

Juan Luis García Alonso

University of Salamanca, Spain; jlga@usal.es

Alejandro G. Sinner, Javier Velaza (eds.).
Palaeohispanic Languages and Epigraphies.
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This book is a recent overview of the most important aspects of what we currently know about the ancient languages and epigraphic materials of the Iberian Peninsula and Southern France. These languages and texts received the denomination of ‘Palaeohispanic’ a few years ago and the name seems to have been generally accepted. The book, written by some of the most active and respected researchers in the field, is a collection of 14 essays covering all the regions as well as all the pertinent questions of the current state of our knowledge.

Besides Phoenician, Greek and Latin we have epigraphic evidence of several Palaeohispanic languages (Tartessian, Iberian, Celtiberian, Lusitanian) in a really sizable corpus of over 3000 inscriptions. These epigraphic texts and the languages in which they are written are relevant for many reasons, among them the history and spread of writing in the Mediterranean context, and the different substrata of the modern languages of the region.

In such a relatively young field of research as this, with often very disparate positions, the different authors were asked by the editors to be meticulous when dealing with the frequently opposing views, making an effort to differentiate “between those hypotheses that can count on broad acceptance and those that are still currently under evaluation and debate” (p. vi), something that was achieved throughout.

1. Method and methods: Studying Palaeohispanic languages as a discipline (pp. 1–24)

Javier de Hoz, who passed away before the book came out, is the author of two chapters of this global overview of Palaeohispanic languages and epigraphies. His ample knowledge of many different aspects of *Palaeohispanistics* made him an appropriate candidate for this methodological introduction.

After defining this field of studies in temporal, linguistic and geographical terms, he summarizes the linguistic and epigraphic situation of Hispania and the history of the research since the Renaissance, with special attention to the role of Gómez-Moreno.

After a section describing the methods of decipherment of scripts and languages, he urges to be wary of risky constructs impossible to prove, and advocates for what he calls “Palaeohispanic Philology”: to go beyond a basic understanding of scripts and languages and arrive at a cultural appreciation of the context of the texts in all its complexity.

The author points out an aspect that may be easily overlooked: the temporal depth of Palaeohispanic texts. A few final comments are added on language contacts, as well as on the diachronic and synchronic variability within each language area.

2. The Iberian Peninsula in pre-Roman times: An archaeological and ethnographical survey (pp. 25–55)

Alberto Lorrio and Joan Sanmartí summarize the archaeological and ethnographical data of Hispania during this period, focusing on the difficulties that this research entails, given the uneven information available (coins, Greek and Latin sources, epigraphy or archaeology).

They include three sections: Iberians, the South-Western people(s) and what they call “Hispano-Celts”, the latter being subdivided in Celtiberians, Vaccaei, Vettones (with the Celtic peoples of the West and North) and the group of Turmodigi, Autrigones, Berones, Caristi and Varduli.

It is striking, for a linguist, not to see a specific heading dedicated to the speakers of the Indo-European but clearly non-Celtic language that we today call Lusitanian. The authors seem to endorse the possibility that the Lusitani are “perhaps” Celtic (p. 39), something I cannot agree with. To me, the description of Lusitanian on the following page as “an archaic Indo-European language (...) with elements in common with the Celtic sub-family” is misleading. Lusitanian does share some isoglosses with Celtic, but also with other sub-families within Indo-European, such as the Italic or Germanic languages. The presence of the Celtic place names in *-briga* across central and western Hispania does not imply anything about the Celtic nature of Lusitanian, but rather that the area was *also* in-

habited by speakers of Celtic, the difficulty being how to explain this co-existence.

3. Phoenician epigraphy in the Iberian Peninsula (pp. 56–77)

J. A. Zamora begins with a history of the epigraphic finds, in southern Hispania, which for a long time were really scarce, although nowadays the number of texts is already significant (around 400 or so). He then overviews the geographical distribution and the dating of the finds and analyses the main characteristics and issues concerning the preserved material. He makes an important point that the Phoenicians most likely used to write on perishable materials, which helps to understand the irregular distribution of texts.

He then summarizes the uses of writing amongst the Phoenicians. Modern research is able to confirm a much more widespread writing practice than what the preserved inscriptions would lead us to believe. Examples of the uses of writing belong in the economic, funerary, ritual (offerings and apotropaic practices) and official spheres.

4. Palaeohispanic writing systems: Classification, origin, and development (pp. 78–108)

J. Ferrer and N. Moncunill undertake a study of all the varieties of said writing systems, how they originated and how they reached their geographic locations. The internal relation between all the scripts is not yet ascertained. In a more limited way both the Latin and Greek alphabets were used to represent native languages (Lusitanian, Celtiberian and Iberian).

