

ANDALUSIA, DECEMBER 15, 2021

## The Andalusian Department of Culture presents the remains of ancient buildings located in the area between Camposoto and Sancti Petri.

These structures are likely related to the Phoenician-Punic temple of Melqart and Hercules in Roman times.

The regional delegate of Culture and Historical Heritage of the Andalusian Government in Cadiz, Mercedes Colombo Roquette, has presented at the Center for Underwater Archaeology of the Andalusian Institute of Historical Heritage (in Spanish, IAPH) the remains of ancient buildings located in the area between Camposoto and Sancti Petri that might belong to the Phoenician-Punic temple of Melqart and of Hercules Gaditanus in Roman times. The public presentation was also attended by the director of the Department of Prehistory and Archaeology of the University of Seville, Francisco José García, and the director of the IAPH, Juan José Primo.

The research conducted over the last year through a Geographic Information System and the use of remote sensing techniques (LIDAR) by Ricardo Belizón Aragón and Antonio Sáez Romero, from the Department of Prehistory and Archaeology of the University of Seville, made it possible to locate these structures of outstanding archaeological and cultural significance in an area between Camposoto (in the municipality of San Fernando) and Sancti Petri (between the present-day cities of San Fernando and Chiclana).

Based on the first results of this study, together with the already existing documentary and archaeological data on the area, the staff of the Territorial Delegation, the University of Seville and the Center for Underwater Archaeology performed several field surveys in these areas. The data collected have revealed the existence in ancient times of a completely different coastal landscape compared to what has been assumed up to now: a complex seascape and a coastline apparently largely anthropized since ancient times, with the presence of possible breakwaters, large buildings and perhaps even a large enclosed harbor basin.

The findings of these research activities, which can be correlated with the information provided by ancient sources such as Strabo, Silio Italico or Philostratus about the Sanctuary of Melqart and Hercules, will be investigated in depth to reconstruct the history of the area and assess the chronology, typology and uses of the structures discovered.



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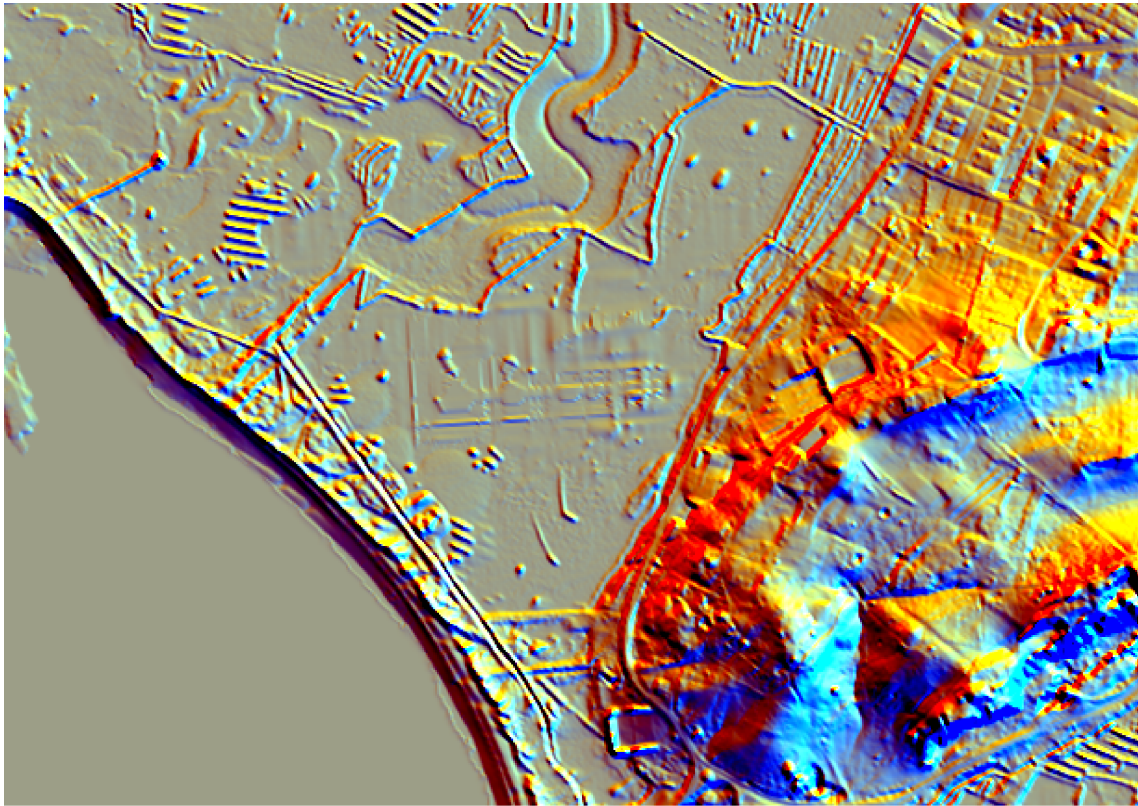
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Future research will focus on archaeological surveys (terrestrial and underwater), specific documentary and geoarchaeological studies, and paleoenvironmental sampling. All of this is aimed, in an interdisciplinary way, at promoting the knowledge of our shared past, and the protection and enhancement of these unique archaeological remains so that Andalusian society will be able to explore and enjoy a singularly remarkable aspect of its history, and that this discovery will have a positive impact on the economic and social development of the region.

