

## Hispano-Celtic Languages

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### Introduction

Celtic documentation from Spain dates back to the second century B.C., predating the Ogham funerary inscriptions of Ireland by about four hundred years. They were inscribed sometimes in the Roman alphabet, sometimes in that curious semi-syllabic writing system employed by the ancient Iberians. Both Roman and Iberian cultures were in immediate contact with the Celtic tribes of the eastern portion of the Peninsula.

The significance of these early inscriptions lies not only in their philological importance but also in their linguistic characteristics which are helpful in piecing together the even earlier common Celtic of Europe, and the relationship of Celtic to Italic languages and to Proto-Indo-European.

The phonological make-up of Hispano-Celtic, as revealed by the documentation, also points the way to a more specific determination of substratum influences that helped shape peninsular Romance language during the period of Roman hegemony.<sup>1</sup>

While the archaeological record reveals Celtic occupation of the Iberian Peninsula from the Pyrenees to the Atlantic littoral of Portugal, the aggregation of Hispano-Celtic peoples who dwelt in the eastern portion of the central meseta are often referred to as Celtiberians, first cited in the third century B.C., by Polybius and Livy.

From the Roman point of view, Celtiberia was a poor region of uncompromising harshness, but nevertheless, rather well populated by various tribes, the most numerous of which was the Arevacos, an agricultural people who were situated on the slopes of the Upper Duero river and who inhabited such towns as the famous Numantia (in the vicinity of present-day Soria) known for its heroic resistance to Roman subjugation.

### Phonological Features

The Celtiberian language seems to have preserved the archaic Indo-European labio-velar sound /k<sup>w</sup>/, lost for example in the Celtic languages of Great Britain. The preservation of this complex phonological unit appears in Hispanic names such as Equabona, Equosera, Aquae Querquernae, Arguius, Equaesus, etc. Similarly, the semi-consonantal /y/ appears to have occurred in the words Belaiocun, Araianom and /w/ in Deiuroreigis. The consonantal system for Celtiberian

may be schematically presented as follows:

-	t	k	k <sup>w</sup>
	b	d	g
	m	n	-
		s	
		l	
		r	
w			y

In contrast to other Indo-European languages, Celtic stands out for the loss of the sound /p/, compare Latin pater, Greek πατήρ Gothic fadar and Irish athir 'father'. In some specific environments the reflex of Indo-European /p/ was /x/, compare Latin septem and Irish secht 'seven'. Among some Celtic languages, the sound /x/ was vocalized as is evident in Middle Welsh seith. The phoneme /p/ of Indo-European origin seems to have suffered a similar fate in Celtiberian judging from its absence in inscriptions.

The archaic Indo-European features of Iberian Celtic are manifest in the preservation of diphthongs of which the proto language was thought to have contained at least six: ai, ei, eu, oi, ou, and au.

The glides ai, au, and oi occurred in Classical Latin, while the others, prior to their merger with long vowels, occurred in Early Latin and Greek, e.g., Latin deico 'dico', douco 'duco', Greek peitho, ourei, leukós. Celtiberian seemed to contain all six diphthongs and although eu often appeared as ou, it nevertheless was retained in the word teuto on an inscription from the province of Zamora.<sup>2</sup>

#### A Celtiberian Inscription

A number of inscriptions discovered this century in the vicinity of Peñalba de Villastar in the province of Teruel were, for the most part, written in the Latin alphabet. One of the texts reads:

eniorosei  
uta tiginō tiatunel  
erecaias to luguei  
araianom comeímu  
eniorosei equéisuique  
ogris ologas togias sistat luguei tiaso  
togias<sup>3</sup>

### Analysis of the Text

The first word of the document, eniorosei, at first glance, appears to carry the P.I.E. dative ending of -ei of consonant stems and found also in other words of the text such as the fourth, tiatunei. According to one view, this word stood for the name of a priest or magistrat<sup>4</sup>; another view considered it to have been a verbal construction meaning 'I dedicate'. The latter best suits the context but it must be assumed that -ei was not a dative singular but a first person singular marker.<sup>5</sup>

