
Ancient Europe and America

Part 5

The Olmec Roller Stamps

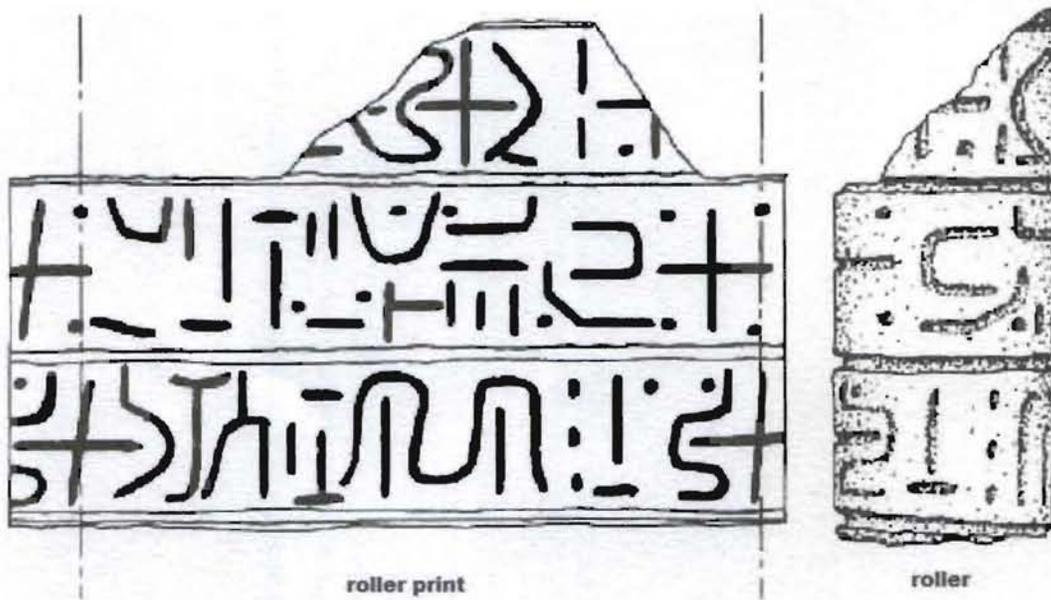
In an article by David H. Kelley of the July 1966 issue of *American Antiquity*, was published the description of the 1948 archaeological dig at Tlatilco of the finding at of a "cylinder seal" or roller stamp measuring 8.5 cm. long and 3.5 cm. in diameter. The artifact was found buried with a type "D" figurine at the level of the "Olmec" horizon (circa 1000-500 BCE). During the 1960s, Kelley, an emeritus professor from the Department of Archaeology at the University of Calgary, first taught at Texas Tech and

then at the University of Nebraska. Photographs of the stamp by Kelly are now kept at the Milwaukee Public Museum. On the stamp are engraved three bands of text. Unfortunately, the top one is partially broken away thus giving us only a partial reading possibility. Luckily, the two other bands of the registry are complete. And as noted by Kelly, *"All three registers clearly carry sequences of arbitrary symbols which are surely part of a hitherto unknown writing system."*

The fact that this writing system went undecipherable added to the mystery surrounding this artifact of Olmec culture. Some epigraphists were quick to notice the great similitude the Olmec roller seals have with Punic or Phoenician ones. When Jon Haskel brought these to my attention, I was astounded for they very much looked like Philistine stamps. Although Palestine was destroyed in 604 BCE when the Assyrians overran the land and sold the inhabitants into slavery, it culturally survived in its colony of Southern Iberia by the Baetis River. However, the fatal end of Philistine culture in the Levant around the VIIth century does not mean that these people had not started colonizing South Iberia at an earlier period. This is what I had first speculated when I replied this to Mr Haskell's e-mail concerning the Mexican roller stamps:

"The writing and glyphs looks like early Philistine. To the best of my knowledge, it could be from the Philistine pre-Tartessian period of southern Spain (circa 1st millennium BCE, from around -1100 to -1000)."

Chronology	
<p style="text-align: center;">Philistine culture</p> <p>Beginning circa 1300 to 1200 BCE Ending around 604 BCE Turdetanian (Tartessos) culture Beginning 900 or 800 BCE with an eastern mediteranean influx c.720 BC Ending with the Roman conquest, First Punic War from 264 to 241 BCE.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Olmec culture</p> <p>From c. 1200 BCE to c. 400 BCE and peaking between 1200 and 900 BCE.</p>



Roller stamp from Tlatilco, Mexico, after a photograph from Milwaukee Public Museum, Kelly, p. 745.



Line one (fragmentary):
 (...)rdnii'd?(...)

rdnii < redonii, genitive pl. of redones "runners, racers", ethnic Armorican Celtic name Redones from the coastal area of Rennes, France;

Line two:

Giéfe ie ax'pé g'p ede

Geie vocative case of geios "dashing, impetuous";

ieaxpe, iaxos < iaccos "healthy, well-off, prosperous" + -pe ;

c'pe voc of cepos / cebos "trunk, post, shaft"; ceppos c.m.n. "garden";

ede, edi, f. geographical suffix of -edia -etia "land, country";

Line three:

S'dnbuiitimiôii's'd

Sidon bui itimioii' s'd

sedon / sidon "abode, seat";

bui, buis c.f.n. "period, duration"; buiô v. "to live";