The semi-syllabaries can be divided into Northern and Southern scripts. The first type includes North-eastern Iberian, the Celtiberian varieties and a possible third script, not yet clearly defined, attested in the lands of the *Vascones*. The second type includes South-eastern Iberian, Southwestern (Tartessian) script and the Espanca script. Additionally, there are a few southern texts that seem to indicate there was at least one more southern script. The authors remark on the important discovery of the ‘dual’ varieties where differentiating voiceless and voiced plosives was possible. Page 81 offers a complete representation of all the varieties and values of each sign.

The authors then provide a more detailed overview of the different scripts, finally offering their hypothesis on the genealogy of all the scripts, which I see as sensible but highly uncertain or difficult to prove at this stage. Two separate adaptations from a Phoenician source feel unlikely to me.

5. The epigraphic and linguistic situation in the south-west of the Iberian Peninsula (pp. 109–137)

J. A. Correa and A. Guerra discuss the linguistic situation in this area, including the typology and classification of the language which appears in this epigraphic corpus and is often associated with the Tartessian tradition. The script is not fully decoded. We are not certain about the phonetic value of many of the signs, most of the texts (around 100) are very brief and in most cases we do not know how to separate the words.

They then state that this script was based upon the Phoenician alphabet, most likely with no participation of the Greek alphabet (De Hoz 2010: 495–500) and finally describe this semi-syllabary, pointing out the many questions on which researchers have not reached consensus. The authors tackle the challenge of the historical context, dating these texts to the 6th and 5th centuries BCE (rather than the 8th century as previously believed).

Concerning the language of the script, the authors make a general description and remind the reader that certain features (personal names in particular) were tentatively labelled by Correa (1985) as possibly Celtic or Indo-European, a hypothesis he later discarded. Untermann (MLH IV), Rodríguez Ramos (2002) and De Hoz (2010: 371–402) have also explicitly rejected this possibility.

As for Koch’s more recent (2009, 2011 or 2014) hypothesis of the language as Celtic, Correa and Guerra notice that, on top of having met with opposition on Celtic linguistic grounds, in their opinion, this is far from proven in sheer epigraphic terms as well, something that I agree with.

6. The linguistic situation in the territory of Andalusia (pp. 138–159)

This second chapter by J. de Hoz covers the linguistic landscape of the different regions of modern Andalusia in ancient times. In each of these areas there were peoples known from ancient sources:

- the *Turdetani*, descendants of the Tartessians, occupied the lower and middle Guadalquivir valley. Probably akin to them were the neighbouring *Turduli*, who lived on the coastal region of Huelva and Cádiz;
- there was, similarly, another pair of peoples with a parallel double denomination, *Bastetani* and *Bastuli*, with a similar ethnic base;
- to the North the *Oretani* occupied areas both within modern Andalusia and in the southern Meseta, and to the South the Phoenicians were located in and around their city-states by the Mediterranean coast;

- finally, in Roman times, in western Andalusia and southern Portugal, we know of the presence of Celtic-speaking peoples.

The author reviews the linguistic material available through onomastics and native inscriptions, dividing it into three parts: Turdetanian for the lower and middle Guadalquivir, Iberian for the Oretanian and Bastetanian regions of the upper Guadalquivir and Celtic for western Andalusia and adjacent areas of southern Portugal.

7. Iberian writing and language (pp. 160–197)

After stressing the main methodological, geographical and chronological questions faced by modern research on the subject, Javier Velaza recognizes that the difficulties do not lie in the scarcity of texts (there are 2250 extant inscriptions), but rather in the hermetic character of a language with no known close relatives.

He then refers to the surprisingly homogeneous aspect of the language given the large epigraphic extension of Iberian, especially despite the fact that many different peoples inhabited the area and that the archaeological evidence is varied as well. He mentions De Hoz's hypothesis that Iberian was not vernacular throughout but acted as a *lingua franca*, being only vernacular in the Southeastern area, but remains unconvinced; as for the place of origin of the language, he would rather favour the Northeast.

Velaza then lists an overall inventory of the inscriptions written in the different varieties of scripts used for this language, after which he discusses the evolution of different usages of writing among the Iberians.

Finally, there is a section dedicated to a prudent and sensible description of the little that we know for certain about the language on different levels: onomastics, phonetics and phonology, nominal morphology, vocabulary, numerals, the verb, and syntax. From a typological perspective, the author believes Iberian to have been an agglutinative and, possibly, ergative language.

