

# MITOLOGÍAS PRERROMANAS DE LA PENÍNSULA IBÉRICA. ESTADO DE LA CUESTIÓN

## Pre-Roman mythologies of the Iberian Peninsula. The state of art

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**SUMMARY:** From the end of the Bronze Age to the coming of Roman Imperial Age the Iberian Peninsula have been divided in three ethnological areas: the indo-european, the non indoeuropean and the punic and greek colonization areas.

The religions and mythologies of the peoples of these areas have been studied by hispanic historians and archaeologists through the literary, epigraphic and archaeological sources. In this paper the author display the state of art in these historical fields.

**Key words:** Pre-roman Spain; mythology, religion, History of Religions.

**RESUMEN:** Desde finales de la Edad del Bronce hasta el comienzo de la Época Imperial Romana la Península Ibérica estuvo dividida en tres grandes áreas etnográficas: la indoeuropea, la no indoeuropea y las áreas de las colonizaciones púnica y griega.

Las religiones y las mitologías de estos pueblos han sido estudiadas por los historiadores españoles a través de las fuentes literarias clásicas y de las fuentes epigráficas y arqueológicas. En éste artículo se ofrece el estado actual de la investigación en estos campos.

**Palabras clave:** España prerromana, mitología, religión, Historia de las religiones.

From Mycenaean times to the Byzantine Empire, the various indigenous peoples that inhabited the Iberian Peninsula maintained contacts of varying intensity with the world of Classical Antiquity. In this article, however, I shall deal with a more limited time span; because of the sporadic or even hypothetical character of some of the contacts, and because Hispania was part of the Roman Empire from the 1st to the 5th centuries A.D., it is convenient to consider only the period between the expansion, in historical times, of Greek colonization (i.e. what in Greek History is usually referred to as the archaic age), and the implantation of Roman administration. I shall begin, then, with the Greek colonization <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> On Greek Colonization see the book of John Boardman: *The Greeks Overseas. The Archaeology of their early colonies and trade*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1973, that is nevertheless an excellent introduction. On the social life of colonists, Paul Faure: *La vie quotidienne des colons grecs de la Mer Noire a l'Atlantique au siècle de Pythagore. VI siècle avant J.,C.* Hachette, Paris, 1978, for the Iberian Peninsula, pp. 203/248.

For the mycenaean expansion to the West, Oliver Dickinson: *La Edad del Bronce Egea*, Akal, Madrid, 2000 (Cambridge, 1994), and John Bennet. "The Aegean Bronze Age", in : *The Cambridge Economic History of the Graeco-roman World* , Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 175/210. On the economy of archaic greek colonies, Michael Dietler: "The Iron Age in the Western Mediterranean", in: *Cambridge Economic History of the Graeco-roman World*, pp. 242/276 and Genaro Chic García: *El comercio y el Mediterráneo en la Antigüedad*, Akal, Madrid, 2009, pp. 271/372.

Following a series of sporadic contacts mingled with more or less systematic exploration between the Bronze Age and the 9th century B.C. (an era known to historians as the precolonial age), the Greeks began to colonize minute areas of the Iberian Peninsula. An initial phase of dominance by the people that had founded Rhode, in the 9th century was followed by an ill-understood interim period and then, from the middle of the 7th century on, by colonization by the inhabitants of Phocis, who founded the Palaeopolis of Ampurias in 560-550 and the Neapolis forty years later. These Greek colonists brought numerous myths with them, together with their particular preferences among the gods of their pantheon, and so introduced a variety of their religion among the peoples of primitive Hispania<sup>2</sup>.

