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Latinization of funerary epigraphy on the Iberian Peninsula: change and continuity (300 BCE TO 100 CE)

Latinización de la epigrafía funeraria en la Península Ibérica: cambio y continuidad (300 A.C.-100 D.C.)

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Resumen: El artículo estudia el surgimiento de la epigrafía funeraria epicórica en las áreas lingüísticas ibérica y celtibérica entre los siglos III A.C. y I D.C. en relación con la presencia de actores romanos. A pesar de las dificultades para relacionarlos y establecer una relación causal directa, se demuestra que la correlación es algo más que una mera coincidencia.

Palabras clave: Epigrafía paleohispánica, latinización, epigrafía funeraria, Ibérico, Celtibérico.

Abstract: The paper studies the rise of epichoric funerary epigraphy in the Iberian and Celtiberian linguistic areas between the third century BCE and the first century CE in relation to the presence of Roman actors. Despite the difficulties to relate these to and establish a direct causal relation, it shown that the correlation is more than a mere coincidence.

Keywords: Palaeohispanic epigraphy, Latinization, Funerary epigraphy, Iberian, Celtiberian.

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1. Introduction

The funerary stelae on the Iberian Peninsula become epigraphic at the time when the contact with the Romans intensifies. It is interesting to note that the earlier contact with the Punic and Greek languages, which introduced the scripts, did not immediately lead to an uptake of lapidary epigraphy. Despite

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the existence of an epigraphic culture on the peninsula prior to the Roman conquest, we can state that the epigraphic culture changed after contact with the Roman sphere. First, there is a clear rise in the use of stone epigraphy in local languages at the time of the Roman conquest from the third century BCE (Abascal Palazón 2003, 246). Second, over time the local customs start to incorporate more and more of the Greco-Roman epigraphic culture, such as formulae. This development touches upon sociological aspects of language use and display and funerary practices.

We will study this process and development of the epigraphic practices of two language communities: Iberian and Celtiberian between the third century BCE and the first century CE. In these two communities we can observe the uptake of epigraphic stelae, in conjunction with a short use of epichoric script and language. The first epigraphic stelae begin with regionalized customs using local forms and languages, before they change into what we consider 'proper' Roman stelae. First, the pre-Roman funerary epigraphic culture of these groups will be discussed. Then we consider what the Latin language examples reveal about the evolution of funerary epigraphy in these areas. Attention will be on the regional characteristics within the Latin language funerary epigraphic culture, such as local formulae. Major challenges for our understanding are the current status of knowledge of the Palaeohispanic languages and the lack of full archaeological context of most of the stelae.

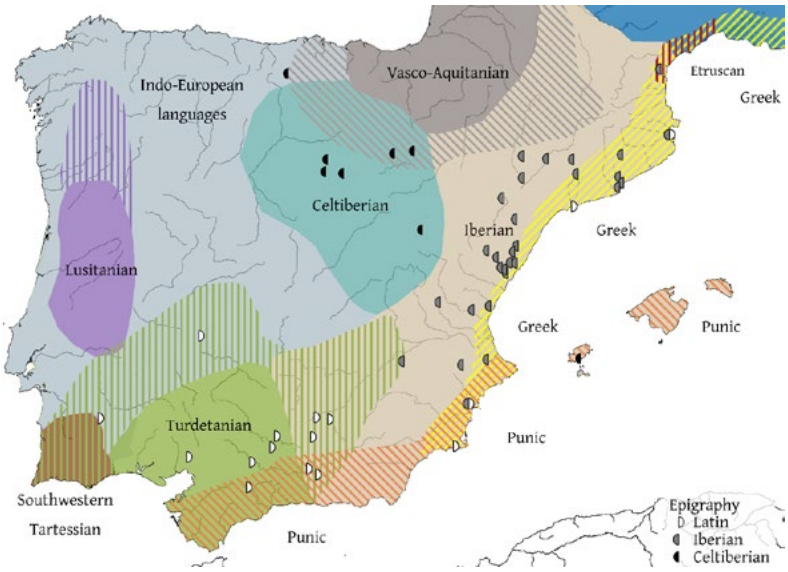

Fig. 1. Republican epigraphic funerary stelae and linguistic zones of the Iberian Peninsula. Note that these languages were not necessarily in use at the same time © Author.

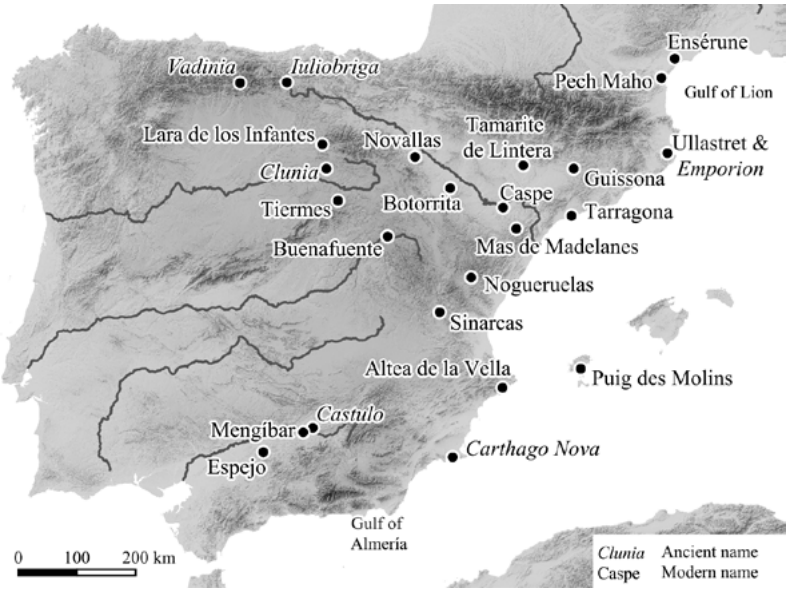

Fig. 2. Places mentioned in the text © Author.

2. Peninsular Funerary Monuments

Well before the arrival of the Romans there was a culture of erecting anepigraphic decorated stelae. The earliest forms of the anepigraphic decorated stelae are those of the South-western, or often called, Tartessian, culture in the Final Bronze Age, roughly starting at 1300-1250 BCE (Quesada Sanz 2011, 88; Brandherm 2016, 186; Celestino and Paniego 2021). These stelae mostly show shields with swords and spears or what is called diadems (fig. 3a Solana de Cabañas stele, C. 1000 – 800 BCE). In the Early Iron Age or Orientalizing period (700-500 BCE) the culture of anepigraphic stelae continues. In addition, around the 7th century BCE the first epigraphic stelae appeared in the region, written in the script called South-western or Tartessian (Correa and Guerra 2019, 114; Jiménez Ávila 2021, 157).[1] Subsequently, in the Middle / Late Iron

1 Despite several attempts, the exact phonetic value of the characters is uncertain. Koch (2009; 2012) has proposed an interpretation based on the assumption the language is related to the Celtic languages. The thesis has several problems, e.g. there is so far no consensus on the reading of the script, complicating the question where to break the continuous writing to form words. See Correa and Guerra 2019 for a discussion on the interpretation of Koch. See the *Palaeohispanica* 21 special issue for more detailed publications on these stelae: Luján 2021; Wodtko 2021.

