

SOME REMARKS FOR THE STUDY OF THE ẖIṢN MIRABĪṬ (CABANES, CASTELLÓ)

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Resum

Aquest text mostra l'estat actual dels coneixements en relació a la fortalesa de Miravet (Cabanès, Castelló) i el seu territori amb la voluntat de proposar un seguit de línies de treball en relació al jaciment. Es compilen, doncs, els estudis de territori amb l'anàlisi de les fonts documentals relacionades i l'estudi arqueològic del propi jaciment, tant pel que fa a les estructures com als artefactes. Tot això amb la finalitat de posar en relació les diferents investigacions dutes a terme les darreres dècades i, sobretot, d'establir una base sobre la qual projectar noves actuacions i línies de recerca en via a una desitjable futura excavació arqueològica que permeti un estudi complet i sistemàtic de la fortalesa.

Paraules clau: arqueologia, ẖiṣn, Šarq al-Andalus, territori, Miravet, Castelló

Abstract

This work analyses the medieval fortress of Miravet (Cabanès, Castelló) and its territory. Its goals are therefore to explore the current state of the art in medieval archaeology research for this region and to propose new actions to address the remaining gaps in this field. Written and archaeological sources are here compiled in order to approach this study from a multifocal perspective. In this way, this text aims to establish connections among the research lines followed over the last few decades and, most importantly, to lay the foundations for new efforts so as to develop a better understanding of this stronghold and its possessions. Hopefully, these will crystallise into future archaeological excavations in the site, which will allow a systematic analysis of it.

Key Words: archaeology, ẖiṣn, Šarq al-Andalus, territory, Miravet, Castelló

INTRODUCTION

This article aims to study the site of Miravet, located in the municipality of Cabanes, in order to broaden our knowledge of the Andalusian settlement in the area known as the plain of Ribera de Cabanes or plain of Oropesa del Mar. This article presents the current knowledge on the medieval site of Miravet, located in the southernmost part of Ribera de Cabanes (Castellón), as well as the possible lines of work to be developed in the future. The textual and archaeological records of this fortress and its domains allow us to analyse the forms of occupation and organisation of this territory in the Andalusian period. It should therefore be made clear from the outset that the lack of archaeological interventions at this site means that the aim of this article is not to present specific and conclusive results, but rather to provide a state of the art in which all the information known to date is presented in an orderly fashion, both in terms of the fortification itself and the surrounding territory.

The *ḥiṣn* of Miravet (Cabanes, Castelló) is located on a hill at the north-eastern end of the natural site of Desert de les Palmes. The fortress is located on the narrow ridge of a rocky barrier with a north-east/south-west orientation and at 380 metres above sea level (fig.1).

The toponym Miravet comes from the evolution of the plural of *morabit* (place of vigilance and prayer of the Almoravids). *Ribats* and *marabouts* were fortresses from the Andalusian period that stood out for their communal, military and hermit-like character (HUGUET 1925). Although the etymological origin commonly given to Miravet is the Arabic *marabout*, M.C. Barceló suggests that it could be a non-Arabic place name (BARCELÓ 1983).

Up to the present day, some local scholars such as G. Andreu Valls (ANDREU 1975, 1988) and M. Betí, with the contributions published in the *Boletín de la Sociedad Castellonense de Cultura* (BETÍ, 1921) have focused their attention on the study of the Miravet site. However, the most detailed and eminently archaeological research is limited to the survey and recording of a few structures by A. Bazzana at the end of the 1970s, mainly habitat spaces (BAZZANA, GUICHARD 1979: 307), as well as the study of some of the ceramic materials recovered as a result of these surveys (BAZZANA 1992). The results of that work, carried out at a time when both Andalusian archaeology and medieval archaeology in general were still in a formative phase in our territory, have not been collected in any monographs, but the information derived from it can be found in various articles and books. R. Jeanniard also carried out an unpublished architectural study of the castle in 1979, in which he tried to analyse the evolution of the structures from the Muslim period to the Christian period (BAZZANA, GUICHARD 1979: 310). Finally, it is also worth mentioning M.O. Rousset's monograph, with both written and graphic descriptions of the constructive devices, as well as some contributions regarding the material record of the site. (ROUSSET 1988).

The scarcity of written documents on this site (BETÍ 1921; ANDREU 1975), means that the current knowledge of this fortress is based solely on the study of its constructive apparatus and the archaeological record recovered from other sites located in the same territory. On a broader territorial scale, research into this context is more prolific and there are works of prospection and historical research and geomorphological analysis (FLORS 2009; NEGRE 2013; SANJAUME, SEGURA 1986).

During the last decades, research linked to the Andalusian rural world has advanced notably thanks to archaeological research, which has contributed to reducing this knowledge gap and correcting errors (NAVARRO Y ROBLES 1996; ACIÉN 2008; CARVAJAL 2009; GUTIÉRREZ 2012). Hence, this article advocates the analysis of the material record as a key tool for the expansion of historical knowledge of the medieval world. This work is therefore an opportunity to approach the study of the Andalusian world in a context that offers the possibility of tackling problems related to research in various fields and current historiographical issues. At the same time, however, it has also been a challenge to deal with scattered information, and debates with positions that in many cases are opposed and entrenched. Therefore, this study heavily relies on the archaeology of the territory as a way to propose future lines of action, as it provides resources that make it possible to put forward hypotheses and establish relationships between the different historical sources that are within our reach at the moment (SUBÍAS, FIZ 2004; BOLÒS 2014; NEGRE 2015; SANCHO 2015).

