

INDIGENOUS DEITIES IN PORTUGUESE LUSITANIA: PRIVATE CULTS / PUBLIC CULTS

Maria Manuela Alves Dias, Catarina Isabel Sousa Gaspar, Lisboa

In what refers to indigenous/local culture, Lusitania was never a culturally unified space. In fact, this administrative area, as created by Augustus, lost, as time went by, the political efficiency, which had presided to its creation, remaining despite it as a political-administrative division. This non-functional survival, as an administrative division, is denounced by the religious heterogeneity visible in this territory.

The northeast area of the province is a geographical area of mountain ranges, which were natural obstacles and ever present divisions in the intercultural process. This helps explain, in part, the religious diversity.

From the archaeological point of view, there are not many cultural elements which can be attributed, with certainty, to a pre-Roman population substratum. The Latin texts, with linguistic elements of non-Latin origin, have been the elements where traditionally one has looked for distinctive traces of pre-Roman populations. The names of gods have been understood as the more lasting elements of that cultural universe, which in Lusitania reveals itself as not very homogeneous.

The introduction of writing and the epigraphic habit are items of the process of Latinisation of pre-Roman peoples and it is because they underwent this transforming process of their culture that their presence becomes evident. But the Latinisation process was not simultaneous in time and space. The Hispanic historiography was conscious of the historical and cultural dimension, which affected the indigenous peoples and consequently the knowledge we have of them nowadays. In fact, the elements we know of them today appear naturally re-contextualised in regional Latin culture.

Already in 1976 L. Michelena said: *“The languages can, thus, change, and even have to change, through the influence of contiguous languages, especially when these are socially dominant. But, after all, not more than two things happen: either the language, with as many changes as one wants, is conserved, or it ceases to be used. It is never lost without leaving traces, but these traces – little or many, explicit or implicit – are no longer more the lose elements, rari nantes, in the new sea they have been dropped into. What is more, even if a language is, probably, the most characteristic aspect of a culture, it is conserved or lost for reasons which have little to do with the realm of Spirit”*¹.

What we know of the Latinisation process of the indigenous communities results of our systematisation, which rests on these traces outside of their context. The times and ways of development of the process are unknown to us. Epigraphy has registered only a few marks of that process, in different times and spaces.

Of the pre-Roman community units there are few vestiges left, and, once more, they come to us by means of epigraphic materials and of what classical authors have said of them. Our systematisations should, nevertheless, bear in mind the difficulties in adapting Latin and Greek terminology, with well defined juridical contours, which the classical authors apply to the indigenous institutions independently of juridical adequacy². Despite everything, in some epigraphic texts, the individuals felt the need to refer to themselves, in Latin, in relation to the indigenous community in which they felt integrated. In those cases, the influence of the *urbanitas* did not affect their community cohesion. The aloofness regarding the social tensions that existed in the large Roman urban centres could explain that permanence.

¹ MICHELENA 1976, 42: «Las lenguas pueden, pues, cambiar, y hasta tienen que cambiar, así por influencia de lenguas contiguas, sobre todo cuando éstas son socialmente dominantes. Pero, a fin de cuentas, no suceden más que dos cosas: o una lengua, con los cambios que se quiera, se conserva o una lengua deja de ser usada. Nunca se pierde, desde luego, sin dejar huella, pero

estas huellas – pocas o muchas, patentes o latentes – ya no son más que elementos sueltos, rari nantes en el nuevo mar a que han sido trasvasados. Además, por más que la lengua sea acaso el aspecto más característico de una cultura se conserva o pierde por razones que tienen poco que ver con el reino de Espíritu”.

² For all this, see CARO BAROJA 1970, 13–62.

