



Publikationen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts

José Luis Simón García, José María Moreno-Narganes, Pedro Jiménez-Castillo

Castellar de Meca Revisited: The Islamic Occupation (9th–12th Centuries)

Madridener Mitteilungen Bd. 65 (2024) 326-365

<https://doi.org/10.34780/c6br-6b43>

Herausgebende Institution / Publisher:
Deutsches Archäologisches Institut

Copyright (Digital Edition) © 2024 Deutsches Archäologisches Institut

Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Zentrale, Podbielskiallee 69–71, 14195 Berlin, Tel: +49 30 187711-0
Email: info@dainst.de | Web: <https://www.dainst.org>

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Mit dem Herunterladen erkennen Sie die [Nutzungsbedingungen](#) von iDAI.publications an. Sofern in dem Dokument nichts anderes ausdrücklich vermerkt ist, gelten folgende Nutzungsbedingungen: Die Nutzung der Inhalte ist ausschließlich privaten Nutzerinnen / Nutzern für den eigenen wissenschaftlichen und sonstigen privaten Gebrauch gestattet. Sämtliche Texte, Bilder und sonstige Inhalte in diesem Dokument unterliegen dem Schutz des Urheberrechts gemäß dem Urheberrechtsgesetz der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Die Inhalte können von Ihnen nur dann genutzt und vervielfältigt werden, wenn Ihnen dies im Einzelfall durch den Rechteinhaber oder die Schrankenregelungen des Urheberrechts gestattet ist. Jede Art der Nutzung zu gewerblichen Zwecken ist untersagt. Zu den Möglichkeiten einer Lizenzierung von Nutzungsrechten wenden Sie sich bitte direkt an die verantwortlichen Herausgeber*innen der jeweiligen Publikationsorgane oder an die Online-Redaktion des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts (info@dainst.de). Etwaige davon abweichende Lizenzbedingungen sind im Abbildungsnachweis vermerkt.

Terms of use:

By downloading you accept the [terms of use](#) of iDAI.publications. Unless otherwise stated in the document, the following terms of use are applicable: All materials including texts, articles, images and other content contained in this document are subject to the German copyright. The contents are for personal use only and may only be reproduced or made accessible to third parties if you have gained permission from the copyright owner. Any form of commercial use is expressly prohibited. When seeking the granting of licenses of use or permission to reproduce any kind of material please contact the responsible editors of the publica-

tions or contact the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (info@dainst.de). Any deviating terms of use are indicated in the credits.



ABSTRACT

Castellar de Meca Revisited

The Islamic Occupation (9th–12th Centuries)

José Luis Simón García – José María Moreno-Narganes – Pedro Jiménez Castillo

Castellar de Meca (Ayora, Valencia) has long been recognized as an outstanding protohistoric archaeological site owing to its enormous size, impressive remnants of cyclopean walls, and, above all, its rock-hewn features which include paths, silos, and cisterns. As a result, the significance of its occupation during the Middle Ages has been overshadowed, despite its substantial material remains. This work aims to analyse the history of Meca during the Islamic period, drawing on surveys, a re-examination of the evidence from excavations conducted by Iron Age specialists, and even historical maps. With this, we seek to demonstrate that the analysis of this site is crucial for two reasons: first, it allows for a better understanding of settlement patterns in the region from the Emirate (9th century) to the Almoravid period (first half of the 12th century). Second, this was the most important settlement in western Valencia during the 11th century. Previously, the region had barely played a marginal agricultural role, but in the 11th century it underwent an intense process of colonisation in the wake of the economic revolution that was taking place in al-Andalus and in other European and Mediterranean regions.

KEYWORDS

Islamic rural settlement, rainfed agriculture, medieval archaeology, islamic pottery, 11th century

Castellar de Meca Revisited

The Islamic Occupation (9th–12th Centuries)

1 Introduction

¹ Castellar de Meca is an impressive archaeological site due to both its topographical location and the intensity of its occupation from the Iron Age to the Middle Ages. The presence of Phoenician material allows us to trace the settlement's chronology back to the 7th century BCE, during the Orientalizing age. However, most of the evidence, especially ramparts, remains of cave constructions, and surface materials, date back to the Iron Age or Iberian culture (4th–2nd centuries BCE). At the beginning of the Roman period, the site was abandoned and we only have clear evidence of re-occupation during the Islamic or Andalusí period, specifically in the (10th century CE), when the Cordovan state ordered the evacuation of hill settlements after the pacification that followed the civil wars. Finally, it underwent a last moment of splendour between the early 11th century and the first years of the 12th century – that is, during the Taifa and Almoravid periods – until it was abandoned again, this time definitively. Iberian-era remains, particularly rock-cut features such as paths, staircases, silos, and cisterns, have captured the imagination of scholars and archaeologists since the 18th century, and the site has become an historiographical reference for this period of protohistory, as can be verified in the publications that deal with the site in this phase¹. However, the history of its occupation during the Andalusí period (9th – first half of 12th centuries CE) is virtually unknown, despite the fact that its importance was highlighted as early as the late 19th century. Even after the excavations, which were carried out during the 1980s and 1990s and aimed to discover protohistoric pathways, the importance of the site's medieval archaeological record remained largely overlooked (Fig. 1).

² Aside from the prominence of Iron Age remains, the reason why no one has explored the Islamic period of Castellar de Meca until now is related to the fact that there is no information preserved in Arabic sources and we are unsure what name this population centre had during that time. However, the archaeological study of Castellar de Meca during the Andalusí period is relevant, especially in the context of our recent

¹ Schulten 1946; Broncano 1986; Broncano – Alfaro 1997; Lorrio 2011; Lorrio – Simón 2016; Ferrer et al. 2015.



a



b

1

Fig. 1: a. Location of the site on the Iberian Península. – b. Aerial view of the upper plateau of Castellar de Meca (Ayora, Valencia).

research on medieval settlement patterns in the eastern sector of the province of Albacete – that is, the region of influence of Meca. This work demonstrates that, following the early Middle Ages, when human occupation was largely limited to a few hilltop nuclei, the foundation of peasant communities in this area intensified significantly in the late 10th or early 11th century. So much so, that we may speak of the colonisation of a territory that had previously been sparsely inhabited and exploited. In this context, Castellar de Meca must have been the largest settlement and the main commercial and administrative hub in the vast territory that spanned the head of the Ayora-Cofrentes valley, the Almansa Corridor, and the eastern sector of the *iqlīm* or administrative district of *madīnat* Chinchilla. In the early 12th century, Meca was abandoned for good for reasons that remain unclear and which will be discussed in this paper, but which may also be the combination of internal socio-economic factors and the instability generated by the advance of Castile-León and the conquest of Toledo, as well as the threat posed by El Cid in the Kingdom of Valencia. The archaeological record attests to a severe demographic downturn around this period, reflected in the abandonment of numerous villages and the concentration of the population into a small number of settlements, such as Alpera, Almansa, or Ayora, around which the territory was organised from then onwards.

3 This paper aims to situate the evolution of Castellar de Meca within this context and, in the process, to delve into its relationship with what we know about settlement patterns in this frontier region between Valencia and southeastern La Mancha during the Andalusī period. As the evidence is limited to that produced by ground surveys and some brief notes in excavation reports that are over three decades old, our conclusions must remain tentative. However, we shall try to bring forth some working hypotheses in the hope that they will be a useful stepping-stone for future research.

4 Therefore, the contents that we will develop in the following sections are: 1. compilation of the news in the history of research on the medieval stage of Meca; 2. the geographical context and what we know about the occupation of the territory or hinterland of Meca during the Andalusī period through surveys; 3. the remains from the medieval period documented in the site; and 4. based on all these pieces of evidence, we will attempt to reconstruct the history of Meca during the Islamic period.

2 History of Research

5 As we mentioned earlier, there are no known references to Meca in Arabic written sources, and the earliest references to the site appear after the Christian conquest. This absence and lack of references makes it necessary to return to the medieval archaeological remains and give them greater importance in understanding the history of the place. Moreover, the lack of information reflects the rural character of the enclave, which is partly distant from political centres or from the network of castles that will appear from the 12th century onwards. Scholars who have described the site throughout history focused almost exclusively on the remains from the protohistoric phase, paying little or no attention to the Andalusī evidence². Therefore, we will not undertake a comprehensive review of all the historiography on Meca, which has already been compiled and published by Santiago Broncano Rodríguez³. Instead, we will exclusively highlight mentions that provide some information about the medieval occupation of the site.

6 The fact that Castellar de Meca has been occupied since ancient times was recognized as early as the late Middle Ages. This turned the site into a magnet for treasure hunters and, more recently, clandestine excavators. For instance, Gaspar Es-

2 Lorrio – Simón 2016.

3 Broncano 1986.

colano's »Década primera de la Historia de Valencia« (1611) describes the discovery of Roman gold and silver coins as well as a »bronze medal«. He reports the activity of »greedy Christians and Moriscos« in pursuit of hidden treasures. Escolano mentions over 300 silos and cisterns and argues that the toponym »Meca« perhaps referred to the presence of a »famous Mosque or hermitage« or to the fact that the place »is almost bald and bare, coming from the word ›mecco,‹ which in Arabic means something without hair«⁴. It is an etymology without scientific basis and, in fact, the origin of the toponym ›Meca‹ is not currently known.

7 Subsequent visitors continued to mention frequent numismatic discoveries; for instance, Juan Lozano, who mentions the presence of »Arabic« coins in 1794 without providing further information⁵. In his 1797 work, Antonio José Cavanilles noted that he collected several Roman coins during his visit and pays special attention to an Iberian piece from the mint of Ilduro pointing out that this was not uncommon⁶. In the second half of the 19th century, there are reports of several local collections in Almansa, like that of the priest José Biosca Megias⁷, which comprised finds from various sites, among which Castellar de Meca provided the largest number of specimens. The search must have been so intense that, in references from the early 20th century, no more coin discoveries are mentioned, neither in the excavations by Pierre Paris in 1899 nor in the visits by Julián Zuazo in 1918⁸. There are some later records of chance discoveries, including a lead inscription and an epigraphic ceramic fragment⁹, as well as arrowheads from the Iron Age¹⁰.

8 In 1899, the French archaeologists Pierre Paris and Pierre Waltz conducted a brief exploration of the area, including archaeological excavations at Castellar de Meca. In his account, Paris reports the following: »The incessant walks I have taken over the whole acropolis, the excavation of some cisterns, houses, and wherever I thought the deposits were deep enough, which went on for several days, have allowed me to shift several cubic meters of ceramic fragments, from which I collected those that seemed most interesting to me; a large number of this I brought to the Louvre Museum«¹¹. Although their main target was to find Iberian statuary, Paris highlighted the relevance of the Andalusí phase of Meca, based on his examination of the ceramic record: »[I]n Meca, as the name itself allowed one to assume, there is much Arabic pottery, including remains of earthenware plates with metallic reflections, which have been agreed to be called Hispano-Moresque«¹².

9 On the upper plateau, construction remains have always been visible and were included in the first topographic survey conducted by General Lammerer in 1921 (Fig. 2) for Adolf Schulten's »Meca. Una ciudad rupestre ibérica« (1946). This plan documented all the remains that were visible at the time¹³, which have been attributed to the Iberian culture owing to the abundance of ceramic fragments from that period on the surface and the monumental rock-hewn features, which have also been consid-

4 Broncano 1986, 34.

5 Lozano 1794, 8–10.

6 Cavanilles 1797, 6–8. Ilduro was a Laietanian-Roman mint (2nd – 1st centuries BCE) identified with Burriac (Cabrera de Mar, Barcelona). The Iberian settlement was built in the 4th century BCE and abandoned in the mid-1st century BC; it covered an approximate area of 10 hectares. Regarding this mint, refer to the monograph by Alejandro Sinner (Sinner 2017).

7 Rosell 1865–1871, 51; Papi 2002, 269.

8 In fact, the excavations undertaken from 1982 yielded only two coins, one Punic and the other one Celtiberian, under the medieval building found in the trench situated in the centre of the plateau (Broncano – Alfaro 1990, 14).

9 Ferrer et al. 2015.

10 Lorrio et al. 2016, 21 fig. 6.

11 Paris 1904/II, 7.

12 Paris 1921.

13 Broncano 1986, 114 fig. 88.



2

ered protohistoric. However, the floor plans of the numerous dwellings reflected in the plan bear no resemblance to Iron Age architecture, but are similar to the houses in the surrounding villages examined during our surveys and excavations. In fact, in addition to the ruins found on the top of the plateau, as depicted in Lammerer's plan, there is ample evidence of masonry buildings on the north slope, specifically in the northwestern sector, demonstrating that a significant settlement existed at the foot of the hill. This was already noted by officials working for the survey conducted by Philip II in 1576, which reported the site and mentioned abandoned remains of a »population of more than two thousand people« on the northern slope of the mountain¹⁴. In Lammerer's plan (Fig. 2), the urban layout on the upper plateau consists of square or rectangular buildings, with two or more bays around proto-patios or fully enclosed courtyards. On the side of the hill, the buildings are in a worse state of preservation, likely owing to their location on a slope. In terms of plan and building structure they are similar to those on the hilltop, and are predominantly associated with Andalusí material (Fig. 3).

Fig. 2: Lammerer's 1921 plan (00013AB8).

¹⁰ The Municipal Museum Casa Alamanzón in Utiel (Valencia) houses an Islamic lead amulet from Castellars de Meca, which was part of the collection of Alejandro Martínez and his family who donated it to the municipality. There is no information about the circumstances of its discovery, so it could be a chance find by a visitor or be the result of clandestine excavations. The piece is a lead sheet that was found folded upon itself. It is rectangular in shape (4 cm × 2 cm) with two triangular rings at the top. It preserves an Arabic text on the obverse and no visible inscription on the reverse, except at the bottom. These items often break along the crease when unfolded. The obverse presents several written lines that run across both halves, framed by two continuous lines flanking a dotted line (Fig. 4). This kind of folded amulet was relatively common

14 Broncano 1986, 34.



3

Fig. 3: Aerial view of Castellar de Meca Interministerial Flight 1973. Partial frame A-0004_0793_00B_0003.

in the Andalusi period and they came in many shapes and types of inscriptions¹⁵. This specimen is similar to the largest examples in the Tonegawa Collection, dated somehow between the 10th and 15th centuries, which generally feature a religious quote with an apotropaic function¹⁶. The text is too weathered to be read, although a simple form of Kufic calligraphy with smooth strokes can be appreciated¹⁷. Studies being conducted on these types of pieces document the spread of Islamic popular religiosity in deeply rural environments, such as the one under consideration.

11 Between 1982 and 1991, the Spanish Ministry of Culture undertook the excavation and cleaning of the site under the direction of archaeologists Broncano and María del Mar Alfaro. They conducted eight campaigns, which exclusively focused on the rock-hewn paths and the results were published in two books, as well as several articles¹⁸. Prior to this, Broncano published a monograph that compiled documents and texts about Castellar de Meca, including transcription and commentary¹⁹. Broncano and Alfaro's main objective was to clear and excavate the network of rock-hewn paths at the

15 Gozalbes 2005, 11 fig. 1, type I.A.

16 <<https://www.amuletosdealandalus.com/BAmuletos.html>> (20/09/2023).

17 Barceló 2019.

18 Broncano – Alfaro 1990; Alfaro 1991; Alfaro – Martín 1997; Broncano – Alfaro 1997. In the 1990 volume, the authors published the paths on the upper plateau, while those on the northern and western slope would be the subject of another book in 1997, with the northeast gate separating the two sectors. By 1990, seven out of the eight campaigns had already been completed; the only to postdate the book was undertaken in 1991 and focused on the lower part of the site. Therefore, by the time the book was published in 1997, six years had elapsed since the end of the excavations.

19 Broncano 1986. Although data from interventions conducted since 1982 are used in both the fourth and fifth chapters alongside graphic material of the excavations at the Eastern Gate, at the foot of the Republican bastion, and on the north wall near the Camino Hondo (Broncano 1986, figs. 103–106), the appendix includes medieval ceramics, one of which is related to the «Medinat Al Zahara style» (Broncano 1986, 159 figs. 118. 119).

site, from the summit to the foot of the hill, covering about 2,180 linear meters, and demonstrate their protohistoric chronology. They started with the hypothesis that the site was an *oppidum* (4th – 2nd centuries BCE) that must have played a very significant role in the organization of the territory around it and whose elites were the architects of an unparalleled road network and a water supply system based on cisterns whose volume far outstripped those found in other sites. The excavations confirmed the ubiquity of medieval levels and structures, to the point that the authors indicate that »practically all visible remains appear to be medieval, except for a possible Roman *castellum*«²⁰. However, as these were outside the research objectives, which focused on the protohistoric period, the evidence for the Islamic period (9th – 12th centuries) was merely listed without any attempt at interpretation or historical contextualisation and virtually all construction remains were put under the generic label »medieval«²¹. The only publication concerning this material was an article on a ceramic assemblage²², in addition to scattered references in the excavation reports (1986, 1990, and 1997). These references were concise but enough for other researchers to incorporate Castellar de Meca into the catalogue of Andalusí sites²³.



Fig. 4: Amulet from Castellar de Meca. Municipal Museum Casa Alamanzón in Utiel (Valencia).

