



Postcard from... Totana

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With walls four metres thick and towers seven metres high, the 4,200-year-old fortification in La Bastida, Murcia, is much more than the most architecturally advanced Bronze Age fortress as yet to come to light: archaeologists believe its discovery confirms the settlement it defended was the most important of the period in Europe.

The Bronze Age city of La Bastida, situated high in the sierras of Totana, was already known to be both wealthy and powerful, with properties 70sq m and an irrigation system capable of storing half a million litres of water. But to judge by a press conference in Murcia last week, the new star of the Bastida site looks set to be the previously undiscovered fortress which protected it.

A 200-metre long outer wall and six imposing, pyramid-shaped, towers are impressive enough. But the fortress also contains unique features and innovative weaponry for the era. These include a secret passageway, walls reinforced with mortar, and a stash of halberds.

The type of warfare in which such passageways were used only became generalised throughout in Europe a thousand years later, and reinforces the theory that La Bastida was one of the most advanced settlements of the time, comparable only to the Minoans in Crete.

Archeologists from the Univeristy of Barcelona carrying out the excavation also believe that the breakthroughs present in the city's and fortress' architecture also show hitherto unsuspected links between Spain and Mesopotanian and Egyptian civilisations of the era, as well as the city of Troy when it was reconstructed for the first time, around 2,600 BC.