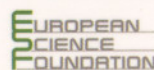


# journeys through european landscapes voyages dans les paysages européens

Editors:  
Laure Lévêque  
María Ruiz del Árbol  
Liliana Pop  
Christoph Bartels



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- English / anglais : Liliana Pop
- French / français : Laure Lévêque
- Spanish / espagnol : María Ruiz del Árbol

Cover design / Couverture designée par: Noelia Calzada Nieto.

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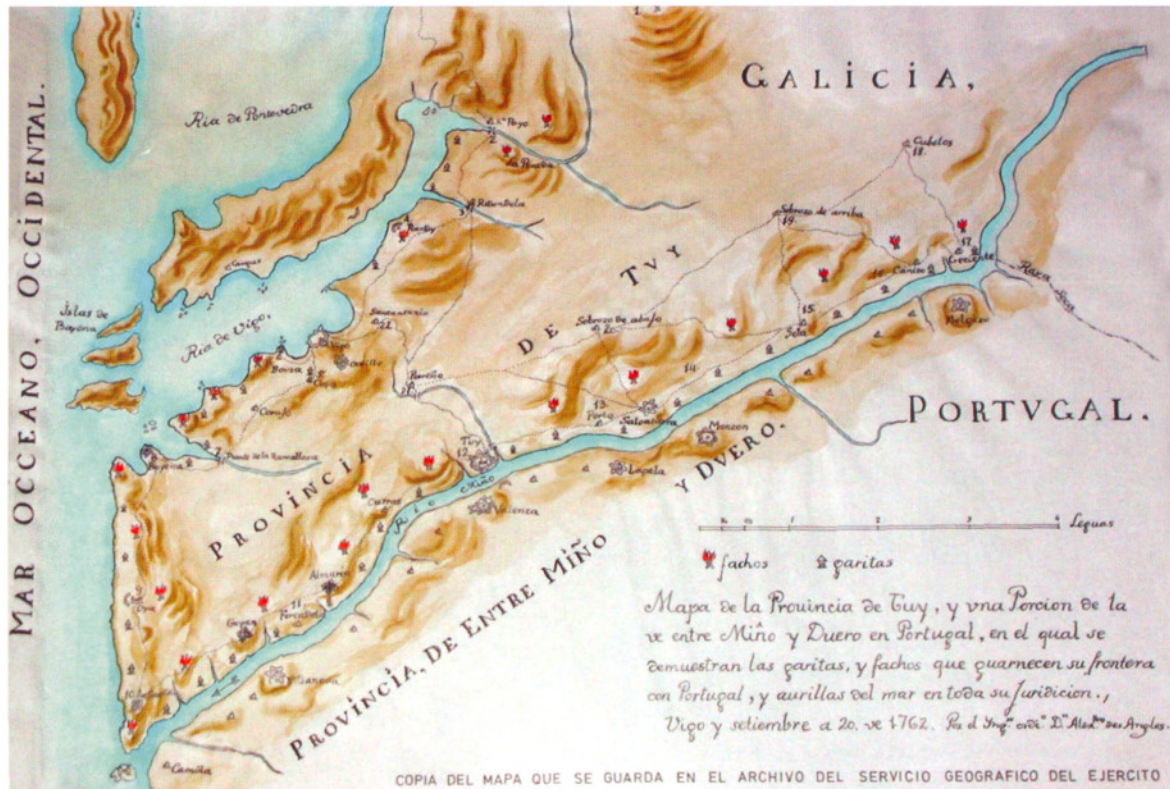


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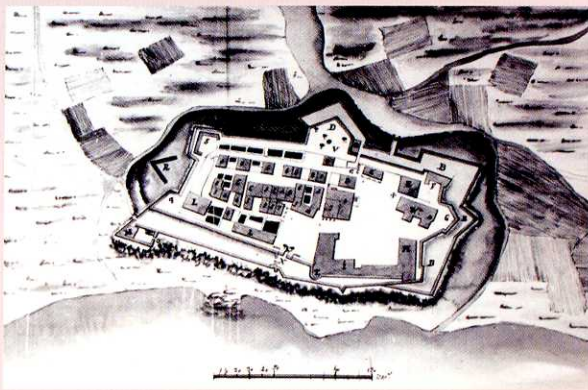
COPIA DEL MAPA QUE SE GUARDA EN EL ARCHIVO DEL SERVICIO GEOGRAFICO DEL EJERCITO

Borders,  
Landscape  
and Modernity:  
Fortification  
Systems  
in the  
Baixo Miño  
Region between  
the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>  
Centuries

