

Augusta Emerita in Late Antiquity: The Transformation of Its Urban Layout During the Fourth and Fifth Centuries CE

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Roman cities were not created as a perennial urban project; quite to the contrary, they constantly evolved, with some researchers stating that they give the sensation of having had building work underway at all times. In archaeological excavations, we often find signs of different types of significant reforms made to the urban fabric that were carried out in just a few years; projects that completed others that had been started some years earlier. These were processes of social, economic, political, and cultural change, which can be seen very clearly in the urban development of these cities.

A clear example of this process was the construction of the provincial center for Imperial worship, which led to the transformation of four blocks of houses and a section of the *cardo maximus*, fifty years after the founding of the Roman colony of

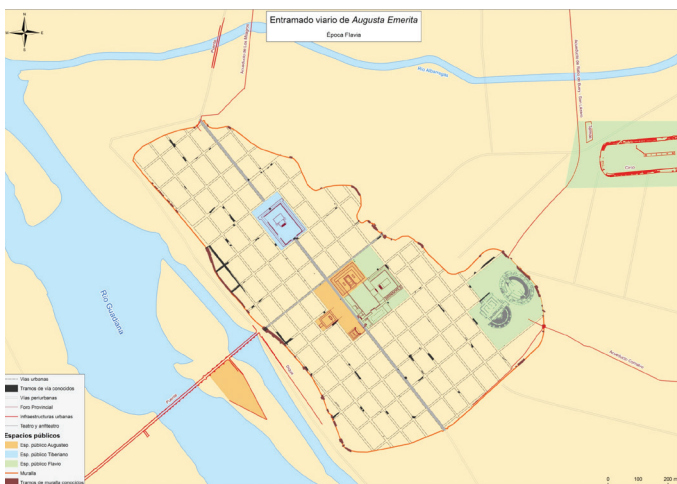


Fig. 1. Ground plan of Augusta Emerita from the Flavian period onwards. By the author.

Augusta Emerita.¹ We have also documented reformation work carried out on the forum, with the construction of the eastern platform over two blocks of houses,² or later, in the third century CE, the reformation of several *domus* for the construction of a public building, next to the provincial center for Imperial worship, whose function we are still unable to ascertain.³ These modifications, to mention just a few examples, gradually transformed the urban landscape, and are a further example of the

- 1 Pedro Mateos Cruz, *El llamado foro provincial de Augusta Emerita. Un conjunto monumental de culto imperial*, *Anejos de Archivo Español de Arqueología* 42 (Madrid: CSIC, 2006), 321.
- 2 Rocío Ayerbe Vélez, Teresa Barrientos, and Felix Palma, “Los complejos forenses de ‘Augusta Emerita,’” in *El Foro de Augusta Emerita. Génesis y evolución de sus recintos monumentales*, ed. Rocío Ayerbe Vélez, Teresa Barrientos, and Felix Palma, *Anejos de Archivo Español de Arqueología* 53 (Madrid: CSIC, 2009), 667–832, at 747–53.
- 3 Rocío Ayerbe Vélez “La llamada basílica de Laborde: identificación, ubicación y cronología. Intervención arqueológica en la C/ Calvario 8,” *Memoria, Excavaciones Arqueológicas en Mérida 2002* (2005): 27–54.

vitality of a city that adapted its urban layout to new circumstances (fig. 1).

Throughout the second and third centuries, new signs of this construction activity in the city are documented, as well as the maintenance of its public vitality. In 261, the governor Clodius Laetus Macrinus dedicated a statue in the forum to the emperor Gallienus, proof of a continuity in administrative life that was uninterrupted until at least this moment in time.⁴ At the end of the third century, these dedications to emperors made by governors multiplied in number, indicating that there were indeed signs of a breakdown in the governance of the city during this period.⁵ These details probably, in fact, indicate that there were multiple interruptions to the public functioning of the city,⁶ if we take into account the previously existing situation, although the same argument may suggest a continuity. The sculpture workshops were likely not as active as they had been in former times. The relief of Maximilian Hercules⁷ is an indication of the decline of the workshops, but also the continuity of the classical official iconographic models.⁸ The paintings from the basil-

4 Javier Arce, "Introducción histórica," in *Las capitales provinciales de Hispania: Augusta Emerita*, vol. 2, ed. Xavier Dupré (Rome: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2004), 7–14, at 12.

5 José Luis Ramirez, Agustín Velázquez, and Eulalia Gijón, "Un nuevo pedestal de Galieno encontrado en Mérida," *Anas* 6 (1993): 75–84; José Carlos Saquete, José Luis Mosquera, and Juana Márquez, "Aemilius Aemilianus, un nuevo gobernador de la Lusitania," *Anas* 4–5 (1992): 31–43.

6 Javier Arce, "Augusta Emerita: Continuidad y transformación (ss. IV–VII)," in *Actas del Congreso Internacional 1910–2010, el yacimiento emeritense*, ed. José María Álvarez and Pedro Mateos Cruz (Mérida: Ayuntamiento de Mérida, 2011), 491–504, 491.

7 Javier Arce, "Augusta Emerita en el s. V d. C.," in *Mérida Tardorromana (300–580 d. C.)*, Cuadernos emeritenses 22 (Mérida: Museo Nacional de Arte Romano, 2002), 179–194, at 114.

8 Javier Arce, "Augusta Emerita," 492.

ica house⁹ and the mosaics from the house “of the Mithraeum”¹⁰ reveal a certain degree of continuity and Roman tradition in the local workshops.¹¹

As we have seen, although we cannot compare the dynamism of the city’s buildings or art with that of previous periods, it does seem clear that activity persisted at this time, coinciding with the administrative reforms of Diocletian (r. 284–304). The possible choice of the colony of Emerita as the capital of the *Diocesis Hispaniarum* seems to be attested, from a historical perspective, by the interpretation of the *Laterculus Polemii Silvii* and the inclusion of Emerita as the only city in the list of new provinces in Hispania,¹² in the same way as Carthage in Africa, or Sirmium in Illyricum.¹³ This argument is the only historical document we have to support this statement, although it should be noted that there are archaeological data that point in this direction. The discovery of the inscription of the *vicarius Octavius Clarus* who declared himself as *famulus Gratiani* serves as further proof of this fact.¹⁴

In order to underline the fact that the city was a capital, we have to consider a vitally important piece of evidence provided by the appearance of the *missorium* of Theodosius, found in the town of Almandraleja, close to Mérida, which amongst other figures shows the *Vicarius Hispaniarum* in the process of receiving the *codicilli* of his new post from the emperor Theodosius I. This means it would have been a gift from the emperor to

9 Antonio Mostalac, “El programa pictórico de la estancia absidada F de la Casa Basílica de Mérida,” in *Congreso Internacional: La Hispania de Teodosio*, ed. Ramón Teja (Segovia: Junta de Castilla y León, Consejería y Cultura, 1997): 581–603.

