REFLECTIONS ON THE EPIGRAPHY OF ROMAN CELTI

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INTRODUCTION

The results of recent research at Celti (Peñaflor, Sevilla) provide us with the opportunity to examine broader processes of cultural and social change at a town in the Guadalquivir valley in Baetica, from the perspective of both the archaeological and epigraphic evidence. The recently published excavations have uncovered a long and complex occupational sequence[1], while meticulous analyses of the epigraphic record have so far yielded a total of 128 texts[2]. The aim of this paper is to quantify the epigraphic record from the site during the first two centuries AD, and to analyze it in the context of the archaeological record. This provides us with a new way of thinking about the epigraphic and cultural identity of a single municipality in its regional context. It also raises important questions about the representitivity of inscriptions found at urban sites in Roman Baetica.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CELTI

The site of Celti is located on a low-lying plateau, close to the foothills of the Sierra Morena on the north bank of the Guadalquivir, a short distance to the west of its intersection with the Genil.

It thus lay close to the nexus of two of the most important routes of communication in central Baetica at the eastern edge of the conventus hispalensis[3]. Recent work suggests that the site covered 28 Ha, and that the site was continuously occupied from the 9th century BC onwards. Between the 9th and the later 1st century BC, there was intensive occupation over much of the site. Although the excavated sample was small, it seems likely that the layout and material culture of the site were largely in the indigenous tradition until the end of this period[4]. Between the later 1st century BC and the mid to later 1st century AD, there are signs of structural change, as well as evidence for some changes in the dietary pattern and in the array of ceramics being used at the site.[5] The major change comes in the mid to later 1st century AD, when all pre-existing buildings in the excavated area were levelled and replaced by a large building which focused upon an enclosed porticoed piazza and was probably public in character[6]. There was also evidence for a significant increase in the volume of imported pottery, as well as a larger proportion of olives than hitherto, and a more non-local meat diet in which pig was now a major part. All of these changes coincided with a change in the status of the site. It has been argued that Celti, like many other towns in the region, may have been granted municipal status in the Flavian period[7]. The next major phase of occupation comes at around the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd centuries AD, when the earlier building was converted into a large house[8].

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1. KEAY, S.; CREIGHTON, J.; REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ, J., *Celti (Peñaflor). La arqueología de una ciudad hispanorromana en la Bética: Prospecciones y excavaciones 1987-1922*, Sevilla 2001.

2. GONZÁLEZ, J., *Corpus de Inscripciones Latinas de Andalucía. Volumen II: Sevilla. Tomo I: La Vega (Hispalis)*, Sevilla 1991; REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ, J., "De topografía y epigrafía celtitana"; CREIGHTON; REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ, *o.c.*, 173-217; STYLOW, A. *et alii*, *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. Volumen Secundum. Inscriptiones Hispaniae Latinae. Pars IV. Conventus Hispalensis (CIL II²/4)*, Berlin (forthcoming).

3. KEAY; CREIGHTON; REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ, *o.c.*

4. KEAY; CREIGHTON; REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ, *o.c.*, Phases 1-4.

5. KEAY; CREIGHTON; REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ, *o.c.*, Phases 5, 6, 6A.

6. KEAY; CREIGHTON; REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ, *o.c.*, Phase 7A.

7. STYLOW, A., "Apuntes sobre las tribus romanas de Hispania" *Veleia* 12, 1995, 105-123.

8. KEAY; CREIGHTON; REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ, *o.c.*, Phase 8.

INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE SITE

The publication of the survey and excavations at the site included a study of 66 inscriptions from Celti and its surrounding country, a total that has been recently increased to 128[9]. Both studies have focused upon providing detailed descriptions of the texts and their contexts, as well as the consideration of traditional concerns such as formulae and names. This paper adopts a different approach, and quantifies aspects of inscriptions as a way of gauging the epigraphic habit at Celti. It builds on the premise that the inscriptions from the site are in some way representative of the original population of inscriptions that would have existed at the site in antiquity. It should be pointed out, however, that this view is by no means universally held. Some scholars point to the "mobility" of inscriptions in the post-Roman period and suggest that the epigraphic record has been too depleted to render any kind of statistical analysis worthwhile. Others do not confront the issue, but are content to make broad generalizations about the presence and absence of inscriptions which are, in effect, quantitative[10]. There is a small minority, however, which have explicitly embraced the quantification of inscriptions as a way to study the epigraphic habit[11]. Even so, the framework of analysis has tended to regional, chronological or by category of inscription. Detailed site by site analyses of the epigraphic signatures of individual urban communities have been rarer.

