

Ancient Iberian Coinage

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The Iberian Peninsula on the periphery of the Greek World

The Iberian Peninsula is located in the western part of the Mediterranean, far from the cultural centers that fostered the main social and political developments throughout the first millennium BC. Nevertheless, it did not remain on the sidelines of the Mediterranean influences; from the beginning the presence of navigators and Punic traders have been detected, first Phoenicians, mainly in the zone South, and later Greeks, in the north.



The colonies, the emporia and centers exploiting resources constituted important points of contact with the native populations, through which an exchange of goods, services and ideas took place. From the first systematic contacts, silver was an important commodity for these traders and navigators and it very soon impregnated the life of the most developed populations of the Mediterranean coast of the Iberian Peninsula.

The land and its people

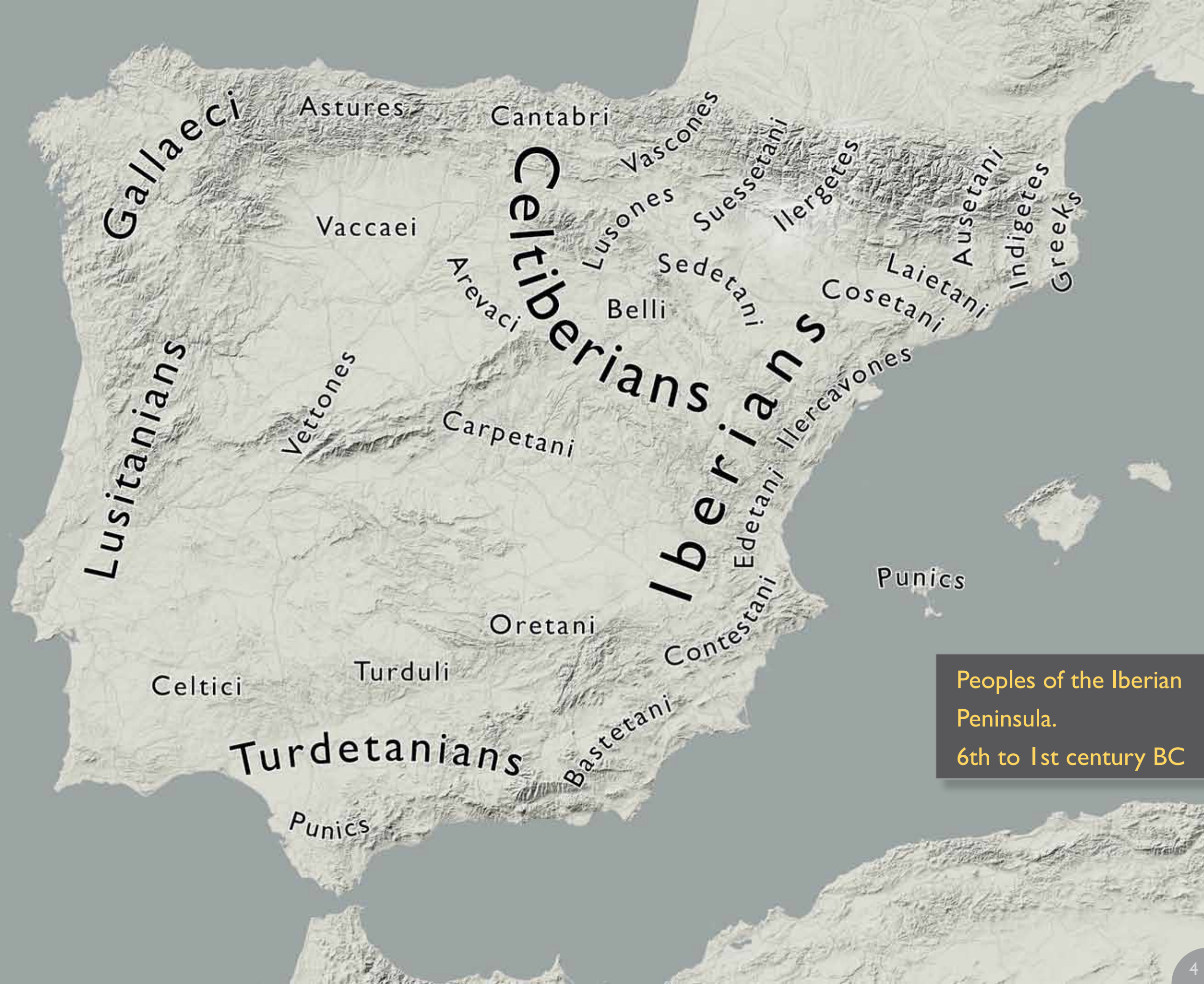
The Iberian Peninsula was a territory inhabited by a remarkable variety of cultures with very different levels of social, political and economic development, depending on whether they were located on the coast, where contacts with traders and navigators extended advances and innovations, or inland, where access was more difficult.

Between the native groups that lived in the Iberian Peninsula we find, on the South and the Mediterranean coast, a Late Bronze native people who evolved towards the Iberian culture, influenced by contacts with Greeks and **Phoenicians**. Some of their populations reached a notable urban development and they were structured in stratified social hierarchies. They spoke a non Indo-European language.

Inside the Iberian Peninsula, to the south of the Ebro river and in the Eastern part of both Mesetas, were the Celtiberians; some of their populations developed forms of urban organization. The Greek influences arrived indirectly, through their contacts with the Iberians. Their language belonged to the Indo-European family.



Priest. Cádiz.
7th century BC



Peoples of the Iberian Peninsula.
6th to 1st century BC

In the central and western part of Iberia, peoples lived with little Mediterranean influences and strong ties to their Late Bronze age traditions. They only developed into urban models from the Late-Republican period. The Phoenicians and Punics on the South coast, and Greeks on the northeast basically formed the settled foreign population in the Iberian Peninsula, exerting a great impact on the natives until the arrival of the Romans, at the end of the 3rd century BC. The colonies which they established, the emporiums that they frequented and the operating centres of natural resources (mines, fisheries), became important points of contact with the native populations.

Of the diverse products that the first navigators came in search for in Iberia, silver was one of the most in demand. The use of Spanish silver has been attested in a 'hacksilber' hoard found in the East, for which the commercial intermediation of the Phoenicians has been advocated, and also in **Auriol** coinages, in France. Silver was soon integrated in the commercial life of the most important populations of the Mediterranean coast, becoming another form of money.



Sileno
Capilla (Badajoz)
7th century BC

Emporion
Ca. 490-480 BC
Auriol hoard
Trihemionbol
1.25 g - 8 mm



Coins were minted in the Iberian Peninsula from the late 6th century BC until the reign of the emperor Claudius I, although their use spread gradually over time and space. The first push towards the monetization of the Iberian Peninsula took place by external motivations, as a result of the huge volume of issues minted during the Second Punic War.

The first coinages were Greek

The first coinages of the Iberian Peninsula were minted in the **Phocaean** colony of Emporion, towards the late 6th century BC, following a Phocaean standard. At the beginning, Emporion struck heavier denominations than Massalia, with **pentobols**, tetrobols, but from the early 5th century Emporitan coinages were characterized by their reduced weight, most of them weighing less than 1 g, and by the great diversity of types, following a model of minting similar to the one developed in Massalia; they are commonly denominated “fraccionarias ampuritanas” and lasted until late 4th century BC.

Phocaean standard	
Drachm	5.52 g
Pentobol	4.60 g
Tetrobol	3.68 g
Hemidrachm	2.76 g
Trihemiobol	1.38 g
Obol	0.92 g
Tritartemorion	0.69 g



Emporion
515/510-500 BC
Pentobol
4.02 g - 12 mm

The **Emporitan** pattern of minting fits well with that proposed for a good number of Greek coinages, according to which coins were not more than the result of the formalization of the use of the silver bullion, by means of codifying and stabilizing its use.

The Emporitan coinages had a local purpose and use, discarding army financing or important trading activities. From its fractional character and its dispersion it can be deduced that these coinages had a wide base of users, Greeks and natives; due to the reduced value, a large segment of population had access to them.

Emporion
515/510-500 BC
Hemidrachm
2.6 g - 11 mm



Emporion. 500-480 a.C.
Tritartemoron
0.55 g - 7 mm



Emporion. 460-400 a.C.
Obol
0.74 g - 8 mm

Towards the end of the 4th century BC, the Greek colony of **Rhode**, located about 18 km to the north of Emporion, initiated the minting of drachms, with an average weight of 4.74 g, modifying the fractional monetary model used until then. This pattern must have originated in the Phoacean standard weight of Emporion. Rhode was, in addition, one of the first cities of the Iberian Peninsula to mint bronze coins, with a pattern of 4.12 g, and many of them were overstruck on bronze coinages of Punic Sardinia, issued during the first half of the 3rd century BC.

Shortly after Rhode initiated the minting of drachms, the colony of **Emporion** also struck them with an average weight of *ca.* 4.70 g and ceased the issue of “fraccionarias” pieces. This new phase of Emporion took place at the beginning of the 3rd century BC and lasted intermittently until the second half of the 2nd century BC.



↑ **Rhode. Late 4th century BC**

Drachm

4.75 g - 19 mm

← **Emporion. Early 3rd century BC**

Drachm

4.75 g - 19 mm

The types that were chosen for the first Emporion drachms (early 3rd century BC) were the female head with corn ears in hair, already used in drachms of Rhode. The reverses show a Nike flying over a horse, which has given room to think that the Carthaginians could have been to some extent involved in their manufacturing, perhaps for the payment of mercenaries recruited in Gaul, where these coinages were largely imitated.



← Gaul. Imitation of Emporion
3rd century BC

Drachm
4.75 g - 18 mm

→ Emporion
Mid 3rd century BC

Drachm
4.74 g - 18 mm



In the later issues types show a greater Syracusan influence, with a female head, adorned with an ear of wheat in her hair and surrounded by three dolphins, on the obverse, and the Pegasus with the legend ΕΜΠΟΡΙΤΩΝ, on the reverse. This typological change has been related to the backward movement of the Carthaginian influence, some years before, *ca.* 280-260 BC, or by Villaronga to the defeat of the Carthaginians in the First Punic War, *ca.* 241 BC.



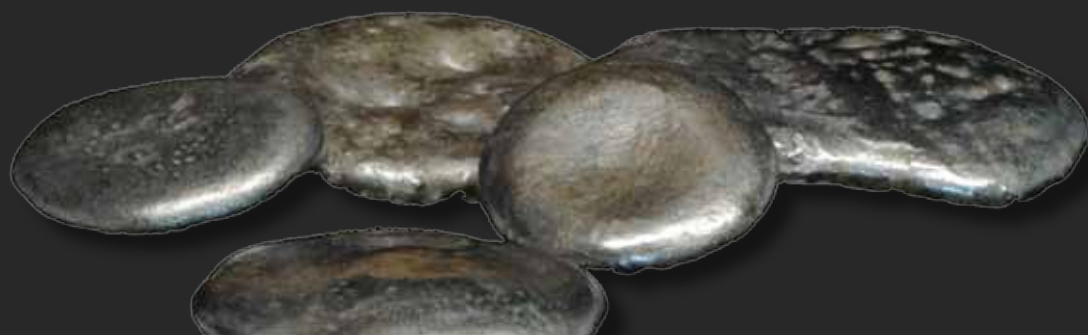
Silver fragments from Sagunt

The use of silver as money

As research progresses, it has become more evident that silver bullion by weight was used in small value transactions in some parts of the Iberian Peninsula.

