

The Decorative Repertoire of the Mosaics from the *Conuentus Bracaraugustanus* and Their Relationships with Other Mosaics of *Hispania*

Conuentus Bracaraugustanus Mozaiklerinin Dekoratif Repertuarı ve *Hispania*'nın Diğer Mozaikleriyle İlişkileri

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Abstract

In this work we intend to extend the comparative study of the mosaics of Conuentus Bracaraugustanus published in the Corpus to the mosaics from Gallaecia and from other regions of Hispania, particularly from the region between the Ebro and Douro rivers, considering different mosaic workshops operating in these areas.

We also register punctual relationships between some compositional schemes, themes and motifs that occur in the mosaics of the Conuentus Bracaraugustanus and some of the north African production.

We will complement our study with information that resulted from the continuation of our research and that was provided to us after the publication of the Corpus, in 2019.

Keywords: Roman mosaic, decorative repertoire, Conuentus Bracaraugustanus, Gallaecia, Hispanic mosaic workshops.


Öz

Bu çalışmada, Conuentus Bracaraugustanus'un Corpus'ta yayınlanan mozaiklerinin karşılaştırmalı çalışmasını Gallaecia ve Hispania'nın diğer bölgelerinden, özellikle Ebro ve Douro nehirleri arasındaki bölgeden ve bu bölgelerde faaliyet gösteren farklı mozaik atölyelerini göz önünde bulundurularak genişletilmesi amaçlanmaktadır.

Ayrıca Conuentus Bracaraugustanus'un mozaiklerinde ve bazı Kuzey Afrika üretimi mozaiklerinde ortaya çıkan bazı kompozisyon şemaları, temalar ve motifler arasındaki eş zamanlı ilişkileri de ortaya çıkarılacaktır.

Araştırmamızın devamı sonucunda ortaya çıkan ve Corpus'un 2019 yılında yayınlanmasından sonra bize sağlanan bilgilerle çalışmamızı tamamlayacağız.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Roma mozaikleri, dekoratif repertuar, Conuentus Bracaraugustanus, Gallecia, Hispanik mozaik atölyeleri.

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The *Conuentus Bracaraugustanus* was one of the three Roman administrative regions included in the *Gallaecia* territory. Most of the *Conuentus Bracaraugustanus* area is within the current Portuguese territory, being limited to the south by the Douro River and the north by the Minho River, with a small strip of land between this river and the Verdugo River, belonging to the present Spanish autonomous community of Galicia.

The basic forms of Roman administrative policies were established in the NW of *Hispania* in the late 1st century BC, namely the ethnic-territorial delimitation in *ciuitates* and the indigenous communities' integration into the Roman model. This is confirmed by the "Edict of Augustus," *Tabula* of El Bierzo, dated from 15 BC, in which the central Roman government approved the limits of the *ciuitas* where an indigenous community was integrated.

At the beginning of the 1st century AD, under Emperor Augustus, a new and intelligent restructuring of the territory and its populations was implemented, creating the geographically delimited *Conuentus Iuridici* and founding their respective capitals. The *Tabula Lougeiorum*, dated 1 AD, mentioned the *Conuentus Asturum*, in which the agreement drawn up between C. Asinio Galo and the Lougei is recorded in Latin (Dopico Cainzos – Santos Yanguas 2017: 711-714).

Three *Conuentus Iuridici* were established in *Gallaecia*, with *Asturica Augusta*, *Lucus Augusti*, and *Bracara Augusta* as their capitals. The toponym *Bracara Augusta* derives from the ethnonym *Bracari* and refers to the indigenous population living in that region (Fig. 1).

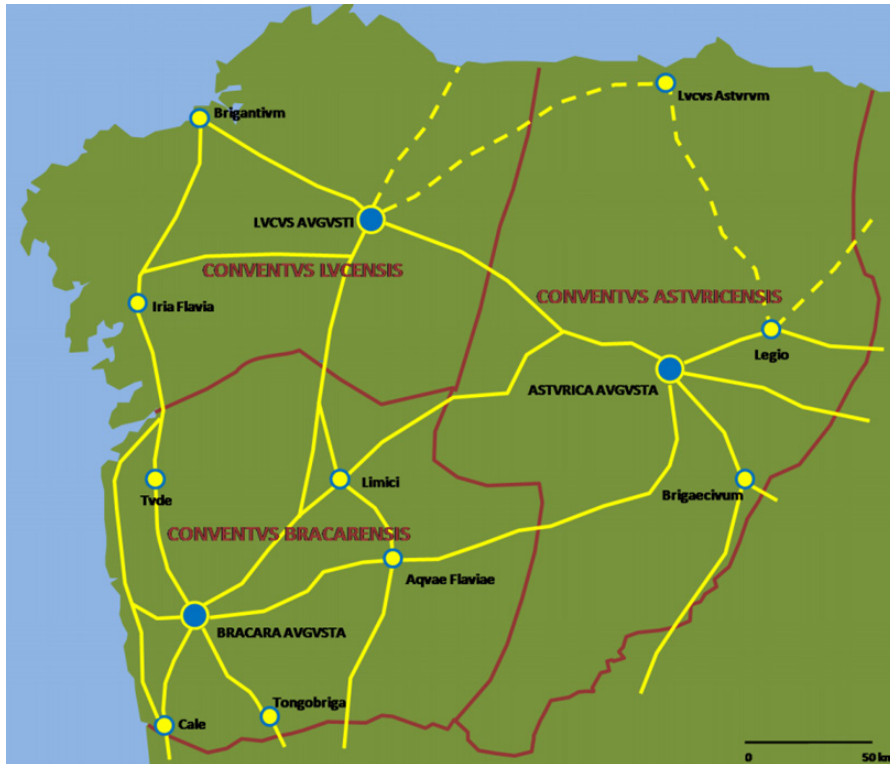


Figure 1
Map of the Roman administrative division of the Peninsular Northwest, 1st-2nd centuries, roads and urban centers. (Fontes 2011: fig. 75; in Repositório Universidade do Minho: <http://hdl.handle.net/1822/20982>; CMRCB, mapa 2, p. 256).

