

From the archaic states to romanization: a historical and evolutionary perspective on the Iberians

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ABSTRACT

In the middle of the first millennium BC small-scale societies (local or even family level communities) on the Eastern coast of the Iberian Peninsula were rapidly transformed, socially and culturally, into complex ones of at least tens of thousands of people and endowed with centralised forms of political organization that controlled vast territories, often of several thousand square kilometres. From the beginning of the 4th century BC, the rapid expansion of writing suggests the establishment of an administrative system and the development of the institutional complexity particular to the archaic states. These states were governed by kings who emerged from the aristocratic ranks that dominated the diverse communities forming the bulk of the population. We know from Greco-Latin sources that the inhabitants of these territories were known by the name of *Iberians*, and that this ethnic group was divided into different peoples that in some cases corresponded to the afore mentioned political entities, whereas in other cases several of them must have been included. Epigraphy shows that the same language was used in the whole of this region, although perhaps not exclusively; in modern times it is known as 'Iberian', and cannot be deciphered. Incorporation into the Roman world around 200 BC meant a gradual integration into Latin culture, that was completed a little before the change of era.

KEY WORDS: Iberian culture, Mediterranean proto-history, socio-cultural evolution, Greek colonization, Phoenician colonization, technological change, ancient demography, archaic state

INTRODUCTION

The first millennium BC is the period in which, for the first time, the transformation of small-scale communities, characteristic of the prehistory of this region, into socio-cultural complex societies is documented for the whole area of the Western Mediterranean basin (with the exception of some insular areas). By socio-cultural complexity is meant the existence of political entities of a certain territorial extension –hundreds or even thousands of square kilometres, some times many more– usually governed from a central nucleus that is remarkable for its size. Also for the administrative functions that take place within it, and by the presence of symbolical elements linked to its power. These entities include an important number of local communities, and have a population of at least some tens of thousands distributed in hierarchic, endogamic social groups with a differentiated access to wealth. These social elites control an institutional and military apparatus

that, together with a legitimizing ideology, guarantees social stability, often reaching a remarkable degree of complexity characteristic of archaic states.¹ The sources of information and our degree of knowledge on the different societies that experienced this process of a growing political economy are very diverse, but the global transformation is evident, from the Numidian and Mauritanian monarchies of Northern Africa –which controlled hundreds of thousands of square kilometres–, to the city-states of Etruria, and the diverse peoples that inhabited the Mediterranean coasts of the Iberian Peninsula, the Mediterranean Gaul, and Liguria.

The causes originating these processes were probably various, both endogenous and exogenous in nature. In reference to the latter, it is worth pointing out that the first millennium BC was the period of the great colonial expansion of Phoenicians and Greeks, two of the great peoples of antiquity, towards the Central and Western Mediterranean. The characteristics of this process –often labelled as 'colonial' because of its relative similarities with modern European colonial expansion– are not homogenous; they may vary from the foundation of large cities, such as Carthage and Syracuse that controlled vast territories plundered from the autochthonous popula-

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Figure 1. Palethnological map (simplified) of the Iberian Peninsula.

tions, to a presence limited to simple commercial establishments, or small cities facing an enormous indigenous hinterland that remained fully politically independent. We can guess, nevertheless, that in all cases the interaction between ‘colonizers’ and local populations played an important role in the evolution of all the societies involved in these encounters. The generalization of iron metallurgy was another very important factor; probably of an external origin –in some cases clearly related to the colonial process–, it helps to explain the fast evolution of Western Mediterranean populations towards social complexity because it allowed a remarkable increase in population.

As regards the endogenous factors, the most obvious is the demographic growth that some social theories hold to be decisive in the process of socio-cultural change.² Literary sources, for instance, mention the great number of Numidian contingents that took first one side and then the other, in the great conflicts that confronted Rome and Carthage, which could not be understood without a heavy population density. At the same time, in many areas, the archaeological record proves an unequivocal increase in the number and size of human settlements on a scale previously unknown. An adequate understanding of the processes of change that led to socio-cultural complexity must necessarily take into consideration all these factors

(demography, technology, exterior relations), both in general or at the particular level of the different societies that went through this change.

One consequence of the colonial presence and progressive integration of the Western Mediterranean into the dominion of the great powers of the time –Carthage and eventually Rome– is the existence of written documentation, both Greek and Latin, that allows us to know the main features of names and places of numbers of peoples that inhabited them, the Iberians being one of them. But the information transmitted by Greco-Latin sources –geographical descriptions, navigation guides, chronicles of the Punic wars and of the Roman conquest– fail in general to provide a solid knowledge of indigenous societies. This is not surprising because, leaving aside the problems of transmission; they are not, with few exceptions, the outcome of an ‘ethnographic’ or historical interest in the autochthonous populations. These are mentioned or summarily described only in so far as they are involved in events, in particular military ones, where they always played secondary roles, often unwillingly. Archaeology has therefore an irreplaceable role in the analysis of these societies, and due to the theoretical and methodological advances of the last decades, as well as to a long tradition of research –more than centenary, at least in the countries on the European coasts– is prepared to offer, with the

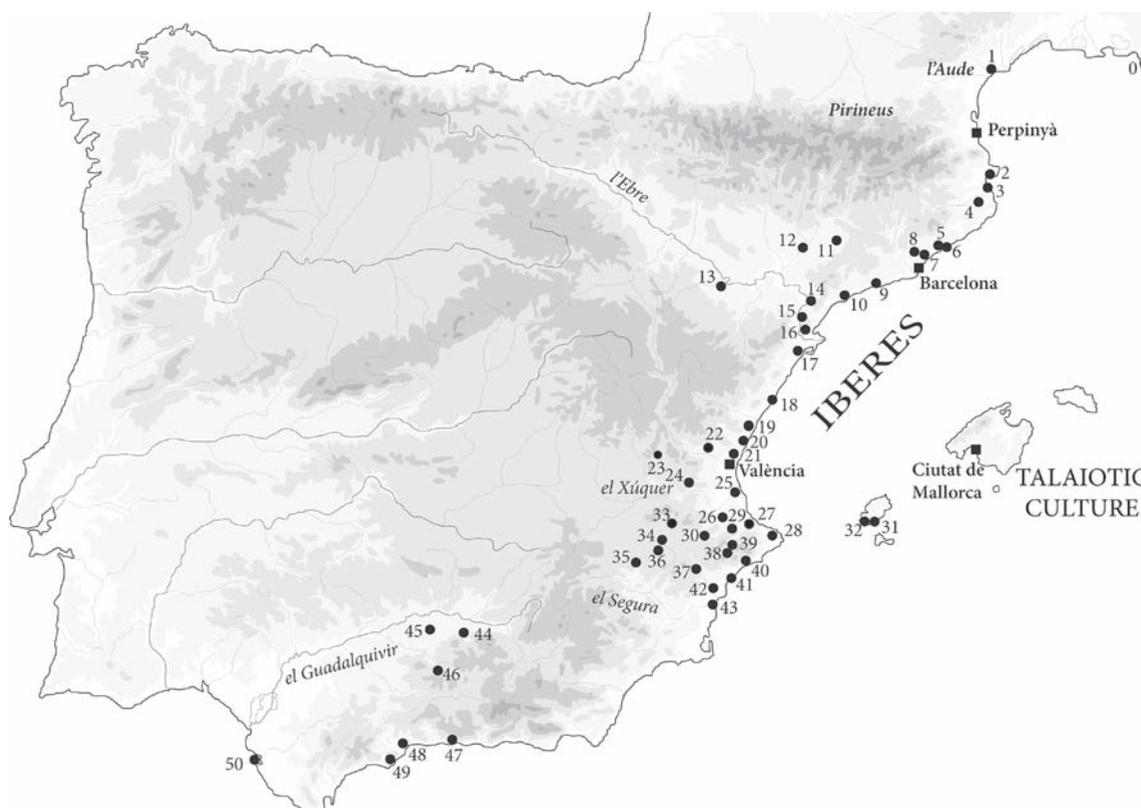


Figure 2. Place-names mentioned in the text.

Aldovesta (Benifallet)	15	La Plaza de Armas (Puente Tablas)	44
Alorda Park (Calafell)	9	La Punta d'Orlell	19
Anserona	1	La Serreta d'Alcoi	39
Azaila	13	Llíria/Edeta	22
Burriac/Ilturo i necròpolis de Cabrera de Mar	5	Los Almadenes (Hellín)	35
Cadis/Gadeira-Gades	50	Los Villares (Caudete de las Fuentes)/Kelin	23
Eivissa/Ibosim-Ebusus	31	Málaga/Malaca	48
El Cabeço d'Alfafara	30	Marsella/Massalia	0
El Castellar de Meca (Ayora)	33	Mataró/luro	6
El Castellet de Banyoles (Tivissa)	14	Molí d'Espígol de Tornabous	11
El Cerro de los Santos (Montealegre del Castillo)	34	Necròpolis de les Casetes	40
El Cerro del Villar (Málaga)	49	Necròpolis de los Collados (Almedinilla)	46
El Monastil (Elda)	37	Porcuna/Obulco	45
El Morro de Mezquitilla (Algarrobo)	47	Pozo Moro (Chinchilla)	36
El Puig d'Alcoi	38	Puig Castellar de Santa Coloma de Gramenet	7
El Rabat (Rafelcofer)	27	Roses/Rhode	2
El Tos Pelat (Montcada)	21	Sa Caleta	32
El Tossal de Manisses	41	Sagunt (Arse)	20
Empúries/Emporion	3	Sant Jaume-Mas d'en Serrà (Alcanar)	18
Iltirta/Lleida	12	Sucro (Cullera)	25
L'Alcúdia d'Elx/Ilici	42	Tarragona/Tarakon-Kese	10
L'Alt de Benimaquia (Dènia)	28	Tortosa (Hibera?)	16
La Carència (Turis)	24	Turó de ca n'Oliver (Cerdanyola)	8
La Covalta d'Albaida	29	Ullastret	4
La Fonteta (Guardamar)	43	Xàtiva/Saiti	26

