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Jean-Gérard Gorges, Francisco Germán Rodríguez Martín

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EL EJÉRCITO ROMANO EN HISPANIA

GUÍA ARQUEOLÓGICA

Ángel Morillo (ed.)



UNIVERSIDAD DE LEÓN

2006

EL PEDROSILLO BATTLEFIELD?

Location: El Pedrosillo, Casas de Reina, Badajoz, Extremadura, Spain

Roman name:?

Type of settlement: roman battlefield?

The place of the Pedrosillo, located in northern spurs of Sierra Morena Mountain range, is located to 7 km. to the northeast of Llerena (Badajoz). It occupies an extensive surface that extends by the two borders of the stream of the same name. After several campaigns of prospection it has been possible to show that is not about a simple isolated installation, as it comes almost happening with the totality from the forts known in the Iberian Peninsula, but of a set of elements that determine a true Roman military complex formed by enclosures, bunkers, constructions utilitarian and by everything an annexed system complementary defenses. In fact, the elements observed *in situ* are distributed in a surface superior to 350 ha (Fig. 29). The prospectings of surface, with the aid of a kind reading of the aerial photographs, put of relief a series of main elements, all articulated between if and extraordinarily adapted to the terrain relief. This way the most important structures distributed by one and another part of the flexion



Fig. 29. El Pedrosillo (Casas de Reina). Aerial view
(J. G. Gorges & G. Rodríguez Martín).

of the Pedrosillo stream are appraised: a) two walled enclosures of trapezoidal form, the one great and other small one; b) a series of circular redoubts, placed generally in a line of three by three; c) a series of small “bunkers” destined to reinforce the control posts, or the strategically important points of the complex; d) stone walls –*titula*– that form parallel assault courses destined to prevent or to make difficult the step; e) annexed constructions destined in concrete keeping and protecting the animals that accompany the army (Fig. 30).

The great fort. What first flamed our attention, is located in one of the elbows that the stream forms, whose channel serves as natural pit in the sides this and north ones to him. It's more trapezoidal than rectangular in shape, defined by a low wall, constructed according to the technique of *emplecton*. The average width of the wall is of 2 m., although usually it oscillates, according to the zones, between 1.80 m. and 2.50 m. It has a very regular height throughout almost all the perimeter (between 1 m. and 1.20 m.) what supposes a height very near which must have in its origin. The internal face of the wall is not vertical, but slightly inclined, with which the base of the wall is ampler than the superior part. The same it happens with the termination, that is conceived like an inclined plane, where the internal face is always more stop (about 30 cm.) than the outer face, that is vertical. As a spine, a rocky outcrop, making level in the central part, crudely divides to the camping in two parts, maintaining an axis the north-south. In the centre of the same one, on the elevated point more, a prepared space is opened (*praetorium*) of that the totality of the complex is controlled to the interior of the quartering almost and. All the walled set occupies a surface of 9.90 ha. Throughout this space we solely found one narrow door of 0.70 m. located in the side this (Fig. 31).

The small fort. One is in the highest part (609 m.), to about 50 m. of the great enclosure. Of identical construction to the previous one, it has the form of a small trapezoid oriented to the northeast. It is also acceded by one narrow door (0.70 m) that is opened in the southeastern third of the eastern facade. The interior in terraces and was flattened, occupying a 3,450m². This terrace, limited the northwest by the wall of the great enclosure, closed with all probability in the other faces by a wood fence (*vallum*). In the side this and south ones it was protected by a pit, whose residual signs can be appreciated in the aerial photographs of 1956, and, in the west, by the continuation of the rocky outcrop that crosses the great enclosure. The protected surface occupied a space around the 3.50 ha., with which the total surface of both main enclosures rises to 13.40 ha.

