

TARTESSOS

Language, Landscape, and the Memory of a Lost Culture

ABSTRACT

Abstract

This paper proposes a new interdisciplinary interpretation of the Tartessian language and cultural landscape, based on a synthesis of epigraphy, morphology, toponymy, hydrology, and archaeology. It argues that the Tartessian endings *-ír* and *-ra / -ura* functioned not as grammatical inflections but as directional and locative morphemes within a proto-geographical orientation system. In this framework, forms such as *órtír*, *kualtír*, *taniír*, and *Ortura* denote waypoints, transitions, and water-related reference points in a hydrologically structured environment.

The analysis shows that this system is part of a long-term west-Mediterranean toponymic tradition, reflected in modern names such as *Segura*, *Altura*, *Zahara*, *Lora*, and *Algeciras*. The phonetic evolution of the hydronymic stem *kual-* into later forms (*gual-*, *guad-*, *wadi*) follows a well-attested Mediterranean sound pathway and supports interpreting *kualtír* as “riverward” or “belonging to the river.”

Archaeological evidence from the Doñana region — including slag deposits, charcoal fragments, and geophysically detected platforms — confirms the existence of a water-dependent metallurgical system that transported ore from the hinterland along river routes. The Semitic root *TRŠ* (“to smelt,” “to refine”) suggests that biblical *Tarshish* referred to this metallurgical center. From this perspective, Tartessos and Tarshish represent two cultural designations for the same hydrologically embedded water-metal civilization.

Iconographic analysis of the southwestern Iberian stelae further indicates that these were not primarily funerary monuments but functional markers of production sites — arguably the earliest “industrial signs” in Europe.

Taken together, the evidence reveals a coherent system in which language, toponymy, iconography, and landscape organization form an integrated whole. This reconstruction suggests that Tartessos was not only the historical core of *Tarshish* but also a plausible cultural template for Plato’s Atlantis narrative. The Tartessian language thus emerges not as an undeciphered anomaly but as an early member of a west-Mediterranean tradition whose structures still echo in the Iberian naming landscape today.

1. Introduction: The Name as a Key to Culture

The term *Tartessos* is far more than a geographical label. It is a linguistic fossil — a remnant of a linguistic world older than:

- Iberian,

- Celtic,
- Latin,
- and even older than the Phoenician presence in the West.

The Greek name *Tartēssos* is not a Greek invention but the Hellenized form of an indigenous, pre-Indo-European toponym. The modern term “Tartessians” is merely a derivative meaning “inhabitants of Tartessos”; the true core lies in the element *Tartess-*.

The question of what this name signifies leads directly into the deep strata of European linguistic history.

2. The Structure of the Name *Tartessos*

The ending *-ssos* / *-sos* is typical of pre-Greek Mediterranean toponyms:

- *Knossos*
- *Parnassos*
- *Zakynthos*
- *Helikarnassos*

This ending is considered non-Indo-European, often described as “Minoan” or broadly “Mediterranean.” The fact that *Tartessos* exhibits precisely this structure is strong evidence for:

- great antiquity,
- non-Indo-European origin,
- an Old European or Mediterranean linguistic layer.

The name is therefore older than the Greeks, older than the Phoenicians, and possibly older than the Bronze Age cultures that later flourished in the region.

3. Etymological Interpretations of the Element *tart-*

Several interpretive approaches exist, and strikingly, all of them fit the geography and cultural setting of the Guadalquivir Delta.

3.1. *Tart-* as “depth / threshold / liminal zone”

Parallels include:

- *Tártaros* (Greek): the deepest place, the underworld, the edge of the world
- Semitic roots *trt* / *trš*: “border, edge, coastline”
- Old European hydronyms: *Tar-* / *Dar-* / *Tor-* for rivers and crossings

These semantic fields correspond precisely to:

- a flooded delta,

- a liminal landscape,
- a place between land and sea,
- a frontier of the ancient world.

3.2. Tartessos as a river name

Many ancient cultures name:

- the land after the river,
- the people after the land,
- the city after the river.

If *Tartessos* originally referred to a river branch, then the Tartessians would be:

☞ **“the people of the Tart-river.”**

This fits the geomorphological reality of the Guadalquivir Delta, which in the first millennium BCE formed a complex lagoon system with multiple river channels.

3.3. Tartessos = Tarshish?

The biblical Tarshish is associated in the Semitic world with:

- metal production,
- smelting furnaces,
- refining,
- and long-distance trade.

Tartessos was:

- the metallurgical center of the West,
- rich in silver, gold, copper, and tin,
- integrated into Phoenician networks,
- and located “at the end of the world.”

The parallels are so strong that a connection appears at least plausible.

4. The Landscape: Tartessos as a Flooded Delta

In antiquity, the region around Huelva, Doñana, and the lower Guadalquivir was:

- a lagoon system,
- with islands,
- alluvial plains,
- submerged settlements,

- and regular flooding.

A name meaning “borderland,” “depth,” “threshold,” or “flooded territory” fits this landscape perfectly.

5. The Stelae: Script, Society, and Identity

The so-called Tartessian stelae are:

- stone slabs with figurative motifs,
- weapons, fibulae, belts, shields,
- and inscriptions in the Southwestern Paleohispanic script.

They come from:

- Huelva
- Badajoz
- Sevilla
- Alentejo
- Córdoba
- the Granada region (indirect influences)

5.1. Grave markers?

Older scholarship interpreted them as funerary stelae. Yet:

- many were not found in graves,
- but along paths, boundaries, fields, and settlements.

5.2. House-signs / property markers

Recent research increasingly favors an interpretation as:

☞ territorial markers, homestead names, clan symbols, property stones.

Much like in modern Andalusia:

- *Casa Elvira*
- *Cortijo del Río*
- *Finca La Marquesa*

The stelae may thus have functioned as homestead or lineage markers.

****5.3. The Tartessian stelae as functional markers:**

Iconography of a proto-industrial landscape system**

Traditionally, the “Southwestern stelae” are seen as grave monuments of an Early Iron Age elite. But their geographical distribution, iconographic motifs, and epigraphic structures point to an alternative interpretation: the stelae may have been functional markers of a proto-urban, proto-industrial system — the oldest known “industrial signs” in Europe.

This hypothesis rests on three observations:

1. The stelae rarely stand in cemeteries but at paths, crossings, river branches, and strategic points.
2. The depicted objects are not grave goods but tools, weapons, devices, and symbols of production and function.
3. The inscriptions follow the same directional and locative patterns found in Tartessian morphemes (-íř, -ura) and in western Mediterranean toponymy.

From this perspective, the stelae appear not as memorials but as visual morphemes of a geographical orientation system.

5.4. Iconographic motifs as functional symbols

The most common motifs on the stelae are:

- swords, spears, shield types
- combs
- fibulae, pins, belt plates
- mirrors
- wagon wheels or wheel-crosses
- helmets and armor fragments

These objects can be interpreted functionally:

Sword / spear / shield → metallurgy, smithing, weapons production → boundary point, protective function, military station

Comb → workshop for bone, horn, or wood → production of everyday objects → symbol of a household or lineage

Mirror → bronze or copper workshop → ritual objects, prestige goods

Wagon wheel / wheel-cross → transport station, wagon-making, trade route → transition point between land and water

Belt plate / fibula → metalworking, elite equipment → status symbol of a production group

These symbols are not funerary but functional. They mark activities, not the dead.

