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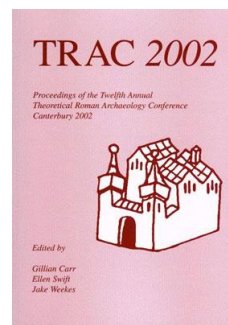# Restoring ontological security: Roman and native objects in Early Roman Gallaecia (NW Iberia)

Alfredo González-Ruibal

In this paper, I would like to stress the importance of a phenomenological, specifically Heideggerian, approach to the study of identities in 'Romanisation'. I will draw upon Martin Heidegger for philosophical grounding and provide an anthropological case study. (For *Being and Time* the 1927 German edition is quoted but I usually resort to Dreyfus' commentary [1991] for the English translation of the concepts. For the concepts referring to aesthetics I quote also German editions but use English concepts as appear in Young [2000]).

The use of Heidegger for archaeological purposes is not new. Since the nineties some archaeologists have drawn attention to this philosopher, both for interpreting archaeological data (Tilley 1993, Thomas 1996) and for addressing epistemological issues (Dobres 2000, Karlsson 2000). However, no attention has been devoted to aesthetics, which are of the utmost importance because of their concern with material culture. Both ontological and aesthetic issues will be taken into account. Firstly, I will address the question of being amongst humans (which is really the question of 'being-there', and secondly, its relationship with material culture will be considered.

To explain in depth what 'Being-there' (*Dasein*) means in Heidegger's philosophy is well beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say, at this point, that 'Being-there' is what characterises human beings as opposed to things; the essence in which a human being is rooted (Vycinas 1961: 68). For the purposes of this paper, I would stress a double possibility of being for 'being-there': the way of authenticity and the way of inauthenticity. This has significant implications for the analysis of identity, as I shall demonstrate.

The *way of inauthenticity* is that of the ambiguity of the common thought. It means 'being like the others', being simply 'one' and not 'oneself' (Heidegger 1927 § 37). The *Dasein* does not wish to go beyond appearances, it lives its ordinary life (*Alltäglichkeit*) as a life of full plenitude. For Heidegger, this way of being occurs as an irreflexive and acritical participation in a certain historical and social world, with all its prejudices. It is in this ambiguity in which the ontological security of beings and their permanence lies. As everything seems understood, people are not forced to ask about their being. In this way, the 'unsettledness' (*Unheimlichkeit*), of 'being-there', the sense of not being at home in the world, is concealed (Gaos 2000: 52). The inauthentic 'being-there' is characterised by the handling of tools (in a Heidiggerian sense) and a concern for people. The latter is named by Heidegger *Sorge*, 'worry', 'concern', 'care'. Nonetheless, this care, in the inauthentic way, leads to an absorption in the intra-mundane, whether things or human beings (Heidegger 1927 § 41). In anthropological terms: if we don't think that the word 'inauthentic' has any moral meaning, but we consider it just a philosophical label, we can say that preindustrial communities tend to live embedded in social relations and material relations, that is to say, they are involved in their relations with other people and with the material culture they ordinary handle in normal life (houses, pottery, ploughs). They don't care about their being, they simply take part in a "certain historical and social world"; the 'one', that is, the community, is more important than the 'oneself', the individual. As Giddens (1984) says, this embeddedness (feeling oneself part of a community, sharing a set of values and norms) acts as a 'protective cocoon', which

protects us from any hint of ontological insecurity or social conflict. Social order in premodern societies is then based on 'inauthenticity', on accepting a given being and not reflecting about it. Individual freedom is sacrificed to the benefit of the community's ontological security.

This inauthentic way of being is not irremediable: the *way of authenticity* might be reached. Inauthenticity is redeemed by ways of considering Being, which implies some kind of becoming aware of 'being-there' through Fear and Anxiety (*Angst*, Heidegger 1927, § 30). Although change is a possibility rooted within 'being-there', what frightens, what brings anxiety, is always something external, an extra-mundane and menacing being. The opening of a world of possibilities is something lived by one 'being-there' as a dreadful menace: "Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its Being towards its own most potentiality-for-Being – that is, its Being-free for the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself" (Heidegger 1927 § 41, quoted in Moran 2000: 241). Let us talk in sociological terms again: in an embedded, ontologically secure society, where possibilities of being are restricted and identities are well defined, the appearance of choices of being puts collective, commonly accepted values in danger. Every human being has the possibility to think about him/herself and his/her place in the world. That is obvious. But premodern societies tend to inhibit this possibility. They are afraid of individuality, future, changes, the unknown, as opposed to our culture, where personal decisions, future and changes are regarded as something positive (Hernando 2002). But, in a cohesive premodern society changes may occur, leading to disembeddedness: war, invasions, famine, illness may alter the social order (they are all intra-mundane, menacing beings) and thus cause a whole rethinking of society: this is what happened in America when Europeans arrived (Wachtel 1977), and also in 19th century Africa. The tales and songs that have been recorded from different ethnic groups subjected to European or Muslim rule reflect confusion about their identity, the fear and existential anxiety before an uncertain future, in which their identity (their being) is in great risk. A Nuer song from 19th century says: "This land is invaded by foreigners / that throw our adornments to the river / and take the water from the bank. / Black Hair, my sister, / I am confused, / Black Hair, my sister, I am confused. / We are bewildered; we stare at God's stars" (quoted in Mathiessen 1998: 24).