Age (500 – 50 BCE), closer to the event of the Roman conquest, we observe the culture of erecting anepigraphic stelae can be found all over the peninsula. According to Izquierdo and Arasa (1999, 272) these later anepigraphic stelae can be divided into two categories: decorated and anthropomorphic. Both these categories can be found all over the Iberian Peninsula, each with their own epichoric visual language. The above-mentioned Solana de Cabañas stele is an example of a decorated stele. This category also includes the later stelae with geometric patterns or military panoply. The anthropomorphic or statuary stelae are stylized in the form of a human, either carved into a rectangular stone (e.g. fig. 3b Altea la Vella stele, c. 500 – 300 BCE), or the whole form of the stone showing a rough humanoid figure (e.g. fig. 3c Nogueruelas stele, c. 150 – 50 BCE, note this is not anepigraphic). The warrior depictions are often recognisable from their pectoral discoid shield. This military panoply bears similarities with the earlier decorated stelae, in that they portray military items such as shields, lances and riders (Marco Simón 1978, 90; Izquierdo and Arasa 1999, 279).

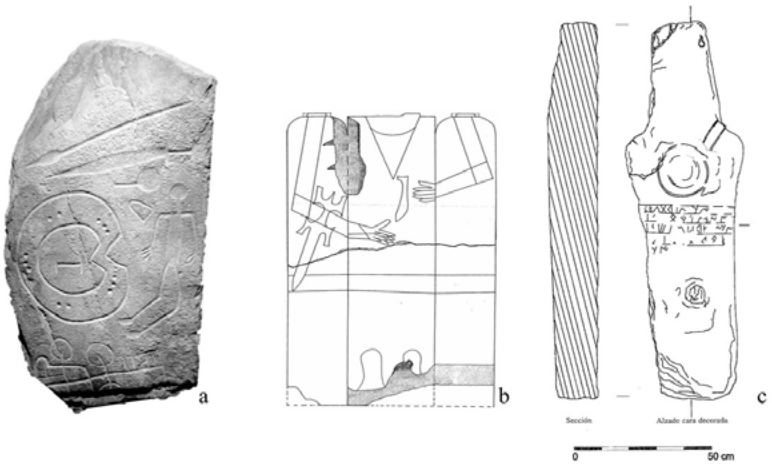

Fig. 3. Stelae with military panoply a) Solana de Cabañas stele c. 1000 – 800 BCE © A. Felicísimo – Wikimedia; b) Altea la Vella stele 500 – 300 BCE © Moroté 1981; c) Nogueruelas stele c. 150 – 50 BCE © Izquierdo and Arasa 1999.

One matter for ongoing debate is the period of the beginning of funerary epigraphy within the pre-Roman period. The origin of the epigraphic culture of the Iberian Peninsula is a point of discussion due to the difficulties of dating the inscriptions. As a result, it is still claimed that erecting stone epigraphy as

a whole is not a Peninsular habit (Lowe 2014, 111).[2] The idea put forward by Lowe might only be supported if restricted to funerary epigraphy as it could be argued that there is no definitive evidence for inscribed funerary stelae before the 2nd century BCE (Velaza Frías 2017, 238).[3] However, the earliest epichoric epigraphy in the peninsula, beginning at the latest in the 7th century BCE, is the South-western epigraphy and written in the South-western script could be funerary. Even though the script cannot be read with certainty and none of the stelae has been found in situ with full archaeological context, the consensus is that these are funerary (Correa and Guerra 2019, 114; De Hoz Bravo 2019, 5; Luján Martínez 2020, 572). This consensus is based on the organization of the epigraphic field with the inferior part free of text, which would have been used as the base in the ground. Moreover, the formulaic nature of the texts supports the interpretation of these texts as funerary. Despite the problems of the context of the stelae, it is clear they date to the 7th-5th century BCE and that the South-western script fell into disuse before the arrival of the Romans.

The reappearance of epichoric funerary epigraphy coincides with the arrival of the first Roman groups in the early third century BCE. These early contacts were of mercantile nature must be dated to the early third century based on Graeco-italic amphorae and graffiti in Latin script with names of Italic origin (Molina Vidal 2013, 196; Estarán Tolosa 2019, 395 & 409). In addition, we must place the Ebro-treaty between Hasdrubal and Rome in the context of Roman contacts with the Iberian Peninsula (Tsirkin 1991, 149; Pol. 2.13.7; Liv. 21.2.7; App. *Iber*. 7). The relation between the arrival of the Romans and epigraphic culture is difficult to establish. The sample of Iberian stelae is too small to grasp the development of funerary epigraphy completely (Simón Cornago 2013b, 101). The major challenge, however, is the interpretation of the inscriptions: the Palaeohispanic languages are not fully understood, and, as a result, it is hard to discern the function of the texts from the content and, unfortunately, the archaeological context of most is unknown. As a result, it is impossible even to be certain of the funerary nature of Palaeohispanic inscriptions based on the text alone (Velaza Frías 2018, 171). However, accepting the current interpretations of the Palaeohispanic texts and dating, it seems that the earliest republican Latin funerary inscription, *RIT* 12 (fig. 4), dated to

2 Taking the references used by Lowe it seems to be possible that he took the references to the Iberians as the linguistic group in the Northeast to be references to the Iberian Peninsula as a whole. The idea of stone epigraphy not being an epigraphic habit can be found in older works such as Maluquer de Motes 1968.

3 Referring to: Barrandon 2003; Beltrán Lloris 2012; Mayer and Velaza 1993.

the end of the 2nd century BCE, based on the name and archaic use of *coeravit* (*RIT* 12; *ELRH* C68), appears after the first appearance of epichoric funerary epigraphy on the peninsula.

Fig. 4. Earliest Latin funerary inscription RIT 12, c. 150 - 100 BCE © EDCS.

The possible discrepancy between the start of epichoric funerary epigraphy and the first Latin funerary inscription is reason to doubt a clear-cut conquest-initiated Roman influence. In any case, the introduction of the concept of funerary epigraphy to the Peninsula need not rely on such simplified visions of cultural interactions, forcing the Iberian Peninsula into a neat pre-Roman and Roman periodization. The Iberian area was in contact with the wider Mediterranean and its customs from as early as the late ninth century BCE through Phoenicio-Punic settlements, later Greek settlements and trading with multiple groups (Keay 2013, 306). One of the examples showing the wider contact is the fifth-century Pech Maho (south-western Gaul) lead tablet (*IGF* 135), the texts on which include Etruscan, Greek and possibly Phoenician, the latter present through a loanword (Mullen 2013, 163). Were we to consider the introduction within a wider Mediterranean context, the opposite question in fact rises: why is the start of funerary epigraphy so late? We find a

potentially similar situation in the epichoric epigraphic landscape of Southern Gaul: the Gaulish epigraphy postdates the initial period of Greek colonization by four centuries or so. A delay in introducing novelties in funerary practices might be expected as dealing with death tends to be a conservative cultural element. The absence of epichoric funerary epigraphy in the Punic south might be the result of such conservatism. So far, the whole corpus of Phoenician-Punic funerary inscriptions contains four inscriptions (Zamora López 2019, 72). The three complete inscriptions have been erected by Phoenician/Punic speakers between the 7th and 4th century BCE. Even though an earlier contact with the concept of funerary epigraphy is very likely in that region, it is not until contacts with the wider Mediterranean intensify during the period of Roman conquest onwards that funerary epigraphy is widely adopted.[4]

