



## ***Religion and Religious Practices of the Ancient Celts of the Iberian Peninsula***

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this article is to provide an account of the main features of the religious systems documented in Celtic Hispania, focusing on the following: 1) the effects of Romanization on the indigenous religions, with an evaluation of the continuities, ruptures and transformations of traditional religious practices; 2) a geography of the cults of the diverse deities, with particular attention paid to the different sources available, regional variations and relations with the rest of the Romano-Celtic world and the areas of Mediterranean Iberia; 3) a review of the typology of sanctuaries, rituals (particularly sacrifice) and the priesthood; 4) an analysis of the system of values of Hispano-Celtic peoples with respect to hospitality, the war-and-banquet *ethos* and funeral ideology, including the cosmological elements implied by the available sources of information.

### **Keywords**

Religion, Celts, Romanization, Hispania, Gods, Rituals

### **1. Religious Romanization, Continuities, Ruptures**

Together with language, religion is one of the most reliable criteria for determining ethnicity. In referring to the populations of *Baeturia Celtica*, a region located on the south side of the Guadiana River, Pliny the Elder asserted that "*Celticos a Celtiberis ex Lusitania advenisse manifestum est sacris, lingua, oppidorum vocabulis*" (NH 3,13). In other words, the *Celtici* descended from Celtiberians out of Lusitania (today's Portugal), as indicated by their religion, their language and the names of their cities. However, religion is by nature an elusive phenomenon and, as in the case of the religious systems of the Celts in general, we only have a rather limited knowledge of the Hispanic Celts. This is due to the nature of the information available, since these peoples did not use writing to communicate.

Paradoxically, the process of cultural contact which is termed "Romanization" served to facilitate, on the one hand, the full expression of indigenous religious manifestations from a stage which can be defined as "essentially non-iconic and atectonic" (Lewis 1966: 4) and, on the other, the rise of religious "Romano-Celtic" systems which were different from those that existed before the Romans' arrival. At this late stage, a double mechanism of "translation" (*interpretatio*) of names and categories from the alien religious system to the native one was already being recorded in written sources: an indigenous and "Roman" translation which must always be taken into account and given its due importance, and that also manifested itself in images. As I have repeatedly highlighted (Marco Simón n.d.a), the main characteristics of such a process of *interpretatio* are its ambiguity and relative spontaneity, as opposed to the interpretations characterized by a more or less veiled religious Roman imperialism (see, for example, Webster 1995).

Subsequently, when considering the continuity (in various degrees) and the ruptures of the syncretic systems belonging to the Roman era along with those existing centuries earlier, a problem arises. We cannot rightfully talk of "pre-Roman" religions since most of the names of the indigenous gods are known through epigraphic texts that belong to the Imperial Era, although it is evident that some of the information they contain predates the Roman presence.

In an attempt to reconstruct those religious systems, we can only suggest a few principles of the indigenous cosmogony, those which we believe to be essential, in order to stand on firmer ground when considering the values that apparently represent this cosmogony, especially the more "ceremonial forms" (Geertz 1988) of religiosity: from ritual sites to offerings and gods' names, which are known from Latin epigraphy.

These limitations, which appear from the outset when investigating the Hispano-Celtic religious world, make cross-cultural comparisons not only essential but also expedient, since divine "types" are all we can hope to determine. Such comparisons are not only convenient, but also necessary, provided that they are not drawn from isolated elements, but from structurally significant ones. Furthermore, we must bear in mind that scientific comparatives must always highlight specificity and difference (Smith 1990), and they must include a "starting point" instead of an "arrival point" (Scheid and Svenbro 1999), a principle that is not always fulfilled (Olivares 2002).

For this reason, I do not consider it adequate to interpret Romano-Celtic religious systems

in a strictly Dumézilian manner. Even if trifunctional ideology has proved fertile when it comes to explaining certain pantheons, it does not work well as a functional framework, not even for Greek gods, for example. Though praiseworthy, the efforts made in order to understand the religious systems of the peoples of the Iberian Peninsula through a tripartite ideology (see Curado [2002] on the subject of the western peninsula) do not seem, at least in my opinion, to show any positive results. Their worth only lies in the fact that they indicate the similarity of certain divinities with others attested to in the Celtic or Indo-European worlds, or as analogues of rituals like the animal sacrifice described in the well-known Lusitanian inscription from Cabeço das Fraguas within an Indo-European tradition that includes the Roman *suovetaurilium*.

Due to the lack of pre-Roman documentary evidence, we do not know to what extent Romanization affected the structure of native "pantheons". However, it seems evident that Romanization led at least to a different structuring of the hierarchy of the gods, as well as the greater definition and specificity that can be observed in Graeco-Roman pantheons. At the same time, it introduced the ritual, until then unknown among the natives of Indo-European *Hispania*, of devoting altars to the gods, specifying the name of the divinity (the theonym) and that of the person who dedicated it, as well as the circumstances which led to such an action (in most cases, gratitude for the fulfillment of a promise: *v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*) (Fig. 1).

It is also thanks to the Romanization process that we have a sounder knowledge of the existence of sanctuaries, due to the written records - sometimes in indigenous languages - of offerings and sacrifices of various species of animals consecrated to divine powers. The acts and rituals of pre-Roman peoples in Hispania have not left any archaeological evidence, partly due to the impossibility of materializing the act itself ("how can a pious petition be recorded?") and partly because, as is becoming increasingly clear, many offerings were performed in aqueous environments. In fact, finds of votive deposits containing swords, helmets and lances like those discovered in the Huelva River or at the estuary of the River Tajo, are actually not very common. Gods were distinguished from each other by the function they performed within a scope of competence that was acknowledged by part of the



Figure 1. Altar to the *Lares Cerenaeci* by Niger, son of Proculus, with the formula *V(otum).L(ibens).S(olvit)*. First-Second centuries AD. From S. Salvador de Tinas, Marco de Canavezes, Porto (M. Nacional de Arqueologia, Lisbon). (Photo: J. Pessoa and J.A. Moreira).

community that worshipped them. Yet, in most cases, little is known of such divine functions because divinities are known almost exclusively from the names recorded in the inscriptions. This situation raises the question of etymology.

It seems clear that resorting to etymology as a means of determining the function of a divinity entails serious risks, especially if it is done in an unsystematic and indiscriminate way, since knowing the original meaning of a divine name (which, furthermore, may have changed over time) does not imply knowledge of the god's functional personality at all. As a matter of fact, as has been recently argued (Búa Carballo 2002: 61), the only divine epithets whose interpretation may be considered valid are toponymic derivatives. For this reason, the cultural context of the finds must always take priority. Fortunately, archaeological excavations provide highly interesting data on the cultural sites, rituals and funerary world that shape the cultural context to which epigraphic data and literary sources can be attributed (as a matter of fact, literary evidence is scarce when it comes to religion, since deeds of conquest were the main focus of attention). However, testimonies provided by Graeco-Roman authors must be read and interpreted with a critical eye due to their possible bias; Graeco-Roman anthropology, in fact, was fed by a polarity between the part of the civilization that wrote it and the barbarism of the alien natives (Marco Simón 1993).

As shall be seen, the iconographic and linguistic testimonies provided by ancient and modern toponymy also play an important role.

## **2. Deities**

This study focuses on the divinities worshipped in Indo-European Hispania, then goes on to deal with sacred spaces and rituals, and concludes with some considerations about funerary ideology.

### **2.1. Exiguity of Literary Information**

Literary records on indigenous deities from Indo-European Hispania are very scarce. Two interesting literary references to the gods of this area are found in Strabo, who wrote his "Geography" at the beginning of Tiberius' reign, providing an account of the world subject to Roman control. In one of the references (3, 3, 7) he wrote that the peoples from the northern Peninsula sacrificed a hecatomb of male goats, horses and men to *Ares* (that is, to an indigenous divinity whom the Greek geographer syncretized with *Ares*, the Greek god of war). This was

probably the same deity that was interpreted as *Mars* in various Latin inscriptions, like the one found in El Escorial, dedicated to *Marti Magno* by a Cantabrian citizen.

The other Strabo passage (3, 4, 16) reads as follows:

Some say that the Callaicians have no gods, but the Celtiberians and their neighbours in the north offer a sacrifice to a nameless god, at night, during the full moon, in front of the doors of their houses, and the whole household dances and stays up until dawn.

Strabo's account may be related to another provided by Appian (*Iber.*, 82) within the context of the Roman military operations against the Vaccaeans in 136 AD: "When night fell the Romans, in groups, dispersed through the fields, hungry and weary, and the people from Pallantia withdrew *as if turned away by a god*" (my emphasis). This passage (with the significant recent exception of Gómez Fraile 2001) has been unanimously interpreted as follows: the Vaccaeans did not attack because of a solar eclipse; rather, this passage likely refers to the same native deity - or a similar one - mentioned by Strabo. Since G. Sopena analyzes the personality of this god in another paper in this issue of *e-Keltoi* dealing with Celtiberian religion, it will not be considered here. However, I would like to briefly comment on the "atheism" attributed to the Callaicians by the Greek geographer. As a matter of fact, this alleged absence of gods is contradicted by religious epigraphy (particularly abundant in the Callaico-Lusitanian world) and I believe that, like the anonymity of the gods of the Celtiberians and their neighbors, it can be explained using Greek cultural keys: all those who worshipped gods that could not be assimilated with Hellenic deities were considered "atheists". When explaining the progressive formation of Greek religion (2, 52 ff.) Herodotus said that the Pelasgians worshipped some deities, but did not give them any name; instead, they called them "gods" in a collective sense. Later on, they learned their appellatives from the Egyptians, while the first poets, Homer and Hesiod, contributed to giving shape, history and genealogical order to those gods who were already distinguished by different names.

If this perspective is applied to the analysis of Strabo's text (see above), the Anatolian geographer appears to be invoking Callaician atheism (and the anonymity of the gods of the Celtiberians and their northern neighbours) precisely in order to highlight the primitive savagery of these peoples. This barbarism was characterized by two features: an absence of gods and the presence of nameless gods. This indicates the distance that separated these societies from the civilized Mediterranean world. These peoples inhabited distant north and northwestern mountain

regions and, as is well known, "the mountain" (*oros*), according to the Greek mental landscape, was one of the "notorious" territories; it represented a double opposition, to the plains and to the city (Buxton 1992), and was considered a characteristic dwelling of bandits (Van der Uliet 1984).

On the other hand, the poet Macrobius (*Saturnalia* 1, 19, 5) mentions in relation to the inhabitants of Acci (Guadix, in Granada) the god *Neto*, specifying his solar character and his *interpretatio* (assimilation with) *Mars*. This deity appears in inscriptions from Condeixa-a-Velha (Beira Litoral: CIL II 365) and Trujillo (Cáceres: *ILER* 889), and probably appears in its Celtic form, *Neito*, on side A of the Celtiberian bronze plaque from Botorrita (Beltrán and Tovar 1982). The epithets *Cosus* - *Nedole dius*, *Nidanlua(ecus)* -, *Reva* - *Nitaecus* - or the *Netaci Veilebricae* mentioned on an altar from Padrón (García Fernández-Albalat 1990: 331), are linguistically related to it.

## 2.2. Deities attested by epigraphy

Almost all the theonyms are mainly known from Latin epigraphy, although, as shall be seen, some divine names are recorded in the Lusitanian and Celtiberian languages. Indo-European Spain boasts almost 500 inscriptions to indigenous divinities, to which we should add the data corresponding to Portugal. Yet, we must not conclude that each of these theonyms refers to a different deity; in many cases we might be dealing with the same divinity whose epithets vary according to the specific place where it is worshipped, or the social group worshipping it. Firstly, what can be observed in relation to theonyms is the almost total absence of references to native divinities among peoples of the area occupied by the Iberians. This can be explained by the fact that religious acculturation had begun among them earlier and was more intense than in the Indo-European area of the Peninsula: for this reason, if the epigraphs reflect a pre-Roman indigenous horizon, they do so through an *interpretatio* which already makes use of Latin names (Fig. 2). Secondly, within the Indo-European area there is a clear contrast between the western or northwestern territories of the Peninsula (where most of the names recorded in the epigraphy originated,

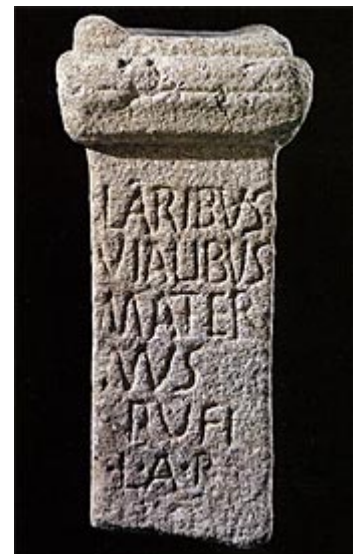


Figure 2. Granite altar consecrated to the *Lares Viales* (*interpretatio* of some indigenous "Gods of the roads") by Maternus, son of Rufus. Second century AD (Museu dos Biscainhos, Braga). (Photo: J. Pessoa and J.A. Moreira).

which challenges the idea of the "atheism" of the Callaicians) and the central areas of the two plateaus in the east of Celtiberia. This contrast seems to be in keeping with the linguistic duality observed in Indo-European Hispania, since most of the theonyms appear in a Callaico-Lusitanian area where an Indo-European language was spoken; a tongue which, as is believed today by a majority of linguists, seems to be more archaic than the Celtic language that we know from Celtiberian texts.

This frequent expression of native theonyms (as opposed to and in clear contrast with the incidence of images in Gaul, where the iconography relating to indigenous deities is abundant) highlights the absence of Roman proselytism and religious catechesis (with the exception of the Capitoline trinity), which is to be expected in unrevealed and fundamentally orthopractical polytheist religious systems.

Why did the peoples who were generically and conventionally called Callaicians and Lusitanians by Graeco-Latin sources maintain the names of their divinities to such a great extent? Besides considering Celtiberia's greater chronological precocity and cultural proximity to the Mediterranean world, which could have affected the intensity of indigenous theonymy, we must also consider the clearer tendency of western and northwestern peoples towards the *topic reduction* of their divinities, as the epithets related to local toponymy show. The transition between these two distinctly different cultural environments, Celtiberian in the east and Callaico-Lusitanian in the west, is marked (Untermann 1985) by a zone that intersects the territory of the Vettonians and Astures, stretching approximately from Oviedo to Mérida. To the west of this zone, among societies that, in addition to kin relationships, epigraphically expressed the *castrum* (*castellum*) as the place of origin and residence, the intensity of theonyms increases. Conversely, in the eastern area, which was more clearly Celtic, the onomastic records of the individual usually include family groups (*gentilitates*) expressed through the characteristic genitive plural.