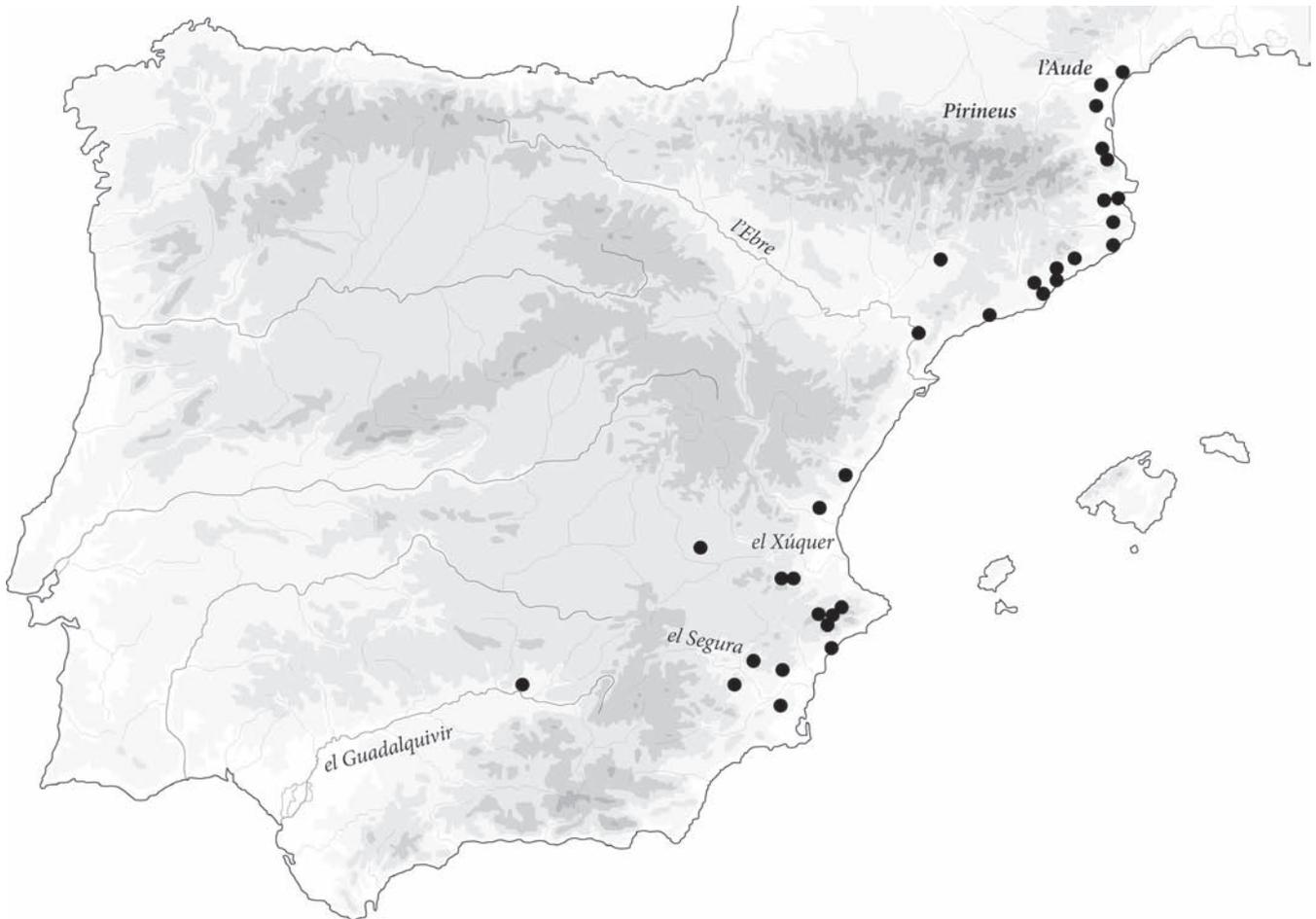


Figure 3. Map of the distribution of Iberian epigraphs prior to the Roman conquest; based on the data by J. de Hoz (2001) (completed).

support of written sources, a coherent and probably quite faithful picture.

We present in this paper a brief account on the process of formation and development of one of those proto-historic peoples, the Iberians. We shall begin with their space-time delimitation, and with what we know of their language and ways of writing. We shall continue with a quick analysis of the history of research and the theoretical framework that has guided it and still does so today. The fourth section will look into the historical processes in the formation of Iberian society in the 7th and 6th centuries BC, its full development until the Roman conquest around 200 BC, and finally on its definitive dissolution into the strong classical culture introduced by the invaders during the two last centuries prior to our era. We shall end by taking brief stock of our research.

THE SPACE AND TIME OF THE IBERIANS

The territory inhabited by the Iberians can be established approximately from the ancient written sources –in particular that of the Greek authors– as well as from the epigraphic evidence left by the Iberian civilization itself. The different references in the Greek texts to the geographical term *Ibería* and of the ethnonym *Íberes* prove that at dif-

ferent historical moments these words designated different realities. The oldest sources usually locate the Iberians in the coastal area spreading from the North of Cartagena to the Pyrenees or even further, to coastal Western Languedoc. In some cases, though, they also include within Iberia Tartessos, in the low Guadalquivir, and therefore the whole South of the Peninsula. (fig. 1). In the later texts, from the 3rd to the 5th centuries BC, the whole of the Mediterranean coast of the Peninsula is often mentioned as being part of Iberia, and both Polybius in the 2nd century BC and Strabo in the time of Augustus, use the word *Ibería* as an equivalent to Latin *Hispania*, a term probably of Phoenician-Punic origin that designated the totality of the great Peninsula in the Western Mediterranean.

The relative ambiguity of the ancient sources can be allowed for thanks to the existence of an important group of inscriptions –nearly two thousand–, dated from the end of the 5th century BC; they are inscribed on different types of objects (coins, lead sheets, weight measures, crockery, pottery, funerary stelae, etc) (fig. 3-5) and were undoubtedly written in the same language. This geographical distribution corresponds essentially to the coastal area stretching from Murcia to Anserona (in Western Languedoc) –with, after the Roman conquest, an extension as far as Almería, besides important penetra-

a			b			
	1	2	1	2	3	4
a	AA	A	𐤀	𐤁	G1 a	𐤁
b	B	B	𐤂	𐤃	G2 e	𐤂
g	Γ	Γ	𐤄	𐤅	G3 i	𐤄
d	Δ	Δ	cf. S56?	𐤆	G3' í	—
e	E E	—	𐤇	w 4	G4 o	𐤇
w	F	—	𐤈	l 1	G5 u	𐤈
dz	I I	—	𐤉	r 4	G6 l	𐤉
e:	H	H e	—	n 4	G7 r	𐤊
th	Θ	—	—	?	G8 r'	𐤋
i	I	I	𐤌	s 𐤍	G9 n	𐤌
k	K	K	𐤎	š M	G10 m	—
l	Λ	Λ	𐤏	g 𐤐	G11 ?	𐤏
m	M	—	𐤑	k 𐤒	G12 s	𐤑
n	N N	N	𐤓	q 𐤔	G13 ś	𐤒
ks	Ξ	—	—	—	G14 ka	𐤓
o	O	◊	𐤕	t x	G15 ke	𐤔
p	P	—	—	—	G16 ki	𐤕
q	Φ	—	—	—	G16' kí	—
r	PPD	DD	⊕	t ⊕	G17 ko	𐤖
r	—	𐤑	—	d ΔA	G18 ku	𐤗
s	{ {	{ ś	—	—	G19 ta	+
t	T	T	—	—	G20 te	⊕
u	V Y	V	𐤗	p ↑	G21 ti	⊕
ph	φ	—	—	—	G21' tí	⊕
kh	+ X	—	—	—	G22 to	Δ
ps	Υ	—	cf. G25?	𐤙	G23 tu	Δ
o:	Ω	—	{ m	{	G24 ba	—
ts	Ⓜ	Ⓜ s	cf. G26	𐤛	G25 be	𐤛
interpunc. :	:	::	cf. G16	𐤜	G26 bi	𐤛
			𐤝	h 𐤞	G26' bí	↑
			cf. G21	𐤟	G27 bo	𐤟
			𐤠	h 𐤡	G28 bu	𐤟
			cf. G28	𐤢	S51	𐤟
			cf. G22	—	S52 ba?	{
					S53	
					S54	𐤛
					S55	𐤛
					S56	𐤛
					S57	𐤛
					S58	𐤛
					S59	𐤛
					S60	𐤛

Figure 4. Systems of writing (according to J. de Hoz); a: 1, Ionic alphabet; 2, Greco-Iberian writing; b: 1, Phoenician alphabet; 2, South-Western writing; 3, Southern Iberian writing; 4, Northern Iberian writing.

tions inland in the Ebre (Sp. Ebro) valley, the Xúquer (Sp. Júcar) and Segura as far as High Andalusia. Since this epigraphic map previous to the Roman conquest basically coincides with the territory that the oldest sources ascribed to the Iberians, it seems reasonable to assume that there is a correspondence between both facts, and that this epigraphic area –which is the only one that the ancient sources labelled as unequivocally Iberian– constitutes the “Iberia proper”, defined by the language spoken by its inhabitants. Therefore, language must have been the most evident element that allowed the identification

and delimitation of the Iberian ethnic group by the Greeks.

From this territorial and palethnological definition the notion has arisen of an “Iberian culture”, in a wider sense, including all the materials documented in the above mentioned area. But it is worth pointing out that this material culture is not even remotely homogeneous over the whole territory, and does not constitute an “archaeological culture” in the sense given by historic-cultural archaeology to this expression, that is, as an homogeneous set of material-culture characteristics cumented

in a well delimited territory which presumably corresponds to a clearly differentiated human group.³ On the contrary, there is an authentic mosaic of material culture facies, sometimes strongly differentiated, as for instance in the scarcity of sculpture pieces to the North of the river Xúquer whereas they are often found to its South. (fig. 6 and 11). As a matter of fact, without the epigraphic evidence and the written sources it is doubtful that archaeologists would have ever recognised a solid cultural unity in the territory we call “Iberia proper”; on the other hand, the presence of archaeological elements, for instance sculptures believed to be of Iberian type, has often led to the inclusion in the Iberian area of other regions that from a linguistic point of view do not belong to it, as in the case of the middle valley of the Guadalquivir.

Nevertheless, although homogeneous material culture did not exist, both archaeology and the written sources prove the existence of developed forms of social and political organization in the area we call “Iberia proper”, which translates into complex –often hierarchical– patterns of settlement, as well as in the use of an advanced technology that included the potter’s wheel (fig. 7) and a sophisticated iron metallurgy (fig. 8). In the archaeological literature it is common to consider these technological elements as distinctive of the Iberian culture, and that their appearance in the archaeological record marks its beginning. If we stand by these criteria, we can speak of an “Iberian culture” starting around the middle of the 6th century BC, a date that fits well with the first mentions of the Iberians in the Greek sources.

