

## Chapter 9

# The ‘Toros de Guisando’ in the Digital Age

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**Abstract:** Preceded by brief introductory notes of an historical-archaeological nature, this contribution presents the results obtained by the application of the ‘Morphological Residual Model’ (MRM) technique to the famous ‘Toros de Guisando’. These results allow us to read the inscriptions of two of the bulls, as well as to specify the anatomical details and the carvings found on the four bulls that comprise the group.

**Keywords:** Toros de Guisando, *Vettones*, Roman epigraphy, ‘Morphological Residual Model’, *cognationes*, *Hispania*.

### Introduction

The zoomorphic stone sculptures (mainly of bulls and pigs, and wild boar), commonly known as ‘verracos’, were a symbolic manifestation of the *Vettones*, one of the peoples who lived in the centre of the Iberian Peninsula before the Roman conquest.<sup>1</sup> According to ancient sources,<sup>2</sup> the heart of their territory was located in the present day provinces of Ávila (with the probable exception of the northern area), Salamanca, Cáceres and the western part of Toledo, although, as can be deduced from the dispersion of this type of sculpture, it also extended to Zamora and the Portuguese regions of Trás-os-Montes and Beira Alta (Figure 1).

The subject of continuous study by the scientific community, and from different perspectives,<sup>3</sup> ‘verracos’ are a very localised phenomenon within the Iberian Peninsula and are a genuine manifestation of pre-Roman times, although with a clear extension in Roman times (definitely until the 2nd century AD). It is interesting to note here that the province of Ávila has the largest number of specimens to date: out of a total of more than 400 that are known and catalogued, 41% have appeared in Ávila, more than twice as many as in the second region in terms of the number of finds (Trás-os-Montes), where an estimated percentage of around 17% is located.

To date, there is no definitive interpretation of these figures: given the breadth and variety of the exhibition (more than 400 examples of various types) and their wide chronological range, it seems unlikely that they can be given a definitive interpretation.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the most certain thing about them is the simplest: that they are elements endowed with a symbolism applicable to various aspects of the material and ideological life of the people who lived in the centre-west of the Iberian Peninsula between the 4th century BC and the 2nd century AD, in the process of Romanisation that had already begun in the second half of the 2nd century BC.

In any case, it should be noted that they constitute a transcript of the importance of livestock farming in the economy of the *Vettones* (the source of power and expression of their elites) and that their association with the funerary world in Roman times is indisputable, as was well attested in 1975 by the findings of the excavations carried out at the site of El Palomar (municipality of Martiherrero, Ávila). Four bulls were found there (one with an inscription)<sup>5</sup> associated with prismatic blocks, carbonised bone remains and some elements considered to be grave goods, such as a coin from the 2nd century AD.<sup>6</sup> As has already been noted by M. Salinas de Frías,<sup>7</sup> we do not know at what point the idea of using these sculptures (with or without inscriptions) to cover tombs arose, but it seems logical to assume that the process of reinterpretation or adaptation was rapid, as the inscriptions of the ‘Toros

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Álvarez Sanchís 2003; Salinas de Frías 1982 and 2011; Sánchez Moreno 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Strabo (*Geography* 3.1.6; 3.3.1; 3.3.2-3; 3.4.12), Pliny (*Natural History* 3.19; 4.112-113) and Ptolemy (*Geography* 2.5.7), especially. See the classic summary by Roldán Hervás 1968-1969 and the more recent one by Domínguez Monedero 2008.

<sup>3</sup> See, among others, the catalogue by Arias Cabezudo *et al.* 1986, the classic monograph by López Monteagudo 1989 and the most recent doctoral theses by Norte Nolasco 2010 and Manglano Valcárcel 2013. Their presence is, of course, constant and almost unavoidable in works of a more or less general nature aimed at analysing the importance of certain animals, especially the bull, in the arts and religions of ancient *Hispania*. The bibliography on the subject is inexhaustible, suffice it to say, but for example see: Blázquez Martínez 1999: 122; Lorrio and Olivares Pedreño 2004: 92-96.

<sup>4</sup> Recent summaries regarding the proposed interpretations can be found in Berrocal-Rangel *et al.* 2018: 347-349; Ruiz Zapatero and Álvarez Sanchís 2008: 222-229.

<sup>5</sup> Arias Cabezudo *et al.* 1986: 93, no. 67; Knapp 1992: 82-83, no. 94; Hernando Sobrino 2005: 185-186, no. 123; Martín Valls and Pérez Herrero 1976: 70-71, no. 4; Rodríguez Almeida 1981: 155, no. 73; Rodríguez Almeida 2003: 205-206, no. 73.

<sup>6</sup> Martín Valls and Pérez Herrero 1976, *passim*. Among the grave goods recovered was a sestertium of *Clodius Septimius Albinus*, which provides a *post quem* date.

<sup>7</sup> Salinas de Frías 1995: 284.