MIRAVET IN WRITTEN SOURCES

Although Miravet seems to be absent in the Arabic sources, the geographer al-Idrīsī, who lived in the 12th century but regularly used earlier sources, mentions the existence of a fortification by the name of ḥiṣn Luriqāt that could correspond to our object of study. Located some 80 km south of Tortosa, this fortress appears alongside the other three important defensive enclosures in the southern districts of Tortosa: Šibart (Alcalà de Xivert), Kūna (Cervera del Maestrat) and Biniškula (Peníscola),¹ all clearly identified through written and archaeological sources (NEGRE 2013: 358-360). It is also this author who locates, among the castles belonging to the district of Burriana, a territory bordering Miravet to the south, the ḥuṣūn of Muṭurnāš (Montornés, Benicàssim) and of J.ḍrāl (Fadrell, Castelló de la Plana), together with which Miravet would serve as the gateway to the road through the Desert de les Palmes.²

In this context, al-Idrīsī places the fortress of Luriqāt in the area around the southern end of Prat de Cabanes, following the main road that runs along the coastal façade. The toponym provides us with the definitive details for its identification given that, historically, its origin is linked to that of the mansio Lubricatum, mentioned by the Ravennate (7th c.) and the Guidonis Geografica

¹ AL-IDRĪSĪ, 1989. *Uns al-muhaġ wa-rawḍ al-furaġ*, edition and translation by Jassim Abid Mizal. *Los caminos de al-Andalus en el siglo XII*, Madrid, CSIC: 97

² *Ibid.*: 95-96

(9th c.) and located around the Late Antique site of Tancat, in Cabanes (NEGRE 2013b: 215). The toponym appears again in the Andalusian period in the *Takmila* by Ibn al-Abbar³ and is finally found again in Latin documentation after the conquest, when a tower of *Lupricato* appears as the boundary between *Miravet* and *Suferá*.⁴

Due to their geographical location and archaeological importance, only *Miravet* and *Oropesa del Mar* could be linked to the aforementioned *Llobregat* fortress. Although some authors have identified the late Roman toponym *Lubricatum*, the early medieval *rahal al-Lobrecaṭí* (*Luriqāṭ*) and the late medieval *turris of Lupricato* with current *Torreblanca* (BETÍ, 1921), a careful reading of King James' donation leads us to discard this hypothesis, since this tower of *Lupricato* should be on the inland Roman road and more or less far from the sea (LLOBREGAT 1984), which places *Miravet* as a firm candidate.

Both *Miravet* and *Oropesa del Mar* are mentioned in the sources at the end of the 11th century, at the time of the incursions into Valencian lands by Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, *el Cid*. Some authors report the siege and conquest of *Miravet* by the mercenary, loyal at that time to the Aragonese crown, between 1090 and 1091. (MALO DE MOLINA 1857: 72; ROVIRA I VIRGILI 1920: III, 602; ANDREU 1975: 214, BETÍ, 1929:301). Certainly, this fortification as well as those of *Oropesa del Mar* and *Montornés* were among the areas under Aragonese control during these years.⁵ However, we have to wait until the beginning of the 12th century, between 1100 and 1103, for reliable news of the effective dominion of the Aragonese over *Miravet* and *Oropesa del Mar*, more specifically in the documentation of Peter I of Aragon, where it is mentioned that *Forti Hortiz* (who also held the tenancy of *Montornés*) was lord at that time of all these places.⁶ Although brief, this mention allows us to place the initial chronology of *Miravet* at least in the middle of the 11th century. *Oropesa del Mar* would continue to appear as a preferential object of donation in the Latin written sources, in this case Catalan, from the middle of the 12th century onwards.⁷ As an example, we find a document from 1149 in which Ramón Berenguer IV and García VI of Navarre agreed on the marriage of Blanca of Navarre. This document also specified that the conquests of Andalusian lands would be shared out amicably and equally, including the places of *Daroca* and *Calatayud*, in the kingdom (sic) of *Saragossa* and *Oropesa* and *Murel*, a place name that some

³ IBN AL-ABBAR, 1887. *At-Takmila li kitāb aṣ-ṣila*, edited by Francisco Codera. Madrid, Biblioteca Árabe-Hispana: 267

⁴ Tortosa, AGV, lib. IV de Enaj., f. 29 and Manaments i Empares any 1262, lib. VI, man. 70, f. 31 (27 April 1225) and Peníscola, ARC, lib. VII, p. 227 (3 September 1225). Colección diplomática de Jaime I el Conquistador (1217-1253) (CDJI), 1916-1919, edited by Ambrosio Huici. Valencia, Hijos de F. Vives Mora, docs. 41 and 44.

⁵ *Gesta Roderici Campidocti* (GRC), 1911, edited by Adolfo Bonilla. *Gestas de Rodrigo el Campeador*. Madrid, Librería General de Victoriano Suárez: 83 and 88

⁶ Orpin (?), AHN, San Juan, leg. 444, núm. 204 R, original[A] (July 1100); *Velilla de Cinca*, ASLZ, *Cartulari petit*, fol-41 (November 1100) and ACH, arm. Núm. IX, lig. 3, núm. 60, original (March 1103). Colección Diplomática de Pedro I de Aragón y Navarra (DPI), 1951, edited by Antonio Ubieto. Zaragoza, Anúbar, docs. 85, 90 and 123.

⁷ El Puig, ACA Barcelona, Cancelleria Reial, reg. 5, f. 8r, original (6 March 1238). *Arxiu Virtual Jaume I* (AVJI), Universitat Jaume I, Castelló, doc. 1796, <http://www.jaumeprimer.uji.es/> [23/04/2017]

authors associate with Morella.⁸ Thus, although Miravet is not clearly mentioned, this document certifies the persistence of the image of this territory, with Oropesa at the forefront, as a frontier to be conquered, following the example of the Aragonese king, who had already established an ephemeral dominion there at the end of the 11th century.

Oropesa del Mar is also mentioned in Arabic sources from the mid-12th century, which refer to it as an important mooring site (Aqaba Abīša).⁹ Likewise, we rely on Arabic sources from the beginning of the 13th century to propose its identification as a small port city. Ibn al-ʿAbbar supports this idea with several texts, mentioning it as the head of a district (“amal”) on the eastern border of Valencia, on which the place of Luriqāt depended.¹⁰ The importance of Oropesa del Mar is even more pronounced if we take into account that it controlled the main communication route between the coast of Tortosa and the Valencian coast, so that al-Idrīsī placed this enclave between Peñíscola and Burriana, close to the sea along which this important route runs. Although he describes the difficulty of crossing this peak, which in reality is barely more than 100m above sea level, we may think that this exaggeration is due to the contrast with the flat land that surrounds it (PIQUERAS, FANSA 2010: 10). Thus, Miravet would be located together with Sufera, Montornés and Fadrell, along a secondary and alternative communication route that would cross the beautiful environment of the Desert de les Palmes (Fig. 2).

