

At a time when the Western Atlantic region was not nations, but confederations of loose tribes or clans, there were no frontiers like there are today. The western tribes lived in hillforts, and they would join together and run rings round the Roman armies, waving the captured Roman standards from the hilltops. The Romans took over 200 years to subdue Iberia after the punic wars.

Their continuation northwards to Germania and Gaul and then to Britain overstretched them, and Caesar was forced to abandon the mission. The space of time between his attempts in 55 BC and the next serious attempt under Claudius was ninety years. During this time, the Romans adopted a military system similar to that which Hannibal Barca had used two hundred years before. They would use auxiliary units made up of the indigenous tribes, and a great many of these came from Iberia. Some Iberian tribal confederations had previously made their mark and had been trained by the great Hannibal Barca, and taken to fight against Rome, so there was a particular interest for Rome in taking them, as they were so well-respected. Some of the Iberian auxiliary regiments were the first to enter Britain. They were paid and offered Roman citizenship as a reward, to motivate the young mercenaries and thus maintain a consistent, loyal army.

Under Claudius, in AD43, an army of 40,000 entered Britain, half of which were auxiliary units, some Iberian, and they were making significant headway. Suetonius Paulinus led a mission to the island on Mona (Anglesey) to dismantle the druid stronghold. Their initial fear and superstition gave way to confidence as the soldiers called them a bunch of women and fanatics. Meanwhile, another surprise awaited them back in the mainland, a very serious problem. There had been an uprising, led by another woman. Her name was Boudica.

The Iceni

Little is known of the Iceni tribe over which Boudica was queen. The Celts did not write, and only what the Latin writers tell us can provide us with any clues. One thing we know is that there had been an uprising over the issue of arms confiscation, a Roman practise also used in Iberia. Historians do know that Boudica and her husband were made client king and queen, meaning that they were like Pontius Pilate was in Judah in the time of Christ, there to maintain order, prevent further uprisings and generally maintain the peace.

Prasutagus was Boudica's husband, a composite word PRASU (from PRAESO = governor, ruler) and TAGUS (which was his name). This TAGUS is the name of the main river which flows westwards through the central Meseta of Iberia and onwards into the Atlantic, and was home to some of the fiercest warrior tribes in the peninsula. Tagus (or in modern times Tiago) is a common name there even today.

If Boudica and Tagus were client king and queen, they were not, therefore, king and queen in any hereditary sense, but were governors or rulers of the Iceni tribe. Not being of Iceni origin, where did Boudica and her husband Tagus come from?

His name would point us to the Tagus river in Iberia, but there is another strong clue. It is found on the coins of the Iceni tribe. Staring us in the face on what are effectively the only cultural records of the Iceni, is their love of the horse shared with their Iberian brothers. However, it is no ordinary horse we see on the coins. It shows the unmistakable long, curved neck of the Lusitanian horse. These Lusitanian horses could only have been brought to Britain by the auxiliary Iberian regiments serving Rome, and the lands north of the Tagus river were where they were bred. Of all these tribes, there was one tribe considered to be the fiercest, and the best horsemen: the Vettones.

So now we have two clues that tally, a man whose name points to the same region as the horse on the face of the coins.



Iceni coins showing the Lusitanian horse.



(above) Celtic Iberian coins and (right) a Lusitanian horse with rider.



Vettones - a warlike nation

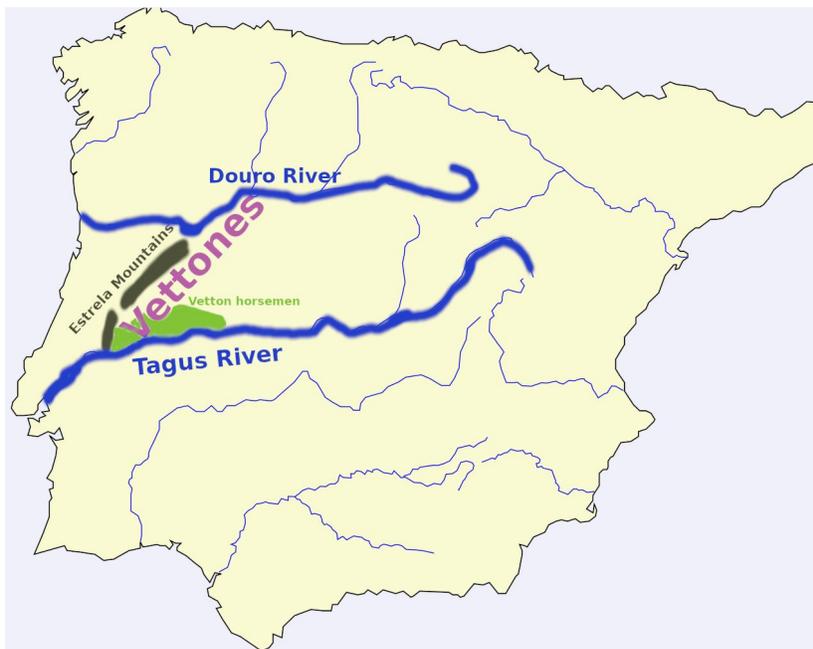
The famed Vetton horsemen were considered the best cavalry of the whole Iberian peninsula. Cornelius Nepos, writing about the death of the great and charismatic Hamilcar Barca, father of Hannibal, called the Vettones who had killed him a "fierce and warlike nation".