5.5. The stelae as geographical markers of a production system

The distribution of the stelae shows a clear pattern:

- along ancient trade routes

- at river crossings
- on hills with visual control of waterways
- near metallurgical zones
- at strategic points between inland and coast

These are precisely the locations where one would expect:

- workshops
- collection points
- transport stations
- smelting sites
- storage areas
- harbor zones
- land-water transitions

Thus the stelae appear as markers of a functional landscape system, not as grave monuments.

5.6. The stelae as visual counterparts of Tartessian morphemes

The iconographic symbols correspond structurally to Tartessian morphemes:

Language

- *-ir* = “towards / at”
- *-ura* = “place referring to something”
- *ort-* = place, crossing
- *kual-* = river, waterway

Toponymy

- *Ortura*
- *kualtir*
- *Segura*
- *Zahara*
- *Lora*
- *Algeciras*

Iconography

- sword = metallurgy
- comb = craftsmanship
- wheel = transport

- mirror = ritual / prestige
- belt = elite / metal

These three levels form a unified orientation system that exists simultaneously in:

- language,
- image,
- landscape.

5.7. The stelae as “house-signs” of a proto-urban culture

The principle of house-signs — depicting tools or symbols to mark a house or workshop — is known from many cultures.

Applied to Tartessos:

- sword-stele → “Here is the smithy”
- comb-stele → “Here is the workshop of the carvers”
- wheel-stele → “Here begins the wagon route”
- mirror-stele → “Here is the ritual or prestige site”
- belt-stele → “Here is the elite equipment / metal workshop”

Thus the stelae would be functional markers, not gravestones — the signage of a proto-urban, proto-industrial landscape, the oldest “industrial signs” in Europe.

5.8. An integrated system: language, production, waterways

In synthesis, a coherent picture emerges:

- The morphemes (-iř, -ura) mark directions and places.
- The toponyms (*Ortura, kualtiř*) denote waypoints and water relations.
- The stelae mark production sites and functions.
- The geography (rivers, lagoons, crossings) forms the structural backbone.
- Metallurgy is the economic core.
- Hydrology is the infrastructural foundation.

Thus the stelae appear as integral components of a water-metal civilization whose spatial organization, linguistic traces, and iconographic markers form a coherent system.

6. The Name *Tanicolobor* – A Key to Tartessian Society

The name *TANIKOLOBOR*, attested on a stele, is one of the longest and clearest Tartessian personal names. It shows:

- compositional structure (*Tani-kolo-bor*)

- clan or lineage endings (-*bor* / -*boŕ*)
- a complex internal morphology
- a social order organized around clans or homesteads

The most plausible interpretation is:

☞ **“Tani of the homestead / clan Bor.”**

This fits perfectly with the house-sign hypothesis.

7. The Language: Tartessian as an Old European Deep Layer

Tartessian is:

- not Indo-European,
- not Semitic,
- not Iberian,
- not Basque,
- and not related to any known language family.

It likely belongs to an Old European hydronymic stratum that shaped Europe:

- before the Celts,
- before the Germans,
- before the Italic peoples.

River names such as:

- *Ana*
- *Baetis*
- *Odiel*
- *Sado*
- *Arunda*

are part of this layer.

8. Mythology: Tartessos as Border-World and Resonance Space

For the Greeks, Tartessos was:

- wealthy,
- foreign,
- distant,
- at the edge of the world,

- and suddenly gone.

This structure is identical to:

- Hyperborea,
- the Hesperides,
- and Plato's Atlantis.

Tartessos was a liminal place, a threshold zone between:

- land and sea,
- Europe and Africa,
- reality and myth.

9. Synthesis: What Does Tartessos Mean?

Taken together, all lines of evidence point to:

Tartessos = “place at the edge / threshold / delta / land of metals.”

Or:

“The people of the Tart-region.”

→ a flooded, metal-rich delta → with ancient river branches → at the edge of the known world → with a deep Old European linguistic layer → and a complex, literate society

10. Tartessos as Europe's Deep Memory

Tartessos is not an isolated puzzle. It is a crossroads:

- between the Bronze Age and the Iron Age,
- between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic,
- between myth and history,
- between Old European languages and Semitic influences.

The name *Tartessos* is an echo from a time when Europe was not yet divided into language families, nations, or cultures — but was instead a web of rivers, deltas, trade routes, and ancient words that still survive in hydronyms and toponyms today.

11. The Tartessian Script: A Hybrid System Between Worlds

The existence of an indigenous script makes Tartessian culture particularly remarkable. It is the oldest writing system in Western Europe — older than Latin or Celtic traditions — and it preserves the material trace of a world whose language has almost completely slipped from our grasp.

11.1. Character of the script

The so-called Southwestern or Tartessian script, used between the 9th and 5th centuries BCE, is a hybrid system:

- It adopts consonantal signs from the Phoenician alphabet.
- It integrates syllabic signs (CV structures) similar to those in the Eastern Iberian scripts.
- It contains unique characters found in no other Mediterranean writing tradition.

This mixture reveals a culture that:

- knew Phoenician traders,
- knew Iberian neighbors,
- yet developed a distinct identity of its own.

The script is not a mere import — it is a local innovation, inspired by foreign models but following its own path.

11.2. Decipherment: we can read, but we cannot understand

The sign values of the script are now largely deciphered. This means:

☞ We can read Tartessian inscriptions aloud. ☞ But we do not understand what they mean.

The language itself remains an isolated outlier:

- not Indo-European
- not Iberian
- not Celtic
- not Semitic
- not Basque
- without any known relatives

Thus Tartessian stands alongside:

- Etruscan
- Minoan (Linear A)
- Sumerian
- Elamite

Languages that are self-contained and have no identifiable sisters.

11.3. The corpus: 95 inscriptions — short, fragmentary, enigmatic

The surviving corpus comprises about 95 inscriptions, mostly from:

- southwestern Spain
- Alentejo (Portugal)
- the Huelva–Badajoz–Sevilla region

Most texts are:

- short,
- fragmentary,
- formulaic,
- often just names or ritual sequences.

Examples:

- *oʻtiʻaʻrkualoʻ*
- *tanikolobor*
- *śilabur*
- *b^haʻrk^he*

We can pronounce them, but we cannot translate them.

11.4. Why the language remains unintelligible

The reasons are clear:

1. **No bilingual texts** No “Tartessian–Phoenician” or “Tartessian–Latin.”
2. **No long texts** No narratives, no contracts, no myths.
3. **No related language** No comparative material.
4. **Short, formulaic inscriptions** Often just names + suffixes.

The script is like a window that opens — but the room behind it remains dark.

12. The Stelae as Cultural Testimonies: Gravestones, House-Signs, Clan Markers

Most Tartessian inscriptions come from stelae — stone slabs bearing:

- weapons
- fibulae
- shields
- belt plates
- figurative motifs
- and inscriptions

Older scholarship interpreted them as funerary stelae. But archaeologically, the picture is different:

- Many stelae do not stand in graves.
- They appear along paths, boundaries, fields, and settlements.
- The inscriptions resemble ownership formulas or homestead names.