Thus, everything seems to indicate that al-Idrīsī identified a fortress, of which he probably did not know its exact name (Miravet) with the name of the territory in which it was located (Llobregat), an etymon that points to a muddy place, probably referring to the area around Prat de Cabanes (MARTÍ, NEGRE 2014). This replacement of the toponym of certain fortresses by the name of the territory in which they were located has been observed in other cases such as Cervera del Maestrazgo (Ġirbīra), called ḥiṣn Kūna, in reference to the territory formed by the valleys of the rivers Cervol and Sénia, vallis de Chona, Vallisconae or Uayl de Cona in Latin documentation from the first half of the 12th century (NEGRE 2013: 130-131).

The following available records take us back to the 13th century, during the planning, execution and management of the military conquest and colonisation of the Valencian territories at the hands of James I of Aragon. A few years before the conquest began, in 1225, the king had already given the castles and territories of Miravet, Sufera and Fadrell to the bishop of Tortosa,¹¹ thus confirming the extension of the new Tortosa diocese as far as Almenara, as his grandfather

⁸ ACA, Cancelleria, pergs, Ramon Berenguer IV, carp. 38, núm. 214 (1 July 1149). Els pergamins de l'Arxiu Comtal de Barcelona, de Ramon Berenguer II a Ramon Berenguer IV (ACB) edited by Ignasi J. Baiges, Gaspar Feliu and Josep M. Salrach, Barcelona, Fundació Noguera 2010, DOC. 884

⁹ AL-IDRISĪ, op. cit.: 96

¹⁰ IBN AL-ABBAR, op. cit.: 1512

¹¹ IBN AL-ABBAR, op. cit.: 1512

Alfonso had endowed it.¹² As these documents specify, the donations served as a reward for the constant help, in the form of financing, that the prelate offered the monarch during the military campaigns in the lands of Al-Andalus. Be that as it may, what is certain is that these texts provide information of great relevance for the study of Miravet and its territory, providing an exhaustive description of the limits of its boundaries and of the Arabic toponymy that still conserved, at that time, all its explanatory potential.

Around the second half of 1231, we find King James in Alcañiz preparing a new military campaign for the effective conquest of Valencia. This action was carried out at the beginning of the summer of 1231, establishing a bridgehead in Muslim territory and taking advantage of the dam close to Ares, which gave him control over the communication route to the south through the Vall d'Alba and Borriol (NEGRE 2013b: 220). With this move and the definitive fall of Peñíscola, the Templars and Hospitallers advanced along the coastal and inland routes respectively and conquered the fortresses of Cervera and Xivert, while the king and his host advanced from the south, conquering Fadrell, Borriol, les Coves de Vinromà, Alcalatén and Vilafamés.

It was during this campaign, in the autumn of 1233, that the castle of Miravet must have passed definitively into Christian hands without putting up much resistance. The municipal charter granted to Cabanes in 1243,¹³ together with those granted to the *alqueries* [farmhouses] of Beniaixo and Tahalfazar (Bell-lloc) in 1250¹⁴ and, finally, the permit that in 1260 allowed the town to hold a weekly market on Wednesdays, boosted the activity of this place to the detriment of the castle which, despite holding the ownership of the Tenement of Miravet, was not easily accessible. However, in the late Middle Ages, Christian records still clearly established that the castle's domains included the towns of Cabanes, Bell-lloc, Torreblanca and Albalat.¹⁵

We know that in 1459, the parish priest in charge of the church of Miravet was Bonanato Pujades, that in 1472 the still existing Tenement of Miravet was under the control of Otó de Montcada and also that the gradual abandonment of the village began in the 16th century, at which point it was already judicially dependent on Cabanes (BETÍ 1921). Both Miravet and Albalat would end up being abandoned and they finally came under the control of Cabanes (ANDREU 1975: 220-223).

MIRAVET IN ITS ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The lack of a greater volume of documentation on this site means that the only way to date it precisely is through its extensive archaeological excavation and the careful study of the material

¹² Tarragona, Comú del Capítol, 1, 4 (700-610) (28 November 1178). *Diplomatari de la Catedral de Tortosa (1062-1193)* (DCT), 1997, edited by Antoni Virgili. Barcelona, Fundació Noguera, doc. 301.

¹³ *Cartes de Poblament Medievals Valencianes (CPMV)*, 1991, edited by Enric Guinot. València, Generalitat Valenciana: 170-173

¹⁴ *Ibid.*: 218-220

¹⁵ *Colección de Documentos Inéditos del Archivo General de la Corona de Aragón (CDIAGCA)*, 1858, edited by Pròsper de Bofarull. Barcelona, Impremta de l'Arxiu, vol. XV, t. II: 258

remains. This action should also be linked to the study of the materials corresponding to other nearby Andalusian fortified sites, which have already been systematically excavated, such as the castles of Xivert and Oropesa del Mar (ARQUER, FALOMIR 2008; SELMA 2014). Among other sites and related singular constructions, we also find the site of Sufera, associated with the Andalusian period (BAZZANA, GUICHARD 1977), as well as the fortresses of Montornès (Benicàssim) and Fadrell (Castellón de la Plana), which would secure the control of the pass through the massif of the Desert de les Palmes (NEGRE 2013b).

Further north we find the Andalusian site of Santa Lucía (Alcossebre), currently under excavation, which is located on the site of a Bronze Age and Early Iron Age settlement. Inland, on both sides of the valley of Xivert, we find the site of Tossal de la Vila (Sierra d'en Garceran), where an Andalusian fortified enclave is being excavated, placed on top of another site that can be dated to the protohistoric period (NEUMAIER, DE ANTONIO, VIZCAÍNO 1998; ARQUER, FALOMIR 2008).