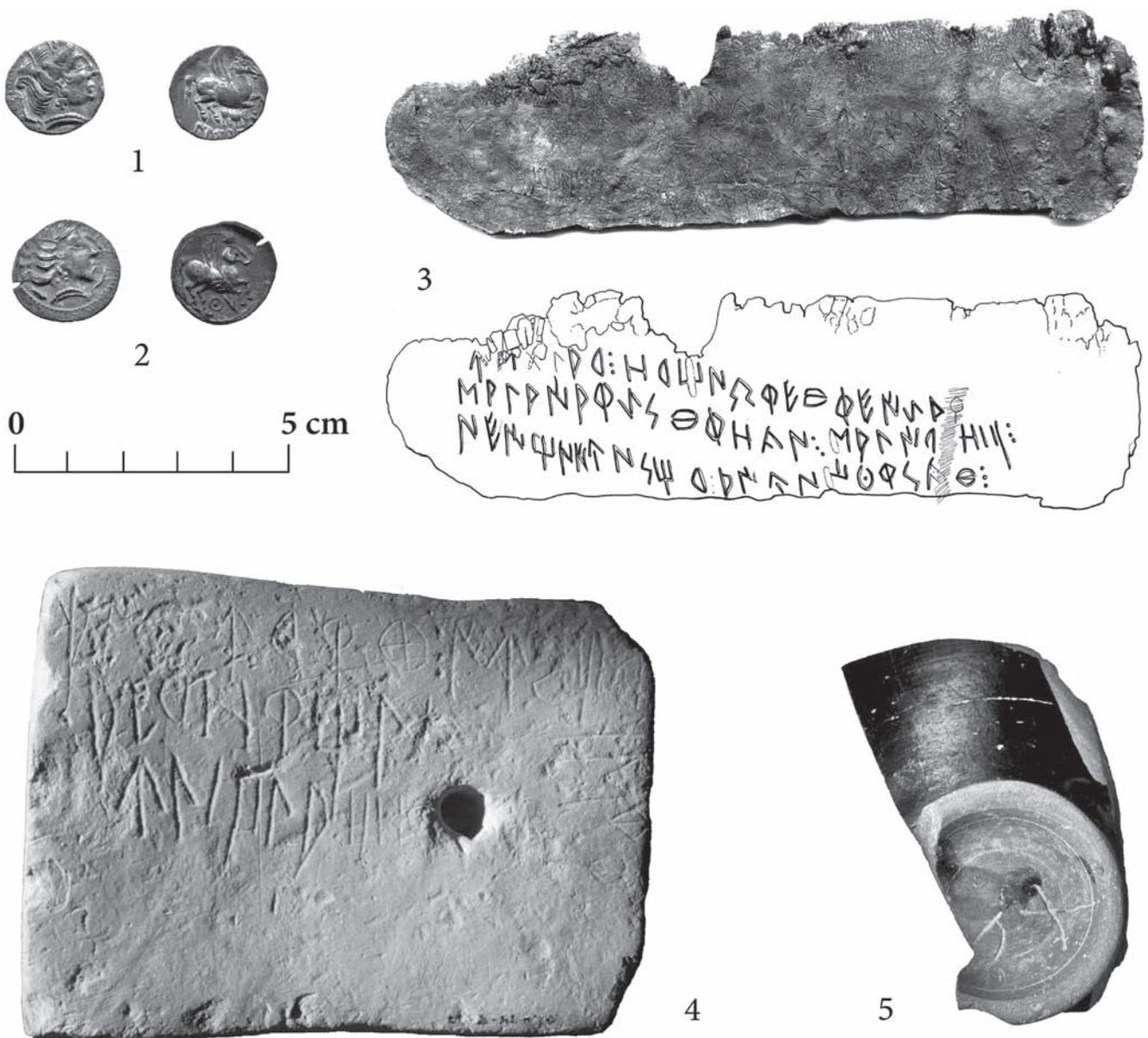


Figure 5. Epigraphic documents in Northern Iberian writing. Drawing by Ramón Álvarez Arza.

Indeed, the first author to refer to the Iberians was Hecataeus of Miletus, who wrote around 500 BC, as well as the unknown author of a 6th century Massaliote circumnavigation that seems to have been one of the sources for Rufus Festus Avienus' *Ora Maritima*, a poetical work written at the end of the 4th century AD.

We find in it the description of the coastline between the Atlantic coast of the Iberian Peninsula and the mouth of the Rhone. This allows us to assert that the Iberian ethnic group already existed in the 6th century BC with clear and differentiated enough characteristics to be recognized by the Greeks who had come into contact with it. Hecataeus' attestation also shows that this ethnic group was subdivided into several peoples; the Milesian geographer mentions the Esdetes –identified as the later Edetani, who in the 3rd century BC occupied the central part of the Valencian Country–, the Ilaraugatai –probably the Ilergetes who in the 3rd century BC inhabited the Eastern part of the valley of the river Ebre (Sp. Ebro), and maybe also the Ilercavones who settled at the North of the Valencian Country and the lower course of the Ebre (Sp. Ebro)– and the Misgetes –literally, in Greek, the *ēmixedí* ones– in the area that lies between the Ebre (Sp. Ebro) and the Hérault. The palethnologic map becomes more complex as attested by the latter sources, which –sometimes with the help of the legends present on coins– allow a more or less precise reconstruction of the mosaic of the 3rd century BC peoples. (fig 1) The complex problem of the relationships between these ethnic unities and the politico-historical entities recognizable from the literary and archaeological sources will be dealt with later. For the moment, let us only point out that the Iberian society and culture did not suddenly disappear with their incorporation to the Roman rule, but that the long process of assimilation into Latin culture was not completed until the second half of the first century BC.

THE IBERIAN LANGUAGE AND ITS WRITING SYSTEMS

As has been pointed above, a substantial number of epigraphic documents are known –almost two thousand, most of them found in 'Iberia proper'– written on objects of a diverse nature and using different systems of writing, but having in common a unique, non-Indo-European language conventionally called by modern scholars 'Iberian'. We can assert that before the Roman conquest this Iberian language was already used, at least as a written language, in a vast geographical area extending from Murcia to the zone between the Aude and the Erau (Fr. Hérault), with important penetrations towards the valley of the Ebre-Ebro, as towards La Mancha and High Andalusia. (fig. 3)⁴ After the conquest, the usage (at least in writing) of the Iberian language went through a significant expansion inland, especially in the Ebre-Ebro valley. It is also worth pointing out that the diversity of objects

bearing the writings –some of which have probably not been preserved due to their perishable nature– as well as the nature of their inscriptions, show that writing was used in all orders of life (fig 5).

The first thing that must be stated about the Iberian language is that although the phonetic value of the signs used in the different systems of writing is known (with only a few uncertainties), it has been impossible to decipher because it is an isolated tongue without any link to any other known language. Obviously this sets a narrow limit to the historical value of the texts that have come down to us, but it is also true that the endeavours of linguists and epigraphists have made it possible to attain a certain knowledge of the general sense of some of the inscriptions, to identify the meaning of some prefixes and suffixes –for instance *ilti*, town– and to identify a great number of anthroponyms and toponyms, which has been facilitated by their presence in ancient texts and, in the case of the latter, on coins (fig. 5, 1-2). By way of example, the repetition of certain structures in sepulchral stelae allows us to recognize funereal formulae, just as the frequency of numeral signs in texts written on lead sheets (fig. 5, 3) suggest a commercial or administrative character.⁵ Beyond this point the Iberian language remains a complete enigma that will only be solved with the discovery of a bilingual text of a certain extension which may reveal the meaning of a significant number of the many Iberian words that have come down to us.

We do not have any one clear reason explaining why there were diverse writing systems (fig. 4). One of them was the Greek alphabet, used in only twenty-four inscriptions (called "Greco-Iberian"), all of them found to the South of the Valencian Country. All the rest, except three in the Latin alphabet, were written in one of two different but related systems of annotation created in the Iberian Peninsula; this is why they, together with a third system used in the peninsular South-West, are known as 'paleo-Hispanic' writings.⁶ Today it is generally accepted that they derive from the Phoenician alphabet, though they clearly differ from it in that they are semi-syllabic systems; that is, they have signs not only to register vowels and consonants, but also syllables. The two systems in question are known as Southern Iberian writing –basically documented to the South of the Valencian Country, the Eastern area of La Mancha and High Andalusia–, and "Levantine"⁷ Iberian writing, respectively. The latter is an unfortunate name that needs to be substituted by Septentrional –or North-Eastern, which is in fact another name also applied to it– since it is documented in the whole area between the Alacant (Sp. Alicante) area (sporadically also more to the South) and the Languedoc.

The vernacular character of the Iberian language in the whole area where it is documented is a question widely debated, in spite of being the only language that has been attested there. The possibility of being the language proper to only part of this area has been raised traditionally due to the existence in it during the first half of the first



Figure 6. Iberian sculpture: The Lady of Elx (Sp. Elche).

millennium BC of several diverse “archaeological cultures”. The obvious influence of the so-called “Urnfield Culture” from beyond the Pyrenees on the area between the North of the Valencian Country and the Languedoc suggested that it had been linguistically submitted to Indo-European influence from the end of the second millennium BC, and consequently that the Iberian language imposed itself later, possibly in the 6th century BC coinciding with the appearance of some characteristically Iberian material cultural traits mentioned above (wheel pottery, iron metallurgy). Logically, this expansion of the Iberian language would have started from the non-Indo-European region in the epigraphic and linguistic area where it is historically documented, that is from the South.

Behind this argument there is an arbitrary identification of two cultural aspects (language and material productions) that are not necessarily related: neither the existence of material culture and practices of the type of urnfield proves the dissemination, and even less the generalization, of an Indo-European language, nor the later appearance of cultural material traits more or less common to the rest of the Iberian epigraphic area implies the expansion of the Iberian language from a specific point in that area, though none of these possibilities must be necessarily excluded.