The *Bracaraugustanus* are mentioned in two honorary monuments dedicated to Augustus and Agrippa Postumus, son of Agrippa, the Emperor's lieutenant. These epigraphic records allow the assumption that, between 3 and 2 BC, the *Bracaraugustanus* community already adopted the customs of Roman citizenship, being integrated into an urban context of Roman architectural features (Martins et al. 2012: 35-36).

Land roads had also been built since the time of Augustus. These roads connected the different cities of the *Conuentus*, facilitating the populations' mobility and transport of goods, contributing to the region's social and economic development, and affirming the central political power.

A general panorama is presented below of the roads that connected the *Conuentus* capitals to the other settlements, *mansiones*, and *uillae*, which supplied many of the mosaics that constitute the object of study of this article.

From the land roads that crossed the *Gallaecia* territory during the High Empire, a highlight is given to the two great state roads that linked *Bracara Augusta*, in the southwest, to *Asturica Augusta* at the western end of the northern Meseta, namely the "Via XVII," dating from the Augustan period, and the *VIA NOVA* ("Via XVIII"), created during the Flavian dynasty. The "Via XVII" went to *Asturica* through *Aqua Flauiae*, crossing from west to east the northern area of western Trás-os-Montes; the *VIA NOVA* left *Bracara* towards *Asturica*, crossing the convergence area of the *Conuentus Bracaraugustanus*, *Lucensis*, and *Asturum*. After crossing the Gerês mountain range towards the Lima valley, it headed to the foothills of the S. Mamede mountain range and, always along the Lima riverbanks, passed by the *mansiones Aquis Querquernis* (Baños de Bande), *Geminis* (Sandiás), and *Salientibus* (Xinzo da Costa), close to the gold mining area.

Throughout the High Empire, the road network became more complex with the building of secondary roads and branches that established either transversal connections between the main roads or alternative routes, connecting different types of settlements and reaching important metalliferous areas (*territoria metallorum*), like for example, the building of a wide bypass alongside the "Via XVII" route that reached the nowadays Portuguese districts of Jales and Tres Minas (Tresminas). A secondary route started at *Aqua Flauiae* and reached *Geminis*, a *mansio* in the *VIA NOVA*, connecting the two main roads through this transversal axis. From *Geminis*, a branch road allowed reaching *Auria* (Ourense), in a gold area, thus establishing the connection between *Auria* and *Aqua Flauiae*, two important urban centers located in mining areas. Apart from the "Via XVII," several secondary roads radiated from *Aqua Flauiae*. One connected *Aqua Flauiae* to *Nemetobriga* (Pobra de Trives) and the *Forum Gigurrorum*, *mansiones* in the *VIA NOVA*. The latter *mansio*, located at a short distance from A Cigarrosa (toponym derived from *Gigurrorum*), would correspond to the current A Rúa or Pobra de Valdeorras (Lemos - Martins 2010: 81-89)¹.

In addition to the "Via XVII" and "Via XVIII," there was another route ("Via XIX") from *Bracara Augusta* to the north. It was the first official route that reached *Lucus*. Passing through *Limia* (Ponte de Lima) and *Tude* (Tui), it continued through *Turoqua* (Pontevedra) and *Iria Flauia* (Padrón), reaching *Lucus Augusti* and then *Asturica Augusta*, after crossing *Bergidium* (Bierzo), an important gold mining area. In the extreme north and coast of the Peninsula, a *Via per loca maritima* ("Via XX"), possibly deriving from the previous one in *Celenis* (Caldas de Reis), went around the Peninsula from *Barbanza* to *Noia* by sea and continued by land to *Brigantium* (A Coruña). From here, it changed south to *Lucus*, with its route to *Asturica* being controversial. From the capital

1 The references made to some of the road routes that crossed the *Gallaecia* territory are based on the article by the authors cited, who, in chapter 6 "As Vias romanas", p. 81-89, present a very detailed description of their routes with the references of the studies carried out on them. With regards to the *VIA NOVA*, the order number (XVIII) was added considering it is the number by which this road is best known.

of the *Conuentus Asturum*, other roads connected the peninsular NW to other areas of *Hispania* (Rodríguez Colmenero (s/d): 94-96 fig. 95). Among these, a special highlight is given to the *Via* that linked *Asturica* to *Caesaraugusta* (“*Via XXVII*”), passing through *Uxama* (Osma), an important urban center, dating from the Imperial Period, and *Clunia* (Peñalba de Castro), in the Province of Burgos.

The “*Via XVI*,” also from *Bracara Augusta*, went south to *Olisipo*, where other land roads connected it to *Emerita Augusta*, the capital of the *Prouincia Lusitania*.

The “Atlantic Way,” which remained active during the Roman period, skirted around *Hispania* from the port of *Brigantium* in its northern end, and connected it to the most important Lusitanian port in *Olisipo*, proceeding to the southern coast to *Gades*, and establishing points of contact between the Peninsula and the North African Provinces and the Romanized Mediterranean world.

The establishment of several *uillae* near the Atlantic coast, as in *Gallaecia*, namely the *Villae* of Toraia, Borreiros (Gondomar, Pontevedra), Praia da Sobreira (Vigo, Pontevedra), Alto do Martim Vaz (Póvoa do Varzim) and Fontão de Antela (Lavra), the last two and Toraia integrated into the *Conuentus Bracaraugustanus*, allowed their proprietors to explore sea-related products, such as *garum* production or the salt industry. Some coastal *uillae* were related to the so-called *Via per loca maritima* (“*Via XX*”)².

