

HISPANISMS IN THE LANGUAGE OF ISIDORE OF SEVILLE

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For the student of late Latin in Spain Isidore of Seville (560-636 AD) is a very important figure, as he is writing at a time when the Latin of the Iberian Peninsula is beginning to distinguish itself from that of other areas of the Empire. As bishop of Seville and later Toledo, Isidore had the task of making himself understood not only to fellow scholars but also to wider sections of the public. He was a leading figure in the revival of Latin culture in Spain which had fallen into abeyance in the early fifth and mid sixth centuries. This cultural renaissance involved careful study of the work of earlier grammarians, particularly of the North African tradition, and led to the reestablishment of a high level of Latinity in Visigothic Spain in the late sixth and seventh centuries. Nevertheless new editions of Isidore, such as those of the *Etymologiae* in the *Belles Lettres* series and of the *Sententiae* for *Corpus Christianorum*¹ are showing that earlier editors, such as Lindsay, may have overestimated Isidore's Latinity and corrected out a number of vulgar and late Latin features to be found in his work.

In a previous study of the evidence for the spoken Latin of seventh-century Visigothic Spain in the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville², I analysed words attributed to the *uulgus* in that work. These proved an unreliable source of evidence on the spoken Latin of Isidore's time, since *uulgus* need not refer to the uneducated masses but simply to the majority of contemporary speakers, including Isidore himself. Furthermore the attribution to the *uulgus* may not have originated with Isidore but could have been taken directly from a source, which could have been written many centuries earlier. Similarly Isidore's section on orthography (*Etym.* 1.27) was shown to have been derived from earlier grammarians and to owe little or nothing to Isidore's knowledge of particular difficulties experienced by his contemporaries in this area. A more fruitful field of research proved to be the etymologies themselves. Those which Isidore had not taken from the grammatical tradition, but had invented himself, often appeared to be based on a

¹ ANDRÈ (1981), (1986), REYDELLET (1984), RODRÍGUEZ-PANTOJA (1995), CAZIER (1998).

² MALTBY (1999).

contemporary pronunciation in which confusions between *b* and *u*,³ *ae* diphthong and *e*,⁴ the voicing of intervocalic *c* to *g*⁵ and the use of prothetic vowels⁶ were common. Most of the vulgar Latin features revealed by this study were pan-Romance phenomena rather than specific to the Iberian Peninsula, reflecting a situation in which the different varieties of Romance were not yet clearly distinguished. The aim of the present paper is to examine the evidence in the *Etymologiae* and other works of Isidore for lexical items which are specifically Spanish.

The most logical place to begin would be with those words which Isidore himself tells us were characteristic of the language of the *Hispani* or *Baetici*:

(a) *Etym.* 15.15.5 *actum prouinciae Baeticae rustici acnuam uocant.*

An *acnua* is a measure of land, equivalent to an *actus quadratus* or 120 square feet WRIGHT (1982) 90 and BANNIARD (1992) 203 see this as an example of Isidore's recording the language of the peasants of his own province of Baetica. To quote BANNIARD, «L'eveque a enregistré des mots du pays ou il vit». Unfortunately it seems more likely that Isidore had taken this information from Columella, also a native of Baetica, but writing some five hundred years earlier.⁷ In itself then the reference in Isidore tells us nothing about the use of the word in his time. In fact the term is attested as far back as Varro, who is not aware of a foreign origin, as his use of the adverb *latine* shows: *Rust.* 1.10.2 *is modus (i.e. actus quadratus) acnua latine appellatur.* The un-Latin *agn-* spelling attested in Columella is likely to be correct and suggests a Celtic origin, as is also the case with the other land measure *arepennis* discussed under (d) below. The *acn-* spelling may be a Latinization, perhaps influenced by *actus*. The use of *agnua* in Spain is attested on an inscription from Andalousia *CIL* 2.2361 *siluae agnuarum trecentarum*, so it could in fact be true that at least for some periods the word was used by Baetic peasants. However it appears to have left no reflexes in Iberian Romance or elsewhere.

