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Celtiberian Ideologies and Religion[1]

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Abstract
This article is a reflection upon various aspects of Celtiberian ethics and rituals as well as an attempt to provide a review of the current state of knowledge on both theoretical issues and bibliographic data on the topic of Celtiberian ideologies and religion. New lines of discussion are proposed based on research advances carried out over the last decade.

Keywords
Religion, Celtiberians, Gods, Priesthood, Agonistic *Ethos*, Rituals, Funerary Customs.

Introduction

Celtiberian religiosity shares the basic principles of Celtic religion as documented in other contexts. The latter is regarded as a set of attitudes rather than as a systematic doctrine, since deficient documentary records still represent a considerable hindrance to research on this topic. This is mainly due to the fact that the soul of Celtic societies was articulated orally, whereas writing became common only through contact with the Mediterranean world. The epigraphs that the Celtic peoples have bequeathed to us, in fact, date from a very late period (never earlier than the second century BC) and the alphabet and language used were almost always Latin. The few records available in native languages, such as the inscriptions from Peñalba de Villastar (Teruel) or the bronze plaque from Botorrita (Zaragoza), are very difficult to interpret. Apart from the case of the Gauls, to whom Julius Caesar devoted particular attention in his writing, or in the case of the Celts of Ireland and Wales, whose superb oral heritage was partially recorded in written form in the Middle Ages, little is known about the Celtiberians because Greek and Roman writers provided little information on the religion of these Hispanic peoples.

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Furthermore, with rare exceptions, the idea of a plastic, i.e. three dimensional, representation of the gods was most unusual for the Celts, and what we do see is the result of continued proximity to the Mediterranean tradition. The iconographic sources available in Celtiberia are scarce and almost all of them belong to a very late period, rarely earlier than the first century BC. Despite significant external influences, Celtiberian art has characteristics that define Celtic art as a whole, that is, a pronounced tendency towards symbolism and abstraction, at the expense of naturalistic realism. Thus, as may be inferred, Celtiberian iconography becomes an indispensable subject for our studies, but one that is very difficult to decipher. The polysemic characteristic of the symbol, which mediates between the intellectual and the real as it illustrates the expression of infinite concepts through finite methods, turns iconography into a complex tool for the historian.

Our knowledge of the stages preceding the Latin presence in Hispania totally depends on the archaeological data obtained from the necropoli or cemeteries. Yet, by definition, all burials are the result of a religious process, not the process itself, which remains unknown to us. Besides, the data are often unfortunately in an unsystematically recorded form, in many cases because they were documented using the techniques applied at the end of the nineteenth century. For this reason, documentary evidence is often of limited utility.

To sum up, although we have a relative knowledge of the external aspects of Celtiberian religion, ritual and ethics, we can only draw a very incomplete panorama of the nature of the Celtiberian divinities.

Celtiberian Gods

The scholar's perspective

The only explicit mention made by an ancient author of the Celtiberian conception of divinity is found in Strabo, who follows Poseidonius of Apamea:

> Some authors assert that the Callaicans are atheists whereas the Celtiberians and the neighbouring peoples of the North dance and revel all night long by their homes, with their families, during the full moon, in order to honor an anonymous god (*Geografia*, III, 4, 16).

According to the Greeks, all peoples, in different places, honored the same gods under different names. As a rule, when the Hellenes referred to an alien deity, they identified it with one of their own. For this reason native theonyms are rather unusual in Hellenic literature.

Poseidonius clearly detected a god in Celtiberia, but did not identify this with any Greek deity, since he could not find any correspondence that satisfied him. Hence the meaning attached to the epithet "anonymous god": a god that cannot be understood, recognized, assimilated or mentioned (Bermejo 1982: 17, 2002; Marco Simón 1987: 35-36, 59 n. 28; Sopeña 1995: Chapter 1,1; Sopeña and Ramón Palerm 1994).

This god, according to José María Blázquez, might have been the Moon, whose name was taboo (Blázquez 1962: 36, 2003: 428, 1975: 119); yet, quite probably, Poseidonius, through Strabo, hints at a primordial god called *Dagda*, "Father of all (*Ollathir*)", common among the Celts of Ireland. The nature of the Irish version of this god is so obvious that he is never named, but his countless functions led to a limitless number of assimilations, as the abundant insular poems attest. He was the God of the druids and governed the Celtic calendar, which was based precisely on lunar cycles. His continental counterpart is accurately identified by Caesar (*BG.*, VI, 18) as *Dis Pater*, the infernal and nocturnal deity of whom all Celts considered themselves children. For this reason they counted time by the course of the moon, by nights rather than by days.

Already some decades ago, due to the rare references to this deity in Celtic epigraphy and the overwhelming Roman *interpretatio* through Júpiter-Dis Pater, it was necessary to resort to the term "Gallic Júpiter" in order to designate this god (Benoit 1956**;** Sjoested 1940: 25). It is worth highlighting the fact that the Roman dictator was quite clear in his assertion that, according to the Gauls, this truth was told by the druids: *Galli se omnes ab Dite patre prognatos praedicant idque ab druidibus proditum dicunt*. Thus, both the god and the dances and celebrations mentioned by Strabo might document a Celtiberian version of a myth whose details are, at least for the time being, absolutely unknown to us (Lincoln 1991: 33-36, 41; Brunaux 2000: 238-241).

The framework: double *interpretatio*

Since Celtiberian inscriptions date from a late period, they are the perfect illustration of that delicate translation of alien things into concepts peculiar to the native culture, a process which was performed by the two societies that came into contact with one another: the Romans and various native peoples. Francisco Marco Simón has repeatedly highlighted this phenomenon, also called double *interpretatio* (Latin vs. autochthonous interpretation). Celtiberia's greater precocity and the intensity of its relations with the Mediterranean milieu, endowed it with a

vigorous idiosyncrasy and caused the "Roman baptism" of deities to take place earlier than in the remote northeastern Galaico-Lusitanian territory. Despite the fact that these regions exhibited a low degree of celticity they were in fact the birthplace of most of the Hispanic Celtic theonyms. Thus, Celtiberian epigraphs can be said to reflect a native horizon through an *interpretatio*, which uses Latin language and writing (Beltrán Lloris 2001; Marco Simón 2001; *idem* 2002b; Olivares 2002; Prósper 2002).

There are about 50 Celtiberian inscriptions that correspond, *grosso modo*, to 30 different theonyms. The appearance of a new name, however, does not necessarily imply the existence of a new god. On the contrary, as in the case of Gaul and the British Isles, the evidence shows that we are dealing with different names applied to the same deity; topical reductions within the framework of that idea which characterized Celtic thought at large. This was based on a conception of divinity that was universalist, an indissoluble unity of Being through multiple manifestations - and that was not anthropomorphized. This allows us to deduce that there are a limited number of types of divinity and that the same deity may be worshipped under different epithets in different areas. It is evident that most of them cannot be assigned a specific function, let alone a unique function, as is the case, conversely, of Roman gods, who were much more specific.

A good example, in this respect, is represented by the dedications to the *Matres*, deities that were very much honored in the Celtic world and that expressed their fecundity in all its semantic amplitude. They certainly had a marked topical character, as their epithets show. The worship of the *Matres* in the Iberian Peninsula was widespread and ancient Celtiberia was its core. Records include both the generic Celtic theonym (*Matribus*, from Clunia and Yánguas; or in the Celtic dative, *Matrubos*, from Ágreda) and various reductions: *Useis* (Canales de la Sierra), *Monitucinis* (Salas de los Infantes), *Tendeiteris* (Covarrubias?); or extreme local reductions: *His Matribus*, "To the Mothers of this place" (Clunia). An epithet worth highlighting is *Brigeacis*, from Clunia, which has the same root as *Brigantia* (from which the toponyms *Brigantium*, Briançon, Bregenz stem, to mention a few), "the Almighty One", which corresponds to *Dana/Brigit*, Dagda's daughter, and shows an unequivocal triple nature. The invocation *Matribus Termegiste* ("To the Three almighty Mothers", from Duratón, Segovia) alludes to the trinity concept of the *Matres* which is typical of the Celtic world and which is attested by Gallo-Roman reliefs (Gómez Pantoja 1999; Olivares 2002: 121 ff.).

Epona, another prominent Pan-Celtic deity, is a beneficent goddess and the only Celtic divinity to have been officially honored in Rome during her own festival on 18th December. She was, above all, the protectress of the dead: a *Mater* who guided the souls to the happy Otherworld. Although her polyvalence encompasses many nuances, she is clearly identified by her close bond with horses (hence the name: *epos* in Celtic, *hippos* in Greek, *equus* in Latin). The identity of the animal and of the goddess is obvious both in the iconography (beautiful examples can be found in Gaul and Germany), and in her counterpart *Rhiannon*, a formidable Welsh Amazon appearing in the *Mabinogion* (Alberro 2003: 15-16, 27-28; Boucher 1999; Euskirchen 1993; Linduff 1979; Oaks 1986: 77-83).

Among the inscriptions devoted to Epona in Hispania, one comes from Monte Bernorio (Palencia), two from Álava and the rest from ancient Celtiberia: one of the latter is from Lara de los Infantes, in Burgos (Elorza 1970) while another inscription comes from Sigüenza (Guadalajara). This one, which unfortunately has disappeared, showed the image of the goddess in profile riding a horse (apparently it was very similar to those of Marquínez and Albaina, in Álava). An anepigraphic stele from Aguilera, Soria, also probably portrays what was considered to be a syncretic image of the goddess seated on a stool, with her hair up in a bun, her lap full of fruits and a horse on her right (Ortego 1976: 251-254, Fig. 1). It has been proved, however, that this iconography historically attributed to Epona in Celtiberia was incorrectly interpreted or non-existent (Alfayé 2003). It has also recently been proposed that the motif on the obverse of a coin from Turiaso (Tarazona), also attested in Gaul, might allude to the goddess: it portrays a naked woman on a horse, with a crescent moon and a star (García Bellido and Blázquez Cerrato 2001: I, 66. 2, 374, 376-377, n. 11-13).

Julius Caesar asserts that Mercury was the god that the Celts worshipped most: he refers to the native form of this deity *Lugus* (or Lug, in his medieval insular form). The vigour of his cult is endorsed by the incidences of the toponym *Lugdunum* that can be found all over Europe. *Lugus* is a primordial divinity with a bright personality and he is skilled in all disciplines (according to the Irish texts he is "good at everything", and Caesar describes him as the "inventor of all arts"), which facilitated his ready assimilation to Mercury. Yet, Lug's faculties far surpass those of Mercury and this explains his great power: his nature is universal, he is not confined to any one function but rather masters them all. *Lugus* is a great organizer but has a gloomy, chaotic side. He is an efficient magician, an inspired poet, but also a fierce warrior and a skilled artisan

who uses marvelous weapons and tools. Logically enough, Rome strove to undermine this devotion to *Lugus* using various political strategies of ideological dissolution. It must be remembered, in this respect, that the date set by Augustus for the *Concilium Galliarum* in *Lugdunum* (Lyon) was precisely August 1st, when the great Pan-Celtic festival of *Lughnasadh* was held. The subsequent creation of a worship center in the year 12 BC represented a frontal attack against indigenous resistance and was aimed at replacing the ancestral native cult with the worship of the Emperor, Mercury and Mars (Zecchini 2002: 88-91).

For this reason, despite Lug's great importance, this god's epigraphic representations did not abound. There are only about ten inscriptions related to Lug and very few of them are Celtiberian. Among these, it is worth highlighting a mention of the God in plural form (*Lugovibus sacrum*). The inscription was found in Uxama (Soria) and is comparable to others from Lugo, Avenches and Nîmes. This hints at the dual character of the god, who is doubled in order to receive his own descendant, an already assimilated theme that is identical to the images of "Mercury and his son", which Classical mythology fails to explain.

The site of Peñalba de Villastar (Teruel), currently being studied by the Spanish research team *Hiberus*, is the most important Celtic sanctuary consecrated to Lugus. The most important inscription found there, dating from the first century BC, includes the most remarkable ancient mention of the above-cited festival of *Lughnasadh*. Originating from the same place comes an outstanding anthropomorphic image: Lug appears, in fact, as bicephalous, or two-headed (Fig. 1). The god, multiplied, looks in all directions, thus expressing his plurality beyond any specific attribution (Sopeña 1995: 104, Fig. 23). Basically, just as in the case of the trinity character mentioned above, this repetition of intensity emphasizes the wholeness of the divine power and aims to show the multiplicity of its aspects (Marco Simón 1986; Sagredo and Hernández 1996; Sánchez González 1999; Sergent 1995).