Every day, the findings of **silver fragments** or ingots, as well as Emporitan fractions, in premonetary indigenous contexts, are more frequently recorded, mainly coming from the coastal area. The evidence that allows us to believe in the existence of the use of the silver by weight are findings of silver ingots and fragments, such as those from **La Bastida de les Alcusses** (Moixent), an Iberian site that was abandoned in the 4th century BC, and those from Puig Castellar, in Pontós, with a chronology ranging from 5th to 3rd century BC.

Silver bullion, scale pan and weights. 4th century BC
La Bastida de les Alcusses



Emporion.
4th century BC
Obol
0.56 g - 9 mm

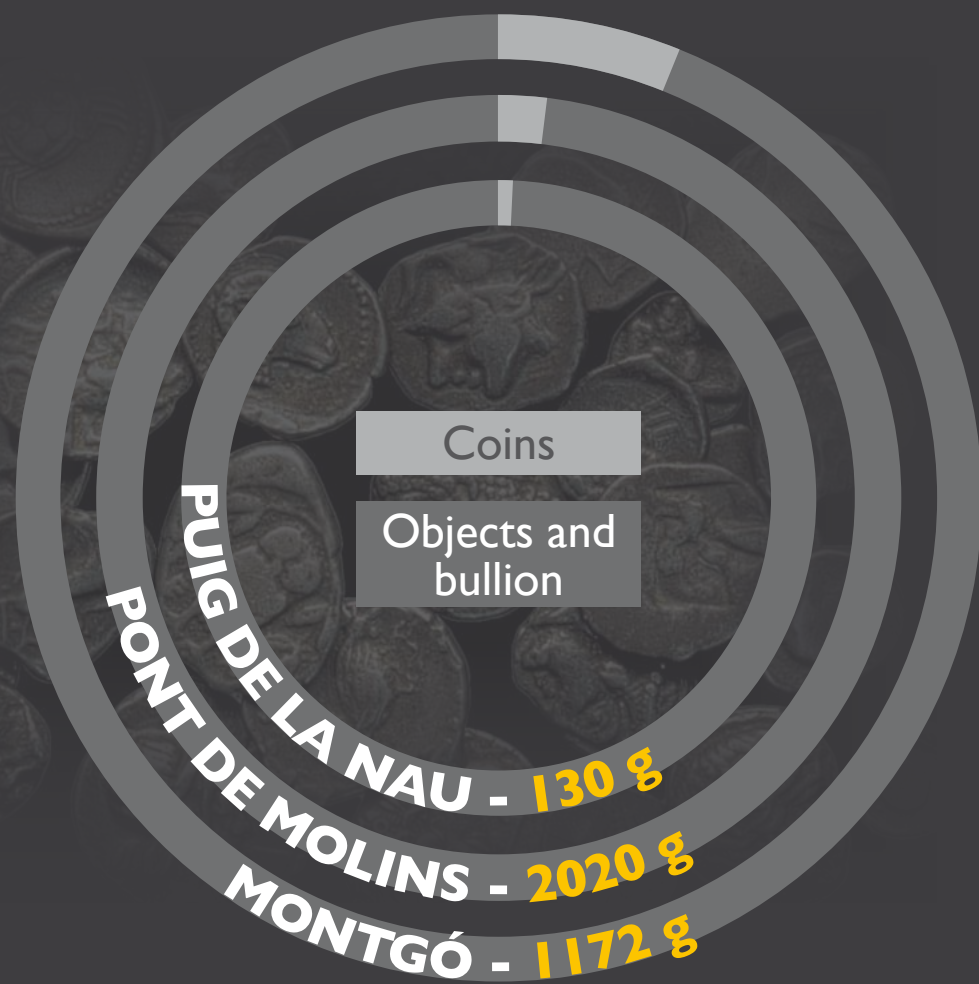


4th century BC hoards

The content of some **hoards** also provides chronologies of 4th century BC, such as the Montgó and the Pont de Molins, which in addition to fractional coinages contained silver fragments of broken jewelry, silver ingots and Hacksilber. As far as the instruments of weighing is concerned, the pondera and the scale-pan are well known, some of which also go back to the 4th century BC.

Supporting of an old context for the use of silver fragments we have an increasing number of diverse **Greek coinages**, struck during the 6th and 5th centuries BC, some of which were cut deliberately as it happens with silver fragments. It could be argued, however, that all these evidences have little to do with the use of

the silver as money and much as commodity; nevertheless, the most interesting features of these findings are its small shape and the reduced weight of the fragments, giving rise to think that its use fits better within the money concept.



4th century BC hoards with total weight



Greek coins from Segesta, Syracuse and Akragas

The Iberians adopted coinage

The introduction of the coinage between the Iberians was a delayed, slow and territorially unequal process. The Iberian world knew coinage in early parts of the 5th-4th centuries BC, because coins arrived in the hands of the natives through trade activities and the Iberian mercenaries who fought in the wars in the central Mediterranean between Greeks and Carthaginians, at least from 480 BC (Herodotus 7.165; Diod. 13.80.2).

The first Iberian issues were struck in the city of **Arse-Saguntum**, presumably in the second half of the 4th century BC, in accordance with the development of their political organization. They must be linked with a process of regulation of their civic relations, during which important urban transformations and outstanding activities in their port took place. With its coinages, Arse-Saguntum did no more than begin to formalize the use of silver bullion valued by weight. But this was a unique advancement in Spain, because the beginning of native issues and an effective monetization only began in late 3rd century BC.



Arse-Saguntum
4th century BC

Obol
0.5 g - 8 mm

Citadel of Saguntum



Alexander III
336-323 BC
Distater
17.17 g - 23 mm



Arse-Saguntum
300-250 BC
Drachm
3.11 g - 15 mm



The designs and the artistic style of the coins struck in Arse are framed within a **Greek-Hellenistic** cultural atmosphere and show typological ties with the cities of Massalia, Magna Greece and Sicily, areas with which **Arse-Saguntum** maintained trade contacts.

Neapolis
350-325 BC
Didrachm



Arse-Saguntum
3rd century BC
Hemidrachm



The monetization of the Phoenicians and the Punics

The monetary model of the Phoenician-Punic people who settled in Spain varied with respect to the Greek colonies. Instead of using silver fractions for their routinely low level exchanges, they expressed an initial preference for bronze, as in **Ebusus**, from the second half of the 4th century BC, and **Gadir**, in the first years of the 3rd century BC. Silver was a product that these peoples searched for from an early time and it comprised one of the goods that were exchanged; nevertheless, when the Phoenician-Punic society began to articulate their monetary system they did it with bronze coins instead of silver ones. It seems obvious that these coinages, by their characteristics, were minted to cover local expenses. It is surprising that the



Ebusus

4th century BC

Eighth

1.2 g - 11 mm



Gadir

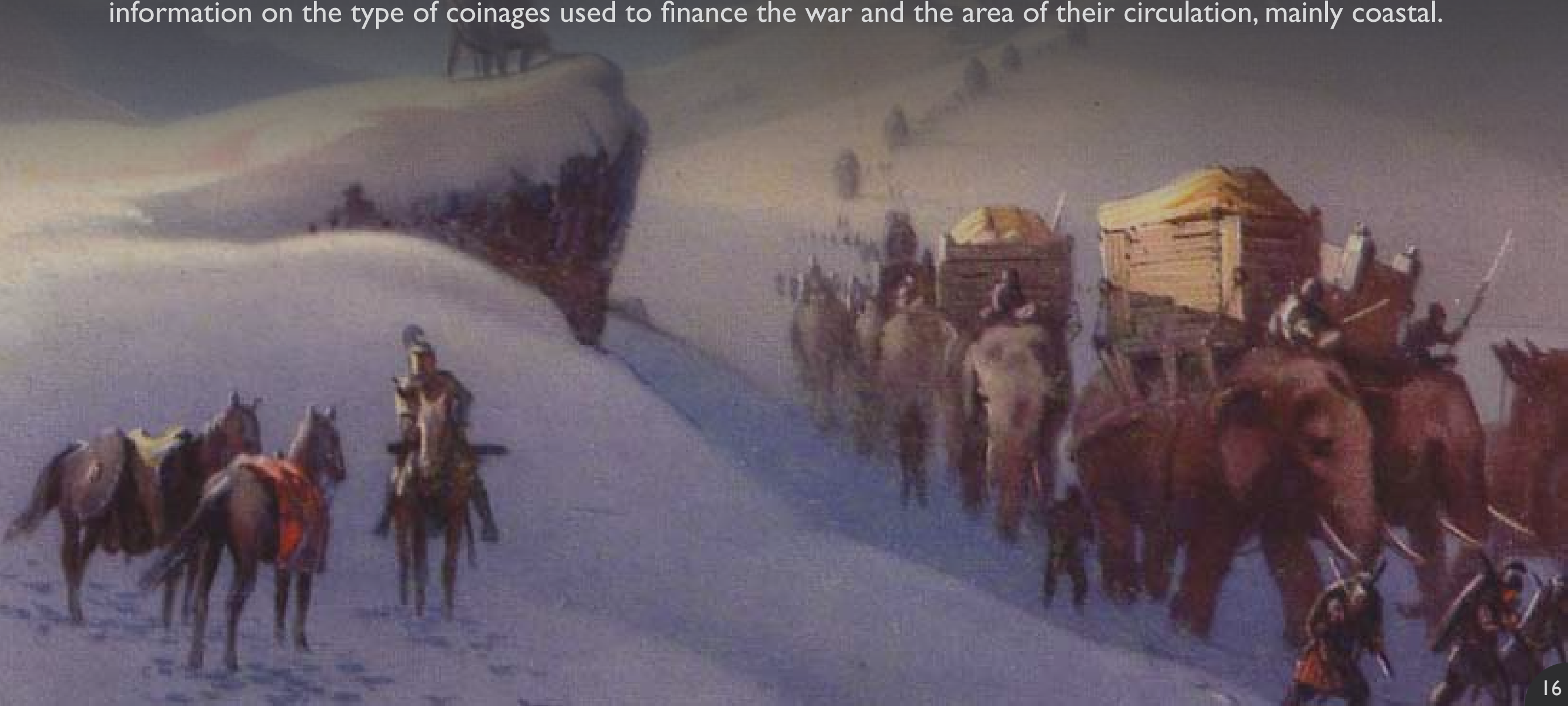
3rd century BC

Half

Phoenician-Punic communities of Ebusus and the south of the Iberian Peninsula had not developed, previously or simultaneously, silver issues. That was, perhaps, due to the political and economic maturity of this society and to the fact that these issues were intended for modest transactions in a local context, which would exclude military financing for which the bronze coinages were not thought appropriate.

The Carthaginians and the Second Punic War

The natural evolution of the native societies towards the monetization accelerated with the presence of the Carthaginians and the development of the **Second Punic War**. The coin hoards of this period provide information on the type of coinages used to finance the war and the area of their circulation, mainly coastal.