Our knowledge of the cults of the Greek Hispanic colonies is sadly limited. In view of the colonists' origin, it has been reasonably assumed that one of their principal divinities must have been Ephesian Artemis, a Greco-Asian goddess whose worship was of great importance in Ionia but whose myths are almost entirely unknown; and this assumption is supported by evidence of an important shrine dedicated to Artemis at the site of what is now Sagunto. According to Strabo (IV, 1. 4-5) her cult extended to Rhodes, Ampurias and Hemeroskopeion from the 6th century on. It seems probable that other Olympians must also have been worshipped in Hispania alongside Artemis, but we know of no other important temples; such works of art with religious subjects as have been recovered, including the renowned Asclepius of Ampurias and a graceful image of the head of Aphrodite, are insufficient evidence of the existence of cults to these divinities. The absence of shrines may possibly have been because the Greek colonies in the Iberian Peninsula were not true colonies like those of Sicilia or Magna Grecia, but rather trading stations with no agricultural activity whose inhabitants had little interest in territorial consolidation. This hypothesis is supported by the particularly striking lack of signs of any cult of founding heroes, which was of major importance in all territorially extensive colonies; its absence in Hispania is attributable to the dependence of the Hispanic trading stations upon non-Hispanic mother cities (Ampurias, for example, depended on Massilia). The Greek colonization of Hispania may thus be characterized as based on colonies that were few in number and small in territorial size, and as involving little intercourse between Greeks and the indigenous peoples due, *inter alia*, to the hindrance of communication by linguistic difficulties. In spite of this, certain important features of Greek culture undoubtedly diffused amongst the Iberians Mediterranean Hispania, including the alphabet and, via Greek art, certain mythological themes such as the legend of the sphinx. The sphinx was first introduced into the Iberian Peninsula as the Phoenician version of the Egyptian male sphinx, as

<sup>2</sup> The studies of Antonio García y Bellido: "Colonización púnica" and "La colonización griega", in: *Historia de España*, I-2, (ed.) Ramón Menéndez-Pidal, Espasa Calpe, Madrid, 1952, pp. 308/680 is a good survey. The best summary of Iberian Greek Colonization is, Pierre Rouillard: *Les grecs et la Péninsule Ibérique du VIII au IV siècle avant Jésus-Christ*, De Boccard, Paris, 1991.

found in the Nimrud ivories. Later, from the late 6th century on, the oriental sphinx was joined by a Greek type. Archaeologists insist that both forms were merely artistic or decorative motifs with no religious significance, but in what may be thought of as a kind of cross-fertilization between the religions of Hispania and Classical Antiquity, the indigenous peoples created new religious meaning for these motifs. As the result of this process, the content of which is now lost, the sphinx came to be used, for example, as an emblem on the coins of Castulo, Illiberis and Ursone, all of them cities within the territory of Iberian culture<sup>3</sup>.

The non-Indoeuropean area of Hispania consisted roughly in the territory south of the SW-NE diagonal through the centre of the Peninsula. In the process of syncretism between Greek religion and the indigenous religions of this area, a prominent role was played by what we may call mythical geography. Two kinds of myth of this type may be distinguished. First, there is a series of Hellenic myths which were set by the Greeks in the Iberian Peninsula, and which some historians have viewed as containing indications of the indigenous religions of the Peninsula; secondly, a number of authentic indigenous myths are known in which the pseudo-geographical setting plays an important role.

All known mythologies bear within them a certain implicit conception of space and time. Myths are set in a time that is normally neither historic time nor time present and which may be called primordial time or, as among the Australian aborigines, dream time. Similarly, the personae and deeds dealt with by the myth are not usually located in domestic or civilized surroundings, but in the wild: in woods, pools and caverns within Greek territory, or among “distant” lands and peoples such as the Hyperboreans. The “geography” of the myth is that of a symbolic space, and the travels of its personae are imbued with a meaning that must be sought in the logic of such spaces. It makes no sense to try to trace mythological itineraries on a map, since the geography of the myth does not coincide with the geography of the cartographer. The gigantic efforts of numerous historians and archaeologists to determine, in worldly geographical terms, the routes taken by Odysseus, the Argonauts or other travellers, or to seek some kind of historical link between mythical and real lands (e.g. between the Fortunate Isles and the Canaries), are in vain. What is necessary, however, is to note that for many centuries the western limit of the world known to the Mediterranean peoples was the Iberian Peninsula; and that the Greek myths, from Hesiod's *Theogony* on, tend to locate certain personae at the ends of the earth. Thus the Greek myths established the abode of the descendants of Iapetus and Clymene in the far west, as also that of the offspring of a

<sup>3</sup> The relation between colonization and Greek religion was very strong. On this problem, see, Irad Malkin: *Religion and Colonization in Ancient Greece*, Brill, Leyden, 1987. The mythology of *nóstoi*, returns, of epic Greek heroes to their homes has very bonds of union with the foundation of greek colonies. See, Irad Malkin: *The Returns of Odysseus. Colonization and Ethnicity*, University of California Press, 1998; François Hartog: *Mémoires d'Ulysse. Récits sur la frontière en Grèce ancienne*, Gallimard, Paris, 1996 and Friederich Prinz: *Gründungsmythen und Sagenchronologie*, Beck, München, 1979.