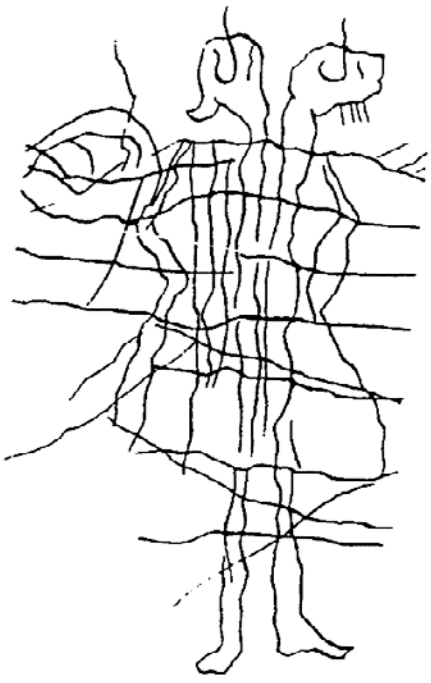

Figure 1. Anthropomorphic image of the God *Lugus* as bicephalous in a carving from the Mountain of Peñalba de Villastar, Teruel. (Sopeña 1995: Fig. 23).

The rest of the gods recorded in Celtiberia in Latin epigraphs are clearly local and,

unfortunately, they are not very eloquent: *Caldo Vledico*, *Leiosse*, *Pendusae*, *Aiioragato*, *Lattueriis*, *Ordaecis-* or *Sordaecis-*, *Peicacomae*, *Vacocaburio*, *Aelmanio*, *Aiiodaicino*, *Boiogenae*, *Amma*, *Dialco*. Goddess *Obione*, from Tobía, in La Rioja, might be related to theonyms from Celsa, Vaucluse and Cologne. We know of a *Visuceu* originally from Agoncillo, which has been confirmed as an epithet of Mercury in Europe (*Visugio*). In *Segobriga* there is an allusion to the *Lares Viales*, the Latin name for the spirits of crossroads, which almost certainly concealed Celtic realities. Likewise, the Roman name of the god, preceded by the term *deus*/*dea* probably conceals native deities and it is the last link in the chain of the above-mentioned double *interpretatio* (Salinas de Frías 1995). This is seen, for example, in the dedication from Alhama de Aragón (Zaragoza): *Deo tutelae genio loci* (*CIL*, II, 3021). Similarly, the analysis of the inscriptions from the Celtiberian-Roman city of *Segobriga* (Cabeza de Griego, Cuenca) reveals that underlying the typically Roman names and interpretations there is a Celtic pantheon (Almagro-Gorbea 1995a: 88 ff.; Lorrio 1997: 332). Also dating from the Augustan era (29-28 BC) are the Roman coins from *Turiaso* (Tarazona), which show, together with the epigraph *Silbis*, a female head, facing right, adorned with a laurel crown. This is a native goddess associated with water and a local sanctuary and interpreted as the Latin *Salus* (Alfayé 2003; Beltrán Lloris 2001: 50; Marco Simón 2002b: 132).

Another inscription alludes to a goddess named *Ataecina*, who became associated with Proserpina. This may have been an infernal deity (*adaig* = night), but there is no certainty about the Celtic nature of this name and the origin of the epigraph itself is questionable (Abascal 1995: 91; Alvar 1999). Two late gravestones (second and third centuries AD), are dedicated by people from Uxama who were far from their homes to the goddess *Deganta* (in Cacabelos, León) and to the god *Bormanico* (in Caldas de Vizella, Portugal). Both have Celtic roots and are probably linked to water (Gómez Pantoja 1998; Jimeno 1980: 192-3, 197-98, 257). Lastly, the theonym *Drusuna*, which is known from two inscriptions from San Estéban de Gormaz, has a fully Celtic root **dru* (perhaps "oak" from which, for example, the word *dru-uid*: "druid" stems), which links this deity to the woods (Blázquez 2001: 65-66; Marco Simón 1999a: 151 ff.; Olivares 2002: 124).

Native epigraphy

The bronze plaque from Botorrita (Zaragoza), which is a crucial text, invokes two possible Celtiberian deities (Fig. 2). The first is *Neto*, whose solar character and assimilation to

Mars were revealed by Macrobius to the *accitani* of Guádix (*Sat.*, I, 19, 5). More evidence can be found in epigraphs from Trujillo and Condeixa-a-Velha (Beira Litoral). On side A of the bronze plaque from Botorrita the god appears in his Celtic form *Neitos* - with the root **nei*=shine (which gives the ogamic form *Net[t]a*). The word *Neitin* in the Binéfar monument is also related. To sum up, the evidence shows a warlike, bright divinity who was later assimilated to Mars and *Cosus*. Perhaps this is the Celtic god *Net*, well attested in the insular Celtic world.

The other citation regards *Tokoitos*. De Hoz and Untermann have related this divinity to other peninsular theonyms that appear in dative form: *Togae*, *Togoti*, *Deo Togoti*, *Tongo*, *Tongoe*. These all stem from the root **tong* which, as Mª L. Albertos observes, in Celtic means oath. Perhaps this was a deity who guaranteed pacts, which would not only be in keeping with the *Tabula Contrebiensis*, but also with Appian's account (*Iber.* 52) of how people from Cauca appealed to the gods of agreements (very well represented in the *tesserae hospitii*). The Irish, for their part, alluded to the divinity of pacts without naming a specific deity: *Tongu do dia toingeas mo túath* ("I swear by the god by whom my tribe swears") (Marco Simón 1998: 390 ff.).

Figure 2. Bronze plaque from Botorrita (Zaragoza). A fragment of the A Side with two mentions of possible Celtiberian deities: *Neto* (Line 6) and *Tokoitos* (Line 10). Museo Provincial de Zaragoza. (Photo: L. Mínguez).

Iconography

As I have so far shown iconographic representations of the gods are very scarce and entail serious interpretation problems. It is therefore advisable for researchers to be very cautious before drawing conclusions (Alfayé 2003). It has traditionally been considered, for example, that the ceramic piece from Numancia might represent the god *Cernunnos* with his characteristic horns (Fig. 3) as he appears on the Gundestrup Cauldron (Blázquez 1977: 361-364, 2003: 430), although this image might be that of a wild animal, perhaps a wolf (Alfayé 2003; Romero Carnicero, 1973, 1976: 24; Sopeña 1995: 119, Fig. 30). Likewise, it is believed that the horned

god is portrayed on vases from Bronchales (Teruel), an hypothesis which also must be accepted with reservations (Marco Simón 1987: 66 ff.). Rather, it is probably an expression of the myth of Acteon, who was turned into a deer and torn to pieces by his own dogs (Alfayé 2003). Similarly, a female figurine modeled in clay and a ceramic painting representing a woman wearing a veil are identified as images of divinities (Fig. 4). Despite Olmos Romera's brilliant exposition on this subject (Olmos Romera 1986: 219; Sopeña 1995: Figs. 5-6, 16), it is necessary to stress that better documentary sources are needed in the future in order to cast light on these findings.

Figure 3. Ceramic piece that is traditionally considered an image of the God *Cernunnos*. Museo Numantino, Soria. (Photo: A. Plaza).

Figure 4. Ceramic decoration representing a woman wearing a veil, identified as a Celtiberian Goddess. Museo Numantino, Soria. (Photo: A. Plaza).

Other records are related to the image of the wolf. The Roman historian Appian (*Iber*., 48) narrates how, in 152 BC, the inhabitants of *Nertobriga* (La Almunia or Calatorao, Zaragoza), sent to the Roman general Marcellus a herald attired in a wolf skin, as a sign of peace. A fragment from Numancia represents a figure that was actually clad in a wolf skin (Marco Simón 1987: 66; Sopeña 1995: 114, Fig. 29), and it is likely that one of the fighters on the Vase of the Warriors also wore a wolf costume (Sopeña 1995: Figs. 49-55). Coinage from *Segeda*/*Sekaiza* (Mara, Zaragoza) included two issues in which the wolf appears with an evident symbolic significance, associated either with a horse rider, a human figure with a torque and a bird, a horse or Pegasus (Gomis 2001: 38-45) (Fig. 5). Celtiberian war trumpets were also generally wolf-headed (Sopeña 1995: 108-109, Figs. 24-27). Perhaps, these elements attest to a cult of the Celtic god *Sucellus*. This prominent infernal and funerary deity, whose partner is Nantosuelta and who

is clearly related to the Irish *Dis Pater* and *Dagda*, carries a mallet, a barrel and the skin of a wolf. It has therefore been suggested that *Sucellus* is the god who appears on the obverse of quarter-pieces from Bílbilis (which are considered mining coins), with the legend *BIL* (García Bellido 1993; Marco Simón 2004: 130); this interpretation has been refuted recently, however (Alfayé 2003).

Figure 5. *Aes* from *Segeda/Sekaiza* (Mara, Zaragoza) with a male portrait and a wolf on the obverse and a mounted warrior with a bird of prey on the reverse. (Private Collection. Photo: J. Paricio).

The frequent association between monetary iconography and religion and spirituality in Celtiberia is well documented. Abascal (2002: 30) has suggested that the native coins with male portraits on the obverse and a horseman on the reverse show iconographic associations like those that can be found in the *tesserae*. Such zoomorphic images, which characterize the male portraits on the obverse of the coins, should prove the divine identity of the figures. Celtiberia apparently imported a monetary model common to the whole Mediterranean area, adapting it to its own pantheon. The portraits on the obverse might be images of gods whose names are unknown to us, though we may assume that among them was Lugus, the main Pan-Celtic deity (Abascal 2002: 30). Although the interpretation of this evidence has just begun, there are already interesting prospects (Almagro-Gorbea 1995b; Burillo 2001: 95 ff; García Bellido and Blázquez Cerrato 1998; Olmos Romera 1995).

Range of worship, sacrifice and priesthood

Sanctuaries

The sacred center was a key idea for the Celts, to such an extent that all their sacred geography seems to spatially endorse this notion (Marco Simón 2000). In Europe there are around 60 mentions of places called *Mediolanum* ("center of the plain"), while Ireland had its center in the hill of Tara, called *Midhe* (The Center). At least until the fourth century BC, when ritual structures begin to appear in greater numbers (Brunaux 1991), sacred places were linked to natural spots - open-air temples which Classical authors called *hieron* or *locus consecratus*. Water sources, mountains and woods were the favored environments; in fact many Celtic

divinities are associated with such natural spaces (Marco Simón 1993c). No doubt, the most important sanctuary was the *nemeton*, a term that alludes to a clearing in the wood and is found in toponyms like *Nemetodunum*, *Nemetobriga* and *Medionemeton*. As Jean-Louis Brunaux, John Scheid and Francisco Marco Simón point out, woods were well established places of worship in all Celtic territories (Brunaux 1993; Marco Simón 1993c: 318-320, 1996: 83-86, 1999a; Scheid 1993).

Several Celtiberian sanctuaries were clearly authentic *loca sacra libera*, natural spots where nothing was built (Alfayé 2001; Castillo Pascual 2001). The mountain of Peñalba de Villastar, which lay at the crossroads of frontier cultures, was a major center of worship dedicated to the god *Lugus* (Fig. 6). It was one of the most important religious centers in Hispania and it boast more than 20 inscriptions, cave paintings and various structures for ritual practice (holes, ditches, etc.) (Marco Simón 1996: 88-90). Cave-sanctuaries like Cueva de la Griega (Segovia), which has provided interesting epigraphs, including the one dedicated to *Nemedus augustus*, are also very typical in this area (Alfayé 2001: 113-130; Marco Simón 1993e). Apart from the necropoli, which were sacred sites by definition, neither urban sanctuaries nor artificial temples have been found in the heart of Celtiberia so far, although there are records of them in other areas of the Celtic world. The structures in Tiermes, which have been traditionally considered native sacrificial temples or stones, do not actually look like such (Alfayé 2001: 23-45). However, it seems possible that ritual practices were performed in certain dwellings in Numancia, as suggested by finds of sepulchral monuments, decorated ceramic vessels containing human remains, decapitated heads, etc. (Alfayé 2001: 46-79, 58; Lorrio 1997: 334; Sopeña 1995: 243-262).