Like many Baetican towns, the inscriptions of Celti have been an object of study since the 16th century, and a study of the provenance of texts reveals quite a few appearing in places a long way from the site from which they originally derived. In general, however, there is little to suggest that these were more than the exception and one suspects that the majority are still at or near the site. While this cannot be proved, the burden of proof must equally rest with those that argue differently. On this basis, therefore, this paper assumes that the surviving inscriptions from the site are generally representative of the original epigraphic population, and that the quantification of texts may be able to tell us something about the nature of the 'epigraphic habit' at the town. However, this will have been tempered by the political status of the town, the degree to which Roman citizens may have followed the letter of legal obligation and expectation, and the degree to which Roman citizens and others responded to perceptions of change and instability within the expanding Roman empire[12].

The chronological curve of inscriptions from the town (Fig. 1) suggests that the practice of inscribing texts on stone was very rare prior to the later 1st century AD, became increasingly common in the course of the 2nd century, and diminished in the course of the 3rd century AD. The situation is similar for those inscriptions found in a rural context, although late 1st century AD texts are proportionately more common than in the town. Unsurprisingly, the epigraphic assemblage is dominated by tombstones, with only a handful of dedications in honour of individuals, deities, or on public works (Fig. 2). However, the funerary inscriptions from the town are quite distinctive. Tabulae are by far the most common kind of medium on which they are inscribed, even though nothing is known about the kind of monument to which they may have been originally attached (Fig. 3). A brief analysis of the examples from Celti suggests that most were quite small (20-40cm height by 15cm width) and cut from re-used marble. In addition, *pius in suis h.s.e.t.t.l* was the most commonly attested burial formula, while the dove and garland was the most frequent decorative symbol. Interestingly, none of the tombstones mention funerary honours, even though this is a common practice of elite self-representation at many Baetican towns[13].

The quality of our evidence for the findspots of inscriptions from Celti is far from ideal, and does

9. STYLOW *et alii CIL II²/4* forthcoming: I would like to thank Armin Stylow and Helena Gimeno for allowing me to see their draft text for the inscriptions from Celti and to use this for the quantification in this paper.

10. Examples of implicitly quantitative approaches to inscriptions can be found in ALFÖLDY, G., "Desde el nacimiento hasta el apogeo de la cultura epigráfica de Tarraco," HERNÁNDEZ GUERRA, L.; SAGREDO SAN EUSTAQUIO, L.; SOLANA SÁINZ, J.Mª (edd.), *Actas del I Congreso Internacional de Historia Antigua "La península ibérica hace 2000 años".* Valladolid 23-25 de Noviembre 2000, Valladolid 2002, 61-74; CABALLOS, A., "Cities as the basis for *supra*-provincial promotion: the equites of Baetica", KEAY, S. (ed.), *The Archaeology of Early Roman Baetica. Journal of Roman Archaeology. Supplementary Series Number Twenty Nine,* Portsmouth R.I. 1998, 123-146; DARDAINE, S., "La naissance des elites hispano-romaines en Bétique," NAVARRO CABALLERO, M.; DEMOUGIN, S., (edd.), *Élites Hispaniques. (Études 6),* Bordeaux 2001, 23-44.

11. For example MEYER, E., "Explaining the epigraphic habit in the Roman empire: the evidence of epitaphs," *Journal of Roman Studies 80,* 1990, 74-96.

12. WOOLF, G., "Monumental writing and the Expansion of Roman Society in the Early Empire," *Journal of Roman Studies 86,* 1996, 22-39.

13. DARDAINE, S., "Honneurs funèbres et notables municipaux dans l'epigraphie de la Bétique", *Habis 23,* 1992, 139-151

not readily lend itself to the more fine-grained spatial analyses of distribution of inscriptions that have been undertaken at such towns as Leptis Magna[14] and Termessos[15]. Nevertheless, some basic observations can be made. There are differences in the proportions of inscriptions from within what would have been the 'urban' part of the ancient town, the cemeteries and the surrounding countryside that could have been the product of structured deposition, rather than random re-deposition in the post-Roman period. Roughly equal numbers of honorary, religious and public dedications were retrieved from the broad area of the town (Fig. 4), as one would perhaps expect: however, the presence of some funerary inscriptions within the area of the ancient town does point to a degree of post-Roman deposition. In the cemetery area, and the countryside beyond, funerary inscriptions dominate the epigraphic assemblage.