The Carthaginians covered their military expenses, largely, with metals mined in Iberia. The silver currency, whose unit was the shekel, was coined following an initial weight pattern of 7.20 g. Also, electrum coins were struck, and the monetary system was completed with bronze issues for daily use.

The Carthaginian designs fit well within the Hellenistic pattern of coinages and its cultural atmosphere; they were varied, with **prows**, masculine and feminine portraits, elephants and horses. The war financing purpose of these issues is why the mint struck such high denominations and the output was so huge.



Hispano-
Carthaginian
237-218 BC
Trishekel

↓ Hispano-Carthaginian
218-202 BC

1/4 stater
2.78 g - 16 mm



← Hispano-
Carthaginian
218-202 BC
Trishekel
22.5 g - 29 mm



→ Hispano-Carthaginian
218-202 BC

Unit
10.14 g - 25 mm



On the other hand, the Romans financed their military expenses with a more varied source of currencies, but, unlike the Carthaginians, they mainly used local mints and designs. Most of the payments were made with drachms from **Emporion** with the Pegasus type, with the head transformed on the reverse, which explains the huge volume of coins minted by the city in a short period of time.

Other coinages found in the coin hoards buried during the years of the war are the **Iberian imitations** of Emporion drachms and of Massaliotan obols, some with recognizable name place legends. The Iberian imitation drachms were minted in a military context and it is possible that they were struck with the intention of meeting some war expenses of the Roman side.



↑ **Emporion**
218-206 BC
 Drachm
 4.63 g - 19 mm

↓ **Iberian imitation**
3rd-2nd century BC
 Drachm
 4.58 g - 19 mm



Other silver coinages that could be related to the war, although they appeared with a much more modest volume, were the Gallic issues “à la croix” (and others not very well attributed), those of Massalia, Greek Hellenistics of diverse origin, those of **Ebusus**, **Gadir**, Arse and **Saitabi**; also several bronze issues are attributed to this period, like those minted in Castulo, Obulco or Gadir.

Ebusus

Late 3rd century BC

Drachm

2.54 g - 17 mm



Saitabi

Post 214 BC

Didrachm

6.80 g - 21 mm



Gadir

Late 3rd century BC

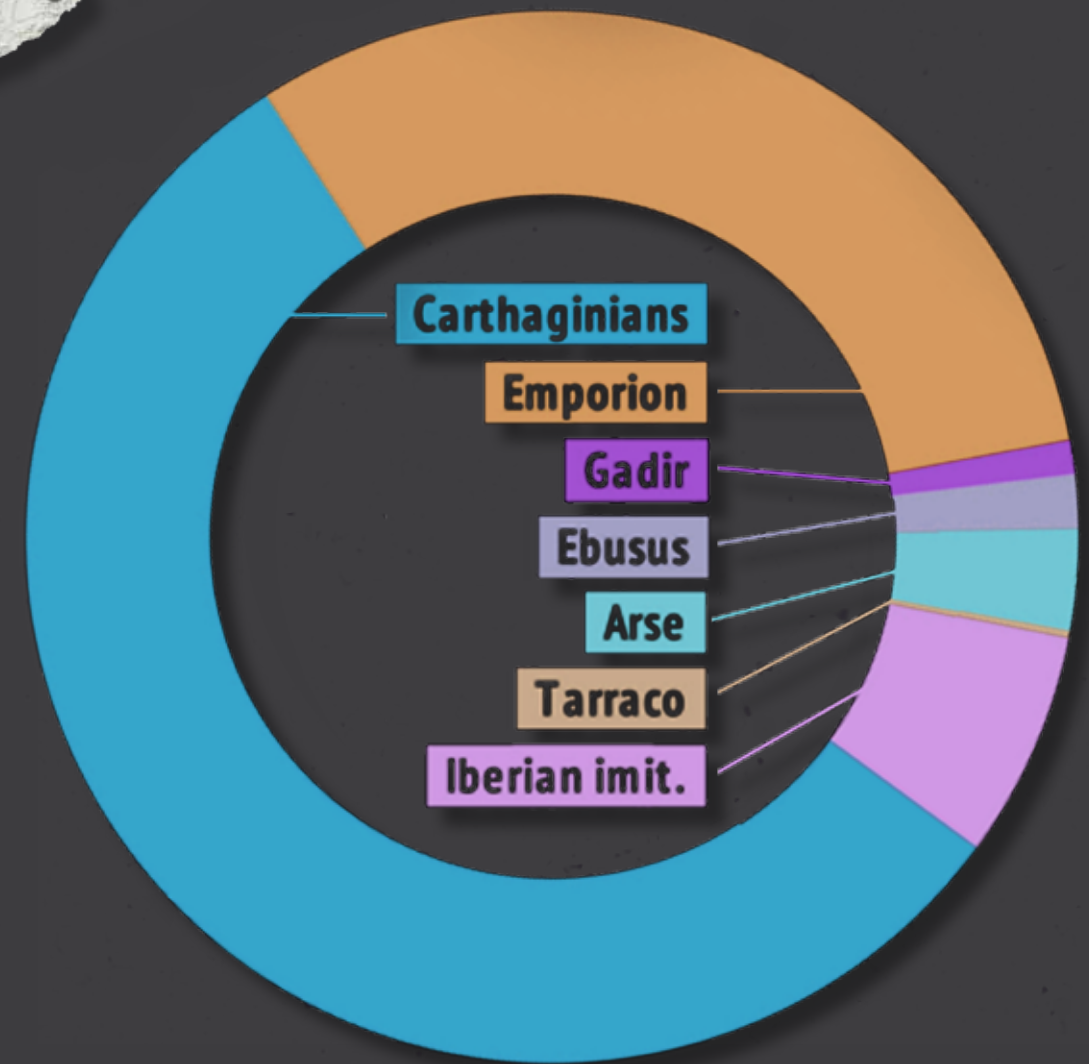
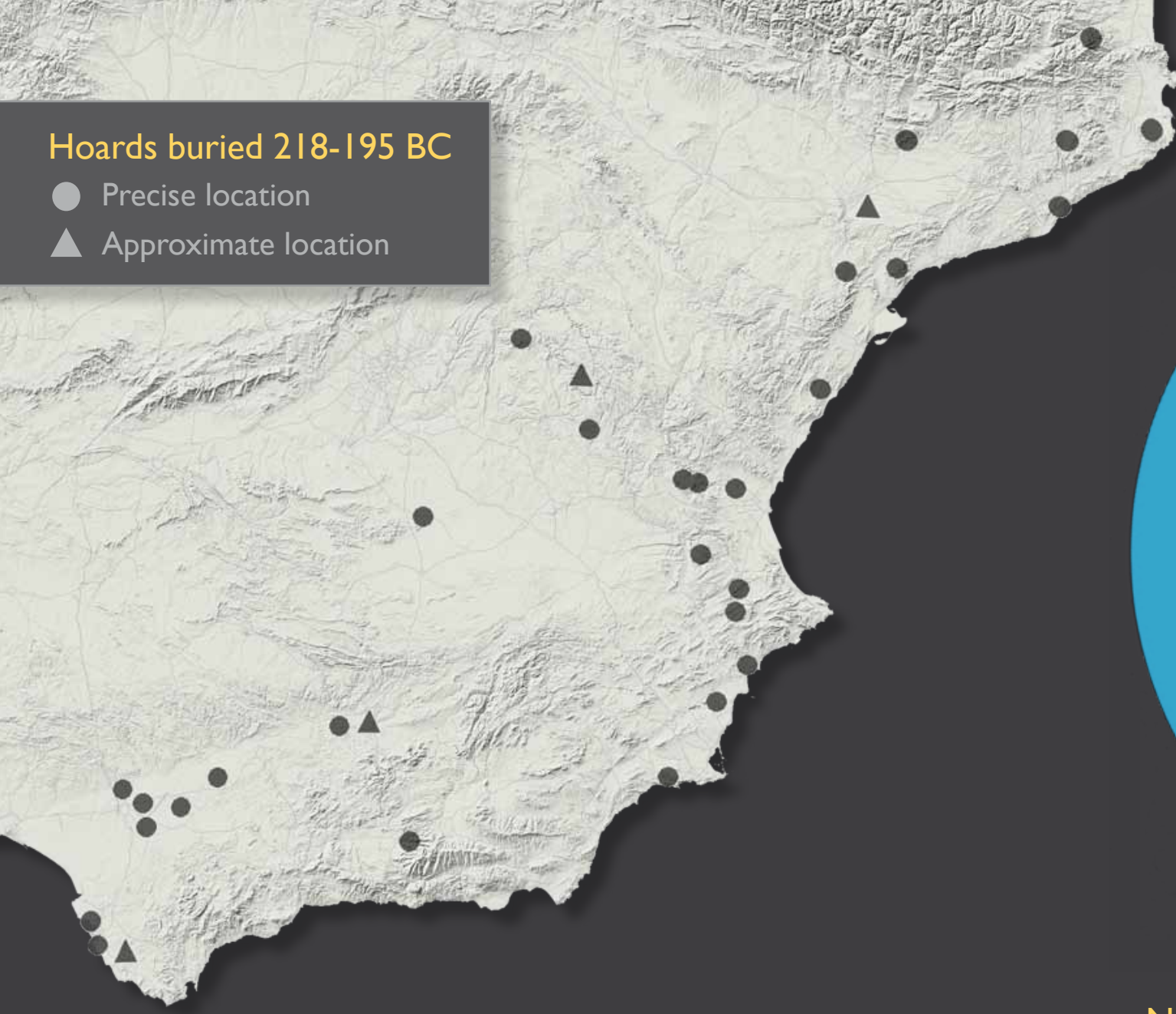
Hemidrachm

