

SUPPLEMENTUM EPIGRAPHICUM MEDITERRANEUM 27-29

FURTHER EVIDENCE ON THE RELATION BETWEEN CELTIBERIAN
AND SOUTHWEST IBERIAN: THE CASE OF THE INSCRIPTION
FROM SASAMÓN

(*Supplementum Epigraphicum Mediterraneum* 27)

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In an earlier discussion of two southwest Iberian inscriptions, one from Abóbada and the other from Fonte Velha in southern Portugal (6th or 5th century BC), I have tried to demonstrate the Celtic (especially Gallic) nature of the language in which these inscriptions are conducted and of the people who are responsible for their making (Woudhuizen 1998-9). The connection of the southwest Iberian language with the nearest variant of Celtic, Celtiberian of northern central Spain, can be further underlined by a treatment of the Celtiberian inscription from Sasamón in the region of Burgos.

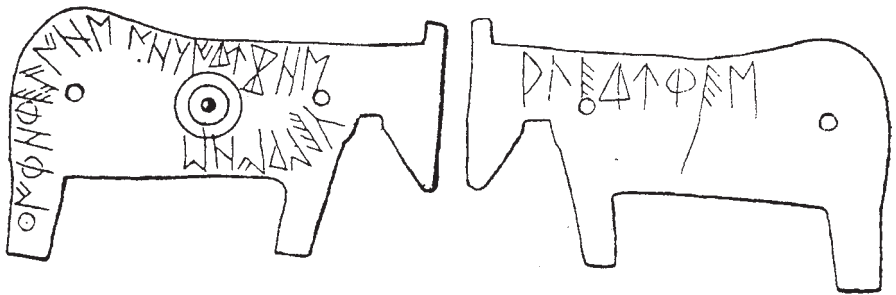


Fig. 1. Drawing of the bronze tessera from Sasamón (from Untermann 1997, 687).

The Sasamón text is inscribed on the front and back side of a bronze tessera in the form of a bull or a horse [or a donkey?]. This tessera has two suspension holes and is decorated on the front side by circles, a set of concentric ones in the middle and a dotted one marking the start of the text in the hind leg at the lower left side. On both sides the text runs continuously in left-to-right direction of writing; on the front side it partly encircles the central decoration motif just mentioned “in Slangenschrift” for mere lack of space (Fig. 1).

In the transcription of Jürgen Untermann as applied in his corpus of Celtiberian inscriptions, the Sasamón text, numbered K.14.1, reads in sum as follows (note that with the transcription of the Greek *san* as *ś* I adhere to Wolfgang Meid’s practice to distinguish the two sibilants – the other being the Greek *sigma* – in Celtiberian writing [Untermann 1997, 688; Meid 1993, 18]):

a. *irorekioś monituukooś nemaioś* b. *aletuureś*

A peculiarity of this inscription, which it shares with southwest Iberian counterparts, is that seemingly superfluous vowels are written where a syllabic sign would have sufficed. Hence it appears to be not syllabic in the peculiar Celtiberian way, but, like its southwest Iberian counterparts, alphabetic in a peculiar way according to which the different consonants of the velar-, labial- and dental-series are, on the analogy of Latin *ce/i, ka, qu*, preferably used in combination with different vowels (Woudhuizen 1998-9, 163). This might indicate that the Sasamón inscription is older than the main body of Celtiberian texts, usually assigned to the period between the years 133 and 50 BC (Untermann 1997, 363). At any rate, the foregoing observation allows us to carry through a simplification of the transcription, also applied by Jürgen Untermann in his commentary, according to which the text reads as follows:

a. *irorekioś monitukoś nemaioś* b. *aletureś*

The division of the words in the part of the text on the front side is based on the recurrence of the respective entities in other Celtiberian texts. Thus the sequence *nemaioś* is also attested for a fish-shaped bronze tessera in Latin script from Sasamón, again, catalogued as K.14.2 by Untermann in his corpus, where it occurs at the end of the text aligned with the female personal name *Desvaeona* in the nominative by the enclitic conjunction *-q*, comparable to Latin *-que* “and”. Furthermore, *monitukoś* recalls the second element of the couple *matres Monitucinae* as recorded for a Latin inscription from Salas de los Infantes in Burgos. Finally, the remaining first sequence *irorekioś* is compared to the family name *Irrico*. It is stipulated in connection with this last comparison that the second element *rekioś* is based on the Proto-Indo-European (= PIE) root **rēǵ-* “king” as evidenced by the common Gallic onomastic element *rix* (Untermann 1997, 688).¹

