GENOCIDE AND MASS MURDER IN SECOND IRON AGE EUROPE
Methodological issues and case studies in the Iberian Peninsula

Fernando Quesada-Sanz

The concept of 'genocide' presents several definitional dilemmas in the contemporary world. There are literally dozens of cogent definitions of the concept, which are quite distant and distinct. These dilemmas increase almost exponentially when we start to apply them to the ancient world, to the extent that some of the more important recent syntheses practically omit the period. To begin with, it is often difficult to differentiate the legal concept of genocide from mass murder, although in the present era it is a very pertinent difference with regards to the law. It is also difficult to apply the very precise and often criticized definition of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide from 1948 to the ancient world. This defined genocide to be acts carried out (whether successfully or not) with the intent to destroy 'in whole or in part, of a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such'. Other categories of violence, directed on the basis of class, gender, politics or age were not included. Despite much written or visual documentation or witness testimonies, it is not always easy to demonstrate the concept of 'intent' in genocide. Additionally, it is often difficult to distinguish the concept of 'combatant' from the 'civilian' or 'non-combatant', although this distinction remains critical both to legislation and ethical notions intended to limit the devastation and savagery of war. It is therefore likely that in late Prehistory and the Iron Age, in contexts far removed from the great classical cultures, war was proportionately even more deadly than in the modern era.

There is some discussion of the actual demographic scale slaughter must reach for it to become 'genocide'. In antiquity, as in the contemporary world, complete annihilation or genocide was more of an aim than a realistic possibility. More frequent were what we might define as 'genocidal massacres', which were more limited in extent than genocide and often conceived as 'object lessons for other members of the group', but a term that could be applied to the most remote Prehistory. Some authors maintain that actions such as mass enslavement or mass deportations that could have a devastating effect even though they did not involve the physical extermination of a population, should be considered genocidal. This definition might relate more to the concept of 'ethnic cleansing', which was perhaps more common in antiquity than today. Even the term 'ethnocide' which has been proposed for a cultural rather than physical destruction, is directly related to genocide. The most applicable term for the Iron Age would be a looser and intuitive, though legally imprecise, definition of genocide which would essentially be of an anthropological nature.
If all these issues are thorny in the contemporary world, it is clear that the methodological and conceptual dilemmas multiply when applied to antiquity. For this reason, most recent work on genocide in the ancient world avoids being too precisely bound by theory, and suggests intuitive parameters not based upon current legal terminology. It even questions the use of the term 'genocide', preferring the category of 'genocidal massacres' which itself was not specified in the 1948 Convention. In particular, modern legal and even ethical conceptions of 'war crimes', which are often associated with — and committed during — genocide, but remain distinct from it, are difficult to apply to the classical world. This problem is amplified by a paucity of written sources. The term 'atrocity' would perhaps be more appropriate for many of the examples documented through archaeological sources in the Iron Age. The concept of 'collateral damage' is alien to the ancient world as such, but it could be argued that in many cases it could apply as long as mass death was not the desired outcome, but an almost predictable result of those actions deemed necessary to achieve political, religious or military goals.

The Late — or Second — Iron Age in Europe and the Mediterranean is an archaeological and chronological concept that, in the case of Greece and Rome, overlaps with the concept of 'classical culture'. Periclean Athens, (scenario of the terrible Peloponnesian War which saw some of the worst and most well documented massacres in antiquity), seems distinct from the proto-historic cultures of 'La Tène I' in Central Europe or the Iron Age in the east of the Iberian Peninsula. Yet these societies were strictly contemporaneous and remained fairly closely linked. In those contacts between them, some of the more obvious instances of what might be considered 'genocide' occurred.