Thus the stelae become house-signs, clan markers, territorial symbols — much like modern Andalusian homestead names:

- *Casa Elvira*
- *Cortijo del Río*
- *Finca La Marquesa*

The name *Tanikolobor* fits this pattern perfectly:

☞ **“Tani of the homestead / clan Bor.”**

A complex, compound name that makes social structure visible.

13. The Collapse of the Tartessians — and the Atlantis Resonance

The Tartessian culture disappears abruptly around 500 BCE:

- settlements are destroyed,
- coastal regions are flooded,
- trade networks collapse,
- the script vanishes,
- the language falls silent.

Only a few generations later, around 360 BCE, Plato writes his Atlantis narrative. He claims to draw on a “very ancient” story from Egypt.

And the Egyptians:

- demonstrably traded with Tartessos,
- knew its wealth,
- knew its metal production,
- and likely knew of its catastrophes.

It is therefore not unlikely that memories of the collapse of this western culture — transmitted through traders, myths, or Egyptian archives — flowed into Plato’s account.

The Tartessian script thus becomes a material echo of that world:

- wealthy,
- distinctive,
- technically skilled,
- and ultimately lost.

14. The Script as the Last Breath of a Sunken Culture

The Tartessian script is not merely a writing system. It is:

- a window into a lost language,
- an echo of an Old European world,
- a testimony to a trading society,
- a marker of territorial identity,
- and perhaps a key to the myths that later shaped Atlantis.

It is the last breath of a culture that flourished at the edge of the ancient world — and whose name, *Tartessos*, still sounds like a distant, deep, liminal word.

15. The Tartessian Inscriptions: Linguistic Shadows of a Sunken World

The Tartessian inscriptions are among the most enigmatic linguistic testimonies in Europe. The stelae of Abóbada, Fonte Velha, Herdade da Abóbada, Almodôvar, Mesas do Castelinho, and other sites display a script whose sign values we can decipher — yet whose meaning remains largely obscure.

Transcriptions such as *órtírařkualoř*, *tanikolobor*, *ioltiř*, *kualtiř*, *řilabur*, *baltibeř*, *koloboř* read like fragments of a language unrelated to Indo-European, Semitic, or Iberian traditions. They stand alone, like the last echoes of a linguistic world that has no sisters left.

15.1. Recurring forms and the structure of the language

The recurring elements — *tani*, *kualoř*, *órtiř*, *biuř*, *siltabeř*, *baltibeř*, *koloboř* — suggest an agglutinative system:

- words consist of chains of morphemes,
- endings such as *-iř*, *-boř*, *-ku*, *-ti* seem to carry grammatical functions,
- names and formulas appear modular,
- similar to languages that build meaning through sequences of suffixes.

This structure faintly recalls:

- Etruscan (isolated, suffix-rich),
- Basque (agglutinative, ergative),
- Iberian languages (CV syllables, suffix chains),

yet Tartessian is related to none of them.

Tartessian remains a solitary language — a linguistic loner.

15.2. Phonetics: a reconstructable but unintelligible voice

Phonetically, the inscriptions can be reconstructed surprisingly well:

- the rolled *r*,
- clear vowel sequences,
- rhythmic syllable chains,
- typical CV structures (*ka-lo-boŕ*, *ta-ni-ko-lo-boŕ*),
- and a sound system that feels Mediterranean yet distinct.

We can hear the language — but we cannot understand it.

It is like knowing the melody but not the words.

15.3. Why the texts remain unintelligible

The reasons are clear:

1. **No bilingual inscriptions** No Tartessian–Phoenician, no Tartessian–Latin.
2. **No long texts** No contracts, myths, narratives — only short formulas.
3. **No related language** Tartessian is an isolated system with no comparative base.
4. **Formulaic, fragmentary inscriptions** Many texts consist of:
 - personal names,
 - clan designations,
 - ritual formulas,
 - ownership markers.

The script is a window that opens — but the room behind it remains dark.

15.4. The stelae as linguistic and cultural markers

The Tartessian stelae are not merely archaeological artifacts. They are linguistic shadows of a vanished world.

They reveal:

- a society with writing competence,
- clan structures,
- territorial markers,
- homestead names (such as *Tanikolobor*),
- and a culture that inscribed its identity in stone.

They are the last voices of a culture that was:

- wealthy,

- distinctive,
- technically skilled,
- and deeply embedded in Mediterranean trade networks.

15.5. Tartessos and Atlantis: cultural resonances

The Tartessian culture disappears abruptly around 500 BCE:

- coastal regions are flooded,
- settlements abandoned,
- trade routes collapse,
- the script falls silent.

Only a few generations later, around 360 BCE, Plato writes his Atlantis narrative, claiming to draw on a “very ancient” Egyptian story.

The Egyptians, in turn:

- traded with Tartessos,
- knew its wealth,
- knew its metal production,
- and likely knew of its catastrophes.

It is therefore conceivable that memories of the collapse of this western culture — transmitted through traders, myths, or Egyptian archives — flowed into Plato’s account.

The Tartessian inscriptions thus become material witnesses of a world that may form the historical core of Atlantis.

16. The Tartessian Language as a Layered System: an ancient core with overlying horizons

At first glance, the Tartessian language looks like a mixture of several traditions. But this impression is misleading. It is not a true mixed language, but a **stratified system** whose core goes back to a very old, pre-Indo-European linguistic layer.

This underlying body is:

- neither Indo-European
- nor Semitic
- neither Iberian
- nor Basque
- and belongs to no known language family

It is an isolated relic from a time when the later language families of Europe did not yet exist. Tartessian thus belongs to those rare languages that function like linguistic fossils — comparable to Etruscan or Sumerian.

16.1. The archaic core: an Old European deep layer

The core of Tartessian shows features pointing to an Old European linguistic stratum:

- agglutinative structures
- recurring suffixes (*-ír, -bor, -ku, -ti*)
- CV syllable patterns
- complex personal names
- hydronymic parallels to pre-Indo-European river names

These features link Tartessian to a pre-Indo-European linguistic landscape that once shaped large parts of Europe before being overlaid by Indo-European languages.

16.2. Phoenician influence: contact, trade, hybridity

With the arrival of the Phoenicians from the 9th century BCE onward, a new layer emerges:

- loanwords
- name elements
- Phoenician-influenced characters
- Semitic-looking morphemes
- terminology of trade and metallurgy

This layer is not dominant, but clearly visible. It shows that Tartessos was a trading hub that adopted Phoenician technologies, writing forms, and concepts — without losing its linguistic identity.

16.3. Celtic influences: sound patterns and name endings

From the 7th–6th centuries BCE onward, Celtic groups enter western Iberia. Their traces in Tartessian include:

- certain sound patterns
- name endings reminiscent of Celtic structures
- possible loanwords in titles or social functions

Again: the influence is overlying, not replacing.

16.4. Iberian influences: syllable structure and endings

Proximity to Iberian cultures led to:

- similar CV syllable structures
- parallel suffixes
- related script signs
- possible loan relations in toponyms

Yet Tartessian remains distinct.

16.5. The result: a language that feels both ancient and hybrid

This overlay of horizons explains why Tartessian words such as:

- *tanikolobor*
- *kualor*
- *or̄tir̄*
- *baltiber̄*
- *śilabur*

sound both foreign and strangely familiar.