The Romans took over 200 years to finally subdue the western part of Iberia because of the strong alliances made between the tribal confederations in particular between the Lusitani and the Vettones. It was the guerrilha-type of warfare which gave the Romans no chance, and the Iberian warriors had light armour and the falcata, a deadly sword with a forward-curving blade which was perfect for this kind of warfare.



In a humorous story recorded by Pliny after the wars, the Romans had a friendly meeting between them and some Vettones. There was a lunch, after which the Romans went for what was, apparently, their customary afternoon walk. Passing by some Vettones sitting on a wall, the Vettones asked the Romans if they had lost their way. “For if a man is not at war he should be sitting down doing nothing”, they said. From this comical story we can conclude that this was a nation for whom war was the default mode of existence.

The Vetton horsemen were so good that they were coveted firstly by Hannibal Barca who, overcoming his hatred of them for having killed his father, took them across the Alps as his left flank cavalry, and won some of the most famous battles in history, one of which was the battle of Cannae. Numidian cavalry from Africa with their fast Arab horses were his right flank, and the Vettons with their smaller, agile and courageous Lusitanian horse were his left flank. Under Hannibal’s brilliance, it was an unmatched combination.



Of all the Vetton lands, spanning from the Spanish Extremadura to the mountains of the Serra da Estrela in Portugal and from the Douro to the Tagus river in the south, it was the small region called Beira north of the Tagus in what is now Portuguese territory that had the fiercest horsemen (see green area on map above), and when later Caesar came up the Zezere river to these parts, he and other Roman generals noted their skills as horsemen and later, just as Hannibal had done,

they formed them into a paid regiment. However, this was only after subduing the western side of Iberia, which they were only able eventually to do by dismantling the hillforts.

Alae Hispanorum Vettonum

So it was that the Alae Hispanorum Vettonum, the Vetton Winged Cavalry was formed in the early part of the first century AD. Judging by the Iceni coins, they must have been one of the first regiments to accompany the Roman armies into Britain. Otherwise, how could the Lusitanian horse appear on the Iceni coins? If Boudica's husband, Prasutagus, was from the region north of the Tagus river, what about Boudica?

Boudica - the name

The Romans quite obviously had a huge fascination with Boudica. It isn't hard to believe, considering the madness of their own ruler and emperor Nero. As they had never seen her name written down, they had to write it using the letters they felt appropriate. Speaking phonetically, there is an unmistakable Portuguese sound in her name. The 'ou' is not easy for a British person to pronounce. It does not sound similar to any sound in the English phonetic range. It is much deeper with a bit of nasal tone. Also, curiously, a Portuguese may well by nature, in pronouncing her name, place the stress on the second not the first syllable. So most people actually mispronounce her name.

If the phonetics of the name Boudica point to Portugal, in western Iberia, for the possible origin of her name, three ancient stones will put it beyond all reasonable doubt. For her name, exactly how it was written by the Romans, has been found in three places, on three epigraphical stones, each one in a place where there is still an ancient hill fort dismantled from Roman times. The three places, indicated in the map below, form a triangle. They are the Boudica triangle. Although other names formed by Bout- are more widespread, Boud- is recognised by onomastic experts to have been exclusive to the small region of Beira Baixa.

Her name, as written by the Romans, is from Beira Baixa, the same place as her husband, and also the Lusitanian horses on the Iceni coins. Judging by the inscriptions showing the other family members, these three Boudicas are not our Iceni queen, but they do confirm the exclusivity of that name to Beira Baixa.



(above) The Boudica triangle

If Boudica and Tagus were by origin from Beira Baixa, just north of the Tagus river and East of the Estrela and Talhado mountain ranges, the question is how they got to Britain. There is really only one possibility. They were serving in the Alae Hispanorum Vettonum. Boudica was part of the Celtic warrior class, which was not so unusual for a woman, as the Romans noted how women fought alongside the men.