3. Iberian Funerary Epigraphy

The Iberian language area is a large continuous area stretching from the Gulf of Lion along the Mediterranean coast down to the *Costa de Almería*. The Iberian languages were non-Indo-European languages and are not yet fully understood. The Iberian area can be divided into two zones: the northern area influenced by Greco-Roman customs and the southern influenced more by Phoenician/Punic customs. The southern Iberian sphere was in direct contact with Phoenicians from the early first millennium BCE, whereas the northern sphere was in contact with the Greco-Roman world, as can be observed in the linguistic evidence (fig.1). This influence must not be seen as the result of 'colonial' culture civilising the barbaric locals, but as complex interactions between cultures within a region. The Roman presence on the peninsula added a new layer to the existing cultural interactions.

Even though there is no clear indication of funerary epigraphy prior to the 2nd century BCE (Barrandon 2003; Beltrán Lloris 2012; Brandherm 2016; Velaza Frías 2017), there are some examples of inscriptions in an early funerary context. The first example of Iberian epigraphy in a possible funerary context is an inscription found in the *oppidum* of Pech Maho on a cista in a *heroön* dated to the 3rd century BCE (Almagro-Gorbea and Lorrio Alvarado 2011, 222; Beltrán Lloris 2012, 12; *MLH* B.7.1. = *Hesp*. AUD.05.01; Velaza Frías 2017, 239).[5] Since the context is interpreted as a *heroön*, the function of the inscrip-

4 A. Mullen (2013) makes this argument for southern Gaul.

5 The references with MLH refer to the *Monumenta Linguarum Hispanicarum* identifiers. Those preceded by Hesp are the identifiers for Hesperia Databank [hesperia.ucm.es].

tion is thought to be funeral or religious. The ending of the first line seems to read **eitakér**, which resembles the **aŕe take** known from late first century BCE Iberian funerary inscriptions in *Tarraco* and *Saguntum*, and might indicate a funerary function (De Hoz Bravo 2011, 414).[6] However, Velaza Frías argues against the early date of the inscription as he notes that it is not incised but a graffito, which could have been added at a later moment (2018, 172).

Another possible early Iberian example is the inscription found in Ensérune, known as the *piedra de Cruzy*. It has been dated between the 5th and 3rd century BCE based on the use of the dual writing system and its archaeological context (*MLH* B.11.1. = *Hesp* HER.02.374).[7] Despite the certain early date and the funerary context, it is again unclear whether this early inscription is of funerary nature. The current consensus considers the inscription a later addition with a votive function. This new interpretation is based on the votive formula **neitiniunstir** (De Hoz Bravo 2011, 380; Moncunill *et al.* 2016, 272; Velaza Frías 2018, 173). Nonetheless, both inscriptions could easily be the result of reusing or inscribing existing Iberian funerary monuments (Velaza Frías 2017, 239).

Even though the existence of Iberian funerary epigraphy in pre-Roman times is doubted, the culture of erecting funerary monuments is certain. Despite the difficulties dating the start of Iberian funerary epigraphy, the existence of epichoric funerary epigraphy is clear. The necropolis of Mengíbar, belonging to the city of *Iliturgi,* with remains dated between the fourth and first century BCE, has provided one of the examples of local funerary inscriptions (Herrera Rando 2017, 117; 2020, 146). The rather simple stele has a short, partially readable inscription (*MLH* H.10.1). Due to the short nature of the inscription and the similarity between the different scripts, it is hard to discern whether the north-eastern or south-eastern Iberian script is used and therefore its reading and dating remain unclear (Herrera Rando 2020, 146). Two options have been proposed: following the north-eastern Iberian writing system it would read **ailur**, this reading has a parallel in the Enguera list of names (*MLH* F.21.1), namely **uŕkaŕailur**. However, for the region it would be more logical to expect the south-eastern Iberian script which would lead to the reading: **ailbir** or **eilbitu** (De Hoz Bravo 2011, 366). Unfortunately, these readings know no equivalents.

6 See Hesperia.ucm.es, last accessed: 28-08-2022.

7 The dual writing system is used in the oldest inscriptions see: Ferrer and Moncunill 2019, 85; De Hoz 2011, 413.

A second, again partial, inscription was found in *Castulo* (*MLH* H.6.11).[8] In this case, the script can be established beyond doubt as south-eastern Iberian script. Despite this certainty, the reading is problematic due to the preservation of the stone. The first transcription of this text reads **cabiti | caua is | astiraes+** (Cabrero 1994, 304). A new reading provided by Herrera Rando reads: **ka++ | ibiŕ i**ś **| kaśtiS46aos+**.[9] Both scholars seem to agree that the last line contains the name of *Castulo* (near Linares, Jaén) in the Iberian language (Herrera Rando 2017, 118). Despite the difficulties of interpretation, the consensus seems to be that this is a funerary inscription.

One of the most famous examples is the *Estela de Cretas* (fig. 5a) found in Mas de Madalenes in the nineteenth century and dated to the late third century BCE.[10] This decorated stele is an undisputed example of a funerary stone with an inscription secondary to its visual language (E.10.1; Izquierdo and Arasa 1999, 281; Velaza Frías 2017, 242). The main language on this stele is iconographic, it depicts a decorated discoid pectoral shield (*caetra*) and lance tips. Cramped at the top of the field, just below the upper decorations and the lances, we find a short inscription reading: **kalunseltar** (De Hoz Bravo 2011, 283). This contains two elements: **seltar** is one of the elements recurring in Iberian funerary inscriptions and has been interpreted as 'tomb' (De Hoz Bravo 2011, 321; Moncunill i Martí 2017, 144; Velaza Frías 2018, 176). The word **kalun** is interpreted as the name of the diseased, leading to the translation 'Tomb of Kalun'. The example of Cretas fits in a tradition of the above mentioned anthropomorphic decorated stelae showing *caetrae* and lance tips without epigraphy. The addition of the inscription should be seen as a new element in funerary epigraphy adding a new literate layer to the funerary culture.

In the extraordinary Vispesa, or Tamarite de Litera (fig. 5b) monument, dated to the late second century BCE, we observe an epigraphic field used as a decorative element (*MLH* D.12.1).[11] Due to its monumental nature, the fragment itself already measures 140 x 38 x 44 cm, it has been interpreted as

8 The authenticity of the inscription is doubted by Rodriguez Ramos, see de De Hoz Bravo 2011, 202 & 368.

9 **S46** denotes a sign of which the meaning is debated, it is considered to be **e**, **ki** or **gi.** Ferrer and Moncunill 2019, 95.