They carry:

- Old European structures,
- Semitic surface contacts,
- Celtic resonances,
- Iberian syllable patterns,

without belonging clearly to any of these traditions.

The language is not an artificial mixture, but the organic product of a culture that interacted for centuries with Phoenicians, Iberians, Celts, and Greeks — and yet preserved its own identity.

16.6. The sudden collapse and the Atlantis resonance

That this language ultimately vanished abruptly — in a landscape shaped by floods and coastal change — gives it a particular historical depth.

In its:

- antiquity,
- isolation,
- hybridity,
- and sudden disappearance,

it bears the very traits that Plato later attributed to Atlantis.

The Tartessian language thus appears as a linguistic shadow of a lost world — an echo that may continue to resonate in Plato’s philosophical myth.

17. **Órtir** and **Ortura**: Deep Linguistic Layers in the Toponymy of the Southwest

The striking similarity between the Tartessian *órtir* and place-names such as *Ortura* is no coincidence, but the expression of a deep linguistic pattern that stretches across millennia in the western Mediterranean. The element *or / ur / ar* belongs to the oldest attested word-roots of the region and appears in numerous pre-Indo-European, Semitic, Iberian, and Tartessian layers.

In many of these traditions, this root denotes:

- a place,
- a settlement,
- an elevation,
- a boundary point,
- or a marked location in the landscape.

It is therefore closely tied to early systems of spatial, territorial, and communal organization.

17.1. **Órtir** in Tartessian: a generic term for “place”?

The Tartessian word *órtir* fits seamlessly into this Old European pattern. Its structure — *or-ti-ń* — suggests an agglutinated compound:

- *or / or* = place, site, settlement
- *-ti* = a frequent Tartessian morpheme (possibly locative or relational)
- *-ń* = a typical Tartessian final suffix (perhaps case or determiner)

Thus *órtir* may have been a generic term for:

- a place,
- a boundary point,
- a settlement,
- or a marked location —

much like *oppidum*, *polis*, *tell*, *ur*, *ar*, or *dun* in other traditions.

17.2. Old European toponymy: **Urso**, **Arunda**, **Castulo**, **Iliturgi**

Similar structures survive in numerous pre-Roman place-names on the Iberian Peninsula:

- *Urso* (Osuna)
- *Arunda* (Ronda)
- *Castulo* (Cástulo)

- *Iliturgi*
- *Obulco*
- *Tucci*
- *Aruci*
- *Uria*

These names are linguistic fossils — remnants of cultures whose languages have vanished, but whose sound patterns persist in the landscape.

They preserve:

- the same syllables,
- the same sound sequences,
- the same morphological building blocks,
- the same semantic fields.

17.3. *Ortura* as an echo of an ancient root

Against this background, it is plausible that a place-name like *Ortura* is an echo of the same ancient word-family found in Tartessian.

The region in which such names occur — Andalusia, especially the Granada–Málaga–Jaén area — was for centuries a contact zone between:

- Tartessian,
- Iberian,
- Turdetanian,
- Bastetanian,
- and later Celtic linguistic layers.

In such regions, old roots overlap without disappearing. Toponyms are often more conservative than any other linguistic layer.

17.4. Persistence of ancient roots: language as an archaeological medium

The similarity between *órtir* and *Ortura* is therefore not an esoteric coincidence, but a sign of the persistence of linguistic structures across millennia.

Toponyms preserve:

- sound forms,
- morphemes,
- semantic fields,

- and functional meanings

that are older than:

- writing,
- historical sources,
- the Indo-European expansion,
- and possibly older than the cultures reflected in Plato's Atlantis myth.

In this perspective, language becomes an archaeological medium: it conserves forms long vanished from active speech, yet still audible in place-names — quietly, but clearly enough for an attentive eye to recognize.

18. Ortura: A Linguistic Fossil in the Andalusian Landscape

The place-name *Ortura* can be understood as a remarkable relic of the multilayered linguistic landscape that shaped southern Iberia in antiquity. It is not a random formation, but a linguistic fossil preserving two ancient morphemes.

18.1. The root or / ort / ortu-: place, boundary, elevation

The root *or / ur / ar / ort / ortu-* belongs to the oldest attested elements of the western Mediterranean linguistic world. It appears in:

- pre-Indo-European hydronyms,
- Iberian and Turdetanian place-names,
- Semitic roots (*'ur, 'ar, 'rt*),
- Anatolian and Aegean toponyms,
- and even in Basque relics (*ur* = water).

Its core meanings revolve around:

- place,
- settlement,
- elevation,
- boundary point,
- marked location,
- transition.

It is an archaic spatial term used by many ancient cultures to structure the landscape.

18.2. The suffix -ra / -ura: location, direction, affiliation

The suffix *-ra / -ura* is typical of:

- Iberian languages,

- Basque locatives,
- pre-Roman toponymy,
- Turdetanian and Bastetanian place-names.

It often carries meanings such as:

- “at the place of,”
- “towards,”
- “in the direction of,”
- “belonging to / associated with.”

Thus *Ort-ura* is structurally a classic pre-Roman toponym.

18.3. *Ortura* as an echo of the Tartessian *órtir*

The structural similarity to the Tartessian word *órtir*, attested on several stelae, is striking:

- same syllabic form (*or-ti-ń / or-tu-ra*)
- same root
- same semantic function (place, site, boundary point)
- same morphological logic (root + suffix)

This parallel is no coincidence, but a sign of deep linguistic continuity.

Ortura may thus be an echo of the ancient word-families that existed in the region long before Roman expansion — and whose traces survive in modern toponymy.

18.4. *Ortura* as a waypoint: “place towards the water”

If the name is read not merely as a settlement label but as a directional marker, a remarkable perspective opens.

In many ancient Mediterranean traditions, place-names served as:

- waypoints,
- trade markers,
- route indicators,
- boundary stations,
- transitions between landscape zones.

In this sense, *Ortura* could mean:

- “place towards the water,”
- “place pointing to the water,”
- “boundary between valley and coast,”

- “way-marker on a trade route.”

This fits the historical reality: The region between Granada, Guadix, Baza, and the Andalusian coast was for millennia a transit corridor linking:

- metal from the west,
- salt and fish products from the south,
- goods from the Mediterranean.

Ortura may thus have been a functional name — a marker within an ancient transport network.

18.5. Language as an archaeological medium

From this perspective, *Ortura* is not a random sound sequence, but a linguistic fossil:

- an echo of a vanished world,
- a remnant of Tartessian and Iberian word-families,
- a marker of ancient trade routes,
- a testimony to the persistence of pre-Roman structures.

Toponyms like *Ortura* show how deeply the traces of the ancient cultures of the southwest are embedded in today’s landscape. They are archaeological layers in linguistic form — older than writing, older than historical sources, and perhaps older than the cultures reflected in Plato’s Atlantis myth.

19. Way-markers, transition zones, and the function of the Tartessian -ir-words

In the region where Tartessian, Turdetanian, and Iberian cultures met, a dense network of way-markers once existed — markers that indicated crossings between river branches, trade routes, or sacred places. These were not mere place-names, but functional signals within a complex system of movement and ritual.

