

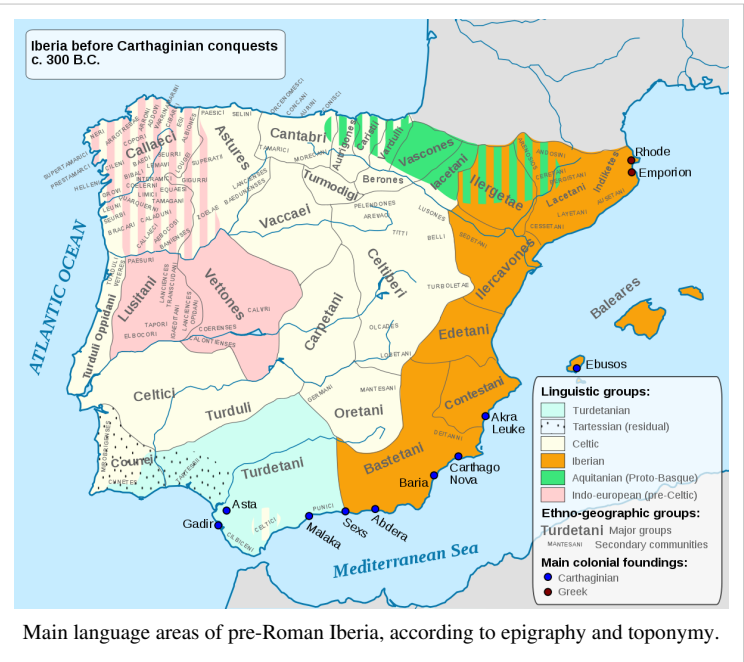
# Celtiberians

The **Celtiberians** were Celtic-speaking people of the Iberian Peninsula in the final centuries BC. The group used the Celtic Celtiberian language.<sup>[1] [2]</sup>

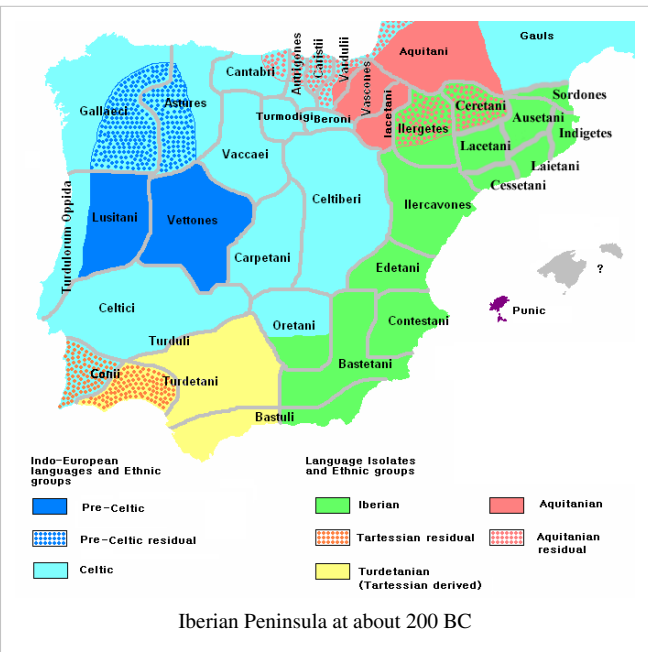
Archaeologically, the Celtiberians participated in the Hallstatt culture in what is now north-central Spain. The term *Celtiberi* appears in accounts by Diodorus Siculus,<sup>[3]</sup> Appian<sup>[4]</sup> and Martial<sup>[5]</sup> who recognized intermarriage between Celts and Iberians after a period of continuous warfare, though Barry Cunliffe says 'this has the ring of guesswork about it' <sup>[6]</sup> ; Strabo just saw the Celtiberians as Celts recognising them as a branch of the *Celti*.<sup>[1]</sup> Extant tribal names include the *Arevaci*, *Belli*, *Titti*, and *Lusones*. *Pliny considers the Celts from Iberia to have migrated from Lusitania's celtici which he appears to regard as the original seat of the whole Celtic population of the Iberian peninsula including the Celtiberians, on the ground of an identity of sacred rites, language, and names of cities.*<sup>[7]</sup>

The Celtiberian language is attested from the 1st century BC. Other possibly Celtic languages, like Lusitanian, were spoken in pre-Roman Iberia. The Lusitani gave their name to Lusitania, the Roman province name covering current Portugal and Extremadura.

## History



Main language areas of pre-Roman Iberia, according to epigraphy and toponymy.