10 The pre-Roman settlement is said to have been abandoned in the first century BCE, giving a *terminus ante quem* for the inscription (Untermann 1990, 344). Unfortunately, there are no other dating criteria available.

11 Campanian wares date the settlement at Vispesa between the second century BCE and the early imperial period (Untermann 1990, 174), giving a rough date for the inscription.

a religious monument. However, recently it has been argued that this could be an aristocratic funerary monument, based on contemporary anepigraphic examples with a clear archaeological context (Garcés Estallo 2007, 342). That the inscription is part of the decorations is clear, as it is in haut-relief similar to the iconographic parts. The inscription runs along the side of the front of the stele (1: [------]**tan.oŕkeikelaur.ekisiran.neitin**[------]) and cuts across in the middle of the field (2: [------]**śkeŕ**). As the epigraphic field is part of the decorations and the decorations are symmetrical, it is likely that the inscription ran along the whole field, either in a square eight, or in at least an H form (Garcés Estallo 2007, 343). Unfortunately, the inscription is preserved partially and therefore hard to interpret.

In other cases, epigraphy became part of the visual message of funerary stelae and took a more dominant role on the stelae. On the El Acampador monument (fig. 5c) found in Caspe, the decorations and epigraphic field are separated and more balanced (*MLH* E.13.1). The monument, dated to the second century BCE, is one of the decorated stelae with an animal shape statue, fitting the pre-Roman tradition, and on the field below the statue depictions of three *caetrae* and one *scutum* can be found, completely in line with local funerary traditions (Izquierdo and Arasa 1999, 281; Chapa Brunet 2005). However, the innovation in this stele is the large space reserved for the inscription: **ośortaŕbanen**|**siltar:iaribeŕ**|[.]**ariŕeboretar++**|[---]***esabe***[(*MLH* III p. 352; De Hoz Bravo 2011, 321). The element **siltar** is taken as a variant of **seltar** found in other funerary inscriptions, this supports that we are dealing with a funerary inscription.

The *Estela de Sinarcas* (fig. 5d) stele, dated to the late second and early first century BCE, is a prime example of an Iberian funerary stele where the iconographic language has been completely replaced by the epigraphic language (*MLH* F.14.1; Velaza Frías 2019, 185). The approximately 78-centimetre-high aniconic stele has seven lines of Iberian writing on it:

ḿskebabassba
baisetaśeba[ne]
nḿisltarbanḿi
beŕbeinarieukia
[r]ḿikatuekaśkoloite

kaŕieukiarseltarban
ḿibasibalkarḿbaŕḿi

The interpretation of the text is unclear. First, the starting sequence of letters is so far not understood: it could well be a numerical expression (Velaza Frías 2019, 188; Montes Novella 2020), although Untermann considers this interpretation to be false (MLH III, p. 510). It seems we can rule out the age of the deceased, as it is rare to find the age of the dead in Republican inscriptions on the Italian Peninsula and they are absent in early Latin inscriptions on the Iberian Peninsula (Barrandon 2003, 216). This raises the question what this opening expression could signify. Moreover, the Iberian language is not fully understood, making it hard to understand the whole inscription, even its formulaic elements. Nonetheless, J. de Hoz has given a tentative reading of the first two lines after the opening sequence: *This belongs to Baisetas, the son of Iltutas, this is his tomb* (2011, 284).[12]

Fig. 5. Iberian stelae
a) Estela de Cretas,
c. 250 – 200 BCE
© Hesperia;
b) El Campador
© Hesperia;
c) Estela de Sinarcas,
c. 150 – 50 BCE
© Hesperia;
d) Vispesa, 150 – 50 BCE © Hesperia.

12 Note that the reading by J. de Hoz accepts the not fully understood suffix **-ńi** as a possessive. See Velaza Frías 2019, 178.

Another example of a strictly epigraphic funerary stele is the Guissona stele (fig. 6) dated to the last quarter of the second century BCE. This rather high stele, measuring 188 cm high, has a very small but prominent and carefully incised epigraphic field containing the following inscription: **neitinke | subake** : **e** : **i** : **tako** (*MLH* D.15.1). There is some agreement on several of the elements in this short formulaic inscription. The suffix **-ke** is not yet understood. Guitart *et al.* give three possibilities of which they find a process of Latinization and subsequent Iberization of a local name the most likely (1996, 165).[13] They propose that an Iberian name has been Latinized into *Neitincus* and when written in the epichoric script it became **neitinke**. The **subake** would then be the father whose Latinized name was *Subacus*. The **e** after the first interpunct could well be an abbreviation for **eban**, comparable to *f(ilius)* in Latin inscriptions (De Hoz Bravo 2011, 293). Velaza Frías argues that **eban** is used as an indicator of filiation and is found in funerary inscriptions (1994). The final to graphemes of the inscription, **X$\underline{\bar{X}}$**, could have signified **tako** and have been a form of **aŕe take**, the Iberian equivalent of *hic situs est*. An alternative explanation for **X$\underline{\bar{X}}$** postulates it is a numeric expression in combination with the so far unexplained **i**. Obviously, the same problem of the introduction of referring to the age of the deceased still stands for this inscription. The translation could either be *Neitincus, Subaci f(ilius) h(ic) situs* or *Neitincus, Subaci f(ilius) a(nnorum)* **X$\underline{\bar{X}}$** (Guitart i Duran *et al.* 1996, 168). These interpretations are based on the premise that formulae within the Latin funerary culture are being adopted and written in Iberian.

Fig. 6. Guissona stele, c. 125 – 100 BCE © Hesperia.

13 The practice of Latinization of indigenous names can be seen in the, now lost, republican funerary inscription of Urcestar Tascaseceris (*ELRH* U50). See also Moncunill 2017a; 2020.

Clearer examples of the influence of Latin on funerary stelae are the two Tarragonese, possibly bilingual, funerary inscriptions dated to the first half of the first century BCE (Estarán Tolosa 2016 I13 & I14). The inscriptions themselves are lost, but good drawings have rendered them readable (fig. 7a and b).

A *ELRH* C65; CIL II 4424a B *ELRH* C66 ; CIL II 4424a

Fig. 7. Bilingual Latin Iberian funerary stelae from Tarraco a) *ELRH* C66; b) *ELRH* C65.

Heic · est · sit[us] | **aŕe teki ar++**[| **sakaŕil**[--] (*ELRH* C65)

aŕe take | **atinbelauŕ.antalskar** | Fuluia Lintearia (*ELRH* C66)

Again, the Iberian is not fully understood. Both inscriptions show the already mentioned formula **aŕe take/teki**. On the assumption *ELRH* C65 a partial bi-version bilingual inscription the formula **aŕe take/teki** is thought to correspond to *heic est situs*. As seen above this interpretation may be supported by other funerary inscriptions. The interpretation of the bi-version bilingual inscription *ELRH* C66 is unclear. In this inscription Díaz Ariño has recognised two anthroponyms: **atinbelauŕ** and **antalskar** (2019, 408). Most likely, this is the name and patronym of the deceased. Since the name of *Fulvia Lintearia* in Latin has been interpreted as the name of a *liberta*, it appears that the two versions of the bilingual text have complementary content.