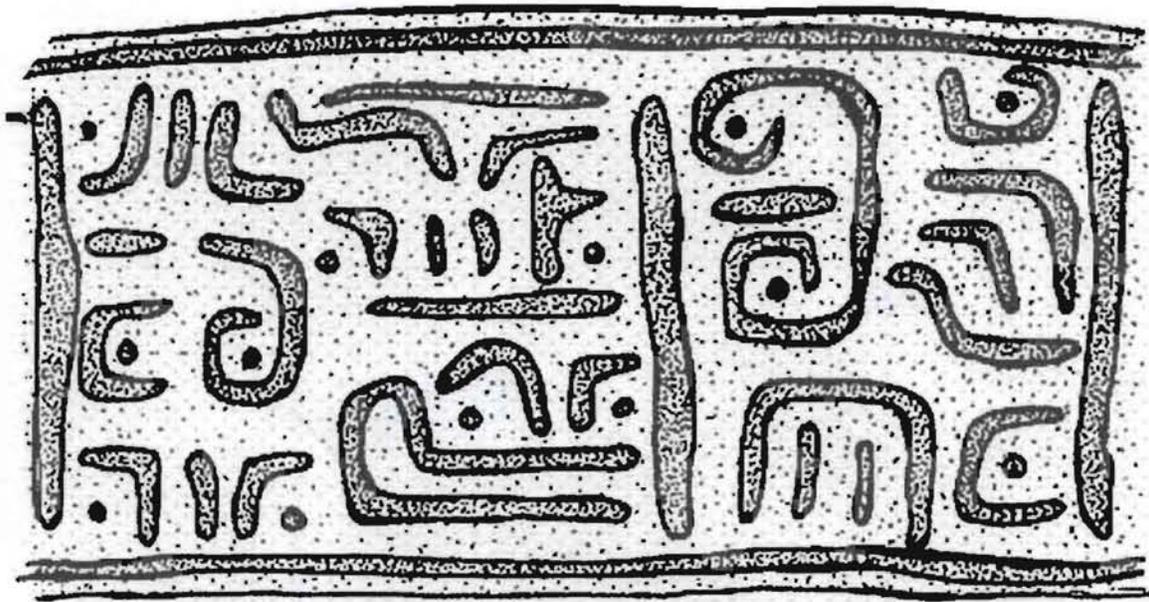
iti geniive case of p.m.n. itos (cf. Hebrew Itai) "the thirst", itios "inferior, low ranking"; itimi, genitive of itimos < itios + -mos superlative suffix "great, grand".

mio, meiô v. "to go"; meios adj. meios >meis further, adverb "further more";

ii, ii / ei pl. m.p. "they, these ones, those"

sed, prefix sed- "aside, side"; sedes "abode"; sediiu, sodiie "this day".

Itos or Itios was a very common philistine personal name and it was carried by a few biblical figures such as Itai haGiti or Itai of Gath, King David's general and one Itai Ben-Rivai or son of Ribai, from Gibeah of the tribe of Benjamin. The philistine records also make much mention of the name where it is attributed to high ranking officials.



Roller stamp from Mexico, Enciso, p. 40

<p>AIU I C/G' L' AIA</p>	<p>I NB/P AET' I AAP</p>	<p>RI Ê/H L' UU N C/G'</p>

Column 1 (from left to right, to bottom):

Aiui c'l'ia

Aiui, genitive of aeu-os/-a, aiu-os/-a "elder";

c'l'aia < celiāia < celiāio / celiāiu celi-os/-a "clienthood, vassalhood", celia "client, vassal" + -io/iu abstractive feminine suffix; celis "clientele"; punning with celia "tower";

Column 2:

Inbbaet'iaap

In "in";

Baetaiaap < Baetaiepa "the Baetic front" Baetaia + suffix -ep-os/-a/-on "faced, fronted"; The Iberian territory of Baetia, romanised as Baetica, was a mountainous region of southern Spain which was inhabited by many Proto-Celtic and Celtic ethnic groups such as the Turdetani and Turduli (called Tartessoi by the Greeks), the Conioi and the Celticoi.

Column 3:

Riê < Ria, Riia "Venus, the Morning Star", literally "free";

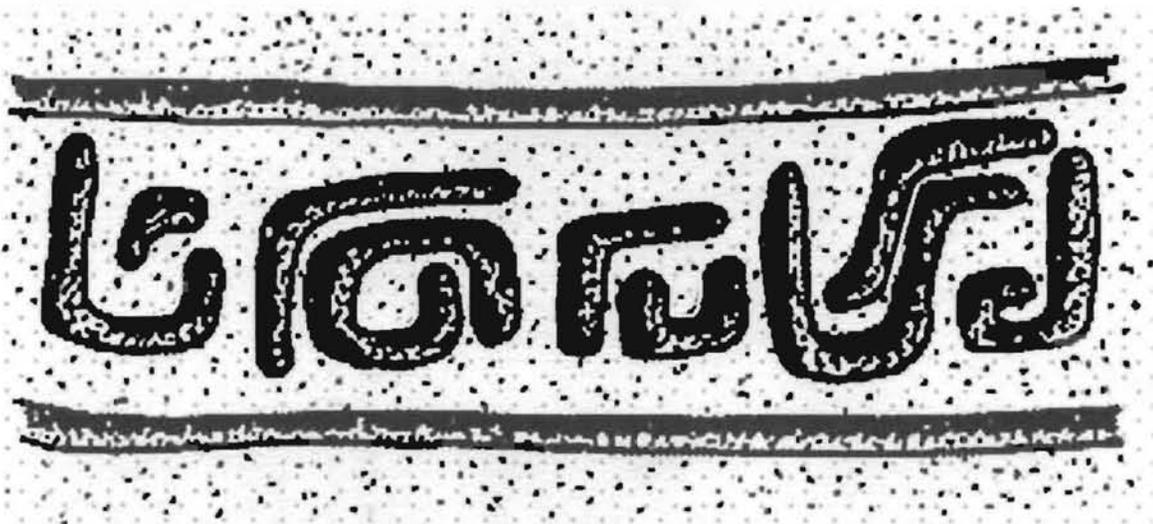
Column 4:

L'uunc < lauonc-os/-a/-n "flowing, rushing water"; lauoncos "flowing one"; leuinco "stone, rock"; Lauonca.

Complete translation:

Aiui celiāia in Baetaiepa Ria Lauonca.

"Of the elders in the Baetic front - Free (Morning Star) Flowing One."



