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## ***War and Society in the Celtiberian World***

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### **Abstract**

This study provides an overview of the strong military component of Celtiberian society, dating back to the sixth century BC and manifesting itself especially during the wars against Rome in the second century BC. This bellicose character developed as a result of a long tradition of warrior-shepherds who formed part of the Bronze Age "proto-Celtic" substrate. From the first millennium BC on, Celtiberian society became increasingly hierarchical and by the Iron Age warrior elites had emerged that subsequently evolved into hereditary regional clans. Archaeology, especially the excavation of cemeteries dating from the sixth to the first centuries BC, has provided most of our information about the Celtiberian warrior aristocracy, referred to in later literary sources as *nobles* and *princes*. The arrival of the Carthaginians and Romans ushers in the appearance of *oppida* as administrative centres that controlled large territories and provided cohesion in the wars against Rome. Within this framework, equestrian structures - the *equites* - emerged with training strategies that influenced military tactics. Graeco-Latin sources refer to Celtiberian customs such as single combat conflict between champion-warriors and Celtiberian warriors as mercenaries. Epigraphic sources, on the other hand, document the existence of institutions such as magistrates, supra-family organisational structures, and hospitality pacts. In this society, warlike, virile and agonistic ideals played an essential role. Thus, analysis of different kinds of evidence (literary sources, iconography, and funeral practices) provides information about the existence of highly religious ritual practices linked to war. This is verified by the fact that the gods were invoked in such rituals and were called upon to witness pacts. Customs such as the *devotio*, which had strong ritual associations, must have been relatively frequent among the Celtiberians. Finally, information is included about fighting methods and the concept of war, which in the Hispano-Celtic world evolved along with society, as is confirmed by important variations documented over five centuries of Celtiberian development.

### **Keywords**

Celtiberian society; war; gentiliate elites; clientelar army; mercenaries; single combat; *devotio*; *equites*.

War is a social phenomenon that implies a conflict between two or more human groups.

Consequently, the characteristics of a war depend on the societies where it occurs as one of the elements of their culture (Harmand 1981: 9). Due to the fact that information on the social implications of war in prehistory is very often lacking, more attention tends to be paid to technical aspects such as weaponry and forms of combat than to its social and ideological implications.

Considering that in Greek, Roman or Celtic culture peace can be regarded as the temporary suspension of a habitual state of war (Harmand 1981: 23), war in protohistoric societies would have been a very important social phenomenon. This, as the Latin word *hostis* indicates, is evidenced by the equivalence between "stranger" and "enemy". Thus, war, even if not continuous, would have affected and conditioned the entire cultural system, from population distribution and organisation of the family to urbanism, from the economy to religion, just as its development was conditioned by the society's characteristics.

To understand war in Iberia's Celtic society, it is essential to analyse the mentality of that society (Almagro-Gorbea 1997). The relationship between war and society means that one would have affected the other as they evolved within the same cultural system. The evolution of war affected weaponry and had profound socio-ideological implications that explain the survival of very archaic warrior traditions until a late date.

The social and political organisation of the Celtiberians has been studied since J. Costa (1893), who based his work on Graeco-Roman writers' reports describing princes and chieftains, warriors and mercenaries, senates, popular assemblies and institutions such as *hospitium* and clientship, *populi* and federations, etc. Historians also mention the warlike character of the Iberian Celts, who chose death in preference to being stripped of their weapons (see discussion below; Sopeña 1995: 92-93). The Celtiberians and the Lusitani fought as mercenaries in the Turdetan, Iberian, Carthaginian and Roman armies (Ruiz-Gálvez 1988; Santos Yanguas 1980, 1981; Santos Yanguas and Montero 1982; etc.), and for much of the second century BC were the protagonists of continuous conflicts with Rome.

The epigraphic sources document institutions such as magistracies, suprafamily gentiliate organisations and ritual pacts of friendship. Archaeology, in particular the necropoli of the Eastern Meseta, provides evidence of the Celtiberian culture from its origins onward, a necessary long-term perspective (Lorrio 1997: 110-111). Grave goods indicate a hierarchical Celtiberian society based on a warrior aristocracy that is evidenced by the rich burial assemblages that have

been found. Settlements, although still not sufficiently investigated archaeologically, with their larger monumental public or communal buildings such as the one in Botorrita with columns, or the *comitium* of Termes, complement the information from the burial record.

Knowledge of the long period between the sixth century BC, when the essential elements of Celtiberian Culture were already defined, and the end of the millennium is rather uneven (Lorrio 1997: 261-262). The literary sources for the Second Punic War and the Wars against Rome after the end of the third century BC and the epigraphy from the second century BC onward provide information on the final phase of Celtiberian society when it was already in contact with the Romanising process.

For the oldest phases only the cemeteries provide information about the evolution of Celtiberian society from the sixth to the first century BC. Through mortuary analysis it is possible to reconstruct the burial assemblages of the warriors buried there, although not their concept of war or the way they fought, which has to be inferred from the evolution of their society. The necropoli provide evidence of social evolution similar to that of the Iberians (Almagro-Gorbea 1991a): aristocratic tombs in the sixth-fifth centuries, more isomorphic warrior tombs in the following two centuries, and a tendency for weapons to disappear from the third century onward which has been associated with the expansion of urban ideologies (see discussion below). But Celtiberian society did not evolve in a homogeneous manner, since there were regional differences between the various *populi* known from the literary sources.

Traditionally, the study of the Celtiberians has been limited to their "historic" stage, from the end of the third century to the first century BC. But the continuity of the archaeological record from the seventh century BC onward justifies the term "Celtiberian" in the lands of the upper Tagus-Upper Jalón and upper Douro rivers, where a culture corresponding to the *Celtiberia* of the Classical authors developed; it was also found on the right bank of the middle Ebro from the fourth to third century BC. A Celtic language known as "Celtiberian" was spoken in all these areas.<sup>1</sup>

From the sixth century BC on a distinct cultural system developed in Celtiberia. Evidence of it can be seen in the material culture, habitat, socio-economic structure and rites that were characteristic of the Celtiberian world; all of this was the result of a long process of evolution. This continuity can be seen in the settlements, socio-economic structure and necropoli, which reveal a warrior society that developed an evidently hierarchical structure from its early phase on

(Lorrio 1997: 312-313). The cemeteries reveal a sequence of the Celtiberian world from the sixth to the first centuries BC with distinct geographical-cultural areas. Four phases can be distinguished: *Proto-Celtiberian*, tenth to seventh centuries BC; *Early Celtiberian*, 600-500 BC; *Middle Celtiberian*, 500-200 BC; *Late Celtiberian*, second to first centuries BC.

### **The Late Bronze Age Substrate: Pre-Gentiliate Society**

Despite their heterogeneity, the Celts, and the Celtiberians in particular, are traditionally considered to be uniform in character through time. However, to understand the variations of their warrior society over the course of time, it is necessary to evaluate their complex ethnogenesis and long evolution.

The appearance of warrior societies in the Iberian Peninsula can be traced from the Bell Beaker Culture at the end of the third millennium BC on, as seen in the deposition of weapons in individual tombs and votive deposits which reflect a new warrior mentality in their ideology. This process, even if poorly understood, continued without interruption and ultimately produced the "warrior" cultures of the Bronze Age, characterised by individuals - "warriors" - who specialised in war; they were a minority, but they seem to have imposed their character on the rest of the society. The term "warrior" society does not imply that war was its only occupation, or even the main one, but that it was an essential part of life for the ruling elites and would thus implicate the whole of that society, affecting the way it behaved and influencing its ideology, as was the case in Heroic Greece.

In the western, northern and central areas of the Iberian Peninsula a basically livestock-breeding cultural substrate is documented, comparable to that in other regions of Atlantic Europe. This would have encouraged the formation of warrior elites as a consequence of the development of a hierarchical structure needed for the protection of the livestock and the control of grazing lands and routes. These regions have archaic place-names, offerings of weapons to water and sun-worshipping cults on omphalic crags related to "proto-Celtic" social and ideological structures through their Indo-European character that continued without interruption into the later Celtic cultures of Hispania, as evidenced by their rites, the names of their gods and their language (Fig. 1).

From the first millennium BC on, permanent hill-fort settlements (locally known as

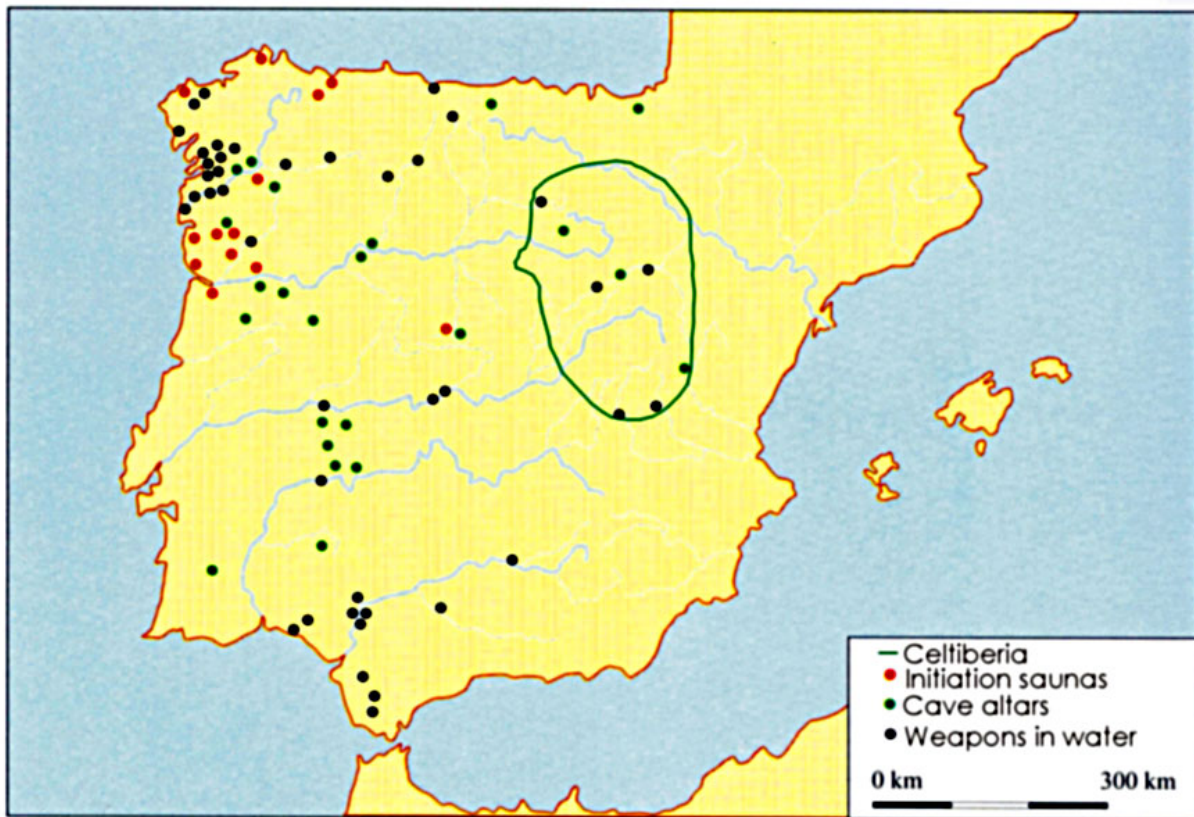


Figure 1 Distribution of "proto-Celtic" elements in the Iberian Peninsula: initiation saunas, cave altars and weapons in water. The map shows historic Celtiberia according to the literary sources and written documents (after Almagro-Gorbea 2001).

