

# The History of Iberian Archaeology: one archaeology for two Spains

Arturo Ruiz, Alberto Sánchez, Juan P. Bellón

## Introduction

In this article we set out to analyse, from a archaeological point of view, a political problem which goes beyond archaeology, as demonstrated by current political debate, and even by acts of violence. Throughout the 19th century, especially in the latter half, a centralist political model for Spain was developed, which failed to find a political balance between the State and the autonomous traditions of various regions of the Iberian Peninsula. As a result of this failure, towards the end of 19th century legitimisation programmes began to be constructed, based on the history of the peoples of these regions. This led to a search in protohistorical archaeology (Iberians, Celts, Tartessians, etc...) for the solution to the political problems caused by a lack of institutional agreement.

Peripheral reactions to the centralist model, the lack of agreement between the centralist model and peripheral regions, and even local reactions to regional models all fueled a debate which continues today. Archaeological research has an important voice in this debate, through the deconstruction of the processes which led to paradigmatic statements based sometimes on insufficiently tested scientific data.

## A time of crisis: from August 1897 to December 1898

The starting point of this study is the 4th of August 1897, when an Iberian carved stone bust was accidentally discovered in Elche in Eastern Spain (Figure 1). The finding was published in the local press on the 8th of August. Ten days later the bust was sold to the Louvre, and by the 30th of August begun the Paris-bound journey of 'La Dama de Elche', soon to be the paradigmatic figure of Iberian culture. On the 10th of December 1898, the Paris peace treaty was signed, ending the Spanish-American war, and depriving Spain of Cuba and the Philippines. The beginning of the 20th century meant for the peoples of Spain a reflection on their identity, in the midst of a profound social and political crisis in which a new group of intellectuals took the reins of power.

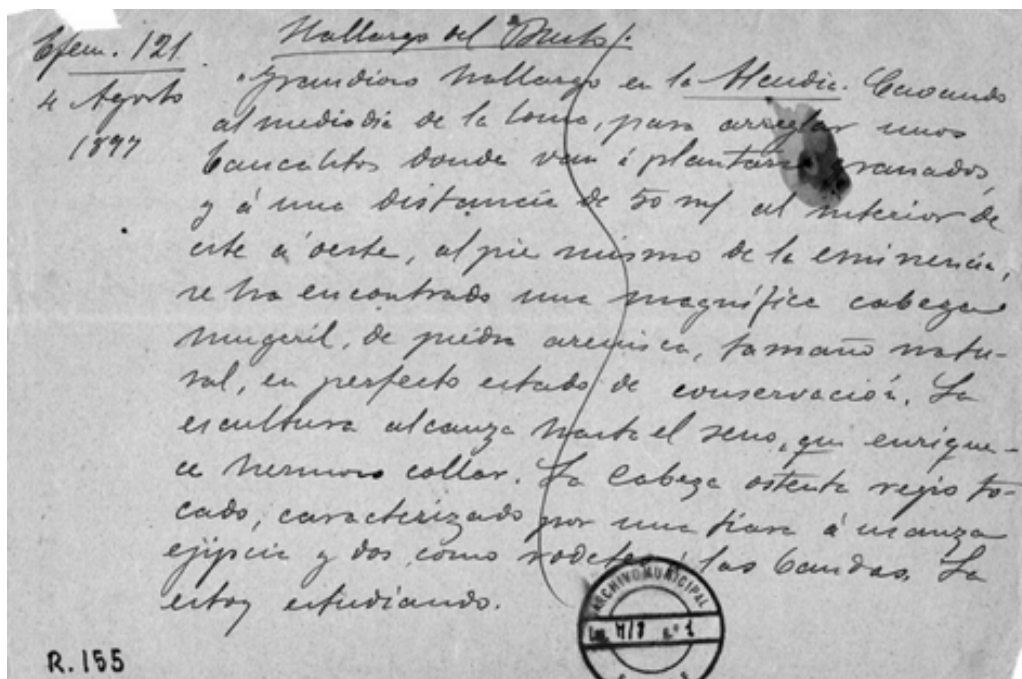


Figure 1. Text written by P. Ibarra about the discovery of the Lady of Elche (Archivo Municipal de Elche, Alicante, España)

**Translation:** “Great find in La Alcudia: excavating the south of the hill to make some terraces where some pomegranate trees are going to be planted, and 50 meters inside east to west, at the very foot of the eminence, it has been found a magnificent female head, built on sandstone, of natural size, in very good condition. The sculpture is a bust ornated with a beautiful necklace. The head boasts a regal headdress characterized by an Egyptian-like tiara, and two buns at the sides. I am studying it”

In fact, the situation had brought about the beginning of a legitimization programme of Spain’s political identity which would last until the Second Republic, and the consequences of which are still evident. It was the ideological programme of a new hegemonic block led by the most liberal and democratic sectors of the Spanish bourgeoisie.