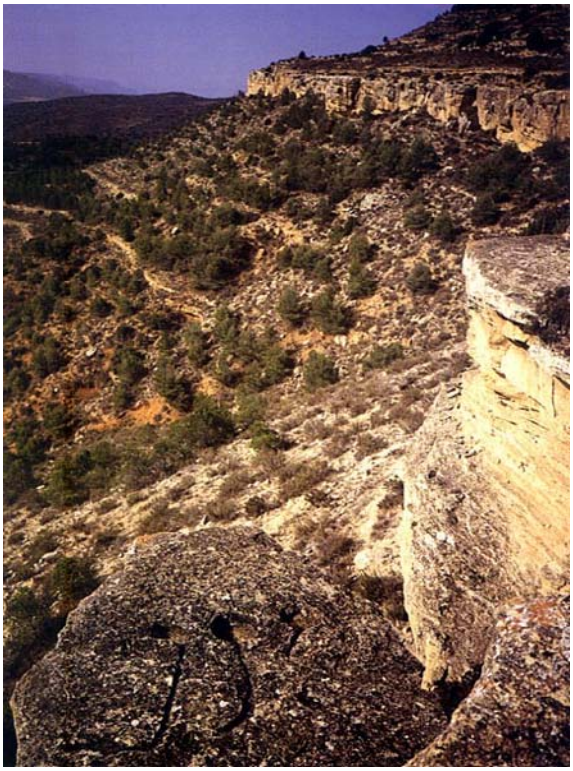

Figure 6. The sacred mountain of Peñalba de Villastar (Teruel). (Photo: F. Marco Simón.)

As Francisco Marco Simón explains in another chapter of this issue of *e-Keltoi*, the

existence of sanctuaries within the cities of the *celtici* in the peninsular south-east is supported by the fact that Pliny (*NH.*, 3, 13) considered them Celtiberian in language and rituals. Miróbriga dos Célticos (Santiago do Cacém, Portugal), Garvão (Beja, Portugal) and Castrejón de Capote (Higuera la Real, Badajoz) are a few examples (Berrocal-Rangel 1992: 193-198). The Roman sanctuary dedicated to Diana in *Segobriga*, which predates the Christian era, may also be regarded as an original Celtiberian *locus* (Almagro-Gorbea 1995a:76, 78; Lorrio 1997: 333).

The Roman poet Martial, of Celtiberian descent, cites a *nemeton* in the wood of *Boterdus* (beloved by the Roman goddess *Pomona* for its vegetation, as he says in I, 49) in his hometown *Bilbilis* (present-day Calatayud, Zaragoza). In IV, 55 he mentions a sacred oak wood, *Sanctum Buradonis Illicetum* (Ágreda, Soria?). The same author alludes to a mountain, *Sacrum Vadaueronem montibum* (Sierra del Madero? Sierra de Vicor?) (Gutiérrez Pérez 1992; Alfayé 2001: 10-11) and to the springs of *Dercenna y Nutha*, at the source of the river Tajo (I, 49). Similiarly, according to Saint Braulio (*Vit. S. Emiliani*, IV, 11), Saint Millán retired to *Dircetius Mons* (Monte de San Lorenzo?). Of course, this does not imply a direct worship of nature: the divinity, which is invisible, manifests itself through natural signs. These spots are merely places of interaction between gods and human beings, but never entities that are honored in their own right. The ritual use of natural sites lasted until the Middle Ages (Sanz Serrano 1998: 263; Sopeña 1987: 58-60).

Sacrifices

Sacrifices in Celtiberia must have been practiced, but little can be said about them in detail. The finding of vessels like *simpula* or *oinochoes*, which were used for making libations, indicates that this might have been a private practice. Probably clay figurines were also part of the domestic cult. The characteristics of two dwellings in Almaluez (Soria) and Las Arribillas (Molina de Aragón, Guadalajara) suggest that these places were used for sacrificial practices (Alfayé 2001: 58-62; Burillo 1997; Galán 1989-90; Hernández and Benito López 1991/92; Martín Valls 1990). As regards public sacrifices, these are explicitly cited by Plutarch (*Tib. Grac.*, V) and by Frontinus (*Strateg.* III,11, 4).

The most accurate information available is provided by those necropoli where weapons that were ritually killed have been found in addition to ceramic offerings and sacrificed animals, perhaps the remains of a funerary banquet (Argente et al. 2000: 298; Cerdeño and García Huerta 2001: 165-167; Lorrio 1997: 338-340; Sopeña 1995: 246-247). A painting from Numancia

shows a figure with an apron and a conical cap, possibly associated with some type of augury (Cowan 1993: 64) (Fig. 7). The figure holds a jug and a bird over an altar, while another officiant brings a curved knife or a sickle to the altar, in order to perform the sacrifice (Sopeña 1995: 67-69, Figs. 10-13). Furthermore, deposits of metal offerings are known to have existed that might have been votive objects (Lorrio 1997: 342-343). Likewise, the burial of a suckling lamb under a house in Fuensaúco could be regarded as a foundation ritual based on its antiquity (seventh century BC) (Romero and Jimeno 1993: 208). To cite one more example, the records from Castrejón de Capote, which Francisco Marco Simón describes in more detail in another chapter in this issue, attest to the sacrifice of animals destined for the communal banquet of the *celtici* from Beturia (Berrocal-Rangel 1994: 245-256, 2001).

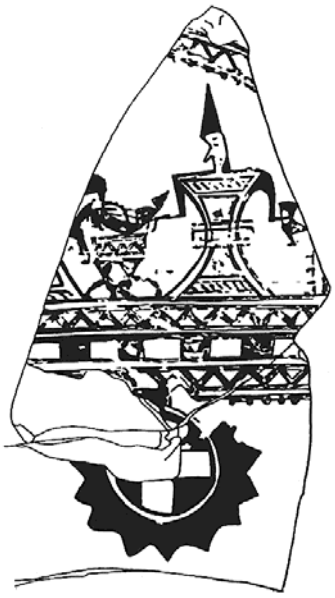

Figure 7. A priest with an apron and a conical cap holding a jug and a bird over an altar in order to perform a sacrifice. Museo Numantino, Soria. (Sopeña 1995: Figs. 10-11).

If human sacrifices were performed at all in Celtiberia, these must have been as rare as they were in other Celtic nations (Marco Simón 1999b: 11, *passim*; Twyman 1997) since there is absolutely no evidence that might lead us to even suspect their existence. Frontinus (*Strateg.* III, 11, 4) relates that Viriatus took the people from *Segobriga* by surprise while they were occupied celebrating sacrifices, and this is all the evidence we have. The interred corpses found under one of the towers of Huérmeda (Calatayud, Zaragoza) - one together with two birds of the corvidae species, its bones tied up and the flesh stripped - belong, in any case, to the Roman city (Burillo 1990: 376-377, 1991: 575-578; Marco Simón 1993d: 493; Martín Bueno 1975, 1982; Salinas de Frías 1983; Sopeña 1995: 254 ff.). It is, likewise, impossible to ascertain if the confusing interments of children in hamlets were foundation sacrifices (Burillo 1991: 574; Cerdeño and García Huerta 2001: 164). Besides, decapitation does not imply a human sacrifice *stricto sensu* since it could be performed on somebody who had already died and had been sacralized, not only on a living person whose life was taken for sacrificial purposes (Sopeña 1995: 152-153). Thus, the so-called *Piedra de los Sacrificios* (Stone of Sacrifices) from *Arcobriga* (Monreal de Ariza) never existed, except in the burning imagination and bright prose of its enthusiastic discoverer (Aguilera y Gamboa 1909: 139-148; Alfayé et al. 2001/2002).

Priesthood

Although documentary evidence has never been abundant, further research has shown the traditional arguments aimed at denying the existence of organized priesthood among the Celtiberians to be insubstantial (Alvar 1996; Blázquez 1962: 227-228, 1983: 227-228, 1986; Urruela 1981: 258 ff.). Celtiberian religion indisputably required and relied on people who could mediate between the gods and humankind as well as on celebrants to perform animal sacrifices. Even more important is that the Celtiberians unquestionably counted on specialists who were able, among other things, to adapt scripts to their own language, deploy sophisticated symbolic codes in order to express their spirituality and settle legal debates in the most just manner possible (as demonstrated by the bronze plaques from Botorrita). Undoubtedly, there were intellectual elites in Celtiberia who undertook priesthood roles as well as performing other functions (Costa 1917: 26-37; Crespo Ortiz de Zárate 1997; García Quintela 1991; Marco Simón 1987: 69 ff., 1993d: 498-500, 1994:172-179; Pérez Vilatela 1991; Sopeña 1987: 60-64, 1995: 43-49).

Unfortunately, as far as Hispania is concerned, traditional historiography long revolved around commonplaces (López Jiménez 2000) and it has dealt with Druidism in a nihilist way, considering the Druid merely as a kind of Roman priest. The term Druid only occurs on one occasion in Caesar, who was quite aware of the way their role had been belittled by other observers (*BG.*, VII, 33, 4). Druidism did include the function of the *sacerdos*, but went far beyond that: it was an institution that encompassed all those occupations that required knowledge. In any case, to reduce druidic duties to simple, mechanical administrative tasks is to miss the point. To regard these functions as part of a centralized, unchangeable clergy-like phenomenon is equally misleading: an Aeduan Druid in Gaul and an insular monk who lived thirteen centuries later were not exactly the same thing, just as a *fili* and a popular Breton songster are not identical.

Furthermore, Graeco-Roman authors did not mention Druids before the second century BC and when they did, they did not refer to Italy, the Danube valley or the Carpathians. To be precise, they did not identify Druids in Aquitania, the Anatolian *Galatia*, Gallia Narbonensis or the Rhineland, either. Should their existence be thus denied without consideration, as it was in Celtiberia? Absolutely not. As specialists have argued, Druidism was a Pan-Celtic institution whose existence was concealed under various names (Berresford Ellis 2003; Green 1993: 64-66,

1997; Hubert 1950: 273-74; Le Roux and Guyonvarc´h 1978: 111-114, 1986; Piggott 1974; Zecchini 2002: 24).

All known records of Celtiberian religion, and the very substance of its religiosity in the first place, clearly support the existence of a priesthood whose characteristics were similar to those of Druidism, although it did not reach the degree of institutionalization the latter had in Ireland and Gaul, an opinion which I share with Francisco Marco Simón (Marco Simón 1994: 172-179; Sopeña 1995: 43-49). Some terms contained in the inscriptions might allude to this institution: the *uiros ueramos* in the text from Peñalba de Villastar, the fourteen *bintis* of the bronze plaque from Botorrita, the *ueisos* in the *tessera* of *Arekorata* or the *teiuoreikis* of the bronze plaque from Luzaga, to cite just a few (Marco Simón 1994: 375-376, 1997); Iconography also attests to rituals performed by specialists, as in the (above mentioned) cases in Numantia (Sopeña 1995: Figs. 10-13) or perhaps in the case of the vase from Arcobriga which shows a tree springing from the head of a human figure, with all the remarkable symbolic associations this entails (Marco Simón 1993b; Sopeña 1995: Fig. 17-18, 57), (although this hypothesis has been recently revised (Marco Simón 2004) (Fig. 8) . The prophetic quality of women, whose social role among the Celtiberians was allegedly imported, is well known (Sopeña 1987: 87-89, 1995: 50-69). According to Suetonius (*Galba*, IX, 2) a Celtiberian *fatidica puella* foretold that Galba would ascend to power, two hundred years before the ascent took place. Such a prophecy was preserved in the temple of Jupiter in the city of Clunia (Burgos) (Gutiérrez Behemerid and Subías 2000; Haley 1992). The native augur expressed her prediction through a poem or chant, known as a *carmen* (Picón 1981; Sopeña 1987: 58). In the case of certain female clay figurines that have often been identified as priestesses, it is more difficult to venture a hypothesis (Sopeña 1995: 67-69, Figs. 5-9, 16).

Figure 8. Vase from Arcobriga showing a tree springing from the head of a human figure. Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid.