Strabo cites Ephorus's belief that there were Celts in the Iberian peninsula as far as Cadiz,<sup>[8]</sup> bringing aspects of Hallstatt culture in the 6th to 5th centuries BC, adopting much of the culture they found. This basal Indo-European culture was of seasonally transhumant cattle-raising pastoralists protected by a warrior elite, similar to those in other areas of Atlantic Europe, centered in the hill-forts, locally termed *castros*, that controlled small grazing territories. These settlements of circular huts survived until Roman times across the north of Iberia, from Northern Portugal, Asturias and Galicia to the Basque Country.

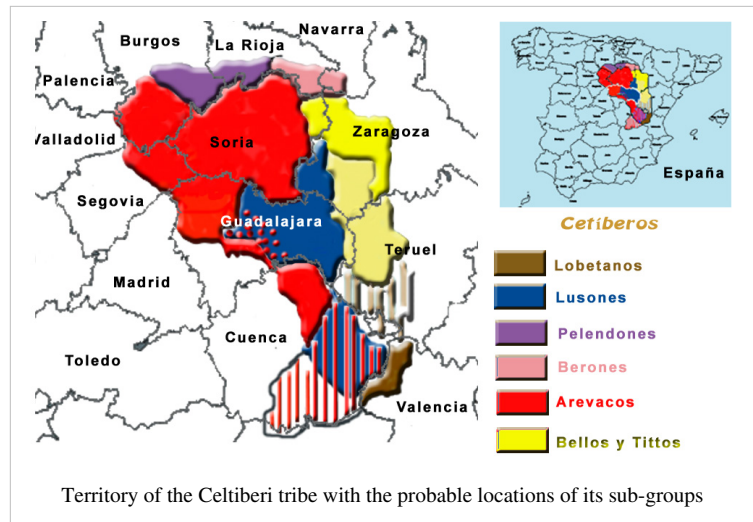
Celtic presence in Iberia likely dates to as early as the 6th century BC, when the

*castros* evinced a new permanence with stone walls and protective ditches. Archaeologists Martín Almagro Gorbea and Alvarado Lorrio recognize the distinguishing iron tools and extended family social structure of developed

Celtiberian culture as evolving from the archaic *castro* culture which they consider "proto-Celtic".

Archaeological finds identify the culture as continuous with the culture reported by Classical writers from the late 3rd century onwards (Almagro-Gorbea and Lorrio). The ethnic map of Celtiberia was highly localized however, composed of different tribes and *nationes* from the 3rd century centered upon fortified *oppida* and representing a wide ranging degree of local assimilation with the autochthonous cultures in a mixed Celtic and Iberian stock.

The cultural stronghold of Celtiberians was the northern area of the central *meseta* in the upper valleys of the Tagus and Douro east to the *Iberus* (Ebro) river, in the modern provinces of Soria, Guadalajara, Zaragoza and Teruel. There, when Greek and Roman geographers and historians encountered them, the established Celtiberians were controlled by a military aristocracy that had become a hereditary elite. The dominant tribe were the Arevaci, who dominated their neighbors from powerful strongholds at Okilis (Medinaceli) and who rallied the long Celtiberian resistance to Rome. Other Celtiberians were the Belli and Titti in the Jalón valley, and the Lusones to the east.



Excavations at the Celtiberian strongholds *Kontebakom-Bel* Botorrita, *Sekaisa* Segeda, Tiermes<sup>[9]</sup> complement the grave goods found in Celtiberian cemeteries, where aristocratic tombs of the 6th to 5th centuries give way to warrior tombs with a tendency from the 3rd century for weapons to disappear from grave goods, either indicating an increased urgency for their distribution among living fighters or, as Almagro-Gorbea and Lorrio think, the increased urbanization of Celtiberian society. Many late Celtiberian *oppida* are still occupied by modern towns, inhibiting archeology.



Bronze Celtiberian fibula representing a warrior  
(3rd–2nd cent. BC)

Metalwork stands out in Celtiberian archeological finds, partly from its indestructible nature, emphasizing Celtiberian articles of warlike uses, horse trappings and prestige weapons. The two-edged sword adopted by the Romans was previously in use among the Celtiberians, and Latin *lancea*, a thrown spear, was a Hispanic word, according to Varro. Celtiberian culture was increasingly influenced by Rome in the two final centuries BC.

From the 3rd century, the clan was superseded as the basic Celtiberian political unit by the *oppidum*, a fortified organized city with a defined territory that included the *castros* as subsidiary settlements. These *civitates* as the Roman historians called them, could make and break alliances, as surviving inscribed hospitality pacts attest, and minted coinage. The old clan structures lasted in the formation of the Celtiberian armies, organized along clan-structure lines, with consequent losses of strategic and tactical control.