Figure 1: Pre-Roman peoples and 'verracos' in the Iberian Peninsula (after Berrocal-Rangel *et al.* 2018: 245).

de Guisando' testify precisely.<sup>8</sup> Whatever the case, the validity of their use as funerary monuments in Roman times, despite the passage of time and the popularisation of other models, only serves to underline the deep roots of this type of sculpture.<sup>9</sup>

### The 'Toros de Guisando': the most famous

Among the many examples from Ávila, the 'Toros de Guisando', a group of four specimens, constitute an emblematic and well known instance, located at the foot of the hill that gives them their name, in the municipality of the town of El Tiemblo (Ávila).

Known since the Middle Ages, the 'Toros of Guisando' have been mentioned by authors as illustrious as Cervantes,<sup>10</sup> Lope de Vega,<sup>11</sup> Federico García Lorca,<sup>12</sup> and Camilo José Cela,<sup>13</sup> and owe much of their fame to a momentous historical fact: in September 1468, at the 'venta' (inn) that bears their name, the signing of what was known as the 'Pactos de los Toros de Guisando'

took place,<sup>14</sup> whereby the King of Castile, Enrique IV, appointed his sister, Isabel, as heir to the throne, to the detriment of his own daughter, Juana 'la Beltraneja'. This put an end to the serious political crisis suffered by Castile and marked the subsequent fate of the kingdom.

In addition to the importance of the four zoomorphic sculptures as such, the optimal location of the sculptures in terms of communications is no less remarkable. The ensemble is located at a crossroads of natural passes that communicate the two plateaus in a north-south direction and the southern slope of the Central System in an east-west direction through the Tiétar valley. It is not surprising, therefore, that we find the aforementioned 'venta' marking out one of the main livestock routes, the 'Cañada Leonesa Oriental', and that all of the published road guides refer to this 'venta' as a landmark, from the Modern Age to the present day.<sup>15</sup>

However, the association of these four bulls with the site of this ancient 'venta' – next to, as was said, an important path – where they have stood since at least the Middle Ages, is an unsolved enigma. The 'verracos'

<sup>8</sup> The only ones whose funeral inscriptions do not include the formula of consecration to the Manes gods. See below § 3.2.

<sup>9</sup> Hernando Sobrino 2005: 246.

<sup>10</sup> *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, Part II, Chapter XIV.

<sup>11</sup> *El mejor maestro, el tiempo*, Act II.

<sup>12</sup> In the poem 'Llanto por la muerte de Ignacio Sánchez Mejías'.

<sup>13</sup> Cela 1957: 304-305, commenting on the poem by Lorca.

<sup>14</sup> Cuartero y Huerta 1952.

<sup>15</sup> See for example the repertoires of Pedro Juan Villuga, published in 1546 (Villuga 1546 [1950]: 17-18) and Santiago López, printed in the 19th century (López 1809: 144).

have, for the most part, been taken out of context and this circumstance, which of course has made it difficult to study and understand them, also affects the 'Toros de Guisando'. Fuidio already identified two pre-Roman sites in the municipality of San Martín de Valdeiglesias, in the Comunidad de Madrid, as possibly being more or less directly related to these sculptures: the site of Navarredonda, 1.5 km away, and the site of the Almoerón (or Almocrón), 5 km to the north of the aforementioned town, on the Alberche;<sup>16</sup> a possibility that Álvarez Sanchís did not reject since, due to their typology (Type 1, basically characterised by their large dimensions and very meticulous carving), they would have to be attributed to the Second Iron Age.<sup>17</sup> At present, however, there is no proven evidence of the existence in the area of a site dating from before the 2nd century BC from which the sculptures may have originated;<sup>18</sup> while on the contrary, a number of Roman sites are known that would have at least some connection with the inscriptions of that time engraved on three of the four sculptures from the ensemble.

In this context, we cannot fail to mention the lithological analyses carried out by a team from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid with the aim of identifying the quarries and, with them, the definitive origin of this type of sculpture.<sup>19</sup> Recently this team has published a work in which the specimens of Guisando are included in category B, and not in category A, of the three that they define by means of different statistical analyses and computerised methods and which,<sup>20</sup> according to their hypothesis, would have had different functions.<sup>21</sup> From this inclusion, it can be deduced that excepting a change in their chronology, they were displaced, as while the 'verracos of series A were usually closer to the quarries, sculptures from the B series could be displaced up to 20 km and more'. However, the truth is that no specific analysis has been carried out to date for our group, so this data – which certainly does not mean that a displacement can be taken for granted – will have to be contrasted.

Whatever the case, it is undeniable that the inscriptions engraved on three of the bulls that make up the group testify to their funerary use in Roman times, either as part of a necropolis (unknown, in any event, in the immediate area), or as a unique funerary monument.

If, as we believe, it is feasible to support the relationship of the 'Toros de Guisando' with the ancient path – as in fact it cannot be denied that in most cases these sculptures are found in the vicinity of what was their original emplacement, so this information should never be ignored – then we consider it is necessary to emphasise that the association between a communication route and the presence of zoomorphic sculptures used as funerary elements, always in Roman times, does not only occur in this case. As a matter of fact, this same association can be seen in the already mentioned Martiherrero complex, also consisting of four sculptures, located on a key path that in the time of 'La Mesta' constituted the 'Cañada Real Soriana Occidental'. The same can be said of the group of sculptures and at least one funerary cist (as in Martiherrero) of the 'Dehesa de Gemiguel' (Riofrío);<sup>22</sup> located 12 km from Ávila, it is also situated on a path that led south from the capital, crossing the mountains to reach the Alberche valley through the Navalmoral pass, now the AV-900 road. Despite lacking the same evidence as these cases, there are other groups of 'verracos', detached from Iron Age sites and close to Roman settlements, which fit into the same pattern.