THE 'EPIGRAPHIC HABIT' AT EARLY IMPERIAL CELTI

On the assumption that the trends outlined above are broadly representative of the epigraphic signature of Celti, it remains to evaluate these in terms of the 'epigraphic habit' of the town. The only way that this can be sensibly achieved is by analysing the trends at Celti against a background of epigraphic evidence from towns in other parts of the region. This kind of approach has been profitably applied to other kinds of archaeological evidence, such as coinage and, more recently, pottery[16], and shows that there are significant variations in the range and quantities of material from one site to the next. There seems to be little reason why this kind of archaeological analysis cannot be applied to epigraphic evidence.

A range of towns were chosen for this comparative analysis on the basis of their urban status. They comprised two the coloniae of Hispalis and Astigi, the municipia of Ilipa, Carmo, Arva, Muni-

gua and Canania[17], as well as the indigenous settlement at El Gandul (Alcalá de Guadaira)[18]. There are considerable differences in the total numbers of surviving inscriptions from all of these sites, as well as in the ways in which these assemblages were collected. Nevertheless the broad prevalence of tombstones, the principal category of inscription in the Roman empire, from most of these sites suggests that they broadly reflect the original epigraphic populations at these sites.

The first important point to be made is that the size of the sample of inscriptions from Celti. The site and its hinterland yielded 128 texts, a total which exceeds that from all the other sites in the region (Fig. 5). As a consequence, it is interesting to note that in percentage terms, Celti appears to have had a very low number of inscriptions pre-dating the late 1ˢᵗ century AD, suggesting that the epigraphic habit at the town did not begin to take root until comparatively late. Hispalis is the only site with a similarly low percentage, although this may be more apparent than real. The provenance of only a few inscriptions is known from this town, 'artificially' depressing the totals in this analysis. In terms of the classes of inscription found at Celti, the high proportion of funerary texts does seem to be part of a regional pattern shared by some sites, such as Ilipa, Carmo, El Gandul, Hispalis and Astigi, but which is distinct to that at the neighbouring centres of Arva, Munigua and Canania (Fig. 6). Indeed, the low level of funerary inscriptions at Munigua and Arva is offset by a higher number of inscriptions on public works and religious dedications. While it might be suggested that this difference is to be explained by the unequal survival of texts, it should be remembered that at Munigua at least a substantial proportion of texts were derived from excavated contexts.

It is the contention of this paper that these differences are significant and that they point to local

14. CONDRON, F., "Ritual, space and politics. Reflections in the archaeological record of social developments in Lepcis Magna, Tripolitania", FORCEY, C.; HAWTHORNE, J.; WITCHER, R. (edd.), TRAC 97. Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference. Nottingham 1997, Oxford 1998, 42-52.

15. VAN NIJF, O., "Inscriptions and Civic memory in the Roman east", COOLEY, A. (ed.), The Afterlife of Roman Inscriptions (Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies Supplement 75), London 2000, 21-36.

16. CARRETÉ, J.M.; KEAY, S.; MILLETT, M., A Roman Provincial Capital and its Territor (Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 15), Michigan 1995.

17. For these towns, see GONZÁLEZ, O.C., GONZÁLEZ, J., Corpus de Inscripciones Latinas de Andalucía. Volumen II: Sevilla. Tomo III: La Campiña, Sevilla 1996; STYLOW, A. et alii, Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. Volumen Secundum. Inscriptiones Hispaniae Latinae. Pars V. Conventus Astigitanus (CIL II²/5), Berlin 1998; GONZÁLEZ, J., Corpus de Inscripciones Latinas de Andalucía. Volumen II: Sevilla. Tomo IV: El Aljarafe, Sierra Norte, Sierra Sur, Sevilla 1996; STYLOW, A., "Una aproximación a la Carmo romana a través de su epigrafía. Nuevas aportaciones y revisión crítica", CABALLOS RUFINO, A. (ed.), Actas del II Congreso de Historia de Carmona. Carmona Romana (Carmona), Carmona 2001, 95-105.