3 Geographical Context

12 Castellar de Meca occupies the northernmost spur of the Mugrón mountain range and its upper plateau is located at an elevation of 1,046 meters above sea level. The hill is in the modern province of Valencia, and since the Late Middle Ages it has been used as a geographical landmark to set up boundaries between municipalities, provinces, and regions, and between the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon during the Middle Ages.

13 Owing to its central location, the Mugrón mountain range is a major landmark in the Almansa Corridor. It separates several geographically distinct areas, such as the southern head of the Ayora and Cofrentes valley, the Alpera plain, and the Almansa lowlands and is therefore a key milestone for the communication routes that run across the region. It also affects the hydrological network, particularly the unique Lagoon of San Benito, as well as the layout and direction of the Alpera plain. The latter was altered in the 14th century by the channelling work undertaken by Don Juan Manuel, which diverted the waters down an artificial canal towards the centre of the Almansa Corridor at the expense of a series of streams that eventually join to form the Cautabán River, a tributary of the Júcar on its right bank²⁴.

14 The modern name of the mountain range comes from the medieval toponym »Almugrón«, which first appears in 1264 in the text in which Alfonso X of Castile grants the »Fuero de Cuenca« to the town of Almansa: »Otrossi por fazer merçed damos les el heredamiento que dizen el Hondón del Almugrón assí commo va del algibe que

20 Broncano 1986, 25.

21 Broncano 1986, 114 fig. 88.

22 López 1985.

23 Bazzana 1992, 409; Gutiérrez 1996, 30. 62. 100.

24 Pretel 1981, 53.

está en la carrera de Ayora contra Almansa»²⁵. Therefore, it seems to be an Arabic toponym predating the Christian conquest of the area, combining an article and a noun, although there is no way to verify it in Arabic sources because, as we mentioned earlier, no reference to Meca or Almugrón has been identified in geographical books, historical chronicles, biographical repertoires, or legal collections. The term »mugrón« may be a Mozarabic word of Latin origin, probably referring to the vine shoot. It could also be derived from »mucro(n)«, which translates into »peak«, and which may have led to a reiterative toponym such as »Puntal del Mugrón«²⁶. Finally, the word may also come from the Arabic root *mḡrb* meaning »west« a likely name for the hill for the Andalusí population to its east, in Ayora and the valley that descends towards the Mediterranean coast.

¹⁵ The geological characteristics of the Mugrón, a Miocene rocky mass of marine origin²⁷, have led wind erosion to create a cliff edge around most of its perimeter, where shelters of varying depths have formed. These caves overlook the surrounding territory far and wide, especially the natural passes, and provide easy access to a variety of nearby natural resources. As a result, the caverns have been used historically as temporary or permanent shelters for human groups whose economy was based on farming and, especially, herding²⁸.

¹⁶ The view from the summit is a typical transitional landscape between the Meseta and the Valencian interior, an extensive dryland subject to extreme climatic conditions: dry and hot in summer and very cold in winter. Traditionally, these hills have been exploited for forest resources, especially hunting (mountain goats, and particularly smaller species like rabbits, partridges, and hares). Over time, dryland agriculture, beehives, lime kilns, and charcoal pits began colonising the area around the hill²⁹. The few springs in place are insufficient to develop irrigation agricultural practices, as seen in the fields that surround the foot of the elevation.

¹⁷ Another historical factor in terms of settlement is the Lagoon of San Benito, which the region's inhabitants perceived as unwholesome. For centuries, they asked the authorities to drain it, a request that was eventually heeded in the 19th century. According to Cavanilles, the lagoon was the »repository of the many waters that flow down from the heights and neighbouring mountains, and may be about half a league long and a quarter wide. It completely dries up, as I saw it in 1792, only seldom, and even then, this fertile soil is left barren because neither worker dares to swallow the poison that the earth exudes when turned, nor do landowners want to risk expenses and seeds, being certain to lose everything in the first storm or downpour. Its stagnant and motionless waters alter and corrupt the atmosphere, leading to frequent epidemics«³⁰.

¹⁸ At the north-western end of the Mugrón, separated by a valley or depression from the rest of the hill range, rises a plateau with an irregular elongated shape, with a maximum length of 810 meters and a maximum width of 315 meters in the central area, before it begins to narrow down towards the east, where it reaches a minimum width of just over a hundred meters. The main nucleus of the ancient settlement of Castellar de Meca, approximately 15 ha in size, lies on this plateau.

²⁵ Pretel 1981, 181.

²⁶ Boyrie-Fénié 2005, 164 f.

²⁷ Calvo et al. 1974.

²⁸ Simón et al. in press.

²⁹ Madoz 1845–1850.

³⁰ Cavanilles 1797, 3 f.

4 The Islamic Settlement in the Territory of Meca

19 As noted in section 2, the importance of Castellar de Meca during the Andalusian period has long been acknowledged by some of the scholars and archaeologists who have explored its ruins. However, no information about it has survived or been recognised as such in the Arabic sources. In fact, we do not even know the name by which this substantial population centre was known during the Andalusian period. Therefore, for this exploration of the history of Castellar de Meca in the Islamic period, our only tool is the archaeological analysis of the site and its surroundings. Additionally, we rely on indirect textual information regarding the historical and geographical context in a broader regional level.

20 To date, systematic archaeological surveys have been conducted in the region to the west of Meca, specifically in the Almansa Corridor³¹. However, no such surveys have been carried out in the Ayora-Cofrentes valley to the east. An important road, which probably predates the Medieval period and which has been identified as the Laminio-Caesaraugusta road in the Antonine Itinerary, runs along this valley. This route begins at the crossroad of Requena³², heading south towards Almansa and Alicante; this was the same route followed by silk fabrics produced in the Requena region in the 16th century to reach Cadiz and, from there, the Americas. No previous study of the Andalusian occupation of the Ayora-Cofrentes valley has taken place and no significant finds have been reported, pending the publication of fieldwork carried out in the castles of Ayora, Jalance, and Cofrentes. Therefore, the archaeological catalogue is limited to Bronze Age sites and Iberian and Roman settlements and necropolises. It is assumed that there was Islamic occupation in almost all settlements in the valley, although there is no hard data beyond the alleged Andalusian filiation of the fortresses that overlook the territory³³. In this regard, the settlement model attested in other Levantine valleys, such as the Vinalopó corridor³⁴, has been taken into consideration, although whether this is justified remains uncertain.

21 As previously noted, the evidence available for the Almansa Corridor is significantly richer. The period spanning Late Antiquity, from the late 4th – early 5th century CE, and the Islamic occupation is archaeologically represented by some chance finds. These include a Visigothic ring from Alpera³⁵ and a series of Late Roman villas situated at the foothills of the Mugarón mountains, such as Los Nogales (or Blanco de Abajo), San Antón, and Casa Nueva del Carrascal, in Almansa³⁶. Other sites include Los Palancares, Los Arcellares, Casa del Collado de San Juan, Casas de Madrona, Casas del Hondo, San Benito, Casa del Baile, and Castellar de Meca³⁷. However, at this point it is impossible to say whether any of these settlements (including Castellar de Meca) was occupied without interruption until the Islamic conquest (as is, for instance, the case with Tolmo de Minateda)³⁸.

31 The study of the Andalusian settlement of the Almansa Corridor was initiated by one of us (JLS) in 2000, and the results began to be published a decade later (Simón 2010; Simón 2014; Jiménez – Simón 2017; Jiménez – Simón 2020). In 2017, we presented an article in the journal *Al-Qanṭara* entitled «El poblamiento andalusí en las tierras de secano. El área sudoriental de La Mancha (ss. XI–XIII)» which focused exclusively on the historical context of settlement (Jiménez – Simón 2017). Afterwards, we continued studying economic and social aspects through a research project that includes archaeological excavations in the Andalusian village of La Graja in Higuera (Jiménez et al. 2021a; Jiménez et al. 2021b; Jiménez et al. 2023).

32 López 2002; Ledo 2008.

33 Poveda 2001.

34 Azuar 2010.

35 Gamo 1999, 201 f.

36 Simón 1988, 102.

37 Poveda 2001.

38 Abad et al. 2012.

22 During the Cordoban Emirate (Fig. 5 a), the population in the region appears, in general terms, to have shrunk. It had a marked rural profile and gravitated around a few Late Antique major hilltop settlements³⁹. This settlement model, of which Tolmo de Minateda is the prime example, is documented elsewhere in the mountain range and its foothills, for instance in Peña de San Pedro, El Santo de Alcaraz, La Molata de Letur, and Peña Jarota in Nerpio, as well as probably Chinchilla in the central plain, Jorquera near the Júcar River, El Molón de Camporrobles, and Castellar de Meca (Ayora) in the eastern edge of the region. Some smaller sites have been documented near these central nuclei, on which they likely depended administratively: e. g., Loma Eugenia (Hellín) and El Cerrico de Don Felipe (Montealegre del Castillo). Most of both the larger and the smaller settlements had been abandoned by the end of the Emirate.

23 The Islamic settlement of Castellar de Meca likely depended on the medina of Chinchilla (*madīnat Shantijāla* or *Jinjilla*), the closest city by approximately 50 km as the crow flies and about 52 km through the historical road that threads the modern towns of Alpera, Higuera, Hoya Gonzalo, and Chinchilla. To the east, it is located 55 km (in a straight line) from the city of *Xàtiva* (*madīnat Shāṭiba*), 69 km via the route (Via Augusta) that runs through Almansa, Fuente la Higuera, Vallada, Moixent, and Canals. While Castellar de Meca may have had connections with both cities, Chinchilla was the closest and most geographically compatible, not to mention accessible by a more practicable route.

24 According to al-ʿUḍrī, in the 11th century (Fig. 5 b) Chinchilla was the administrative centre of a district located on the north-western boundary of the province of Tudmīr⁴⁰. Al-Idrīsī reports that »Jinjilla was a medium-sized city, defended by a strong and extensive fortress, surrounded by gardens or *al-munyas* and groves«⁴¹. Several significant figures were born there between the second half of the 10th century and the first half of the 11th century, as documented in coeval biographical compilations, such as Ibn Bashkuwāl's and Ibn al-Farādī's⁴². Al-ʿUḍrī does not mention any toponym that can be identified with Castellar de Meca, nor the nearby towns of Almansa and Alpera. The first reference to these places is found in the geographical work of al-Idrīsī, written in the mid-12th century, who records that, »from Játiva to Almansa there are twenty-five miles; between Almansa and Ayora, there are springs and rivers, to the West, there are twelve miles«⁴³. Meca is situated between the two, but al-Idrīsī clearly ignores it, although he does describe a physical feature of the area during that journey, the existence of springs and rivers.

25 The territory for which Chinchilla was a political-administrative centre presents several types of settlement, including *ḥusūn* (medium-sized settlements, typically protected by a hilltop fortress); villages (*qurā*), either on elevated or flat ground; hamlets; and cave shelters. The *ḥusūn* that depended on the *madīna* of Chinchilla included Alpera, Almansa, and Carcelén, as well as the fortresses built alongside the Júcar River, which stood as *al-thaḡhr* or frontier settlement during the advance of Castile between the late 12th and the early 13th centuries⁴⁴. These settlements seem to have flourished during the 11th century, in correlation with widespread demographic growth, which is most clearly embodied in this region by the colonization of the rural areas between fortifications⁴⁵. From the last third of the 11th century, the role of *ḥusūn* in the structure of settlement gained importance by meeting the defensive needs posed by

39 Jiménez et al. 2021a, 47–53.

40 al-ʿUḍrī 1965, 42. 63; Chavarria 2011, 145–168; Jiménez – Simón 2017, 223 f.

41 al-Idrīsī 1969, 175. 195 of the Arabic text and 210. 237 of the French translation.

42 Chavarria 2011, 156; Camarero in press.

43 Abid Mizal 1989, 92.

44 Simón 2011.

45 Jiménez – Simón 2017.

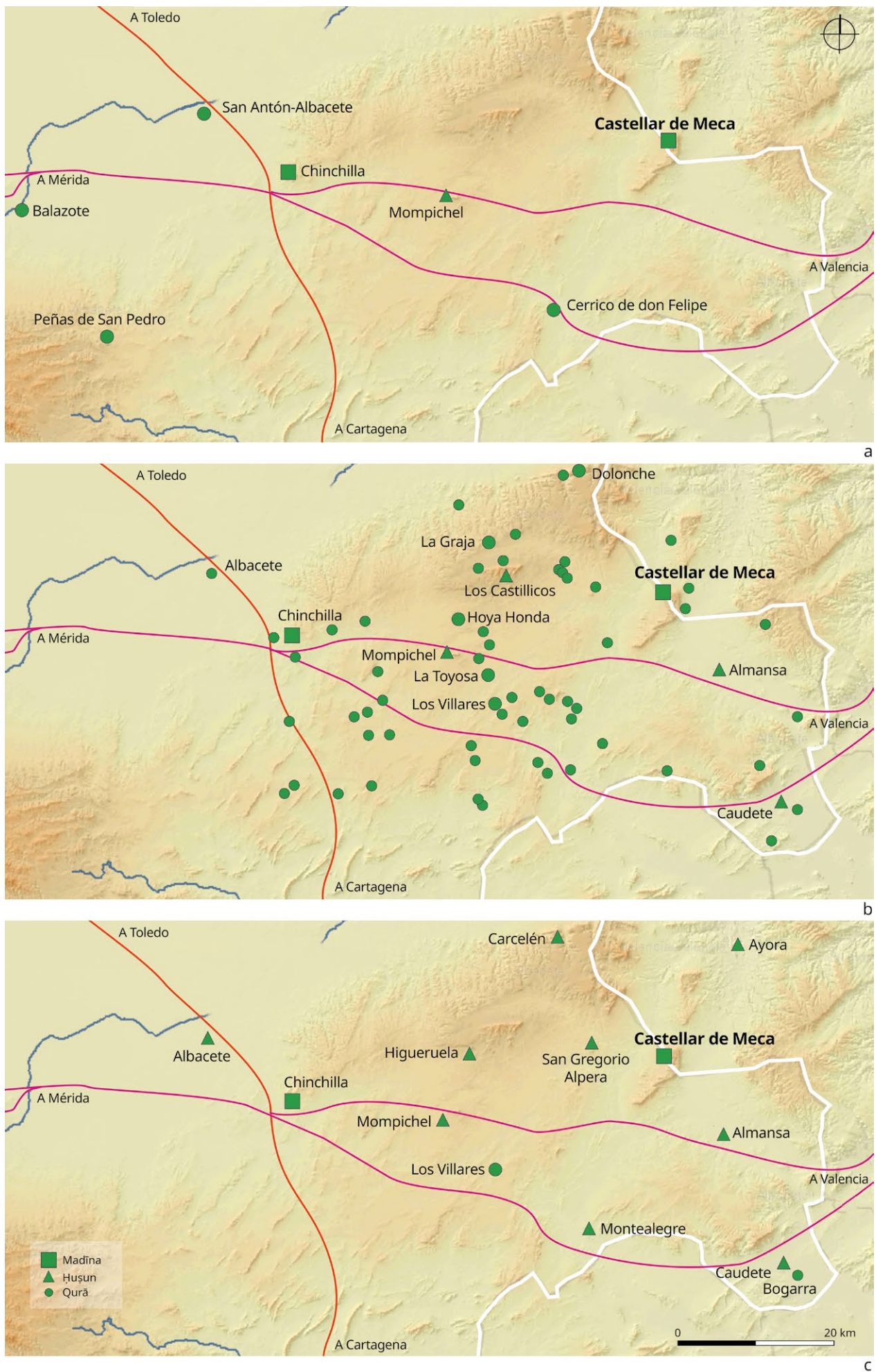


Fig. 5: Evolution of settlement in the vicinity of Castellar de Meca (eastern sector of the province of Albacete). a. Emirate; b. Taifa Phase; c. Almoravid Phase.

the political instability of the period, as we shall see in more detail later. These fortified hilltop villages continued to develop during the 12th and 13th centuries, all the way to the Castilian conquest, after which not all of them survived. Some, like Higuera and Carcelén, remained uninhabited until well into the 14th century.

26 However, the most numerous and significant group of Andalusí settlements in the area during the 11th century is that of rural hamlets (*qurā*, singular *qaryā*), small agricultural communities that were administratively dependent on *ḥuṣūn* or *mudun* (Fig. 5 b). As revealed by systematic surveys, this type of settlement tends to form clusters around communication routes, which over time became major drove roads, as well as in small valleys, such as those in Alpera and Montealegre. They are notably absent in the immediate vicinity of the *madīna* of Chinchilla, the hinterland of which was uninhabited within a radius of about 10–15 km, approximately two or three hours of travel. These settlements are generally small, usually comprising ten to twenty houses over an area ranging from 1,000 to 2,000 square meters, although some could be larger. The archaeological excavations that we have been conducting since 2020 in one of these villages, La Graja in Higuera, which had 35 or 40 houses at its peak, have allowed us to conclude that they were inhabited by peasant communities engaged in dryland agriculture and, especially, sheep- and goat-herding⁴⁶. Most, like La Graja, are situated on flat terrain and lack collective defensive features; however, a proportionately small number of them are located on high ground on the slopes of small hills with minimal natural or artificial defences beyond the gentle slopes. Occasionally, there may be a summit, usually small and showing no signs of occupation, which could have been used as a makeshift refuge. Even the strategic advantage that could be derived from their elevated position does not always justify their placement, since in some cases their sightlines are blocked by nearby elevations or open to areas of no particular interest. The best example is the ›alquería‹ of Los Castillicos de Mingo García in Higuera, a hillside settlement defended by ravines on either side, with two rows of houses with yards abutting each other and arranged in terraces on the eastern slope. They are protected from the prevailing winds by the rocky cliff at the summit⁴⁷.