The worry raised by the question of being leads to a situation of bewilderment or confusion; a state of not knowing what to do. Everything loses its meaning and our personal concerns are brought into sharp relief. Anxiety first causes the need to flee. However the ontical and existential fleeing unveils that from which one is fleeing, since this very act means that one is already aware of the fundamental ontological question: what is the being of "being-there"? The *Dasein*'s possibility of not-being (the contingency of being) is what leads the being-there to the way of authenticity. This way of authentic being is the state of resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*) in which the not-being appears as another possibility of its being. Resoluteness means *Dasein* waking up from its embeddedness in common thought and ordinary life (Heidegger 1927 § 54). The first reaction to a situation of contact between groups of different cultural backgrounds (such as Incas and Spaniards: Wachtel 1977) is confusion, rejection and fear. Foreigners and invaders are regarded as a danger for the identity of the group. But once the contact is unavoidable (such as after a conquest or the installation of a colonial factory), the acceptance of the Other arrives. This acceptance of the contingency of being is what allows creole identities to be created. Creolisation means accepting the Other, but it is also accepting the loss of a part of one's identity. And this implies not being any longer embedded in the 'one', i.e., in previous community values, but being to some degree free to negotiate a new identity.

In the world there are beings other than human beings (that is, those who live in the way of 'being-there'). Those beings which are not human, are things. *Things* have been given great relevance in Heidegger's ontology. To be, for Heidegger, means belonging to an instrumental totality that is the world (Vattimo 1998). And even that is not being in the middle of a totality of instruments, but being acquainted with a totality of meanings (cf. the metaphorical character of things in Tilley 1999). As Lemonnier (1990: 27–28) puts it, speaking about a hammer: "but we also share, by virtue of being members of a given human group, representations of other kinds; regarding, for example, the supposed clumsiness of women with such a tool, or associations of hammers with anvils, with pianos, sharks and so on... Of course, we also know how to distinguish a hammer from a crucifix or a sickle". There are also two modes of being for things, tools and works of art. These Heideggerian concepts are crucial to an understanding of material culture from an ontological point of view. They have become blurred, especially with Modernity. In *The Question of Things* Heidegger (1962) says that, with the development of modern science, a conception of 'thing' was developed that ignores "the difference between a thing and a poem" [although even the poem has the character of thing (Heidegger 1950: 9)]. In fact, *work-of-art* and *tool* are akin, since they are both something created by a human being, to the point that it can be said that a tool is "half a work of art" (Heidegger 1950: 20). However, the thing-instrument, or tool, is characterized by its utility. With the famous example of the peasant boots in a Van Gogh picture, Heidegger defines the concept of tool: "the boots are more boots the less the peasant thinks of her boots during her work, when she even does not look at them or feels them. It is in the process of use of the tool when we have to meet truly with the character of tool" (Heidegger 1950: 22). Thus, what Heidegger means by tool is anything that is of use to be secure in the world, anything that gives confidence and with which one is acquainted: for example, houses, in which one lives, or a plough, which one uses, or dresses, which one wears. We do not need to think of our house to know what it is. And, of course, we do not usually reflect on a hammer (to use a Heideggerian example), we just use it to drive in nails – regardless of the social meanings to which it is attached, as Lemonnier (1990) points out.

We can easily find a relationship between the inauthentic way of 'being-there' and tools as defined by Heidegger. The 'Being-there' in the inauthentic way lives in a state of security, and the tools in their 'being-tool' transmit this reliability (*Dienlichkeit*) (Heidegger 1950: 23), ontological security. On the other hand, 'being-there' lives in the inauthentic way because it does not consider its 'being-there'. It is embedded in the ambiguity of the 'one' (*man*), of thoughtlessness. Material culture, then, is part and parcel of being embedded in community values: being acquainted with material things is directly related to an inauthentic way of being.

However, it is possible to move beyond this embeddedness; to reflect, for example, with Heidegger, on the peasant boots; in this instance this becomes possible through the work of art. The picture by Van Gogh "is the opening through which it is discerned what the tool really *is*. This being comes to light in the unconcealing of its being" (Heidegger 1950: 22). The *work of art*, then, unveils Being and opens it to the truth (Heidegger 1951): not really *the Truth*, but *a truth* (Heidegger 1943). Moreover, in the work of art, truth is materialized not only as revelation, but also as obscurity and concealment; this is called by Heidegger "conflict between the World and the Earth". The work of art is presented as a stock of meanings that have to be discovered, what the philosopher named 'Earth' (*Erde*). It simultaneously shows a World (*Welt*), and places in front the Earth. The fight (*Kampf*) between these dimensions, that cannot get rid of each other, is the very basis of the work of art (Heidegger 1950: 44). Work of art and tool live in a different manner in the world: the art-work is irreducible to the world, in

opposition to tools, that are pure mundanity. The art-work takes with it its own world: it is a *radical novelty* (Heidegger 1950: 62). There lies precisely the *Stoss* ('shock') of the work of art: when I meet it, as Gianni Vattimo says, "the world as I was accustomed to see it becomes strange for me, it is put into crisis as a whole, since the work proposed is a new general systematization, a new epoch in history" (Vattimo 1993: 167). All which was until then ordinary and normal becomes non-existent by virtue of the work of art, and thus loses its capacity to impose and maintain Being as a measure. A tool becomes a work of art when it is not (or not only) regarded as something useful, but as something that can transform our being-in-the-world.