*castros*) emerged in these Atlantic regions, characteristically occupying places that were easy to defend, fortified with surrounding walls to protect a number of individual circular dwellings suggesting a social organisation that was not very complex or hierarchical. The spread of the hill-fort phenomenon reveals growing instability, a consequence of the increase in the population and the need to defend their *pagus*, generally a valley or small territory. The predominance of stock-raising, some of which was transhumant to avoid the arid summers of the Meseta plains and the hard winters of the sierras, resulted in endemic conflicts over control of grazing lands. Over time, this process would have favoured an increasingly hierarchical social structure, giving rise to warrior elites that developed into hereditary gentiliate clans from the Iron Age onward.

This *castro*-type habitat survived until the Roman era in the west and north of the Iberian Peninsula from Galicia to the Basque Country. Poseidonius and Strabo (3, 3, 7) considered these settlements the most primitive in Hispania. This society was the "proto-Celtic" substrate mentioned above, which explains the cultural, socio-economic, linguistic and ideological affinity

of the *Vaccaeii*, *Vettones*, *Lusitani*, *Cantabri*, *Astures* and *Callaeci*. The Celtiberians also belonged to this substrate; they were the principal Celtic group in Hispania, although their early adoption of iron and the gentiliate clan system set them apart and gave them the necessary impetus to "Celtiberianise" the other related tribes.

A specialised army and continuous warfare would not have existed in this socio-cultural context, but raids would have begun to develop a seasonal pattern of spring and autumn campaigns. Since the groups involved were small, tactics would have been simple and limited to confrontations between neighbouring tribes which were resolved by means of ambushes, guerrilla attacks and fights between "champions", to judge by the large bronze swords found (Fig. 2) (Coffyn 1985: Fig. 10, 11, 14-17), suggesting single combat. But the main weapon of the Celtiberians was the spear (*Ibid.*: Figs. 7, 19, etc.), as it was for the Dorians (from *δόρυ*, spear) and the Lacedaemonians (Tirteus, *frag.* 5, 6, 19, 13 W; Herod. 7, 225, 3), the *Gaesati* Celts (from *gaesum*, spear) and the Hispanic *Lancienses* (Plin., *NH*, 4, 35, 118; Ptol. 2, 6, 28; from *lancea*, a Hispanic word, according to Varro, Gell. 15, 30, 7) (cf. Sergent 1999: 149-150).

Judging by the etymology of the names of their gods, the Celtiberians practiced Celtic warrior rites, and they preserved ancestral Indo-European customs such as age classes and warrior fraternities (Almagro-Gorbea and Álvarez-Sanchís 1993; Ciprés 1990; Peralta 1990; Peralta 1991). Warriors had to go through grueling initiation rites in order to prove their personal courage before being admitted into the fraternity, to keep down surplus population and to enrich themselves with booty, generally cattle, in obedience to a warrior ideology that Strabo compared

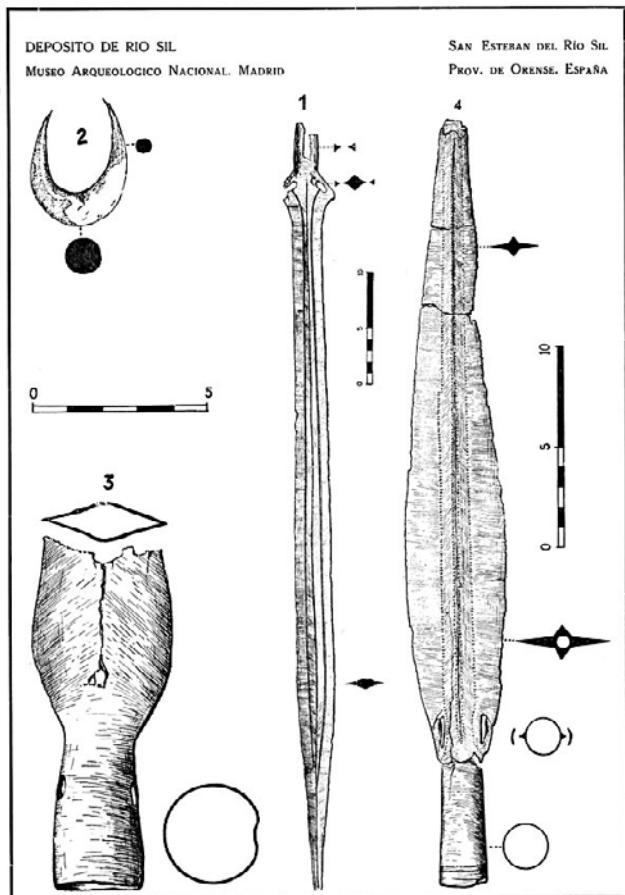


Figure 2 Armour of a Late Bronze Age warrior in the hoard found at San Esteban de Río Sil (tenth century BC) (after Almagro 1966).

with that of the Lacedaemonians (Brelich 1969: 113-114; MacDowell 1986: 54). Strabo (3, 3, 6) and Martial (Epigr. 6, 42, 16) alluded to frugal meals and dry sweat baths with red-hot stones (Almagro-Gorbea and Álvarez-Sanchís 1993). These rites would have represented the "Passage to the Beyond" from which a young man returned "reborn" as a warrior. There are parallels with the Dorians of Thera, linked to Apollo *Lykeios* ("Wolf-Apollo"), Herakles and Hermes, chthonic deities with warrior rituals involving fire, or *ferialis exercitus* (Tac., *Germ.* 43; Gernet 1982: 215; García Fernández-Albalat 1990: 202s.). These rites also existed among the Etruscans, *irpini Italics* (Virg. *Aen.* 11, 785-788; Plin., *N.H.* 7, 19) and Romans (Cic. *off.* 1, 129; *de orat.* 2, 224; Val. Max. 2, 1, 7; Ambros. *off.* 1, 18, 79), as well as among the Gauls (Sidon., *Ep.* 2, 9, 8-9), Irish Celts (Sergent 1999: 216) and Scythians (Herod. 4, 73-75), and have survived in the folklore of Celtiberia. This initiation with fire and boiling water would bestow invulnerability and the "warrior ardour" of Mars or Achilles (Dumézil 1977: 574-575) and was associated with ritual meals reminiscent of the Lacedaemonian rites of passage and the communal meals of warrior fraternities (Gernet 1982: 51-52; Versnel 1980: 110), like those of the Roman *curia* (Dion. Hal. 2, 23, 2). Appian (*Iberia* 71), Diodorus (33, 21) and Strabo (3, 3, 7) relate that these warriors held gymnastic games, ritual combat and sung warrior anthems, typical of initiation rights (Brelich 1962: 53; Jeanmaire 1939). Silius Italicus (3, 346-350) says that these songs were "in the language of their ancestors", which evidences their antiquity, like those of the Gauls, and the Cantabrians chanted them even in storms (Str. 3, 4, 18). Strabo (3, 3, 6) also says that the panoply of some warriors was that of a bygone age, and consisted of a small, concave, round shield, linen cuirasse, leather helmet, dagger and small spears, specifically referring to lances "with bronze points", which at the end of the first millennium BC can only be explained as a survival from the Bronze Age for ritual reasons.

The Celtiberians practiced ritual emigration, or *ver sacrum*, with expeditions until they had settled or were slaughtered, and young men of military age, the *iuventus*, devoted themselves to hunting, raiding and war (Diod. 5, 34, 6) in territories far away from their natal communities. This way of life, typical of pre-urban societies, would have contributed to the instability of the "castro" society, and explains its capacity for expansion, sometimes over vast distances (Diod. 5, 34, 6; 3, 3, 5; App., *Ib.* 56-57, 64, 67-70; Oros. 5, 5, 12; Flor. 1, 33, 15). Groups of these *latrones* or bandits have been documented until the Roman conquest. This pre-gentilite warrior organisation is comparable with the fraternities of other pre-urban Indo-European peoples



(Benveniste 1969, 1: 222-223; McCone 1987), such as the *iouies hostatir* (= *iuvenes hastati*, young men armed with spears) of Gubbio (Prosdocimi 1989), the Umbro-Samnites (Alföldi 1974: 96-97, 121) and the *salii* (Martínez-Pinna 1981: 128-129; Torelli 1990) and *luperci* (Ulf 1982) of Rome, since these customs gave rise to myths of the founders of towns and cities in antiquity, such as that of Romulus and Remus (Virg. *Aen.* 7, 678-681), the *latrones* that founded Rome.

War in these primitive societies had a sacred and magical character, with rites such as those preserved in the *ius fetialis* of Rome. According to these beliefs, the inhabitants of *Palantia* would cease pursuing the defeated Romans in the event of a divine omen (App, *Ib.* 82), perhaps a lunar eclipse (Polib. 5, 78, 1-2). Warriors and their weapons would have been imbued with magical properties related to the underworld and its deities, to which they were linked in the initiation rites. Examples include the *Harii* of the Germanic tribes (Tac., *Germ.* 43) who daubed themselves with black to go into battle and wielded the supernatural power endowed by *Odhin*, warrior god of wrath who led an army of combatants from "The Beyond" (Dumézil 1940: 101; García Fernández-Albalat 1990: 202; Höfler 1934: 45-46; McCone 1987); the *sihsluagh*, servants of *Lug* and *Ogma*, deities of the *sidh* or "The Other World"; and the *Fianna* of the *Fionn Cycle* of Celtic-Irish Mythology (Mac Cana 1983: 104-113; O'Fáolain 1954; Ó hÓgain 1988). These *fianna*, who lived an independent life somewhat outside the *tuath* (from Old Irish *teuto*=people, the basic political unit of Irish-Celtic society), and had to have warrior traits and virtues, spent their lives engaged in fighting or hunting. To be admitted to the fraternity they had to undergo initiation tests and rites of endurance and show that they did not fear combat or death. Their lives and activities were synchronized with the Irish-Celtic year: they carried out *razzias* and hunted during the winter, the dark season of the year, which explains their relations with the *tuath*. This annual bi-partition of military activities resembles that of the Roman world, where the military campaigns were carried out from March to October, as evidenced by the Salians' initiation rites and Roman festivities such as the *October equus* (Dumézil 1977: 248; Torelli 1990: 100-101). As for the rest of the year, the *fianna* returned to the *tuath* in order to protect it and to maintain their prestige and their family ties (Le Roux and Guyonvarc'h 1986: 235). This shows that they were not mere bandits, as the Romans saw them, but genuine warriors of a pre-urban society who fought using military guerrilla tactics instead of acting like a regular army.