Flat stamp from Chimalpa, Mexico, according to Welby Ricks, “the crudeness of its geometric pattern is indicative of antiquity of the designs”, Enciso, p. 34.

 <p>'B/A B/P L B/P C/G AN L</p> <p>A Balbac anal.</p> <p>“To the whispering breath” Implying: (The low rumor of the bee-hive, the Philistine go along!)</p>	<p>A < ab “to, for” Balbac < balbacos “almost dumb, whispering” Anal < anala “breath, blow” Connoting: A Bel(os) “to Belos” Pel < pellos “intellect, understanding” ; Pel < Pelletes “Philistines” ; Bec > becos “bee” Becan < becenna “bee-hive” Al, el “go!, go along!, come on!”, imperative of allô “go”</p>
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Jon Haskell, e-mail sent Thursday, September 19, 2013: “Would you share your thoughts on the possible source of the scripts on the attached cylinder seal from Mexico. I was speaking with Carl de Borhegyi this morning about this and you came to mind as one who might recognize the symbols.”

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Chapter IV

TARTESSIAN – A FORGOTTEN PROTO-CELTIC CIVILISATION



*La Dama de Elche, «The Lady of Elche», M.A.N.,
National Archaeological Museum of Madrid,
photo by Luis García (2006).*

The Tartessians or Turdetani

The Tartessian culture was initiated at the start of the first millennium, circa 1200 to 1100 BCE, and was at its peak from around 800 to 540 BCE. Archaeologists generally divide the Tartessian culture into two major periods: geometric and oriental. The geometric period covers the period of the end of the late Bronze Age from around 1200 BCE into the Iron Age ending around 750 BCE. The 1200 BCE date coincides with the eruption of the Sea Peoples upon Egypt and Canaan. As for the oriental period, it spans from 750 to 550 BCE and is marked by an eastern Mediterranean influence due to an inferred Phoenician and Greek presence. But it also could be postulated that a majority of these easterners comprised of Philistine expatriates and refugees. Tartessos was probably originally founded by the Sea Peoples following their Egyptian defeats and relocations.

The Sea Peoples were a collection of related Indo-European peoples who made themselves known to the Egyptians (on the Medinet Habu reliefs) around the XIXth dynasty when its military power was on the decline and

were vanquished eventually by Ramses III, XXth dynasty. As the three leaders of these invasions the hieroglyphs mention the Denen (Danunas for the Hittites and – later on – Danoi in the Iliad), the Prsht / Frst / Plst or Pulushta (named Pelesetes by the Greeks and Pilistim by the Hebrew, i.e. the Philistines) and the Wawaitw (probably Proto-Venetic). Among their subordinate allies, the Egyptian epigraphy quotes the Tskl (Sicules, settled later on in Sicily), the Shrdn (probably from the city of Sardi, future capital of Lydia and who later became the Sardis), the Sakar (maybe the future Sicanes), among others. These same ethnic groups will later appear in continental Europe as the co-founders of the Proto-Celtic, Proto-Italic, Proto-Illyric and Proto-Germanic ethnic groups. It now appears; judging from inscribed tablets found in Israeli archaeological sites that the Philistine, as the Denen, were Proto-Celts.

The Greek name Ταρτησσός, Tartessos, was coined from the Iberian place name Turtha (from PIE root *tur- < *t_uer- «to twirl, turn to grab, hold»; *tur-da > turđa “artificial mound, hill fort, oppidum” and punning with torta “wet, damp, place”) with Greek suffix -essos. The Tur- root is also found in the ethnonym Turodoi for “those of the heights” in Proto-Celtic. It is of the same etymology as the Irish toponym Tara (from tura > turra > torra “knoll, hill, mound, earth heap”). The root element turd- is also found in the names of surrounding Celtic Iberian ethnic groups such as the Turduli and Turdetani. Judging from what wrote Strabo, Tartessos was called Turdetania in their language.

Strabo, in *Geographica, Book III*:

«From this river the country has received the name of Bætica; it is called Turdetania by the inhabitants, who are themselves denominated Turdetani, and Turduli. Some think these two names refer to one nation, while others believe that they designate two distinct people. Of this latter opinion is Polybius, who imagines that the Turduli dwell more to the north than the Turdetani. At the present day however there does not appear to be any distinction between them. These people are esteemed to be the most intelligent of all the Iberians; they have an alphabet, and possess ancient writings, poems, and metrical laws six thousand years old, as they say. The other Iberians are likewise furnished with an alphabet, although not of the same form, nor do they speak the same language.»

The city of Tartessos was situated at the mouth of the Guadalquivir River («Great River» in Arabic), then called Betis and Latinized as Baetis. Strabo in the 1st century AD, the Turduli occupied the area that was Tartessos which was the Baetis River. From the 8th century BCE, the Tartessians were trading partners with the Phoenicians who operated from the port of Gadir (called Gádeira by the Greeks, Gades by the romans and now Cádiz in Spanish). It has long been assumed that Gadir was founded by the Phoenicians but there is also likelihood that it was a colony settlement of Gaza Philistines. Indeed, Gaza (from Greek Cadytis, as mentioned by Herodotus) was in the Phoenician and Greek league.

Most of the Tartessian archaeological sites were found at Huelva (Escacena del Campo situated in the province of Huelva), Turtha (today Puerto de Santa Maria in Cadiz), Urso (today Osuna in Seville) and Etibirge (today Elvira in Granada).

The area of Huelva, actually known as the Río Tinto mines, was exploited from Bronze Age for its minerals.

