

Typo-technological analysis of a bifacial stone tool from Cueva de los Toriles (Carrizosa, Castilla-La Mancha, Iberian Península) and its importance as a new Acheulean site from the Southern Iberian Plateau

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The study of the Paleolithic period in Inner Iberia, specifically between Tajo and Guadiana's basins, has always been a pending matter in the archaeological historiography. This lack of evidence is even greater when we approach more recent Pleistocene chronologies [1]. This part of the Iberian Peninsula has traditionally been thought to be practically inhabited during most of the Paleolithic, and even nowadays is the prevailing paradigm [2]. Toriles' Cave, along with other archaeological sites nearby with similar industries [3], has come to make us rethink the present hypothesis and fill the emptiness of the past researches.

The stone tool was found in a stratigraphic position associated with travertine levels of high calcium carbonate precipitation. The raw material is a fine-grained quartzite (64x41x17 mm, 38.32g), probably, made on a flake, but the ventral surface is barely outlined. The dorsal surface is shaped as a convergent scraper with an invasive bifacial retouch on the left edge and a unifacial retouch on the right edge. The butt of the striking platform is characterized by the large presence of reflected negative scars. The left edge retouch has plain and invasive negatives scars that are reflected in the middle of the tool. Attending the technological attributes described above, the bifacial tool can be classified as an almond-shaped handaxe or as a bifacial convergent *racloir*. The techno-typological and functional analysis of the bifacial stone tool has been developed by the Prehistoric Technology and Archaeology Laboratory of the CENIEH (Centro Nacional de Investigación sobre la Evolución Humana).

Techno-typological, taphonomical, and functional analyses showed that the lithic tool could be attached at the final Acheulean or Mousterian periods. For this reason, we consider that the chronological range of the lithic tool is 300-120 kya, but the travertine dates will corroborate it.

Previous research suggested, based on the evidence of the primitive species of badger *M. thoralis* [4], the potential presence of some Pleistocene deposits into Cueva de Los Toriles. Our results highlight also the importance of this site as a previously unknown Acheulean archaeological site. The fossil and archaeological record in the southern Iberian plateau is particularly scarce compared with other regions of the Iberian Peninsula [5], but it is crucial to understand the pattern of population mobility between the north and the south of the Peninsula and thus its population during the Pleistocene. Future excavations in Cueva de Los Toriles, combined with absolute datation of stratum where the tool was found, will contribute to filling this gap of knowledge.

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