These groups were led by a chieftain or *dux*, endowed with magical powers and normally

the most powerful individual who is clearly identifiable among the warriors depicted on the Late Bronze Age stele from southwest Iberia (Almagro 1960, E.3.1; Harrison 2004). Warriors consecrated themselves to these chieftains until death by means of the *devotio* (App. *Iber.* 71; Liv. 25, 17, 4 and 38, 21), attested among Celtiberians (Plut., *Sert.* 14; Val. Max. 2, 6, 14; Gell., 15, 22; Oros. 5, 23; etc.), *Lusitani* (García Fernández-Albalat 1990: 238-239), Vettons (App., *Ib.* 56-57 and 67-69) and *Cantabri* (Sil. Ital., *Pun.* 16, 46-50), as among other Indo-European peoples (Caes., *B.G.*, 3, 22; Tac., *Germ.* 13, 14; etc.; cf. Benveniste 1969: 67-78; García Fernández-Albalat 1990: 237). Their weapons included the sword, whose magical powers survive in the Arthurian cycle. They settled their conflicts in heroic combat between two warriors or "champions", whose fate decided that of their armies, as a kind of ordeal in keeping with their supernatural interpretation of war. Such combats are documented in the Iliad, the Irish Celtic epics and among the Gauls (Diod. 5, 29, 2-3). An example of this is the episode in which Scipio was challenged by a Celtiberian, whom he defeated (App., *Ib.* 53; Polib. 35, 5; Veleyo 1, 12, 4; Plut., *praec. ger. reip.* 804, p. 29; Ampelio 23, 3; *De viris ill.* 58; Oros., *hist.* 4, 21, 2).

The Celtiberians held hecatombs and sacrificed goats, prisoners and horses to a warrior god identified with *Ares* (Str. 3, 3, 7; Hor., *Carm.* 3, 4, 34; Sil. Ital. 3, 361). They also told auguries by sacrificing prisoners (Str. 3, 3, 6; Plut., *Quest.Rom.* 88). For example, a man and a horse were sacrificed in order to sign the peace in Bletisama (Liv., *per.* 48; cf. Hoz 1986: 48). Archaeology documents wolf-men among the Iberians and Celts, such as the herald of Nertobriga (App., *Iberia* 48) or the warrior depicted on a vase from Numantia (Romero 1976: lám. 11, nº 20). The wolf, as the most feared of the beasts because of its associations with the underworld, night, war and death, was an ideal symbol for the Indo-European warrior fraternities (McCone 1987) such as the Roman *Luperci* (Alföldi 1974: 96-97; Ulf 1982), the Samnite *Hirpi Sorani* (Fest. 93, 95 L.; Serv. *Ad. Aen.* 11,785; Alföldi 1974: 121 ff.; etc.), Lucanos (Alföldi 1974: 129) and the Germanic *Úlfhennir* (Dumézil 1940: 101-102; McCone 1987). This wolfish character explains divinities such as *victor Martius lupus* (Dumézil 1977: 180, 192) and Apollo *Lykeios*, which were all associated with initiation.

Their initiation rites included cutting off the heads and hands of the defeated (Str. 3, 3, 6) to show their valour and skill as warriors (García Rianza 2002: 227-230; Sopeña 1987: 96-112, 1995: 149-154). This is seen in the reliefs of Binéfar, Huesca (Sopeña 1995: Figs. 46-47), in the "equine" fibulae (Fig. 3) (Almagro-Gorbea and Torres 1999: 77-78) and in the episode of the

consul Mancino, who was defeated by 4,000 *iuvenes* who wanted to cut off the Romans' hands in order to marry a very beautiful princess (*de vir. ill.* 59). The rite of exposing the corpses of warriors to the vultures (Lorrio 1997: 345, Fig. 129; Sopeña 1995: 210-212, Fig. 44, 53, 54), practised by the Vaccei and the Celtiberians (Sil. Ital., *Pun.* 2, 3, 341-343; 13, 671-672; Claud. Aelianus, *De nat. anim.*, 10, 22), and attested by the stelae and ceramics of Numantia (Fig. 4), also belongs to this substrate.



Figure 3 Fibula of a horseman showing an enemy's severed head (175-125 BC) (Photo: Almagro-Gorbea).



Figure 4 Scene on a vase from Numantia showing dead warriors being devoured by vultures (first century BC) (after Archivo Museo Numantino; Photo: A. Plaza).

The deities of this ideological substrate were warrior gods. They are associated with mountain peaks and water as gates to "The Beyond", which explains the offerings of weapons to rivers and mountain peaks in the Bronze Age (Ruiz-Gálvez 1982), perhaps funerary rites or votive offerings. There are deities with river names, such as *Deva* or *Navia/Nabia*. *Nabia*, a multifunctional deity (Olivares 2002: 233-244), seems, like the ancient Irish goddesses, to be linked to water and the Beyond, and her epithet *Tongoe* is related to oaths. The epithet *Corona* is related to the god *Coronus* (*\*korio-nos*, [García Fernández-Albalat 1990: 329]), "chief of the *curia*" or assembly of warriors, comparable to *Quirinus* (<*\*co-wiri-no-*) and *Herjann*, epithet of *Odhinn* as "leader of the armies", which attests his warrior function of protecting the whole community. Another divinity was *Bandua* (from *\*bendh*), guardian god of the *castros*, equivalent to the Gaulish Mars (Olivares 2002: 151-152), who was associated with the allegiance of warrior fraternities to their leader through the *devotio* (García Fernández-Albalat 1990: 109-110). *Cossus*, possibly equivalent to *Bandua*, given his exclusive geographical distribution, in

Paços da Ferreira is associated with an omphalic and augural rock, which explains his epithet *Oenaecus* (from *oenach*, the assembly of Irish warriors, similar to the Germanic *Ghilde*, the Italic *curia* or *\*co-wiri-a* and the Celtic *\*corios*) (García Fernández-Albalat 1990: 266).

These traditions depict a Bronze Age society before the Celtiberian gentiliate clans documented in the final phase by plural genitives. Although they are not well known, these data document what war would have been like in the "Proto-Celtic" phase and explain the origin and function of later customs, from the *devotio* to the *iuventus*, which originated in these ancestral traditions.

### **Celtiberian Gentiliate Society**

The gestation of Celtiberian society (seventh to sixth centuries BC)

A series of innovations in settlement patterns, funerary ritual and material culture that took place from the seventh to sixth centuries BC on in the Iberian System and the eastern Meseta, the nuclear area of historical *Celtiberia*, indicate that major changes were occurring. These may have originated with the incursions of people from the Middle Ebro during the Later Urnfield period (Arenas 1999). They brought with them the language known as "Celtiberian" and a gentiliate structure that strengthened the latent social hierarchy of the pastoral organisation of the late Bronze Age. This fact, together with the adoption of iron for the manufacture of weaponry - abundant and developed early in these regions - explains the formation of the Celtiberian Culture and its militaristic and expansive characteristics until it became the most important Celtic ethnic group in pre-Roman Iberia. However, the archaeological evidence is insufficient to explain the role of the substrate and the social structure of this period. An occasional site such as Pajaroncillo (Cuenca) continues from the Bell Beaker period to the end of the Iron Age (Ulreich et al. 1993), confirming the complex ethnogenesis of *Celtiberia*, and some bronze hoards from the Atlantic Bronze Age (Delibes and Fernández Manzano 1991: 211) and gold hoards of the Mesetas, such as Abía de la Obispalía (Cuenca) and Sepúlveda (Segovia) (Almagro-Gorbea 1974), attest to the presence of elites among the pastoral groups of Cogotas I of the Late Bronze Age.

The new socio-economic system explains the appearance of *castros* with an enclosed plan and terraced houses protected by ditches and stone palisades that indicate a definitive colonisation of the territory and growing insecurity as a result of increased demographic pressure

combined with an increasingly militaristic and hierarchical social structure. At the same time, the funerary ritual that originated in the Urnfields became widespread, implying the rise of hero cults associated with the gentiliate system (Almagro-Gorbea 1996: 84-85). Thus, the Celtiberian cemeteries reflect both social structure and evolution (Lorrío 1997: 134-146, 313-318), for weapons included in the grave goods reveal a gentiliate structure and a very hierarchical society. The richest tombs, with a complete panoply of grave goods, are comparable to those of the early Iron Age "princes" of western Europe (Almagro-Gorbea 1987: 39), but their differences and chronological duration do not reflect an invasion, but rather the formation *in situ* of gentiliate warrior hierarchies whose aristocratic character would have contributed to the progressive expansion of this type of society.

The appearance of Celtiberian elites in the cemeteries was the consequence of their evolution *in situ* (Almagro-Gorbea 1993: 146-147), but there were also external demographic contributions. The arrival and development in the Mesetas of a gentiliate organisation, understood as hereditary aristocracies subsequently reflected in specific onomastics (Almagro-Gorbea 1995: footnote 3), reinforced the hierarchical character of the pastoral socio-economic structure of the Late Bronze Age.

The new socio-economic organisation would have encouraged demographic growth and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of those who controlled grazing land, the abundant salt deposits of the area, essential for livestock-raising and preserving foodstuffs, and the production of iron from the major outcrops of the Iberian System (Lorrío 1997: 64, Fig. 12). All of this contributed to the development of weapons and military organisation, a process that would have been indirectly strengthened by the colonial influx into this area through a natural pass between the Ebro Valley and the Meseta. Trade aimed at the elites and controlled by them would have helped to reinforce the gentiliate system (Almagro-Gorbea 1993: 147). Few populated places dating to these initial phases are known, but an internal hierarchical structure is absent (Lorrío 1997: 103-104) and they are mainly agricultural communities (Lorrío 1997: 295-296).

