

LAS VALLINAS (TEVERGA, ASTURIAS). AN IRON AGE AND ROMAN FARMSTEAD IN NORTHERN SPAIN

LAS VALLINAS (TEVERGA, ASTURIAS). UNA GRANJA DE LA EDAD DEL HIERRO Y ÉPOCA ROMANA EN EL NORTE DE LA PENÍNSULA IBÉRICA

ALFONSO FANJUL PERAZA

Arqueólogo
alfperaza@hotmail.com

SUSANA DEL CARMEN FERNÁNDEZ MENÉNDEZ

Departamento de Geología
Universidad de Oviedo
fernandezmsusana@uniovi.es

JOSÉ ANTONIO PIS MILLÁN

Centro de Experimentación Pesquera
Principado de Asturias
joseantonio.pismillan@asturias.org

RODRIGO ÁLVAREZ GARCÍA

Departamento de Explotación y
Prospección de Minas
Universidad de Oviedo
alvarezrodrigo@uniovi.es

M^a ÁNGELES FERNÁNDEZ CASADO

Departamento de Biología de
Organismos y Sistemas
Universidad de Oviedo
mafernand@uniovi.es

HERMINIO SEVERIANO NAVA FERNÁNDEZ

Departamento de Biología de
Organismos y Sistemas
Universidad de Oviedo
hnava@uniovi.es

ÁLVARO BUENO SÁNCHEZ

Instituto de Recursos Naturales y
Ordenación del Territorio (Indurot)
Universidad de Oviedo
abueno@uniovi.es

JOSÉ IGNACIO ALONSO FELPETE

Instituto de Recursos Naturales y
Ordenación del Territorio (Indurot)
Universidad de Oviedo
alonsojose@uniovi.es

MARÍA DÍAZ HERRERO

Arqueóloga
diazherreromaria@gmail.com

Recibido: 01/11/2017

Aceptado: 08/02/2020

ABSTRACT: Obstacles to prospection along the coastal landscape of the Bay of Biscay, structural and material limitations in smaller settlement units, and a lack of comprehensive monitoring of current alterations to the terrain, have all left a dearth of knowledge about the possible presence of open Iron Age farms or hamlets in the Cantabrian region. Presented here for the first time, we demonstrate the existence of these farms with findings verifying agricultural land use at Las Vallinas. In comparing information from this farm with that from inhabited hillforts of the same period, we are also given a wider picture of the economic development of the ancient Astures from the end of prehistory to the beginning of Roman occupation. The impact of Romanization caused an unprecedented upheaval of the old social and economic structures of the Asturs in the area, instigating a slow and steady recovery of a rural economy from the late 1st century AD.

KEYWORDS: Las Vallinas, Farm, Iron Age, Roman times; North of Iberian

RESUMEN: Los obstáculos para la prospección a lo largo del paisaje costero del Golfo de Vizcaya, las limitaciones estructurales y materiales de las unidades de asentamiento más pequeñas, y la falta de un control

exhaustivo de las alteraciones actuales del terreno, han ocasionado un vacío en el conocimiento sobre la posible presencia de granjas o caseríos en espacios abiertos durante la Edad del Hierro en la región cantábrica. Presentamos por primera vez la existencia de estas granjas, con los hallazgos en Las Vallinas que confirman el uso agrícola del terreno. Al comparar la información de esta alquería con la de castros habitados de la misma época, aportamos una visión más amplia del desarrollo económico de los antiguos Astures desde finales de la Prehistoria hasta el inicio de la ocupación romana. El impacto de la romanización provocó una alteración sin precedentes de las antiguas estructuras sociales y económicas de los Astures en esta zona, dando lugar a una lenta y continua recuperación de la economía rural a partir de finales del siglo I d.C.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Las Vallinas, granja, Edad del Hierro, época romana, norte de la península ibérica

1. FINDING THE FARMS.

During the last two centuries of Asturian archaeological research, the hillfort and the fortified settlement have been the central focus of all discussion of ancient settlement in the region. The dense vegetation of the northern Spanish coast characterizing the landscape, has made the finding of small settlement units, such as farms, almost impossible. Furthermore, these structures have only been found in other regions of the Iberian Peninsula through comprehensive monitoring of construction sites¹ (Rojas et al. 2007). Heritage laws in Asturias do not require comprehensive monitoring of construction sites; therefore, to the present time, Asturias is possibly the only region in Western Europe where archaeological remains never appear when a new freeway is under construction.

Nevertheless, our successive reviews of the fortified landscape² encouraged us to believe Asturias to be no different to the rest of pre-Roman Atlantic Europe³, and that smaller unfortified settlement units must have existed, in the form of hamlets, farms or mountain pastures (brañas). Iron Age material findings in valleys without hillforts, the small size of most Asturian hillforts, as well as the relatively low number of settlements that should have been simultaneously occupied throughout the region, are aspects providing enough reason to propose not only the existence of smaller non-fortified inhabited settlements, but also, apart from the landscape, a hierarchical society, such as existed in the rest of Western Europe⁴. Our research has led us to