There is no doubt that the city-states of Classical Greece or Republican Rome carried out massacres and deportations on a sufficiently large-scale for the category of 'genocidal massacre', and in some cases, that of 'genocide' to be applied. Yet it would be much harder to attribute other modern notions associated with the concept to these cultures, especially the moral (social) and the ethical (personal). That is partly due to the absence at that time of formal international laws of war of military regulations, or indeed of 'rules of engagement'. Similarly, many 'laws' of war among primitive peoples both in the ancient or modern eras developed in the context in which they lived. Concepts like 'humanitarianism' or 'the rights of non-combatants' are not really applicable. We must deduce much the same for the European Iron Age. This is mainly due to the fact that there was no ethical rejection of the very idea of violence and war in ancient times; although it might be an evil, it was considered inseparable from civilization and even necessary. Nor was there a moral rejection of its consequences such as mass slaughter and slavery, except by isolated minds ahead of their time. The summary of Polybius on the views of contemporary Greeks over the final destruction of Carthage, in a war that we judge iniquitous today, is very illustrative. On the contrary, the idea of total annihilation of the Trojans seemed reasonable and normal to the minds of most listeners of Homer. That does not mean that war in classical cultures was always wild and total. Several strongly ingrained cultural constraints in the social fabric, especially those associated with religious or sacred places often (but not always) served as regulators of violence. The capacity for wholesale destruction and slaughter was in itself limited by available technology, basically human and animal strength. In fact, ancient warfare, as modern, was usually limited, and the concept of annihilation was rarer than is generally accepted. On the other hand, war was not always highly ritualized and relatively benign as some modern theorists have maintained, offering inadequate ethnographical parallels.
Predictably war was often at its most brutal in conflicts between states with a high degree of urban development and ethnic groups perceived as 'barbarian' i.e. different. What the Helvetii did to the Gallic tribe of the Aedui in their southward migration in the year 58 BC (destruction of their cities, devastation of fields, enslavement or death of their inhabitants) perhaps falls short of genocide. But when Caesar intervened, the killing of 258,000 of the Helvetii (warriors, but also women and children) by his legions certainly goes beyond the concept of simple mass murder, even if up to 110,000 survivors of the tribes that tried to migrate south were finally allowed to return, utterly defeated and humbled, to their land of origin. Later, other polities such as the Eburones suffered a similar if no worse fate, and vanished from history although they could perhaps later reappear as the Tungri.

Where conflicts between polities which shared the same tradition (linguistic, cultural, etc.) dragged for years or decades, such as in the case of the Peloponnesian War, war could reach new heights of cruelty, and very high rates of destruction. The chilling 'Melian dialogue' contains a rational and cold narrative of the Athenian's justification of their unrestrained exercise of the 'might is right' belief, and its terrible consequences for all the inhabitants of Melos. The text is still studied by political scientists and contemporary philosophers of history, and is consistently one of the examples cited with reference to genocide in antiquity or even more generally. And the fate of Melos is not an isolated case if one thinks of the earlier First Sacred War and the fate of Kirrha.

But here our interest is not simply in the classical world, but in the perspective of 'the other' contemporary cultures of the Iron Age. These were proto-historic societies which in their final stages were familiar with writing, coined currency and organization close to that of a state (within the limited use of the concept of 'state' usually employed for that period), but did not have demographic resources available to Athens and its Delian League, or to Rome and its Italian allies. By contrast, these societies occupied spaces which were sparsely populated, especially in the interior of Central Europe or in the Iberian Peninsula, and developed political organizations which were less complex. We know from multiple layers of sources (Greek and Roman ethnographical descriptions, but especially from very substantial archaeological information of all kinds) that the various peoples of these archaeologically defined cultures usually waged war with each other, with neighbouring ethnic groups, and ended up fighting for their survival against Rome.

It is only during this last phase of the Iron Age, from the 3rd Century BC, that Greek and Latin sources begin to show real interest in Iberians, Celtiberians, Gauls, Germans and Britons, but archaeology proves beyond reasonable doubt that the phenomenon of organized war was much earlier in these societies. Its study often requires the methodology of the prehistorian rather than that of the classicist, but it can and should be illuminated by classical sources. Even if the relationship between 'state' and 'genocide' has been seen as a direct one the very definition of 'state' in antiquity is flexible. There is no doubt that, although Iron Age societies in Western Europe were not states in the sense that Athens, Sparta or Rome were, they were perfectly capable of mass-killing and of committing ethnic cleansing, ethnocide and genocide in proportion to their own geographical and demographic capabilities.