Most of these cases illustrate a common problem in the archaeology of al-Andalus, namely the detection of medieval Islamic sites reoccupying the site of protohistoric and ancient habitats, and reusing their construction materials (CRESSIER 2001; AZUAR 2005). This hypothesis is put forward in the various works on the southern area of Šarq al-Andalus, which note a decrease in settlements located on the plains, riverbeds and main communication routes from the 5th century onwards in favour of mountain settlements (TORRÓ, FERRER 1985; REYNOLDS 1993; BOONE 2009: 46). In any case, we are dealing with a period severely affected by the disarticulation of the large Mediterranean commercial markets that will mark the new production systems in the rural world and the use of marginal spaces that will respond to new settlement strategies.

Although they date from a later period, the fortified constructions of the castle and the church of Albalat should also be highlighted as examples of Christian fortifications. At the same time, we must also highlight the role of the three watchtowers of the Ribera de Cabanes, together with the tower of Torrelasal, which date from the 15th to 16th centuries and which, therefore, can only be related to Miravet in the Christian period.¹⁶ In addition to these unique constructions, there are a number of archaeological sites that should also be taken into account (fig.3):

Firstly, we must highlight the importance of the nearby site of Torrelasal, which has been systematically excavated in recent years and where an important population centre has been documented between the 10th and 13th centuries (FLORS 2009: 239). Furthermore, the survey work conducted by the same team in Ribera de Cabanes and, more specifically, in the Miravet ravine, has made it possible to document a series of small sites with ceramic materials corresponding to the same period, which have been identified as *alqueries* (FLORS 2009: 52, PÉREZ 2014: 8). In

¹⁶ Inventari General del Patrimoni Cultural Valencià (IGPCV), Direcció General del Patrimoni Cultural Valencià, Generalitat Valenciana, <http://www.ceice.gva.es/ca/web/patrimonio-cultural-y-museos/inventario-general> [14/04/2017]

all cases, these are small rural settlements that should be related to the agricultural and livestock exploitation of these lands under the control of a fortification with territorial functions, which in this case would correspond to the fortresses of Miravet and Oropesa. These are sites where we find—in many cases—present-day farmhouses, which is understandable if we take into account their location near seasonal watercourses and their proximity to water sources (Miravet and Perelló springs). Thus, these prospection tasks confirm an occupation of the ravine from the 10th century onwards, characterised by a series of settlements with an obvious agricultural function based on irrigation systems.

Evidence of this is the archaeological material that has been found on the surface on the banks of this ravine, along the route of the so-called Camino de la Madera, the communication route overlooked by the fortress, and around which we also find some hydraulic infrastructures such as the well known cistern of Oropesa del Mar or Miravet. This fact has traditionally been interpreted as a new model of territorial exploitation organised around strategic defensive points related to the communication routes and which in turn served as a refuge for the peasant communities that lived along them. This model, according to the dating of the remains found in prospecting, would be perpetuated until the first half of the 13th century with the Christian conquest, when most of these settlements were abandoned, as well as the associated irrigation systems. From this point on, only the most strategic places seem to be occupied: castles and the strongest population centres, such as the villages of Oropesa del Mar, Cabanes, Torreblanca, the castle of Miravet and the newly created village of Albalat (FLORS 2009: 544-545).

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE FORTRESS OF MIRAVET

Regarding the functions that this site may have performed throughout history, the different works carried out lead directly to the debate on the role of the fortresses (*ḥuṣūn*) in the formation and structuring of Andalusian society. Since the 1980s, this debate has brought two opposing positions to the table: those who described the fortifications as emerging elements of a segmented and tribal society (BAZZANA, GUICHARD 1979; BAZZANA 1983 i 1992) and those who saw them as a consequence of a new and progressively Islamised state society (AZUAR 1989). The first group, who actually used Miravet to exemplify their ideas, proposed a general dynamic for the creation of fortifications by relatively independent peasant communities as a place of shelter. In contrast, the second group defended a state initiative in the construction of these monumental elements linked to the defence and organisation of the new Andalusian domains. The debate has been ongoing over the last decades, with proposals for interpretation closer to one or the other model based on different regional case studies (TORRÓ 1998; MARTÍ, NEGRE 2014). However, it should be noted that the most recent work focuses on the variability of functions of these sites, as well as their complexity, which cannot be included in unified and homogeneous models for the whole of the Iberian Peninsula.

In general terms, the Miravet fortress seems to be linked, due to its position and visual reach, to the control of the pass between Prat de Cabanes and the Fadrell plain, formed by the alluvial terraces of the Seco de Borriol river, through the mountainous massif formed by the Desert de les Palmes. This control was exercised together with the fortresses of Sufera (Cabanes), Montornés (Benicàssim) and Fadrell (Castellón de la Plana), which were located along this pass (NEGRE 2013b). It is therefore a strategic location as it controls both the mountain pass and a large segment of the coast, along which the main road between Tortosa and Valencia runs. Thanks to this privileged position, it was possible to control traffic along the Levantine coastline, a privileged axis since the 7th century, to the detriment of the inland route along the Via Augusta (NEGRE 2013b).

From the mountain where the site is located, you can also follow the ancient path of La Fusta. This road, which begins at the Torrelasal site –which was already inhabited in the Iberian period–links up with the old Vistabella road on its arrival at Cabanes. From this point, it passes along the edge of the Roman arch of Cabanes, where it crosses the Via Augusta and enters the Alba Valley towards Atzeneta del Maestrat, undoubtedly being an ancient route of great agricultural and commercial importance (ARASA, ABAD 1989: 30). One of the main functions of these secondary roads was the diffusion of imported goods from the sea to the hinterland (ARASA, ROSSELLÓ 1995: 121).

If we take into account that the Arab sources mention the presence of a mooring, called ‘Aqaba Abīša, in this same area of the coast, either in reference to the Andalusian settlement of Torrelasal or that of Oropesa del Mar, it is reasonable to suggest that this route of penetration towards the interior would still be in operation in medieval times. It seems, therefore, that the function of guarding the roads played a fundamental role in the choice of the site of Miravet and that its key position in the Andalusian road network may have been one of the driving forces behind the development of a stable settlement nearby.

