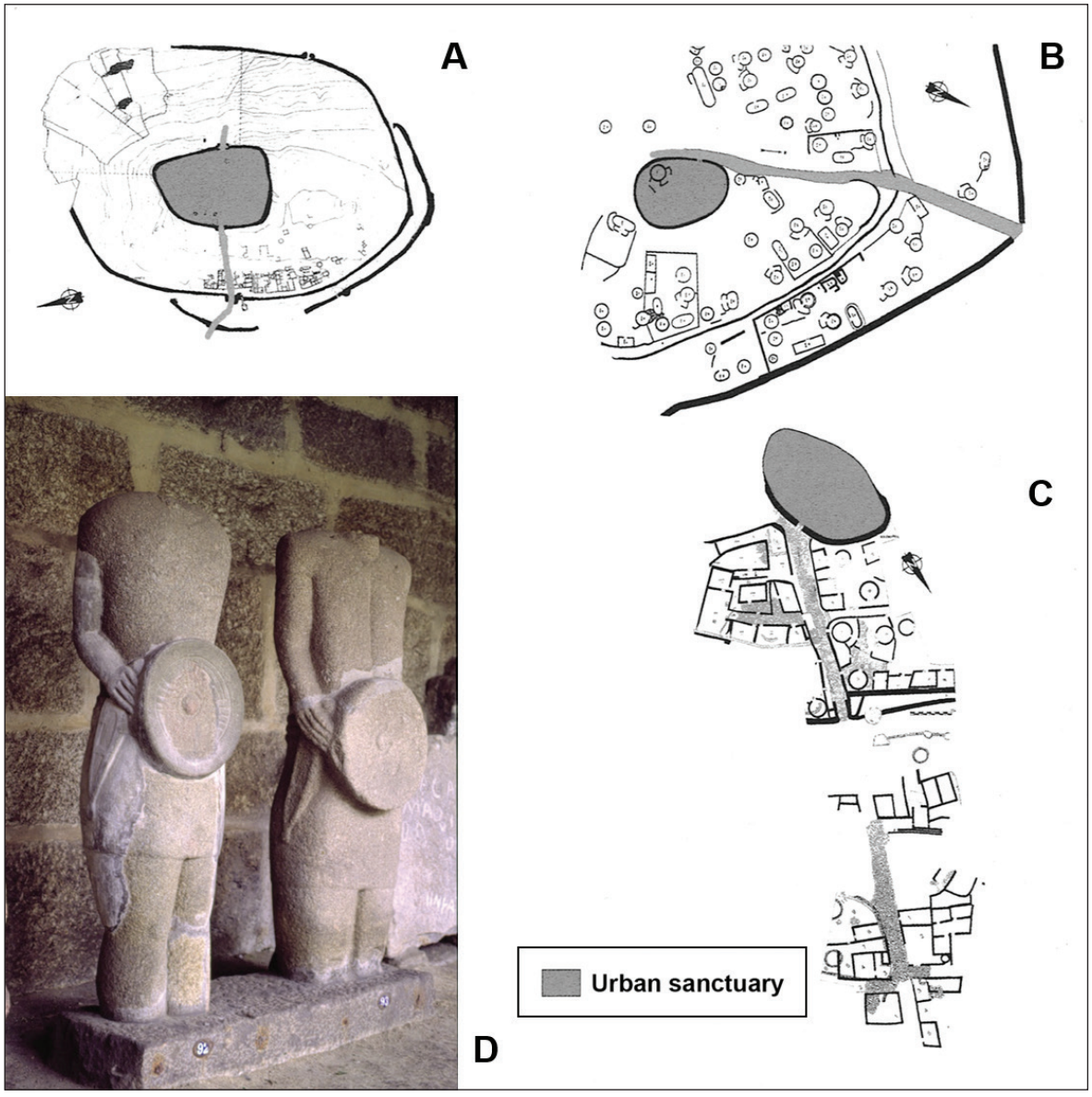

Figure 8.16. A.–C. Urban sanctuaries of the north-west and the avenues that lead to them: A. San Cibrán de Las. Drawing after Rodríguez Cao, Xusto Rodríguez, and Fariña Busto 1992; B. Santa Luzia. Drawing after Almeida 1990; C. Monte Mozinho. Drawing after Almeida 1974; 1977; D. Warrior statues of S. Jorge de Vizela (Guimarães, Braga) and Santo Ovidio (Fafe, Braga). Photo by Jesús Álvarez-Sanchís.