- 1 ROJAS RODRÍGUEZ MALO, J.M., GÓMEZ LAGUNA, AJ., CÁCERES GUTIÉRREZ, Y., JUAN ARES, J. DE (2007). "Estructuras de ocupación del Bronce Final orientalizante, Hierro I y II Edad del Hierro localizadas en la autovía de los Viñedos cm. 400. Tramo Consuegra-Tomelloso (P.K. 0+000 A 74+600) Yacimientos de Varas del Palio, Palomar de Doña Leonides, Zona 4 de Lerma y Arrojachicos". *Actas de las II Jornadas de Arqueología de Castilla la Mancha*. Toledo. pp. 1-40.
- 2 FANJUL PERAZA, A. (2005). *Los castros de Asturias. Una revisión territorial y funcional*. Oviedo; FANJUL PERAZA, A., MENÉNDEZ BUEYES, L.R. (2004). *El complejo castreño de los astures transmontanos*. Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca.
- 3 MAUNE, S. (1998). *Recherches récentes sur les établissements ruraux protohistoriques en Gaule méridionale (IX-III s. Av. J-C)*. Protohistoire européenne, 2, Montagnac; RIEDEL, A., TECCHIATI, U. (1999). "Settlements and economy in the bronze and iron age in Trentino-South Tyrol. Notes for an archaeozoological model". *Preistoria Alpina*, 35, pp. 105-113.
- 4 ALMAGRO-GORBEA, M., TORRES ORTIZ, M. (1999). *Las fibulas de jinete y de caballito. Aproximación a las élites ecuestres y su expansión en la Hispania céltica*. Zaragoza; WOOLF, G. (2002). "Generations of aristocracy. Continuities and discontinuities in the societies of the interior Gaul". *Archaeological dialogues*, 9 (1), p. 215;

make a complete departure from the current theories held by official academia⁵ that continue to keep alive the material myth of an egalitarian self-sufficient pre-Roman “community” as a means for interpreting the Cantabrian Iron Age.

Accidental discoveries at Las Vallinas have given strong support to our theory, and the research goes further than simply providing information on inhabitation. The complete devastation occurring to fortified settlements in Asturias brought about by the arrival of the Romans, can also be observed to have occurred in the small settlement units.

2. DISCOVERY AND LOCATION OF LAS VALLINAS.

The terrain known as Las Vallinas is found at an altitude of 670 metres on the slopes of the Sobia Mountain Range in the heart of the high mountain valley at Teverga in Asturias. The use of this particular area of the valley for the location of a succession of farming establishments is not by chance. Here we find what could be the most fertile farmland in the entire valley, where a small stream supplies water to the area throughout the year, the soil and aspect are suitable for the cultivation of mountain cereal crops, and the topography protects the whole cultivated area from the wind. The landscape is formed of ancient hillside cultivation terraces that descend for one and a half kilometres from the vertical limestone face of the Sobia Range to the lowest part of the valley where the River Páramo flows. Extensive glacial sliding of mountain limestone forms the geological base, over which layers of clay have been deposited. The result of this sliding can be seen completely covering the slopes of the Sobia Range, where limestone outcrops predominate in the landscape.

Towards the end of 2013, the owner of the land decided to build a track a few metres long between two agricultural terraces to allow a vehicle to pass through. Cutting into one of the terraces revealed numerous remains of fauna and ceramics, circular mill fragments and small metal elements. These findings led to the owner contacting us and the commencement of the steps toward a more comprehensive archaeological examination.

On first viewing the findings, we were able to assign the context to the end of the Iron Age, especially regarding the finding of a mill with a tiered recess in the upper section, characteristic of those at Asturian hillforts⁶, and ceramic elements, all with identical properties to those at the neighbouring pre-Roman La Garba hillfort. We had carried out several surveys at this hillfort in 2004, finding occupation from the 4th – 3rd centuries BC, without finding any remains related to Roman occupation, except for a later hamlet from the 4th – 5th centuries

FANJUL PERAZA, A. (2013). “Social myths and landscape realities of the Asturian Iron Age hill forts”. *Trébole. Boletín Cultural de Asturias en USA*, 2, pp. 2-12.

5 FERNÁNDEZ-POSSE, M.D., SÁNCHEZ-PALENCIA, F.J. (1998). “Las comunidades campesinas en la cultura castreña”. *Trabajos de Prehistoria*, 55, pp. 127-150.

6 MAYA GONZÁLEZ, J.L. (1988/89). *La cultura material de los castros asturianos*. Monográficos de Estudios de la Antigüedad, 4/5. Bellaterra.

AD⁷. With no previous discoveries of open farms or villages for the period, the Las Vallinas site made an exception, and we began excavation there the following year.

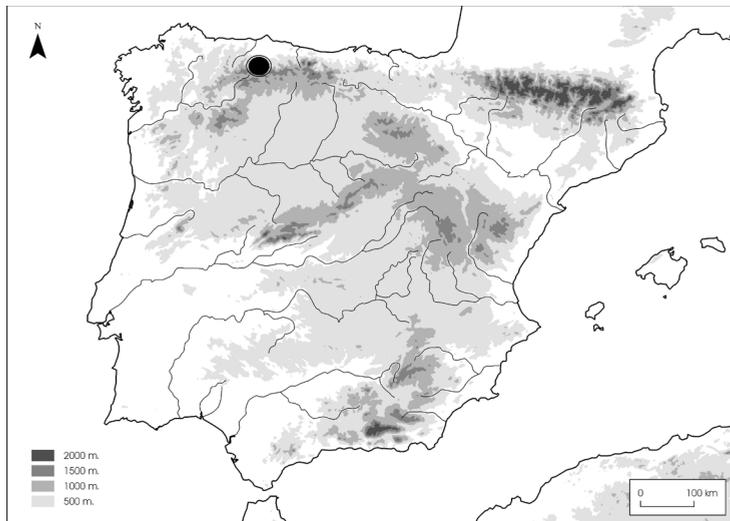


Figure 1. Map showing the location of Las Vallinas (Teverga, Asturias)



Figure 2. Location of the cut in the terrain where the first archaeological materials from Las Vallinas appeared on a mountainside of the Sobia Range.

7 FANJUL PERAZA, A., FERNÁNDEZ RODRÍGUEZ, C., LÓPEZ PÉREZ, M.C., ÁLVAREZ PEÑA, A. (2007). "Excavaciones en el castro de la Garba (Teverga), Asturias. Primeros trazos arqueológicos del poblamiento castreño en la alta montaña". *Estudios varios de Arqueología castreña. A propósito de las excavaciones en los castros de Teverga, Asturias*. Salamanca. pp. 49-76.