The formation of a warrior society is reflected in the cemeteries (Fig. 5A). These, from their initial appearance in the Ancient Celtiberian phase, provide evidence of a social hierarchy based on weaponry as a sign of prestige (Lorrío 1997: 261-264, 312-313). Funerary tumuli and aligned tombs, which are a ritual characteristic of the eastern Meseta, became widespread in the

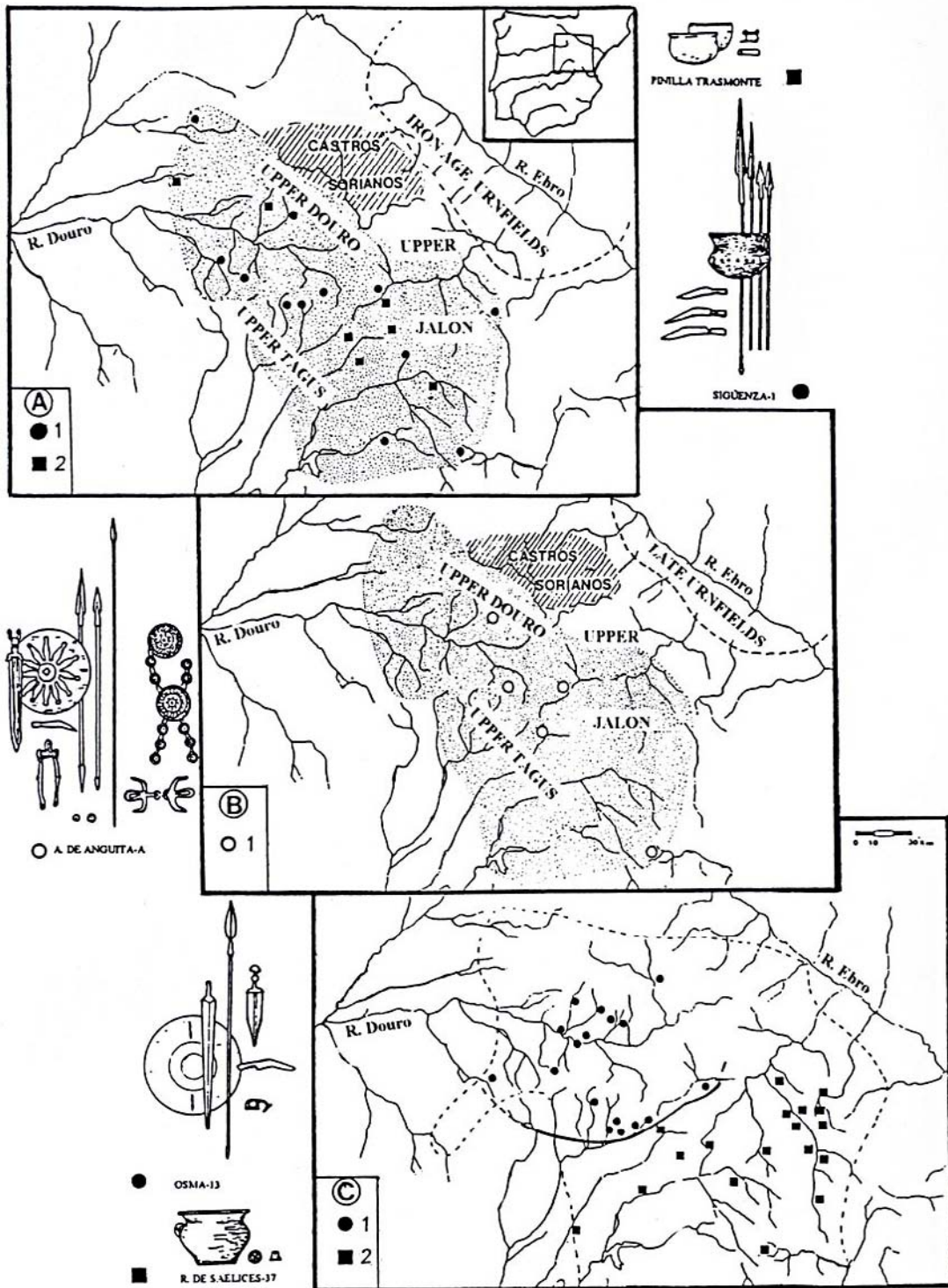


Figure 5 Chronological sequence of Celtiberian territories of the upper Tagus - Upper Jalon - Upper Douro on the basis of the funerary record, and other areas of Celtiberia at a late date. A, Early Celtiberian (sixth century BC): 1, cemeteries with weapons; 2, cemeteries without weapons. B, Middle Celtiberian (fifth century BC): 1, cemeteries with aristocratic tombs. C, Middle Celtiberian-Late Celtiberian (fourth to second centuries BC): cemeteries with weapons; 2, cemeteries without weapons (after Lorrio 2000).

following phase (Lorrio 1997: 114-118). This arrangement of the funerary space is difficult to explain, although it has been suggested that it represents lineages or some other type of social grouping.

The cemeteries of Sigüenza (Guadalajara) and Carratiermes (Soria) provide information on this initial phase. In addition to tombs containing weapons, there are others containing bronze jewellery. The latter, more ancient tombs, dating from the sixth century BC onward, contain spearheads up to 50 cm long with a strong central rib following Late Bronze Age traditions (Fig. 6), no swords or daggers, and are accompanied by knives with a curved back (Lorrio 1997: 152-153, Figs. 59, 61, plates 1, 2; Lorrio 2002: 71-74). In Carratiermes shield components have been found (Argente et al. 1992: 308). It has not yet been possible to determine what proportion of tombs in this phase contained weapons. But the group with military grave goods must be fairly small, corresponding to an aristocratic sector in which weapons were status symbols, confirming the emergence of warrior elites in the formative phase of Celtiberian Culture. From a military point of view, these grave goods, among which the most common weapon was a long spear, would have belonged to infantrymen, since horse harnesses are very rare. This military equipment was made by local craftsmen in the service of the elites, as is shown by different belt buckles and fibulae found in Andalusia and the Levant. Finds are concentrated in a geographic area that is restricted to Celtiberian territory (Lorrio et al. 1999: 172, Fig. 3), occasionally with a markedly tribal distribution (Almagro-Gorbea 2000).

### The aristocratic warriors of the fifth century BC

From the late sixth or early fifth century BC on, the cemeteries of the upper Tagus contain rich military grave goods that now include swords and other sumptuous items (Fig. 5B). Among them are bronze armour such as helmets, cuirasse-discs and large embossed shield umbos (Figs. 6, 7) (Lorrio 1997: 156-171, 314; Lorrio 2002: 74-77). The cemeteries of Aguilar de Anguita (Guadalajara) and Alpanseque (Soria), of the initial phase of Middle Celtiberian, have parallel lined streets and grave goods that imply a hierarchical society, with rich aristocratic tombs.

Major economic development occurred during this phase in the Upper Tagus and Upper Jalon rivers that explains the wealth of the grave goods, thanks to stock-raising, and control of salt deposits and iron production. This group has a distinct personality, demonstrated by its grave



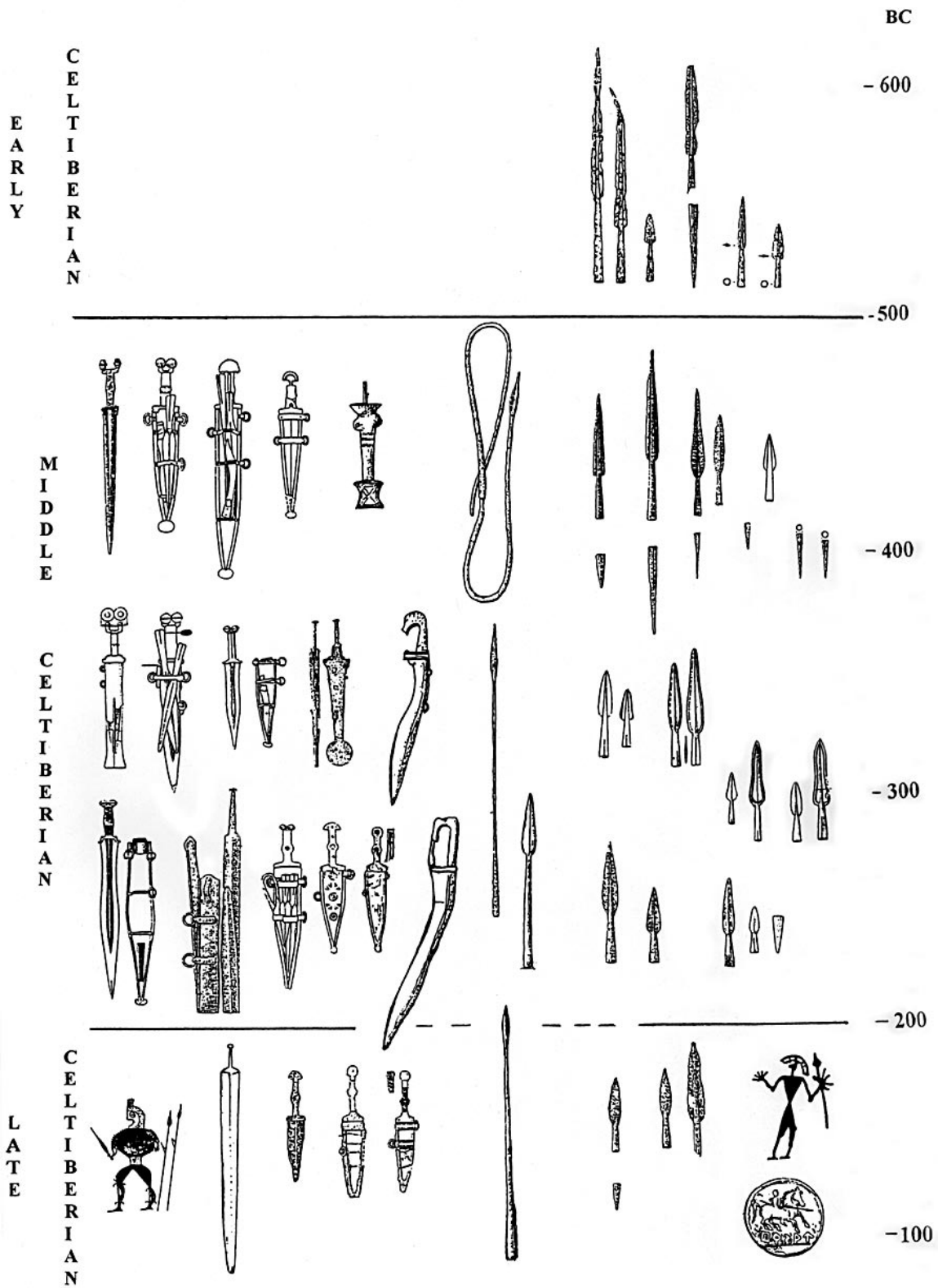


Figure 6 Evolution of Celtiberian offensive weapons: swords, daggers and spears.