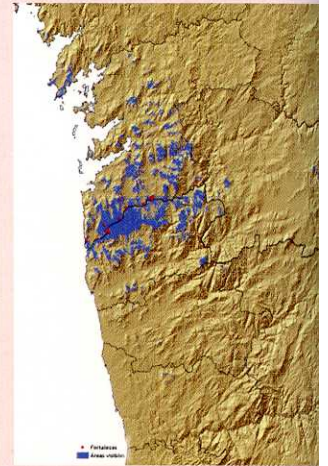
Along the northern border between Spain and Portugal there are physical reminders of wars and confrontations between the two countries since the twelfth century, including the War of Restoration (1640-1668) the most important conflict in terms of explaining the archaeological remains conserved in this geographical context. Against this historical backdrop, the lower reaches of the Miño River (or 'Baixo Miño') served as a perfect natural frontier, known as the *Raya Húmeda* or 'wet frontier'. Eventually it became the backbone for a whole landscape in the Modern Age in which new methods of warfare and siege tactics appeared, mainly the generalised use of gunpowder. Its situation as a borderline led to the whole area turning from a rural landscape with mediaeval origins into a new and impressive geopolitical landscape, with constructions and architecture in line with the pattern of rationality that served as the basis for the modern States and Empires of the Iberian Peninsula.

Before 1640 (when Portugal recovered its independence) a series of conflicts took place in this area which led to the construction of walled towns such as A Guarda or Tuy, castles such as Salvaterra de Miño, and towers such as those seen in Fornelos (Crecente). In these cases, corresponding to fortifications from mediaeval times, the defences were the actual town walls, protected by towers or turrets with parapets on small hills. Fortifications of this kind continued to be built until the fifteenth century, when the use of gunpowder and mechanical weapons increased offensive power, making it necessary to improve these walled enclaves. Circular towers connected to the walls gave way to bastions that eliminated problems of visibility. The development of artillery forced military architecture to discover models that would meet the following requirements: to resist the impact of the new types of artillery, to minimise damage caused by bullets, easily reconstruct damage elements, and make it easy to adapt the structure to the land. Thus, the type of fortification used in the Modern Age is a polygonal that uses bastions as a key defensive element. Changes had to be made to the walls, as canons could easily open holes in them; they became lower, with an inner slope as an emplacement for artillery, and with solid parapets to resist attack.



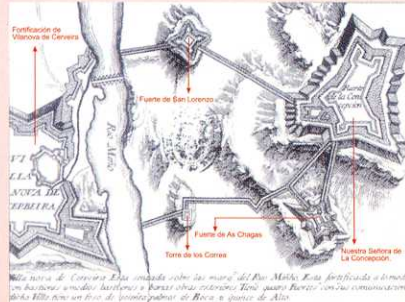


Towns such as Salvaterra were fortified according to modern military planning, their bastions enclosing the remains of mediaeval walls



Military positions in the Baixo Miño had visual command over an extensive territory beyond the border.

Earth fortresses were essential during rapid advances in times of conflict.



Each fortification was directly related to those of its surrounding area, forming complex fortified spaces, such as the *Fuerte de la Concepción*.

The reshaping of mediaeval fortifications and the building of fortifications with bastions served as the driving force behind different socio-economic phenomena seen in the material remnants. They testify to an architectonic technology that does not only reflect the political situation, but also reproduces a context of change marked by technical innovations and the significant socio-economic structures of the old regime. In this sense, the construction of a fortification involved an innovative project that combined political, social and economic aspects, giving an impulse to metalworking industry, modifying attack strategies, renewing communications networks, and, perhaps most relevantly, altering the physiognomy of the cities. Within this process of constructing a new, socio-spatial reality, the landscape came to form part of the military strategy itself, as the main conditioning factor in any defensive action. The landscape became a fortified territory.

Despite the fact that the original intention of the two conflicting powers was to deal with the territory in a general manner, there was no generic project by either side in the war with the aim of fortifying the territory for once and for all; instead, this occurred during the conflict, with the aim of defending specific points and gradually creating a fortified territory in the area. In this way architecture itself constructed the fortified landscape of the Baixo Miño.

The recognition of the material remains from these periods of warfare, their detailed study as constructive units and analysis of their current situation as heritage elements, leads us to a wider observation point and the study of a more general area, in which it is possible to see how in each historical moment, due to specific circumstances, the landscape of the Baixo Miño was used and transformed for specific strategic and military purposes.

