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“POPULUS SEANOC[...]”, 104 BC

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“POPULUS SEANOC[...]”, 104 BC¹

This inscription was published in 1984 in the Spanish journal *Gerión*: a bronze tablet 21.5 x 19.3 cm., cleanly cut off down the right side. It commemorates a *deditio* made in 104 BC to one L. Caesius *imperator* by a Spanish people whose name is unfortunately incomplete: *populus Seano...* with a c, g, o, or q partly visible as next letter. The tablet was found about 4 km. south of Alcántara in western Spain, at what seems an ancient rural settlement (a *castro*). Some local and Roman coins, of Republican and Imperial date, and bits of pottery were also found.

L. Caesius was probably the *monetalis* whose issues are dated c.112/13 by Crawford. Presumably he was praetor or propraetor of Hispania Ulterior in 104. He accepts the *deditio* on the advice of his *consilium*, requires the Spanish *populus* to hand back the plunder it has taken (prisoners, horses and mares), and on these conditions guarantees to it its own possessions, lands, buildings and laws, “so long as the People [and perhaps “the Senate”] of Rome should wish”. And he orders the Spaniards, “concerning that matter”, to go somewhere – a destination seemingly given in the lost right-hand strip.²

The inscription vividly illustrates the practice of *deditio* or unconditional surrender. It gives a glimpse of a far-west Roman frontier, sounding rather like *the Wild West*, at the end of the second century BC. This paper deals with one fairly basic question: what Spanish

¹ An earlier paper on the *populus Seano...* (entitled ‘The Dediticii of the Tabula Alcantarensis’), with some different points, appeared in *ZPE* 78 (1989) pp.40-44.

² R. López Melero, J.L. Sánchez Abal, S. García Jiménez, ‘El bronce de Alcántara. Una *deditio* del 104 a.C.’, *Gerión* 2 (1984) pp.265-323; *AE* 1984, no.495; cf. J.S. Richardson, *Hispaniae: Spain and the Development of Roman Imperialism, 218-82 B.C.* (Cambridge: 1986) pp.199-201; D. Nörr, *Zeitschr. Savigny-Stift.* 103 (1986) pp.635-637 (report on *Gerión* 2).

It may be useful to quote the document: C. Mario (*vac.*) C. Flavio [cos.] / L. Caesio C.f. imperatore (*sic*) *populus Seanoc(?)*[. . . se] / dedit. L. Caesius C.f. imperator postquam [deditionem] / accepit ad consilium retolit quid eis im[perandum] // censerent. de consili sententia imperav[it ut omnes] / captivos equos equas quas cepissent [traderent.] / omnia dederunt. deinde eos L. Caesius C[f. imp. liberos] / esse iussit. agros et aedificia leges cete[ra omnia] / quae sua fuissent pridie quam se dedid[erunt quae tum] // extarent eis redidit dum populu[s senatusque] / Roomanus vellet. (*vac.*) deque ea re eos [(?) domum] / eire iussit. (*vac.*) legatos Cren[us (?). . . f.] / Arco Cantoni f. legates (*vac.*).

At line 3 Richardson’s alternative supplement [eos in fidem] is preferable to [eos in deditionem] for reasons of length; or else supply simply [deditionem] as above. L. 6: Richardson suggests [traderent. haec] but again this seems too lengthy compared with the other lines’ supplements. L. 7: Richardson argues for imperator in full but here it would make the supplement very long. L. 11: Richardson and Nörr propose [qui aderunt Romam]; see my text with note 6. L. 12: legatos does not construe; perhaps the engraver was meant to inscribe legates (on this nominative plural see A. Degrossi, *Inscr. Lat. Lib. Rei Pub.* ii p.497) – and if so, legates in l. 13 may be intended as replacement.

populus was involved? For the following locations see the map on p.95.

The adjective seems to be something like “Seanocus” or “Seanocensis”. No such community is known, in Hispania Ulterior or anywhere else. Of course many small towns or peoples are known from only one document: until the impressive municipal law of Irni, in southern Ulterior, was discovered a few years ago no one knew that Irni existed, for instance. The obvious inference from the *Tabula Alcantarensis* would seem to be that the “Seanocenses” (to call them that) dwelt at the *castro* where it was found. But two points deserve note.