The interior *uillae* were mostly located near the fluvial and land roads which crossed the territory, as for example the *Villae* of Parada de Outeiro, in the *Conuentus Bracaraugustanus* near the “*Via XVIII*”, as well as A Cigarrosa, in the *Conuentus Asturum*, near the Sil River; the *Villa* of Porta de Arcos, in Rodeiro, near the “*Via XIX*” that connected *Bracara* to *Lucus*; the *Villa* of Cirro, inside the *Conuentus Lucensis*, located in the influence area of *Iria Flauia* and near the “*Via XX*” (Torres Carro 2015a: 210). In the *Conuentus Bracaraugustanus*, also the *Villae* of Fonte do Milho (Canelas, Peso da Régua) and Quinta da Ribeira (Tralhariz), on the Douro Axis, and the *Villae* of Vizela (Guimarães) and Sendim (Felgueiras, Porto), both on the Interior Axis. The latter was in an area surrounded by the valleys of the Jagueiros, Vizela, Sousa and Tâmega rivers, controlling the access to the tin mines in the Seixoso region, key to the bronze metallurgy.

Most of the *Conuentus Bracaraugustanus* mosaics date from the 3rd/4th century or later, from after *Gallaecia* became an autonomous province, and *Bracara Augusta* reached the status of provincial capital. During this period, the *uillae* also underwent major renovations regarding their proprietors’ residence and the enlargement or construction of other spaces, including bath complexes.

2 The *Villa* of Toraia (Toralla) has been completely and scientifically excavated and is accessible to the public. Its plan is dated between the middle of the 4th century and the end of the 5th/6th century. The residential part has a rectangular plan, a porticoed gallery, a thermal complex, and several rooms. Only a few fragments remain of the mosaic pavement found in the thermal area and preserved in the Museo Quiñones from León de Vigo (Museum of Castrelos). The mosaic presents geometric and vegetal motifs, but also some figurative ones, such as the representation of a snake-shaped motif (Torres Carro 2005: 477-479; Torres Carro 2015a: 208-209 and 218; Vale Abad 2015: 317).

There are mosaic fragments from the *Villa* of Fontão de Antela, Lavra, Matosinhos (CMRCB, Mosaic 76-77 a-g) in the Sacred Art Museums of Porto and the D. Diogo de Sousa Museum in Braga, which belonged to the now extinct Ethnology and Municipal Museums of Porto. This heritage’s complex history, partially collected at this relatively important archaeological station and not yet the object of systematic excavations, led to its dispersion, and the location of several objects are still unknown (Couto 2020: 237-249).

The mosaics from this *Conuentus* stylistically reflect the influences of others, as access was facilitated by the roads built throughout the Empire and the natural connections by the sea and rivers. However, among other factors, they were also conditioned by the operating workshops' greater or lesser skill to apply the techniques and copy the models, the taste and financial capacity of those who commissioned them, their execution time, the greater or lesser access to the available materials in a given region, as occurred with the use of granite in two mosaic pavements from *Bracara*, one in *opus tessellatum* and the other in *opus sectile* and *tessellatum* (CMRCB, Mosaics 1 and 2).

The circulation of models and artisans was common practice, both within the Empire and Roman Provinces. Particularly in Late Antiquity, it is possible to observe that, concerning geometric and geometric-vegetal themes, there was a widespread “language” of mosaic art in the Roman world. This generalization makes the detection of the workshops that made most mosaics, ever-changing “kaleidoscopes,” very complex. Nevertheless, certain regional and even local particularities allowed for the identification of workshops and even groups of different artisans working on mosaics from the same *uilla*. Thus, it has been possible to point out, in the extreme peninsular NW and northern Meseta, the so-called “NW *Officina*”, a workshop that also worked in the Provinces of León and Zamora (Balil 1975; Torres Carro 2005; Regueras Grande 2015; Regueras - San José 2017); the “Prado-Almenara workshop” (Torres Carro 1988; 1990; 2011; Regueras - San José 2017), the “Clunia-Uxama workshop” (Fernández-Galiano 1980), extending to *Asturica Augusta* (Regueras - San José 2017) and, in the Alto Douro, the “Cuevas-Valdanzo workshop”, in the current Province of Soria (Fernández-Galiano 1980; Torres Carro 1990; Regueras - San José 2017)³.

In the *Conuentus Bracaraugustanus Corpus* of Roman Mosaics (Abraços 2019), ninety-three mosaics are distributed over thirty-nine sites discovered in the region between the Douro and Minho Rivers. The present article includes the examples of the few remaining mosaics from nine archaeological sites north of the Minho River, in the territory of Galicia (Torres Carro 2015a).

The compositional schemes, themes, and motifs present in the mosaics of this *Conuentus* are unfortunately very fragmentary and mostly geometrical, excepting some representations of aquatic fauna and vases. The relationships between late antique mosaics of *Hispania* and those from Proconsular Africa and the Mediterranean East are well known, having been studied by different authors who gave important publications about the subject. However, for the mosaics we studied it is only possible to refer to generalized stylistic influences from these geographical areas and some features punctually similar. In opposition to that, the Peninsular mosaics allow establishing more direct and, occasionally, identifiable relationships. The greater affinities are observed above all with the mosaics from *Gallaecia* and northern *Hispania*, from the region between the valleys of the Ebro and Douro Rivers. These relationships, regarding mostly the same compositional schemes and decorative motifs, expand into the Spanish territory to other mosaics from the northern Meseta, being limited to the south by the Tagus River and some Provinces of the extreme NE, central, and even southern *Hispania*. Moreover, parallels are observed between mosaics from the Portuguese territory and others integrated into the *Conuentus Scallabitanus*, *Emeritensis*, and *Pacensis*.

³ The references to the location of the different workshops and the study of the mosaics they made are not meant to be exhaustive, but only exemplary.

Some of the mosaics studied at the CMRCB were selected to exemplify these relationships.