It is a complex landscape, with a solid material culture that was constructed through a past reality, which means that it is essential that its study should be based on an interdisciplinary strategy combining modern history, cultural anthropology and archaeological methodology. Basing our work on historical data, written sources and fieldwork, the first stage was to establish a typology within the fortifications on the Galician side of the study area. To do so a series of variables were integrated, such as layout, emplacement, chronology or construction materials:

- Bastioned fortresses built in stone, with four or five bastions (San Lorenzo, Santa Cruz or Insua);
- Bastioned fortifications with external constructions in stone, reinforcing previously existing walled structures (Tui);
- Bastioned fortifications with external earth ramparts (Castle of Medos);

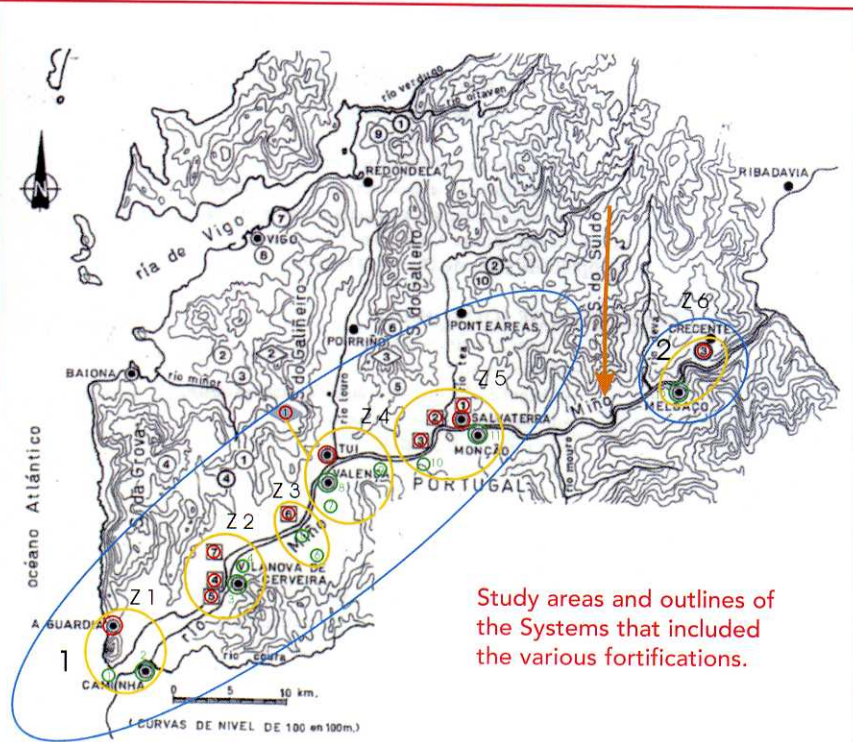


The border defended by modern fortresses disappeared, giving way to modern connection routes such as the International Bridge, in the shadow of San Francisco de Lovelhe.

- Fortifications based on trenches, ditches and temporary emplacements (Fillboa);
- Towers and lookout points built of earth (Porto) or stone (Torre dos Ratos and mediaeval towers, such as Crecente).

All of these architectural features are monumental structures – built to see and be seen – that together form an integral defensive system. Once the war ended in 1668, the fortifications did not always disappear, but instead continued to serve to articulate the territory, playing a role in new conflicts or simply changing their function and absorbing new types of architecture in the modern era, contributing once again towards configuring a new trans-frontier landscape, historically characterised by its dynamic nature and subject to the shifting positions of States and their different political, social and economic destinies.

The Baixo Miño contains a landscape of a truly monumental nature, built as a space for confrontation, which has been converted into the physical evidence of European political history, a heritage resource and cultural element that must be managed today, within a new space of political negotiation in which the frontiers have lost their former significance.



Study areas and outlines of the Systems that included the various fortifications.

Taking into account the historical data, the information obtained by the individual analysis of each fortification, the relationship between them and the defence of communication routes, a series of defensive Systems are configured in the area of the Baixo Miño, serving as the backdrop to a series of episodes in the conflict between Galicia and Portugal:

**1. THE A GUARDA-INSUA-CAMINHA SYSTEM**

Formed on the Galician side by the mediaeval walls of A Guarda and the Castle of Santa Cruz, and on the Portuguese side by the Fortress of Insúa and the fortifications of Caminha.

**2. THE GOIÁN-VILANOVA DE CERVEIRA-ESTÁS SYSTEM**

Formed on the Galician side by the Fortress of Nuestra Señora de la Concepción, the Fortress of San Lorenzo, the Torre dos Correos, the fortress of As Chagas, the Torre dos Ratos (all in Goián, Tomiño) and the Castle of Medos (Estás, Tomiño). On the Portuguese side are the fortified town of Vila Nova de Cerveira, the fortress of Lovelhe and the Atalaia or Battery of Mata (also known as the Atalaia do Espírito Santo).

**3. THE AMORÍN-SAN LUIS GONZAGA SYSTEM**

In Galicia, this is formed by the Fortress of Amorín, and in Portugal the fortresses of San Luis Gonzaga and San Jorge da Silva.