First, they do not figure among the eleven Lusitanian communities which, two centuries later, put together funds to build the Alcántara bridge nearby. These included (for example) the Igaeditani whose town, modern Idanha in eastern Portugal, lies 40 km. or so north-west of the bridge; the Meidubrigenses whose town lay at the foot of the Mons Herminius (Serra de Estrela) perhaps 30 km. farther away; the Aravi near the river Duero no less than 100 km. north; two groups of Lancienses somewhere between the Tagus and the Duero. The “Seanocenses” would have been the nearest of any to the crossing and might be expected to have a peculiar interest in the bridge project. Unless they had provided a ferry service!

The Spanish scholar Raquel López Melero suggested that the “Seanocenses” might have been listed, with other communities, on one of three other bridge inscriptions that are known to have existed once upon a time. She thinks that each of the four inscriptions named contributing communities from a different sector, north-west, north-east, south-east and south-west of the bridge. Now it is true that several towns in the general region do not figure in the surviving bridge inscription – such as Caura and Capera about 50 km. to the north-east, and the Roman colony Norba Caesarina about the same distance south-east. And true again that all the named eleven lie north of the Tagus: though not all to the north-west of the bridge, if the “Taporí” are correctly located near Salamanca. But the extant inscription does not hint that the eleven formed only one group of contributors, rather the reverse. It looks as though they had a special interest in a reliable crossing. And of the “Seanocenses”, no trace.³

³ *ILS* 287a: municipia provinciae Lusitaniae stipe conlata quae opus pontis perfecerunt: Igaeditani, Lancienses Oppidani, Talori (*sic*), Interannienses, Colarni, Lancienses Transcudani, Aravi, Meidubrigenses Arabrigenses, Banienses, Paesures (= E.M. Smallwood, *Documents... of Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian* [Cambridge: 1966] no.389). “Talori” is probably a mistaken reading for “Taporí”, a known community probably near Salmantica (B.D. Hoyos, ‘In defence of *CIL* II 760’, *Athenaeum* 56 [1978] pp.394-395; on the other communities, *ibid.* p.391). López Melero’s suggestions about the *populus Seanoc...*: *Gerión* 2 (1984) pp.296-314.

Secondly, a community with a similar name did exist: Searo, some way to the south. Iberian coins from Republican times attest a town of that name in what later was the north-west sector of Baetica (Augustus divided Hispania Ulterior into two unequal parts, Lusitania north of the river Anas [modern Guadiana] and Baetica to the south). A fragmentary inscription, from the same area, offers a word beginning “SEA...” which its editor completed as “Sea[rensis]”, denoting a person from Searo; this may be correct as no other suitable town is known, but the adjective was more probably “Searonensis” (compare “Tarraconensis” from Tarraco). Pliny the Elder, in his geographical survey of Baetica, mistakenly moves several towns from the south of that province to the north-west – the town of the “Siarenses Fortunales”, along with that of the “Callenses Aeneanici” and some others that lack titles: seemingly because the names of the two titled towns, Siarum and Callet, got confused in his lists with two genuine towns of north-western Baetica, Searo and Ceret (this latter known from both coins and inscriptions). These do not appear at all in his survey, whereas his mislocation of the Siarenses and Callenses seems to be the reason why some other south Baetican towns too are put in the north-west: presumably they were all together in one of his lists. One or two south Baetican towns are similarly mislocated northwards in Ptolemy’s *Geography*, but not those of the Siarenses and Callenses, and the reason in his case is hard to fathom.⁴

Searo lay in the area north of Hispalis (Seville), in the juridical *conventus* attached to Hispalis. (Pliny’s mislocated towns lay in the southern part of the the same *conventus*.) So it was quite far to the south of Alcántara, 120 km. or more. Nor is distance the only difficulty with linking it to our *populus*. What about the difference between “Searonensis” and “Seanocensis” or “Seanocus”?