second Titan couple, Phorcys and Ceto, from whom the Graeae, the Gorgons, Chrysaor, Geryon and Orthrus all descended. Systematic scrutiny of all the Greek myths supposedly set in Hispania leads always to the same conclusion: that their logic is that of the Greek myth, and that this has no relationship whatsoever with the historical-religious reality of the indigenous peoples of the Iberian Peninsula. The sole cause of their supposed geographical setting is that there was a time at which the Iberian Peninsula was the westernmost land within the Greeks' ken, and hence a land whose hazy geographical reality left room for the workings of the mythogenic imagination<sup>4</sup>.

In fact, strict adherence to the myths demands that the beings mentioned above be located in the Kingdom of Night, beyond the river Ocean that girdles the earth, and hence outside any concrete geographical region. The “geography” to be gleaned from myths, of indigenous or Greek origin, is the geography of their own *imaginary worlds*. The geographical “identification” of the settings of these myths with actual places has involved all kinds of spurious criteria together with, in the case of certain Spanish historians, a certain degree of chauvinism.

According to philologists, one of the most ancient Hellenic documents to speak of the geography of the Iberian Peninsula is a fragment of a Massilian periplus that has been preserved in a poem of the 4th century A.D. by Rufus Festus Avienus. In its description of the coast of the Peninsula, there is a striking contrast between the Mediterranean side, for which concrete ethnographic and geographical data are provided, and the Atlantic side. Once past the Straits of Gibraltar, both profiles become blurred. Instead of specific localities, only peoples are mentioned, and these peoples are attributed increasingly mythical characteristics. Of the Oes-trimnians, for example, it is stated *that haec dicta primo oestrymnis (est) / locos et arva Oestrymnis habitantibus / post multa serpens effugavit incolas / vacuumque glaebam nominis fecit sui* (Ora Maritima, 154-157). This apparently incomprehensible account has led historians and philologists alike to interpret *serpens* as *Saefes*, the name of a Celtic people whose totem would have been a serpent; this allowed association with the early Iron Age invasions, in keeping with the abundance of Celtic remains in the indoeuropean part of the Peninsula. Unfortunately, the text is certainly not corrupt. Avienus' statement is more plausibly explained in terms of folklore, in particular the folklore of the Greek and Roman myths. Among the animal myths and cults of both civilizations, the serpent occupied a prominent position and, as in the Massilian periplus, was attributed with invasions that razed cities and ravaged whole regions. Several centuries after the periplus was written, the Greek geographer Strabo (III. 4. 18) narrated the very similar case of a plague of mice in the northern Iberian Peninsula that required the exclusive efforts of the Roman army for its elimination; similar plagues of rodents are mentioned in the Bible, the folklore of both Classical Antiquity and European folklore. Both in the periplus and

<sup>4</sup> See: José Carlos Bermejo Barrera: *Mitología y Mitos de la Hispania Prerromana*, I, 2ª ed., Akal, Madrid, 1994, pp. 93/180.

in Strabo, we see the northern of northwestern Iberian Peninsula as constituting mythical territories for the Hellenic mind, as lands in which the shape of reality becomes blurred<sup>5</sup>.

Another mythical geographical feature of the northwest Iberian Peninsula is referred to in Greek and Latin accounts of the crossing of the River Oblivion by the army of Decimus Junius Brutus Galaicus. In this case a feature of the underworld that appears in the Orphic tablets has been directly transposed to Galicia. What actually occurred may have been as follows. Decimus Junius and his army came to a river that, according to the local inhabitants (and in keeping with Celtic tradition), led to the entrance to the underworld. The Roman general performed the rite of evocation to bring over the enemy's god of the underworld, to whom the Romans then did worship, and thereupon, still in accordance with ritual, proceeded to consagrate himself to the god by wading into and across the river, followed by his troops. Historiographic tradition, instead of retaining a faithful account of these events, assimilated them to a standard Hellenic mythical model. The relocation of Oblivion in the Iberian Peninsula should cause no surprise, since Strabo himself (II. 2. 12) stated that Homer had identified Tartarus with the kingdom of Tartessus in the south of the Peninsula due to their both being associated with sunset and the mythical kingdom of Night, and to the entrance to the underworld being located in the far west (e.g. according to the *Theogony*)<sup>6</sup>.