### **2.2.1. Theonyms and Epithets**

From the 1970s on, after a period in which historiography had prioritized pre-Roman languages and more specifically the etymology of theonyms, a significant sector of researchers engaged (with interesting results) in what could be described as the "return to the stone" (Encarnação 2002: 13), in an attempt to guarantee, as far as possible, an accurate reading of the inscriptions through a detailed and direct examination. As an example, A. Guerra and C. Búa (1999) realized that an altar in the vicinity of Lisbon dedicated to *Iuppiter Assaecus* was actually

intended for *Kassaecus*. Likewise, in 1985, José Manuel García published an epigraph dedicated to *Quangeius Tanngus*, after correcting the reading of an altar from Malpartida de Plasencia (Cáceres) that had been previously believed to be dedicated to *Dovancius*. Subsequently, new finds increased by 11 the number of monuments dedicated to this divinity, which has always been assumed to have a sovereign character that related it to Jupiter (Olivares 2002: 193), in a very short period of time (see data provided in Encarnação 2002: 14-15).

The "primordial indefinition of divinity" (Marco Simón 2002a: 17-20) is a common characteristic of very different religious systems. This includes the Roman system, as seen in the famous inscription of the Capitolium, dedicated to *Genio romano, sive mas sive femina*, or Virgil's passage in *Aen.* 8, 349-352, concerning the choice of the place for the foundation of the *Vrbs*. This phenomenon can be also found in Indo-European Hispania. Since the name implied the divine entity, identifying the names of the gods was essential in order to address them with the proper theonyms and receive their response. This would explain the existence of the generic dedications *Diis Deabusque* ("To the gods and the goddesses") found in some places where the specific name of the god must have been unknown (Perea 1998).

Recent research on the indigenous theonyms recorded by epigraphy seems to suggest, on the one hand, the individualization of landscape elements where the divinity was thought to manifest itself, and, on the other, the topic bond of most theonyms. The latter, however, could be better defined and greater emphasis should be put on the deities' tutelary nature and their guardianship over various places or human communities.

Javier de Hoz (1992) categorized the indigenous divinities as they appeared in the epigraphy, in the following way (as Untermann [1985] had previously done in relation to the Callaico-Lusitanian area):

- a) simple theonyms which are not accompanied by any epithet (*Togae, Regoni*);
- b) epithets used as theonyms (*Bormanico, Parameco*);
- c) two-word theonyms - the most usual ones - or three-word theonyms (*Cossue Nedoledio, Lucoubus Arquienis; Munidi Eberobrigae Toudopalandaigae*);
- d) indigenous theonyms with a Latin epithet (*Nemedo Augusto*);
- e) generic Latin terms together with an indigenous theonym (*Deo Aerno, Laribus Cernaecis*);
- f) Latin theonyms together with an indigenous term (*Ioui Ladico, Marti Cariocieco*);
- g) combinations of various types (*Deae Ataecinae Turibrigensi Proserpinae*).

In short, they were expressions of the different rhythms and solutions resulting from the cultural



contact that affected religious belief, a fact that cannot be dealt at length here.

As has been observed in relation to the deities from Narbonensis, and as De Bernardo has recently stressed (2003), the epithets specifying the form in which deities are worshipped are of two kinds: descriptive, denoting a quality or characteristic of the divinity in question, and toponymic, denoting their belonging to a group or town. Both types are common among Hispanic gods, although the latter seem to be more abundant (see Olivares 2002: 152 ff. for the Callaico-Lusitanian area). For example, *Roudeacus* corresponded to *Bandua*, tutelary god of the *vicani Roudenses*, mentioned in an inscription found in Casar de Cáceres, and *Bandua Longobrigu* surely refers to Longroiva, where the inscription was found (Olivares 2002: 249). *Ilurbeda* is a special case since it is a deity attested to by four epigraphs belonging to the area between Salamanca and Lisbon. It is homonymous with an identical toponym mentioned by Ptolemy in Carpetania (*Geogr.* 2, 6, 56), which suggests the spread of the theonym from this region to the Lusitanian area (Prósper 2002: 33).

Sometimes, the divine names do not indicate the place where the worshipping community lived, but rather the social unit itself, be it an *ethnos*, a familial group or an individual (Guerra 2002). Two examples of this ethnic association are an inscription in the sanctuary of Panóias (Vila Real) that reads "to all the gods of the Lapitas" (*omnibusque numinibus Lapitearum*), and the references to *Igaedus*, the god of Igaeditans. An epigraph from La Milla del Río (León) was dedicated to the god *Vagodonnaegus* by *Res Publica Asturica* itself, i.e. the city of Asturica Augusta. In my opinion, this find is very important because it attests to the integration of at least a few individual native gods into the public cult of the new urban framework imposed by the Romans.

Some epithets seem to stem from anthroponyms: for example, *Araco Arantoniceo* found in an inscription from Cascáis (Arantonus); *Mermandiceo*, attested to in Sintra (Mermandicus); *Arengio Tanginiaeco* (Tanginus) from Castelo Branco; *Caesariciaeco* (Caesaro/Caesarus) from Martiaga (Salamanca); and others (see map in Olivares 2002: 212). There are also some remarkable inscriptions that attest to the existence of tutelary gods of familial groups. Such is the case (Alarcão, Etienne and Fabre 1969: 222) with the *Lares Lubanci Divilonicorum Horum* from Coimbra (the "Lares Lubanci of these Divilonici people"), which implies the existence of other familial branches that had settled outside Coimbra, or the *Lares Gapeticorum gentilitatis* (the "Lares of the gens of the Gapetici") from La Oliva (Cáceres: *CIL* II 804).

A very frequent, and consequently important, phenomenon is the presence of different graphic variants of the same divine name (for instance, there are up to 15 variants of the name *Attaecina*: *Attaecina*, *Attaegina*, *Attegina*, *Atacina*, *Ataecina*, *Addaecina*, *Adaegina*, *Adegina*, *Adecina*...). These varieties may reflect different indigenous linguistic forms, but, above all, they reflect the difficulty in noting down sounds using Latin letters. As a matter of fact, unlike the inhabitants of Celtiberia and the eastern and southern areas of the Peninsula, who already relied on a Paleo-Hispanic "writing system" at the time of the Romans' arrival, the Lusitanians were illiterate. Hence the importance of inscriptions like those from Lamas de Moledo (Fig. 3) and Arroyo de la Luz (Cáceres), in which the text in the Lusitanian language was preceded by the names of the scribes and the verb in Latin: *Ambatus scripsit*, *Rufinus et Tiro scripserunt*, respectively. This is a very remarkable fact because it proves that the people responsible for local worship, who undoubtedly mastered the Latin language, were not willing to use it when it came to ancient religious traditions (Untermann 2002: 67-68). The perpetuation of the Gaulish language (at least two and a half centuries after the Roman conquest, as the calendar from Coligny shows) and its use in popular magic texts (*defixiones*) (Marco Simón 2002b), are thus two comparable situations that are worth considering.

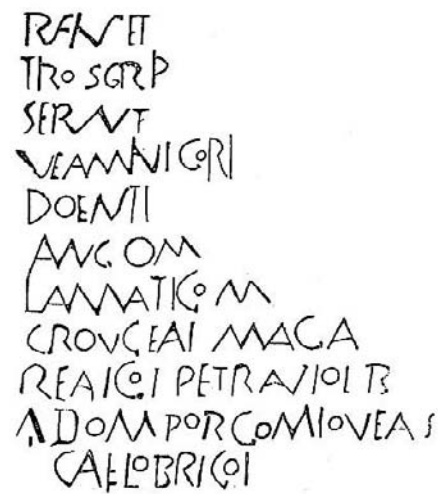


Figure 3. Lusitanian rock inscription of Lamas de Moledo (after J. Untermann).

### 2.2.2. Gods as personifications of the landscape

The peoples of Celtic Hispania do not seem to have worshipped natural powers directly; as a matter of fact, the invisible divinities manifested themselves through visible signs like trees, springs, mountains or specific animals. There are no bull-gods, or horse-gods or mountain-gods (Blázquez 1962; 1991): rather, deities manifested themselves through these natural elements. A beautiful example of this can be found in the famous passage in Pliny on the harvesting of mistletoe (*NH* 16, 95), although it does not refer to our area, but to Celtic Gaul:

The Druids - for so they call their magicians - hold nothing more sacred than mistletoe and the tree that bears it, if it is the oak (...) They think that everything that grows on the trees has been sent from heaven and is *a proof that the tree was chosen by the god himself* (my emphasis).

This process of making a ritual site sacred, whereby it is turned into a deity with a name, and thus becomes an area of worship, is well attested to in Hispania. For example, an inscription to *Nimmedus Aseddiagus* was found in Mieres (Asturias). The first element of the theonym *Nimmedus* (also recorded on an inscription from the cave of La Griega in Pedraza, Segovia, here accompanied by the epithet *Augustus*) is clearly related to the Celtic word *nemeton*, which among the Celts indicates a sanctuary par excellence, a place where communication between human beings and gods took place. The term *nemeton* is the basis for ancient toponyms like Nemetobriga (present-day Puebla de Trives, in Orense), or for ethnonyms like the Callaicians Nemetati cited by Ptolemy in the second century AD. From the notion of *nemeton*, that is, the concept of the wood as a sacred environment whose mystery conceals the visible presence of the divinity, there is a shift to its identification with the place, to a theonym recorded epigraphically. This process is equally prevalent beyond the Pyrenees in the names of deities like *Nemetona* (the tutelary goddess of the Nemetes and Treveri tribes in Gaul, associated with *Mars*), the *Matres Nemetiales* or the *Mars Rigonemetis* attested to in England.

*Eburianus* is a deity recorded in a tombstone from Duratón (Segovia) whose name stems from the Celtic *\*eburos*, or "yew" in Gaulish, which is the basis for toponyms like Eburobritium (Évora) among the Lusitanians, or the Ebura found in the south of the Iberian Peninsula, the Celtiberian *gens* of the Eburanci or peoples like the Eburones or Eburovices in Gaul. The yew tree had extraordinary importance in the Celtic world; a passage by Caesar narrates that Catuvolcus, chief of the Eburones, poisoned himself with yew (*BG* 6, 31). Florus noted that when the Cantabrians were under siege on Mons Medullius by legate Gaius Furnius in the year 22 BC, most of them took their lives either by slaying themselves with a sword, letting themselves burn in the fire or taking a poison extracted *ex arboribus taxeis*, that is, from the yew tree (2, 33, 50-51). This is an extremely common tree in the sacred geography of today's Asturias; in fact, about 200 rural chapels have a big yew growing next to them. It is worth remembering the importance of this tree in the funerary iconography of the Cantabrian tribe of the Vadinienses, as well as the deity with a tree on his head who appears on a vase from Arcóbriga (Monreal de Ariza, Zaragoza) that I have related to the image of Mercury depicted on a vase from Sens du Nord (France) (Marco Simón n.d.b). Prudentius around the year 400 (*Contra Simacum* 2: 1005-1011) and Martin of Braga in Visigothic times (*De correc. rust.* 8) denounced the fact that the Hispanic peoples worshipped trees and sacred stones.

An altar from San Martín de Trebejo (Cáceres) is dedicated to *Iberus*, a personification of the river Ibor. Similarly, the *Aquae Eleteses*, attested to in Retortillo (Salamanca), represented a personification of the river Yeltes, the *Nymphae Silon(ianae)* represented the river Sil (Díez de Velasco 1998; Blázquez 2002), *Durius* referred to the river Duero (García 1991: 309-10) and the theonyms *Ana* and *Barraeca* on the "altar of the rivers" from Mérida (Canto, Bejarano and Palma 1997) represented the river Guadiana and its tributary the Albarregas, respectively.

*Reus/Reua/Reue* is one of the most characteristic gods of the Callaico-Lusitanian area. According to authors like Villar, *Reve* was originally a name for water streams, which is apparently corroborated by the dedication to *Rauue Anabaraeco*, found in Ruanes (Trujillo, Cáceres). This epithet results from the merging of two river theonyms from the "lintel of the rivers" found in Mérida (Canto, Bejarano and Palma 1997). However, the presence of the name *Reve* in mountainous contexts (Cabeço das Fraguas, Mte. Larouco) has led other authors to suggest that this was a deity associated with heights and mountains (Untermann 2002: 69). Three inscriptions dedicated to the god *Laroucus* have been discovered in the vicinity of Mount Larouco, on the border between Galicia and Portugal. One of them refers to him as *deus maximus*, using the same epithet that characterizes Jupiter (this is also true of the god *Penninus*, the god of the Great St. Bernard mountains, who, according to Livy, was the tutelary god of the towns of that area (Liv. 21, 28, 6), and who is himself later assimilated to Jupiter through the characteristic process of *interpretatio*: Bernardi 1991: 24).

Another epigraph is dedicated to *Reve Larouco*, an interesting compound that associates the mountain with the god *Reva*, one of the best-attested gods in the Callaico-Lusitanian region. Likewise, the god *Tilenus*, whose name was recorded in the mountains of León, in the vicinity of Astorga (*Asturica Augusta*), is mentioned in an inscription from Valdeorras (Orense) and in a silver ring found on one of the hillsides (Fig. 4); this deity had already been assimilated to the native god of Rome (*Marti Tilenos*) (Rodríguez Colmenero 2002). Another epigraph in San Martín de Trebejo (Cáceres) was dedicated to *Deo Optimo Salamati*, no doubt the syncretization of the Latin god and the indigenous god who dwelt on mount Jálama (Melena 1985).



Figure 4. Silver ring with dedication to *Mars Tilenus*. From Villa de Quintana de Marco (La Bañeza, León). (Photo: Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid).

Usually, the syncretization of indigenous ancestral deities and "Roman" ones was performed in a visible way by expressing the indigenous theonym as an epithet of the Roman name, through the characteristic phenomenon of the *interpretatio*. A significant example, in this respect, is *Iuppiter Candamius*, known from a tombstone found in Mount Candanedo (on the border between León and Asturias) that attests to the persistence of *Candamius*, a native god worshipped in the mountains of that area and assimilated to Jupiter. The same god appears, also assimilated to Jupiter, in a stele from Mount Cildá dedicated to *Iovi Deo Candamo* by a Cantabrian. In Galicia, a man called Salaenus dedicated another altar to *Iovi Optimo Maximo Candiedoni*. These theonyms (Albertos 1974) seem to contain the root *\*cand-*, "glitter, burn, shine" or the word *\*canda-canta-ganda*, "stone, rock", which is included in the name Cantabria. Various toponyms in Asturias (Candamo, Candanedo) and Cantabria (Candiano, Candenosa, Gandarilla, Sierra Gándara, Candina) stem from the same root. To conclude, they allude to a heavenly god who dwells in the mountains and manifests himself through thunder, like the Celtic *Taranis/Tanarus*. To the stone element are also apparently related theonyms like *Crougea*, with its various epithets. One of them, *Crougiai Toudadigoe*, (which may be interpreted either as "the rock of the village" or "the rock of the people") seems to have the same meaning as the Lusitanian deity *Trebopala* (*vid infra*), and has been related to rituals of sovereignty such as those of the stone Fal in Ireland (Brañas 2000: 70 ff).