Apart from its privileged geographical location, the settlement has a series of elements characteristic of fortified settlements, such as the perimeter wall, hydraulic installations (wells, water cisterns and drainage systems), a mosque and a large number of dwellings (LORRIO, SÁNCHEZ DE PRADO 2008; SÉNAC 2005). All of this seems to indicate that it was a settlement with a stable and substantial habitat that also served, at the end of the Andalusian period, as a refuge for the inhabitants of the nearby *alquerías*.

MORPHOLOGY OF MIRAVET: WALL, MOSQUE FORTRESS AND VILLAGE

The site of Miravet stretches along a 200m platform delimited by a perimeter wall with a rectangular tower at its north-eastern end. In the southernmost part of the site, the enclosure wall rests against the main enclosure. Further down we find a series of stone constructions identified as a settlement. With origins that can be traced back to the Andalusian period, the settlement

would have lasted until the Christian period, although it may well have been formed later than the main enclosure. In a central area within the settlement there is a singular building identified as a rural mosque that would later be used as a church and, with the abandonment of the settlement, as a chapel (fig.4).

In terms of construction, almost the entire site is made of limestone, either dry-bonded or mortared. In addition, red sandstone was used for the manufacture of mortar and the construction of some decorative elements in the building of the mosque and the upper enclosure: points for the support of beams, arcades or ashlar used in some of the corners. However, both the typology of well-the ashlar and the use of sandstone are often associated with feudal-period structures, alterations or extensions, whereas most Andalusian structures are built with masonry walls. Furthermore, if we observe the fortification from the southern part of the site, we can clearly see that the bedrock that sculpts the mountain is mainly formed by a limestone base on which the construction of the walls of the upper enclosure rests. However, this outcrop also has an important vein of red sandstone running through the eastern part of the hill. It is therefore plausible to suggest the use of nearby local resources for the construction of the various structures on the site. Also, if we look at the composition of the mortar that joins the stone ashlar, we can easily observe how there is a proportionally greater part of sand than of lime. This sand, moreover, has a reddish hue which seems to indicate that it comes directly from the reddish stones of the same mountain.

The upper enclosure has been greatly altered by the reforms of the Christian period. Broadly speaking, it is made up of a lower part where we find the entrance, a trapezoidal tower, the chapel and a core made up of arches. The castle also contains a large cistern (BAZZANA 1992: 297) and a well. It seems that the main entrance was located in the central part and would have given direct access to the centre of the enclosure; however, there is evidence of a second entrance in the east of the fortification, which can be dated to a later period and possibly linked to a restoration (ROUSSET 1988: 55).

As for the walls of the fortress, we find a great diversity of reconstructions and modifications over the centuries. To begin with, the outer part of the fortress is enclosed by its own perimeter wall built at the base with limestone and characterised by a slight widening at the bottom to reinforce the direct support on the rock (ROUSSET 1988: 54). The upper part is built with rammed earth and topped with battlements, which is the only evidence of earthwork found at the site. This type of construction makes it possible to date this alteration of the fortified enclosure probably to the Almohad period, although it is not a technique that was unknown before that time (AZUAR 2005; CANIVELL, GRACIANI 2015). Therefore, the work below the rammed earth wall should be dated to an earlier period, characterised by the use of masonry that rests on its base on larger, squared dry-stone ashlar (fig. 5). The limited presence of rammed earth constructions at Miravet, together with the strength of the best-preserved stone walls and the absence of remains of earthwork from

fallen walls, would suggest that the construction was almost exclusively in stone. This could be explained by its high altitude, which would make it difficult to transport clay and water.

The perimeter wall of the settlement has an extension of 550m, is adapted to the natural relief, and is so homogeneous in terms of the mortars used that the small differences found in some sections are probably due to conservation efforts (ROUSSET 1988: 41). Different studies have shown that the wall initially rested on the first houses of the settlement and that it would therefore have been built after the construction of the settlement. On the outer face of the wall, there is still evidence of a walkway, which would have been built at an even later stage and made of timbers supported by beams fixed to the wall (ROUSSET 1988: 54).

The Miravet mosque is located in the centre of the village, next to a platform in the form of a small square. Its plan follows a simple, single-aisled plan with a single nave and no minaret, possibly due to a lack of space. The mihrāb, which faces southeast and is located in the centre of the wall of the *qibla*, is semi-circular and was covered by a semi-dome (CALVO 2004: 54) (fig.6). The interior space was divided in the Christian period into four chambers by three diaphragm arches, so that the functional orientation of the building was shifted by 90 degrees (BAZZANA 1992: 299) (fig.7).

It is a rural mosque within a *hiṣn* (andalusian fortress) where the weekly prayer of a dispersed settlement would be centralised, as in the case of Molón (LORRIO, SÁNCHEZ DE PRADO 2008) or Velefique (ANGELÉ, CRESSIER 1990). The architectural features of the oratory do not allow us to determine its chronology, although the shape of the mihrāb seems to correspond to models of rural mosques of the 10th century or later (CALVO 2004: 55-56).

As for the settlement, it is worth mentioning some particularities about this type of aggregated habitat in Andalusian historiography. According to some authors, the formation of Al-Andalus generalised, from the Ebro valleys to the Maghreb, homogeneous urban and cultural patterns that have lasted, in many cases, until a few centuries ago (BAZZANA 2002). Other authors question these generalisations and propose a more exhaustive analysis of these areas in order to identify differences in social organisation and characteristics beyond morphological similarities (GUTIÉRREZ 2012b).