From The *Natural History* of Pliny the Elder, Chapter 3, a general description of the territory of Baetica and its people is given:

«The country which extends from the Bætis to the river Anas, beyond the districts already described, is called Bæturia, and is divided into two parts and the same number of nations; the Celtici, who border upon Lusitania, in the jurisdiction of Hispalis, and the Turduli, who dwell on the verge of Lusitania and Tarraconensis, and are under the protection of the laws of Corduba. It is evident that the Celtici have sprung from the Celtiberi, and have come from Lusitania, from their religious rites, their language, and the names of their towns, which in Bætica are distinguished by the following epithets, which have been given to them. Seria has received the surname of Fama Julia, Nertobriga that of Concordia Julia, Segida that of Restituta Julia, and Contributa that of Julia. What is now Curiga was formerly Ucultuniacum, Constantia Julia was Laconimurgis, the present Fortunales were the Tereses, and the Emanici were the Callenses. Besides these, there are in Celtica the towns of Acinippo, Arunda, Aruci, Turobriga, Lastigi, Salpesa, Sæpone, and Serippo.»

And from Strabo's *Geographica*, Book III, chapter I:

«The Turdetani not only enjoy a salubrious climate, but their manners are polished and urbane, as also are those of the people of Keltica, by reason of their vicinity [to the Turdetani], or, according to Polybius, on account of their being of the same stock, but not to so great a degree, for they live for the most part scattered in villages.»

It has also been argued in the past that the Greek Tartessos and the Biblical Tarshish were one and the same. The debate as to the identity and location of Tarshish has been going on for quite some time. In Biblical terms, «ships of Tarshish» designate seagoing vessels. Jerome defines Tarshish as meaning «sea». In his commentary on Isaiah (Isa. Xxiii), does he not write that his teachers say that the Hebrew word for «sea» was Tarshish? The term rather seems to parallel the Greek name Thalassa, also for «sea» and therefore does not refer to a definite location or place. Nevertheless, other biblical passages equate Tarshish with «Carthage» and Jonathan's Targum is given as Tarshish in Kings (I, xxii) and again, Jonathan mentions that it lies by «Afriki», that is, Carthage (The Jewish Encyclopedia, 2002-2011).

The language

Epigrapher Donald Buchanan, after much research, trial and error, was convinced that the Southwest Iberian script expressed a Celtic language. Here is what he wrote in *The decipherment of Southwest Iberic* (1991): «Perhaps the language of the inscriptions in southwest Portugal was Celtic? Once my sound values became relatively solid, I essayed decipherments using Old Irish, Gaelic, Welsh and Cornish. The results were not immediate, but enough progress was made to encourage me in my belief that the inscriptions were in a Celtic language (and to carry me forward in my establishment of the sound values).

John T. Koch also agrees for Celtic (*A Case for Tartessian as a Celtic Language*, 2009, p. 340):

«Considering comparanda from Goidelic, Brittonic, Gaulish, and Lepontic, as well as Hispano-Celtic, many further Celtic etymologies for Tartessian can now be set out as worth consideration.»

If this doesn't sound convincing enough, then Koch's detailed five point conclusion on Iberian Celtic just about sums up the question in a nutshell:

«1. Most of the Celtic forms identifiable in the south-western inscriptions are well attested and belong to the core vocabulary of more than one Celtic language.

2. There are numerous Hispano-Celtic parallels, including comparanda from Celtiberian and the Lusitanian-Callaecian zone.

3. Particularly among the longer inscriptions, the complete ones, and those with few uncertain readings, the forms identified as specifically Celtic (or more generally an Indo-European that could be Celtic) are frequent and those that do not look Celtic are infrequent. It is sometimes possible to interpret these texts as continuous funerary statements in an Ancient Celtic language, favouring the conclusion that Celtic is the language of the southwestern inscriptions, rather than another language with isolated Celtic names.

4. However, that distinction is only of limited significance because, in either case, Celtic was in use in the extreme south-west of Europe by the VIIth century BC.

5. That general conclusion could carry important implications for historians and archaeologists. It reinforces something we have known for some time, namely that the Celtic languages in the Iberian Peninsula—possibly unlike those of Gaul and Britain—cannot be explained as the result of the spread of the La Tène and Hallstatt archaeological cultures of the central European Iron Age. To find Celtic extensively used so far to the south-west at such an early date must also call into question the relevance of Hallstatt's Late Bronze Age forerunner, the Urnfield cultures, in the Celticization of the Peninsula. The immediate background and context of the earliest attested Celtic language appears, instead, to be the Atlantic Late Bronze Age, a conclusion broadly resonant with ideas expressed by Almagro (e.g. 1995), as well as the new theories concerning the origins of the Celtic languages of Cunliffe (2001) and Brun (2006).»

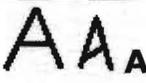
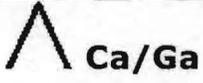
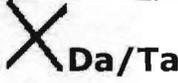
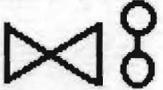
Very few Tartessian names are given by the classical authors and can be resumed to this list given on the *All About Spain* site (1996-2013):

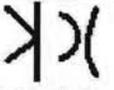
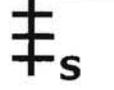
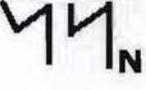
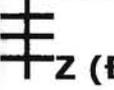
The mythical kings of Tartessos

Geryon < Gerrionos «the brief, the short», Gerris «brief, succinct, short»	Was the fabled king whose great cattle herds were stolen by Heracles.
Norax < Noraxs < Noracos, from nora / noro «generosity, magnanimity» and -axs < -acos acting suffix for personal name formation	Grandson of Geryon, conquered the south of Sardinia where he founded the city of Nora. He dictated the first laws, divided the kingdom in seven cities, the society into seven classes, and forced the noble class to work.
Gargoris < Gargorixs, gargos «savage, wild, uncooth, unpolished» and rixs «king»	Introduced beekeeping and trade as well as new agricultural tools like the plow.
Arganthonios ; also certainly of Celtic etymology: Argantonios «Silvery One», from arganton «silver».	But only about one of them there are specific historical sources; the last known king of Tartessos

The Tartessian script and language bear a great resemblance with Lusitanian; in that they are regional dialectal variants of an archaic Iberian Proto-Celtic.