A reference to *Hispani*, then, in Isidore could, like references to the *uul-gus*, simply be derived from Isidore's sources and tell us nothing about the

³ E.g. *Etym.* 12.1.31 *uacca dicta quasi boacca.*

⁴ E.g. *Etym.* 5.25.1 *dicta hereditas ab aere.*

⁵ E.g. *Etym.* 10.6 *alacer, a uelocitate et cursu, quasi diceret 'aliger'.*

⁶ E.g. *Etym.* 8.2.5 *spes uocata ... quasi 'est pes'.*

⁷ *Colum.* 5.1.5 *sed hunc actum prouinciae Baetici rustici agnuam uocant.*

state of the spoken language in his time. This is the case again in our second example:

(b) *Etym.* 15.9.5 *foramtum, siue formacium, in Africa et Hispania parietes a terra appellant, quoniam in forma circumdatis duabus utrimque tabulis interficiuntur uerius quam instruuntur.*

The word *formatum* or *formacium* refers to a wall made by pouring mud into a wooden mould and letting it bake dry. Here Isidore's reference to *formacium* as characteristic of Spain or North Africa comes from Pliny the elder.⁸ In this case, however, the word does leave reflexes in Iberian Romance, the Spanish *hormazo* «heap of stones» and *hormaza* «brick wall»⁹ and was probably a feature of the local language in Isidore's time.

(c) *Etym.* 12.7.67 *tucos, quos Hispani ciculos uocant, a uoce propria nominatos.*

The normal Latin word for cuckoo is *cuculus* and this is reflected in its Romance reflexes including Spanish *cuquillo* and Portuguese *coco*.¹⁰ Isidore here attributes the form *ciculus* to the *Hispani*. In fact, if true, this would be a typical Spanish dissimilation of *u-u* to *e-u*. So here Isidore could be giving the actual pronunciation of his time. This is backed up by the etymology at 12.8.10 where *cicades* are derived from *ciculorum sputo*.¹¹ The form *tucus*, incidently, is not reflected in Romance and occurs only in glosses, but again onomatopoeic variation of *t* and *c* is quite common.¹²

(d) *Etym.* 15.15.5 *actus quadratus ... hunc Baetici arapennem dicunt, ab arando scilicet.*

arapennis is another term of land measurement attributed by Isidore to the *Baetici*. In this case the attribution occurs only in Isidore and has not, as far as I know, been taken from a source. Columella gives the form as *arepennis*, which is probably the original form, and attributes the word to the *Galli*.¹³ Like *agnua* in (a) above the word is in fact likely to be of Celtic origin. And the form *arepennis* gives rise to the French and Provençale re-

⁸ Plin. *Nat.* 35.169 *in Africa Hispaniaque e terra parietes, quos appellant formaceos.*

⁹ REW 3442.

¹⁰ REW 2360.

¹¹ Isid. *Etym.* 12.8.10 *cicades ex ciculorum nascentur sputo.*

¹² See ANDRÉ (1967) 56.

¹³ Colum. 5.1.6 *Galli ... semiuggerum ... arepennem uocant.*

flexes.¹⁴ The form with *a* in Isidore may be there to ease the etymological derivation *ab arando*, though, more likely, it contains a reflection of the actual pronunciation in Baetica in his time, as the old Spanish form *arapende* suggests.