27 The Mugrón mountain range was part of this region and its settlement during the Andalusí period adhered to this model⁴⁸. Surveys in the area have revealed small, isolated villages or hamlets, whose houses have one or two rectangular rooms and an adjacent courtyard-pen like those documented at La Graja. One of these settlements is Pozo Egea, located on the boundary of the municipalities of Almansa and Ayora, on the eastern slope of the Mugrón facing the Lagoon of San Benito. The site of Hoya Marín, which is very similar, is in the northeastern sector of the hill between the bottom of the slope and the small elevations of Villaricos on the right bank of the homonymous *wādī*. Farther away, Casa de la Torca is on the northern slope of the Mugrón and in the western foot of Puntal del Arciseco, in the municipality of Ayora, like Hoya Marín. Nearby are the remains of yet another analogous Andalusí settlement, although this one has been especially affected by recent agricultural and herding activity. All these sites are identified as Andalusí based on the characteristics of the structural remains and the presence of ceramic fragments, primarily Valencian kitchen wares with globular or piriform bodies and distinctive striated and grooved necks. Their typology, craftsmanship, fabrics, and temper are typical of Andalusí coarse kitchen wares predating the 12th century, a pattern also observed elsewhere, for instance in La Graja⁴⁹.

46 Jiménez et al. 2021a.

47 Jiménez – Simón 2017, 227–229.

48 Simón – Segura 2005–2008; Simón 2010.

49 Jiménez et al. 2021a, 215.

28 The second type of Andalusí archaeological sites documented in the Mugrón consists of more or less deep caves and shelters used as animal pens from Prehistory to the mid-20th century. Two types can be distinguished: caves or shelters with artificial structures on the exterior and those lacking visible architectural features.

29 The first group includes Cueva Negra (Almansa), situated at the foot of the eastern slope of Mugrón on the estate of Los Nogales or Blanco de Abajo. Here, structures that resemble the houses in the nearby hamlets can be observed with two or three rectangular rooms around a courtyard-pen and a fence that encloses the pen within the shelter⁵⁰. A similar site is found on the opposite slope in the shelter of Rincón de San Pascual, which is the largest of its kind in the northeastern sector of the valley and features medieval and modern graffiti⁵¹. Other smaller, open-air structures comparable to those in Cueva Negra in Almansa, but equally used for livestock, have also been attested⁵².

30 Shelters with evidence of occupation but lacking in visible architectural remains are scattered across all the hill's slopes, especially on its southern face, such as the cave of Puntal del Mugrón (Almansa) and the Shelters I and II of Mugrón. In all of these sites, as in those noted above, fragments of cooking pots have been found whose features safely point to the Andalusí period. Additionally, fragments of green or honey-coloured glazed platters (sp. »ataifores«) and glazed amphorae in bluish-green hues suggest a continued use of these sites beyond the Christian conquest in the mid-13th century. After the conquest, their use appears to become more sporadic, at least judging by the analysis of surface ceramic remains. All these small settlements and shelters likely depended on the major Andalusí settlement of Castellar de Meca.

5 The Andalusí Architectural Remains

31 In the archaeological site of Castellar de Meca, many archaeological remains of many different types (defensive structures, warehouses, dwellings, cisterns, and roads) are still visible, many of them carved into the rock (Fig. 6). Despite the absence of clear archaeological evidence, these constructions have generally been attributed to the Iberian period, between the 4th and early 2nd centuries BCE, when the violent end of the pre-Roman city is usually dated⁵³.

32 However, the archaeologists to have worked at the site in the late 20th century, whose main aim was to discover the Iron Age road system, identified some buildings and other features that they attributed to the Islamic period based on stratigraphy and construction technique. This evidence, combined with data from our site survey and Lammerer's plans, suggest the existence of a sizeable Andalusí settlement across the upper plateau, a section of the northern slope outside the walls and much of the north-western slope, where the presence of masonry structures interpreted as houses, silos, and even ceramic kilns has been confirmed. These structures were built atop the pre-Roman roads⁵⁴. In other words, the Iberian occupation, which has been the main focus of research until now, seems to have been confined to the 15 hectares of the upper plateau and some constructions on the northern slope⁵⁵. Meanwhile, the occupation area during the Islamic period was substantially larger, reaching 30 hectares, not only across the upper plateau but also on the northern slope, as indicated by the features detected during the surveys and excavations directed by Broncano (Fig. 9. 11. 13).

50 Jiménez – Simón 2017, 221.

51 Mesguer 1990, 379.

52 Jiménez – Simón 2017, 221.

53 Broncano – Alfaro 1997, 197.

54 López 1985, 183.

55 Broncano 1986, 19; Lorrio 2011, 123; Lorrio – Simón 2016, 420.



Fig. 6: High sector of Camino Hondo.

6

33 In Lammerer's 1921 plan (Fig. 2), the presence of residential structures on the upper plateau is represented with dashed lines that are particularly dense between the depression of Fuente de Meca and Camino Hondo (Fig. 7). These structures were clearly visible until recently owing to grazing activities in the area, as seen in the aerial photograph from the IGN⁵⁶. Most of these constructions are isolated buildings and are generally oriented to the southeast or south, within an urban layout in which apparent signs of planning by an external authority are lacking. They are built with masonry laid with mud, with orthostats at the corners and jambs in passageways. A preliminary analysis revealed two types of construction: buildings with a square plan, comprising several bays divided into several rooms and a large space, resembling a courtyard-pen, typically located in the northern and eastern sides of the complex; and rows of rooms seemingly not connected to enclosed courtyards (Fig. 8). Without delving into a detailed analysis of each type, these residential models are different from the buildings dated to the Iron Age, but similar to domestic complexes documented in a number of Andalusí villages in the region, especially La Graja, Castillicos de Mingo García, La Toyosa, and El Bachiller, in terms of floors and construction technique⁵⁷. The surface is strewn with Andalusí pottery sherds, particularly in the western slope, as Iberian-Roman period ceramics are proportionally more prevalent at the top of the plateau.

34 Furthermore, when these houses were built the existence of the network of rock-carved Iron Age pathways was not considered, as these were covered by abandonment layers with varying thicknesses but generally greater than 1 meter (Fig. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13). In this regard, the directors of the excavations undertaken in the 1980s consistently pointed out that the medieval structures and the Iberian paths were separated by an abandonment layer⁵⁸. This is illustrated by Section 880–900, where a medieval house, whose floor was situated 1.55 meters above the path, was found. Another example is

56 Vuelo 1973–1986 Interministerial, Fotograma A-0004_0793_00B_0003.

57 Jiménez et al. 2021a, 127.

58 Broncano and Alfaro divided the excavated area into "tramos"; that is, segments of the path several dozen meters long, which we have translated as "sections" (Broncano – Alfaro 1990).



Fig. 7: Section of the Deep Road with the sharpest bend, which is also the most steep and deepest.

7

Section 580 + 200, where the remains of a house with double walls filled with rubble and jambs with large vertical orthostates overlap the paths (Fig. 9)⁵⁹. Based on this evidence, it can be inferred that most, if not all, of the buildings in Meca are dated to the Andalusi period.

35 In Section 800–900, Broncano and Alfaro note, the presence of a structure that they defined as a »medieval wall« as it was built on a 1 m-thick abandonment layer overlaying the rock-cut path⁶⁰. Additionally, they document rubble masonry in the area of the northeast gate, as well as repairs to the wall in the same sector carried out with smaller stones⁶¹. Therefore, it can be inferred that the access, gate, and Camino Hondo continued in operation during the Islamic period, controlling access to the settlement on the upper plateau, now through a path for which wheel tracks were not necessary, since during the Middle Ages goods were hauled using pack animals (Fig. 10).

36 Outside this gate, the remains of several rectangular rooms (8 m × 4 m) were discovered. These rooms featured compacted flooring and 60 cm-wide walls built with small to medium-sized stones, dry-stacked or bound with minimal earthen mortar, between two and four courses high. Approximately 3.50 meters from these, two »sloping« ceramic kilns were also found⁶², each with a base diameter of 1 meter, semi-excavated in the natural fill of the hill and situated on the rock-cut path after a long period of abandonment⁶³. These kilns suggest small-scale craft activity to meet the local demand of highly functional ceramics such as the characteristic »Levantine« or »Valencian« cooking pots⁶⁴. This »potters' quarters« was, as is commonly the case, outside the walls.

37 Beyond this craft area there is a north-facing slope in which medieval layers and features are absent, except for the bottom part, where new features emerge in the vicinity of Fuente and Aljibe de Meca⁶⁵. As the rock-cut path was cleared, medieval ar-

59 Broncano – Alfaro 1990, 61. 73. 125 pls. XLVII. LXII.

60 Broncano – Alfaro 1990, 170. 192 pl. CLXV.

61 Broncano – Alfaro 1990, 186.

62 Coll – García 2010.

63 Broncano – Alfaro 1997, 16.

64 Broncano – Alfaro 1997, 28 f.

65 Broncano – Alfaro 1997, 47.

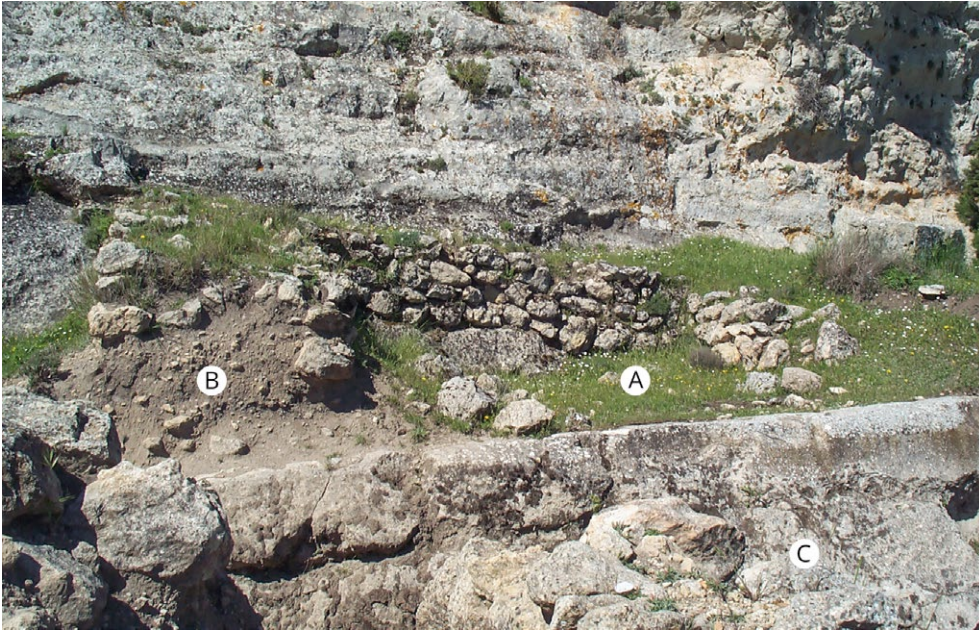


Fig. 9: Department 2, Emirate-period building (A); one of its walls (B) was sectioned by the archaeological excavation that revealed the protohistoric path (C).

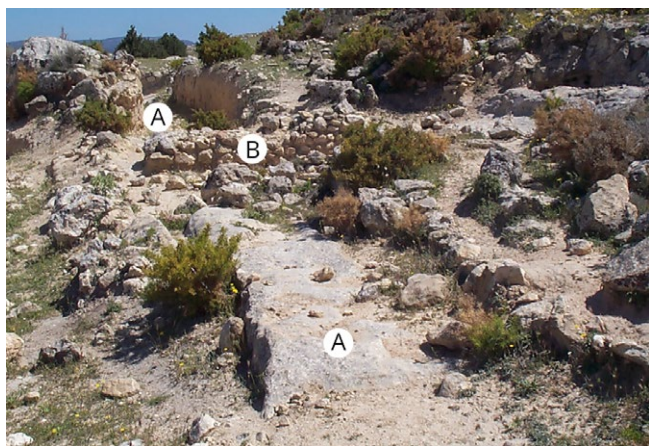


Fig. 10: Medieval walls corresponding to the reconstruction of the northeast gate.

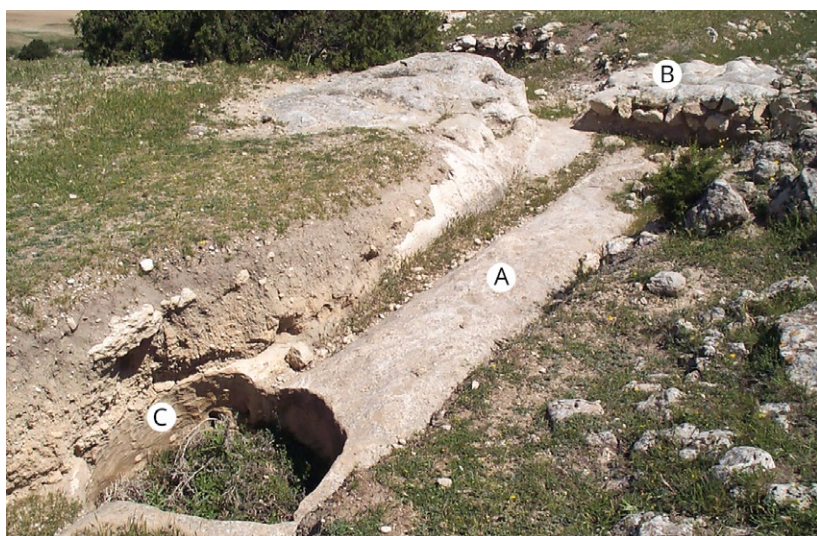
chitectural elements were recognised to form a settlement whose density and size likely resembled those of that on the upper plateau, but were more thoroughly covered by sediment washed down from the hill above. The walls of these constructions appear to be masonry bound with mud or a very poor lime mortar; they have larger stone bases, founded on abandonment levels, without contact with the geological base into which the paths with wheel tracks were carved. On these foundations, two or three courses of smaller stones are preserved, often arranged in a herringbone pattern (Fig. 11)⁶⁶.

38 Near these structures and randomly arranged are the bases of silos, excavated into the rock. The top section of the silos was dug into sedimentary levels that disappeared when the paths were cleared. The density of these underground deposits, all

66 Broncano – Alfaro 1997, 79 pl. LXXX.



11



12

Fig. 11: Medieval wall (B) overlaying the protohistoric path carved in the rock (A).

Fig. 12: Section of protohistoric rock-cut path (A), obstructed by a medieval wall (B) and a silo (C).

of which were found empty, led Broncano and Alfaro to suggest the existence of a veritable ›silo field‹ located in the lower part of the slope, and even to consider it a collective granary, despite its small size and capacity (Fig. 12)⁶⁷. Similarly haphazardly arranged post holes, of various sizes and depths, were documented.

³⁹ The archaeological excavation in the vicinity of Aljibe de la Fuente de Meca had to be interrupted due to the density and dimensions of the medieval structures, prompting the excavators to consider the medieval settlement in this area (Fig. 13). In their estimate, it was 9 hectares in size which, along with the craft district on the northern slope and the plateau, led them to suggest the existence of a medieval village spanning approximately 30 hectares⁶⁸. The area occupied by the medieval settlement was in their view not be entirely built up; instead, the perimeter wall comprised a scattering of medieval dwellings, corrals, and stables, as clearly illustrated by Lammerer's 1921 plan. The excavators were unsure whether to define the site as a medina, owing to the lack of mentions in the written sources and the modesty of the material record, which consists of what appears to be low-quality ceramics and lacks other artifact categories, such as iron tools and weapons.

⁴⁰ Finally, it should be noted that in our numerous visits we have observed the presence of human remains in the lower part of the northern slope, which could be tentatively interpreted as evidence for the existence of a burial ground in the area.

6 Ceramics

⁴¹ Ceramics were very abundant on the surface of Castellar de Meca until a few decades ago, although they have been gradually disappearing due to uncontrolled collection by visitors, especially Iberian painted wares. The only significant archaeological collection from the site comes from the works conducted between 1982 and 1991 under the direction of Broncano and Alfaro. They kept a concise inventory and published five pieces with brief references, primarily focusing on the protohistoric phases of the site. Concerning Islamic ceramics, only Isabel López's brief article in the 1985 issue of journal *Sharq al-Andalus* has been published⁶⁹. Therefore, it can be assumed that all the pieces described in this work come from the initial excavation campaigns between 1982–1984.

⁶⁷ Broncano – Alfaro 1997, 132 pl. CLIII.

⁶⁸ Broncano – Alfaro 1997, 91.

⁶⁹ López 1985.