Martínez and others 2016). There are also solid stone walls, built using blocks or masonry walls. Sometimes this solid type is composed of polygonal or helical masonry, as in the San Cibrán de Las oppidum (González Ruibal 2006–2007, 305–06). The oppida gates also present a considerable level of monumentalization (González Ruibal 2006–2007, 306; Torres-Martínez 2011, 298–99), as for example the north gate of Santa Trega (La Guardia, Pontevedra; Fig. 8.14). Furthermore, in the north-west, it is precisely at the gates the famous warrior statues were located, such as the one found in Sanfins (Paços de Ferreira, Porto; Fig. 8.15). These figures probably represent idealized warrior aristocrats that symbolically protected the settlements, while at the same time they represent the power of the elites (Fig. 8.16D) (Schattner 2003; González Ruibal 2004a, 119–23; Rodríguez-Corral 2013).

It is relevant to note that the walls are also the main reference point for the integration and internal order of the oppida. In the north-west, the generally anarchic agglomerations of previous stages gave way to central places with a preconceived pseudo-orthogonal design. In general, these large fortified settlements are centred on two or more main roads, which are wide and often paved, with other

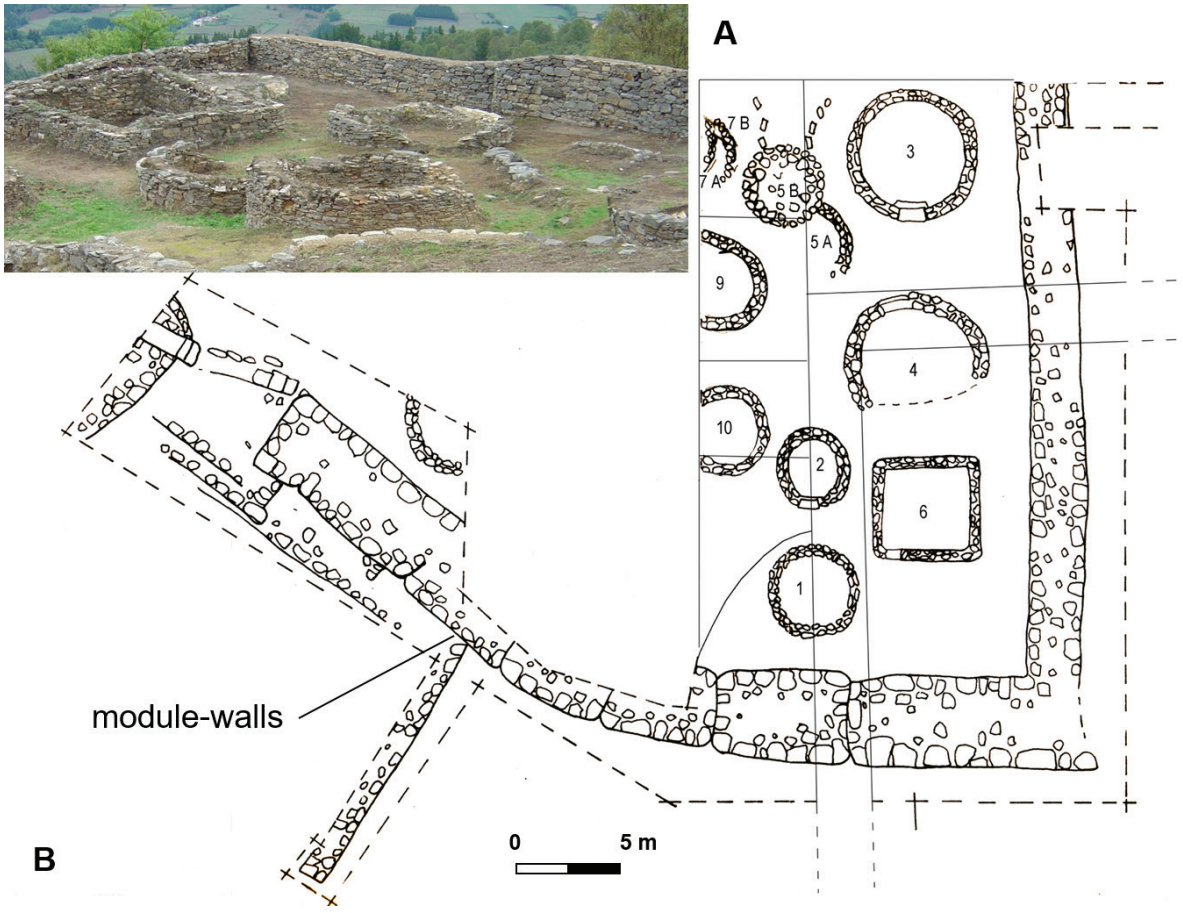

Figure 8.17. San Chuis hill fort: A. A view of the low quarter; B. Schematic map of the north-eastern sector of San Chuis. Modified after Marín Suárez 2011.

secondary streets that are at angles to each other. In this manner the streets defined insulae where the dwellings were located. As discussed below, sometimes one or more roads were especially wide, and these connected the gates to a central, upper enclosure where assemblies or religious practices were performed (Fig. 8.16A–C) (González Ruibal 2006–2007, 373–83; 2008, 922–23; Parcero and others 2007, 224–31; Álvarez González and others 2017). In some cases, communal buildings have been discovered, which could constitute the seat of the assemblies, such as the 'Council House' — a large circular hut with a continuous bench — found in Briteiros (Guimarães, Braga, Portugal) (González Ruibal 2008, 923; Sande Lemos and others 2011, 193). A recurring element in this region is the presence of ritual saunas, which were located in marginal areas and near the entrances of the oppida (see below). Likewise, collective structures related to water supply and hygiene, such as cisterns, fountains, and drainage systems were a common feature on these urban sites (González Ruibal 2006–2007, 381–83).