### 2.2.3. Animal theomorphism

A similar process of divinization and personalization involving a specific animal species is attested to by a tombstone consecrated to *Deis Equeunu(bos)*, that is, "some equine gods", by a man called Iulius Reburus, in order to keep a vow. The inscription is housed in a rustic chapel consecrated to St. Lawrence (La Vid, Pola de Gordón, León), on a mountain overlooking the national road from León to Oviedo (Marco Simón 1999b).

Although there is no solid base for an interpretation of the personality of the *Dei Equeunui*, their "equine" character or their association with horses is evident. The horse, together with the tree, as has already been seen, is predominant in the iconography of the remarkable *stelae* of the Cantabrian Vadinienses. Both were protective divinities, with possible solar connections, who dwelt in the heights and had a sanctuary overlooking one of the main roads between the two ancient Asturias: *Asturia cismontana* and *Asturia transmontana*. The horse element also appears in an epithet of the goddess *Arentia*, attested to in Sabugal (Guarda):

*Equotullaicensi* (Olivares 2002:188).

As Claude Lévy-Strauss has argued, animals are good to think in a symbolic way, hence the importance of zoomorphism in the hypostasis of deities in the Celtic world in general and in the Hispanic world in particular. The importance of divine zoomorphism is best observed in the world of the Vaccaeans, through their characteristic religious icon: the hybrid animal represented in a zenithal perspective on a knife pommel from Tomb 32 of the necropolis in Las Ruedas, or on the large oven lid from the town of Las Quintanas, in *Pintia*/Padilla de Duero (Sanz Mínguez 1998).

Perhaps, as in the case of certain themes of hybrid zoomorphism in Numantine ceramics, it would be appropriate to resort to the Celtic notion of metamorphosis, so clear in Medieval texts (Taliesin, Etain, etc.) in order to explain the morphologic instability of mythical and divine characters and the belief that the entity belongs to all realms and elements of the cosmos. This characteristic fluidity of concepts makes it impossible to draw a line between different worlds: the physical, the spiritual and the imaginary merge.

An interesting religious aspect of the culture of the Vettonians and Vaccaeans concerns statues of boars and bulls (Fig. 5). About 400 statues of "*verracos*" are known from the beginning of the fourth century BC to the third century AD in the western regions of the northern plateau, the Extremadura and the Portuguese region of Tras-os-Montes, the most characteristic nucleus being the area of the



Figure 5. Bulls of Guisando (El Tiemblo, Ávila). (Photo: J. R. Álvarez Sanchís).

Vettonians. Various hypotheses have been ventured regarding the meaning of these large sculptures, which can be up to 2.5 meters high, like the one from Villanueva del Campillo, at the head of the valley of Amblés, and which always represent boars or bulls, with marked male sexual organs. According to one of these hypotheses, they can be seen as symbols of wealth in a cattle-raising environment, stones marking winter pasture lands (Álvarez Sanchís 2003), or possibly boundary stones indicating borders between different ethnic territories. Another interpretation, the most interesting to us, highlights their religious meaning, suggesting that they may have been intended to protect the cattle and ensure the animals' successful procreation

(Sánchez Moreno 2000: 145-146). Also worth considering is the funerary symbolism attached to boars in later contexts. As Sánchez Moreno also has pointed out (2000: 146-147), boars combine a number of meanings, with an essential religious basis, in a highly symbolic signifier: the boar as the protector of cattle, territories and groups of people (perhaps similar to a psychopomp, as is suggested for some of the Iberian zoomorphic sculptures). Very recently, a boar was found engraved in the rock under the base of the northern tower of the gate of San Vicente, in the ramparts of the city walls of Ávila (Álvarez Sanchís 2003). Finally, we cannot discount the hypothesis that such animals might be the zoomorphic manifestation of the deity that performed different functions.

#### **2.2.4. Regional variation in worship**

Tertullian of Carthage observed that each region had its god (*Apologeticum*, 24, 7), providing an interesting literary testimony on the process of specification of divinity. As a matter of fact, epigraphy has recorded multiple theonyms in Indo-European Hispania that do not belong to the same range of worship. Side by side with the majority of local deities, all of which can be associated with specific places, are other regional, or supra-regional divinities; some of these are even attested in other areas of the ancient Celtic world. The latter will be the first ones to be considered below.

##### **2.2.4.1. Deities attested in other areas of the Romano-Celtic world**

Among the most prominent Pan-Celtic deities that have been recorded in Hispania we find *Epane* (no doubt a variant of the well-known Epona, the Celtic goddess associated with horses), who has been attested to in the Cantabrian area, on Mount Bernorio (Palencia). Various ethnonyms (*Luggoni* in the middle eastern part of Asturias, or *Lougei* on the bronze plaque from El Caurel, Lugo, as well as on a plaque from El Bierzo), as well as ancient and modern toponyms, may be derived from their connection to the god *Lugus* (*Lug* in the Irish texts). This god is attested to epigraphically in France, Germany and Switzerland, and his cult in the Peninsula was centered in Celtiberia. In northwest Callaicia, this god is mentioned in three inscriptions from Sober and Otero del Rey (Lugo) in which the deity appears in the plural form (*Lucubo Arquienobo*, *Locoubu Arquienis*). A sanctuary dedicated to this native god might have been the basis for the foundation of the city of *Lucus Augusti* (García Quintela 2003). In any case, *Lugus* was also worshipped by the Cantabrians: an inscription from Peña Amaya, north of Burgos, is dedicated, according to Untermann (1980), to *Dibus M(agnis?) Lucubo(s)*, which

testifies to the supreme nature of this god among the Cantabrian people (Fig. 6).

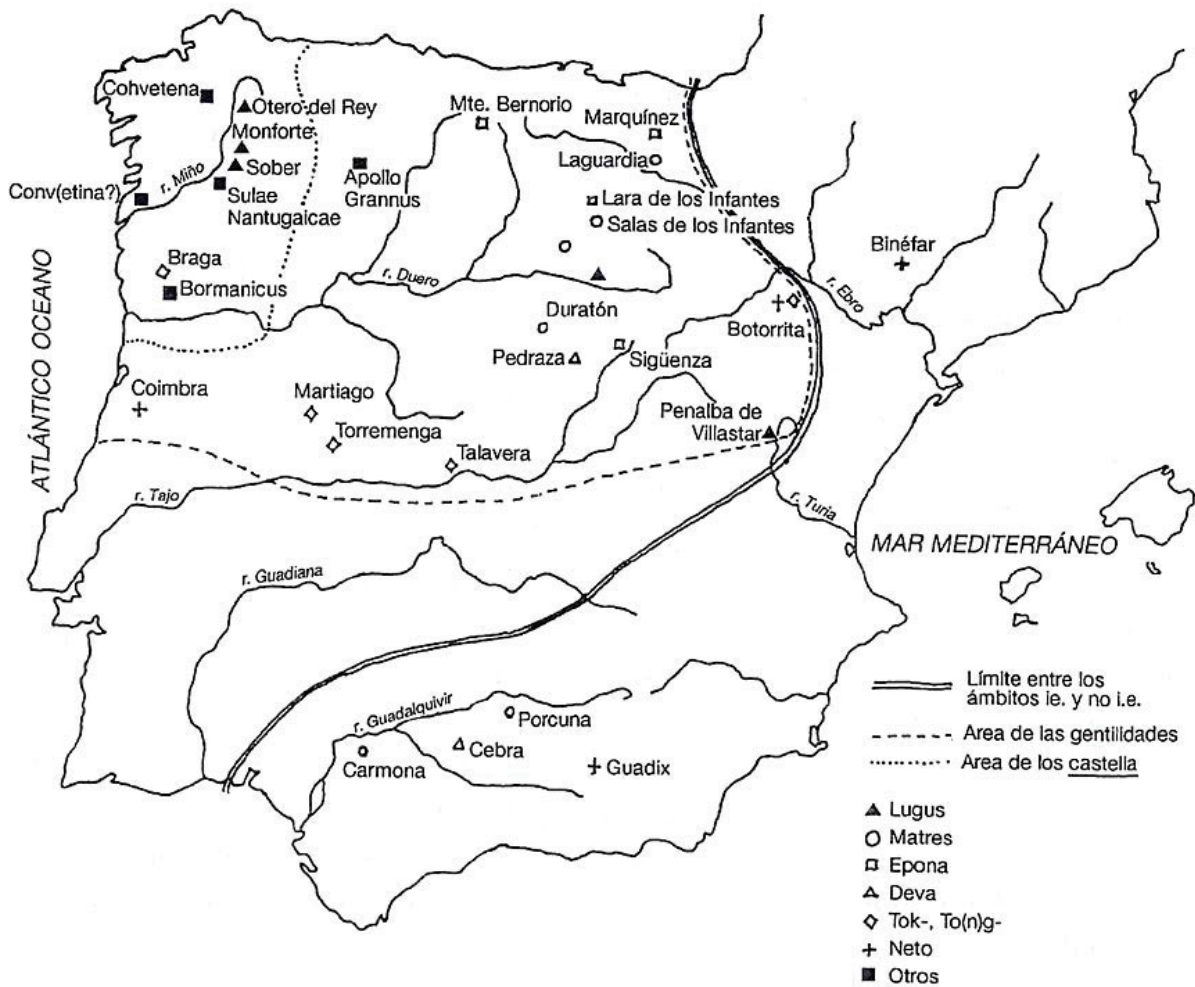


Figure 6. Main Celtic gods of the Iberian Peninsula (after F. Marco Simón).

Many etymologies have been proposed for the description of Lugus: principally "The Bright One" and "The Shining One", epithets that emphasize his solar nature. Yet, a significant number of linguists (Koch 1991: 252) believe that he was originally and etymologically the god of Oaths (\**lugiom* in Celtic). The linguistic root of the *Lugunae*, goddesses attested to in Atapuerca (Burgos), is identical to that of the pan-Celtic god Lugus.

Celtic iconography also records the *Matres*, who personify fertility and abundance of the earth, as a triad (the triple nature is known to be a characteristic common to various Celtic gods). They appear again as a trinity in a tombstone from Nocelo da Pena (Xinzo de Llíma, Ourense), dedicated, according to Rodríguez Colmenero (1997, 171-172) to "The mothers of the city" (*Matribus Civitatibus*) (Fig. 7). However, examples of this cult are concentrated in Celtiberia.



Some epithets appear in peripheral areas that are descriptive or refer to human groups. Such is the case of the epigraphs to the *Matribus Vseis* (the "Supreme Mothers" from Laguardia, Alava), and *Monitucinis* (from Salas de los Infantes, Burgos, and related to the Celtiberian ethnym or anthroponym *moniTuKos* from nearby Sasamón). Perhaps the goddesses *Duilliae*, recorded in various inscriptions from

Palencia, may be related to the *Matres*. An altar found nearby showed three upright female figures of different ages, similar to some *Matronae* from the Rhine area, which might be what they represent. The name *Deva*, ("the goddess") was found in the cave of La Griega (Pedraza, Segovia) and in an inscription from Cabra (Cordoba). This name was the basis for diverse ancient hydronyms and toponyms of Celtic Europe, especially in Britain, and for modern river names in the north of Spain (from Pontevedra to Guipúzcoa) and in the province of Teruel. In Gaul, this deity was called *Divona*, and presided over the sanctuaries of numerous springs and rivers: two of her Gaulish names, *Sequana* and *Matrona*, gave rise to the hydronyms Seine and Marne respectively.

Various theonyms from different areas of the ancient Celtic world either correspond to or stem from the Celtic language. An inscription from Condado (Orense), dedicated to the *Sulae Nantugaicae*, protectresses of the springs (Tranoy 1981: 277), relates to the *Matres* (o *Iunones*) *Suleviae*, who are attested to in various provinces of the Empire with a tradition of Celtic worship. The second element, *nantu-*, linked to springs and small valleys, is contained in *Nantosuelta*, the name of a deity associated with the Gallo-Roman Mercury. The god *Bormanicus*, also attested to in two inscriptions from Caldas de Vizela (Guimarães), seems to be associated with the Gaulish *Bormo-Borvo-Bormanus*, a solar deity related to Apollo. *Cohvetena*, recorded in both Guitiriz and Sta. Cruz de Loyo (Lugo), also has a solar nature, like the Celtic triple-goddess *Coventina*, with the fourteen inscriptions dedicated to her in an ancient sacred spring at Brocolitia (present-day Carrawburgh in northern England) where the Romans built a fountain and a basin inside a little temple, near the northernmost of Hadrian's Wall, as evidence

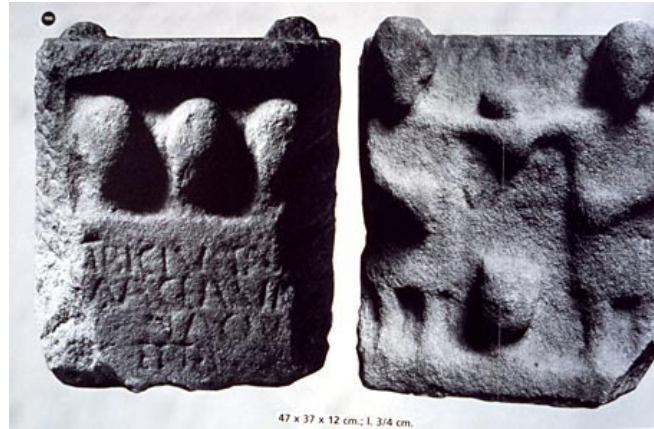


Figure 7. Altar dedicated to the *Matres Civitatis* from Nocelo da Pena, Xinzo de Llímia (Ourense). (Photo: X. Gil and A. Rodríguez Colmenero).

(Allason-Jones and McKay 1985: *passim*; Allason-Jones 1996). *Visuceus* is a theonym attested to in Agoncillo (Rioja), and it is used as an epithet for Mercury and Apollo - the latter as *paredros* of *Visucia* - in various inscriptions from the Rheinland (Benoit 1959: 64).

Lastly, there are toponyms that might allude to other well-known Celtic divinities. *Tárano*, *Taranes*, *Taraniello*, *Taranilla* and *Taraño* are toponyms recorded in Asturias and nearby areas. They apparently stem from the same element (*taran*=thunder), which is the base for the theonym *Taranis* (a celestial deity whose iconographic attribute is the wheel, and who was assimilated to the Roman Jupiter). The latter, according to Lucan, together with *Esus* and *Teutates*, form the supreme triad worshipped by the Celts (*Phars.* 1, 444 ff.). There is, however, little epigraphic evidence for this.

