
Zooarchaeological study of the Mesolithic site of El Collado (Oliva, Eastern Iberian Peninsula). Preliminary results and research perspectives

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Abstract

Recent studies in the Iberian Mediterranean region show that postglacial adaptations were characterized by more diversified foraging strategies and the reduction of the exploitation of lagomorphs regarding the final Paleolithic. Diet broadening based on the diversification of ungulates' species and small prey has been consistently reported during the Mesolithic period. However, our current view on Mesolithic subsistence systems is overwhelmingly dependent on sites located tens to hundreds km away from the Early Holocene Mediterranean coast. In this context, new research on faunal assemblages from coastal areas are required to (i) complete our current view about foraging strategies at regional scale, and (ii) study the impacts of the postglacial sea level rise on foraging adaptations.

In this paper, we present the preliminary results of an ongoing research project (CIDE-GENT/2018/040) focused on the faunal collections of the Mesolithic site of El Collado (Oliva, Valencia). This site, located 3 km away from the current coastline, contains an archaeological deposit with occupation evidences and a rich funerary record composed of 14 Mesolithic burials, (Aparicio 2008). Despite the interest of the site, no specific studies have been undertaken on the vertebrates' faunal assemblages. For the purposes of this work, we will focus on the analysis of a sample from the excavation units H1 and H2 that has been subject of a recent chronological revision (Fernández-López de Pablo 2016). The preliminary results show a rich and diverse taxonomic composition by ungulates (*Bos primigenius*, *Capra pyrenaica*, *Cervus elaphus* and *Sus scrofa*) and small prey (especially *Emydidae/Geoemydidae* and *Leporidae*). The taphonomic analysis mainly indicates anthropogenic accumulation and the anatomical profiles suggest the prey transport to the site for processing. The ongoing research in comparison with previous studies of littoral resources (Fernández-López de Pablo and Gabriel 2016) and human paleodiets (García Guixé et al. 2006) will open new perspectives for the knowledge of the occupation dynamics and economic strategies for the Mesolithic period in the Western Mediterranean.

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