The programme began to influence archaeology for the first time in 1900 when two recognised members of *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, Saavedra and Riaño, succeeded in obtaining from the government of Silvela the appointment of the young Gómez-Moreno as head of the Monumental and Artistic Catalogue of the Nation. The creation and development of different institutions increased between 1910 and 1916. In 1910, under Canalejas’ Liberal government, the *Centro de Estudios Históricos* was founded, led from the start by Menéndez Pidal. It was supported from the beginning by Gómez-Moreno, and had an extremely important role.

### **Spanish Nationalism in the 19th century and the origins of the Spanish nation**

In Spain, researchers agree that the origin of the Spanish Nation can be placed at the beginning of the 19th century. B. Riquer, who interprets the nation as the result of the politicisation and radicalisation of identity, divides Spanish nationalisation into two models. The first model corresponds to liberal nationalism, and is based on individual liberties. It is a civic-state process in which the concept of the nation is not fully identified with that of the state. The second model, which could be called national identity, entails the submission of personal relationships to the right of the national collective; to the interest of the nation. This is also the interest of the state, since it is evident that the process has led to the construction of an identity between the state and the nation (Riquer 1999). In political terms, the development of the process was not clear-cut. For this reason, Spanish nationalisation is divided into three phases in the 19th century: the first 40 years of the century; from 1840 to 1875; and from 1875 onwards.

In the first phase of nationalisation, there was opposition in the Cortes of Cádiz between two conceptions: the unitarist position which saw the territory of the Peninsula as one unit was opposed by the municipalist, decentralised, federal position. The second phase of nationalisation, in the mid 19th century, is best reflected by the 1845 Constitution, showing a triumph of the centralist position and single national identity, with limitations to popular sovereignty. It was around this time that Modesto Lafuente published the *Historia General de España*. In this work he proposed a new myth to explain the origins of the Spanish character, calling on a mixture of Iberians and Celts: the Celtiberians (Lafuente 1850).

### **Archaeological questions for the national debate of the origins of the nation**

The first archaeological model on the origins of the Spanish nation was *Las Antigüedades Prehistóricas de Andalucía*, by Manuel Góngora. The last part of this work proposed a sequence similar to that of Lafuente, namely the existence of an initial invasion by Iberian peoples coming from Asia, and a subsequent invasion of Celts, which dominated the Iberian. The merging of both peoples resulted in the Celtiberians (Góngora 1868).

A later interpretation was proposed in the work of Lasalde (1879), who theorized that the order of settlement in the peninsula was the opposite of that proposed by Góngora. According to Lasalde, these were the Celts who first settled in the peninsula. They were followed by several other invasions by Galicians, Iberians and Bastetani, who pushed the existing populations further to the centre of the

peninsula. This proposal, together with Góngora's hypothesis on the survival of Iberian population in the eastern and western (Basque and Catalanian) Pyrenees, make up the four questions to be discussed in archaeological debates on the first inhabitants of the Iberian peninsula and, also, by extension, in debates on nationalism. These four questions are:

The origin of the Iberians: Asians, Africans or indigenous?

The first settlers in the Iberian Peninsula: the Iberians or the Celts?

The area occupied by the Iberians: all the peninsula, or only parts of it?

Did the Iberians merge with native peoples, with invaders or with settlers?

### **Paniberianism (1875-1898). An incomplete programme of historical legitimisation**

The third phase in Riquer's model of Spanish nationalisation starts in 1875, when the Borbon dynasty regains the Spanish throne and the Conservative cabinet headed by Cánovas del Castillo takes over. Cánovas' programme included a reactionary process based on a conservative and centralized agenda, and pursued the depoliticization of the lower classes, and understanding between the upper classes (Cánovas 1981).

