

Taphonomy at the Pinilla del Valle Sites: How taphonomic analysis helps us understand hominin behavior



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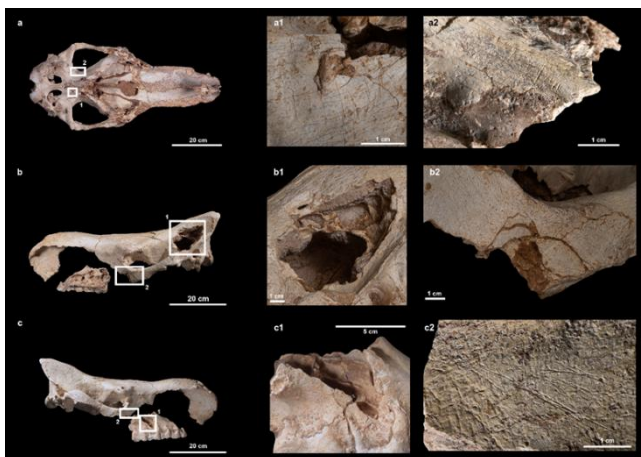
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Fyssen Foundation grant, PALEVOPRIM lab.



Traditionally, Taphonomy in archaeological contexts has been used to analyse how hominins accessed to animal carcasses (primary vs. secondary) and to assess the degree of alteration in faunal assemblages. However, in recent years, the scope of taphonomic research has expanded, addressing new questions such as the level of competition between hominins and carnivores or even symbolic issues.

The archaeological area of Calvero de la Higuera in Pinilla del Valle (Spain) is one of the best European examples demonstrating the significance of taphonomy in resolving various archaeological issues. In these karstic sites, which span from the Middle Pleistocene to the Holocene, taphonomic studies have identified hyena dens with sporadic Neanderthal presence, water-reworked assemblages, a short-term Neanderthal hunting camp, and the only known Neanderthal faunal accumulation that is entirely symbolic rather than subsistence-related.



In this talk, we will delve into which taphonomic variables are most relevant in archaeological contexts and how they influence the interpretation of the assemblages from Pinilla del Valle sites.