

### **Carn Liath Broch: 'Enclosure. Man of Iron thus formed a clan here'**

North of Inverness, Scotland, an inscription within Carn Liath Broch is written in Iberian, at a time when Picts inhabited Scotland. This inscription raises the possibility that Picts spoke Iberian, a dialect of Finnish.

Carn Liath broch overlooks the North Sea on a built-up mound between Golspie and Brora, close to highway A9. Another two hundred confirmed brochs and three hundred probable brochs populate Scotland and the surrounding islands, like Shetland, Orkney and Harris.

A broch comprises a tall, circular house with massive, double walls built up of large stones and roofed with thatch (Figure 1). A thick, wooden door on hinges sealed the entrance. Between the double walls, a stone stairway connected multiple habitation levels on wooden floors supported by posts. Near the broch, cattle grazed in pastures, while stone walls surrounded fields of grass to be harvested for hay. Like Carn Liath Broch, most were built atop cliffs or defensible mounds. While unable to withstand a long siege, close proximity to other brochs provided a measure of mutual defense. As the population of each broch outgrew the interior, they added rectangular stone-walled barns and cottages around the base.

*Figure 1 Examples of restored brochs and a cutaway of a broch.*



Initial construction of brochs occurred during the early Bronze Age, between 3000 BC and 2400 BC, until catastrophe annihilated animals and people alike in England and Ireland. Afterward, huge numbers of brochs were built in Sardinia. Millennia later, between 500 BC and 100 AD, iron-age settlers restored many brochs, giving the false impression that these later settlers originated the design.

Iberian inscriptions occur in Spain from 700 BC to 100 AD; the language is Finnish, the script a daughter of Old European. This broch has two good radiocarbon dates, 2900 BC and 400 BC, so the inscription dates from around 400 BC, Iron Age, when Iberians restored the broch.

Iberians arrived in Spain around 700 BC, apparently from Turkey/Albania as some deities are from that region: Ishtar and High Tomar. Before that they apparently came from the eastern Baltic Sea around 1280 BC, as other deities include Tyr and Thor. Their writing resembles that of Etruscans, who arrived in Italy about the same time. Iberians brought with them a short steel sword able to pierce leather armor that Rome later adopted for infantry. Iberians raised horses, lived in hilltop forts, and fought Carthaginians, then Romans. The arrival of Iberians in Scotland

may result from a war against Rome. If so, it might account for the implacable resistance of Scots to Roman rule.

At Carn Liath Broch, the sea once lapped the foot of the steep hillside, but now lies some distance away as a result of glacial rebound. North and south lie broad fields planted in grass or barley, while thick woods blanket a mountain to the west. The Iron-age settlers added an entrance passageway facing east, and likely added some buildings at the base.

*Figure 2 Aerial view of Carn Liath Broch. The grey ring lines inside the broch. Grass grows on top of the double wall, whose spacing has been filled with rubble.*



Chiseled into a long, flat stone within the entrance corridor is the Iberian text, which reads left to right (Figure 3). An unusual element of the text is a breathing dot at the end of the second phrase where none is needed. The two dots tell the reader to repeat the inscription between dots, changing the words between readings.

### Translation

Iberian: TA • MI RA NI LO LA TÄ • MI RA NI LO LA TÄ

Finnish: Tahan. Mies rauan niin loi laji tähän. Mies rajan niin loi lauat tähän.

English: Enclosure. Man of Iron thus formed a clan here. A man from the border then made platforms for this.

*Figure 3 Cairn Liath Broch transcription.*



### Notes on Translation

**TA**, a noun, reads *tahan* meaning ‘enclosure’, which describes the broch. This letter would normally be drawn like a backward P, but by changing circular elements into straight lines, it conveys the idea of an enclosure made of rectangular stones.

**MI**, a noun, resembles a man with two legs; it reads both singular *mie* meaning ‘man’ and plural *miehet* meaning ‘men, people’, but must match the verb LO, which is singular.

**RA**, an adjective, has three meanings: *rauan* ‘of iron’, *rauhan* ‘of peace’, and *rajan* ‘from the border’. One of these makes a name, ‘Man of Iron’. Another describes the carpenter who built

the platforms, 'man from the border'. Apparently the border region between Scotland and England existed before Roman occupation.

**NI**, a conjunction, reads *niin* meaning both 'thus' and 'then'.

**LO**, a verb, reads *loi* meaning 'he-she-it formed, created'.

**LA**, a noun, reads both *laji* 'clan' and *lauat* 'platforms'.

**TÄ**, a modifier, reads both *tähän* 'here' and *tähän* 'for this'.

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