18. CABALLOS, A., "Las inscripciones", KEAY, S.; WHEATLEY, D. et alii, Prospecciones arqueológicas en el Gandul (Sevilla) (forthcoming).

elites making conscious choices about what they chose to commemorate with written texts in public contexts. Elites at Celti were amongst many in the region for whom funerary inscriptions were the preferred form of self-representation. At the same time, however, there were differences in the kinds of funerary inscription chosen by elites at Celti and other towns in the region. Analysis of the classes of epitaph (Fig. 3) show that tabulae were common at Celti, and at Carmo and Munigua, while altars, pedestals, stelae and inscriptions from large funerary monuments were rare. By contrast, stelae are much more common at Astigi. One should also remember that the Celti tabulae themselves had distinctive decoration and were cut onto reused marble slabs.

INTEGRATION OF THE "EPIGRAPHIC HABIT" AND OTHER CULTURAL BEHAVIOUR AT CELTI

The foregoing analysis of the epigraphic and archaeological evidence allows some general points to be made about cultural behaviour at Celti during the first two centuries AD. Prior to the monumentalization of the urban landscape in the mid to late 1st century AD, the use of stone inscriptions as a means of self-representation by elites was rare and may have been confined to a limited number of elite individuals, possibly as part of a strategy of setting themselves apart from the rest of the urban population and, thus, reinforcing their own social standing in the community. The majority of the population, by contrast, did not inscribe texts in a public arena, and continued to live within a built environment that may have been largely unchanged since the later Republican period, diet, eating habits and other cultural practices were still largely defined by pre-existing traditions. In other words, despite the many major political and economic developments taking place in western Baetica at this time, aspects of Celtitanian society may have been static, and the new practice of self-representation on inscriptions may have enhanced the social standing of only a small elite minority. It is also possible that the absence of funerary inscriptions prior to the later 1st century AD may point to a persistence of indigenous burial traditions until that date.

The mid to late 1st century AD sees the beginning of a period of transition. The monumentalization of the urban landscape coincided with a growing preference for non-local dietary regimes, gradual moves towards the adoption of Roman

eating habits, and the increasing integration of the urban community into commercial circuits focused upon such major regional Roman centres as Hispalis and Astigi. Furthermore, by the mid middle of the 2nd century, olive oil from estates in the vicinity of Celti was exported to different parts of the western empire[19].

The large increase in the number of inscriptions in the course of the later 1st and 2nd centuries AD is symptomatic of a gradual transformation of the social structure of the town. The change and instability inherent in the integration of provincial communities into the Roman empire generated the new social hierarchies in towns like Celti, whose populations used the epigraphic habit as a necessary means of self-representation. Individuals belonging to many levels of the provincial Roman social hierarchy are commemorated on inscriptions from the town, as are occasional indications of rank and wealth. At the same time, Roman burial habits, as reflected in the commemoration of the deceased with an inscribed text, became established in the course of the 2nd century AD[20]. Since funerary texts are the most common class of inscription at Celti, it would appear that fear of 'oblivion and loss of self' were the motivating concerns in the development of the 'epigraphic habit' by members of the upper levels of society. By contrast, the 'publicization of key validated aspects of self worth and achievement and an emphasis of key relationships with deities and places' as a way of confronting the threats of social dislocation may have been of secondary importance[21].

How far these social changes were symptomatic of a break with the earlier period is unclear. The rarity of pre late 1st century AD inscriptions, together with the fragmentary nature of 2nd century AD texts makes it very difficult to estimate how many families of the late 1st century BC or earlier 1st century AD continued to dominate the political and social life of the town in the late 1st or early 2nd centuries AD. It is possible, however, that a small group of wealthy and highly influential families did. For example, the son of M. Fabius Basileus Celtitanus, provincial flamen in the early 3rd century AD, was inscribed in the Galeria voting

19. KEAY; CREIGHTON; REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ, o.c.
20. The rarity of attested Roman citizens argues against the idea that this reflects the testamentary obligations of Roman citizens: MEYER, o.c.
21. Issues argued in detail by Woolf in his analysis of the social context of epigraphic practice in the Roman empire by (WOOLF, "Monumentel...", o.c.).

tribe[22], suggesting that he was the latest in a long family line that may have first established itself at Celti in the Augustan period, before the town gained municipal status[23].

CONCLUSION

This paper has analysed the epigraphic evidence from Celti in the context of the archaeological evidence to explore how far it is possible to suggest that Celti had a distinctive cultural identity. The foregoing discussion has raised some issues that could form the basis of some more sustained research involving a number of town sites. It has also underlined the value of looking at the epigraphic evidence in the context of the archaeological evidence from the site.