2.3 g - 17 mm



Hoards buried 218-195 BC

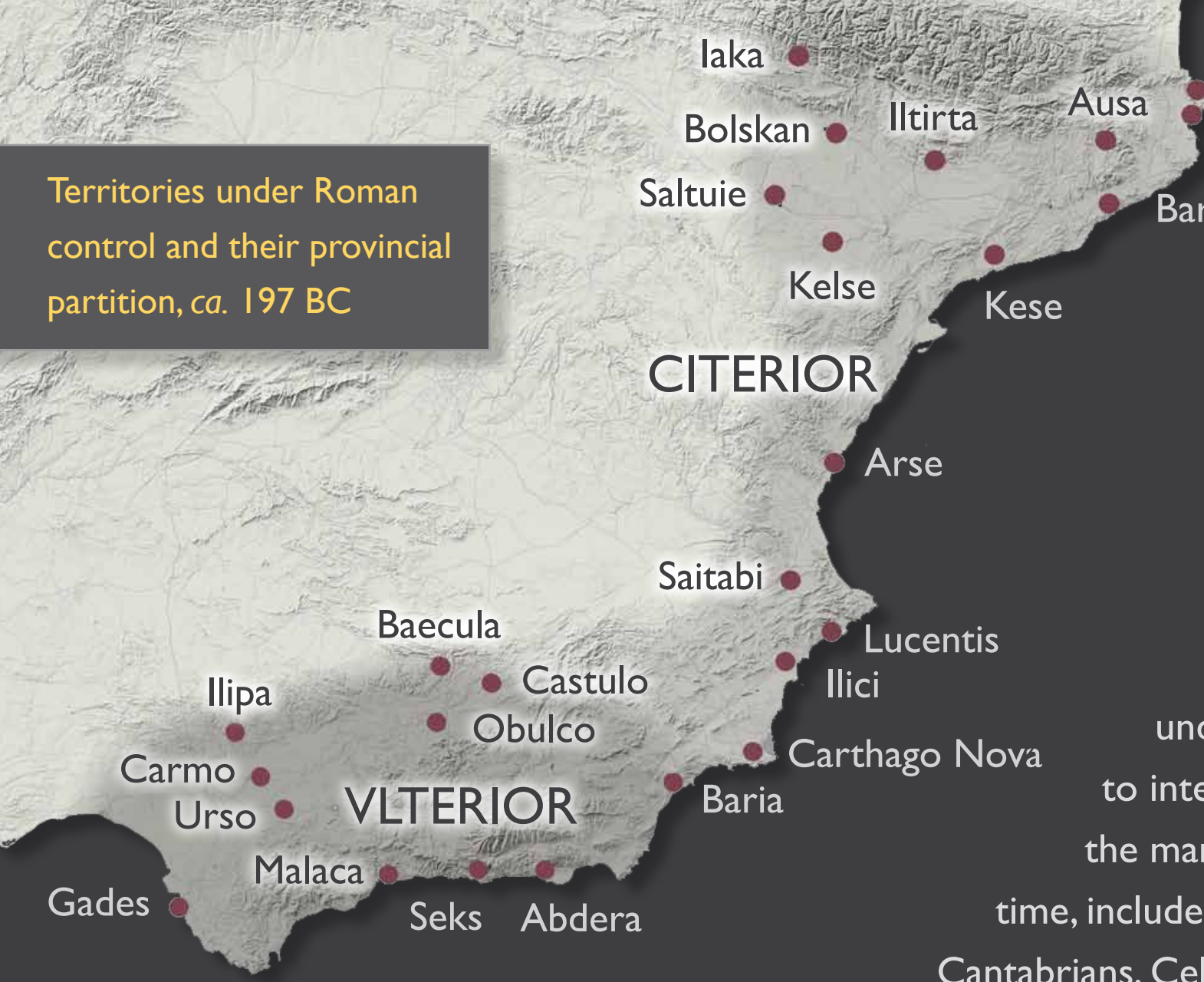
- Precise location
- ▲ Approximate location



Number of dies used during the period 218-195 BC

The **financing** of the war contributed in a decisive way to the familiarisation and coin use by the indigenous population. Nevertheless, coins did not extend through the whole territory uniformly, since the findings of **hoards** indicate that they were concentrated basically on the Mediterranean coastal strip, rarely entering inland, as well as on the Guadalquivir valley. Carthaginian coinages were predominant in the south, while those of the Roman side in the northeast.

Territories under Roman control and their provincial partition, ca. 197 BC



The Roman dominion

After the defeat of the Carthaginians the Roman Senate decided to remain in the Iberian Peninsula in order to exploit its resources. The dominated part was divided in **two provinces**, the Hispania Citerior and the Hispania Ulterior, each one under the command of a praetor, with authority to intervene in the local policies, probably including the manufacture of coinages. The first province, over time, included within its boundaries Gallaecians, Asturians, Cantabrians, Celtiberians, Vascons, towns of the Pyrenees and Iberians, and the second province the Iberians of the South-east, Turdetanians, Lusitanians, Vetons, Punics and peoples of the south of Portugal.

The Roman presence had important repercussions in the life of the Iberian Peninsula natives, generating a slow and complex process of assimilation and sociocultural exchanges and, simultaneously, a series of legal changes on the subjected populations. The Roman dominion favored the contacts between the different peninsular people; integrated their productive economies in those of the Roman state, and, during the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, contributed to the increase of coin use, making it more habitual.

At this time, the Roman society was in a process of important monetization, the Romans encouraged the urban organization and, with it, the tendency towards a monetized economy. The presence of the army and the arrival of colonists, craftsmen and businessmen, were very important because all of them were accustomed to and dependent on the use of coinages. However, as a result of the repeated remittances of **booties to Rome** in the first decades of the 2nd century BC (Livy, 34, 10, 4-7; 34, 46, 2; 40, 43, 6) and of the shortage of the native issues, the monetization of the economy took more than fifty years to develop. A case in point is the rarity of the Second Punic War coinages in findings dated during the first half of the 2nd century BC, both isolated and hoards.

Roman coinages did not contribute either, at the outset, to the development of the monetization among the natives, since until the second half of the 2nd century BC few Roman coins arrived to Spain.



Peter Paul Rubens

A Roman Triumph

[National Gallery, London]

Metals and denominations

During the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, coins in Spain were made of silver and **bronze**, except the imperial gold issues attributed to Patricia (*RIC* 50-153) and Caesaraugusta (*RIC* 26-49). The ternary bronze (copper, tin and lead) was mostly used in both provinces, as in the Mediterranean at this time; pure copper has also been recorded in Celtiberian mints and an alloy of copper and lead was found in some issues of Castulo, Obulco, Ikalesken and Kelin.

The identification of the native bronze denominations is complex, because the Roman names of denominations were not suitable, due to the variations of weight with respect to the Roman standard, presumably because native bronze coinages had a local intention. At the outset, many issues were minted following a high weight average, around 20-24 g, but later, those coinages articulated around 9-13 g tended to be more common. However, it seems that the bronze coinage tended to follow the Roman standard using weights easily convertible to Roman denominations.



Saitabi

2nd century BC

Reduced uncial as

23.92 g - 32 mm



Laiesken

2nd century BC

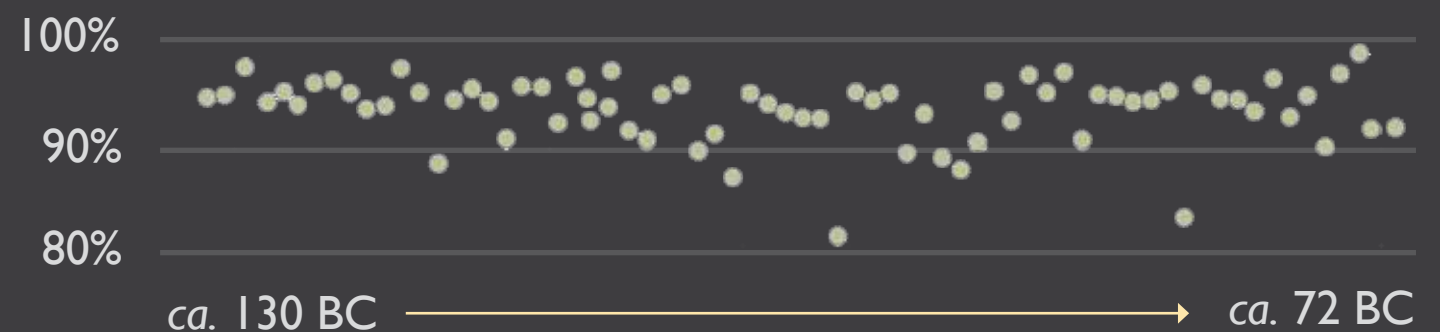
Unit

19.28 g - 31 mm



Concerning the **silver** coinages of the 2nd-1st centuries BC, the average **quality** of the metal minted was relatively high, although some mints located in the Meseta display more dispersed values and with an average of slightly inferior quality, below 90%. All silver coins were minted in the Citerior and the majority adopted the weight of the Roman denarius, for that reason they probably had an equivalent value.

Fineness of the Iberian denarii struck at Turiazu.

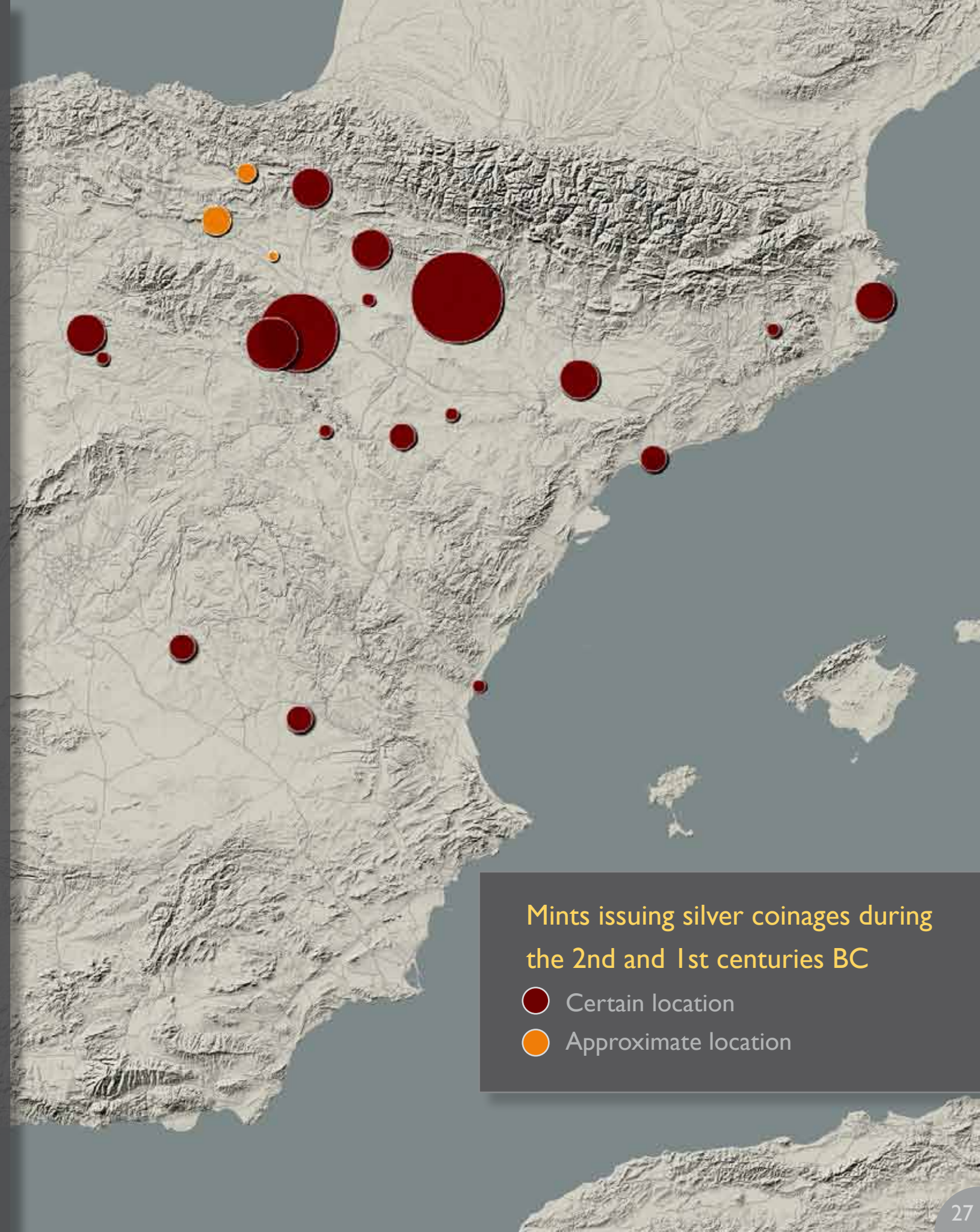


→ **Turiazu**
Ca. 120 BC
Denarius
4.28 g - 19 mm

← **Itirta**
Ca. 175-150 BC
Denarius
3.75 g - 19 mm



No city in the Hispania Ulterior minted silver coinages, however the territory was supplied with silver coinages, native or Roman. This location is one of the most notable differences between both provinces. Such distribution of the silver coinages has leads us to assume that some type of directive or norm from the Roman administration existed, allowing the Citerior to **strike silver** but not allowing the Ulterior. To do so, at the moment, no explanation that justifies the absence of silver issues in the Ulterior is satisfactory.



