

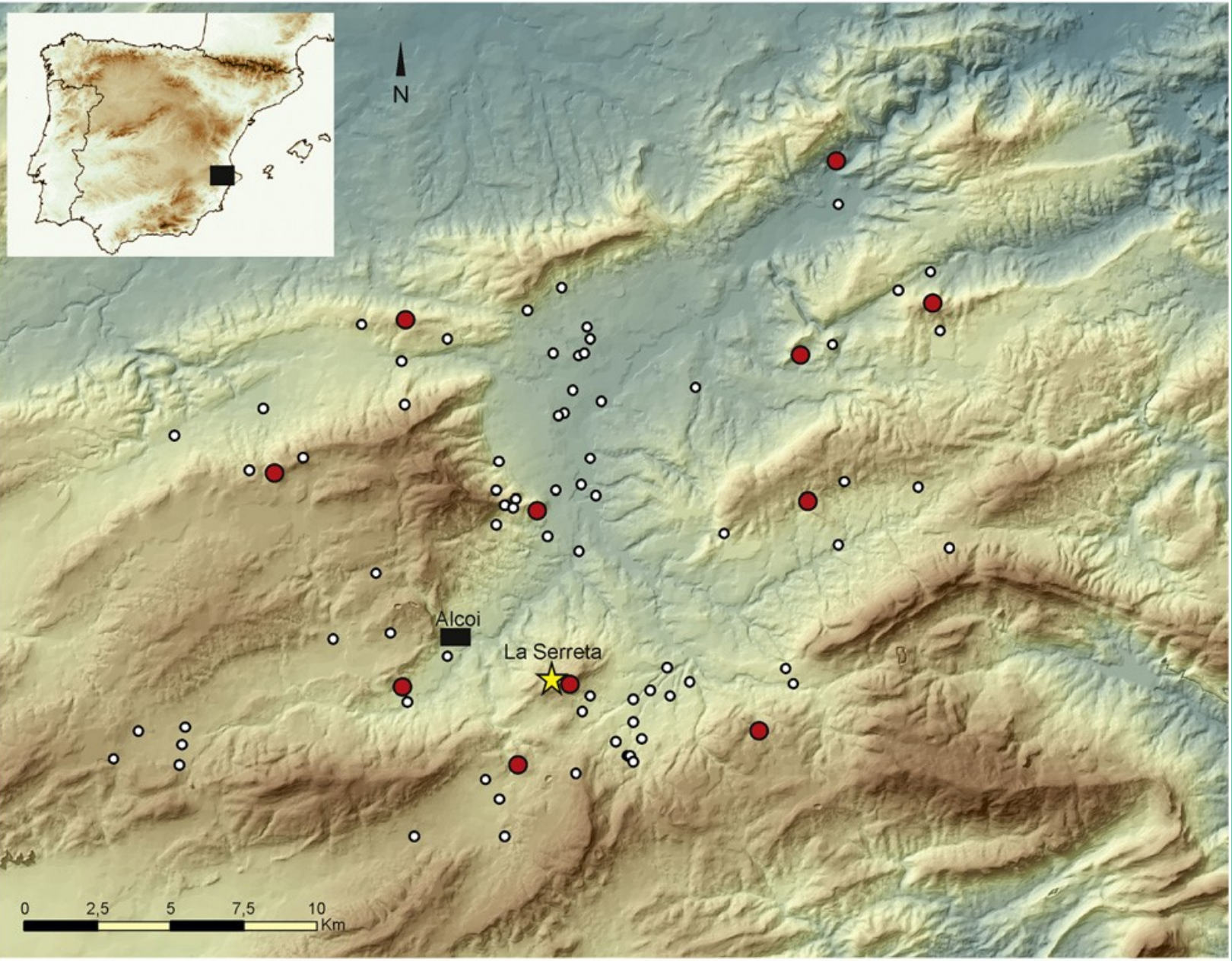
Introduction:

La Serreta is the main oppidum in the Alcoi Valley along the eastern coast of the Iberian Peninsular. The Alcoi region of the peninsular is the central southern part of modern day Valencia. The oppidum is situated on top of the La Serreta mountain in the Alcoi valley.

The main occupation of this oppida was from the eighth to the first century BC, but became a prominent oppidum during the fourth century BC (Martin and Langin-Hooper, 2018, 152). During the late third century BC the region was invaded by the Romans.