In addition, Tarraco has yielded another partial bilingual text on the side of an architrave with Corinthian capital. Based on the style of the capital the object and inscription are dated to the first half of the first century (Berns 2008, 12; Estarán Tolosa 2016, 357). Of the text only the last few characters are preserved:

[---]NEI | [---]**ban** | [---]

The text itself does not allow for any interpretation, other than is being originally a text written in Latin and Iberian script. Unfortunately, the archaeological context does not aid, as it was reused in a palaeochristian necropolis. Nonetheless, Alföldy and Untermann have proposed that the text is

possibly a religious text, linking –NEI to *Apolonei* (Alföldy 1975; *RIT* 4; *ELRH* C16) and –**ban** to **teban**, which is considered to relate to the Latin *coeravit* (Untermann 1990 C 18.10; see also Estarán Tolosa 2016 I16). Contrary to this interpretation, Berns has argued that it was part of a funerary monument as similar three-quarter capitals have been attested in funerary monuments on the Iberian Peninsula (Berns 2008, 13). Regardless of the interpretation of the text, this piece shows a clear linguistic and architectural hybridization in the first century BCE.

Lastly, there is a hybrid opisthographic inscription dated to the first century BCE, found in *Castulo* (Linares) (Estarán Tolosa 2016, 361: I17), with texts on two sides.

Side A (*ELRH* U53A)

[---] M(arcus) · Folui(us) · Garoṣ
[---]A · VNINAVNIN · VE
[---]BAG · MA̅RC · LA · L
[---] VNININIT
[---] SIEROVCIVT̄

Side B (*ELRH* U53B)

P(ublius) Cornelius · P(ublii) · l(ibertus)
Diphilus
CASTLOSAIC

The inscriptions have three interesting elements. First, these are the only known bilingual inscriptions with transliterated Iberian. Second, both start with Latin *tria nomina* already containing other languages (Abascal Palazón 1994, 141; Díaz Ariño *et al.* 2019, 409). The name on side A *M. Foluius Garos* has a possible indigenous cognomen. The second name, on side B, *P(ublius) Cornelius · P(ublii) · l(ibertus) Diphilus* is clearly a *libertus* of a Publius Cornelius, as this is part of the onomastic formula. In addition, the cognomen is of Greek origin. Third, in both cases, the inscription continues in the indigenous language after the onomastic formulae. Unfortunately, the Iberian text on side A is impossible to comprehend (Estarán Tolosa 2016, 363). There are no comparable texts to help understand it. In addition, due to the fragmented epigraphic field, as the left-hand side is lost, the text is incomplete. The Iberian on Side B is easier to understand: *Castlosaic* seems related to the name of *Castulo*, which appears on coins in Iberian as **kaśtilo** (Villaronga i Garriga 2004, 141). Moreover, the gens Cornelia, to which Diphilus belonged, is well attested as an early family of importance in *Castulo* (*ELRH*, p. 238).

In the early imperial period, the use of the Iberian language for epigraphy had died out and funerary epigraphy followed the Latin standard. Examples of funerary stelae, dated to the early imperial period and set up by people of clear Iberian descent, are:

IRC I 73 from Terrassa and dated to the Augustan period

> Titiniae · P(ubli) · f(iliae) | Bastogaunini | M(arcus) Licinius · | Neitinbeles | coniugi

IRC II 83 from Florejacs and dated to the first century ce:

> L(ucius) · Iunius · Lau|rbeles · P(ublius) · Iuni|us · Silo · Iuni|a L(uci) f(ilia) · h(ic) s(iti) s(unt)

And *ERTeruel* 5 from Alcañiz dated to the early first century ce:

> Cọṛnẹḷia · L(uci) · f(ilia) ·| Siṛ[a]steiun ·| hic · ṣita · est || Sodalis · amor · rapuisti ·| me · nunc · ṣụmus · una | ḍum · vixsimus (sic!) · [se]mṗer con|[c]ọṛdes, nunc sumus ҫerte pares| [tr]es et viginti annos aetas | [---]ṣ nostra teneret | [---] fui sempeṛ | [---]ṛaer[--- s]ubito | [---]R | [---]AC | [---]ME | [---]

In all cases the names of the deceased follow Roman standard practices, although they display Iberian cognomina. Moreover, the stelae, especially the carmen, show a clear awareness of the epigraphic funerary culture.

One of the major changes during Roman rule is the visual lay-out of the stelae. The earliest funerary stelae were anthropomorphic stelae with military panoply and no inscription. In order to understand the message of the stele the viewer needed to understand the epichoric iconographic language. The first appearances of inscriptions on stelae were, quite literally, marginal additions to the decorations of the stelae. The inscriptions were short and secondary to the iconographic message. However, the addition of epigraphy signifies a big change in the language needed to 'read' the stele. Reading decorated stele with an inscription requires a double literacy: visual and textual (Velaza Frías 2017, 244). The anepigraphic stelae only requires the reader to understand the iconographic message: that is to have visual literacy. Whereas the decorated epigraphic stelae require double literacy: the reader needs visual literacy to read the iconographic message and textual literacy to read the inscription. The textual element is a *novum* in the Iberian funerary world; in a rather short period it obtains an important place on the funerary stelae.

The epigraphic culture in the Iberian area is a localized phenomenon, created by the specificities of local cultures and their contacts. We can locate the epichoric epigraphic funerary stelae to the Iberian Levant roughly between Guissona and Sinarcas (see fig. 2) (Izquierdo and Arasa 1999, 284). Interestingly despite the presence of Iberian inscriptions in the whole Iberian

language area for the Late Iron Age, only a few inscriptions are attested in the southern script. However, it must be note that there are only about seventy inscriptions in the southern script, as a result a low number of funerary inscriptions was to be expected. Nonetheless, these few inscriptions are found in the area around Alicante, where both the northern and southern script both are attested. Moreover, as stated there is little evidence for Phoenician/Punic funerary epigraphy on the Iberian Peninsula (Zamora López 2019, 72; Herrera Rando 2020, 59).[14] The absence of funerary epigraphy in the southern zone continues well into the republican period, only in the second half of the first century BCE does Latin funerary epigraphy start to appear. The absence of funerary epigraphy in the southern Iberian area up to the Roman period, and the spread of Latin republican funerary inscriptions, seems to support the importance of the Roman presence for the flourishing of epichoric funerary epigraphy. The southern area stood in contact with the Punic sphere in the period prior to the Roman conquest. Hence, they did not adopt the epichoric funerary practice, as in this region funerary epigraphy was not customary. In contrast, the northern area was in contact with the Greeks and Romans. Moreover, this is also the region in close contact with the Romans from the early start of the conquest in the late third century BCE, the Roman allied cities of Saguntum and Emporion support this more intensive contact prior to the Second Punic war. Moreover, the only south-eastern Iberian script funerary epigraphy is found in the area of Alicante, a region at the 'boundary' between the Greek north and Punic south, with Greek mercantile colonies. Therefore, it is likely that the habit of erecting epichoric funerary inscriptions was started through contacts with the Graeco-Roman sphere.

