
The significance of subtlety: contrasting raw material use at the Oldowan sites of Barranco León and Fuente Nueva 3 (Orce, Andalusia, Spain)

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Résumé

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Barranco León and Fuente Nueva 3 (Orce, Andalusia, Spain) are major archeological sites

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corresponding to the Western European Oldowan. Situated in southern Spain's Guadix-Baza depression, these sites are among the most numerically rich lithic and faunal records providing information about the earliest hominins outside of Africa (1,4-1,3 Ma, respectively). Ongoing excavations and inter-disciplinary research efforts allow to discern contrasting raw material procurement and exploitation patterns used by the hominins present at both of these occurrences; in spite of their spatial and temporal proximity. This new data allows us to discern subtle, landscape-related behavioral differences in the treatment of limestone and flint materials between the two sites. The context of the sites: on the shores of a paleo saline lake with in-feeding thermal fresh water sources, and an abundance of other large mammals including competitive carnivores, underline questions of expedience as an influence on techno-morphology in these early stone toolkits. We analyze these themes, accenting updated information from these and other key European late Early Pleistocene sites.

Mots-Clés: Orce, raw materials, technology, stone, tools, hominin behavior, Oldowan