The first part of the word eni- appears related to Latin enim 'in truth', 'in fact', 'assuredly', etc. and occurs in other Italic languages such as Umbrian enem. In Celtic lenition of nasals was common. The sequence oro- seems to be connected with Latin orare 'to speak', an ancient form of the religious and juridical language whose usage in Celtic suggests a solemn or ritual affair. The Celtic form can also be equated with Sanskrit arya- 'praiser', and Russian orătĭ 'cry', and Breton oroit which appears cognate to Latin oratio, and so on.

It is interesting to note that Meillet assumed an ending -ei for Celtic o-stem forms in the second person singular<sup>6</sup> (without benefit of Celtiberian texts), and derived Irish -bir from \*bherei 'carry'. Other stems had the usual Indo-European desinence -si. The ending -si may have then been the simple form (as if it were a pronoun) and -ei the conjunct ending, i.e., \*bherei-si 'Irish biri; \*-bherei 'Irish -bir.

The sign s seems to mark the preterit of Indo-European origins (s-aorist) as found for example in the Irish simple preterit of the second person singular carsi 'I love', and the conjunct preterit -caris.

The personal ending of the second person singular preterit, then, was -sei which gave rise to Irish -caris (via metathesis), i.e., /\*kar-s-ei/ > /\*kar-s-i/ > /kar-i-s/.

In short, eni-oro-s-ei consisted of the adverbial eni-, the conjunctive verb form oro, the preterit marker -s-, and the second person singular ending for conjunct verb forms -ei, and seemed to mean 'thou has dedicated' where the antecedent of 'thou' appears to have been some unstated deity.

The word uta is clearly related to the Latin adverb ut from uti and Old Latin utei, 'thus, accordingly.' Avestan uti, Sanskrit uta...uta 'not only...' 'but also' demonstrates the Indo-European nature of the word and on the basis of Latin ita and aliuta it might be supposed that Latin also had an earlier uta.

The sequence tigino tiatunei appears to have been a name, the first in the genitive singular, and perhaps a patronymic, the second in the dative singular, with both words conveying the meaning 'to Tiatun of Tigino.'<sup>7</sup>

erecaias, a noun in the accusative plural, appears to indicate 'enclosures' and stands as the object of the sentence. It is composed of the word \*peri 'around', and cai 'field', compare Welsh cai 'field', but originally a fence or hedge. The accusative plural ending -as of a-stems is of Indo-European derivation, cf. Sanskrit senas, Latin puellas, etc.

The sentence reads: 'Thou hast dedicated (these) enclosures to Tiatun of Tigino'.

The sequence to luguei corresponds to the dative singular of Indo-European u-stem nouns and is here introduced by the preposition to (comparable to English 'to', German 'zu') and refers to the Celtic deity Lug, a name which also occurred in Ancient Gaul as in the name Lugdunensis and Lugdunum (Lyon).

araianom may be segmented as ara-ian-om, an accusative singular form meaning (this) land or cultivated field. Note Breton arat, Welsh are-, Irish air- 'plow, cultivate', and Latin arare from Proto-Indo-European ar- 'to plow'. The form -ian may be related to Welsh llan, a word for enclosure but which once meant 'land'.

In the above text comeimu clearly seems to be a verbal form and has been analyzed as com-mei-mu, a first person plural built on the root mei with the prefix com- and the first person plural marker -mu (compare Latin com and -mus).

The meaning of this word is not entirely clear, but if the root mei can be equated with Sanskrit mah 'bestow', then the sequence reads: 'to Lug we bestow (the) cultivated land'.

equeisuique also seems to be a proper name in the dative singular and derived from Indo-European \*ekuo 'horse' which, along with the preceding word reads: 'Thou has dedicated to Equeisui'. The enclitic que presumably means 'and'. If the form is segmented into equ-ei-sui-que, the sui remains somewhat inexplicable.<sup>8</sup> As mentioned earlier, the Celtic name Equaesus does appear elsewhere on the Iberian Peninsula.

