

PRINCIPAL LANDMARKS AT THE ANDALUSI FORTIFICATION VASCOS, IX-XIth CENTURIES (TOLEDO, SPAIN).

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this poster is to introduce some of the principal elements which have had more relevance during the developing of the studies concerning the foundation, evolution and abandonment of this medieval fortification (IX-XIth centuries). This place, unknown by the medieval Arabic sources, is one of the most relevant settlements due to it holds remains of the Islamic medieval period developed in the Iberian Peninsula. Thus, we are generating an intensive study of the defensive system based in the Umayyad architecture. Some of these landmarks are showed in this poster.

INTRODUCTION

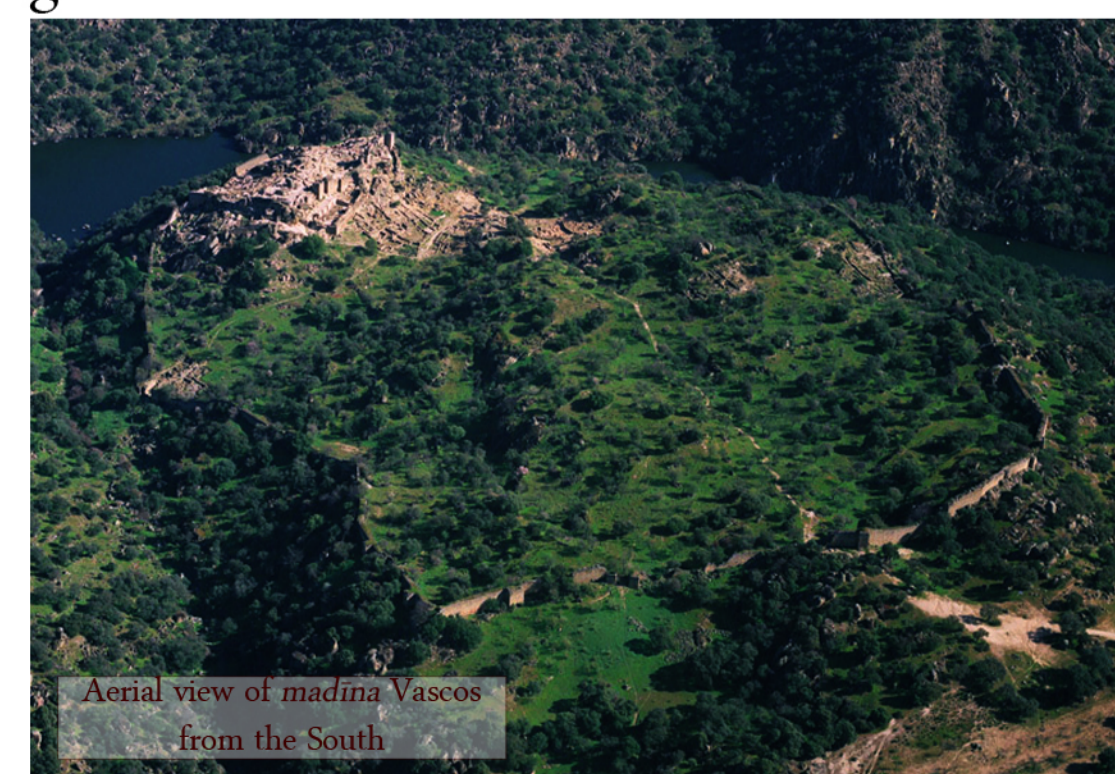
Madīna Vascos was an Islamic and Andalusian city, which spectacular remains are located in the province of Toledo, Spain. In this poster I would like to introduce at the principal landmarks of the fortification. Those

landmarks allow us to classify the remains inside of the 'official' Umayyad tradition fortification, developed in the Iberia Peninsula between the 8th and 10th Centuries (Jiménez 1949).

Thus, this is an extract from my PhD, where I try to understand the evolution of the settlement through its defenses, and determinate the causes which motivated those people to create, develop and eventually abandon this *madīna* and its adjacent land. The opening spaces in the wall are studied in this document, and the poster follows the following scheme: Firstly I introduce some of the typical elements which configure the city or *madīna* in al-Andalus; Secondly, some of the landmarks of this fortification are heeded; and finally between interpretation and conclusion we discuss some guidelines regarding a possible interpretation.

CONFIGURATION OF THE MADINA

The medieval Islamic *madīna* was configured with elements built by the official power to different objectives. One of the most relevant elements which forms the orography perception of the city was the binomial *Qasb*-Wall (*madīna*). The first one was made to be the residence and the protection place for the delegates of the Cordoba governments. The second one was the defense and control of people, as well as the propaganda site of the power.



