

The Eerdmans Encyclopedia of Early Christian Art and Archaeology

Paul Corby Finney, *General Editor*

WILLIAM B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING COMPANY
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
2140 Oak Industrial Drive N.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49505
www.eerdmans.com

© 2017 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
All Rights Reserved
Published 2017
Printed in the United States of America

23 22 21 20 19 18 17 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

SET ISBN	978-0-8028-3811-7
VOL. 1 (A-J) ISBN	978-0-8028-9016-0
VOL. 2 (K-Z) ISBN	978-0-8028-9017-7
VOL. 3 (PLATES AND MAPS) ISBN	978-0-8028-9018-4

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

Slipcase illustration: Ivory panel (416 × 143 mm) with an archangel (probably Michael); right panel of a diptych (left panel lost). In his right hand the figure holds a globe surmounted by a Greek cross; in his left, a long staff, perhaps a scepter. The architectural setting consists in an arch supported by fluted columns, capped with Corinthian capitals; there are steps beneath the plinths below left and right. Beneath the arch is a wreath enclosing a Greek cross; a scalloped shell frames the wreath. Above the arch, within a long narrow rectangular tabula, is written: +ΔΕΧΟΥ ΠΑΡΟΝΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΜΑΘΩΝ ΤΗΝ ΑΙΤΙΑΝ (“Receive the suppliant, although you know his guilt”); London.BM, OA.9999. (Photo courtesy Trustees of the British Museum)

Bovalar

(also Bobolá). Rural settlement on the banks of the Segre River, 23 km southeast of Lérida (Ilerda), in Diocletianic Tarraconensis, Prefecture XV: Hispania (see map 7, L3). Although small in size, the site holds great interest because of its architecture and its archaeological remains. Occupied over a long period in antiquity, B. was destroyed suddenly by an intense fire, which effectively sealed its material culture in situ.

The site includes a three-aisled early Christian basilica (with parallels in the → Balearics, North Africa, Baetica, and Lusitania; fig. 1). A settlement of Visigothic date surrounds the church; the *terminus ad quem* (based on numismatic evidence) is 711-15. The east end of the church was divided into three spaces, with two straight partition walls intersecting the east wall of the building. The church sanctuary was in the middle of the nave, with funerary chambers on either side; there was no projecting apse. At the west end of the nave, still within the walls of the basilica, was a separate

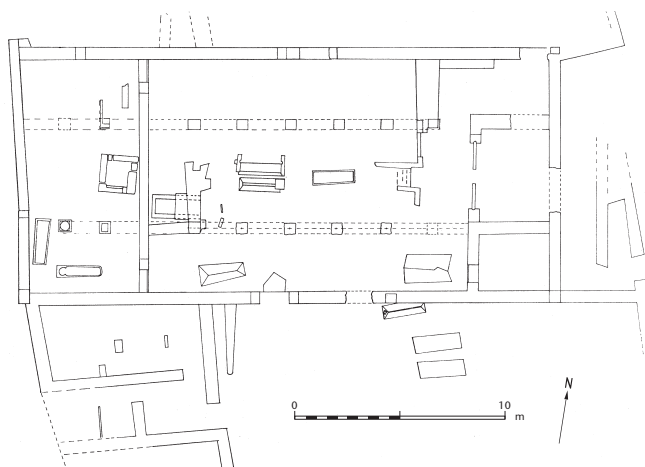


Fig. 1. Bovalar, plan of the basilica.

baptismal space with a square font (Ristow.1998, no. 571) situated beneath a baldachin (→ Ciborium); the canopy was supported by columns with finely carved capitals and impostes resting on horseshoe arches. The movables found inside the basilica included a 7th-c. cylindrical bronze censer (Pita & Palol, CIAC 8 [1972], figs. 14a, b) with a domical lid; several Italian and Coptic parallels exist.

Several three-roomed houses were recovered at the site, along with farm and husbandry tools. The coins (trientes of Egica [687-98], of Egica/Wittiza [698-702], of Wittiza [702-10], and of Achila [possibly 710-13]) provide a chronological context for the settlement of the site. These were struck at the Tarracoenensis mints of Gerunda (→ Gerona), → Tarragona/Tarraco, and Zaragoza/Caesaraugusta; others were struck at mints elsewhere in Hispania: Sevilla/Hispalis, → Mérida, → Córdoba, and → Toledo. Coins issued by Akhila, who ruled in the eastern part of the Visigothic kingdom when Roderic was on the throne in Toledo (according to the *Laterculus Regum Visigothorum* [Codex Parisinus 1667], which states that he reigned for three years before the Muslim occupation) were also discovered here. Items of personal adornment — above all, 7th-c. Hispano-Visigothic lyre- or kidney-shaped bronze belt attachments of Hispano-Visigothic type — were found in the houses at the site.

This conjunction (in a sealed deposit) of numismatic evidence and important movables is a singular event in the archaeology of the Iberian Peninsula in a late antique/early medieval setting (7th-8th c.). In addition, the appearance of the first coins of Akhila from the mint of Caesaraugusta defines the geographic extent of this monarch's rule. The basilica should be dated to the 5th c.; along with the rest of the settlement, it was destroyed between 713 and 715. B. was evidently an agricultural hub from which farmers went out to cultivate cereals and legumes and to tend orchards. This conflicts with the several contemporaneous literary smears of Visigothic Spain as a realm of indolence and decadence.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barceló, M. "El rei Akhila i els fills de Wititza," *Miscellanea Barcinonensia* 49 (1978): 59-78.
- Coll i Alentorn, M. *Els successors de Vitiza en la zona Nord-Est del domini visigòtic* (Barcelona, 1971).
- Miles, G. C. *The Coinage of the Visigoths of Spain, Leovigild to Achila II* (New York, 1952).
- Palol, P. de. *El Bovalar (Seròs, Segrià). Conjunt d'època paleocristiana y visigòtica* (Barcelona, 1989).
- Pita, R., & P. de Palol. "La basílica de Bobalá y su mobiliario litúrgico," in CIAC 8 (1972), 383-401.

P.d.P.†