#### 2.2.4.2. Callaico-Lusitanian gods

*Bandua*, *Cosus*, *Nabia* and *Reva* are the best documented deities in large areas of the western and northwestern Peninsula (Fig. 8). While the first three gods "traveled" from the north to the south, *Reva*, who originated in the territory of Emerita Augusta, traveled in the opposite direction, as the study performed by Prósper (2002: 440-441) on the variants of theonyms and epithets demonstrates. Some authors, for example Untermann (1985, 349 ff.), De Hoz (1986: 36 ss.) and Ferreira da Silva (1986: 295-296), maintain that these names have a generic, rather than a personal nature. According to this theory, they were common names that could be assimilated to the Latin *deus/dea*, *lar* or *genius*. If we accept this hypothesis, then there are not individual deities (say,



Figure 8. Callaico-Lusitanian deities (after F. Marco Simón).

*Bandua*) with different "epiclesis" or topic manifestations, but as many independent gods as epithets. I do not believe this theory to have solid grounds though, and documentary evidence does actually show that we are dealing with personal gods having different topic manifestations.

*Bandua* is a deity associated with deals and oaths (an interpretation defended by Holder and his followers on account of its etymology based on the root *\*bendh*, meaning "to bind or fasten"). However, many other authors do not exclude its possible association with water (which would explain the hydronym Banduje, in Portugal, or the toponym Baños de Bande, a thermal spot), or its relation with fords (Prósper 2002: 272). More than thirty theonyms have been recorded that have different epithets and express the main name in various ways (Fig. 9). The form *Bandue* predominates in the Galician territory north of the Duero River while the *Bandi/Bande* form is more common in the Lusitanian area to the south (Untermann n.d.). Its epithets seem to allude more to dwelling places (at least those containing the suffix *-briga*, "fortress": *Lanobrigae*, *Aetobriga*) than to the worshipping communities themselves (Pedrero Sancho 1999 and 2001; De Hoz and Fernández 2002). This theory has been recently refuted by De Bernardo Stempel (2003), who interprets what have traditionally been considered singular thematic datives of male attributes as plural genitive forms referring to groups of people (*Bandue Aetobrico(m)*, *Cadogo(m)*, *Roudeaeco(m)*,

*Veigebraego(m)*). She also states that they depend on a theonym, *Bandua*, which would be feminine as a consequence of the above, and which was probably created later than its masculine counterpart. Thus, we have a pair of deities, *Bandus* (male) and *Bandua* (female), comparable to other Celtic pairs like *Bormanos/Bormana*, *Belisama/Belisamaros*, *Camulos/Camuloriga*, or *Arentius/Arentia*, the latter known from diverse inscriptions from Lusitania (with regard to this, see Olivares 2002: 187 ff.). It has recently been proposed that Torquatus, one of the seven apostolic men responsible for the introduction of Christianity to Hispania whose relics are kept in Santa Comba de Bande (Ourense), may be a Christian version of *Bandua* (Castro Pérez 2001).



Figure 9. Altar for *Bandua Veigebraegus* by M. Silonius Silanus, *signifer* of the First Gaulish horsemen squadron of Roman citizens, with the formula *V(otum). S(olvit). L(ibens). M(erito)* on the upper part of the inscription. From Rairiz da Vega (Ourense). (Photo: X. Gil and A. Rodríguez Colmenero.)

*Cosus*, a deity attested to by about twenty inscriptions, is linguistically related to the epithet variant for *Mars* in France (CIL XIII 1353: *Mars Cososus*). Some of the names assigned seem Celtic, as, for instance, *Segidiaecus* (from the root \**segh-*, "victory"), attested to by an inscription from Bierzo, which also defines him as *deus dominus*. Some authors have equated *Cosus* with the indigenous god assimilated to the Greek *Ares* by Strabo in his description of the sacrifices performed by the peoples in the northern Peninsula (3, 3, 7). Like *Bandua*, *Cosus* was an eminent deity too polyvalent to be assigned to a specific place (for example, fords or river confluences [Prósper 2002: 225 ff.]). It has been asserted that *Cosus*, *Bandua* and the indigenous *Mars* are theonyms that refer to the same god, due to the fact that their areas of worship do not coincide (Olivares 2002:137, 158). Yet, given the existing evidence, this does not seem very likely, since the authenticity of the inscription that mentions *Mars* as a *Socius Banduae* is questionable.

*Nabia*, another deity whose cult was widespread among Callaicians and Lusitanians, is mentioned in eighteen epigraphs. Her association with water seems highly probable, as suggested by modern hydronyms like Navia in western Asturias, Navea (a tributary of Sil in Orense), and other examples from Europe and the British Isles and Ireland. This goddess has also been associated with valleys (Melena 1984), plains and slopes other than on mountains (Rodríguez Colmenero 2002).

*Reva*, another deity recorded in about twenty inscriptions, has been interpreted as the personification of water flows (Villar 1996; Marco Simón 1999a). She has been attested to in Trujillo as *Baraecus* (CIL II 5276), and in the nearby Ruanes as *Rauueanabaraeco* (CIL II 685): that is, in the same form appearing in the "lintel of the rivers" from Mérida, as the goddess of the confluence of the rivers *Anas* (Guadiana) and *Baraecus* (Albárrega) (Canto et al. 1997). Yet, Olivares upholds her supreme celestial nature (2002: 169 ff.) on the basis of her dual relationship with mountain heights and river flows.

The geographical area of worship of the goddess *Ataecina*, conversely, is not that large. She is mentioned in 36 inscriptions found between the central Tajo River and the Guadiana. Fifteen of these come from the sanctuary of El Trampal, in Alcuéscar (Cáceres). The characteristic epithet *Turibrigensis*/*Turobrigensis* led to the belief that the center of worship for this deity was in *Turobriga*, a city located in Celtic Beturia (Pliny, *NH* 2.14). The recently uncovered epigraphs dedicated to the goddess in the sanctuary of El Trampal, dating from the

beginning of the third century, also seem to suggest that the town was located in those environs. It was probably a *vicus* or *pagus* in the territory of Emerita Augusta (Abascal 2002). The theonym is accompanied by epithets such as *dea*, *domina* and *sancta*, which are common in inscriptions from the central area of the Spanish Extremadura. These are found in sanctuaries in Sta. Lucía del Trampal, Malpartida and Herguijuela (Cáceres), with various votive offerings in the form of a goat welded to a plaque together with an inscription and some collective dedications by a group of devotees. Four inscriptions from the area of Mérida assimilate Ataecina to Proserpina, but are limited to this area. As a matter of fact, the references to the indigenous deity predominate to the north of the Guadiana River, while references to the Roman deity are more abundant south of the river.

The interpretations concerning the personality of the goddess *Ataecina*, derived from the etymology of her name (this is a thorny matter that must always be considered within the specific context of the group of worshippers, given the incoherence existing between the etymology and the goddess' functions), suggest her association with an infernal world and with agriculture. The personality of *Proserpina*, with whom the goddess is equated in an execration tablet from Mérida (*CIL* II 462), proves that those two elements, although they seem to be incompatible, are related to each other. Various authors have highlighted the Celtic nature of the theonym: D'Arbois de Juvainville and others, for instance, have associated it with *Ate-gena* ("born again") and two characteristic Celtic elements (*Atepomaros*, *Nemetogena*). Steuding related it to the Irish *adaig*, "night", although other interpretations must not be discounted (Prósper 2002: 287 ss.).

Unlike *Ataecina*, who was attested to in various areas of Lusitania and even outside this region (in Celtiberian Segobriga and by an inscription in Sardinia), *Endovellicus* is a local divinity, with only one sanctuary in San Miguel da Mota (Terena, Alto Alentejo), which was originally a pre-Roman sacred place (Fig. 10). More than 80 votive inscriptions and numerous iconographic finds dating to the period between the mid-first century AD and the mid-third century AD, were found here. This makes this indigenous god one of the most widely documented deities of all the Western provinces of the Empire. Recently, attention was drawn (Cardim 2002; Alves Diaz 2002) to the eminently classical nature of *Endovellicus*, with the exception of the name itself: there are epigraphs which highlight the constant presence of the god, who reveals himself to his devotees in their dreams or through oracular responses, and there is iconographic evidence which associates him with the masculine archetype of *Zeus/Iuppiter*,



*Hades/Pluto, Serapis or Esculapius* (with a bearded head), and others. *Endovellicus* appears to be a tutelary god, with an infernal and savior-like nature; his cult was no doubt practiced by a body of priests, and included animal sacrifices (pigs, boars and birds) as well as the erection of abundant altars, engraved in the marble of that region (Fig. 11). Among the worshippers of this god were also soldiers and women who fulfilled oaths taken for the sake of their families' health.

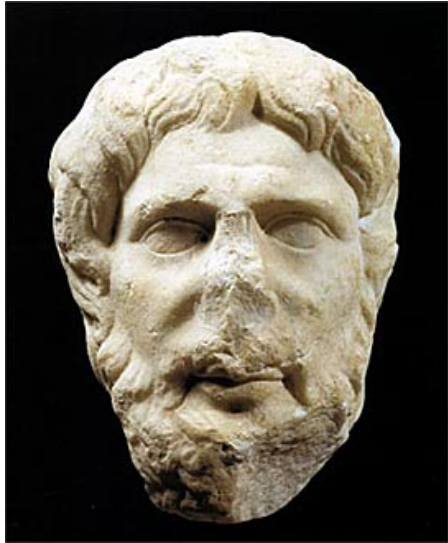


Figure 10. Marble head of *Endovellicus* from S. Miguel da Mota (Museu Nacional de Arqueologia, Lisbon). (Photo: J. Pessoa and J.A. Moreira).



Figure 11. Marble pedestal for *Endovellicus* by M. Vibius Bassus. First century AD. From S. Miguel da Mota (Museu Nacional de Arqueologia, Lisbon). (Photo: J. Pessoa and J.A. Moreira).

This theonym is unquestionably made up of two elements and a suffix. The first one, *endo-*, may be the superlative form of the Indo-European prefix *\*ndhi-*, or rather, *\*endo-*, "inside" (Prósper 2002: 351). *Beles* or *-bels* (*beltz*, "black", in the Basque language) has been proposed as a second element: it is part of numerous anthroponyms of the Iberian area, such as *Endobeles* (*Indibilis*), and the theonym has been translated as "very black" (in allusion to the infernal nature of the god). Therefore, it could be considered as a hybrid of Iberian and Indo-European formation. Other interpretations may be ventured on a Celtic linguistic basis: one possibility could be that the second element of the theonym stems from the Indo-European root *\*uell-*, "good" or "loved", as already argued by Leite de Vasconcelos (1905, 124). Thus, the theonym would mean "He who contains within himself the loving goodness" (Cardim 2002: 87).

About twenty tombstones in the Vettonians' sanctuary of Postoloboso (Candeleda, Ávila) are dedicated to *Vaelicus*, a toponym which seems to corroborate the interpretation of the theonym as related to the Celtic *\*vailos*, meaning "wolf", proposed by Albertos (1966: 124). Therefore, this deity could be associated with this animal, which appears in different religious

systems related to the infernal Otherworld, and subsequently, with a divine personality not unlike that of the Gaulish *Sucellus*. If its root are related to the Lusitanian *Endovellicus*, then *Vaelicus* and *Endovellicus* would be variants of the same deity, venerated both by the Vettonians and the Lusitanians (Fernández Gómez 1973). However, the worship contexts vary: most of the people who dedicated the altars to *Vaelicus* were natives with a specific tribal affiliation (*Caraecium*, *Meneticum*, *Pintolancum*...). Also, the texts are very simple, which contrasts with the more decidedly classical environment of *Endovellicus*.

Two inscriptions from the Cáceres area in Coria, and others from the Portuguese Beira, mention a divine pair, *Arentius* and *Arentia*, whose etymology apparently refers to the element of water (Olivares 1999; Prósper 2000).

The theonym *Trebaruna*, attested to in the Portuguese Beira and in Coria (Albertos, 1983: 486), has been interpreted from the linguistic Celtic perspective (as previously done by Leite de Vasconcelos, II, 1905: 301). It is undoubtedly related to the Lusitanian deity *Trebopala*, from Cabeço das Fraguas (whose first element Tovar -1967: 246 - associated with I.E. *\*treb-*, "house" in ancient Irish). As is widely known, there are various Contrebas in Celtiberia. This theonym is also attested to by the toponym Tribopala from southern Andalusia and, most importantly, it can be related with *Triborunnis*, coming from the environs of Lisbon: this divinity was probably associated with water and with protective functions.

### 2.3. Iconography as a source

Unlike Gaul, which was a very rich territory as far as the iconographic expression of worshipped gods was concerned, Hispania has provided relatively little iconic evidence for Romano-Celtic divinities. The almost total absence of divine images is surely in keeping with the characteristic relative non-iconism of cultural Celtic manifestations as compared to Hellenistic-Romano plastic art. This scarcity undoubtedly denotes a particular perception of divinity by Celtic populations, which is recorded in some literary passages. Diodorus of Sicily (22, 9, 4), for instance, noted the hilarity of Brennus, the Gaulish chieftain, as he beheld the anthropomorphic images of the gods in Delphi during his pillaging of the sanctuary in 280 BC. A similar behavior was recorded by Tacitus (*Germ.* 9, 3) with respect to the Germans, who did not think it appropriate for the majestic gods to be locked between walls or represented in human form. The numerous divine representations in the Gallo-Germanic provinces show that the Romanization of religious practices in this area followed patterns that were very different from those in the

Hispania of Indo-European tradition. The latter, as a matter of fact, provided a large number of indigenous theonyms, as shown above.

The divine iconography of Celtiberia will be dealt with in another chapter of this volume that has been very recently revised by Alfayé Villa (2003). However, it is worth observing that very few divine images of indigenous patrimony have been uncovered. Some of them depict horned gods: the "Janus-like" god from Candelario (Salamanca) with two faces and two little horns, the horned god of the hills from Ríotinto (Huelva), and the possible representation of *Vestius Aloniecus*, with his spread arms ending in unusually large hands, part of a group of artefacts uncovered near the altars dedicated to this god in Lourizán (Pontevedra). The horns emphasize the aggressive power, the genetic vigor and fecundity inherent in these deities of the "Cernunnos type". Another interesting representation is that of a three-headed god from Montemayor (Salamanca) (Olivares 2002: 257), representative of a very characteristic motif found in Gaul. Similarly, the "Colossus of Pedralva", a seated masculine figure with a marked phallus raising its right hand (López Cuevillas 1951: 187-189) is another interesting representation. From the same site comes an "idol" which, like the sculpture from Paderne (La Coruña), probably represents a deity (Santos Estévez and García Quintela 2002: 127). Also worth mentioning is the votive monument from Nocelo da Pena (Xinzo de Limia, Orense), apparently dedicated to the *Matribus Civitatibus* (the "Mothers of the city" of the people of Límia), which are represented on the obverse side. Meanwhile, on the reverse side is a libation scene whose protagonists are, predictably, Tapila and Tacius, the Dedicators (Rodríguez Colmenero 1997: 171-174). As regards the altar from Palencia, it has already been mentioned that the three female representations might allude to the *Duilliae* or the *Matres* (Beltrán and Díez n.d.).