In the year 170 BC, according to Florus (I, 33, 13-14) (3), a man called Olyndicus stood

out on account of a peculiar war deed. The Roman writer betrayed a hostile attitude towards the rebel, whom he considered a cunning sham. The Celtiberian in question was perhaps a man whose main function was a druidic one. Florus, who refers to this subject as a *summus uir* and *dux*, narrates that he gained leadership after receiving a silver spear which appeared to have fallen from the sky and that he acted like a prophet. This person, Florus goes on to explain, died as a guardsman caught him alone by the consul's tent at night. The silver spear coming from the sky coincides with the invincible *Gae Bolga*, symbol of the lightning bolt, used by Cuchulainn, the warrior hero of Ulster. Furthermore, the name *Olyndicus* seems to contain the root **al-*, **ol-*, which in Celtic means "above, over" and is also found in the supreme epithet of the Dagda, the Druid-god, called *Ollathir* ("Father of all"). This meaning coincides with *summus*, which may be interpreted as the Latin translation from the Celtiberian *uiros ueramos* found in Peñalba de Villastar. The Irish Dagda, who corresponds to the Latin *Dis Pater*, according to Caesar, is a nocturnal infernal god. Similiarily, Olyndicus acted and died solely at night. In addition, he vaticinated holding the silver spear: *uaticinanti* is a Latin form belonging in the semantic area of *uates*, and vaticination in the Celtic world was a prerogative of Druids. Thus, Florus' text might allude to a ceremonial performance within a warfare context, corresponding to other known Celtic ceremonies carried out by Druidic figures who took on military functions when necessary. Such was the case of Julius Sacrovir (= *sacrum vir*) in 21 AD (Tacitus, *Ann.*, III, 40-46), of Gutuater (functional term: "Father of the voice", associated with the utterance of invocations) in 51 AD (*BG.*, VIII, 38) or of *Divitiacus*, (*BG.*, II, 5), who was a Druid and a politician and led a cavalry division (Blázquez 1999: 307-308, 2003: 432; Ciprés 1993a: 128; García Fernández-Albalat 1990: 23, 45 ff.; García Moreno 1993: 352-353; García Quintela 1991: 33-34, 1999: 217-220, 255-57; García Teijeiro 1999; Marco Simón 1987: 69-70, 1993d: 499-500, 1994: 374-375; Pérez Vilatela 2000; Salinas de Frías 1985: 317; Sopeña 1987: 63-64, 1991: 36, 1995: 43-49; Zecchini 2002: Chapters III and IV).

Other common rituals

The existence of festive dances is documented in Poseidonius (Strabo, III, 4, 16). The ritual nature of such celebrations is proved by the fact that they took place during the full moon. Some paintings include figures that look like dancers, but no further details are discernible. The pictures show either human beings with their forearms encased in bull's horns or confused dynamic figures (Sopeña 1995: Figs. 1, 4) (Fig. 9).

Figure 9. Celtiberian dancer with his forearms encased in bull's horns. Museo Numantino, Soria. (Sopeña 1995: Fig. 1).

Figure 10. Present-day dances, with poles and shields, from San Leonardo, Soria. (Photo: A. Plaza).

On this basis, and taking into account some generic information gathered from Strabo III, 3, 7, according to which dances were simulated battles, BlasTaracena has argued that the present-day dances from San Leonardo and Casarejos (Soria) are original Celtiberian dances that have subsisted until today (Taracena 1932: 16, 1982: 276) (Fig. 10). The dances in question are essentially a war parade in which swords are replaced by poles. The dancers rhythmically clash the poles one against the other, strike the floor and also clash their small shield, which is significantly called *cetra*. In former times, this dance was performed to the songs of women, in a pine wood (Caro Baroja 1984: 172-173; Ruiz Vega 2001:49-60). The ceramic pieces from Numancia sometimes depict men inside animal-shaped armor (Sopeña 1995: Figs. 2-3; Wattenberg 1963: 217, X, 1245), whereby the hypothesis has been ventured that festivals like the one from Barrosa de Abejar (Soria) are Celtiberian in origin (Jimeno 1999: 11; Ruiz Vega 2001: 33-37) (Figs. 11, 12). However, this must remain an assumption and the Celtiberian root of such dances cannot be ascertained. Similarly, Frontinus (II, 4, 17) explains that Hispanic people tied oxen to carts that were filled with burning torches and fat in order to infuriate the animals, and used them as a weapon against Hamilcar, the Carthaginian general. This narration alone

Figure 11. *La Barrosa* de Abejar (Soria): Young man wearing bull-shaped armor (Photo: A. Plaza).

has fostered the belief that current festivals with *toros de fuego*, or fire bulls, to which iron staffs with burning balls are fastened, date from Celtiberian times (Taracena 1982: 275-276). It cannot be doubted, however, that this bull festival at goes back at least to the Middle Ages, when pyrotechnic works were first deployed (Caro Baroja 1984: 257-283; Ruiz Vega 2001: 71-72).

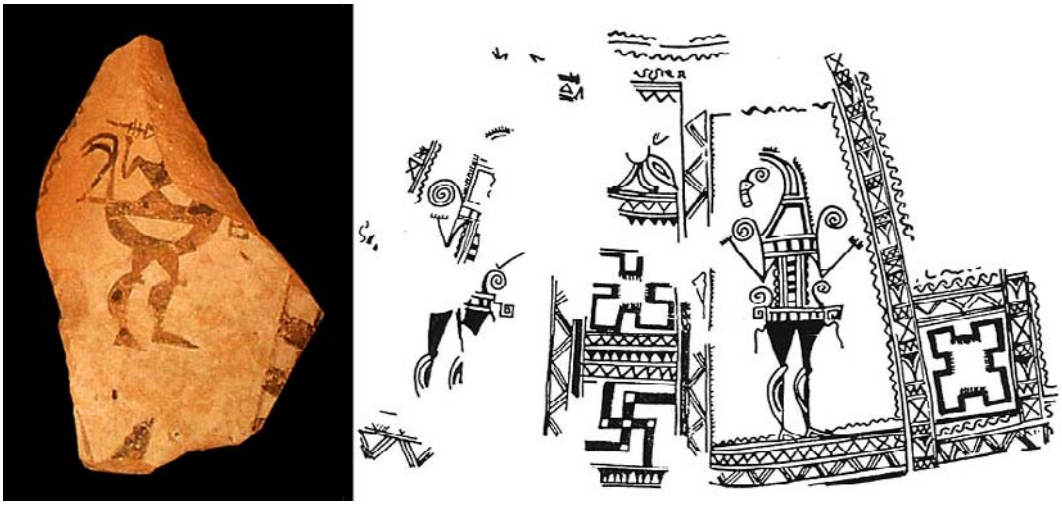

Figure 12. Men wearing animal-shaped armor. Museo Numantino, Soria. (Photo: A. Plaza. Sopeña 1995: Fig. 2).

Ethics

The Graeco-Latin perception

What brought together Celtiberian peoples and shaped their culture was, together with their Mediterranean identification, their common resistance against Rome. Because of their opposition these peoples stood out from their environment and shared a collective fate of extermination (Ciprés 1993b, 1999; Gómez Fraile 2001; Pelegrín 2005; Untermann 1984). Thus, Celtiberian conflicts were the vehicle whereby Celtiberia was introduced into history, due to the interest shown by Graeco-Roman writers in an atrocious war for survival which was waged for decades, according to Cicero (*De offic.*, I, 38). The annihilation of Numantia by Scipio in 133 BC, a fact which was glorified by the Roman sources, triggered the decline of Roman literary interest in the region, which would be rekindled only on specific occasions that required the intervention *manu militari*, as in the case of the indigenous revolts in the years 98-94 or 92 BC, which ended in the massacres of Termancia and Belgeda (Gómez Pantoja 2003: 237-243) (Fig. 13).

Therefore, although Greek and Roman writers had a more immediate perception of Celtiberians' ethical principles than of their system of beliefs, our knowledge in this respect is

Figure 13. *Último día de Numancia (The Last Day of Numancia).* Painting by Alejo Vera (1881). Diputación de Soria.

also poor and mainly dependent on authors who were alien or hostile to the culture they were describing. Lastly, it must be remembered on the one hand that the narrations that have reached us date from long after the events they describe and, therefore, the researchers must beware of these views. On the other hand, with the exception of Polybius (as he himself quotes in III, 59, 7) and Poseidonius (who visited Hispania circa 100 BC and whose direct testimony of these peoples has been lost), we can only rely on other authors who were inferior to the Stoic master from Apamea. In other words, almost all our sources are derived from books or learned approximations about Celtiberia (Salinas de Frías 1999a).

The agonistic *ethos*

The documents already found prove that Celtiberians articulated their lives through a system of beliefs and values with a high degree of moral content. The spiritual portrait of Celtiberians drawn by Greek and Roman authors, biased as it may be, is in keeping with archeological records, iconography and direct, though late, references relative to the native peninsular environment. Everything points to an agonistic *ethos* that parallels the existential development and religion of other Celtic peoples.

Celtiberians developed their own way of life, without breaking with Celtic culture. They had an extraordinary sense of social responsibility and held personal *uirtus* (virtue) in high esteem. Celtiberian societies were characterized by war and individuals perceived themselves mainly as fighters, regarding death in battle as the most desirable personal achievement. Celtiberians, in fact, had immense confidence in life beyond death and thought that the Otherworld could be best gained through the fulfillment of such ethical premises, which granted not only social esteem but also the individual's ultimate fate. In Celtiberia, this belief in the immortality of the soul, which was essential to Druidic thought, made warfare a consecrated arena where both winning and dying were sacrificial models of conduct (Sopeña 1995: Chapters II-III; Brunaux 2000).

As is well known, the Celts' war-like attitude was perceived by the Graeco-Roman people as rough, imbued with furor and lacking foresight. This was due to the high degree of ritualization that characterized the life of these peoples, for whom war played the role of an institution that regulated their social rhythms. Celtic military practices were actually brief, highly regulated demonstrations of strength that never resulted in huge loss of human lives, at least until the confrontation with Rome: the programmed criteria of dominion applied by the Romans were, in fact, impossible to overcome (Pleiner 1992: Chapter 2; Rawlings 1996). Celtiberian dynamics were grounded in basic elements of individual honor: fighters had to offer their victory to the gods, they had to show valor and aspire to a *Kalòs Thánatos*, a beautiful death (Sopeña 1995: 75-85, *passim*). The strong aesthetic component derived from such an ethic and religious nature influenced the image of the Celts gained by Classical authors to such an extent that the barbarian stereotype, the *feritas celtica*, was created (Kremer 1994: 17-263; Marco Simón 1993a; Webster 1996).

The Celtiberian war-like orientation, rooted in religious and moral values, also had an aesthetic component that was diametrically opposed to Roman military pragmatism.

Weaponry

Weapons played an important role in Celtiberian social life, and the Classical sources on the sophisticated metalworking of Celtiberians have been supported by archaeological evidence (Lorrio 1997: 302-306; Quesada Sanz 1997; Sopeña 1995: 89-96). This excellence in weaponry may be regarded as the material expression of ethic will and is well attested in the Celtic world at large. Like the parts that were removed from the enemies' bodies, especially skulls and hands, the weapons taken during war were considered trophies and were consecrated and buried in tumuli (Caesar, *BG.*, VI, 17, 3-5; Livy, V, 39, 1; Florus, I, 20). The bond that existed in Celtiberia between *uirtus* and weapons was so close that the latter became an extension of the person who carried them, the very symbol of his valor. To hand over one's weapon implied the loss of one's self; without weapons life was not worth anything. All this is endorsed by Poseidonius (in Diodorus, XXXIII, 16-17 and 24-25), Appian, *Iber.*, XXXI and XCV-XCVII; Livy, XXXIV, 17; Florus, I, 34, 3 and 11; Orosius, V, 7, 2-18; and

Figure 14. Sacrificed sword from a tomb, Numancia. Museo Numantino, Soria. (Photo: A. Plaza).

Justin, XLIV, 2).

Due to the Celtiberians' belief in life beyond death, the bond between the warrior and his weapons continued after his death and his arms were deliberately made unusable before being deposited in the tomb (Lorrio 1997: 340-342; Quesada Sanz 1997: 641-643, *passim* Sopeña 1995: 95-96 172) (Fig. 14). This practice, common all over the Celtic world, may be interpreted as a sacrifice of objects: the weapons had to share their dead owner's fate. Such rituals became widespread in Celtiberia beginning in the fourth century BC, with the incorporation of swords in the La Tène funerary shafts: in Numantia all known weapons were ritually killed (Jimeno 1996: 62). Some of the decorations show a strong symbolism, as in the case of the stylization of the Tree of Life in the *Arcobriga* type of swords (Cabré de Morán 1990: 215-220), the solar symbolism on the bosses of some shields and helmets like the ones from Griegos and Alpanseque (Cabré 1930-40), or the Ophidic signs in some belt brooches (Morán Cabré 1975, 1977) (Figs. 15, 16). Some of these weapons, judging by their extreme fragility, must have been used only for display purposes (Baquedano and Cabré 1997).