1. We begin by mentioning the 3rd/4th-century mosaic of a *Domus* in Rua D. Afonso Henriques, nº1 Edifício da Escola Velha da Sé (CMRCB, Mosaic 15-16)⁴ (Fig. 2). The compositional scheme of tangent outlined circles and poised squares, forming bobbins, which expanded during the 2nd century to the western part of the Empire, is an almost identical parallel to one of the mosaics from the Quinta da Ribeira, Tralhariz, (Carrazeda de Ansiães), with a scheme applied in a strip, possibly connecting to the wall. This fact leads to the assumption that the artisans who made it applied the same model at a slightly later date (CMRCB, Mosaic 93) (Figs. 3-3a). In other mosaics from the Portuguese territory, the same compositional scheme is observed at the *Villa* of Coriscada, Meda (3rd/4th century), south of Tralhariz, and, with a more exuberant decoration in the simple guilloche involving the circles and squares, in the *Villa* of Santiago da Guarda, Leiria (*Conuentus Scallabitanus*), whose mosaics have been dated *in genere* to the 4th/5th century; in the “Casa da Medusa,” Alter do Chão, Portalegre (*Conuentus Emeritensis*), in two lateral panels of the *triclinium*'s figurative mosaic, dating from the 3rd/4th century; and in a mosaic from Boca do Rio, Vila do Bispo (*Conuentus Pacensis*), a mosaic kept in the Santos Rocha Museum in Figueira da Foz.



Figure 2
Detail of the mosaic from the *domus* of the «Escola Velha da Sé», Braga; (CMRCB, Mosaic 15, fig. 39). ©AFMDDS

In *Gallaecia*, the same type of composition is observed in mosaics from the *Conuentus Lucencis*, Doncide and, perhaps, in Centroña; and from the *Conuentus Asturum*, also in late mosaics, in Camarzana de Tera (Zamora) and, in the Province of León, in Campo de Villavidel, in Quintana del Marco, and Calzada del Coto, here the compositional scheme is applied without decoration in a mosaic dated to the 2nd/3rd century; in other mosaics from Navarra and the northern Meseta, in Liédna (Navarra), in the Bacchic mosaic dated to the 3rd century, the circles and squares surrounded by a simple guilloche, and, in the same *uilla*, in a panel on the south side of the peristyle, in black and white, in which the compositional scheme presents a very simple decoration; in the province of Burgos, in Cardeñajimeno, in a mosaic dated to the end of the 4th

⁴ Most of the literature on the comparative study of mosaics has been omitted because it can be found in CMRCB.

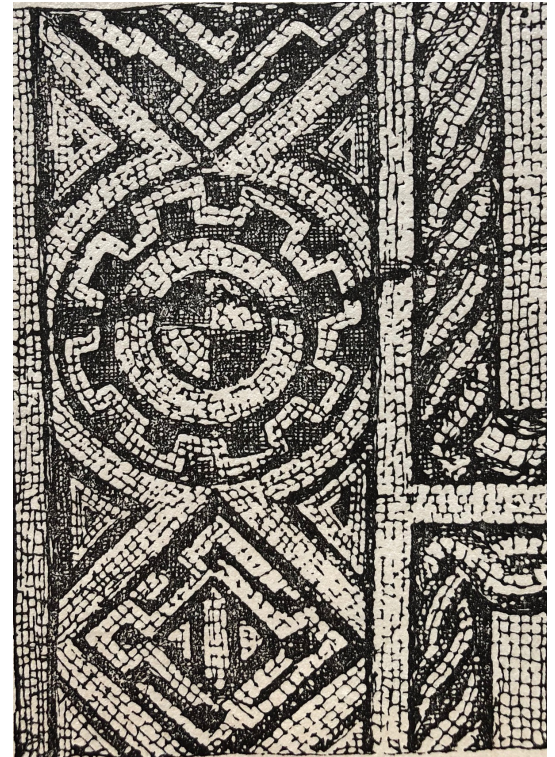
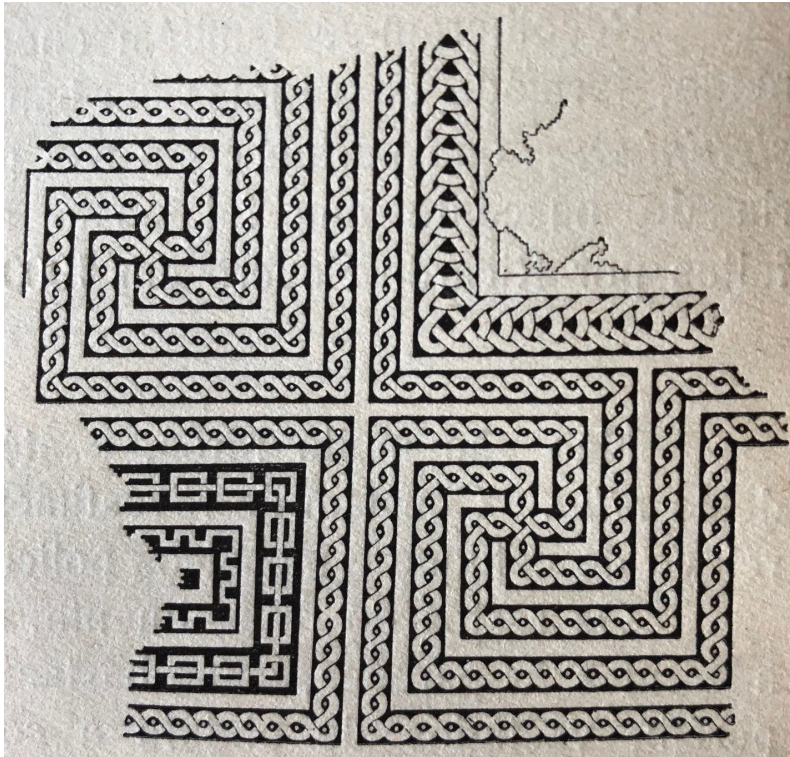


Figure 3
Mosaic of Tralhariz, Carrazeda de Ansiães, decorated with meanders with swastikas. (Drawings in Russell Cortez 1946: 36-43, fig. 10; CMRCB, Mosaic 93, fig. 142.