The Celtiberians were the most influential ethnic group in pre-Roman Iberia, but they had their largest impact on history during the Second Punic War, during which they became the (perhaps unwilling) allies of Carthage in its conflict with Rome, and crossed the Alps in the mixed forces under Hannibal's command. As a result of the defeat of Carthage, the Celtiberians first submitted to Rome in 195 BC; Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus spent the years 182 to 179 pacifying (as the Romans put it) the Celtiberians; however, conflicts between various semi-independent bands of

Celtiberians continued. After the city of Numantia was finally taken and destroyed by Scipio Aemilianus Africanus the younger after a long and brutal siege that ended the Celtic resistance (154 - 133 BC), Roman cultural influences increased; this is the period of the earliest Botorrita inscribed plaque; later plaques, significantly, are inscribed in Latin. The Sertorian War, 80 - 72 BC, marked the last formal resistance of the Celtiberian cities to Roman domination, which submerged the Celtiberian culture.

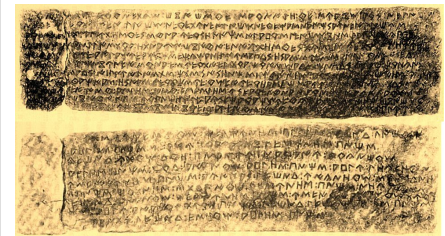
The Celtiberian presence remains on the map of Spain in hundreds of Celtic place-names. The archaeological recovery of Celtiberian culture commenced with the excavations of Numantia, published between 1914 and 1931.

## Notes

- [1] Strabo. *Geography* ([http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Strabo/3D\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Strabo/3D*.html)). pp. Book III Chapter 4 verses 5 and 12. .
- [2] Koch, John (2005). *Celtic Culture : A Historical Encyclopedia* ([http://books.google.com.au/books?id=f899xH\\_quaMC&pg=PA364&lpg=PA364&dq=koch+celtiberian+origin&source=bl&ots=p-RBhdzrVK&sig=lh8K8ojtz5b-QX1fm5NO1IUQtg&hl=en&ei=vhn0TfrGFY6YvAO70fTHBg&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=6&ved=0CD0Q6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=koch+celtiberian+origin&f=false](http://books.google.com.au/books?id=f899xH_quaMC&pg=PA364&lpg=PA364&dq=koch+celtiberian+origin&source=bl&ots=p-RBhdzrVK&sig=lh8K8ojtz5b-QX1fm5NO1IUQtg&hl=en&ei=vhn0TfrGFY6YvAO70fTHBg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=6&ved=0CD0Q6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=koch+celtiberian+origin&f=false)). ABL-CIO. pp. 363-364. ISBN 978-1851094400. . Retrieved June 12, 2011.
- [3] Celtiberian manners and customs in Diodorus Siculus v.33-34; Diodorus relies on lost texts of [[Posidonius ([http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus\\_Siculus/5B\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/5B*.html))].]
- [4] Appian of Alexandria, *Roman History*.
- [5] Bilbilis was the birthplace of Martial.
- [6] Cunliffe, Barry (2003). *The Celts: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press. pp. 52. ISBN 0-19-280418-9.
- [7] Sir William Smith (1854), Dictionary of Greek and Roman geography, Volume 2, Boston, Little, Brown and Company. ([http://books.google.com/books?id=aAkFAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA583&dq=lusitanians+celtic+people&lr=&as\\_brr=3#v=onepage&q=lusitanians+celtic+people&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=aAkFAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA583&dq=lusitanians+celtic+people&lr=&as_brr=3#v=onepage&q=lusitanians+celtic+people&f=false))
- [8] Strabo (1923). *The Geography of Strabo - published in Vol. II of the Loeb Classical Library edition* ([http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Strabo/4D\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Strabo/4D*.html)). University of Chicago. pp. Book IV Chapter 4. .
- [9] The Site of Tiermes (<http://www.archaeospain.com/tiermes/tiermes1.htm>), official website

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- Jesús Martín-Gil, Gonzalo Palacios-Leblé, Pablo Martín-Ramos and Francisco J. Martín-Gil, "Analysis of a Celtiberian protective paste and its possible use by Arevaci warriors". *e-Keltoi 5*, pp 63–76.



Botorrita plaque: one of four bronze plates with inscriptions.

## External links

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  - "The Celtiberian and Roman city of Tiernes" (<http://www.archaeospain.com/tiermes/tiermes1.htm>): an on-going excavation
  - James Grout: *The Celtiberian War*, part of the Encyclopædia Romana ([http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia\\_romana/hispania/celtiberianwar.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia_romana/hispania/celtiberianwar.html))
  - Detailed map of the Pre-Roman Peoples of Iberia (around 200 BC) (<http://www.arqueotavira.com/Mapas/Iberia/Populi.htm>)
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