At that time, the goal of defining the origins of Spain was shared by politicians and researchers. The wish to separate Spain from the rest of Europe, and to appear as a serious traditional society led to considering the Iberians as the ultimate origin of the Spanish peoples. This 'paniberianism', as this view is known, was clearly exposed in the *Historia de España* published in 1893 under the supervision of Cánovas himself. The archaeological part was written by Vilanova y Piera and Rada y Delgado, and it showed a clearly positivist approach based on the sequence of technological ages and the thorough description of every finding known at the time (Vilanova y Piera & Rada y Delgado 1893)

However, the paniberian movement did not take its definitive form at that time, perhaps because the political fragmentation of the Iberians did not quite convince the theoreticians of the Restoration, who had always preferred firmer and stronger historico-political models. The last stage in paniberianism lies in the speech given at the Royal Academy of History in 1906 by Mérida, a renowned member of the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (Mérida 1906).

### **Basque and Catalan nationalisms**

In 1892, Sabino Arana wrote *Bizcaya por su independencia*. He laid emphasis on how in the early period of Basque nationalism, Biscay took pride in remaining pure and untouched by the Iberian and Celt invasions, and in rejecting the splendour of the Roman Empire (Arana 1965). In writing that, Arana intended to put an end to the debate on the relations between Iberians and Basques. This debate had involved two major positions: 'basqueiberism' and 'basquecantabrianism'. The former identified the Basque language as the pure remains of the Iberian culture; this was a basic element of the foundations of the Spanish nationalist liberal archaeology. The latter was not an opposing view, but admitted an original link between Basques and Cantabrians that was later broken by the Romanisation and subsequent Latinisation of the Cantabrians (Dupla & Emborujó 1991).

According to Juaristi, the high opinion that Carlism always held of the Basque uniqueness may have been crucial to Arana's view against the Iberian or Celt origins of the Basques. In fact, Spanish nationalism implicitly entrusted the Basques with the representation of the archaic and eternal image of Spain (Juaristi 1992).

As to Catalanian nationalism, its origin was linked to the ideological programme of the *Reinaxença*, a conservative movement which recreated elegiacally the medieval Catalanian past, mythicised ancestral values and recommended the rediscovery of country life. The *Reinaxença* was to some extent an ideological and cultural reaction to two distinct views. The first view was that of non-Catalan points of view present in Catalonia which could influence the self-consciousness of the bourgeoisie as a prevailing stratum (carlists, democrats and militarists). The second was the centralist view proposed by the Isabelline model of the nation (Fradera 1999; Riquer 1999).

The process gathered new momentum in the late nineteenth century, when Almirall wrote *Lo Catalanisme* in 1886. This work marked the onset of the growing opposition between Castilianization by the dominating Spanish nationalism, and the increasing self-consciousness of Catalonia as a different nation. The latter is best captured in *La Nacionalitat Catalana*, written in 1906 by Prat de la Riba.

From the point of view of the programmes of historical legitimation, the methods used by Almirall and Prat de la Riba are clearly different. The former considers that the differences between Castille and Catalonia date back to the Middle Ages, and also as the result of the identification of the Hapsburgs and Borbons with Castille. The latter takes the Iberians as the earliest referents of Catalanian identity (Prat de la Riba 1998).

It was also Prat de la Riba who identified the Iberian territory with the linguistic area of Catalanian, and who started the first excavations in Ampurias, the archaeological site that best represented the ideal of the Catalanian identity (Prat de la Riba 1998). Obviously, Prat de la Riba's catalanism had not accepted Rada's early paniberianism. By contrast, he acknowledged the restrictive views of Gongora's model and accepted the existence of a pure Iberian area in the Pyrenees free of Celtic influence. Prat de la Riba also recognised Lasalde's works, which held the belief that there were a number of Iberian settlements in the area of Catalonia and Aragon.



Figure 2. Excavation in Tossal de les Tenalles, 1915, Sidamunt, Lleida, Spain (Arxiu Fotogràfic del Bisbat de Lleida).

It was the creation of the *Servicio de Investigaciones Arqueologicas* in 1914 that finally put archaeological evidence directly to use and gave shape to the legitimation claims contained in Prat de la Riba's work on the origins of Catalonia (Figure 2). Thanks to the research programme of the *Servicio*, P. Bosch-Gimpera worked out a sequence dating back to an initial cultural group derived from the Capsian

culture and living in the Pyrenees in the Late Neolithic (Bosch-Gimpera 1932). Based on this sequence, three elements can be identified in Bosch-Gimpera's research on the Iron Age:

First: an original nucleus of identity free of outward influences, inhabited by auso-ceretes and located in the inland near the Pyrenees on the Plana de Vic

Second: an active and expansionist area inhabited by the coastal group of indiketes-sordones with subgroups which spread over areas of Cosetani, Lacetani and Layetani

Third: a more civilized but less active area, a colonization territory in the Ebro valley and parts of Lerida, Tarragona and Valencia, inhabited by Ilergetes, Ilercavones and Edetani. From an ethnical point of view Bosch-Gimpera identified these people with the Iberians.