In the Cantabrian region, the absence of extensive excavations in the large nuclei greatly hinders our knowledge about the urban structure of these sites. Fortunately, in recent years a series of geophysical projects, such as those conducted inside the Monte Bernorio oppidum, are beginning to make up for this lack of information. The internal structure of this central place is formed by a series of natural terraces located along the mountain's top and southern side, reinforced by retaining walls. Dwellings were built on these terraces. According to the results of the geomagnetic survey, the entire surface of the settlement comprised buildings of different dimensions that were arranged in a structured, but irregular manner. As such, using this method, different sets of constructions and transit areas have been detected (Torres-Martínez and others 2016, 369–71). However, in the nearby oppidum of La Ulaña (Humada, Burgos) intensive surveys have detected a very different internal organization, one characterized by the presence of houses scattered throughout certain areas and by intermediate empty spaces. Nonetheless, it should be borne in mind that the enormous size of this site (285 ha) prevents agglomerations or makes them unnecessary (Cisneros, García Sánchez, and

Hernández Domínguez 2011, 69). In any case, this huge settlement seems to fit well into the aforementioned notion of low-density urbanism (Fletcher 2009; Moore 2017).

From the mid- to late second century BC, a characteristic model of domestic architecture emerged in the north-west, one associated with the appearance of the oppida: the courtyard house. In this model, the fundamental feature is a circular structure with a courtyard, around this are secondary buildings of an agricultural type: livestock pens, granaries, and storerooms. In theory, each house with a courtyard is associated with a nuclear family, so those domestic units formed by several houses with a courtyard would most likely house extended families (González Ruibal 2006–2007, 383–93; Ayán Vila 2008, 951–59). Furthermore, these types of houses are rich in architectural stone decorations, especially on door jambs and lintels. The complex decorative programmes of the dwellings would be a way of marking the social and economic position of their inhabitants (González Ruibal 2004a, 126–30; 2006–2007, 393–401). Considering the surface area of the ten dwellings that have been excavated from the phase prior to the Roman conquest in the oppidum of San Cibrán de Las, Yolanda Álvarez González and colleagues (2017, 361) have estimated that between 200 and 240 houses and about one thousand to 1200 inhabitants once existed on this site. An approximate number of three to four thousand inhabitants has also been calculated for Sanfins (González Ruibal 2006–2007, 373).

