

## Original Synthetic Report

# Iberian-Tartessian scripts/graffiti in Iruña-Veleia (Basque Country, North Spain): findings in both Iberia and Canary Islands-Africa

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**Abstract** - 760 officially recognized scripts on ceramics from Iruña-Veleia excavated by the archaeology firm Lurmen S.L. (approximately between years 2002-2008) have been analyzed. A number of these ceramics contains scripts which may be assimilated to Iberian/Tartessian writings. This number may be underestimated since more studies need to be done in already available and new found ceramics. This is the second time that Iberian writing is found by us in an unexpected location together with the Iberian-Guanche inscriptions of Lanzarote and Fuerteventura (Canary Islands). On the other hand, naviform scripting, usually associated to Iberian rock or stone engraving may have also been found in Veleia. Strict separation, other than in time and space stratification, between Iberian and (South) Tartessian culture and script is doubted.

**Keywords:** Iruña-Veleia, Teverga (Asturias), Iberian, Tartessian, Basque, Vasco-iberismo, epigraphy, scripts, graffiti, “iberico”, “tartesico”, “grafitos”, “escritura”, “Guanche”

## Introduction and Methodology

The Iruña-Veleia affaire is sufficiently known (SOS-Irunaveleia, 2011). The precipitation of judgment and the lack of different and public studies and opinions have obscured and entangled the relevance and significance of archaeological and epigraphic finding, particularly those related to ancient Basque language inscriptions.

In addition to the many near impossible oddities that a hypothetical faker might have gone through, it becomes almost impossible if, in addition, he/she would have properly handled Iberian scripting.

We have analyzed n=760 ceramic pieces, which are put up on the Araba Diputacion General page under the heading of “AFADFA.IV\_FOTOS\_GENERAL\_PIEZAS\_PEQUEÑAS” ([www.alava.net/publicar/Fotos/AFADFA\\_IV\\_Fotos\\_General.zip](http://www.alava.net/publicar/Fotos/AFADFA_IV_Fotos_General.zip)) (Diputación General de Alava, 2011).

Many of the pieces may contain Iberian scripts/graffiti but they have been neglected; some of our finally taken scripts (shown in Appendix 1) may also be explained by other old Mediterranean scripts, but we are confident that most of them are written in the old Iberian script and some of them can strictly be Iberian (Daniels & Bright, 1996).




**Figure 1**

Note that this sign is not present in the Tartessian-Espanca signary, but it is often present in South West “Tartessian” inscriptions. (see: [www.alava.net/publicar/Fotos/AFADFA\\_IV\\_Fotos\\_General.zip](http://www.alava.net/publicar/Fotos/AFADFA_IV_Fotos_General.zip))

Lurmen S L is an archaeological firm paid by the Autonomous Basque Government and private organizations grants in order to excavate and study Iruña-Veleia bed. This old Roman/Basque-Iberian City is close to Vitoria/Gasteiz in the Spanish Basque Country.

Many authors, Wilhelm Humboldt being the most known, have from Middle Ages believed that Basque language was a form of ancient Iberian, (Basque/ Ancient Iberian) (Humboldt, 1990); this has nowadays been rediscovered with new methodologies (Arnaiz-Villena & Alonso-Garcia, 1998; Arnaiz-Villena & Alonso-Garcia, 2000; Rodriguez Ramos, 2004; Arnaiz-Villena & Alonso-Garcia, 2008).

At the moment, we stick to Manuel Gómez Moreno and Antonio Tovar Iberian scripts transliteration (Gómez Moreno, 1949; Tovar, 1951; Tovar, 1955; Gómez Moreno, 1962) and decline to follow the strange derivation taken by Rodríguez Ramos and Correa (Rodríguez Ramos, 2004; Correa, 2005) in redefining Iberian transliterations and even trying to define a new language, “Tartessian”, which cannot be separated from Iberian at present as a different language. Their lack of objectivity is reflected, for example, in (Fletcher Vals, 1993; Correia, 2009):  (which is not contained in the Espanca signary but appears often in “Tartessian” inscriptions) is converted quite subjectively in sound “R”. It does not fit with previous archeo-epigraphic findings (Fletcher Vals, 1993). This letter has been found in Iruña-Veleia ceramics 11260, as shown above (Fig. 1).

## Results

See Appendix 1.

## Discussion

Iberian scripts findings cover most of Iberian Peninsula geography. It is clear that from an archaeological point of view it is not possible to distinguish in Iberia and southern France different signs by a distinct geography. Most Iberian signs do not follow geographical compartmentalization. Perhaps one or some of them are most often found in one particular archaeological site or region; however, once future script sites and findings are expected to appear, it is not objective to defining one particular Iberian-Tartessian script by classifying it by geography. This time stratification implies the use of different writing supports (metal, stone, ceramics, and rock wall) that cannot be taken has a particular and fundamental distinction, i. e.: assuming existence of different languages because of they are on different supports. On the other hand, the so called “Tartessian” language needs to be revised in timing and in space (Correia, 2009) since this kind of scripts are also found in North Caceres (Monfragüe), a quite high and central place in Iberian Peninsula for being considered “Tartessian-South West” script-language; “Tartessian” scripts are also found in the Spanish South-East (Pérez Rojas, 1993).