Monetization as effect of civic impetus

The native coinages were promoted by the city authorities, which could at that time define their characteristics, perceivable not only in the designs, but also in the scripts used on the legends. The monetization of the Iberian Peninsula took place largely from within, from the issues minted by more than 160 populations. This was linked with their development, and the existence of economies in which payment and retail trade were usual and until a certain point necessary, as was the case of the mining zones (**Castulo**), the rich agricultural territories (**Obulco**), the harbour areas (e.g. **Untikesken**, Arse-Saguntum, Malaca, Gadir) or the military establishments.



Castulo
Ca. 130-100 BC
As
18.45 g

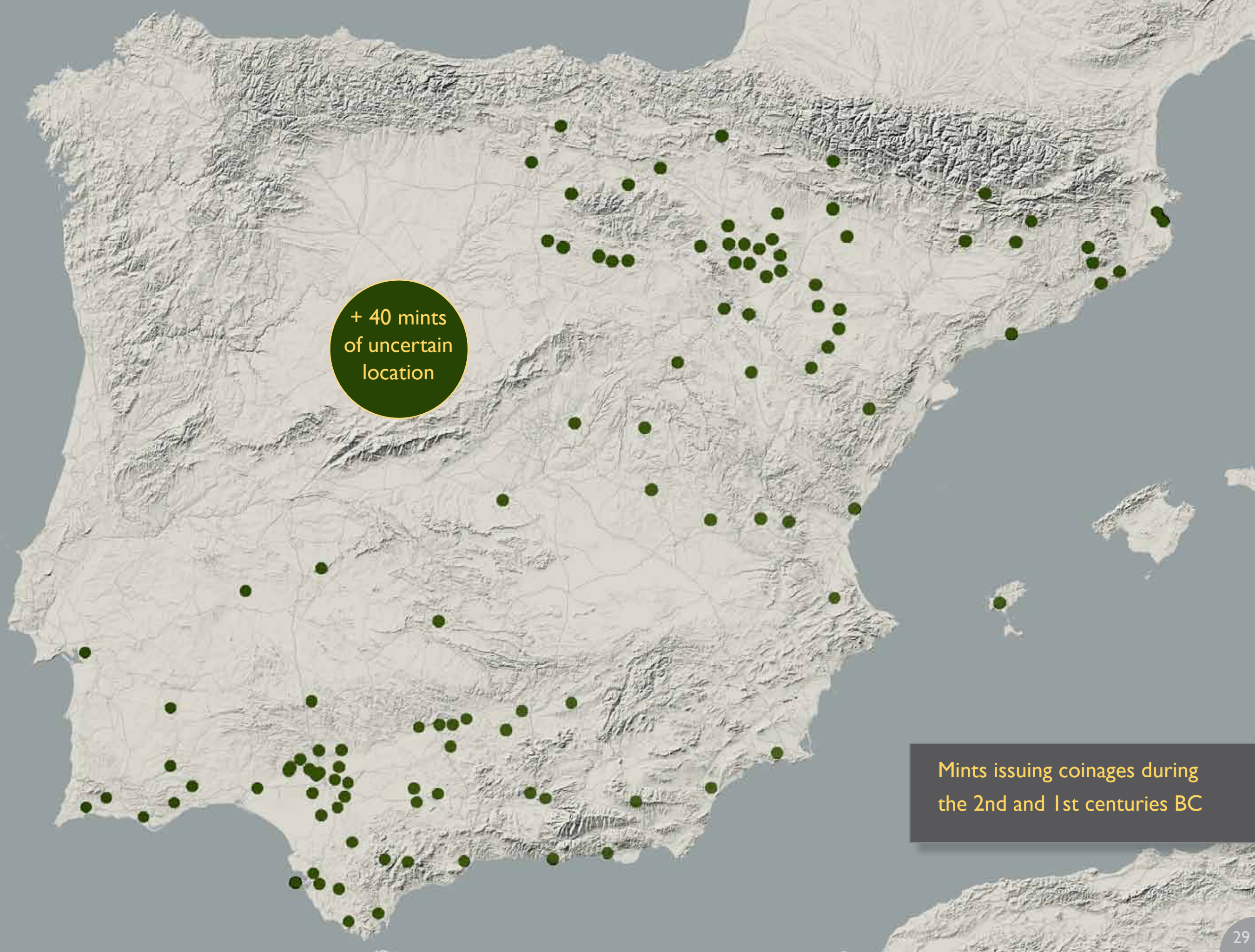


Obulco
Ca. 130-100 BC
As
11.82 g



Untikesken
2nd century BC
Unit





+ 40 mints
of uncertain
location

Mints issuing coinages during
the 2nd and 1st centuries BC

Regarding the silver issues, although some could be struck for local purposes (e.g. Arse, Itirta, Ausesken, **Kese**), a good part was minted in Celtiberian cities and the Pyrenean area (**Bolskan**, **Arsaos**, Sekobirikez, Arekorata or Turiazu). They were more likely originated in a military context (to pay auxiliary troops), than struck to cover Roman regular fiscal taxes.



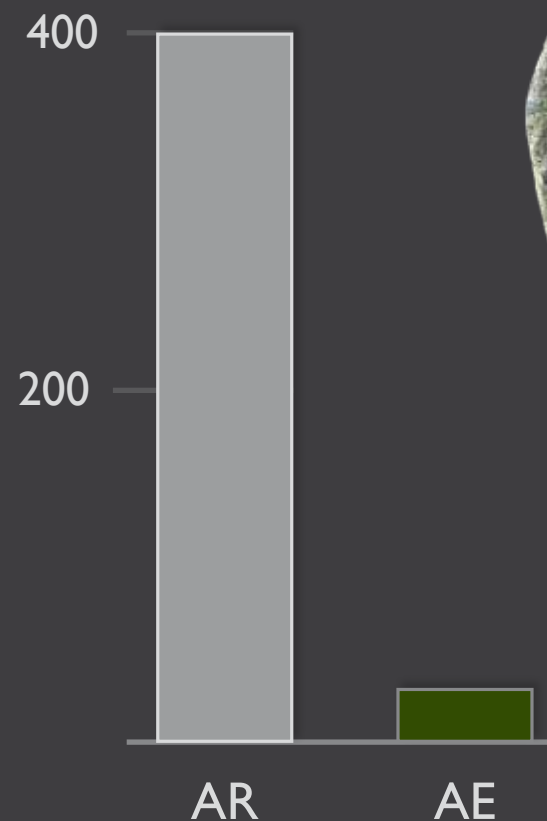
Kese
Ca. 180-150 BC
Denarius
3.86 g - 19 mm

Arsaos
Late 2nd century BC
Denarius
3.78 g - 19 mm

Bolskan
Late 2nd century BC
Denarius
3.83 g - 19 mm



Turiazu
Ca. 100 BC
Denarius
3.83 g - 19 mm



Number of obverse dies used for
silver and bronze issues of Turiazu



Turiazu
2nd-1st century BC
Unit
3.78 g - 19 mm

Most of the mints that coined huge amounts of silver were inland and struck a reduced amount of bronze (units and fractions), which suggests that they were not minted for local purposes, as was the case of **Turiazu**, where for denarii about 400 obverse dies were used, whereas for all bronze denominations only 30 have been identified.

The civic coinages were used all around the Iberian Peninsula without any type of restriction; the findings in the cities correspond to issues coming from the neighbouring cities or from places that struck a huge volume, providing the greatest amount of bronze coinage that Iberians used. To a lesser extent, we also found the Iberian Issues in North Africa and in Gaul.

Designs

During the 2nd-1st centuries BC, the native populations had quite an autonomous development, in which they adapted the coinage concept to their idiosyncrasies. The native issues took on Greek-Hellenistic iconographical figures from diverse origins that by their repeated use became characteristic icons of a series of mints or regions (e.g. corn ears, **Hercules**, **sphinx**, **bull**, horseman). The few connections of the designs and the ideology of the Hispanic coinages with the Roman cultural world could be explained by the autonomy that the Hispanic communities enjoyed, since Rome did not yet have a standardized iconography of cultural symbols.



Seks
2nd century BC
Unit



Castulo
2nd century BC
Unit



Arse-Saguntum
2nd century BC
Drachm

Some characteristics of the designs allow us to establish differences in the monetary production of the two Hispanic provinces. In cities from the Citerior province, the monetary types were characterized by being rather uniform. For the bronze units and the silver denarii, the **male head** on the obverse, and the **horseman** with spear, palm or another object on the reverse, was preferred. The obverse could represent the founding hero or a local divinity of the ethnic group and the reverse could be chosen to fulfil values or beliefs of the elites of equestrian tradition, as has been suggested by Almagro.



Arse-Saguntum
2nd century BC
Unit
14.17 g - 26 mm



Kili
2nd century BC
Unit
14.17 g - 26 mm



On the bronze fractions the designs were a little more varied and in many occasions they identified the value of the denominations, as was the case of the **horses** for halves and the half **Pegasus** for quarters. The homogeneity of types and scripts suggests the will to be a participant in a monetary circuit with recognizable and homologous pieces.

In the Ulterior province, however, there was a greater variety of monetary designs, among which the horseman was occasional, and many were chosen from the flora; in addition, the existence of a standardized system of fractions distinguished by designs is less evident.



Kelse
2nd century BC
 Half
 6.52 g - 22 mm



Kelse
2nd century BC
 Quarter
 3.6 g - 17 mm



Kese
2nd century BC
 Sixth
 2.41 g - 14 mm

Their designs reflected manifold facets of their identity. They alluded to their cults, like Hercules in Gadir, Seks, Asido and Lascuta; Jupiter-Saturn in Carteia; Hefaistos-Vulcano and Helios-Sun in **Malaca**; and male and female local divinities like in Castulo, Obulco or Carmo. The religious designs were numerous as well as those related to the economic resources of the cities (tunas in Gadir and Seks, corn ears in **Obulco**, Ilipa, **Ilse**, Murti, Laelia, Acinipo or Carmo).



