

The Romanization of Art in Celtiberia (Central Spain)

Professor Leonard A. Curchin

Classical Studies - University of Waterloo
lcurchin@watarts.uwaterloo.ca

Resumen

Un estudio de la evolución del arte en el centro de Hispania en época romana (del fin de la República hasta el Alto Imperio) ofrece una perspectiva reveladora del intercambio de culturas romana y indígena. El arte celtibérico daba énfasis a técnicas tradicionales y valores sociales que se diferenciaban de los del conquistador. Por tanto los artistas tenían que adoptar nuevas habilidades y estrategias para halagar el gusto romanizante de sus clientes. Al mismo tiempo la paz romana eliminó el comercio de armamento decorado, propio a la aristocracia guerrera. La producción de vasos pintados continuó, pero con figuras más racionales y más vivaces, en conformidad con normas clásicas. Al lado de esculturas tradicionales en terracota encontramos estatuaria fina en nuevos medios, en particular bronce y mármol. Un aumento de escultura representacional acaba por la ejecución de retratos precisos, a diferencia del esquematismo abstracto del arte céltico. El repertorio de pinturas murales se extiende desde las muestras geométricas de la época prerromana a primorosos diseños florales y zoomorfos. Los artesanos de mosaico, medio completamente nuevo, cuidadosamente dan preferencia a los diseños geométricos, si bien existen también ejemplos figurados. Tales innovaciones producen nuevos símbolos y formas artísticas, sin embargo persisten algunos motivos tradicionales (por ejemplo, bestias fantásticas e híbridos humano-animales). Se crea como resultado un arte ni totalmente romano ni totalmente indígena, sino efectivamente provincial.

Palabras claves: Arte, Celtiberia, Hispania

Abstract

A case study of artistic evolution in Central Spain during the period of Romanization (Late Republic to Early Empire) offers a fascinating perspective on the interplay of Roman and indigenous cultures. Celtiberian art stressed traditional techniques and social values that differed greatly from those of the conqueror. Artists therefore had to adopt new skills and strategies to cater to a clientele that was increasingly acquiring Romanized tastes. With the Roman peace there is no longer a market for elaborately decorated military hardware for a warrior aristocracy, so its production is discontinued. Vase painting continues, but the painted figures are more rational and lifelike, conforming more closely to classical canons. The tradition of terracotta sculpture does not die, but alongside it we encounter fine statuary in new media, notably bronze and marble. A growing trend towards representationalism results in the accurate sculpting of portraits, in contrast to the abstract schematism of Celtic art. The repertory of wall-painting expands from the simple geometric patterns of the pre-Roman period to elaborate floral and faunal designs. Mosaic pavements represent a totally new artistic medium, with the artists showing a cautious preference for geometric designs, though figural examples are also found. But while these innovations produce new artistic forms and symbols, some of the traditional motifs (such as fantastic creatures and human/animal hybrids) persist. The result is the creation of an art which is neither wholly Roman nor wholly indigenous, but may best be characterized as provincial.

Keywords: Art, Celtiberia, Spain

1. INTRODUCTION

What do we mean by 'Romanization of art'? Was it adoption of totally new forms, adaptation of indigenous art to approximate Roman canons, or adaptation of Roman art to make it compatible with indigenous tradition? The evidence from Celtiberia (Central Spain) is suggestive in addressing this question.

Art is both a medium for expressing ideas, and a mirror of contemporary thought, though it may also perpetuate older, traditional themes of cultural heritage, such as scenes from Greek myth in Roman art. Pictorial and plastic creations often transcend mere representationalism, to reflect the deeper concerns and values of the artist and his society. In Central Spain, the indigenous artistic tradition was confronted with the very different Mediterranean repertoire. This posed crucial challenges for the artistic community, in terms of whether to discontinue the customary art forms and attempt to produce unfamiliar Roman ones, or to modify the traditional products by incorporating Roman motifs. Though the process of change took several generations, its direction was ultimately governed by the market. With the breakdown of the pre-Roman social system, skilled artisans were no longer the personal dependants of chiefs, but instead sold their products to Romanized patrons or customers. These consumers increasingly demanded Roman works of art such as statues and mosaics. New forms and motifs were therefore introduced to our region, creating a repertoire of visual symbols that were clearly identifiable as Roman. The decorative programs of the houses and villas of the elite in the time of the Empire required not only Romanized taste on the part of those who commissioned the work, but a concentration of wealth to pay the small army of craftsmen. Moreover, the appearance of new art forms, and new types of artists to create them, signals an increase in the complexity of culture and society.