In summary, assuming that the chronology of the zoomorphic sculptures implies two periods (pre-Roman – Vettonian – and Roman) and, therefore, two different circumstances, we believe it is legitimate to reflect on whether, between one period and the other, there was a total change of concept in the use of these sculptures, a different variety, or some form of continuity/evolution. We therefore believe that this association may not be a coincidence and may constitute, in the future, an interesting way of analysing the 'verracos' in Roman times.

## The inscriptions of the 'Toros de Guisando'

### *One authentic, another false*

As has been demonstrated by González Germain,<sup>23</sup> the inscriptions on the 'Toros de Guisando' are first mentioned at the end of the 15th century by Antonio Geraldini – an Italian poet and humanist in the service of the court of the Catholic Monarchs – in a speech addressed to Pope Inocencio VIII in 1486.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Fuidio 1934: 17. Regarding the attribution of this site to the Second Iron Age, see Blasco Bosqued *et al.* 1980: 54.

<sup>17</sup> Álvarez Sanchís 2003: 231 and 266.

<sup>18</sup> Given that the sites of Navarredonda and Almoerón seem to correspond, in reality, to medieval settlements (see Rodríguez Hernández 2018: 190, with the previous bibliography).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Mangano 2013: 37–66 and 427–512; Mangano *et al.* 2015.

<sup>20</sup> A: the oldest (from 4th to 3rd centuries BC) and largest, with the most complex and realistic details; B: from 3rd to 1st centuries BC, medium size and basic anatomical details; C: from the 1st to 2nd centuries AD; the smallest, with a schematic design.

<sup>21</sup> '... our initial hypothesis defend that the 'verracos' must reflect different dispersion patterns according to different functions: from the oldest and biggest exemplars, which were carved as singular sculptures at the final site of exhibition, or nearby; to the latest and smallest, which were made through "industrial" productions and could be transported over long distances. Between them, verracos from the 3rd to 1st centuries BCE were made in *oppida* workshops with communal values and they could appear around these fortified big settlements' (Berrocal-Rangel *et al.* 2018: 349).

<sup>22</sup> A group consisting of eleven 'verracos', some of which have been known since ancient times (Cf. Gómez Moreno 1983 [1901]: 40).

<sup>23</sup> González Germain 2011: 173 and 2014: 122.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Fernández de Córdova Miralles 2005: *passim*; Jiménez Calvente 2014: 138–142.



Figure 2: Juan Fernández Franco (Ms. Biblioteca Capitular y Colombina 59-2-14, f. 49).

The intention, which was far from innocent, of this speech was to underline the predominant situation of *Hispania* with respect to the rest of the Roman provinces; according to Geraldini, once Augustus had conquered *Hispania*, the Romans founded more colonies on its territory than in any other province and, among other testimonies to their presence, he states that: *in Bastetania tauri sunt ex lapide durissimo maxime marmirer gaque his l(itte)ris adhuc notati: BELLVM CAESARIS ET PATRIAE*.<sup>25</sup>

The deterioration of the surfaces of these bulls – except for one, in which the ancient text can also be perfectly read today (from now on Bull 1) – led to the production of a series of false texts for the rest of the bulls, based on certain features that should still have been visible in the 15th century, alluding, among other things, to Caesar's campaigns in the Iberian Peninsula against Pompey's sons.<sup>26</sup> The dissemination of these inscriptions was not

only rapid, but also highly effective,<sup>27</sup> despite the fact that their falsity was openly denounced as early as 1587 by Antonio Agustín in his famous *Diálogos*.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, the texts (both the genuine and the invented ones) were transmitted without variation since the end of the 15th century by numerous authors, already in handwritten (Figure 2) and printed works, and even included in what is considered the first great national history, the *Historia general de España* by Juan de Mariana, whose *editio princeps* – in Latin – dates from 1592.<sup>29</sup> They were published in this form in *CIL* II, a compilation in which the invented ones are listed, obviously in the section on '*inscripciones falsae vel alienae*' and with the number *CIL* II 278\*, and the authentic one, with the number *CIL* II 3052.

As a result, the texts (which are visible but not easily readable)<sup>30</sup> of two of the bulls (Bulls 2 and 4) remained

<sup>25</sup> Geraldini 1486: s.p.

<sup>26</sup> Regarding the causes behind the creation of these 'falsos hispánicos', see the study by Hernando Sobrino 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Gimeno Pascual 1992: 97–98, 110; González Germain 2011: 173–178.

<sup>28</sup> Agustín 1744 [1587]: 455–456.