This vision of the linguistic map prior to the 6th century BC as well as the supposed non-Iberian anthroponymic density in places such as Ullastret and Azaila, un-

derlies the hypothesis of J. de Hoz that the Iberian language must have spread northwards from the South and center of the Valencian Country as the habitual language used in those commercial transactions that the meridional Iberians developed in more Northern regions as partners of the the Greek colonizers that had settled at Emporion (Empúries-Sp. Ampurias).⁸ This would explain that Iberian was the only written language even in those areas where it was not common, where it was probably adopted by the leading social sectors. Nevertheless, according to J. Velaza the majority of anthroponyms that J. de Hoz considers as non-Iberian can be explained without difficulty within the Iberian onomastic system; and, if this is not the case, the percentage of “oddities” is not larger than the percentage found in the anthroponymy of any other part of the Iberian linguistic area.⁹ To this basic objection against De Hoz’s hypothesis we may still add other arguments of historical coherence; they refer to the supposed commercial role of Southern Iberians, or to the feasibility of interpreting the “Iberization” of the material culture of the Northern zones as a result of this supposed activity.¹⁰

Velaza has also suggested that the lack of dialectal fragmentation of the Iberian language as it appears in the epigraphic record could not be explained if it had been the common vernacular tongue in the whole epigraphic area where it is attested long before the appearance of the first inscriptions at the end of the 5th century BC. This would imply a population movement not long before that date –some time towards the middle of the 6th century BC, when an important and swift change in the material register takes place, seems most probable; this population change must have been sufficiently radical to provoke the linguistic substitution in the reception zones. Which was the direction of this population movement, the author does not say.¹¹ Velaza’s argument is important but we have to ask to which extent the available documentation is sufficient to recognize the dialects if they ever existed. This allows us to reconsider the possibility of the Iberian language being vernacular in its whole epigraphic area. Nevertheless, a phenomenon of expansion that might have been caused by a population shift can not be excluded –most likely in the South to North direction–, nor can the use of other languages, strictly at the spoken level, in the area in question.

HISTORY OF THE RESEARCH

Research on the Iberians has a long tradition of almost a century and a half, based on hundreds of field studies and thousands of published works¹² that include the analysis of the written sources, excavation and survey monographs, epigraphic and linguistic studies, *corpora* of materials and a huge number of studies on outstanding objects, urbanism, architecture, etc. It is impossible to offer a complete view of it all; we will only point out the main

lines of this research and to frame them within the theoretical context and the intellectual atmosphere that guided them. In spite the abundance of bibliographic material –or perhaps because of it– there is only one updated authorial synthesis also published by A. Ruiz and M. Molinos¹³ in 1965, but there are some partial¹⁴ and one of a popularizing nature,¹⁵ as well as two excellent exhibition catalogues¹⁶ and the minutes of a Conference dealing with the archaeological aspects of Iberism in the Catalan Countries and the Mediterranean Gaul.¹⁷

The study of literary sources began, as could be expected, in the Renaissance. The Occitan Peire de Marca is a good representative; his erudite work (*Marca Hispanica, sive limes Hispanicus*) was written during his stay in Catalonia from 1644 to 1651 as General Visitor to Louis XIII. It consists of a first approximation to the palethnological reality of this part of the Peninsula. Of course, the process of identification of the Iberian material culture was slower and more complex, and did not culminate until the end of the 19th century. It goes without saying that Iberian materials were usual finds, but although they were recognized as ancient –sometimes as Iberian or at least as pre-Roman– until the second half of the 19th century they were often attributed to the Roman, Byzantine, or Visigothic times. Epigraphy, on the other hand, showed a peculiar system of writing that could be partially interpreted and that from the legends on coins permitted the identification of some Iberian toponyms and ethnomyms that had been transmitted by ancient sources and that warranted the cultural assignment.

It is in the last third of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th when more or less systematic excavations began: necropolis of Almedinilla (Córdoba) in 1867; excavation by the *Madrid Museum* in the Cerro de los Santos shrine (Albacete) in 1871, 1891 and 1898-1903; excavation of the necropolis in Cabrera de Mar (Maresme) in 1881; L'Alcúdia d'Elx (Baix Vinalopó) in the periods 1897-1900 and 1905; the beginning of the works in the village Puig Castellar in Santa Coloma de Gramenet (Barcelonès) in 1905, among many others. They were motivated in some cases by the interest aroused by the Iberians as the first Spanish “national” culture, and in some other cases –particularly those by the Louvre museum– by the eagerness to recover some pieces to enrich their collections, and still in other cases by simple scientific curiosity; none of these aims necessarily excluded the others. These works, together with the fortuitous but sensational finding of La Dama d'Elx (Sp. The Lady of Elche) in 1897, began to define the nature of the material culture of the different Iberian ethnic groups. In this sense, with have emphasize, by its liminal character, the work of Pierre Paris *Essai sur l'art et l'industrie de l'Espagne primitive* (Paris, 1903-1904), which is the first study on pre-Roman material production in the Iberian Peninsula, especially sculpture and pottery. This work though was more focussed on the history of art than on archaeology, and did not establish with precision either the territorial area of

what it meant to be Iberian –Iberian art and industry were only provisionally those of pre-Roman Spain– or its chronology, because he derived Iberian pottery from the Mycenaean ceramics, which were in fact more than half a millennium older.

The more strictly scientific foundations for the study of Iberian society were laid down in the first third of the 20th century by three eminent figures. One was Adolf Schulten (1870-1960), the author of the compilation and commentaries of almost the whole collection of the *Fontes Hispaniae Antiquae* (University of Barcelona, 1922-1970) in which Pere Bosch Gimpera also participated. Also the great erudite Manuel Gómez Moreno y Martínez (1870-1970), whose main contribution was the discovery of the phonetic value of the syllabic signs of Iberian writing. Finally we have to especially remember Pere Bosch Gimpera (1891-1974), who was the first archaeologist with a solid theoretical and methodological training who dealt with the problems of Iberian culture and with the pre-history of the Iberian Peninsula in general. Bosch studied classical philology in Barcelona, but during his stays in Berlin from 1911 to 1914 he acquired a very complete training as a European pre-historian, which was an absolute novelty in Spain.¹⁸ From the methodological point of view, Bosch became familiarised with the field work methods and with the analysis of material culture sets, as well as with those associations capable of offering reliable dating; with this knowledge, he was able to reject in his doctoral dissertation *La cronología de la cerámica ibérica*, presented in 1913,¹⁹ the exaggerated old dating proposed by P. Paris, and highlight the existence of different territorial facies. From the theoretical point of view, under the direct influence of Gustaf Kossina, Bosch adopted the historic-cultural focus based on the anthropological theory of Cultural Circles (*Kulturkreislehre*) that at that time prevailed in European pre-history studies, most especially in Germany. This research was not centred on the analysis of the material bases of subsistence nor on the study of social structures, but on the identification of the characteristic cultural traits identifiable in the material culture of each of the peoples that had consecutively occupied a certain area; from this derived the notion of *Kulturschichten*, that is, the stratification of the different “Cultural Circles”. With these presuppositions Bosch's programme was inevitably based on the identification of superimposed “archaeological cultures”;²⁰ their appearance in a certain area was understood as a result of a population shift. Bosch systematically applied this programme both in his research at the *Servei d'Investigacions Arqueològiques de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans* (Archaeological Research Service of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans) and in his monumental *Etnologia de la Península Ibèrica* (Barcelona, 1932), among other works. Much abridged, his vision of the Iberians is that of a people of ancient African origin that established themselves at the South of the Iberian Peninsula in Neolithic times, and that by means of their contacts with Greek colonizers created an original civili-

zation characterised by a sculpture with strong Hellenic influence; these people spread towards the North in the second Iron Age. As a matter of fact, the peoples North of the river Ebre (Sp. Ebro) and central Catalonia were for Bosch not Iberian in a strict sense but late “Iberianized”.

The analysis of social relations in the Iberian world had hardly been studied prior to the 1936-1939 civil war; the only exception was a brief article by Joaquim Costa published in 1889 in which he proposed the existence of one class of noble tribes and another of servile tribes attached to the first by relationships of collective dependence.²¹ In the first years after the civil war the study of social relationships experienced an important renewal thanks to the works of Julio Caro Baroja who, in spite of the obvious influence on him of the *Kulturkreislehre*, shows also his affection for the clearly functionalist work of Richard Thurnwarld. Probably this influence explains the presence in *Los pueblos de España* (Barcelona, 1946) of large sections dedicated to the analysis of social organization, of political institutions, war, economy, or everyday life of the pre-Roman peoples of the Iberian Peninsula.

Still valuable, his work had a remarkable influence on the majority of researchers in the post-war period, such as Antoni Arribas and Joan Maluquer de Motes. Caro never paid special attention to the question of the origins of Iberian culture, whereas Maluquer de Motes has dealt with it several times. His approach is not essentially different from that of Bosch Gimpera, in the sense that he considers the formation of that culture as a direct result of the contact with the Greek colonisers, but he offers a more complete explanation inspired in good measure in the processes of cultural change caused by modern colonization; he considers that the passage to urban life was directly caused by the Greek colonizers in order to raise the purchasing power of the native populations who constituted their commercial customers, while at the same time

trying to avoid the formation of political entities solid enough to endanger the maintenance of Greek colonies.²² Miquel Tarradell also brought forward this idea about the formation of Iberian culture by the direct influence of colonizers, although placing the initial focus in the peninsular South-East as Bosch had already done.²³ This idea acquired a certain relief in the 1970s when early contacts between this zone and the Phoenician colonies of the Circle of the Gibraltar Strait were attested and wheel-made pottery dating from the first half of the 6th century BC was found in some sites.