The other iconographic variant, which is much more classical, portrays ancestral deities in the clothes of Hellenistic divinities. An example is the god *Bandua Araugelensis*, represented on a sacrificial bowl in the Museum of Badajoz (Fig. 12) that represents the characteristic



Figure 12. Silver bowl for *Band(ua) Araugel(ensis)*. (Photo: Museo de Arqueología de Badajoz).



iconography of the *Genius Loci* (Marco Simón 2001). The goddess *Iscallis*, who is portrayed in the central medallion of the mosaic of the Roman villa in "El Saucedo" in Talavera la Nueva (Toledo) can be thought of in the same way. The latter is iconographically assimilated to *Tyche-Fortuna* and holds a cornucopia in her left hand (Canto 2001: Figs. 6-7). The same association between a deity with an indigenous theonym and classical iconography can be seen in a sacrificial bowl from Otañes, Cantabria (Iglesias, J.M. and Ruiz, A. 1998: 122). Here, *Salus Vmeritana* (the epithet stems from an indigenous toponym probably used among the *Amani Autrigones*), who was probably a female deity associated with water, is represented by the conventional figure of a nymph and by the assimilated Roman *Salus*.

The so-called "lintel of the rivers", from a mausoleum at Emerita Augusta dating to the end of the second century or the beginning of the third century AD (Canto et al. 1997), shows *Ana* and *Baraeca* (that is, the Guadiana River and its tributary, the Albarregas) as an old river god (with a beard) and a young river god, respectively. The "lintel of the rivers" attests to a characteristic cult of the confluence of the rivers *Ana* and *Barraeca*. There is no doubt that this indigenous tradition underwent a process of re-signification within the Imperial context, and that the pre-Roman divinity worshipped in Mérida was no other than *Revvē Anabaraecus*, recorded in two epigraphs from the area of Trujillo (*CIL* II 685 y 5276). Lastly, the sanctuary of the "Fonte do Ídolo" from Braga also portrays *Tongus Nabiagus* with classical attributes if we interpret it as a standing figure holding a cornucopia.

### 3. Sanctuaries and Rituals

The analysis of areas of worship allows us to go further back in time than the analysis of gods' names. Archaeology has revealed the existence of some sanctuaries that date from times preceding the impact of Romanization as well as some that likely reflect earlier traditions but date from the Roman period.

#### 3.1. Sanctuaries

The areas where rituals were typically performed were located within characteristic landscapes. They were normally open-air places, though caves are also known, which Graeco-Roman writers described as *loci consecrati* or *hiera*, sites for the communication with divinities. Among these places were clearings in the woods, (*nemeton*, essential notion of the Celtic sanctuary, anthropomorphized in theonyms like *Nemedus*), prominent rocky sites, areas near

springs, rivers, lakes or the coast (such as Facho de Donón in Pontevedra, where numerous epigraphs have been uncovered, all dedicated to *Deus Lariberus Breus*) and presumably caves as well (Fig. 13).



Figure 13. Sanctuaries of the Indo-European Hispania (after F. Marco Simón).

Sanctuaries placed among large granitic rocks were very characteristic: they were endowed with carved stairs, holes, flat surfaces and small drainage channels for libations or animal sacrifices which, as attested to in Panóias (Alföldy 1995; 2002) were sometimes performed following detailed rules. These rock sanctuaries are characteristic of the western regions; among them are those in the vicinity of the Duero River, such as San Pelayo (Almaraz de Duero, Zamora), San Mamede (Villardiegua de la Ribera) and others (Benito and Grande 1992). *Cazoletas* (cup marks) have been found in La Mesa de Miranda (Chamartín de la Sierra, Ávila) and in Las Cogotas, while carvings of horses and horsemen were found on the walls of "castros" (hillforts) from the Salamanca area, like those of Yecla and Yeltes (Martín Valls 1983), La Redonda and Sobradillo or in Villasviejas de Plasencia and Villasviejas de Gata (Caceres).

Lastly, carved stairs were discovered in La Mata de Alcántara in the Province of Cáceres (Álvarez Sanchís 1999: 310-311).

Some ritual complexes have been dated back to the Iron Age. Among them are those of A Ferradura (Amoeiro, Ourense), Caneda As Canles (Campo Lameiro-Pontevedra, where the inscription *DIVI* was found engraved on a rock face that obviously dates to the Roman period), Corme (Ponteceso) and Pedra Fita (Lugo), where petroglyphs (podomorphs, palettes, engraved crosses, horseshoes, swastikas, "triskeles" or solar representations, anthropomorphic or snake-shaped carvings) and cup marks were uncovered (Santos Estévez and García Quintela 2002).

I. Vaz (2002) has recently distinguished three kinds of rock sanctuaries of Paleo-Hispanic tradition in Portuguese territory, all located in rocky places. The first kind includes simple sanctuaries containing a votive inscription consecrated to a specific deity, and lacking architectural structures. To this group belong the sanctuary of Castro dos Três Rios (Viseu) consecrated to the *Peinticis*, the sanctuary of Eiriz (Castro de Sanfins), consecrated to the *Nimidis* or *Munidis* on the border between the territories of the *Cosuneae* and the *Fiduenae*, the sanctuary in Lamas de Moledo (another frontier sanctuary, between the *Veaminicori* and the *Petranioi*'s regions, dedicated to the cult of *Crouga Iouea*), a sanctuary in Cabeço das Fráguas (which provides a mention of the sacrificial victims destined for the various deities) and lastly, the "Fonte do Ídolo" from Braga. Temples, the second category, includes complexes that were already showing signs of architectural infrastructures, such as those at Panóias (Vila Real), Penascrita (Vilar de Pedizes) and Castro de Mogueira. Finally, the third type of sanctuary is characterized by less complex altars with holes for libations and altar bases on the rocky surface, as at Igeriz (Valpaços), Rameseiros (Montealegre), and Castro de Ucha (São Pedro do Sul). Two altars were uncovered in São Pedro do Sul: one was dedicated to *Banda Ocelensis* (theonym which is similar to that of the sacrificial bowl from the Colección Calzadilla in the Museum of Badajoz: *Band(ua) Araugel(ensis)*) The other was probably dedicated to *Martis Genio*, "to Mars' Genius", and offers a splendid example of *interpretatio*.

The imposing Vettonian sanctuary of Ulaca (Solosancho, Ávila), characterized by its urban location, is made up of two well-defined parts which belong to the same complex: a rectangular abode, carved in the rock, and, in front of it, a big stone, the so called "altar of sacrifices" (Fig.14). A double flight of stairs of six and nine steps respectively, with an intentional geographic-astronomical orientation towards the highest peak of the Sierra de

Paramera (Almagro-Gorbea and Álvarez Sanchís 1993), leads to an upper platform with inter-communicating cavities and a little channel that reaches down to the base of the rocks. A sanctuary with similar characteristics, including a sacrificial stone and the remains of cauldrons nearby, was found in the *castro* of Novás (Orense).



Figure 14. Sanctuary of Ulaca (Solosancho, Ávila). (Photo: F. Marco Simón).

The persecution of pagan practitioners documented by Christian authors (Martin of Braga's *De correctione rusticorum* [Nascimento 1997] is a remarkable example, in this respect), and the reiteration of canons in various ecclesiastical councils held in Braga and Toledo (Vives 1963) prove the persistence, well into the Middle Age, of rituals conducted in particular locales (woods, rocky projections, springs, rivers and caves) that continued to serve as objects of veneration (Marco Simón 1999a). There is no evidence of various other sanctuaries until Roman times (on the role of rural sanctuaries during the process of Romanization, see Marco Simón 1996). A good example is the case of the already mentioned sanctuary of *Endovellicus* in S. Miguel da Mota (Alandroal, Alto Alentejo). The excavations carried out at this site in 2002 uncovered materials dating from between the first century and the beginning of the third century. These included three remarkable altars and five human sculptures: one of them represents the masculine bust of the divinity, naked and with a cloak on his shoulders; his left hand is unusually large and holds a lance. The other sculptures represent a man wearing a toga and female figures with offerings, as well as a boar, animal that was characteristically associated with *Endovellicus* (Fig. 15). The new excavations at S. Miguel da Mota have enabled us to conclude that there are no vestiges of pre-Roman occupation, or at least, none have been uncovered so far (Guerra, Schattner, Fabião and Almeida 2003).

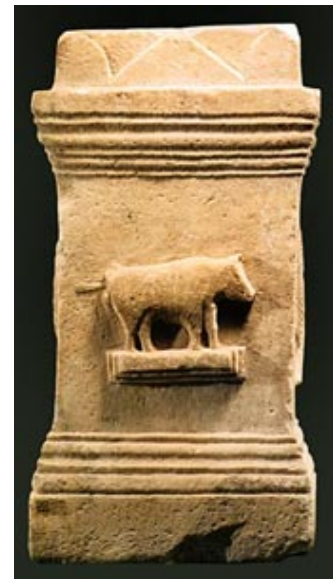


Figure 15. Marble votive altar dedicated to *Endovellicus* with depiction of a boar, from S. Miguel da Mota. (M. Nacional de Arqueologia, Lisbon). (Photo: J. Pessoa and J.A. Moreira).

The same is true of the sacred site of *Ataecina* in Santa Lucía del Trampal, Alcuéscar, Province of Cáceres (Abascal 1995). Its location in the Sierra de San Pedro made it a "frontier" sanctuary at the crossroads of various ethnic groups (Vettonians, Lusitanians and Celts). Thus, it became a "ritual space of convergence", like Peñalba de Villastar in Teruel (Marco Simón 1996), which facilitated the development of religious and legal ceremonies and trade. The above-mentioned sanctuary of San Pelayo in Almaraz de Duero, on the border between the Vettonian, Vaccaean and Asturian territories (Álvarez Sanchís 1999: 310), might be of a similar nature, as might the sanctuary of Postoloboso in Candeleda (Ávila), located on the border between Vettonia and Carpetania. In Carpetania (Illescas, Toledo) the sanctuary of "El Cerrón" contained an altar (or bench) whose front was decorated with a relief made of heat-hardened adobe. It shows a rather uncommon and clearly pre-Roman iconography for central Hispania (fourth-third centuries BC): on the left are two horse carriages, driven by two coachmen, and in front of the second coachman is an upright figure with a tunic and a cloak, raising his right arm; the picture is completed by a winged griffin. This motif clearly shows Mediterranean influences and, if the context is interpreted as the domestic sanctuary of some notable, the picture might express the voyage of two heroes to the Otherworld (Balmaceda Muncharaz 1994).

The so-called "Fonte do Ídolo" in Braga, a water sanctuary consecrated to *Tongoe Nabiagoi* is also of considerable interest (Fig. 16). It is a monument sculpted from a big granitic block, 3 meters long and 1.5 meters high, with the deity represented by a big upright figure (bearded according to ancient inscriptions) with a *cornucopia*. The dedicator, Celicus Fronto Ambimogidus,



Figure 16. Sanctuary of the "Fonte do Ídolo", Braga. (Photo: F. Marco Simón).

from the city of Arcóbriga (there are two homonyms in Celtiberia and Celtic Beturia), is perhaps represented in a small temple with a dove and a mallet portrayed on its pediment (Tranoy 2002; cf Rodríguez Colmenero 2002, who believes the upright female figure to be *Nabia*, and the bust in the niche a *Tongus Nabiagus*, a representation similar to that of *Sucellus* in the Cotian Alps). One of the three tombstones found nearby is dedicated to the goddess *Nabia*, while another is

associated with the sanctuary of Celicus Fronto's descendants, a grandson and two great-grandsons, who restored the complex built by their great grandfather (Rodríguez Colmenero 2002; Tranoy 2002).

A passage from Strabo (3, 3, 7), our main source on northern populations during this period, relates that condemned people were hurled down the cliffs while parricides were stoned to death far away from the mountains and the rivers. I agree with various authors on the interpretation of the scenery as an allusion to the sacred nature of the above-mentioned places. Likewise, the practice of leaving the sick along the roads could be interpreted as a way of avoiding the contamination of the community's essential living space. The same author (3, 4, 16) describes the monthly festival held by the Celtiberians and their northern neighbors during the full moon, when dances and sacrifices were performed.

Caves were also sacred spaces that could be dedicated to interaction with the gods. The cave of Puente, in Orduña (Burgos), apparently provides evidence of a ritual of initiation (Almagro-Gorbea and Álvarez Sanchís 1993: 217, n. 42), judging from the cave epigraphy that it contains. Some 300 meters or so from the entrance, an epigraph mentions a *dux* who entered therein with ten strong men (*X uiri fortes*), but 400 meters far from the cave only the *dux* and *IX uiri fortissimi* are recorded, which may imply that one of the participants died or gave up the enterprise. It cannot be excluded, however, that these inscriptions might have had a playful or humorous meaning (Mayer 1995: 38).

### 3.2. Sacrifice and other forms of ritual practice

One of the elements that Graeco-Latin authors emphasized with respect to the religious system of the indigenous populations of the Iberian Peninsula, the Celts and the barbarian "others" in general, was the performance of human sacrifices. According to Strabo (3, 3, 7), the people from the northern parts offered hecatombs (sacrifices of hundreds of victims) of male goats, horses and men to *Ares* (that is, to the god of war assimilated to this Greek deity). These sacrifices are reminiscent of those mentioned by Caesar (*BG* 6, 16-17) or Diodorus of Sicily (5, 9, 5) when describing the Gauls; these peoples apparently sacrificed prisoners and animals to *Mars* after the conclusion of a war, and built tumulus with their remains or threw them into a wickerwork colossus, which they subsequently burnt (this information is endorsed by archeological finds in some Gallo-Belgian sanctuaries, especially the one in Ribemont-sur-Ancre [Brunaux 2000]). Strabo himself recorded a characteristic ritual of Lusitanians, the human



sacrifice with a divinatory nature (3, 3, 6), a topic which will be dealt with further on in this article. Also worth remembering is Martin of Braga's mention (*De correc. rust.* 8), in Visigothic times, of the practice of human sacrifices among the peoples of the northern areas (Nascimento 1997).