The pre-Roman art of Central Spain, while not uninfluenced by contemporary La Tène products, is not part of the La Tène tradition, and moreover incorporates Iberian elements. Not surprisingly, the latter are found especially in the eastern and southern districts of the Meseta. They can be seen, for instance, in the clay relief from Illescas (Toledo), whose chariots and griffins are orientalizing features characteristic of Iberian art (Figure 1). But like La Tène art, that of Celtiberia is symbolic and imaginative, even fantastic. The themes, taken largely from nature, are delicately fashioned by the artists with an originality of design and expression that 'reflects the tortuous and subtle nature of their thought processes.' (Ross 1970: 176) Both two- and three-dimensional images are stylized with flowing curves that make them graceful and compelling. Abstract or geometric patterns often intrude on naturalism. Especially common are zoomorphic motifs, including both domestic and huntable animals. Among the most popular are the horse and the bull, which were important militarily, economically and religiously. Specific animals tend to prefer particular media: horses are most often represented on bronze fibulas (probably worn by the elite), bulls on terracotta figurines, fish and birds on painted pottery. Also found are representations of monsters and other unreal creatures, which we consider fabulous but which the contemporary society may have thought existed, at least in their imagination (Aldhouse-Green 2004: 149). Human forms are less frequent, and often take the form of a 'severed head' or mask, which again may have cultic significance.

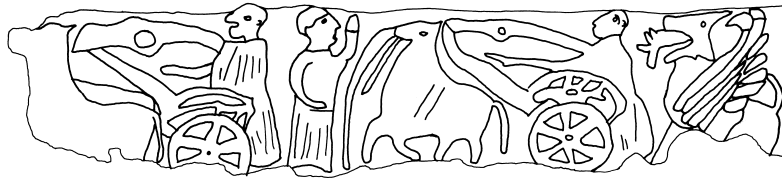


Figure 1 - Clay relief from Illescas, Toledo (after Balmaseda & Valiente Cánovas 1981: fig. 3)

Artisans throughout the Celtic world were adept at decorating bronze and precious metals. Celtiberian bronze shield-bosses and helmets are ornamented with sunbursts or scallop designs, while the scabbards of swords and daggers are encrusted with intricate geometric compositions in silver and copper (Lorrio 1997: figs. 64-6, 78; Cabré de Morán and Baquedano Beltrán 1991). The military nature of these products is no accident, for the patrons who commissioned art were an elite whose status depended not only on wealth but on prowess in battle. Coin obverses show gods or heroes with exaggerated eyes and noses, and locks of hair ending in spiral ringlets (Curchin 2004: fig. 8.1 e-f); such exaggeration is typical of Iron Age anthropomorphic imagery. However, it is in the decoration of personal adornment that we find particular variety. Fibulas may adopt the shape of pigs or horses, their bodies of impossible proportion and their joints indicated by concentric circles in the Celtic manner (Curchin 2004: fig. 8.8). A delightful example from Driebes (Guadalajara) combines a fantastic creature with a human head (Figure 2). The beast is portrayed in vertical perspective; this bird's-eye view of animals - paralleled on that masterpiece of Celtic art, the Gundestrup cauldron - is frequently encountered on both the metalware and painted pottery of the northern Meseta (Romero Carnicero and Sanz Mínguez 1992; Blanco García 1997). Other fibulas are ornamented with a series of spirals branching from the central spine (Lorrio 1997: fig. 85).

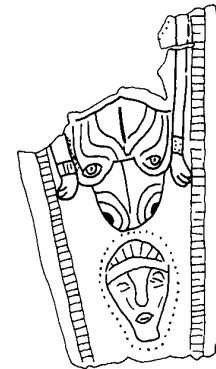


Figure 2 - Silver fibula from Driebes, Guadalajara (after Lorrio 1997: fig. 82)



Figure 3 - Theriomorphic pendant from Coca, Segovia. Photo: A. Rodríguez Arranz (reproduced with permission from *Revista de Arqueología* n.º. 81, 1988)