<sup>29</sup> Mariana 1852–1853 [1592]: vol. I, 81–82.

<sup>30</sup> Although Gómez Moreno (1983 [1901]: 38) noted when referring to



in complete obscurity until the end of the last century: this was when the first interpretations based on direct analysis were proposed, first by G. López Monteagudo and subsequently by R. Knapp.<sup>31</sup> In this century, E. Rodríguez Almeida and María del R. Hernando Sobrino have published further information, completing the previous proposals.<sup>32</sup>

### The new readings

These proposals for reading are now joined by those resulting from the application of the MRM technique ('Morphological Residual Model')<sup>33</sup> to the three-dimensional models obtained in two photogrammetric registration campaigns carried out in September 2014 and November 2016, respectively, by Hugo Pires, author of the technical study.

This micro-relief contrasting technique is based on a segmentation and classification algorithm that allows residual morphological details to be highlighted with respect to the predominant relief of the surfaces under study. The results are subsequently converted into contrasting colour scales to graphically show grooves or other types of traces of anthropic action.

As will be seen, thanks to this technique, notable progress has been made in understanding the texts, completing and improving the previous readings of Bulls 2 and 4, and adding information of interest to Bull 1. Similarly, progress has been made in individualising the anatomical details and the carvings that complete these figures, although the strict meaning of the latter still escapes us.

- Bull 1 (Figure 3)

As previously mentioned, the text on this bull is the only authentic text that has been passed on since the 16th century. For reasons of space, here we record only the corresponding number of the *CIL* II and a selection of the bibliography that follows it. The inscription extends over the central part of the left side of the animal, seen from the head.

It reads:

*Longinus / Prisco Cala/<sup>3</sup>eti(um) · patri · f(aciendum) · c(uravit)*

Bibliography: *CIL* II 3052; Gómez Moreno 1983 [1901]: 39; Rodríguez Almeida 1981: 155-156, no. 74 and 2003: 206-207, no. 74, 297, no. 150; Blanco Freijeiro 1984: 121; Arias Cabezero et al. 1986: 117, no. 90; López Monteagudo 1989: no. 88; González Rodríguez 1986: 126, no. 74; Knapp 1992: 78, no. 89; Hernando Sobrino 2005: 224-225, no. 172.

Its reading has been unanimous; at most, there is a slight variation in the wording of the term in line 2-3, in which some authors read *Calaetio*. The first person to identify the Q was Gómez Moreno, who states that 'el sobrenombre se ha leído *Calaetio*, pero en la piedra más bien hay *Calaetiq(um)*, que se deriva del usual *Calaetus*'.<sup>34</sup>

- Bull 2 (Figure 4)

The interpretation of this inscription – in the central part of the right side of the bull, seen from the head – is far from unanimous.

We list here the readings prior to the MRM in chronological order and at the end add the text after studying the results of the MRM (Table 1):

Table 1

l.	1989 López (59, no. 59)	1992 Knapp (79-80, no. 91)	2003 Rodríguez (297-299, no. 151)	2005 Hernando (227, no. 174)	Gimeno MRM
		F[3-4]S			
1		F[6-8]IVS	+P OC+	[- - -]NVS	ONGINVS
2	[- - -] MA*	[- - -]+N+IA·	DVOD	[- - -]GIN	LONGINAE M
3	[- - -] F C**	[- - -] F C**	FC	F C	D S F C

\* *ma[t(er)]*

\*\* *f(aciendum) c(uravit)*

false inscriptions, that 'el examen de los toros mismos comprueba que ni existen grabadas en ellos ni han podido estarlo... la calidad del granito es excelente, y su superficie... resulta bien lisa'.

<sup>31</sup> López Monteagudo 1989; Knapp 1992.

<sup>32</sup> Rodríguez Almeida 2003; Hernando Sobrino 2005.

<sup>33</sup> Pires 2014.

<sup>34</sup> Gómez Moreno 1983 [1901]: 39.



Figure 3: Bull 1 (MRM image: Hugo Pires).

Thanks to the MRM we can offer the optimum *exemplum* of the text of what we have called the second bull:

[L]onginus / Longinae m(atri) /<sup>3</sup> d(e) s(uo) f(aciendum) c(uravit)

There is a coincidence between the personal name inscribed on Bull 1 and the one that appears here as a dedicant: *Longinus*. It could therefore be considered that the texts of Bulls 1 and 2 are related: Bull 1 is the funeral monument of his father, *Priscus Calaetiqum*, and the second is that of his mother, *Longina*, who passed the name on to her son.

Moreover, *Longinus*, -a, is a Latin *cognomen* often used as a single name; numerous examples have been found in

*Hispania* in general, and in *Lusitania* in particular.<sup>35</sup> In fact, in addition to Bull 1, there is another example of this name on an inscription coming from the town of Ávila.<sup>36</sup>

#### – Bull 4 (Figure 5)

Its text, which had not been read in full either, extends across the upper middle part of the animal's right side, seen from the head. The previous readings, and the one resulting from the MRM procedure, are in Table 2:

<sup>35</sup> Abascal 1994: 401-402; Grupo Mérida 2003: 215. See ADOPIA *Lusitania*, s.v. <http://adopia.huma-num.fr/es/>.