For Classical Antiquity, the Iberian Peninsula was thus associated with myths and thought of in mythical terms, especially those of its regions that were most inaccessible for the Mediterranean peoples and which remained outside their sphere of influence longest (e.g. the North and Northwest). Strabo and other classical sources, though providing us with valuable information on the customs and religious traditions of the inhabitants of the Peninsula, were only too ready to subject them to the logic of myth. This tendency was encouraged by the mountainous orography and Atlantic climate of the northern and Northwestern Peninsula, which contrasted with those of the Mediterranean and provided a setting that conspicuously lacked three basic elements of Mediterranean culture: the vine, the olive and wheat. For Posidonius, barbarians were barbarians because their climate made their souls barbarous, a geographically determinist theory that is already to be found in the Hippocratic treatise on *Airs, waters and places*. Strabo did not go so far as Posidonius (one of his ethnographic sources), but nevertheless implies that peoples who eat acorns instead of bread, drink beer instead of wine and use butter instead of oil cannot be civilized. For the Greeks, there was a close relationship between food and sexual activity and social life in general; not for nothing was Demeter, the giver of

<sup>5</sup> José Carlos Bermejo Barrera: *Mitología y Mitos de la Hispania Prerromana*, II, Akal, Madrid, 1986, pp. 57/74.

<sup>6</sup> See Marco V. García Quintela: "El río del Olvido", in J.C. Bermejo Barrera: *Mitología y Mitos de la Hispania Prerromana*, II, pp. 75/86 and Marco V. García Quintela: *Mitología y Mitos de la Hispania Prerromana*, III, Akal, Madrid, 1999.

wheat, also the goddess of The thesmophoria. Hence Strabo associates the gynaeocracy of the peoples of the northern Iberian Peninsula with their diet, which he likewise relates to their military practices (based on looting and plunder) and semi-anarchic political organization. Strabo's thoughts on barbarians are not without a certain profundity, and at some points, such as his reflections on social customs and drunken rites, are in line with the philosophical considerations developed by Plato in the *Laws*. More generally, they illustrate how the characteristics of a qualitatively distinct region can be understood as a transformation of the heterogeneous, unconnected regions of the myths. Just as, in the mythical world, real geography gives way without warning to imaginary, mythical geography, so too, in ancient ethnography, there is a sharp distinction made between the civilized world and barbarians, and dwelling in barbarous lands does not make civilized men barbarians, nor removal to Hellas suffice to civilize a barbarian<sup>7</sup>.

In spite of the ideological clichés used by Latin and Greek authors in their descriptions of the indigenous peoples of the Iberian Peninsula, their texts nevertheless afford valuable information on these peoples, revealing homologies between Hellenic and indigenous myths. There are written accounts of only three myths attributable to pre-Roman Hispanic peoples. The first is the myth of the Lusitanian Mares as recorded by Pliny (*Natural History* VIII. 166; IV. 116; XVI. 93), who states simply that in the neighbourhood of Olisipus (roughly where Lisbon now stands) mares breathe and are fertilized by the wind called Favonius, giving birth to foals that are extremely swift but live no longer than seven years. Though the natural context of this picturesque information, i.e. the rest of Lusitanian mythology, is now lost, Greek mythology provides numerous examples of the fertilization of both animals and women by the wind; moreover, the issue of these pregnancies -foals, eggs or whatever - is always short-lived. Such pregnancies are associated with the extreme sexuality attributed to certain animals, in this case mares, who as a result of foaling were supposed to exude an aphrodisiacal liquor, the *hippomanes*. The Lusitanian myth can thus be set in a wider context of fecundation myths; and the ability of the Greek myth to provide a context for the Lusitanian myth is not due to any process of myth diffusion between the two peoples - Lusitania was not colonized by the Greeks - but to their mythologies being to some extent homologous<sup>8</sup>.

A second example, likewise from Lusitanian culture, is provided by Diodorus Siculus (XXXIII. 7. 5), according to whom Viriatus convinced the inhabitants of the city of Itucci by telling them the story of a man with two lovers, one a girl and the other a crone, who ended up bald because the girl plucked out his grey hairs to make him more like her, and the crone did likewise with the rest of his hair. The fifty-second fable of the *Corpus Aesopicus* is a similar tale, and was well known among the ancients. Parallels can also be drawn with certain myths in which the

<sup>7</sup> J.C. Bermejo Barrera: *Mitología y Mitos de la Hispania Prerromana*, II., pp. 13/74.