Bronze belt buckles are damascened in gold or silver with animals, interlocking scrolls or a triskelion (Almagro Basch and García y Bellido 1947: 286 and figs 345-9; cf. Lorrio 1997: fig. 92). Amongst the wealth of pre-Roman silver jewelry found at Padilla de Duero (Valladolid) may be mentioned three bracelets whose ends take the form of stylized serpents' heads, and a finger-ring emblazoned with a triskelion (Delibes de Castro *et al.* 1993: figs 2, 5). While animal decorations may be used merely to fill space, such as the stags incised on pectoral plaques (Lorrio 1997: fig. 87), they can also form the main design. A gold fibula from *Saldania* consists

of two horses' heads in delicate filigree, their eyes indicated by scrolls (García Castro 1991: 87). A splendid piece of Celtic abstraction is the silver head (probably a pendant) from *Coca*, consisting of eight elements soldered together (Figure 3). The bulging eyes and the use of curves to outline facial features make a vivid impression, yet it is left to our

imagination to identify what real or fabulous beast is intended, and whether its purpose is secular or sacred.

2. VASE PAINTING: AN EXAMPLE OF CONTINUITY

While ornamented weapons and jewelry are predominantly a feature of the pre-Roman period, and thus represent a 'dead end' or 'lost art', artistic continuity and change between the Celtiberian and Roman periods can be amply documented in a different genre, painted vase decoration. Although Celtiberian painted pottery, ubiquitous on Iron II sites, consists mostly of geometric designs such as horizontal bands, semicircles and triangles in dark red paint on a buff or orange ground, some wares are decorated with motifs taken from nature. Stylized suns on a vase from Solarana (Burgos), consisting of two concentric circles enclosing a dot, with a flourish of rays outside, find close parallels on metalware from central Europe (Delibes de Castro *et al.* 1988: 141; cf. Megaw 1970: pl. 6). Imaginative birds, a rabbit and a sphinx-like creature decorate the Celtiberian pottery of Castrojeriz (Burgos) (Abásolo *et al.* 1982: 29) (Figure 4).

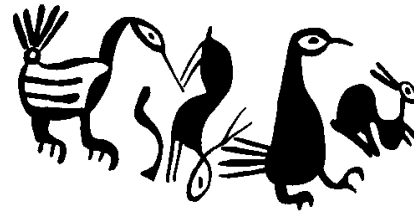


Figure 4 - Celtiberian vase from Castrojeriz, Burgos (after Abásolo *et al.* 1982: 29)

However, the most famous examples of ceramic decoration in Central Spain are the polychrome wares of *Numantia*, produced in the first century BC, possibly as late as the Augustan period. Though influenced to some extent by the painted Iberian wares of Aragon and the east coast, these display an originality and inspiration of their own; and, despite their post-conquest date, they make no concession to Roman iconography. The clay bowls, cups, bottles and trefoil jugs are painted in red, white and black with birds, fish, dogs, horses, monsters and human figures. These are often framed by rows or panels of squares, triangles, zigzag or serpentine lines, swastikas, cables or contiguous semicircles (Romero Carnicero 1976: 125-69). Among the most striking of the motifs are sea monsters and a 'reverse centaur': a figure with equine head but human body, which may represent a creature from Celtiberian mythology rather than misunderstanding of a Greek model (Curchin 2003-04: 184-89). The Celtic trait of *horror vacui* (dread of leaving empty spaces) is evident in the busy designs, which include filling the outline of the animals with geometric shapes. The combination of asymmetry, enclosure of figures, integration of unlike motifs, and reduction of unused space clearly show that these late productions had evolved from egalitarian to hierarchical artistry (Wason 1994: 119, table 6.2). Early scholars condemned the Numantine human figures as awkward, ugly and childish (Paris 1914-19: 122; Schulten 1933: 147), but this perception assumed Greco-Roman representationalism, rather than Celtic schematism, as the canon. Unfortunately, classically trained scholars tend to regard schematic imagery as 'bad art' (Aldhouse-Green 2004: 13). Human torsos composed of two triangles in the shape of an hourglass, which resemble but are independent of the Greek Geometric style, reveal the Celtic love of geometric shapes in figural art. Even the more lifelike humans, such as the facing warriors (Curchin 2004: fig. 10.1 a), are deliberately unrealistic, with exaggerated eyes and noses, almost invisible arms and wasp waists. As in ancient Egyptian art, the shoulders are shown frontally, while the face and legs are in profile. The sensitivity and whimsy of the Numantine vase paintings belie the Greco-Roman literary descriptions of the Celtiberians as savages.

