

SUMMARY

CELTIC PEOPLES IN THE SOUTHWESTERN IBERIAN PENINSULA

In these pages we defend a project, the primary objective of which was the comparison of the Classical documentary sources with the archaeological ones referring to the Pre-Roman world of the Southwest, in order to palliate a clear vacuum of information from the latter.

We believe it is unnecessary to refer, again, to the words of Ephorus, Herodotus, Strabo or Pliny who, from the V century B.C. cite the presence of Celtic peoples in these lands, but we do call attention to the small volume of information that, up until the past decade, was offered by Archaeology.

The methodological bases upon which this project was carried out were found in Geography, Epigraphy, Classical Texts (Greek or Roman) and Archaeology, all fundamental bases of DOCUMENTARY SOURCES and, therefore, disciplines in which our work has been carried out.

Of these, our major source of data has been the archaeological record. The small amount of information initially known has been greatly increased through the work of institutions created in recent years, such as the *Dirección del Patrimonio of the Junta de Extremadura*, the Area of Archaeology of the University of Extremadura and the *Regional Serviço de Arqueologia do Sul of Portugal*. Thus, in the eighties, archaeological sites of the importance of Garvão, Belén, Mirobriga and Alcácer were dug and studied, while others were examined in greater depth, resulting in the configuration of important stratigraphic sequences, as in Badajoz.

Surveys, analyses of public and private collections, «compendia» of publications and new excavations such as those of the hillforts of Capote (Badajoz), Nertóbriga (Badajoz) and Pomar (Beja), have completed this record.

As a consequence, such interventions have allowed us to develop working hypotheses that have produced results of spatial, temporal and ethnocultural character. In summary, as we will defend in the following pages, we believe that we have laid the necessary ground-work for a consolidated definition of the cultural and ethnical personality of the pre-Roman populations of the Southwest. This affirmation is based upon arguments of geo-

graphical, philological, archaeological and cultural nature.

Geographical concepts have served to define the existence of an authentic natural region that, anthropologically, refers to a specific ethnical area. Defining characteristics are the eruptive base geology and a Cambrian Period which configure a typical Siliceous Peninsula edaphology, where soils are light, rocky and little apt for agriculture, reasons for a landscape which favored certain types of settlement.

The abundance of granite and slate, together with a sub-Atlantic regime of rainfall, would have a clear effect on constructive systems and techniques as well as on the types and patterns of colonization of the land. That same siliceous panorama would favour oak forests that encouraged live-stock husbandry, rather than agriculture, and the survival of important hunting resources until present-day times.

In the same way a rocky and mountainous ecosystem is accompanied by the abundance of iron and copper (and to a lesser degree, gold and tin) ores as a result of the geological dynamics of this region, meridional paleozoic plate of the Hesperian Massif.

This last characteristic would affect the nature of the hydrographic network, favouring shallow channels and brusque turns that denote the hardness of bedrock. But because of this, the waters of the Guadiana, as well as those of the Sado and Mira, would favour human movement and communication without acting as frontiers.

Philological concepts, fundamentally based on Epigraphy, are as insufficient as may be expected from an historical area where there is not an autonomous development of writing, but reflections in the early Roman Era and the information from Greco-Latin texts allow to reach solid hypotheses.

So it is that after compilation and analysis of these testimonies, the results affirm with almost complete unanimity the presence of peoples of Indoeuropean speech. Among the languages so recognized in the Peninsula, we believe that it would be of the type called Lusitanian, a pre- or proto-Celtic language that in this case seems to be strongly conditioned by two foreign elements: an important presence of Celtiberian components along with others of Transpyrenean origin and a very ancient background (i.e., in Goidelic Celtic, Oscan, Latin and Illyrian).

On the other hand, such a panorama, along with the judgements expressed in Greco-Latin texts (referring to the toponomy, hydronomy, customs and beliefs), allow us to confirm that in the eyes of classical writers, these populations shared the same ethnic entity, that they called «Celtic».

Archaeological concepts have been analyzed according to spatial and temporal dimensions.

In the first case, the record is treated inductively according to micro-, meso- and macrospatial levels, in order to be able to establish the principal economic and cultural patterns that justify the occupation of the territory.