4. Celtiberian Funerary Epigraphy

The second linguistic area of focus in this paper is the Celtiberian area (see fig. 1). The area is defined using the epigraphic and numismatic record written in the eastern and western Celtiberian scripts, derived from the Iberian script (Ferrer and Moncunill 2019). However, as the Celtiberian language, part of the Celtic language group, differs much from its neighbouring Iberian the script has undergone some changes. For example, the difference between the /r/ and thrilled /ŕ/ is absent in the Celtiberian script, as a result one sign has been lost,

14 The scarcity of funerary epigraphy is not the result of a Phoenician habit, they erected funerary epigraphy elsewhere, see Quinn and Vella 2014.

whereas the other is continued. This has resulted in some shifts between signs and makes the Celtiberian script slightly different from the Iberian scripts.

The region developed a funerary culture with rather simple, undecorated funerary stelae and, in some cases, rough decorations (Lorrio Alvarado 1997, 343; Gorrochategui Churruca 2017, 307). The erection of these stelae started well before the Roman conquest and must be seen as a local cultural phenomenon, rather than the result of 'colonial' contacts. Nonetheless, the habit of writing on funerary stelae is only attested in a few examples and all of them rather late. Most likely, the innovation of placing names on stelae was adopted from the Iberians, similar to the adoption of the script (Beltrán Lloris 2005, 37; Simón Cornago 2013a, 274; Ferrer and Moncunill 2019, 90). Two inscriptions are on the discoid stelae type found in Peñalba de Castro (Roman Clunia) dated to the 2nd or 1st century BCE; there are three examples of anepigraphic stelae with similar iconography. The stelae often show 'jinetes' or riders, Hesberg relates this iconography to the auxiliae (Von Hesberg 2018, 171). This relation between the Celtiberian rider stelae with the earliest epichoric funerary texts and auxiliae enforces the idea that contacts with the Roman sphere initiated this new epigraphic phenomenon. Interestingly we can observe redundancy within the script on these funerary stelae: **kaabaarinos** (*Hesp* BU.06.01 see fig. 8a), **mukuukaaiau** (*Hesp* BU.06.02 see fig. 8b) and in the boustrophedon funerary inscription [---]**ikookuustuunuo** (*Hesp* BU.06.04). All the inscriptions have a redundant repetition of the vowel. The first two inscriptions have been interpreted as personal names in nominative singular. Both inscriptions are found on discoid stelae with a clear iconographic message, to which the inscription is secondary. The latter seems the ending of a longer inscription on an aniconic stele. The inscription is written continuously in boustrophedon, which makes it difficult to ascertain the breaking of words (Gorrochategui Churruca 2014, 232). It seems most logical to regard -**iko** as the ending of the family name (Luján Martínez 2016, 251). The father's name follows the family name; the name **kuustuunuo** could be related to *Gustumus* also attested in Clunia (*CIRPBurgos* 101). The duplication of the vowel in the Celtiberian script is an interesting feature we find in late Celtiberian inscriptions. The Celtiberian script is semi-syllabic: the plosive consonants are combined with a vowel in a syllabogram. However, it seems that the semi-syllabic nature was ignored and the vowel repeated. Nonetheless, the fact that the correct vowel is combined with the syllabogram (e.g. **ku** and **u**) indicates that the consonant vowel combination of the syllabogram is still understood. This redundancy

of vowels in the Celtiberian inscriptions has been interpreted as the result of contact with the Latin alphabet (Barrandon 2003, 212; Beltrán and Jordán 2019, 269). It is interesting that there seems to be a trace of Latinization in the inscriptions, but the choice was made to use the epichoric writing system in a slightly different way.

A *Hesperia* BU.06.01 © CERES.mcu.es

B *Hesperia* BU.06.02 © Hesperia

Fig. 8. Celtiberian discoid stelae with graffiti a) BU.06.01 © ceres.mcu.es; b) BU.06.02 © Hesperia.

Within the group of the discoid stelae of the conventus Cluniensis we can observe a similar development as in the Iberian region. From inscriptions of apparently secondary importance, we turn to the more balanced iconographic and epigraphic fields. The first example is Madicenus Calaetus inscription found in Lara de los Infantes and dated to the first century CE (*CIRPBurgos* 438, see fig. 9a). This discoid stele has a depiction of a *jinete* - a 'knight' or rider - with a spear set on a field covering just over half the surface. The lower section has a short inscription in Latin:

Madicenus | Calaetus | Am͡bati f(ilius) | an͡(norum) LV

Ligatures are used for the third (MB) and fourth line (AN). An interesting feature are the two inverted S-graphemes. This is most likely not a result of a choice to indicate a different form of S, as the Celtiberian name Kalaitos is also attested in the Third Botorrita Bronze in Celtiberian script. In Celtiberian it is written with the grapheme identified as S, rather than the Ś (*Hesp* Z.09.03 = *MLH IV* K.1.3).

From the same site with a similar date, we find the Sempronius Festus inscription where the most significant element is not the epigraphic field but the decorative elements around it (*CIRPBurgos* 450, see fig. 9b). However, the epigraphic field has gained an additional iconographic element clearly taken from the epigraphic culture belonging to the Latin sphere, the tabula ansata.

As a result, the epigraphic field is more prominent in this stele. The iconographic depiction is again a *jinete*, in a clear hunting scene with a boar and a hunter on foot, taking up the upper half of the field. The lower half contains the inscription in a tabula ansata. The whole discoid field is delimited by what seems to be a torque with two horse heads as endings. The inscription reads:

Sempronio | Festo Lougei | f(ilio) an(norum) LXV

Fig. 9. Disk stelae with riders and a clear epigraphic field a) CIRPBurgos 438 © EDCS b) CIRPBurgos 450 © EDCS.

In both cases we find clear local onomastics. Madicenus Calaetus son of Ambatus has no Latin names. The name Madicenus is only attested in another inscription as Madigenus also found in Lara de los Infantes (*CIRPBurgos* 439). As stated Calaetus is attested in the Third Botorrita Bronze as Kalaitos, indicating it is a Celtiberian name. The father's name Ambatus is one of the most common Celtic names on the Iberian Peninsula (Abascal Palazón 1994, 30). The name of Sempronius Festus son of Lougeius is a combination of Roman names and a Celtiberian filiation. Sempronius is after Valerius the most common Latin *nomen* in the Celtiberian area (Navarro Caballero *et al.* 2011, 136).