In a sense, however, the most important issue to be raised concerns the quantification of epigraphic evidence from town sites and, in particular, deciding at what point the presence or absence of inscriptions becomes significant. The results discussed above suggest that there is some value in the limited quantification of provenanced inscriptions from sites like Celti, especially when they are evaluated against a 'background' of other sites. They allow us to bring out the main characteristics of an assemblage, characterize differences to other sites, and explain them in terms of the known economic and political history of the region.
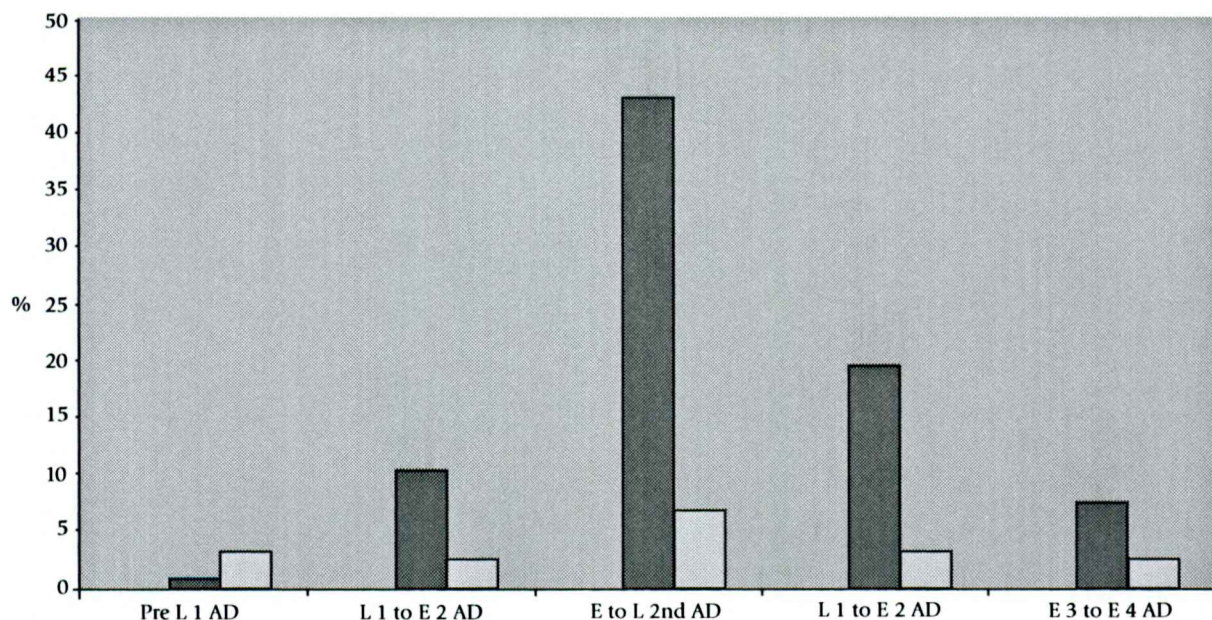
Chronology of Inscriptions in Town and Country

Fig. 1

22. STYLOW, A., *et alii*, *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. Volumen Secundum Inscriptiones Hispaniae Latinae. Pars VII. Conventus Cordubensis (CIL II²/7)*, *o.c.*, n. 295.

