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Archaeologists reconstruct life in the Bronze Age through the site of La Motilla



La Motilla del Azuer, La Mancha (Spain) Credit: University of Granada

Researchers of the Group of Recent Prehistory Studies (GEPRAN) of the University of Granada, from the department of Prehistory and Archaeology, have taken an important step to determine how life was in the Iberian Peninsula in the Bronze Age.

Since 1974, archaeologists from Granada, directed by professors Trinidad Nájera Colino and Fernando Molina González, have been working on the site of the Motilla del Azuer, in the municipal area of Daimiel (province of Ciudad Real), in search of the necessary information to reconstruct the day by day in this thrilling and unknown historical period.

The sites, known as “motillas”, represent one of the most peculiar types of prehistoric settlements in the Iberian Peninsula. They occupied the region of La Mancha in the Bronze Age between 2200 and 1500 BC, and they are artificial mounds, 4 to 10 m high, a result of the destruction of a stone fortification of central plan with several concentric walled lines. Its distribution in the plain of La Mancha, with equidistances of 4 to 5 kilometres, affects river meadows and low areas where the existence of pools was quite frequent until recent dates.

Although they were already known since the end of the 19th century, the “motillas” were erroneously considered to be burial mounds until the middle of the seventies, when the start of the research work on the Motilla del Azuer carried out by the University of Granada and sponsored by the Department of Culture of Castile La Mancha showed that it was a fortification, surrounded by a small settlement and a necropolis. It has been the first site of this kind to be excavated in a scientific and systematic way.

The mound of the fortification which has been recovered has a diameter of about 50 metres, and is composed of a tower, two walled enclosures and a large courtyard. The central core is composed of a tower of masonry of square plan, with 7 metres high east and west fronts and an interior accessible through ramps inlaid in narrow corridors, which confer a particular nature to the place.

The researchers of the UGR explain that settlement of the Azuer contains the oldest well found in the Iberian Peninsula. The inside of this type of walled enclosures protected basic resources such as water, collected from the phreatic stratum through the well, and was also used to store and process cereals on a large scale, to keep the livestock occasionally and to product pottery and other home-made products, whose remains have also been found.

The site of the Motilla del Azuer has been possible thanks to the close collaboration between the Council of Communities of Castile la Mancha and the Public Service of Employment of Castile La Mancha (SEPECAM), who have financed the works, and the University of Granada, thanks to the archaeologists of the GEPRAN, who have also had the support of the Town Council of Daimiel (Ciudad Real).

Source: Universidad de Granada

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