The celebration in Barcelona in 1976 of the *International Symposium: The Origins of the Iberian World*²⁴ culminates two decades in which the improvement in excavation techniques and the knowledge of archaeological materials permitted the fixation of the chronological framework, in particular the settling in the 6th century BC of the spread of wheel made ceramics and iron metallurgy, which are conventionally accepted as diagnostical traits of the Iberian world. From the 1980s, under the influence of processual archaeology, research has been rather more directed to the characterisation of the territorial settlement patterns and also, through extensive excavations, to the nature of habitats and domestic architecture, as well as to the management of economic resources, a field that has been much favoured by the progressive introduction of different techniques of archaeo-biological analysis. Similarly, the analysis of iconography has played an important role in the studies carried out during the recent decades,²⁵ while gender issues and the various discourses that are more explicitly post-modern have had a more limited presence.²⁶

From the end of the 1980s the main trend has generally been to see the formation and the development of Iberian civilization as the result of essentially endogenous processes, but the probable role played by colonial trade can not be ignored, in so far as it could provide some of the



Figure 7. Ceramic jar. Kàlathos from Cabezo de la Guardia, in Alcoriza (Museum of Teruel).

elements used in the power relationships of indigenous societies that could make easier the processes of social differentiation. As will be shown over the next pages, the more widely used models have their origins in cultural materialism, in structural Marxism and the theory of

prestige goods, often related to approaches close to the world-system theory. Structural Marxism together with other inspirational sources equally of a Marxist trend are found at the root of the model for social change postulated by A. Ruiz and M. Molinos²⁷ to explain the formation

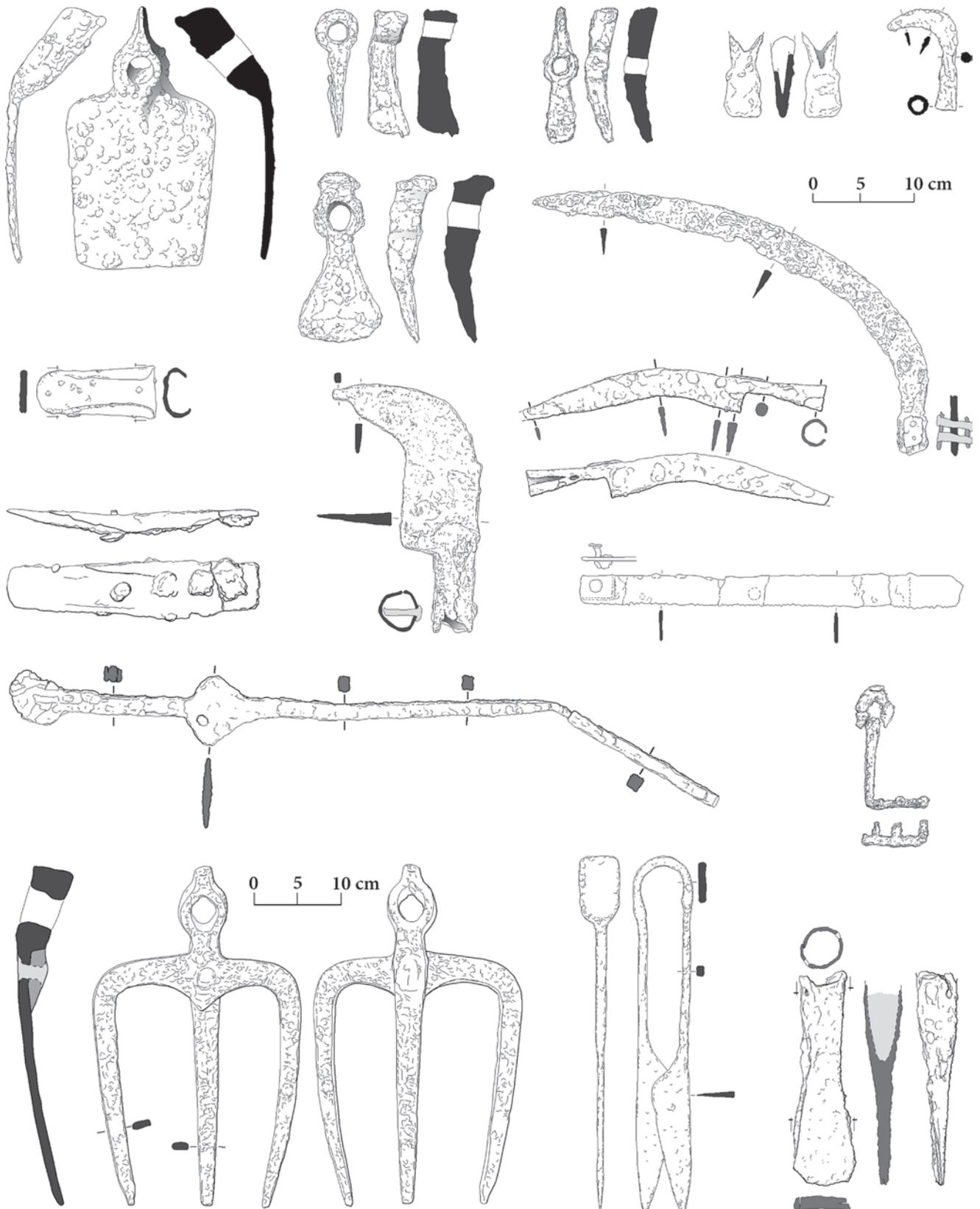


Figure 8. Iron tools from the Iberian period. Drawing by Ramón Álvarez Arza.

and development of Iberian society. This model centres its analysis on the study of power relationships among lineages and the role that prestige goods, particularly imported materials, played in them. This theory, that has a certain documental basis in literary and epigraphic sources can be, from our point of view, easily integrated into a developed cultural materialist model such as the one by A. Johnson and T. Earle;²⁸ this model searches in the material roots of subsistence and reproduction of society (especially in population growth) the ultimate causes of the growth of the political economy and the social change that derives from it; it does not undervalue the role played in these processes by the social relationships specific of every human group, nor the material items that are used in it, and therefore also the contacts with the colonizing society. To a great extent the aim of the present article is to propose an interpretation of Iberian society based on this theoretical synthesis.²⁹

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE IBERIANS. THE ORIGINS OF SOCIO-CULTURAL COMPLEXITY

In the first centuries of the first millenium BC the communities that inhabited the territory studied in this paper –including its extensions towards the South of the Iberian Peninsula and Mediterranean Gaul– were small-scale societies. In some zones they were family level groups: families were the basic organizational units of the economy and behaved in an almost independent and self sufficient way, although they could also form somewhat larger communities (perhaps of up to five family units).³⁰ In other areas, the existence of fully settled local groups has been attested; they were made up of a variable number of families (between ten and fifty) settled in hamlets occupying an area of between 2000 and 4000 m². The low technological level (the farming tools must have been made of wood except for bronze axes) and the tiny dimensions of the human groups show that they were horticultural peoples that practiced an arable agriculture complemented by stock rearing and harvesting.

The increase in population during the early centuries of the first millenium is well documented. In spite of the existence of particular dynamics in the different areas, the tendency to form settled hamlets and to occupy the areas that were previously not inhabited (such as the transversal valleys of the middle Ebre (Sp. Ebro) River,³¹ some areas in Andalusia³² and the peninsular Mediterranean coast) is obvious.³³ On the long run the population growth and the economic intensification that it implied had to cause difficulties for the subsistence economy and to bring about the increase in the political economy, that is, the institutions that regulate the relationships between economic agents and, inseparable from that, give rise to social differentiation. The need to establish and to enforce the fulfilment of certain norms in an environment



Figure 9. Phoenician amphora from Aldovesta. Photograph by Ramon-Torres.

where resources are diminishing, as well as the need to improve the capacity of society for a more complex organization, offered a good opportunity to those ambitious individuals, lineage heads, that enjoyed prestige positions within their groups, to transform this authority into real power and to establish this power position in a permanent and hereditary manner.

This view is perfectly compatible with Marxist structural approaches that have understood the development of social inequality as the result of the acquisition of an agonistic character by the institution of the gift. The competition between lineage heads to achieve a leading position within their community (and possibly to achieve the control of neighbouring communities) must have run through the mechanisms that are peculiar to the prestige goods economies, which were now supplied –in addition to the local products– by the abundance of imported items, as we will soon see. This kind of non-aggressive competitiveness must have often taken the form of celebration of feasts, the more lavish the better, and particularly with a great consumption of alcohol –the production of beer is attested from the second millenium BC–; if other lineage heads could not respond in a similar way, rela-

tionships of subordination and dependence were created. In other words, the rise of elites would have taken place when certain lineage heads acquired the capacity to accumulate riches not linked to religious causes, and excluded the rest of the community, or a considerable part of it, from a system of reciprocity of gifts to which the majority could no longer respond; for this reason they had to integrate themselves into society under new forms of relationship that implied the subordination to those families that had managed to dominate.³⁴ A process such as this –that implies the renouncement to an equalitarian ideology– must have found the best conditions to develop in contexts of scarcity and competition in which the possibility of leaving the community are few or nil, while the development of a political economy makes tolerable the increase in power of some of its members. It is in this context that a new factor appears in the area under study, the importance of which cannot easily be overrated. From the 9th century BC Phoenician colonizers originally from the Eastern Mediterranean settled in the European and African coasts around the straits of Gibraltar and founded numerous settlements, some of which such as Cadiz (*Gadeira*) or Málaga (*Malaca*) later became important cities. The more Northern ones are La Fonteta (Guardamar) and Sa Caleta (Eivissa), which were founded at the middle of the 8th century BC³⁵ and around 700 BC,³⁶ respectively. Although the ultimate cause for this human movement was trade to obtain the silver from the mining area of Río Tinto and Aznalcóllar, it also generated a true agrarian and settlement colonization. This is proved by the appearance, already by the mid-8th century BC, in some indigenous settlements, of Phoenician transport amphorae that were manufactured in coastal Andalusia. This is obviously due to the early adoption of a new economic strategy –not necessarily at the exclusion of the previous one–, which is based on the local production and export to the indigenous world of highly valued food products, wine probably in the first place). It is also important to point out that iron production, which was unknown at that time in the native world, is well attested in the 8th century BC in the Phoenician sites of Morro de Mezquitilla³⁷ and Cerro del Villar.³⁸

A second colonial movement began around 600 BC with the foundation of *Massalia* (Marseille) by Greeks arrived from Phocaea (Northern Ionia); in the second quarter of the 6th century BC, the latter, on their turn, established in the coast of the Empordà (North-eastern Catalonia) a small trading centre that quickly became an independent town, maintaining nevertheless the name of *Emporion* (market, trading post) which obviously shows its original nature.³⁹ Later, in the 4th century BC, on the other side of the gulf of Roses, another second Greek city was founded, *Rhode*, the present Roses, also of small dimensions.⁴⁰

Non-aggressive competitiveness among lineage heads must have focused on the control of production, or the purchase through trade, of prestige goods that were used in feasting and in social transactions such as marriage ex-

changes. Phoenician commerce promoted the arrival in the native world of new prestige goods, particularly amphorae that were used to carry products suitable for feasting, such as salted fish, oil, and particularly wine (fig. 9). As for the goods locally produced, fibulae and iron knives that appear in relative great numbers in the tombs of Catalonia and Languedoc at that time, can be understood as objects used in social transactions (the former might reflect the use of new types of clothing; the latter might often be marriage presents symbolizing women's role in the family). The fact that iron objects were always prestige items, but not tools used for subsistence activities, shows either that they were imported –as some authors maintain–⁴¹ or that while iron metallurgy was known –this is our opinion–, it was more profitable for the new pre-Iberian elites to exploit the prestige attributes of the new material rather than to face the expenses and the risks that go with the adoption of a new technology on a large scale, which would have entailed the necessity of renewing the existing productive system and creating new infrastructures.⁴²