<sup>8</sup> J.C. Bermejo Barrera: "Los caballos y los vientos: un mito lusitano antiguo", in *Hispania Antiqua*, IV, 1976, pp. 301/310.

bald lover is the moon, no less, which is known to have been worshipped in Hispania. We appear, then, to have a situation similar to that of the Favonius myth: the homology between the mythologies of widely separated peoples allows a surviving Hispanic fragment to find its context among items from Classical Mythology<sup>9</sup>.

The third and last case we know of is the famous myth of Gargoris and Habis narrated by Justin (XLIV. 4), who summarized the Philippic History of the Gallic historian Trogus Pompeius. This genuinely indigenous story is about the two mythical, opposed but complementary founders of Tartessus, one of whom is exposed in a wood and suckled by a deer, and of the advent of agriculture. It thus deals with a number of mythical themes that are well known in many cultures: the birth of the hero, his exposure and nurture by an animal, and his subsequent rescue; and the advent of agriculture, the foundation of cities and the birth of social inequality. Exact analysis of the tale of Gargoris and Habis is extremely difficult because, in the absence of other sources of information, there is virtually nothing with which to correlate its details; exact interpretation of the role of the two founder kings, for example, would require knowledge of the Tartessian theory of kingship, and the same holds for other elements of the tale, such as honey, agriculture, deer and insects. Again, however, resort to Greek mythology affords an answer in the form of the mythical king Aristaeus via the Curetes, a mythical people that is also mentioned in Justin's text. Both Gargoris and Aristaeus are fertility kings similar to Cronus in the Golden Age; their people are hunters and honey gatherers who have no knowledge of agriculture or labour in the fields. Habis, on the other hand, the king exposed in the wood, breaks with the old regime by introducing a new social order based on agriculture, law and social division, i.e. in the creation of political power. Habis is paralleled in Attic mythology by Cecrops and Theseus, and his divine equivalent is Zeus<sup>10</sup>.

Though we have here been using the similarities between Greek and Hispanic myths to interpret the latter, ancient authors were less keen to recognize such similarities. Rather, like Strabo, they tended to wrest the most strikingly grotesque elements of barbarian mythology from their mythological context, so rendering them meaningless, any similarity with Greek myth being overlooked. This behaviour formed part of their general practice of stressing the most repudiable aspects of barbarian culture in order to differentiate it sharply from Hellenic culture. Strabo (III. 4. 16) for example, states that the *gallaeci*, the inhabitants of the Northwestern Iberian Peninsula, are *atheist*, even though he immediately goes on to name the gods they worship and offer sacrifices to. This is no slip or contradiction, nor a reference to a cult with no images or to primitive forms of some deity: he is using the word *atheist* in the same derogatory sense in which pagans and Christians applied it to each other, as a term of abuse similar to those later directed at each other by Catholics and Protestants during the Reformation. The ploy of “denaturalizing”

<sup>9</sup> J.C. Bermejo Barrera: *Mitología y Mitos de la Hispania Prerromana*, II, pp. 45/56.

<sup>10</sup> J.C. Bermejo Barrera: *Mitología y Mitos de la Hispania Prerromana*, I, pp. 67/82.

the customs and beliefs of the barbarian so as to deny his cultural validity recurs when Strabo (III. 4. 16), with the evident intention of provoking repugnance, affirms that the Celtiberians (a people inhabiting the centre of the Peninsula) use fermented urine as a dentifrice; he fails to mention that this practice was common in the ancient world, not only among the lower classes but also among the educated and the medical profession (the medicinal properties of excrements are the sole theme of Book XXVIII of Pliny's *Natural History*, and indeed, figure large in European pharmacopoeias until the 18th century). Elsewhere, Strabo (III. 3. 7) writes of human sacrifices to the god Ares, referring no doubt to the indigenous Lusitanian war-god Cosus, to whom the Lusitanians would have offered sacrifices, as the Greeks to Ares, in order to divine military outcomes. There is a twofold insult here. Firstly, to the Greeks of Hellenic times, though not to the Celts whose rites were practiced by the Lusitanian peoples, sacrificing human beings rather than lower animals was a perversion of the *thysia*, the sacrificial rite; thus Strabo adds a sacrilegious perversion to the culinary, sexual and hygienic perversions he has already mentioned; Hellenic ethnographers in fact commonly referred to human sacrifice as proof of the barbarity of various other peoples. Secondly, to Hellenic Greeks, Ares represented a form of furious, unthinking warfare, based essentially on one-to-one fighting, that was indeed more in line with the military practices of the Lusitanians than with those of the Greeks. In Greece, it had been superseded by the more modern strategies of the wars among the city states, which were based on the phalanx and ruled by a certain code of honorable practice. As a result, Ares' functions as a war-god had largely been taken over by the more intellectual Athene; Strabo's remarks are derogatory in that they portray the Lusitanians as worshipping a deity equivalent to a rather inferior member of the Greek pantheon, and by implication transfer the uncivilized characteristics of that deity to the Lusitanians themselves<sup>11</sup>.