The work of art, anthropologically speaking, is anything capable of causing a great shock in 'being-there', a shock of such great magnitude that it leads one to rethink fundamental issues such as, for example, power, gender or identity. A work of art, in this sense, is not necessarily a Greek temple or a Gothic sculpture (on the contrary, those things might be mere tools, transmiting reliability and ontological security). A work of art may be a simple earthenware dish or a pin. The key lies in the social meanings which have become attached to the objects, that can be revolutionarily new (a radical novelty). Deetz (1996), for example, shows the relevance of the change from communal pots to individual dishes in rethinking social relations in 18th century North America, and Johnson (1989) points to the revolutionary character of chairs for manifesting hierarchy in 15th and 16th century Britain. Perhaps we should start looking at Roman objects in native environments as works of art – in a Heideggerian sense– leading to a renegotiation of social identities and the self. This will be attempted in the following case studies.

Restoring ontological security in past and present: Gallaecia (northwest Iberia) and Benishangul (Ethiopia)

At this point, I would like to adumbrate two parallel stories: that of the Roman-native interactions in NW Iberia and that of the fight between Modernity and tradition amongst Pre-Nilotes.

From the time of Augustus onwards the Northwest of Iberia (Figure 1) was effectively conquered by the Romans (for a comprehensive account of the process and its aftermath see Tranoy 1981). It was one of the latest territories to be conquered in Iberia and one in which in the Roman period native traditions seemed to remain very strong. Parallel to the study of the Iron Age Society in NW Iberia and its transformations under Roman rule, I am carrying out ethnoarchaeological research in Benishangul, a region in West Ethiopia (Figure 2), inhabited by Pre-Nilotic peoples (Grottanelli 1948), who, although maintaining a traditional way of life and a premodern material culture, have begun to enter Modernity, especially the younger generations in the 'urban' areas (González-Ruibal and Fernández Martínez forthcoming).

We cannot make direct comparisons between modern Ethiopian Pre-Nilotes and natives from NW Iberia. Historical circumstances are very different. We cannot forget, for example, that the cultural distance between the Western world and the Prenilotes is greater than that between Romans and Gallaecians and the fact that it was not Europe that conquered the land of the Berta and Gumuz, but an African State: the Abyssinian Empire.
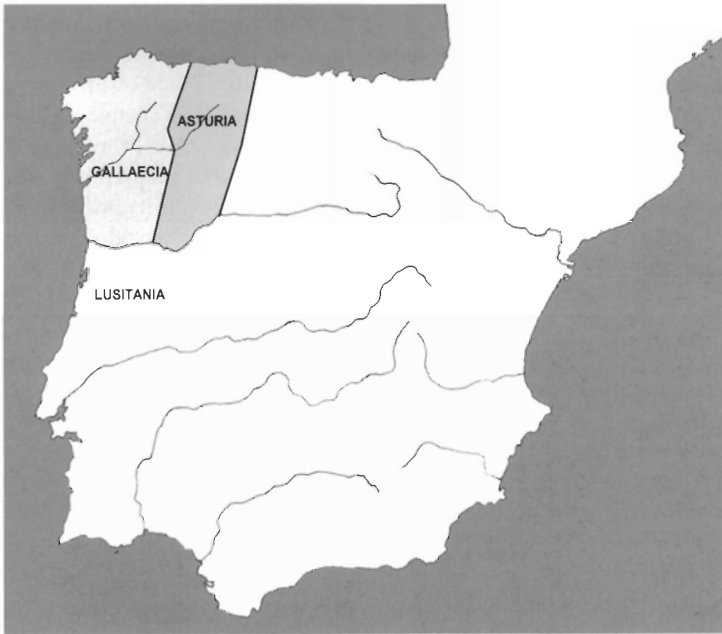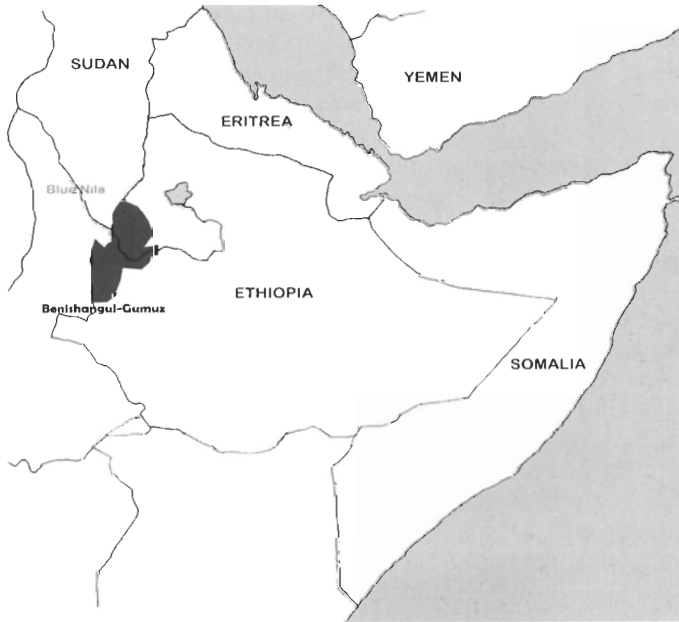
Figure 1. NW Iberia in the 1ˢᵗ century AD.