At the end of the Late Iron Age, two different types of domestic structures seem to coexist in the oppida of the Cantabrian region: the circular or oval form and the rectangular or rectangular construction with rounded corners. The first model is common among the *castros* north of the Cantabrian Range (Marín 2011, Fig. 4.53; González Álvarez and others 2018, 223–30), such as the San Chuis hill fort (Allande, Asturias; Fig. 8.17) (Jordá Pardo, Marín, and García-Guinea 2011). The second type is that used in the Meseta. In both cases, the dwellings have a stone base and wattle and daub walls (Cisneros, García Sánchez, and Hernández Domínguez 2011, 68; Torres-Martínez and others 2016, 370). Around the houses there would have been an entire series of auxiliary constructions, such as storerooms and raised granaries (Torres-Martínez 2011, 316). Hypothetically, a nuclear family of four to five members would have lived in each of the main domestic structures. In the oppidum of La Ulaña more than a hundred structures that may have been used for domestic functions were found. Therefore, its excavators have calculated a total population for this site of some 500–600 inhabitants (López Noriega and Cisneros 2005, 48–50).

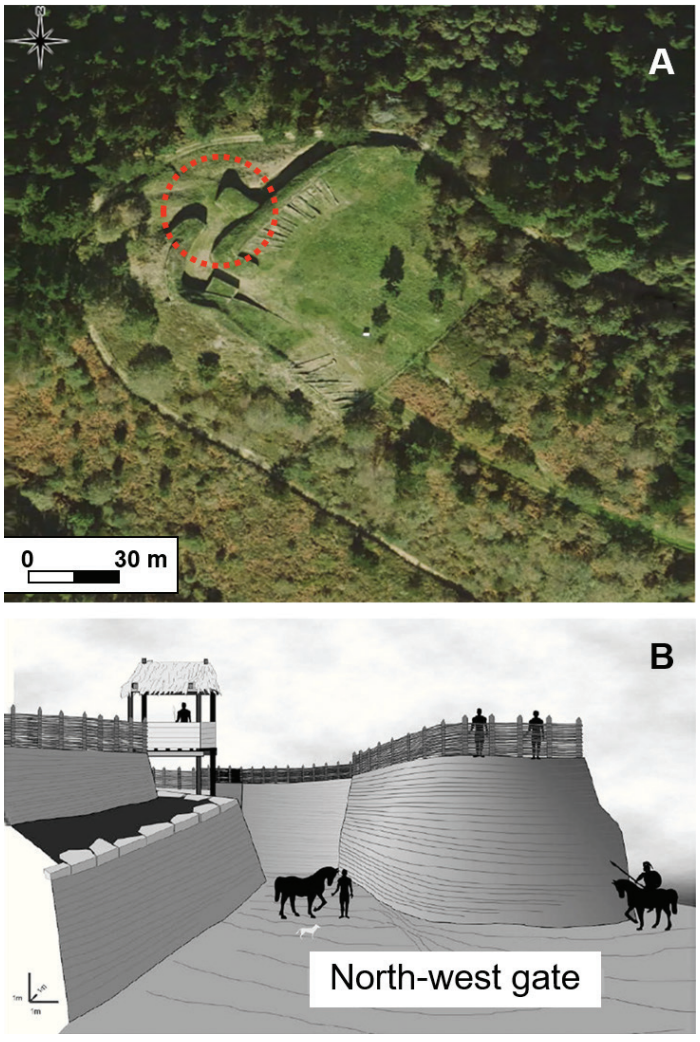

Figure 8.18. Oppidum of Marueleza: A. Aerial view of the north-west gate; B. Reconstruction. Drawing after Valdés 2009.

As mentioned above, some urban sites in the north-west possess a central, upper enclosure that would have functioned as a sanctuary or a social aggregation space. This is the case of the internal enclosures or acropoleis of San Cibrán de Las, Monte Mozinho (Penafiel, Porto), and possibly Santa Luzia (Viana do Castelo) and Briteiros. The space in the first enclosure of Sanfins would also have been used for ritual purposes. Sculptures of divinities, votive inscriptions to indigenous and Roman gods, and architectural decorations (triskelia or severed heads) frequently appear in these places (González Ruibal 2004a; 2006–2007, 567–70; 2008, 922–23; Álvarez González and others 2017). There is another type of ritual structure inside the oppida of the north-west: the saunas. These constructions have been related to initiation ceremonies for warriors (Almagro-Gorbea and Álvarez-Sanchís 1993), although recently their use has been considered in rites that would allow

warriors to enter the community as peaceful citizens upon their return from battle (García Quintela and Santos-Estévez 2015).