Painted pottery of the Early Empire, exemplified by the so-called *Clunia* ware, involves not only a range of new ceramic forms but a greater degree of realism and

rationality. Motifs are enclosed in formal metopes, separated by triglyphs of vertical lines, a feature that may be borrowed from Roman *terra sigillata* decoration (García Merino 1973: 54). Typical of the *Clunia* repertoire are lifelike rabbits and birds, alternating with geometric and vegetal designs. The animal and plant forms are likewise suspected of being borrowed from *terra sigillata* (Abascal Palazón 1986: 76 and fig. 28). The fantastic creatures (Figure 5) seem more pedestrian than the swimming or flying monsters of the Numantine school (Curchin 2004: fig. 8.1 a), while human figures are strangely absent. Despite the obvious Roman influences, however, the *Clunia* products, and their southern counterparts at *Segobriga* (which use geometric and vegetal motifs but not animals) continue the indigenous vase-painting tradition, and indeed were for many years misinterpreted by archaeologists as pre-Roman artifacts.



Figure 5 - Vase painting on *Clunia* ware (after Abascal Palazón 1986: figs. 48-51)

Unfortunately our understanding of these painted designs, particularly the figural ones, is hampered by ignorance of their purpose: were they apotropaic, cultic, or merely ornamental? The choice of one design over another was not accidental, but had a selective value. There is a limited range of motifs, conveying information which could be read by those familiar with the grammar (O'Brien and Holland 1996: 192-3).



Figure 6 - *Terra sigillata* stamp from Bronchales, Teruel (after Atrián Jordán 1958: plate XI)

Also interesting is the repertoire of stamped designs on the *terra sigillata* pottery produced at Bronchales (Teruel) in the Early Empire. Most striking is the figure of a hybrid creature – a man with a stag's head – being attacked by dogs (Figure 6). This is not a portrayal of the Celtic god Cernunnos as some have thought, but a representation of the classical myth of Actaeon (Alfayé Villa 2003: 80-81). Nonetheless, the popularity of hybrids (such as the 'reverse centaur' already mentioned) among indigenous customers may have been an important marketing factor in the choice of this design.

3. SCULPTURE: THE RISE OF REPRESENTATIONALISM

It is in sculpture that the transition from pre-Roman to Roman art is most dramatically illustrated. Though many books on Celtic art purport to show 'Celtic' sculptural masterpieces in bronze and stone, these are almost invariably either non-Celtic or of Roman date (Collis 1984: 177). In Central Spain, though bronze is used for flat zoomorphic trinkets such as fibulas and hospitality tokens (the latter dating probably to the first century BC), this material is not normally used for Celtiberian sculpture in the round. An apparent exception is the free-standing bronze bull of the second or first century BC from Aliud (Soria), poorly cast and with details indicated by file-strokes (Borobio Soto 1985: 17 and pl. I). Instead, the standard medium for

small sculpture in the round is terracotta. Terracottas were introduced into our region at an early date, to judge from two examples (a hollow bird's head, and a horse serving as the handle for a round lid) in a cremation burial at Anguita de Aguilar (Guadalajara), dating between the sixth and fourth century BC. However, the terracottas and other items in this tomb appear to be of Iberian manufacture (Cabré de Morán 1990: 212 and fig. 10). Production of terracotta sculptures in the Meseta does not begin until after 133 BC, and most of them date to the first century BC or even later (Lorrio 1997: 247). A large quantity of clay figurines from *Numantia*, depicting horses, cattle, people and human feet, sometimes with a hole for hanging, may have been ex-votos or amulets (Schulten 1914-31: vol. 2, p. 213 and pls 35-6). While stone sculpture in the round was alien to Celtic practice, we do find it among the para-Celtic peoples of the western Meseta, namely the Vaccaei and Carpetani, and an adjacent chiefdom in Lusitania, the Vettones. This takes the form of large granite animal statues known as *verracos*, which literally means boars, though some of the sculptures appear to be bulls (Curchin 2004: fig. 8.3). The date and purpose of these monuments remain unclear; they may have had a votive, apotropaic or funerary use. Boars and bulls are "liminal" creatures, straddling the ordered world of farming and the chaos of wilderness" (Aldhouse-Green 2004: 117). Another type of stone carving which is considered pre-Roman (though it probably postdates 133 BC) is the series of five discoid or semi-discoid funerary stelae at *Clunia*. These depict in low relief a warrior with a large round shield, usually on horseback, and two give the name of the deceased in Celtiberian characters. One of these stelae has a warrior on foot, facing a bull; another depicts on the reverse a cow attacked by a wolf (Palol and Vilella 1987: 17-20). Warriors on horseback are also represented on rock carvings from Domingo García (Segovia), south-east of *Cauca* (Balbín Behrmann and Moure Romanillo 1988: 23).

