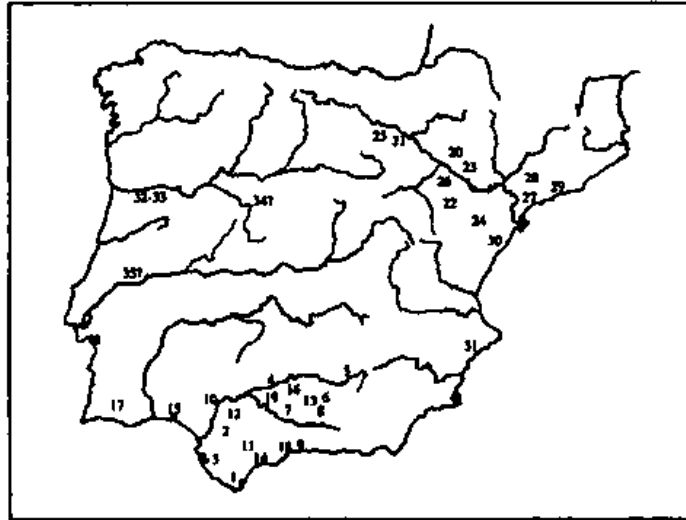


## –*uba* and –*oba* in early names

Villar (2000) wrote (in Spanish) a [book](#) about place names in pre-Roman *Hispania*, whose chapter 4 concerns an element *\*uba* ‘water, river’. It shows up with numerous spelling variants (*upa*, *oba*, and *ovius*, to name just three) in 35 ancient names from Iberia and 113 from elsewhere across Europe, and into Asia and Africa. Their heartland in Spain is the valleys of the [Ebro](#) and the [Guadalquivir](#), around modern Barcelona and Seville. Google Books used to show most of the vital pages, but seems to have stopped, so here is a scan of one key diagram.



1 Alube, 2 Calduba, 3 Conobaria, 4 Corduba, 5 Cusubi, 6 Ilubaria, 7 Ipolcobulcula, 8 Iponuba, 9 Maenuba, 10 Maenuba, 11 Oba, 12 Obucola, 13 Obulco, 14 Onoba, 15 Onoba, 16 Onuba, 17 Ossonoba, 18 Salduba, 19 Ucubi, 20 Allobone, 21 Caluba, 22 Idubeda, 23 Iluberis, 24 Obanae, 25 Obione, 26 Salduie, 27 Subi, 28 Telobis, 29 Tolobi, 30 Uduba, 31 Sorobis, 32 Apiobica, 33 Mirobieo, 34 Obila?, 35 Tacubis?.

In Britain *\*uba* etc may contribute to these names:

- [Canovium](#) = Caerhun
- [Celovion](#) ?= Girvan
- [Galluvio](#) in northern Lancashire
- [Matovion](#) = Dalginross
- [Noovioy](#) ?= Nith
- [Panovius](#) ?in the Forth estuary
- [Ρατοσταθυβιον](#) ?= mouth of the Rhymney
- [Τοβιος](#) = river Tywi
- [Τοισοβιος](#) = ?river Glaslyn
- [Τουεροβιος](#) = river Teifi
- [Vinovia](#) = Binchester
- [Ουερουβιουμ ακρον](#) ?= Duncansby Head
- [Ουολιβα](#) near Falmouth

A proper historical linguist who understands Spanish and Spain may be able to take this story further. What determined the form this element took in different areas? How did it differ from the more familiar PIE *\*ap-/\*ab-* ‘water’? Did it arise from Iberian speakers interacting with Indo-European speakers, sometimes suggested as the cradle of Celtic? Is it related to *\*uper/\*ofer* ‘bank’ and, if so, is ‘waterside, riverbank’ a better translation than ‘water, river’?