The growth in social differentiation can in some measure be recognized in the archaeological record. In the funerary field of Catalonia and Languedoc, from the 7th century BC there were tombs remarkable for the number and the nature of the objects they contained, and sometimes by the isolation of one or a group of tombs. The most relevant diacritic elements are weapons –probably symbolizing the role of certain individuals as protectors



1



2

Figure 10. 1, Wall of Ullastret; 2, Entrance gate towers in Castellet de Banyoles (Tivissa).

of the community– and the objects related to the celebration of banquets, such as iron roasting spits or the *simpula* (bronze ladles used in the consumption and distribution of drinks), as well as the Phoenician vases.⁴³ Sector B of the Les Casetes necropolis (La Vila Joiosa) in the South of the Valencian Country is different from the previous graveyards as much by the structure of its tombs, which is very elaborate, as for the presence of arms and numerous imported objects.⁴⁴ In what refers to habitats, several traces suggest the presence in the whole territory of outstanding personalities, “Big Men” that must have brought to bear their authority on groups of a certain importance (up to half a thousand people), and that heralded the formation of the first politically centralised territorial entities some decades later. This is the case of the isolated tower-homes that appear in the Lower Aragón (Sp. Aragón)⁴⁵ and in Terra Alta,⁴⁶ as well as in places such as Aldovesta (Benifallet, Baix Ebre),⁴⁷ Sant Jaume-Mas dién Serrà (Alcanar, Montsià)⁴⁸ and Los Almadenes (Hellín, Albacete),⁴⁹ all of them consisting of a single large house with diversified spaces and great storage capacity. They were characterised by the great volume of imported items, the presence of prestige goods and, in Aldovesta, by the metallurgical activity related to exportation. A similar interpretation is possible for the fortified village of Alt de Benimaquia (Dénia, Marina Alta), where the first autochthonous production of wine, a prestige good par excellence, is first documented.⁵⁰ It is not very likely though that these positions of inequality were fully institutionalised, or that they were hereditary. At the same time that these processes of differentiation were taking place, society kept an egalitarian *ethos* that put limits on the display of riches, except in the redistributive activities and in funerary ceremonies. A sign of this is the great number of Phoenician amphorae that appear especially to the South of the Ebre and in the areas surrounding this river, which indicate the need of the emergent elites to win and keep the support of the population through their feasting.

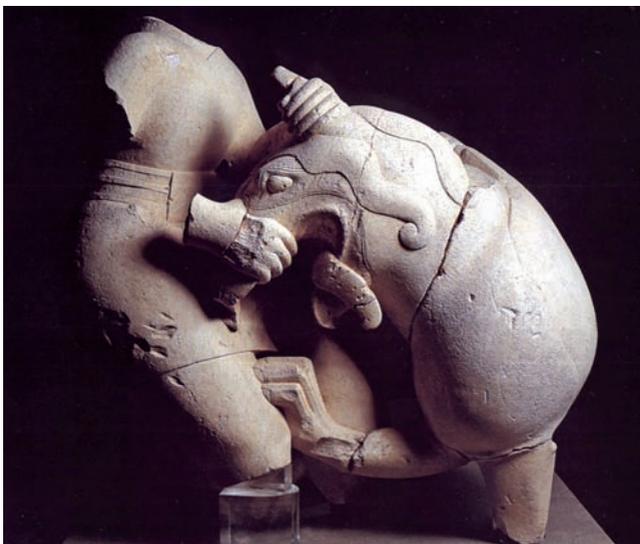


Figure 11. Hero fighting a griffin. From Porcuna (Museum of Jaén).

To sum up, the available data on the first Iron Age show the existence of some processes of social differentiation that apparently took place in a context of demographic growth and in the absence of technological improvements in the subsistence economy. This situation had necessarily to lead to a crisis that could only be solved either by diminishing the pressure on the environment –and therefore by restricting the population and/or the volume of the product that promoted the transactions abroad–, or through the adoption of new technologies capable of increasing the capacity of the area to sustain population, a process that cannot be extricated from a new increase of political economy.

THE EARLY IBERIAN PERIOD (CIRCA 550-400 BC). TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

From the middle of the 6th century BC or little before, a series of transformations show deep changes in the scale and in the form of organization of society, in technology as well as in the nature, volume and origin of the imported goods of Mediterranean origin. The settlement patterns constitute a clear witness to this. In spite of the relative scarcity of data, the available information shows the existence in most of the Iberian territory of hierarchic settlement systems, that must correspond to centralized political units with a certain territorial extent. Although often difficult to evaluate, they are far bigger than the local communities and the groups of communities led by Big Men during the first Iron Age. These entities are dominated by settlements of a much greater size than the hamlets documented in the preceding period; when it can be determined, they occupy an area of some three hectares or a little more, such as Puig de Sant Andreu in Ullastret (Baix Empordà) –protected by mighty walls (fig. 10, 1)–, El Cabeço d’Alfafara (El Comtat), La Serreta and El Puig d’Alcoi or L’Alcúdia d’Elx, and –only if we value the presence of imported materials or the outstanding role they later played– other less known such as Tarragona (*Kesse/Tarakon*), Sagunt (*Arse/Saguntum*), Sant Miquel de Lliria (*Edeta*), Los Villares (*Kelin*) and Xàtiva (*Saiti*).⁵¹ The secondary settlements often cover an area around 1.5 ha., such as Turó de Ca n’Olivé in Cerdanyola (Vallès Occidental), Tos Pelat in Montcada (Horta Nord), or Covalta d’Albaida (Vall d’Albaida). Besides, the permanence of little villages and scattered settlements in farms and isolated houses is also attested. The hierarchic settlement system that can be observed at that time in large areas of the Iberian world is a reflect of a society that is itself hierarchised in particular forms that will be referred to later.

This general view should not conceal the existence of different dynamics of transformation particular to the different areas. The appearance of great settlements (Punta d’Orlell, Torre de la Sal) in the Northern counties of the Valencian Country and in the lower course of the Ebre

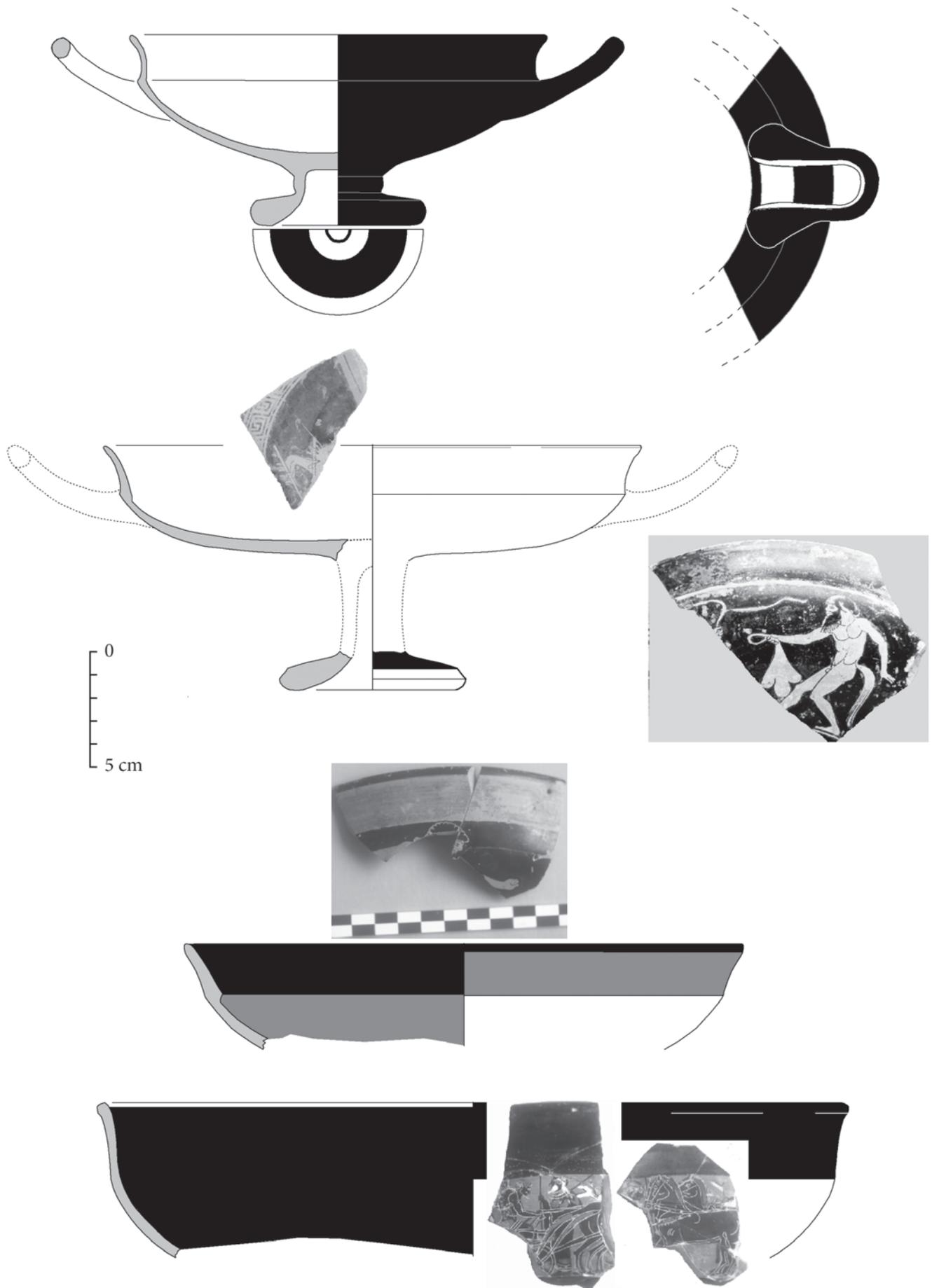


Figure 12. Archaic Attic pottery.