Figure 3a
Detail of the band connecting to the wall. (Drawings in Russell Cortez 1946: 36-43, fig. 18; CMRCB, Mosaic 93, fig.143).

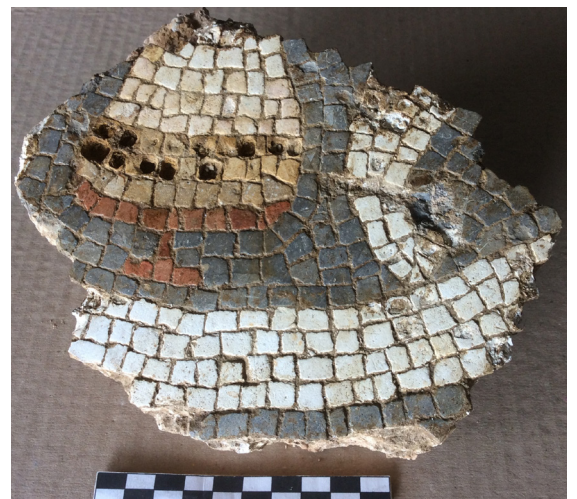
Figure 4
Mosaic fragment decorated with a rosette from the *domus* on Rua D. Afonso Henriques, n^os 20-28 (CMRCB, Mosaic 17, fig. 44a); *Cliché* by author.

Figure 4a
Mosaic fragment decorated with a vase from the *domus* on Rua D. Afonso Henriques, n^os 20-28; Braga (CMRCB, Mosaic 21, fig.45c); *Cliché* by author.

century; in a decoratively exuberant mosaic from Cuevas de Soria, in which the sequential decoration of the bobbins creates an effect of crossed bands. Identical relationships extend to the Province of Toledo, such as Talavera de la Reina and Malpica de Tajo or Ciudad Real, Alcázar de S. Juan, in a mosaic kept at the Fray Juan Cobo Museum, dating from the 4th century, with diverse decorative motifs filling the geometric figures, and the circles being defined by laurel wreaths.

This compositional scheme is also well documented in mosaics from *Africa Proconsularis*, with examples from the 2nd century, in El Djem; the 3rd century, a black and white mosaic from the XII corridor of the “Maison de la Cascade,” in Utica; and from the 4th century, in Thuburbo Maius, and the examples of Christian *basilicae* of Sabratha (Corpus España X: 23).

2. The 3rd/4th-century mosaics presented at the CMRCB, Mosaics 17-21 (Figs. 4-4a) are part of a group of about 400 fragments (kept at the MDDS reserves) collected from the rubble created by the successive remodelling of a Roman building.



Among them, the following mosaics were selected: one decorated with a rosette filling a square with concave sides, two with segments of circle delimited by a band of white *tesserae* and a simple guilloche, and three with vases of the same type, with only the bases and part of the bulge visible. All the decoration was done against a background of black *tesserae*. The same execution technique, the approximate size of the *tesserae*, the same type of mortar, the black *tesserae* background, and the decoration on these fragments allow the assumption that they were part of the same mosaic pavement, whose compositional scheme could have had tangent circles forming concave squares.

The type of the compound rosette finds parallels in other rosettes featured in 3rd and 4th-century mosaics from the Portuguese territory integrated into the *Conuentus Scallabitanus* and *Pacensis*, as in *Conimbriga* (“House of the Swastika” and “House of the Skeletons”); Torres Novas (*Villa Cardílio*); Pisões; Cerro da Vila; Abicada and, particularly, in one of the rosettes that occurs in the Ocean Mosaic from Faro (XII b) (Correia 2005: 33-48, Est. 1-5).

Regarding the compound rosettes in the Ocean Mosaic from Faro, (Lancha - Oliveira 2013: 212) found stylistic similarities with those executed in 3rd/4th-century North African mosaics. According to these authors, these similarities could have originated from a workshop in this geographical area. Thuburbo Majus, Tunisia, is indicated for the XIIb rosette (Corpus Tunisie II, 1, no. 42 A pl. XXIII).

As for compositions based on large circles and squares, these are greatly disseminated in late Hispanic mosaics, notably in the compositional repertoire of Galician mosaics, where most schemes are treated with simplicity (Torres Carro 2015a: 214). These fragments’ compositional scheme relates to some of the mosaics of Lugo’s *Domus Oceani* (the room preceding the *oecus* and one of the wings of the porticoed courtyard), dating between the late 3rd and early 4th century (González Fernández 2005: 225). By analyzing the mosaics in the room preceding the *oecus*, Mercedes Torres Carro considered that the Lugo workshop that worked on them executed the same procedures used by North African workshops from a slightly earlier period, specifically from Cherchel, Thuburbo Maius, and Timgad (Torres Carro 2015b: 336).

Although remotely, certain aspects present in these Braga mosaic fragments, such as the black *tesserae* backgrounds, the very simple compound rosette, and the vase figuration, relate to some works by the so-called “Asturica-Clunia-Uxama Workshop” from a period after the end of the 2nd century or the “Prado-Almenara Workshop” due to the use of dark backgrounds and a specific type of craters.

3. The late 3rd/early 4th century mosaic from the “Casa da Roda,” R. de S. João, Braga (CMRCB, Mosaic 34) (Fig. 5) corresponds to an urbanization phase of *Bracara Augusta*, already as the capital of *Gallaecia* (Abraços - Wrench 2020; Wrench 2020)⁵.