Microspatially it is of interest to call attention to the presence of socially and productively significant elements, such as the smelting ovens, storage pits, mills or ritual structures, that have served to define the dominant functions of the different constructions and clarify the internal morphology of the habitat. Different levels of defenses, from elemental inaccessibility of location to authentic fortresses with towers, bastions and ditches are well documented, along with unique rooms like the altar of Capote or with buildings that seem to correspond to palatial functions or those of prestige, as in the Castro de Segovia, that have been subjects of specific treatment, due to their uniqueness.

These elements acquire special importance when it is time to commence the next interpretative level, when it is necessary to inter-relate the remains of defensive constructions with the degree of adaptation to landforms, estimates of surface areas occupied and the internal organization of the habitat in order to be able to present a coherent treatment of the configuration of settlements.

In conjunction with different geographical environments of Pre-Roman villages, it is possible to define, through their proximity to resources, the characteristics of locations and the spatial incidence of significant archaeological materials, dominant patterns of settlement and, through these, to establish models of a centripetal or centrifugal nature according to relations of subordination or coordination.

The chapter on «Territory» shows the culmination of all these analyses that, on one hand, permits us to make hypotheses of concentration and dispersion of the population and on the other hand, reveals probable geopolitical systems that only continued archaeological research will confirm.

Then it is possible to confront **TWO PATTERNS OF SYSTEMS:**

I: composed of a settlement, or several, in a nuclear area surrounded by controlling locations, that enclose and define a particular territory. On the exterior are located enclaves with productive resources (mining, fishing, etc.).

It may be supposed that the control over the productive outskirts is brought about through relations which are more coordinated than imposed, in an organization of a clearly centripetal nature.

This pattern appears in a coastal zone, with a nuclear area formed around the Sado Estuary (Setúbal/Caetoberga + Alcácer/Salacia) and an extensive hinterland where smaller territories are located, each with its own particular nodal area: Ébora, São Bartolomeu de Out-

eiro, Outeiro do Circo/Beja, Mangancha/Aljustrel and Odemira.

In this way there is formed a peripheral band of villages, of medium-sized surface areas, each controlling its own surrounding region, which maintain relations with each other and «depend» for external contacts on the nuclear, centralizing, coastal area (Setúbal-Alcácer). Despite a certain unavoidable amount of interior subordination, these are egalitarian patterns, made up of relations of coordination and exchange of resources. For that reason, in spite of the concentration of wealth in the nuclear area (necropolis of Alcácer) there are no other signs of predominance over the villages of the hinterland (such as Mangancha/Aljustrel).

II: it is located in an interior riverside environment among diverse patterns of concentration and important nuclear areas such as Badajoz/Vaiamonte, Azougada or Mértola. Basically, it has a strong nuclear area, as those dominated by Azougada-S. João-Ratinhos, with various «commercial» villages of interest (Azougada itself, Moura) and surrounded by another with primarily productive settlements (Adiça, Safareja, Monte Novo), although those of the «atalaia» type are not lacking. On the exterior it possesses another peripheral band of hillforts on high sites, strategically located to control the surrounding territories (Passo Alto, Castillo de Aroche, Cuncos, Tominha, etc.) and which dominate and mark the boundaries of a specific territory. It is a pattern that, in terms of spatial transformation, could be considered to be in a proto-state trajectory.

Temporally, the archaeological record has been developed following the guide-lines observed in the few but important stratigraphies, some of them with depth of the test pits of Alcácer and Badajoz where, unfortunately, excavations of extensive areas have not been carried out. Others on the contrary, allow more in-depth study of recognized Pre-Roman strata, such as those of Garvão, Belén, Miróbriga or Capote. All of them, together with the artifacts from some few necropolises and from surveys and fortuitous finds, allow us to establish **TEMPORAL SEQUENCES OF OCCUPATION** in 45 of the 133 sites analyzed, which are enounced in the following proposal:

Initial or Transitional Phase (450/425-375 B.C)

This exciting moment is clearly reflected in the records of the so-called Neves-Corvo Facies, in southern Alentejo; in Alcácer and Azougada, in coastal and central Alentejo, and in the hillforts of Badajoz and La Martela, in Spanish Extremadura, among other sites.