The Tartessian term *órtiír*, attested on several stelae, fits perfectly into this system. Its proximity to modern toponyms such as *Ortura* is therefore no coincidence, but a sign of deep linguistic continuity.

19.1. *Ortura* as a relic of an ancient orientation system

Seen in this light, *Ortura* appears as a linguistic relic of an ancient orientation system that pointed toward the waterways and lagoon landscapes of western Andalusia — a region where archaeology reveals:

- artificial islands,
- submerged settlements,
- concentric structures,
- and ancient river channels.

The idea that a name like *Ortura* indirectly refers to a vanished coastal culture is therefore not speculative, but a plausible link between:

- language,
- geography,
- and cultural memory.

The name becomes a silent signpost pointing to a world long lost to the sea — a world whose echo may survive in Plato’s Atlantis narrative.

19.2. The Tartessian *-ir*-words: a consistent morphological pattern

The Tartessian words ending in *-ir* form a strikingly consistent group within the surviving inscriptions. Forms such as:

- *ortir*
- *iolir*
- *kualir*
- *tanir*

share a common structure:

- a stressed root syllable,
- followed by the recurring morpheme *-ir*,
- which clearly served a grammatical function.

The frequency of this ending shows that *-ir* was not accidental, but a stable element of the Tartessian system.

19.3. Possible functions of the morpheme *-ir*

Three interpretations are linguistically plausible:

1. **Personal marker** → names, titles, affiliations.
2. **Locative** → “at the place of,” “towards,” “near.”
3. **Affiliation marker** → clan, lineage, territorial identity.

In many pre-Indo-European and Iberian languages, similar endings marked:

- origin,
- spatial relation,
- belonging,
- or ritual function.

The Tartessian stelae — often cultic or territorial — support such a reading.

19.4. Structural parallels to pre-Roman place-names

Especially striking is the structural parallel between these *-ir* forms and pre-Roman place-names such as *Ortura*, which share:

- the same root *or / ort*,
- and a related suffix *-ra / -ura*.

The recurrence of *-tir* in several Tartessian words suggests an independent morpheme expressing:

- belonging,
- origin,
- or locative relation.

From this perspective, the *-ir* words may have been:

- waypoints,
- place-designations,
- clan names,
- or cultic markers —

elements of an orientation system in a landscape shaped by trade routes, river arms, and transition zones.

19.5. Linguistic continuity between Tartessian and Andalusian toponymy

The correspondence between:

- Tartessian endings (*-ir*, *-tir*),
- pre-Roman place-names (*-ra*, *-ura*),
- and ancient roots (*or / ur / ar*)

is not a linguistic curiosity, but a sign of deep continuity between language, space, and cultural memory.

Seen in this light, the hypothesis that such names may point to ancient routes or coastal cultures is not speculative fantasy, but a serious clue in reconstructing a vanished world.

20. Kualtir and Guadalquivir: Linguistic continuity along the great western river

The phonetic proximity between the Tartessian *kualtir* and the later river-name *Guadalquivir* opens a surprisingly coherent linguistic and historical perspective. The modern name derives from the Arabic *al-wādī al-kabīr* (“the great river”), but this layer overlays a long sequence of earlier names from:

- Phoenician,

- Iberian,
- Tartessian,
- and Roman traditions.

Remarkably, the Greeks themselves called the river *Tartessos* — a clear sign that the river was the geographical and cultural center of the culture bearing that name.

20.1. *Kualtir* as a relic of an older river-name

Against this background, the structure of *kualtir* — with the root *kual-* and the ending *-tir* — appears as a possible relic of an older hydronym or a title associated with the river.

The phonetic correspondence between *kual-* and *guadal-* is not accidental:

- shifts between k, g, and q are common in Semitic, Iberian, and pre-Indo-European layers,
- the vowel pattern *kua-* / *gua-* is nearly identical,
- the syllable shape matches typical Mediterranean hydronyms.

Thus *kual-* may have been an early Tartessian designation for the river or for a function associated with it — whether:

- a place-name,
- a cultic term,
- a title of a person linked to the river,
- or the name of a river section.

In this reading, *kualtir* becomes a linguistic echo of a world in which the great western river was not merely a geographical feature, but the lifeline of a culture whose traces now lie beneath the sediments of Doñana.

20.2. *Ortura* and *kualtir*: two markers of an ancient orientation system

The connection between *Ortura* and *kualtir* reveals a coherent structure in Tartessian semantics.

Both words consist of:

- a clear root (*ort* / *kual*),
- and a functional ending (*-ura* / *-tir*).

This parallel is not accidental, but part of a systematic pattern.

20.3. Semantic functions of the roots

- *ort-* → place, boundary, elevation, transition
- *kual-* → river, waterway, current, “the great stream”

Both roots are topographical and functional.

20.4. Semantic functions of the endings

- *-ura* → locative, directional (“towards the place,” “at the place of”)
- *-tir* → possibly affiliation, direction, function (“belonging to the river,” “the river that leads to...”)

Thus two complementary meanings emerge:

- *Ortura* → “place towards the water,” “place pointing to the water”
- *kualtir* → “the river that leads to something,” “the one belonging to the river”

20.5. An ancient orientation system

In this reading, the endings *-ra* and *-ir* are not mere grammatical markers, but semantic indicators within an ancient orientation system linking places and waterways.

- *Ortura* would be a waypoint pointing from the interior toward the coast.
- *Kualtir* would be the river leading into the lagoon landscape of Doñana — the area where archaeology reveals artificial islands and submerged settlements.

The structural parallel between the two words points to a coherent system in which:

- language,
- geography,
- and cultural function

were tightly interwoven.

20.6. Linguistic markers of a vanished coastal culture

Seen in this light, the Tartessian morphemes are not random sound sequences, but elements of an ancient network of waypoints — a network that may point to the coastal culture later echoed in Plato’s Atlantis narrative.

The phonetic link between *kualtir* and *Guadalquivir* is therefore not a mere curiosity, but a sign of:

- linguistic continuity,
- topographical function,
- cultural memory,
- and the persistence of an orientation system that once structured the landscape of the southwest.

21. A proto-geographical orientation system: The morphemes *-ra* and *-ir* as way-markers of a vanished coastal culture

The analysis of Tartessian word-forms reveals a consistent linguistic pattern pointing to an ancient, direction-based morphemic system. The endings *-ra* and *-ir / -ir'* appear in several inscriptions in ways that suggest not grammatical categories, but **functional or geosemantic markers**.

These endings were not mere inflections — they were **spatial signals**, markers in a system that linked places, rivers, and transition zones.

21.1. *Ortura*: “place that points toward the water”

From this perspective, *Ortura* can be understood as:

- “place that points toward the water,”
- “place at a transition,”
- “place marking a direction.”

The suffix *-ura* functions as a locative or directional marker, common in Iberian, Basque, and pre-Roman languages.

Thus *Ortura* was not simply a settlement name, but a **waypoint** — a marker on a route leading from the interior toward a river, lagoon, or coastal zone.

21.2. *Kualtir'*: “the one belonging to the river”

Accordingly, *kualtir'* may mean:

- “the one belonging to the river,”
- “the river that leads to something,”
- “the river-section marking a direction.”

The root *kual-* resembles an early designation of the great western river later known as:

- *Baetis*,
- *Betis*,
- and finally *Guadalquivir*.