The Iberian Almodovar script

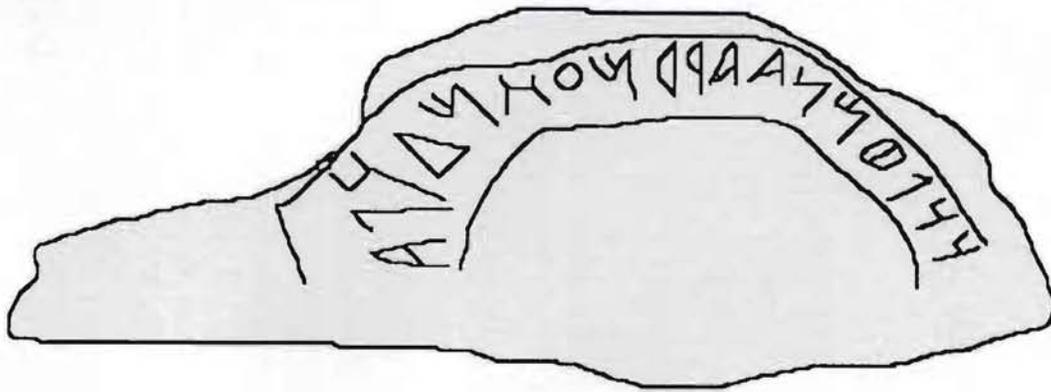
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 U	 Bu/Pu	 Cu/Gu	 Du/tu	 R
 O	 Bo/Po	 Co/Go	 Do/To	 Ó

 E	 Be/Pe	 Ce/Ge	 De/Te	 S
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The Almodovar site

A number of "stelae" with their writing have been found, the oldest among them is dated around the 9th century BC. The inscriptions, for the most, are funeral commemorations for the deceased.

Lapidary Inscriptions of Almodovar, Algarve, Portugal



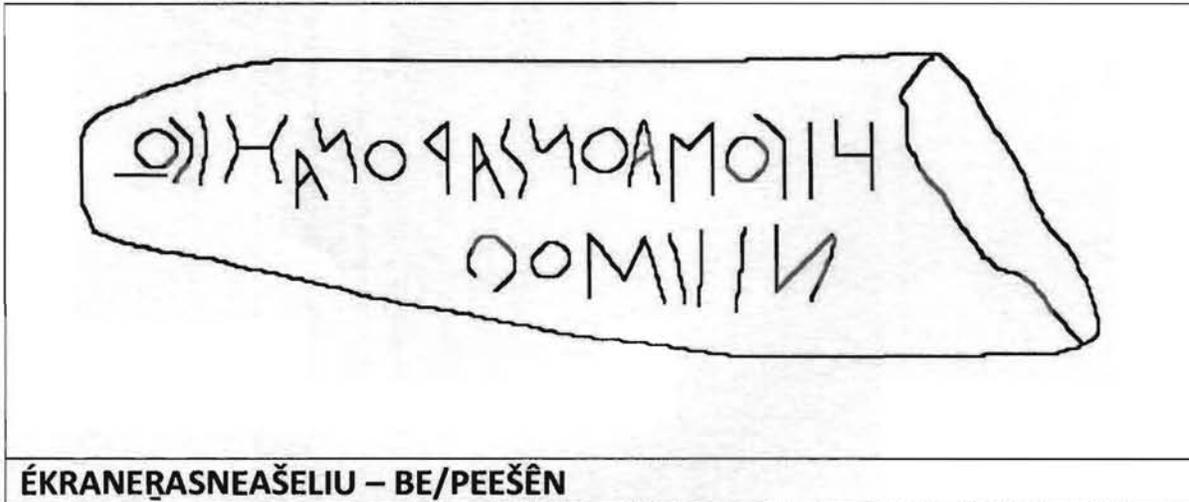
ALUDIṚEIĀRAANIDI/TiLUU

Translation

ALUDI < genitive of al(a)udos «singer, songster, exalter»; alauda «lark»;
 ṚEIĀ < reia, reia, rea «Venus (planet), the evening star», Celtic name of the
 goddess Venus, cf. Germanic Freya;
 RAANIDI/Ti < ro-anidi / ro-anitis, ro- intensifying prefix «very», anitis
 «noble one», adj ani-/os/a/on «noble, pure, gentle»; annatis «next of kin,
 relative»; Annidioi name of a Celtic ethnic group;
 LUU < luu(u) dative, comitative, instrumental case of luuios «leader, chief,
 guide».

Aludi Reiâ roaniti luu.

«Of Aludos, Reiâ with (herein) noble leader.»



Translation

Line1:

ÉKRANE < Ecrone, vocative of Ecron-os/a «oh Ecron One» or Ecroni genitive of Ecron-os/a «of Ecron»;

RASNE < ras-ne «protruding down, under (ground)», ras / ros «ahead, before, protruding» and -ne suffix «down» ne adverb «down on the ground»;

AŠELIU < as(s)eliu comitative, instrumental case of asselios asselos / asselis «limb, member (of the body)»; seliu, comitative, instrumental case of selios «he of the offspring, descendant»; punning with selio «furrow».

Line2:

BE/PEEŠËN < besenna «bee hive».

Ékrane rasne asheliu. Beeshên.