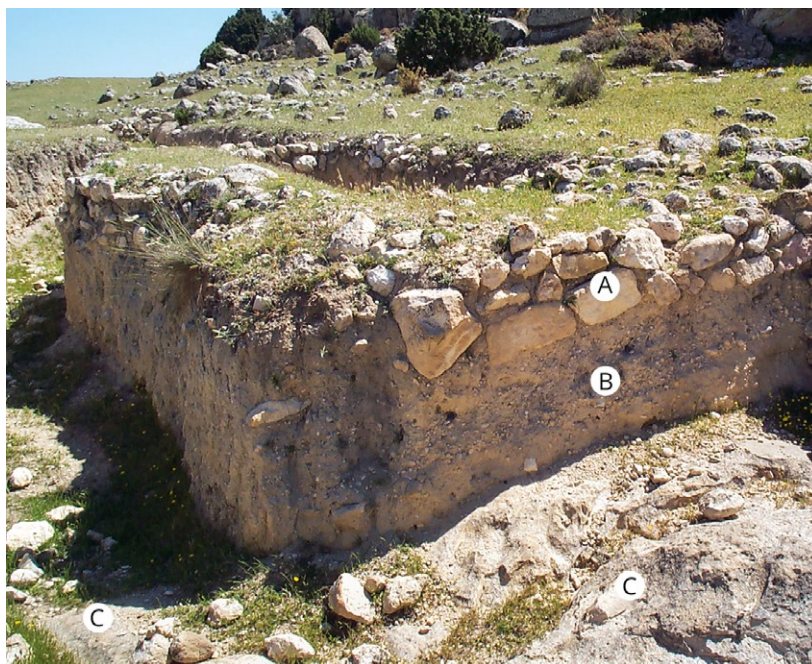


Fig. 13: Medieval wall (A) on an abandonment layer (B) overlying the rock-cut path (C).

13

For this article, we thus undertook the task of examining the Islamic remains collected during excavation, currently housed in the Museum of Prehistory of Valencia⁷⁰, and of trying to correlate them with the archaeological activities carried out at the site between 1982 and 1991. This work faces several problems⁷¹, the ceramics deposited in the mentioned museum are labelled with reference to the year and departments or sectors, identified as M, with numbers ranging from 1 to 36⁷². Materials from the »East Gate«⁷³ and the »Northwest Gate« were also distinguished⁷⁴, as well as those from »Cistern 2«.

Some assemblages of medieval pottery classified under the same label number appear to correspond to well-differentiated and uncontaminated levels, as all the fragments could belong to contemporary productions. However, bags, in which ceramics from different chronologies are mixed, are far more numerous. It is impossible to tell whether these reflect the nature of the contexts or if the mixing took place during the excavation process. Therefore, for the classification of the Andalusí ceramics we have

⁷⁰ We would like to express our gratitude to the technical staff, especially to the director, Dr. María Jesús de Pedro Michó, for the facilities provided to access and study the medieval ceramic collection housed in the Museum, as well as the documentation available in its archives.

⁷¹ In addition to the materials, the only source of information available to us were Broncano and Alfaro's monographs (Broncano – Alfaro 1990; Broncano – Alfaro 1997), in which the order of the campaigns is not followed, and where there is no textual or graphic reference to the location of the »sectors« and »departments«. As such, our first task was to try to establish their location. According to the 1997 publication (Broncano – Alfaro 1997, 17 fig. 2), eight excavation campaigns were conducted in the years 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1989, and 1991. A colour diagram was used to mark excavation areas in each campaign; unfortunately, these were missing from the printed version, in which only the 1986 (yellow) and 1991 (blue) campaigns can be distinguished. The museum records only include information for the of 1982, 1983, 1984, 1986, and 1987 campaigns, and we have been unable to locate information on the of 1985, 1989, and 1991 campaigns.

⁷² The sectors M21, M27, M29, M30, M32, M33, and M34 are likely situated in the section that ends at the Meca Cistern, while the sectors M6, M10, and M11 should be located following Departments 2–4 and before Section 1520.

⁷³ The identification of the Northeast Gate is very clear, as it serves as the dividing point between the two monographs. The first is dedicated to the upper part of the plateau, and the second to the slopes. This gate or sector is located at the beginning of the ascent of the Camino Hondo, at Pk 900.

⁷⁴ It should be located near the Fuente de Meca, in the lower part, as its excavators describe the sector with this geographical orientation (Broncano – Alfaro 1997, 14. 23).

relied on the detailed study of more or less homogeneous groups, while on mixed units only pieces that reliably be dated based on parallels were taken into consideration.

44 The material can be divided into three groups on chronological grounds: the earliest comes mainly from a closed and well-located assemblage, while the other two consist of pieces from contexts found at different points of the site.

6.1 Emirate Period (9th Century)

45 Several rectangular rooms, built upon the then-abandoned rock-cut path, were found outside the walls on the northern sector of the site. One of these rooms, referred to as »Department 3« by the excavators, yielded a homogeneous assemblage with a number pieces that were either complete or could be reconstructed. This assemblage became the main focus of López's work, which argued that it must predate the mid-10th century. Additionally, we have confirmed the discovery of similar coeval productions in other sectors of the site, such as M11, situated at the same elevation as Department 3; that is, at the foot of the plateau but about 100 meters to the west.

46 The most notable feature in the assemblage found in Department 3 is the high number of cooking pots of various types and fabrics, primarily falling into two groups: the first one consists of globular-bodied pots without handles, while the second group comprises »pear-shaped« pots, both with and without handles.

47 The cooking pots from the first series (Fig. 14, 1–4) are vessels with a pear-shaped profile, typically featuring grooves on the shoulder and lower part of the neck. These can be regarded as the rudimentary predecessors of the so-called Levantine pots or Valencian pots, which were widely distributed across the eastern Iberian Peninsula in later periods. These early cooking pots are analogous to one of the closed cooking vessel series found at Tolmo de Minateda⁷⁵. However, in Tolmo they are exceptional, unlike at Meca, where they appear to have been fairly abundant. Moreover, the productions from the Emirate-period medina of Tolmo display a more stylized form, manufactured with a type of potter's wheel that leaves well-defined marks on the interior, in contrast to the less refined version from Meca, which is typical of rural pottery workshop productions.

48 »Valencian« or »Levantine pots« were described by André Bazzana in 1987⁷⁶, although the first to approach the analysis of these pieces with stratigraphic criteria to determine their chronological evolution was Rafael Azuar⁷⁷. Over time, the type evolved from the hand-formed productions of the Emirate period to the use of increasingly faster potter's wheels. The incorporation of handles occurred around the second half of the 10th century, and the introduction of glazing in the 12th century. These developments allow for some chronological precision within this series.

49 It is believed that they are of pre-Islamic or early Andalusí origin. In fact, there is no evidence of this type of production in eastern Arab or Berber contexts from the 8th to the 9th centuries⁷⁸. Therefore, the hypothesis that they are a direct indication of early Berber settlement in the Iberian Peninsula should likely be discarded⁷⁹. They seem to have reached the Valle de Alpera and Corredor de Almansa from Valencia in the late 9th century and they were still being made in the 12th century⁸⁰. However, the type disappeared around the Almohad period, so in contexts dated to the first third of the 13th century, for instance in the »arrabal« of Fortí de Denia, they are no longer represented⁸¹.

75 Amorós et al. 2012, fig. 5.6.; Amorós 2017, 199 Group 2.1.4.

76 Bazzana 1987, 93–98.

77 Azuar 1989, 278 f.

78 Amorós 2020, 16–22.

79 Acién 1999, 48.

80 Gutiérrez 2018, 50–55.

81 Gisbert et al. 1995, 167.

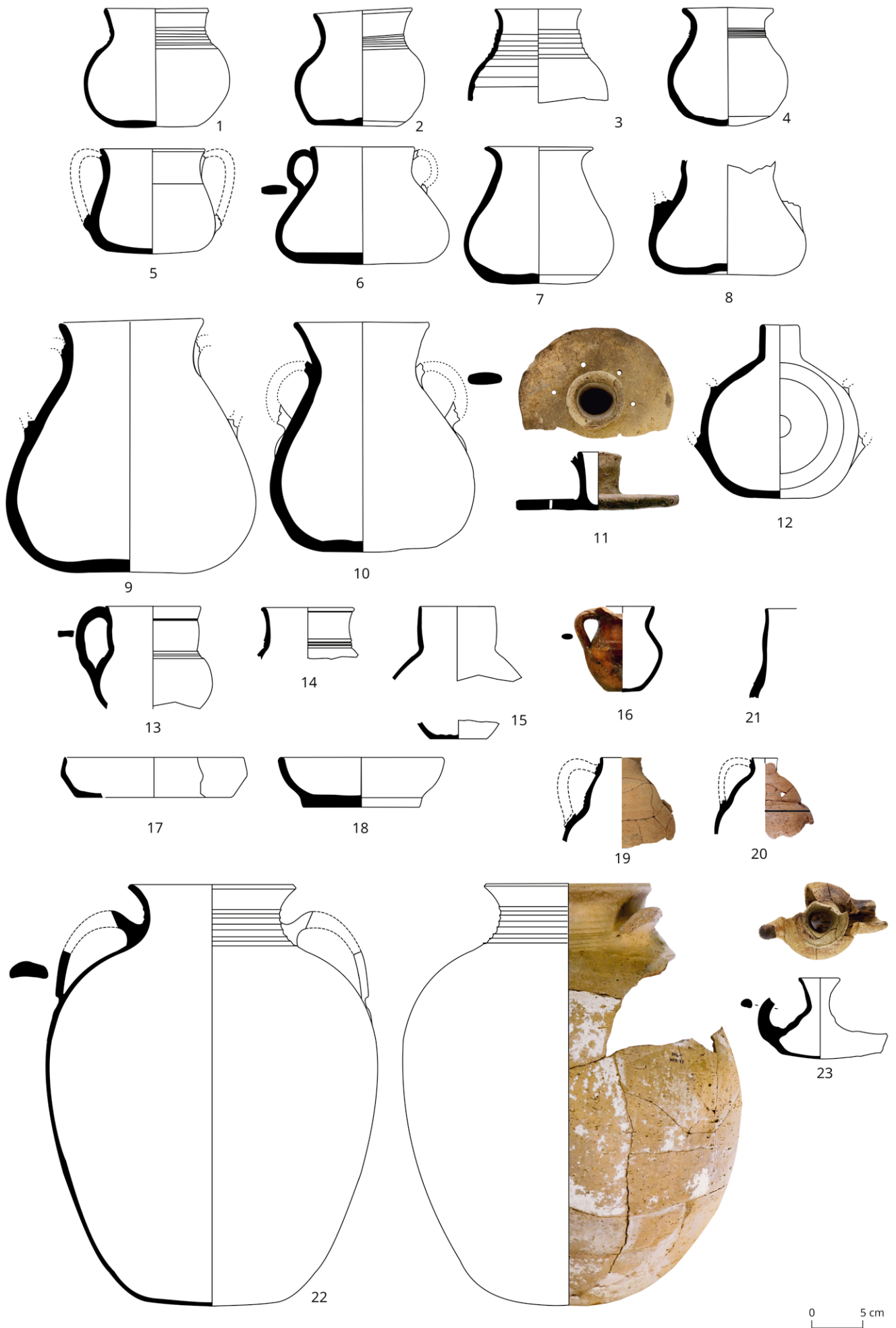


Fig. 14: Emirate-period ceramics.

50 The excavations at the castle of Oropesa (Castellón) have allowed for a more fine-grained chronology for the type to be established⁸². According to the stratigraphic analysis conducted by Joan Negre, Luis Lozano, and Sergi Selma, the *ollas* from Meca belong to the Type 1 variant, dated to the early 10th century and associated with the Valencia-Xàtiva group put forward by Bazzana⁸³. These pieces are characterized by their coarse, poorly refined clay with abundant mica tempers. They were formed on a turnstile and finished with a spatula, the inclusions leaving visible marks on the surface when dragged.

51 The firing process is consistently crude, resulting in irregular tones and colours ranging from grey to brown, sometimes within the same piece. It's worth noting that the *ollas* from Meca appear even more rustic than the Type 1 from Oropesa. This suggests that they may be earlier or that their production process was more primitive, as suggested by their comparison with the series from Tolmo de Minateda.

52 The second group of cooking pots features a pear-shaped body, squatter than the first type (Fig. 14, 5–10), with irregular profiles, a smooth neck, and an everted rim. This series also lacks direct parallels in known Emirate-period contexts (series 1.3.1/1.4.3 from Tolmo)⁸⁴, so it is assumed that it was a local production with limited distribution. Alternatively, it could be an older type predating the 9th century, earlier than the first known series of ›Valencian pots‹, as seen in contexts in the Meseta, where they appear from the late 6th century (TL2 series)⁸⁵, or in *Zaragoza* in the early 8th century⁸⁶.

53 One of the open pans has a slightly carinated shape and a flat base (Fig. 14, 17). Made of pinkish clay, it is wheel-thrown and lacks firing marks. The profile, which could be reconstructed, recalls type 4.3.2b from Tolmo de Minateda. Victoria Amorós argues that ›stratigraphic evidence, as well as the types of clay used, demonstrate that the form was produced in the late 9th century and/or early 10th century‹⁸⁷.

54 Another piece was a slightly globular-bodied jar (Fig. 14, 16) with a narrow neck, everted rim, and a handle running from the lip to the lower part of the body. The shape is similar to series 7.6.7/T18.5⁸⁸. Concerning lighting shapes, the lamp also has direct parallels at Tolmo de Minateda (Fig. 14, 23)⁸⁹. Department 3 also yielded a bottle, a flask (Fig. 14, 12), and another casserole pan (Fig. 14, 18).

55 Technological and formal features led López to date the assemblage to the early Andalusí period, especially because of the absence of glazed ceramics. According to López, ›these are closed assemblages, the interest of which lies in the fact that they were sealed by a fire event. The material has a primitive appearance, with a high percentage of pots, wheel-thrown, often lacking symmetry, and careless surface treatment. This, coupled with the complete absence of glazed ceramics, suggests a date before the second half of the 10th century‹⁹⁰.

56 Indeed, the formal analysis of this ceramic assemblage reveals pieces that, in terms of shapes and clays, seem to have parallels in Horizon III-Phase 5.3 of Tolmo de Minateda (dated to the 9th century)⁹¹. especially some casserole pans, jars, pitchers, and the upper part of a type of bottle that could have a slightly earlier chronology. This seems to be confirmed by the discoidal-bowl lamps also documented in the as-

82 Negre et al. 2018, 242 f.

83 Bazzana 1987, 12 fig. 5.

84 Amorós 2017, 182.

85 Vigil-Escalera 2006, 733 fig. 6.

86 Vega et al. 2017, 168 fig. 3.

87 Amorós 2017, 227 fig. 35T.

88 Amorós 2017, 293 fig. 78T.

89 Amorós 2017, 330 fig. 102T Serie T11.1.3.

90 López 1985, 185.

91 Amorós et al. 2012, 252.

semblage. The rest of the Emirate-period shapes included in this study, such as bottles (Fig. 14, 19–21), small jars (Fig. 14, 13–15), and a large storage vessel (Fig. 14, 22) with 8th-century parallels⁹² have been assigned to this group based on fabric and production technique, which are readily distinguishable from those found in later wares.

6.2 Taifa Period (11th Century)

57 In her publication, López presented a table with four whole pieces found in different areas of the site, which were later included in the appendix of the 1986 publication⁹³. Based on these ceramics, López suggested a certain continuity of the settlement beyond the Emirate period, although rather vaguely: »The settlement was continuously occupied, as suggested by the pottery fragments decorated in green and manganese in the style of Madīnat al-Zahrā' and total ›cuerda seca‹«⁹⁴.

58 Particularly outstanding are the cooking pots with grooved necks, handles, and concave bases made of grey clay with visible tempers and spatulated surfaces, resulting in the characteristic appearance of the ›Valencian‹ or ›Levantine pots‹ described by Bazzana⁹⁵ and other authors in the journal *Sharq al-Andalus*⁹⁶. As previously noted, those types could be the result of the formal evolution of those that predominated in this region in the 9th century. In Meca, the pots found in these contexts display some modern features: they are wheel-thrown and present well-defined grooves, a pronounced carination between the neck and shoulder, and vertical handles. At the same time, they also have relatively ancient characteristics, such as the absence of glazing. Therefore, they could be identified with Negre, Lozano, and Selma's type 4, dated to the 11th century, and with contemporary productions documented at La Graja (Higueruela). Similar pots have been found in coeval contexts in important settlements in the interior of the province of Alicante, such as *Tossal del Moro*, Cocentaina Castle, and Sompó, all in Benilloba⁹⁷, and Castellar de Alcoy⁹⁸, as well as in Valencia⁹⁹. They are also similar to the cooking pots that are part of the assemblage found in Benetússer which, contrary to Escribà's opinion¹⁰⁰, we believe to be dated to well into the 11th century, judging by the profiles and feet of open tableware shapes, among other indicators, such as the morphology of lamps and the presence of partial ›cuerda seca‹.

59 As for the open table shapes, the large plates or bowls (sp. »ataifores«) with green and manganese decoration (Fig. 15, 14), as well as others with brown glaze on a mottled background must be highlighted. These pieces present a curved profile (Fig. 15, 12–14) and narrower and taller annular feet than Caliphate-period examples¹⁰¹, but less than those dated to the Almoravid period¹⁰². They can be identified with Azuar's type III (a)¹⁰³, generically dated to the 11th century, as well as with specimens from La Graja¹⁰⁴. The best-preserved fragment features a radial motif of inscribed palmettes that divides the field into four (Fig. 15, 14).

