



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Quaternary International

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/quaint

The Palaeolithic art of Tito Bustillo cave (Asturias, Spain) in its archaeological context

Rodrigo de Balbín-Behrmann ^{a,*}, José-Javier Alcolea-González ^a,
Manuel Alcaraz-Castaño ^b

^a Área de Prehistoria, Departamento de Historia y Filosofía, Universidad de Alcalá, C/ Colegios 2, 28801, Alcalá de Henares, Madrid, Spain

^b Neanderthal Museum, Talstraße 300, 40822, Mettmann, Germany

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Available online xxx

ABSTRACT

In this paper we analyze cave and portable graphic expressions of Tito Bustillo cave (Asturias, Spain) in relation to their archaeological context. We use an integrative approach that considers graphic expressions, archaeological objects and organized underground spaces as integrative parts of the Upper Palaeolithic human behaviors in the caves. We conclude that Tito Bustillo is an outstanding case of *humanized cave*, in which the underground space was humanized through graphic expressions, permanent structures, topographic marking systems and other daily-life activities since the beginnings of the Upper Palaeolithic. During the Middle and Upper Magdalenian this process of humanization significantly increased, as shown by the development of a large living site sharing spaces with the most decorated areas of the cave.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd and INQUA. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The cave of Tito Bustillo (Ribadesella, Asturias, Spain), located in the central area of the Cantabrian Cornice (Fig. 1) and close to the current western limits of the large Palaeolithic graphic cluster of Northern Iberia (González-Echegaray and González-Sainz, 1994; Serna et al., 2002; Ríos et al., 2007; Blas-Cortina, 2014), can be considered a major site of the European Upper Palaeolithic (Balbín-Behrmann et al., 2003). The large number and quality of its Palaeolithic graphic expressions, together with the presence of several archaeological deposits and some architectural and topographic features showing a structured organization of the cave, make Tito Bustillo an excellent case for studying Upper Palaeolithic cave art in its archaeological and spatial context. In this paper we first present a comprehensive synthesis of the archaeological content and graphic expressions known in Tito Bustillo, and then we put forward a systemic analysis aimed at integrating both types of evidence in the context of the spatial organization of the cave throughout the Upper Palaeolithic.

2. Location and general description of Tito Bustillo cave

Belonging to the lower Sella basin (Fig. 1), Tito Bustillo is located in the Ardines massif, a karstic formation of carboniferous limestone excavated by the San Miguel River close to its estuary into the Sella River. The cave is in the second level of a large underground network including also the caves of La Lloseta, La Cueva and El Tenis. Tito Bustillo is directly connected to La Lloseta (Fig. 2), which is located right on the top of it, and also to the underground course of the San Miguel River, which is the current lowermost level of the underground network of Ardines.

Tito Bustillo is about 500 m long from West to East. Its main entrance during Palaeolithic times was located in the so-called *Gorgocera*, where the San Miguel River sinks into the limestone massif, beneath the village of Ardines. Facing South and connected to the rest of the cave through a small gallery, this entrance is found at the bottom of a blind valley, in a privileged position for accessing several natural resources, including those of marine origin, located just roughly 10 km to the North during the maximum regression of the Cantabrian sea (see Gutiérrez-Zugasti, 2009: 77–80). The cave system consists of a main passage hosting easily accessible spaces, such as the big chamber named ensemble XI, or the smaller chamber of ensemble X (Fig. 3). Several adjacent passages, smaller but also frequented in Prehistoric times, are found at both sides of the main gallery (Fig. 3).

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: rodrigo.balbin@uah.es (R. Balbín-Behrmann).



Fig. 1. Location of Tito Bustillo cave (Asturias, Spain).

3. Synthesis of research conducted at Tito Bustillo

Since it was discovered in 1968, Tito Bustillo has been the object of several research projects that have progressively enlarged our knowledge of the Prehistoric human settlement of the cave and its outstanding graphic expressions. The most significant of these projects have been those conducted by Alfonso Moure and Rodrigo de Balbín-Behrmann from the 1970's to the late 1980's, which were respectively focused on the archaeological material contents (Moure, 1975, 1990, 1997; Moure and Cano, 1976), and the graphic expressions found at the cave (Balbín-Behrmann and Moure, 1980a, 1980b, 1981a, 1981b, 1982, 1983; Balbín-Behrmann, 1989). Finally, from 1999, Rodrigo de Balbín-Behrmann and Javier Alcolea-González have leaded a research project aimed at completing the archaeological recording of the cave in the framework of a comprehensive study of the Upper Palaeolithic settlement of the Ardines massif (Balbín-Behrmann et al., 2000, 2002, 2003; Balbín-Behrmann and Alcolea-González, 2007–2008, 2012).

Fieldworks in the cave of Tito Bustillo during the last 15 years have been focused on both a systematic review of the rock art and an intensive field survey of the whole underground space. These

works have included several specific excavations in different areas, aimed at testing some aspects of the human occupation of the cave. Recording and analysis of the rock art have been benefited of modern techniques of lighting, digital photography and, in some cases, 3D scanning. Graphic expressions have been also subject to direct chronometric dating (Pike et al., 2012; Balbín-Behrmann and Alcolea-González, 2013) and pigment analyses (Balbín-Behrmann et al., 2003; Navarro-Gascón, 2003; Navarro-Gascón and Gómez, 2003; Balbín-Behrmann and Alcolea-González, 2009; Hernanz et al., 2012).

Our research has been also directed towards the understanding of the spatial distribution of the cave and its use by humans throughout the Upper Palaeolithic. We have discovered new decorated galleries, some of them yielding evidences of human activity, such as architectural structures and portable art works (Balbín-Behrmann et al., 2002). The chronometric dating of rock paintings, archaeological layers and some of the aforementioned structures, have enabled us to (1) define the chronological development of the human occupation of Tito Bustillo, and (2) investigate the role of the graphic expressions in the whole Palaeolithic settlement of the cave throughout time.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5113909>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5113909>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)