Despite the Celtiberian onomastics, the names follow the Roman habit of strict formulae. One of these customs is the naming formulae: *praenomen*, *nomen* and *cognomen,* often with filiation and sometimes with the *gens* and *tribus* added. The full three names are called *tria nomina*, however, in the Roman epigraphic practices *duo nomina* also existed. In the above two cases, we ob-

serve *duo nomina*: *nomen* and *cognomen* followed by filiation. This formulaic naming habit seems to have shaped the epigraphic culture of the Celtiberian world. Admittedly, we are looking at Latin inscriptions with Celtiberian onomastics, thus finding that the Roman naming practice is followed is less surprising. Nonetheless, looking at earlier Celtiberian inscriptions, we can discover similar naming practice with the personal name, family name, father's name and the tribe. A good example is the rare find of a Celtiberian inscription in epichoric script found on the island of Ibiza, well beyond the linguistic area of the Celtiberians, in Puig des Molins (Ibiza, see fig. 10). The reason for the use of Celtiberian so far beyond the linguistic area remains unknown, it has been proposed that Tirtanos preferred to have his vernacular language used for his epitaph. The reason why he was on Ibiza remains unclear, it has been proposed he was a mercenary in the Roman army, leading to a date around the end of the 2nd century BCE (Velaza Frías 2015, 392). The Celtiberian funerary plaque reads (*Hesp* IB.01.01; Beltrán and Jordán 2019, 268):

tirtanos | abulokum | letontun|os ke(ntis) beli|kios

The standard Celtiberian formula used here is as follows: Personal name (PN) **Tirtanos**, family name (FN) in genitive plural **Abulokum**, father's name **Letontunos** in genitive followed by the abbreviation **ke** for kentis 'son of'. Finally, we find the *origo* in nominative **Belikios**, the place is also known from numismatic evidence (Villaronga i Garriga 2004, 178). This reference to the place from where the deceased originated is standard in the Celtiberian funerary stelae outside the Celtiberian area, although this is the only case of *origo* in the Celtiberian language (Ramírez Sánchez 2013, 165).[15]

One of the interesting aspects of the Celtiberian naming practice is the use of the family name or often referred to kinship name. One of the major sources for understanding the kinship names is the Third Botorrita Bronze. Multiple studies have been focussed on the kinship names of the Celtiberian region (Untermann and Wodtko 1997; Ramírez Sánchez 2003; Navarro Caballero *et al.* 2011; Ramírez Sánchez 2013; Luján Martínez 2016, 2017). A simple summary of his analysis is that the family names are based on personal names by adding the suffix –ko after the vowels a, i or o. As the kinship name is expressed in genitive plural it ends in –m. Looking at the example above we find the family name **abulokom**, which is derived from **abulu** a name attested several times in Celtiberian epigraphy.

15 He gives the examples of *CILCaceres* I 201: Aploniocum; *ERPLeon* 224: Tritalicum; *ERAv* 12: Cutarioq(um).

Fig. 10. Celtiberian inscription from Ibiza © Hesperia.
Fig. 11. Celtiberian inscription in Latin alphabet © Hesperia.

This naming habit continued, as can be observed in the only funerary stele in Celtiberian language written in the Latin alphabet (*Hesp* S.01.01 = *MLH* K.26.01) from Iuliobriga. The inscription is dated with a *terminus post quem* 16 BCE as this is the foundation of Iuliobriga and *terminus ante quem* 200 CE as a rough estimate for the last use of Celtiberian language (Simón Cornago 2013a, 260: P130). The standard reading provided by Hesperia is:

------? | [------]|LICVIAMI | GMONIM |AM

The continuous text has been reconstructed as *–lic Viami G monimam*. In this case –lic is taken to be the abbreviated ending of a Celtiberian family name ending in –licum. *Viami* would be the father's name. The name *Viami* is known from the Vadiniense inscription, *ERPLeon* 386. However, as we can see in figure 11 the I is slightly at an angle and the A has no crossbar. Simón Cornago has stated it seems that the stone has broken along the M creating the idea of IA. The new reading would then become:

------? | [------]|LICVṂ MI | G MONIM |AM

In this case -licum is taken to be the end of the abbreviation of the family name. In this new reading MI would be an abbreviated form of the father's name (Simón Cornago 2013b, 258-259: P130).

In both readings we find the G following the father's name, this G is taken to be the abbreviation for *kentis.* The choice for the G, rather than the C, might

be less accidental than it seems. The Celtiberian syllabogram for **ke** resembles a G. Moreover, the abbreviation of the word *kentis* to G, or **ke** in the former inscription, is a form of Latinization (Adams 2003, 282). In the Celtiberian inscriptions, apart from the one from Ibiza, the word *kentis* is written in full. It is likely that the abbreviation of *kentis* with only its initial letter, or in the case of the Ibiza inscription syllabogram, is derived from the Latin practice of abbreviating *filius* to F.

The last word would be *monimam,* which has been interpreted as a local form for *monumentum* (Untermann and Wodtko 1997, 716). However, this interpretation is problematic for the two inscriptions from Tiermes written in Celtiberian with Latin alphabet on silver paterae, which also record *monimam*.

MLH K.11.1; *HEp* 1, 1989a; *HEp* 9, 1999, 530:

Stenionte · Docilico | An(---) · gente · monimam

And *MLH* K.11.2; *HEp* 1, 1989b; *HEp* 9, 1999, 531:

Cougio · Visci|co · monimam

The appearance of *monimam* on paterae problematizes the use of *monimam* for a monument, although Untermann has postulated it could have been possible it is used to indicate it is a votive (Untermann and Wodtko 1997, 678).

Despite the uncertainties, the addition of *monumentum* to funerary inscriptions seems to be a local custom in the wider region. After the turn of the millennium, it is quite common in the north-western part of the peninsula to add *monumentum* to refer to the placing of the stele (Abásolo Álvarez 2005, 34; Martino García 2012, 310).[16] The feature of placing *monumentum* in a funerary inscription is not specific to the Iberian Peninsula; however, starting the inscription with M or MON as the abbreviation for *monumentum* is a custom found mostly in Hispania Citerior (González Rodríguez 2017, 48).

Mon(umentum) Ambati | Pentovieci Amb|atiq(um) Pentovi f(ilii) an(norum) LX | hoc monum(entum) pos(uerunt) Amba|tus et Doiderus f(ilii) | sui

In this example of a discoid aniconic stele, roughly dated to the Early Empire, we find the habit of mentioning the *monumentum* as part of the procedure for raising a stele (AE 1995, 885). In addition to the *monumentum* we observe again the Celtiberian naming practice. In this case, we find *Pentovieci*

16 Note that the combination of *monumentum* and *memoria* is used to date funerary epigraphy to the second half of the second century, see (Fernández Corral 2016, 28).

added to the standard formula PN: Ambati, FN: *Ambatiq*(*um*) and PN father: *Pentovi*. The addition of *Pentovieci* has been interpreted as a differentiation between families. We see that *Pentovi* is the father's name in the genitive with *f*(*ilii*) as the filiation indication. The family name is *Ambatiqum*, derived from one of the most common indigenous names on the peninsula, in the Celtiberian genitive plural (Abascal Palazón 1994, 30). The repetition of the son's name in the family name and the father's name within the new addition has led to the interpretation that this *Pentovieci* is an addition to the family name to differentiate between two families with similar names (Luján Martínez 2016, 250). Another interpretation could be that we see the adoption of a Roman practice and that *Pentoveici* is the cognomen of the deceased. In this case, the deceased has a duo nomina: *Ambatus Pentoveicus*.