In this way Bosch-Gimpera proposed the existence of an Iberian area coinciding to a large extent with Catalan-speaking area comprise of Catalonia, southern Aragon and Valencia. This Iberian area would be the natural area of expansion of non-Iberian tribes from northern Catalonia who would form the original nucleus of Catalan identity. Although this modified Prat de la Riba's original theory of the Iberian origin of Catalonia, Catalan uniqueness was reinforced, and the essence of the Iberian was reserved for the Catalan cultural circle (Bosch-Gimpera 1932).

### **Spanish nationalism: Gómez-Moreno's theory**

Spanish nationalism was also expressed in 1925, when M. Gómez-Moreno exposed an ideological reconstruction well in line with the model presented by Bosch-Gimpera. Gómez-Moreno agreed with Bosch-Gimpera in marking similar territories for Iberians and Tartessian-Mastieni, but, unlike him, did not separate Iberian and non-Iberian tribes in Catalonia. Based on his knowledge of Iberian epigraphy and on his defence of Basqueiberianism, Gómez-Moreno proposed that the original Iberian nucleus, that is the original nucleus of Spanish identity, reached from the Basque area to Valencia (Figure 3) (Gómez-Moreno 1949).



Figure 3. Excavations in Tossal de Manises and Albufereta, 1932, Alicante, Spain (Institut d'Estudis Catalans)

Otherwise, Gómez-Moreno repeated the structure of Bosch-Gimpera's model. He added to the Iberian nucleus of original Spanish identity an active area: the Andalusian Tartessos. From this active area, an expansion drive led towards the Balearic Islands in the Bronze Age, and later, in the Celtic

period, towards the centre and northeast of Spain (Figure 4) (Gómez-Moreno 1949). The proposal of the term “Hispanic” to replace Iberian was immediately welcomed by the scholars at the *Centro de Estudios Históricos*.