<sup>36</sup> *Longinus* is the single name of a *sesquiplicarius* of the *ala Vettonum* that was responsible for raising the stele of *Matugenus Turaedoqum Cadani filius*) (Hernando Sobrino 2014; AE 2014, 716).



Table 2

l.	1995 López (59, no. 57)	1992 Knapp (77-78, no. 88)	2003 Rodríguez (301, no. 153)	2005 Hernando (226-227, no. 173)	Gimeno MRM
1	[-----]	-----		[-----]	LANCIV[S]
2	GAIA F [---]	CAEL·T·CV*	CAEL·T·CV	CALAETC`VM`**	CALAETICVM
3		-----		[-----]	H S E

\* Cael·t(i)cu[m]  
\*\* Calaet(i)c`um`



Figure 4: Bull 2 (MRM Image: Hugo Pires).



Figure 5: Bull 4 (MRM Image: Hugo Pires).

Following the MRM procedure, we can read:

*Lanciu[s] / Calaeticum /<sup>3</sup> h(ic) s(itus) e(st)*

In this case the idionym of the deceased is *Lancius* and his link with *Priscus* and *Longina*, registered in Bulls 1 and 2, respectively, is the *cognatio Calaeticum*, which completes his onomastics.

The anthroponym *Lancius* is well attested among the *Vettones*,<sup>37</sup> especially in Cáceres province, with eight examples recorded in 2003.<sup>38</sup> Usually used as a single name, in *Augusta Emerita* it is also documented as a *nomen*.<sup>39</sup>

#### *Evaluation of the group*

The bulls were reused, as can be seen from the arrangement of the texts, as a support for the inscriptions. It is clear that we are dealing with a first-degree family, of whom we know the father *Priscus* (Bull 1), the mother *Longina* (Bull 2) and the son *Longinus* (Bulls 1 and 2), all bearing single Latin names, with the son's name taken from his mother. The father, *Priscus*, is from the *cognatio* of the *Calaetici*, which also includes *Lancius* (Bull 4), but he does not express any first-degree relationship with the *Priscus* family. In view of this, it could be asked whether these are the funeral monuments of two families in the first degree, that of

the *Longini* and that of the *Lancii* with a higher family link, since both belong to the same *cognatio*.

As regards the tombs of these *Calaetici*,<sup>40</sup> the MRM reading allows us to consider that they would have shared the same space in the territory of the *civitas* of these two families in the first degree, who belonged to the same *cognatio*. We know another woman from this same *cognatio*, *Monova*, who is mentioned in a stele from Ávila,<sup>41</sup> whose extensive territory also covered the southern slopes of the Gredos mountain range.<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately the stele is broken at the bottom and we have no more data of the dedicant which would allow us (as is the case in other examples)<sup>43</sup> to go beyond merely stating that she belonged to the *cognatio*. In any event, the names of the *cognationes*, such as the anthroponyms from which they are derived, are repeated in the same

<sup>40</sup> Related to the anthroponym *Calaetus*, a well-known name in *Lusitania*, in Ávila it is not recorded, and the closest testimonies are from the province of Cáceres, specifically from Jarandilla de la Vera and Torrejón el Rubio. On the names of family units in plural genitive, *cognationes*, and indigenous names that can be related to them, see Luján 2016: 234.

<sup>41</sup> Hernando Sobrino 2005: 130-131, no. 46, with the preceding bibliographic references.

<sup>42</sup> As can be deduced from the typology, clearly a product of the capital's own *officina*, of the steles of La Adrada (Hernando Sobrino 2005: 222-223, no. 169 and no. 170), a town situated to the south of this mountain range, and which now makes it possible to confirm the *terminus Augustalis* found in Jarandilla de la Vera (Cáceres), which delimits a community whose name is not completely preserved, but which must be *Augustobriga*, with regard to that of the *Auile(n)s(es)* (cf. Gómez-Pantoja 2011: 294; AE 2011, 485 and *HEp* 20, 2011, 48).

<sup>43</sup> On the causes behind the coincidence or divergence of the *cognatio* of the women, in particular the spouse, and the other people of the same inscription, see Luján 2017, 190-198.

<sup>37</sup> Ramírez Sádaba 2003: 65.

<sup>38</sup> Grupo Mérida 2003: 210. See ADOPIA *Lusitania*, s.v. <http://adopia.huma-num.fr/es/>.

<sup>39</sup> *CIL* II 573; Murciano Calles et al. 2011.