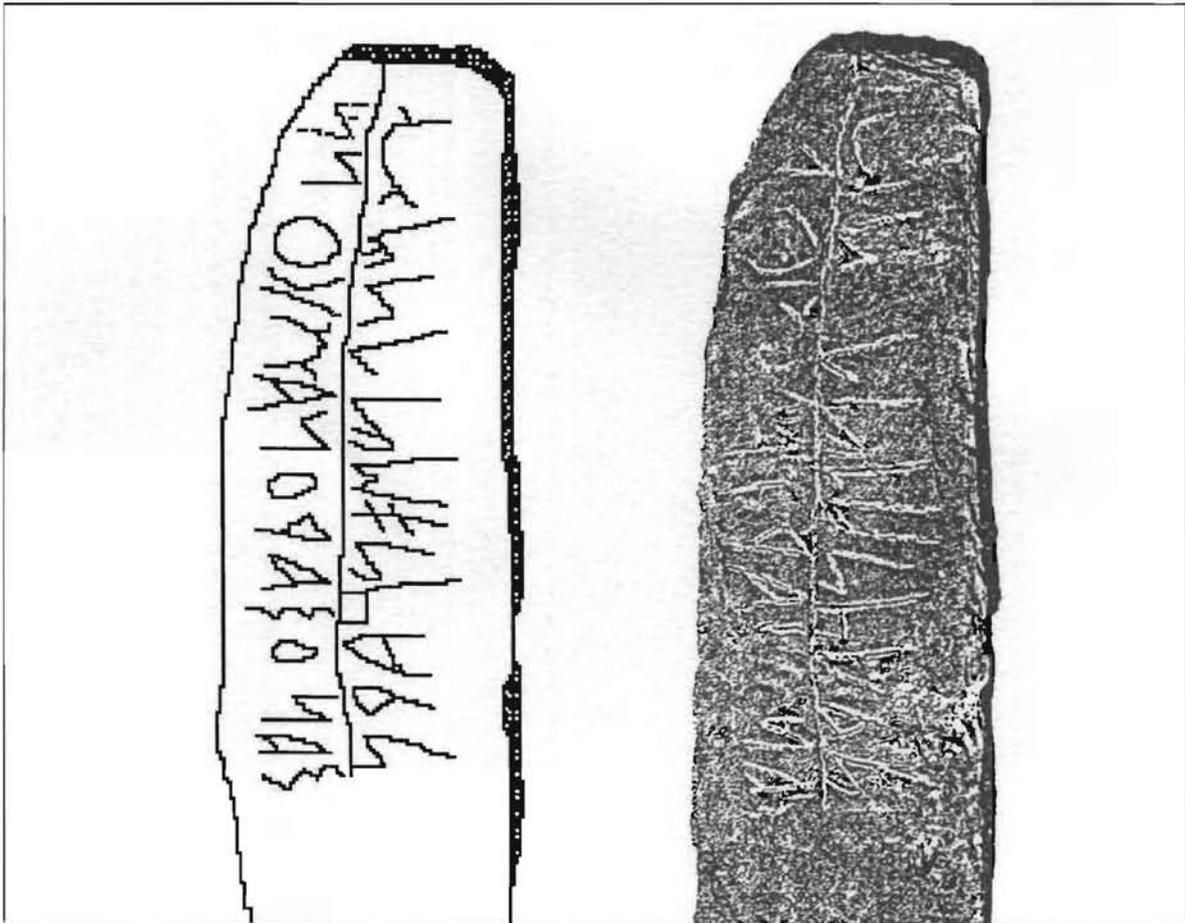
«Ecran protruding under (ground) with limb. The beehive.»

Ecran

Other stones bearing the Ekrane inscription

 A line drawing of a stone fragment, likely a funeral stone, with a horizontal band containing the inscription 'O)(HAYO'. The fragment is irregularly shaped and has a shaded, textured appearance on its right side, suggesting it is a fragment of a larger stone.	<p>Ourique parish, Algarve, funeral stone fragment</p> <p>This drawing is after E. Hübner, who published on the inscription in 1893.</p> <p>Hübner, E. <i>Monumenta Linguae Ibericae</i>. Berlin: Berolini. 1893.</p> <p>EKRANE</p>
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Algarve



Sepulchral stone from Algarve

Boustrophedon reading:

IN EKRA NE RAMENAM – NRAUNOSILNIR / RINLISONUARN.

Translation

Line 1:

In < in / en «in»;

Ekrane < vocative or genitive of Ekran; maybe a place name: Ekrane, Ekra or Ekrania.

Ramenam < romenam, vocative or genitive «of, a wonder», compare with Celtiberic genitive -um and Gaulish -om, neutral n. romen «prodigy, wonder»; if not from Latin Romanum «of Rome»?;

Line 2 (retrograde):

Rin < adj rin-/os/a/on «beloved»; punning with rinos «brook, stream»;

Lisonu < Lisonu, comitative, instrumental case of Lisonos «he of the castle court»; lissos «court of fort, fortified place, castle», lisson «manor, estate»; Arn < orn < orno «destruction, slaughter»; ern-os/a/on adj «sizeable considerable»; possibly punning with arna «river», the ford, crossing or river of death.

In Ekane ramenam rin Lisonu arn.

«In Ekran a wonder, beloved Lisonos, the slaughter.»

The Abobada Stela



The Abobada grave stone (late Bronze Age) bearing southern Iberian Proto-Celtic inscription. Kept at the Museu da Rainha D. Leonor, Beja, Portugal. Photo by Georges Jansoone, 2006.

Line 1 : EROMARE ÊADi/Ti ANEADo/ToE

Line 2: Do/ToASUMIDi/TiNEKe/GeRANLEIZ UBU/PuLAURI

Translation:

Line 1:

EROMARE < ero(s) «eagle», to the vocative case and -maros «great»; aro «farming»; Aros, cf. Greek Ares, the god «Mars; Eromaros, personal name.

ÊADi/Ti < aedi(s) «fire»; genitive case of Aedus «Blazing», name of the morning sun deified; punning with aedu «ram».

ANEADo/ToE < -anetis / -anatis «dwelling in, adjectival collective suffix for ethnic names»; anoito «betrayal, perjury».

Eromare Êadi aneadoe.

«Eromaros, the Great Eagle, of Êadus, the Fire (Morning Sun) People dwellers.»