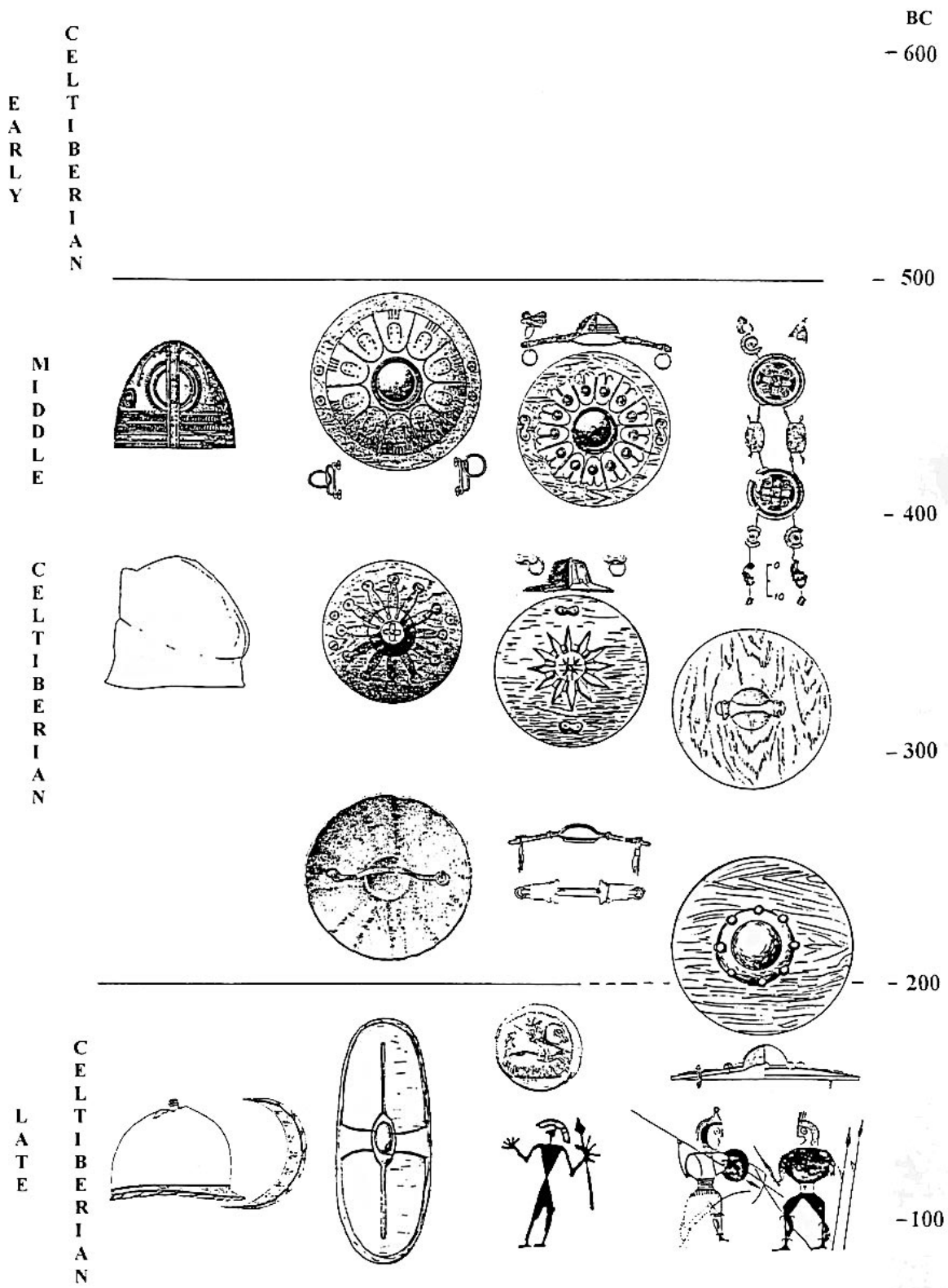


Figure 7 Evolution of Celtiberian defensive weapons: helmets and shields.

goods: fibulae with a decorative plate on the bow, ceremonial weapons, etc. whilst the cemeteries of the right bank of the Upper Douro have no rich panoplies, although their grave goods do contain swords.

The evidence for the different social sectors of this phase is very limited. In Aguilar de Anguita less than 1% of the finds have "rich" grave goods (Aguilera 1913: 595), which includes almost all the known sets (Lorrio 1997: 135-136). The tombs with a sword or dagger as well as horse harness are clearly linked to individuals with high status, constituting a small minority of the burials with weapons. Most of these belong to warriors with one or more spears or javelins, although the absence of evidence of "moderately wealthy" grave goods makes it impossible to know if the tombs with spears and javelins were the most numerous, as is the case in other, better known cemeteries (Lorrio 1997: 156-157).

The possession of weapons would have been restricted to small groups of gentiliate warriors and their clients, with war being the exclusive preserve of the ruling classes and *latrones*. Aguilar de Anguita reflects an aristocratic elite whose status is demonstrated by a rich panoply of grave goods as well as horse ownership, confirmed by the presence of harnesses (Fig. 8). The combat in which these aristocratic "champions" engaged, with its emphasis on the sword because of its symbolic value, is documented in the Iberian sculptures of the *heroon* of Porcuna (Jaén) (Fig. 9) (Negueruela 1990: plate XVIII). War would have been limited to struggles between rival

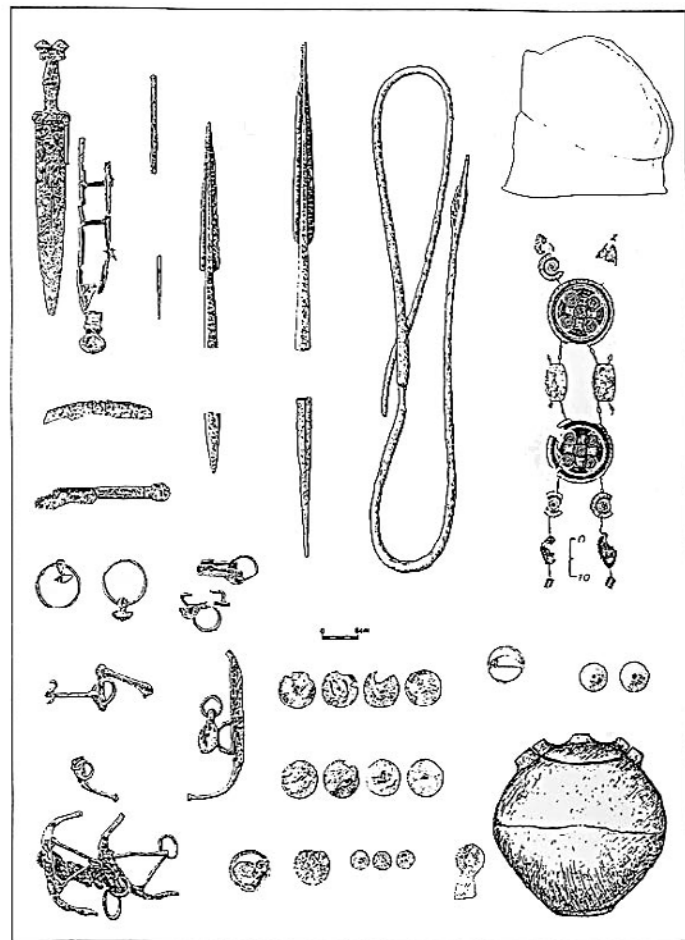


Figure 8 Grave goods of an aristocratic tomb in Aguilar de Anguita (early fifth century BC) (after Schüle 1969).

clans and *castros* and small skirmishes or cattle thieving raids, but the demography of the *castros* of the period suggests that there would have been no more than about a hundred warriors involved in each case, excluding of course the large-scale battles of the "Celtiberian Wars" against Rome in the second century BC.

### The *Arevaci* and warrior expansion (fourth to third centuries BC)

From the fifth century's end to the end of the third century BC, at the end of the Middle Celtiberian phase, the dominance of the Upper Tagus and Jalon valleys shifted to the lands of the Upper Douro (Lorrio 1997: 315-316). Evidence for this change is seen in the rise of the *Arevaci*, the most powerful Celtiberian *populus* in the fight against Rome. The cemeteries of the right bank of the Upper Douro (Soria) that belonged to them contained numerous warrior tombs that reflect their importance in *Arevaci* society and its military character. The tombs in these cemeteries do not have the helmets, pectorals or the large embossed bronze umbos of the Aguilar de Anguita or Alpanseque type burials (Lorrio 1997: 173-182).

Change is reflected in the high proportion of warrior tombs in the cemeteries, as in La Mercadera (44%) and Ucero (34.7%) as well as in La Revilla, Osma or La Requijada de Gormaz (Soria). The proportion is very much higher in the border regions, such as the Vetton cemeteries (Ávila) (Álvarez-Sanchís 1999: 172 and 175; Ruiz Zapatero and Lorrio 1995: 235), where the sepultures with weapons reach 17.3% in El Raso de Candeleda (Fernández Gómez 1986, II), 11.4% in La Osera (Cabré et al. 1950) but only 2.69% in Las Cogotas (Cabré 1932; Castro 1986: 131-132; Kurtz 1987).



Figure 9 Statue of an Iberian warrior in Porcuna, whose panoply is the same as that documented in the aristocratic tombs of the eastern Meseta - early fifth century BC - (ca. 480 BC) (after Almagro-Gorbea 1991b: Photo Palazzo Grassi).

Data from the funerary record indicate a major increase in the number of warriors, most of them infantrymen. In Arcobriga (Saragossa) ca. 300 tombs have been excavated, with forty-

two La Tène type swords, in addition to antennae swords and bi-globular type daggers and a small number of horse harnesses (Lorrio 1997: 171, 173; Lorrio 2002: 77). Thus, these cemeteries did not represent all the sectors of the population, given the small number of "poor" burials. Of the groups with a right to burial, tombs with weapons are more numerous than in earlier periods and in other contemporary Celtiberian cemeteries where grave goods are poor, with hardly any weapons. This phenomenon can be seen in the cemeteries of Alto Tajuña (Fig. 5C), to the north of Guadalajara and nearby areas, dating from the fourth to the second centuries BC or even later (Argente 1977: 138-139; Cuadrado 1968: 48; Díaz 1976: 177; García Huerta and Antona 1992: 169, 1995: 66). This striking disappearance of weapons from the tombs that occurs in the middle of the Celtiberian War, just before the Roman conquest, is difficult to explain. It has been suggested that the need for weapons made it necessary to abandon the custom of deposition of weapons in tombs (García Huerta and Antona 1992: 169), but an evolution of the Celtiberian tribes toward an urban social organisation seems a more logical explanation (Almagro-Gorbea and Lorrio 1991: 37-3; Ruiz-Gálvez 1990: 8). Weapons would lose their symbolic value if social status based on war disappeared and depended on wealth instead. Since social status previously was demonstrated by military attributes shown by placing weapons in the tomb, their absence could be related to the appearance of the *oppida* in the third century BC (Burillo 1986: 530, 1988b: 302; Almagro-Gorbea and Lorrio 1991: 37-38; Almagro-Gorbea 1994: 39).