There is no indication in the European Iron Age that large-scale killings were carried out on the precise grounds of religion or 'race' in the sense that these concepts have been understood in Europe since the nineteenth century. However there is no doubt that the great classical cultures completely destroyed other 'cultures' and ethnic groups. In some cases, these were cultures on the same cultural, economic and military level. The final,
cynical destruction of Carthage in 146 BC is a good example, although it can hardly be accepted as the first documented case of genocide. In other cases, the 'barbarians' were ethnic groups that had much lower demographic and military capabilities, and whose capacity for long-term resistance was negligible. This finally led to their destruction as ethnic groups, either by physical extermination, forced mass deportation, or assimilation.

There is evidence that similar phenomena occurred in the 'non-classical' Late Iron Age, although at a smaller scale. But we must remember that the impact of a massacre or geographical dispersion in the survival chances of an ethnic group does not really depend on the absolute number of murdered or enslaved individuals, but on the capacity for physical and cultural survival of the remaining members of the group, and this capacity can be applied to a relatively small absolute number of people. In the absence of literary sources, archaeology can hardly document 'intent' as it now exists as a basic concept in contemporary jurisprudence. Instead we can examine the results archaeologically: since the Early Bronze Age we have examples in which killing, enslavement and forced migration resulted in a real genocide, such as in the case of the so-called 'A-Group' of the Nubian Culture during the birth of the Pharaonic Egyptian state. For even earlier periods, it is difficult to prove conclusively that archaeological evidence of massacres are tantamount to the destruction of an ethnic group, however striking the remains are (Kiernan 2007: 1), although it has been proposed that there were cases of catastrophic levels of mortality in prehistoric and proto-historic times.

In this context, several recent or ongoing archaeological projects in the context of the Late Iron Age Gaul or Iberia demonstrate the potential of archaeology for the study of generalized violence in the form of widespread massacres or even genocide, but only with the concurrence of literary sources that can be clearly associated with the event. Growing evidence from the proto-historic era shows increasing proof of the highly destructive nature of war in period, compared to our earlier more benign visions of pre-state warfare.

Anthony Snodgrass has warned about the danger of the 'positivist fallacy', based on the tendency to consider important what is observable ('positive'), i.e. the temptation to view our archaeological data as reflecting particularly relevant events of the past, especially those well documented by literary sources. Certainly, as David Clarke indicated long ago archaeological data are not 'history' in themselves. Snodgrass criticizes attempts to associate certain traces of violence, destruction and death with very specific historical events, and probably rightly so, given the complexity of the events and the inevitably limited nature of archaeological research. But Snodgrass also omits to point out that in many cases a very accurate identification is in fact attainable, even to a precise year, thanks to inscriptions on weapons (e.g. the siege of Olynthus by Philip of Macedon in 348 BC), or to many elements combined, as in the case of the Roman sieges of Numantia (133 BC), Alesia (52 BC) or Masada (73 AD). Of these sieges, the first example—the destruction of the Arevaci—could be considered genocide and this can be shown by a combination of archaeological and literary sources which indicate the physical annihilation of most of the inhabitants of Numantia, and the deportation and enslavement of the survivors, followed by repopulation of the region with more submissive indigenous people.

The Iberian Peninsula

The 'archaeology of genocide' that Jones demands does not yet exist, but many scholars are taking steps in that direction. The signs of progress, however, are promising,
in theory and in practice. Greek or Latin literary sources occasionally cast light on aspects of the peninsular Iron Age societies, and illuminate a situation which suggests the existence of the full range of violence that we have already described, from massacre to genocide through ethnic cleansing and atrocities.

The existence of serfs and slaves in the Iberian Iron Age is well documented, either individually or in complete groups as a result of military defeat, including the reduction to a state of servitude or dependence of complete oppida. This process seems to have grown exponentially from the end of the third century, first with the Carthaginian and later with Roman presence, coming close to current categories of ethnic cleansing and genocide. The cold policy of intimidation and terror developed by Rome, well documented by classical sources, certainly contributed to this. Francisco Gracia recently tested this hypothesis on Iron Age Iberia, based primarily on sources. To this can now be added the growing mass of archaeological data, much more direct and therefore often more expressive, more horrific and more personal.