(e) *Etym.* 18.6.9 *secures ... quas Hispani ab usu Francorum per deriuationem franciscas uocant*

(f) *Etym.* 18.7.7 *claua ... haec et cateia, quam Horatius caiam dicit. est enim genus Gallici teli ex materia quam maxime lenta ... huic meminit Vergilius dicens (Aen. 7.741): 'Teutonico ritu soliti torquere cateias.' unde et eos Hispani et Galli tautanos uocant.*

In examples (e) and (f) occur two names of weapons which Isidore attributes to the *Hispani*. First, *francisca* is a kind of axe, named from the Franks. It is a new import which seems to be taking over from the Latin *secures* in Isidore's time, but which has left no reflexes in Romance. Next, *tautanus* is a kind of wooden throwing stick or boomerang, so named from the Teutones. SOFER (1930) 46-7 suggests the *au* diphthong is an Iberian feature corresponding to Celtic *ou* from an original *eu* diphthong in Teutones. The word in this form is also attested in a gloss¹⁵ and seems to represent a form current in Spain in Isidore's time, but again it has left no reflexes.

(g) *Etym.* 19.24.15 *mantum Hispani uocant quod manum tegat tantum. est enim breue amictum.*

It is uncertain why Isidore sees *mantum* 'a short cloak' as specifically Spanish. The word is probably a back formation from *mantellum*. It is attested in Caeserius of Arles (and so was just as frequent in Gaul as in Spain), occurs in Medieval Latin and has reflexes in all the Romance languages except Romanian.¹⁶ However, the existence of the Basque *mantar* leaves open perhaps the faint possibility of an Iberian origin.

Finally in this section comes the use of *ciconia* not in its original sense of a stork but as a kind of pump, resembling a stork.

Etym. 20.15.3 *hoc instrumentum (sc. telonem) Hispani ciconiam dicunt,*

¹⁴ REW 634 Fr. *arpent*, Prov. *arpen*.

¹⁵ Gloss V 247.29 *tautanos cateias, de quibus Vergilius (Aen. 7.741).*

¹⁶ REW 5328.

propter quod imitetur eiusdem nominis auem, leuantes aqua ac deponentes rostrum, dum clangit.

This use of the word for a type of pump lives on in Spanish and Portuguese as well as in Sicilian and was also applied to other stork-like instruments.¹⁷ Columella mentions its use by the *rustici* as a kind of measuring-stick¹⁸ and in the modern Spanish form *cigueñal* it is used of a crank-shaft. To sum up on this section, all the words attributed by Isidore to the *Baetici* or *Hispani* seem to be either new words typical of the region such as *francisca* and *tautanus*, or to have been well established in the Peninsula for some time such as *acnua*, *formacium*, *arapennis*, *mantium* and *ciconia*. In the case of *ciculus* and *arapennis* the reference may be to slight dialectal variants *ciculus* for *cucus* and *arapennis* for *arepennis*. With the possible exception of *francisca* and *tautanus*, Isidore seems to rely on the literary tradition rather than on his own personal experience of the local dialect and lexicographers should be warned that a reference to what the *Hispani* or *Baetici* say in Isidore cannot be dated with certainty to the time he was writing.

As well as using *Hispani* or *Baetici* Isidore can on occasion use the first person plural to indicate a usage common to himself and his compatriots. Again we have to be careful that he has not just copied the first person plural form from his source. Two particular examples of this deserve further investigation:

- (a) *Etym.* 9.4.44 *ancillae a sustentaculo uocatae. ancon enim grece cubitus dicitur. unde et anconem dicimus.*
- (b) *Etym.* 17.10.11 *lactuca agrestis est quam sarraliam nominamus, quod dorsum eius in modum serrae est.*

In (a) Isidore says *ancon* is the Greek for *cubitus* ‘elbow’ from which ‘we’ say *anconem* «elbow in the sense of a support». The fact that the Spanish used the Greek *ancon* for Latin *cubitus* is also attested independently by Fortunatianus.¹⁹ There were numerous Greeks living in the Spanish Peninsular and loan words from Greek must have been common. The existence of the Romance reflexes *ancon* and *anco* in Spanish and Portuguese in the

¹⁷ REW 1906 Sp. *cigueña*, *cigueñal*, Port. *cegonha*.