The difference may well be due to variant forms or spellings. There is no exact parallel, but some other cases are instructive. As indicated just now, Callet the town-name produced the adjective Callenses. Bletisa, a town somewhere near Salamanca, seems to have produced “Bletonenses”. Salamanca itself is variously named in ancient sources Helmantike, Salmatike, Salmatis, Hermandica. The Roman colony of Caesaraugusta (modern Zaragoza) was established at a Spanish town variously called Salduie (or Saltuie) and Salduba (or Saldubia), with the adjectives – found on inscriptions – “Salluviensis” and

⁴ Sea[r(on)ensis]: *Ephemeris Epigr.* 8 pp.379 and 500. “ Searo” coin-type: A.M. de Guadan, *Numismática ibérica e ibero-romana* (Madrid: 1969) p.213 and fig.476. On the Siarenses Fortunales and Callenses Aeneanici see B.D. Hoyos, ‘Pliny the Elder’s titled Baetican towns: obscurities, errors and origins’, *Historia* 28 (1979) especially pp.449-454.

“Salluitana”. The Celtiberian towns Contrebia and Clunia issued coins during the Republic with, respectively, CONTERBACOM and CLOVNIOQ (presumably “Clounioqom”), which I take to be contracted genitives plural.⁵

In sum, it is conceivable that the *populus* whose town we know from coins as Searo may at times have been termed the “populus Seanocensis” or “Seanocus” or “Seanoqus” and their town at times as “Seano”.

What about the distance? Various possibilities exist. The *tabula* may have been at Searo in north-west Baetica but was, for some reason, taken to be the area where it has now turned up: bronze was in demand in the Middle Ages and a trader might have been taking a collection of old pieces to Portugal to sell. Alternatively, our marauding Spaniards may have been misbehaving around southern Lusitania, between Anas and Tagus, were then chased northward by the Roman governor coming up from the Baetis area, and were cornered on this hilltop not far from the hard-to-cross Tagus. To mark their *deditio*, this tablet and maybe other copies were engraved in L. Caesius’ camp and given to the leaders, such as the envoys Arco and Cren[us], one of whom proceeded to mislay his.

If so, then it could help to solve a puzzle in lines 11-12: Caesius eos [...] / eire iussit. To where? “Roman” has been suggested – unenthusiastically, because it would have been unparalleled to send a minor provincial community to consult the Senate over so straightforward a matter. To Corduba then, the provincial capital? But the governor was surely on the spot at Alcántara: L. Caesius *imperator* could hardly be a subordinate. Besides, it is not the envoys who are to go but (so it seems) all the “Seanocenses”.

Now if the *dediticii* were the wayward folk of Searo, far from their town, the supplement is obvious: eos < domum > / eire iussit. Admittedly, “de ea re” reads slightly awkwardly if so. But not so awkwardly (I hope) as to disqualify this solution.⁶

If the community did live at the *castro* near the Tagus, it was Lusitanian or more precisely

⁵ Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 83 (Bletonenses); cf. Richardson, *Hispaniae* p.159 n.13. Ancient varieties of Salmantica: Polyb. 3.14.1, Livy 21.5.6, Plut. *Mor.* 248E, *Itinerar. Ant.* 434.4, Polyaeus 7.48. Caesaraugusta formerly Saldub(i)a, Pliny *NH* 3.24; Guadan, *Num. ibér.* p.190 and figs.194-195 (“Salduie” coins in Iberian script); *ILS* 8888 = Degrassi, *Inscr. Lat. Lib. Rei Pub.* ii no.515 (*turma Salluitana*, 89 BC); Guadan, *Num. ibér.* p.207 and figs.410-412 and 414 (“Conterbacom”, “Clounioq” – contrast fig.415 “Clunia”).

⁶ At the University of New England epigraphy seminar, Professor Harold Mattingly acutely suggested that line 11 might be completed “eos [ad quaestorem]” – i.e., L. Caesius bidding the Spaniards go to his quaestor (at Corduba?) to arrange things. This seems quite plausible, though we might have expected him to give such an order only to their envoys.