However, the disappearance of weapons in these cemeteries is not due to the loss of their ideological meaning in Celtiberian society, since according to the literary sources the Celtiberians preferred to die rather than surrender their arms (Ciprés 1993: 91; Sopena 1987: 83-87, 1995: 78-79).<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the disappearance of weapons from the cemeteries of the upper Tagus does not mean that this also happened in the rest of Celtiberia. In the Upper Douro, there are weapons in the Arevaci cemeteries in the third to second centuries BC and even later, as there are in Osma, Quintanas de Gormaz (Fig. 10), Ucero, Carratiermes and Numantia, and new types of swords and daggers are included in the grave goods (Lorrio 1997: Plate 2). The same thing happens in the Upper Henares and the Upper Jalón areas, whereas in El Atance and Arcobriga (Lorrio 1997: Plate 1) weapons are documented during the third and even second centuries BC (Lorrio 1994a, 1994b, 1997: 171). Moreover, the impoverishment of the grave goods and the disappearance of weapons is limited to a sector of Celtiberia with little urban development, since

the *castros* of the later period rarely exceeded one hectare until romanisation and La Cava (Guadalajara), with two and a half hectares (Iglesias et al. 1989: 77) and Luzaga (Guadalajara), with five and a half hectares (Sánchez-Lafuente 1995: 193) could be interpreted as urban. These cemeteries, restricted to this geographical area and contemporary with cemeteries with weapons in the Upper Douro and the Arevaci *oppida* of Uxama, Termes and Numantia, could be explained as client settlements (Ruiz-Gálvez 1985-86: 97-98, 1990: 343), an institution well documented in Celtiberian society (Almagro-Gorbea and Lorrio 1987: 112-113, Map 5; Ramos Loscertales 1942; Salinas 1983).

### War and gentiliate society

Indo-European-derived gentiliate social organization was characterised by patrilineal descent from a common ancestor, real or mythical, with the *pater familias* serving as the incarnation of the *numen* or guardian divinity of the family, the *genius familiaris*, which conferred *potestas* on him as lord and priest of the family group, which included properties, servants and clients. These gentiliate groups could include numerous families, and the *pater familias* could become the equivalent of the *rex* of a whole settlement and its territory, his family gods becoming the guardian divinities of the entire community. Over time, this domestic worship of the family "hero founder" evolved into the *conditor* of the *oppidum*, and moved to temples independent of the domestic sphere.

Stable occupation of the land from the Iron Age onward and differences in access to the means of production introduced social differences that were accentuated by the appearance of skilled artisans and stimulated by colonial influence. The *heredium*, originally the family's plot of land, spread as private ownership of the land and the client system developed, and larger, more cohesive and powerful social units began to be formed.

Judging by the complex grave good panoplies of the gentiliate warrior elites, it seems



Figure 10 Warrior's grave goods at Quintanas de Gormaz (early third century BC) (after Almagro-Gorbea 1991b: Photo Palazzo Grassi).

evident that an ideological change in the way political power was conceived did take place, as the tradition of elected *duces* of the Late Bronze Age gave way to gentiliate dynasties of the heroic type. Moreover, through the mercenaries' contact with Greeks, Carthaginians and Romans, the gentiliate forces became larger and better organised, until they became real armies. The army would have had a charismatic chieftain worshipped by his followers through the *devotio*, or consecration of life to the leader (Str. 3, 4, 18; Plut. *Sert.* 14, 4; Val. Max. 2, 6, 11). This tradition, adapted to the gentiliate structure, lasted until the Roman period, and contributed to the ideological basis of the Imperial cult. This social development implied changes in the tactics and forms of war and earlier traditions and rites were adapted to them. The warrior fraternities would have been integrated into the *iuventus*, while the chieftains of the gentiliate clans with a client structure became the *duces* and champions, adapting earlier ideological concepts. A similar adaptation is documented in Italy in the warrior fraternity of the *suodales Mamartei* of *Satricum* (Coarelli 1984: 62; Versnel 1980: 108-109), which worshipped the family chthonic gods of P. Valerio Puplicola, Consul in 509 BC and head of the *gens Valeria* and its warrior fraternity. These large gentiliate clans fought private wars, such as that of the *Fabii* against *Veyes* in ancient Rome, which continued until they were virtually exterminated at the battle of *Cremera*. There are records of similar armies in Hispania. For instance, Diodorus Siculus (33, fr. 17) states that the *eugeneis* or nobles ruled other settlements, and another example is the Celtiberian prince *Allucius*, who in 209 BC thanked Scipio for releasing his betrothed, held hostage in *Nova Carthago*, by presenting him with 1,400 of his clients' *equites* (Liv. 26,51,7; Frontinus, *str.* 2,11,5; Diod. *fr.* 57, 43; Val. Max. 4, 3, 1; Polib. 19, 19; Gell. 6, 8), an authentic gentiliate *equitatum*. An *Indo* king with his troops and cavalry was also involved in the wars between Caesar and Pompey's forces in 45 BC (*De bell. Hisp.* 10).

The sword became the most significant weapon during this phase, a symbol of prestige and of social primacy more important than the spear, as shown in the Celtiberian cemeteries (Lorrio 1993: 310, Fig. 3, 1997: 158-159). Similar traditions are documented among the Greeks, Celts and Romans, since *principes* were the bearers of the sword (Varro *l.l.* 5,89: *hastati dictis qui primi hasti pugnabant, pilani qui pilis, principes qui a principio gladiis*). Although the tactics cannot have varied much, with the continuation of combat between champions and "guerrillas", the evolution of the gentiliate *castros*, the development of the *poliorcetics* and growing tactical capacity demonstrated the strategic and organisational capacity of armies that continued to grow

in size. The experience obtained by some warriors as mercenaries in the colonial world in order to achieve wealth and prestige must have played a part in this process, like the famous *Moericus*, who surrendered Siracuse to the Romans (Liv. 25, 30 ,2) and was rewarded with Roman citizenship and the city of Morgantina.

This socio-cultural context explains why "the Celtiberians are cruel to their enemies but hospitality to their guests gives them prestige" (Diod. 5, 34), a tradition destined to reinforce alliances in a situation of endemic warfare, confirmed by the frequently found Celtiberian *tesserae hospitales* (Fig. 11)

which guaranteed pacts that were protected by the chthonic divinities associated with war. Sempronius Gracchus, by signing treaties with Celtiberian cities,

gave and took oaths (App., *Iber.* 43), and when he took Lucullus by betraying Cauca, its inhabitants cursed and made the gods the witnesses of their oaths (App., *Iber.* 52). In order to parley, they used olive branches, perhaps as a result of Hellenistic influence: two examples of this are the taking of Complega by Sempronius Gracchus in 180 BC and the request for peace made to Lucullus by the elders of Cauca in 150 BC.



Figure 11 *Tesserae hospitales* from Contrebia Belaisca, representing the intertwined hands in the ritual act of signing a pact (first century BC) (after Almagro-Gorbea 1991b; Photo Palazzo Grassi).

## War and Urban Society in Celtiberia

The paramount type of settlement from the third century BC onward was the *oppidum*, a fortified town designed to protect both people and property (Almagro-Gorbea 1994). Generally situated in high locations, the oppida had areas of more than 10 hectares and stood out over the other settlements in their surroundings by controlling a *chora* (Diod. 33, fr. 24) or large, hierarchically organised territory, which included dependent *castros* and other smaller settlements (Fig. 12). They were the political and administrative centre of true city-states, *civitates* or *poleis* as historians called them in antiquity. In fact, the city was the political and administrative unit of the Celtiberians from the third to second centuries onward (Almagro-Gorbea 1994; Burillo 1993: 229; Burillo 1998: 210-216). Celtiberian city-states were autonomous, meaning that their administrative bodies could enter into alliances, declare war or



peace and elect their own military leaders. The cities minted coins and took part in official ceremonies (Burillo 1988a: 184), as the *Tabula Contrebiensis*, Botorrita Bronze 1 and certain hospitality pacts attest. This progressive adoption of urban life meant that the Celtiberians were considered, after the conquest, as *togati* (Ciprés 1993: 64), "which means that they are peaceful and have become civilised people in the Italic manner, dressing with a toga" (Str., 3, 4, 20; 3, 2, 15).



Figure 12 Aerial photograph of the *oppidum* of Numantia (after *Archivo Arqueológico Alemán*: Photo P. Witte).

Together with the *oppida*, *urbes* and *poleis*, the literary sources mention smaller places that reflect the hierarchical character of the Celtiberian habitat (Almagro-Gorbea 1994). Strabo (3, 4, 13), referring to the Celtiberians, says that according to Polybius, Gracchus took 300 towns (*poleis*), but Poseidonius says that these were no more than fortresses (*pyrgoi*). These smaller settlements are identified with the abundant *castros* of Celtiberia.

The *oppida*, by becoming increasingly urban, would have included the gentiliate groups of the *castros* within their territory, as seen in the process of the synoecism of Segeda (App., *Iber.* 44). This gentiliate structure is reflected in the onomastics, with plural genitives to indicate a usually small clan or gentiliate family group (González 1986). The hospitality *tesserae* indicate relations between these clans and cities that were sometimes a great distance apart (Almagro-Gorbea and Lorrio 1987: 113-114, Map 6).

The most powerful clans would have produced aristocratic warrior lineages, *eugeneîs* or *nobiles*, led by the head of the lineage or *princeps*, who would have extended his power in order to control the whole territory by means of clients. These *nobiles* formed the *senatus* to represent the oligarchy. Although the *duces* of a tribe might become hereditary *reges*, there seems to have been a general trend towards oligarchic institutions with a complex administration, in which the *senatus* would have been led by elective *praetores* and *magistratus*. Some magistratures seem to have been the same as the Roman institutions, such as the *eporedorix* or *magister equitum*



documented by *signa* found in Numantia. It must also be assumed that there were *magistri pagi* responsible for censuses and recruiting for war (Dion. Hal. 4, 1), since the pagus would have changed from performing a land registry function, to being the organization in charge of transacting censuses and conscripting, like the centuria in Rome. There would also have been warrior assemblies, similar to the Roman curia, the Celtic \**corios*, like the *comitia curiata* presided over by the *magister populi* or the *rex* in Rome, to decide on peace and war, and who would be the *dux* or person to hold command, as evidenced by the *comitium* of Termes.