According to Plutarch (*Quaest. Rom.* 83), around 95 BC proconsul Publius Crassus prohibited the human sacrifices that the *Bletonenses*, inhabitants of *Bletisama* (Ledesma, Salamanca), conducted according to their tradition. This practice was not the norm, however, and, as observed about the Celts in general (Marco Simón 1999b), it was only a last resort used in extreme situations (a practice that is well documented in Rome itself).

The votive deposit of Garvão (Ourique, Baixo Alentejo), where a box containing a human skull with signs of trepanation was uncovered, has been assumed to be a sacrificial foundation ritual (Beirão et al. 1987). As regards the sculpted heads found at sites like Yecla de Yeltes, Plasencia or La Vera (Sánchez Moreno 1997: 125), I do not believe that they allude to the practice of human sacrifice or to the Celtic ritual of severing the heads of the enemies (attested to in Gaul by Diodorus [5, 2, 9] and Strabo [4, 4, 5], and also in the peninsula (Blázquez 1958), where horse fibulae with trophy heads hanging from the bridle, with or without horsemen, have been found [Almagro-Gorbea 1999]). Rather, these heads might allude to the protection of the spaces where they were found. The head, which is omnipresent in Celtic three-dimensional art, may be interpreted as representing the presence of the divinity. Animal sacrifices were more frequent and are attested to by remarkable epigraphic evidence, and by sanctuaries like the one at Picote (Tras-os-Montes, Portugal).

Some literary sources allude to sacrifices without specifying whether the victims were human beings or animals, although this very lack of details suggests that the killing referred to animals (Fig. 17). The people from Segobriga, for example, were surprised during a sacrifice by Viriatus, as he attacked the city in 147 BC (Frontinus, *Str.* 3, 2, 4). Other references to this practice include the sacrifices performed on the



Figure 17. Granite relief with a bovine driven to sacrifice from Frende, Baião, Porto. (M. Nacional de Arqueologia, Lisbon). (Photo: J. Pessoa and J.A. Moreira).

occasion of weddings (Diodorus: 33, 7, 2) or at the funerals of a Lusitanian chieftain during which a multitude of victims were immolated (Appian, *Iber.* 72). According to Horace (*Carm.* 3, 4, 34) and Silius Italicus (3, 361) the Cantabri Concani drank the blood of sacrificed horses during a ritual that is described by other sources as belonging to the Scythians and Masagetes.

The Lusitanian inscription from Cabeço das Fráguas contains an enumeration of animals as sacrificial fees to various deities, which reads as follows (Fig. 18):

*Oilam Trebopala / indi porcom Laebo / comaiam iccona Loim / inna oilam usseam / Trebarune indi taurom / ifadem ///? Reue tre ///?*

This may be translated as "One sheep to *Trebopala* and a pig to *Laebo*... a one-year old sheep to *Trebaruna* and a breeding bull to *Reva*". The importance of this sacrifice, as already pointed out by Tovar (1967), lies in the fact that the list of victims is the same as that of the Roman *suovetaurilium* performed on the occasion of the purification (*lustratio*) of the fields, as we know of from Cato's testimony (*De re rust.* 141). This practice is also comparable to the Indian *sautrámani*, a

Persian ritual and the Greek *trittias*. An inscription from Sagunto that is now lost (CIL II 3820) mentions the sacrifice to *Diana* of the same animals that appear in the Lusitanian inscription, which could represent the vestige of rituals that were carried out in Indo-European Hispania.

The text of the inscription from Marecos (Peñafof, Oporto), closely studied by Le Roux and Tranoy (1974) is also of great interest. It mentions various animal victims (cows, oxen, lambs, and calves) sacrificed to the divinities *Nabia* (Corona), *Iuppiter* and *Lida*, and is dated April 9, 147 AD, according to consular dating. It apparently refers to an annual ceremony, organized by two men, Lucretius Vitulinus and Lucretius Sabinus Postumus Peregrinus, who were no doubt members of the local aristocracy, and the ritual was probably held on their property. Evidence from Marecos attests to a rural sanctuary of syncretic nature, a characteristic meeting place dedicated by the cult to indigenous and exotic divinities. This place, as Le Roux

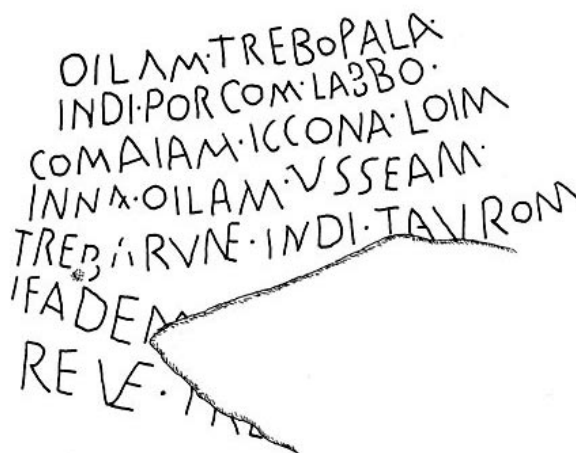


Figure 18. Lusitanian rock inscription of Cabeço das Fráguas (after J. Untermann).



and Tranoy (1974) have pointed out, played a certain role in the spread of the Roman organizational model, and was probably as effective as covenants, in this respect. In the cave sanctuary of Panóias (Vila Real) a number of holes were excavated in the rocks (Fig. 19). There is little doubt as to their sacrificial function, judging from the text of one of the existing inscriptions (CIL II 2395 e):



Figure 19. Sanctuary of Panóias . (Photo: F. Marco Simón).

*(Diis?...)/ Huius hostiae quae ca / dunt hic inmolantur exta intra quadrata / contra cremantur / in quo hostiae uoto cremantur / sanguis laciculis iuxta / superfu(nd)itur.*

The epigraph, which dates from the third century AD, alludes to the immolation of victims, the cremation of their entrails in deposits (*quadrata*) and the gathering of their blood in holes called *laciculi*. The term *hostiae* was used to refer to expiatory offerings to the gods, in order to distinguish them from the *uictimae*, which were thanksgiving offerings (the same terms *hostiae* and *lacus* appear on another inscription from Mougás). The inscriptions and cave structures found in the sanctuary of Panóias apparently provide evidence of a ritual of mystic initiation (Alföldy 2002). Here the senator G. Calpurnius Rufinus, very likely an official of the provincial government, left records, or "mysteries", of the native cult to the local traditional gods of the *Lapitae* and to the Almighty Serapis (*Hypsistos Serapis*, in a bilingual Graeco-Latin inscription), the supreme infernal divinity. Panoiás is, thus, a wonderful example of the adaptation of a native cultural space to the new eastern religious currents of the Imperial era.

Sacrifices like the ones mentioned in these inscriptions are iconographically attested to by six bronze pieces dating from the second Iron Age, uncovered in various places in the northwestern Iberian Peninsula (Fig. 20). Among the iconographic elements are sacrificed animals (rams, goats, boars or pigs, bears), human sacrifice enactors, cauldrons, torques and axes. A bronze piece from Castelo de Moreira (Celorico do Basto, Portugal) represents a human figure carrying an axe over the shoulder; another one, housed in the Instituto Valencia de Don Juan de Madrid, of unknown origin, shows four figures on the verge of sacrificing animals; other findings include a bull and a ram protome which are kept in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional, a

ram whose discovery was attributed to Lalín (Museo de Pontevedra), and lastly, an axe from Cariño, that terminates in a representation of a bull's head (like some knife handles in the National Archeological Museum of Madrid), which is housed in the Museo Arqueológico Histórico del Castillo de S. Antón de la Coruña. These objects share the motif of sacrificial practice, like the cart from Monte da Costa Figueira (Vilela, Paredes, Portugal), a piece that dates between the fourth and the second centuries BC. The cart has two teams of oxen facing in opposite directions, and carries 14 figures placed symmetrically in two rows; the last two are about to sacrifice an animal (Armada Pita and García Vuelta 2003). A lost relief dating from the Roman period, from Duratón (Segovia), represented two male figures sacrificing a boar on an altar (Curchin 2004: 188).

Fortunately, the evidence provided by archeological records on sacrificial rituals is increasing. Excavations in the necropolis from Vallfogona de Balaguer (Lérida) uncovered the bones of two sacrificed horses. The sacrifice of horses, which is also attested to in other funerary contexts both in the Peninsula and in ancient Celtica, was due to the outstanding role played by these animals in these peoples' activities and to their prominent position in the economic and cultural systems (Sánchez Moreno 1995-96; Almagro-Gorbea 1999). Animal bones have been found in other places, such as the *favissa o bothros* from Garvão (Beirão et al. 1987), where abundant bones of cows and pigs were uncovered, or in Picote (Tras-os-Montes) and in other terra-cotta *ex votos* (Castrejón de Capote, Garvão), bronze *ex votos* (like the Alentejana goats studied by Leite de Vasconcelos, who associated them with Strabo's well known text [3, 3, 7] on the sacrifice of male goats) and the ones from the middle Guadiana basin (Abascal 1995: 89-90).

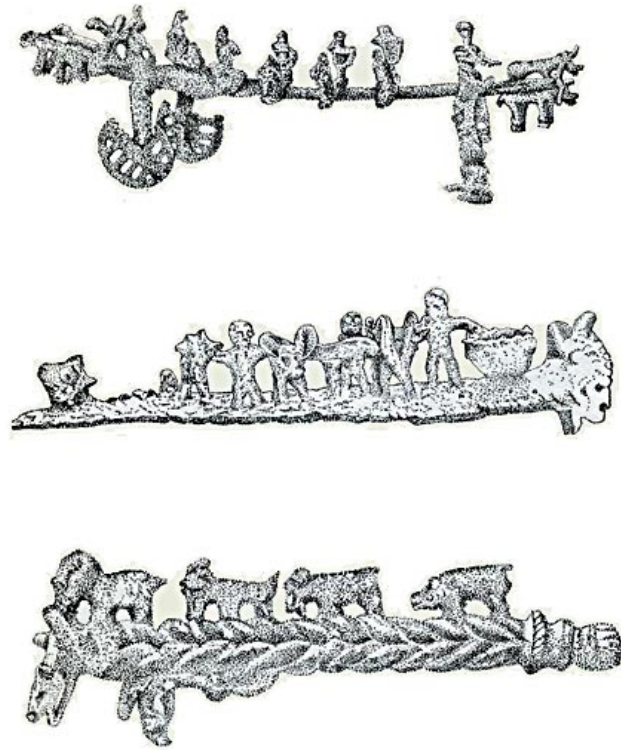


Figure 20. Top: Votive cart from Monte da Costa Figueira (Vilela, Paredes) (Museu de Guimarães): IV-II cent. BC. Middle: *Ex voto* with sacrificial scene (Instituto de Valencia de D. Juan, Madrid). Bottom: Bronze with sacrificial scene from Castelo-do-Moreira (Celorico do Basto). (After J.M. Blázquez).

The deer horns found inside the ramparts of Blacos (Soria) suggest an animal sacrifice performed to secure divine protection for the city (Curchin 2004: 187). On the Vaccaean-Roman site of Las Quintanas (Padilla de Duero, Valladolid), the location of ancient Pintia, ritual deposits of dogs, cats, sheep and pigs were uncovered. One of the deposits included four piglets and a candlestick (Alberto Barroso and Velasco Vázquez 2003).

Obviously, votive offerings were only a complement to sacrifices proper. Altars, which should also be added to the divinities with the characteristics outlined above, are not abundant. Their scarcity in extensive rural areas of central Indo-European Hispania (contrasting with their abundance in the northwest) might be due to the fact that the population in this area simply did not wish to dedicate altars of this kind, or lacked the financial means to do so. This would imply that native cults were more deeply rooted than is actually suggested by the number of their epigraphic representations (Curchin 2004: 176). Coin hoards also seem to have a votive character. That of Salvacañete (Cuenca), datable to about 100 BC, whose coins were apparently selected based on their iconographic content (especially horses and bulls), could be an *ex voto* to an animal deity (Blázquez Cerrato and García-Bellido 1998). Also worth mentioning are the more than 3,000 coins deposited in the River Burejo, near *Pisoraca* (Herrera de Pisuerga) (Curchin 2004: 187-188). Finally, in the province of Palencia a bronze bull was found, with a cavity at its base that was probably intended for insertion on top of a pole for religious ceremonies (Curchin 2004: 173).

The excavations carried out by Luis Berrocal in the "*castro*" of Castrejón de Capote (Badajoz), in the heart of Celtic Beturia, have produced extraordinarily interesting results. In the center of the hamlet a peculiar architectural complex was discovered (Berrocal 1994: 263 ff.): a structure open on the side facing the main road, with the floor raised in the fashion of a podium, three continuous benches leaning against the wall and a stone table in the middle. This structure, unlike ordinary dwellings of this period, did not have a fixed roof and was full of ceramic, bone and coal fragments. It was used from the fourth century onwards, until it was destroyed in the first half of the second century BC during the turbulent period prior to the Lusitanian wars, which were marked by Roman interventions between 185 and 155 BC.

This structure seems to have served as a "focal point", a public and open place where a small number of people performed activities that could be observed from the outside by some two hundred or so individuals. The great concentration in this place of pots for communal use

and metallic instruments like spits, grills and knives is outstanding. Evidence was also found of the burning of saffron in perforated vases. According to the excavator, the activities performed there were of a culinary and collective nature that included the sacrifice of dozens of animals (cows, deer, asses, sheep, goats and pigs) that were killed on the altar in groups of two or three, under the supervision of prestigious personalities sitting on the benches. Here the animals' heads and paws were separated from the bodies, which were later carried outside for roasting. The meat was consumed at a collective feast attended by all the adult members of the community. The ingestion of the meat was accompanied by a kind of local beer like the one mentioned by Strabo in his description of the hecatombs performed by northern peoples (3, 3, 7):

“They drink beer, but have little wine, which, when they do have it, is drunk speedily in feasts with their kinsfolk. Instead of olive oil, they use butter. They dine on benches built around the walls of the room, seating themselves according to their age and rank. The food is passed round; while they drink, they dance to the sound of trumpets, leaping high and falling down on their knees”.

Banquets and rituals of this kind (the "cuisine of sacrifice", to use the well known terminology applied to Greece by Detienne and Vernant [1979]) are reminiscent of the *Brandopferplätze* or sanctuaries attested to in the Alpine area, Italy and Gaul, where remains of bonfires have been found on artificial platforms; among the remains were animal bones and weapons (Kraemer 1966; Bruneaux 1986:17-20; Vitali 1991). Certain deposits observed on other sites of the Iberian Peninsula such as Garvão, El Amarejo, Alhonoiz, or structures like the one found in Illescas (a sanctuary with a bench made of adobe, decorated by reliefs) or in Peña Negra de Crevillente (Berrocal 1994: 276) might be evidence of ritual banquets of the above-described kind.