Terracotta sculpture continues to appear in the Roman period, and indeed provides a valuable window on the beliefs and customs of the lower classes, who could not afford sculptures in bronze or marble. Rapid, large-scale production of terracotta products was now possible through the use of moulds. Since the cost of transporting Italian terracottas into the Spanish highlands would have been prohibitive, it is likely that most of the surviving pieces are regional products. This does not, however, preclude the possibility that some were inspired by, or even moulded from, Italian terracottas. Some of the pieces appear to be votive figurines of deities or worshippers, such as the fragment of a nude Venus from *Complutum*, in a stratified layer datable to the 60s AD (Fernández-Galiano 1984: 338), or the male and female figures, some in togas, found at *Turiaso* in the same context as a sardonyx bust of Augustus (M. Beltrán Lloris *et al.* 1980: 119). Others depict human heads, which may also have a religious significance. The dead were sometimes accompanied to the next world by terracotta artifacts. A child's tomb at *Clunia* contained clay figurines of a goat, a panther, two roosters, a Silenus resting on a wine-skin, a nymph leaning on an urn, and a small foot with an elegant shoe, all hollow and possibly intended to hold liquids (Anonymous 1875: 250). Terracottas from the Roman cemetery at *Palantia* include female busts (one of them with a high coiffure of the late first or early second century), an ithyphallic Silenus carrying Bacchus on his shoulder, Europa being abducted by the bull, a warrior whose cuirass is inscribed with the maker's name QVINTVS, and an actor wearing a tragic mask and leading a child (Taracena 1947: 95 and pl. XXXIV).

A surprisingly large number of bronze statues of the first two centuries AD have been discovered in Central Spain. Most cannot be dated more precisely than this,

and there is no evidence to show that they appear first in the eastern Meseta and later in the west. Indeed, a nicely executed statuette of Mercury found at the Vaccaean-Roman settlement of Cubillas de Cerrato (Palencia), and dated to the first half of the first century AD, is one of our earliest pieces (Curchin 2004: fig. 8.4). On the other hand, the Meseta lags behind the south and east coasts and Ebro valley, where Romanized bronze sculpture begins in the Late Republic. Two sculptures, possibly of emperors, were found in the forum of *Termes* in 1910, not far from the so-called basilica (more likely a temple of the Imperial cult). One is a laureate bust, at one-third scale, of a middle-aged man, variously identified as Tiberius, Galba or Titus. The other consists of fragments of an equestrian statue, slightly larger than life, including the finely detailed head of the rider. The traditional identification of this head as Tiberius has been rejected in a study of equestrian statues by Bergemann (1990: 80-81), who suggests that it could be a Roman senator or even a local decurion. More intriguing is a horse's hoof (apparently part of an equestrian statue) and a fragment of its pedestal in gilded bronze from *Clunia* (Palol 1994: 11-12 and figs 92-3), since we know that statues of emperors were gilded upon their deification. Gladiators are portrayed on two bronze statuettes and a medallion from *Palantia* (Elorza 1975: 164-6) and *Saldania* (Cortés 1975: 199-201), possibly souvenirs purchased at an amphitheatre. There are also countless bronze statuettes, ex-voto figurines and household *instrumenta* depicting domestic and wild animals, humans (including women, children, soldiers and old men) in various poses, and mythological beings such as gorgons, sphinxes and hippocamps.

Meseta artists also mastered the Roman technique of making fine statuary from marble and other stones. Since stone is friable, there are many unidentified heads, torsos and limbs; luckily, we also have many whole examples. Some of these sculptures represent Roman or oriental deities. Others show mythological figures, such as fauns, satyrs, sileni and bacchants. Imperial portrait busts, many of them unearthed in buildings adjoining the forum, assert or affect loyalty to the ruling dynasty (Curchin 1996). These monuments of public art include a young Augustus and young Nero from *Clunia*, Lucius Caesar and Agrippina Minor from *Ercavica*, Tiberius from *Bilbilis*, Agrippina Major and a probable Vespasian from *Segobriga*, Domitian from *Palantia*, and a possible Trajan from *Valeria*. A sardonyx head of Domitian from *Turiaso* was reworked, after the *damnatio memoriae* of that emperor, into one of Augustus (Curchin 2004: fig. 3.5). A more unusual subject, again from the forum of *Clunia*, is Julia Sabina, daughter of the emperor Titus, who became Domitian's mistress and was nominated as consul for 84 (Figure 7). This suggests a familiarity even with relatively minor members of the Imperial dynasty. The