10 Arce, “Augusta Emerita en el s. V d. C.,” 115.

11 Arce, “Augusta Emerita,” 492.

12 Robert Etienne, “Mérida capitale du vicariat des Espagnes,” in *Homenaje a Saenz de Buruaga* (Badajoz: Diputación Provincial de Badajoz, 1982), 201–8.

13 Arce, “Augusta Emerita en el s. V d. C.,” 115.

14 Rafael Hidalgo y Guadalupe Méndez, “Octavius Clarus, un nuevo vicarius Hispaniarum en Augusta Emerita,” *Memoria, Excavaciones Arqueológicas en Mérida 2002* (2008): 547–64.

the *vicarius*. The reinterpretation made by Jutta Meischner, associating the disk with Theodosius II¹⁵ has been clearly refuted by Javier Arce.¹⁶

It is difficult to identify the reasons why Augusta Emerita was chosen as the site of the *Vicarius Hispaniarum* due to the lack of historical and archaeological data that could shed light on this matter. The continuity of its economic, cultural, and political activity would have been a basic factor, although we still do not know the historical and political reasons for this choice. Arce suggests that this would have been due to its peripheral geopolitical location in relation to the rest of the cities in the diocese. Well connected to the dioceses of Baetica, Tarraconense, and Cartaginense, it displaced the political axis towards a less conflictive region, with less possibilities of falling into the hands of usurpers and rebels, as was the case with Tarraco and Carthago Nova.¹⁷

The legal and administrative consequences of this designation, and the arrival of the *vicarius* and all the governing posts of the diocese have been studied in detail by Arce.¹⁸ In terms of its urban development, this period saw a series of transformations made to the city, which must be seen in the light of this new designation, and the impetus that came about as a result of these administrative changes in the old colony. This is the case of the renovation work carried out in the buildings used for leisure purposes and performances.

Epigraphic and archaeological evidence has been found of the renovation of the main buildings used for performances at that time, between the year 335 — in the theater and amphitheater — and 337 — the circus — indicating that they were in continuous use. Apart from the inscriptions referring to this event,

15 Jutta Meischner, "Das Missorium des Theodosius in Madrid," *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 3 (1996): 389–432.

16 Javier Arce, "Teodosio I sigue siendo Teodosio I," *Archivo Español de Arqueología* 71 (1998): 169–79.

17 Arce, "Introducción histórica," 12.

18 Arce, "Augusta Emerita en el s. V d. C.," 115.



Fig. 2. General view of the circus of Emerita. By the author.

the decorative sculptures preserved from these buildings clearly serve to date these projects, which can also be seen in the archaeological data provided by excavation work carried out in the theater¹⁹ and the circus.²⁰

The restoration of the circus *vetustate con lapsum*, during the period of the sons of Constantine (337–350) (fig. 2) indicates that there was a certain degree of economic recovery, and that it was a result of a deliberate policy for rebuilding public buildings, and the idea that it was unthinkable to have a capital of a diocese without the presence of a circus in all its activity, as

19 Pedro Mateos Cruz and Antonio Pizzo, “Los Edificios de ocio y representación en Augusta Emerita: El teatro y el Anfiteatro,” in *Actas del Congreso Internacional 1910–2010*, ed. Álvarez and Mateos, 173–94.

20 Ana Montalvo, Eulalia Gijón, and Javier Sánchez, “Circo romano de Mérida. Campaña de 1995,” *Memoria 1. Excavaciones Arqueológicas realizadas en Mérida durante 1994 y 95* (1997): 245–58.

demonstrated by mosaics showing circus scenes dating from the middle of the fourth century.²¹

Similarly, the theater was renovated, as referred to in another inscription which describes the poor condition of the building and its restoration between 333 and 335, under the supervision of the *praeses provinciae Lusitaniae*, Severus.²² We do not know if the alterations made around the building were related to this restoration work, or if they were new projects carried out at this time; these alterations included the abandonment of the outer doorways leading into the theater from the north side of the city, which were made at the same time as the *porticus post scaenam*.²³ These doorways were transformed into shops with direct access to the *cardus* that separated the theater and the amphitheater in a north-south direction.

This new status as a capital led to numerous refurbishments and modifications being made to the urban structure. The incorporation of new governors and institutions, and the logical interest in improving the image of the city, must have provided sufficient impetus to justify the restoration of the main buildings in the colony, and the construction of others of which we are still unaware. This dynamism, and the new needs of the city, brought about substantial changes to the urban fabric, of which we have archaeological evidence in some cases.²⁴

21 Antonio Blanco, *Los mosaicos romanos de Mérida*, Corpus de Mosaicos romanos de España (Madrid: csic, 1978), 45.

22 Trinidad Nogales, *Espectáculos en Augusta Emerita*, Monografías Emeritenses 5 (Mérida: Museo Nacional de Arte Romano, 2000), 31.

23 Pedro Mateos Cruz and Juana Marquez, "Nuevas estructuras urbanas relacionadas con el teatro romano de Mérida: El pórtico de acceso," *Memoria III. Excavaciones Arqueológicas realizadas en Mérida durante 1997* (1999): 301–20.

24 Pedro Mateos Cruz and Miguel Alba, "De Emerita Augusta a Marida," in *Actas del Simposio Internacional Visigodos y Omeyas: Un debate entre la tardoantigüedad y la Alta Edad Media*, ed. Luis Caballero and Pedro Mateos Cruz, *Anejos de Archivo Español de Arqueología* 23 (Madrid: csic, 2000), 143–68, at 145.

For example, in the case of the urban layout, according to the archaeological data we have documented, the road network remained unchanged; however, a series of modifications were made, such as the privatization of the gateways for the roads, which occurred diachronically from the second to the fourth century, by the houses that occupied these spaces, and which increased their domestic space or used them as *tabernae* for commercial purposes. During the excavation work carried out in Morería, it was found that the street had been fully or partly invaded in order to build baths in two of its houses.²⁵ This invasion of the streets by houses on occasions is interpreted as something negative, when in fact the only thing it demonstrates is the vitality of the city at this time, and an increase in private enterprise in relation to the public interest.²⁶ However, this is an interesting aspect when it comes to evaluating the start of the urban transformations that heralded major changes in the concept of the city.

Another situation that has been documented in the streets of Emerita during this period is the laying of new paving over the streets, with diorite stones. Apart from raising the level of the streets, in the case of the *decumanus*, it would have lowered their east–west slope, used to empty their sewers into the River Anas. This new road surface would have covered over the manholes leading into the sewer network, putting the sanitation network at risk, and which may have fallen into disuse by the end of the century, something that is more evident in the fifth century. What we see in the streets of the city, their continuity in the lay-

25 Miguel Alba, "Ocupación diacrónica del Area Arqueológica de Morería (Mérida)," in *Memoria, Excavaciones Arqueológicas en Mérida 1994–1995*, ed. Miguel Alba Calzado, Pedro Mateos Cruz, and Juana Márquez Pérez (Madrid: Consorcio de la Ciudad monumental de Mérida, 1997), 285–315, at 292.