3. THE EXCAVATION.

Archaeological exploration was carried out at Las Vallinas in July-August, 2014. First, we examined the cut that produced the findings with stratigraphic excavation, in order to spend several weeks afterwards setting up three surveys.

As a result of the stratigraphic excavation, we were able to identify a layer in which material remains were gathered, almost level with the base of the track (SU 2.2.), and another in which we found a concentration of ash and refractory clays (SU 2.3.). The upper levels (2.1. and 2.2.) consisted of a mixture of small limestone rocks and archaeological material, resulting from later centuries of agricultural activity.

We positioned the first survey 20m uphill from the stratigraphic cut. Our first theory, based on logic, was that, for there to be so many material remains on the outer layers of the slope, there would need to have been an inhabited area from where all the findings of waste lower down had come. This first survey was positioned on a small, flat terrace, being an ideal location for finding dwelling structures. Below a depth of 60cm, historical materials began to disappear, and we began to find small fragments of coarsely tempered handmade ceramics subjected to a variety of firings that we were able to identify as Iron Age. In this context, at --70cm, a ten centimetre thick occupation layer appeared; it consisted of refractory clays, charcoal and ash. Both the position of this relatively flat layer and its similarity to the occupation layer found in the stratigraphic excavation, allowed us to identify it as the remains of a hut. The analogies with the remains of huts we had found at the neighbouring La Garba hillfort⁸, and the imprints of wooden poles forming the surface, led us to believe that the wall ruins at that level were those of a hut, above a layer of ash and charcoal.

Survey 2 was positioned at the cut in the terrain for building the track that we had studied. The aim was to intensively excavate the occupation layer previously located in the stratigraphic excavation, bearing in mind that part of it was no longer there due to the construction of the track.

The stratigraphic sequence was the same as the one detected with the initial excavation, and in a limited way, we were able to differentiate between which materials belonged to the occupation layer, and which had been deposited at a later date.

Two large rough limestone slabs appeared to border the location of the occupation layer (SU 2.3.), but the small size of the survey, 1m wide x 4m long, did not allow us to find a dwelling structure that might have been partly formed by the stone slabs.

8 FANJUL PERAZA, A. (2011). "The valley conquest. New dates on the development of fortified settlements in the high mountain area of northern Spain". *Origini. Preistoria e protoistoria delle civiltà antiche*, XXXIII, Nuova Serie, V, pp. 303-318.

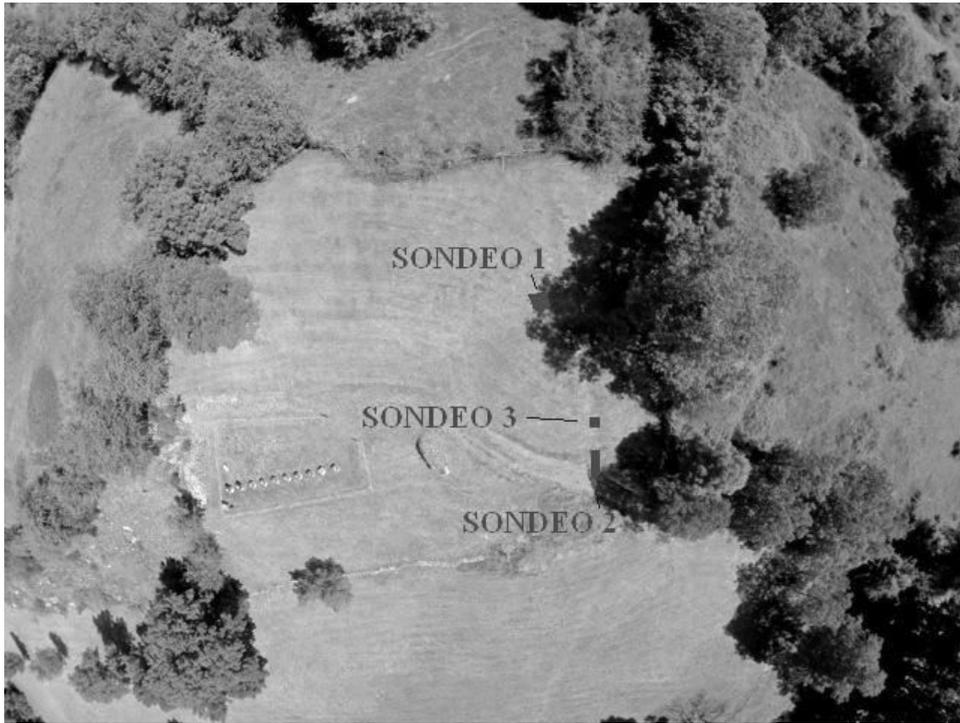


Figure 3. Aerial view of the three surveys.



Figure 4. View of survey 1.

Survey 3 was positioned at a point between surveys 1 and 2. The aim was to rule out the possibility that on a small flat area of just 8 square metres on a terrace immediately above Survey 2 there might be another occupied space from where all the superficial material remains found in that survey had come.

In this case the dimensions that we decided on were only 1m x 1m; we had the sole aim of detecting occupation layers from where the material found in Survey 2 had slid downhill. The result was negative, the stratigraphy showing a single layer of a typical mixture of a later occupation to that of Survey 1, being the result of intensive agricultural activity, from which a large quantity of assorted bone, ceramic and lithic material emerged.

From a stratigraphic point of view, the evidence shows that first we have some layers showing human presence from an undetermined period within late prehistory, but not showing great changes in intensity of agricultural activity. The remains of two huts appear later, the one discovered in Survey 1, dated to the Iron Age, and the other in the occupation layer from Survey 2 that we dated to 15 AD.