The Miravet settlement was built in stone, and we can assume that it was combined with vegetal elements (holes and support points for beams in the walls). Its construction is quite heterogeneous, and several construction models can be identified. The first model is characterised by a rather heterogeneous type of facing, consisting of large, well-squared blocks on the one hand, and large and medium-sized, unsquared blocks that are wedged together with small stones on the other. These walls would have been bound with a very light mortar or simply with earth. The second

model is made up of large blocks at the base and medium-sized blocks at the top. Both are well squared and the ashlar are bound with thick layers of mortar. When smaller stones are used, they are laid obliquely, in the form of *opus spicatum*, in order to ensure the thickness of the walls is homogeneous. The third model is similar to the first but uses more regular ashlar and an even thicker mortar. It is used for the outside of houses and for particularly exposed walls, such as the perimeter enclosure. In addition, these walls are often associated with water drainage systems and beam holes. Both this and the second model are related to some domestic constructions in Xivert that have traditionally been associated with the Taifa period (11th-12th century). The fourth construction model is characterised by the use of walling and well-squared blocks for the construction of angles and for the framing of openings. Examples of the latter can only be found in the construction of the upper enclosure and would correspond to feudal-period alterations. Finally, there is a series of dry stone walls, often built with smaller stones or simply by piling up large blocks (ROUSSET 1988: 52,53).

In terms of the layout of the domestic space, we find a variety of different models that would differentiate the single-cell dwelling from the more complex one. On the one hand, single-cell dwellings are made up of a massive rectangular structure, formed by a single polyfunctional room without windows, organised around a hearth. This structural arrangement, although it may be intracompartimentalised or have juxtaposed structures, has a single function and access, and is often organised on three levels (barn, living space and terrace). On the other hand, more complex domestic buildings are made up of various spaces that respond to specific functions and which are communicated with each other through a central space, which will be more or less defined, depending on whether we are talking about layouts of associated modules, aggregates or a central courtyard. The latter will be more common in the Caliphate period and will be evidence of social segmentation, as we often find more than one household distributed across the different spaces (BAZZANA 2002; GUTIÉRREZ 2012b).

The type of houses that can be found in Miravet are small dwellings distributed around a central core. Each house is located, at the same time, on areas where the bedrock of the mountain juts out, thus providing a natural defence (BAZZANA 2002: 218). The fact that the buildings follow the natural topography of the mountain means that the distribution of the structures does not follow an orderly pattern, although this is compensated for by the addition of complementary rooms (BAZZANA 2002: 299).

Among the houses studied at the Miravet site are structures 221, 222 and 203 (BAZZANA 2002: 219-226). In the case of the first two, they have been identified thanks to the data provided by A. Bazzana on their position, since, unfortunately, they are now practically flattened and unrecognisable. As for the last one, the work carried out by A. Bazzana at the end of the 1970s is still visible.

A. Bazzana describes house 203 (fig. 8) as an elongated structure conditioned by the cliff it overlooks. The main room would have been connected to a central area enclosed by a low wall. The house would also be made up of areas 2035 (kitchen and storage) and 2036, together with a barn (BAZZANA 1992 i 2002). Although the domestic space 203 was first interpreted by A. Bazzana as a structure made up of different contemporary areas, it was later proposed that it could be an arrangement formed by a single-cell structure to which different modules were added (BAZZANA 2011: 59). This evolution in the distribution of domestic structures could also point to the chronological evolution of the settlement, from the simplest to the most complex constructions. A thorough stratigraphic analysis of these areas would therefore be necessary.

EL REGISTRE CERÀMIC DE MIRAVET

The study of the ceramics recovered from the site is a key element in understanding the evolution of the building structures and their chronology. In the absence of a careful description of the materials recovered during the excavations of the 1970s and the impossibility of carrying out new ones at the present time, we only have available the observations made by those who previously studied them (ROUSSET 1988; BAZZANA 1992):

In space 2035 there is a higher percentage of closed forms (pots, jars, bottles and jugs) than open ones (basins, bowls and *ataiforos*), as well as a low number of decorated fragments. A lamp and a large number of fragments with green and honey-coloured glazed covers have also been found, which the authors link to the 12th-century period (ROUSSET 1988: 121; BAZZANA 1992: 148). The absence of blue and white ceramics and Paterna ceramics has helped to date the abandonment of this settlement in the 13th century.

House 204 shows similar characteristics to the previous one but with more similar quantities of open and closed forms, a smaller number of storage ceramics and a higher number of decorated fragments, especially white glazes and manganese decorations. According to the authors, this would indicate a later occupation of this structure (ROUSSET 1988: 119-120). House 222 has the same proportion of closed and open forms, as well as tableware and kitchenware, as in space 2035. However, there is less storage pottery. This house, which also has a chimney, would have been inhabited around the 15th century, as shown by the presence of stanniferous roofs and blue and white decorations (ROUSSET 1988: 121).

As for the upper enclosure, the number of open forms is similar to that of closed forms. However, it is here that we find the highest percentage of decorated fragments, mainly manganese, with a lower presence of later blue and white ceramics or Paterna ceramics (ROUSSET 1988: 121).

In general, the authors propose that the limited presence of green and manganese decorations indicates that the site does not predate the 11th century (ROUSSET 1988: 121). Unfortunately, the impossibility of analysing the ceramic record recovered during the interventions, which has now disappeared, prevents further analysis of this argument.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEW DIRECTIONS FOR INTEGRATIVE RESEARCH

The information provided on the Miravet site is only a starting point for the analysis of the Islamic period in the area of the Ribera de Cabanes plain. Bearing in mind that the information provided by the written sources is really limited and fragmentary and that the archaeological record has not yet been effectively explored, it is necessary to consider that the results of this study can only be limited to a state of the art and provide a broad outline of the origins and development of this site.