In the Cantabrian strip, the best-known sanctuary is that of Gastiburu (Arratzu, Vizcaya). It is a sanctuary built in the surroundings of the Marueleza oppidum (Nabarniz, Vizcaya; Fig. 8.18). This sacred place comprises, among other elements, four or five grandstands that face a central space. Its use would have been related to the monitoring of the seasonal calendar (Valdés 2009). There are also examples of ritual saunas in the western Cantabrian area, although they differ from those previously mentioned, as they are found in *castros* and lack the *pedras formosas* (beautiful stones), the monumental façades of these baths which are sometimes highly decorated (Almagro-Gorbea and Álvarez-Sanchís 1993; Marín 2011, 579–84; García Quintela and Santos-Estévez 2015).

As in continental Europe, trade flows would have been channelled from the oppida to rural settlements. In the north-western urban centres, the acquisition and integration of long-distance exchange — Roman and neo-Punic — played a fundamental role in the power negotiations that took place among prominent social groups (González Ruibal 2004b; 2006–2007, 523–31). In most of northern Iberia, the indigenous use of writing would not occur until the Roman period. However, in those areas of the Cantabrian foothills that were more accessible to contacts with the populations of the eastern Meseta, examples of legal texts with indigenous writing have been found, such as the *tessera hospitalis* that was recently discovered in Monte Bernorio. The importance of these types of legal documents is that they reveal the existence of 'citizenship rights' among the Iron Age communities (Torres-Martínez and others 2016, 375–76). In this northern area, the beginning of monetization was to occur as a result of the Cantabrian Wars (29–19 BC) (Peralta 2003, 259–82).

The effective domination of the north and the north-west at the time of Augustus did not put an end to all the oppida or the *castros*. However, from the middle of the first century AD onwards, these pre-Roman means of occupying the landscape gave way to other types of settlements (*civitates*, *villae*, or *vici*) (González Ruibal 2008, 925; Marín 2011, 673–88).

The Demise of the Iberian Oppida

As in many parts of Europe, the demise of the Iberian oppida is related to the Roman conquest between 218 and 19 BC (Fernández-Götz 2019). However, the conquest was a long process — some two hundred years — and the different rates at which it was achieved in the various regions led to an uneven history of Iberian oppida abandonment. In many ways, the Roman conquest opened the door to a major shift in the settlement pattern, in which urban settlements came under the same legal, social, economic, and technological systems. In any event, the shift, indeed the decline, of most oppida was related to the new Roman economic, production, and trade structure that incentivized the move from hill-top settlements to new sites on the plains.

The Roman conquest offers a clear-cut map of isochrones across an east-south and north-west/north axis, with three main phases (Edmondson 2014). The first came about in the final decades of the third century BC with the control of a narrow strip of territory along the Mediterranean coast (Prevosti 2019) and with wedges penetrating into the Ebro and Guadalquivir Valleys (Campos Carrasco and Bermejo Meléndez 2018, 11–26) (see Fig. 8.1). In these regions — the first and most Romanized — some of the oppida were abandoned at the same time as the first Roman towns were founded in the second half of the second or early first centuries BC. There was an explosion of rural establishments and just a few cases of full continuity between the indigenous and Roman settlements.

The second phase was from the beginning of second century BC to the Lusitanian-Celtiberian Wars (154–133 BC), as the conquest progressed to the interior of the Iberian Peninsula (Curchin 2004). In a first stage, the oppida reinforced their resistance to Roman power through a process of *synoecism*. A few decades later, we can recognize a continuity from oppida to Roman towns such as *Numantia*, Tiermes, *Cauca*, *Toletum*, and *Conimbriga*. In other cases the indigenous sites fell into decline or the population moved, as in the case of Ulaca, to a Roman town, *Obila* (present-day Ávila). The *ex-novo* foundation of Roman towns was a means of defusing indigenous power and the symbolic meaning of oppida (Fernández-Götz 2019). At the end of the second century BC, Rome imposed a new economic system and a new communication network and began to erode the indigenous settlement pattern.