(Sp. Ebro) was not prior to the 4th century BC. Besides, certain zones experienced processes of a different kind. In central Catalonia and by the river Ebre (Sp. Ebro) the biggest nuclei, such as Molí d'Espígol in Tornabous, were not larger than 1 ha. (maybe because of the lack of information on Lleida/*Iltirta*), and continued to be so even after the 4th century BC. Another particular situation is that of the high Guadalquivir, where from the end of the 7th century BC, a process begins that in little more than a century resulted in the concentration of the whole population in a series of fortified settlements covering several hectares; each one of these settlements was probably inhabited by a whole human group with differentiated residential areas for the aristocracy and their clients, and for the other social groups (slaves, craftsmen, etc).⁵²

We can infer from this an important population growth, which would also explain the fast spread of the potter's wheel for the production of ceramics, since the cost of the general introduction of this technique can only be justified by a considerable increase in demand.⁵³ The demographic expansion implies also a strategic change in the use of iron, which results in its being applied to the intensification of the subsistence economy. It is precisely by mid 6th century BC when the first iron agricultural tools are documented; they include the ploughshare which is the basic tool of intensive agriculture.⁵⁴ The reasons for this transition –which implied the acceptance of new risks and expenses, as said above– must be looked for in the interest of the emerging aristocracy, in particular their need to increase the human and economic capital which had reached its limits with the pre-existing technology. In conflictive situations this increase was vital to expand, consolidate and eventually to make permanent and hereditary the power of the elites, who as suggested by A. Ruiz, must have kept control over the production and the use of new means of production.⁵⁵ It is likely, though, that the solutions that this process brought to the subsistence economy problems –increase in productivity and the possibility to moderate the limits on population growth– contributed to its acceptance by the whole of the population.

We are justified in believing that this positive perception of technological change and of the role played by the elite helped in the formation of an ideology legitimising the hereditary inequality, to which we have some significant clues. In the funerary record we need to note that the number of known tombs is very small in relation to a demographically growing society. To the North of the Ebre (Sp. Ebro) the number of tombs that have been found is much lower than that of the previous period, something that cannot be imputed to problems of conservation, since the ritual and the types of graves that we know are similar.⁵⁶ Moreover, the tombs often present signs of a high social status, particularly in the area of Southern Iberia, where we find complex funerary monuments and splendid sepulchral sculpture. It is possible therefore that the complex archaeologically documented funeral rites was

limited to a very restricted social group;⁵⁷ differentiated forms of other world survival must have been attributed to this group, as well as a special relationship with the supernatural forces that enabled them in particular to exercise power and the leadership of society. This supernatural constituent is visible in the Southern funerary sculpture, very obvious in Pozo Moro (Albacete), ornamented with reliefs alluding to the links between the buried individual and the divinity;⁵⁸ we find the same in the group of Porcuna (Jaén)⁵⁹ where the combat between the hero and a gryphon stands out (fig. 11). In the same way, the great decline in the number of imports shows that these items –at that time exclusively Greek table ware (fig. 12)– are no longer distributed among the whole community, but rather used by a restricted aristocratic circle with the function of marking status differences which were accepted by society as a whole.⁶⁰

THE MIDDLE IBERIAN PERIOD (CIRCA 400-200 BC). THE RISE OF THE ARCHAIC STATES

Between the second half of the 5th century BC and the Roman conquest –at the beginning of the 2nd century BC– we perceive a new demographic expansion that is witnessed to by the growth of some of the settlements, by the appearance of other concentrated nuclei of population, and in certain areas, by the expansion of a scattered population in farms and rural dwellings. This makes us think of a completely humanized landscape, doubtless for the first time in the history of this area, as well as in a density of population that must again have reached the limits of its carrying capacity. This situation brought about organisational improvements related to the exploitation of resources and the storage and distribution of the surplus, as well as the protection of the territory and the population. In short, a new expansion of the political economy which gave rise to an administrative system and to the institutional complexity characteristic of the archaic states. Both easily recognised in the historical and archaeological documentation.

Sure enough, the models for peopling several areas are well known; beyond some peculiar traits proper of each region, they generally show a strong hierarchical structure and a remarkable functional specialisation of the settlements. The most important nuclei, which can very likely be considered as capitals of political areas, often cover now an area around 10 ha., even 15 or more in the case of Ullastret. The lower levels include secondary towns, hamlets, military establishments for the control of specific areas –as the aristocratic citadel of Alorda Park (Calafell)–, as well as a scattered rural population. This hierarchical structure shows the existence of a complex administration with different levels of decision taking which is also revealed by the great diffusion of writing starting in the 4th century BC. In particular, we should mention the writing on lead sheets (fig. 5, 3), which, as

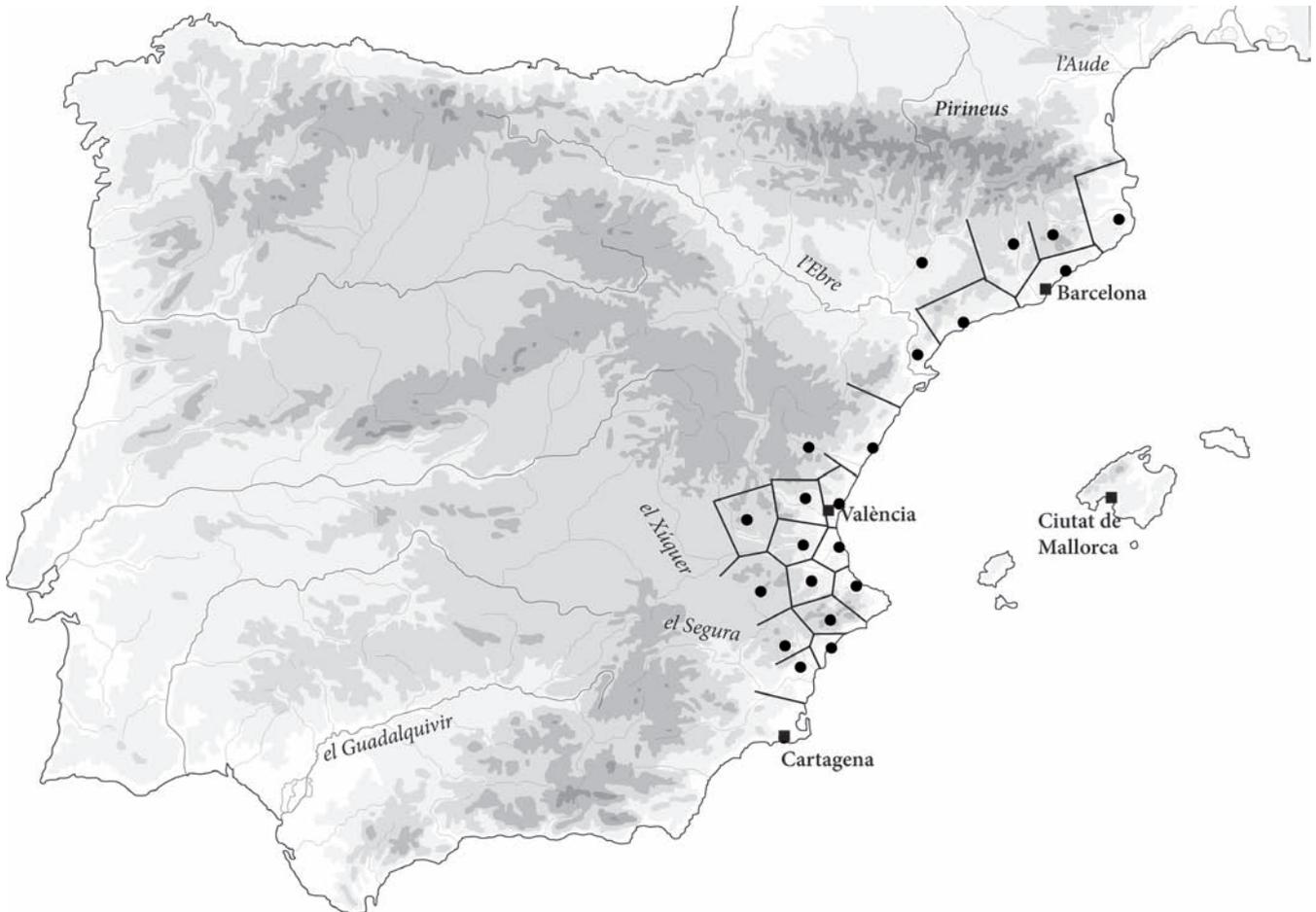


Figure 13. Iberian political territories in the 3rd century BC. Hypothesis based on the application of the Thiessen polygons.

said above, generally seem to be texts with an economic content, probably administrative documents. We have to add the existence of systems of weights and measures and the minting of coins (fig. 5, 1-2), a great majority of which are not prior to the second Punic War and can therefore be related to the Roman presence; but in the case of the first silver coins from *Arse* (Sagunt),⁶¹ according to some authors they could be dated at the middle of the 3rd century BC. The elite control over production –necessary for the maintenance of the administrative structures and the military apparatus– is also proved to the North of the Ebre (Sp. Ebro) by the existence of large silos fields, authentic entrepôts for grain. These often can not be related to important population nuclei and have to be understood as true accumulations of capital.⁶²

The extension of these states can be established through the literary sources and above all through archaeological documentation, in particular from the distribution of the biggest nuclei and the military settlements, which may mark the border zones. With this data it is possible to propose a hypothetic and provisional map of the Iberian political territories in the 3rd century BC, just before the Roman conquest (fig. 13), using basically the Thiessen polygons technique of geographic analysis. Their extension seems to be relatively uniform: on the

Catalan coast it can be calculated between 2000 and 3000 km², while in the Valencian Country they seem to be much smaller, between 800 and 1700 km², although Kelin, an inland settlement, seems to have ruled over a territory of some 2500 km². These are very common figures in the ancient world; they can be compared with the dimensions of many Greek⁶³ and Etruscan⁶⁴ states, and they are not very different from the theoretical extension of 1500 km² that Renfrew proposed for the *early state module*⁶⁵ Nevertheless the results of this methodology have to be understood as an approximation, not a precise reflection of the Iberian politico-territorial reality. The possibility that some of the greatest nuclei and the territories they controlled could at certain times be dependent from other more powerful nuclei must also be considered.

ETHNIC GROUPS AND STATES

The ancient sources furnish a relatively high number of Iberian ethnic names and, in spite of some scholars' scepticism,⁶⁶ we believe that they generally allow us to infer with more or less precision the geographical location of the peoples that bore them. We have already mentioned the witness provided by Hecataeus around

500 BC, but information becomes much more plentiful in later sources that narrate the politico-military events that took place in Iberia during and after the second Punic war, as well as in the geographic texts, in particular those by Strabo and Ptolomaeus. The persistence in Roman administrative terminology of some Iberian names –for instance *regio contestana* or *regio edetana*– must also be pointed to, though without any guarantee that the reality they refer to coincided strictly with the territorial area of the Iberian ethnic groups of the same name; also the legends on coins –almost all of them from the 2nd and 1st centuries BC– present in some cases ethnographic names (for instance *laiesken* or *ausesken*) well documented by literary sources (in this case, *laeetani* and *ausetani*). The palethnological map that can be inferred from these documents was established by Bosch-Gimpera with remarkable precision; he was in line with a long tradition of research of written sources which he completed with the analysis of the geographic structure and of the relatively scarce archaeological information available at that moment.⁶⁷ The result of his work has been taken over and completed by a great number of studies, and with certain nuances is still valid today. Figure number 1 shows a reasonably complete and updated picture of this, although we can not enter now in its particulars. Given the late dates of most sources, we have to infer that this map reflects approximately the situation existing at the end of the 3rd century BC; there are no elements permitting us to know if it was much different in the preceding centuries.