8. Cultural and linguistic contacts in southern Gaul (pp. 198–218)

This chapter is an introduction to the linguistic situation in Southern Gaul, which, even though geographically not a part of Hispania, is still included in *Palaeohispanistics* because of the interactions between Iberian, Gaulish, Greek and Phoenician.

A. Mullen and C. Ruiz Darasse explore the complexities of the language contacts in the area, divided into two epigraphic zones limited by the river Hérault, one to the west, using the Northeastern Iberian script, and another one to the east, using the Greek alphabet.

They overview the early contacts of this area with the Greeks, Etruscans and Phoenicians. The pre-Roman Greek epigraphic presence does not show any linguistic interaction with other communities (local or Iberian). Evidence of Greek-Etruscan (even Roman) contacts in the area earlier are clear, as are contacts between Etruscan and Gaulish/Celtic populations. The chapter continues with a revision of the contacts with the Iberian world.

The final section deals with the contacts in Roman times; the development of the so-called Gallo-Greek epigraphy; the less frequent epigraphic examples of direct Greek-Iberian interactions; the few local cases (Haute-Garonne) of a threefold Iberian, Latin and Gaulish interaction; and the final stages where Latin took over with an immediate disappearance of Iberian names and a more gradual elimination of Gaulish ones.

9. The Vasco-Iberian theory (pp. 219–239)

This old controversial question is discussed in detail in this chapter by E. Orduña, who had first put on the table the (at least apparently) surprising similarities of the entire numeric systems of Basque and Iberian.

The author begins by summarizing the historical development of the hypothesis since the sixteenth century, even though until Gómez-Moreno's contributions from the 1920s onwards (1922, 1925, 1942, 1943, 1945, 1949, 1962) the readings of the Palaeohispanic scripts were not correct. After him the panorama changed, with most of the important scholars¹ rejecting the idea of a genetic relation between the two languages. Michelena's opinions "are still dominant" (p. 221) today, as Orduña says.

After reviewing the traditional reasons supporting the theory, Orduña analyses different arguments that cannot be discarded easily, at various levels: phonology, noun morphology, pronouns, verbal morphology, syntax, onomastics, and lexicon.

The chapter ends with a few sensible words concerning the difficulty of closing this discussion and the need to know much more about Iberian and about ancient Basque to be certain about the degree of closeness between the two.

10. Writing and language in Celtiberia (pp. 240–303)

In the context of ancient Hispania, the best known language is Celtiberian. F. Beltrán and C. Jordán overview the language and analyze different epigraphic issues.

¹ Caro Baroja (1942, 1943), Bähr (1948), Tovar (1954, 1961) or Michelena (1961, 1975, 1985).

After a historical and geographical introduction to the peoples inhabiting this region, the authors point out that this corpus of over 200 inscriptions constitutes the only native epigraphic area in Indo-European Hispania, with the exception of half a dozen Lusitanian texts. All the lands to the West and Northwest of Celtiberia, with the exception of Lusitanian territory, must have been inhabited by speakers of dialects of Hispano-Celtic². The authors mention that modern researchers debate whether Lusitanian is one of them; I would add that most linguists do not think it is.

After reviewing Celtiberian phonetics and phonology³, nominal morphology, adjectival formation, verbs, pronouns, numerals, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions and particles, prefixes and preverbs, there is a section dedicated to personal onomastics, followed by another one dealing with the Celtiberian epigraphic culture.

11. Language and writing among the Lusitanians (pp. 304–334)

Eugenio Luján overviews the use of writing among this people. They did not use a Palaeohispanic script, but would rather recur (sporadically) to the Latin alphabet in order to represent their language, whose linguistic classification is also discussed here. Lusitanian is the name of a language known from half a dozen native inscriptions⁴ coming from the territory of the Lusitani. In the same area, further linguistic (onomastic) elements, of varied nature (some akin to these texts, some clearly Celtic) have surfaced. Moreover, we have onomastic evidence of Lusitanian beyond the lands of the Lusitani, to the North, in the territory of the Gallaeci.

The chapter follows with a description of the language, based first in the native language texts, but also taking into account the remaining linguistic informa-

² “Celtiberian is the only pre-Roman language directly attested in the Iberian Peninsula which is undoubtedly Celtic” (p. 247); however, Celtic was spoken in other regions beyond Celtiberia. The term Hispano-Celtic should be applied to those other Celtic dialects which we cannot call Celtiberian with confidence (leaving Lusitanian out, of course).