23. The significance of the attestation of Galeria voting tribe in post-Flavian inscriptions is discussed by , "Apuntes...", *o.c.*
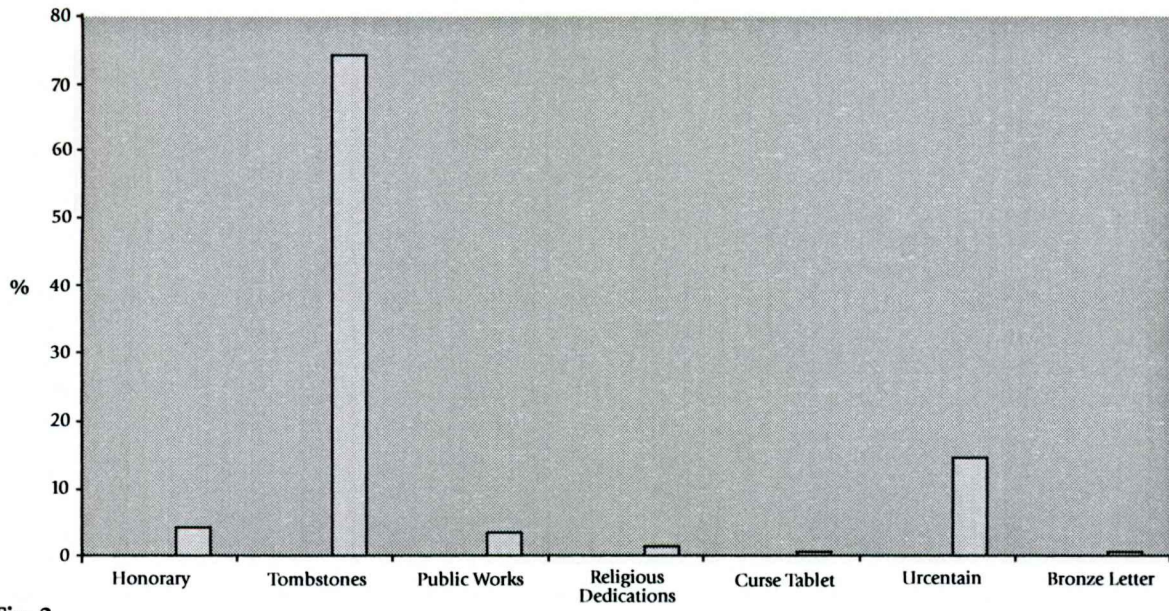
Categories of Inscription from Celti
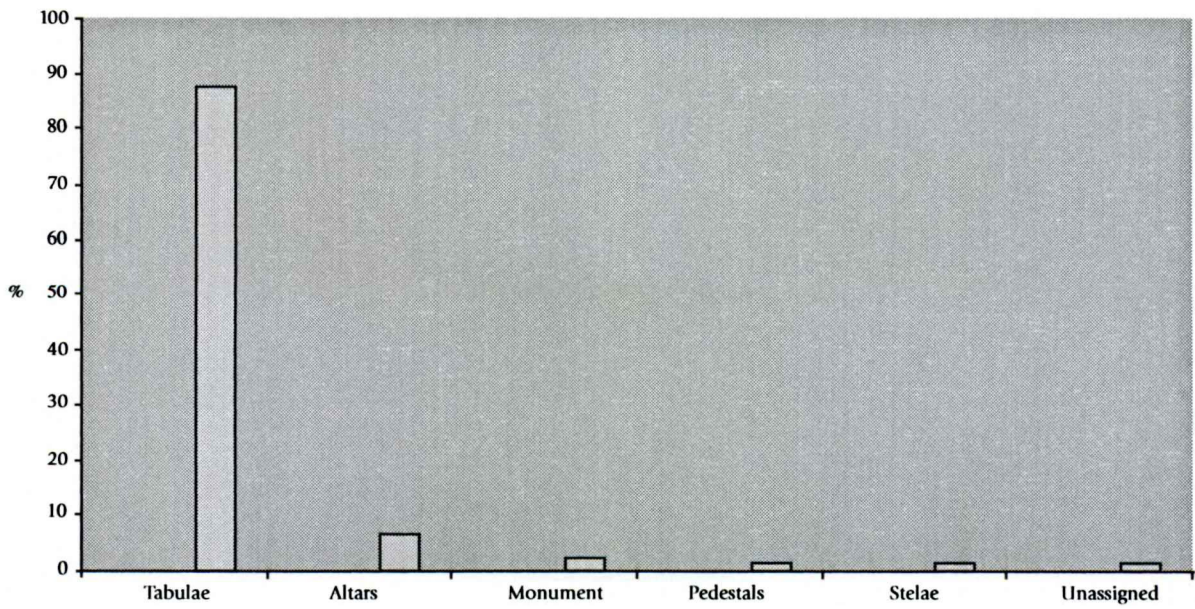