¹⁸ Colum. 3.13.11 *id genus mensurae ciconiam uocant rustici.*

¹⁹ Fortunatianus 3.4 Rhet. Lat. Min. HELM p. 123 *Hispani non cubitum uocant, sed graeco nomine ancona (anconem).*

sense ‘bay’ further support this view.²⁰ But again a note of caution needs to be sounded, for Augustine had earlier used the first person plural and *uulgo* in association with this word: Aug. *in Hept.* 2.109 *anconisos autem dicit, quos uulgo uocamus ancones* (‘which we commonly call supports’), *sicut sunt in columnis cellarum uinariarum, quibus incumbunt ligna, quae cupas ferunt.* This indicates that although this use of *anco* may have originated in Spain it was no longer by Isidore’s time restricted to that area of the Latin speaking world, as the Italian place name *Ancona* ‘bay’ also shows.

The source of (b) on *sarralia*, a kind of lettuce, is the sixth-century *Dynamidia* (a Latin Dioscorides).²¹ But there the third person *uocant* is changed in Isidore to *nominamus*. The frequency of reflexes in Ibero-Romance²² shows that Isidore may have been correct in seeing this alternative to *lactuca* as characteristically Spanish.

There is no need, with Lindsay, to correct the spelling to *serrallia* to bring it into line with the etymology from *serra* and the Catalan and Portuguese reflexes. Isidore is not worried in his etymologising by the difference of the odd vowel here and there.

The first person plural uses then, while pointing perhaps to forms familiar to Isidore in Spain at the time of writing, cannot in themselves be taken as evidence for the exclusive use of these words in the Iberian Peninsula.

Reference to words used by the *rustici* may sometimes give an indication in Isidore of the contemporary usage of Spanish peasants and this seems to be the case with the form *ala* for *inula*. Greek ελένιον:

Etym. 17.11.9 *inula, quam rustici alam uocant.*

The plant referred to here is *sympyton officinale* ‘comfrey’. The normal alternative form in Latin is *alum*, which may be a Celtic loan word, as in Scrib. Larg. 83 *sympyti radix, quam quidam inulam rusticam uocant, quidem autem alum Gallicum dicunt.* But the glosses²³ as well as the reflexes in Catalan and Spanish²⁴ support Isidore’s spelling *ala*. There is no way of telling whether this information about rustic usage came to Isidore directly or whether he got it from a book but in this case it does seem to reflect an Iberian usage that continued into Romance.

²⁰ REW 444 Sp. *ancon*, Port. *anco* ‘bay’, cf. *Ancona*.

²¹ *Dynamidia* 2.52 *multi bene (sc. lactucam siluaticam) sarraciam uocant quod dorsus eius in modum serrae est.*

²² REW 7865 Sp. *saraja, cerraja*, Cat. *serralla*, Port. *serrabla*.

²³ Gloss III 560.71 *elenium id est enula siue ala.*

²⁴ REW 305 Catal. and Sp. *ala*.

I come now to the final section on words occurring in Isidore with no indication of origin, but which we know from external sources to be Iberian. Here Isidore may be an unconscious witness to the state of the language in his time.

(a) The form *apopores* or *apoperes* occurs only in *Etym.* 17.10.16 and in glosses.²⁵ It comes from a section of the work which is clearly incomplete and simply lists plants *cucurbita*, *apoperes...brassica*, *olisatrum* without further discussion. These entries were presumably to be filled in at a later date. The Portuguese reflexes *abobra* and *abobara* suggest that Isidore is here using a native Iberian word.²⁶

(b) *Etym.* 12.4.33 *salpuga serpens est quae non uidetur.*

The *salpuga* is a mysterious and dangerous snake-like creature, perhaps a scorpion. We are told by Pliny the elder that the form *salpuga* comes from Baetica.²⁷ It occurs significantly in the work of Isidore's fellow Spaniard Lucan and is called a Spanish form by the scholia on that passage.²⁸ Isidore's source is probably the Placidus gloss which comments on the form *salpinta*.²⁹ There are no Romance reflexes. It is probably the same as the beast referred to as *solifuga* in *Etym.* 12.3.4.³⁰ Here we seem to be dealing with a Latinised form derived from a popular etymology, as with *solipuga* attributed by Pliny to Cicero, based on the Latin *pungere*.³¹ For Isidore to give different etymologies of two forms of the same word is not unknown.³² *Salpuga* appears again to be a native Iberian word with no Latin etymology.