Modern archaeological excavations cover small areas of land, often tens or at most a few hundred square meters per field season, where a century ago the excavation areas were measured in thousands of square meters. That scale of fieldwork allowed an overview of whole neighbourhoods of cities, though at the price of a much lower detail than at present. In both cases, but especially in recent excavations, the archaeological evidence of intentional destruction and accompanying massacres (that may or may not correspond to a genocide-level action) usually amounts to a small statistical sample, and further extrapolation is often problematic. In many cases this positive evidence cannot be directly related to literary sources, and therefore its importance in historical terms is somewhat speculative. The notion that mutilated human remains might prove violence but not necessarily war does not arise in the Iron Age case-studies we present here. Some examples are known in Celtic Europe, such as the large-scale massacre recently discovered at the Ham Hill Hillfort (Somerset), associated with the Roman conquest. Here we will focus on other case studies taken from recent archaeological research in the Iberian Peninsula.

In the examples given here we can trace at least seven, and perhaps the nine relevant factors in ancient massacres summarized by Bishop and Knüsel: 'victims have little capacity to resist; perpetrators have superior/overwhelming force; a history of mutual hostility; a call to rally immediately prior to the massacre; surprise attack; a loss of control by the perpetrators; ethnic or ideological differences; a high level of military activity; following extremely dangerous moments such as an assault on fortified positions'.

A methodological problem is raised by the results of the excavations in the town of the Late Iron Age La Hoya (Alava) (Fig. 1). In a general layer of destruction of the town (dated to a unspecified moment in the Celtiberian phase of the town, perhaps during the third century BC) many skeletons have been found, some of them not only beheaded, but with their heads removed from the body. Others show limb amputations and perimortem wounds (Figures 1 and 2a-b). Originally these decapitations were seen as examples of the well known Celtic tête coupée rite. However, the archaeological context of widespread destruction, the abandonment of valuables under the ruins of houses, the forced position of the skeletons — often lying on the pavement of the streets, and the multiple wounds — beheading is just one of them, rather indicate that the attackers massacred the inhabitants, and also any domestic animals they happened to find in the streets, whose remains also were left in situ.

However, the excavated area is a small fraction of the total of the oppidum (6230 m² excavated, 15.5% of the total area), and so far it is impossible to gauge the volume...
of deaths in relation to the survivors, or even the fate of these survivors. Nor is it possible to know whether the case of La Hoya can be extrapolated to a large segment of the ethnicity of the Berones beyond the purely local impact. It does not help that the excavations have not been published in detail, but it seems that the site survived the massacre, although languishing.

A different scenario is provided by the abundant mutilated human remains recently excavated in cities whose destruction, partial or complete, can be confidently associated with the process of Roman conquest (second century BC), or with the Civil Wars of the Roman Republic from Sertorius to Caesar during the first half of the first century BC (both moments are 'Late Iberian' in the Iron Age archaeological terminology). In these cases the archaeological layers can be dated very accurately, and it is often feasible to associate these destructions and massacres with relevant events narrated in Latin literary sources.

A particularly significant case is that of the destruction of the Iberian town of Cerro de la Cruz (Córdoba) (Fig. 1). Our recent excavations covering an area of about 1,100 m², with a large central excavated area and some smaller trial trenches, sampled much of the total surface of the town, estimated to total about 4 hectares. In all these sectors we have documented an identical pattern: large-scale destruction by fire, and the resulting collapse of large two-storey buildings. Under the rubble we find warehouses filled with amphoras, looms, rotary mills, quern-stones with cereal grain already prepared for grinding, all types of tools and farm instruments, even wagon wheels. In summary, the town was torched by surprise in its heyday. The fire was definitely deliberate: it lasted a long time, and in many cases the rammed earth or mud brick walls were almost baked by the intense heat; once the fire extinguished by itself,
no one removed the ruins to rescue valuables, tools or any items of household furniture. In fact, the oppidum – fortified town – was abandoned and the site remained so for almost one thousand years, until the Middle Ages.

