

# Ancient History in Spanish Historiography

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En este trabajo trato de explicar la importancia que la Historia Antigua ha tenido en la historiografía española y la forma en que ha sido tratada en las diversas épocas históricas, partiendo del hecho de que el propio pensamiento historiográfico es a su vez un producto histórico. En una primera etapa, como consecuencia de una idealización del reino visigodo, se consideró que sólo el reino de Castilla era la heredera del Imperio romano. A raíz de la unificación de España por los Reyes Católicos se desarrolló la idea de una España antigua unida bajo el poder de Roma que legitimaba a su vez el proceso “Reconquista”. Durante el siglo XIX se elabora una historia nacional, en la que no se hacía referencia a otras nacionalidades. Es la historia de un estado-nación. Durante los años posteriores a la Guerra Civil española el debate historiográfico se polarizó entre las propuestas de Américo Castro y Claudio Sánchez de Albornoz. Desde Cataluña se plantearon propuestas historiográficas más racionalistas, centrando el debate en problemas históricos y no metahistóricos. En este sentido los estudios de Vicens Vives fueron determinantes. Las décadas de los sesenta y setenta fueron de una gran innovación historiográfica, fenómeno relacionado, entre otras cuestiones, con el hecho de que la Historia Antigua en nuestras Universidades alcanza el estatuto de disciplina independiente. La historiografía española entra de lleno en el marco general de las diversas escuelas historiográficas que se desarrollaban en Europa. Empiezan a discutirse y revisarse conceptos claves de la Historia Antigua peninsular como romanización, comunidades de aldeas, feudalismo, etc. Desde esta perspectiva los trabajos de los profesores Marcelo Vigil, Abilio Barbero, José María Blázquez, Francisco Presedo y otros fueron muy significativos. Sus propuestas han marcado un antes y un después en la historiografía española sobre el mundo antiguo y medieval. Las discusiones posteriores sobre estos autores y sus interpretaciones dan cuenta de la originalidad de sus propuestas y de la importancia de las mismas en la historiografía española contemporánea.

María José Hidalgo, born in Malaga, completed her studies in Classical Philology at the University of Granada, where she received her doctorate in 1976 with a thesis on Apuleius of Madaura. As Professor of the University of Salamanca she published the book *Sociedad e Ideología en el Imperio Romano: Apuleyo de Madaura*, 1985, fruit of her research on that author. In 1993 she was given the Chair of Ancient History of the University of Salamanca and she published the monograph *El intelectual, la Realeza y el poder político en el Imperio Romano*. She has published many articles on imperial power and on the power of the empresses in dynastic legitimation. She is now preparing a volume on that theme; she directs a research project entitled “Las imágenes del poder imperial. Fronteras y alteridades (ss. I-IV)”. She has been Dean of the Faculty of Geography and History and is now Vice Rector for Student Affairs of her University.



The aim of this chapter is to explain, necessarily in synthetic form, how Ancient History has been treated and what relevance it has had in Spanish historiography.

In the first place we must not forget that the form in which we reflect on the origins of the ways of interpreting the past is tightly connected to the historical development of each country and with phenomena which are contemporary to those who practice this activity which we call History. Which means that I consider that each historiography is, itself, a product of history.

To these aspects of a general character we must add the concrete situations which the historical disciplines have had in each country in the university organisation. In Spain, in 1900, the Faculties of Letters and Philosophy were organised in the universities with the creation of the *Secciones de Historia* (Sections of History). Furthermore until 1965, when the first university chairs of Spanish and Universal Ancient History were endowed, Ancient History as such was not institutionalised as an autonomous discipline. Ancient History, hence, is the youngest of the historical disciplines. Until that time, those who cultivated it and dedicated their research to antiquity were classical philologists, archaeologists and historians of Roman Law. The situation was indeed depressing if we observe that in the more advanced European countries, research and teaching of Ancient History already had a history going back more than two centuries and was part of a tradition deeply rooted in the thought and the cultural background of those countries.

In spite of these deficiencies, due to causes of an historical character, in the last thirty years our discipline in all respects has reached the level of the other scientific disciplines with a longer tradition in our country.

Although the first part of the 1960s constitutes a very significant *terminus ad quem* in the evolution of this discipline as a form of historiography or of the practice of history of antiquity, thanks especially to the work achieved by Vigil and Barbero, we cannot forget the earlier historiographical proposals which also constitute part of the cultural and political thought of our country and contributed to its elaboration in different historical periods.