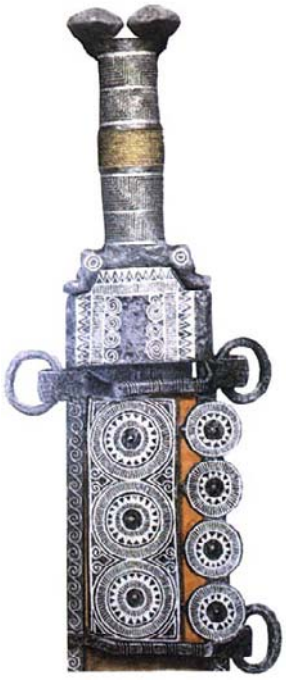

Figure 15. Sword (*Arcobriga* type) in iron, silver and bronze, decorated with solar circles. From the necropolis of El Altillo de Cerropozo, Atienza (Guadalajara). (Sopeña 1995: Fig. 37).

Figure 16. Shield from Griegos (Teruel). Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid.

From a ritual perspective, as can be seen in the region of Cataluña, a methodic action was needed in order to disable the weapons: an expert had to perform this complex task with the typical tools used in a foundry. For this reason, the bending and sacrifice of these objects was carried out before they were deposited in the tomb (Gracia Alonso 2001: 115-116; Rafel 1985: 20).

The *iuuentus celtiberorum*

The periodic raids that Celtiberians made into neighboring territories must be understood as a way of gaining prestige, social status, virtue and wealth. The same motives drove them to fight in foreign armies, where their warlike skills were much appreciated. As in the rest of the Celtic world, the Celtiberian mercenaries were a phenomenon that mainly took place before and after the confrontation against Rome, in other words mainly, when the Celtiberians themselves were under no external threat. Mercenaries were not soldiers of fortune who individually joined a foreign army, but well organized groups. Livy writes that they had their own leaders (XXV, 33) and their own separate camps (XXXIV, 19), and were identified with the term *iuuentus celtiberorum* (XXIV, 49). They determined whether to serve far from their town by holding a *consilium* (XXXIV, 19), and sometimes their decisions were taken against the will of their homeland (Appian, *Iber.*, 31; Polybius, X, 6, 2 and 7; Livy, XXV, 33 and XL, 35). There is also evidence for the existence of outstanding individuals with great economic power who were referred to as *principes Celtiberorum* (Livy XXIV, 49, XXV, 32; XXVI, 50). The presence of the *iuuentus*, besides the economic benefits these groups might gain, was considered an important form of social identification and a vehicle for the acquisition of prestige (Ciprés 1993a: 81-134, *passim*; Pelegrín 2004).

An ambassador in wolf's clothing: brotherhoods and initiation rituals

In Celtiberia, the war against Rome involved a group of towns that committed their armies to this cause, made alliances among themselves and jostled for hegemony. Yet, the term *iuuentus* is to be understood only in its semantic sense, since it indicated a master of men from a town who, due to their condition, were fit to take arms. The group was formed following age criteria and was not an army *stricto sensu* (Ciprés 1990, 1993a: 104-107; Sopeña 1987: 79-87). Therefore, as suggested above, these people could even oppose the decisions made by their own hometown. Appian (*Iber.*, 48) reported that in 152 BC the inhabitants of *Nertobriga* sent to Marcellus a herald who, instead of holding the rod of goodwill (a common object in Celtiberian

diplomatic missions, as the same author argues in *Iber*., 93 and 50-52), arrived at the Roman camp alone and dressed in a wolf skin. This person represented a group which, disregarding the town's decision, had deliberately attacked the Romans, and appeared before the Consul in order to ask for forgiveness and the restoration of normal relations. Everything in the text shows that this was an act of war in which the practice of *uirtus*, the encounter with danger as a way of gaining personal qualities, had taken priority over political decisions (Sopeña 1995: 109-119).

The existence of "brotherhoods of warriors" in Hispania has been defended for years. It is an initiatory phenomenon attested in the whole Mediterranean milieu, whereby roles were assigned to men according to their social age: these groups carried out, together and in the same initiatory period, a number of ritual tasks in accordance with their condition (Dacosta 1991; Wikander 1938: 65-95). Arguments in support of the existence of this phenomenon are based on the solid evidence of a cult to the gods of war in the Iberian Peninsula, as well as of typical actions like plunder and robbery, *deuotio*, foundations of cities, abandonment of the homeland, *bandolerismo*, a roving life, *uer sacrum* and a tendency towards risk. To conclude, what has been so far uncovered suggests that this institution actually existed in Hispania (Almagro-Gorbea 1997a: 210-212; Almagro-Gorbea and Álvarez Sanchís 1993:211-221; Bermejo Barrera 1978: 39-62, 1981; García Fernández-Albalat 1990: 201-203, 207-241; García Quintela 1999: 179-213, 284-287, 2001: 45-52; Peralta Labrador 1990, 2000: 169 ff.).

The information gained on the existence of such groups of men leads us to suppose that the practice of body painting, well known among the Germanic *harii*, the Picts and Scots, to cite a few, must have been also carried out in Celtiberia (Sopeña 1995: 100-101). This hypothesis might be related to the discovery of needles and double needles in Celtiberian tombs, the function of which still remains unknown (Lorrio: 1997 234-235). The needles might have been used for tattooing practices, but this hypothesis has not been confirmed yet (Fernández Nieto 1999a: 284-286, 291-292).

Figure 17. *El Paso del Fuego*, San Pedro Manrique, Soria. (Photo: A. Plaza).

It has been postulated that the current festival of *Paso del fuego* in San Pedro Manrique (Soria), held during

the solstice, might stem from an initiatory ritual performed in Celtiberia (Caro Baroja 1989: 111-124; Chesley Baity 1964, and 1966: 107; Cortés 1961, pp. 180-185; Díaz Viana 1981: 269-272; Jimeno 1999: 6-8; Taracena 1982: 282) (Fig. 17). Although this hypothesis cannot be proved, there is a remarkable similarity, though it concerns only a small part of the present-day festival, to the ceremony of fire-walking as performed by the Italic *Hirpi sorani*, whose relation with the wolf and *Dis Pater* is widely known (Almagro-Gorbea 1997a: 110-114, 1997b; Sopeña 1995: 117). It has also been assumed that today's festivals in Santerón (Cuenca) and the "Caballada" of Atienza (Guadalajara) might be remnants of old Celtiberian *amphictyonies* or federations (Fernández Nieto 1999b).

The Celtiberian herald in wolf clothing may be interpreted in this light. A wolf skin can be seen in the stele from Zurita, in Cantabria. This case is particularly worth mentioning because it is iconographically associated with the ritual whereby corpses were exposed to vultures (Peralta Labrador 1990: 55, 2000: 175). A ceramic fragment from Numantia shows a man covered in wolf skin (Sopeña 1995: 114, Fig. 29), and one of the two fighters on the Vase of the Warriors seems to be wearing the same gear (Sopeña 1995: Figs, 49-55) (Fig. 18). To disguise oneself as a wolf meant to turn oneself into the animal, gain its qualities and be imbued with its furor. The wolf was associated by the Celts with the infernal god *Sucellus*, and is frequently represented in Celtiberian iconography. The wolf was the infernal animal par excellence and the ideal model for the brotherhoods of warriors in the Indo-European world (Almagro-Gorbea 1997b; González Alcalde and Chapa 1993; Ivancic 1993; Lincoln 1991: 134-137; Przyluski 1940; Olmos Romera 2001: 54-55).

Figure 18. Scene from Numancia: two big men fighting against a smaller one. The latter has thick and bristly hair and he is yelling and moving towards the left, armed with a shield and a spear. Museo Numantino, Soria. (Sopeña 1995: Figs. 20-21).

Sallust (*Hist.*, II, 92) speaks of plundering as an activity appropriate for young Celtiberians, an observation endorsed by Plutarch (*Mario*, VI). In 137 BC Sextus Aurelius Victor (*De uiris illustribus Vrbis Romae*, LIX) cites a specific period (*eo die*) during which the Numantines had to marry off their daughters. If a girl had two suitors her father would give her to the first one who succeeded in cutting off the right hand of an enemy (also in Sallust, *Hist.*, II,

91). Not only did this act represent a public sanction of the match, but it also marked the beginning of a period of initiation that would culminate in a wedding. The fact that the initiation began in mid-summer is significant in this respect. It may be inferred that weddings were probably celebrated during the festival of *Lughnasadh* (Salinas de Frías 1984-85: 94-95).

Warfare: a ceremonial scenario

Polybius' description provides a good example of the tremendous visual impact and fear that the Celts instilled in Roman armies before they engaged in the fight: naked, furiously shaking their long hair in order to intimidate the enemy, shrieking brutally, bragging and defiant, they showed an outrageous contempt for their own life (Brunaux 1996a: 141-151; Marco Simón 1990: 132 ff., 1993; Pelegrín n.d.b; Rankin 1987: 70-71, 74, 80, 112, 115). The same is true of Celtiberians to a great extent.

Appian (*Iber.*, 52-54) and Valerius Maximus (III, 2, 21) describe two kinds of war dances performed during individual fights: an orthodox *circunambulatio* and a triumphal dance. While there is evidence of other Hispanic peoples (Diodorus, V, 34, 5 and Appian *Iber.*, 68-69, Lusitanians; Silius Italicus, *Pun.*, III, 346-350, Galaic people; Livy, XXIII, 26, 9, Turdetans and Suessetans) we only have a fragment by Livy on the Celtiberians: (XXV, 17, 4). The text, which describes how Hannibal had a pyre built at the entrance of his camp to incinerate Gracchus, is used by Livy in order to demonstrate that these people no doubt performed typical war dances. Some images on ceramic pieces also seem to depict such dances, including the practice of the exhibition of the hair (Sopeña 1995: Figs. 3-4). The Celtiberians' intimidatory use of their hair in war seems to be confirmed by Martial, who boasted of his bristly hair (after the fashion of his Celtiberian forebears: X, LXV; IV, 55; VII, 52) and Catullus, who attributed to the Celtiberian Egnatius the use of urine as toothpaste and a thick head of hair (XXXVII, 18-20), but is also attested by paintings and coins (Guadán 1977: 35-56; Sopeña 1995: Figs 17-18). The intimidating use of cries and shaggy hair appears to have been captured in a scene from Numancia, which shows two big men fighting against a smaller one: the latter has thick and bristly hair and he is yelling and moving towards the left, armed with a shield and a spear (Sopeña 1995: 103-104, Figs. 20-22) (Fig. 18).

Archaeological remains of clay trumpets attest to the existence of the uproar accompanying warfare that was common to all Celtic conflicts (Fig. 19). About fifteen whole and sixty fragmentary Celtiberian trumpets are known. These were heavy wind instruments, with

a mouthpiece at one end and an amplifier at the other. Their function was due more to the power of the blower than to the disposition of their components: Celtiberian trumpets were designed mostly for the production of noise although the possibility of their use for the transmission of commands through acoustic signals should not be discounted (Pastor Eixarch 1987, 1998: 125; Sopeña 1995: 104-109; Taracena 1946). Appian mentions these trumpets in 140 BC (Appian, *Iber.*, 78), hinting at the fact that they were commonly used even when surprise was not intended. This instrument also appears on coins from *Louitiscos*, a mint of uncertain location in Celtiberia (Guadán 1979: 54-55, 76-77, Fig. 27; Sopeña 1995: Fig. 28). Comparable pieces found in Celtic areas are similar to the Celtiberian trumpets except that they are made of metal (Megaw 1991: 645-647).

Figure 19. War trumpets from Izana and Numancia (with wolf-headed amplifier). Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid.

The Greeks well understood the ritual importance of trumpets, as proved by the Greek sculpture of the Dying Gaul (at the Musei Capitolini of Rome), which synthetized the same four archetypal elements of *feritas celtica* listed by Polybius (II, 29, 4-6) and Poseidonius (in Diodorus, V, 30-31): nakedness, the torc, the sword and the *carnyx* or war trumpet (Mattei 1987). As can be seen on the Gundestrup cauldron, the noise produced by the trumpets invoked an eschatological dimension (Gricourt 1954), a fact that is also endorsed by the findings of offerings, including four trumpets intentionally placed near human skulls, in the lake of Loughnasad (Armagh, at the foot of Navan Fort hill) (Raftery 2001: 68). A funerary stele from Lara de los Infantes (Burgos) sets Celtiberian trumpets in an identical transcendental scenario, showing two men playing, a dead fighter, a vulture about to devour him and a number of architectural structures belonging in the Otherworld (Abásolo 1974: 186; Marco Simón 1978: 135, 144). Consequently, the trumpets had a symbolic ornamentation that varied according to the

place of origin: boar-shaped horns, like the one from Deskford, and monster-shaped instruments, like the ones on the Gundestrup Cauldron, were very common in the Celtic world (Megaw 1991: 647). Celtiberian trumpets, on the other hand, were characterized, apart from the multicolored abstract decorations, by wolf-headed amplifiers (Sopeña 1995: Figs. 24-28) (Fig. 20). Such animal decorations alluded to the personification of warlike or ancestral divine powers, with the voice of the trumpet representing the voices of these entities (Brunaux and Lambot 1987: 113-115).

