
The exploitation of wild plant resources in Can Sadurní Cave site (Begues, Spain) during the last hunter-gatherer occupations (11.000-6000 cal BC)

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Abstract

The site of Can Sadurní (Begues, Spain) is a cave located in the calcareous Garraf Massif near the Mediterranean coast. The site has a long sequence of occupation that cover approximately 11000 years. In this communication, we will present the study of the plant remains of the layers 19, 20, 21 and 21EVI, that correspond to the Mesolithic occupations dated between ca. 11000 to 6000 cal BC. The goal of the study was to characterize the environment during the Mesolithic occupation and the main plant resources gathered. The data obtained will cover a gap in the region since very few sites covering these chronologies have been excavated in the region until now.

The sediment of the site has been systematically sampled and floated in order to recover plant remains; moreover, the remains of big size were picked out by hand during the excavation. The sampling strategy has allowed to recover a high diversity of plant remains, all of them carbonized.

Charcoal fragments are the most abundant type of remain. Most of them come from the oldest layers (21 and 21EVI). Among them, *Acer* sp., *Quercus* sp. deciduous, *Prunus* sp., and *Pinus* sp. are the best represented, the presence of Mediterranean taxa as evergreen *Quercus* is also documented.

Regarding other plant macroremains although they are present in every layer, only the *Pinus* scales are documented in all the sequence. It is noteworthy the presence of fruits, especially in the oldest layers (21 and 21 VI), among them *Prunus* sp. and other Rosaceae. Finally, it should mention the presence of some fragments of plant underground storage organs, which are practically absent in the archaeological record of this area.

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These taxa suggest the presence of a mixed forest in the cave surroundings. These forests provided of firewood but also of food. According to the macrobotanical remains identified at Can Sadurní, fruits and underground storage organs were intentionally gathered, although their contribution to the diet is difficult to evaluate their presence provides new insights into the economic strategies of the last hunter-gatherer in the region.

Keywords: Firewood, Fruits, Underground storage organs, Iberian Peninsula, Hunter, gatherers