

English

MONTANEJOS MUSEUM GUIDE





INTRODUCTION

Montanejos preserves a rich culture that reveals how people have lived on these lands: photographs, accounts and objects that reflect their way of living and understanding the world, and that document techniques, practices and everyday objects that tell us about those who created and used them.

In this room we have tried to evoke a walk along the banks of the river that crosses Montanejos, revealing at every step the traces of its history: the archaeological remains of the Cueva Negra (Black Cave) indicate Neolithic and Bronze Age settlements. Evidence of the Iberian period has also been uncovered in the surroundings of the Castle of La Alquería, a fortress that has dominated the confluence of the Montán and Mijares rivers since the Middle Ages. And the course of the river running between the two sites is dotted with elements of the cultural landscape that we will discover as we walk through the room.





1. CASTLE OF LA ALQUERÍA

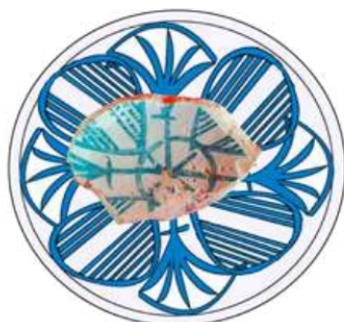
At an elevation of around 750 meters, this fortress is related to the two lines of castles that marked the courses of the Mijares and Montán rivers. As well as serving a defensive role, the castle organised and controlled the small villages and farmsteads located beside the irrigated lands.

Although we lack documentary references from before the 13th century, the archaeological evidence suggests it may have been built originally in the Al-Andalus period. However, most of the preserved architectural remains date from the late medieval Christian period (13th to 14th century).

The castle is composed of two enclosures joined by a section of stepped wall that follows the slope.

The lower enclosure, which forms a bailey, surrounds the lowest part up to the ledge, with towers punctuating the stretch of the west wall.

The upper, more confined enclosure is where we find the most important preserved remains: the south tower, the cistern, and the north tower.



Blue earthenware bowl decorated with shields and radial palmettes. 14th–15th century.



11th century jar decorated with a technique known as *cuerda seca parcial* (partial dry cord), from the Provincial Museum of Jaén. This decorative technique can also be seen in fragments found in the Castle of La Alquería.



Virtual recreation of the southwest view of the Castle of La Alquería, based on the existing remains.



Map of the castles, towers and fortresses of the Alto Mijares region.

SEAL MATRIX

Discovered in the Caste of La Alquería, this seal matrix is inscribed with a proper name that translates as Abū Bakr / ibn Jamīs. The specialist Ana Labarta has studied this artefact, dating it to the second half of the 11th century. The image is incised in negative in hollow

relief, to leave a positive imprint on the seal.

This piece, cast in bronze, forms part of the collection donated by the archaeologist Francesc Esteve Gálvez to Castellón Museum of Fine Arts in 2001.

ABŪ BAKR / IBN JAMĪS.



Inscription incised in negative on bronze



Positive imprint left by the matrix.



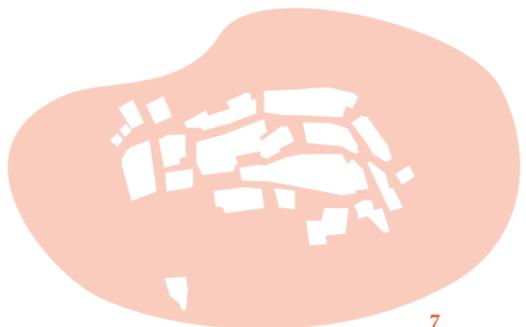
View of La Alquería from the area known as Plarandar.



2. LA ALQUERÍA, MONTANEJOS

Arab texts use the term *qarya* to designate rural populations, almost always protected by defensive structures, that are dependent on an urban centre.

At the foot of the castle, and under its protection, the inhabitants of these lands lived the two *qurà* (Alquería de Arriba and Alquería de Abajo) that gave rise to the current villages of La Alquería and Montanejos.





Recreation of the historical landscape of the 16th and 17th centuries beside the river Mijares as it runs through Montanejos, produced with reference to documentary sources. The recreation is based on a photograph taken from the Castle of La Alquería.



3. SAN JOSÉ BRIDGE

The San José aqueduct and bridge dates back to 1803. Located at the heart of the municipality, it crosses the river Montán as a continuation of the original road that led into the village. Beneath it runs a canal that carries water to La Alquería.

It is built with rough stone masonry, forming three large segmental arches, and was restored in 2008.



Image of San José bridge with the river Montán running under one of its arches.



4. HISTORICAL CROPS

THE IMPORTANCE OF CROPS USED FOR TEXTILE PRODUCTION.

In addition to the historical crops of wheat, legumes, grapevine, vegetables, walnuts, figs and almonds, the banks of the Mijares have provided an ideal location for cultivating the following raw materials: flax for textiles; hemp for cordage, espadrille, and horse trappings; and mulberry trees for breeding silkworms.

