

LA PALMA, PUBLIUS CORNELIUS SCIPIO 'AFRICANUS' ENCAMPMENT DURING THE SECOND PUNIC WAR



UNIVERSITAT DE BARCELONA



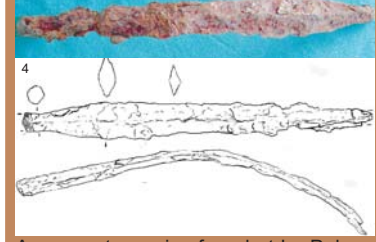
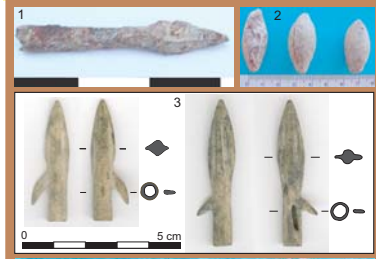
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The archaeological work carried out since 2006 at the site of La Palma (Tarragona, Spain), near the mouth of the River Ebro, has identified a Roman military encampment from the time of the Second Punic War. To date, no structures have been identified and all the finds have been made through field walking. Nevertheless, the geostrategic importance of the site, the references in the written sources and the finds confirm that this was the site of an encampment from the 217 to 209 BC campaign, under the successive commands of Lucius Marcus, Caius Nero and Publius Scipio.

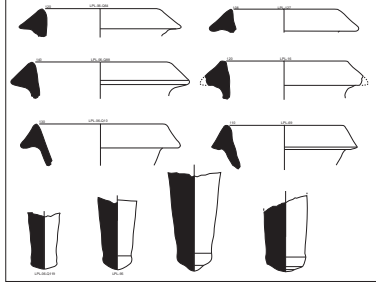


- Cn. Scipio (218 BP) 15,000 men (aprox)
- Publius Scipio (217 BP) 8,000 men
- Caius Nero (211 BP) 13,100 men
- Publius Cornelius Scipio 'Africanus' (210 BP) 11,000 men

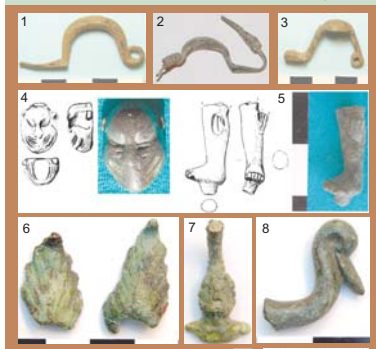
To date, three systematic archaeological prospection campaigns have been carried out on a 5 hectare area, although the whole site covers some 20 hectares. The most outstanding finds have been Greco-Italian amphora fragments, around a hundred coins dated to the end of the 3rd century BC, the remains of armaments, fibulae and other bronze objects of personal use.



Armament remains found at La Palma: 1) *pilum catapularium*, 2) lead sling bullets, 3) Carthaginian arrowheads, 4) iron lance.



The Greco-Italian amphoras make up 70% of the pottery found. The solid pivots and 45% inclined rims suggest a dating around the end of the 3rd century BC.



Bronze personal ornamentation objects: 1-3. Fibulae, 4. An amulet in the shape of a satyr head, 5-6. A winged foot and wings, 7-8. Handle appliqué, 9. A winged scarab.



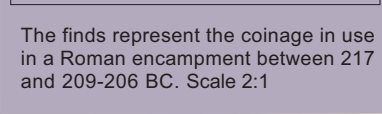
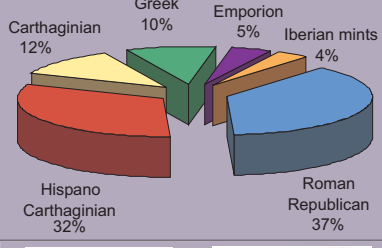
Roman dispositions on the River Ebro at the beginning of the Second Punic War in northeastern Iberia (218-209 BC).

- Large bases
- Possible encampments



Location of the La Palma Roman encampment on the River Ebro fluvial terrace.

ORIGINS OF THE COINS



The finds represent the coinage in use in a Roman encampment between 217 and 209-206 BC. Scale 2:1

In 209 BC, the troops under the command of Publius Cornelius Scipio assembled at the mouth of the River Ebro, probably at La Palma, to cross the river and march rapidly south to attack Cartago Nova (Cartagena). Once they had conquered that fortified town, they made their definitive advance to the south of the Iberian Peninsula; the La Palma encampment would then probably have lost most of its strategic importance.

References to a Roman encampment at the mouth of the River Ebro in the written sources

Livy. *History of Rome*. Loeb Classical Library, London 1964-1976. Translation by B.O. Foster.

XXV, 37, 6-7 ...after they had fortified a camp on this side of the Hiberus and decided that a commander of the army should be chosen in an election by the soldiers, relieving each other as sentries on the wall and in out post duty until all had cast their votes, they unanimously conferred the high command upon Lucius Marcus....

XXVI, 2. This army Nero embarked at Puteoli and transported to Spain. Arrived at Tarraco by sea, he there disembarked his troops, beached the ships, and armed even the crews, to increase his numbers. Then setting out for the river Ebro, he took over the army from Tiberius Fonteius and Lucius Marcus.

XXVI, 41, 1-2. In Spain at the beginning of spring Publius Scipio launched his ships, and after summoning the allied auxiliaries to Tarraco by an edict, he ordered the fleet and the transports to sail thence to the mouth of the river Ebro. Having ordered the legions to leave their winter quarters and meet at the same point, he himself with five thousand allies set out from Tarraco to join the army.

Livy XXVIII, 42, 3-4: Over an unmolested sea you sailed along the coast of Italy and Gaul, and put in with your fleet at Emporiae, a city of our allies. Landing your troops you led them through country everywhere perfectly safe and reached allies and friends of the Roman people at Tarraco. From Tarraco it was then a march from one Roman post to another. Along the Hiberus were the armies of your father and uncle, which after losing their generals had gained more spirit even from disaster.



Between 218 and 209 BC the lower reaches of the River Ebro were a hugely important strategic area. The battles between the Romans and the Carthaginians were fought there. The first was at Cese (218 BC), followed by the naval battle near the mouth of the Ebro (217 BC), the battle of *Hibera* (216 BC), that of *Intibili* (215 BC) and, finally, the retaking of Sagunt in 212 BC.