At the beginning of the third century La Serreta became a political and religious nucleus of the region of the Alcoi Valley (Mira, 2003, 273).

The ‘Celtic peoples’ of this region are mentioned as Iberians, or even Celtiberians as they are along the Iberian Peninsular by ancient Greek and Roman writers.

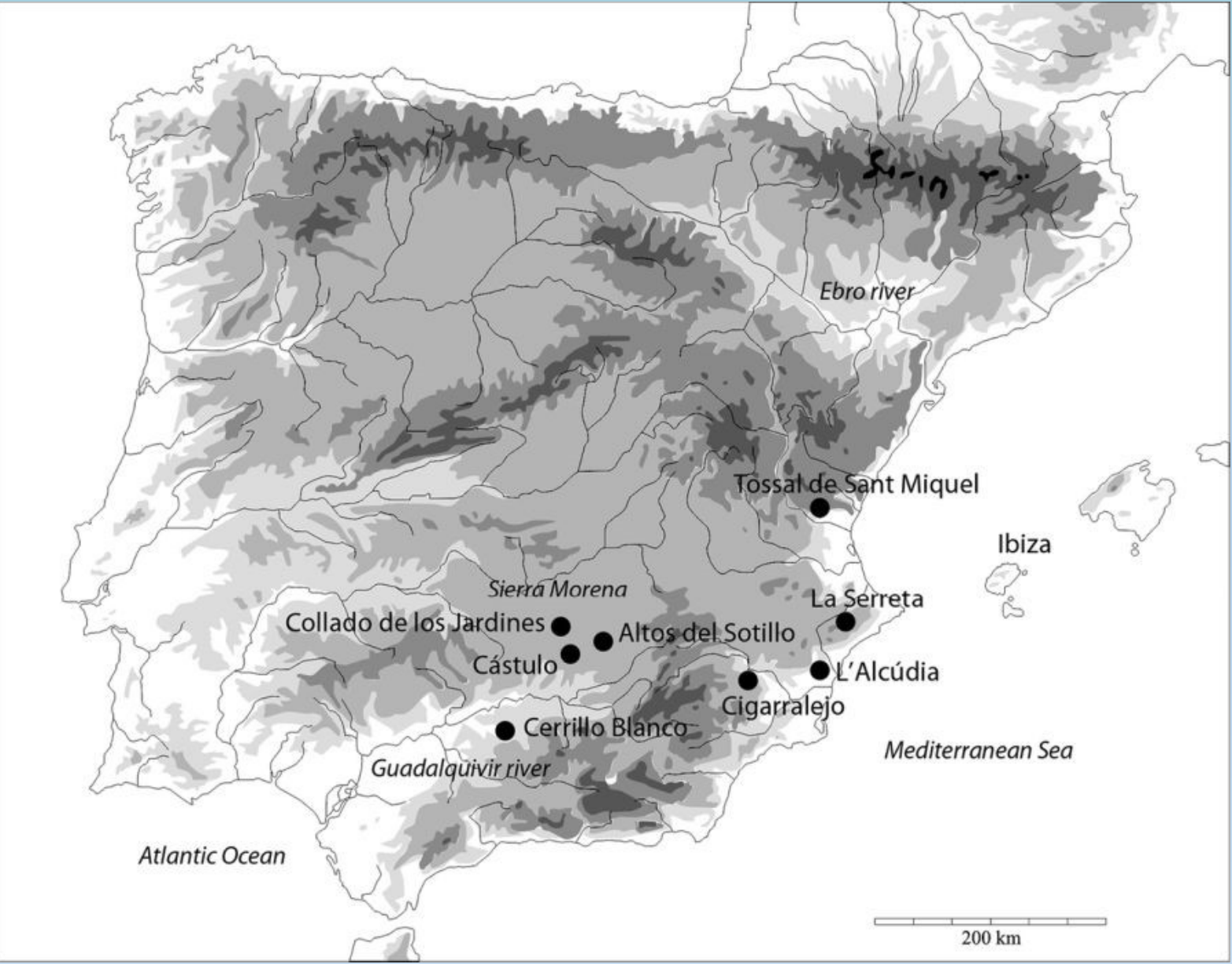


Focused map of the Iberian Peninsular, highlighting the Alcoi valley and the oppidum of La Serreta

Trade

In the second half of the third century there is evidence of extensive amounts of imported vessels, including amphorae. This importation of objects appears to have gotten more intense during the second century (Mira, 2003, 274).