We know that, as in the rest of the Mediterranean and Central Europe, the V Century was a time of profound transformation marked by the exhaustion of previous dynamics, a depletion that in the Southwest is reflected in the clear final decline of Tartessos and the «orientalizing» phenomenon.

In this sense, the ergological differences between the grave goods of phases B and C of Martires de Alcácer necropolis are significant, although the latter phase does not seem to be much older (VI Century and middle of

the V Century B.C., respectively). Nevertheless, although the contrast is much more evident in the IV Century (Phase A), the persistence of orientalizing ceramic traditions during this Initial or Transitional Phase is evidenced in the stratum Badajoz A, Corvo I, Galeado and La Martela.

Also, other artifacts, such as the significant gold plates of the latter site, reflect exemplarily this world in transition, combining purely oriental techniques with designs from Celtic iconography. Even in the most common artifacts, new elements make their appearance, as occurs in Phase A of Badajoz and, probably, in the hillfort of Segovia, Elvas, with the first vessels decorated with stamped impressions.

As a consequence, it is not possible to speak of a complete rupture but of new guide-lines that are imposed without apparent violence, and mark the direction of what will be profound transformations, manifest in historical perspective.

Central Phase (375-350 and 350-175 B.C.)

One of the fossil guides of the change is the presence of Attic pottery, for its diffusion, chronological value and initial persistence in the new period. Thus the last series of Greek ceramics, dated between 375 and 350 B.C., are useful in order to delimit a subphase, the principal characteristic of which is to mark the definitive beginning of the new patterns of cultural behaviour.

This moment has its climax from the middle of the IV Century in the evidence and traces of what could be an authentic «colonization» of the land. Numerous medium and small sized villages at elevated locations, strongly associated with the fluvial currents, mining resources, and the appearance of a hand-made pottery with a strong personality are the principal novelties, along with the diffusion of stamp impressions, black wheel-thrown ceramics and pins and weapons of continental inspiration. A whole context, which by geographical area and symbolic elements, clearly corresponds to those peoples called «Celtic», now appears as a homogenous cultural horizon in the Sado and lower Guadiana river basins, from the limits of the Tagus to the Algarvian and Turdetan lands, including aperturist nuclei such as Alcácer.

Late Phase (175-150 and 150-90 B.C.)

Once again it is the presence of imported artifacts which advises of new transformative dynamics although still within the same cultural trajectory as before: «Campanian» ware, Dressel I amphoras, coins, writing in Latin and Iberian characters reflect the historical moment of the violent social convulsions of the second century B.C.

In a first subphase, between 175 and 150 B.C., approximately, the appearance of Italic and Turdetan elements is sporadic and gradual (silver coins, Campanian A pieces). It is easy to suppose that later the warfare and social chaos of the Lusitanian Wars must have been the cause and effect of this process of change, with recu-

sative responses (raids, revolts, banditry) that to a certain degree testify to an interruption or, more likely, a change of direction of indigenous transformations.

However, the final cultural repercussion was a strengthening of integrating changes, and that is reflected at the end of the century by the massive appearance of Italic products and by an evident transformation of indigenous ceramics with the complete imposition of the black wheel-thrown pottery that adopts decorative techniques under Roman influence (dented-wheel impressions, applications, etc.).

Final Phase (90-50 B.C.)

The process of conquest of the Occidental lands to the South of Tagus river seems to have completely concluded with the victory of Licinius Crassus in the year 93 B.C. Around that time, the syncretic character of cultural change is giving way to a gradual imposition of new social and political guide-lines. This phenomenon seems to have been especially notorious during the Sertorian Wars and complete after the actions of Caesar and the Civil War with Pompeius. For that reason, we propose the arbitrary date of 50 B.C. to be considered as the methodological end of the Pre-Roman Period.

Archaeologically, this process is reflected in the nature of the newly-founded settlements, small fortified outposts destined for military control of the territory, and with clearly defined patterns: romanized indigenous hillforts, such as the Peña de San Sixto de Aracena; small fortresses or fortified Roman villas, like Represas, Monte Novo and Castelo da Lousa, and the well-known «castella» in the Almodôvar-Mértola line. Such dynamics have their repercussion on indigenous ceramics, which along with the already frequent pieces of Italic origin or imitation, reflect the definitive acceptance of Roman tastes.