Continuing upward from the discovery of successive dwelling structures, the stratigraphic information continues to be highly significant, showing the effects of intensive agricultural practices from the same Iron Age period up to the level when the hut layers are replaced by a mixture of small limestone blocks and waste from various later periods.



Figure 5. View of Survey 2, next to the track, and Survey 3, at a slightly higher level.

4. THE IRON AGE FARM.

The information from Las Vallinas corresponds in almost every aspect with that from the pre-Roman settlements examined in the centre of the region.

According to the information from La Campa Torres⁹, major deforestation of the territory was carried out in about the 11th century BC, leaving behind open countryside, mainly consisting of pasturelands and fields for cereal crops; this was to be followed, to a lesser degree, by the cultivation of a variety of legumes, with the residues of forestland, formed mainly of oak and chestnut, concentrated near streams and rivers. If we consider the information from Llagú, this deforestation was to gradually continue in the centre of the region with an intensification of the agricultural economy¹⁰, coinciding with the information from the layers of early occupation at Las Vallinas. Nevertheless, the examples of fauna vary, the settlements from the late Iron Age consuming large quantities of cattle, sheep and goat, followed by a progressive diversification of species in the late pre-Roman years that would continue to become more localized and varied from Roman times.

The materials and layers found in Survey 1 clearly show that the land at Las Vallinas was used for agriculture during late prehistory. Pollen analysis shows a very open and already deforested landscape going back to previous centuries, this being formed of pasture and cereal cultivation, there being very little forestland – mainly oak and some chestnut – with bracken of different species on the lower mountain slopes.

Land use at Las Vallinas at this stage goes through two periods of change during the same era. In the first phase, agricultural activity seems to follow very rudimentary patterns, with little intensity showing in the stratigraphic data (SU 1.4.); successive burning of the fields was carried out, probably for clearing the land for pastures and cultivation after harvest. The analysis of the components of ceramic materials show that during this first phase clay from this same terrain was used for making ceramic objects, and that in conjunction with agricultural and livestock farming, there was a bronze metallurgy economy. In the second phase, we find an occupation layer revealing the ruins of a hut wall, built with an intertwining of hazelnut branches filled and coated with clay. The analysis shows that the clay for building the hut was again from the same terrain, whereas, the ceramics were made in another part of the valley where better tempers were found. The appearance of the hut coincides with intensification of agricultural activity at Las Vallinas (SU 1.2.).

The fauna remains found in the lower strata of protohistoric occupation at Las Vallinas (SU 1.4.) completely correspond with sheep and goat, animals perfectly suited to the rocky terrain of the Sobia Range surrounding the site. We are unquestionably faced with a people involved in a mixed economy, mainly of agriculture and livestock, but which also included

9 MAYA GONZÁLEZ, J.L., CUESTA TORIBIO, F. (2001). *El castro de la Campa Torres. Periodo Prerromano*. Gijón.

10 BALADO PACHÓN, A., MARCOS HERRÁN, F.J. (2006): *Excavación arqueológica en el castro de Llagú (Latores, Oviedo), campaña 2004-05*. Consejería de Cultura del Principado de Asturias. Informe inédito.

mining and metallurgy, if we look at the drops of melted bronze shown in sample SU 1.4. From the time the farm is established as a domestic structure (SU 1.3.), maximum intensification of agricultural activity can be seen.

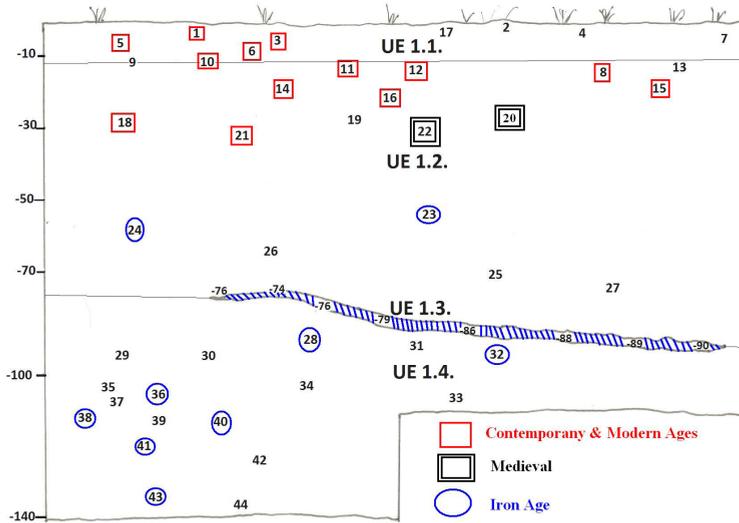


Figure 6. Survey 5 cut showing the location of materials and remains of the Iron Age hut (SU 1.3).

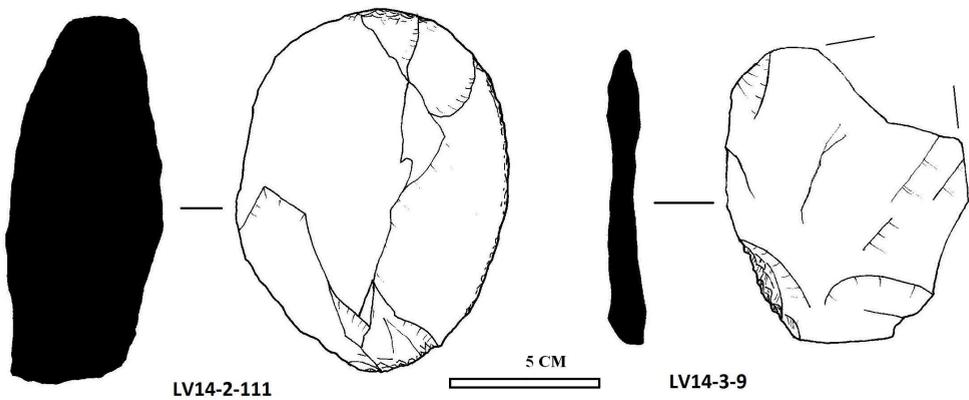


Figure 7. Lithic quartzite materials from pre-Roman layers at Las Vallinas.