The phonetic proximity between *kual-* and *guadal-* is not accidental:

- shifts between k, g, and q are common in Semitic, Iberian, and Old European layers,
- the syllable pattern *kua-* / *gua-* is nearly identical,
- both forms fit Mediterranean hydronymic patterns.

Thus *kualtir'* may have been a proto-Tartessian river-name or a title associated with the great stream.

21.3. A proto-geographical waypoint system

Taken together, these forms point to a proto-geographical waypoint system in which places and waterways were named according to their **function in space**.

Such a system may have served to:

- mark routes from the interior to the coast,
- indicate crossings between river branches,
- locate sacred or cultic sites,
- enable orientation in a lagoon landscape.

The Tartessian morphemes thus appear as linguistic relics of an orientation system reflecting the structure of a vanished coastal culture — the one now buried beneath the sediments of Doñana.

21.4. Tartessos and Tarshish: two names for the same place?

The meaning of *Tartessos* leads directly to its possible Semitic counterpart *Tarshish*, described in biblical texts as:

- a wealthy,
- distant,
- western port.

Both names share:

- striking phonetic similarity,
- similar semantic fields,
- identical geographical position.

Phonetic structure:

- *tar-shish*
- *tar-tess-os*

The endings *-sh*, *-ss*, and *-sos* correspond functionally in Semitic and Greek phonology.

Thus both forms can be understood as variants of the same underlying concept.

21.5. Tartessos as the Greek name — Tarshish as the Semitic name

In this perspective:

- *Tartessos* is the Greek name of the region,
- *Tarshish* the Semitic name of the same place.

Both describe:

- a metallurgical center,
- a port at the far west,
- a place beyond the Pillars of Heracles,
- a region rich in silver, gold, and copper,

- a coastal landscape of lagoons and river-arms.

21.6. *Ortura* and *kualtir* as part of this system

If:

- *Ortura* = “place that points toward the water”
- *kualtir* = “the one belonging to the river”

then both terms are semantic markers within an ancient orientation system leading from the interior to the coast.

The endpoint of this system would be the lagoon landscape in the west:

- known in antiquity as *Tartessos*,
- in Semitic tradition as *Tarshish*,
- and in Plato’s narrative as *Atlantis*.

21.7. A multilayered geographical system

In this view:

- *Tartessos*,
- *Tarshish*,
- *Ortura*,
- *kualtir*,
- and the Tartessian morphemes

merge into a single multilayered geographical system whose traces survive in both language and landscape.

It is a system that linked:

- rivers,
- crossings,
- settlements,
- cult sites,
- and trade routes —

and that reflects the structure of a vanished coastal culture whose echo still resonates today.

22. *Tarshish* and *Tartessos*: Metallurgy, semantics, and the Semitic root TRŠ

The Semitic root *TRŠ*, from which the biblical name *Tarshish* derives, means:

- “to smelt,”

- “to refine,”
- “to process metal.”

It refers to a place understood as a center of metallurgical activity — a semantic field that aligns strikingly with the archaeological reality of Tartessos.

22.1. Metallurgy as the core of Tartessian culture

The Tartessian region in southwestern Iberia was famous in antiquity for:

- silver,
- gold,
- copper,
- tin,

and for an intensive metallurgical infrastructure:

- smelting furnaces,
- slag heaps,
- refining installations,
- mining complexes,
- trading stations.

The Rio Tinto — its red color caused by metal oxides — is a vivid testament to this industrial intensity: a river that has literally lived from metal since the Bronze Age.

22.2. Tarshish and Tartessos: phonetic and functional proximity

The phonetic similarity between *Tarshish* and *Tartessos* is striking:

- *tar-shish*
- *tar-tess-os*

The shared root *tar-* is unmistakable. The endings *-sh*, *-ss*, and *-sos* correspond functionally in Semitic and Greek phonology.

Thus both names can be understood as cultural variants of the same underlying concept:

- *Tarshish* → Semitic designation
- *Tartessos* → Greek designation

Both describe:

- a metal-rich region,
- a port at the far west,
- a place beyond the Pillars of Heracles,

- a center of long-distance trade.

22.3. The waypoint system and its endpoint: Tartessos / Tarshish

The reconstructed waypoint system fits this picture remarkably well.

Ortura → “place that points toward the water” → waypoint from the interior toward the coast

Kualtiř → “the one belonging to the river” → marker of the great western river (Baetis / Guadalquivir)

Both terms appear as linguistic markers of an ancient geographical orientation system linking:

- valleys,
- river branches,
- transition zones,
- and coastal areas.

The endpoint of this system would be the lagoon landscape known as:

- *Tartessos* in antiquity,
- *Tarshish* in Semitic tradition,
- and echoed as *Atlantis* in Plato’s narrative.

22.4. TRŠ as a semantic key

The Semitic meaning “smelting furnace, refinery, metal center” aligns perfectly with:

- archaeological evidence (Rio Tinto, Huelva, Aznalcóllar),
- ancient descriptions (Herodotus, Strabo),
- and the geographical reality (lagoons, river arms, harbor sites).

Thus *TRŠ* becomes a semantic key linking:

- the Phoenician perspective (*Tarshish*),
- the Greek perspective (*Tartessos*),
- and the Tartessian internal perspective (*kualtiř, ořtiř, Ortura*).

22.5. Tartessos as the historical core of Tarshish — and as the echo of Atlantis

The convergence between:

- the Semitic meaning “smelting center,”
- the archaeological record of the region,

- the metallurgical complexes of the Rio Tinto,
- and Plato’s description of a wealthy, metal-working coastal culture,

strongly suggests that:

Tartessos was the historical core of Tarshish.

And more:

Tartessos may have been the historical model behind Plato’s Atlantis.

In this perspective, language, geography, myth, and archaeological reality merge into a coherent picture of a vanished culture whose traces survive in:

- names,
- landscapes,
- and traditions

to this day.

23. Tanikolobor and the Water-Metal Civilization: Morphology, social function, and hydrological embedding

23.1. The morphological structure of *tanikolobor*

The Tartessian form *tanikolobor* can be divided into three segments:

- *tan-*
- *kolo-*
- *-bor*

This tripartite structure is typical of Tartessian name-formation: root + relational element + affiliation marker.

tan-: “great,” “much,” “comprehensive” This prefix appears in several pre-Indo-European and Mediterranean traditions with meanings such as:

- great,
- abundant,
- total,
- overarching.

It functions as an intensifier or qualitative marker.

kolo-: “community,” “settlement,” “household group” This element parallels proto-Mediterranean morphemes denoting:

- community,
- settlement,

- household,
- clan,
- homestead.

It is a social core concept.

-bor: affiliation, person, function The ending *-bor / -boř / -beř* appears in several Tartessian inscriptions and functions as:

- a personal marker,
- an affiliation marker,
- a clan indicator,
- or a title.

23.2. Meaning and social function of *tanikolobor*

From the combination of the three morphemes emerges a plausible meaning:

“member of the great community” or “person with a central role within an important group.”

Thus *tanikolobor* is not merely a personal name, but a **title** indicating:

- leadership,
- organizational function,
- or central status within a settlement.

In a culture structured around clans, homesteads, and metallurgical centers, such a title is entirely plausible.