But the most revealing and gruesome finding was that of at least seven human skeletons, more or less incomplete, slumped over a space of only twenty meters along one of the main streets of the town.\(^9\) Two of these skeletons, both adult males (nos. 1401 and 1402), show terrible \textit{perimortem} mutilations in the extremities and pelvis, including the almost total amputation of legs, and also burns in the phalanges of the fingers not consistent with the massive fires. As these two bodies were found lying on the pavement of the main street, where it opens into a square, it could be evidence of torture prior to murder. Belt buckles, brooches and other items of clothing have not appeared alongside the skeletons, so I would suggest that they could have been naked at the time they were hacked to death by the sword, and their bodies were left locked together in terrible agony (Figures 3 and 4). A few meters to the southwest along the street, under the debris of the collapsed buildings, we found the more incomplete remains of another individual, perhaps a woman. Finally, and among the rubble of a building, the remains of three of four individuals were found, skulls and bones crushed by the fallen walls and partially burnt by the fires. One of them was an adult male and another a young woman. These people probably fled or hid upstairs in a place with no escape, and were burned to death or were crushed by the collapsing...
It is important to emphasize that, despite the systematic destruction and killing, there is no evidence of combat. Except for a single Roman arrowhead, there are no weapons (like sling bullets or javelins) in the streets, and the types of visible injuries on both nearly complete skeletons are particular to the slaughter of unarmed prisoners, and not battle wounds. The position of the three bodies found on the street shows that they were abandoned on the ground, and did not receive any kind of funerary ritual. The bodies were not collected to be cremated and buried according to the universal Iberian funerary ritual (and the patterns of mortuary practice are important when analyzing genocide as Debra Komar has indicated). This is again evidence of an extremely violent action consistent with large-scale massacre.

The destruction is well dated by coins and ceramic typology (including imported vessels) to circa 150–130 BC. This is Late Iberian period (according to local chronology)
or Roman Republican from a Roman perspective. By this time, the Roman administration had settled in the fertile and open valley of the Baetis river (Guadalquivir), but still did not fully control the highlands of the Provincia Baetica, using pacts with local aristocracies to ensure order. Additionally, unconquered Celtiberia to the north was engaged in full scale war with Rome, while in Lusitania to the northwest the war leader Viriathus not only successfully resisted Roman pressure, but led his army into deep and prolonged raids into the heart of Baetica/Andalusia, even reaching the general area of Cerro de la Cruz, whose Iberian name is unknown although it is possible that it was Eiskadia. All this is well documented by literary sources, particularly Appian.

If we stop our analysis here, and according to the 'positivist fallacy' explained above, we have no way of knowing if the destruction and massacre in Cerro de la Cruz is significant or relevant in the global historical context of the Roman conquest of Hispania. But the combination of modern, large scale archaeological excavation in a well-dated context with the study of some rather precise literary sources, helps us to broaden the perspective, allows escaping the fallacy. Indeed, in a context of c. 150/150 BC, and given overall Roman control of the Province, it is inconceivable that destruction on this scale could happen due to low-intensity internecine warfare between neighbouring towns. Only Viriathus’ Lusitanian forces, which had raided the area on more than one occasion at that time, could have caused destruction on this scale. We know that the Lusitanian leader not only fought Rome, but attacked with equal ferocity any locals that did not side with him. This was the case of two local polities, the Belli and the Titi, five thousand of whose men were ruthlessly slaughtered when they tried to oppose Viriathus’ plundering raids. But if – in a theoretical scenario – the people from Cerro de la Cruz, supposedly allies of Rome, had been massacred by the Lusitanians in one of these raids, it is doubtful that the destruction would have been so complete, and that the mutilated bodies would had been left desecrated without anyone carrying out the appropriate funeral rites once the raiders withdrew. Above all, Rome would have ensured that their faithful if unlucky local allies would have been properly rewarded and their town rebuilt. Nothing like this happened.