(c) *Etym.* 19.22.29 *camisias uocari quod in his dormimus in camis, id est in stratis nostris. Etym.* 20.11.2 (*de lecticis et sellis*) *cama est breuis et circa terram. Graeci enim chamai breue dicunt.*

²⁵ Gloss. III 430.30 *apapores ἀνακρεμνάδες*.

²⁶ REW 529.

²⁷ Plin. Nat. 29.92 *est et formicarum genus uenenatum, non fere in Italia. solipugas Cicero appellat, salpugas Baetica. his cor uespertilionis contrarium omnibusque formicis.*

²⁸ Lucan 9.837 *quis calcare tuas metuat, salpuga, latebras?* Schol. Lucan ad loc. *salpinga: genus serpentis modici, quam Plinius dixit animal formicæ simile quod Hispania salpungas dicit.*

²⁹ Gloss. Plac. V 97.17 *salpinta serpens quae non uidetur.*

³⁰ *Etym.* 12.3.4 *est in Sardinia animal perexiguum, aranei forma, quae solifuga dicitur, quod diem fugiat.*

³¹ KELLER (1891) 58.

Although *cama* ‘small bed’ is etymologised from Greek in Isidore, it is not found outside these two passages and its Romance reflexes in Spanish and Portuguese.³³ This is then another native Iberian word, with no Greek or Latin root, but which unlike *salpuga* goes through into Romance.

(d) *Etym.* 20.3.18 *caelia a calefaciendo appellata; est enim potio ex suco tritici per artem confecta ... quae fit in his partibus Hispaniae cuius ferax uini locus non est.*

caelia is a type of beer. Isidore gives a clue to its Iberian origin in his words *quae fit in his partibus Hispaniae cuius ferax uini locus non est*. Orosius pins it down to the Spaniards of Numantia on the upper Douro.³⁴ The word is not Latin but has reflexes in Spanish and Portuguese as *celia*.

(e) *Etym.* 18.12.5 *cetra scutum loreum sine ligno, quo utuntur Afri et Mauri. de quo poeta (Virg. Aen. 7.732) ‘laevas caetra tegit’. Cf. Serv. ad loc. *caetra* est *scutum loreum, quo utuntur Afri et Hispani.**

caetra is a small Spanish shield. The word occurs in Virgil and Servius comments that it is used by the *Afri et Hispani*. Isidore changes this to *Afri et Mauri*. Like *caelia* the word is not Latin but has reflexes in Spanish and Portuguese as *cetra*.

(f) *Sent.* 3.9.6 *ingenio tardus, etsi non per naturam, per assiduitatem tamen lectionis augmentat* Cf. CAZIER (1998) xlviii.

CAZIER’s new edition of the *Sententiae* discusses in its introduction a number of late Latin and vulgar uses in this work, intended for a wide audience. At the lexical level, one interesting feature from our point of view is the intransitive use of *augmentare*, not attested elsewhere in late Latin, but clearly the forerunner of the modern Spanish intransitive use of *aumentar*.

(g) *Etym.* 17.3.9 uses the term *alica* in the sense of ‘spelt’, rather than ‘gruel’, which is the normal classical meaning.³⁵ ‘Spelt’ is the later Spanish meaning of *alaga*³⁶ and seems already to have been established in Spain in

³² Cf. *Etym.* 10.255 *scurrā >sequendo*, 2.6.30 *iscurrā>esca*.

³³ REW 1537 Sp., Port. *cama*.