Figure 20. War trumpets from Numancia with (a) abstract decorations and (b) wolf-headed amplifier. Museo Numantino, Soria. (Photo: A. Plaza).

Figure 21. Celtiberian warrior with a helmet decorated with a crest. Painting from Ocenilla. Museo Numantino, Soria. (Sopeña 1995: Fig. 19).

Among the Celts, as Poseidonius argues (in Diodorus, V, 30, 2), the use of the helmet was not only defensive, but clearly had ostentatious purposes; this was the piece of equipment with by far the greatest number of added ornamentation (horsehair, feathers, etc) which, among other things, made the fighter look taller (Quesada Sanz 1997: 549-550, 556-562, 569) (Fig. 21). It is also worth mentioning, in this respect, the helmet from Ciumesti, decorated with an eagle or vulture whose wings, hinged in the middle, moved along with the fighter (Zirra 1991). Poseidonius informs us that Celtiberians also decorated their helmets with crests (in Diodorus V, 33), as a painting from Ocenilla shows (Sopeña 1995: Fig. 19). Silius Italicus (*Pun.*, 388-389) reports that the people from Uxama added to their helmets ornaments in the shape of open-mouthed wild animals, a practice confirmed by the decorations of the helmet painted on a ceramic fragment from Numancia; another image from the same scene depicts a typical horned Gaul (Sopeña 1995: Fig. 32). The statuary remains from Porcuna include what might be a cat on the helmet of a warrior (Negueruela 1990: 53, 129, Plate XLII) while the Vase of the Warriors portrays a fighter whose helmet is decorated with a cock (Sopeña 1995: 154, 173, Figs. 49-51). Also worth mentioning is the solar symbolism of the helmets from Almaluez, Griegos and

Alpanseque (Quesada Sanz 1997: 551-552).

The Celts' lack of moderation in drinking is accepted as a commonplace by Graeco-Roman writers (Bermejo 1987), and is also evident in subsequent literature but, inevitably, it always appears in the highly ritualized contexts of feasts and war (Arnold 1999, 2001; Bouloumié 1983; Poux 2000a and b). Celtiberians are known to have consumed a kind of beer (*caelia*) of very high alcoholic content (Pliny, *NH.*, XIV, 149; Orosius, V, 7, 13-15). People from Numancia got drunk with it during the last days before their city was taken and, so inflamed, went out to fight after eating raw meat (Florus, I, 34, 11). In the sixth century AD, Gregory of Tours (*Liber in gloria confessorum*, 80), still distinguished between British, Gaulish and Germanic ales, *corma* and the *caelia celtiberica*, which was obtained from cereal maceration and was highly intoxicating (Salin 1987: 443-444).

Duels and challenges

The custom of single combat is well attested in Celtiberia. Such a challenge was the perfect vehicle for the agonistic concept of life that characterized these peoples. Silius Italicus (I, 225) and Justin (XLIV, 2) assert that the Celtiberians fought among themselves when there was no foreign adversary, since their soul was ready to die and their bodies were prepared to suffer. Duels in Celtiberian followed patterns similiar to those described by Poseidonius (in Diodorus, V, 29, 2-3) and an analogous ritualization to that illustrated by insular poetry: a *fír fer* or fair play (Sopeña 1987: 82, 86-87, 1995: 120-145).

Valerius Maximus (III, 2, 21) reports two duels that took place in 142 BC between a certain Occius, Metellus' lieutenant, and two Celtiberians. These were performed according to native norms. The first narration records insults and cries of contempt uttered by the native fighter while he was riding a horse in circles, a movement (*obequitare*) which may be interpreted as a canonical *circunambulatio* (Le Roux and Guyonvarc´h 1986: 201, 300-305). In the second duel, Occius confronted a socially outstanding youth (*praestans*), eventually slaying him (Ciprés 1990: 185, n. 71).

The combat between Corbis and Orsua, duellists in the games held by Scipio in 206 BC *mortis causa patris patruique* - (Livy, XXVIII, 21, 1-10) had a legal nature and was closely related to the ordeal: two cousins fought while appealing to the god of war in order to settle their case after rejecting attempts at mediation. This practice belonged in the Celtic tradition of funerary games, during which single combat duels were commonly performed (Caesar, *BG.*, VI,

19) (Fernández Nieto 1992). The transcendental component of the duel can be observed on the Vase of the Warriors, which depicts three monomachies, formally correlated (Olmos Romera 1986: 218-219) as well as in two other paintings from Numancia, one of them with a marked symbolic character (Sopeña 1995: 139-140, Figs. 32-33) (Figs. 22 and 23). The challenge, either as an aesthetic ostentation in any of its forms, an assertion of individual qualities, or a formal invitation to fight, was the best way to test one's personal valor with all the facets of war.

Figure 22. The *Vaso de los Guerreros* (Vase of the Warriors): The duel. Museo Numantino, Soria. (Photo: A. Plaza).

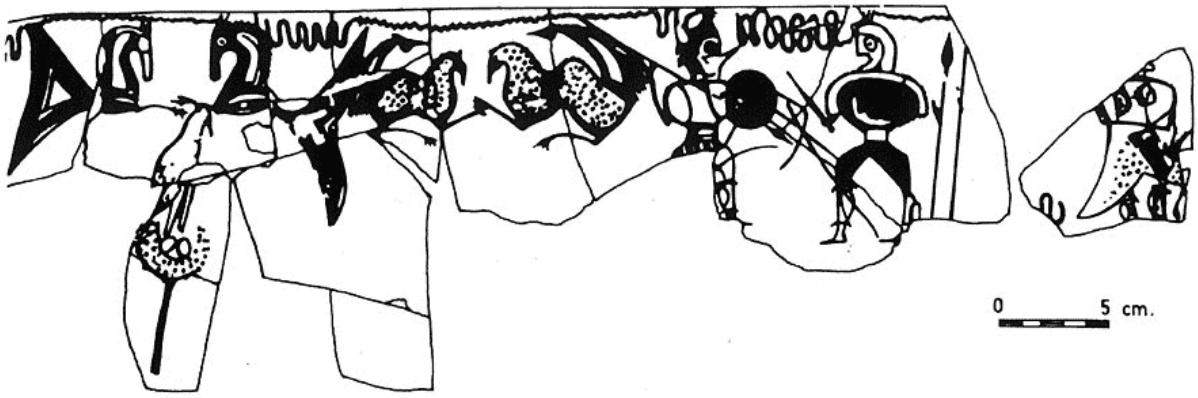

Figure 23. The *Vaso de los Guerreros* (Vase of the Warriors): Three monomachies, formally correlated. Museo Numantino, Soria (Sopeña 1995: Figs. 49-51).

Hospitality

In Celtiberia the *hospitium* was an institution that had very deep roots. This ancestral native tradition, with which Latin epigraphy overlapped, is recorded in about forty *tesserae hospitii*, portable documents which contained an epigraph with the characteristics of the deal and the names of the people who signed it: each guest kept half of the object as a guarantee. The *tesserae* were written in the native language since they expressed agreements made among Celtiberians, but ten of them, which reflect deals between Celtiberians and Romans, were in Latin. The former not only involved the individual but the entire community; as a matter of fact,

Rome took advantage of this native practice to impose its legal weight in areas where the Roman presence was less pronounced. Thus, little by little, the *hospitium* lost its original nature of equality and became assimilated to the clientele system (Beltrán Lloris 2001:54-55).

Most of the *tesserae* date, *grosso modo*, to a period between the second century BC and Augustus' principate and are in the shape of animals of symbolic significance for the Celts (bull, pig, boar, etc.) or of Graeco-Roman origin (dolphin) (Fig. 24). There is one in the shape of a human head and four others in the shape of a right hand (*dextera hospitii*), the very symbol of a deal in the Graeco-Roman world. Lastly, six of them have geometric forms. It is now widely accepted that these were not only made from metal, but of perishable materials as well (Marco Simón 2002a).

Figure 24. *Tessera* from Fuentes Claras, Teruel. (Photo: F. Burillo).

The religious sanction of such an institution may be inferred by Poseidonius' praise (in Diodorus, V, 34, 1) of the Celtiberians' proverbial hospitality. Agreements were protected by the gods themselves (García Quintela 1999: 141-146). In a world characterized by insecurity and spatial mobility, hospitality was essential (Salinas de Frías 1999b: 288-292; Sánchez-Moreno 2001), and, together with banquets, was a basic element of Celtic culture (Dietler 1995; Le Roux and Guyonvarc´h 1986: 249-259; Marco Simón 1990: 119-141; Poux 2000a and b; Sopeña 1995: 126-132).

Banquets

The practice of banquets among the Celtic peoples of Hispania will be discussed by Francisco Marco Simón elsewhere in this issue. For this reason I will not deal at length with the remarkable example of Castrejón de Capote (Badajoz), in Beturia which, according to Pliny (*NH*.,3, 13), was inhabited by Celtiberians (Berrocal-Rangel 1994, 2001), nor will I comment on the data concerning wine consumption (Domínguez Monedero 1995; Quesada Sanz 1995; Pérez Sanz 1999).

In 136 BC in the well-defined area of Celtiberia proper, after partially compensating for Mancinus' defeat with honorable negotiations, Tiberius Gracchus realized that the books of accounts containing the transactions of his quaestorship had been left behind in the city of

Numancia. The Numantians, glad to oblige him, asked him back into the city, entreated him to stay and warmly received him with a banquet, serving him as guest of honor. Afterwards, they returned his account books and insisted on his taking whatever he wanted. Gracchus only accepted some of the incense used during public sacrifices and departed, after expressing his friendship to the Numantians (Plutarch, *Tib. Grac.*, V).

This source, notwithstanding its rhetoric, might indicate that banquets in Celtiberia were also a ceremonial affirmation of social cohesion where hospitality could be expressed and gifts could be exchanged. Gracchus accepted the invitation so as not to offend his hosts, but, since he did not want to be bound by too valuable a gift, he prudently chose the modest incense used for sacrifices (Sopeña 1995: 132).

Funerary banquets deserve separate mention: animal remains found in the necropoli attest the existence of such ceremonies. These kinds of offerings have been discovered only in a small number of tombs, making them valuable indicators of prestige and as such proof of the high status of the buried subject (Cerdeño and García Huerta 2001:167). Also, metal fragments found in the tombs were probably the remains of spits, tripods, grills and cauldrons (Lorrio 1997: 231-232).

Solutions to consecration: *deuotio* and decapitation

The sacrificial nature of suicide is often mentioned, sometimes with the highest degree of rhetorical artifice, in order to highlight the fact that Celtiberians would rather take their own life than face dishonor. The extreme consequences deriving from consecration within a martial context can be clearly observed in the institution of ritual suicide. The *deuotio* manifested itself in Celtiberia as a specific form of military bond, similar to the Gaulish *soldurii* (Caesar, *BG.*, III, 22) or to the Germanic *comitatus* (Tacitus, *Germ.*, 13, 2-4). It was a magnified version of the Roman clientele, informed by a strong religious feeling, whereby the *deuoti* consecrated their lives to the gods in order to follow their leader and share his victory or die with him. This practice is well attested by numerous sources (Valerius Maximus, II, 6, 11; Servius, *Ad. Georg.*, IV, 218; Dio Cassius, III, 20, 2; Appian, *Bell. Civil.*, II, 108-112; Florus, I, 34, 11; Strabo, III, 4, 18) (Ciprés 1993a: 123-129; Dopico 1994; Sopeña 1995: 145-148). The deep roots and persistence of *deuoti* are supported by the fact that in 74 BC Sertorius gathered about him a retinue of guards made up of select Celtiberian lancers (Plutarch, *Sert.*, 14) who, in all likelihood, were *deuoti* (Salinas de Frías 1983: 30).