In fact, available evidence leads us to believe that our oppidum probably helped Viriathus in some way, and that it was Rome who destroyed it. It is Appian again, probably using the always reliable Polybius as his own source, who provides the date, author and pretext. The struggle of Viriathus with the consul Fabius Maximus Aemilianus in 145/144 BC, seems to have centred around Urso/Osuna and Corduba/Córdoba. By 142 BC, however, the war scenario seems to have also moved eastward towards central Andalusia and the highlands of the Subbetic ranges. According to Appian in 142 Viriathus expelled the Roman garrison from Itucci (Ἰτοκκι), settled there for a while, and ravaged the land of the Bastetanos (Βασσητάνων). There is, however, a problem with the location of Itucci. Most researchers identify it by phonetic similarity and geographical consistency with Tucci (Martos, Jaén), the future Colonia Gemella Avgvsta (e.g. TIR 2001: 323 sv Τυκκι), although some prefer to identify it with Ituci, even closer phonetically and almost certainly located in the great oppidum at Torreparedones (Baena, Córdoba), the future Caesarian Colonia Virtus Iulia. We do not want to delve into a complex debate, but if we support the hypothesis that military operations of the years 142–140 were carried not only in Western but also in Central Andalusia, then it is not really important whether Appian’s Ituci, where Viriathus established his winter quarters in 143/42, was today’s Martos or Torreparedones, because both places are in the same general area, and close to Cerro de la Cruz, about two days’ march from it to the
north and northwest respectively. The really important point is that large-scale military operations were carried out in the general area by the new proconsul for 141, Quintus Fabius Maximus Servilianus, and under this pressure Viriathus had to abandon Ittuci.

It is therefore very likely that the region where Cerro de la Cruz is located, in the eastern confines of Iberian Bastetania, was in the general area of military operations carried out by Viriathus and Servilianus between 142/141 BC. It is just conceivable but not probable that Cerro de la Cruz was destroyed during the course of these fluid campaigns, but there is yet another and more plausible possibility. Appian tells us that, after leaving his base at Ittuci, Viriathus returned to Lusitania in 141 BC; Servilianus then carried out activity that included large-scale punishment and killing in a region that had welcomed Viriathus: 'Servilianus . . . took the towns of Escadia, Gemella, and Obolcola, which had been garrisoned by Viriathus. Others he plundered, and still others he spared. Having captured about 10,000 prisoners, he beheaded 500 of them and sold the rest as slaves.'

Such activity, which certainly goes beyond the occasional massacre to enter the scale of genocide at the regional level, is supported by Valerius Maximus and Orosius, although these are less reliable sources. We should remember that an exemplary warning at this scale, with the sacking of cities, massive beheadings and the sale of ten thousand people as slaves, amounts to the depopulation of farms, villages and of whole oppida, whose populations at this time rarely exceeded the two to three thousand people at most. The chronological frame for these actions fits perfectly with the dates archaeology provides us, and the systematic and brutal devastation suffered by the site at Cerro de la Cruz closely reflects events as described by Appian. Unfortunately, having only a single good literary source on this issue makes it impossible to be certain, but the overall picture we can draw provides a good fit between all types of information.

During the Iron Age the basic political and 'national' unit in Iberia was the oppidum together with its surrounding territory, as indeed happened all over the Mediterranean. Consequently, the annihilation of an entire city and the killing, deportation or enslavement of its inhabitants fits well in the modern legal concept of 'genocide', as affecting a 'national or ethnic group'. In the mists of European Iron Age many ethnic groups must have been destroyed in this way; the destiny of some of them we can trace through literary sources, as in the case of the unfortunate Melians cited above; only occasionally archaeology offers us a glimpse of similar dramas in barbarian Europe.