Figure 2. Benishangul in East Africa.

However, what I propose is to use the ethnographic data as "food for the archaeological imagination" (David and Kramer 2001: 195) not as a direct analogy. Some coincidences are worth considering: Post-conquest, it is no longer possible, for example, for Pre-Nilotes or Gallaecians to live in the way of inauthenticity, in the secure place of the ambiguous one. Their worlds are suffering an existential crisis, because of a dreadful menace: Rome or Modernity. Identity has to be negotiated on different grounds. In both cases, the appeal to past material elements and their stock of meanings (the Earth) is a way of maintaining oneself historically rooted in the past, that is to say, of preserving ontological security, while resorting to certain modern objects (the World) exemplifies the acceptance of the world newly founded. Romans and local populations have to deal with the Other, and build identities in which the Other (which is the same as saying novelty) can have a place. For Pre-Nilotes, also, the cohabitation with Otherness, as represented by Modernity, is necessary.

I think that it is possible to see the symbolic fight between Earth and World in the material record, whether archaeological or anthropological. The mechanisms involved for maintaining ontological security in convulsed times are very similar in both cases. In short: people resort to domestic items for constructing new identities, for re-understanding themselves in the changing order. But they do so in the security of the old architectural landscape.

The persistence of the pre-Roman house model in *Gallaecia* is greater than that of any other native item. Even in the 2nd century AD the presence of round huts is not uncommon. This survival may be explained by the very ontological character of homes. The house is where one is safe, the place of ontological security by definition. The construction of homes, as Parker Pearson and Richards (1994: 3) remind us, is an attempt to materialize an eternal and imperishable social order, a way of negating the changes that frighten a society. We must remember the term *Unheimlichkeit* (not-being-at-*home*) used by Heidegger to express the situation into which Being is thrown by Anxiety. The philosopher resorts to the metaphor of 'being at home' for expressing 'being located', 'being ontologically secure'. To the contrary, 'not-being-at-home' expresses the idea of confusion and fear in inauthentic beings, when they start to ask themselves about their Being (about their social identity). If homes can give us so good an idea of ontological security, this is due to the cosmological meaning of houses and their implication for the reproduction of the social order.

The transformations taking place throughout the Augustan period and later on are essentially discussed inside households. Webster (2001: 223) points out that the experiencing of Roman culture by natives should be understood "through the materiality of domestic life". In the case we are dealing with this is especially true – at least in the early period after the conquest– because change is centred on the domestic world (the world of the house), more than on any other thing (such as politics, law or administration, for example, the focus of much historical work), except probably the religious arena, an issue that merits further attention. Sanctuaries inside hill-forts and ritual baths are indigenous phenomena that characterize the Late Iron Age in NW Iberia. They suffer important transformations under the early period of Roman rule (up to the end of the 1st century AD) and disappear from the beginning of the 2nd century AD, if not before. In fact, changes associated with ritual are very similar to those occurring in the domestic sphere: in both cases many native elements are kept (external, structural features, such as kind of building, monumental shape, masonry), while important changes are taking place (as reflected by inscriptions, Roman deities, imported materials). The friezes showing people in togae at the ritual bath at Monte da Saia (Calo Lourido 1994: 433–434) or the inscriptions to Jupiter engraved on a rock inside the upper ritual enclosure at San Cibrán de Las (Rodríguez, Xusto y Fariña 1992: 50–51) are good examples of those changes.

Since a detailed account of these matters would merit another paper, I will focus here on the domestic space, defined as architecture, settlement organization and indoor activities.

While most of the material culture used by the inhabitants of Santa Trega (Peña Santos 1985–86, Peña Santos 2001), one of the greatest oppida in NW Iberia, was Roman (brooches, pins, pottery, containers, etc.) and most of the traditional material culture (mainly friezes and sculptured decoration) had been discarded or destroyed by the Claudian period, the shape and appearance of compounds is basically pre-Roman (Mergelina Luna 1944–45; Peña Santos 1998). Almost all the houses are round and virtually no *tegulae* have been discovered (Figure 3). The 'Being-there' has first to deal with the World through bodily actions, the physical appearance and the preparation and consumption of food, in a manner not dissimilar to that observed in Roman Britain (Hill 1997, Meadows 1997).

In the oppidum of Santa Trega, about 49% of the total amount of pottery (including containers) is of Roman pattern (Carballo Arceo 1989: 118), which is rather surprising for such an early period (Augustus to Claudius). (In fact, the percentage of Roman pottery in the Julio-Claudian period must be greater, since Santa Trega was occupied before the Augustan era. Lower layers have been much destroyed by later building activity, therefore earlier materials are expected to appear mixed in the foundation of Augustan or later structures.) High-quality vessels, such as *millefiori* glasses are not rare, and Samian ware, Campanian and Pompeian red slip ware are very common (Figure 4, Peña Santos 2001). The same can be said for other big oppida, such as Sanfins (Silva 1999) or Monte Mozinho (Almeida 1977), in NW. Portugal, although the Augustan layers are less well preserved here and most of the remains belong to the mid–1st century AD – early 2nd century AD. At least for Monte Mozinho it can be asserted that the settlement preserved round huts and compounds up to the mid–1st century AD and even in the early 2nd century AD pre- Roman compounds still existed. Foreign pottery is conspicuously displayed inside houses, showing a desire for assimilation with the Roman world, but ostentation is mainly restricted to the domestic sphere. In the same way in the Shamau Al-Hakim compound, in Asosa (Benishangul), up to 63% of the vessels are industrial: plastic, glass, porcelain and metal usually outnumber the wooden and pottery containers (Figure 5).