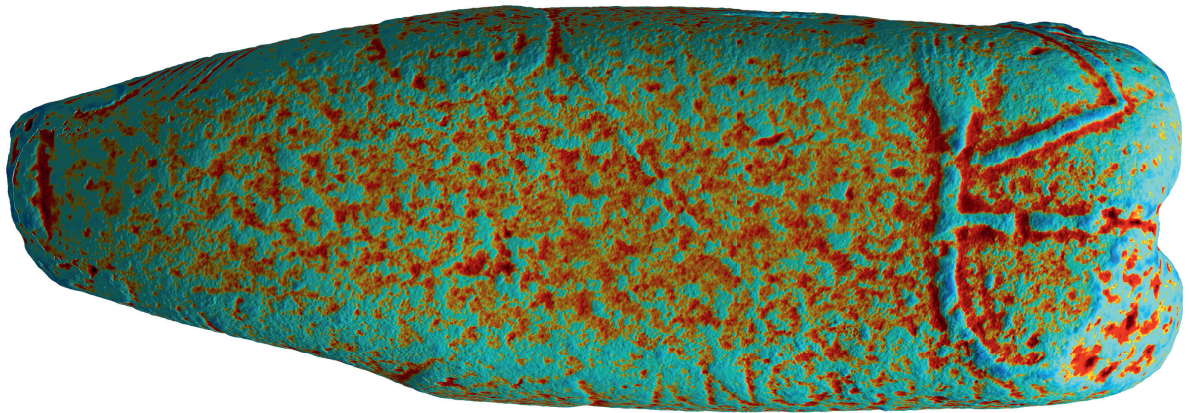


Figure 6: Bull 4 (MRM image: Hugo Pires).

area and our case corroborates what we already knew about this.<sup>44</sup>

### Anatomical details and carvings

As previously mentioned, the application of the MRM technique has also made it possible to specify the anatomical details and the carved symbols that appear on these bulls and which, without a doubt, have been part of them since their origin. In fact, thanks to this technique it is possible to clearly observe the position of the tail, which is always turned from the left haunch to the right, leaving the genitals clearly exposed, as Blanco Freijeiro observed.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, it makes it possible to appreciate all its details, including its final tuft or tassel, which is practically erased in all the bulls and which with this technique can be seen very clearly (Figure 6).

It also makes it possible to clearly see a series of stripes or prominent elements on the bulls' hindquarters (on the right flank, as Gómez Moreno has previously noted)<sup>46</sup> with an ancient typology and which in the four specimens from Guisando are practically identical:<sup>47</sup> two parallel lines over which there is a zig-zag line (Figure 3, Bull 1; Figure 8, Bull 4).

According to Gómez Moreno these strips,<sup>48</sup> which he referred to as 'verdugones' (welts),<sup>49</sup> are similar to cattle brands,<sup>50</sup> a suggestive idea – which has also been

proposed for some of the symbols found on hospitality *tesserae*<sup>51</sup> – but which seems to conflict with the fact that they also appear sculpted on the specimens representing wild boars, animals that obviously cannot be considered from this perspective. Analysing Gómez Moreno's idea, Blanco Freijeiro indicated that these elements, which he identifies as 'belts' or 'straps',<sup>52</sup> adorned the animals 'como si se tratase de una guarnición o arnés'; for this reason, he noted that they were evidence enough to prove that 'los animales no son toros bravos, ni jabalíes en el caso de los cochinos, sino bestias de una cabaña doméstica lo bastante dócil para dejarse uncir o guarnecer'.<sup>53</sup> However, today there is no doubt that, while in a minority, in the particular 'bestiary' that makes up the group of 'verracos', wild boars can also be identified.<sup>54</sup> In turn, Álvarez Sanchís speculates that it could be the expression of a language that identifies either from the site, or from the cattle; he also highlights the homogeneity that these elements present in all of the old-type specimens and concludes that this homogeneity 'podría indicarnos que la élite debió mantener relaciones entre sí, compartiendo una simbología común y, probablemente, en muchos casos, unos mismos artistas'.<sup>55</sup>

However, in Bull 2 the usual combination of elements visible on the right haunch of the animals – the double

subject, pointing out that these elements could be 'reductibles a signos alfabéticos' (Gómez Moreno 1949: 136).

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Balbín Chamorro 2006: 84–86.

<sup>52</sup> Isidoro Bosarte had already defined as straps some of the artistic elements found on the 'verraco' (a wild boar) of the convent of Santo Domingo el Real in Segovia, indicating that: 'la correa demuestra ciertamente que no estaba en su libertad natural en el bosque, sino con algún freno o algún adorno, que ya no podemos juzgar enteramente' (Bosarte 1804: 30).

<sup>53</sup> Blanco Freijeiro 1983: 120 and 1984: 7. It seems clear, however, that Blanco Freijeiro himself did not maintain his hypothesis, as would seem to be deduced from the later work in which he analysed, jointly, zoomorphic fibulae, some corresponding to wild boars, and 'verracos' (cf. Blanco Freijeiro 1988: 72–74).

<sup>54</sup> Ruiz Zapatero and Álvarez Sanchís 2008: 216.

<sup>55</sup> Álvarez Sanchís 2003: 286.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. González Rodríguez 1986 and 1994; González Rodríguez and Ramírez Sánchez 2011; Luján 2016 and 2017.

<sup>45</sup> Blanco Freijeiro 1984: 6.

<sup>46</sup> Gómez Moreno 1954: 136.

<sup>47</sup> Always according to Álvarez Sanchís 2003: 286; among the specimens of this typology are, besides those of Guisando, those of Ulaca, Ávila, Las Cogotas, Tabera de Abajo, Segovia and Segura de Toro.