60 Like in La Graja, unglazed plates (Fig. 15, 10. 11) are relatively abundant, in line with traditions typical of the Meseta (rather than Levante), where good parallels

92 Vega et al. 2017, 181 fig. 9.

93 López 1985, fig. 1; Broncano 1986, 157–159 figs. 118. 119.

94 López 1985, 185.

95 Bazzana 1987; Bazzana 1992.

96 Azuar 1989; Negre et al. 2018, 242 f.

97 Rubio 1989, 394 fig. 7.

98 Pérez 2015, 89 f.

99 Bazzana 1987, fig. 5, 10.

100 Escribà – Barceló 1990, 33.

101 Jiménez – Pérez 2018, 97.

102 Pérez – Jiménez 2018, 181–183.

103 Azuar 1989, 241 f.

104 Jiménez et al. 2021b, 76 f.

exist¹⁰⁵. Although the evidence is still limited, it seems that this type of unglazed dishes could be at least as numerous as glazed ones in domestic assemblages in the region during the 11th century. These pieces present a straight rim with a thickened lip, triangular in cross-section, a carinated profile, and a flat base. They are typically decorated on the interior with simple geometric motifs painted in red ochre using a thick brush, among which wavy parallel bands can also be discerned.

⁶¹ This phase also includes some lamps characterized by a well-developed spout and a relatively small, globular-shaped bowl (Fig. 15, 21, 22), which sets them apart from the lenticular-bodied lamps of the Emirate and Taifa periods. These lamps reflect a trend towards smaller bowls, leading first to pear-shaped forms and, by the 12th century, to types in which the bowl is almost an extension of the spout.

⁶² Finally, Meca also yielded two pieces with glazed decoration over excised motifs. This type of decoration is well-documented from the Caliphate period in the kiln of San Nicolás kiln and in Pechina, for example, to the Almoravid period with the ›ataifores‹ from Platería 14¹⁰⁶. One of them is believed to be Almoravid judging by the shape, glaze colour, and parallels, as we shall see in the following section. However, the other one could be dated to the 11th century (Fig. 15, 20), like the specimen found in La Graja¹⁰⁷ and those from Cerro Calvario (Huesca)¹⁰⁸.

⁶³ Summing up, the review of the materials indicates that these ceramics were found in large numbers in the vicinity of the north-eastern gate, as well as in Departments 1 and 4, sector M11, and cistern 2. Overall, ceramics from this phase are substantially more abundant than those dated to the Emirate period phase and Almoravid Phase. As noted, this relatively large assemblage comprises some very characteristic productions, such as low-footed plates decorated in green and manganese, unglazed large bowls, a series of Levantine pots and jars with grooved necks, and pear-shaped-bodied lamps. All of these are typical of 11th-century contexts in the region, notably those documented in La Graja (Higueruela)¹⁰⁹.

6.3 Almoravid Period (Late 11th Century – First Half of the 12th Century)

⁶⁴ The latest ceramic assemblage is later than the date generally associated with the abandonment of the settlements situated in the vicinity of Meca. Some of the pieces published by López and Broncano, such as a carinated-profile plate with total ›cuerda seca‹ decoration on its inner surface, can be included in this group. The review of materials stored in the Museum of Valencia has confirmed that the assemblage is relatively large, although not as much as the one dated to the Taifa period, and that it was attested in Department 3, sectors M10 and M11, the NE Gate, and Cistern 2.

⁶⁵ Department 4 yielded a plate decorated with very simple vegetal motifs in green and manganese; the height of the wall and the tall, annular foot are clear chronological indicators of its relatively late date. The plate also features a characteristic rim, slightly thickened vertically and outlined on the exterior (Fig. 16, 1). These slender profiles are far removed from those which characterise assemblages dated to the first third of the 11th century, during which flat bases were combined with very low, annular feet, as illustrated by numerous examples from Madīnat al-Zahrā'¹¹⁰ or the kiln of San Nicolás¹¹¹. The type has not been documented in mid-11th century contexts in nearby La Graja, where the flat bases disappear but the feet remain very low. One of these

¹⁰⁵ Puch et al. 1986; Retuerce 1998, fig. II 25.

¹⁰⁶ Jiménez – Navarro 1997, 94 cat. 16.

¹⁰⁷ Jiménez et al. in press, fig. 5, 6.

¹⁰⁸ Asensio – Magallón 2011, 107, 111.

¹⁰⁹ Jiménez et al. 2021a, 217.

¹¹⁰ Escudero 1988–1990.

¹¹¹ Jiménez – Pérez 2018.

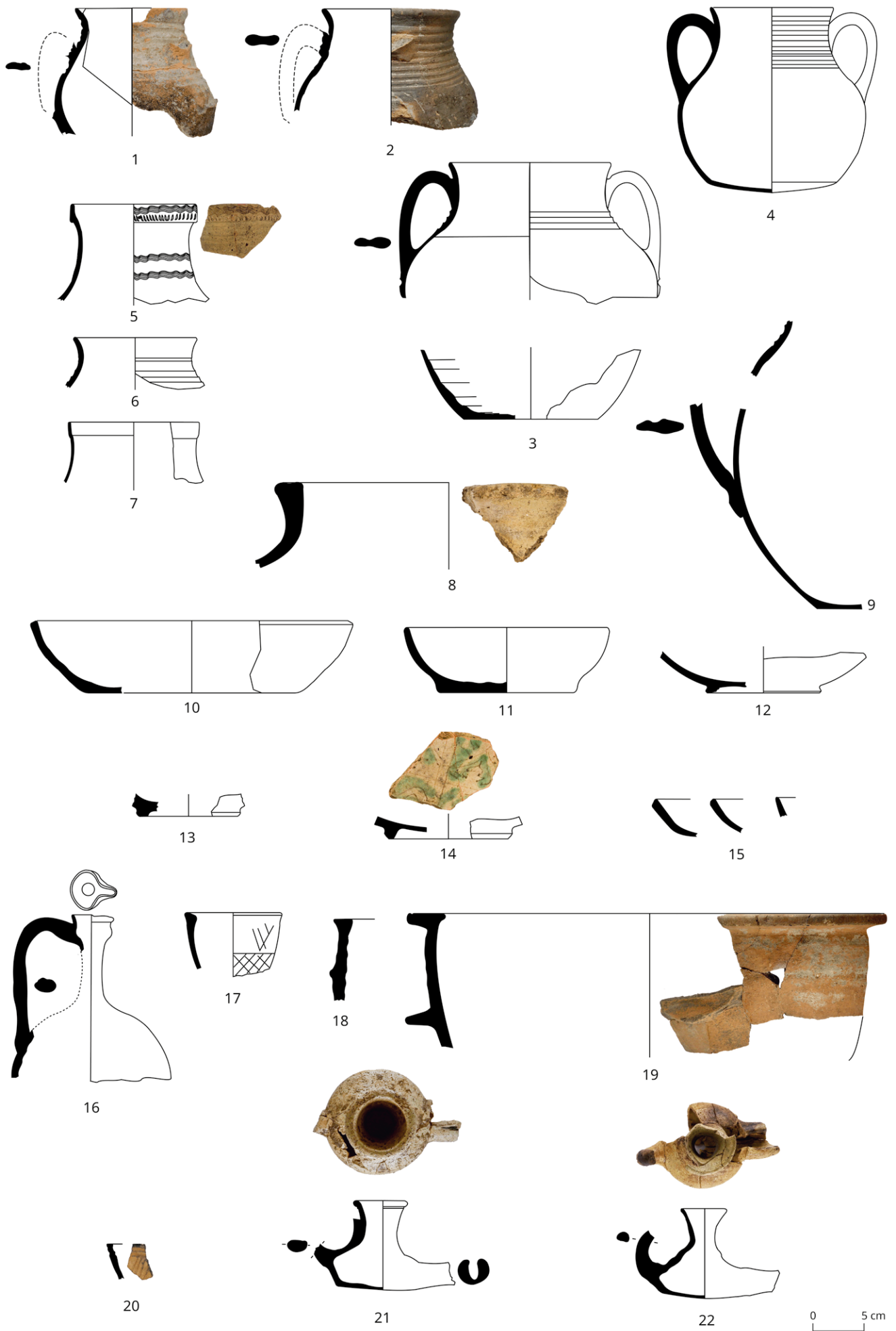


Fig. 15: Taifa-period ceramics.

›ataifores‹, however, appears in Phase V of Calle Pascual (Murcia), dated between the late 10th century and the mid-11th century, although this piece is not as slender as the one from Meca¹¹². Another piece with many formal similarities from our specimen was found in Castellar de Alcoy; according to Azuar, this piece should be dated to the second half of the 11th century based on context¹¹³. However, the plate from Meca is noticeably more stylised than the piece from Alcoy, both in terms of wall height and of proportion between the diameter and the height of the foot. For this reason, the piece is believed to be later in date, perhaps as much as the Almoravid period. This piece is not exceptional in Meca, as many other plate bases with the same formal characteristics have been found, two of which have been included in the table (Fig. 16, 2. 4).

66 Another piece that is worthy of note is a plate decorated with geometric motifs in total ›cuerda seca‹ (Fig. 16, 3) which, according to López, was found near the north-eastern gate. This decorative technique is well-documented in al-Andalus during the 11th and 12th centuries; however, the carinated profile of the piece suggests a relatively late chronology. As noted elsewhere¹¹⁴, plates with a pronounced carination generally begin appearing in al-Andalus well into the Taifa period or even the 12th century, depending on the region¹¹⁵. In this regard, very useful chronological references are found in the Middle and Upper Marches, which suffered the Christian expansion in the late 11th and early 12th centuries: places like Calatalifa, Madrid, Guadalajara, and Toledo yield dates late into the Taifa period¹¹⁶. The type is abundant in Mértola, where it is sometimes decorated in total ›cuerda seca‹, in 12th-century contexts, especially in the second half of that century¹¹⁷. It has also been attested in an Almoravid level in the city of Málaga¹¹⁸. The kiln at Casa de los Tiros, in Granada, also dated to the Almoravid period, produced the type in total ›cuerda seca‹¹¹⁹. The finds from Cartagena¹²⁰ and from Calle Tossal de Sant Esteve, Valencia, present, in our opinion, a similar chronology¹²¹. In Albarracín, it is found in the site's latest Andalusi contexts dated to the second half of the 11th century, and especially to the first half of the 12th century¹²².

67 The most chronologically significant materials in the assemblage related to the latest levels are perhaps the lamps. Spouted types are heirs to Late Antique lamps that evolved in well-documented ways during the Andalusi period until they disappeared in the late 12th century, when they were replaced by pinched and high-footed types. In Meca, the older lenticular-bodied and short-spouted lamps have been found, but also more slender ones (Fig. 16, 18), in which the oil container is barely wider than the spout, a type that strongly resembles widespread 12th-century models¹²³, which are slightly more evolved than the pear-shaped lamps from La Graja¹²⁴. Therefore, they should be dated later.

68 In addition to these types, which are regarded as relatively late but which seem to have been found mixed with other materials, more or less homogeneous assemblages from this period also appear to have been excavated in Meca. In 1987, a cut made at the foot of the plateau in the hilltop near the NE gate yielded assemblage 7234,

112 Jiménez – Pérez 2018, 100 fig. 14.

113 Azuar 1989, 150 fig. 73; Azuar 2012, 65 fig. 1.3.

114 Pérez – Jiménez 2018, 182 f.

115 Rosselló 1978, 16 f. 24; Rosselló 1985, 195.

116 Retuerce 1998, 100–104 type A.12.

117 Gómez 1997, 323. 335 fig. 9, 63; Gómez 2004, 369 f. 615 f. 719. 739 fig. 54.

118 Salado – Arancibia 2003, pl. 3.2.

119 Rodríguez 1999, 108 f. pl. 4.

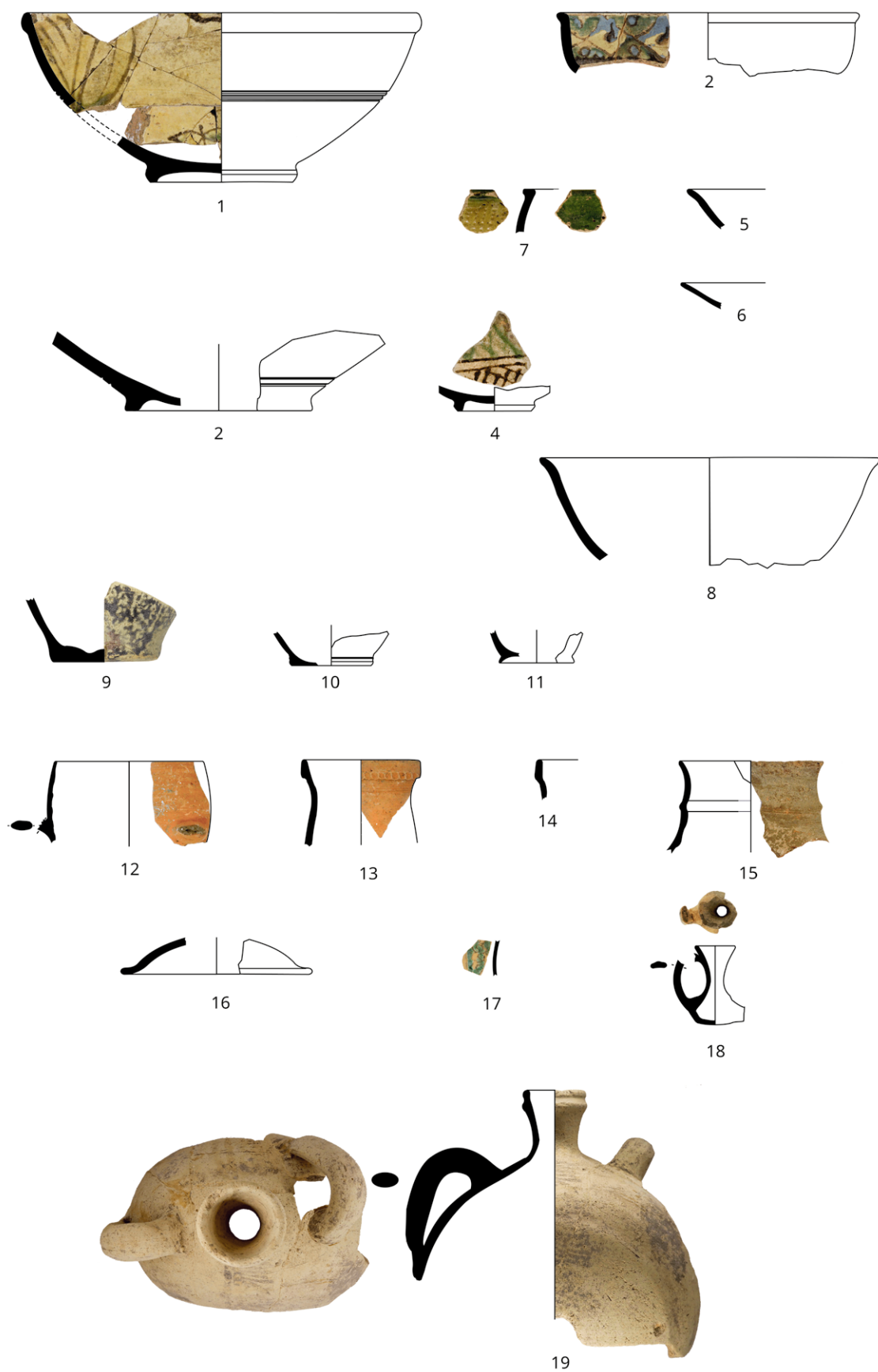
120 Guillermo 2014, 43 pl. IV.

121 Lerma et al. 1987, fig. 3; Bazzana 1991, 59. 64. 71. 75 f. 78 figs. 16. 18. 20.

122 Hernández 2019, 239.

123 Pérez – Jiménez 2018, 172 f.

124 Jiménez et al. 2021b, 78 figs. 13–37.



0 5 cm

Fig. 16: Almoravid period ceramics.

entered in the catalogue in 1988, including Iberian, Roman, and, especially, medieval ceramics. The latter comprised fragments that could date back to the 8th–9th centuries, specifically a rim of a jar with the base of a handle. However, most of the Andalusí artifacts in the assemblage are late (late 11th or early 12th century). The assemblage includes several fragments of glazed bottles, including one with a small flange near the rim that resembles a specimen from Platería 14¹²⁵. There are also several fragments of small jars decorated with partial ›cuerda seca‹ (Fig. 16, 17) and a number of fragments of a type of jug with a cylindrical neck and a well-marked carination, above which there is a decorative band that consists of a succession of incised circles; the band on which the circles are imprinted may have been added to the neck after the main body was formed. This series is well-documented at the site and is, to the best of our knowledge, not common outside the area of Castellar de Meca, which could indicate that they are late local or regional productions. Concerning open table forms, the rim of a plate whose inner face is glazed in green and presents a mottled appearance over incised decoration on the outside stands out (Fig. 16, 7); this piece recalls specimens from the mid-Almoravid assemblage of Platería 14¹²⁶. However, what is most striking is perhaps the total absence of the green and manganese decorative technique, while white-glazed table wares abound (Fig. 16, 5, 6). It is highly likely that some of these were lustrewares, although no traces of the metallic paint are preserved, which is fairly common in these productions, as illustrated by the assemblages from Platería, *Fortuna*, and Onda¹²⁷. These pieces include closed (Fig. 16, 9) and open forms, one of which has a mottled glazed cover on the exterior and white on the interior.