It is thought that this increase of trade is linked to the Roman port at *Lucentum*, and that La Serreta became the main redistribution point of merchandise that arrived there (Mira, 2003, 274).



Map showing the Iberian Peninsular showing a selection of the main sites (Martin and Langin-Hooper, 2018, 147).

La Serreta



Terracotta figurines found at the La Serreta sanctuary. (Mira and Gallelo, 2017).

Sanctuary

The Sanctuary at La Serreta is of particular interest to archaeologists as the votive offerings found there are terracotta statuettes in many different figures and representing human figures (Mira and Gallelo, 2017, 142).

At this site there were found to be approximately 430 pieces found, making it the largest finding (to date) from the Iberian region.

Not only will this sanctuary have fulfilled the religious needs of the surrounding area, but it is thought to have played an economic role as by-passers and traders would have gone there to pray and would have left tribute payments, donations and so on at the time of religious festivals (Mira, 2003, 274).



Terracotta heads found at the La Serreta sanctuary (Mira and Gallelo 2017).



Clay figurine representing an adult woman, wearing a long tunic and a prominent pointed headdress. Her hands meet touching her stomach (Martin and Langin-Hooper, 2018).

Reassembled clay figurine. Figure wearing necklace and prominent earring and other garments (Martin and Langin-Hooper, 2018).

Conclusion

Before the third century when this ‘Celtic’ area was invaded by the Romans it was a prominent oppidum of the Alcoi Valley, and had already got established trade routes with other Iberian oppidum. This was only expanded further by the Roman port Lecentum.

The key feature focused on in this oppidum after the archaeological excavation are the votive offerings of clay figurines. These figurines had different meanings, thought to be for different rituals. They are also thought to be at odds with each other through the type of material used and the garments that they are wearing.

(Votive) Offerings:

During different time periods, there were different types of votive offerings left at the sanctuary at La Serreta. As mentioned before there were the terracotta figurines or statuettes between the fourth and third centuries BC. Along with these figurines were terracotta mould-made incense burners (Martin and Langin-Hooper, 2018, 153). Some of these figurines are whole, but also heads and busts.

Some of these figurines have been identified as breastfeeding women, and is thought to be linked to “the Mother Goddess paradigm” (Grau et al. 2008, 18-20).

In comparison to offerings left at other shrines along the eastern coast of the peninsular, there have been small engravings and sculptures of humans and horses, but never in the same extent found at La Serreta (Martin and Langin-Hooper, 2018, 154).

It is thought that these figurines were left at the sanctuary for reasons of: offerings for petitions involving initiation rites and fertility. This is thought to be the case as a result of many of the female figurines touching their stomachs and some of the male figurines having erect penises (Martin and Langin-Hooper, 2018, 156).

It has also been suggested that there is another set of votive offerings have been left as a result of healing rituals. The gestures and clothing of the figurines is believed to have depicted the meaning of the offering.

As mentioned before there were terracotta figurines found at the sanctuary in La Serreta, these are thought to be votive offerings left by the people, and those travelling through the oppidum.

The Terracotta Figurines

The terracotta figurines found at the sanctuary were made from local clay. However, other modelling of items would have included mould-made, hand-modelled and wheel-made techniques (Martin and Langin-Hooper, 2018, 155).

For example, the body of the figurines is thought to have been wheel-made as the body has a cylindrical or bell-shaped, and then later had details added to it, but the head is thought to be shaped in a mould to get the details (Martin and Langin-Hooper, 2018, 155).

The heads and faces of these moulds are the most prominent features, often appearing in a larger proportion to the rest of the body. It is also thought that the head-moulds were reused for different figurines, it has also been suggested that the same moulds were used for male and female heads with details then added with rolled clay to specify the gender (Martin and Langin-Hooper, 2018, 155) (Horn, 2011).

Clay is normally seen as a material of low status and value in comparison to other materials known to the ‘Celtic’ era. However these figurines are thought to be at odds with themselves as the people depicted in the clay are wearing high status accessories and garments such as jewellery and weapons (Martin and Langin-Hooper, 2018, 160).

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