



Tossal del MORTORUM



Guide to the
Archaeological Site



Background

Tossal del Mortórum is a hill located opposite the coastal plain of Ribera de Cabanes, Torreblanca and Oropesa, in the Plana Alta region (province of Castellón, Spain).

Archaeological studies have revealed various remnants of the past that can be found in different areas, including a settlement and a burial mound. The settlement is thought to have been occupied from approximately 1950 to 550 B.C., i.e. from the Bronze Age to the early Iron Age. The burial mound, in turn, was used as a tomb by settlers at different times during the Bronze Age.

The first excavations at Tossal del Mortórum took place in 1925 in the area of the settlement, but the methodology of the time resulted in the loss of most of the results and materials obtained. Excavations have been carried out on a regular basis since 2002, thanks to the collaborative efforts of the Cabanes Town Council and the Archaeology Department at the Castellón Provincial Council.





2 Location and territory

The location of Tossal del Mortórum has a clearly strategic intent. On the one hand, it is defensive, as the slopes of the hillside make it even more difficult to attack; on the other, it provides good visual control, as the summit affords excellent views over the entire coastal plain of Ribera de Cabanes, Torreblanca and Oropesa, as well as the Mediterranean Sea.

Numerous archaeological findings have been discovered on this plain and there are signs of human presence dating back more than 300,000 years. After the Neolithic Period, more than 7,000 years ago, we have been able to determine that the human communities were fully settled and the area was continuously occupied during different times of the Neolithic Period and the Bronze Age.

There are indications of a wharf at Torre La Sal after the 7th century B.C. and evidence of maritime trade, based in particular on the findings of amphorae. This activity intensified between the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C., when Torre La Sal became one of the most important Iberian settlements in the Castellón region.





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The Tossal del Mortórum settlement in the bronze age

1950-1120 B.C.

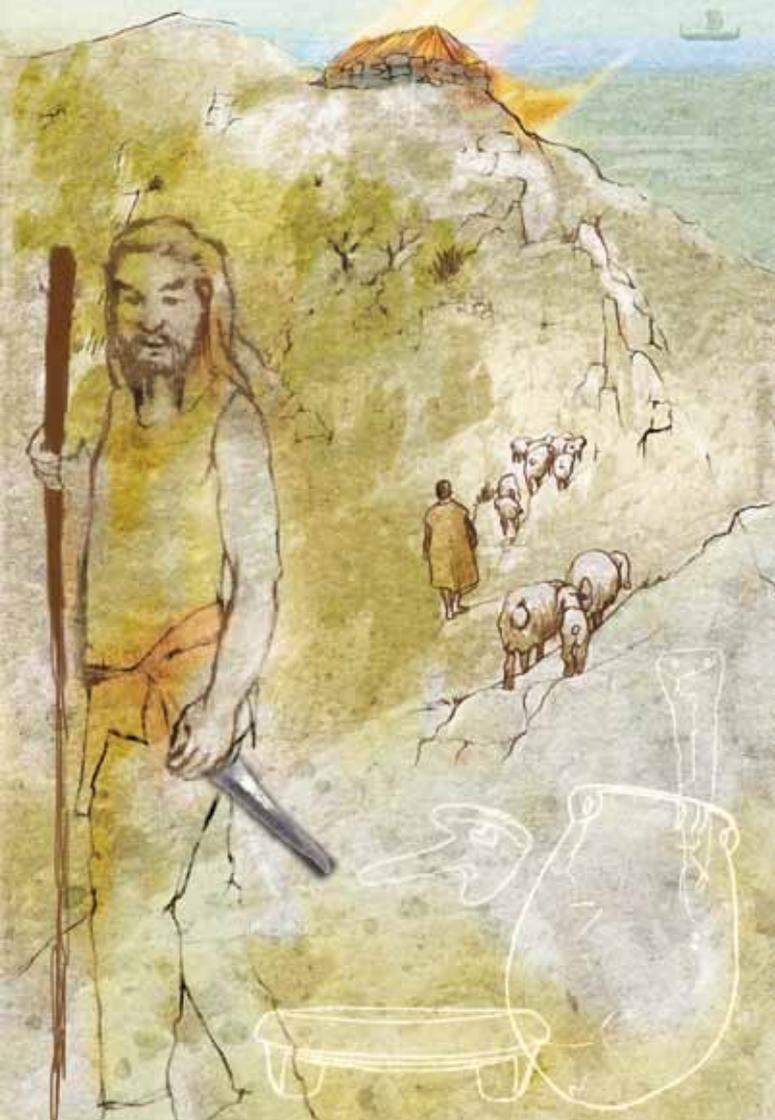
Research into the most ancient times of Tossal del Mortórum suggests that the first human settlement was established at the start of the second millennium B.C. Only a few walls and homes remain from this first settlement, although numerous ceramic artefacts and other objects have been recovered. Towards the middle of the second millennium B.C., a fire caused the settlement to be abandoned.

Between the years 1400 and 1130 B.C., still in the Bronze Age, the settlement was once again occupied, by inhabitants whose customs differed slightly from those of their predecessors, as evidenced by a comparison of the construction techniques used, the arrangement of spaces and certain changes in objects, especially pottery, some fragments of which indicate contact with cultures from the central part of the peninsula.

The settlement was abandoned at the end of the second millennium B.C.