Antiquity and the History of Ancient Spain, as is true of the historical periods nearer to us too, is a productive environment in which to build images of the collectivity, of the nation, contributing to the historical project, in fact, to the social projects cultivated by historians of different epochs.

From this starting point, which is a premise common to history of historiography in a general manner and for any period, we can observe that there are two kinds of language, each with its own meaning, with which the historian projects, in our case onto Antiquity, a series of messages, as a function of his/her vision of the past, from the contemporary period, from the present. Thus a link is created, through language, with myths and symbols which were produced in our own Antiquity (Greek and Roman civilisation) in order to explain or to justify phenomena or institutions of the present time for the historian, tying Spanish Antiquity to the Classical World.

Furthermore, with some concrete and significant exceptions, Spanish historiography has never shown a special interest for the Classical World and its end. This is due to the ide-

alisation of the Visigoth Kingdom as the agent of the first political and religious unification of Spain. In the earlier periods, for Spanish historiography, the Iberian peninsula was only the territorial stage on which episodes of internal strife or the domination of foreign enemies – among whom we find the Phoenicians, the Greeks and the Romans – had been acted out

Among the few early examples to which I alluded above, I wish to mention the writer Rodrigo Ximénez de Rada, “el Toledano” (the Toledan) (1170-1247) who established the legend of Hercules as the ancestor of the Spanish monarchy, thus connecting the Ancient History of Spain to the classical world. This was part of a common process which was developing in European historiography as it tended to link national origins to the classical world. Toledano was successful in giving prestige to Spanish monarchy by connecting it with the foundation of Rome and the model of Aeneas. On the other hand, he also considers very highly the Visigoth contribution, thus inaugurating the “Gothicist” current of Castilian historiography. In this way the historiographical discourse on Antiquity became more and more “Castilianised”, and it was used a vehicle of justification and of pre-eminence of Castilian monarchical power over England and Portugal, considering that through the Visigoths, Castile is heir to the Roman Empire.

Certainly, there was not really a “national” historiography until more recent times. Nonetheless, in the 16th century Spanish historiography had practitioners in the various Kingdoms. Later Father Mariana tried to fill these gaps with a historical account from the origins up until 1516, in which he conceived of Spain as a unitary and eternal reality.

In the period of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabel of Castile, the Catholic Kings, Joan Margarit (1421-1484) defended the existence of an ancient Hispania united under the power of Rome, which was to support, defend and legitimate the new unification of the peninsula under the sovereigns and provide the means to justify the “Reconquista” as well.

In contrast to these views, in which the presence of classicism is evident in some respects, the idea of an Iberian peninsula characterised by an a-temporal and essential unity going back to before the arrival of the Phoenicians is a constant from the 13th to the 18th centuries. It can be exemplified by the ideas expressed by such illustrious historians as the Marques of Valdeflores, the Cordovan brothers Rodríguez Mohedano and the Catalan Masdeu. There are differences in some aspects of their thought, however all lie within a clear historiographical project. The Cordovans contribute a completely positive view of the peoples that come to the Iberian peninsula: Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians and Romans; however it is the Goths which receive the highest praise of all, and even Muslim culture begins to be judged positively.

Their historical discourse presents a Hispanic “essence”, lasting many centuries, which ever since Antiquity has been open to knowledge and progress. Spain is seen as never having had a subordinate position with respect to Greek culture, cradle of Classical culture and the firstborn cultural referent of European Antiquity, as of course it did not with France (Gallia) or England (Britania). This historiographical construction projects the national past in the light of contemporary history, recognising an essential identity between all Spaniards from the origins to the present.

The unavoidable fact that there was a great diversity of peoples living in the Iberian peninsula, as these intellectuals knew very well from the sources, did not prevent them from considering the population of the peninsula to be globally Spanish from the beginning – always in opposition to outsiders, whether Phoenicians, Egyptians, Greek, Carthaginians, Romans or “French” (during the War of Independence).

This essential unity, although not translated into a political unity (of the different kingdoms in Spain) was associated with a territory and would help to legitimate – from the far-away past – an essential unity destined to be achieved in the future. In final analysis, this historiographical project, leaving aside its methodological validity, responds fully to the political project of the enlightened monarchy of the Bourbons and fully assumes the idea of being a reflection of the image which the 18th century held of its remote past.