In this transition toward urban life, torques, fibulae and sumptuary vases would have replaced weapons as status symbols, since private treasures evidenced how the warrior status of the gentiliate aristocratic elites was replaced by a wealth status, typical of urban society. But earlier traditions survived. One was the *iuventus* (Liv. 40, 30; Ciprés 1990), an urban adaptation of the ancient warrior fraternities of the Late Bronze Age (Almagro-Gorbea and Álvarez-Sanchís 1993). Another example is the gentiliate structure of the army, which developed from the earlier phase, but without becoming a citizen army, as shown by the absence of standardised weapons and discipline.

In this phase, war changed from being performed between family groups and neighbouring settlements to a way of resolving conflicts between city-states. The latter, now centres of political and administrative control, were ruled by the most powerful clans, which tried to increase their power and territory by inciting conflicts between neighbouring ethnic groups, as between Segeda and the Titti (App., *Iber.* 44) or between the Torboletai and Sagunto (Pol. 3, 15, 7; Liv. 28, 39). To the hospitality pacts between gentiliate clans were added alliances between cities or *symmachía*, like that reached between Segeda and the Numantians (App., *Iber.* 45) or between Lutia and Numantia (App., *Iber.*, 94). Mercenary armies, previously provided by gentiliate groups in the service of colonial powers, would have been used to defend the cities. And new practices would have emerged: one would be the obligation to subordinate gentiliate interests to a higher power, given the identification of the elites with the city-state; and another the development of cavalry as a new tactical weapon characteristic of the elites.

The *equites* must have played an essential role in the pre-Roman *oppida* of Iberia comparable to their position in Greece, Rome and the Italic cultures. The written sources describe this elite cavalry as *Moericus* or *Allucius* (see discussion below) or the *quadraginta nobiles equites* that T. Sempronius Gracchus incorporated into his army in *Certima, militari iussi*

in proof of loyalty (Liv. 40, 47). Rome maintained a policy of attracting these equestrian elites that led to their full incorporation into the Roman clientship system. These *equites* were the ruling elites of the *oppida* and *civitates* and leaders of their armies (Almagro-Gorbea and Torres 1999). They issued the coinage and were the first to become romanised by joining the army and the Roman client system (Badian 1958; Syme 1958:1-23).

This Hispanic cavalry or *equitatum* developed out of the Celtiberian equestrian elites after their contact with similar forces in the Mediterranean by serving as mercenaries in the Carthaginian, and later Roman, armies. The Celtiberian *equitatum* was of similar importance to that of the Gauls and became increasingly aware of its strength until it established itself as the ruling elite of the socio-political organisation of the *oppida* or city-states. The cavalry made movement and provisioning more difficult, and tracked the enemy, as when Lucullus, defeated at *Palantia*, was pursued to the Douro during the night (App., *Iber.* 55). However, the horsemen dismounted and fought on foot in the heroic tradition, a custom that lasted until Caesar's time, although it went against the principles of equestrian tactics. The importance of the Celtiberian *equitatum* is evidenced by iconographic testimonies: decorations on coins (Fig. 13), fibulae (Fig. 3) and funerary stelae (Fig. 14).

A characteristic of this phase was the *Gefolgschaft* of specialised warriors serving closely and directly under great chieftains (García Moreno 1993: 347 ff.), as the frequency of the name *Ambatus* indicates (Abascal 1994: 269-270; Almagro-Gorbea 1993: Fig. 13B), although their connection with the Gaulish *ambacti* or *soldurii* (Daubigney 1985) has been contested (Gómez Fraile 2001: 277; Ortiz de Urbina 1988: 186). Their concentration in areas of Celtiberian expansion of the Upper Ebro and Lusitania appears to confirm this social structure and explains their absence from the central area of Celtiberia (Almagro-Gorbea and Lorrio 1987:



Figure 13 Celtiberian denarius from *Sekobirikes* depicting a horseman holding a spear (second to first centuries BC).



Figure 14 Funerary stele from Lara de los Infantes depicting a Celtiberian horseman holding a spear (first century BC) (after Almagro-Gorbea 1991b: Photo Palazzo Grassi).

112). The story that *Retogenes* broke through the siege of Numantia to seek help accompanied by five comrades (App., *Iber.* 94) also belongs to this tradition, and Strabo (3, 4, 18) describes how two men went on horseback and one of them fought on foot, as in the Celtic *trimarchisia* (Paus. 10, 19, 11).

Even at this late date, single combat continued. In 151 BC in Intercatia, surrounded by Lucullus, a native warrior on horseback with resplendent weapons challenged any Roman to single combat. Since none took up his challenge, he ridiculed his enemies, withdrew performing a dance,<sup>3</sup> and continued his taunts until the young Scipio took up the challenge and killed him (App., *Iber.* 53).<sup>4</sup> A similar episode is recounted by Valerius Maximus (3, 2, 21) and Livy (*pap. Oxyrh.* 164) in 143-142 BC. The protagonists of these duels would have belonged to the social elite (Ciprés 1993: 93). The literary sources refer to the protagonist of the duel with Scipio in Intercatia as *rex* (Flor. 1, 33, 11), while Valerius Maximus (3, 2, 6) uses the term *dux*. No reference is made to the kind of weapons used in these combats. The resplendent weapons (App., *Iber.* 53) and the possession of a horse indicate an important social position. In Greece, the use of the shield, the sword and the javelin was permitted, and any of them could be used in combat (Fernández-Nieto 1975: 47-48 and 58, 1992: 383-384). Warriors in ritual duels depicted on vases from Numantia (Fig. 15) (Romero 1976: lam. II, 2) and Liria (Valencia) (Fernández-Nieto 1992: 383, Fig. 1) are armed with swords, spears, javelins, helmets, shields and greaves. The duel offered social prestige (Ciprés 1993: 92), not forgetting its ritual significance; it was also used by the Gauls in well-known episodes such as those of Manlius Torcuatus and Valerius Corvus (Liv., 7, 9-10; 8, 7). These practices made it possible to decide disputes in the manner of a trial by ordeal (Fernández-Nieto 1992). Livy (28, 21, 6-10) mentions how in the funerary



Figure 15 Scene showing champions fighting depicted on a vase from Numantia (first century BC) (after Almagro-Gorbea 1997, Archivo Museo Numantino: Photo A. Plaza).

games held in honour of the Scipios two pretenders decided the succession to the throne by armed combat. Moreover, amongst the Germanic tribes this practice constituted a form of augury to determine who would win a war (Tac., *Germ.* 10, 6). This practice of single combat is also

present in the Irish-Celtic sagas and oral literature. A good example is the successive day after day single combats performed by Cú Chulainn in a ford against the champion-warriors of the invading allied armies under Queen Medb, during the famous "Cattle Raid of Cooley" (*The Táin*, Kinsella 1990: 114, 128, and *passim*).

This ideological framework explains the special relationship of the Celtiberians with their weapons. The literary sources repeatedly mention the warrior's refusal to surrender these, preferring death instead (Ciprés 1993: 91; García Riaza 2002: 206-212; Sopeña 1987: 83-84, 1995: 92-93).<sup>5</sup> In Complega, the Lusones who took refuge in the city in 181 BC asked Fulvius "to give them a tunic, a sword and a horse for each man who had died in the war" (App. *Iber.* 42);<sup>6</sup> the *rex* of *Intercatia* wore shining armour (App. *Iber.* 53); Sertorius won over the natives by giving them weapons decorated with gold and silver (Plut., *Sert.* 14); etc. Literary sources also mention the quality of Celtiberian weapons,<sup>7</sup> a result of advances in metallurgy since the sixth century BC (Lorrio 1997: 147-148).

In this urban phase, the tactics and form of war markedly changed.<sup>8</sup> It is significant to note that war was no longer discontinued in winter (Diod. 31, *fr.* 40), something which implies a complex organisation typical of urban armies. The Classical historians now refer to large armies, made up of men of military age (*andrôn, hebedón*), which means total mobilisation. For example, 20,000 Celtiberians laid siege to Carabis in 188 BC (App., *Iber.* 43); a Celtiberian army of more than 17,000 men with 400 horses and 62 standards relieved Contrebia (Liv. 44, 33) and 20,000 infantrymen and 5,000 horsemen made up the army of Carus, who was elected *dux* of the Arevaci and Segedenses (App., *Iber.* 45). This ratio of 4:1 infantry/horsemen is much higher than the 10:1 that was the norm in antiquity, and confirms the importance of the Celtiberian cavalry (App., *Iber.* 45). Lucullus slew 3,000 soldiers and later another 20,000 infantry in Cauca (App., *Iber.* 52), the entire population, and in 141 BC Numantia had 8,000 soldiers, infantry and horsemen (App., *Iber.* 76). Kaisaros killed 9,000 Romans (*id.*, 56); 4,000 Romans and three elephants died in Nobilior's attack on Numantia (*id.*, 46), where 2,000 Numantians also died. The Celtiberians also had the capacity to lay siege to cities, as in 188 BC when they besieged Carabis (App., *Iber.* 43).

However, this tactic continued to be rare, because of earlier traditions. Levies of the *iuventus* are documented (App., *Iber.* 94), and combat between champions or *monomáchion* remained (Liv., *per.* 48, 20; App., *Iber.* 53; etc.). The *duces* (Flor., *epit.*, 2, 17, 1314; 2, 18, 4) were

sometimes elected, certainly from amongst the chieftains of the most powerful gentiliate clans. The literary texts confirm that the election of the *dux* was performed by a show of hands, certainly in warrior assemblies, as was the case of Carus, head of the army of Segeda and Numantia (App., *Iber.* 45; cf. Capalvo 1996: 150) or of Ambón and Leukón, *strategoí* of Numantia (App., *Iber.* 46). In the same way, we know that the *Arevaci* voted for war in 153 BC after Kaisaro's victory (Diod. 31, fr. 42; App., *Iber.* 56) and on another occasion, Numantians and Termestians regretted the way they voted (Diod. 33, fr. 16). The survival of gentiliate structures also explains secret peace agreements that only applied to certain clans, such as that between Marcellus and Litennon (App., *Iber.* 50) or between Pompey and the Numantians (App., *Iber.* 79), under which the Numantians killed their ambassadors, Avaros and his five companions, after they had met Scipio and returned with bad news (App., *Iber.* 95), suspecting secret terms for his own people (Oros., *Hist.* 5,8,1: *res numantina ... concordia invicta, discordia exitio fuit*; cf. Capalvo 1996: 194). Furthermore, the Celtiberians fought as light infantry and could not withstand combat against regular infantry (App., *Iber.* 51). They lacked discipline, as shown after the defeat of Mummius by the Lusitanian Kaisaros (App., *Iber.* 56). They used scorched earth tactics (App., *Iber.* 52) and "guerrilla" ambushes: the Celtiberians surprised Nobilior on his advance on Segeda (App., *Iber.* 45), the Numantians ambushed Scipio while he was foraging (App., *Iber.* 88) and Viriathus lured the Roman cavalry into a swamp (Frontinus, *strat.* 2, 5, 7). These must have been habitual tactics and may have included trickery; Viriathus, in order to take Segobriga, abandoned his cattle, beat a retreat for three days (Frontinus, *strat.* 3, 10, 6) and then came back in a single day to take Segobriga by surprise; the inhabitants of Complega also came out with olive branches to surprise Sempronius Gracchus in 180 BC (App., *Iber.* 43). They took advantage of the night to launch attacks: Olindicus attempted to murder the Roman consul one night (Flor., *epit.*, 2, 17, 14); *Rhetogenes* managed to escape through the tight siege of Numantia under cover of darkness to seek help from Lutia (App., *Iber.* 94).

