

MONTE ROMERO (HUELVA), A SILVER PRODUCING WORKSHOP OF THE TARTESSIAN PERIOD (ABSTRACT)

by

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The subject of this poster is Monte Romero, a silver producing workshop situated in the Sierra Aracena (Huelva) in South-west Spain. Excavation of the site took place in 1986 and produced a number of archaeometallurgical finds connected with the extractive metallurgy of silver from polymetallic complex ores (Rothenberg, Andrews and Keesman, 1986). Based on the typological study of the pottery, the smelting activities were dated from the last half of the 7th century BC to the beginning of the 6th century BC (Pérez Macias, 1991: 106-107).

The period in question is known as the Tartessian period during which trading links between South-western Iberia and the Eastern Mediterranean were established. Silver was the commodity central to this trade. As a result of the booming metal trade, a general growth and prosperity is witnessed not only in the larger sites such as Huelva (Fernández Jurado, 1988-89a: 227) but also in the mining areas of the Huelva Province where at this time there is a marked increase in the mining activities and the smelting of ores (Ruiz Mata, 1990: 408).

Metallurgical workshops have been found in a number of the excavated sites such as San Bartolomé de Almonte (Ruiz Mata and Fernández Jurado, 1986) and Huelva-San Pedro and La Esperanza (Fernández Jurado, 1988-89b), but more often than not these are dedicated to the refining of silver rather than primary smelting. On the other hand, evidence of extractive metallurgy dating to this period discovered in sites such as Rio Tinto are often found under metres of metallurgical debris accumulated over centuries of exploitation.

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