In my work on the Abóbada inscription, numbered J.12.1 by Untermann in his corpus, I have shown that in southwest Iberian the Gallic dedicatory verb *eivrou* or *ieuru* “(s)he has dedicated” occurs in form of *iru*, and preferably so in first position, as is also the case in yet another southwest Iberian inscrip-

¹ Cf. Delamarre 2003, s.v. *rix*. In Celtiberian, this onomastic element is represented as well, cf. *Teiuoreikiś* “of Deivoreks” in line 8 of the Luzaga bronze inscription, catalogued by Untermann as K.6.1 in his corpus.

tion, namely the one from Arinhal dos Mouros, which is catalogued as J.7.9 by Untermann in his corpus (Woudhuizen 1998-9, 166; cf. Delamarre 2003, s.v. *ieuru*). On the analogy of this form, it seems likely that our initial *iro* constitutes a separate entity, *in casu* the Celtiberian variant of the Gallic dedicatory verb in question. This analysis receives further emphasis from the fact that a participial derivation of the PIE root **rēǵ-*, viz. *rekatiś* (cf. Latin *regentis*), features in the dating-formula of the other southwest Iberian inscription which I treated, the one from Fonte Velha (Woudhuizen 1998-9, 168). In line with this observation, namely, our form *rekioś*, which appears to be an adjectival derivative in *-io-*, viz. “royal”, may likewise be assumed to mark a dating-formula, reading literally “during [= temporal genitive in *-s*] the royal (term of office)”, which in effect boils down to “during the kingship”. As a corollary to this line of reasoning, the personal name *nemaios*, which is obviously masculine, and the corresponding ethnic adjective in *-ko-*, *monitukoś*, are not characterized by the nominative singular ending *-s*, but by the *genitive* singular which likewise ends in *-s*, thus forming a temporal expression with the third genitive singular in a row, *rekioś*. In sum, this leads us to the translation of the entire sequence *rekioś monitukoś nemaios* as “during the kingship of Nemaïos, the Monitucian” (Untermann 1997: 404, § 645).

The entry on the back side, *aletureś*, is convincingly identified by Untermann as a nominative plural in *-eś* (Untermann 1997: 405, § 648). Moreover, it is plausibly suggested that the stem in question constitutes a compound of a prefix *ale-*, which originates from an original **are-* by dissimilation, with the root *tur-*. This analysis is further elaborated by Dagmar Wodtko, who amplifies that, according to a suggestion by Michel Lejeune, the prefix **are-* corresponds to Gallic *are-* < **para-* “along” and the root *tur-* bears reference to the river name *Durius* “Duero”, so that we are actually confronted here with a formation similar to Gallic *are-sequani* “the (inhabitants of the region) along the Seine” (Wodtko 2000, s.v. *aletuures*; cf. Delamarre 2003, s.v. *are-*). The plausibility of the given analysis is strongly enhanced by the inference that the ethnic of the king in the dating-formula, *monituko-*, for its attestation in a Latin text from Burgos, may in fact be a derivative of the ancient name of the latter city, which lies along a branch of the Duero, now called Arlanzón, but perhaps also *Durius* in antiquity (Fig. 2). At any rate, the region of the upper Duero more in general is recorded to have been inhabited by the Celtic *Turones* according to the ancient literary sources, which, in the reconstruction of Pedro Bosch-Gimpera, effectively means from about the 8th century BC onwards (Bosch-Gimpera 1939: 39; Maps II-III; see further below). Note, however, that because of the plural nature of the subject we should have expected the verb *iro* to be marked as such, which, in view of the relevant Gallic parallel *iourus* “they have dedicated”, appears not to be the case (Delamarre 2003, s.v. *ieuru*; esp. 335 [L-12, G-271]). Notwithstanding this apparent oversight by the scribe, we may safely translate *iro (...) aletureś* as “the (inhabitants of the region) along the Duero have dedicated”.