The next word in the text, ogris, appears related to Latin ager 'field' (cf. the genitive agri and the dative plural agris, Greek αγρός, Gothic akrs, etc. from \*agros). The Hispano-Celtic form is probably an accusative plural. According to Ernout and Meillet,<sup>9</sup> the word is not known in Celtic but ogris seems to contradict this statement. The P.I.E. root \*ag- 'drive' seems to have given rise to ager, ogris, that is, a place where the cattle were driven, a pasture or field.

Also, apparently in the accusative plural, olgas is here translated as 'gardens' and derived from an earlier reconstructed form \*olga-s. olca, as a Gaulish word was first cited by Gregory of Tours with the comment 'campus tellure fecundus, tales enim incolae olcas uocant'.

The Celtic root \*togi- is, perhaps, the same word as toki in Basque, borrowed from the Celts. It means 'place' or, as in Biscayan, 'stable'. Compare also Irish tugae 'strodach' or 'thatched roof', Latin toga 'covering' and the Hispano-Celtic togias an accusative plural which can perhaps be assigned the meaning 'houses' (including dwellings (coverings?) for man and beast).

A reduplicated form of the stem \*sta- seems to give sistat of the text, a third person singular form of the verb (although togias, etc. as subject is in the plural, this is not uncommon in Celtic). The verb appears comparable to Latin sto, stas... Note, also, however, Latin sistere (sisto, sistis, etc.) which in juridical Latin could mean 'to present', that is, 'to make stand or produce in court'. The word occurred in Umbrian sestu. The Hispano-Celtic word could conceivably have been a cross between sto and sisto. It is here translated as 'presents' or 'dedicates'.

The object of the verb seems to be luguei 'to Lug' in the dative singular. It is possible that the verb has an impersonal subject with Lug the indirect object, and tiaso togias, the last two words of the text, serving as direct objects. tiaso presents a problem inasmuch as its relationship with possible cognates is obscure. If the form is in the genitive singular, we could have Lug of Tiaso. Compare English thiasus from Greek θιαος.

#### Conclusion

Often, as in this case, Hispano-Celtic documentation appears in the form of land titles or agreements in the realm of ager publicus and, perhaps, drawn up by magistrates and priests (a kind of commentarii).

These epigraphic remains of which some of the most important have been unearthed only in the past few decades, clearly add another dimension to Celtic studies and as Hispano-Celtic inquiries move into an era of language description and analysis, the generally token references given to this branch of the family in linguistic surveys will, no doubt, give way to more comprehensive statements.

Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The reduction of /-kt-/, for example, common to Western Romance, also occurred in Hispano-Celtic. The name of a Numantian leader, Retogenes corresponds to Rectugenus, attested in Ancient Gaul as Reitugenus. See Whatmough, p. 972.
- <sup>2</sup> Tovar 1961, p. 81.
- <sup>3</sup> For this text see also Schwerteck, pp. 185ff.
- <sup>4</sup> Tovar 1946.
- <sup>5</sup> Schwerteck, p. 186.
- <sup>6</sup> See Lewis and Pedersen, p. 282.
- <sup>7</sup> The case ending -o seems to have derived from P.I.E. \*-os of consonantal stems. Final -s was lost, cf. \*wir-os and \*reg-s Irish fir and rig in the genitive singular.  
  
The name Tigino may have been related to Latin Tignarius 'carpenter' from tignum 'building material' and ultimately to \*tek- 'cut, hew'.
- <sup>8</sup> Note Latin sui 'himself', a reflexive third person pronoun, Irish sui 'a sage' Welsh syw 'wise', etc.
- <sup>9</sup> See Ernout and Meillet, p. 15.

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