**4. THE TUI-VALENÇA SYSTEM**

With Tui as Galicia's only fortification, facing it on the Portuguese side is the fortified town of Valença do Minho and the fortresses of Gandra and Carrexil.

**5. THE SALVATERRA-MONÇÃO SYSTEM**

On the Galician side are: the fortified emplacement of Salvaterra, the Castle of Santiago de Aitona, the fortress of La Estrella, the Tower of Porto, and the fortress and fortifications of Fillboa. On the Portuguese side are the Tower of Lapela and the fortified town of Monção.

**6. THE CRECENTE-MELGAÇO SYSTEM**

Comprised of both fortresses, the Tower of Fornelos in Galicia, and the fortified town of Melgaço.

It follows that two areas are defined. Area 1 includes the first 5 systems, and Area 2 the sixth. The Systems organised the territory by defending specific areas, in which there was generally a pre-existing population, around which the modern fortification was built. In either case conflict began either by attacking consolidated populations, the tactic of the Portuguese army, or by occupying the surrounding area to attack them later on, the tactic preferred by the Spanish.





**Bastion of the Fortress of San Breno de Goian.**

Depending on their strategic location, it is possible to define different types of Systems:

1. Atlantic systems: comprising the fortifications found at the mouth of the Miño River, protecting it and access to other areas along the Atlantic coastline. In this case, for example in Crecente, the fortifications do not face each other, with no direct visual relationship between Santa Cruz-Insua-Caminha, as the mountain of Santa Tegra is situated between them. In part it is related to the systems that defend transit routes. It is a diachronic system.
2. Paired systems: with one (or more) Galician and Portuguese towns facing each other. A diachronic system, deeply rooted in history.
3. Road systems: protecting communication routes between systems, in particular strengthening the systems that are the most vulnerable due to the weakness of their defences. This is the case of Amorín, working together with the Castle of Medos or part of the fortifications of the Salvaterra system. These are systems that were newly constructed in the Modern Age.
4. Secondary systems: these protected areas away from the Miño, but which were situated on roads that ran towards the interior of Galicia, for example the Crecente-Melgaço system. These correspond to the mediaeval period.

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**Abstract:** The beginning of the Modern Age is highly visible in the transformations that took place in the landscape of the Baixo Miño region during the periods of war suffered by this border emplacement. Advances in technical knowledge and poliorcetic planning created the most suitable forms for defending the territory. Unlike the situation in other historical periods or areas of study, we know the theoretical and defensive strategies that were used as the basis for military constructions for each specific purpose and emplacement. Military idiosyncrasy allows little leeway to the builders, which means that the implantation of the general systems of fortification and defence along the Galician-Portuguese border were planned on the basis of exhaustive knowledge of the natural environment in which they had to be located. Consequently it was the landscape that had to be dominated in order to choose the precise location where the fortifications were to be built.

**Résumé :** Le passage aux Temps Modernes est clairement lisible dans les transformations intervenues dans le paysage du Baixo Miño, région-frontière qu'ont bouleversée les guerres. Les avancées en poliorcétique comme dans les connaissances techniques ont activement participé de la défense du territoire. À l'inverse de ce qui se passe pour d'autres périodes historiques, on connaît bien les stratégies théoriques et défensives qui ont été aux sources des constructions militaires, associant chaque visée spécifique à un emplacement. L'idiosyncrasie militaire laisse peu de marge de manœuvre au constructeur, ce qui signifie que la mise en place du système défensif de fortifications à la frontière galico-portugaise s'est faite en intégrant la connaissance approfondie de l'environnement naturel dans lequel il devait être implanté. Ainsi le paysage devait-il être maîtrisé pour permettre de choisir l'endroit précis où seraient construites les fortifications.

**Resumen:** La implantación de la Modernidad está patente en las transformaciones que el Paisaje del Baixo Miño experimentó durante los periodos de guerra por los que ha pasado este enclave fronterizo. Los avances en el conocimiento técnico y planificación poliorcética configuraron las formas más apropiadas para la defensa del territorio. A diferencia de lo que ocurre en otros períodos históricos u otros ámbitos de estudio, se conocen los planteamientos teóricos constructivos y de defensa en los que se basan los ideales de la edificación militar para cada finalidad y enclave concreto. La propia idiosincrasia militar deja poca libertad al constructor, por lo que la implantación de los sistemas generales de fortificación y defensa de la frontera galaico-portuguesa fueron planificados basándose en el conocimiento exhaustivo del entorno natural en el que se hacía necesaria su ubicación. De tal manera era el paisaje lo que era necesario dominar para poder elegir la ubicación precisa en la que construir las fortificaciones.