Thus, we can establish an approximate chronological sequence on the basis of the survey work, the study of the ceramics and the analysis of the written sources presented throughout the text. Regarding the latter, the site of Miravet is mentioned as early as the end of the 11th century, although not explicitly. But there is evidence of a rural occupation in the bed of the Miravet ravine as early as the 10th century, which seems to be associated with this fortress. This could point to the existence of a peasant community prior to the construction of the fortification or to a more or less contemporary birth of both realities (the farmsteads and the fortification) which is not revealed in the written documentation until a century later, when only the main nucleus is described. However, the ceramics found by A. Bazzana provide a date between the 12th and 13th centuries, and the settlement was not abandoned until the 15th century. As for the perimeter wall, its relationship with the dwellings allows us to date it to a period after the construction of the settlement. Turning now to the study of the data from the upper enclosure, a larger sample of late ceramics and some repairs to the facing point to the reuse and restoration of this area during the feudal period

Thus, broadly speaking, we could speak of the existence of a first fortification associated with a series of *alqueries* on the plain from at least the 11th century, which lasted until the 13th century. At the same time, from at least the 12th century onwards, we can date the existence of the settlement on the hilltop, which features various phases of construction (including the perimeter wall) that extend until the 15th century, when the settlement was abandoned. These phases seem to be associated with the Christian conquest process, when the mosque was transformed into a church and a series of reconstructions were carried out in the upper enclosure that eclipsed practically all the remains of Andalusian construction. However, we must be aware that these preliminary ideas are based on a very early study and must be confirmed by systematic excavation and study of materials from the site.

From a territorial point of view, everything seems to indicate that Miravet would overlook both the path of La Fusta and the farmhouses located along it. However, there is evidence that the greatest increase in population in the area, during the Andalusian period, took place in the region of the castle of Oropesa del Mar, with an important mooring and on the main coastal communication route. However, Miravet would become important as a strategic place to control the communication routes in the northernmost part of the Desert de les Palmes and the entrance to the same area. In this respect, the path of La Fusta is of great importance as one of the key routes of communication between the coast and the interior, and the Desert de les Palmes is also of great importance as a border area.

On the basis of this preliminary work and for future studies, the creation of appropriate survey guidelines will allow us to optimise our efforts when undertaking fieldwork. Thus, it is necessary to take into account the examination of the places identified as protohistoric sites, to carefully analyse the toponymy, and to map the traditional road network, which is inevitably linked to settlements. The ceramic record obtained from these interventions must necessarily be compared with archaeological sites of a similar chronology carried out in the territory in order to create a basic chronotypology for their seriation (ARQUER, FALOMIR 2008; FLORS 2009; SELMA 2014).

Studying Miravet and some of the rural settlements in its vicinity would be an extraordinary opportunity to analyse the role of the fortress and the associated territorial evolution. The analysis of the archaeological materials would make it possible to establish definitively whether a rural settlement existed prior to the fortification. The dating suggested in this article for the foundation of Miravet would also be consistent with the studies of J. Torr , in which he claims that fortifications prior to the 10th century represent only 10% of the total number of Andalusian fortifications in the southern part of what is now Valencia, most of them dating from the 10th and 11th centuries (TORR  2005: 312). However, it will be necessary to improve our understanding of the different phases of settlement and to understand the processes of articulation between the fortified sites on high ground and the agrarian spaces linked to the valleys and more fertile areas.

The excavation of the site would also allow us to delve deeper into the problems related to its morphology. Miravet could shed light on some of the current questions about the urban planning of fortified sites. It is therefore essential to study the Miravet site in greater depth, as it could provide first-rate information on the morphology of the dwellings, their articulation in the form of settlements, and the socio-cultural interpretations that can be derived from these aggregated forms of habitat (GUTI RREZ 2012).

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Fig. 1 Location map with information on the current municipalities. Author's archive.

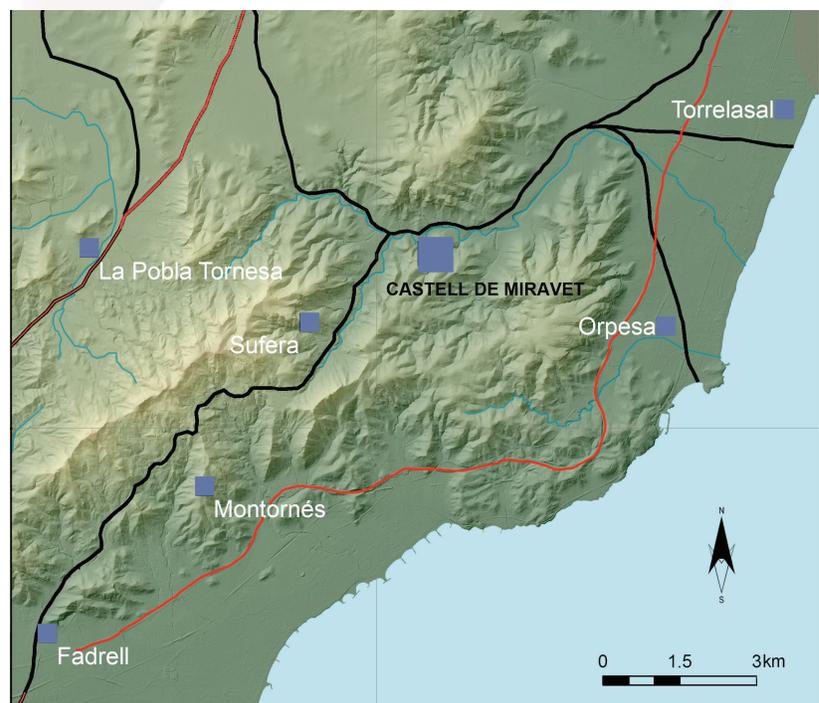


Fig. 2 Map of the communication network with the main archaeological sites. The main roads are shown in red and the secondary roads in black. Author's archive.