So far, I have surveyed what classical literary sources tell us of the myths and mentality of the primitive Hispanic peoples. Two other sources, archaeology and epigraphs, also provide us with a certain amount of information on ancient Hispanic religions. In particular, Latin inscriptions found in the Peninsula have given us the names of over a hundred indigenous gods, some of them explicitly identified with Roman divinities. Those finds are distributed chiefly in the Indoeuropean region, the northwest especially. Unfortunately, lack of any information other than the bare names makes their interpretation hazardous even at the Linguistic level. Until recently, attempts were made to group these deities as sun gods, water gods, war gods, and gods of vegetation, fecundity, mountains, etc. More recently they have been

<sup>11</sup> The literary and epigraphic documents relating to the myths, cults and religions of Pre-roman Iberian Peninsula have been edited by José María Blázquez Martínez along many years. See: *Religiones primitivas de Hispania. I. Fuentes Literarias y epigráficas*, Delegación de Roma, CSIC, Madrid, 1962; *Diccionario de las religiones Primitivas de Hispania*, Istmo, Madrid, 1978; *Imagen y Mito*, Ediciones Cristiandad, Madrid, 1980; *Primitivas Religiones Ibéricas, II, Religiones Prerromanas*, Ediciones Cristiandad, Madrid, 1983; *Religiones de la Hispania Antigua*, Catedra, Madrid, 1991.



subjected to comparative analysis in an attempt to characterize their functions in relationship with the social structure of indigenous peoples. Though many are still obscure, a number of significant groups appear to have been successfully established. One such is the group of wayside gods, or *lares viales*, deities of the north-west of the Peninsula that were associated not only with roads but also, like the Greek god Hermes and the goddess Hecate, with magic and the dead, and whose cult continued during the early centuries of Christianization and can still be traced in surviving folklore. Another approach to the Hispanic pantheon has been to seek a Dumézilian trifunctional structure. Though there is no clear evidence of the first function (attempts to identify an indigenous god of the mountains equivalent to Jupiter have been inconclusive) nor of the third, a number of war gods have been definitely identified, namely the Luso-Galician gods Cosus and Bandua and the goddesses Nabia and Reua, who fit the model of other Celtic war gods and were worshipped by professional warriors grouped in brotherhoods that survived into Roman Times. Though the Dumézilian approach falls short of total success in this context, it at least has the merit of providing a model of historical religions making some sense of an otherwise chaotic pantheon<sup>12</sup>.

A myth is a story, a narrative of life and facts of Gods, Heroes and another characters. Myths only can be analysed by the historians if they have been compiled in a literary text or collected from an oral narrative by folklorists and anthropologists. Very different methods and theories have been developed since the Antiquity for understanding and interpreting the myths<sup>13</sup>. But none methodology can be applied if we don't have texts, or at least we can know the names of Gods and Heroes testified in epigraphic texts and iconographic representations.

Some comparative historians of religions have decanted myths, beliefs and rituals of the celtic literature of the Irish Middle Ages to the Ancient World of Gallia and Iberian Peninsula. This was the method instituted by H. D'Arbois de Juvalville. The lack of ancient facts in someone studies of this type of comparative mythology and in the study of history of celtic religions have been already proclaimed in the XIXth Century by Fustel de Coulanges<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> See J.C. Bermejo Barrera: *Mitología y Mitos de la Hispania Prerromana*, II pp. 87/116, and Blanca García Fernández Albalat: *Guerra y religion en la Gallaecia y la Lusitania antiguas*. Ediciones do Castro, Sada, 1990.