Fig. 2

Classes of Tombstones from Celti

Fig. 3

Contexts of Inscriptions

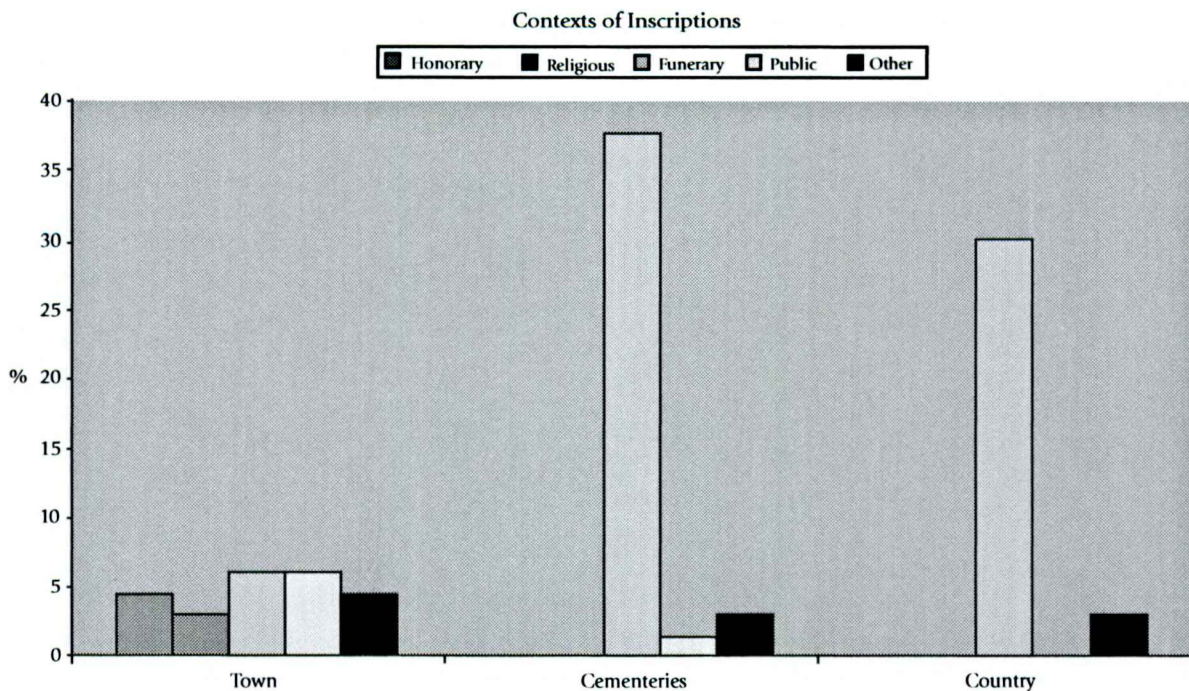| Honorary | Religious | Funerary | Public | Other |