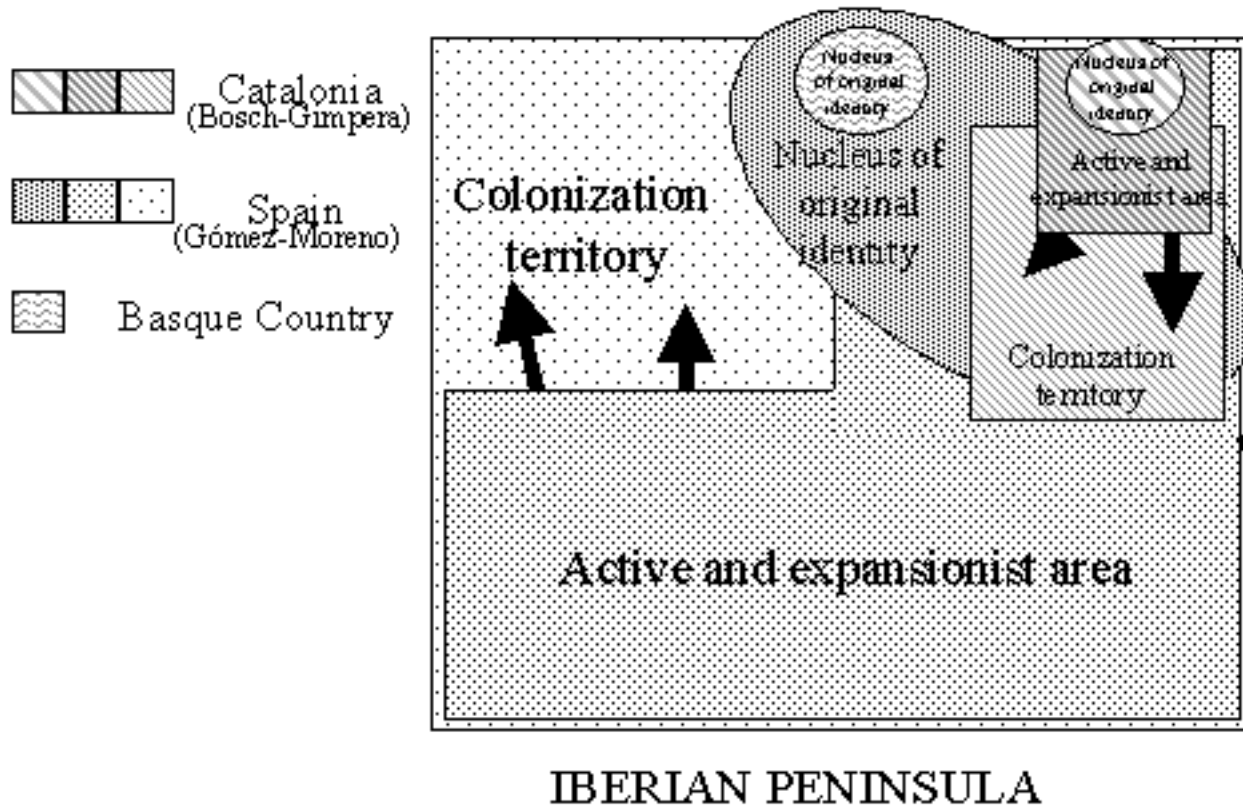


Figure 4. Models of Bosch Gimpera, Gómez-Moreno and Basque Country

### Celtism: a post-war theory

In 1905 Gómez-Moreno pointed out the existence of a past and long-forgotten theory according to which the Celts had built the large megalithic monuments of Antequera (Gómez-Moreno 1949). With the end of the Spanish Civil War and the start of Franco’s regime, a number of scholars found the old Celtist theory useful to build up a link with the origins of the then rising National Socialism. The ‘panceltist’ theory did not entail a rejection of the common origin of Spain. What Franco’s nationalism was actually doing was replacing the Iberians with the Celts, and promoting the notion that the Iberians were in fact Celts with strong Mediterranean influence (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Archaeological Provincial Museum of Alicante after the Spanish Civil War (Museo Arqueológico Provincial de Alicante)

In a written homage to the martyrs of the Spanish Civil War published in 1941, Martínez Santaolalla laid the foundations of the new legitimation of the regime based on the Celtic origin of Spain. This proposal established a sequence for late Prehistory that consisted of two phases. The first was marked by a series of North-African invasions and which was also successively influenced by Mediterranean civilizations from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age (1200 B.C.). The second phase started suddenly in the first Late Bronze and the arrival of up to four Indo-European invasions that, according to Martínez Santaolalla, would in time result in a radical cultural, economic and racial change. The fourth Indo-European invasion in the Early Iron Age supplies the Celt population which split into two lines: one Goidelic, in the Central Plateau and the Atlantic Coast, and one Iberianizing or Celtiberian, on the Mediterranean Coast. The second line, under Greek and Carthaginian influence, would taken on the Classical traits leading it to its cultural splendour after the Roman conquest. According to Martínez Santaolalla, sculpture groups like the Lady of Elche date back to this time (Martínez Santaolalla 1941).

This scholar must have relied on the concept of “hispanic” supplied by Gómez-Moreno, because this term appeared in the bibliographical reference cited earlier. However, Martínez Santaolalla altered the notion of paniberianism to cover two qualifications: first he understood that the first settlers were not Iberians, but Celts and, second, and more importantly, he changed the diversity principle contained in Gómez-Moreno’s notion of “Hispanic”. Another factor supported this Celtist position: it came in 1943, when García y Bellido (1943) dated Iberian art as provincial Roman art, thus providing empirical foundations for Martínez Santaolalla’s panceltism. Some years later, García y Bellido (1952) himself would argue against Almagro Basch’s Celtism in Menéndez Pidal’s *Historia de España*. That came at a time when panceltism was to disappear for political reasons that are well-known, and for lack of scientific evidence to maintain this view.

This time coincides in political terms with the internal crisis within Franco’s regime, which relegated the influence of the Falange to that of a mere institutional image. The place of the Falange was taken by fundamentalist Catholic positions, which in archaeological terms returned to the concept of Iberian autonomy from the Celts. This was shown by Pericot in his work on *Las raíces de España*.

In 1949 Gómez-Moreno had already published his book *Miscelaneas*. This work contained his research on Pre- and Proto-history, especially his two syntheses of 1922 and 1925 in which he insisted on his original theory on the Iberians. Similarly, Fletcher (1949) argued for Iberianism at the *Servicio de Investigaciones Prehistóricas* in Valencia.

Panceltism had lasted only one decade. By contrast, Iberian archaeology remained as the basis of the legitimation processes for the two Spains: the Spain of the exiles like Bosch-Gimpera in Mexico, and the Spain that dozed for decades under Franco's dictatorship.

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