26 Miguel Alba "Diacronía de la vivienda señorial de Emerita (Lusitania, Hispania): Desde las domus altoimperiales y tardoantiguas a las residencias palaciales omeyas (Siglos I–IX)," in *Archeologia e società tra tardoantico e alto medioevo*, ed. Jean Pietro Brogiolo (Padua: Università di Padova, 2008), 163–92, at 172.



Fig. 3. Remains of the dwelling known as the “House of Marbles” in the Archaeological Zone of Morería. By the author.

out with changes in their shape and external image, also applies to the majority of the urban structures in Emerita at this time.

As regards the dwellings located in the area within the city walls, apart from the previously mentioned “invasion” of the street found in some cases, excavation work carried out in the archaeological zone of Morería has identified refurbishment work, where the size of some buildings was increased, adding large, vaulted salons in some cases, with private baths (fig. 3).²⁷

During this same century, probably during the second half, based on the analysis of the paintings found in the interior,²⁸ the so called “basilica house” of the theater was built — a domestic structure built by making use of part of the entrance doorways leading into the theater,²⁹ which meant abandoning public spac-

27 Alba, “Ocupación diacrónica del Area Arqueológica de Morería (Mérida),” 290.

28 Mostalac, “El programa pictórico de la estancia absidada F de la Casa Basílica de Mérida.”

29 Mateos Cruz and Marquez, “Nuevas estructuras urbanas relacionadas con el teatro romano de Mérida.”

es in favor of private occupation. Arce interprets this as a *schola* or *collegium*.³⁰

As previously mentioned, during this century, the workshops that contributed to monumentalizing some of the prosperous homes — which altered their floors and walls by installing luxurious mosaics and painted tapestries, and which decorated their rooms — were still operational. This has been deduced from a study of the mosaic in *opus sectile* and the paintings from the house in the citadel, for example, from the paintings in Calle Suarez Somonte with circus scenes and *venationes*³¹ or from some of the mosaics and paintings that decorated the so-called “House of the Mithraeum,” as well as the cosmogonic mosaic dated by Arce to the mid-fourth century.³²

Another element that defines the continuity of the urban layout throughout the fourth century is the continued presence of the forum areas, and the main public buildings whose architectural and functional structure was not altered until the fifth century. It is likely that the new status as a capital of the diocese would have led to some type of changes being made to the official architecture of Augusta Emerita, such as that found in a public building belonging to the western platform of the forum, which may have been the *schola iuvenum*,³³ inside which a thermal structure was built, dated from the late imperial period, without the possibility of offering a more detailed chronology.

Apart from this refurbishment carried out on the western platform, we do not have any archaeological or epigraphic data whatsoever that confirms the new transformation work carried

30 Javier Arce, Alexandra Chavarria, and Gisela Ripoll, “Theurbandomus in Late Antique Hispania. Examples from Emerita, Barcino and Complutum,” in *Housing in Late Antiquity*, ed. Luke Lavan, Lale Özgenel, and Alexander Sarantis, *Late Antique Archaeology* 3.2 (Leiden: Brill, 2007) 305–36, at 309–11.

31 José Álvarez Sáenz de Buruaga, “Una casa romana con valiosas pinturas, en Mérida,” *Habis* 5 (1974): 169–87.

32 Arce, “Augusta Emerita en el s. V d. C.,” 117–36.

33 Ayerbe Vélez, Barrientos, and Palma, “Los complejos forenses de ‘Augusta Emerita,’” 747–53, 800.



Fig. 4. Water conduit known as “Los Milagros.” By the author.

out in the forum during the fourth century. These were probably not structural reforms, but instead ornamental work, although if they did take place, they have not been documented to date.

As regards the public infrastructures, it is important to note the lack of documentation referring to the re-use of the aqueducts, where the only piece of archaeological data has been provided by excavation work carried out on a section of the conduit of “Los Milagros,” (fig. 4) where five coins were found amongst the filling material, all of which dated from the time of Constantine II (337–340) and Constantius II (346–354), although the fact that these coins were in use for a lengthy period means it is impossible to precisely date when they were obliterated.³⁴ However, due to the lack of a monographic study of these structures, we still do not know the precise date of their construction, their renovations over the centuries, and their re-use.

34 Rocío Ayerbe Vélez, “Intervención arqueológica en la urbanización Jardines de Mérida de la Avda. de la plata. Excavación de un tramo de conducción hidráulica Proserpina-Los Milagros,” *Memoria, Excavaciones Arqueológicas en Mérida 1998* (2000): 39–58.

We have also observed the continued development of the walled area of Augusta Emerita during this period. As we will see later on, although the city walls were reinforced with a lining of large blocks of stone for defensive purposes at an unknown moment during the fifth century, not one single renovation has been documented, either in its layout or architectural details, during the fourth century. It is possible that sporadic reformations were made to its structure, affecting the gates, ramparts, and towers that stood on top. For example, raising the height of the *decumanus*, as a result of laying new paving materials, also resulted in changes in the arches of the gates in the wall, whose heights had to be altered.

However, the main urban changes during this period took place outside the city walls. While the pagan funerary areas had maintained their size in the areas around the main roads leading into the city, during this century they seem to have collapsed, and grown in size. In addition to this growth of the necropoli, there was an urban change that is difficult to explain, resulting from the progressive abandonment of the suburban houses, whose owners moved to either refurbished and enlarged houses within the walls, or to new, sumptuous *villae* in the countryside, which extended throughout the ager of Emerita during this century. This was the case in the north-east part of the city, where the abandonment of the suburban *domus* in the area has been documented during this time, such as the “house of the amphitheater,” built entirely throughout the first century CE, although with refurbishments made to its walls and floors over the years.³⁵ This could be connected to the pressure caused by the constant growth of the funerary area known as the “eastern necropolis,” confirmed by the discovery of a mausoleum dating from the

35 José María Álvarez, “Excavaciones en Augusta Emerita,” in *Arqueología de las ciudades modernas superpuestas a las antiguas*, ed. Alberto Balil (Zaragoza: Ministerio de Cultura, 1985), 35–54, at 46.

mid-third century, in an area halfway between the previously documented necropolis and the “house of the amphitheater.”³⁶

Finally, we have the discovery of new funerary areas from the late Roman period, especially in the south and north-east part of the city, which occupied the abandoned space of the suburban *domus* documented in the area.

Based on the data provided by the urban archaeology, everything would seem to point towards the fact that after becoming capital of the *Diocesis Hispaniarum*, the fourth century in Mérida was characterized by the functional continuity of the main structures that made up its urban layout, although these underwent numerous transformations typical of the passage of time and renovation work, especially in the public sphere, due to the new situation that affected the city during these years. Despite being documented to a lesser extent, these changes announced a new urban concept that would characterize the city over the following centuries. In parallel, during the fourth century, new structures gradually appeared that formed a part of a new cultural context: Christianity, which despite only having a minor impact during this century, would gradually have a profound impact on the society of Emerita over time.

