

An archaeological analysis of a battlefield of the Second Punic War: the camps of the battle of Baecula

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Since 2002, our team at the University of Jaén's Research Institute for Iberian Archaeology has been undertaking an archaeological research project focusing on the analysis of the site of a conflict that can indisputably be dated to the final phase of the Second Punic War. Based on the topography, descriptions in the ancient sources, and archaeological data, we present the hypothesis that the site we have located corresponds to that of the battle of Baecula. In that confrontation in 208 B.C., Scipio the Younger faced Hasdrubal Barca. It was a momentous battle, at least in terms of its subsequent outcome, given that it could be considered the event that triggered Hasdrubal's withdrawal to Italy.¹

Our research project has yielded information which we believe to be paradigmatic in two respects. First, we have been able to ascertain the size of the area over which an armed confrontation of this type would have taken place, thanks to the identification of determining elements such as the different camps set up for the battle and their sizes. It covers the area where the armies clashed, where they were positioned and deployed, their movements on the battlefield, and so forth. Second, thanks to intensive sampling, we have recovered a corpus of finds that may be used in the future as a reference for the allocation of other sites to the period of the Second Punic War.

The present article is a compilation of the phases and results of our project. It offers a general framework for understanding the detailed analysis of the identified camp structures. Recent excavations carried out at the encampment area, where Hasdrubal and Scipio will have set up their camps before and after the battle, have revealed the typical evidence from a campaign camp — the traces of a stay of barely a few days at a place that was not subsequently re-occupied, thereby allowing it to be preserved down to the present day. Our work has also had to consider a potential conflict between the philological and epigraphic tradition, on the one hand, and, on the other, archaeological research; in the present context we do not think that they should be considered as conflicting.

The Second Punic War in the Alto Guadalquivir: silver, copper and grain

The site is located in the south of the Iberian peninsula, in the Alto Guadalquivir, a region frequently mentioned in the sources with reference to the Second Punic War,

1 K. Zimmermann, "Roman strategy and aims in the Second Punic War," in D. Hoyos (ed.), *A companion to the Punic Wars* (Malden, MA 2011) 293; J. P. Bellón *et al.*, "Baecula. An archaeological analysis of the location of a battle of the Second Punic War," in Á. Morillo, N. Hanel and E. Martín (edd.), *Limes XX* (Anejos de Gladius 13; 2009) 17-29; J. P. Bellón, "Estudio de los escenarios bélicos anibólicos de Numistro y Grumentum (Basilicata, Italia): Numistro," *Informes y Trabajos* 7 (2012) 229-43; *id. et al.*, "Analyse archéologique d'un champ de bataille de la deuxième guerre punique: Baecula," in F. Cadiou and M. Navarro (edd.), *La guerre et ses traces: conflits et sociétés en Hispanie à l'époque de la conquête romaine (IIIe-Ier s. av. J.-C.)* (Ausonius Mémoires 37; 2014) 25-53; *id. et al.*, "Una metodología arqueológica para el estudio de los campos de batalla," in *id. et al.* (edd.), *La Segunda Guerra Púnica en la Península Ibérica. Baecula, Arqueología de una batalla* (Jaén 2015) 229-56.