The decoration, both in the strip connecting to the wall and in those bordering the mosaic field, reveals a careful execution, with the well-drawn florets placed at regular spaces, the cuboids with serrated sides, the polychrome shaded row of tangentially inverted bells, these ones with a dentilled simple file, the undulating

⁵ This mosaic is *in situ*. It was reburied, after being cleaned, consolidated, and photographed by the MDDS technical team. We think that, at least outside the building where the mosaic was found, there should be a sign with a picture marking the mosaic as it is one of the richest mosaics from the capital of the *Prouincia Gallaecia* discovered so far.

row of alternately inverted *peltae* with a heart on the central point, outlined in black and filled in by red *tesserae*.

Figure 5
Mosaic of Casa da Roda (House of the Wheel)
(CMRCB, Mosaic 34, fig. 61); ©AFMDDS.



The decorative themes are widely used in western mosaics, namely from *Hispania*, the Mediterranean East, and North Africa, although the cuboids in perspective and the “undulating ribbon” refer mainly to mosaics from these last two geographical areas. Among the many examples, it is possible to highlight the occurrence of bands decorated with “rows of tangent cuboids” in mosaics from Antioch and Zeugma, dating from the 2nd/3rd century and later, or from Apameia in Syria. In *Africa Proconsularis*, this theme is used until a very late period, as observed in a thermal complex of Djebel Oust, from the Byzantine period (Fendri 1963: 161-169 fig. 18 no. 1-5). Fendri considers the representation of aligned or isolated cuboids far from the “mosaic reproduction of an authentic architectural element” (the cornice), as is the theme of the consoles, which occurs in another mosaic of the same *thermae* from the 2nd/3rd-centuries.

In *Hispania*, the use of the “row of tangent cuboids” in framings was very common, occurring in mosaics from late *uillae*, often associated with the “polychrome undulating row of bells” theme. Examples are found integrated in the Ebro/Douro area (Comunion, Álava; Cardeñajimeno, Burgos; Los Quintanares, Soria; La Malena, Zaragoza), but also in the Tagus valley (Toledo, *Villa* of Carranque), further south, in the Province of Jaén, *Villa* de Bruñel and, in the extreme peninsular NE, in Gerona (Bell-Lloch), in a middle 3rd century mosaic (Corpus España XII: 27, mosaic no. 9 fig 5, from Cardeñajimeno, with references to the mosaics of the *uillae* mentioned above). The hollow cuboids of this mosaic from Cardeñajimeno have larger dentilled laterals, executed using a specific technique in which the *tesserae* are cut into triangles (Corpus España XII: 22 mosaic no. 9). In a mosaic from Urrea de Gaén, province of Teruel (*Conuentus Caesaraugustanus*), dated to the 3rd century considering the archaeological context, the cuboids that frame one of the squares of the composition show dentilled sides, with poised *tesserae*, as in the mosaic from the “Casa da Roda” (Fernández Galiano 1987: 103 Lám. XLV, 172).

In mosaics from the Portuguese territory, while the theme of the “polychrome undulating row of bells” is geographically distributed among the different *Conuentus* that integrate it, the theme of “tangent cuboids” as the example of

the “Casa da Roda”, occurs predominantly in the *Conuentus Scallabitanus*, in mosaics from the *Villae* of Rabaçal and Santiago da Guarda. Only in the mosaic of the “Casa da Roda” the larger sides of the cuboids are serrated.

Concerning the undulating row of alternated *peltae*, with a heart shaped leave in the apex, a widely used theme in the Roman world, the highlight is given to a mosaic from Albalate de Cinca, in the Province of Huesca (*Conuentus Caesaraugustanus*), dating from *circa* the last quarter of the 4th century (Fernández Galiano 1987: 62-63 Lám. XXIX).

In the Braga mosaic framing, the lateral tips of the *peltae* are connected through a kind of a knot. In mosaics from the Portuguese territory, in which the theme occurs in areas integrated into the *Conuentus Scallabitanus*, *Emeritensis* and *Pacensis*, in the latter with considerable incidence, the same procedure is only observed in three mosaics from the *Villa* of Quinta das Longas, Elvas (*Conuentus Emeritensis*), in two mosaic pavements dated from the beginning of the 4th century, and in another one, from the beginning of the 5th century (Oliveira et al. 2011: figs. 10, 13, 16).

The *peltae* interconnection using small knots is also carried out in Sorian mosaics from the *Villae* de Los Quintanares and Santervás del Burgo, in bands decorated with the same theme (Corpus España VI: 27-28 mosaic no. 14 Lam. 28, and mosaic no. 37 Lám. 14). On p. 28, reference is made to the same theme used on two mosaic fragments from Mérida dating from the 4th century (Blanco Freijeiro 1978: 47; 84). Does this *modus faciendi* refers to the same workshop whose artisans worked on the different mosaics? Or to mosaicists who applied the same *modus faciendi* circulating among workshops? Did the artisans of *Bracara Augusta* start this specific procedure?

4. Examples of parallels between structures and mosaic decoration are found in the tanks/pools, with or without steps, with bottom and/or walls covered in white mosaic with black *tesserae* florets, from Braga, Largo Cardoso da Saudade (CMRCB, Mosaic 11), and the *Villa* of Requejo, Zamora. (Fig. 6). The same decoration was executed on the small tank from the *caldarium* of the *Villa* Cuevas de Soria; the contraposed apses pool in the Place of Sta Maria de Lugo, with half- florets, and the small tank with steps in Milreu, Faro (Abraços 2015; Regueras Grande 2015: 299 fig. 19 a; Torres Carro 2019: 38-41 figs. 1, 2, 3).



Figure 6
Tank/pool with mosaic decorated with black *tesserae* florets (CMRCB, Mosaic 11, fig.29); ©AFMDDS.