Fig. 4

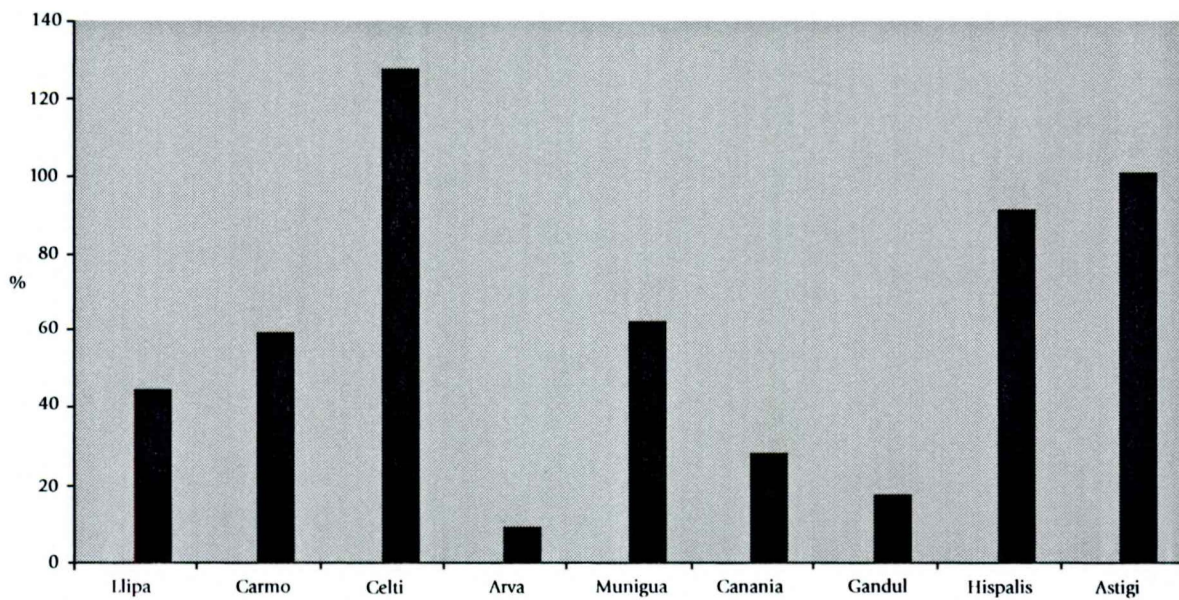## Absolute Numbers of Inscriptions

Fig. 5

Inscriptions of pre late 1st century AD date
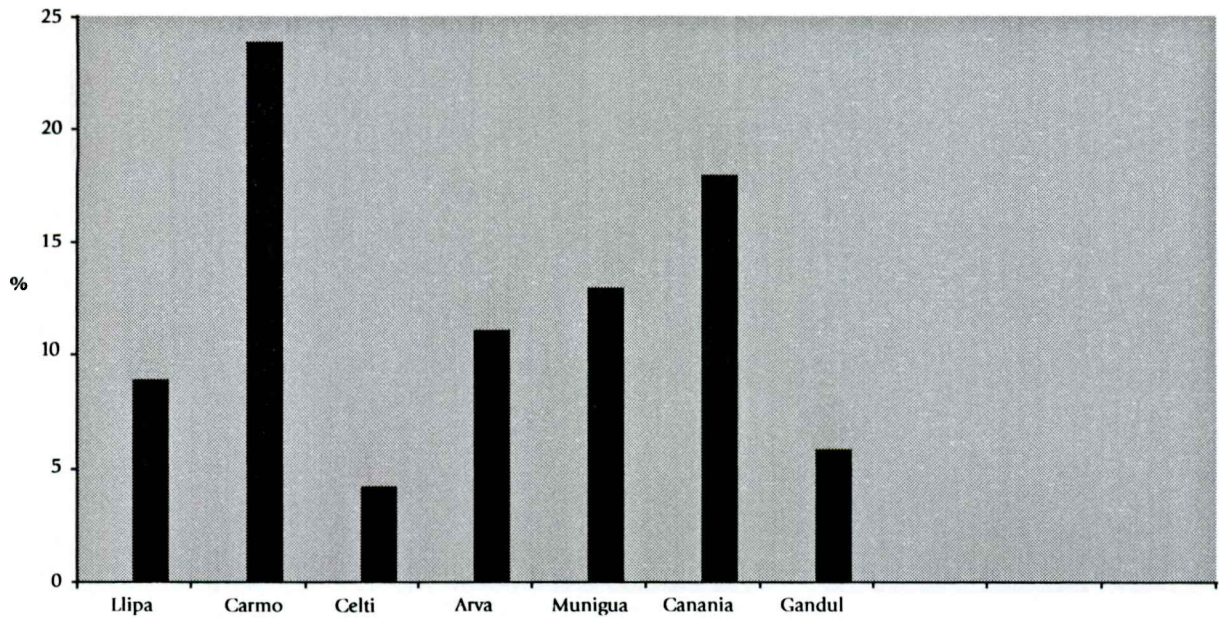
Fig. 6

Celti against Regional Background

1. Classes of Inscription

		Ilipa	Carmo	Celti	Arva	Munigua	Canania
Honorary		8,88	10,16	4,16	44,44	25,8	21,42
Tombstones	60	59,32	74,16	22,22	9,67	42,85	
Public Works	2,22	0	3,33	0	8,06	21,42	
Religious Dedications	8,88	3,38	1,63	11,11	17,74	3,57	
Other/Uncertain	20	27,11	16,37	22,22	38,7	10,71	

Tombstones	Gandul	Hispalis	Astigi
Public Works	17,64	27,47	6,93
Religious Dedications	76,47	63,73	86,13
Other/Uncertain	0	1,09	0,99
	0	5,49	4,95
	5,88	2,19	0,99

2. Classes of Epitaphs

Epitaphs (excluding uncertain attributions)

	Celti	Carmo	Munigua	Astigi
Tabulae	87,64	81,25	62,5	31,39
Altars	6,74	3,12	25	1,16
Monument	2,24	6,25	0	3,48
Pedestals	1,12	3,12	12,5	0
Stelae	1,12	6,25	0	30,23
Unassigned	1,12	0	0	33,72
	N=89	N=32	N=8	N=86

3. Inscriptions dating prior to the late 1st century AD

Town	Ilipa	Carmo	Celti	Arva	Munigua	Canania	Gandul
%	8,88	23,72	4,23	11,11	12,9	17,85	5,82
No.	4	14	5	1	8	5	1
Total per town	45	59	118	9	62	28	17

Town	Hispalis	Astigi
%	1,09	34,65
No.	3	35
Total per town	91	101

4. Absolute numbers of inscriptions from Celti and other regional towns

Ilipa	Carmo	Celti	Arva	Munigua	Canania	Gandul	Hispalis	Astigi
45	59	127	9	62	28	17	91	101

Fig. 7