On the link between ethnic groups and political territories, the situations vary considerably. North of the Ebre (Sp. Ebro) there seems often to exist a precise correspondence between these two realities, especially on the coast, where the ethnic spaces that according with the written sources can be attributed to the *Indiketes*, *Laeetani* and *Cessetani* coincide with the “archaeological” territories fixed on the basis of the Thiessen polygons; these were presided by the great nuclei of Ullastret (*Indika?*), Burriac (*Ilturo*) and Tarragona (*Tarakon-Kese*) respectively. The situation is quite different in the region of the Ebre (Sp. Ebro) and to the South of the river. There, the ethnic units are larger than the political spaces defined by archaeology. In this way, Ilercavònia could have included at least two of these territories centred on Torre la Sal and on Tortosa (or on Castellet de Banyoles?). The same can be said of Edetania –which would have included the territories of *Edeta*, *Arse*, *Sucro* and maybe La Carència– as well as the Contestània, which, besides the towns of *Saiti* and *Ilici*, would also have incorporated the political regions organized around Rabat, La Serreta d’Alcoi and Tossal de Manisses. More inland, three other large areas corresponding respectively to *Kelin*, El Castellar de Meca and El Monastil can be individualised, although it is not possible to suggest a certain ethnic affiliation for them.⁶⁸

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Our knowledge on the nature of the institutions and the administrative organization is limited by the lack of information passed down by Greco-Latin authors, as well as by the absence of architectonic structures clearly linked to these functions. Nonetheless, the reference made by Titus Livy, when talking of the peoples living to the North of the Ebre (Sp. Ebro), to the *senatores omnium civitatum* who were summoned by Cato after the Bergistaniis revolt, suggests the existence of councils of old men in that area. There existed a council of this kind in Sagunt, too (Livy, 21, 14). References to monarchs, documented in various areas such as Bastetania, Edetania or Ilergecia are more frequent. The epithets *tyrannos*, *basiléus*, *dynastes*, *regulus* and *rex* are repeatedly used to designate outstanding personalities such as the Ilergetian Indibilis (or Andobales) and Bilistages, the Edetan Edecon (or Edescon), and Culchas (or Colicas) who reigned over several cities (twenty-eight in 209 BC; only seventeen in 197 BC), probably situated in Bastetania. The frequent association in the ancient sources between Mandonius and Indibilis has caused the supposition of the possible existence among the Ilergetes of a dual monarchy similar to that of Sparta. Titus Livy (21, 12) mentions a *praetor* from Sagunt who might be a monarch or, more probably, a magistrate. The fact that in 205 BC, yielding to the demands of the Romans after the unsuccessful rebellion by the Ilergetes and the Aussetani, the *concilium* of the Ilergetes (in case this institution was not an assembly of the various insurgent peoples handed over Mandonius and other princes, may perhaps indicate the pre-eminence as a last resort of this institution above the monarchy. The existence of similar institutions among the other Iberian peoples seems quite probable, in spite of the silence of written sources, which is probably due to the lack of protagonism of these ethnic groups –and, as a consequence, of their leaders– in the events of the second Punic war.

The documentation on social organization is even more scarce. In a liminal study on this issue, J. Mangas showed that a widely spread form of social relationship in the Mediterranean world prior to the Roman conquest and the introduction of slavery, was the submission of entire rural communities to another, dominant one, that in this way acquires an aristocratic status and leads society from a large settlement where power and administration are concentrated.⁶⁹ The degree of dependence can vary considerably and it is perfectly possible that the submitted communities kept the control of their lands, were considered free and held their political rights –in spite of being forced to deliver a part of their surplus production to the dominant community– and participated in a differentiated form in the service of arms. As A. Ruiz has asserted in several works,⁷⁰ the origin of this kind of relationship lies in the differentiation processes that during the first Iron

Age and the Ancient Iberian Age led to the separation of certain families and to the establishment of links of dependence. By virtue of these, the aristocracy provides protection and distributes the prestige goods needed for social transactions in exchange for tribute, obedience and military contribution. We would like to add that these processes can indeed be explained by the structures of social relationships each society had inherited from its past, but that they have their causal factor in the demographic and material bases that we have previously described. In other cases, military conquest may have led to similar situations.

From the analysis of literary and epigraphic sources J. Mangas considered that community dependence during the pre-Roman times was the basic trait of social organization in the South of the Iberian Peninsula. This model has a parallel also in the available archaeological data from North of the Ebre (Sp. Ebro) where, as explained above, there were often several large nuclei of population that had the function of capitals and that in all probability were the place of residence of the aristocracy (or of a good part of it) in their respective territories. This is proved by the dimensions and the complexity of domestic architecture, by the sophistication of defensive systems and, in an eloquent way, by the fact that the two large necropolises of the Middle Iberian Period that have so far been discovered are placed around two of these settlements (Ullastret and Burriac). The fact that different villages were inhabited by socially separated communities is also proved by the differences in size and structure of the houses as well as in the number and quality of the prestige goods, particularly imported items.⁷⁰ The hierarchical structure of settlement patterns suggests that this model of social organization also characterized the rest of the Iberian territory down to Murcia. On the contrary, the existence in the Upper Guadalquivir of a polynuclear model, which lacked hamlets and particularly large settlements as well, has suggested the existence inside each settlement of groups of whole gentility groups –from aristocrats to the lower levels of their clients–, something that the excavation and survey works carried out in Puente Tablas seem to confirm.⁷¹ Only at a later stage, already in the 3rd century BC, the existence of wider political structures becomes manifest because, as said above, Culchas controlled at different times between seventeen and twenty-eight *oppida*.

THE DISSOLUTION OF THE IBERIAN WORLD

The process of cultural change that culminated in the total dissolution of Iberian culture and the full assimilation of the autochthonous population into Latin culture covers a long period of two hundred years, within which it is possible to distinguish different stages and processes in the relationships between native inhabitants and Roman colonizers.⁷³

Archaeological data corroborate the textual information showing the first stage of Roman occupation as a traumatic process marked by several uprisings, the most important of which, in 197-195 BC, was rigorously repressed by M. Porcius Cato. The desertion –and sometimes the violent destruction– around the year 200 BC of many Iberian settlements, including power centres and places of strategic value, has been proved; in some cases these were related to the military operations of the Second Punic War; in other cases, probably due to Cato's work. Equally significant is the fact that the necropolis of Burriac, where the Laetian aristocracy were buried, was abandoned at the beginning of the 2nd century BC. In many cases the conquest meant the liquidation of native power structures, and probably also the liberation of communities subject to the old Iberian states, as has been documented in Andalusia. The resulting political atomization is reflected in the high number of Iberian mints that were active in the 2nd century BC, especially North of the Ebre (Sp. Ebro); this must have greatly facilitated the control of the country by the Romans, notwithstanding the fact that many Iberian settlements continued to be occupied –or were re-occupied– up to the middle of the 1st century.

During some fifty years Rome's presence was mainly limited to a military occupation –brought about especially from the camp established beside the Greek town of *Emporion*, and from the military base of *Tarraco*–, and to the financial exploitation of the conquered territories; this is reflected in the proliferation of indigenous minting, probably meant in part for the sustenance of Roman armies operating in the Peninsula. During the second half of the 2nd century BC a progressive reorganization was undertaken; it was marked by the foundation of new cities –the first, Valencia, in 138 BC–, the creation of a new road network, and an expansion of rural settlements, which has to be put down to the initiative of Roman power because of the existence of some cadastres probably dating from that time. At the end of the 2nd century BC urban foundations proliferate, especially in Catalonia, which suggests an authentic colonizing programme that would have implied the arrival of Italic people and that might be linked to the introduction of new ways of agricultural exploitation based on the system of the *villa*; this is suggested by the appearance, during the second quarter of the 1st century BC, of local wine production that was traded in Italic type amphorae.⁷⁴

During the course of the 1st century BC the process culminates with the founding of Roman cities –such as *Iluro* (Mataró) at the middle of the century, and *Barcino* (Barcelona) already in the Augustan age–, the final abandonment of the last Iberian nuclei, and the definitive expansion of the so-called “agricultural system of the *villa*”. In short, after the Augustan age none of the typically Iberian settlement patterns remain. From that time on we will only find a landscape humanized along very different, fully Roman, lines.

On the process of linguistic substitution, we know that

until the first quarter of the 1st century BC the use of Iberian language and writing kept a great vitality, to the point that it is witnessed in zones where it did not exist before, as in the central area of the Catalan Pyrenees. The period of maximum use of the Iberian writing system appears to take place between the last third of the 2nd century BC and the first quarter of the following century, with a subsequent marked decline especially from the middle of the 1st century BC.⁷⁵ The latest Iberian graffiti are dated from the middle of the 1st century AD, a time in which the process of linguistic substitution must have already been very advanced; nevertheless, it is not possible to date when the final extinction of the oral use of Iberian –or of other languages that might have been used in this area– took place.

CONCLUSION

It is not possible to summarize in a few pages a whole historical process of more than five hundred years and the multiple manifestations of a brilliant civilization that achieved a high degree of socio-cultural development and produced an outstanding material culture, including a sculpture that has quite understandably called the attention of scholars for more than a century. Nevertheless, if we want a quick description of this period pointing to its really crucial traits, we must conclude that it was a time of deep transformation, marked at the beginning by the disintegration of equalitarian societies and the development of social stratification and, at the end, by its incorporation and eventually its full integration into Roman culture. The way of life was deeply transformed during this relatively short period. The population growth and the generalization of iron metallurgy resulted in the development of a completely settled population, as well as the filling an achievement of a fully humanized shaping of the landscape. Besides, the development of administrative systems entailed the appearance of tribute and, probably, the attachment to the land of the vast majority of the population, the peasantry. All this meant, for the first time in this part of the world, the definitive domestication of the members of our species, a transformation unequalled since the Neolithic and probably, in what concerns the ways of life, still more radical than it.

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