The first signs of Christianity from this century coexisted with a profoundly pagan society, which gradually became permeable to new cultural forms that arose, especially in the main cities of the west following the persecutions of Diocletian and Maximian Herculus. This would lead to the creation of new martyrs, leading to the first signs of Christian architecture in the cities. In Mérida, despite some signs of a Christian community having been documented from the second and third centuries,³⁷ it was not until the fourth century when the first traces of this

36 Alicia Canto, Ana Bejarano, and Félix Palma, “El mausoleo del dintel de los ríos de Mérida, Revue Anabaraecus y el culto de la confluencia,” *Madridrer Mitteilungen* 38 (1997): 247–94.

37 Isaac Sastre, *Los primeros edificios cristianos de Extremadura. Sus espacios y elementos litúrgicos*. Caelum in terra, Serie Ataecina 5 (Mérida: Asamblea de Extremadura, 2010).



Fig. 5. General view of the excavations carried out inside the church of St. Eulalia. By the author.

new culture appeared in the topography of the city, coinciding with the death of the young Eulalia (d. 304), and the birth of her cult as a martyr, sung by Prudentius in the *Peristephanon*.

These initial expressions of Christianity in Mérida consisted of a series of objects found without a context, associated with funerary rites. On the one hand, we have sarcophagi decorated with Christian motifs,³⁸ and epitaphs dated from the early part of the fourth century,³⁹ which are some of the first artistic works that indicate the spread of Christianity in Mérida. On the other hand, from the middle of the century a Christian funerary area

38 Pedro Mateos Cruz, "Sarcófagos decorados de época tardorromana en Mérida," *Memoria. Excavaciones Arqueológicas en Mérida: 2000* (2002): 437–48.

39 José Luis Ramírez and Pedro Mateos Cruz, *Inscripciones Cristianas de Mérida*, Cuadernos emeritenses 14 (Mérida: Museo Nacional de Arte Romano, 2000), 17, 20, 51, 63.

grew around what we currently believe to be the building where Eulalia was worshipped as a martyr. The main buildings that occupied this funerary area are known from excavations carried out inside the Church of St. Eulalia (fig. 5).⁴⁰

All of these details point towards the fact that throughout the fourth century there was a Christian community in the city, whose presence was reflected in the urban development of Emerita, based on their funerary and religious rites around the figure of the martyr. Although it has not been documented, it is possible that other types of Christian funerary areas existed in Mérida during this same century, associated with the burial of a local martyr or saint.

As regards the possible presence of a cathedral in the city in the fourth century, as has been documented in other western cities⁴¹ we do not have any evidence of any written, architectural or sculptural remains being found that would be associated with such a building. This said, other types of evidence have been found inside the city, such as a Chi Rho painted inside an underground cistern from the Roman period, which belonged to a house, and which has been tentatively associated with a *domus ecclesiae*,⁴² although so far we have not been able to archaeologically or epigraphically document any other type of Christian structure in the city from this century.

Therefore, the fourth century in Emerita could be described as a period of urban and cultural continuity, in which the main buildings that formed the city during the Early Imperial period remained in use. In comparison to the introduction of the first Christian structures, the pagan temples and structures were still used, with others being built such as the possible *taurobolium*, defined by its discoverer as a center for Mythraic and taurobolic

40 Pedro Mateos Cruz, *Sta. Eulalia de Mérida. Arqueología y urbanismo*, An- ejos de Archivo Español de Arqueología 19 (Madrid: CSIC, 1999).

41 Richard Krautheimer, *Tre capitali cristiane. Topografia e politica* (Turin: Einaudi, 1987).

42 Javier Heras, "Los cristianos de Mérida y la domus de la Puerta de la Villa," *Boletín Foro, Consorcio de la Ciudad Monumental de Mérida* 59 (2010): 6.

worship, found recently during excavation work carried out on the “Los Blanes” site,⁴³ which also confirms the existence of a pagan-Christian duality that marked this century in the main cities of Hispania.⁴⁴

In order to recreate the essential features of Emerita during the fifth century, we have to examine the archaeological data provided by the excavations carried out on the site, together with the few historical sources from the period, which are mainly based on the *Chronica* of Hydatius and the presence of Goths and Suevi in the city, recently analyzed by Arce.⁴⁵

As already mentioned, the *vicarii* had lived in Emerita since the reforms of Diocletian. The last known *vicarius* in Emerita was Macrobius, between 399 and 400. It seems that the Roman administration disappeared after it was taken over by the Suevi, Vandals, and Alans, and shared out between them, although in 420 there is a document referring to Maurocellus as *vicarius*, who visited Bracara with his troops in the same year. It would therefore appear that at this time there was still a *vicarius* in Emerita, and as a result, a Roman administration.⁴⁶

Hydatius first refers to the arrival of the Vandal king Geiseric in the city in 429, while news arrived that the Suevian Heremigarius had started to pillage Lusitania, and the Vandal king clashed with the Suevi to prevent the taking of Emerita.⁴⁷ The result was the death of Heremigarius in the River Anas at the hands of Geiseric, saving the city, which according to Arce was not sacked or demolished. The other episode narrated in the *Chronica* is the conflict between the Gothic king Theodoric

43 Javier Heras, *Un edificio singular de la Mérida tardorromana: un posible centro de culto metróaco y rituales taurobólicos*. Ataecina, Serie de estudios históricos de la Lusitania 8 (Mérida: Asamblea de Extremadura, 2011).

44 Pedro Mateos Cruz and Luís Caballero, “El paisaje urbano de Augusta Emerita en época tardoantigua (ss. IV–VII),” in *Actas del Congreso Internacional 1910–2010*, ed. Álvarez and Mateos, 505–20, at 509.

45 Arce, “Augusta Emerita: Continuidad y transformación (ss. IV–VII).”

46 Arce, “Augusta Emerita en el s. V d. C.,” 183.

47 Arce, “Augusta Emerita: Continuidad y transformación (ss. IV–VII),” 497.

and the Suevi in 456, which resulted in the defeat of the Suevi, and the imprisonment and death of Rechiarius.⁴⁸ Theodoric remained in Mérida for three months with his troops, before setting off for Gaul in 457.