These new findings are the result of the close collaboration established between researchers from the University of Seville and the Regional Department of Culture and Historical Heritage, which has focused to date on the documentary and archaeological research of the material remains from the Punic and Roman periods, in most cases of underwater provenance, found in an area ranging from Sancti Petri to La Caleta in Cádiz.

These actions have been developed within the scope of the "Ergasteria Project" (reference US-1266376, funded by the Regional Department of Economic Transformation, Industry, Knowledge and Universities, within the 2018 call for R+D+i FEDER Andalusia 2014-2020 Projects), directed by Professors Eduardo Ferrer Albelda and Antonio Sáez Romero of the University of Seville, and with the support of the Research Group "From Turdetania to Baetica" (HUM-152), and of the Faculty of Geography and History of the same University. Following the provisions of Article 50 of the Law of Historical Heritage of Andalusia, the researchers notified the finding to the Territorial Delegation of the Department of Culture and Historical Heritage in Cadiz through the Center for Underwater Archaeology of the IAPH.





Structures identified in the southern area of Río Arillo area, in the marshes located facing the Camposoto military barracks (source image PNOA-LIDAR).



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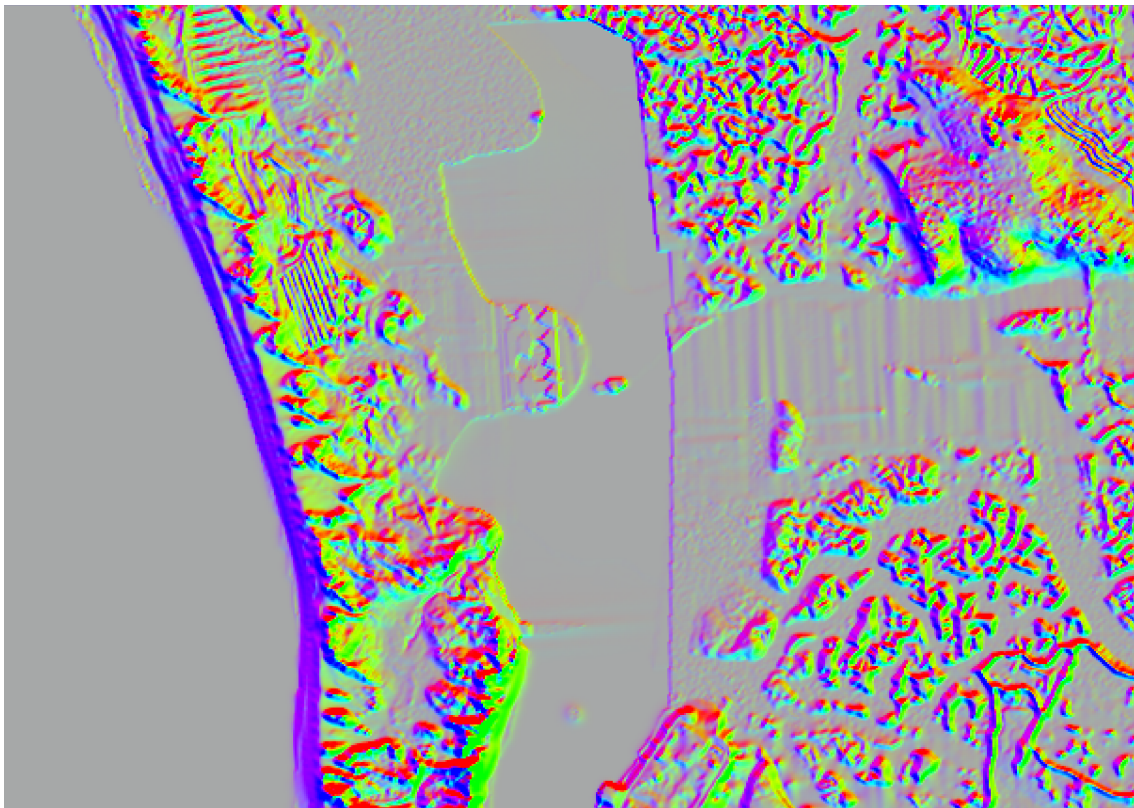
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Main structures and seascape transformations discovered in the area of the present-day mouth of the Sancti Petri stream, based on the analysis of PNOA-LIDAR data.



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