5. ROMAN ARRIVAL AND ASTUR DOWNFALL 25-19 BC.

In 29 BC, a rebellion of the Vaccaei, who were probably supported by the Cantabri and Astures, constituted the beginning of the Astur-Cantabrian wars. A year later, Augustus opened the gates of the temple of Janus in Rome and marched toward the Iberian Peninsula¹¹.

Except for the names of the Roman generals, there is little recorded of the events of 27-28 BC. This lack of information is probably due to the fact that the war expeditions were for the purpose of exploration or reconnaissance of the enemy territory, in preparation for a major campaign, such as was to be undertaken the following year. The campaign mainly took place in Cantabria¹², with the taking of enclaves in the north of Palencia and a mountain campaign that seems to have culminated in the first defeat of the Cantabri¹³. At the end of winter in 25 BC, the Astures attempted to surprise the Roman army in the most westerly sector of the conflict at their capital, Lancia. The taking of the city and other neighbouring sites by Carisius, seems to have put an end to the conflict in the southern sector of Astur territory. Before returning to Rome in 24 BC and closing the gates of the temple of Janus, Augustus ordered the Cantabri and Astures to cease inhabiting the hillforts and to move to non-fortified areas.

In 22 BC, a widespread rebellion arose in the Astur-Cantabri region against the oppression of the governor, Carisius. A war in the mountains, led by Gaius Furnius, was won through the taking of the mythical Mons Medulius, and several key confrontations with the Astures¹⁴.

In 21-20 BC, we witness a certain degree of peace, undoubtedly maintained through the massacre or taking as slaves of the local male population of military age. A year later, the arrival of Cantabri slaves fleeing Roman rule, brought about the beginning of another generalized rebellion and further oppression of the population, this considered to mark the end of military campaigns for conquest.

A review of all the excavated Asturian hillforts provides an immediate picture of the consequences of the Roman invasion. None of the hillforts in central or eastern Asturias survived these years, but clear traces of fire can be seen at some of them, such as at Podes¹⁵, Moriyón¹⁶ and Caravia¹⁷, while at others, such as Llagú, Roman military material coinciding with these layers

11 SCHULTEN, A. (1943). *Los cántabros y astures y su guerra con Roma*. Madrid.

12 GUTIÉRREZ CUENCA, E., HIERRO GÁRATE, J.A. (2001). "La guerra cantábrica. De ficción historiográfica a realidad arqueológica". *Nivel Cero*, 9, pp. 71-96.

13 PERALTA LABRADOR, E. (2000). *Los Cántabros antes de Roma*. Madrid.

14 VICENTE GONZÁLEZ, J.L. (2008-2009). "*Bellum Asturicum*. Una hipótesis ajustada a la historiografía romana y al marco arqueológico y geográfico de la comarca de los valles de Benavente y su entorno". *Brigecio*, 18-19, pp. 1-73.

15 FANJUL PERAZA, A. (2015). *Los Astures y el poblamiento castreño en Asturias*. Tesis doctoral inédita. Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.

16 CAMINO MAYOR, J. (1997). "Excavaciones en castros de la Ría de Villaviciosa". *Estudios del Poblamiento Pre-romano de la Ría de Villaviciosa*. Villaviciosa. pp. 43-86.

17 ADÁN ÁLVAREZ, G.E., MARTÍNEZ FAEDO, L., DÍAZ GARCÍA, F. (1994): "Limpieza estratigráfica del castro de Caravia (Caravia, Asturias): Reconstrucción arqueológica/histórica". *Zephyrus*, XLVII, pp. 343-352.

of destruction is also evident¹⁸. The rest of the settlements are abandoned. In the western part of Asturias, the situation is different, and although some political seats survive, the presence of Roman military material along with limited examination of the archaeological layers for the period, lead us to suggest relative survival as opposed to the scene of total devastation in the central and eastern parts of the region

The archaeological and epigraphic information gives us reason to propose that the Roman conflict lasted until the late 1st century AD during the time of Nero. On the one hand, the epigraphic information speaks of an Astur rebellion in the sixties of the 1st century AD (CIL XI, 395), and it is only from this time onward that Roman settlement structures begin to be built in Asturias, as in the case of several villas. We believe that the sudden move of the VII Gemina Legion from the western part of the Empire to Astur territory in 74 AD, was not only related to mining activity, but was for the most part due to the conditions of instability. On the other hand, it marked the move of the first Roman settlement from La Campa Torres to Gijón, where a coastal headland provided greater supply and defence capabilities than those at La Campa Torres.

6. THE SURVIVORS – UNIT 2.3. – LAS VALLINAS (15 AD).

It was in this context of instability during the early 1st century AD, or more precisely, close to 15 AD, that the Iron Age occupation structure revealed in Survey 1 suddenly moved several metres downhill to cultivation areas.

The landscape changes completely, and not only in relation to our farm. Pollen analysis of the Asturian hillforts studied, shows that they all underwent a sudden change in their environment¹⁹. In the case of Las Vallinas, extensive forestland, about 70%, took over from ancient pastures and cultivation terraces on the slopes of the Sobia Range, producing what seems to be a generalized abandonment of the landscape, with cereal crops, in this case, spelt and einkorn, becoming very infrequent.

In conjunction with this, inhabitation of the majority of the hillforts had ceased. In the case of Llagú, this desertion is also evident, although there the greater presence of cereal crops along with an increase in forestland can be understood in relation to the need for providing sustenance to the military garrison that occupied the site²⁰. However, at La Campa there was a similar occurrence²¹, with forestland taking over the landscape, with some cereal crops surviving.