All the above-described customs reflect the continuity of Celtiberian warrior ideology. Cicero (*Tusc.* 2, 65) claimed that the Celtiberians *in proeliis exultant, lamentantur in morbo* ("the Celtiberians delight in battle and lament if they are ill"). Other authors express themselves in similar terms (Val. Max., 2, 6, 11; Sil. Ital. 1, 225, 3, 340-343; Iust., *Ep.* 44, 2; Claud. Elianus 10, 22), saying that death in combat was glorious for Celtiberians and *Vaccaei* (Ciprés 1993: 90; Sopena 1987: 83, 1995: 89), and this is shown by the fact that those who fell in combat were

rewarded with a specific funerary ritual: the exposure of the corpse to be devoured by the vultures (Fig. 4), birds being considered sacred and entrusted with taking the deceased to "The Beyond". The Celtiberian warrior preferred death to losing his freedom, as he showed by committing suicide in practices such as the *devotio* (Val. Max., 2, 6, 11; 3, 2, 7; Sall., in Servio, *ad Georg.* 4, 218; Flor., 1, 34, 11; Plut., *Sert.* 14), according to which consecrated warriors could not outlive their chieftain (Ciprés 1993: 126-127; Ramos Loscertales 1924).

## Conclusions

From its early stages, Celtiberian society had a strong military component. Its warrior character was the result of a long tradition of warrior-herders that culminated in an effective gentiliate organisation (Figs. 16, 17). This is the key to Celtiberian expansion, gradually imposed on the "proto-Celtic" social system of the Bronze Age and strengthened from the fourth century BC onward with the rise of the Arevaci in the Upper Douro River.

Army	Iuvenes	Champions	Clientelar Army	Urban Alliances	Urban Mercenaries
Pre-Gentiliate Bands	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Gentiliate Army	(Yes)	Yes	Yes	No	No
Proto-Urban Army	(Yes)	(Yes)	(Yes)	Yes	Yes

Figure 16 Evolution of the fighting systems in the Hispano-Celtic world.

This socio-economic structure, encouraged by personal clientship and adapted to a stock-raising environment, involved customs such as single combat between champions, mercenary armies or cattle thieving raids, and contributed to imbuing the whole society with a warrior ethos. But fighting techniques and the concept of war underwent important variations over more than five centuries of development of the Celtiberian Culture, until there was full-scale mobilisation in the conflicts with the Mediterranean powers from the 3rd century BC onward.

Warrior ideals played an important role in this society. The literary sources and funerary practices indicate ritual practices linked with war and warrior gods and witnessing pacts. The *castros* and the iconographic evidence shown in scenes on Numantian vases such as the "warriors vase" (Fig. 15), decorations on coins (Fig. 13), funerary stelae (Fig. 14) and even fibulae (Fig. 3), testify to the military character of Celtiberian society:



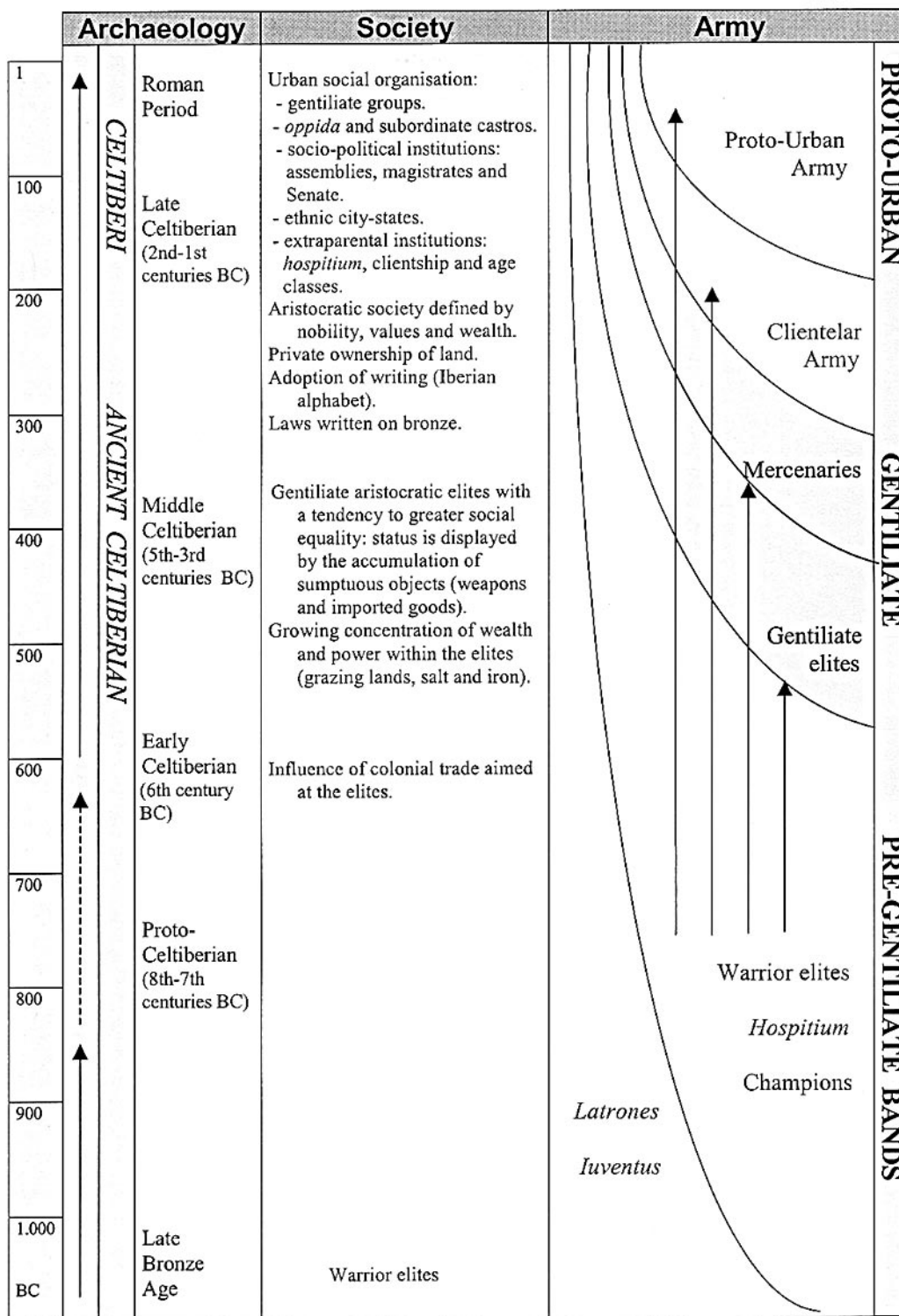


Figure 17 Diagram showing the correlation between the archaeology, the social structure and the type of army in the Celtiberian culture.

The Celtiberians were an aristocratic warrior society whose elite, defined by its nobility, valour and wealth, appears in the sources as *eugeneis*, *nobiles* or *principes* (Ciprés 1993: 175-176). The army leaders would be elected from amongst these prominent figures, and important military clients would be ritually linked to them by the *devotio*. In a competitive society such as the Celtiberian, the clients would be indicators of the prestige of their chieftains or patrons.

In this context, war constituted for the Celtiberians a means of achieving prestige and wealth. The frequent raids organised against neighbouring territories and their presence as mercenaries in the service of the Turdetani, Iberians, Carthaginians and Romans can be understood in this context. Celtiberian society was expanding, and this would have favoured a process of progressive Celticisation that would have forced other groups to adopt similar ways of life as their best means of defence. This explains the spread of the gentiliate warrior society towards the west and north of Iberia until the Roman conquest cut short its expansion after an impressive resistance that lasted for almost two centuries.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The use of the term Celtiberian in other parts of the Meseta and *Hispania* in general should not be neglected, given the generic way it was used by the literary sources (Gómez Fraile 1996: 179 and 184, 2001: 62).

<sup>2</sup> Cf., Polib., 14, 7, 5; App., *Iber.* 31; Diod., 33, 16-17 and 25; Liv., *Dec.* 17 and 34; Flor., 1, 34, 3 and 11; Lucano, 4, 144; Oros., 5, 7, 2-18; Ptol., *Apotel.* 2, 13; Just., *Ep.* 44, 2.

<sup>3</sup> The literary sources describe the tribes of Iberia performing war dances and songs (Sil. Ital., 3, 346-349; Diod., 5, 34, 4; App., *Iber.* 67). Their purpose would be to embolden the warriors and inspire panic in the enemy. Salustius (2, 92) relates that mothers recounted "the warrior feats of their elders to the men who were preparing for battle or raiding parties, where they sung of their valiant deeds". The war horns of the Numantians (App., *Iber.* 78), documented archaeologically (Wattenberg 1963, Tables XV-XVI), could be related to these practices. On these practices in Celto-Germanic societies, see Sopeña (1987: 90 f; *Ibid.* 1995: 97-109) and Ciprés (1993: 83-84).

<sup>4</sup> On this episode, see Polib., 35, 5; frags. 13 and 31; Liv., per. 48; Veleyo, 1, 12, 4; Val. Max., 3, 2, 6; Flor., 1, 33, 11; Plut., prae. ger. reip. 804; Ampelio, 22, 3; De viris. ill. 58; Oros., 4, 21, 1; Plin., 37, 9.

<sup>5</sup> See Polib., 14,7,5; App., *Iber.* 31; Diod., 33,16-17 and 25; Liv., *Dec.* 17 and 34; Flor., 1,34,3 and 11; Lucano, 4,144; Oros., 5,7,2-18; Ptol., *Apotel.* 2,13; Just., *Ep.* 44, 2.

<sup>6</sup> According to Diodorus (29, 28) they asked for a spear, a dagger and a horse.

<sup>7</sup> See Philon (frag. 46), Diod. (5,33), Plin. (34, 144), Mart. (1, 49, 4 and 12; 4, 55, 11; 14, 33), Iust. (44, 3,



8), etc.

<sup>8</sup> Polybius (35,1) compares the Celtiberian War to a forest fire: just when it seems to have been put out it breaks out again somewhere else. Diodorus (31,40) called it a "war of fire".

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