

# MIGRA – Mapping Inscriptions revealing Geographic Mobility in Roman Antiquity: The Case of Spain.

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Figure 1. Location of a selection of inscriptions of migrants in Roman Spain.

## MIGRA Project

MIGRA is the acronym of a Geographic Information System (GIS) connected to an epigraphic database, designed to analyze and map geographic mobility between cities in the Roman Empire. The development of this tool is the main objective of the research project “*Movilidad, arraigo y registro epigráfico de la memoria en la Hispania romana: estudio histórico y cartográfico*” (HAR2013-40762-P) (Mobility, Settlement and Epigraphic Memory in Roman Spain: A Historical and Cartographic Study), funded by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of the Government of Spain, within the State Programme for Research of Scientific and Technical Excellence.

One of the goals of this project, carried out at the University of Cantabria since 2014, is to build a digital mapping platform allowing the visualisation of the intensity and direction of migratory movements documented through Latin inscriptions.

The GIS has been developed using layers of geographic information for Roman Spain obtained from several sources, such as the digitalised, georeferenced and vectorised *Tabula Imperii Romani*. It has also used the freely downloadable maps of the Ancient World Mapping Center (University of North Carolina), by extracting and correcting (where necessary) data for the Iberian Peninsula with cartographic information of the Spanish National Geographic Institute.

The epigraphic corpus consists of Latin inscriptions recording population movements between cities, provinces and regions in the Roman Empire. These movements are normally detected through indications of the *origo* in the onomastic of the migrants, or through other explicit references in the epigraphic texts. With the georeferences of the places where the inscriptions were found and the *origines* of the people who had moved, it is possible to map the migratory flows between *civitates* and identify the main immigration centres (Figures 1-3).

The inscriptions are located by searches on the main online databases, especially *Hispania Epigraphica Online (HEpO)*, *Epigraphik-Datenbank Claus* /

*Slaby (EDCH)* and *Epigraphic Database Heidelberg (EDH)*. In addition, there is abundant literature identifying migrants in Roman Spain (e.g. the study of Evan W. Haley, *Emigration and Economy in Roman Imperial Spain*, Barcelona, 1991).

## Epigraphy and geographic mobility

Modern research is shaking off the idea that the ancient world was static and only periodically altered by large migrations described as “invasions”, “waves” or “expansions” of some people over others. Paradoxically, at the same time as these phenomena are being minimised, research is increasingly focusing on everyday mobility from one city to another, which is often invisible in literary sources but can be traced through epigraphy. In recent decades, historians have made use of the huge amount of information provided by inscriptions to identify such mobility. However, most of scholarship is short of supported mapping. The MIGRA Project aims to provide such an analytical tool.

## The case of Aurelius Aeliodoros

A good example of an epigraph revealing geographic mobility in Roman Spain is the one dedicated to *Aurelius Aeliodoros* (*CIL* II<sup>2</sup>/14, 2111). The monument consists of a funerary plaque found in the palaeo-Christian necropolis in Tarragona (Figure 4). It can be dated in the late fourth or early fifth centuries according to the epigraphic formulae and the archaeological context.

The inscription refers to an Easterner (*Graecus*) living in Spain. *Aurelius Aeliodoros* originally came from *Tarsus*, in the province of Cilicia, lived in the city of *Hispalis* (Seville) and ended his days in *Tarraco* (Tarragona), where he was buried. Bearing in mind his links with three large port cities, his geographic mobility is likely to have been motivated by trading activity.



Figure 2. Location of the origins of the migrants represented on the map in Figure 1.

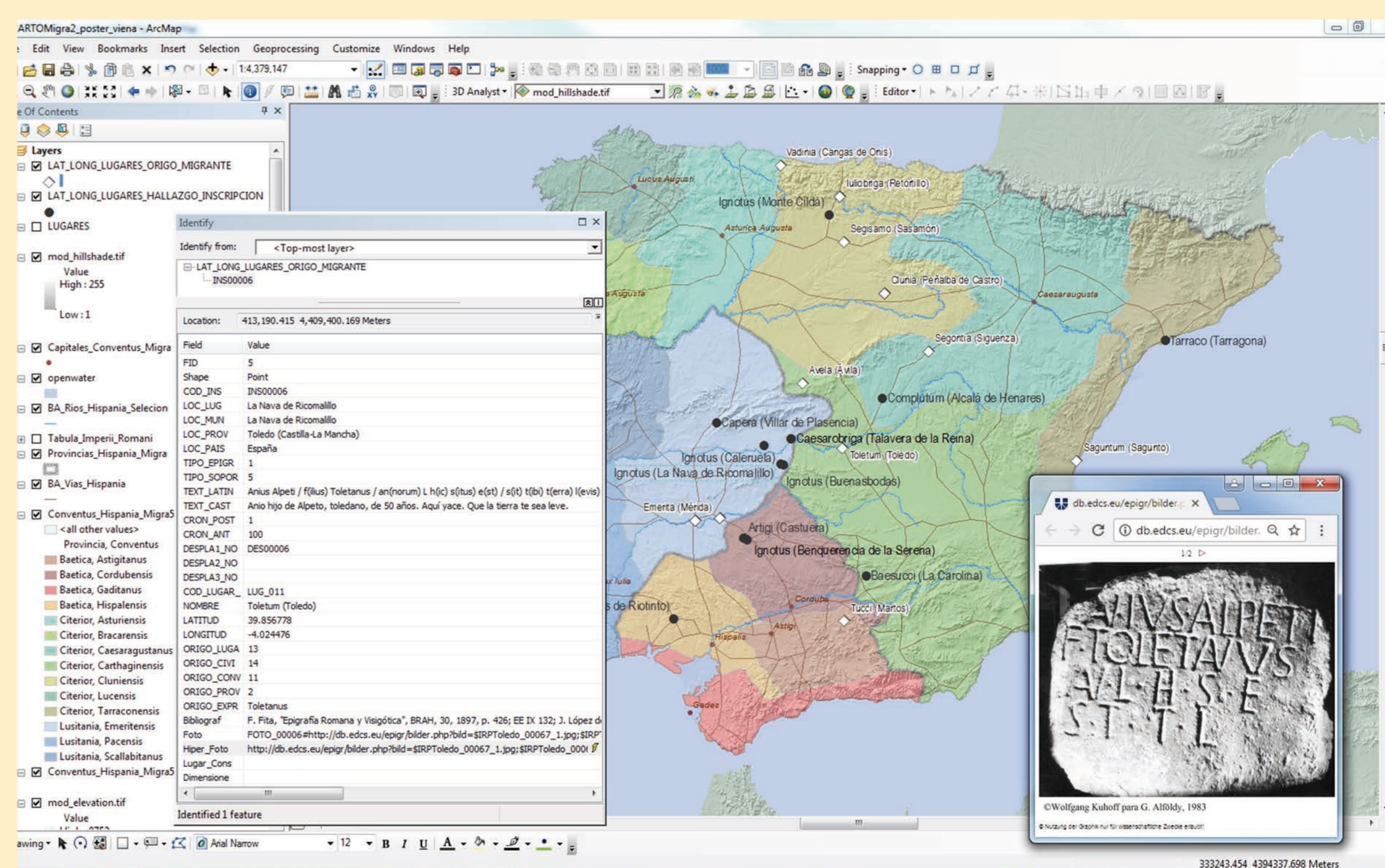


Figure 3. Screenshot of the MIGRA database.



Figure 4. Epitaph of Aurelius Aeliodoros. Photograph: RIT, 958.

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