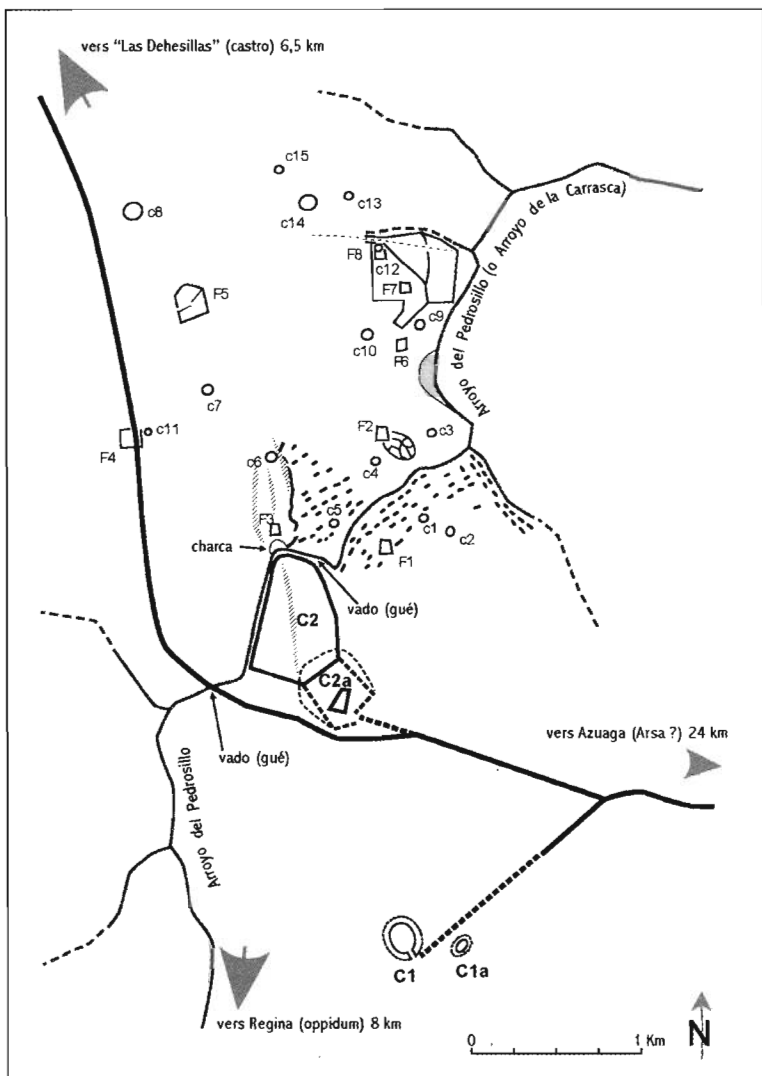


Fig. 30. El Pedrosillo (Casas de Reina). Plan of the structures relating with the military complex (J. G. Gorges & G. Rodríguez Martín).



Fig. 31. El Pedrosillo (Casas de Reina). Wall from the major camp (J. G. Gorges & G. Rodríguez Martín).

The complementary defensive systems and annexed constructions. To the north of the main camping, to both part of the stream, the Roman strategists developed a complementary system of defense very elaborated, which turns to the complex of the Pedrosillo like one of more excellent the conserved catrastrales sets of *Hispania*. There are active defensive systems, like circular bunkers or redoubts (*castella*), or passive obstacles, as lines of stones (*titula*), or facilities that has taken advantage of natural pits formed by the bed the stream, that the own Romans have deepened.

The bunkers. Of unequal size, they are distributed in three different lines. We have located eight, whose surface varies between the 300m² and 770m², for next to the camping, and the 1.000 to 1.500m²., for the most moved away. The walls are made generally in stone, whose thickness varies according to the places between 1 and 2 m.

Circular redoubts. As complement of which we have denominated bunkers, a dense network of circular fortifications is distributed by all the northern zone of the complex. These stone circles, raised following the same technique that the used one in the great enclosures (*emplecton*) with walls between 1 and 2 m. of wide, and approximately 1.40 m. of stop. The diameter of the circles oscillates between the 15 and 20 m.

arriving to reach the 30 m. We have on a fortnight of these constructions had and in group of three or four generally in line.

The titula. One of the most spectacular elements of the defense system is, unquestionably, the constituted one by parallel lines of placed artificial obstacles in the average part and low of the slope, to both sides of the Pedrosillo stream, made generally with earth a preceded slope of a ditch, it titles them are true sections of stone wall here. We counted with more of a hundred. They are constructed following the technique used in the rest of the set (*emplecton*). It even presents/displays measures that go from the 10 to the 30 m. of length, or more according to the lines, and the 3 m. of wide, are constructed following the technique of the pavement in dry, within a face that forms a rectangular frame. The conserved height goes up to around the 0.50 m.

Annexed constructions. They are of double natures. They depended on the general device of defense, and the others were destined to lodge and to protect the material, the horses, the animals of load or other elements of the caravan that accompanied the troops. Between first, the equivalent one to a third enclosure, they are opposite of the main camping (to the north). The rest of the set constitutes two individualized zones or, that we interpreted mainly like surrounded or corrals destined to lodge material, horses, animals of load and cattle that an active army accompanied.

The Roman military complex of the Pedrosillo offers a unique testimony of applied field location and strategy to one of the most conflicting zones of the conquest.

Germán Rodríguez Martín & Jean-Gérard Gorges
