

This is the first page only. On how to acquire the full article please click this link.

## The mithraeum at Lugo (*Lucus Augusti*) and its connection with *Legio VII Gemina*

Jaime Alvar, Richard Gordon and Celso Rodríguez

The University of Santiago de Compostela (Galicia) has a campus in Lugo, ancient *Lucus Augusti*, a Roman town with fine late-antique walls (fig. 1) and several archaeological remains.<sup>1</sup> To accommodate the Vice-chancellor's office, the University acquired an old *pazo* (manor house) belonging to the Montenegro family. The proximity of the Roman wall suggested that it would be as well to conduct an archaeological exploration of the immediate area (figs. 2a-b), though unfortunately it was begun only after the building work had commenced. This exploration led to the discovery of a large, high-status *domus*-complex inhabited from the Early Principate until the Late Empire (in fact, the site has been continuously occupied up to the present day).<sup>2</sup> During the period corresponding to Level IVc (early 3rd c. A.D.), part of this *domus* was remodelled to create a room identified as a mithraeum. In the context of the re-fortification of the city at the time of the Frankish raid of 262, part of the *domus* had to be destroyed in order to construct a road running along the foot of the wall.<sup>3</sup> The numismatic evidence, however, suggests that the mithraeum itself remained in use for a further 80-100 years. Indeed, with one exception (a stray coin of Hadrian found in the northern area, where modern constructions had altered the stratigraphy), all the coins found in the course of the excavation belong to the period 250-350. The structures related to the mithraeum, being on slightly higher ground than the rest of the *domus*, have suffered considerably from subsequent intrusion.

Although every sizeable Mithraic cult-relief implies the existence of a temple, this is only the second mithraeum to be discovered in *Hispania*, the other being a small, short-lived shrine at *Emerita* (Mérida), capital of *Lusitania* (but see Addendum below).<sup>4</sup> Victorinus' altar (inscription no. 2 below) is one of just a handful of Mithraic monuments in *Hispania* that can confidently be dated to the 3rd c. A.D. or later.<sup>5</sup>

- 
- 1 On the town of *Lucus Augusti*, which was in the Diocletianic province of *Gallaecia*, see: A. Rodríguez Colmenero, *Lucus Augusti I. El amanecer de una ciudad. Excavaciones arqueológicas en Lugo* (Lugo 1996); E. González and M. C. Carreño, "La capital del extremo noroeste hispánico: *Lucus Augusti* y su tejido urbano a la luz de las últimas intervenciones arqueológicas," in A. Rodríguez Colmenero (ed.), *Los orígenes de la ciudad en el noroeste hispánico. Actas del I Congreso Int., Lugo 1996* (Lugo 1998) 1171-89; G. Alföldy, *Provincia Hispania Superior* (Heidelberg 2000). The latest account, also mentioning the mithraeum, is *La muralla de Lugo* (Vigo 2004).
  - 2 C. Rodríguez Cao, *Excavación arqueológica en el entorno del Pazo de los Montenegro* [Vicerrectorado de Lugo: Informe Valorativo] (Santiago de Compostela, n.d.).
  - 3 The towns of León and *Asturica Augusta* (Astorga) were likewise re-fortified at the same period. This emergency fortification is not to be confused with the Diocletianic re-building of the walls, which was part of an Iberia-wide programme affecting more than 30 cities.
  - 4 For the small mithraeum, c.50 m from the Plaza de toros, dated by the excavators to the Flavian period, and destroyed in c.A.D. 100 (if we can believe it), see T. Barrientos, "Nuevos datos para el estudio de las religiones orientales en Occidente: un espacio de culto mitriaco en la zona sur de Mérida," *Memoria 5: Excavaciones arqueológicas en Mérida, 1999* (Mérida 2001) 357-81. The famous group of Mithraic and other statuary, found in 1902 and 1913 on the Cerro de St. Albín (now the site of the Plaza de toros) just outside ancient *Emerita*, was not found in a mithraeum but in a room where it had been placed for safe-keeping: see A. García y Bellido, *Les religions orientales dans l'Espagne romaine* (Leiden 1967) 26-33 nos. 1-13; M. J. Vermaseren, *Corpus inscriptionum et monumentorum religionis Mithriacae* (The Hague 1956-60) nos. 772-96 (hereafter V.); J. Alvar, "Los cultos mistericos en Lusitania," in *Actas II Congreso Peninsular de Historia Antigua, Coimbra 1990* (Coimbra 1993) at 791 n.2. Nevertheless, there clearly was at least one other mithraeum in *Emerita* apart from Barrientos'.
  - 5 The others are:
    - 1) the important triptych from Tróia (Portugal): García y Bellido *ibid.* 36 f. no. 20 = V. 798;
    - 2) the inscription of San Juan de Isla, Asturias: García y Bellido, *ibid.* 38 f. no. 26 = V. 803, dated to the