Between these two military operations, it is important to note the presence of the Suevi in Emerita, as a result of the attempt by Rechila to expand towards the south, having entered the city in 439 with the aim of setting up his operational base in Mérida and controlling Betica, converting the city into the temporary capital of the Suevi kingdom. We know that in 448, Rechila and his court were still in Emerita, as according to Hydatius, the king died in this same year, and was replaced by Rechiarius. For at least ten years, the seat of Suevi power was not Bracara but Emerita, from where they made their first incursions into Baetica, including the conquest of Hispalis in 441, which apparently remained under the control of the Suevi until 458. The following years were marked by Bracara and Emerita sharing the royal privilege for some time, until their invasion of Tarraconense in 456 led the Goths of Theodoric II to enter Hispania and put an end to the reign of the Suevi. The Goths traveled from Gallaecia to Lusitania with their sights set on Emerita, although according to Hydatius, forewarned by what had happened in Bracara, did not provide Rechiarius's troops with an opportunity.⁴⁹

An "objective" interpretation of the *Chronica* reveals, on the one hand, a certain prominence by Emerita during the middle years of this century, in the power struggles that took place in Hispania, and on the other, a series of turbulent periods that must have influenced daily life in the city. Faced with this data, it is logical to ask what the city was like, having hosted the Suevian court while the monarchy used it as a temporarily stable base, and what influence this process had on the urban development

48 Ibid., 498.

49 Pablo Díaz, "El reino suevo de Hispania y su sede en Bracara," in *Sedes Regiae (400–800)*, ed. Gisela Ripoll (Barcelona: Real Academia de buenas Letras de Barcelona, 2000), 405–10.

of the city during the fifth century. Following the disappearance of Roman power in Hispania, the city went from being the capital of the Hispaniarum diocese, to becoming the temporary seat of the Suevian monarchy, as an alternative to Bracara.

Archaeologists have traditionally considered the city in late antiquity as having experienced a process of urban decay, with large numbers of abandoned spaces used for sporadic burials, reoccupation, and the re-use of old buildings, together with the construction of poor-quality buildings, in which families lived with allotments and farmyards. Meanwhile, the urban landscape became dotted with new religious buildings, replacing the former centers of public life from the Roman city.

This new image of the city in late antiquity was different, as indicated by Peter Brown, from the classical city, although, “they are not ruinous, decaying cities.”⁵⁰ Perhaps the concept of the city and its urban features changed, if we consider that this was an urban landscape derived from the Roman design, but now inhabited by the new peoples who were arriving in Hispania with a new culture. This suggests a new attitude towards public life, in which many of the structures from the old city still survived, while other new buildings were erected that would mark the development of these cities over the following centuries.⁵¹

In the case of Emerita, the fifth century was a period of urban transformation of the fourth century city, the legacy and continuation of the urban landscape from the late imperial period, which shifted towards another, different situation, basically marked by the abandonment of the public buildings that had defined the classical city, and the definitive incorporation of a new culture — Christianity — with new public buildings.

50 Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 29.

51 Rocío Ayerbe Vélez and Pedro Mateos Cruz, “Un nuevo ejemplo de arquitectura pública emeritense en época tardoantigua,” in *Navigare necesse est. Homenaje al profesor Luzón*, ed. Jorge García, Irene Mañas, and Fabiola Salcedo (Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 2015), 179–91, at 188.



Fig. 6. Archaeological excavations carried out in the hypocaustum of the theater of Emerita. By the author.

Throughout the fifth century, Mérida bore witness to the definitive abandonment of the main public buildings from the Roman city, which were gradually occupied by new public, domestic, or productive buildings. This was the case of the theater, which had already been abandoned by this stage, judging by the archaeological evidence found in recent excavation work carried out in the *hypocaustum* and in the *porticus post scaenam*, as part of the research projects by the Archaeological Institute of Mérida on the two buildings used for public spectacles in the

city.⁵² The work carried out in the *porticus* revealed the remains of dwellings that once occupied its northern side, including the so-called “sacred hall,”⁵³ while the *hyposcaenium* seems to have been definitively sealed at the end of this century, judging by the ceramic materials found in the levels covering the stage pit (fig. 6).⁵⁴

The amphitheater had already been abandoned during the fifth century, first losing its decorative elements made of marble, such as the panels that covered the granite podium separating the stands from the arena. The granite blocks used as seating were also removed, although the blocks from the podium remained in place, but we do know that different structures were re-used that had once formed a part of the pictorial and epigraphic decoration of the building.⁵⁵ This is the case of the scenes of *venationes* shown on a mural painting found on four ashlar stones from the amphitheater, which were re-used as part of a burial in late antiquity, and a monumental inscription in marble from a building used for performances, which was re-used inside a mausoleum close to the amphitheater itself.⁵⁶ During late antiquity, the amphitheater was re-used for domestic purposes,

52 Mateos Cruz and Pizzo, “Los Edificios de ocio y representación en Augusta Emerita.”

53 Pedro Mateos Cruz and Begoña Soler, “El aula sacra del teatro de Mérida. Nuevas consideraciones sobre su concepción arquitectónica y la cronología de su pavimento marmóreo,” in *Actas del II Congrés Internacional d’Arqueologia i Mon Antic, August i les Províncies Occidentals 2000 aniversari de la mort d’August* (Tarragona: Fundació Privada Mútua Catalana, 2015), 111–18.

54 I would like to thank Rocío Ayerbe Vélez, archaeologist for the Consortium of the Monumental City of Mérida, and responsible for both excavations, for this unpublished data.

55 Miguel Alba, “Evolución y final de los espacios romanos emeritenses a la luz de los datos arqueológicos (pautas de transformación de la ciudad tardoantigua y altomedieval),” in *Augusta Emerita: Territorios, espacios, imágenes y gentes en Lusitania romana*, ed. Trinidad Nogales, Monografías Emeritenses 8 (Mérida: Museo Nacional de Arte Romano, 2004), 207–56, at 220.

56 Canto, Bejarano, and Palma, “El mausoleo del dintel de los ríos de Mérida,” 289.

revealed by the discovery of different personal items in the *vomitorium* of the amphitheater, together with slag from forges built on the same site, documented during excavation work carried out as a part of the same research project.

Finally, we have very little archaeological data regarding the abandonment of the circus in Emerita.⁵⁷ The last piece of information we have about it being in use is contained, indirectly, in the epigraph of Sabinianus, a Christian charioteer whose funerary slab, re-used as the covering for a tomb from the adjacent paleochristian basilica of Casa Herrera,⁵⁸ has been dated from the fourth century.⁵⁹ It seems likely that by the mid-fifth century, the circus had already been abandoned in the same way as the theater and amphitheater, and that its most valuable materials were gradually being plundered.

In the same way as these buildings used for leisure and performance purposes were re-used during this century, we also have data that reveal the gradual abandonment of the main buildings in the forum of the colony, which by the mid-fifth century had undergone a process of transformation in which they lost their original functions. In general, and as indicated by the researchers who have analyzed the urban design of the forum, this transformation “was generally expressed by the plundering of the decorative and structural elements of the buildings, the destruction of their component parts, the recovery of specific areas for commercial purposes, and the appearance of rubbish dumps.”⁶⁰ Logically, this is a general overview of the situation, requiring more specific details of the exact processes that occurred in each of the areas of public life. During the Roman pe-

57 Eulalia Gijón and Ana Montalvo, “El circo romano de Mérida,” in *Actas del Congreso Internacional 1910–2010*, ed. Álvarez and Cruz, 195–208.