During the 19th century a new concept of nation and State was developing, which influenced the new way of practicing history and facilitated the appearance of new historiographical problems. Thus the contemporary debate in the 19th century on the abolition of slavery favoured studies on slavery in Antiquity such as H. Wallon, *Historia de la esclavitud en la Antigüedad* (History of Slavery in Antiquity) (1847); however, this problem was not to be introduced in Spanish historiography until the contemporary era.

In the 19th century the most representative historian is Modesto Lafuente, who published a *Historia General de España* (General History of Spain) in 30 volumes (1850-1867), which had great influence in the following periods. His *History* is structured around the process of formation of the Spanish nation; this brings him to go back to revive the Gothic myth as the agent of Spanish unity at all levels, although he reserves the foundation of Spain to the Celts and the Iberians. In this context he judges positively the Peace of Augustus which recomposed the unity of Spain by conquering the peoples of the North and brought great political and civic benefits, even if the peninsula was under Roman domination.

The deficiencies that subsisted under the Romans were satisfied under the Visigoths, who were to be the definitive founders of a new Spain based on unity in all areas of national life and on a sentiment of individual freedom, the principal element of progress. Furthermore, Lafuente's *History* does not stray from the essentialist dogma of Spanish unity and its immutability throughout the centuries. He continued to appreciate, in the same way as the Spanish bourgeoisie, the feudalising mystifications of Spanish historiography. This fact casts a shadow over many of his positive findings and historiographical advances: a sketch of social conflicts, legislative and institutional development, lay aspects, and so forth, as elements of dynamism in the historical process and specific to a nationalist positivism. His *History* opened the path towards the construction of a national history where no other nationalities existed: it is the history of a nation-state.

The historiography of the 20th century began with the ghost of the crisis of 1898 which dragged the intellectuals into a pessimism expressed by the “regenerationist” movement and a certain complacency for the most glorious moments of Spanish history. In the years before the Civil War (1936-1939) to this pessimism and exaltation of the past was added a theoretical tendency to follow German positivism and nationalism as exemplified by the figure of Menéndez Pidal and his voluminous *Historia de España* (History of Spain) in the



**Fig. 1**  
Ramón Menéndez Pidal.

prologue of which he proposes a modernisation of the old historiographical myths and among them the exaltation of Castile as spiritual head of the struggles for the unification of Spain.

During the Republic and the Civil War the figures of Ortega and Bosch Gimpera stand out. Bosch Gimpera, archaeologist, historian and Catalan nationalist politician, considered the past of the Iberian peninsula as a necessary point of reference for the construction of a modern Spain, tolerant and federal. He criticised Ortega's idea of Castile as the backbone of Spain and Menéndez Pidal for pushing those ideas back to Roman times, denying the evident cultural diversity of the peninsula's peoples. However his historiographical construction suffered from a lack of scientific basis because it is limited to substituting the myth of Spanish unity with the myth of federalism: he substituted one unitary metaphysical entity with another metaphysical entity: "The true Spain is primitive Spain, root of all further evolution", he said, and he considered the Roman and the Visigothic dominions to be

superstructures, extraneous and artificial, which trap the pristine vocation of the primitive peoples in a freely confederated State.

In this sense, Romanisation is interpreted as a brake on the “natural evolution of the country”, because it forces a unity from above for the benefit of a minority. He considers the Visigoths intolerant, and that they tried to obtain Catholic unity with force, beginning the persecution of the Jews and converting the Church hierarchy into a political power. Classical culture was completely absent from his interpretations.

## THE LATER DEBATE

In the period after the Civil War the historiographical debate was centred on the contrast between Américo Castro and Claudio Sánchez de Albornoz. In 1948 Castro published *España en su historia: christianos moros y indios* (Spain in her history: Christians, Muslims, Jews), re-elaborated under the title *La realidad histórica de España* (The historical reality of Spain). For this historian there was no continuity between proto-historical, Roman and Visigothic Spain, and the upsurge after the Muslim invasion. The Spaniard, in his view,



Fig. 2  
Américo Castro.