Figure 7 - Marble bust of Julia daughter of Titus. Photo: Museo de Burgos (reproduced with permission)

sculptural representation not only of emperors but of their relatives shows a realization that 'the empire was in the hands of a family' (Price 1984: 162). Whether they were imported from Italy, or produced locally in emulation of Roman paradigms, is unknown, but it is clear that these idealized representations influenced honorific sculptures of local magistrates and other dignitaries (Nogales Basarrate 2001: 130-1). Togate statues have been found at *Consabura*, *Laminium*, *Bilbilis*, *Segobriga* and *Saldania*. A male bust with curly beard typical of the Antonine period was found near Medina de

Rioseco (Valladolid) (Ruiz Martín 1932-33). Also of Antonine date is a splendid pair of male and female busts in Carrara marble, found at a Roman villa near Becerril de Campos (Palencia) and plausibly interpreted as the villa owner and his wife (Curchin 2004: fig. 5.4). It is obvious from the dress, coiffure and sculptural style of these portraits that the persons who commissioned them wanted to be identified as Roman.

Reliefs from *Clunia* and San Esteban de Gormaz (Soria) depict military weapons and shields, possibly intended as spoils of war since the shields are of non-Roman shape (Palol 1994: figs 150-53; García Merino 1977). Also from *Clunia* comes a frieze of wine-cups (*canthari*) and winged figures variously identified as victories, genii or putti (Palol 1984: fig. 154). The mythical heroes Meleager, Ulysses and Orestes are portrayed on, respectively, a high relief from *Turiaso* (Balil 1978: 5-8), a bas-relief from *Clunia* (Calvo 1916: 25), and a second-century sarcophagus at Husillos (Palencia), possibly removed from *Palantia*

(Taracena *et al.* 1947: 133 and figs 117-18). Zoomorphic motifs include a prancing horse from Luzaga (Guadalajara) (Morère 1983: pl. 1.1), a bull's head from Fuentes Claras (TE) (Atrián Jordan *et al.* 1980: pl. XXXIII) and a whale or dolphin from Fuentes de Ropel (Zamora) (Larrén Izquierdo 1987: 67-8). Especially popular are ornamental friezes of floral and vegetal decoration. However, the most frequent use of reliefs in our region was for the decoration of funerary stelae (see especially Marco Simón 1978). These are often engraved with geometric or floral designs – rosettes were especially popular – as well as motifs connected with death and the afterlife, such as astral symbols, ivy, or a boar. Sometimes the stele provides a portrait of the deceased, either seated at the funeral banquet, idealized as a mounted warrior, or engaged in mundane occupations such as herding, wine-making, or weaving (Curchin 2004: figs. 5.5 and 7.3). The most prolific production centres for these stelae are *Clunia* and Lara de los Infantes (Burgos), each with its own distinctive style (Abásolo 1994; Abásolo and Marco Simón 1995: 329-30). While the funerary reliefs produced in major cities are quite competent, we find divergent degrees of skill, and of adaptation of Roman canons, in some of the rural examples, for instance the family group at Buniel (Figure 8) whose schematic portrayal smacks of Celtic tradition.

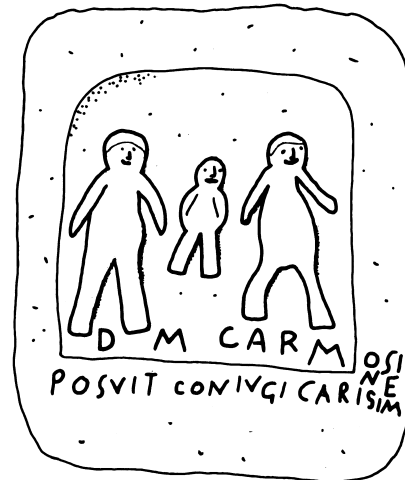


Figure 8 - Roman-period stele from Buniel (after Abásolo 1984: plate I)

4. ART AT HOME: INTERIOR DECORATION

In pre-Roman homes, the earthen walls were generally coated on the inside with thin layers of stucco or fine clay, and sometimes decorated with paint. Red stucco decorated the walls and floors of the circular houses at Soto de Medinilla (Valladolid) in the Soto II phase (650-550 BC). In the Iron II period, we find walls painted in red, white and black, sometimes with bands of geometric design including diagonal lines, diamonds and reticules, at various sites in the provinces of Segovia, Valladolid and Cuenca. However, these early efforts pale beside the more ambitious and complex repertoire of fresco patterns and stucco mouldings of the Roman period.