As far as the practice of decapitation is concerned, it can be regarded as the final act of the war performance. The more offensive the humiliation imposed on the enemies, if they experienced it personally, the more honorable the victory. According to various texts, to gain a skull meant to appropriate the qualities of the defeated person (a belief that can be considered analogous to that which led to the mutilation of the right hand in Celtiberia) (Ciprés 1993a: 88; García Quintela 1999: 238; Sopeña 1987: 96-99), and to obtain a prestigious trophy that proved one's *uirtus*. As a matter of fact, the head was not only a metaphor of victory and of the fighter's personality, but a complex spiritual sign. Its importance was enormous and lasted long after the disappearance of ancient Celtic peoples as independent entities. It was the abode of the soul, the part symbolizing the whole, a reflection of personality and a compendium of feelings, the exponent of both death and subsistence, a talisman, and a bond with ancestry. This constant and immense polyvalence led, according to Pierre Lambrechts, to a Celtic *exaltation* of the skull, which became associated with a large number of metaphorical phenomena; it did not necessarily always signify decapitation nor was it mere ornamentation (Green 1992b: 78 ff., 116-118; Lambrechts 1954; Ross 1957-58, 1968: 96-169; Sopeña 1987: 99-114, 1995:149-155).

Texts regarding the celebration of this ritual in Celtiberia are not numerous (Diodorus, XIII, 57, 2; Valerius Maximus, III, 2, ext. 7), but both villages and necropoli have yielded a generous number of heads in all kinds of forms (weapons, ornaments, jewelry, ceramic paintings, *tesserae*, sculptural applications) (Almagro-Gorbea and Lorrio 1992; Blázquez 1958; García Merino 1992; Hernández Vera and Sopeña 1991; López Monteagudo 1987; Sáiz 1992; Sopeña 1995: 149-154, Figs. 34, 35, 40-43, 59-63). The representations of zoomorphic fibulae, whose ideological background is described in Poseidonius' well known text (in Diodorus, V, 29), are also remarkable. Those that portray a horse with a man's head under the animal's muzzle are very rare and of very high quality (Almagro-Gorbea and Lorrio 1992: 426-428; Almagro-Gorbea and Torres 1999), comparable to an image on a ceramic piece from Aulnat, currently in the Museum of Bribacte, depicting a warrior with a head hanging from his horse's harness (Green 2001: 99) (Fig. 25). Also worth highlighting are the superb Celtiberian examples of *signa equitum* where horse *protomes* are symmetrically placed and accompanied by men's trophy heads (Almagro-Gorbea 1998:102-103 *passim*) (Fig. 26).

There is enough evidence to demonstrate that the Celtiberians deliberately preserved human skulls in domestic areas to suggest that they practiced ancestor veneration. To keep such

Figure 25. Fibulae from the necropoli of Numancia (Museo Numantino. Photo: A. Plaza) and Herrera de los Navarros (Museo Provincial de Zaragoza. Photo: L. Mínguez) showing a horse with a man's head under the animal's muzzle.

Figure 26. *Signa equitum* from Numancia, with horse protomes symmetrically placed and accompanied by men's trophy heads. Museo Numantino, Soria. (Photos: A. Plaza).

relics within the hamlets, as observed in a Numantian dwelling, must be interpreted as a different practice from that of nailing skulls on the walls or gates of villages (observed, for example, in the French Languedoc or the Catalan Puig de Sant Adreu or Puig Castellar) as warning signs (Alfayé 2001: 66-79; Antunes and Santinho 1986; Dedet and Schwaler 1990; Gracia Alonso 2001: 103; Green 2001: 103 ff.; Oliver 1995; Rovira i Hortalá 1998; Sopeña 1987: 71-73, 1995: 154, 246, 252-253; Taracena 1943). The analysis performed in recently uncovered necropoli reveal that on some occasions only certain bones were cremated and preserved (the head and the extremities), while on others, Celtiberians kept the skulls, not only those belonging to the enemy but also those of the members of the community (Cerdeño and García Huerta 2001: 166; Jimeno 2001: 246-247; Jimeno et al. 2002: 69-70; Sopeña 1995: 243-262). This is a well-attested practice in the whole Celtic world and was obviously different from the above-described war-like proceedings. Certainly, keeping the skull of a member of the family required the ritual defleshing of the corpse (Carr and Knüsel 1997: 167-173; Green 2001: 106 ff.).

Funerary rituals: *sacrum facere*

The excarnation of corpses and the subsequent selection of the bones before burial is a widespread prehistoric practice in the Iberian Peninsula (Andrés Rupérez 1998; Bellido Blanco and Gómez Blanco 1996: 146 ff.; Fábregas 1995: 97ff, 113 ff.; Ruiz Zapatero and Lorrio 1995), North Africa (Camps 1961: 486-487, *passim*) and the Balearic Islands (Calvo Trías 2001; Coll Conesa 1993; Guerrero Ayuso et al. 1997: 364 ff.; Salvá et al. 2002: 210-213). Ossuaries contain disordered bundles of bones that were deposited there after the corpse had been exposed and the carrion had disappeared. On some occasions there are signs of the use of fire (Andrés Rupérez et

al. 2002; Delibes and Etxeberria Gabilondo 2002; Ortega 1991: 21, 23-25; Pascual Benito 2002: 172-173). The Celtiberian ritual of exposure thus may be considered an atavistic practice, rooted in a prehistoric substrate (Almagro-Gorbea 2001: 100; Delibes 1995: 66, 69 ff.; Ruiz Zapatero and Lorrio 1999).

In a fragment that is crucial for our understanding of the religiosity of these peoples, Silius Italicus distinguishes between two kinds of funerals in Celtiberia:

> The Celts, who have added to their name that of the Hiberi, came also. To these men death in battle is glorious; and they consider it a crime to burn the body of such a warrior; for they believe that the soul goes up to the gods in heaven, if the body is devoured on the field by the hungry vulture (*Pun.*, III, 340-343. Trans. Duff 1949).

The author explicitly cites the ritual on another occasion, together with nine other kinds of well attested funerals (*Pun.*, XIII, 466-487). In both cases, the ethnographic information matches the sources. The poet faithfully follows Polybius, Timeus and Poseidonius of Apamea's tradition (Ariemma 1999: 82-83; Bona 1998; Delz 1995; Nicol 1936: 25, 47-49, 130-131, 151-155, 157-166; Sopeña 1995: 217-218; Sopeña and Ramón Palerm 2002: 260; Spaltenstein 1990).

Claudius Aelianus describes the Arevaci in a similar way, in a new reading which we suggest as a possible interpretation of the Barkaioi - unanimous in the manuscript tradition - a text of paramount interest that has been attributed to the Vacceans:

> The Arevaci (…) insult the corpses of such as die from disease as having died a cowardly and effeminate death, and dispose of them by burning; whereas those who laid down their lives in war they regard as noble, heroic and full of valour, and them they cast to the vultures, believing this bird to be sacred (*De natur. anim.*, X, 22. Trans. Scholfield 1971).[2]

The existence among the natives of a moral system which exalted the *Kalòs Thánatos* (beautiful death) and contemplated the performance of a simple funeral according to nature or to universal reason, was indeed very appreciated by Aelianus, a devout and sober Stoic (Sopeña and Ramón Palerm 2002). This practice is again mentioned, later on, in a rhetorical and indirect way by Orosius, who asserted that the Numantians did not want to accept the corpses that were offered to them for burial (V, 7, 15-17) (Sopeña 1995: 218-219).

There are thirteen large circular tiled pavements on the South Numantine slope, made from stones 50 cm deep (Fig. 27). They are about 3 meters in diameter and one is rectangular and measures 12 x 6.5 meters, with a cobbled paving and a cross on it. The long-held opinion that they were places for the exposure of corpses (Sopeña 1995: 248-250; Taracena 1982: 237, 256)

appears to be supported by the discovery of the Numantian necropolis nearby (Jimeno 1996: 57-58, 1999: 13-14), but it is still wise to be careful in this respect. The circular structures from Montecillo-Dulla (Burgos) (Sopeña 1995: 248), El Arenal (San Leonardo, Soria) and Castro del Zarranzano (Almarza, Soria), of undeniable anthropic origin, must have had a similar function (Alfayé 2001:63-64).

Figure 27. One of the thirteen large circular tile floors on the south Numantine slope, made from stones 50 cm deep. (Photo: A. Plaza).

Two Numantian tomb paintings are absolutely explicit: a dead fighter, lying on the ground, is approached by a vulture, which devours him (Sopeña 1995: 222-224, Figs. 52-54) (Figs. 28, 29). There are other examples of this motif on stelae from Lara de los Infantes (Burgos) (Marco Simón 1978: 144, nº 134-135; Sopeña 1995: 226-227, 240, Figs. 44-45). One of the iconographic variants of this ritual, the association of birds that carry the soul of the dead (symbolized by a head) to the Otherworld, is evident in a funerary urn from Uxama and in three other identical pieces, called "bird-urns" (Argente et al. 2000:196-197, Figs. 59-63; García Merino 1992; Martínez Quirce 1996: 169-171; Saiz 1992; Sopeña 1995), and may be the same as those represented on a *lunula* from Chao de Lamas, Portugal (Almagro-Gorbea and Lorrio 1992: 422-423; Marco Simón 1998: 393-395). These Celtiberian pieces are similar to Gaulish

Figures 28, 29. Numantine paintings: a dead fighter, lying on the floor, is approached by a vulture, which devours him. Museo Numantino, Soria. (Photos: A. Plaza).

ones like the lintel of the altar from the *oppidum* of Nages, although here the heads are inserted between horses (Benoit 1969: pl. XII); also worth mentioning are the characteristic ceramic pieces with human skulls forming a frieze from Galane (Lombez) many of which came from interments (Mesplé 1957: pl. III-45, XIII-5). Two sculptures of the *heroön* from Porcuna might also attest the presence of this ritual in this place (Blanco 1996: 596-598; Blázquez 2003: 72-73; Negueruela 1990: 77-82, 103-105, 92-94, Plates XXIII and XXXVII), but there is a debate over the nature of the panoplies and the mercenary nature of the Celtiberian warrior represented here (Quesada Sanz 1997: 626-632). The ritual of exposure is unquestionably seen on the stele from Zurita, in the Cantabrian territory (Peralta Labrador 2000: 175, 249-251; Sopeña 1995: Fig. 48).

The fibula from Drieves (Guadalajara) is an example of animal androphagy, a core concept of Celtic eschatology (Benoit 1948: 72 ff., 1949: 245-250, 1964; Green 2001: 97-101; Moitrieux 1999: 86 ff.) (Fig.30). The foot of the fibula comes in the shape of a head, with a helmet and torc, while the arch shows a symmetric scene in which the other head is devoured by a lion grabbing it between its paws. In the middle of the brooch is a circular torc, with clear eschatological connotations, alluding to the destruction of a part of the physical subject and to his integration into the supernatural world (Sopeña 1987: 119, n. 9, 1995: 228; Barril 2002).

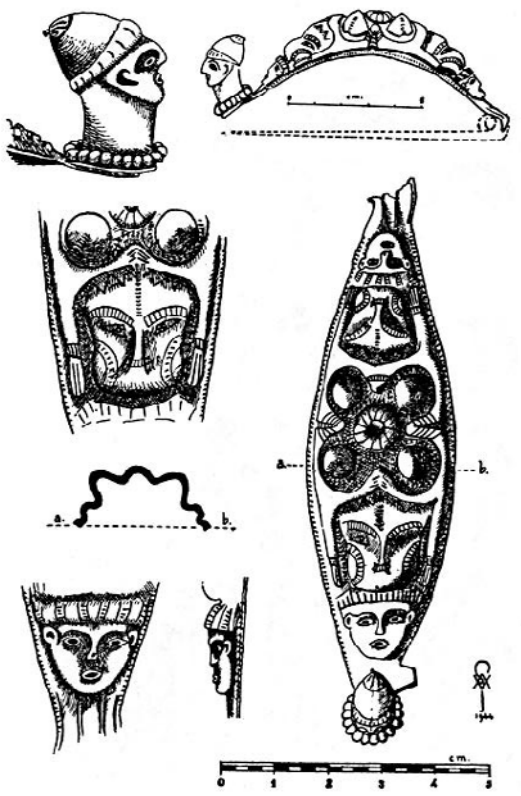

Figure 30. The fibula from Drieves (Guadalajara). Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid. (Sopeña 1995: Fig. 34).