Malaca
2nd century BC
Unit
8 g - 25 mm

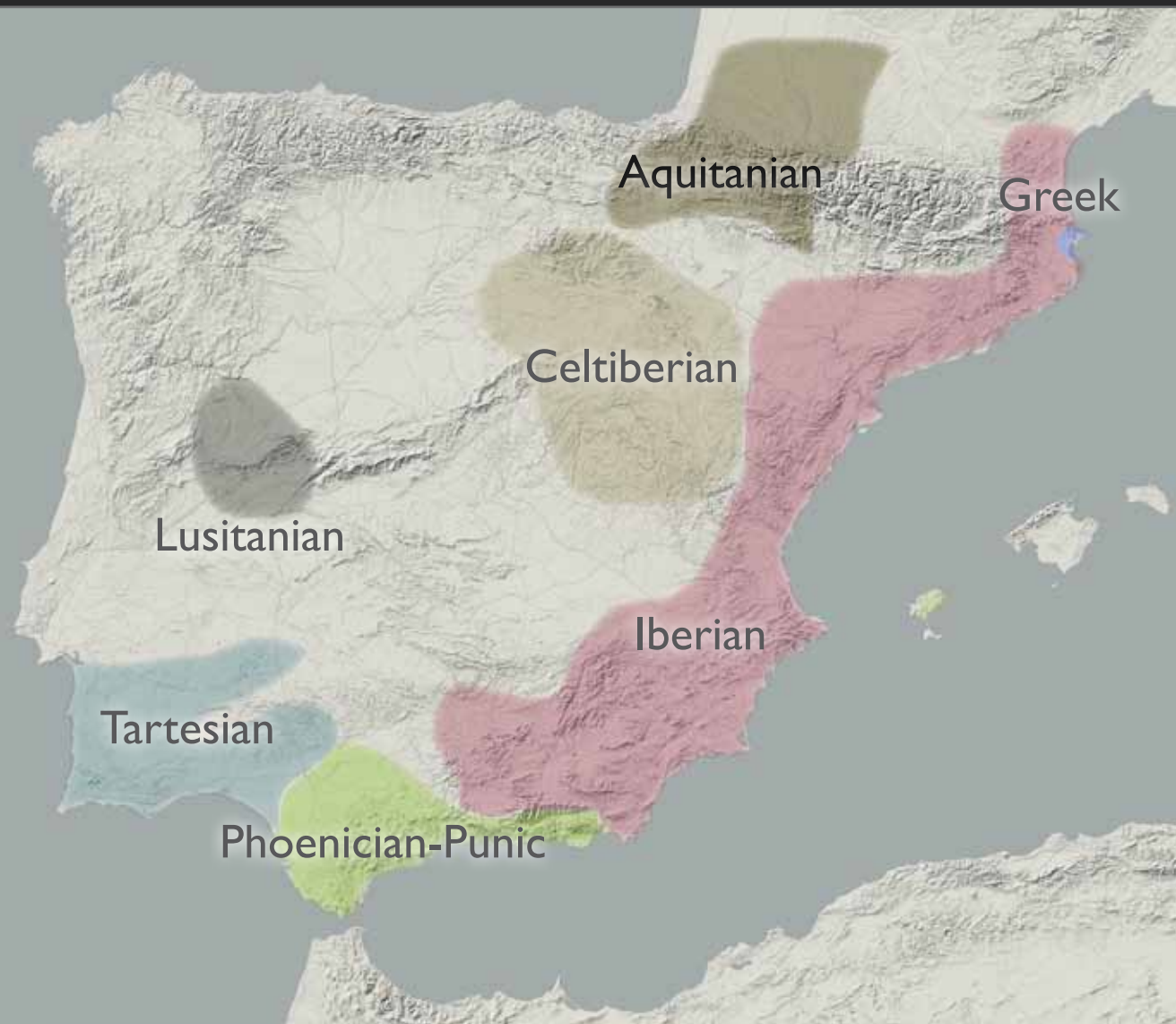
Obulco
2nd century BC
Unit
19.72 g - 32 mm

Ilse
2nd century BC
Unit

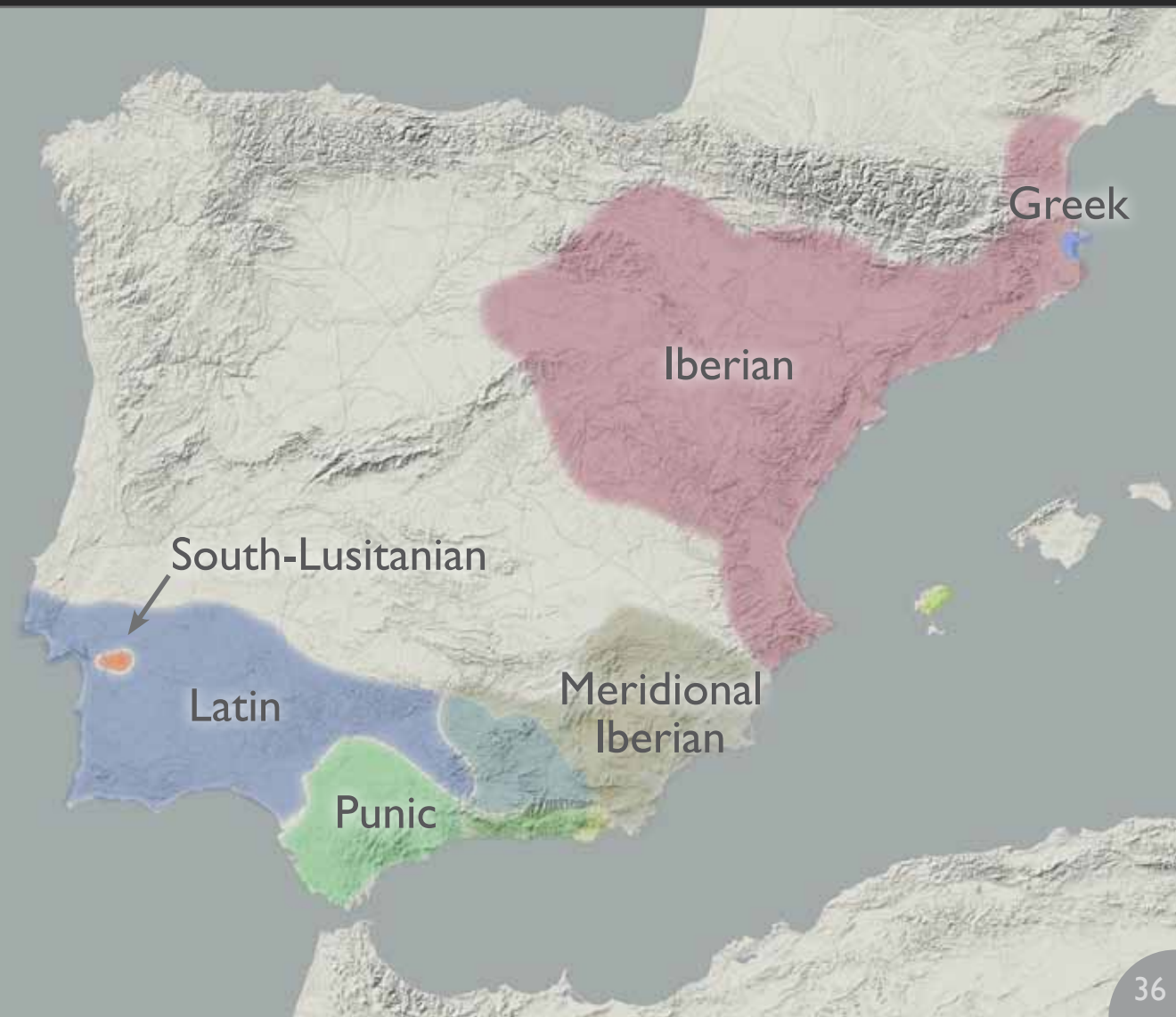
Legends

Another relevant characteristic of the ancient coinages of the Iberian Peninsula was the **script** they used. The development of the cultural features of the native societies that took place during the 2nd-1st centuries BC, as a form of autonomy and self-representation of the elites, can also be detected in the epigraphy, which reflects the diversity of existing peoples in Hispania, the Roman consent, as well as the encouragement of the urban life.

Pre-Latin languages in the Iberian peninsula



Scripts used in the Iberian peninsula



Coin legends give evidence of diverse types of script. Foreign cultural groups used their own, like Greek and Punic. However, the native population used at least three types of scripts. The 'Levantine Iberian' was used in Iberian area and it was employed to write the Celtiberian language. The 'Meridional Iberian' script was used in the Southeastern half of the Peninsula (e.g. **Ikelesken**). Finally, the denominated 'Tartessian' or 'South-Lusitanian' script, of which virtually everything is unknown, and is only recorded on the issues of **Salacia** (Portugal).



Ikelesken
2nd century BC
Denarius



Salacia-Ketouibon
2nd century BC
Unit
14.92 g - 28 mm



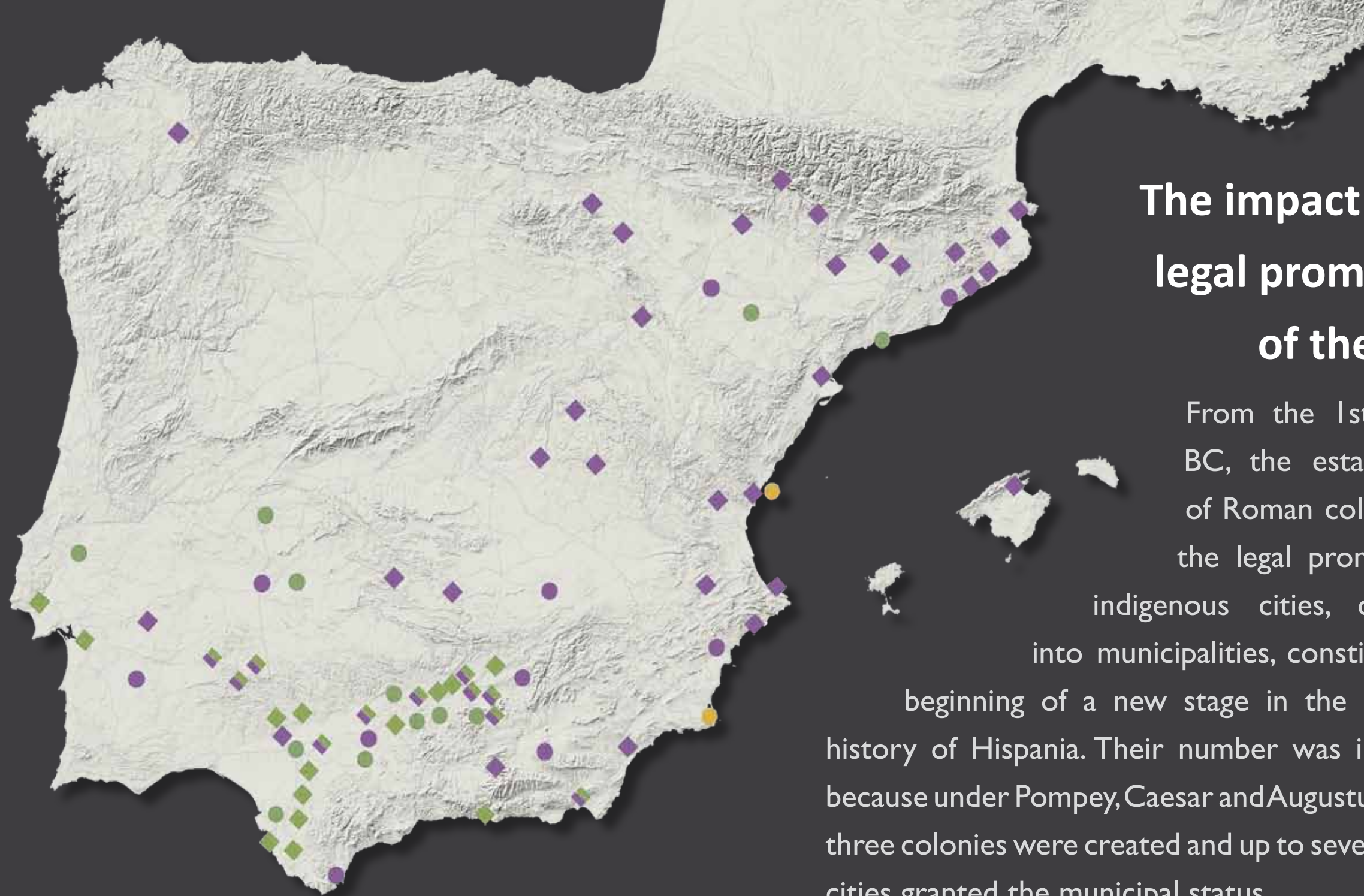
In addition, many native populations of the Hispania Ulterior used **Latin script** from the beginning, but in a restricted way and for official aims (e.g. place names). This does not demonstrate that a majority of the population knew Latin, but rather that it was a specific package of Latin use, which could be defined as coinage literacy.