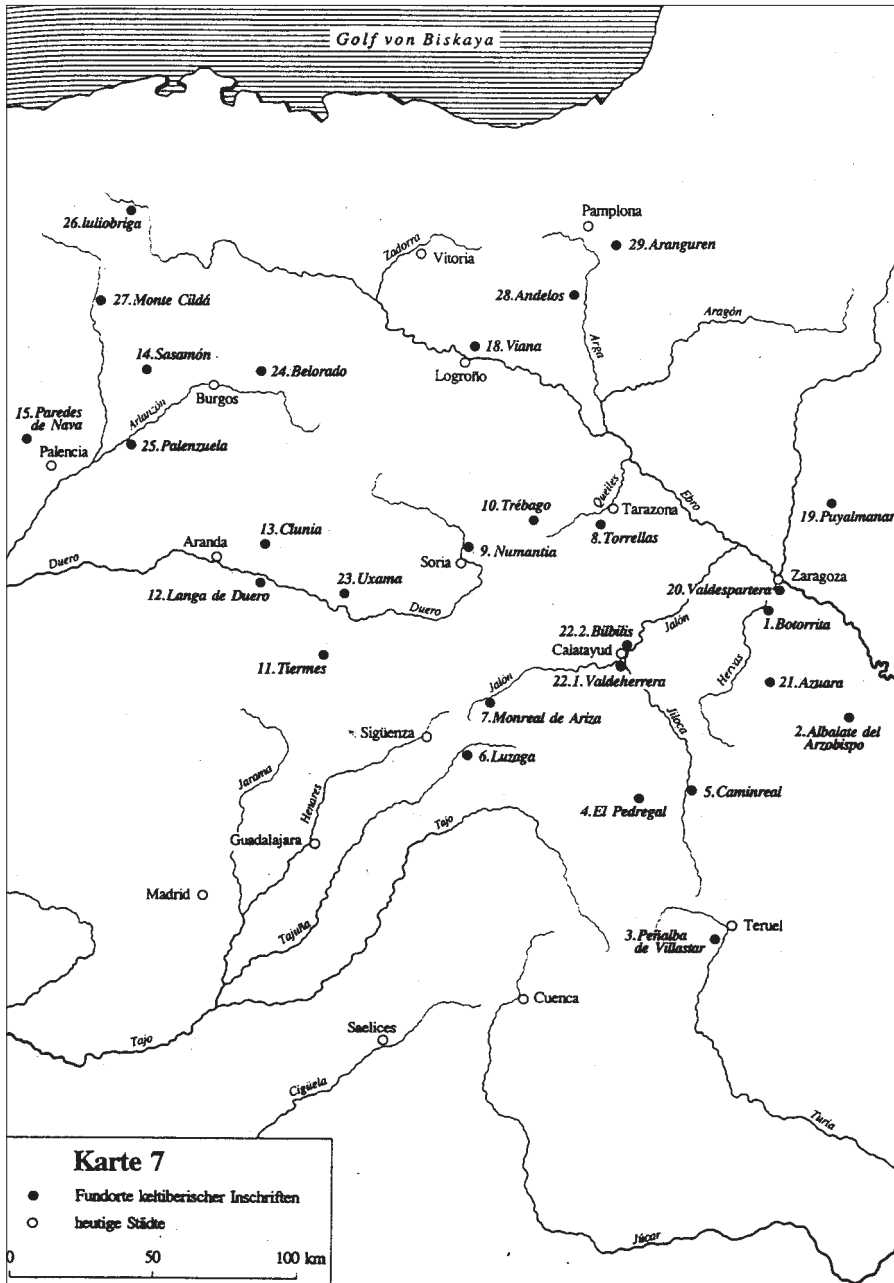


Fig. 2. Distribution of Celtiberian inscriptions (from Untermann 1997, 439, Karte 7).