For the "gods of mountains", Angeles Penas Truque: "Los dioses de las montañas", en *Mitología y Mitos de la Hispania Prerromana*, II, pp. 117/ 134.

<sup>13</sup> See José Carlos Bermejo Barrera: *Sueños para unas sombras .Caminos del mito griego*, Enxebrebooks, Santiago de Compostela, 2014, pp. 41/103; Lluís Duch: *Mito, interpretación y cultura*, Herder, Barcelona, 1996, and Andrew Von Hendy: *The modern Construction of Myth*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2002.

<sup>14</sup> In: *El ciclo mitológico irlandés y la mitología céltica*, Visión Libros, Madrid, 1981 (Paris, 1872). For the critic of N.D. Fustel de Coulanges: *Histoire des Institutions de la Ancienne France, I. La Gaule Romaine (1875)*, ed. Camille Julian, Hachette, Paris, 1922.

On celtic literature, Ramón Sainero: *Lenguas y literaturas célticas. Origen y Evolución*, UNED, Madrid, 1997.

The study of celtic religion must be accomplished with the methodological guide of History of Religions. This is the case of the classical reference books of R.O. Unregauñ or Jan de Vries<sup>15</sup>, and also of the recent studies as the book of Miranda Aldhouse-Green<sup>16</sup>. It is impossible to acquire knowledge of ancient myths, cults and sanctuaries working only with “evidences” that are really only conjectures. However many historians of ancient hispanic religions from time to time are working with this ancient conjectural and comparative methods. Their conclusions are very disputable and some historians don’t agree with them. The absence of historical facts in these studies is the motive for not extracting it in this historical summary.

Though archaeological data are always of interest, they have not been of decisive importance for our view of primitive Hispanic mythologies, because few large religious monuments have been discovered. Numerous sanctuaries have been found, and the funeral rite is known in some cultures of the Iberian area<sup>17</sup>, but the interpretation of iconographical themes is very difficult by the absence of texts.

The sanctuaries and deities of medicinal waters and fountains have been historically studied<sup>18</sup>. The most important sanctuary bring to light is the Sanctuary of Monte Do Facho, in O Hío (Galicia, Spain) with a very important epigraphical collection of votive *arae* dedicated to *Deo Lari Berobreo*<sup>19</sup>. This is a medicinal God because their inscriptions have the epigraphic formula *pro salute*. The chronology of the site is the IV Century AD, but the divinity is an indigenous god. His cult can be included in the *renaissance* of celtic and indigenous cults of medicinal gods and heroes in the Gallia and the Roman West<sup>20</sup>.

The lack of a well-developed iconographic tradition in most of the Peninsula, and the archaeological poverty of certain areas, have meant that relatively little information has been forthcoming about religious rites and practices from archaeology. However the progress in the studies of these fields of historical studies will rely upon the work of epigraphists and archaeologists, because is very improbable the discovery of Greek and Roman texts relating to the ancient pre-roman hispanic mythologies.

<sup>15</sup> R.O. Unregauñ: *Les religions des Celtes, des Germains et des Anciennes Slaves*, Colection Mana, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1948, and Jan de Vries: *La religion des Celtes*, Payot, Paris, 1977 (Stuttgart, 1977).

<sup>16</sup> *Caesar’s Druids. Story of An Ancient Priesthood*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> On the Iberian area, Benjamin Collado Hinarejos: *Los Iberos y su mundo*, Akal, Madrid, 2014, pp. 193/223 and the classical study of Antonio Arribas: *Los Iberos*, Ayma, Barcelona, 1965.

<sup>18</sup> See Francisco Diez de Velasco Abellán: *Termalismo y Religión. La sacralización del agua termal en la Península Ibérica y el Norte de África en el Mundo Antiguo*, Ilu, Monografías, I, Universidad Complutense, Madrid, 1998.

<sup>19</sup> See Thomas G. Schattner, José Suarez Otero, Michael Koch: “Weihaltäre im Heiligtum des *deus lar Berobreus* auf dem Monte do facho (O Hío, Galicien); in: Alexandra w. Busch and Alfred Schäfer, eds.; *Römische Weihaltäre im Kontext*, Likias, Köln, 2014, pp. 249/268.

<sup>20</sup> See Aline Rouselle : *Croire et guérir. La foi en Gaule dans l’Antiquité tardive*, Paris, Fayard, 1990.