⁶⁹ The archaeological record of Meca suggests a phase of occupation from the late 11th century to the early 12th century, at which time the site seems to have been definitively abandoned, as no later material has been found. As noted, most villages in the region were abandoned as part of a process of demographic concentration in medium-sized fortified settlements (*ḥuṣūn*); for instance, Alpera, Almansa, and Ayora became the main territorial nodes from that moment onwards, a phenomenon attested at the regional level that has been explained in detail elsewhere¹²⁸. However, most sites were abandoned around the third quarter of the 11th century, not in the early 12th century, as was seemingly the case in Castellar de Meca. In fact, the material record and geographical conditions of Meca seem to suggest that this was one the rallying points in which peasant communities from the smaller villages regrouped. Unlike the other larger settlements mentioned above, Castellar de Meca did not survive and was abandoned a few decades later on the eve of the Almoravid period. There is no evidence that the abandonment of the site was triggered by a violent event, although, as noted, the sequence of events must be confirmed through excavation.

7 Islamic Meca in Its Historical Context

⁷⁰ Though no research project to date has focused on the medieval sequence of Castellar de Meca, the evidence available clearly suggests that the site was an important population centre during the Andalusí period, one which likely played an important role in the Corredor de Almansa and Valle de Ayora, judging by surface remains and those published by the specialists in protohistory to have excavated at the site. The data reviewed prove that there was a significant settlement in Meca between the 9th and

¹²⁵ Jiménez – Navarro 1997, 44; Pérez – Jiménez 2018, fig. II.8.

¹²⁶ Jiménez – Navarro 1997, cat. 16; Pérez – Jiménez 2018, 181–183 fig. II.7.

¹²⁷ Pérez – Jiménez 2018, 175–178.

¹²⁸ Jiménez et al. 2021a, 253.

12th centuries, sprawling upon both its upper plateau and the northern and western slopes. Most of the visible features and perhaps some of the rock-cut structures (in particular the silos and maybe some of the cisterns and stairways) should be attributed to this medieval phase, as noted in the publications that report the excavations that revealed the rock-carved paths.

71 The evidence is too piecemeal to go much beyond general conclusions about the evolution of the Andalusí settlement in Castellar de Meca. However, a phase during the Emirate period seems likely, judging by the ceramics found during excavations that bear a striking resemblance to those found in Tolmo de Minateda. The rural society that characterised the modern province of Albacete during this period, which was organised around middling hilltop settlements that date back to Late Antiquity, appears to have been in decline¹²⁹. This model, of which Tolmo de Minateda is the prime example, is also attested in other settlements in the mountaintops or their foothills, such as Peña de San Pedro, El Santo de Alcaraz, La Molata de Letur, and Peña Jarota, in Nerpio (Fig. 5 a). Similarly, Chinchilla in the central plain, Jorquera near the Júcar River, and Castellar de Meca in the easternmost elevations of the range follow the same pattern, although the evidence for the latter three cases is not as conclusive. Further north, Molón de Camporrobles, in the province of Valencia, poses another example¹³⁰. A few smaller settlements have been detected near these central nuclei, on which they likely depended administratively, such as Loma Eugenia (Hellín) or Cerrico de Don Felipe (Montealegre del Castillo).

72 Most of these settlements, both large and small, were abandoned towards the end of the Emirate period, within the framework of the Caliph's policy to bring communities that lived on hilltops down to the valleys in order to bring an end to the endemic uprisings¹³¹. At the beginning of the 10th century, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III al-Nāṣir definitively pacified al-Andalus and brought local lords back into obedience, including the well-known 'Umar b. Ḥafṣūn, the most powerful among them, who has managed to establish a practically independent state from his capital in the mountains of Málaga. The eastern part of the peninsula also seemed to be out of control, as official chronicles recount that in the year 304 H (916–917), the caliph launched another military campaign against dissenters from the coras of Tudmīr and Valencia. During this campaign, the castle of Orihuela was conquered. However, the region does not appear to have been definitively pacified until the year 928, when 'Abd al-Raḥmān III undertook a campaign against Pamplona, during which he first headed towards Murcia to subdue the rebel of Tobarra, Ya'qub Abi Jālid al-Tūbarī, apparently a Muladí who controlled a part of the northeastern lands of Albacete, including Chinchilla and Peñas de San Pedro¹³². In this context, it is likely that in Department 3 of Meca, »a fire caused considerable destruction, leaving behind a large amount of material, especially ceramics«¹³³. In other words, the Emirate-period ceramics discussed above were found in a stratum sealed by a layer of ashes that resulted from the fire that destroyed the house. This could indicate that the end of this phase was traumatic. In fact, during the Caliphate period, the site seems to have been abandoned, as suggested by the absence of materials characteristic of the period, especially distinctive types and features such as green and manganese-based plates, sack-profiled jars, engobe finishes, white paint, and discoidal-bowl lamps. However, given the limitations of the available data, extending this conclusion to the whole site might be too speculative. Therefore, this conclusion should remain tentative; we must wait for further work in Meca to confirm or reject the hypothesis.

129 Jiménez et al. 2021a, 47–53.

130 Lorrio – Sánchez 2008.

131 Jiménez et al. 2021a, 54 f.

132 Ibn Ḥayyān 1981, 181 f.

133 López 1985, 184.

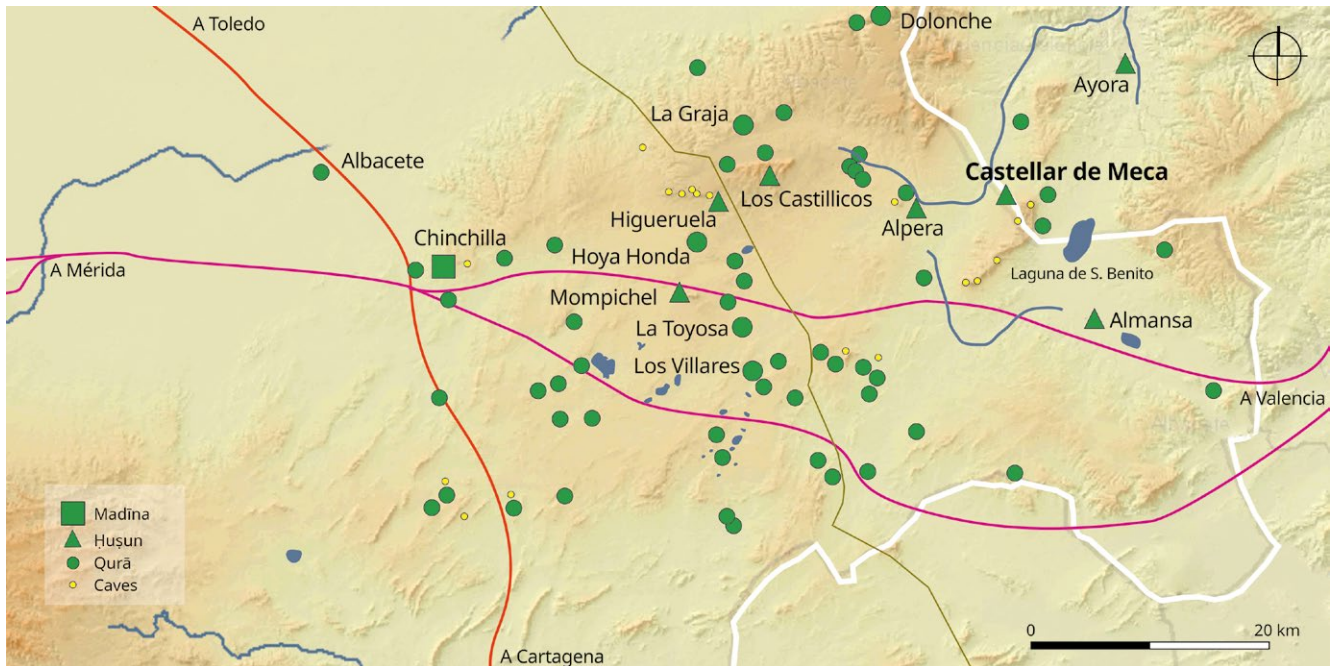
73 The transformation undergone by the main gate and the walls, as well as the materials recovered during excavation, demonstrate that after the fall of the caliphate in the 11th century, the site was reoccupied intensively. In our opinion, this is related to intense demographic growth in the region, which resulted in the emergence of numerous small and medium-sized settlements (Fig. 5 b; 17). These settlements were relatively close to each other, were mostly situated in the high flatlands, and practiced herding (especially sheep and goats) and dryland agriculture¹³⁴. In this context, Castellar de Meca mirrors other fortified hilltop sites dated to the 11th century, such as Castellarets in Petrer and Castellar de Alcoy¹³⁵. On a smaller scale but geographically closer to Meca, the site of Los Castillicos in the area of Mingo García, Higuera, also fits this model, although hilltop settlements were less numerous than flatland villages. The intensity of occupation at Castellar de Meca in the 11th century is strongly suggested by the fact that the most abundant collection of Andalusí ceramic materials found at the site corresponds to this period. These ceramics are found in association with, for instance, the dwelling known as Department 4, which may be dated to this period, but also with the reoccupation of Department 3, which was destroyed by fire in the 9th century. Most of the medieval buildings recorded in Lammerer's plan can be assigned to this phase, based on the pottery record and the construction techniques used in the building. Meca was the largest of all settlements identified during our surveys, which covered the whole eastern sector of the *iqḷīm* of Chinchilla, including the Corredor de Almansa and the surrounding territory. No information about the administrative relationship between these sites exists, although it seems logical to assume that Castellar was the district's central settlement. What seems certain is that it was the main economic centre in the area, as suggested by the fact that, to date, it is the only site in which pottery workshops, probably producing to meet regional demand, have been documented¹³⁶. It is also possible that Meca was the defensive rallying point for many of the villages and hamlets that peppered the valley, like those near Alpera and Higuera, and even that the colonization of these high lands sprung from Meca and that the settlers came originally from there, another plausible hypothesis that remains unconfirmed.

74 However, the archaeological record suggests that this period of growth was relatively short-lived, spanning barely a century. Systematic surveys have revealed far-ranging changes in settlement in the area; many villages, such as Malefatón and Tobillos, both in the Alpera region, were abandoned. This trend is also observed in such sites as Malas Tardes and Los Villares de Horna (Chinchilla), La Carrasquilla (Corral-Rubio), San Antón (Albacete), La Toyosa (Chinchilla), and Hoya Honda, La Graja, Los Castillicos, and La Rambla, in the drylands of Higuera. In most sites, the crisis is dated to the late 11th century, as indicated by the absence of surface materials that can be dated to the Almoravid period or later. Archaeological excavations in La Graja also confirm this sequence of events. However, not all sites disappeared, as a small number of them remained inhabited and even grew, likely as a result of demographic concentration (Fig. 4 c). This gave previously scattered peasants greater security, even if the sites they concentrated on did not have better natural defensive conditions than their previous abodes. Very few plain villages survived, as the population tended to concentrate in more or less elevated settlements, or at least at the foot of hills on which there was a fortress (*husun*). Examples include Higuera, Almansa, Carcelén, Jorquera, and Castellar de Meca itself. In addition to the selection of more defensible locations, this also meant a drop in the number of settlements and, subsequently, in settlement density.

134 Jiménez – Simón 2017.

135 Pérez 2018, 96.

136 The evidence for this craft practice consists of small, double-chambered kilns that likely produced coarse wares, especially grooved-neck jars and cooking pots, types recurrently found in the sites detected during our surveys.



17

The surviving settlements were noticeably larger. In other words, the end of the model of disperse occupation that characterized the human landscape during the 11th century gave way to a different pattern in which peasants grouped in a few, generally larger, better-defended nuclei. Naturally, these sites were more distant from one another and, with few changes, they continued to articulate the region in the following centuries.

75 Beyond the region we are examining, the proliferation of hilltop settlements such as Ayna, Liétor, Letur, Yeste, and Riópar is also attested in the basins of the Segura and Mundo rivers and Alcalá, Jorquera, and Ves in the basin of the Júcar River. However, in most instances, the evidence is still fragmentary and more archaeological work is needed¹³⁷. The *ḥiṣn* *Yakka* (Yecla, Murcia) and Gumalla (*Jumilla*) also grew in the 11th century, as shown by the date of construction of the Alcazaba walls and, in the case of Yakka, also of houses¹³⁸. In Jumilla, a *ḥiṣn* located 65 km from Castellar de Meca, the abandonment of the previous settlement on the plain by the late 11th century is well documented, at the same time as the population was relocated to the slopes and the foot of the castle hill¹³⁹. Likely owing to this growth, some of these settlements transitioned from villages (ar. *qurā*, sp. »alquerías«) to *ḥuṣūn*, turning them into higher-ranking centres from an administrative and demographic perspective. This transition is also well documented in *Siyāsa* (Cieza)¹⁴⁰.

76 The dispersion pattern of Andalusí ceramics appears to indicate that the occupation of the settlement was uneven in all phases and that the most intensively occupied sectors shifted over time. In this regard, it is important to note that we not only have limited data, but that we have also been unable to locate materials from some of the excavation campaigns, which may well be crucial to answering many questions. The data available suggest that, during the Emirate, the settlement primarily occupied the upper plateau and slope near the NE gate (where Department 3 is located). After it was abandoned during the 10th century, Castellar de Meca was intensively resettled in the Late Caliphate period or the Early Taifa period, particularly the flattest area located

Fig. 17: Castellar de Meca and Andalusí settlement in its hinterland (11th – 12th centuries).

137 Simón 2011, 493 f.

138 Ruiz 2000, 171; Ruiz 2009, 78.

139 Hernández – Simón 2015, 70.

140 Navarro – Jiménez 2007, 54–56.

opposite the NW gate, while the undefended flatlands below, across Corredor de Almanza and the hinterland of Chinchilla, were being peppered with peasant villages. Finally, in the late 11th century the population shifted once again to high ground, a process also recorded in Jumilla. This process of demographic concentration was triggered by growing threats, which prompted the population to seek better-defended sites.

77 The causes of this historical process are likely of a political or socio-economic nature, but are not yet fully understood, so only hypothetical explanations can be put forth. One factor that must be taken into account is that the phenomenon does not seem to be limited to a specific region, but is documented in other parts of al-Andalus too. As such, it logically follows that it can be examined more broadly. According to Guillermo García-Contreras, in the Salado Valley (Guadalajara), the abandonment of some villages coincided with the concentration of peasants in hilltop settlements. This phenomenon could be related to »the Castilian advance and the conquest of the northern part of the valley, around Atienza and its hinterland«¹⁴¹. It seems reasonable to assume that the insecurity that affected the region of the Alcarria also affected La Mancha, and the written sources indicate that the Castilian-Leonese conquest of Toledo in 1085 caused considerable instability south of the Tagus. This is also suggested by the raids carried out by El Cid, Alvar Fáñez, and Alfonso VI in the southeast, and the establishment of a royal bridgehead in Aledo (1086–1092). Furthermore, the Christian threat and the weakness of Muslim states bordering with Christian territories led to dramatic episodes of banditry by renegade Muslims, as recounted by Ibn al-Kardabus, which particularly affected peasant communities¹⁴². The insecurity resulting from Christian incursions and banditry created almost frontier-like conditions in the region for decades. This may have been one of the reasons that pushed the population to congregate in better-protected settlements, a notion similarly supported by the written sources. Abū l-Walīd b. Rushd (d. 520 H/1126 C.E.) describes the inhabitants of fifteen *qurā* in the Sharq al-Andalus gathering to share a mosque in a single village that was close to a fortification (*hisn*). This situation persisted for years, until the danger passed and the people could return to their places of origin¹⁴³.

78 Although the general settlement history of the region is clear, not all hilltop settlements survived, likely owing to causes that varied from case to case. As such, we have attested the abandonment of several settlements that met good defensive conditions, such as Los Castillicos de Mingo García in the municipality of modern Higuera, occurred at the same time as small villages on the plains. This *qaryā* had 30 or 40 houses and was situated on a high hill in the middle of a mountainous area, in relative isolation from valleys and plains. Castellar de Meca is a special case, as it was the most important population centre in the region during the 11th century. Therefore, it is likely to have received peasants from the deserted plains villages in the last third of the century, only to become depopulated shortly thereafter during the first half of the 12th century. It is obvious that neither Mingo García nor Meca were abandoned for defensive reasons, so other factors, possibly internal, must be taken into account. Indeed, historiography has identified a prominent cause for the abandonment of rural settlements in Europe during the 12th and 13th centuries, namely the proven inability of settlers to establish a sufficient agricultural base to support themselves. This phenomenon, known as »Fehlsiedlungen« in German historiography, has been well-studied in Germany, Italy, southern France, and even Christian Spain¹⁴⁴. According to Pierre Tou-

141 García-Contreras 2017.

142 Ibn al-Kardabus 2008, 124 f.

143 Guichard – Lagardère 1990.

144 »Une autre cause majeure de désertions rurales, à côté des crises agraires et des surconcentrations des XII^e–XIII^e siècles, a été désignée par les chercheurs allemands du nom *Fehlsiedlungen*. Indépendamment de ces recherches, j'avais eu moi-même, dans le Latium, l'occasion de souligner l'importance de cette cause de désertion par ce que je caractériserais comme une incapacité avérée d'habitats castraux nouvellement fondés

bert, regional studies in Germany and Italy, and to a lesser extent in southern France and Spain, have not only confirmed this explanation, but have allowed for the phenomenon to be defined more precisely. Indeed, the territory around Mingo García was unsuitable for the barest of agricultural developments, as shown by the fact that even with modern technology all attempts to develop an agricultural economy have failed. Moreover, Castellar de Meca's location was far from ideal from an agricultural perspective; it was partly surrounded by unproductive marshes, but water resources for irrigation were, paradoxically, very limited (Fig. 16). In contrast, other nearby centres survived the period, such as Almansa, Alpera, and Ayora, were located next to naturally irrigated areas suitable for agricultural exploitation with minimal infrastructure.