Line 2:

Do/To < do / to preposition «to, for»; do- / to- prefix «ad-, with»;

AŠUMI < aesumi, genitive of aesumos «divine»; connoting: Esus < Aesus / Aisus «Divine Breath», name of a Celtic god, and assos «bronze»;

Di/TiNEKe/Ge < dinece, vocative of dinos «dreadful, fierce» and –cos «agent suffix»; < deinece, dainece, vocative of deinecos, dainecos, compound of deinos, dainos adjective «hasty, name «fighter»;

RAN < ran(na) «part, share»;

LEIZ(Ð) < leis, preposition «plus»; leises «several ones, many, of number»; leisos < leitos «grey»; the place name Luz is unlikely (Luz < PIE root *leuk- «white, bright»).

U < u-, ud- prefix expressing completion, accomplishment;

UBu/PuLAURI < Abulori, genitive of Abuloros «he of the Rowan-tree»; or genitive of Aballoros «he of the apple-tree»;

Bu/PuLAURI < Balari, genitive of Balaros «Ligheous», name of a Celtic god.

Do-Asumi dineke leiz Ubulauri.

“To (those) of Ašumos, dreadful one, (this) share of number of those of Ubulauros, the rowan-tree.”

The Iconography

The armed sketchy stick-man in the framed doorway is probably meant to depict a deity. In this case, the godly character here featured is most likely Ašumos (< Aesumos «divine»). Not too menacing and smiling, he seems to be holding an arrow and bow.

The symbols represented in his left arm can be interpreted using the Celtic graphic repertoire.

 <p>Grannos, the beaming (bearded) Sun</p>	 <p>The Sun diamond also representing thee element Fire; the «Sun stone», Greinoclocca, of quartz</p>
 <p>The Moon Crescent, Luxna, the Moon; the horns of the Great Celestial Cow of the Milky Way</p>	 <p>The Sun Grid representing time and space with the four cardinal points and center; the Sun's annual march; the two halves (light summery warm and dark wintery cold) along with the four seasons</p>
	<p>Gaulish quarter silver of the Leuci. Notice the winged bird god with the wind gusts and arrow pointing westward.</p>

Abobada Stela, detail, the Archer



Tartessians Across the Atlantic

Barry Fell on the Iberians in America

The myth of Celtic society described as being essentially rude and unsophisticated has been maintained on from the classical authors up onto the present day by our modern scholars. In this, Barry Fells comments on Iberian Celtic culture just picks up from earlier comments made by Julius Caesar and the like. And there likewise, as he postulated in *America B.C.*, p. 157, the Iberians led a “rude manner of life”:

“The men of Tarshish established colonies in eastern North America, the settlers probably drawn from the native Iberians (that is, Celts and Basques) of the Guadalquivir valley in Andalusia. That they could not have included many Phoenicians is apparent from lack of sophisticated material cultural objects at the sites so far investigated. Rather, these colonists must have

been accustomed to the rude manner of life of the Iberians before the arrival of Phoenician traders in Spain but, like many colonial peoples, they has acquired the language of their colonizers, in this case the Phoenicians, and some at least of their chieftains were literate in the Tartesian manner of writing the Phoenician (or Punic) tongue. These inferences are drawn from the documents found in their chieftain's burial mounds".

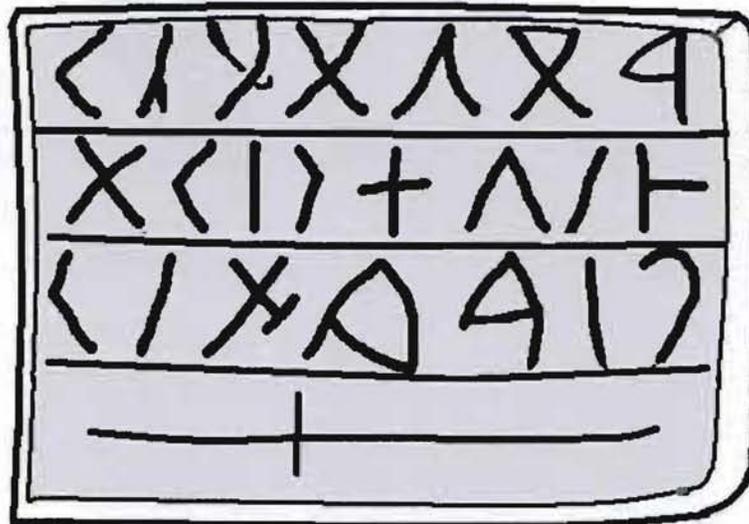
And Fell further explains that "The first authenticated find of an engraved Phoenician tablet in an American archaeological context was that of a Tartessian inscription found in 1838. This tablet was excavated from a burial chamber found at the base of Mammoth Mound in Moundsville West Virginia".

Lux Oriens, as the old Latin saying goes, the East is bright! And this expression only confirms the old prejudice that the Levantine ways are naturally more civilized and sophisticated than those of the dark West. Western cultural scholarship was traditionally under the influence of the theology department which systematically regarded anything from outside the Biblical paradigm as, of nature, being shadowy and non historical. If Tarshish is worth of mention isn't it because the name is mentioned in the Bible (it appears 24 times in the Masoretic texts of the Hebrew Bible)?

Fell's attribution of Punic (Semitic Tartessian or Carthaginian) being the language inscribed on the tablet contradicts the eminent ethnographer Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, who studied it and concluded that the characters were carved by Celts from ancient Spain or possibly Britain. And as we have seen in the previous chapter, Tartessos was undoubtedly a Proto-Celtic civilization founded by Philistine expatriate settlers to Iberia and therefore not Semitic.

Concerning the Braxton tablet, Barry Fell wrote (in *America B.C.*, p. 160) that "This engraved tablet (Mammoth Mound Grave Creek Stone), inscribed in Iberian script and employing the Punic language, shares some vocabulary and all its basic style characters with the historic tablet of Tasach, excavated in 1838 from the foot of the Mammoth Mound at

Moundsville, Grave Creek, West Virginia. Thus it is clearly related to the Iberian culture of Moundsville. It was found in a stream bed central West Virginia, and erroneously supposed to be of Viking origin. Its vocabulary is found in standard Semitic dictionaries, and yields the following translation, the script matching that given in Diringers tables: 1. The memorial of Teth. 2. This title. 3. (His) brother caused-to-be-made.