**Fig. 3**  
Claudio Sánchez de Albornoz.

was the result of the confluence of Christian, Hebrew and Muslim elements, a fact which came about in the Middle Ages. The equilibrium of these three cultures later was broken, leading to the conflictive phase of modern times. To this approach based on the diversity of origins of Spain, Sánchez de Albornoz presented his answer: in his *España, un enigma histórico* (Spain: an historical enigma), 1956, he wanted to show the persistence of the characteristic features considered as “Spanish” which had existed from primitive times to the present. The “Spanish spirit” is what made this manifest throughout the various epochs with different variations. This polemic went far beyond purely historical problems, to centre on the “essence” of Spain and both interpretations hid the historical reality of Spain. Both tried to convert Spain into something anomalous, unchangeable and by definition separate from universal history and always an “historical enigma”. This polemic, in the end, took the problem of history onto a meta-historical terrain: “What is Spain?”. Nothing was said about social or economic changes.

In parallel with this polemic between Castro and Albornoz there was an advance in historical studies in general and in the Ancient History of Spain in particular. From Catalonia Jaume Vicens Vives was working on his *Aproximación a la historia de España* (Approach to the History of Spain) on a more rational basis. Its objective was “to resolve the problem of the imperfection” of Spain in order to follow the path of western civilization towards capitalism, liberalism and rationalism in the triple economic, social, political and cultural aspect; and also the failure of Castile in the task of making Spain a harmonious, satisfied and acquiescent community”. Vicens Vives contrasts the protagonism of Castile to the pluralism of the Hispanic kingdoms of Portugal, Castile and Aragon. Furthermore he perceives that the Asturians and the Cantabrians “that always have been the groups most reluctant to enter the peninsular community, took on the role

of continuers of the Hispanic tradition". This is obviously a step forward in understanding the peninsular history.

Advances in Ancient History were produced by Antonio Garcia Bellido. From the field of Archaeology in which he was expert and of which he had great knowledge as professor of Archaeology, he passed also to the sector of History, in which he made an important contribution to renewal from the thematic point of view and that of the interpretation of historical facts. It was precisely his know-how as an archaeologist that allowed him to make innovative historical interpretations starting from archaeological evidence. In this direction he opened new perspectives for the study of ancient Spain, applying the most recent techniques and interpretations utilized by historians of the Ancient world outside of Spain. He elaborated exhaustive catalogues of sources relating to Classical Antiquity, but his most strictly historical research was "*Bandas y guerrillas en las luchas con Roma*" (Bands and guerilla wars in the struggles with Rome), *Hispania* V, 1945, in which he abandoned the traditional view of the Roman conquest and emphasized the socio-economic aspects underlying the armed conflicts, and he showed the social and economic conflicts within the indigenous peoples themselves, without an understanding of which it would have been useless to attempt to study this period scientifically. He also emphasized other themes which deal with what we call the Romanisation of the Iberian peninsula: studies on the Roman colonies, the army, demographic problems and so forth. In this direction we must recognise that he brought Spanish historical science to the same level as in other countries.

From the 1960s and 1970s on in Spain there was a deep methodological and theoretical renewal in the studies of Antiquity. It coincided with a strong impulse of studies on the ancient history of Spain, which had left the hands of the philologists and archaeologists and entered the historians' field. In this regard we can point to the studies of Blásquez, Presedro and Montenegro, not particularly innovative on the methodological or theoretical level, but very useful in advancing knowledge. The most important innovation in historical research in this period was produced by the works of Marcelo Vigil and Abilio Barbero in the 1960s and 1970s, which imposed a new vision of the Ancient History of the Iberian peninsula. This progress is connected with that which in the same years were taking place in the different schools of studies of Antiquity in other countries – France, England and Italy – starting with the teaching of such figures as Pierre Lévêque, Santo Mazzarino, Bianchi-Bandinelli, Momigliano, George Thomson and E. A. Thompson.

In its general lines, their works both taken together and individually represent a continuous demonstration of convergence, starting from the various single disciplinary sectors (Ancient and medieval), and reaching a general vision of the Ancient History of the Iberian Peninsula. Rather than concrete revisions of factual knowledge, it is a matter of new ways of putting together historical knowledge in an coherent overall interpretation that connects adequately the different branches of the whole.