Remains of painted plaster have been found on many Roman sites, but in most cases are too fragmentary to permit reconstruction of the decorative program (Abad Casal 1982). Mural decoration was not necessarily a status symbol, since even modest homes could have wall-paintings; however, the more elaborate designs could only be achieved by hiring an artist familiar with Roman pictorial motifs. The contrast between simple and advanced decorative compositions is especially visible at *Bilbilis*, whose wall decoration has been the subject of a major recent study. Whereas the frescoes in the forum exhibit what the authors of this study call ‘ornamental poverty’, the paintings in private homes of the late first century AD reveal such intimate familiarity with the Italian repertoire that the authors have no doubt that the painters came from Italy (Guiral Pelegrín and Martín Bueno 1996). Be this as it may, there must have been other Meseta cities whose artists were not Italian, but whose workshops were capable of producing reasonable imitations of Roman fresco, based on examples they had seen elsewhere. The possibilities of itinerant painters from Italy or other parts of the Mediterranean travelling from town to town, or of portable ‘pattern books’ – papyrus scrolls containing stock designs for wall-paintings, perhaps in colour, that could be copied even by a non-Roman artist – remain hypothetical, given the lack of evidence.

Romanized wall-painting must already have begun in the Late Republic, at least in the eastern Meseta. There are scant remains of painting in the Pompeian ‘second style’ (80-20 BC) in buildings demolished during the Augustan remodelling of *Bilbilis*, but many more examples of the third and fourth styles, datable to the Julio-Claudian and Flavian periods. The colourful frescoes of the House of the Aqueduct at *Termes* likewise span the third and fourth styles (Argente Oliver and Díaz Díaz 1994: 208-9), as do those in the so-called *praetorium* (actually a house with porticoed patio) at *Arcobriga* (Guiral Pelegrín and Mostalac Carrillo 1992: 103). Fragments of third-style painting are also preserved in the House of the Atalaya at *Uxama* (García Merino and Sánchez Simón 1998: 25-8). Later examples, from the second century AD, can be seen on such sites as *Clunia* and *Vilde* (Soria) (Abad Casal 1982: 97-8, 247). The paintings display a rich variety of decorative themes, including geometric patterns, floral and vegetal designs. Imitation marble, its grain and colour scheme indicated by paint strokes on the plaster, is represented at *Clunia*, *Numantia*, *Segobriga*, *Bilbilis* and *Uxama*. Birds and other wildlife are represented on frescoes from *Cauca*, *Uxama*, *Bilbilis* and *Termes*. Paintings with human figures have appeared at *Uxama* and *Termes*, but await publication. Stucco mouldings, embellished with stamped designs such as egg-and-dart, scrolls, or dolphins, have been found at several cities, notably *Bilbilis* and *Termes*. Rural villas must also have had painted walls, but few traces survive.

Mosaics are another well-known Roman art form. However, while we have many fine polychrome, often figural, mosaics dating to the Late Empire, only a few survive from the Romanizing period. This is sometimes interpreted to mean that Romanization of art in the Meseta did not reach its zenith until the Late Empire. However, the mosaics of that later period are often inspired by African, Egyptian and Asiatic, rather than Italian, models. Unless we adopt an unusually generous definition of Romanization that would include Roman-period influence from the Maghreb and the Near East, it is difficult to see how these late mosaics can be considered more Romanized than the early ones, whose themes are invariably borrowed from the Italian repertoire. Moreover, the disparity in numbers of surviving examples need not mean that there were more mosaics during the Late Empire; it is more likely that the majority of Early Imperial mosaics either fell apart from prolonged use, or were

ripped up in later redecorating projects, or still lie buried below the preserved Late Imperial pavements. The fact that some of the late mosaics achieve a high standard of technical and artistic perfection does not necessarily bespeak a higher level of Romanization, since some of the early examples are also of excellent quality, while some mosaics of the Late Empire are decidedly inferior. A splendid Early Imperial example is the Medusa and Seasons mosaic from *Palantia*. Ostensibly this represents a typically classical mythological theme, yet the choice of Medusa (a human transformed into a monster) is entirely in keeping with the Celtic love of fantastic creatures straddling the boundary between the real and imaginary worlds.