Table 1: Spain*

	Find spot	Indigenous organizational unities	Text	Bibliography
	Pico de Dobra (Cantabria)	<i>Aunigainu(m)</i>	Corne(lius) Vicanus / Aunigainu(m) / Cesti(i) f(ilius) ara(m) / posuit Deo / Erudino X K(alend)is / Augu(sti) . Ma(l)lio Eu(tropio) Co(n)s(ulibus)	GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ 1986, n. 46
Indigenous Deities	Candeleda (Avila)	<i>Cara/eciq(um)</i>	Eburein(ius) Corun(di) f(ilius) Cara/eciq(um) Vael[i]/co . v(otum) s(olvit) m(erito) l(ibens)	GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ 1986, n. 84
	Candeleda (Avila)	<i>Pintolanq(um)</i>	C(aius) Vlantiu(s) Pintolanq(um) / Velico ar[a]m / p(osuit) v(otum) l(ibens) a(nimo) p(osuit)	GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ 1986, n. 167
	Monte Cildá (Palencia)	Polecensium	Cabuniaegino / Doiderus Tridia[ui](m) / pro salute / [D]uratonis f(ilius) / Polecensium / v(otum) l(ibens) m(erito)	GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ 1986, n. 183
	Osma (Soria)	<i>Vrcico(n)</i>	Lugovibus / Sacrum / L(ucius) L(icius) Vrcico(n) Colle/gio sutoru(m) d(edit) d(edicavit)	GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ 1986, n. 193
	Collado Villalba (Madrid)	<i>Ael/ariq(um)</i>	Ami/a Ael/ariq(um) / Marti / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens)	GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ 1986, n. 12
Roman Deities	Pinilla del Campo (Soria)	<i>Anniq(um)</i>	Marti / Atimo/laius / Anniq(um) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)	GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ 1986, n. 26
	Nieva de Cameros (La Rioja)	<i>Calaedico(n)</i>	Silvano / Titullus / Calaedico(n) Vianni f(ilius) / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)	GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ 1986, n. 73
	San Esteban de Gosmaz (Soria)	<i>Docilico(n)</i>	Pompeius / Docilico(n) / Herculi / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)	GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ 1986, n. 111
	Azután (Toledo)	<i>Doviliq(um)</i>	Iovi / Sacrum / Vrocus / Dovilus / Doviliq(um) / v(otum) l(ibens)	GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ 1986, n. 112
	Oliva (Cáceres)	Gapetico/rum	D(is) Laribus / Gapetico/rum gen/tilitatis	GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ 1986, n. 124
	Calderuela (Soria)	<i>[M]unerigio(n)</i>	[M]arti aram / [po]sit (sic) Lougus A[rqui] f(ilius) / [M]unerigio(n)	GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ 1986, n. 154
	San Esteban de Gosmaz (Soria)	<i>Tritalicu[m]</i>	L(ucius) Tritalicu[m] / Attonis Fla/vi f(ilius) Herculi	GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ 1986, n. 186

* According with M. C. González Rodríguez, Las Unidades Organizativas Indígenas del Área Indoeuropea de Hispania, Vitoria/Gastéis, 1986, p. 67.

Since, as it was also already referred by L. Michelena: *Urban life implied the existence of inequalities and of oligarchic groups, always willing to lean on any power near or far, and to maintain or improve their condition, even if to do so they had to break the community cohesion*³.

The way the break with the community cohesion manifests itself did not always imply, judging by the epigraphic testimonies, the negation that one belonged to the group. The examples prove that the first crisis does not affect individual identity but religious identity. To illustrate this process we look for examples that mention indigenous organisational units, because we think they exemplify a feeling of intentional participation in the indigenous community or, at least, because the mention of the indigenous community was still important on a political and social level.

In 1986 Maria Cruz González Rodríguez recovered and re-evaluated what was known of the studies around indigenous communities within the framework of philological and historical Hispanic tradition. In this work she gathered two hundred and twenty one inscriptions, with explicit references to indigenous communities⁴. Most of these inscriptions appear in funerary stones, which stresses the constancy of the social importance of belonging to an indigenous community. Only a small group of sixteen inscriptions are votive and, of these, only five mention indigenous deities. Let us first analyse the table 1, which refers the examples of the present Spanish territory⁵ (see Table 1 – Spain).

In this table, the first inscription, a text dedicated to the God Erudino, is the only one with a date which refers an indigenous deity. The consular date points to the year 399 AD⁶.