Thus the ways in which the inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula establish relations with the various colonizers – Phoenician, Greek – and the Roman conquerors lead, considering the overall process, to the appearance of specific forms of dissolution of the indigenous communities settled in this territory. The process in the Ancient period is connected to that which will develop later during the Middle Ages, in the sense that this (the Medieval



world) constituted at the same time the result of the crisis of the slave system, contacts with the barbarian peoples, and the specific forms of dissolution of the primitive communities at the end of the Roman empire. Thus, colonization, Romanisation, invasions and transitions came to create part of the same historical reality. The multiplicity dissolves into the whole.

This perspective permitted beginning the necessary revision of the archaeological data starting from the non-mechanical analysis of the textual data or from an enrichment of local (Spanish) history through the knowledge of the classical world as a whole.

## NEW PERSPECTIVES

The dissolution of the primitive community is a process in which we find the origins of historical formations which shape the political bases of the social relationships that human beings establish between themselves. In this process we find the origin of the city, the state and of exploitive class relations. In this sense the analysis of the primitive community, of the clientele relationship and of patronage allows understanding the functioning of the primitive communities and the mechanisms of their dissolution. The community dissolves through different paths according to the epochs and the relationships between the peoples. The indigenous institutions are shaped according to the contacts with the Carthaginians and the Romans. The organization of the *gentes* and the *gentilitates* appears as a dynamic institution which serves as a base for the new class structure.

However the presence of the Phoenicians and of the Greeks before had played a similar role, with which it was possible to by-pass the classical interpretation of Iberian historical development as almost exclusively the result of national rivalries between Phoenicians and Greeks, at first, and of these with the Romans later. The most traditional historiography, which claimed to explain these phenomena on the basis of the 'nationalist' differences between the Greeks and the Phoenicians, was abandoned, because until the wars with the Medes, the Greeks did not have a 'national' awareness respect to the barbarians, and they refused furthermore the connection of their voyages to those of others. The pre-colonial voyages were based on economic rivalries of different sorts, however not between ethnic communities. The rivalries had been explained, then, as national, nationalist and even racist.

The Phoenician and Greek presence favours the heterogeneity of the Peninsula respect to what would happen with the Roman presence and with its tendency towards the formation of a unified state under the slave system.

## ROMANISATION

In 1963 Vigil defined the concept of Romanisation as a single process of conquest, Latinisation and monumentalisation, with the premise that in reality this was a social process which developed between the indigenous populations and Hispano-Roman society. It is a single social process, but with many faces and facets, in which integration does not mean homogenisation in the concrete way in which each society is organised. Differences

remain inside a coherent whole. The break-up of social cohesion leads to the creation of new social formations which are similar to each other in their relationship to the Roman Empire.

“Not as a simple imitation of the more external forms of culture, but as a deep change in the social and economic structures of the country (he refers to the peoples of the north), without which that imitation would either be impossible or would remain on the surface”. P. Desideri has expressed how the discourse on Romanisation in the end means taking an implicit or explicit position on the meaning of the Roman Empire in World History or at least in the western part of the world. To this lucid idea we must add the utilisation that part of the national historiographies have made of this concept in order to consider it the precedent for the origin of contemporary states and nationalities.

Concretely, in 1961, professor Cepeda of Contemporary History wrote on this theme: “Rome gave Spain her historical form on an autoctonous underlying foundation... precisely because this was so, Spain was able to respond from this Latin, Christian and western position to a terrible challenge, that of Arab domination”. Professor Suarez, a medievalist, said, “with this expression historians claim to say how the inhabitants of the peninsula were incorporated into the whole of Mediterranean civilisation on which the Empire was built and which served as a basis for Christianity. No event has had a similar significance in determining the shape of Spain, which defines itself as a Roman and Christian community”. Professor Montenegro went farther in expressing the idea that the connection between the two Spains (Atlantic and Mediterranean) was centred in Celtiberia: that is in the Celts plus the Iberians.

All these Spanish national or nationalist interpretations were, in part, heirs of Menendez Pidal who considered Celtiberia and then Castile, together with Betica, to be the cohesive nucleus of Spain: “In Antiquity also, the central part, the same as afterwards Castile, represents the cohesive nucleus” and joined to Betica “gives all the representative and glorious men in letters and politics, just as in the 16th and 17th centuries the immense majority of them came from Aragon, from the two Castiles and Andalucia”. This relationship between Antiquity and the Modern Age “shows this spiritual unity ruled by certain organic principles, certain vital energies, lasting in their action and their strength”. (*Los españoles en la historia* [The Spanish in History], Buenos Aires 1959) Thus the Spaniards Trajan, Adrian and Theodosius were to become Emperors; and the conquest of America was accomplished by Castilians, Andalusians and men from Extremadura.