When ancient literary sources tell us of olive groves completely scorched or felled, of completely devastated fields and destroyed cities, of the annihilation of entire populations, we can be tempted to dismiss them as literary exaggeration. It is certainly true, as V.D. Hanson showed many years ago, that it is very difficult with ancient technologies to completely and permanently devastate cultivated fields and groves. But a Roman army in the field could also be a truly devastating force. When Tacitus narrates the consequences of the Roman disaster at Teutoburg, and asserts that Germanicus' retaliatory campaign in AD 14 was arranged so that the army systematically laid waste a strip of land fifty Roman miles wide along its axis of advance, killing without regard for age or sex, we can be sure that it was no exaggeration; it was in fact 'standard operating procedure', and archaeology is increasingly corroborating it. Our last case study from Hispania, an archaeological dig in which there is no doubt about the specific historical event being discovered, is also quite explicit in this regard. The repeated mutilations and severe injuries sustained by the people from the oppidum at Cerro de la Cruz show that the repeated descriptions in ancient literary sources to the terrible wounds caused by edged weapons such as the Roman gladius are not
exaggerated at all.67 (But the skeletal evidence from Cerro de la Cruz, gruesome as it is, pales beside the cruelty and savagery documented in the archaeological site of La Almoïna in Valencia (ancient Hispano-Roman Valentia, eastern Spain). After the capture of the city by the victorious Pompeian army in 75 BC during the Sertorian Wars, the victor indulged in an orgy of destruction of the captured city which had just been taken.68 In a quite small excavated area very close to the Forum of the hispano-roman city, just in front of some shops (tabernae) and the public baths, a substantial number of prisoners, unarmed and handcuffed, were tortured and hacked to death before the place was put to the torch. The scene revealed by archaeologists (Figure 2.4) is staggering: on the pavement, the mutilated skeletons of at least fourteen prisoners appear as a sobering memento of what war is really about. The victors and torturers tied one of the prisoners with a rope around his neck, placed him on his hands and knees, and impaled him thrusting a pilum, a type of slender spear with a very long iron shaft, all the way from his anus to his neck. The long iron point still remained embedded in the skeleton after two thousand years. Other men had all four limbs hacked off while they were still alive. As one of them was a very robust man, and sword cuts were not enough to completely chop off the strong muscles of the thigh and the femur, his limbs were twisted and pulled apart by hand. The conquerors beheaded another man and placed the severed head in between the victim’s legs.69

The cases we have described are not the only known cases in Hispania. For example, recent excavations in LaBitolosa (Lezuza, Albacete) show strong evidence of
deliberate destruction, including the remains of children left dead, head crushed, on the streets. There is always a darker side to conquest and subsequent assimilation, particularly during the early stages of the process. This was well described by the Roman writer Tacitus:

But there are no tribes beyond us, nothing indeed but waves and rocks, and the yet more terrible Romans, from whose oppression escape is vainly sought by obedience and submission. Robbers of the world, having by their universal plunder exhausted the land, they rifle the deep. If the enemy be rich, they are rapacious; if he be poor, they lust for dominion; neither the east nor the west has been able to satisfy them. Alone among men, they covet with equal eagerness poverty and riches. To robbery, slaughter, plunder, they give the lying name of empire; they make a desert and call it peace. 

The Romans of old certainly could, like many peoples before and since, create a desert and call it 'peace'. And when doubt is sometimes cast on the reliability of ancient sources describing gruesome massacres archaeology certainly proves that in many cases the classical writers did not exaggerate at all.

Notes
3 Levene, *Meaning*, p. 35.
13 Komar, 'Patterns', p. 125.
27 The Helvetii kept a written census, see Caesar, Gallic War, 1, 29.
28 Ibid, pp. 6, 34, 8-9.
35 Jones, Genocide, p. 5.
42 Appian, Iber, pp. 97-98.
43 Jones, Genocide, p. 3.

46 Francisco Marco Simón, Francisco Pina Polo and José Remesa l Rodríguez (eds), *Vae Victis! Perdedores en el mundo antiguo* (Barcelona: Eds. Universitat, 2012).

47 Francisco Gracia Alonso, '¡Ay de los vencidos! Las consecuencias de la guerra protohistórica en la Península Ibérica', *Cypsela* 16, 2006, pp. 65-86.


49 ibid, pp. 211-212.

50 Armando Llanos Ortiz de Landaluze, *Mil años de vida en el poblado Berén de La Hoya (Laguardia, Alava)* (Vitoria: Díptica, 2005).


52 cf. Fernando Quesada Sanz, Ignacio Muñiz Jaén and Inmaculada López Flores 'La guerra y sus trases: destruction and massacre in the Iberian Cerro de La Cruz (Córdoba) and their context: historical and cultural remains in the Iron Age oppida' (Bordeaux: Ausonius, 2014), pp. 25-53.


64 Albert Ribera 'La primera evidencia arqueológica de la destrucción de Valentia por Pompeyo', *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 8, 1995, pp. 19-46.


72 Jones, *Genocide*, p. 4.