18 BALADO PACHÓN, A., MARCOS HERRÁN, F.J. (2006): *Excavación arqueológica en el castro de Llagú... op. cit.*

19 MAYA GONZÁLEZ, J.L., CUESTA TORIBIO, F. (2001). *El castro de la Campa Torres... op. cit.*

20 BERROCAL-RANGEL, L., MARTÍNEZ SECO, P., RUIZ TRIVIÑO, C. (2002). *El Castiello de Llagú (Latores, Oviedo). Un castro astur en los orígenes de Oviedo*. Bibliotheca Archaeologica Hispana, 13. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia.

21 MAYA GONZÁLEZ, J.L., CUESTA TORIBIO, F. (2001). *El castro de la Campa Torres... op. cit.*

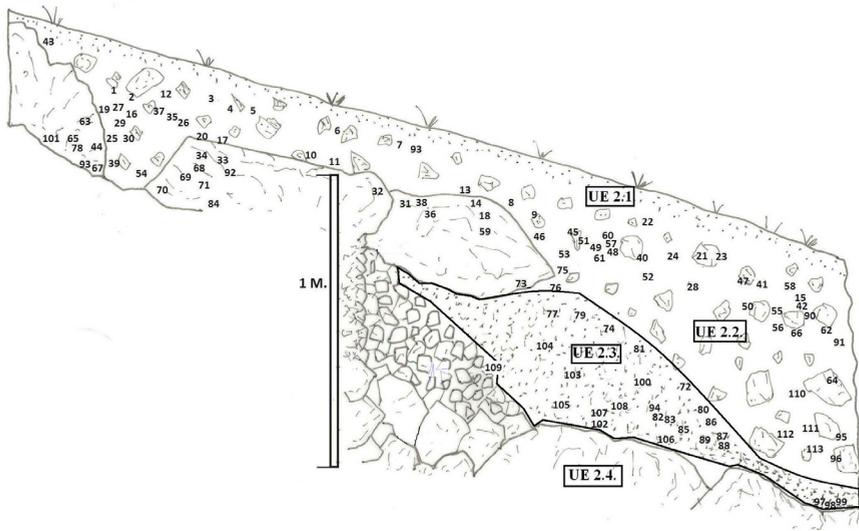


Figure 8. Stratigraphic profile of Survey 2.

In respect to the fauna, a reduction in Bovidae livestock gave way to an increase in farmhouse animals or poultry such as pigs and hens at Llagú²², while at Las Vallinas the type and percentages of species correspond exactly with those consumed during the late Iron Age at the neighbouring hillfort at La Garba. Inter-regional differences can easily be explained by the fact that Llagú and La Campa had ceased to be political seats and now had other more localized functions, accounting for the greater consumption of fauna from local sources, while Las Vallinas continues as an ongoing farming establishment in accordance with economic models of the late Iron Age. Hence, not a single Roman element appears among the ceramic material of the period and the ceramic pieces are identical in colour, texture and content to those from the late Iron Age layers at la Garba hillfort. The same occurred with the lithic materials, with pieces of quartzite from the valley floor continuing to be used as pounders and grinding tools.

When compared with the neighbouring La Garba hillfort, two other significant aspects of the fauna species at the farm emerge: the cattle at Las Vallinas were consumed fully matured and produced poorer quality meat than those at La Garba, and pork disappears from the diet and wild boar is eaten.

In structural aspects as well there is less durability than in the known remains from the end of the Asturian Iron Age. The fact that the hut, more so than that from SU 2.3., made use of a natural projection on the hillside for its location, and that a lesser quantity of impinted clay remains were found, as compared with the remains from Survey 1, lead us to suggest the

²² BALADO PACHÓN, A., MARCOS HERRÁN, FJ. (2006). *Excavación arqueológica en el castro de Llagú... op. cit.*

existence of a less resistant hut, in which, according to the analysis, even the roofing is clearly built with material from bushes rather than the grass or barley that is used for other pre-Roman structures found.



Figure 9. Quartzite piece at the base of the occupation layer from Survey 2.

In short, the instability of the structural and material resources and the poorer diet, along with an abandoned landscape, lead us to suggest marginality of the rural Astur peoples in the early 1st century AD, in comparison with their former economic context. We believe there is a clear connection between this sudden decline and the devastation of the old social system and pre-Roman settlement from the time of the Roman invasion and later conflicts.

7. SLOW AGRICULTURAL RECOVERY AND THE ASTUR-ROMAN FARM.

The exact chronological context of the Asture-Roman farm is uncertain, due to the fact that we have only Carbon-14 dated Unit 2.3., and some of Unit 2.2., as in the case of a small bronze applique, identical to one from the Priañes Villa²³ that the authors attribute to the 4th century AD, without Carbon-14 dating.

Although we did not find dwelling structures in this unit, we think they can be located in neighbouring terrain barely five meters from Las Vallinas; there was a large rubbish dump on which we carried out our research.

23 REQUEJO PAGÉS, O., ÁLVAREZ MARTÍNEZ, V. (2008). "Materiales arqueológicos procedentes de la villa de Priañes, Nora, Oviedo. Principado de Asturias". *Férvedes*, 5, pp. 405-412.