For Sánchez de Albornoz Romanisation constituted a phase in the Spanish nation: “Spain was not born in a different way: Rome and Christianity engendered her in the bosom of the Empire, but she only succeeded in existing as an historical unit when she ripped away from the Roman matrix and acquired autarchic life”. R. Etienne, in his well known book *Le culte impérial dans la Péninsule Ibérique d'Auguste à Diocétienne* (1959), mentions the work by Claudio Sánchez de Albornoz, *El culto al emperador y la unificación de Hispania*, only to discard it immediately, with the explanation that the entire work aims at defending the thesis of Spanish unity. These same interpretations from different angles appear in works of authors of the prestige of Martín Almagro, Pericot and Dolç.

These ideas were formed by manipulating a sentence of Florus (Ep. I, 33: *Celtiberos id est robur Hispaniae*) in order to ascribe to Castile the role of protagonist over the millennia in

the political direction of the many kingdoms and peoples of Spain. In truth, always treating Castile as the protagonist in all these interpretations has the scope of confusing and identifying the history of Castile with the history of Spain. The traditional history of Spain has been written in this perspective.

## FEUDALISM

In the book by Vigil and Barbero, *La formación del feudalismo de la Península Iberica* (The Formation of Feudalism in the Iberian Peninsula), 1978, the definitive bases of the thought of these historians, now dead, were established. The crisis of ancient peninsular society is studied as a multiple process, only united by the fact that the factors of cohesion of slavery imperialism disappeared. Thus a global transformation came about delimited by the changes in the world of the *civitas*, which went from being the seat of pagan evergetism to the sphere of Christian charity.

In the context of this process of crisis the important thing to determine is what is renewed and what remains the same in the different peoples or areas of the peninsula. Kinship groups or aristocratic family societies (*gentes*), hidden by the Roman conquest, but used by the Romans to impose their dominion, reappear; however these same features are channeled into the transition towards the Middle Ages, within the sphere of the Germanic kingdoms and even in the world of the Asturians, with the creation of an Asturian kingdom of great mythical significance in the passage toward the medieval world in traditional nationalistic historiography (with the “Reconquista”).

This new kingdom is studied by Vigil and Barbero as the background for the continuation of conflicts such as those led by the Cantabrian and Asturian communities during the Imperial period. Hence, the feudalisation of the North of the Peninsula is created starting from these situations, based on the *gentes*, precedent but hidden, and through processes sometimes different from those proposed by traditional historiography.

In this context the Goths are transformed into defenders of the Roman kind of property and heirs of the Roman empire. They identify with the dominant class, they collaborate in transforming the dominant classes of the Empire and in canalising towards the Middle Age the new forms of exploitation based on a very heterogeneous dependent peasantry. This context explains the transformation which takes place in the meaning of the term *servus*, an aspect which gave rise subsequently to further investigations and debate, as I will explain briefly below.

From this global perspective, these authors consider that the peninsular kingdoms that form are new phenomena and heirs of the old system of organisation of the Roman state. And it will be their solidarity structures which will lead to the new forms of exploitation of a feudal type.

This new vision was to open the way to new and diverse paths of research on the passage from the ancient to the medieval world, and also the discussion and criticism, always positive, of all the adventurous interpretations which broke sharply with existing points of view. The discussion already was on a new basis, no longer centred around the theme of a single

model for the entire national territory; nor was it on how to define feudalism in the trail of the sterile discussion between Américo Castro and Sánchez de Albornoz, although for a long time this was one of the themes given at the state examination in order to teach in the middle schools.

In the sphere of the discussion and criticism generated by Vigil's and Barbero's new interpretations in later historiography we must note, in the area of specialists in Ancient History, an article by F. Beltrán, *Un espejismo historiográfico. Las organizaciones gentilicias hispanas* (A historiographical mirage. The Hispanic organisations of *gentilitates*) 1988-1990, in which he criticises the existence of societies based on aristocratic families, as *gentilicia* societies, in the peoples of the North of the peninsular, however without proposing an alternative interpretative model, leaving his discourse as a mere rhetorical, a-historical play on words.

