



Archaeological Palimpsest Dissection at Cova del Parco (Lleida, Spain) through Microstratigraphic Investigation of Combustion Structures. Preliminary Results.

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We present preliminary data from ongoing microstratigraphic investigations of Cova del Parco (Lleida, Spain), a Magdalenian karstic cave site in North western Catalonia. Excavations of the Upper Magdalenian levels are currently underway, with radiometric dates between 15,690 and 16,390 cal BP. This period has yielded a complex anthropogenic sedimentary deposit including combustion features and local accumulations of anthropogenic debris near the cave walls. One of the working hypothesis is that the Magdalenian hunter-gatherers who occupied the site did so for short periods, possibly seasonally. Support of this hypothesis comes the presence of overlapping, very thin flat combustion structures, which appear to have been short-lived and close to each other in time. In order to investigate this issue, we carried out micromorphological analysis of some of the mentioned combustion features. Preliminary results show significant microstratification and presence of unburned spherulites mixed in with reprecipitated calcitic wood ash, both of which point towards the existence of hiatuses between combustion events. This is supported by the observation of scattered, lightly burned microscopic flint and bone fragments in the sediment between ash layers, which could represent renewed occupation floor debris. Our case study adds to the growing number of combustion feature microstratigraphic investigations contributing to a correct characterization of anthropogenic palimpsest deposits.

Key words: Microstratigraphy; Micromorphology; Magdalenian; Combustion features; Wood ash; Palimpsest; Iberian Peninsula.