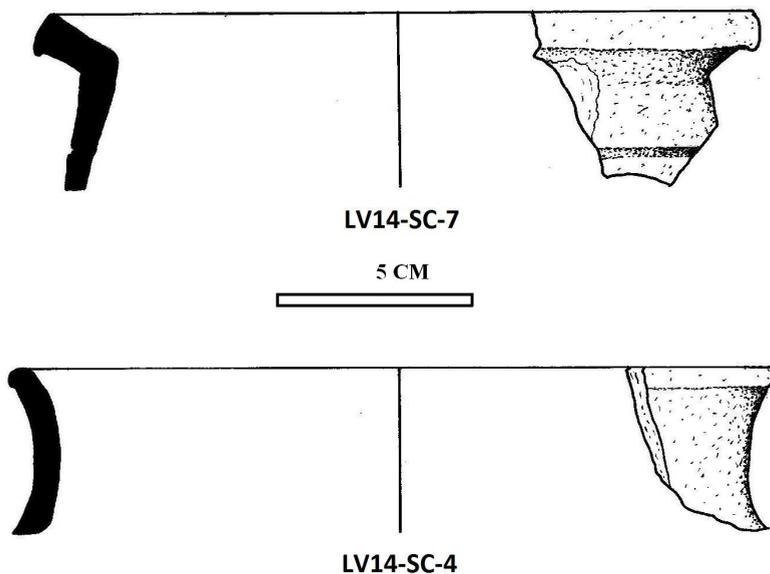


Figure 10. Local ceramics from SU 2.2.; still no examples of Roman material culture appear.

All the traces of pollen studied at La Campa Torres, Llagú, and Las Vallinas, indicate a land use taking over from the forest coverage of the previous era, but still with forest cover of 40-50%. The increased usage of the land for pasture and cultivation leads us to suggest a slow recovery of the rural economy, while the species base consumed remains the same as in the former period, with cattle, sheep and goat predominating, followed by horse and wild boar as game. There were, however, several new elements at this new farm. On the one hand, as we have mentioned, there was a slow return to an agricultural economy, with the addition of legumes to the mainly cereal crops. On the other hand, the change in the location of the living space to flatter, more convenient terrain, rather than as previously on the mountainside, leads us to suggest that dwelling conditions were now more stable. Other material elements point toward several significant developmental aspects.

The presence of iron scoria and bronze appliques and plaques indicates a diversified economy in which metal production is once again found in the domestic sphere. On the other hand, the absence of pounders and fragments of circular mills, proves that there is also gradual material recovery. From a statistical point of view, the greater quantity of remains evident in this unit, compared to the previous unit, also leads us to uphold the idea of intensification of and clear improvement in the rural economy when compared with the decline in the early 1st century AD.



Figure 11. Fragment of a typical Iron Age mill with upper indent, belonging to the Astur-Roman unit 2.2.

8. CONCLUSIONS.

Our archaeological intervention at La Vallinas consisted of a study limited to three surveys but was nonetheless sufficiently broad to confirm the reality we sought, based on our theoretical position over recent years: the existence of farms in addition to fortified settlements as part of the Cantabrian Iron Age settlement.

As seen in SU 2.3., this smaller kind of settlement unit, also suffered the sudden historical changes affecting the political seats. The study results of the paleo-environment are similar in all the Asturian cases analysed, and at Las Vallinas this signifies a radical change, with movement away from a fully domesticated landscape with substantial agricultural and livestock activity to one of abandonment. The forest cover went from 30% at the end of the Iron Age to almost 70% by 15 AD, showing economic and social break down in the former Asture territory at a time when there was no engagement in military conflict. However, there was certainly a climate of instability and insecurity that Rome tried to control with a military presence, installing a network of watch towers (*turris*) along the principal lines of communication, as in the case of neighbouring Alesga²⁴.

24 FANJUL PERAZA, A., MENÉNDEZ BUEYES, L.R., ÁLVAREZ PEÑA, A. (2005). "La fortaleza de Alesga (Teverga, Asturias): Una posible *Turris* de control altoimperial". *Gallaecia*, 24, pp. 181-191.



Figure 12. Bronze plaque with four small nail holes. In the other cases, the plaques are half as wide with space for two holes, from stratigraphic Astur-Roman unit 2.2.

The dwelling structures seem identical to those at the hillforts in central Asturias at the end of the Iron Age, when a simple intertwining of hazelnut branches bonded with clay, with a roof of vegetation over a central post, makes an adequate dwelling, without any need a stone base for the structure.

The economy is varied and early on includes bronze metallurgy, as seen at a large number of European highland sites²⁵, later on advancing to iron metallurgy in the Astur-Roman period. At the same time cereal crops are predominant and in the last phase legumes are added. These factors give evidence to a recovery of the rural economy, seen both in the diversity and the quantity of species, when compared with earlier stages.

LATE IRON AGE FARM (UE 1.4.)	LATE IRON AGE HILLFORTS (Garba-2 & Cogollina 3),	EARLY I d.C. FARM (UE 2.3.)	MIDDLE OR LATE I d.C. FARM (UE 2.2.)	LATE ROMAN HILLFORT (Garba-1)
<i>Ovis aries / Capra hircus</i>	<i>Bos taurus</i>	<i>Bos taurus & Equus Caballus.</i>	<i>Bos taurus</i>	<i>Ovis aries/ Capra hircus</i>
	<i>Ovis aries/ Capra hircus</i>	<i>Ovis aries/ Capra hircus</i>	<i>Ovis aries/ Capra hircus</i>	<i>Sus domesticus</i>
	<i>Sus domesticus</i>	<i>Sus scrofa/ Sus domesticus</i>	<i>Equus caballus</i>	

Table 1. Changes in fauna consumption at the archaeological sites in the Teverga Valley. A correlation can be seen between the fauna at Las Vallinas and at the hillforts for similar periods.