Vettonian (the broad name for the population of that region). Sra López Melero holds that the “Seanocenses” occupied both the site of the find (it is called Villavieja) and half a dozen other *castros* in a 15-kilometre stretch along the south side of the river. That of course remains possible. Such a community cannot have been very developed in 104: Lusitania was poor and pastoral, though with a bit of agriculture. Urbanised communities took a very long while to evolve – even on the bridge inscription two centuries later, several still used purely tribal names. The *dediticii* of 104 look rather more advanced: they had “aedificia” and “leges”, as well as land and other property. That hints (though no more than hints) at a community in Baetican Ulterior, where settlements that the Romans recognised as towns were well established.

The region where Searo lay was the hill country of the Sierra Morena, north of Hispalis. The area was well peopled with many small towns, some of them notable enough three generations later to bear fancy Latin titles (Seria Fama Iulia, Segida Augurina and so on), which seem to indicate that they had acquired the Latin right. But this does not mean that northern Baetica was a peaceful and polite haven c.104 BC – or even that the writ of the governor always ran firm in districts far from the Baetis valley and the coast. The standard idea, that Roman rule after 133 extended all the way up to the foothills of the Cantabrian and Asturian mountains in the far north, is Roman propaganda. All of the evidence suggests that communities more than 200 or so kilometres inland (and in some places less than that) listened to Rome only when there was a Roman army around – at least until more thorough control was established in the 40s and 30s BC. Governors were constantly warring in the interior and making claims of victory and conquest. Interestingly, some titles given to towns in Caesar’s and Augustus’ time, and the names of some new towns, in western and south-western Ulterior proclaim victories and pacification: for example, when Augustus established a colony in southern Portugal near the close of the first century BC, he named it Pax Iulia (modern Beja in Alentejo). When the author of *De Bello Hispaniensi* fought in Baetica on the side of Caesar, in the Munda campaign of 46-45, he was struck by how well fortified the province was: towns with strong defences, towers and other strong points dotting the countryside. This (he writes) was “because of the frequent raids by the barbarians”. With this situation across the central plain of the Baetis, conditions then must have been no less volatile in the surrounding hills and mountains – which some of these “barbarians” were

living.⁷

The “Seanocenses” seem not to have been directly at war with, or in revolt from, the Romans but rather to have been preying on other provincials, collecting slaves and animals. This kind of behaviour was natural enough, in undeveloped border regions especially. Reports of on-and-off fighting in Hispania Ulterior are common from the later second and early first centuries. Particularly interesting is Plutarch’s claim that Marius as governor in 114 “is said to have cleansed Hispania Ulterior of brigandage” (no surprise if it soon returned). There is also Julius Obsequens’ item about a Roman army being slaughtered by the Lusitanians (precisely which Lusitanians we are not told) in 105.⁸ L. Caesius may have won his salutation as *imperator* in a campaign that sought to retrieve the latter situation – though, as just noted, the “Seanocenses” were probably not involved, to judge from his lenient treatment of them. They would be a side issue. Military instability could only encourage misbehaviour like theirs, along the margins of Roman provincial control. And without fairly consistent policies to alleviate poverty and unrest (policies for which there is no evidence), we must infer that such misbehaviour was far from ended by this particular *imperator* – or his successors.

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⁷ On Baetican towns with fancy titles see Hoyos, *Historia* 28 (1979) pp.439-471. Besides Pax Iulia, note the suggestive titles of two other privileged Lusitanian towns: Scallabis Praesidium Iulium, on the Tagus, and Salacia Urbs Imperatoria between Pax and Olisipo (admittedly Olisipo Felicitas Iulia, Ebora Liberalitas Iulia and Myrtilis Iulia lack warlike overtones). On all of these places see (e.g.) P.A. Brunt, *Italian Manpower, 225 B.C. - A.D. 14* (Oxford: 1971) pp.250, 584-588, 593 and 603. On barbarian raids in mid-first century Baetica, *Bell. Hisp.* 8.34.

⁸ Plut. *Marius* 6; Obsequens, *ad ann.* 105; cf. Richardson, *Hispaniae* pp.156-160, on warfare in general in Spain between 133 and 82 (but omitting C. Marius).