Finally, between the early first century BC and the Augustan conquest of the Cantabrian people (29–19 BC) in the northern and north-western regions, the indigenous pattern of *castros* and oppida remained almost unchanged (Fernández-Götz, Torres-Martínez, and Martínez-Velasco 2018). In the second half of the first century AD we see the profound transformation of the settlement structure through the new Roman nuclei and the abandonment of most of the oppida (Santos Yanguas 2009). The genuine world of the oppida, if such a thing had ever existed, was gone.

Conclusions

Behind the diverse meanings of urbanism (Fernández-Götz and Krause 2016; Smith 2016) and its long archaeological approach in European Prehistory (Gaydarska 2017) there is a basic dual approach. On the one hand, urbanism is the architectural and spatial organization of a settlement space, perhaps in some way its 'skin' and its visible appearance, while on other hand — constituting the 'hidden base' — is the living organism with its inhabitants, the community structured by social relations and the wielding of power (Fig. 8.19). In other words, the sociality (Fletcher 2019). The first approach has generally prevailed, as it also has in this overview, and this involves remaining on the surface of the urban phenomenon. So we are relegating the close relationship of urbanism with the social dimensions to the background: the social organization and the population and its interaction with the rural population and also with the political and ideological dimensions of the community. In other words, 'urbanisation is not simply a construction or an architectural process, it is also a process through which particular qualities in the social sphere — size, density and heterogeneity — themselves increase' (Han 2016, 178). In this sense, a broader perspective of urbanization as a fundamental characteristic of the city emerges from external connections, heterogeneity, and aggregation, which work to support the adoption of innovation, the 'urban way of life' (Han 2016, 179).

Although V. Gordon Childe (1950, 3) established seventy years ago that 'the concept of "city" is notoriously hard to define', and obviously that is absolutely true today, we need to move forward between theoretical concepts (Currais and Sastre 2019) and the new, more plentiful archaeological data so as to try to understand the true meaning of urban. For Bisserka Gaydarska (2017, 181–82) urbanism is 'a culturally specific process within which an urban way of life is conceived' and urbanization concerns 'the proliferation and sustainability of urban settlement forms'.

In our overview we have tried to use categories of sites that are different from the categories used for cities. This involves the need to understand sites in their own context in time and space so as to avoid a restrictive perspective, because even if we try to explore what urbanism means, it certainly cannot be a simple question of 'urban versus non-urban' settlements.

In any case, some categories are useful to approach prehistoric urban planning, for example, the concept of 'low-density urbanism', elaborated on by Roland Fletcher (2009; 2012). According to Fletcher

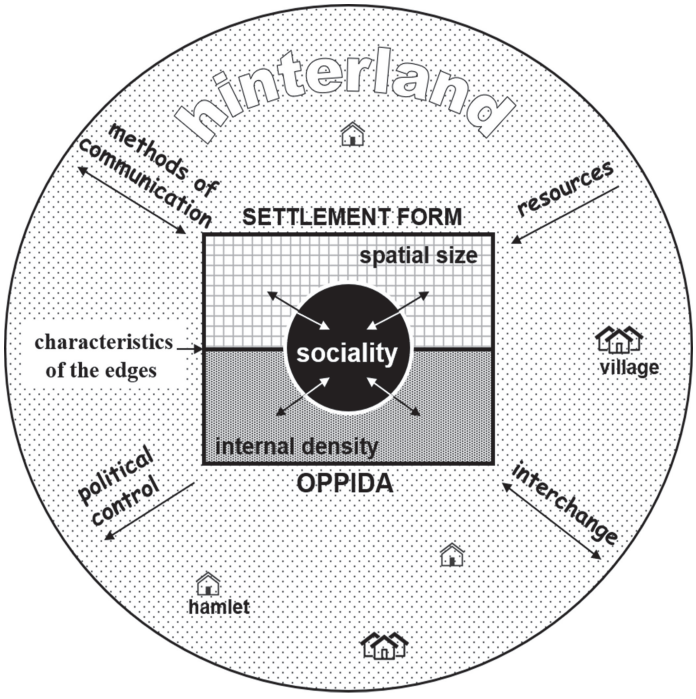

Figure 8.19. Model of 'low-density' urbanism. Illustration by authors based on data from Fletcher 2019.

Western urbanism or 'compact urbanism' (the classical Mediterranean city) is only a manifestation of the complex and polymorphic urban phenomenon, and the wide extra-European tradition shows another model, that of 'agrarian low density', which is also a common feature of human behaviour. These are sites with large settlement areas composed of scattered domestic units but as a single social entity. In some way, they are 'dispersed agrarian urban settlements'.