Nonetheless, the majority of the buildings are traditional Pre-Nilotic houses, round in plan and with thatched roof. Here it is also inside where modern identities are negotiated (Figure 6). Young people build their own houses, away from their parents, following an old tradition. These houses are absolutely identical to their parents. But the interior is completely different: paintings, posters, photos, dresses, everything reveals the impact of the Western world and the eagerness to adopt a Modern identity (Figure 7). The same changes noticed in cooking customs and the presentation of food can be observed in physical appearance. While during the 1st century BC the ideal model for men in NW Iberia was that of the warrior represented in big granite sculptures, with traditional weapons, jewels and decorated dress (Queiroga 1992) (Figure 8), during the 1st century AD the image is that of people in *toga* (Figure 9). As regards males, the warrior has given way to the citizen. This can be seen in sculptures and friezes as well as in the rapid and complete replacement of brooches: traditional fibulae disappear during the first decades of the 1st century AD, being replaced wholesale by omega brooches and Aucissa-type fibulae.
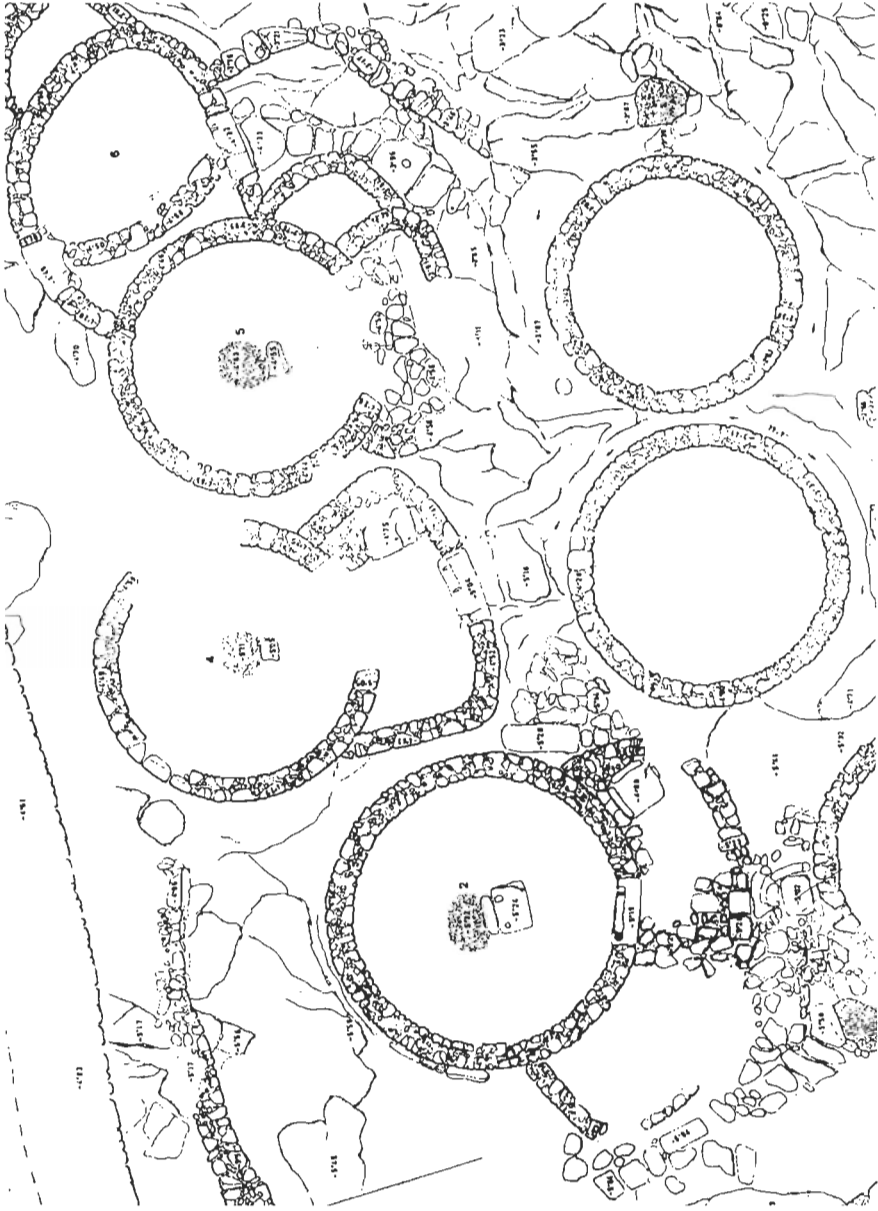
Figure 3. Plan of pre-Roman style huts in Santa Trega (Galizia, Spain) belonging to the Julio-Claudian period. After Peña Santos (2001).
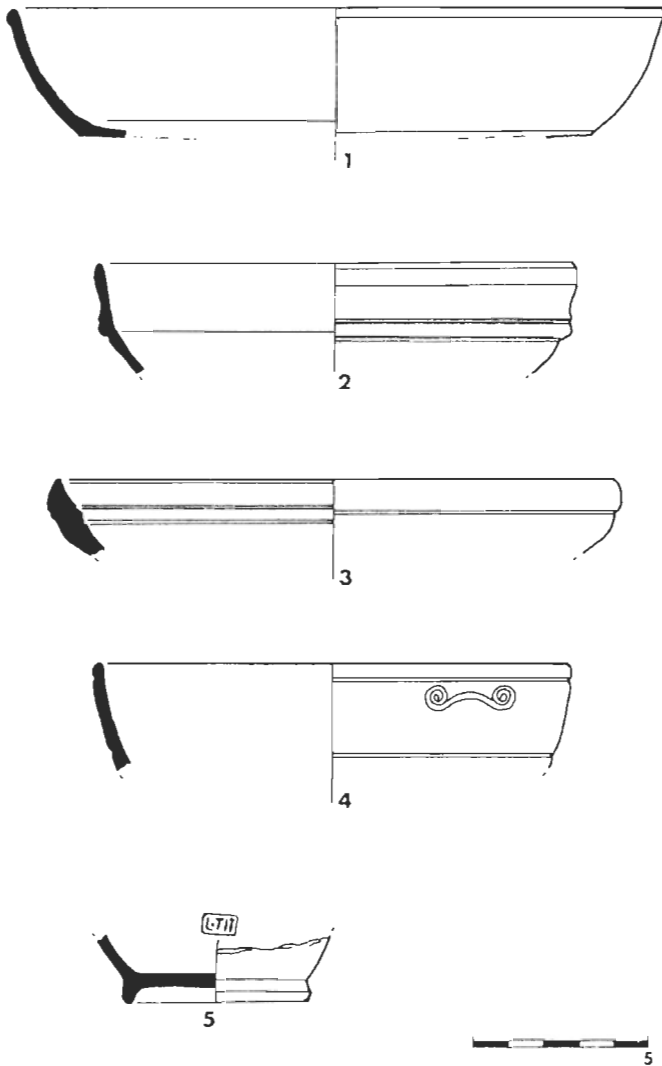
Figure 4. Roman fine ware found at Santa Trega in the houses of Figure 5 (After Peña Santos 1985–86).