### 3.3. Considerations on priesthood

The social development of populations of Indo-European Hispania during the Roman occupation, and the scarce but significant evidence available enable us to conclude (in contrast with the restrictive position held by various authors such as Blázquez or Urruela) that there was an organized priesthood (Marco Simón 1994; 1998). The essential information appears to be provided by Strabo (3, 3, 6) in his description of the divinatory sacrifice performed by the *hieroskópos* among the Lusitanians (García Quintela 1991):

The Lusitanians are given to offering sacrifices and inspect the vitals without separating them from the body: they inspect the veins on the side of the victims and they divine the future by means of touching them. They also make predictions through the vitals of their

prisoners of war, whom they cover with cloaks. Then, when the victims are struck by the diviner (*hieroskópos*) in their vital organs, they first draw their auguries from the way the victims fall. They cut off the hands of their captives and consecrate the right ones.

This kind of Lusitanian divinatory sacrifice is amazingly similar to that described by Diodorus in relation with the Gauls (5, 31, 2-4).

According to Plutarch, the human sacrifices carried out by the *Bletonenses* "according to their traditional norms" (*Quaest. Rom.* 83) seem to indicate the existence of individuals who specialized in things sacred, who, as in other environments of the ancient world, would also be responsible for the administration of therapeutic herbs, such as the famous *vettonica*, frequently used by the Romans (Pliny, *NH* 25, 84).

Besides the abundant information we have on the druids of Gallia and Britannia, Classical informants endorse the existence of priests among those populations which did not have the same level of social complexity as other Hispanic peoples. In the case of the Germans, for example, a priest by the king's side was responsible for divination cults, religious punishment and the imposition of order during the assemblies. The sanctuaries consecrated to specific divinities and the sacred groves were also presided over by a priest in charge of the ritual (Tácito, *Germ.* 7, 2; 10; 11, 4; 40, 3-4; 43, 4).

García Fernández-Albalat (1990: 45) and García Quintela (1991: 34) have interpreted the *Ouatius* mentioned by an epigraph from Quieriz (Beira Alta) as an individual of priest-like character, due to its linguistic similarity to the *ouates* mentioned by Strabo (4, 4, 4), Gaulish priests specializing in sacrifices and devoted to the study and interpretation of natural phenomena.

As indicated above, the scribes responsible for ritual inscriptions among the Lusitanians from Lamas de Moledo (Ambatus) and Arroyo de la Luz (Rufinus and Tiro) probably had to do with the organization of local cult. They knew Latin, but, like the scribes who wrote the Gaulish calendar of Coligny, they used the Lusitanian language to record their ancestral rituals in stone. The epigraphy of the sanctuary of San Miguel da Mota, dedicated to Endovellicus, records some formulas (*ex uisu, ex iussu numinis, ex responsu...*) that are associated with oracular proceedings and the communication with the gods through dreams (*incubatio*). It is obvious that a center with such characteristics, where dozens of inscriptions have been uncovered, required, like the one in Facho de Donón and some others, a well organized priesthood, even if the inscriptions date from

the Roman period.

Iconography also provides possible images of priests. Apart from those depicted on the vases from Numancia, a little bronze statue from Nava (Palencia), which is now lost, apparently represents a priest wearing a high hat and blowing a flute (Curchin 2004: 182). In spite of the multiple existing variants, priesthood in ancient, pre-Christian times seems to have been defined by two essential elements: the mediation between gods and human kind (Beard and North 1990: 7) and the practice of animal sacrifice, which we find at the heart of all rituals. There is little doubt that both elements were included in the religions of the peoples of Indo-European Hispania.

#### 4. *Ethos*: The System of Values

On the occasion of the siege of Cauca (Coca), Appian provides rather interesting information on the perfidy of the Romans and, more specifically, Licinius Lucullus:

Meanwhile, *invoking loyalty and the gods protective of deals* and reproaching the Romans with their perfidy, they perished cruelly, and only very few of the twenty thousand men were able to flee through the steep gates of the ramparts (my emphasis) (*Iber.* 52).

##### 4.1. Hospitality

This passage introduces a reality of extraordinary importance within the system of values (*ethos*) of the Cantabrians, their Celtiberian neighbours and the Vaccaeans: the pacts of hospitality. The proverbial hospitality of the Celtiberians, who were unrivalled in their welcome of foreigners, since they were loved by the gods on account of it, is described by Diodorus of Sicily (5, 34-35). As I have argued elsewhere, the *raison d'être* of the practice of hospitality resided in the vulnerability of a reduced human community as well as the need of the individual or the familial group to reduce the risks involved in movements outside their territory; hence the transformation of a customary practice into law. These covenants were made formal by hospitality *tesserae* (Fig. 21), which, though

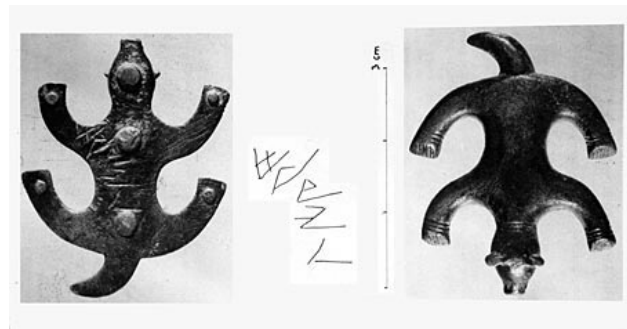


Figure 21. Hospitality tessera from Cabeza del Griego, Cuenca, in the shape of a bear or dog, with the inscription *libiaka* ("Of Libia", a town of the Berones). (Photo: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Madrid).

characteristic of Celtiberia, are also found in other areas. The majority, more than thirty of the known examples, are written in the Celtiberian language (using the Paleo-Hispanic native writing or the Latin alphabet) whereas ten are written in Latin. They come in various forms ranging from the figural representations of native origin, including animal images related to the tutelary gods of covenants (Abascal 2002), to "Roman" imagery (dolphins, interlaced and non-interlaced right hands), and geometrical abstractions (Marco Simón 2002c).

Especially worth analyzing is a *tessera* uncovered in Herrera de Pisuerga (Palencia), the old location of *Pisoraca* located on the border between Cantabrian and Vaccaean territories. This piece has the shape of a pig or boar, it dates from the year 14 AD, as may be inferred from the mention of the consuls, and is engraved on both sides. The text on side A reads as follows...

Under the consulship of Sextus Pompeus and Sextus Apuleius, in the *kalendae* of August, Caraegius, Abuanus and Caelius, Magistrates, and the Megaviensis senate (honoured) bestowed honorary citizenship upon Amparamus of the Nemaiecani, Cusaburensis, his freedmen and descendants, and, within the limits of the Megaviensis territory, they consequently took all the (ritual) oaths (taken) by the Megaviensis citizens.

Thus, this *tessera* expresses the bestowal of the honorary citizenship of the *civitas Maggavensium*, located in Sta. María de la Mave (Olleros de Pisuerga), on Cusaburensis Amparamus of the Nemaiecani, an honor that was equally granted to his freedmen and descendants. The pact was solemnly sanctioned by taking oaths from all those "within the limits" of the Megaviensis territory (*finibus Maggaviensium*); this would probably have involved the offering of sacrifices and liquid libations. A double trunco-conic bronze jug found together with a *tabula* at Montealegre de Campos (Valladolid) suggests a libation ritual. The inscription refers to the renewal of the ancient covenant between the *Amallobrigenses* and the *Caucenses* in 134 AD. As Delibes and Romero Carnicero (1988: 88-89) have observed, the jug might have been made and used some generations earlier, at the time of the signature of the original pact, since the analysis of this piece dates it back to the late Iron Age.

The sacred character of borders and frontiers is well attested to in various areas of the ancient world. According to the Roman religious system, border signs were the residence of *numina*, more specifically of *Iuppiter Terminus*. An inscription (AE 1914: 85) found in Bizanet, in Gallia Narbonensis, is dedicated to *Finibu[s]*, "To the Borders" (that is, to the gods who protected them). Rituals like the one conducted by the (priests) *Fetiales* on the enemy borders when declaring war or signing a pact (Livy 1, 32, 7 ff.; Dion. Hal. 2, 72, 7 ff.), equally indicate



the magic-religious character of border lines in Roman culture. Similar ideas are accounted for among the Celts of Gaul. A Gaulish inscription from Plumergat (Auray, France) is dedicated to the "Fathers-Borders" by the Vabros (*atrebo aganntobo*) (Lambert 1994, 107).

#### 4.2. From banquet to war

When Strabo observed that the Vettonians could only conceive of men as waging war or resting (3, 4, 16), he was indicating two poles which, as in the Celtic world, seemed to dominate the system of values (*ethos*) of these peoples: battles and banquets celebrating hospitality, with the hunting of diverse animals as another popular activity (Fig. 22).



Figure 22. Votive cart from Mérida with a boar hunt. Musée des Antiquités Nationales de St. Germain-en-Laye, Paris. (Photo: RMN n° 95CE595, R.G. Ojeda).

Various authors have drawn attention to the importance of the anthroponym *Ambatus* among the Vettonians and Lusitanians and its possible relation to military clientele. The term refers to the Gaulish *ambacti* or *soldurii* mentioned by Caesar (*BG* 6, 15, 2), which were similar to the *devotii*. It also possible that the reports of banditry and robbery in Lusitania and other neighbouring territories (Diodorus 5, 34, 6; Strabo, 3, 3, 5) actually refer to rituals of initiation like those known to have been performed elsewhere (Ciprés 1993).

Further important information on the system of values of the Hispanii includes the agonistic ethics of the Celtiberians and the Vaccaeans. This was also characteristic of the Cantabrians, who, according to Flavius Josephus (2, 374), like the Lusitanians were also "fond of wars" (*kántabron areimanía*), that is, they could not live without fighting. Perhaps this would explain Silius Italicus' text concerning the suicide of old people, a common practice among the Cantabrians (*Pun.* 3: 326-331; see also 1: 225-228) and the reflection of a system of values under which men held their lives in contempt when they could not live as warriors any longer.

Silius Italicus (16, 26) describes a band of young Cantabrian mercenaries serving under the Carthaginians during the Second Punic War, who fought in a suicidal way with Larus, the chieftain of the *pubes caterva* who threw himself upon the Roman ranks. This was probably a case of *devotio*, a religious consecration to the gods that the sources attribute to Hispanic peoples



(Valerius Maximus explained that the Celtiberian devotees consecrated themselves to their lord, thus performing the consecration of their own souls: [2, 6, 11]) and an example of ecstatic *furor* that Strabo and other authors claim to be characteristic of the Cantabrians and Asturians. The very name of the Cantabrians, *Orgenomesci*, apparently composed of *orgeno*, "kill", (contained in the Gaulish name Orgetorix, "King of massacres"), and *mesco* ("inebriation", appearing in the known Irish tale "The Drunkenness of the Ulstermen" (*Mesca Ulad*), should be interpreted within this context. The name of this Cantabrian population (where the two poles of the battle-banquet coincide) would be translated as "The Drunken Killers". Its first element appears in the name of the god *Orgenus*, which is attested to in northern Italy (Cisalpine Gaul). Peschel (1989: 273-282) believes feasts and drinking rituals to be two of the foundations of *devotio*, with the distribution of wine, integrated into sacrificial practices, symbolizing the alliance of the community of warriors before the fight.

The best example of the *topos* of individual challenge is found in the Vaccaean environment. In 151 AD, before the walls of *Intercatia*, a Vaccaean repeatedly challenged the Romans to single combat; since nobody answered his provocation, he mocked his enemies and left after performing a triumphal dance. Eventually, Scipio Aemilianus accepted the challenge and slew the Spaniard (Appian, *Iber.* 53). Pliny provides some very interesting information in this respect (*NH* 9) when he claims to have read that the son of the Intercatian slain by Scipio used a seal with an engraved combat scene. Various fibulae in the shape of horseman and horses, illustrated in a publication by Martín Almagro-Gorbea (1999), also attest to the ritual use of trophy heads (observed by Posidonius with respect to the Gauls) among the Vaccaeans and other Hispanic peoples. On the pommel of a knife found in Tomb 32 in the necropolis of Las Ruedas (Padilla de Duero, Valladolid) a scene of mythological content is represented including various animals and a zoomorph or hybrid in zenithal perspective as well as a single combat between two warriors (Sanz Mínguez 1998, 439 ff; Sanz Mínguez and Velasco Vázquez 2003: 80, 186) (Fig. 23).



Figure 23. Pommel of a dagger from the Tomb 32 of the necropolis of Las Ruedas (Padilla de Duero, Valladolid) (after C. Sanz).

#### 4.3. *Ethos* and Funerary Ideology

A last, unavoidable topic is that of funerary beliefs. The dominant funerary ritual

performed by these peoples was cremation, but excavations in the castra have not cast more light on the situation and, as in other areas of the peninsula, the lack of localized necropoli is proverbial.

The ritual destruction of weapons to maintain their magic bond with their deceased owners and to transfer their power to the Otherworld is well attested to in the Celtic as well as the Iberian world. In Vettonia the ritual is documented at Las Cogotas, La Osera, El Raso de Candeleda, El Castillejo de la Orden and El Romazal I (Álvarez Sanchís 1999). The existence of fire rituals and funerary banquets is supported by the discovery of various objects in the necropoli associated with such practices, such as spits, grills, andirons, tongs and tripods (La Osera, Las Cogotas). These objects were always found in association with horse harnesses and were uncovered in tombs together with a profusion of weapons. This might indicate a male elite that perhaps, as Cabré argues, was related to the priesthood, although it also has been suggested that these materials were associated with a domestic cult presided over by the patriarch of a family (Kurtz 1982).

The absence of large necropoli suggests the existence of alternative mortuary rituals, such as, for example, the deposit of cremated remains in aqueous environments. As is well known, water was for the Celts very important as an element of access to the Otherworld. In Ulaca there is a semi-hypogeous, 6.5 meter long rectangular construction that has been interpreted as a sauna of ritual nature (Almagro Gorbea and Álvarez Sanchís 1993). Perhaps structures such as those from San Mamede and Picote (Miranda do Douro) were also used for initiation baths, like those that might have taken place at the "*pedras formosas*" in the northwestern Peninsula (Sanfins, Briteiros, etc.), which are decorated with astral motifs (Fig. 24). These monuments and structures have been associated with bathing activities of the laconic style, as they took place in the waters of the Duero River (Strabo 3, 3, 6) and, according to Sidonius Apollinaris (*Ep.* 2, 9, 8), the Gallo-Romans continued the tradition of steam baths in the fifth century.



Figure 24. "*Pedra Formosa*" of Sanfins. (Photo: F. Marco Simón).