All in all, we arrive at the following transcription and translation of the inscription from Sasamón:

- a. *iro rekioś monitukoś nemaioś* “The (inhabitants of the region)
b. *aletureś* along the Duero have dedicated
during the kingship of Nemaioś,
the Monitucian.”

This short inscription of five words in sum contains as much as four words or elements of a clearly Celtic, especially Gallic, nature: the dedicatory verb *iro*, the magistracy *rekio-*, and the preposition *ale-* < **are-*, all discussed in the above, to which may be added the personal name *nemaio-*, which appears to be an adjectival derivative of the root *nem-* also present in *nemeton* or *drunemeton*, the typical Gallic indication of a (tree-)sanctuary, and in the related Celtiberian place name *Nemetobriga*². Of these four patently Celtic forms, two or possibly three are also present in the two southwest Iberian inscriptions from Abóbada and Fonte Velha, used here for comparative purposes: the dedicatory verb *iru* and the participle *rekatiś* indicative of the dating-formula, discussed in the above, to which perhaps may be added the preposition *ero-* which in the compound *eromare-* appears to be a local dialectal variant of Gallic *are-* as in the similar formation *aremorici* “the (inhabitants of the region) along the sea” (Woudhuizen 1998-9, 166, note 21). In addition to this, the two southwest Iberian inscriptions in question contain further patent Celtic forms like the kinship term *kenti-*, corresponding to Celtiberian *kentiś* (Wodtko 2000, s.v. *kentis*; Meid 2000, 9), and the onomastic elements *numat-* and **nerti-*, also present in the Celtiberian place names *Numantia* and *Nertobriga* (Woudhuizen 1998-9, 166). Finally, the use of the onomastic element **kalti-* may indicate that the people responsible for the southwest Iberian inscriptions considered themselves to be Celts, indeed (Woudhuizen 1998-9: 168, note 26). From a linguistic point of view, then, Celtiberian and southwest Iberian are obviously two branches of one and the same Celtic or Gallic parent language – which, in the case of Celtiberian, can be further specified as *q*-Celtic (Meid 1996: 16 [**equeisos*]).

Now, according to the interdisciplinary reconstruction of Bosch-Gimpera, there have been two Celtic “waves” in Spain, one indicated by the extension of the European urnfield culture to the region of the mouth of the Ebro in Catalonia, dated *ca.* 1200-900 BC, and yet another reflected in the archaeological material by a later variant of the European urnfield culture taking possession of the Spanish heartland, an event dated *ca.* 800-650 BC (Bosch-Gimpera 1939, Maps I-II). Of these two Celtic migrations, Bosch-Gimpera

² Delamarre 2003, s.v. *nemeton*; cf. also Phrygian *Nemean* games and *Nemesis*, on which see Woudhuizen 1993.