5. The figurative repertoire of the mosaics from this *Conuentus*, known so far, is dedicated to sea fauna and vase representation: a *cantharus* on the sepulchral lid of Frende (CMRCB, Mosaic 88), and three very schematic vases, in the mosaics mentioned above (CMRCB, Mosaics 17-21). Concerning the sea fauna, the mosaic from the *impluuium* of a *domus*, discovered in the cloister of the Seminary of Santiago in Braga (CMRCB, Mosaic 14), although incomplete, has the largest number of sea species still visible. The representations of four complete fishes have been preserved. (Fig. 7). Several reverses were responsible

Figure 7

Mosaic discovered at the *domus* of Santiago Seminary and displayed at the Pio XII Museum, Braga (CMRCB, Mosaic 14, fig.36); *Cliché* by author.



for the fact that only fragments with incomplete representations of some species of sea fauna or only traces referring to the aquatic environment remained from other mosaics of this *Conuentus* with the same type of decoration. This is the case of the fragments found in four other sites in Braga: Largo de S. João do Souto, Seminário de Santiago, Cerca (CMRCB, Mosaics 8;10); two tanks from Cardoso da Saudade, Largo de S. Paulo (CMRCB, Mosaic 13) (Fig. 8); Campo das Carvalheiras, under the Seminário dos Órfãos (CMRCB, Mosaic 38); and several fragments originally kept in Fernando Castiço's house in Braga, but relocated to the Martins Sarmiento Museum in Guimarães (CMRCB, Mosaics 41-48). Also fragmented or only known through pictures are the mosaics from the *Villae* of Fonte do Milho (CMRCB, Mosaic 91), Parada de Outeiro, Ourense and Panxón, Pontevedra. In most of them, the aquatic environment is represented by long lines and small parallel lines to which a double V-shaped appendage is superimposed. This motif seems to suggest the undulation of the water surface. The existence of this sign in several mosaics from *Gallaecia*, in addition to other aspects, such as the repetition of some fish species and other sea fauna, points to the possible existence of an itinerant Workshop, active during the 2nd half of the 3rd century, which may have operated along the land route that linked *Lucus* to *Bracara* (Balil 1975: 262), a Workshop previously referred to as "NW *Officina*."



Figure 8
Mosaic fragment of Cardoso da Saudade, Braga, with a fish head (CMRCB, Mosaic 13, fig.34); ©AFMDDS.

If there are strong similarities regarding the geometric and geometric-vegetal themes between the mosaics from *Conuentus Bracaraugustanus* and those from the Hispanic NW, the similarities seem evident in the so-called “maritime” themes and representation of aquatic environments. Some fish species, moray eels, bivalves, and urchins are common to the mosaics from Braga, Fonte do Milho, Parada de Outeiro, and Panxón. They are also observed in mosaics from the Portuguese territory part of the *Conuentus Pacensis*, as in Milreu, Faro, and *Villa de Pisões*, Beja, in a small tank in one of the rooms open to the tetrastyle *atrium*. At the bottom of this tank, fish and a moray eel are depicted, with lines suggesting the aquatic environment, some with poised *tesserae*.

When comparing the sea fauna of Parada de Outeiro with that of A Cigarrosa, *Conuentus Asturum*, Acuña Castroviejo (2013: 149) considers the representation in A Cigarrosa to be more refined, with more precise lines, which may indicate an earlier stage than that of Parada de Outeiro⁶. In this *Villa*, the mosaic found covered the bottom of a pool with 2, 40 m x 1, 70 m. López Cuevillas, in 1953, and Chamoso Lamas, in 1954 (Torres Carro 2015a: 210-211), described the structures and the mosaic at the time of its discovery. Several fish species were represented, organized in parallel strips outlined by horizontal water lines, swimming in opposite directions. The representation of bivalves and sea urchins (or sea flowers) and a dolphin figure that occupied the mosaic center is also mentioned. In a preserved fragment, it is possible to identify a red porgy of the species *pagrus pagrus* (Mendez Fernández 2003; http://www.musarqourense.xunta.es/es/peza_mes/mosaico-romano-parada-de-outeiro/). Two curved lines also suggest the water movement under the fish, an element that does not exist in mosaics with a similar theme in the Portuguese territory.

On the hillside of Castro de Panxón, there is probably a Roman *Villa* associated with a *necropolis*. A prospection carried out revealed the existence of some structures and ceramic and granite fragments. These findings can relate to those documented, since the 19th century, in San Joan de Panxón: Roman *amphorae*, mosaics, ceramics, coins, and *tegullae* (Torres Carro 2015a: 204-205). Only

⁶ The remaining fragments of mosaic found in this *Villa* of Parada de Outeiro were taken to the Provincial Archaeological Museum of Ourense, where they were restored. A fragment of the lower right part of the entire mosaic, with 1,01 m x 1,25 m was kept (Mendez Fernández 2003; Rodríguez González 2003); Torres Carro 2015a: 210-211; Valle Abad 2015: 317.

a small part of the mosaic is known in which it is possible to observe a fish of the *Mugil labrarsus* species, a pair of bivalves and signs representing the aquatic environment through small lines, some featured with poised *tesserae* and others with parallel lines, finishing perpendicularly with a double V-shaped appendage. The mosaic was studied by Acuña Castroviejo (1974: 35-38), who, in a later publication (Acuña Castroviejo 2013), added new data on its origin and a description of the mosaic group to which the fragment belonged⁷.

The mosaic from Fonte do Milho, Peso da Régua, is known through pictures (CMRCB, Mosaic 91). At the time of its discovery, it was possible to distinguish bivalves (possibly clams), sea urchins, fish (a red porgy and another Teleostei species), a cartilaginous animal, probably a shark, and a cetacean, possibly a dolphin. “Apart from the formal differences, these fish-like representations share with those from Milreu and Braga, as well as with those from Parada de Outeiro and A Cigarrosa, a diagonal *tesserae* arrangement aimed at recreating the visual effect of the scales and their glint, as well as an outline of the forms, especially at the lower level, expressed in the double darker colored row” (Cátia Mourão CMRCB: 82; 235).