Aerial view of *madīna* Vascos from the South



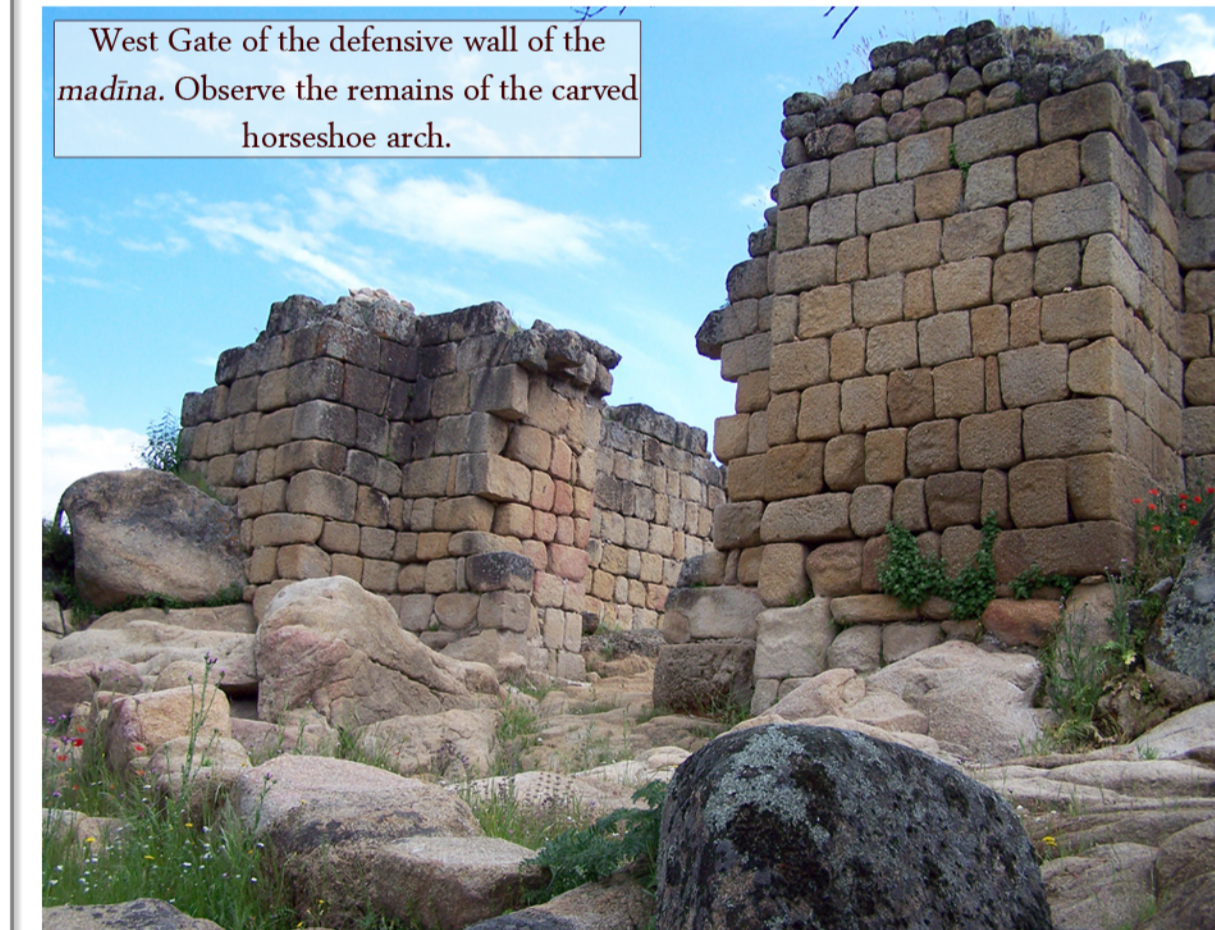
Map of some of the principal cities in Al-Andalus in the Umayyad Period (VIII-X C.), with the location in red of Vascos

Another elements shaped the *madīna* inside and outside the wall as mosque, *hammam*, *maqbara* and in the private area, the indomitable urbanism sometimes

organized around the principal mosque, or around the gates. Nevertheless, the gates were the place for the relations and veiled communications among power and inhabitants. The openings within the wall were used to demonstrate what its engineers might do. Besides, the opening landmarks allow us to approximate to the evolution of the site due that they were the main ways of the fort.

OPENING LANDMARKS

GATES The structure of the plan of the several gates was the same; two quadrangular towers flanked the gateway, which had a small wall as decorative parapet -*mochetas*- (Zozaya 1996). Vascos still have five principal gates, three in the *Qasb*, and two of them in the Wall of the *madīna*. The gateways of the *qasb* were more defensive, and could be divided in two types: complex with barbican at west and east, and direct access for the principal entrance. All of these gates have lost the upper part, although the voussoir of the principal gate was founded in the archaeological dig (Izquierdo and De Juan 2004). The remains of the horseshoe arch still at the entrance.



West Gate of the defensive wall of the *madīna*. Observe the remains of the carved horseshoe arch.

