INVESTIGATION IN POZARRATE QUARRY AT THE PREHISTORIC FLINT MINING COMPLEX OF ARAICO-CUCHO (TREVINO), SOUTH BASQUE-CANTABRIAN BASIN (SPAIN)

The quarry of Pozarrate is one of the most important sites in the Cantabrian Basin that has provided data associated with the Neolithic period. The two dates for Pozarrate quarry were obtained from an unburnt (5640±100 BP uncal) and from a charcoal (6050±100 BP uncal) (Tarriño et al., 2011a and 2011b).

The archaeological excavation focused on the interior dump which was dated 6000-5600 BP (uncal.) and thousands of lithic remains and artifacts have been collected, including mining tools. Geophysical surveys confirming the existence of a quarry face about 5 m high. The relevance of the flint mining complex is corroborated by the identification of the use of this raw material in many archaeological sites of the Cantabrian (from Asturias to the Basque Country), the Western Pyrenees and the south of Aquitanian Basin (France), from the upper Pliocene to the Holocene.

Araico is one of the only two prehistoric flint mining complexes in the Iberian Peninsula that have provided dates associated with the Neolithic periods. The two dates for Pozarrate quarry were obtained from an unburnt (5640±100 BP uncal) and from a charcoal (6050±100 BP uncal) (Tarriño et al., 2011a and 2011b).

The survey of 3 meters deep shows 3 levels:  
A. Marker flints with breccia. They usually have leveling rings. These are the ones presenting a sharp edge.  
B. Clothed silicates with fossorial presence, in stratiform disposition 
C. Briciated silicates with footprints of roots and porosity with vadose cementations, in stratiform disposition.  
D. Banded chert with algae laminations and occasionally ooliths.

The archaeological materials collected during the excavations correspond to what is supposed to be found in a dump. It rises to tens of thousands of lithic accessories, including tools for extraction and other materials such as adze, blade or ceramic.

The flint had wide geographical distribution and involved archaeological sites located across several tens of km. However it is necessary to underline that the archaeological sites pointed in the map cover a period from Upper Paleolithic to Neolithic times. The flints reached the Cantabrian coast and southwest France through a distance of almost 500 km (Tarriño et al., 2011a).

The survey of 3 meters deep shows 3 levels:  
- Upper level of fine gravel: intermediate level of fine and coarse gravel.  
- Lower level of coarse gravel and boulders (between 50 and 200 cm) which were occasionally formed by debris of the mining activities.  
- The bottom of sondage the limestone with intermediate level of fine and coarse gravel which has only made a stratigraphic column of 85 meters. (Tarriño, 2004).

The flints of Sierra de Araico can be classified into different types and are all formed in facies-limestone-palaeokarst environments, with compact limestones and dolomites, dolomitic limestones, and calcareous dolomites (Tarriño, 2004):  
A. Nodular flints with breccia. They usually have leveling rings. These are the ones presenting a sharp edge.  
B. Clothed silicates with fossorial presence, in stratiform disposition.  
C. Briciated silicates with footprints of roots and porosity with vadose cementations, in stratiform disposition.  
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