<sup>48</sup> Gómez Moreno 1983 [1901]: 39.

<sup>49</sup> A term also used by Arias Cabezedo et al. 1986: 15.

<sup>50</sup> For our specimens he notes, literally: 'cual marcas de ganadería' (Gómez Moreno 1983 [1901]: 38). The same author returns to this

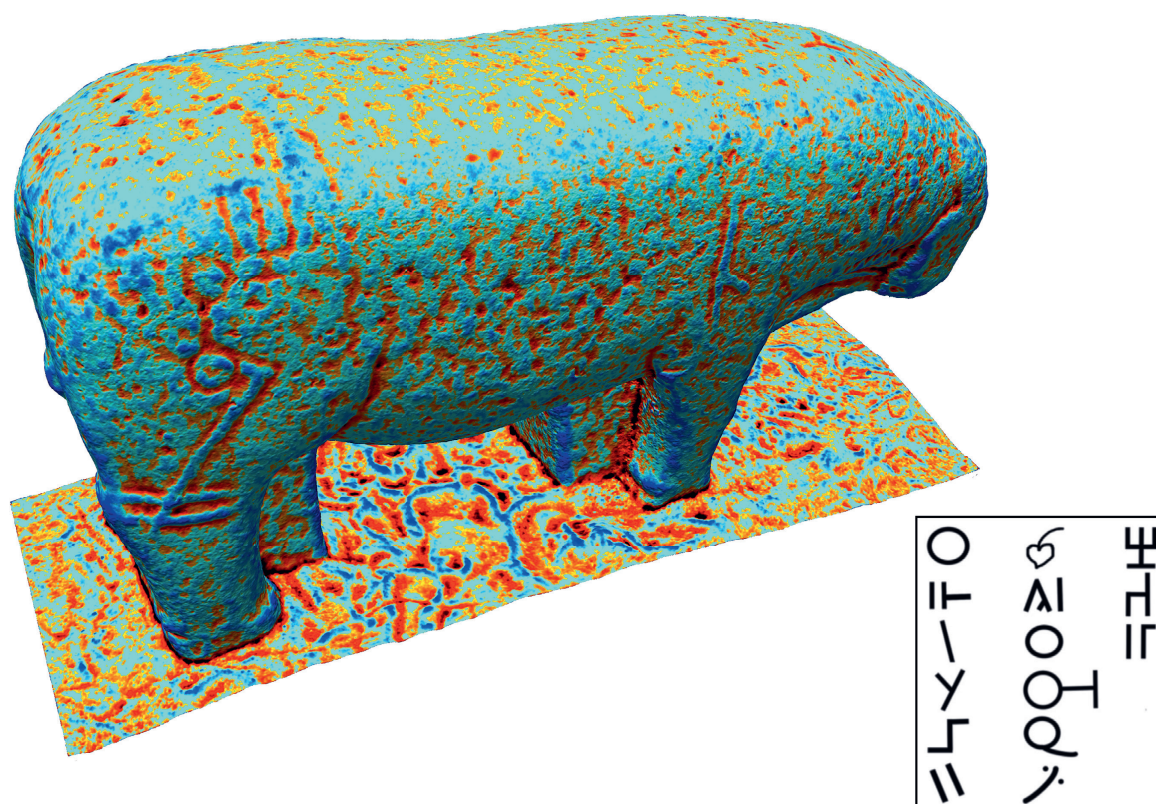


Figure 7: Left: Bull 2 (MRM Image: Hugo Pires). Right: symbols observed in steles from Belorado – Fresno del Río Tirón (after Fernández Corral 2016: 37).

line and the zig-zag line – is complemented by others that are absent in the remaining specimens, which have not been seen until now, and which give this specimen a certain complexity: two circles joined by a vertical line, which connects with the zig-zag, and on the animal's rump, to the right of the circles, a small but distinct trident (Figure 7, left). The presence of the latter is of considerable interest<sup>56</sup> as it is a relatively common motif in the epigraphy of the Iberian Peninsula; in fact, it is documented in another 'verracó' that forms a part of the group from Ávila.<sup>57</sup> In a very recent study, J. Gómez-Pantoja includes all of the evidence from *Hispania*,<sup>58</sup> and concludes that it is 'un símbolo estrictamente asociado a epitafios';<sup>59</sup> he goes on to state that they are mainly found in the western regions of *Hispania Citerior* and

*Lusitania*, and in rural settings. This latter aspect could make it possible to interpret the trident as a 'pitchfork' or 'fork', a common agricultural tool, a hypothesis that is considered very likely by A. Redentor for the steles of Bragança.<sup>60</sup> However, we agree with Gómez-Pantoja that, except in obvious cases associated with the marine or amphitheatrical world, there is still no satisfactory explanation of the meaning of this figurative element, which seems to be present in funerary monuments of very diverse typology. Be that as it may, we understand that the proposal that advocates relating the trident with the followers of Christianity in its earliest phase is not applicable, due to its chronology, in our case.<sup>61</sup>