Reading the table we can conclude that the fact that it is still particularly relevant to these people the avowal of their belonging to an indigenous community does not in any way imply their religious options were exclusively directed to indigenous cults. Roman deities, as the Gods Lares, Mars, Jupiter, Silvanus and Hercules, impose themselves in the religious universe of the local people, even in that of those who,

in the Late Empire, still stubbornly affirm their indigenous character; all this, although some are simultaneously bearers of Roman onomastic elements (see Table 2 – Portugal).

In the construction of this table we considered the inscriptions of the Portuguese territory which refer, explicitly or implicitly, the existence of supra-familiar units / indigenous organisational units. Namely, when we have vestiges of them, either through personal names, as in table 1, or in the references admitted as exclusively ethnic names associated to the name of a deity.

In the first case, the form *Cosigos* was considered an ethnic epithet of the deity; we accept the interpretation of J. L. INÊS VAZ, although, as happens in other inscriptions of this region, it is not certain.

The second inscription of the table is lost. The association of the God Mars was suggested by a passage of Macrobius (*Saturn.* I, 19, 5). The disappearance of the stone does not allow us to affirm that the reference to the God Mars was in the text. The hypothesis of – *Neto* – functionally recovering the Roman god explains the reason why this inscription was not included in both groups of texts. The indigenous organisational unit is assumed by the people who dedicate it, together with the geographical reference – *de vico Baedoro* –, which does not imply the *Pinton(um)* identified exclusively with the inhabitants of this *vicus*.

Still in the first group of inscriptions dedicated to indigenous deities, the text that refers to *Ordo Zoelarum* is the only one where a community collectively expresses its ethnic cohesion, independently of their geographical location. By calling themselves *Ordo Zoelarum*, the people who dedicated the inscription are identified not by belonging to a geographically defined community, but by a social and political organisation, which they characterised by an ethnic name with the form of the name of the people in a genitive plural. This does not allow us, therefore, to transform the *Castro de Avelãs* into the geographical centre where the Zoelae resided. The epigraphic vestiges of the presence of this community are geographically distributed by a large area. If we also bear in mind that *Aermus*⁷ is the deity, by excellence, of

³ See MICHELENA 1976, 48: “La vida urbana implicaba la existencia de desigualdades y de grupos oligárquicos, siempre dispuestos a apoyarse en cualquier poder cercano o lejano, y a mantener o mejorar su condición, aunque para ello hubiera que romper la cohesión comunitaria”.

⁴ As GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ 1986, 11 says “the real study object are the indigenous unities documented in the epigraphic sources by means of the terms *gens*, *gentilitas* and by the plural genitives which form part of the individual onomastic system in an extensive zone of the Indo-European area of the Iberian Peninsula”.

⁵ The organisation of the documentation in two tables, separating the materials from Spain from those of Portugal, obeyed practi-

cal needs. Concerning the Spanish texts we simply used the *corpus* published in 1986. Concerning the Portuguese territory texts we chose to add to the initial *corpus* texts that, mentioning indigenous communities, had not been included.

⁶ See BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 1962, 211–213.

⁷ For TRANOY 1981, 296 there is the hypothesis that *Aermus* can be considered as a god with funerary functions, since the decoration of the monuments consecrated to him appear in funerary monuments of the same geographical area; nevertheless, he also considers that the documents available do not suffice to confirm this hypothesis.