As seen in Britain (Hill 1997), in NW Iberia tweezers, pins and other items related to personal appearance become common after the arrival of Rome. Traditional jewellery, such as torcs, also disappear to be replaced by Roman necklaces, earrings and rings, and the context of the consumption of jewels changes from the male to the female sphere. Symptomatically, many friezes representing *togati/-ae* appeared in native environments such as ritual saunas (Almagro-Gorbea and Álvarez Sanchís 1993), like those mentioned in Monte da Saia (NW Portugal), and sanctuaries (Fonte do Ídolo, Braga, NW Portugal). The body acts as a privileged arena for

the negotiation of identity, as well as power. Meaningfully, colonial authorities controlled bodily practices during 19th and 20th century as a means of "civilizing the savages"(Farnell 1999: 349). For the Pre-Nilotes, the agents of Modernity, mainly western missionaries, and Islamisation, induced people to change their bodily habits by dressing them, and in so doing destroyed part of their identity reflected by scarifications and body art (Figure 10 and 11). Dress and appearance, then, are no longer a tool, in the Heideggerian sense, but a field for theorizing about new social relations and Being.

The conservative architectural ambience in both Benishangul and NW Iberia, that conceals the widespread changes in personal appearance and customs, at the same time, reinforces the World that is being founded, by radically expressing the contrast with the old (that is, showing the Earth), and makes the changes licit and comprehensible through the historicity of the being-there. Native architecture serves to diminish the importance of a social change, metaphorically represented by the small items mentioned. The building environment (not only indoor areas but the whole settlement) conceals these objects which are full of creative force, because of their novelty and because they are not linked to any previous meaning (Willis 1994). Nonetheless the work of art is already working here: the work can show us the place where we dwell (Heidegger 1950: 25), or make possible another dwelling (Biemel 1994).
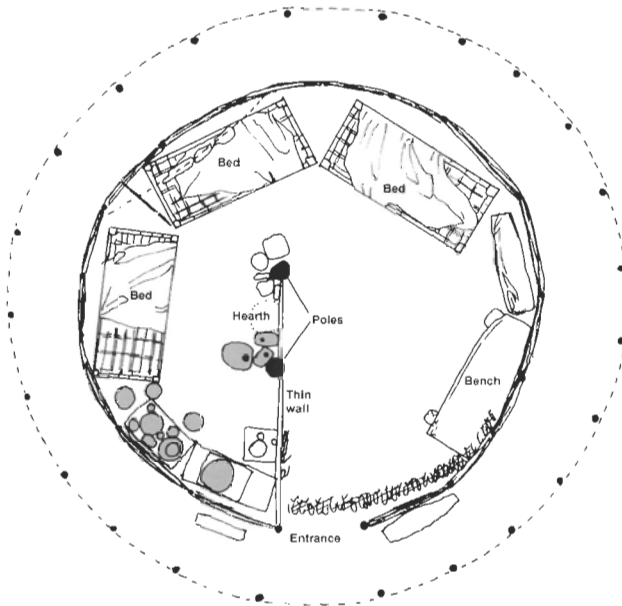

Figure 5. Distribution of industrial items inside a traditional Pre-Nilotic house (Asosa, Benishangul).