³⁴ Oros. 5.7.13 *Numantini ... suco tritici per artem confecto, quem sucum a calefaciendo caeliam uocant.*

³⁵ See ANDRÉ (1981) 35.

Isidore's time. The word probably came into Latin originally from the Greek $\alpha\lambdaικα$ the accusative form of $\alpha\lambdaιξ$ = 'spelt'.

(h) Similarly with *centenum* for classical *secale* 'rye', Isidore at *Etym.* 17.3.12 gives the name of this cereal common in the Iberian Peninsula in his time. Elsewhere the form is attested only in the edict of Diocletian 1.3 *centenum siue secale*, but is clearly the root of the Spanish and Portuguese forms *centeno* and *centeio* respectively.³⁷

Finally the names of a number of fruits from book 17 of Isidore's *Etymologiae* seem to reflect local Spanish usage.

(i) *Etym.* 17.7.5 *malomellus a dulcedine appellata, quod fructus eius mellis saporem habeat*

Here *malomellum* as it stands in the text must be emended to *melomellus*, because of the feminine *appellata*.³⁸ It refers to the tree called $\muελιμηλον$ 'sweet apple' in Greek. Isidore's metathesised form *malomellum* for classical *melimelum* is attested elsewhere only in later glosses and in Isidore's Medieval successor Johannes de Janua, but it is the ancestor of such Iberian Romance forms as Portuguese *marmelo* and Asturian *marmiellu* «quince», and also of the Portuguese *marmelada*.³⁹ Isidore then provides the first attestation of an important Romance form.

(j) *Etym.* 17.9.75 *malua euiscus ...euiscus quia glutinosa est.*

This is a good instance of a popular etymology. The original form for this type of mallow was *malua hibiscus*.⁴⁰ *Euiscus* is a late form of *hibiscus* attested in Pseudo-Sornaus and Oribasius. Isidore connects *euiscus* with *uiscus*, as the beaten root of this mallow was in fact viscous in texture. Later the two words were run together into *maluauiscus* which is the root of the Romance forms, found not only in Spanish *malvavisco* and Portuguese *malvaisco* but also in the dialect Italian form *malvavischio*.

(k) *Etym.* 17.7.3 *mala matiana a loco uocata unde prius adiecta sunt.*

³⁶ *REW* 337.

³⁷ *REW* 1118.

³⁸ See ANDRÉ (1981) 84.

³⁹ *REW* 5478.

The *malum matianum*, originally a particular kind of apple named after Gaius Matius a contemporary of Caesar, becomes the common name for apple in general in Iberian Romance, as in Spanish *manzano* and Portuguese *maçã*. Hence it is the one type of apple which is singled out for special mention in this section of Isidore. He etymologises not from a person but from a place-name, referring it to Matianum near Aquileia, in Northern Italy, an etymology found in originally in Athenaeus (*Deipn.* 3.23).

(l) *Etym.* 17.7.10 *coquimella, quam Latini ob colorem prunum uocant, alii a multitudine enixi fructus nixam appellant.*

Similarly *nixa*, classical *myxa*, from Greek μύξα, was originally a special type of plum, the Sebesten, but becomes the general word for plum in some Spanish dialects.⁴¹ For the change *m* to *n* in vulgar Latin one may compare the change classical *mappa* to vulgar *nappa*. Again, apart from glosses, Isidore is the first to preserve this *nixa* form which had important Spanish reflexes.

To sum up, we can say that Isidore can often unconsciously be a useful source of early Iberian Romance forms, but his own awareness of what was characteristically Spanish is slight. This is not surprising since he was writing at a time when local variations of Romance were only just beginning to be differentiated. Where he does mention a form as specifically Spanish or Baetic his information is often derived from earlier literary sources rather than personal contact with local speech, and so must be treated with care when attempting to establish a chronology of early Iberian Romance.

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⁴⁰ See ANDRÉ (1981) 205.

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⁴¹ REW 5936a Astur *nisu*, N. Leon. *ñisu*.