25 CARRER, F. (2013). "Archaeologia della pastorizia nelle Alpi: Nouvi dati e vecchi dubbi". *Preistoria Alpina*, 47, pp. 49-56.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

This research was carried out thanks to David, Rocío and their family (Sobrevilla, Teverga), owners of the land of Las Vallinas, and the hard work of Leticia Tobalina, Olatz González Cordero y Javier Sánchez Pascual.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

- ADÁN ÁLVAREZ, G.E., MARTÍNEZ FAEDO, L., DÍAZ GARCÍA, F. (1994). "Limpieza estratigráfica del castro de Caravia (Caravia, Asturias): Reconstrucción arqueológica/histórica". *Zephyrus*, XLVII, pp. 343-352.
- ALMAGRO-GORBEA, M., TORRES ORTIZ, M. (1999). *Las fíbulas de jinete y de caballito. Aproximación a las élites ecuestres y su expansión en la Hispania céltica*. Zaragoza.
- BALADO PACHÓN, A., MARCOS HERRÁN, F.J. (2006). *Excavación arqueológica en el castro de Llagú (Latores, Oviedo), campaña 2004-05*. Consejería de Cultura del Principado de Asturias. Informe inédito.
- BERROCAL-RANGEL, L., MARTÍNEZ SECO, P., RUIZ TRIVIÑO, C. (2002). *El Castiello de Llagú (Latores, Oviedo). Un castro astur en los orígenes de Oviedo*. Bibliotheca Archaeologica Hispana, 13. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia.
- CAMINO MAYOR, J. (1997). "Excavaciones en castros de la Ría de Villaviciosa", *Estudios del Poblamiento Prerromano de la Ría de Villaviciosa*. Villaviciosa. pp. 43-86.
- CARRER, F. (2013). "Archaeologia della pastorizia nelle Alpi: Nouvi dati e vecchi dubbi". *Preistoria Alpina*, 47, pp. 49-56.
- FANJUL PERAZA, A. (2005). *Los castros de Asturias. Una revisión territorial y funcional*. Oviedo.
- FANJUL PERAZA, A. (2011). "The valley conquest. New dates on the development of fortified settlements in the high mountain area of northern Spain". *Origini. Preistoria e protoistoria delle civiltà antiche*, XXXIII, Nuova Serie, V, pp. 303-318.
- FANJUL PERAZA, A. (2013). "Social myths and landscape realities of the Asturian Iron Age hill forts". *Trébole. Boletín Cultural de Asturias en USA*, 2, pp. 2-12.
- FANJUL PERAZA, A. (2015). *Los Astures y el poblamiento castreño en Asturias*. Tesis doctoral inédita. Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.
- FANJUL PERAZA, A., FERNÁNDEZ RODRÍGUEZ, C., LÓPEZ PÉREZ, M. C., ÁLVAREZ PEÑA, A. (2007). "Excavaciones en el castro de la Garba (Teverga), Asturias. Primeros trazos arqueológicos del poblamiento castreño en la alta montaña". *Estudios varios de Arqueología castreña. A propósito de las excavaciones en los castros de Teverga, Asturias*. Salamanca. pp. 49-76.
- FANJUL PERAZA, A., MENÉNDEZ BUEYES, L.R. (2004). *El complejo castreño de los astures transmontanos*. Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca.
- FANJUL PERAZA, A., MENÉNDEZ BUEYES, L.R., ALVAREZ PEÑA, A. (2005). "La fortaleza de Alesga (Teverga, Asturias): Una posible *Turris* de control altoimperial". *Gallaecia*, 24, pp. 181-191.
- FERNÁNDEZ-POSSE, M.D., SÁNCHEZ-PALENCIA, F.J. (1998). "Las comunidades campesinas en la cultura castreña". *Trabajos de Prehistoria*, 55, pp. 127-150.
- GUTIÉRREZ CUENCA, E., HIERRO GARATE, J.A. (2001). "La guerra cantábrica. De ficción historiográfica a realidad arqueológica". *Nivel Cero*, 9, pp. 71-96.
- MAUNE, S. (1998). *Recherches récentes sur les établissements ruraux protohistoriques en Gaule méridionale (IX-III s. Av. J-C)*. Protohistoire européenne, 2. Montagnac.

- MAYA GONZALEZ J.L. (1988/89). *La cultura material de los castros asturianos*. Monográficos de Estudios de la Antigüedad, 4/5. Bellaterra.
- MAYA GONZÁLEZ, J.L., CUESTA TORIBIO, F. (2001). *El castro de la Campa Torres. Periodo Prerromano*. Gijón.
- PERALTA LABRADOR, E. (2000). *Los Cántabros antes de Roma*. Madrid.
- REQUEJO PAGÉS, O., ÁLVAREZ MARTÍNEZ, V. (2008). «Materiales arqueológicos procedentes de la villa de Priañes, Nora, Oviedo. Principado de Asturias». *Férvedes*, 5, pp. 405-412.
- RIEDEL, A., TECCHIATI, U. (1999). "Settlements and economy in the Bronze and Iron Age in Trentino-South Tyrol. Notes for an archaeozoological model". *Preistoria Alpina*, 35, pp. 105-113.
- ROJAS RODRÍGUEZ MALO, J.M., GÓMEZ LAGUNA, A.J., CACERES GUTIERREZ, Y., DE JUAN ARES, J. (2007). "Estructuras de ocupación del Bronce Final orientalizante, Hierro I y II Edad del Hierro localizadas en la autovía de los Viñedos cm. 400. Tramo Consuegra-Tomelloso (P.K. 0+000 A 74+600) Yacimientos de Varas del Palio, Palomar de Doña Leonides, Zona 4 de Lerma y Arrojachicos". *Actas de las II Jornadas de arqueología de Castilla la Mancha*. Toledo. pp. 1-40.
- SCHULTEN, A. (1943). *Los cántabros y astures y su guerra con Roma*. Madrid.
- VICENTE GONZÁLEZ, J.L. (2008-2009). "*Bellum Asturicum*. Una hipótesis ajustada a la historiografía romana y al marco arqueológico y geográfico de la comarca de los valles de Benavente y su entorno". *Brigecio*, 18-19, pp. 1-73.
- WOOLF, G. (2002). "Generations of aristocracy. Continuities and discontinuities in the societies of the interior Gaul". *Archaeological dialogues*, 9 (1), p. 215.