All this data reveals a greatly altered populational panorama in this first half of the I Century B.C., in both large centers and smaller ones.

The abandonment of some indigenous habitats (Capote, Chibanes, Pedra d'Atalaia, Badajoz), the centralizing strength of others (Nertobriga, Mirobriga, Eborá) and the establishment of positions of military and economic control, such as those indicated, certify the disappearance of the autoctonous settlement patterns and therefore, entry into a new period. Then can be observed the re-vitalization of some oppida, not as population centers but as administrative, political, economic and religious centers. This is the function that Biers supposes for Miróbriga and that we have defended recently for Nertóbriga.

Answers to *Ethnocultural concepts* are the most interesting, because they represent the final objective of the preceding interpretations and, therefore, are those most difficult to perceive.

It is clear that documentary sources do not give valid explanations for the appropriateness of the tribal name «Celtic» that they employ with evident frequency and, so, we need to find valid answers, in agreement with archaeological evidence, that allow us to approach the cul-

tural traits and the confirmation of an ethnic sentiment that can justify such an appellation.

We are well aware of how spiny it is to deal with any subject of Peninsular Protohistory that delves into the characteristics and roots of those traditionally considered to be Hispanic Celtic Peoples. Fortunately the work of those, up until recent times, few Spanish Celticists is beginning to bear fruit and the viability of studies of peoples called «Celts» has passed from an initially generalized rejection to the most hopeful reality.

All of the Classical Authors that deal in depth with Pre-Roman Hispania coincide in the presence of Celtic peoples in the Sado-Guadiana basins. That only allow us to affirm that Pre-Roman Peoples were considered Celtic according to the ethnic concepts of their Greco-Latin contemporaries. In this sense, and only for methodological purposes, we allow ourselves to use the tribal name Celtic to identify these peoples, with the same reasoning as that used in the case of Celtiberians or Lusitanians.

However, these classical references, charged with ethnocentric considerations, cannot serve, in any way, as a justification for an important Central European presence in the Peninsula, a presence that Archaeology has not been able to confirm, in spite of enlightening linguistic evidence that even includes equivalence between the tribal «Beturican» and the Celtic «Bituriges», the principal Central European people responsible for the continental invasions of the IV Century. For this reason, the rejection of the efforts of the great figures of our historiography, such as Bosch Gimpera or Almagro Basch, has led to the denial of any Celtic presence in the Peninsula, in our opinion without realizing that such a position falls into same interpretative errors as did the traditional theories based on invasions as principal diffusive agents.

This rejection has ignored the out-standing role of fields such as linguistics or beliefs and even, in Archaeology, comes to the point of ignoring the profusion of well-coordinated studies that allow an in-depth knowledge of peoples from the Central Plateau, such as Celtiberians, whose material culture is not less «Celtic» than the classic ones from Hallstatt and La Tène territories. These studies offer explanations without having to recur to massive invasions, but more common and continual diffusive processes, such as those favored by the constant and secular relations between the peoples of either side of Pyrenees (the «Cumulative Celticity» of Hawkes). Probably, the error perpetuated by recusative considerations can be found in the excessive weight given to the absence of archaeological records identifiable with the Central European ones, in the Peninsula as well as in the presumed Pyrenaic passes. It does not stop to consider that such evidence leads to the traditional and erroneous consideration of «Archaeological Culture».

Most recent anthropological discussions collected by Shennan argue this dead-weight of research. As this author indicates, the mere archaeological record is a response to cultural connotations but should never be confused with the whole reflection of a cultural identity.

Once admitted this postulate, we may also ask ourselves to what extent the Hallstatt/La Tène assemblage as a paradigm of protohistoric Celts does not imply the

same level of subjectivity and a greater degree of deformation (Collis, 1986). In this sense, we believe that the incorporation of the peninsular Celtic World admitted with its special characteristics within the Venetian exposition *I Celti. A prima Europa* has managed to mark a new era in the interpretative studies of Late European Prehistory (Hawkes, 1973; Renfrew, 1990; Ruiz Zapatero, 1991; Almagro, 1991).