23.3. The Water-Metal Civilization: hydrology as the foundation of Tartessos

The link between metallurgy and water is crucial for understanding Tartessian society.

Metallurgy requires enormous amounts of water for:

- washing ores,
- quenching and cooling,
- separating slag,
- transporting materials,
- operating workshops,
- refining processes.

The location of Tartessos was perfect:

The region around:

- Rio Tinto,
- Aznalcóllar,
- Huelva,
- Doñana,
- the Guadalquivir delta,

offered a unique combination of:

- metal-rich mountains,
- water-rich lagoons and river arms,
- natural harbors,
- navigable channels,
- hydrologically embedded settlements.

This landscape was not accidental — it was a functional necessity for large-scale metallurgy.

23.4. *Ortura* and *kualtir* as markers of a hydrological system

In this context, the reconstructed waypoints:

- ***Ortura*** (“place that points toward the water”)
- ***kualtir*** (“the one belonging to the river”)

gain special significance.

They appear as linguistic markers of a proto-geographical system linking:

- ore sources,
- waterways,
- metallurgical centers,
- coastal harbors.

23.5. *Tarshish* = “place of smelting” → *Tartessos* as metallurgical center

If the Semitic name *Tarshish* indeed means “place of smelting,” then the entire structure forms a coherent system:

- *Tarshish* = Semitic designation
- *Tartessos* = Greek designation
- *kualtir* = Tartessian internal term for the river system
- *Ortura* = waypoint from interior to coast
- *tanikolobor* = title within the social organization

Thus language, geography, metallurgy, and social structure interlock.

23.6. Tartessos as the model for Atlantis

The convergence between:

- the Semitic meaning “smelting center,”
- the archaeological evidence (lagoons, islands, metallurgy),
- the hydrological structures,
- and Plato’s description of a water-rich, metal-working island or lagoon city,

strongly suggests that:

Tartessos was not only the historical core of Tarshish, but also the cultural model for Atlantis.

In this perspective, the Tartessian world appears as a **Water-Metal Civilization**, whose spatial organization, linguistic traces, and archaeological remains form a remarkably coherent system.

24. Metallurgy, hydrology, and toponymy: Archaeological traces and linguistic continuities of a water-metal civilization

24.1. Metallurgical traces in the Doñana region: slag, sediments, hidden structures

If Tartessos was indeed a metallurgical culture — as the Semitic meaning of *Tarshish* (“place of smelting”) suggests — then archaeological traces should survive in the former Doñana lagoon.

And they do.

Slag finds around the ancient lagoon

At several sites, metallurgical remains have been discovered:

- La Algaida
- El Cerro del Trigo
- the Huelva region
- Aznalcóllar / Rio Tinto system

These include:

- slag fragments,
- metallurgical residues,
- charcoal,
- traces of furnaces.

Many are over 2,500 years old.

Why the center of the marshes shows few finds

Geology explains the absence:

- repeated flooding,
- tsunamis,
- sedimentation,
- lagoon infilling,
- shifting river arms.

Workshops, harbors, or smelting sites now lie under meters of mud.

Geophysical surveys

Modern studies reveal:

- rectangular structures,
- platforms,
- channels,
- artificial terraces —

exactly where metallurgical infrastructure would be expected.

A coherent picture emerges:

☞ A coastal culture that brought ore from the mountains by river, used lagoon water, and built its metallurgical centers in a hydrologically ideal landscape.

****24.2. The Tartessian endings -ír and -ra / -ura:**

A morphological system of way- and direction-markers**

The Tartessian forms ending in *-ír* and *-ra / -ura* follow a clear pattern:

root + directional or locative ending

Examples:

- *órtír*
- *kualtír*
- *ioltír*
- *taniń*
- *Ortura*

This is not accidental — it is a proto-geographical system naming places by their spatial function.

24.3. Parallels in Mediterranean toponymy

This pattern appears not only in Tartessian, but across the western Mediterranean.

Modern Spanish place-names such as:

- Segura
- Altura
- Zahara
- Lora
- Algeciras

show the same logic:

- semantic root (Seg-, Alt-, Zah-, Lor-, Alge-)
- plus locative/directional ending (-ura, -ira, -era, -ora, -ra)

Many lie at:

- rivers,
- passes,
- lagoons,
- transition zones —

places with real directional function.

24.4. Linguistic continuity across millennia

These parallels suggest:

☞ The structure *root + directional ending* is a deeply embedded pattern of western Mediterranean toponymy.

It survived:

- language shifts,
- cultural upheavals,
- Romanization,
- Arabic overlay,
- modern sound change.

Thus the Tartessian forms are not isolated relics, but early representatives of a system still visible today.

24.5. The water-metal civilization: a coherent system

The convergence of:

- metallurgical finds,
- hydrological landscape,
- Tartessian morphemes,

- Semitic etymology (TRŠ = “smelting”),
- and Plato’s description of a water-rich, metal-working city,

forms a remarkably coherent system.

Tartessos appears as:

- a metallurgical center,
- a hydrologically embedded lagoon city,
- the node of a waypoint network,
- known to Semites as *Tarshish*,
- to Greeks as *Tartessos*,
- and mythically refracted as *Atlantis*.

In this perspective, the Tartessian world becomes a **water-metal civilization**, whose spatial organization, linguistic traces, and archaeological remains form a unified whole.

25. The Tartessian language as a west-Mediterranean system of directional and locative morphemes

The Tartessian language, preserved in a limited corpus of inscriptions from the 7th–5th centuries BCE, is one of the earliest written languages of Western Europe. Its script — the Southwestern script — is a semi-syllabic system combining alphabetic and syllabic elements. Despite the opacity of the language, recurring structures, morphological patterns, and geographical contexts allow increasingly robust hypotheses.

25.1. The endings **-ír** and **-ra / -ura** as directional and locative markers

Among the most striking features of Tartessian word-forms are the endings:

- *-ír*
- *-ra / -ura*

These suffixes appear consistently and can be interpreted as directional or locative markers.

Examples:

- *órtír*
- *kualtír*
- *ioltír*
- *taniír*
- *Ortura*

All follow the same pattern:

root + deictic suffix

The suffix marks:

- movement “toward,”
- position “at / near,”
- affiliation with a place,
- spatial orientation.

Thus Tartessian possessed a productive system of locative morphemes embedded in geography.

25.2. Parallels in west-Mediterranean toponymy

These Tartessian endings match morphological patterns across the western Mediterranean.

Modern Spanish place-names such as:

- Segura
- Altura
- Zahara
- Lora
- Algeciras

show the same structure:

lexical root + locative suffix (-ura, -ira, -era, -ora, -ra)

Many lie at:

- rivers,
- passes,
- lagoons,
- transition zones —

places with real directional function.

This suggests a deeply rooted structural principle surviving across language shifts.

25.3. The root *kual-* : a hydronymic core

Analysis of individual roots reveals semantic coherence.

The root *kual-* may represent an early hydronymic core, continued in later forms:

- *kual-* → Tartessian
- *gual-* → Iberian / pre-Roman
- *guad-* → Arabic-Romanic
- *wadi* → Arabic (“river”)

The sound development:

kual → **gual** → **guad** → **wadi**

follows a well-attested Mediterranean pathway:

k/kw → **g/gu** → **w**

Thus *kualtir* likely meant:

- “belonging to the river,”
- “river-wards,”
- “the river that leads to something.”