Table 2: Portugal

	Find spot	Indigenous organizational unities	Text	Bibliography
	Fornos de Algodres (Viseu)	Cosigos	Pudens / Competri (filius) / ara(m) ser(vit) / Colovesei / Caiaeloni C/osigos	INÊS VAZ 1997, 221–222, n. 33,
Indigenous Deities	Conimbriga (Coimbra)	<i>Gentis Pinton(um)</i>	[Deo Marti?] Neto (?) / Valerius Avit[us] / M(arcus) Turranius Sulpici[anus] / de vico Baedoro / gentis Pinton(um)	GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ 1986, 133, n. 168.
	Castro de Avelãs (Bragança)	<i>Ordo Zoelar(um)</i>	Deo / Aerno / Ordo / Zoelar(um) / ex voto	CIL II 2606
	Torre de Almofala (Guarda)	<i>Civitas Cobelcorum</i>	Iovi . Optumo / Maximo / Civitas / Cobelcorum	FRADE, 1998, n. 266; FRADE, 2002, 417, n. 80.
	Castro da Ucha (Viseu)	<i>Depenori(-)</i>	Mart(is) / Genio / Depen/ ori[---] / [---]	Inês Vaz 1987, 183–184, n. 6.
Roman Deities	Conimbriga (Coimbra)	<i>Dovilonicor(um)</i>	Lares Lubanc(os) / Dovilonicor(um) / horum Albui(us) / Camal(i) f(iilius) Sacr(um)	GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ 1986, 129, n. 113.
	Conimbriga (Coimbra)	<i>Gentis Pinton(um)</i>	[Deo Marti?] Neto (?) / Valerius Avit[us] / M(arcus) Turranius Sulpici[anus] / de vico Baedoro / gentis Pinton(um)	GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ 1986, 133, n. 168.

the Zoelae, the geographical region attributed to them would go from the coast to the interior, which would justify Plinius's information⁸. We can think that these Zoelae had “nomadic” habits in a limited territory.

In the second group, which includes the inscriptions dedicated to Roman deities, note that in the fourth text, concretely, in the expression *civitas Cobelcorum*, the community conscience classifies the urban centre with an ethnic name, in plural genitive, and not with an adjective formed by derivation of the ethnic name, with the function of *cognomen* of the urban centre. As with the first inscription, the conscience of the group is not shaken, despite the reference to the *civitas*. A community of natives follows the cult of *Jupiter Optimus Maximus*. This community, legally within the Roman order, worship the most important and most universal god of the Roman pantheon. The community of the Cobelcorum would be, in this case, in the first phase of community break-up or, if you like, of “Romanisation”, independently of the epoch in which this process occurred.

As to the fifth inscription of the table, the fact that the support is fractured does not allow us to gather more information from the text, concretely, about the community it mentions. Admitting that, as it looks like, *Depenori* is the complete form, possibly of a plural nominative, we have here one more example of an indigenous group that, assuming themselves collectively as such, dedicates an inscription to a Roman religious entity.

In the case of the inscription dedicated to the *Lares Lubanc(os)*, we have an individual person with an indigenous name, which relates the worship of the *Lares* with an indigenous community which is named through an ethnic name in a plural genitive, but which specifies that they are “these”, from here, (*horum*). This makes it possible to admit the hypothesis that this indigenous community was not concentrated only in the place where the inscription was placed.

We should also consider the problematic case of the rup-estrian inscription of Lamas de Moledo (Viseu), which we

⁸ See TOVAR 1989, 112; See MÁRIO CARDOZO 1972, 24 for the distribution of the inscriptions of the cult of *Aerno*.

Besencla sanctuary – Viseu (Portugal)

<p><i>Besen- clae</i></p> <p><i>Docqu- irus Ce- lt(i filius) v(otum) a(nimo) l(ibens) s(olvit)</i></p>	<p><i>Docqu- irus</i></p> <p><i>Celti(i) f(ilius) v(otum) f(ecit)</i></p>
<p><i>Docquir- us Celti(i filius) v(otum solvit)</i></p>	<p><i>Docqu- irus Cel- ti(i filius) v(otum solvit)</i></p>

left out of this table, since the interpretation of a text traditionally considered as one of the few examples of text in Lusitanic language, and where some authors see, besides the references of ethnic names, cults of deities both indigenous and Roman, is very problematic.

In the geographical area of the present Portuguese territory we do not have, as does the present Spanish territory, any inscription which can be dated with absolute certainty. The only certainty, however, is that there is no chronological homogeneity among them.