These "monuments with ovens", interpreted as saunas, are found in the same areas of the *Conventus Bracarensis* as the statues of warriors and torques, all key elements of ethnic identity for the peoples who inhabited today's southern Galicia and northern Portugal. Some of the "*pedras formosas*" were transformed into nympheums under Roman influence, and later on into Christian baptisteries, as in the case of Saint Eulalia de Bóveda (Lugo) or Saint Mariña de Aguas Santas in the province of Orense (Castro Pérez 2001: 62 ff.).

Another possible funerary ritual, inferred from the scarcity of necropoli, is the exposure of corpses in an allusion to the astral Otherworld, which is well attested to in the Vaccaean and Celtiberian areas, and is also recorded in literary texts in the Gaulish world (Sopeña 1995). The preponderance of astral observations among the peoples of Indo-European Hispania is also expressed in the form of the ceramic boats with solar representations that are found at diverse Vaccaean sites (Matapozuelos, Simancas, Cuellar), which can be dated back to the last two centuries before Christ (Blázquez 1983: 258-259). In the Vettonian areas elements with a similar iconography are found: funerary urns (Las Cogotas) as well as iron plaques with silver incrustations on sword handles (La Osera y Chamartín de la Sierra in the Province of Ávila, Atienza in Guadalajara). The iconography from Las Cogotas, representing a sun and a human figure on a boat, is particularly remarkable (fourth-third century BC) and so is an anthropomorphic solar representation between two swans, found in La Osera, which follows Italic prototypes. The ceramic piece from Soto de Medinilla also exhibits stylized ducks or swans and solar representations (Wattenberg 1959), although some of these stylized forms may represent vultures rather than swans (in the ceramic piece from Las Quintanas, Padilla de Duero, birds of prey are associated with astral elements [Sanz Mínguez and Velasco Vázquez 2003: 195]), which could relate the iconography to an excarnation funerary ritual and to the psychopomp-like nature of vultures, which were thought to carry the spirits of the warriors to heaven (as attested to by Silius Italicus' text on the Celtiberians [*Púnicas* 3, 330-333], and by Elianus' text [*Natur. anim.* 10, 22] on the Vaccaeans, or the Arevaci according to Sopeña and Ramón's latest interpretation [2002]).

A silver neck-ring from Chaô de Lamas (near ancient Conimbriga, in Beira Alta, Portugal), now in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional of Madrid, is the most significant piece from a hoard hidden between 100 and 93 BC. Both ends of this beautiful piece feature snake's heads, and it contains as basic motifs two human heads inside golden medallions, with a twisted

edge, like other pieces in the "Castro Culture" of the northwestern Iberian Peninsula, flanked by two birds of prey with their talons at the ready (Fig. 25). Behind them, there are two quadrupeds, with another one on the right end of the piece, while a third figure appears on the left that has been interpreted as another quadruped. However, it shows clear differences, not only in its legs, which are much shorter, but especially in its head, which exhibits unequivocally human features. The presence of a small round shield (a *caetra*, no doubt) immediately underneath leads to the interpretation of this motif as a human being whose hands and lower legs had been amputated.



Figure 25. Silver neck-ring from Chão de Lamas (near Conimbriga) (M. Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid). (Photo: F. Marco Simón).

Almagro-Gorbea and Lorrio (1991: 422) have related these motifs to the sacrificial scenes on the votive knives known from the same period, suggesting also that the association between heads and birds of prey could refer to some theme on the Numantine pottery with funerary connotations. This is probably the best way to go about interpreting the piece. This iconography is to be related in my opinion to the ritual exposure of the bodies of the fallen warriors. Silius Italicus and Claudius Elianus, when describing the Celtiberians, refer to the vultures as psychopompous animals carrying the souls of their deceased to the heavens. The human heads represented on the neck-ring provide a significant parallel for those appearing on the golden embossed plates from Castro de la Martela (Segura de León, Badajoz) (Berrocal 1989): they are a good example of Celtic iconography (frontal heads and horse) with Mediterranean influences (the technique is orientalizing), and between both human heads and the horse there are two motifs similar to the "leaf crown" or mistletoe leaves of so many La Tène artifacts. But in the heads of Chão de Lamas the style of hair and beard blend in a hybrid of man and animal. Seen as a lion, it could be explained as an adoption of an iconographically Mediterranean element that stresses the aristocratic or heroic status of the owner. It is more probable, however, that what the hybrid heads reveal are the features of a wolf, in which case a "mythic transposition" from another culture should not be posited, considering the importance of the wolf in the indigenous

imagery (Almagro-Gorbea 1996). It is possible that the hybrid heads represent the ambiguous image of a transit myth: that of the dead warrior to the Otherworld, as in the case of the *paterae* of Santisteban del Puerto (Jaén) or Tivissa (Tarragona) (Olmos 1996).

The quadrupeds that figure on the neck-ring of Chão de Lamas are undoubtedly boars, animals of great symbolic value among the Celts in general and the Hispano-Celts in particular (think for example of the *verracos* sculptures). The snake, which forms both ends of this piece, also has a very broad symbolic polyvalency, and it is worth recalling here its significance as a guide to the Otherworld, which in my opinion is probably what the snake on the Gundestrup cauldron, found in a bog in Denmark, represents as well. Snakes appear in the Lusitanian votive bronzes from Castelo de Moreira and from Costa Figueira (Portugal), as well as on the handle of a knife now in the Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan in Madrid. The figure near the right end of the neck-ring may represent the mutilated body of a warrior lacking his hands and part of his limbs. It is worth recalling here that Strabo (3, 3, 6) says the Lusitanians amputated the right hands of the prisoners and consecrated them to the gods.

Astral symbolism plays an outstanding role in the iconography of the Hispano-Roman areas (Abásolo and Marco Simón 1998): crescent moons, discs, stars, and straight-radius swastikas can be seen in various pieces dating from the Roman era and probably allude to the astral location of life beyond death (Fig. 26). This iconography is a continuation of a tradition appearing in the so-called "gigantic stelae of Cantabria", dated to between the first century BC and the first century AD. Sometimes the astral destination is explicitly expressed, as in the case of the epitaph in León for Lucretius Proculus, *armorum custos*, and the epitaph for his wife Valeria Amma, which includes three stylized human busts whose heads contain right-facing swastikas.



Figure 26. Funerary stela with astral symbols (Museu de Bragança). (Photo: F. Marco Simón).

In the lower part of the gigantic stele from Zurita, which is two meters in diameter, the corpse of a warrior with a round shield (*caetra*) is shown being devoured by a vulture. Above, in the disc, is a horse with some other kind of bird on it; in front of these are two warriors holding



large round shields, a lance or a sword, apparently wearing on their heads and shoulders the skin of an animal (bear or wolf). According to Peralta (2000), this might allude to the characteristic wolf skin disguise that symbolized the mystic union with the animal and the transformation of the warrior into a wild beast, like the Germanic *berserkir* who made up Odin's *comitatus*. A wolf skin was also the badge of office of Celtiberian heralds (Appian. *Iberica* 48).

These ideas of a transition to the Otherworld are found in some pieces that exhibit one of the most prominent iconographies of the Peninsula (Marco Simón 1994). I am referring to the golden diadems uncovered at Moñes (Piloña), seven fragments of which are preserved in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional, the Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan de Madrid and the Musée des Antiquités Nationales de St. Germain-en-Laye in France. These pieces come, as may be assumed, from a funerary deposit and represent the material expression of the prestige of a native *Princeps*. It can be reasonably assumed that they date back to the last centuries before Christ, or to the early first century AD. The scenes have been interpreted as allusions to water rituals (López Cuevillas 1951) or scenes of sacrifice (López Monteagudo 1977). In my opinion these scenes symbolize the turning of warriors into heroes as they transit through water to the Otherworld (Fig. 27). The scenes include the following elements: water, horsemen and infantry (some naked, some wearing torques or deer horns), cauldron carriers (which I interpret, as in the

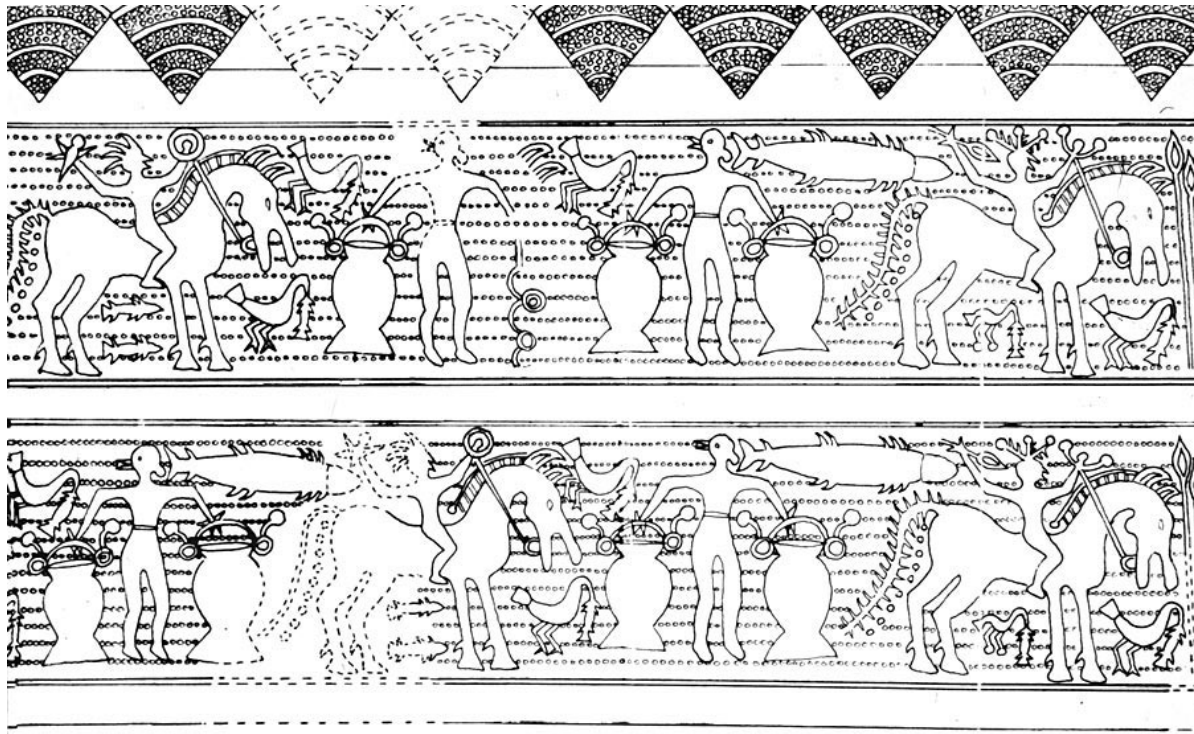


Figure 27. Diadem from Moñes (Piloña, Asturias) (after G. López Monteagudo).



case of the Gundestrup cauldron, in terms of the "resurrection cauldron"), birds and fish (salmon), a dog, and ornithomorphs related to the transformation of people into birds that takes place in the Otherworld, as seen in various passages of Irish literature. All these elements highlight the basic symbolism of heroicization, corroborated by testimonies found in the area characterized by the cult of the goddesses *Nabia* and *Deva*, who are clearly related to aqueous environments and control and facilitate access through their powers. Likewise, García Quintela (1999: 158-169) has related the iconography in the diadems of Moñes to Strabo's text (3, 3, 5) on the revolt of the Celts from the Guadiana area. These crossed the river Limia, called *Lethes* (that is, "of forgetfulness"), a term that is linked to the common Celtic *\*Letavia*, used to indicate the doors to the Otherworld.

Archeology has uncovered evidence for other forms of heroicization, for example, the statues of the "Lusitanian warriors" (Ferreira da Silva 1986: 291 ff.; Schattner et al. 2003), created under the influence of Romanization (Fig. 28). They evidently represent heroicized native *Principes* and their Celtic character is demonstrated by the use of helmets of the La Tène type, torques (Castro Pérez 1992; Marco Simón 2002d) and bracelets (*uiriae*), as well as by characteristic anthroponyms (Clodamus, Corocaudius, Dovilo, among others). It is possible that, like the famous statues from Hirschlanden and the Glauberg, they were used to indicate the position of a tomb, but their location, at the entrance of the "*castros*" (attested to in Sta. Comba, Mozinho o Sanfins) shows that, at least on some occasions, they were used to consecrate the memory of the individual protecting the community. Similar conceptions were at the base of a funerary practice attested to among the Irish Celts (for example, the interment of king Loegaire): the body of the warrior was buried in an upright position and it wore weapons to



Figure 28. Statue of Callaico-Lusitanian warrior from Outeiro do Lezanho (Boticas, Vila Real). (Museu Nacional de Arqueologia, Lisbon). (Photo: J. Pessoa and J.A. Moreira).

protect the territory from the enemy (Velasco 1999). Tertullian (*De anima* 57), for example, alludes to the Celts' custom of spending the night by the tombs of their heroes, where they had premonitory dreams (Grenier 1943, 1944).

The sculptures from Lanhoso and Xinzo de Limia also look like heroicized people (Ferreira da Silva 1986: 298, 310), although the latter might represent a deity (Castro Pérez 2001: 69). Especially significant is the monument from Sant Martí Sarroca, Barcelona (Guitart 1975: 71-80), whose three heads, represented on one side, are associated not only with Indo-European Hispania, but also with three-dimensional works found among the Celto-Ligurian populations of Provence. Also worth mentioning are the nail-pierced skulls uncovered in Celtiberia and Ullastret (Gerona). Lastly, the anthroponymy of Indo-European Hispania also reflects its aristocratic system of values: names such as Viriatus, Camalus, Coronerus, Cloutius, Taurus indicate power, prestige and warfare skills, whereas dignity is expressed in more symbolic and religious terms like Caelius, Meiduenus, Medamus, Eburus, and perhaps Ovatius, which express priest-like connotations (see Brañas 2000: 121-142 on Callaico-Lusitanian "heroic names").

A good deal of the evidence considered belongs to religious systems that are neither "native" nor "Roman" by this time, and have a marked syncretic character. Elements of traditional culture would co-exist with Hellenistic-Roman ones, until they ultimately were replaced by the Christian faith.

As this paper has shown, the religious systems of the Indo-European speaking peoples in the Iberian Peninsula manifest a clear heterogeneity in the diverse areas of evidence considered, although there are some features that are common to other areas of the European (Romano)-Celtic world, from divine personalities such as the Matres or Epona and the perception of the head as an expression of the god, to various cosmological elements regarding the Afterlife and the Beyond. The tendency to express religious piety through the new Roman ritual of votive altars is more marked among the populations of the northwestern and western Peninsula, strongly suggesting a difference between these Callaico-Lusitanian areas (speaking Indo-European but not specifically Celtic languages, according the majority of scholars) and the Hispano-Celts of both central Mesetas and Celtiberia, where exposure of corpses in an allusion to the astral Otherworld or the importance of iconography on pottery as a vehicle of cosmological ideas are more characteristic traits.

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