Figure 6. Traditional Pre-Nilotic hut (Asosa, Benishangul) (photo by Luis Luque).

Figure 7. The son of the magician in Kebele 03 (Asosa, Benishgangul): The shock of Modernity concealed by a traditional Pre-Nilotic house.

In fact, both things occur in Santa Trega and the Shamau Al-Hakim compound: the new World founded manifests the Being of the traditional space (its social and ideological meanings), and at the same time enables its reconstruction, which will finally lead to a Roman or Modern space. And if 'building' (*bauen*) is related to 'thinking' (Heidegger 1972), 'rebuilding' wiederbauen, must mean 're-thinking'.

From this point of view, domestic space and Roman items fail to be a tool, a place or things for living that go unnoticed, but become works of art, places and things for (re)thinking society. We see the use of objects as an attempt at *conversation* between radically different languages, as a means to survive the novelty, the World opened. In fact, this conversation is an ideological product aiming to conceal the battle (*Kampf*), that is being fought. Domestic space allows the Anxiety of not knowing who one is to be scared away, reinstating the possibility of being 'one' instead of 'oneself', embedded in community values, and, in so doing, reinforces the links with the past *Dasein*, making the new language acceptable through its domestication: in the sense of domination, making it familiar, and, in the most literal sense, inserting it into the household. However the work affects the totality of the being among which it is inserted. Samian ware or amphorae inside traditional buildings are reshaping vernacular space through display and consumption.

It must be acknowledged that both the anthropological and archaeological records are more complex than has been demonstrated here. In today's Benishangul, as well as in Gallaecia in
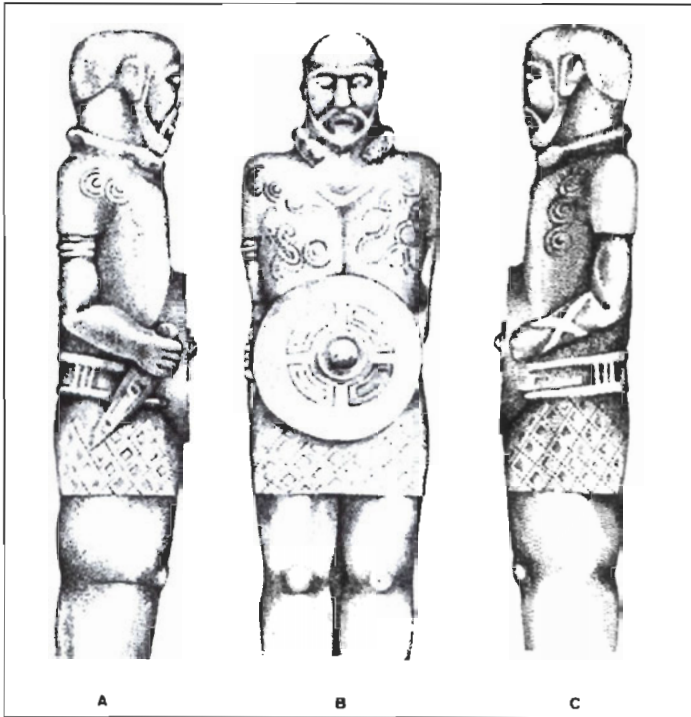

Figure 8. Gallaecian warrior from Lezenho, NW Portugal (after Silva 1986: CXX, 2).

the first half of the 1st century AD, square houses do exist. I cannot explain in detail why these exceptions appear; I will just mention a few motives for the archaeological instances:

1) square houses may belong to immigrants, probably merchants (ethnohistorical parallels in Botswana: Reid et al. 1997) from Italy or from other areas of the Iberian Peninsula, where square-angled houses are the norm –unfortunately, the lack of modern excavations makes this assumption untested.

2) Angled structures may belong to building types not previously known and therefore not constrained by social norms: this is the case with the Mozinho temple (Almeida 1980), but it must be borne in mind that this is a later example (Flavian era), when rectangular structures are already common.

3) Complex structures incorporating angles are known in a religious context, e.g. ritual saunas (Almagro-Gorbea and Álvarez Sanchís 1993) probably before Roman influences arrived on the area.

4) Rectangular buildings but with rounded angles are known from the IV century BC, at least (Carballo Arceo 1996) and in the eastern area (which has not been considered here) they are the norm from the pre-Roman times. The fact that many buildings maintain rounded angles while having a rectangular plan has been explained in functional terms –lack of architectural skill–, but it might be also explained as a way of showing respect to the ancestral habit of building round huts (square huts with round angles and round roof can be observed in Benishangul), i.e. a technical decision motivated by social constraints (Lemonnier 1986).

5).When rectangular huts first appear, they are probably used as stockyards or warehouses, not as the main living house: in Romariz, N. Portugal, traditional round houses articulate the space inside compounds where all huts are already square and still bear the most important social functions (Silva 1986: 51–53).

6) Besides, it is not only the shape, round or angled, but also the way structures are arranged, that counts, and most of the compounds inside oppida in the second half of the 1st century AD still show a native organisation, square and round houses being disposed around a central, enclosed yard.