79 After the Christian conquest, Castellar de Meca was never inhabited again. The Treaty of Campillo (1281), negotiated by Aragonese representatives of Ayora and Jarafuel and Castilian delegates from Chinchilla, set up the border between the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, designating Fuente de Meca as one of its landmarks¹⁴⁵. In order to do this, an »old Moor« who was by then living in Elche, had to be brought over¹⁴⁶. The area had been deserted for several decades, and there were likely no Mudéjars (Muslims living under Christian rule) left in the nearby towns of Almansa and Ayora, at least since the quashing of the uprising of 1264–1266. As a result, the town council of Almansa lost the northern sector of the Sierra del Mugrón, where Castellar de Meca is located, which had traditionally been part of the jurisdiction of the *hışn* of Almansa¹⁴⁷. Recovering this area became a secular demand of the representatives of Almansa's town council, leading to legal disputes over this sector of Sierra del Mugrón and the Lagoon of San Benito until the 19th century¹⁴⁸. The arbitrary actions undertaken by the towns of Ayora and Almansa were the final blow to any attempt to repopulate the mountain range. It took several centuries for agriculture to return to the vicinity, and many of the plots of land established then have survived until today, owing to the fertility of the surrounding plain, especially in the area around the Lagoon de San Benito after it was drained¹⁴⁹. Numerous crosses carved in the rock, which mark pastures along the boundary and watering points, such as the natural basins documented in the Sierra del Mugrón, attest to this more recent activity.

80 There is still a long way to go in the study of the Andalusí settlement of Castellar de Meca; in fact, this work is only a first step. Crucial aspects remain unknown, and future archaeological research will hopefully provide answers: we need to clarify whether all sectors of the site are contemporaneous; define the chronology of each of these sectors; establish the true nature of the apparent hiatus between the 9th century and the final decades of the 11th century; explore the role of the site, especially in the 11th century, within the broader settlement of the eastern sector of the modern province of Albacete; and, naturally, try to better understand the social and economic organization of the communities that inhabited the area. Uncertainty also hovers over the factors that led Meca to be abandoned, unlike similar sites in the area, which survived to shape settlement in the region thereafter, such as Ayora, Almansa, or Alpera.

(X^e–XII^e siècles) à structurer autour d'eux une assiette suffisante de terroirs agraires. Les études régionales conduits depuis, tant en Allemagne qu'en Italie, mais aussi à un moindre degré en France méridionale et en Espagne, loin de remettre en question cette typologie en tryptique des causes de désertion, a permis au contraire de la confirmer et d'en affiner les caractéristiques» (Toubert 1999, 35).

145 López 1999, 111 f.

146 López 1999, 111 f.; Pretel 2011, 33.

147 Jiménez – Simón 2020.

148 Feliu 1972, 89.

149 Ponce 1986, 62.

Bibliography

- al-ʿUḍrī 1965** ʿA. al-Ahwānī (ed.), (al-)ʿUdhri, Aḥmad b. ʿUmar. Tarṣīf. Nuṣūṣ ʿan al-Andalus min kitāb Tarṣīf al-ajbār (Madrid 1965; Traduction and Study: E. Molina, La cora de Tudmīr según al-ʿUḍrī (s. XI). Aportaciones al estudio geográfico-descriptivo del SE peninsular, Cuadernos de Historia del Islam IV = Serie monográfica. Islámica occidentalia 3 [Granada 1972])
- al-Idrisī 1969** (al-)Idrisī, Ṣifāt al-Maghrib wa-arḍ al-Sūdān wa-Miṣr wa-al-Andalus, maʿkhūdhah min kitāb Nuzhat al-mushtāq fī ikhtirāq al-āfāq, in: R. Dozy – M. J. de Goeje (eds.), Description de l’Afrique et de l’Espagne (Leiden 1969)
- al-Idrisī 1974** (al-)Idrisī, Geografía de España, Textos medievales 37 (Valencia 1974)
- Abad et al. 2012** L. Abad – S. Gutiérrez – B. Gamó – P. Cánovas, El Tolmo de Minateda (Hellín, Albacete, España). Un proyecto de investigación y puesta en valor del patrimonio, Debates de Arqueología Medieval 2, 2012, 351–381
- Abid Mizal 1989** J. Abid Mizal, Los caminos de al-Andalus en el siglo XII. Según »Uns al muhaṣṣ wa-rawḍ al-furayḥ« (solaz de corazones y prados de contemplación) (Madrid 1989)
- Acién 1999** M. Acién, El poblamiento indígena en al-Andalus e indicios del primer poblamiento andalusí, Al-Qanṭara 20, 1, 1999, 47–64
<<https://doi.org/10.3989/alqantara.1999.v20.i1.451>> (14.07.2024)
- Alfaro 1991** M^a M. Alfaro, El sistema defensivo de la puerta de entrada a la ciudad ibérica de Meca (Ayora, Valencia), in: N. Molist – E. Sánchez (coords.), Fortificacions. La problemàtica de l’Ibèric Ple. (Segles IV–III a.C.). Simposi Internacional d’Arqueologia Ibèrica. Manresa 1990 (Manresa 1991) 147–152
- Alfaro – Martín 1997** M^a M. Alfaro – A. Martín, Un departamento ibérico sobre el tramo 2.060–2.080 m, in: Broncano – Alfaro 1997, 199–228.
- Amorós et al. 2012** V. Amorós – V. Cañavate – S. Gutiérrez – J. Sarabia, Cerámica altomedieval en el Tolmo de Minateda (Hellín, Albacete, España), in: Atti del IX Congresso Internazionale sulla Ceramica Medievale nel Mediterraneo (Venice 2012) 246–257
- Amorós 2017** V. Amorós, Contextos cerámicos altomedievales de El Tolmo de Minateda. Caracterización morfológica, cronotipológica y porcentual desde la perspectiva estratigráfica (PhD Thesis University of Alicante 2017)
<<http://hdl.handle.net/10045/83530>>
- Amorós 2020** V. Amorós, Entre ollas y marmitas. Una reflexión sobre la producción cerámica entre los siglos VII y IX en el sureste de la península Ibérica, Arqueología y Territorio Medieval 27, 2020, 11–36
- Asensio – Magallón 2011** J. A. Asensio – M^a A. Magallón, La fortaleza altomedieval del Cerro Calvario en la Puebla de Castro. Un hiṣn en el extremo norte de la Marca Superior de al-Andalus, Perfil. Guías de Patrimonio Cultural Altoaragonés 3 (Huesca 2011)
- Azuar 1989** R. Azuar, Denia islámica. Arqueología y poblamiento, Patrimonio 11 (Alicante 1989)
- Azuar 2010** R. Azuar, Campesinos fortificados frente a los conquistadores feudales en la montaña alicantina (s. XII–XIII), MARQ. Arqueología y Museos 4, 2010, 67–88
- Azuar 2012** R. Azuar, Cerámicas en »verde y manganeso«, consideradas norteafricanas, en al-Andalus (s. X–XI d.C.), Arqueología y Territorio Medieval 19, 2012, 59–90
- Barceló 2019** C. Barceló, Devoción y profilaxis. Epigrafía árabe en láminas de plomo, Boletín de la Sociedad Castellonense de Cultura 95, 2019, 289–320
- Bazzana 1987** A. Bazzana, Essai de typologie des ollas valenciennes, in: J. Zozaya (Coord.), Segundo Coloquio Internacional de Cerámica Medieval en el Mediterráneo Occidental (Madrid 1987) 93–98
- Bazzana 1991** A. Bazzana, La cerámica islámica de Valencia I. Catálogo, Serie arqueológica municipal 2 (Valencia 1991)
- Bazzana 1992** A. Bazzana, Maisons d’al Andalus. Habitat Médiéval et structures du peuplement dans l’Espagne orientale 1–2, Collection de la Casa de Velázquez. Archéologie 37 = Collection de la Casa de Velázquez 17 (Madrid 1992)
- Boyrie-Fénié 2005** B. Boyrie-Fénié, Dictionnaire toponymique des communes. Landes et Bas-Adour (Pau 2005)
- Broncano 1986** S. Broncano, El Castellar de Meca, Ayora (Valencia), Excavaciones Arqueológicas en España 147 (Madrid 1986)
- Broncano – Alfaro 1990** S. Broncano – M^a M. Alfaro, Los caminos de ruedas de la ciudad ibérica de Meca (Ayora, Valencia), Excavaciones Arqueológicas en España, 162 (Madrid 1990)
- Broncano – Alfaro 1997** S. Broncano – M^a M. Alfaro, Los accesos a la ciudad ibérica de Meca mediante sus caminos de ruedas, Serie de Trabajos Varios 92 (Valencia 1997)
- Camarero in press** I. Camarero, La Chinchilla islámica. Revisión de las fuentes histórico-geográficas y puesta al día, in: P. Jiménez – J. L. Simón – J. M^a Moreno (eds.), Microhistoria de una comunidad campesina andalusí del s. XI. Economía y sociedad (Albacete in press)
- Cavanilles 1797** A. J. Cavanilles, Observaciones sobre la historia natural, geografía, agricultura, población y frutos del Reyno de Valencia II (Valencia 1797; ed. facsimil Valencia 1985)
- Calvo et al. 1974** J. P. Calvo – S. Ordóñez – J. Usera, Estudio del Terciario marino de la sierra del Mugrón (Prov. Albacete y Valencia), Acta Geológica Hispánica IX 5, 1974, 174–178
- Chavarría 2011** J. A. Chavarría, Cuando Castilla-La Mancha era Al-Ándalus. Geografía y toponimia (Ciudad Real 2011)
- Coll – García 2010** J. Coll – J. M. García, Tipología, cronología y producción de los hornos cerámicos en al-Ándalus, Arqueología Medieval, 2010
<<http://www.arqueologiamedieval.com/articulos/125/tipologia-cronologia-y-produccion-de-los-hornos-ceramicos-en-al-andalus>> (14.07.2024)

- Escribà – Barceló 1990** F. Escribà – M. Barceló, La cerámica califal de Benetússer (Valencia 1990)
- Escudero 1988–1990** J. Escudero Aranda, La cerámica decorada en »verde y manganeso« de Madinat al-Zahra, Cuadernos de Madīnat al-Zahrā' 2, 1988–1990, 127–161
- Feliu 1972** A. Feliu, La Laguna de San Benito (Valencia-Albacete), Cuadernos de Geografía 11, 1972, 79–89
- Ferrer et al. 2015** J. Ferrer – A. J. Lorrio – J. Velaza, Las inscripciones ibéricas en escritura suroriental del Castellar de Meca (Ayora), Palaeohispanica 15, 2015, 161–176
- Gamo 1999** B. Gamo, La Antigüedad tardía en la provincia de Albacete, Serie I. Estudios 107 (Albacete 1998)
- Gandía – Hernández – Simón 2021** E. Gandía – E. Hernández – J. L. Simón, Aspectos arqueológicos e históricos de la fortaleza de Jumilla (Murcia) en la Edad Media, Castillos de España. Publicación de la Asociación Española de Amigos de los Castillos. Extra 1, 2021, 129–144
- García-Contreras 2017** G. García-Contreras, Algunas cuestiones para el debate sobre los asentamientos rurales. Protocolo de estudio del valle del Salado (Guadalajara) entre los siglos X y XII, Debates de Arqueología Medieval 7, 2017, 97–146
- Gisbert et al. 1995** J. A. Gisbert – V. Burguera – J. Bolufer, El registro cerámico de una ciudad árabe durante el primer tercio del siglo XIII. El arrabal de Daniya. »El Fortí (Dénia-Alacant)«, in: Actes du V^e Colloque sur la céramique médiévale en Méditerranée occidentale (Rabat 1995) 162–177
- Gómez 1997** S. Gómez, Cerámica decorada islámica de Mértola – Portugal (ss. IX–XIII), in: La céramique médiévale en Méditerranée. Actes du VI Congrès de l'AIECM2 (Aix-en-Provence 1997) 311–325
- Gómez 2004** S. Gómez, La cerámica islámica de Mértola. Producción y comercio (PhD Thesis University of Madrid 2004)
- Gozalbes 2005** C. Gozalbes, Un ensayo para la catalogación de los amuletos de plomo andalusíes, Boletín de Arqueología Medieval 12, 2005, 7–18
- Guichard – Lagardère 1990** P. Guichard – V. Lagardère, La vie sociale et économique de l'Espagne musulmane aux XI–XII siècles à travers les »fatwa/s« du »Mi'yar« d'al-Wanšarīsī, MelCasaVelázquez 26 (Madrid 1990) 197–236
<<https://doi.org/10.3406/casa.1990.2565>> (14.07.2024)
- Guillermo 2014** M. Guillermo, Cartagena medieval, Cuadernos Monográficos del Museo del Teatro Romano 1 (Cartagena 2014)
- Gutiérrez 1996** S. Gutiérrez, La cora de Tudmir. De la antigüedad tardía al mundo islámico. Poblamiento y cultura material, Collection de la Casa de Velázquez 57 (Madrid 1996)
- Gutiérrez 2018** S. Gutiérrez, De Madīnat al-Turāb a Balansiya. Ceràmica paleoandalusí a València (segles VIII–IX), in: P. Armengol (Coord.), L'argila de la Mitja Lluna. La ceràmica islàmica a la ciutat de València. 35 anys d'arqueologia urbana (Valencia 2018) 41–65
- Hernández 2019** A. Hernández, La cotidianeidad en la alcazaba andalusí de Albarracín (Teruel): el testimonio de la cerámica, in: J. Ortega Ortega (Coord.), Actas II Jornadas de arqueología medieval en Aragón. Reconstruir al-Andalus en Aragón (Teruel 2019) 225–259
- Hernández – Simón 2015** E. Hernández – J. L. Simón, El Castillo de Jumilla. Historia de un centinela (Jumilla 2015)
- Ibn Ḥayyān 1981** M^a J. Viguera – F. Corriente (Trads.), Ibn Ḥayyān. Muqtabis V. Crónica del califa Abderrahman III an-Nāsir entre los años 912 y 942, Textos medievales 64 (Zaragoza 1981)
- Ibn al-Kardabus 2008** Ibn al-Kardabus, Historia de al-Andalus. Estudio, Traducción y Notas de Felipe Maíllo Salgado (Madrid 2008)
- Jiménez – Navarro 1997** P. Jiménez – J. Navarro, Platería 14. Sobre cuatro casas andalusíes y su evolución (siglos X–XIII), Excavaciones arqueológicas ciudad de Murcia 1 (Murcia 1997)
- Jiménez – Pérez 2018** P. Jiménez – M. Pérez, Cerámicas emirales y califales de Murcia, calle Pascual (siglos IX–XI), Arqueología y Territorio Medieval 25, 2018, 67–106
<<https://doi.org/10.17561/aytm.v25.3>> (14.07.2024)
- Jiménez – Simón 2017** P. Jiménez – J. L. Simón, El poblamiento andalusí en las tierras de secano. El área sudoriental de La Mancha (ss. XI–XIII), Al-Qanṭara 38; 2, 2017, 215–259
<<https://doi.org/10.3989/alqantara.2017.008>> (14.07.2024)
- Jiménez – Simón 2020** P. Jiménez – J. L. Simón, El hişn de Almansa (Albacete). Fortificaciones y poblamiento, in: J. Navarro – L. García-Pulido (eds.), Defensive Architecture of the Mediterranean X (Granada 2020) 105–122
<<https://doi.org/10.4995/fortmed2020.2020.11551>> (14.07.2024)
- Jiménez et al. 2021a** P. Jiménez – J. L. Simón – J. M. Moreno, La alquería andalusí de La Graja (Higuera). Poblamiento y economía campesina en la Mancha oriental. Primera campaña de excavaciones, Serie I. Estudios 269 (Albacete 2021)
<<https://doi.org/10.37927/978-84-18165-45-0>> (14.07.2024)
- Jiménez et al. 2021b** P. Jiménez – J. L. Simón – J. M. Moreno, El campesinado andalusí del secano manchego (s. XI). Primera campaña de excavaciones en la alquería de La Graja (Higuera, Albacete), Arqueología y Territorio Medieval 28, 2021, 45–90, e6360
<<https://doi.org/10.17561/aytm.v28.6360>>
- Jiménez et al. 2023** P. Jiménez – J. L. Simón – J. M. Moreno, The Colonization of Rainfed Land in al-Andalus. An Unknown Aspect of the 11th Century Economic Expansion, Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies 15, 2023, 484–521
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/17546559.2023.2244477>> (14.07.2024)
- Jiménez et al. in press** P. Jiménez – J. L. Simón – J. M. Moreno, La cerámica de la alquería de La Graja en su contexto. Aportación a la historia del poblamiento andalusí en La Mancha sudoriental, in: Actas del