58 Luís Caballero and Thilo Ulbert, *La basílica paleocristiana de Casa Herrera en las cercanías de Mérida (Badajoz)*, Excavaciones Arqueológicas en España 89 (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1976), 178–80.

59 Ramírez and Mateos Cruz, *Inscripciones Cristianas de Mérida*, 99.

60 Ayerbe Vélez, Barrientos, and Palma, “Los complejos forenses de ‘Augusta Emerita,’” 828.

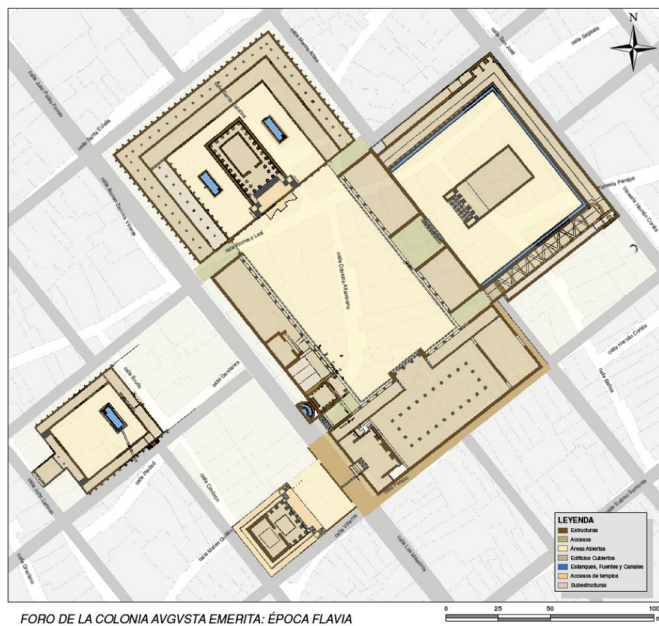


Fig. 7. Reconstruction of the forum from the colony of Augusta Emerita during the Flavian period. Used by permission from Rocío Ayerbe, Teresa Barrientos, and Felix Palma, “Los complejos forenses de ‘Augusta Emerita’” in *El Foro de Augusta Emerita. Génesis y Evolución de sus Recintos Monumentales*, ed. Rocío Ayerbe, Teresa Barrientos, and Felix Palma, *Anejos de Archivo Español de Arqueología* 53 (Madrid: csic, 2009), 667–832, at 828.

riod, the area of the forum (fig. 7) was arranged around three platforms containing the main public buildings.⁶¹ The central platform contained the temple “of Diana,” at its northernmost end, in what we have identified as a *cryptoporticus*. At the other end was the basilica, in front of which was a central square, sur-

61 Ibid.



Fig. 8. General view of the “Temple of Diana” dated from the Augustan period. By the author.

rounded by arcades containing the main buildings that comprised the forum, such as the *curia*, *aerarium*, or *carcer*.

Remains have been documented on the eastern platform — traditionally known as the “portico of the forum” — of an area dedicated to the Imperial cult, which included a temple. Another public space existed to the south of this complex, whose function is unclear. Finally, remains have been found on the western platform of the temple that stood in Calle Viñeros, and a public structure that has been identified as a *schola iuvenum*. Each of these areas suffered from independent processes of abandonment of their buildings, and the plundering and re-use of their spaces. In some cases, we have been able to interpret certain stages of this process.

The temple “of Diana,” after being abandoned as a building for Imperial worship, must have been re-used for some other purpose, as it is still in a good state of preservation today (fig. 8). It is possible that after the fifth century it was used for some other type of public purpose, possibly religious, judging by the discovery inside the building of large numbers of architectural decorations, which are now located in the portico of the Renais-

sance palace of “Los Corbos,”⁶² built in its interior, as well as the discovery of several gravestones in the surrounding area.⁶³ To the east of the so-called temple “of Diana” a building was erected using granite ashlar with external buttresses. Only one of its walls remains in place, which ran perpendicularly to the temple, and whose construction levels indicate that it was built in the mid-fifth century. The characteristics of these remains suggest that it may have been used for public purposes,⁶⁴ although we are unable to ascertain its function.

Inside the porticoed spaces, the remains of crucibles were found embedded in the paving, suggesting the presence of forges or metal foundries, and that these workshops were set up inside the buildings that were gradually being dismantled and plundered. In some parts of the porticoed buildings to the south west of the square, levels of abandonment have been found from this century that were prior to the process of dismantling and plundering these buildings. Also, the *cryptoporticus* in this area was filled in, and its space divided up for use as dwellings at a subsequent moment. The archaeological excavations have also revealed that the thermal baths were abandoned at this time, which had been built in the fourth century over the remains of a building identified as a possible *schola iuvenum*.⁶⁵

On the eastern platform, to the south of the monumental area, in a space that is difficult to interpret, but which may have contained the public baths of the forum during the Early Imperial period, a public building once stood that was built in the first half of the fifth century, but which continued to be in use until the end of the sixth century, at which stage it was trans-

62 Pedro Mateos Cruz and Isaac Sastre, “Mobiliario arquitectónico de época tardoantigua en el entorno del templo de Diana. Una propuesta sobre su ocupación entre los siglos VI al IX,” *Memoria, Excavaciones Arqueológicas en Mérida 2001* (2004): 397–416.

63 Ramírez and Mateos Cruz, *Inscripciones Cristianas de Mérida*, 279.

64 Ayerbe Vélez, Barrientos, and Palma, “Los complejos forenses de ‘Augusta Emerita,’” 830.

65 *Ibid.*, 831.

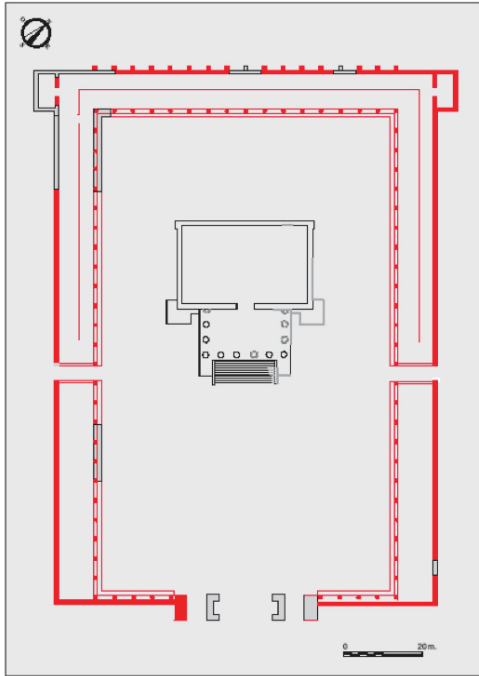


Fig. 9. Reconstruction of the ground plan of the provincial center dedicated to imperial worship in Augusta Emerita. By the author.

