



Re-evaluating the human remains from El Bosquet cave (Mont-rà, Tarragona, Spain): healed trauma and forgotten past

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Abstract: During the early development of archaeology in Spain, many of the materials obtained from excavations were later forgotten in museum deposits. However, re-investigation of these collections with contemporary methodologies can still contribute valuable knowledge. This study presents the case of El Bosquet Cave (Mont-rà, Tarragona, Spain), located in the Northeastern Iberian Peninsula. This cave was excavated and documented in 1956 and the recovered materials were transferred, years later, to the Reus Museum, where they are currently located. Our results provide a more precise Middle Bronze Age chronology for the site in addition to bioarchaeological conclusions on the human remains from four individuals. Of note is a healed mandibular fracture in one of the individuals. Trauma observed in human skeletal remains reflect the conditions and risks of human groups in relation to daily activities or may be the result of interpersonal violence. In the Iberian Peninsula there are very few documented cases of mandibular fractures in prehistoric populations. This study contributes to the knowledge of the populations of the recent prehistory in the region of Catalonia and highlights the importance of reanalyzing the collections that are deposited and, in many cases forgotten, in the different museums of the territory.

Keywords: Antemortem trauma; paleoimaging; Middle Bronze Age; sepulchral cave; Iberian prehistory

1 Introduction

Throughout the 20th century, the Iberian Peninsula witnessed a rapid development of archaeology as a discipline that resulted in the discovery of numerous sites and an incredible expansion of knowledge of past peoples. In the case of the Catalan territory, many caves were the object of exploration and excavations carried out by archaeologists and/

or speleology enthusiasts. The practices of early archaeologists and nonprofessional enthusiasts documented many new archaeological sites, but they also frequently contributed to the destruction of relevant scientific information, especially through a lack of modern archaeological methodologies and documentation of recovered archaeological materials (Chambon 2003; Schulting et al. 2010; Robb 2016; Aranda Jiménez et al. 2020).