The Braxton Tablet After a photo from ceramic cast courtesy Dr. Clyde Keeler by Joseph D. Germano in *America B.C.*, p. 160.

It seems strange that Fell could extract consonants and avoid vowels using the Iberian script. Indeed, contrary to Iberic or Celtiberic, the Semitic languages make very little use of vowels. Fell's transliteration is in no way faithful to the text here inscribed. Following the Iberian script's sound ascriptions, the tablet yields a completely different text. Not one decipherable with the aid of a "standard Semitic dictionary" but one in conformity with the script.

Ce/Ge	I/Ba/Pa	M	Da/Ta	L	Co/Go	AR
Da/Ta	Ce/Ge	I/Ba/Pa	Da/Ta	L	I/Ba/Pa	D/T
Pa(Ba)	I	Do/To	A	AR	I/Ba/Pa	Bi/Pi

Transliteration and wording: Ceim Dalgo A Dageta Lit Baito Aribi

The Bat Creek Stone, Tennessee



Photo by Warren W. Dexter, 1986.



Engraving for Cyrus Thomas, image out of copyright, and in the public domain. Thomas, Cyrus. *The Cherokees in Pre-Columbian Times*, N.D.C. Hodges, New York, 1890. Notice that inscription is presented upside down.

The Bat Creek inscribed tablet was discovered in wintery February of 1889 in a Mississippian Indian mound referred to as mound 3 near the mouth of Bat Creek in Loudon County, Tennessee. Along with the stone found lying under the skeletal remains of nine individuals were "two copper bracelets, an engraved stone, a small drilled fossil, a copper bead, a bone implement, and some small pieces of polished wood wood soft and colored green by contact with the copper bracelets" were found. "The engraved stone lay partially under the back part of the skull..." (Cyrus Thomas 1894).

Since it contradicted the accepted scientific paradigm, the artefact was declared a hoax and a fraud. The Smithsonian Institute still clings to this label. However, this did not prevent the museum to give the artifact a prominent display at the McClung Museum of the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. Scott Wolter, examined the Bat Creek stone and presented his appraisal to the Cherokee Tribal Council along with a presentation on his TV documentary series on H2 entitled *America Unearthed, Lost Relics of the Bible*. According to his scrupulous forensic examination, the stone is older than 1889 and may be thousands of years old. In 2009, I had a discussion a discussion with Hu McCulloch of the Midwestern Epigraphic Society who felt the inscription could be a form of old Hebrew. I had previously informed Mr McCulloch that the inscription read very well as Celtiberic but he remained skeptical. Scott Wolter argues that: "The best research shows

that the inscription is in Paleo-Hebrew," there citing Hugh McCulloch's online article simply entitled *The Bat Creek Stone*. It was Cyrus H. Gordon who first proposed that the text read in Paleo-Hebrew when Joseph B. Manhan presented him a picture of the stone. The inscription was first thought to be in the Cherokee script (an alphabet invented by Sequoyah around 1821) after Cyrus Thomas had declared that the stone was "unquestionably Cherokee." So from 1890, scholars dated it at best from anywhere past this date. Hu McCulloch knew that the mound site dated from around 427 CE from a previous radiocarbon test he had obtained. If academia clings so much to the hoax theory, it is that the inscription previously appears in the American Freemasons' Encyclopedia and Dictionary published in 1870. Therefore, if John Emmert, who excavated all three Bat Creek mounds in 1889, copied the inscription from the Freemasons' Encyclopedia and planted it there, it was to impress his boss Cyrus Thomas, the director of the Smithsonian Bureau of Ethnology's Mound Survey. This is exactly what two archaeologists from the University of Arkansas, Robert Mainfort and Mary Kwas have recently concluded in an article of *American Antiquity*. However, no matter how convincing, the argument that the artefact was a planted objet with an inscription copied by Emmert from a book published in 1870 does not hold water either. Not only because of the fact that the Bat Creek inscription is not an exact transcription of the Holliness of the Lord example from the Freemasons Encyclopedia, but also the stone is much older than the later part of the XIXth century. Indeed, when Scott Wolter conducted his microscopic examination of the artifact at the University of Tennessee in May of 2010, he noticed that the grooves showed much weathering except for two scratches which appeared recent. For further analysis, he used their Scanning Electron Microscope to conduct a more in-depth study. He then was able to conclude that the most recent marks on the stone were test scratches made after 1890. Then, Wolter examined another peculiar mark which was made by a metal probe when the stone was unearthed at the dig in 1889. He was able to conclude that the inscription was carved much earlier than the other marks because the grooves in the letters showed much more weathering. Along with the Bat Creek Stone, there were other objects found in the mound that dated to around 100 CE. The 100 CE date is more in line with a possible Celtiberian presence in Tennessee.

Although very similar, the Freemassons' Hebrew text does not use all of the same Old Hebrew letters. Therefore, a transliteration of the Bat Creek inscription should not spellout the same text. This detail contradicts any categorical statement that the Bat Creek tablet was copied from the the Freemassons' Encyclopedia.



ANCIENT CHARACTERS OF THE INSCRIPTION.

HOLINESS TO THE LORD. An inscription worn on the forehead of the High-Priest, as described in Exodus xxxix. 30: "And they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote upon it a writing like to the engraving of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD."



H/Ê I H/Ê I L Š W R

RWŠ LIHIH

(Rosh Aliya "The head is exalted by God")

Rws < rûš from Hebrew rôš < *raoš "head";

Lihih < 'lihih from proto-semitic root 'ly, Hebrew 'āliyā "ascent"; 'ēli "is exalted" connoting Ēl "lord, god (is exalted)".

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