25.4. *Ortura* as a waypoint “toward the water”

Analogously, *Ortura* can be understood as:

- “place toward the water,”
- “place pointing to the water,”
- “place at a transition.”

Together, *Ortura* and *kualtir* form complementary elements of a proto-geographical orientation system marking:

- river courses,
- crossings,
- settlement zones,
- coastal areas.

25.5. *Tarshish* (TRŠ) as a Semitic parallel

The Semitic parallel *Tarshish*, from the root *TRŠ* (“to smelt,” “to refine”), fits seamlessly into this picture.

If *Tarshish* referred to Tartessos, it points to:

- a metallurgical culture,
- whose spatial organization depended on waterways,
- and whose name semantically meant “place of smelting.”

The Tartessian directional markers *-ir* and *-ura* appear as linguistic reflections of a system linking:

- ore sources,
- river routes,
- metallurgical centers,
- coastal harbors.

25.6. A west-Mediterranean continuity system

Taken together, the epigraphic, linguistic, and geographical evidence suggests that Tartessian:

- was not an isolated phenomenon,
- but an early member of a west-Mediterranean tradition
- in which directional and locative morphemes played a central role.

The convergence of:

- Tartessian endings,
- later Iberian and Romance place-names,
- hydronymic developments,
- geographical structures,

indicates remarkable continuity.

Thus the Tartessian inscriptions are not opaque relics, but early witnesses of a morphological system that has persisted for millennia in the toponymy of the Iberian Peninsula.

26. Algeciras / al-Jazīra: A modern reflex of an ancient west-Mediterranean place-morpheme

The place-name *Algeciras* — from Arabic *al-Jazīra* (“the island”) — fits remarkably well into the morphological pattern already visible in the Tartessian forms *or̄tiṛ*, *kualtiṛ*, *taniṛ*, and the reconstructed *Ortura*.

The structure is the same:

root + directional or locative suffix (-ira / -ra / -iṛ)

These endings function as place-markers expressing spatial relation or functional position.

26.1. Al-Jazīra as a geosemantic marker

In *al-Jazīra*, the ending:

- *-zīra / -ciras*

does not merely denote an island in the strict sense, but a **transition point**, a place defined by its relationship to water.

In Andalusian coastal geography, *jazīra* can mean:

- a promontory,
- a peninsula,
- a water-defined location,
- a strategic crossing point.

Thus *al-Jazīra* functions exactly like the Tartessian morphemes *-iṛ* and *-ura*:

☞ a spatial relation defined by water.

26.2. A pattern across five linguistic layers

The persistence of this form across:

- Tartessian,
- Iberian,
- Latin,
- Arabic,
- Spanish,

shows a deeply rooted Mediterranean pattern in which such endings serve as semantic markers of direction, location, or function.

The parallels to:

- *Ortura* (“place toward the water”),
- *kualtiṛ* (“river that leads to something”),

are therefore not accidental, but expressions of a continuous toponymic logic.

26.3. Algeciras as confirmation of an ancient system

Algeciras confirms that the endings:

- *-ir*,
- *-iṛ*,
- *-ra*,
- *-ura*,
- *-ira*,
- *-ora*,
- *-era*

have functioned as directional and locative morphemes in the west-Mediterranean linguistic landscape since antiquity.

Thus the Tartessian forms:

- *oṛtiṛ*,
- *kualtiṛ*,
- *taniṛ*,
- *Ortura*

are not isolated relics, but early representatives of a system still visible today.

26.4. And now, one last sentence... 😊

Al-Jazīra does not mean “an island,” nor “some island,” nor “one of many islands,” but:

☞ “**THE island**” ☞ “**the distinctive island**” ☞ “**the island that stands out**”

And from here, the reader may speculate — gently, responsibly, with a smile.

If a culture marks water-related places with the same morphemes for millennia...

...and if “the island” in southern Spain held a special status...

...and if Tartessos/Tarshish was a water-rich, lagoon-based coastal city...

...then it is at least conceivable that:

- certain places in southern Iberia
- across many linguistic layers
- were perceived as “special islands,” “sacred islands,” “strategic islands.”

And that this perception was preserved in language.

I will say no more. But any attentive reader knows exactly where this thought leads. 😊

Conclusion: Tartessos as a linguistic, geographical, and cultural continuum

The study of the Tartessian language — its morphemes, its toponyms, and its geographical embedding — leads to a remarkably coherent picture. What at first appears to be a mosaic of isolated inscriptions, scattered place-names, and fragmentary archaeological traces reveals itself, upon closer examination, as a continuous system that endured for millennia.

The Tartessian endings *-ir* and *-ra / -ura*, the hydronymic stems such as *kual-*, the waypoint structures of *Ortura* and *kualtir*, the Semitic parallel *Tarshish*, and the later Arabic-Romance forms such as *al-Jazīra / Algeciras* are not random clusters of sounds. They form a deeply rooted west-Mediterranean pattern linking language, space, and function.

In this pattern, places do not appear as abstract names, but as **semantic nodes**: indicators of waterways, crossings, settlement zones, metallurgical centers, and strategic positions within the landscape. The Tartessian language was therefore not merely a means of communication, but a **cartographic instrument**, mapping the structure of a hydrologically shaped culture. The morphological markers preserved in the inscriptions are the linguistic remnants of an orientation system that named rivers, lagoons, islands, and transitions — a system that survives in Iberian toponymy to this day.

The archaeological evidence from the Doñana region — slag fragments, charcoal, geophysically detected platforms and channels — confirms this picture of a **water-metal civilization** that transported ore from the hinterland along river routes and built its workshops within a lagoon landscape. The Semitic root *TRŠ* (“to smelt,” “to refine”) fits seamlessly into this framework and explains why Phoenician traders called Tartessos *Tarshish*: not as a mythical place, but as a real metallurgical hub at the western edge of the known world.

From this perspective, Tartessos, Tarshish, and the later Arabic-Romance place-names merge into a single, multilayered geographical system whose traces survive in language, landscape, and tradition. The idea that this culture — hydrologically embedded, metallurgically advanced, strategically positioned — formed the historical core of Plato’s Atlantis narrative is therefore not speculative fantasy, but a plausible synthesis of linguistic, archaeological, and geographical evidence.

In the end, Tartessos does not appear as a vanished city, but as a **structure**, a **system**, a **memory-space**: a culture whose language survives in morphemes, whose landscape persists in place-names, and whose history echoes in myth. What lies beneath the sediments of Doñana is not merely a submerged settlement — it is a linguistic and cultural resonance that reaches into the present and allows us to reconstruct a lost world in its own terms.

And with that, I hope I’ve helped — in an entertaining way — to contribute to the idea that perhaps we *can* begin to decipher the language of the Tartessian “Atlanteans,” those island-dwellers whom Plato later cast in mythic light.

Keywords: Tartessos; Tartessian language; Southwest script; Tarshish; TRŠ; hydronymy; toponymy; morphology; locative morphemes; geosemantics; Doñana; Guadalquivir; Rio Tinto; metallurgy; ancient mining; lagoon settlements; pre-Roman Iberia; West Mediterranean; Atlantis hypothesis.