Warrior Elite

To be part of this warrior elite, there were initiation rites which were hard and gruelling - dry sweat baths, frugal meals and red hot stones. The one who desired to enter into this elite warrior class would begin a “journey to beyond” from which he or she returned as a “reborn” warrior. Gymnastic games and ritual combat and anthem singing in their ancestral languages were also part of that initiation. In the VER SACRUM, the new warrior was also prepared for emigration.

Boudica was a warrior-class Celt. We can easily see that she had fought for the Romans, as she shows in her pre-battle rousing speech a complete familiarity with Roman war tactics and weaponry. Also, she was thoroughly knowledgeable about Roman life and politics. She had inside knowledge that could only have come from having served Rome.

Interestingly, she also in this same speech claimed to have come from a people who only knew war and for whom war was their default mode of existence. Like we learned in Pliny’s story, this was, of course, the Vettones from whose lands north of the Tagus river they had come.

Boudica’s message to Nero

There is a third factor in her pre-battle speech that we have overlooked. It is what I will call the Nero factor. The Vettones were artistic people, and we could even say that Boudica created a

carefully-worked artistic masterpiece, designed as a very personal, direct message to Nero himself. Like other Celts, she didn't write, but her art spelt a message which was this:-

Emperor Nero, you are finished. The seeds of your own destruction are within you. Rome is working out its own destruction. It's over for you, because you committed sacrilege not just against me as a Celtic mother and woman, but against nature itself, the very nature which feeds you, clothes you, and gives you air to breathe. Nature is a mother too, it cares and nurtures, and you have insulted in the most perverted way your own mother.

Boudica had woken up, and suddenly she saw the false illusion that was Rome. Having served for money and privileges, now after her humiliating public flogging, and the rape of her daughters, the only thing she had left was an empty "citizenship" of the Rome she now hated, and that realization drove her to take up arms, and turn from a defeated and wounded woman into the warrior she actually was. Her Celtic roots, resolve and warrior training she put to use and amply demonstrated it in her work of art. Even her followers were actually being prepared to help to create Boudica's masterpiece, directed at the Roman emperor himself, Nero.

When Boudica got to London she amply showed her capacities as a warrior with no reserve, and by using the only language that Nero the mother-killer would understand, she made her message abundantly clear. For he not only had humiliated and degraded Boudica as a mother, but this Nero had also killed his own, and the gruesome account of Londinium, and Roman women on stakes, their breasts cut off and sewn to their mouths was the message given by Boudica in the only language that Nero the monster and madman would understand. The breasts of mothers, given by nature to feed and nurture, sewn to their own mouths. Nero had defiled motherhood itself.

We have to remember Boudica was a warrior, and she was doing what warriors do. It was not just a random act of rage, it was designed to deliver a message.

Cailleach Beira

The word Beira itself, from where Boudica had come is a word which was taken from Iberia to Britain, where in Celtic parts it is still sacred. Cailleach Beira is the guardian of winter. Iberia is essentially feminine. All the gods brought by the pre-roman peoples were feminine. Tanit, Astarte and Cupid of the Carthaginians, Cailleach Beira and Trebaruna of the Celts.

Boudica's story

Boudica has a portuguese-sounding name, and that name is exclusive to a small part of Beira Baixa called Cova da Beira. Her husband's name Tagus is the river on the southern border of Vetton lands in Beira Baixa, and is also identified with the region. They were Vetttons, from a

They are, top to bottom, as follows:-

CIL II 455 = ERBeira 229 = AE (1988) 697 **Sta Estevao, Sabugal**

Quintus Modesti filius) a(morum) XXV / Placida Modesti filia) a(morum) XIII / Boudica Flacci filia) Modestus / Celtiatis filius) liberis uxori sibi feci[t].

ERBeira 44 **Idanha**

Bassus Maturro/vi et Boudica Sem/proni sibi et Bassi/no filio an(norum) XXX.

ERBeira 33 = AE (1967) 170 **Telhado (Argemela)**

[L]ovio Caenonis filio) patri / Boudicae Tongi filiae) matri / Cilio Tapaesi filio) socio Cileae / Cili filiae) uxori Caeno Lovi filio).

We may never find Boudica's tomb. Perhaps it's here in Beira Baixa. If we do find it, I think that we will find her golden torque. The Romans also noted a particular detail in her clothing. I'm sure it will be there too. It's a brooch. I know it will be the famous brooch worn here by the horsemen, with the Lusitanian horse. So popular did it become, and the Lusitanian horses it featured, that not only do we find them on Icenic coins, but also these Roman-era horse brooches found by metal-detectorists sell on eBay even today.



Pre-roman horse brooches from central Iberian Meseta. Probably the one used by Boudica.