Even, a “Tartessian”-specific sign is found in northernmost part of Spain (Asturias) (Fig.2) (Arnaiz-Villena & Alonso-Garcia, 1998,2011; Arnaiz-Villena & Alonso-Garcia, 2000). Also different time stratum are supposed to exist and a kind of “dialectal” undefined way of writing is also assumed in different archaeological sites. Iberian-Tartessian scripts can be found in Galicia (reported by Gabriel Puig Larraz in BRAH, pp 414-426, 1897), Asturias (Fig. 2) (Arnaiz-Villena & Alonso-Garcia, 2000), Portugal and many parts of Iberian Peninsula from North to South and East to West. Tartessian jewellery is widespread throughout Iberian Peninsula, like Cáceres, Alicante-Villena, and probably North West Asturias (Maluquer de Motes, 1970; Arnaiz-Villena & Alonso-Garcia, 2000).



**Figure 2.**

Laid stones at the entrance arch to the church garden; some of them bear Iberian inscriptions original from Asturias, North Spain. One of them is classified by most authors as Tartessian  $\equiv$  (E) (Arnaiz-Villena & Alonso-García, 2000, 2011). See 2011 edition prologue to “El Origen de los Vascos”.

The problem of different phonologies for the same scripts in different sites is not yet resolved (Fletcher Vals, 1993; Pérez Rojas, 1993). Methodology for phoneme assignment is not standardized and each scholar has his own interpretation (Fletcher Vals, 1993). This reference is only given for a particular grapheme ( $\sphericalangle$ ), however, Untermann has more author discrepancies in Iberian signs phonology (Untermann, 1990).

We are not going to further discuss about Iruña-Veleia Basque graffiti, which are valid for us (Arnaiz-Villena, 2011), but only to report that also Iberian scripts are found in Veleia ceramics. Studied material in this paper probably comes from before 3<sup>rd</sup> Century AD (SOS-Irunaveleia, 2011). This makes very difficult to hold the view that studies in Iruña-Veleia epigraphy should stop, because there is no objective reason to end now their Basque or Iberian scripts/graffiti studies, for example.

Redundancy rule of vocals after syllables is not a characteristic of a hypothetical “Tartessian” language, because it does not occur universally (Correia, 2009). The artificial “Tartessian” language separation from Iberian language is at the moment another hypothesis, which is weakly based on objective terms. In addition, some signs not present in the Espanca signary are invented “ad hoc”, when it is considered necessary by some authors (Correa, 2005; Correia, 2009), and some of the Espanca “Tartessian” syllables-letters are never used in the South West script. On these confusing bases, we think it is better at the moment to stick in our hypotheses for Basque-Iberian translations/transliterations or otherwise, to the initial Gómez Moreno and Tovar transliteration (Gómez Moreno, 1949; Tovar, 1951; Tovar, 1955; Gómez Moreno, 1962). We also oppose the concept that Iberian and Tartessian are altogether different languages until it may be objectively demonstrated, if ever.

On the other hand Veleia scripts of “Y” type may be assimilated to Lycian, Greek or other origins and “X” to Etruscan or Latin origin (Appendix 1). However, the context and/or attributed time (III century AD) goes in favour that these scripts belong to Iberian signary. Other scripts are Iberian (CARP-1[N°2], [N°7], [N°29], [N°38], [N°41], etc.). This is the second time that we have found Iberian scripts in an unexpected location: Guanche-Iberian rock graffiti are also found in Fuerteventura and Lanzarote (Canary Islands) (Arnaiz-Villena & Alonso-Garcia, 2011)


[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Iberian-Guanche\\_inscriptions.pdf](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Iberian-Guanche_inscriptions.pdf).

Finally the last piece, CARP-3[N°8], may be an example of the so called “naviform” graffiti, which are found on rocks or stone-like pieces in Cerdaña and Andorra (Pyrenees) and Corsica (Campmajo & Crabol, 2009). These “naviform” graffiti are associated to Iberian signs (Campmajo & Crabol, 2009).

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## Appendix 1

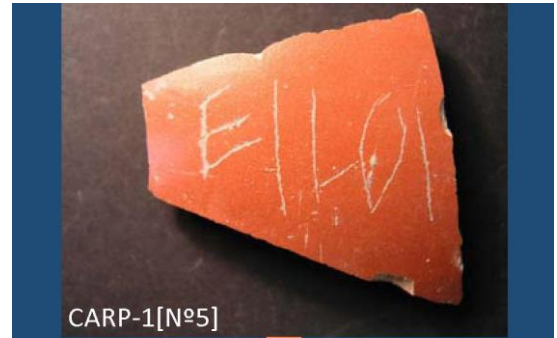
Abbreviations: a) CARP=CARPETA. b)Plane number: as classified by Diputacion General de Alaba, web page.(see [www.alava.net/publicar/Fotos/AFADFA\\_IV\\_Fotos\\_General.zip](http://www.alava.net/publicar/Fotos/AFADFA_IV_Fotos_General.zip))





CARP-1[Nº2]

Iberian sign; it sounds **ti/di** according A.Tovar. It is found in Catalonia, including France (Enserune)



CARP-1[Nº5]

= e   
 = ba/pa   
 = o (Cerro de Los Santos) – "South-Iberian"  
 = r (Gador "South-Iberian"; Enserune)   
 = ba/pa



CARP-1[Nº6]

= X (?) da/ta



CARP-1[Nº7]

= ko/go ( the lower line is not horizontal in Enserune)  
 = ba/pa    **Koba**



CARP-1[Nº11]

= do/to (Enserune) (?)



CARP-1[Nº21]

= (?) da/ta