As for filling the water backgrounds with parallel or zig-zag lines, this is a common arrangement in North African mosaics, with poised *tesserae* lines. Mercedes Torres Carro (2019: 47-50 and twenty-six illustrative figures) presented her ongoing study of the motif executed via small parallel lines topped by a V as well as variants of it in both Hispanic and North African mosaics. In mosaics from this geographical area, with the motif applied to fill the “aquatic backgrounds,” the author highlights only the mosaic of the Triumph of Venus from Timgad (fig. 9a) and the mosaic from the fountain of a house in Cherchel, with the representation of Ulysses and the Sirens (Fig. 9b).

This sign executed in the backgrounds of mosaics with a sea theme appears in mosaics from the peninsular NW and in *Gallaecia*: in León (in the mosaic fragment from the Roman *balnea* found under the Cathedral), in Braga, Lugo, Panxón, Parada de Outeiro, A Cigarrosa and, in *Lusitania*, in several mosaics from Milreu. It seems evident that this motif belongs to a specific workshop as suggested by Balil (1975) and Acuña Castroviejo (1974), or it was carried out by artisans from different workshops but in possession of the same model.

6. We finish the examples of mosaics from *Conuentus Bracaraugustanus* with those from a *domus* of *Bracara Augusta* that features two mosaic-covered rooms, one decorated with a chess composition (CMRCB, Mosaic 1, panel 1, and water mouth frame of this panel) and the other with a square of hourglass lines (CMRCB, Mosaic 1, panel 2). (Fig. 9) The chessboard composition, a *tableau* of houses in color opposition, was used in the eastern Mediterranean on pebbled pavements since the 8th century BC. In the 2nd century BC, this type of decoration began to spread not only in the west but also in the region of Greece, and it was widely used in Italy. In Ostia, it was known since 130 BC. In the second half of the 2nd century, it is represented in Mérida, and at the end of the same century, it is depicted in the Casa del Mitreo. In northern *Hispania*, in the Termas Mayores of *Asturica*, probably dating from the end of the 1st and 2nd century (Regueras – San José 2017: 314-315). In the late 2nd century, it appears in two rooms of Póvoa de Cós. In *Conimbriga*, the House of Fountains has

⁷ The mosaic fragment from this *uilla*, studied and published by Acuña Castroviejo (1974), belonged to the Blanco Cicerón family collection, and was later sold to an Antiques Gallery. Acuña Castroviejo 2013: 147 reported that in late 2012 he located it in the Carltonhobbs House of Antiques. Currently, its whereabouts are unknown.

this decoration on a mosaic pavement from the northeast *cubiculum*, dated from the 3rd quarter of the 2nd century and the 1st quarter of the 3rd century. In the Sociedade Martins Sarmento Museum collection in Guimarães, there is a mosaic fragment with a chessboard pattern in color opposition from Braga (CMRCB, Mosaic 51), with no dating. It also appears in Rio Maior in panel D of mosaic no. 3, dated to the second half of the 4th century. It is also observed in Torre de Palma in the doorsill of room SE10, in polychrome chess, dated to the end of the 3rd century, beginning of the 4th century (Corpus Portugal II: 246-247 Pl. LXXXVII and Pl. XCIX).



Figure 9
Mosaic of the crypt of D. Diogo de Sousa
Museum (CMRCB, Mosaic 1); ©AFMDDS.

Panel 2 and the mosaic frame of the water mouth of panel 1 show a square of hourglass lines, a motif represented in Ostia since the Republican era, in *Stabiae* since the 1st century BC; in Pompeii, since the first half of the 1st century. In Este, Province of Padua, it was depicted since the 1st century. In Sicily, in Palermo, in Piazza della Vittoria (?), and in the Tindari baths, the motif was represented later in the 3rd century. In Sardinia, in Olmedo, this motif is observed dating to the 2nd century. In *Lusitania*, in *Conimbriga*, it is represented in the House of Cantaber (*peristylum* C 23) in a mosaic with a surface composition of discontinuous hourglass lines, dated between the 3rd quarter of the 2nd century and the 1st quarter of the 3rd century, and in another one (*peristylum* C 27), dated from the 2nd – 3rd century. In Torre de Palma, it is observed in a mosaic decorated with a grid of hourglass lines and tangent squares, in contrasting colors, dating from the end of the 3rd century and the beginning of the 4th century (Corpus Portugal II: 232-233). In *Hispania*, this motif appears in Huesca, dating from the beginning of the 1st century (Fernandez-Galiano 1987: 94-95); in Badalona, Mataró, a high-imperial mosaic (Fernandez-Galiano 1987: 94).

This mosaic composition used in the *domus* of *Bracara* (in the crypt of the MDDS), which results from applying two very different materials (granite and limestone), seems to be a local adaptation of imported classical compositions (Abraços 2008: 69-74).

The mosaics of this *domus*, whose decoration has a very wide chronological spectrum, are dated to the High Empire period through the structure analysis of

the house to which they belong, the *tesserae* dimension and density, the rigor of the motif execution, mainly near the drainage mouth, and the perfection of the plumbing carved in granite, that passed under one of the floors. The interest in these mosaics is increased because they correspond to a development plan of *Bracara Augusta* carried out between the last quarter of the 1st century and the beginning of the 2nd century, being one of the few existing testimonies of this period.

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Abbreviations

- AFMDDS – Arquivo Fotográfico do Museu D. Diogo de Sousa
 APECMA – Associação Portuguesa para o Estudo da Conservação do Mosaico Antigo
 CMRCB - O Corpus dos Mosaicos Romanos do Conuentus Bracaraugustanus
 MDDS – Museu D. Diogo de Sousa