It is interesting to note, at this point, that the elements combined in this Bull 2 seem to have striking similarities with some of those recorded, on an individual basis, in the peculiar steles of the group from Belorado-Fresno del Río Tirón, in the province of Burgos (Figure 7, right). Although it is assumed that they do not fulfil a merely decorative function, it is admitted that 'the significance of the signs is still unclear as long as we are not able to arrive at the symbolic language of the society who carved them'.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>56</sup> It is, moreover, a very abundant element in ancient pre-Roman and Roman iconography, and offers a wide range of possibilities for interpretation according to its context; see, in this respect, the work of Ozcáriz and Unzu (2011: 87-88) on its presence in graffiti found on pottery, or the interesting study by Graells i Fabregas and Mazzoli (2013) on this subject of the overlapping trident-shaped metal structures in pre-Roman helmets.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Hernando Sobrino 2005: 135-136, no. 50.

<sup>58</sup> Gómez-Pantoja 2020: 6, n. 8.

<sup>59</sup> It should be noted, however, that various authors have interpreted as a trident the symbol found in a votive inscription dedicated to *Ataecina* from Malpartida de Cáceres (*HEp* 6, 1996, 235), interpreted by Beltrán Lloris as a very minimalist anthropomorphic decoration (Beltrán Lloris 1975-1976: 58, no. 37). On its interpretation as a trident, see Río-Miranda Alcón 1995: 16, no. 10.

<sup>60</sup> Redentor 2002: 242-243.

<sup>61</sup> Gómez Vila 2002: 230-233; Mañanes 1999: 570-571.

<sup>62</sup> Fernández Corral 2016: 36-37.





Figure 8: Bull 4 (MRM image: Hugo Pires).

In our opinion, the MRM also allows us to rule out (at least for these specimens) the hypothesis proposed by López Monteagudo according to which the strips on the backs of these animals could be interpreted as *dorsuale*,<sup>63</sup> specifically at the height of the front legs. This is a very interesting hypothesis, as it leads the author to date these sculptures to Roman times, since the use of the *dorsuale* did not spread in Rome until the 1st century BC. It is true that there are representations of processional bulls adorned with cloths on their backs in orientalizing ceramics in the south of the Iberian Peninsula (by the first half of the first millennium BC),<sup>64</sup> nor can it be ruled out that they were put on and taken off on these statues on commemorative or festive occasions, as noted by Blanco Freijeiro.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, the MRM technique has confirmed for our bulls the opinion expressed by Álvarez Sanchís that the supposed strips are nothing more than a means of highlighting the front legs (see Figure 8).<sup>66</sup>

However, some lines are visible, in the form of ribbons or ropes, crossing the body of the animals (especially in Bull 4; see above Figures 6 and 7) and could perhaps be related to the position of the tail and the other sculpted elements.

It is obvious that the interpretation of all these figurative elements is hampered by the mystery surrounding the ultimate meaning and purpose of the 'verracos' themselves. Nevertheless, we believe that, in this sense, the evaluation made by Blanco Freijeiro could be revealing with regard to the interest of the artists in making clear,<sup>67</sup> in these sculptures – whether of bulls or pigs – the male sex of the specimens, by moving the tails to one side (clearly artificially held in place in Bull 4, once again). The use of the term 'retranca' (harness) to replace Gómez Moreno's 'verdugones' (welts) may be revealing and which,<sup>68</sup> according to the researcher himself, was used by farmers in the Guisando area to define the aforementioned marks on the legs of the specimens in the group.<sup>69</sup>

For this reason, the idea is extremely tempting, given the importance of gripping the tail in veterinary procedures where it is necessary to control the animal's movements,<sup>70</sup> to consider that what is being represented is nothing less than the ritual restraint of these bulls. In short, it would be a matter of ensuring their control and perhaps, at the same time, guaranteeing the capture and use, symbolically, of their strength.

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<sup>63</sup> López Monteagudo 1989: 50, 144 and 149.

<sup>64</sup> For a summary in this regard, see Escacena and Amores 2011.

<sup>65</sup> In reference to the 'Toros de Guisando' this author also notes that 'Todo lo que al respecto se sabe de la exornación de las víctimas en la religión antigua, y aún de pervivencias modernas como el Toro de San Marcos, es aplicable al caso presente' (Blanco Freijeiro 1984: 8).

<sup>66</sup> Álvarez Sanchís 2003: 286, n. 301.

<sup>67</sup> Blanco Freijeiro 1984: 6.

<sup>68</sup> Blanco Freijeiro 1988: 74.

<sup>69</sup> Blanco Freijeiro 1984: 7.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Gasque Gómez 2008: 431.

Fondo Social Europeo) and ‘Corpus de Manuscritos de la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid para la Historia Antigua de España’ (ref. PID2019-109530GB-I00, Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación), as well as the Research Groups ‘InScribo-CIL II’ (Universidad de Alcalá; PID2019-107905GB-I00), ‘Ciudades Romanas’ (ref. 930692, Universidad Complutense de Madrid), and TEAPIMEG (ref. 930750, Universidad Complutense de Madrid).

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