

THE TARTESSIAN TUMULI OF THE GUADIANA

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estratto

Abstract: This article presents a new approach towards the territorial model in the central Guadiana valley during the Early Iron Age. The main focus is an analysis of the so-called *Tartessian buildings hidden under tumuli*. These buildings are large constructions which bear a certain resemblance to the Phoenician architecture of the southwestern Iberian Peninsula. A settlement pattern can be discussed which is unique to the period, and which gives personality to the geographical sphere in which it is found.

Keywords: Protohistory; Central Guadiana Valley; Tartessos; Territorial Model; Buildings Under Tumuli.

1. INTRODUCTION¹

The phenomenon of the so-called Tartessian tumuli of the Guadiana river is nothing new in the archaeological literature; however, as we will see later on, the variety of interpretations to which these tumuli have been subjected and the number of terms that have been used to define them have complicated their historical understanding and their integration into the analysis of how the central Guadiana valley was settled during the Early Iron Age. This is true despite the fact that the tumuli represent an element that gives more personality to the area's land occupation model, making it stand out from other territorial systems documented in the vicinity, such as the Guadalquivir and Tagus River Valleys.

The origin of the tumuli must be traced through the Phoenician architecture located in the southwestern part of the Peninsula, which is the reason why the territorial models considered up to now had their basis in the Guadalquivir valley, both in the "core" of Tartessos and in the Andalusian Highlands.² Nevertheless, archeology is beginning to show how a more eastern influence – resulting in the Tartessian phase in the interior – was not only a consequence of the stimulus that came out of the core of Tartessos, but that on the contrary, the influence of the Phoenician colonies of the Atlantic coast of Portugal also played an important role.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to update the information that is currently available on this type of settlement. To accomplish this, we analyze previous research work dealing with these sites, as well as the terminology used to refer to it, its unique characteristics, and finally, the role of these sites within the territorial model of the central Guadiana valley during Tartessian times, when the Tartessians lived alongside other types of settlements such as elevated settlements (which some researchers have defined as *oppida*), small village- and farm-like settlements, and the necropolis.

However, before starting, reference must be made to the geographic context of this study, as this is essential in order to understand the relationships that existed between the different archaeological sites mentioned in the article. The central Guadiana valley (FIG. 1) is an area characterized by the absence of major landforms that could hinder communications between its different component regions or districts. Similarly,

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2 Almagro-Gorbea 2010a; 2014; Jiménez Ávila 2001; Rodríguez Díaz – Enríquez 2001; Rodríguez Díaz – Pavón – Duque 2016.