MINOR GATES: Other accesses were built in the fort. These small gateways had a double functionality: serving as architectural discharge and allow the inhabitants to evacuate waste. The structure of the gates was similar: one small opening of c. 0,8 m. wide and between 1.60 to 1,90 m. in height. Ashlars or even bedrock was founded as sill. The jambs were defined by the internal part of the wall, where three monolithic lintels rested, configuring some of the upper gates. Those lintels have been preserved in five out of seven minor gates of the defensive wall, while they have been lost in the unique minor gateway of the *Qasb*. Besides these gateways were regularly connected to a quadrangular compact tower, which functionality suggest control of the access.



Main Gate of the *Qasb*, with rest of the horseshoe arch.

Between 2007 and 2010 we have dug the two main accesses in the wall of the *madīna*, The West and The South gates. We discovered that both gateways were barbican and were paved with granite (Izquierdo 2009). The plan structure continues with the tradition of the Early Islamic constructions defined previously. These gateways had the special element of propaganda which we were founded in the principal gate of the *Qasb*, a horseshoe arch. In these cases an, no one official constructor had carved in the ashlar the form of this arches conformed the symbol of the Omayyad tradition.

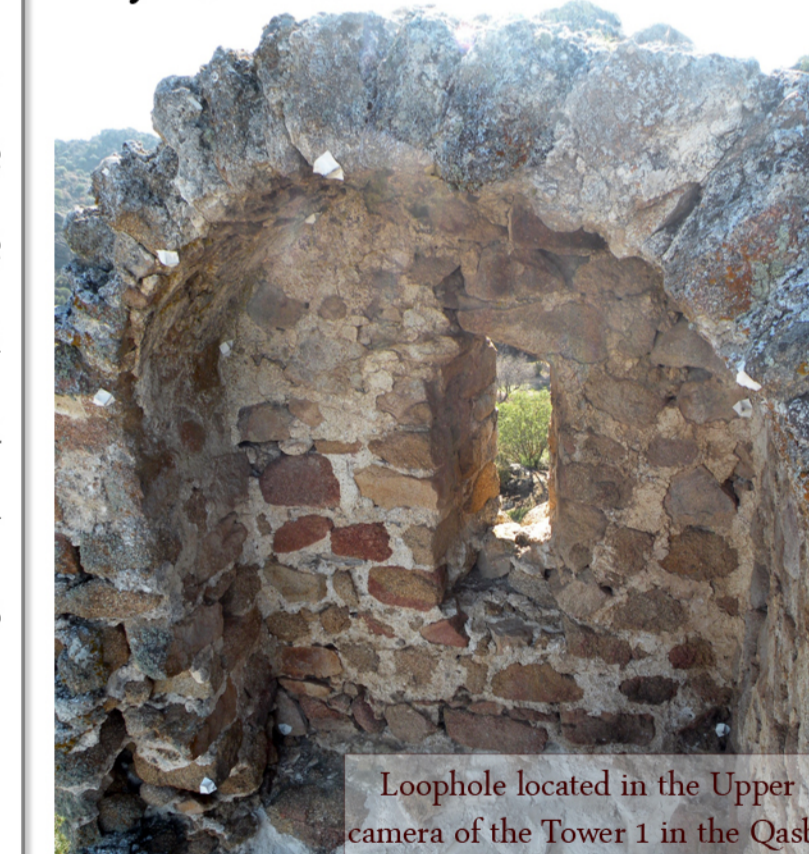


Photomontage of the minor gate 1, between Tower 1 and Tower 2 -the last one in the picture-

Pipelines: These types of openings represented an architectonic interest in the conservation of the defensive walls located in particular slopes, where the construction was attempted more carefully. These devices show the skill of the builders: the lower base was bevelled from in on the outside between one or three rows of ashlar. However, the upper part was stepped, and it was joined into the middle of the wall. Nine pipelines have been documented in the defensive wall, and four in the enceinte of the *Qasb*. **Loopholes:** These elements were probably developed during a further period of the fort, because we could only found one of them, situated in the tower nº 1 of the *Qasb*. The building masonry used and the type of tower -with an upper camera and vault-, could tell us when the construction was built: probably in the XIth Century (De Juan 2000). Particularly this loophole had of height 0,85 m. and wide 0,24 m. with embrasure out on the inside.



Pipeline 2, in the defensive wall.



Loophole located in the Upper camera of the Tower 1 in the *Qasb*.

CONCLUSIONS. In this short presentation some of the main landmarks, i.e. the openings elements, have been introduced. Those elements bring to us the possibility to know a few evidences of the relations between the delegate power of Cordoba and the inhabitants of the city. In some special cases, another sector of the society was linked to the power: the engineers and the official constructors. The connections among those specialists -*al'arif*- and the local builders, probably allowed for local variations which can be spotted in other forts (Martínez and Piedecabras 1996; Gurriarán and Márquez 2005), and which can served to mark the evolution of this settlement.

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