Many of the surviving Early Imperial mosaics come from cities rather than rural sites. This period, after all, marks the culmination of urbanism in the Meseta, just as the Late Empire is the era of the great villa estates. The earliest of these is the bichrome (black and white) mosaic in *opus signinum* in the *oecus* of a house in the Celtibero-Roman town of 'La Caridad' (Caminreal, TE) in the Jiloca valley. The composition, datable to the first century BC, includes rhombi, meandering swastikas, ivy leaves, dolphins, and circles of roses drawn with a compass. A Celtiberian 'inscription' in white tesserae reveals that the artist of this mosaic, Likine from the town of *Osicerda*, was indigenous rather than Italian; in other words, this new Roman art-form was being produced by native practitioners (Vicente Redón *et al.* 1986: 8-10). Similarly a mosaic inscription from the intramural baths at *Segobriga*, built probably under Augustus, names 'Besso of the Abiloqi (clan), from *Belgida*' as the mosaicist.

While figural mosaics were not unknown in Central Spain during this period, it is clear that geometric mosaics predominated in both urban and rural settings. To some extent this may be because only the most skilled artists could render human figures convincingly, and such personnel may have been scarce or expensive. On the other hand, any mosaicist could produce repetitive patterns of squares, circles, triangles, guilloches, Solomon knots or stylized vegetal motifs. A further advantage of geometric mosaics was that they were easily adaptable to rooms of different dimensions. Their motifs could be combined, juxtaposed, or modified with borders and internal divisions. The versatility of these geometric 'carpets' was fully exploited by Meseta mosaicists, despite the somewhat limited repertoire. Another interesting aspect is the distribution pattern of the mosaics. Whereas the earliest mosaics occur in the eastern Meseta, those with human or divine figures are found only in the west (provinces of Palencia, Segovia and Madrid). While theoretically such a pattern might result from a different level of taste or wealth in those districts among the patrons who commissioned the mosaics, it seems more likely that the distribution reflects accidents of survival. There is no reason why human figures should not have appeared on mosaics in the eastern Meseta, especially since humans are portrayed on statuary and fresco.

The choice of motifs for wall paintings and mosaics was ultimately the decision of the home owner; how this worked in practice was subject to variations. A self-assured owner might have very definite ideas of what decorations he wanted in his house. More commonly, however, he would seek the advice of the artist as to possible and appropriate themes. Particularly busy or unknowledgeable owners might even leave the choice of designs to the artist, or at least allow themselves to be swayed his suggestions.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Changes in art during the Roman period in Celtiberia reveal growing complexity, not only in materials, forms and designs, but also in the skill of the artist and the taste of the consumer. The indigenous tradition meets with a mixed fate. Richly decorated weapons and jewelry, the hallmarks of the Iron Age, are discontinued. However, the motifs and techniques of vase painting remain largely indigenous, despite some Roman influence. The urge to carve in stone – apart from the large, ungainly *verracos* of the western Meseta – is a Roman phenomenon, alien to indigenous artistic habits. The same applies to sculptures in cast bronze. Roman sculptural canons introduce an accurate representationalism in art, as well as classical themes. Even terracotta sculpture, which had existed in the Celtiberian period and remained an art form accessible to the less affluent, adopts Roman motifs. Portrait sculpture in particular is a novelty of the Roman period, in contrast to the abstract style of Celtiberian art. The subjects are members of the local elite and the imperial family, the latter group appearing chiefly in public contexts and bearing powerful ideological significance.

Funerary and other reliefs display a variety of Roman floral, faunal, military and mythological themes. Only in funerary reliefs, particularly those from rural workshops, do we see indigenous touches that remind us we are dealing with ‘provincial’ sculpture, a hybrid of Celtiberian and Roman traditions. Also relevant are fresco and mosaic, colourful new genres that brought a repertoire of classical themes into public and private buildings. Wall-paintings and decorative stucco mouldings, including examples of Pompeian third and fourth styles, created a Romanized atmosphere in the home. Their variety of designs suggests an informed discourse between artists and their patrons in the common enterprise of creating a Romanized domestic interior.

In short, the Romanization of art in Celtiberia involves a combination of continuity and abandonment of traditional art forms, as well as the introduction of important innovative features. While some familiar symbols of the Celtic tradition were maintained or adapted, new genres, techniques and motifs from the Mediterranean area made significant inroads in the artistic repertoire of the region. The end result is a provincialized form of Roman art, in which indigenous ideas and meanings, though glimpsed through Roman optics, are never far below the surface.

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