The last example is the Buenafuente inscription (*CILPGuad* 97), at first sight it seems a perfect Roman inscription (fig. 12). The inscription, dated to the first century CE, is set in a tabula ansata and has clearly been carved with care as we can still make out the guidelines (Abascal Palazón 1983, 4)

Fig. 12. Funerary inscription with Celtiberian marked S © EDCS.

Letondo | Segośśoq(um) | Melmą̄ndi · f(ilius) | (h)i(c) s(itus) e(st) H | [------]

However, a closer reading reveals several local elements. *Letondo* is a well-known Celtiberian name, attested in the *Tabula Contrebienses* and several oth-

er inscriptions (Abascal Palazón 1994, 399).[17] The father's name *Melmandus* is not attested in other inscriptions, although it might have been derived from *Melamanius* (Abascal Palazón 1994, 426). Another form, *Melaniq(um)*, is also attested as part of a family name in the Celtiberian genitive plural in two other inscriptions: *Segobriga II*, 18 and AE 1987, 642.

Another local feature is the Celtiberian genitive plural, found in *Segośśo-q*(*um*). This feature is interesting for two reasons. First, the family name is composed of a Celtiberian personal name, otherwise unattested, complemented with the suffix *-ko-* to indicate it as a family name (Navarro Caballero *et al.* 2011, 132; Simón and Jordán 2018, 188).[18] As stated above, this practice is well attested in Celtiberian onomastics. Second, the suffix *-ko-*, indicating that the anthroponym is used to indicate kinship, has been latinised into *-qum* and then became abbreviated to *-q*. This Celtiberian genitive plural, abbreviated to *-q*, is rather easy to recognise. However, this kinship can be expressed in five different forms of genitive plural, which are harder to recognise for those unaware of this practice: 1) *-um/-un*; 2) *-om/-on*; 3) *-orum*; 4) *-o*; 5) the already mentioned the suffix *-ko-* in different forms, such as *-iko-* (Ramírez Sánchez 2003, 15). The latinization of the Celtiberian genitive plural is interesting, as it is a retention of a pre-Roman form that has been adapted to follow the practice of Roman abbreviation.

Lastly, we observe the presence of a specific grapheme called the Celtiberian marked s (written as ś) in *Segośśoq*(*um*). Once aware of the marked s it is rather easy to recognise, the s has an additional strike at the bottom. The phonological rendering of this ś is unclear. Its use is a clear Celtiberian practice, as it is only found in Latin inscriptions within this region. Moreover, the letter occurs in the inscriptions written in Celtiberian language with Latin alphabet, such as the Novallas Bronce (*Hesp* Z.02.01) and the 'Great Inscription' at the sanctuary of Peñalba de Villastar (*Hesp* TE.17.03) (Simón and Jordán 2018, 200). Clearly this marked s originated from the Palaeohispanic writing system. This writing system uses two different graphemes for the sibilants. More importantly, the marked S in Latin inscriptions is only used in words with a clear Celtiberian origin. The tabula ansata inscription of Letondus son of Melmandus of the Segossoci might seem very 'Roman' at first sight. But

17 In one specific case (*ERPSoria* 96) Letondo is found in the Celtiberian genitive plural: Letondiq(um).

18 E.g. Letondo as family name: HEp 4, 1994, 110*:* Letondiquom and *ERPSoria* 118: Letondiq(um).

when looking at it with some care it is clear that we find Latinized Celtiberian customs.

5. Conclusions

The rise of epichoric epigraphy takes place on the cusp of the permanent Roman presence on the Iberian Peninsula due to the Second Punic War, with the earliest dated examples starting in the early third century. This seems to indicate that this uptake of funerary epigraphic customs was not related to the Roman presence. However, looking closely at the epigraphy and its spread we see a pattern that indicates that Roman agents played a role. Especially when we consider that the peoples of the Iberian Peninsula had long been in contact within the Mediterranean sphere and as such would have come into contact with the concept of funerary epigraphy well before the Roman conquest began. Moreover, the Roman presence on the Iberian Peninsula, specifically in the northern part where the legions tended to be focussed, seems to have had a significant impact on local funerary customs. The spread of Latin funerary inscriptions in the republican period supports the idea that the epichoric and Latin inscriptions were at least partially contemporary. In the south we observe that the Latin funerary epigraphy becomes widespread and epichoric funerary epigraphy is absent. It seems that this absence in the south is related to the Phoenicio-Punic epigraphic customs, where we also observe the absence of funerary epigraphy. The absence of epichoric or Punic funerary epigraphy in Carthago Nova, founded by the Carthaginians and located at the crossroads of Phoenicio-Punic and Greek areas (see fig. 1), is contrasted by the presence of Latin funerary epigraphy, this supports the assumption that the contact with the Latin epigraphic culture introduced the funerary epigraphic culture.

The uptake of funerary epigraphy can be seen as a three stepped process: first the epigraphic message is of secondary nature, often added in the margins of the iconography. We observe this graffiti type of inscription from the third century in the Iberian record and in the late second century in the Celtiberian record. After this initial period the epigraphy obtains a more prominent but shared space. Iconography and epigraphy are balanced in the funerary stelae. Lastly, during the first century BCE we see the appearance of the first stelae where iconography has been completely replaced with epigraphy. However, we must not see the development from the anepigraphic to the strictly epigraphic as an inevitable teleological development from visual to textual funerary

stelae, driven by a straightforward replacement of one cultural package with the next. Solely iconographic stelae and stelae combining text and iconography continue to be created next to the solely epigraphic stelae. Moreover, iconographic funerary monuments, e.g. with portraits, are an important part of the funerary customs in the Roman world.

During the entire Roman period, the iconographic element remains important in funerary stelae. Nonetheless, one of the results of contact with the Roman sphere is the introduction of funerary epigraphy. In the Iberian sphere we can clearly see the addition of written messages on funerary monuments. It seems that the first inscriptions were added as a secondary element to the stele. It is possible that the written message was added to give more prestige to the iconographic stelae showing the literacy of the commemorators of the diseased. However, as the inscription was still a novelty it did not obtain a prominent position. Thereafter, the iconography and epigraphy become more balanced. Ultimately, we find that in some cases the epigraphic message becomes the sole message on the funerary stelae. The creation of the new epigraphic culture is the result of interaction between the existing funerary customs and the new textual element.

Similarly, we can observe elements clearly taken from Roman epigraphic culture that have been adopted in a specific form in the Celtiberian zone, for example the Roman habit of writing *monumentum* on funerary monuments seems to have been taken up in the form *monimam*. Certainly, we see that *monumentum* is added in the early imperial period in most of the stelae of the northwest. We might have to consider the Iberian use of **seltar**/**siltar** in the same light. Likewise, the naming practices in both the Iberian and Celtiberian communities follow the practices known from Latin epigraphy, where **kentis** and **eban** are used to indicate filiation. Moreover, we can consider the Celtiberian and Iberian abbreviations of these words as subtle forms of latinization. Without a doubt, we must consider the abbreviated Celtiberian genitive plural in Latin epigraphy as a result of latinization. The use of local features in funerary stelae shows that local identities can be expressed using Latin, but the epichoric and the Roman practices are neatly entwined.

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