convincingly argued that the first may well be held responsible for the typical Celtic names in *-dunum* attested for the region of Catalonia, like *Vinodunum*, *Beseldunum* and *Salardunum* (Bosch-Gimpera 1939: 242). In line with this inference, the second Celtic migration is likely to be linked up with the spread of Celtic names in *-briga*, like *Nemetobriga*, *Nertobriga* and *Segobriga*, which are concentrated in the Spanish heartland, but extend all over the western part of the peninsula. The relatively later date of the place names in *-briga* as compared to the ones in *-dunum* appears to be underlined by the fact that the first were still productive in the time of the Galatian migration to Asia Minor (*Eccobriga*) and even well into the Roman period (*Cesarobriga*, *Augustobriga*, *Iuliobriga*, *Flaviobriga*), whereas the latter were not³. From an historical point of view, Bosch-Gimpera connects his second “wave” with the arrival of the Celtic tribes of the *Cempsi* in southern Portugal, the *Berybraces* in the region of Valencia and the *Turones* in the Spanish heartland along the upper Duero, to name just a few examples relevant to our cause. At any rate, the *terminus ante quem* for the arrival of the *Cempsi* and *Berybraces* is formed by their mention in the Massiliote *periplus*, usually considered to depict the ethnic situation around the middle of the 6th century BC⁴. This coincides with the information from Herodotus (*Histories* I, 163) that the Tartessians were ruled by a king *Arganthonios* at the time of the Phokaian trade with them during the 6th century BC – the name of the king being based on the Celtiberian word for silver, **arakanto-*, which also figures in the Celtiberian magistracy for a monetary official, *arkanta toutinikum* “treasurer of the citizens”, as mentioned in the inscription from Botorrita discovered in 1992 (Untermann 1997, K.1.3 III 44; cf. Meid 2000, 13; Meid 1996, 42), no doubt being modelled after the Gallic *argantodanos*⁵. It may safely be concluded, therefore, that the land of the Tartessians in southwest Iberia was already thoroughly Celticized at the time that the inscriptions in the southwest Iberian script were written down. In order to explain the Celtic migrations into the Iberian peninsula, it might be of relevance to note that, insofar as Bosch-Gimpera’s second “wave” is concerned, the newcomers – given the partial overlap of their new archaeological material culture on the one hand and their southwest Iberian inscriptions on the other hand with the distribution of findspots of stone stelae decorated with horse-drawn wagons and chariots dated to the 8th or 7th century BC – brought a new military technique with them in the form of the horse-drawn battle chariot (Figs. 3-4)⁶. Maybe, they were attracted by the new

³ Rix 1954, esp. Abb. 1-2; cf. Faust 1975, 205, Abb. 5. Note, however, that Rix considers the chronology of the *-dunum* and *-briga* names to be reversed.

⁴ Bosch-Gimpera 1939, 73; Map III; cf. 70-1 (note that the date of c. 650 BC assigned to the *periplus* is much too early, Massalia being founded c. 600 BC).

⁵ Delamarre 2003, s.v. For the common use of magistracies as personal names, see Woudhuizen 2006, section 12, note 424.

⁶ Niemeyer 2002, 194-5, Abb. 4a-b; Piggot 1983, 131-2.