Lastigi
2nd century BC
Half
6.25 g - 25 mm

Acinipo
2nd century BC
As

Ulia
2nd century BC
As
23.66 g - 32 mm



The impact of the legal promotions of the cities

From the 1st century BC, the establishment of Roman colonies and the legal promotion of indigenous cities, converted into municipalities, constituted the beginning of a new stage in the monetary history of Hispania. Their number was important, because under Pompey, Caesar and Augustus twenty-three colonies were created and up to seventy-seven cities granted the municipal status.

These foundations meant important changes in the socio-political geography of the Iberian Peninsula and allowed the indigenous elites and the new established population to acquire the Roman citizenship.

- | | | |
|------------------|----------|-----------|
| ● Colonies | Pompey | Caesar |
| ◆ Municipalities | Augustus | Uncertain |

In the native promoted cities, the social and political changes affected **urbanism**, the government magistracies, the personal and place names, the monetary designs, etc. The founding of the colonies contributed to the diffusion of the Italo-Roman symbols of identity and explains the disappearance of the indigenous cultural features in the surrounding areas, due to the origin of their settlers.



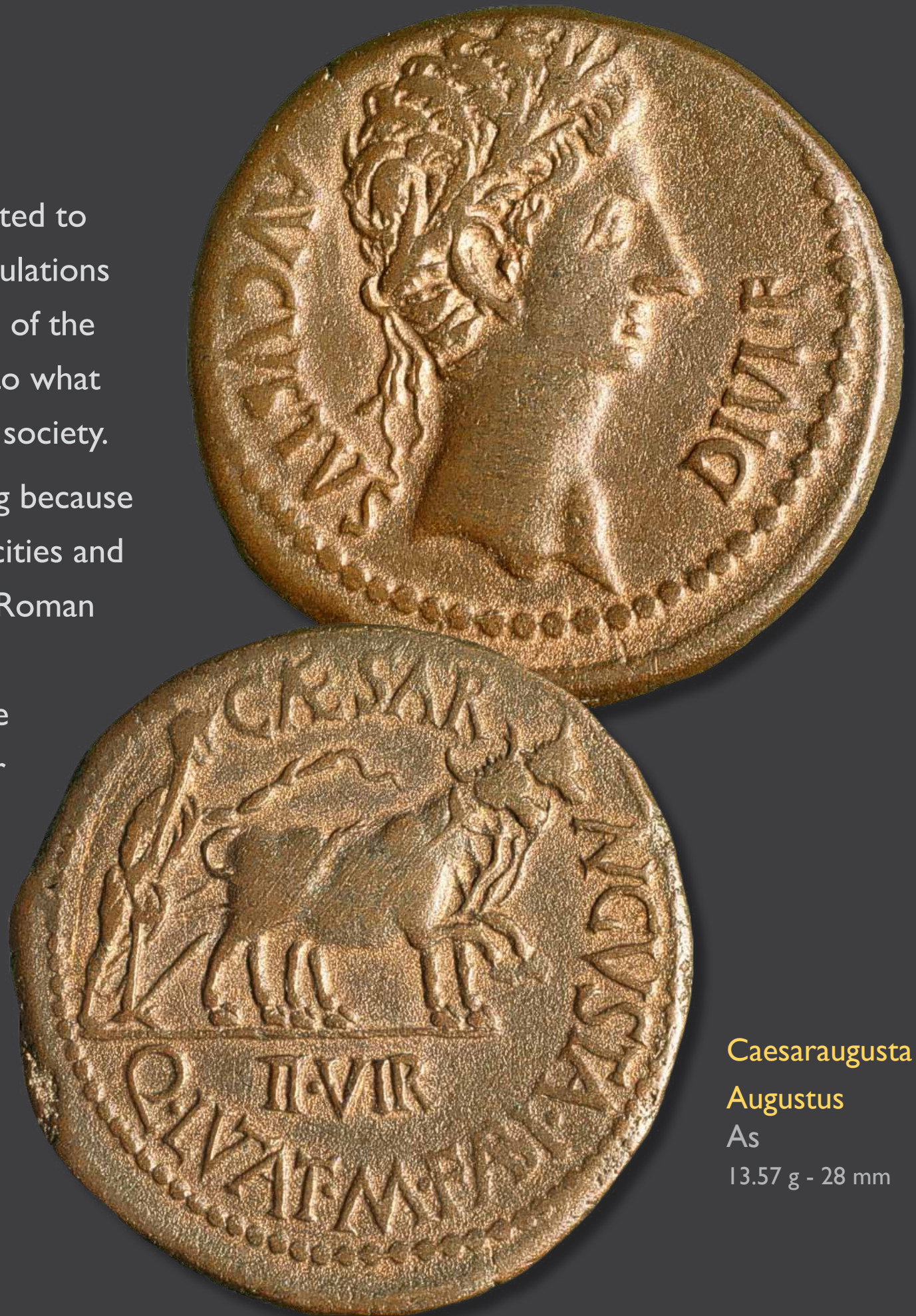
Amphitheatre of Segobriga (Saelices, Cuenca)

New designs for a new society

The new political situation, the legal changes granted to the cities, and the new contingents of settled populations motivated a change in the designs of the coinages of the cities. They started looking more Roman, similar to what happened to other external signs of the Hispanic society.

The new coin types had, mostly, a Roman meaning because they were chosen by the elites of the promoted cities and because many were inspired by and copied from Roman issues. From **Augustus** on, the messages that the coinages transmitted were in accordance with the new imperial ideology of legitimizing the emperor and his successors, proclaiming their loyalty to the emperor and the new state.

The Roman provincial issues showed on the obverse the portrait of the emperor and, in time and to a lesser extent, some members of his family, contributing to make the imperial portrait one of the most characteristic symbols of contemporary coinage.



Caesaraugusta
Augustus
As
13.57 g - 28 mm

The date of portrait introduction in the coinages of Hispania is uncertain and few of them can be dated with certainty before the twenties BC. The generalization of the imperial portrait, usually wreathed, has raised the question of their obligatory nature, but several exceptions, like **Carteia** (*colonia*) and **Emporiae** (*municipium*), seem to indicate that the cities adopted it voluntarily.

The election of the imperial portrait for the obverses implied that the cities only had the reverses to show designs with local meaning. For this side of the coin, several types were chosen, often adapted from the Roman monetary designs.



Carteia

Late 1st century BC

Quarter

4.99 g - 18 mm



Emporiae

Late 1st century BC

As





The Roman provincial coinages designs often reflected the origin and the culture of the populations of both types of privileged cities of Hispania, the colonies (foreign people) and the municipalities (native settlers). At the outset, some municipalities maintained designs from their previous issues, those minted during the Republican time; although, most were replaced during the reign of Tiberius by others based on Roman coinages. The maintenance of the traditional designs suggests that these accounted for their identity and that with them called attention to their history, such as in **Emporiae** and **Osca**.

In the colonies, the designs referred to another cultural horizon. In them, types with Roman symbolism and without connection to the previous indigenous iconography of their surroundings were used. They alluded to the origin of the settled population, in the case of veterans by means of **legionary standards**; to the **Roman ritual of colonization**; to the symbols of the Roman religion; to the imperial cult, with the election of altars and **temples**; and to dynastic themes, influenced by the Roman issues and the political context of the time.

Tarraco
Tiberius
Dupondius



Caesaraugusta
Tiberius
As



Emerita
Augustus
As

However, the iconographic difference between municipalities and colonies was not absolute, since in both types of cities similar designs were also used, such as **wreaths** or **bulls**. The latter was depicted standing or walking (in Lepida also running) with or without pediment on the horns. This ornament, known in the Republican monetary iconography (*RRC* 455/4) and in reliefs (Ara Pietatis, Boscoreale cup, altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus), as a part of scenes of sacrifice, suggests the bull had a religious meaning (e.g. Tarraco, Caesaraugusta, Graccurris and Ercavica).



↑ **Colonia Patricia**
Augustus
As

↓ **Caesaraugusta**
Tiberius
As

↓ **Graccurris**
Tiberius
As



↑ **Segobriga**
Caligula
As
7.04 g - 22 mm

Colonies

Municipalities



Latin prevailed

The promotion of native cities and the foundation of colonies accelerated the disappearance of the non Latin scripts from the public manifestations. In the last years of the Republican period, a part of the society had already been Latinized, as seen from the reduction of the pre-Roman epigraphic testimonies, the existence of bilingual legends and from the increase of Latin writings.



AVGVSTO
PONTIFICI MAX IMP
XIII COS XII TRIB
POTEST XV MVNICIP
SAGVNTINI

Pedestal of Augustus
found in Saguntum

Theatre of Saguntum



Abdera
Tiberius
As
10.69 g



Ebusus
Tiberius
As

ΜΠΟΛ



Saguntum
Late 1st century BC
As
11.02 g

The epitaphs and dedications used Latin, and very soon this practice became a Roman cultural act for natives, revealing the acceptance of the culture of the rulers and recognizing Latin as a prestige language. In the privileged cities the use of Latin is attested on all official manifestations, and the coin legends reinforced this dynamic; however, some exceptions can be found on provincial coinages from **Ebusus** and **Abdera**, which used bilingual legends in Latin and Punic to indicate their place name. A singular case is attested in **Saguntum**, to which a rare issue in Greek is attributed. However, in the domestic sphere natives kept using pre-Latin scripts for a while.



Julio-Claudian
bilingual inscription
from Saguntum

What the legends tell

The legends of the Roman provincial coinages provided more information than the native issues struck during the Republican time, because they contained more words and more abbreviations, following the late Republican and Imperial models. The wide adoption of the portrait of the emperor in the obverses made an identifying legend necessary. With Augustus, the **imperial title** on the coin legends was varied, and only became regularized over time, becoming more systematized during the reigns of Tiberius and Caligula.



