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# Early Aurignacian phantoms at the Iberian NE. The short occupation patterns from Cova Foradada and Balma de la Griera (Tarragona, Spain).

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## Abstract

The first phases of the Aurignacian at the north-east of the Iberian Peninsula have played a significant role in the discussion about the tempo and mode of *Homo sapiens* spread across Europe and the disappearance of indigenous Neanderthal populations. Ages from classical sites such as Abric Romaní and l'Arbreda have been in the debate for decades but the absence of new sites and data left them as isolated spots in a large territory. Recently, the discovery of the Middle-to-Upper Paleolithic site of Cova Foradada provided new stratigraphic evidences of human presence in the territory during the 40-to-30 kyrs cal. period, including Early Aurignacian occupations. At the same time, the ongoing excavations at the neighbor site of La Griera also allowed to document a stratigraphic layer dating back to 35 kyrs cal BP. Both sites display an occupational pattern clearly characterized by a very low intensity anthropic impact. The scarcity of cultural remains and other activity indicators such as anthropized fauna are common traits and seems to draw a regional pattern of low site re-occupation. This pattern can be aprioristically related with a territory where low demography and/or very high mobility dynamics are dominant, complicating the archaeological visibility of human activity and being in concordance with the general absence of evidences documented so far. In this paper we will present for the first time the ongoing studies at Cova Foradada Layer III and La Griera Layer IIb and discuss about the possible significances of the very-short occupation pattern documented.

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**Keywords:** Upper Palaeolithic, Aurignacian, Iberian Peninsula, Cova Foradada, La Giera