Therefore, setting aside the old concept of «archaeological Culture», we decided to approach the presumed cultural identity of these peoples by way of the paths blazed by Shennan, Wiessner and other scholars, especially by those referring to the spatial and temporal variability of the record and to the analysis of the nature of style as a cultural and ethnic expression.

a) Regarding the former, variability appears as a complex conjunction of the social, economic, productive and ideological factors that can aid in the process of understanding cultural identity.

In VILLAGES (where neither extensions nor internal organizations that could be considered completely urban are observed), as well as in NECROPOLISES (where burials of special wealth are not known. Even in the case of Alcácer, weapons and Attic pottery characterize grave-goods not equivalent to princely Iberian or Celtic tombs) or in reference to the ORGANIZATION OF PRODUCTION (there is no evidence to make us suppose the existence of protostate geopolitical systems, not even to the degree of what could be reached in Celtiberia and very far from the small turdetanian kingdoms) results reflect an egalitarian and unitarian character that is confirmed by the vague approaches to the world of BELIEFS and CUSTOMS.

The unity of cults, fundamentally under the advocations of Endovélico and Ategina, had its response in the carrying out of mass rituals, judging by the standardization of the offerings of the votive deposit of Garvão (the small plaques of beaten eyes or the possible organic presents in small bowls) and according to our interpretation of the Altar and deposit of Capote, both remains of collective customs were coordinated by a lesser number of individuals, that in this case would be no more than twenty odd.

In conclusion, the material and ideological concepts reveal populations with a low sociopolitical development ruled by a certain concept of egalitarianism that requires, nevertheless, the presence of rulerships based upon privileges of age or military needs rather than on personal wealth. In this sense it may be worthwhile to remember that the few bits of information collected by the classical authors confirm this character among the occidental and septentrional peninsular peoples and refer repeatedly to the presence of «Celtic» military leaders.

b) With respect to the ANALYSIS OF STYLE, we employ those methodological procedures confirmed as the most efficient points of view for attempts to approach cultural identity. Following Wobst, Shennan and Wiessner, we understand that the recognition of an individual style, typical of a culture, is together with their customs, the best proof of the conscious or unconscious belonging to a community, that is, of the recognition of an ethnic sentiment.

In this sense, if the data about customs strengthen a collectivist and egalitarian concept of the nature of Society, the presence of a particular style becomes evident, precisely, in the most popular object: the local pottery. Of this, it is enough to mention that it is the most characteristic product of the Southwestern «Celts». This style possesses the two factors responsible for symbolic value according to Wiesner.

b.1. An Emblematic Style, which allows the conscious recognition of a community, the reflection of which could be in decorative motifs such as the profuse «Wolves teeth»; the stamped «haloed or semi-haloed polygons»; cut-out geometric motifs and, even, in the appearance of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic stamps.

b.2. An Assertive Style that implicitly has a wide range of stylistic variability, focused from a stocastic view on the artifacts from of Capote's Deposit A , the results of which are comparable, in similarity, with those known from other large ceramic assemblages of the SW (Badajoz, Belén, Garvão, Vaiamonte, Segovia or Miróbriga) in our Central Phase.

IN SUMMARY, from the detailed analysis of the type and dispersion of the material culture, of the references, epigraphy and contemporary observations, and from the presence of an individual decorative style, it is possible to affirm the specific cultural personality, but clearly of an Occidental and Indoeuropean nature, of the native populations that occupied, at least from the end of the V Century, the basins of the Sado and Guadiana rivers. This context, in its maximum strength between the IV and II Centuries, represents a new combination of cultural and ethnic traits among these peoples. That could be due not only to the greater value placed on indigenous cultural components after the fall of Tartessos and the end of the oriental presence, but also to the incorporation of foreign cultural elements, the closest parallels of which, judging from the Style, Philology and Beliefs, are located in the central Douro basin, although sharing deep relations of ancestorship with the rest of the Peninsula and, beyond, with the Central Southern area of France and Septentrional Italy.

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