formed for domestic use. It is a structure made of *opera mixta* with granite ashlars and large blocks of stone and brick, with buttresses also made of granite ashlars. Only two of the building's rooms have been preserved. Their architectural features and construction technique indicate that this was a public building. The thickness of its walls, the use of external granite buttresses, and the architectural quality of the preserved remains, all point towards it being an example of public architecture from late an-

tiquity, as seen in other public buildings in Mérida and the rest of the Iberian Peninsula.⁶⁶

One could also suggest a parallel, contemporary process for the public buildings found in what is known as the provincial complex for Imperial worship (fig. 9). This complex, accessed through what is known as the “Arch of Trajan,” the entrance into this monumental space, is defined by a triple portico delimiting a square presided over by a tetrastyle temple with an oblong *cella*.⁶⁷ It was built during the Tiberian period, while throughout the fifth century the main buildings were plundered for building materials, losing most of their valuable elements, and dismantled for subsequent use as dwellings in the area of the square and the porticos.⁶⁸ Here, the remains of up to five buildings have been found, which were adjacent to the podium of the temple, the walls of the porticos, and the “Arch of Trajan.” During this century, layers of rubble accumulated over the marble pavement of the square and the doorway leading into this area, saving it from being plundered.⁶⁹

In general, as can be seen from the data provided by the archaeological excavations carried out in the area, the fifth century was a time of major transformations in the area occupied during Roman times and known as the “forum of the Colony” and the provincial area for Imperial worship. During this process, the main buildings in the public area lost their original function, and some of them were plundered for their decorative and structural elements, as occurred with the granite ashlar that surrounded the concrete nucleus of the temple in Calle Vi-

66 Ayerbe Vélez and Mateos Cruz, “Un nuevo ejemplo.”

67 Mateos Cruz, *El llamado foro provincial de Augusta Emerita*, 251–76.

68 Miguel Alba and Pedro Mateos Cruz, “Transformación y ocupación tardoantigua y altomedieval del llamado foro provincial,” in *El llamado foro provincial de Augusta Emerita*, ed. Mateos Cruz, 355–80, at 360.

69 Xavier Aquilué and Rafael Dehesa, “Los materiales arqueológicos de época romana y tardorromana procedentes de las excavaciones del denominado ‘Foro Provincial’ de Mérida,” in *El llamado foro provincial de Augusta Emerita*, ed. Mateos Cruz, 157–70, at 170.



Fig. 10. Remnants of the defensive structure of the Roman wall inside the archaeological area of Morería. By the author.

ñeros.⁷⁰ However, the area was not completely abandoned, and instead the space was used for domestic and commercial purposes. At the same time, other public buildings were erected as part of the official representation of a new political situation that came about following the departure of the Roman authorities. This process of re-using the space must have occurred, based on the archaeological data, during the first half of the fifth century, following the abandonment of these buildings at the end of the fourth century or in the early fifth century. This coincided with the end of the Roman administrative and political power represented in Augusta Emerita by the figure of the *vicarius*, whose presence in the city has been attested until the year 400.

Another important structure in the Roman city, the wall, suffered the transformation of its architectural design, but not its layout. The wall that had defined the internal space of the colony of Augusta Emerita until that time has remained unchanged since the Roman period. Throughout the fourth century, it underwent a series of minor alterations that did not affect its shape

70 Ayerbe Vélez, Barrientos, and Palma, “Los complejos forenses de ‘Augusta Emerita,’” 831.

or course; now, the Roman wall was reinforced by the construction of an external layer using granite blocks that were re-used from other buildings, which are visible in many of the known sections of the Roman wall (fig. 10).

In terms of its structure, the reinforcement of ashlar blocks that covered the wall at this time had a width of between two and three meters, consisting of rows of granite material re-used from previous buildings. Apart from ashlars, a large number of columns have been identified, together with material from different funerary settings, such as *cupae* and *pulvini*,⁷¹ evidence of the prior destruction of these pagan funerary spaces before re-using them as reinforcement materials. The absence of sections with architectural decoration from the public buildings in the forum made of granite, such as the temple “of Diana,” the only building that was not plundered, probably due to its continued re-use, or the temple documented in Calle Viñeros,⁷² mean it is not possible to confirm whether these buildings had been dismantled at the time the protective “covering” was built. However, we do have evidence of the re-use of decorative materials from both buildings in structures considered as belonging to the Emirate period.⁷³

One of the substantial reforms that influenced the life of the city at this time was the re-use of the conduits used to supply, control, and channel the city’s water. The water supply was cut off during the fifth century, probably because the aqueducts (except for the aqueduct of San Lázaro, which may have been in use for a longer period) had already been abandoned by this time, judging by the data from the excavations carried out in the aqueduct of Los Milagros,⁷⁴ although this is still impossible to

71 José Beltran and Luís Baena, “Pulvinos monumentales de Mérida,” *Anas* 9 (1996): 105–31, at 110.

72 Felix Palma, “Solar de la calle Viñeros, 17,” in *El Foro de Augusta Emerita*, ed. Ayerbe Vélez, Barrientos, and Palma, 331–66.

73 Antonio Peña, “La decoración arquitectónica,” in *El Foro de Augusta Emerita*, ed. Ayerbe Vélez, Barrientos, and Palma, 525–82, at 563.

74 Ayerbe Vélez “Intervención arqueológica,” 47.

confirm with regard to the rest of the conduits. At this time, the city probably had cisterns and wells, which had been in regular use since the Roman period, in the collective dwellings. Also, the drainage system had become inoperative due to the lack of running water and maintenance work on the sewers, whose manholes located at the city's crossroads had been covered over following the refurbishment of the road system.

One of the most widely documented elements associated with the transformation of the city during the fifth century, and the new situation that came about as a result, is found within the domestic sphere. We have extensive data on the new domestic spaces that appeared, for example, as a result of the abandonment of the public spaces from the fifth century onwards. This is the case of the dwellings documented inside the provincial forum,⁷⁵ in the forum of the Colony,⁷⁶ in the *peristylium* of the theater, or in the amphitheater,⁷⁷ to name just a few examples. In general, these were dwellings that were adapted to the previously existing urban structure, on one floor, and made of material from previously abandoned buildings.