The heuristic value of the concept has been recognized and applied to certain British oppida (Moore 2017) as well as Central European ones (Fernández Götz 2019). Recently Fletcher (2019) has highlighted that the comparison is a useful tool to think about cases such as the European Iron Age oppida, considering that the form of these settlements includes two fundamental variables: the size of their surface and the internal density of structures, being important in relation to how they delimit its confines (walls, ditches, and so on). This relationship between site size and occupation density has not usually been explored in detail. And it offers many interesting possibilities because, as Fletcher rightly argues, behind the urban it is sociality, in one way or another, which despite its diffuse meaning, is alluding to the way in which community interacts and relates itself, solves social-friction problems, and articulates the political and ideological foundations of the 'city'. The model proposed by Fletcher helps to investigate

something that we already observed when comparing the Vetton and Celtiberian settlement models (Álvarez Sanchís and Ruiz Zapatero 2001, 71). The Vetton model seems close to the low-density type, and the Celtiberian is usually closer to compact urbanism, but first we would need to carefully evaluate exact values for both variables, surface size and internal density, and afterwards explore the meanings behind both models.

As a final summary on Iron Age urbanism, in the Iberian area settlement structures are based on oppida of different sizes (5–50 ha and in some cases even larger) with populations that ranged between seven hundred and *c.* five thousand individuals, although with different settlement patterns. At least four settlement patterns have been recognized: 1) in High Guadalquivir, the oppida are almost the sole type of site, and there is a polynuclear model in which these sites controlled hinterlands of a generally regular shape. The oppida are organized around a scheme of a walled site, rectilinear streets, and houses with shared walls that are arranged into blocks, with dynastic palaces (*regia*) and sanctuaries in what was quite a dense occupation. Water cisterns are included in some cases; 2) in the south-east, medium-sized oppida are located on the upper level of the territorial areas, with a second level of smaller fortified sites and towers; 3) in the Levante region, the oppida are the paramount feature of small territories that controlled a landscape comprising fortified sites, hamlets, and farmsteads; and finally, 4) in the north-east, there are medium and small oppida with hinterlands of smaller sites dispersed throughout the territories.

In the central lands of the Meseta, Celtiberian towns reveal clear Iberian influences from the east — as in their writing and coins — in urban layouts with orthogonal schemes, a dense occupation of the space with residential rectangular structures, few public buildings, and a general 'city state' model. A quite similar situation may also be seen in the Vaccei area, with greater nucleation in large settlements with planned interiors organized into perpendicular streets and blocks of rectangular houses, and with long distances between one town and another. In Celtiberian and Vaccei towns, populations would have been around a few thousand inhabitants. In the western Meseta lands, however, Vettonian settlements were organized in a different manner, without a specific urban layout and with isolated houses scattered throughout the sites, offering a low density of structures, huge empty spaces, and only a few public or religious buildings. Apparently they also had smaller populations than those of the Celtiberian and Vaccei towns.

The most common settlement model in northwest Iberia is the *castro* (hill fort), with stone fortifications and roundhouses, although some villages and farms have begun to be documented as other types of sites. These are medium and small settlements without any apparent order in the distribution of the houses, and they most probably had somewhere around several hundred inhabitants. They were inspired by heterarchical social relationships that prevented hierarchical organization and the emergence of central places. However in some limited areas of south-western Galicia and northern Portugal, larger settlements have been denominated oppida due to their surface size and the monumental scale of their walls and gates. These settlements sometimes feature stone statues of warriors and a pseudo-orthogonal street layout. Ritual saunas, cisterns, and drainage systems were also part of the special character of these sites, which were different to simple *castros*. Their populations may well have reached up to four thousand inhabitants.

Two worlds came into contact: the Iberian urban settlements, having Mediterranean construction systems, proportional measurement units, and ordered layouts, and that of the Atlantic regions with their *castros* and semi-isolated stone roundhouses in irregular schemes — although connected to the Mediterranean Sea through a Late Phoenician/Punic presence on the north-western Iberia coast. We are now only just beginning to glimpse the complexity and interactions of these two worlds and their settlement forms at the end of the first millennium BC.

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