³ In relation to the evolution of *p > φ > Ø, this “fricativization and loss of *p in the initial position before a vowel or continuant and intervocalic position” (p. 149), I do not think that Cib. **konbouto** [Mon.74] is a good example, since the voiceless plosive is not found here in the right context. I do not think we really need a reading of [kom-φlouto]; we would not expect the disappearance of p- in that context (after a nasal sound).

⁴ Either 6 or 7, depending on whether the lost inscription of Arroyo de la Luz, with its two pieces, is counted as a single one broken in two or as two separate texts.

tion obtained by the onomastic and morphological details seen in Latin inscriptions.

Luján then discusses the classification of Lusitanian within Indo-European, mentioning the two main positions about its possible Celtic character, starting with Tovar (1966) (against) and Untermann (1984, 1987) (in favour). The author’s main conclusion is that Lusitanian cannot be considered a Celtic language and I agree with his arguments, all of which seem quite reasonable.

12. The parts of Hispania without epigraphy (pp. 335–364)

In this section, J. Gorrochategui and J. M. Vallejo overview the linguistic situation in the areas of Hispania that did not have native epigraphic testimonies of the local languages.

The authors introduce alternative sources to epigraphics, identifying distinct linguistic areas by means of information gathered from classical literary sources or from epigraphic texts in Latin which have some native onomastics embedded in them.

After a few reasonable comments on the nature of toponyms, anthroponyms and theonyms, the authors overview the linguistic areas of the regions of Hispania without a native epigraphy:

- Western Hispania, where Lusitanian was spoken, shows anthroponyms that are congruent with it, but also a few in common with its northern neighbours;
- the Celtiberian area, well known through its native epigraphics, with specific characteristics extending to other peoples to their West and Northwest;
- Southern Hispania, with native texts from different periods, which was romanized much earlier than Northern and Western Hispania and shows three layers of onomastic evidence — Celtic in the West, Turdetanian in the Guadalquivir basin and Iberian in the East;
- the Iberian area;
- the Basque-Aquitanian area, with onomastics akin to the Basque language.

13. Coin evidence for Palaeohispanic languages (pp. 365–395)

As pointed out by P. P. Ripollés and A. G. Sinner in this section, numismatics was the first discipline to face the challenge of analysing certain native texts in an unknown type of writing coming from different areas of Hispania. Already during the 16th century this was a matter of concern among specialists. This chapter starts with a history of this research until our times.

The authors offer a special section dedicated to the classification of native coins, associating each of them with specific dates: Greek (6th-2nd centuries BCE),

Punic (4th century BCE – imperial period), Northeastern Iberian (3rd – 1st centuries BCE), Southeastern Iberian (3rd – 1st centuries BCE), Celtiberian (2nd – 1st centuries BCE), unidentified Southern script (2nd–1st centuries BCE).

The final part of this section describes and classifies the coins that were minted in Hispania, in every language and in every context, in some more detail, and trying to obtain all kind of historical, economic or social information from each of the areas, cultural milieus, and linguistic surroundings.

14. Writing, colonization, and Latinization in the Iberian Peninsula (pp. 396–416)

Both the Palaeohispanic native writing systems and the native ancient languages would die out as a final consequence of the long process of Latinization. B. Díaz Ariño, M. J. Estarán and I. Simón overview the introduction of the Roman epigraphic culture in Hispania. There is a section dealing with the first written texts (3rd century BCE), related to the trade between Italy and the Mediterranean ports of Hispania, followed by another describing the epigraphic activity of the Roman administration until the civil wars, after which the authors define a phase in the development of Latin epigraphy due to the arrival of Italic immigrants. The final step is linked to the epigraphic use of Latin by the local elites.

The authors then offer a reflection on linguistic contacts, as perceived by the presence of bilingual inscriptions, and on the effects they had on the whole Latinization process, with a separate analysis for each area (Iberian, Celtiberian and Lusitanian).

The chapter ends with an analysis of the disappearance of Palaeohispanic languages and scripts. In some areas both events took place almost simultaneously, while in others the languages survived much longer. Local writing systems ceased to be used completely during the first decades of the 1st century CE. The Iberian and Turdetanian languages died out almost at the same time. However, Indo-European Hispania was very different: Romanization started later, the immigrants were far fewer and concentrated in a few urban centers, and the languages could have survived until the end of antiquity and, in the case of Basque, till today.

Final pages

The book ends with a very complete (although it admits than including 100% of the pertinent publications is not possible) and useful bibliographic selection (pp. 417–472), followed by a concordance of the inscriptions in *BDHesp* and *MLH* and a detailed index of sources.

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