

Roman peasant habitats and settlement in central Spain (1st c. B.C.–4th c. A.D.)

Jesús Bermejo

The area under study comprises the Autonomous Community of Madrid, a highly urbanized modern region which coincides *grosso modo* with the N part of what used to be *Carpetania*. During the Early and Later Empire, it fell within the province of *Hispania Citerior Tarraconensis*, embracing the N part of the *conventus Carthaginensis* and the SW part of the *conventus Caesaraugustanus*. From the early days of municipalisation of the Hispanic provinces¹ rural sites in this region belonged to the *ager* of three Latin *municipia*: *Complutum*,² *Titulcia*,³ and *Mantua Carpetanorum*⁴ (fig. 1). While it is difficult to identify the precise limits of their *agri*, it seems probable that *Complutum*, as the most important urban centre in the region, would have had the largest *territorium*.⁵

In the absence of supporting evidence from systematic archaeological surveys (the consequence of intensive urbanization since the late 19th c. around metropolitan Madrid), one can apply to this region a rural settlement model characterized by two general patterns. The first is the articulation of settlements around river valleys. These valleys, linked to some of the main tributaries and sub-tributaries of the *Tagus* (the Henares, Jarama, Guadarrama and Manzanares), provided direct access to the most important water resources. The second is the concentration of rural sites in the lower-lying areas of the central plain. The central Meseta's geography, with its average elevation of 900 m (fig. 1), may account for the preference by rural inhabitants of the Roman era to establish sites close to river valleys and gullies. That would have been optimal for agricultural exploitation of the landscape, especially the cultivation of cereals,⁶ production of wine⁷ and, probably, olive oil.

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- 1 For a general perspective on this historical phenomenon, see G. Alföldy, *Römisches Städtewesen auf der neukastilischen Hochebene* (Heidelberg 1987); P. Le Roux, *Romains d'Espagne. Cités et politique dans les provinces* (Paris 1995) 122-28; E. Ortiz de Urbina, *Las comunidades hispanas y el derecho latino* (Vitoria 2000); J. Andreu, *Edictum, municipium y lex: Hispania en época Flavia* (69-96 d.C.) (Oxford 2004); L. A. Curchin, *The Romanization of central Spain* (London 2004) 69-96.
 - 2 M. P. González-Conde, "Promoción jurídica y organización municipal de *Complutum* en el Alto Imperio," *Lucentum* 4 (1985) 133-46; L. A. Curchin, *The local magistrates of Roman Spain* (Toronto 1990) no. 662; M. Ruiz Trapero, *Inscripciones latinas de la Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid (siglos I-VIII)* (Madrid 2001) 66.
 - 3 On the debated identification of *Titulcia* in the Madrid región, see J. M. Abascal, "La ley flavia municipal y las ciudades de Carpetania: algunas reflexiones," in *Toledo y Carpetania en la edad antigua* (Toledo 1990) 131-39; A. U. Stylow and H. von Hesberg, "Ein Kaiserbogen in Titulcia?," *Chiron* 34 (2004) 205-66.
 - 4 A. U. Stylow, "Neue Inschriften aus Carpetanien (Hispania Citerior)," *Chiron* 20 (1990) 322; R. C. Knapp, *Latin inscriptions from central Spain* (Berkeley, CA 1992) 185; M. Contreras, C. Jiménez and A. Martín, "Aproximación al estudio de la *Mantua Carpetanorum* de Ptolomeo. Nuevas aportaciones arqueológicas para su localización," in *XXII Congreso Nacional de Arqueología* (Vigo 1993) 399-404; G. Alföldy, "Aspectos de la vida urbana en las ciudades de la Meseta Sur," in J. González (ed.), *Ciudades privilegiadas en el Occidente romano* (Seville 1999) 473.
 - 5 González-Conde (supra n.2) 138; J. Gómez-Pantoja, "*Complutum* y su territorio," in M. L. Cerdeño, E. Gamo and T. Sagardoy (edd.), *La Romanización en Guadalajara: arqueología e historia* (Madrid 2013) 63-71.
 - 6 An economic orientation documented in the region since prehistoric times: P. Díaz-del-Río, *La formación del paisaje agrario: Madrid en el III y II milenios BC* (Madrid 2001) 129-300.
 - 7 M. Major, E. Penedo and Y. Peña, "El *torcularium* del asentamiento rural romano de Los Palacios,