In general, the Bronze Age is considered to be the climax of the emergence of chiefdoms and elite figures, in other words, the moment when the decision-making power of societies lay with one or a limited number of individuals.





4

The burial mound of Tossal del Mortórum: a bronze age tomb

1740-1020 B.C.

The name Mortórum, of Latin origin, makes clear reference to a place related to the dead, suggesting that the presence of burial sites has been known since at least the Middle Ages. However, ruins of this type were not discovered until 2006, when the remains of a tomb were discovered 300 metres from the settlement. It was most likely used during the second millennium B.C. to bury the dead of Tossal del Mortórum.

The structure in question consists of a central space or burial chamber formed by vertically arranged slabs and supported by an essentially square perimeter structure built using large stone blocks.

In spite of having been pillaged in ancient times, archaeological digs have recovered the human remains of at least five individuals. Anthropological dental studies have determined that they were approximately 7 and a half, 12, 20, 25-30 and, finally, over 60 years old at the time of death.

The burial mound at Tossal del Mortórum is particularly interesting because it represents a type of interment typical of other regions of the peninsula with a megalithic tradition, but not Castellón.





5

The settlement in the early iron age 7th-6th centuries B.C.

After being abandoned for nearly 500 years, towards the second half of the 7th century B.C. a new settlement was built on top of the previous remains, protected by a thick wall and almost certainly presided over by a tower. This settlement is characterised by the fact that most of the rooms were used for storage. The objects recovered reveal trade with the Phoenicians, from whom they obtained wine transported in amphorae, ceramics made on a potter's wheel and metal objects that were still unknown in the area, as well as surely many other products of which no archaeological evidence remains.

All of the remains recovered suggest the presence of inhabitants who played a leading role in access to - and possibly the control and redistribution of - products originating from Phoenician trade.

These inhabitants of Tossal del Mortórum must have selected the site once again for its easy defence and its visual control of land and sea, as well as possibly its proximity to Torre la Sal.

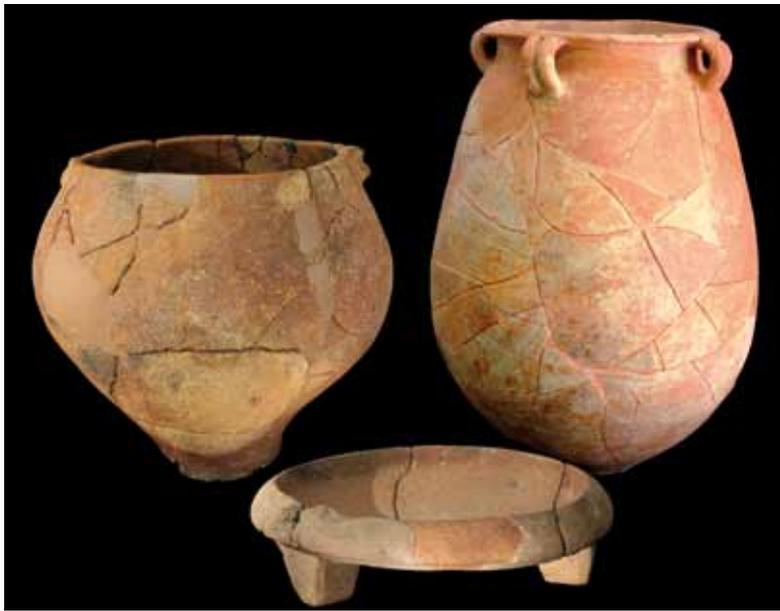
An analysis of the building techniques and spatial planning indicate new techniques and prior planning that lend credence to the idea of imported concepts, most likely stemming from contact with the more culturally advanced western Phoenician world.

It seems that Phoenician trade products were obtained through the exchange of raw materials, mainly metal, but also other types of products. In the case of Tossal del Mortórum, it has not yet been possible to determine which local products were used in the transactions, but we know that metal and metallurgic resources (specifically, iron and lead, among others) featured in the region.

At the wharf in Torre La Sal, located on the coast directly opposite Tossal del Mortórum, indications of these trade contacts have been detected that date back to the 7th century B.C., particularly the finding of Phoenician amphorae and certain metal objects.

The settlement of Tossal del Mortórum was abandoned in the first half of the 6th century B.C. This apparently occurred suddenly, as excavations of some of the rooms have turned up valuable objects that under other circumstances would not have been left behind.







The Tossal del Mortórum Route



Duration: Approximately 90 minutes

Difficulty: medium (appropriate footwear is recommended)

Distance: 1,100 metres. **Difference in elevation:** 85 metres

The route begins with the climb up the hill known as Tossal del Mortórum. The first part of the journey takes place on a dirt road between crops and pine forests. Halfway along the route, we can see an old lime oven.

Later, the dirt road turns into a trail, and after climbing to the top of the hill, we reach the settlement of Tossal del Mortórum, where we can visit the remains of homes and streets, most of which date from the 7th and 6th centuries B.C.

From the settlement, the trail leads to the Mortórum burial mound. These ruins belong to a structure that was used as a tomb during a large part of the second millennium B.C.

Route profile:



How to get here:



Ayuntamiento de Cabanes
964 33 10 01 - cabanes@cabanes.es
Oficina de Turismo
964 657 032 - touristinfo@cabanes.net
www.cabanes.es/mortorum