Finally, personal building of identities (the decision of raising a square hut inside a compound) in earlier times may apparently contradict what I have defended here. But they are a minority before the mid 1st century AD and this complexity fits well within the theory that has been discussed. The diversity of solutions developed in order to face the Anxiety provoked by the foundation of a new World must come as no surprise. "Anxiety, said Heidegger, makes manifest in *Dasein* its Being towards its own most potentiality for Being, that is, its Being-free for the freedom of choosing" (Heidegger 1927 § 41, quoted in Moran 2000: 241). It represents a widening in the limits of social agency. This is why 'Romanisation' appears nowhere as a gradual, homogeneous imposition of Roman culture (Jones 1997: 129–135), uniformly accepted or resisted by natives, but as a permanent fight between Earth and World, between old and new *Dasein*, which generates diversity. We can describe trends, but we cannot offer recipes: individual agency is, post-conquest, far more complex and active than in pre-Roman times.
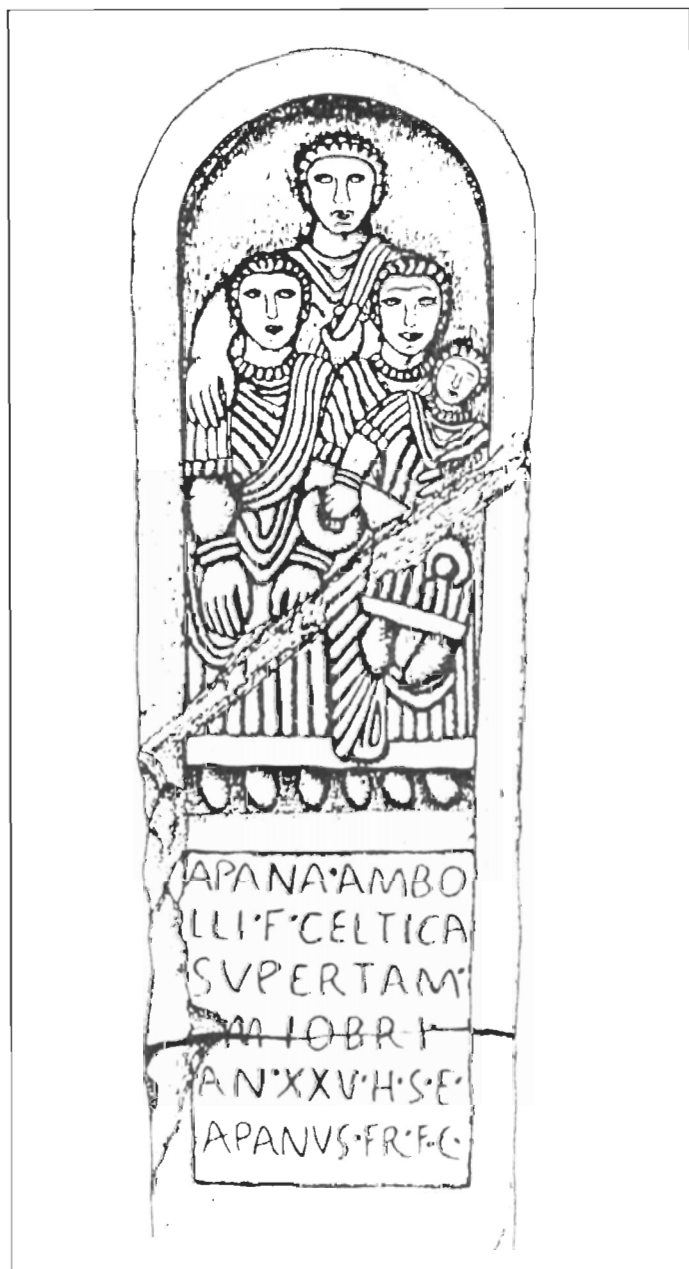
Figure 9. Natives in Roman dresses in the 1ˢᵗ century AD monumental stela from Crecente, Galiza, Spain (after Rodríguez Colmenero and Carreño Gascón 1996).

Figure 10. Berta woman in Islamic style dress (photo by Luis Luque).

Figure 11. Gumuz woman with traditional scarifications (photo by Luis Luque).

Conclusion

'Romanisation', finally, is not a process of adopting an alien culture, whether by political or economical interests or constraints. 'Romanisation' is a manner of coming to terms with a new *Dasein*, it is first and foremost a change of being (Barrett 1994), both for Romans and for natives, since both have attended the creation of a new world. It is not only about understanding oneself, but also about making the new self comprehensible to others, trying to affect the least the ontological security in which society is grounded. This is especially true for élites (but not only élites), who have to negotiate the basis of their power with the rest of the population: this is what Kus (1988) has ironically called the 'social contract'. 'Romanisation', in Heideggerian terms, is therefore a change in the way one deals with things (*besorgen*) and people (*fürsorgen*). Things that passed unthought are now objects of reflection: tools have become works of art. The necessity of restoring the state of ambiguity (or embeddedness) leads to to the formation of Imperial identities (Woolf 1998), which means returning once more to a state of inauthenticity, embedded and ontologically secure. Being-Roman, by the beginning of the 2nd century AD, is having ordinary life (*Alltäglichkeit*) restored: pottery or brooches or houses are now simply tools, good for living, but also for maintaining, structuring and reproducing social reality. The fact that by the 3rd century AD Roman customs, material culture (including not only small items but also architecture) and language have been adopted all over NW Iberia without any apparent clash or major social disorder corroborates the importance of maintaining ontological security by inserting changes in a collective, historically sanctioned space.

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