It has been pointed out that in the Celtiberian coins of *Sekaiza* type the horseman occupies a clear position of heroic *ascensus*, as in the funerary stelae, and the bird of prey, together with the wolf, might be playing the role of connection with the Otherworld (Gomis 2001: 41-44). Another wonderful example of remarkable symbolism comes from Tiermes, with a vulture, a bleeding figure, another bird, and a wolf fight (García Quintela 1997; Sopeña 1995:

241-243) (Fig. 31). The examples of the Numantian Vase of the Warriors (Romero Carnicero 1999: 60 ff.; Olmos Romera 1986: 18; Sopeña 1995: 241-243) and the stelae from El Palao (Alcañiz, Teruel) and Binéfar (Marco Simón 1976: 76-77; Sopeña 1995: 243 n. 177, Fig. 46; 226-227, Fig. 47) cannot be attributed to this heroic concept with certainty (Alfayé 2004) (Fig. 32).

Figure 31. Ceramic painting from Tiermes representing the association of a bleeding man, a vulture, another bird, and a wolf fight. Museo Numantino, Soria. (Sopeña 1995: Fig. 64).

Figure 32. Stele from El Palao (Alcañiz, Teruel). (Photo: F. Marco Simón.

Basically, the information transmitted by Silius Italicus and Aelianus coincides with that provided by Pausanias (X, 21, 3) on the Gauls during his expedition to Delphi in the year 279 BC (Curchin 1995). The Celts consecrated those who died fighting far from the home country in this way because according to their beliefs, wild animals belonged in the divine world (Brunaux 1996a: 104-105, 165, 167, 2000: 244; Green 1992a).

The removal of flesh from corpses, which is well documented in the Celtic world, had a mortuary meaning that differed greatly from the Graeco-Roman practices (Brunaux 1986; Brunaux et al. 1999; Carr and Knüsel 1997; Green 2001; Lambot 1998; Parker Pearson 2000; Sopeña 1995: Chapter III; Wieland 1999). The last twenty-five years of research have revealed how interments were the culmination of previous, very complex rituals. Thousands of excavations have allowed us to draw for Gaul a panorama of funerary sobriety and scarcity of interments, especially in the latest stages. In the necropoli there is an apparent total lack of the wish to humanize the space. The removal of flesh before interment is clearly attested in sanctuaries like Ribemont (Brunaux et al. 1999: 206-212; Brunaux 2000: 238-241), but the

enormous deficit of interments, especially in the late La Tène period, can be explained, at least partially, by the exposure of corpses with the consequent destruction of most of the skeleton. The necropoli, indeed, do not seem to have been places for eternal rest, in the western *ad hoc* sense, but places for relegation and offerings, something that is not easy to interpret from a Classical perspective (Brunaux 1996a: 162-166, 1996b, 2000: 249; Dedet 2001: 260, 308-335; Demoule 1999: Chapter IV; Leman-Delerive 1998; Perrin 2000).

In the British Isles, most of the human remains dating from between the end of the Bronze Age and the Iron Age have been uncovered in ditches, silos and dwellings. The exposure of corpses was the dominant funerary practice: 95% of the population was disposed of in an archeologically invisible manner (Matthews 1999). The wooden structures on posts that characterize many settlements of this period were polyvalent platforms; one of their functions was the above-mentioned exposure of the dead (Ellison and Drewett 1971). In cases such as that of Flag Fen (Norfolk), the base was built on water and here the findings included not only human remains, but also weapons (Pryor 1991). Lastly, there is evidence of the gathering of some bones and their subsequent transportation, either at the same time or after the ultimate deposit, and on some occasions, of their complete destruction in a short time (Carr and Knüsel 1997; Cunliffe 1992; Healy and Housley 1992; Hill 1995; Parfitt 1995; Raftery 1981: 173-204; Sopeña 1995: 202-203; Waddell 1998: 279 ff.; Wait 1985: 83-121; Whimster 1981).

As far as Celtiberia is concerned, the cremation ritual lasted at least from the sixth century BC, *mutatis mutandis*, to the third and second centuries BC (Curchin 1997). In the necropoli, only some tombs stand out from the rest due to their rough stelae (Riba de Saelices) or coarse tumuli (la Yunta). However, the norm was the individual interment in the form of a simple deposit of an urn in a hole, with or without offerings and personal belongings (Burillo 1990; Cerdeño and García Huerta 2001; Lorrio 1997: 261-264, 275, 288-289; Sopeña 1995: 159-183) (Fig. 33). If the apparent lack of planning in the cemeteries of the Middle Celtiberian era (or *Celtibérico pleno*, from the fifth to third centuries BC) appears peculiar (some tombs were placed side by side, or very far from each other, or they

Figure 33. A tomb *in situ*, with funeral offerings, from the necropolis of Tiermes. (Photo: J.L. Argente).

overlapped and formed thick strata), the scarcity of interments, especially in the Upper Duero River region, is equally significant (García Soto-Mateos 1990: 26; Lorrio 1997: 114) and in *Celtiberia Citerior* (Burillo 1987: 77-78, 1998: 133) the figures relative to the burial population hardly provide any orientation at all for the living population of this area (Álvarez Sanchís 2003: 105-107; Álvarez Sanchís and Ruiz Zapatero 2001).

The depositing of the urn in the hole was the end of the funerary process (Fig. 34). But what happened in the preceding stages? Given the current state of knowledge, it is difficult to tell, although analysis shows that there is a significant loss in the percentage of bones deposited in the cemeteries, which were much less than 40% of the quantity contained in a skeleton; this must necessarily be due to ritual causes: apparently not just fresh corpses but also selected bones that had dried after the removal of the flesh were subsequently burnt (Agustí i Farjas 2001: 73-75; Cerdeño and García Huerta 2001: 164-167; Gómez Bellard 1996: 62; Trelliscó Carreño 2001: 90-93).

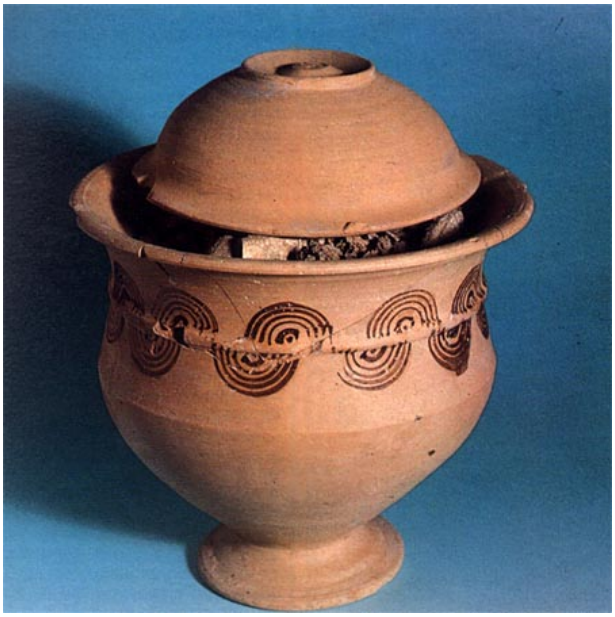

Figure 34. Funerary urn from the necropolis of La Yunta (Guadalajara), decorated with a band of waves. (Photo: J.A. García Castro).

In Tiermes, where 530 tombs have been analyzed, the organic material found seldom weighs more than 500g, while the ashes of a person of medium build should weigh more than 1500g. As a matter of fact, the lack of remains prevented the analysis of 94 of the studied cases. This indicates that only some parts of the body were burnt or that the ashes resulting from the pyre were only partially gathered (Argente et al. 1990: 18, 2000: 294, 298, 300-304). In Numantia, out of 23 uncovered tombs, only 14 provided remains of bone material, corresponding to skulls and extremities, a quantity which must be considered primarily symbolic, just enough for a cthonic offering. The frequent discovery of holes containing animal remains seems to prove the existence of cenotaphs. Forty-five such tombs are known from Carratiermes (Argente et al. 2000: 294) as well as being attested in numerous necropoli in Gaul (Perrin 2000: 99-100). This demonstrates that it was impossible to recover all the corpses or that some were completely

destroyed during exposure (Argente et al 2000: 309; García Huerta and Antona 1992: 148; Jimeno 2001: 246-247; Jimeno et al. 1996: 37, 42; Sopeña 1995: 243-262).

Tombs then, were not the only place for the dead in Celtiberia. The existence of two necropoli for a single town, together with the discovery of four skulls in a dwelling, in Numantia (Taracena 1943: 157-171; Sopeña 1995: 154, 246, 252-253; Alfayé 2001: 66-75) and three large tombs in the northeast sector, possibly including a Heroön (Alfayé 2001: 47-57; Sopeña 1995: 138-139 n. 85, 256-262) as well as certain ancient information relative to ossuaries, might indicate possible alterations in the crematory practices (Sopeña 2004) (Fig. 35). There are signs that the ordinary cremation ritual included a liminal period between the death and the burning that made the removal of the flesh possible. This does not imply that all corpses were exposed to birds, but simply that they might have become dried skeletons before their ultimate interment. The significant fact described by our sources is that only the worthiest people were privileged to be devoured and carried to heaven in a direct way by being ingested by an animal. Only the corpses of the men who had died fighting could not be burnt, represented by bones produced by nechrophagy that were preserved by Celtiberian communities (Sopeña 2004).

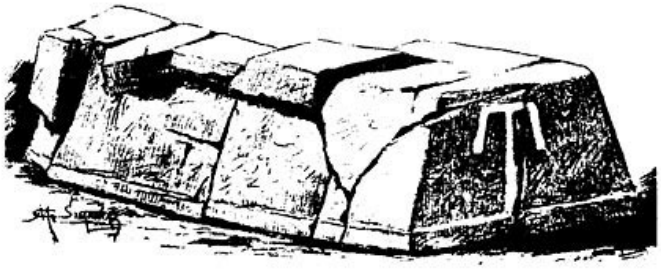

Figure 35. One of the three large tombs in the northeast sector of Numancia, maybe a *Heroön.* Museo Numantino, Soria. (González Simancas 1926; Sopeña 1995: Fig. 66).

The Celtiberians had a complex eschatological conception that was not a mere vegetative idea of the Otherworld (Sopeña 1987: 115-148, 1995: 268 ff.). The dismembering of the body and its subsequent treatment led Brunaux to consider the following three elements: an individual soul which is freed and has access to the Otherworld of Heroes, the skull (residence of war-like virtue, liable to be transmitted and/or venerated) and the rest of the body, whose function and destiny are more easily comprehended (Brunaux 1996a: 162-164, 2000: 243). The most desirable image of a world beyond death in Celtiberia contemplated a celestial goal for the soul, heaven being the dwelling of divinity: hence the rich astral iconography of Hispano-Roman stelae (Abásolo and Marco Simón 1995; Blázquez 1991: 256-60, 2003: 415-416; Green 1989; Marco Simón 1978). This idea of the Otherworld included all the elements: water (the proximity of rivers to the cemeteries is symptomatic) (Alvarez Sanchís 2003: 83; Sopeña 1995: 165), earth,

fire and air based on an individual idea of apotheosis. As a matter of fact, the most desirable access to the Otherworld was not proscriptive; everyone could achieve this personal happiness if they had achieved uirtus (Sopeña 1987 and 1995: *passim*). Everything seems to support the fact that Celtiberian funerals had an extraordinary social significance but they declined over time and only attached a relative value to tombs that, on some occasions, were simple cenotaphs.

The deep faith in the immortality of the soul, a topic for druidic speculations according to Poseidonius (in Diodorus, V, 28, 5-6, Caesar, *BG.*, VI, 14, Lucan, *Phars.*, I, 454-464 or Pomponius Mela, III, 2, 18 ff) (Velasco López 1998) is the key to understanding Celtiberian practices. To die was a virtuous exercise regarded as the fighter's ultimate vocation, which clearly affected the corpse of the dead person within the sacred war-space; this created a clear-cut model of sacrifice, given that the dead fighter became consecrated: *sacrum facere*, to make sacred. To sum up, in Celtiberia, as in the entire *Celtica* (Aelianus, *Hist. uar.* XII, 22), there was an oral heroic tradition, apparently preserved mainly by women, which reminded those who went to war of their ancestors' deeds (Sallust, *Hist.*, II, 92) and transmitted this ideal of life. This ideal, as observed by Lucan (Phars. I. 440-462), accompanied the soul of those who died with valour to the Otherworld - thanks to the song/guidance of poets. The death of Celtiberians during the fight was, indeed, a *Kalòs Thánatos*: a beautiful death.

Endnotes

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[2] Arevaci is our *lectio* (Sopeña and Ramón Palerm 2002). Scholfield reads Vaccaei and this is the *Lectio Vulgata*.

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