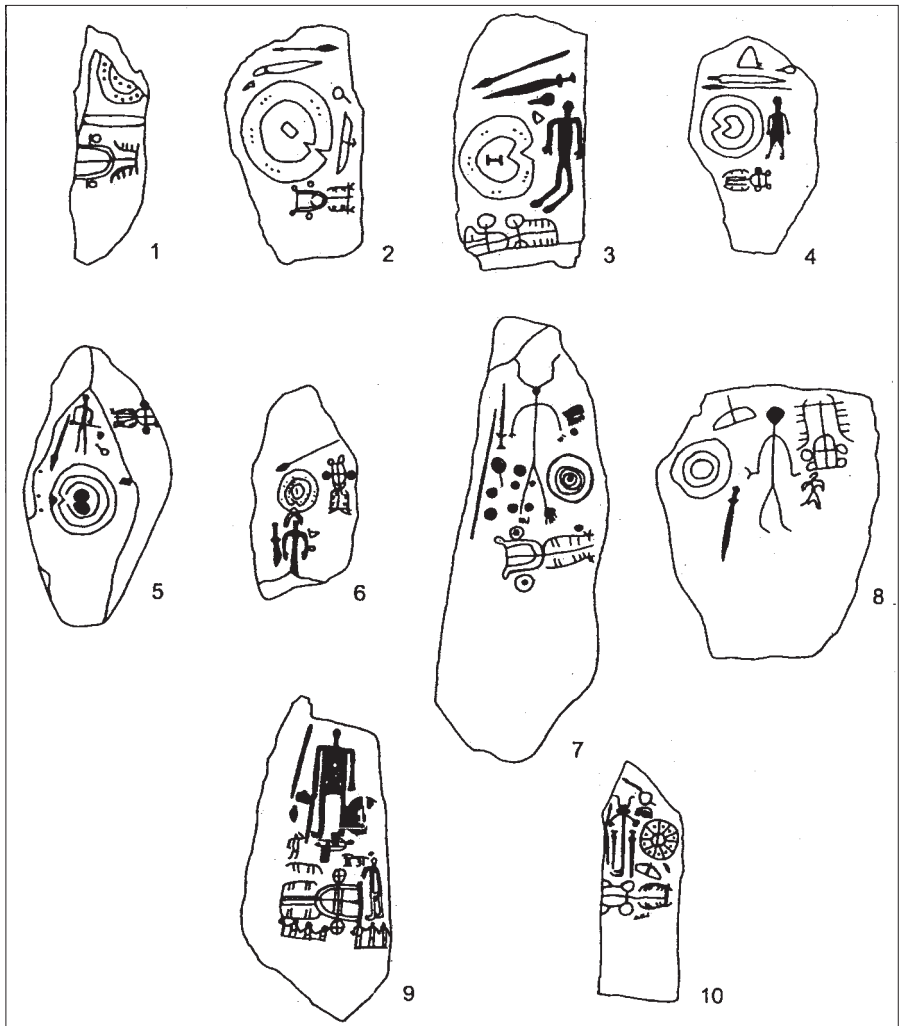


Fig. 3. Stone stelae decorated with horse-drawn wagons and chariots (from Niemeyer 2002, 194, Abb. 4a).

opportunities offered by the Phoenician trade and colonization at the time. Whatever the extent of this latter suggestion, the introducers of the war chariot were certainly aware of the wealth offered by the mineral resources of the Sierra Morena along the upper Guadalquivir, which region is included in the distribution of the decorated stone stelae just mentioned.

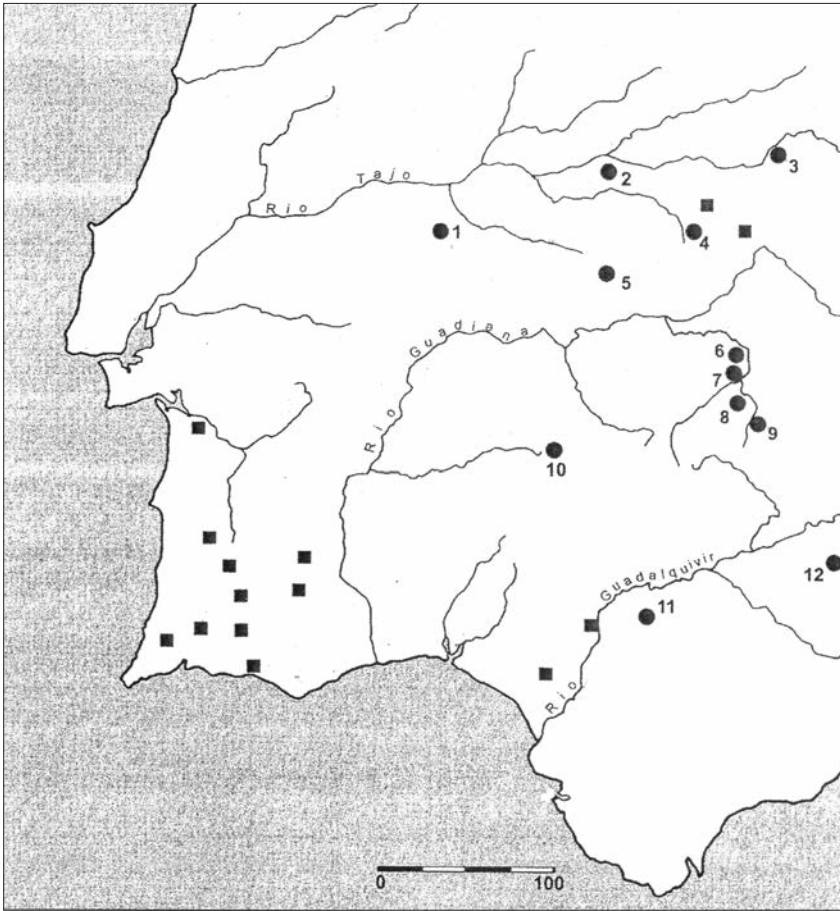


Fig. 4. Distribution of (a) stone stelae decorated with horse-drawn wagons and chariots, (b) southwest Iberian inscriptions (after Niemeyer 2002, 195, Abb. 4b).

- (a)
- (b)

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