Contrarily to what might be expected, bearing in mind the affirmation of the conscience of belonging to an indigenous community of the worshipers, the Roman gods are those who are most worshiped. It so seem that it is not religion the mains cause for the loss of community conscience, as it is not that which binds them the most. With the exception of the inscription dedicated to *Aerno* by the *ordo Zoelarum*, the inscriptions dedicated to indigenous deities are mostly private cults and some of them seem to be able to be tracked to well located sanctuaries. A good example is the sanctuary dedicated to the indigenous deity *Besencla*, in the region of Viseu. There we have a set of four inscriptions, by the same person, but only one of them has the reference to the name of the deity, which, together with the fact that they were found together, makes us admit the existence of a private sanctuary. The absence of the mentioning of *Besencla* in three of the fourth stone altars would in these circumstances become redundant⁹. In fact, among the *rustici*, the cult to indigenous

deities is, above all, a private matter, whether they assume or not their belonging to an indigenous ethnic group.

The chronological amplitude of the practice of the cult worshipping indigenous deities is unknown. Usually, these epigraphic materials have been placed in the beginning of the Imperial epoch. The reasons for this chronological attribution are often based in palaeographic criteria, difficult to apply to texts engraved in granite supports, but the acceptance of a historiographical presupposition dating from the 19th century is responsible for the forcing of the attribution of dates. As shown by the text of MARTINHO DE BRAGA, *De correctione Rusticorum*¹⁰, the cults of the deities were still practiced in Late Antiquity, as Sanders recognises¹¹. In this late period, the church, the ideological heir of the Roman Empire, strived to stamp out the traces of indigenous religion, made to circulate by the long process of Latinisation of the indigenous communities. As with the cults, the indigenous languages finally remained in use only within the family group. As GARCIA BELLIDO observed: *languages die because their use becomes thin and wide, a tenuous string of familiar speech, which by nature does not leave remarkable historical testimonies*¹². The fight of Christianity against indigenous religious practices could have been done through the use of some of the indigenous tongues of Hispania but, as Mariner affirmed, *there was no Christian liturgy in Iberian Celt or in Lusitan, fundamentally because neither served at the time even to the pagan cults Christianity would come to replace*¹³.

By ignoring the public dimension, the indigenous religion confronted, first, with the Roman State religion and, later, with the universality of Christianity, loses political representativity. While Western Christian thought was expressed in Latin and supported itself within the political context of what was left of the Roman Empire, most of the indigenous languages did not have a genuinely indigenous context which could support them politically.

Underlying the epigraphic vestiges, which attest the cults to indigenous or Roman deities by worshipers who refer to themselves as members of an indigenous community are, beyond the cults and the worshipers, the cultural and political aspects that determined them. The question of the public and the private is determinant in the understanding of those vestiges. The public exhibition of a cult does not necessarily imply its public dimension, what determines it is its political context, which in turn is determined by time and space.

⁹ Apud INÊS VAZ 1997, 206–210: n. 20: *Besen/clae / Docqu/irus Ce/lti(i filius) v(otum) a(nimo) l(ibens) s(olvit)*; n. 21: *Docqu/irus / Celti(i) f(ilius) / v(otum) f(ecit)*; n. 22: *Docqu/irus Cel/ti(i filius) / v(otum solvit)*; n. 23: *Doquir/us Celti(i filius) / v(otum solvit)*.

¹⁰ See MARTINHO DE BRAGA, *Introdução Pastoral sobre Superstições Populares: De Correctione Rusticorum*, ed., intr. e com. por Aires A. Nascimento, Lisboa 1997.

¹¹ See SANDERS 1966, 139–145.

¹² See GARCIA Y BELLIDO 1967, 27: “Las lenguas mueren porque su uso se adelgaza y alarga acabando en hilo tenue de un habla familiar que por sua naturaleza no deja ya testimonios históricos apreciables”.

¹³ See MARINER 1976, 282: “no hubo liturgia cristiana en celtíbero ni en lusitano, fundamentalmente porque ya ni otro servían siquiera para el paganismo que aquélla venía a sustituir”.

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