In the medieval area J.M. Minguez questioned some aspects of the Vigil-Barbero interpretative model especially from the point of view of the analysis of the term *servus*, which he translated and considered, in the classical meaning of the term, to signify *slave*, thus denying the feudal character of Visigoth society and pointing to the French historian Bonassie's idea of extending until the 10th century the duration of slavery as characteristic of the societies of the northern part of the peninsula. And lastly, M. Barceló denies the feudal character of Andalusian society as well.

These interpretations were presented and discussed at an International conference held in Salamanca in 1996. The objective was to reach, by means of a serene and rigorous discussion, that is, a true scientific debate, a historiographical overview of the studies of those researchers. The conference made it possible to put into contact different specialists who, using different methodologies and in different areas, carry out research directly related to the problems and the themes of peninsular societies of Antiquity and of the Middle Ages. The works which were presented were related, in some way, to the key concepts of "Romanisation" and "Reconquista" and their application to concrete social realities.

The satisfactory results of the conference allow us to know and to compare some of the most important hypotheses and conclusions of the most recent research on these problems. In spite of the criticisms on concrete and overall aspects which some researchers presented (Arce, Minguez, Barceló) the validity of the general theoretical and methodological approach of the two researchers, as the general validity of the formation of feudalism in the Iberian Peninsula, although further investigations have been able to soften and correct some aspects of this "New Vision" of the Ancient History of the Iberian Peninsula, as it was called by one of the participants, Professor D. Plácido, in her opening paper.

To conclude, I think that these recent developments in the path followed by Spanish historiography permits us to be optimistic about the present and even more about the future. The challenge that we face now is to work to make the important contributions of Spanish historiography to the advancement of historical knowledge of Antiquity known and recognised beyond our frontiers.



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## SOURCE

The Pact of the Zoelas (C.I.L. II, 2633.)

*M. Licinio Crasso / L. Calpurnio Pisone co(n)s(ulibus) [27 d.C.]/VIII k(alendas) Maias / Gentilitas Desoncorum ex gente Zoelarum / et gentilitas Tridiouorum ex gente idem / Zoelarum hospitium uestustum antiquom renouauerunt eique omnes alis alium in fi / dem clientelamque suam suorumque libero /rum posterorumque receperunt. Egerunt / Arausa Blecaeni et Turaius Clouti, docius Elaesi, / Magilo Clouti, Bodecius Burrali, Elaesus Clutami / per Abienum Pentili magistratum Zoelarum / actum Curunda. /*

*Glabrione et Homulo co(n)s(ulibus) [152 d.C.] V Idus Iulias / Idem gentilitas Desoncorum et gentilitas / Tridiauorum in eandem clientelam eadem / foedera receperunt ex gente Auolgigorum / Sempronium Perpetuum Orniacum et ex gente / Visaligorum Antonium Arcuium et ex gente / Cabruagenigorum. Flavius Frontonem Zoelas. / Egerunt L(uciu)s Domitius Silo et / L. Flavius Seuerus / Asturicae.*

The Consuls being Marcus Licinius Crassus and Lucius Calpurnius Piso, the fourth of the Calends of May [28 April 27 B. C.] the *gentilitas* of the Desonci, belonging to the *gens* of the Zoelae, and the *gentilitas* of the Tridioui, of the same *gens* as the Zoelae, renewed the very ancient pact of hospitality which joined them and mutually they admitted respectively in their *fides* and in their clientele and in that of their sons and descendents. [The pact was] signed by Arausa (son of) Blecano and Turayo (son of) Clouto, Docio (son of) Ealeso, Magilo (son of) Clouto), Bodecio (son of) Burralo), Eleaso (son of) Clutano with the mediation of Abieno (son of) Pentilo, magistrate of the Zoelae. Signed in Curunda [the name of an unknown indigenous city].

The Consuls being Glabrion and Homulo, the fifth of the Ides of July [11 July 152 A. D.] the same *gentilitas* of the Desonci and the *gentilitas* of the Tridioui admitted the same clientele and in the same pacts Sempronius Perpetuus of the *Omiaci*, of the *gens* of the Auolgigi and of the *gens* of the Visaligi, Antonius Arcuius and of the *gens* of the Cabruagenigi, Flavius Fronto of the Zoelae.

The pact was signed by Lucius Domitius Silo and Lucius Flavius Severo in Asturica.