During this same period, the Roman stately homes began to be fragmented, with their courtyards converted into patios, and their rooms used as dwellings for whole families. The way the spaces were used and occupied changed, breaking them up, and leading to the dysfunction of the parts of the former Roman house.⁷⁸ Both of these situations — the creation of new private homes in the former public areas, and the subdivision of the old Roman mansions — have been used as arguments to support the increase of population within the city walls during this century, which became crowded in relation to other previous historical

75 Alba and Mateos Cruz, "Transformación y ocupación tardoantigua."

76 Palma, "Solar de la calle Viñeros, 17"; Peña, "La decoración arquitectónica," 528–31.

77 Mateos Cruz and Pizzo "Los Edificios de ocio y representación en Augusta Emerita: El teatro y el Anfiteatro."

78 Alba, "Evolución y final de los espacios romanos emeritenses a la luz de los datos arqueológicos," 236.



Fig. 11. Grave goods found in one of the tombs from the funerary area of “Los Blanes.” Photograph by Consorcio de la Ciudad monumental de Mérida. Used by permission.

periods in the city. However, it is likely that this was only a reflection of a process of urban de-structuring that characterized the city at this time, with abandoned areas, unoccupied buildings and spaces that were sporadically used for burials inside the city and which were not associated with funerary structures, combined with densely occupied housing.

This said, we find the clearest indication of the urban changes that occurred during this century in the area outside of the city walls. The pagan funerary areas were abandoned, destroying the buildings and the tombs inside them. As we have seen, many of the remnants of these structures were re-used in the reinforcement of the city walls, which are full of countless granite ashlar blocks, together with fragments from burials in these funerary areas, such as *pulvini* or *cupae*. In turn, the excavation work carried out on the site of “Los Blanes” revealed a large funerary area, whose final stage contained eleven burials with grave goods and jewelry that were clearly of Suevian origin (fig. 11). The tombs were dated, stratigraphically and from the materials they contained, from between the start and middle of the fifth



Fig. 12. Ground plan of Augusta Emerita with the main Christian buildings that stood in the city in late antiquity. By the author.

century,⁷⁹ confirming the presence of a Suevian military elite in the city at this time.

From the fourth century onwards, Christian funerary areas were created in the city around the burial site of a martyr, such as the large funerary area of St. Eulalia which, as previously mentioned, was destroyed prior to the construction of the basilica in the second half of the fifth century. Due to the extension of these basilicas for funerary purposes, and their dedication to martyrs, in the suburbs of the city, new areas were created around these churches, located within and outside of the city walls.

Here we are seeing a process of urban transformation that reflects the economic, cultural, social, and political changes that occurred in this society during the fifth century and led to a new concept of the city. This new concept was a legacy of the late Roman city, except all of the main landmarks connected with leisure, government, or religion had been eliminated, in parallel with the end of the Roman administration. These public build-

79 Javier Heras and Ana Olmedo, "Ficha de catálogo. Collar," in *Catálogo de la Exposición Hispania Gothorum. S. Ildefonso y el reino visigodo de Toledo*, ed. Rafael García (Toledo: Museo de la Santa Cruz, 2007), 390.

was adapted to the architectural layout of the martyrial building which, like the rest of the structures in the necropolis, had been destroyed at a previous time (fig. 13). It seems likely that following the construction of the basilica, the space was once again used as a funerary area, with evidence of burials of privileged individuals in its interior, in crypts that were built to contain the bodies of the bishops of Emerita, as well as certain public figures who lived in the city.

At this time, there must have been other funerary basilicas in the suburbs of Emerita. The *Vitas Patrum Emeritensium*⁸¹ refers to the presence at the end of the sixth century of churches dedicated to different saints and martyrs. These were located inside a Christian funerary area, and so it is likely that they were already in use during the fifth century. Similarly, we know that other churches existed within the city walls during the Visigothic period, in different parts of the city, which were built according to the availability of land and religious needs. However, we have hardly any archaeological data referring to these structures.

It is likely that there was a church close to the so-called temple “of Diana” in the mid-fifth century. We do not believe that it was built by using the remnants of the pagan building itself, as this re-use would have been unusual at such an early date. As previously mentioned, the presence of different funerary epigraphs in the surrounding area,⁸² together with fragments of architectural decorations from the Visigothic period (cymatium moldings, capitals and bases), re-used in a building erected in the sixteenth century inside the temple,⁸³ allow for the hypothesis that this church was present in the area.

Also within the city walls, the *Vitas* indicates that there was a church dedicated to St. Andrew, which probably stood on the site of the now abandoned convent of Santo Domingo, which

81 *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium*, ed. Antonio Maya Sánchez, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 116 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992).

82 Ramírez and Mateos Cruz, *Inscripciones Cristianas de Mérida*, 279.

83 Mateos Cruz and Sastre, “Mobiliario arquitectónico de época tardoantigua en el entorno del templo de Diana.”

was still known as the convent of St. Andrew in the seventeenth century.⁸⁴ A series of remnants from the Visigothic period were found during excavation work inside the convent, which could be connected with this structure, although the only sustainable argument is provided by the historical memory of the site, which kept the same name over the centuries.

During this century, it is also likely that the cathedral or *ecclesia senior* already existed, which according to the *Vitas* was known as St. Ierusalem.⁸⁵ The only archaeological data associated with the location and architectural features of the cathedral have been provided by a series of decorative materials which appeared in the area around the current co-cathedral church of St. Mary, which include an object that has been identified as a *cathedra*, the seat of the bishop,⁸⁶ and an epigraph which was re-used as an impost in the gateway leading into the Arab citadel, and which may be connected to the change of the cathedral's dedication from St. Ierusalem to St. Mary, Princess of all the Virgins.⁸⁷ These elements have made it possible to suggest a hypothetical location of the Visigothic cathedral in the same position now occupied by the present-day cathedral, taking into account the appearance of these elements in the surrounding area, and historical records that refer to the construction of the "main church of St. Mary" following the re-conquest of the city in 1228, on the site formerly occupied by the Visigothic cathedral.

In summary, we have a series of archaeological data that explain the process of urban transformation that took place in Augusta Emerita during its development from the capital of the Hispaniarum diocese at the start of the fourth century, until it became the temporary base of the Suevian monarchy in Hispania throughout the fifth century. This was a time of transition,

84 Bernabé Moreno de Vargas, *Historia de la ciudad de Mérida* (1633; rpt. Mérida: Diputación Provincial de Badajoz, 1987), 476.

85 *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium*, 4.9.7.

86 María Cruz, *Mérida Visigoda: La escultura arquitectónica y litúrgica* (Badajoz: Diputación Provincial de Badajoz, 1985), 205, n. 182.

87 Ramírez and Mateos Cruz, *Inscripciones Cristianas de Mérida*, 31–35.

in which the structures that had defined the Roman city were gradually removed and replaced by a new concept of the city, associated with its new and different political, cultural, economic, and social condition, where the power of Rome was replaced by the power of other peoples who settled in Emerita during the fifth century. The city did not lose its function as the structuring element of the territory, although it would evolve towards other ways of understanding public space, as a private sphere in relation to the classical city. The buildings used for leisure purposes and performances, the architecture of power, and the rest of the public urban structures from the Roman period gradually lost their function, and were abandoned and replaced by a new type of architecture, which manifested the authority of the church from this moment on.

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