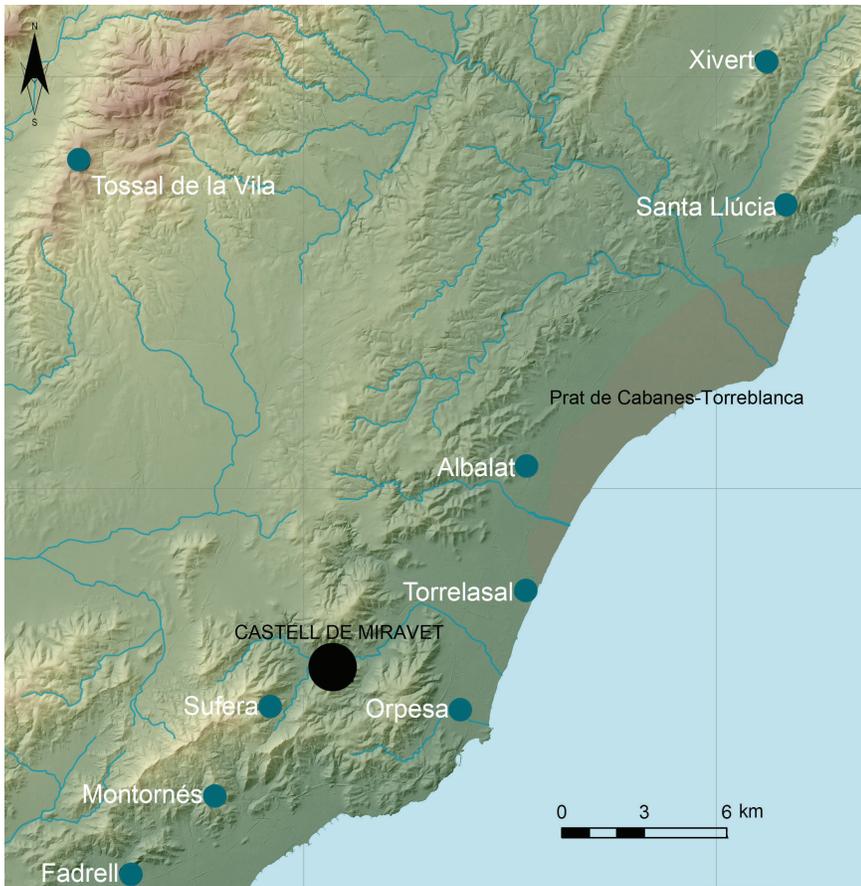


Fig. 3 Location of the main archaeological sites described in the article. Author's archive.

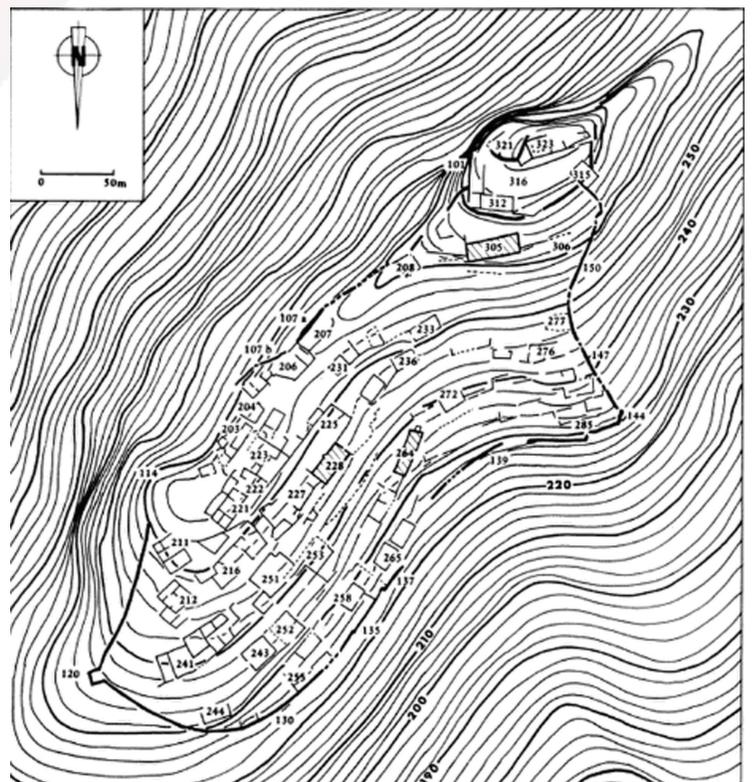


Fig. 4 Diagram of the distribution of Miravet. Planimetry by A. Bazzana.

Fig. 5 Detail of the different construction techniques of the upper enclosure wall. Author's archive.



Fig. 6 Photogrammetry of the *mihṛāb* and the base of one of the arches. Author's archive.



Fig. 7 Photograph of the interior of the mosque-church taken in 1919. Arxiu Mas (Diputació de Castelló)

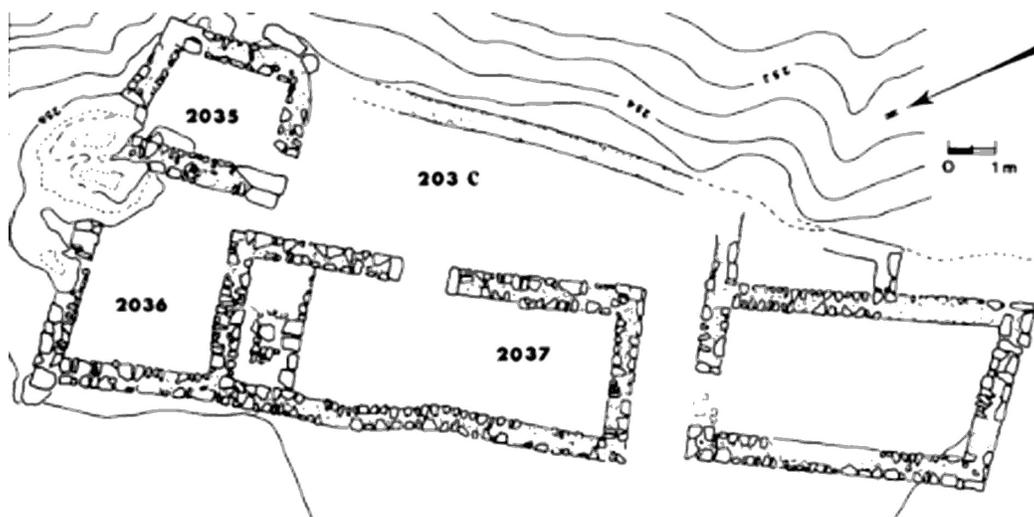


Fig. 8 Distribution of the dwelling 203. Planimetry by A. Bazzana.