XIII Congreso sobre Cerámica Mediterránea Medieval y Moderna de la AIECM3 (Granada in press)

Ledo 2008 A. C. Ledo, De ediciones y correcciones. Ibn Šāḥib al-Šalā. Cofrentes y la ruta antigua del río Magro, *Anaquel de Estudios Árabes* 19, 2008, 91–103

Lerma et al. 1987 J. V. Lerma – I. Miralles – M. P. Soler, Cerámicas musulmanas de »El Tossalet de Sant Esteve«, Valencia, in: J. Zozaya (coord.), Segundo Coloquio Internacional de Cerámica Medieval en el Mediterráneo Occidental (Toledo 1987) 155–163

López 1985 I. López, Cerámicas islámicas del Castellar de Meca, *Sharq Al-Andalus. Estudios mudéjares y moriscos* 2, 1985, 183–189

López 1999 A. López, Jaime II, don Juan Manuel y el señorío de Villena (Alicante 1999)

López 2002 P. López Elum, Los castillos valencianos en la Edad Media (materiales y técnicas de construcción) I (Valencia 2002)

Lorrio 2011 A. Lorrio, El Castellar de Meca. Anatomía de un »oppidum« ibérico, in: Las raíces de Almansa. Desde los orígenes del poblamiento hasta el fin de la Edad Media, *Jornadas de Estudios locales* 9, 2011, 95–141

Lorrio – Sánchez 2008 A. Lorrio – M. D. Sánchez, El Molón (Camporrobles, Valencia). Un poblado de primera época islámica, *Lucentum* 27, 2008, 141–164

Lorrio et al. 2016 A. Lorrio – S. Pernas – M. Torres, Puntas de flecha orientalizantes en contextos urbanos del Sureste de la Península Ibérica. Peña Negra, La Fonteta y Meca, *CuPaUAM* 42, 2016, 9–78
<<https://doi.org/10.15366/cupauam2016.42.001>> (15.07.2024)

Lorrio – Simón 2016 A. Lorrio – J. L. Simón, El oppidum ibérico de El Castellar de Meca y su Territorio en la provincia de Albacete, in: B. Gamio Parras – R. Sanz Gamio (Coords.), *Actas de la I reunión científica de arqueología de Albacete, Serie III. Congresos, seminarios, exposiciones y homenajes* 16 (Albacete 2016) 419–433

Lozano 1794 J. Lozano, Bastetania y Contestania del Reyno de Murcia con los vestigios de sus ciudades subterráneas 1 (Murcia 1794; Reprint Bastitania y Contestania del Reino de Murcia, Biblioteca murciana de bolsillo 16 [Murcia 1980])

Madoz 1845–1850 P. Madoz, *Diccionario Geográfico Estadístico-Histórico de España y sus posesiones de Ultramar* (Madrid 1845–1850)

Meseguer 1990 M. Meseguer, Los grabados y cazoletas del Arco de San Pascual (Ayora, Valencia), *ArchPrehistLev* 20, 1990, 379–406

Navarro – Jiménez 2007 J. Navarro – P. Jiménez, Siyāsa. Estudio arqueológico del despoblado andalusí (siglos XI–XIII) (Granada 2007)

Negre et al. 2018 J. Negre – L. Lozano – S. Selma, Una primera aproximació a la caracterizació de la ceràmica andalusina de la fortalessa d'Orpessa (Castelló), *QuadCast* 36, 2018, 231–256

Papí 2002 C. Papí, La Sociedad Arqueológica Valenciana. Reglamentos, socios y actividades, *BMusMadr* 20, 2002, 265–292

Paris 1904 P. Paris, *Essai sur l'art et l'industrie de l'Espagne primitive* 1–2 (Paris 1904)

Paris 1921 P. Paris, *Promenades Archéologiques en Espagne II. Antéquera, Alpéra et Meca, Emporionm Sagonte, Mèrida, Bolonia, le palais de Liria a Madrid* (Paris 1921)

Pérez 2015 G. Pérez, La caracterización del registro cerámico del siglo XI de El Castellar de Alcoi (Alicante). El Horizonte II, ¿La antigua Farqasa/Furqusa?, *Recerques del Museu d'Alcoi* 24, 2015, 87–104

Pérez 2018 G. Pérez, El Castellar d'Alcoi (Alicante). La constatación arqueológica de un poblado fortificado ex novo andalusí. Resultados preliminares de las campañas de excavación de 2016 y 2017 en el Sector 2, *Recerques del Museu d'Alcoi* 27, 2018, 91–102

Pérez – Jiménez 2018 M. Pérez – P. Jiménez, El ajuar cerámico almorávide en Šarq al-Andalus, in: M. Marcos (ed.), *Al-Murābiṭūn (los almorávides). Un Imperio islámico occidental. Estudios en memoria del profesor Henri Terrasse, Memorias* 4 (Granada 2018) 161–221

Ponce 1986 G. Ponce, Transformaciones agrarias recientes en la Laguna de San Benito. La última fase de la ocupación de un espacio natural, *Investigaciones Geográficas* 4, 1986, 59–70

Poveda 2001 J. V. Poveda, *Historia del Valle de Ayora-Cofrentes. Desde la Prehistoria hasta la expulsión de los moriscos (1609)* (Valencia 2001)

Puch et al. 1986 E. Puch – A. Martín – M. A. Negre, Hallazgos islámicos en Pajaroncillo (Cuenca), in: *Actas del I Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española* 4. Andalusi-Cristiano, Colección Actas 10 (Valladolid 1986) 111–131

Pretel 1981 A. Pretel, *Almansa Medieval. Una villa del señorío de Villena en los siglos XIII, XIV y XV* (Almansa 1981)

Pretel 2011 A. Pretel, *Conquista y poblamiento del Júcar de Albacete. Edición conmemorativa del VIII centenario de la primera conquista* (Albacete 2011)

Retuerce 1998 M. Retuerce, *La cerámica andalusí de la Meseta* (Madrid 1998)

Rodríguez 1999 A. Rodríguez, Estudio de las producciones postcalifales del alfar de la casa de los Tiros (Granada). Siglos XI–XII, *Arqueología Medieval* 6, 1999, 101–121

Rosell 1865–1871 C. Rosell, *Crónica General de España ó sea Historia ilustrada y descriptiva de sus provincias, sus poblaciones más importantes y posesiones de Ultramar* (Madrid 1866)

Rosselló 1978 G. Rosselló, *Ensayo de sistematización de la cerámica árabe en Mallorca* (Palma 1978)

Rosselló 1985 G. Rosselló, Un ataífor norteafricano. Un ensayo de interpretación iconográfica, *Sharq Al-Andalus* 2, 1985, 191–205
<<https://doi.org/10.14198/shand.1985.2.19>> (15.07.2024)

Rubio 1989 F. Rubio *Memoria sobre el yacimiento medieval del Sompo, Cocentina* (Alicante), *ArchPrehistLev* 19, 1989, 385–409

- Ruiz 2000** L. Ruiz, Hisn Yakka. Un castillo rural de Šarq al-Andalus. Siglos XI al XIII. Excavaciones Arqueológicas en el Cerro del Castillo de Yecla (1990–1999), Yakka. Revista de Estudios Yeclanos 10, 2000
- Ruiz 2009** L. Ruiz, Yakka. Un castillo de Šarq al-Andalus en los siglos XII y XIII. Aproximación histórica al poblamiento almohade en Yecla (Murcia), Tudmır 1, 2009, 77–138
- Salado – Arancibia 2003** J. B. Salado – A. Arancibia, Málaga durante los Imperios norteafricanos. Almorávides y almohades, Siglos XI–XIII, Mainake 25, 2003, 69–102
- Schulten 1946** A. Schulten, Meca. Una ciudad rupestre ibérica, in: Crónica del II Congreso Arqueológico del Sudeste Español, Boletín Arqueológico del Sudeste Español 4–7 (Albacete 1946) 265–279
- Simón 1988** J. L. Simón, Contribución al estudio del mundo romano en Almansa, in: I Congreso de Historia de Castilla La-Mancha 4 (Ciudad Real 1988) 97–105
- Simón 2010** J. L. Simón, El poblamiento islámico en el Corredor de Almansa y las tierras de Montearagón. Los andalusíes olvidados, in: Las raíces de Almansa. Desde los orígenes del poblamiento hasta el fin de la Edad Media, Jornadas de Estudios Locales 16 (Almansa 2010) 169–266
- Simón 2011** J. L. Simón, Castillos y torres de Albacete (Albacete 2011)
- Simón 2014** J. L. Simón, El poblamiento islámico en Albacete. Las alquerías andalusíes del Villar de Hoya Honda y la Graja (Higueruela, Albacete), Al-Basit 59, 2014, 191–252
- Simón – Segura 2005–2008** J. L. Simón – G. Segura, Cartas arqueológicas del Corredor de Almansa-Monte Ibérico. CEDER Monte Ibérico (Ort? 2005–2008)
- Simón et al. in press** J. L. Simón – J. M^a Moreno – P. Jiménez, El poblamiento medieval en la Sierra del Mugrón. Proyecto Centinela, Instituto de Estudios Albacetenses (in press)
- Sinner 2017** A. Sinner, La ceca de Ilduro, Archaeopress Roman Archaeology 29 (Oxford 2017)
- Toubert 1999** P. Toubert, Histoire de l'occupation du sol et archéologie des terroirs médiévaux. La référence allemande, in: A. Bazzana (Coord.), Castrum 5. Archéologie des espaces agraires méditerranéens au Moyen Âge. Actes du colloque de Murcie (Espagne) 8–12 mai 1992, CEFR 105 = Collection de la Casa de Velázquez 55 (Murcia 1999) 23–37
- Vega et al. 2017** D. Vega Almazán – A. A. Jordán – J. Muruzábal Cal – V. Orozco Legaza, Un acercamiento a la vida cotidiana en los primeros años del Islam en el norte de la península ibérica. Una cocina del siglo VIII d.C. en El Pueyo (Los Bañales, Uncastillo, ZA). II. La cerámica, Veleia 34, 2017, 163–188
- Vigil-Escalera 2006** A. Vigil-Escalera Guirado, La cerámica del periodo visigodo en Madrid, in: La investigación arqueológica de la época visigoda en la Comunidad de Madrid, Zona Arqueológica 8, 2006, 705–716

RESUMEN

Castellar de Meca Revisitado

Las Fases Andalúsíes (Siglos IX–XII)

José Luis Simón García – José María Moreno-Narganes – Pedro Jiménez Castillo

Castellar de Meca (Ayora, Valencia) ha sido reconocido desde hace tiempo como un destacado yacimiento arqueológico protohistórico, debido a sus enormes dimensiones, sus impresionantes restos de murallas ciclópeas y, sobre todo, sus elementos excavados en la roca, como caminos, silos y aljibes. En consecuencia, la importancia de su ocupación durante la Edad Media ha quedado relegada a un segundo plano, a pesar de sus importantes restos materiales. Este trabajo pretende analizar la historia de Meca durante el periodo islámico, basándose en prospecciones, un nuevo examen de las pruebas procedentes de excavaciones realizadas por especialistas en la Edad del Hierro e incluso mapas históricos. Con ello pretendemos demostrar que el análisis de este yacimiento es crucial por dos razones: en primer lugar, permite comprender mejor los patrones de asentamiento en la región desde el Emirato (siglo IX) hasta el periodo almorávide (primera mitad del siglo XII). En segundo lugar, se trata del asentamiento más importante de la Valencia occidental durante el siglo XI. Anteriormente, la región apenas había desempeñado un papel agrícola marginal, pero en el siglo XI experimentó un intenso proceso de colonización al hilo de la revolución económica que se estaba produciendo en al-Andalus y en otras regiones europeas y mediterráneas.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Asentamiento rural islámico, agricultura de secano, arqueología medieval, cerámica islámica, siglo XI

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Castellar de Meca Revisited

Die islamischen Phasen (9.–12. Jh.)

José Luis Simón García – José María Moreno-Narganes – Pedro Jiménez Castillo

Castellar de Meca (Ayora, Valencia) ist seit Langem als herausragende frühgeschichtliche archäologische Stätte bekannt, die sich durch ihre enorme Größe, ihre beeindruckenden Reste von Zyklopenmauern und vor allem durch ihre in den Fels gehauenen Strukturen wie Wege, Silos und Zisternen auszeichnet. Dies hat dazu geführt, dass die Bedeutung der mittelalterlichen Besiedlung trotz der umfangreichen materiellen Überreste in den Hintergrund gedrängt wurde. Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es, die Geschichte von Meca während der islamischen Periode zu analysieren. Dabei stützen wir uns auf Vermessungen, eine erneute Untersuchung der Funde aus Ausgrabungen, die von Spezialisten der Eisenzeit durchgeführt wurden, und sogar auf historische Karten. Damit wollen wir zeigen, dass die Analyse dieser Stätte aus zwei Gründen von entscheidender Bedeutung ist: Erstens ermöglicht sie ein besseres Verständnis der Siedlungsmuster in der Region vom Emirat (9. Jahrhundert) bis zur Almoravidenzeit (erste Hälfte des 12. Jahrhunderts). Zweitens war dies die wichtigste Siedlung im Westen Valencias während des 11. Jahrhunderts. Zuvor hatte die Region kaum eine landwirtschaftliche Rolle gespielt, doch im 11. Jahrhundert erlebte sie im Zuge der wirtschaftlichen Revolution, die in al-Andalus und in anderen europäischen und mediterranen Regionen stattfand, einen intensiven Kolonisierungsprozess.

SCHLAGWÖRTER

Islamische ländliche Siedlung, Regenfeldbau, mittelalterliche Archäologie, islamische Töpferei, 11. Jahrhundert

SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Cover: <<https://www.comunitatvalenciana.com/es/valencia/ayora/monumentos/ruinas-del-castellarde-la-meca>> (17.07.2024)

Fig. 1: a. DAI, USGS, GEBCO (author: D. Blaschta, modifications: C. Comas-Mata); b. P. Collado Almendros

Fig. 2: Lammerer's 1921 plan (00013AB8).

Fig. 3: Aerial view of Castellar de Meca Interministerial Flight 1973. Partial frame A-0004_0793_00B_0003.

Fig. 4: Municipal Museum Casa Alamanzón in Utiel (Valencia) (J. L. Simón)

Fig. 5: a–c. Authors

Fig. 6: <<https://www.comunitatvalenciana.com/es/valencia/ayora/monumentos/ruinas-del-castellarde-la-meca>> (17.07.2024)

Fig. 7: <<https://www.comunitatvalenciana.com/es/valencia/ayora/monumentos/ruinas-del-castellarde-la-meca>> (17.07.2024)

Fig. 8: Authors

Fig. 9: Photo: J. L. Simón

Fig. 10: Photo: J. L. Simón

Fig. 11: Photo: J. L. Simón

Fig. 12: Photo: J. L. Simón

Fig. 13: Photo: J. L. Simón

Fig. 14: 1–22. Authors

Fig. 15: 1–22. Authors

Fig. 16: 1–18. Authors

Fig. 17: Authors

ADDRESSES

Dr. José Luis Simón García
Técnico Inspector de arqueología
Servicio Territorial de Cultura y Deporte de la Generalitat Valenciana
Avd. de Aguilera 1
03700 Alicante
España
simon_josgar@gva.es
ORCID-ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5118-8790>

Dr. José María Moreno-Narganes
Departamento de Prehistoria, Arqueología,
Historia Antigua, Filología Griega y Filología Latina
Universidad de Alicante
Carr. de San Vicente del Raspeig, s/n
03690 San Vicente del Raspeig, Alicante
España
josemariamoreno01@gmail.com
ORCID-ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1345-7037>

Dr. Pedro Jiménez Castillo
Técnico Superior
Escuela de Estudios Árabes
Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas
C/ Frailes de la Victoria, 7
18010 Granada
España
pedro@eea.csic.es
ORCID-ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6012-4414>

METADATA

Titel/Title: Castellar de Meca Revisited. Die islamischen Phasen (9.–12. Jh.)/*Castellar de Meca revisited. The islamic occupation (9th–12th centuries)*
Band/Issue: MM 65, 2024

Bitte zitieren Sie diesen Beitrag folgenderweise/
Please cite the article as follows: J. L. Simón García – J. María Moreno-Narganes – P. Jiménez Castillo, Castellar de Meca revisited. The islamic occupation (9th–12th centuries), MM 65, 2024, § 1–40, <https://doi.org/10.34780/c6br-6b43>
Copyright: Alle Rechte vorbehalten/*All rights reserved.*

Online veröffentlicht am/*Online published on:*
20.12.2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34780/c6br-6b43>

Schlagwörter/*Keywords:* Islamische ländliche Siedlung, Regenfeldbau, mittelalterliche Archäologie, islamische Töpferei, 11. Jahrhundert/
Islamic rural settlement, rainfed agriculture, medieval archaeology, islamic pottery, 11th century
Bibliographischer Datensatz/*Bibliographic reference:* <https://zenon.dainst.org/Record/003076327>