PERM • CAES • AVG

Colonia Patricia

Augustus

As



TI • CAESAR • DIVI • AVG • F • AVGVSTVS •

Caesaraugusta

Tiberius

As



G • CAESAR • AVG • GERMANICVS • IMP

Caesaraugusta

Caligula

As

Local information was displayed on the reverses. This was the most usual place for naming the minting cities, with or without an indication of their legal status; and the magistracies held by those who were in charge of the issue (mostly in the Tarraconensis province); of these, the *Ilviri* were the most recorded; also *quattuorviri*, *aediles*, *quaestores* and *praefecti* were mentioned, although with much less frequency. The reverse legends also identified divinities and allegorical figures represented in the designs and allow us to know the meaning and intention of the objects and monuments engraved.



← Caesaraugusta
Tiberius
As

→ Caesaraugusta
Caligula
As



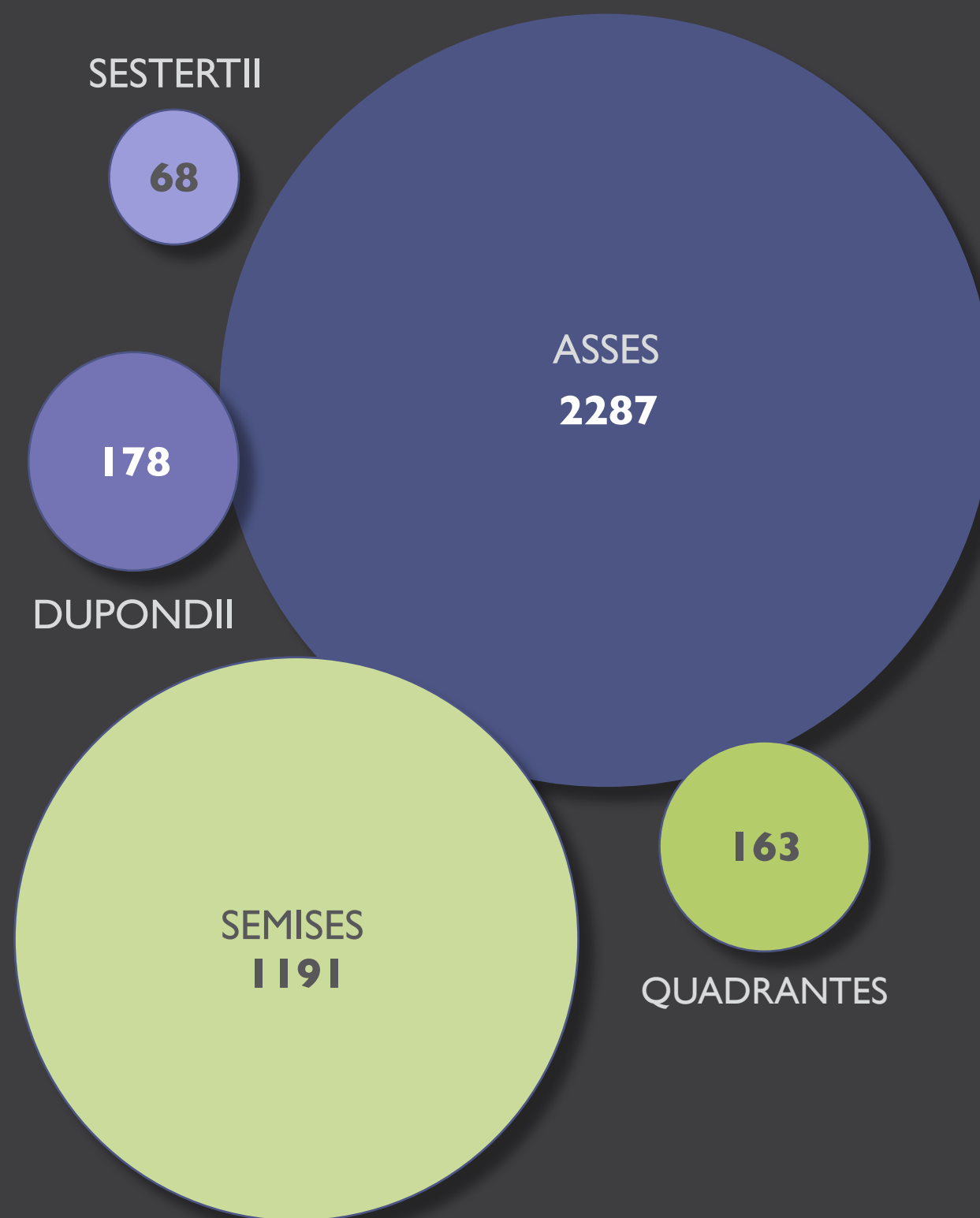
C • CA • T • CAECILIO • LEPIDO • G • AVFIDIO • GEMELLO • II • VIR •

C • C • A LICINIANO • ET • GERMANO II • VIR

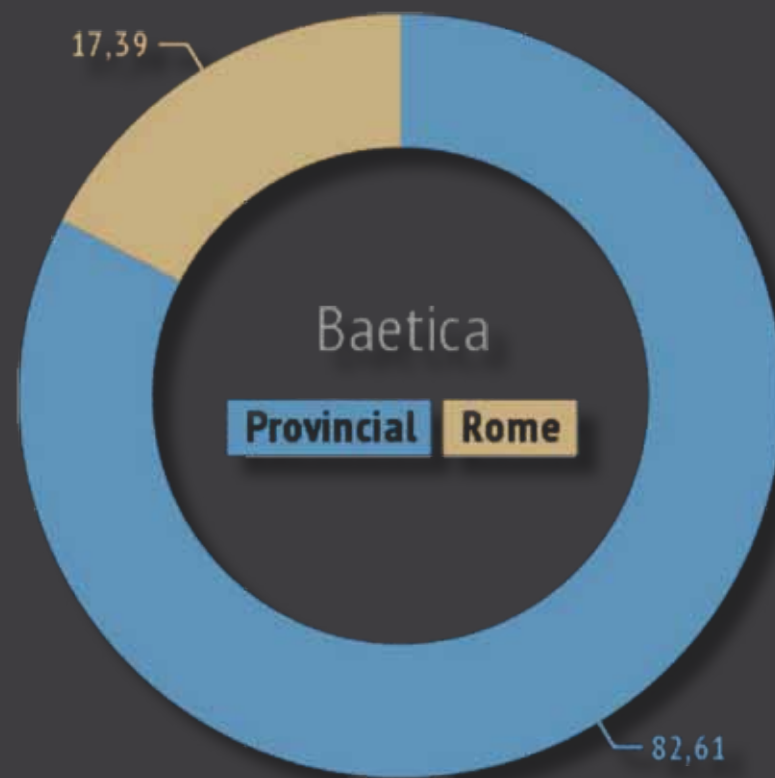
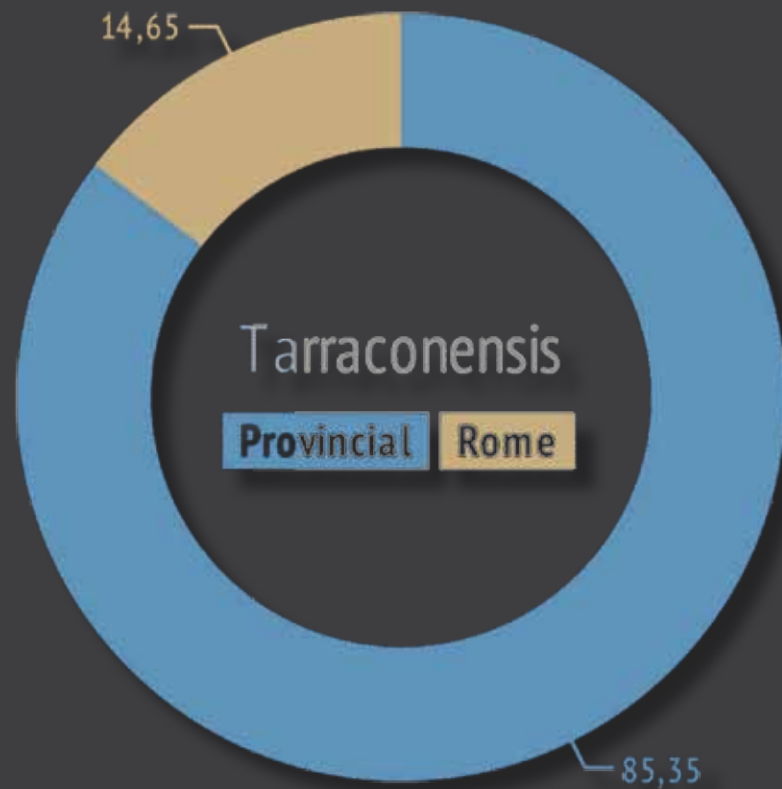
Why the cities minted

The Roman provincial coinages of Hispania were only struck in bronze (from the reign of Tiberius a few mints used copper for the asses and orichalcum for the dupondii and sestertii: Caesaraugusta, Tarraco, Ilici or Osca) and almost always in a discontinuous rhythm. These features, together with the fact that the most minted denominations were the asses and semisses, suggest that cities put in circulation a relatively modest amount of wealth, destined for local use and function, and being very useful for the payment of small value exchanges.

The **civic issues** increased and refreshed the stock of bronze coinages that was in circulation in Hispania, because at the beginning of the reign of Augustus it was scarce and well worn, partially due to the low coin production in the course of the five preceding decades, both Roman and native.



Estimation of dies for the Roman provincial coinages of Hispania



Imperial and provincial coins circulation in Hispania

The **monetary findings** of civic coinages suggest they fulfilled an important task in the monetization of Hispania, reaching in certain cities up to 85% of all bronze coinages in circulation.

The provincial issues of Hispania are correlated with local motivations, but their production did not reach, in many cities, to meet the most basic expenses of their administration, as they could be the wages of the apparitores, the maintenance of the public slaves and the public games (Lex Ursonensis 62). The precise reasons that lead the cities to strike coins are difficult to identify, although they must searched within themselves and not in financial necessities of the Roman state. They had to be diverse and some could be concurrent, like financing services and public works, providing coinages for daily retail trade through moneychangers; beneficent actions of money distribution; profiting from the minting issues; some type of commemoration or celebration; prestige for having their coinage or the opportunity to engage an engraver or a workshop. Providing coinage to the army has also been the alleged function of some mints. It is probable that army

settlements exerted a powerful attraction on the provincial coinages and could even prompt some issues by virtue of their benefit on the part of the city or of their citizens, because the bronze coinages optimized the use of silver coins and favoured the exchanges.

The end of civic coinages

From the reigns of Caligula/Claudius I on, the coinages of the Roman cities of Spain ceased. This end must be connected to the western imperial context, to which Hispania belonged, and must be viewed from a wider perspective that includes the western part of the Empire, which was immersed in a trend towards the unification of the Roman monetary system, in which civic bronze coinages were progressively replaced by Imperial ones.

Diverse hypotheses have tried to explain the end of the minting in Spain, by means of political reasons, of economic weakness of the cities or preference for the Imperial coinages; nevertheless, none of them seems completely satisfactory by itself. With the end of the Roman provincial coinages during the reign of **Claudius I**, one of the most important public symbols of the cities disappeared and thereby concluding five hundred years of civic coinages. Henceforth, all the coinages used in Spain came from the Imperial mints.



Ebusus
Claudius I
As

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Pere Pau Ripollès

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