Flax was cultivated in Montanejos in the 16th century especially. In 1610, Gaspar J. Escolano wrote that the linen from this region had surpassed the linen of Játiva.

He also highlighted the importance of the mulberry tree for the economy of Montanejos. At the end of the 18th century, Cavanilles named this settlement and Montán as the leading producers of the region.





Panoramic view of the urban centre of Montanejos from the road leading to Zucaina.



5. MONTANEJOS

The origin of Montanejos is associated with the original nucleus of La Alquería and the fortress of the same name, in the period of Islamic rule. In 1239, King James I granted Pere Ximénez de Vallterra the lordship of Castellmontalt, which included Montán, Montanejos and Arañuel.

In the 16th century, with the great development of hemp and flax

cultivation, Montanejos became a compact population centre. But its growth slowed with the expulsion of the Moriscos in 1609, which uprooted the nearly 100 families who lived there. The requirements of the new settlers (mostly from Aragon) were laid down in a 'Letter of New Population', signed in March 1612.



6. THE TOWER OF MONTANEJOS

The tower formed part of a network constructed to control a stretch of territory. Cylindrical in form, it had several circular floors and a terrace. The access bay was located at the level of the first floor.

This tower belonged to La Alquería de Abajo, which was dependent on the Castle of La Alquería. It later became part of the stately palace of the Counts of Vallterra.

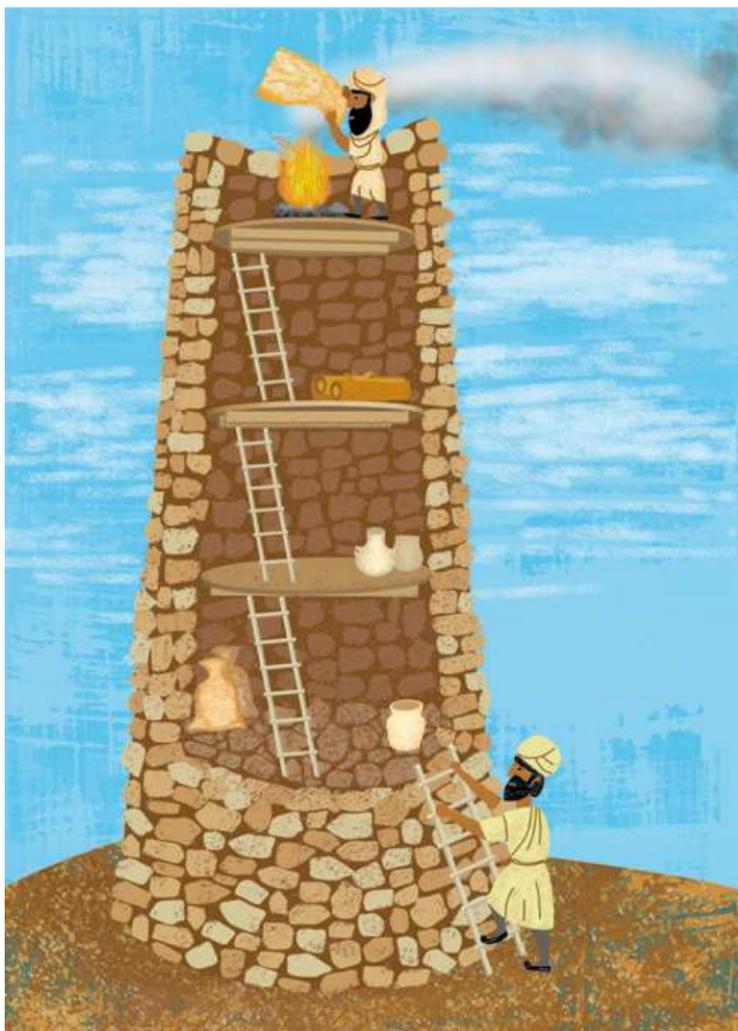


Illustration recreating the different floors or levels of the watchtower of Montanejos.

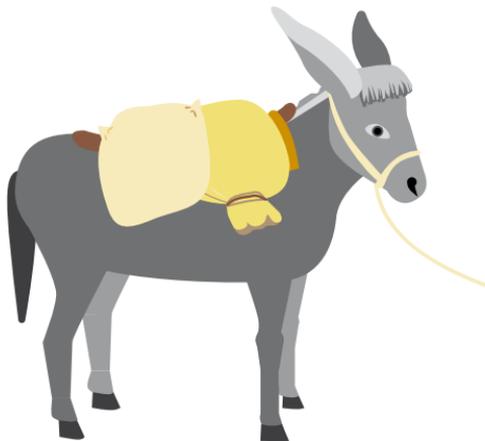


El Machón, next to the natural pools and the Fuente de los Baños route.



7. EL MACHÓN

This stone structure, located in the bed of the river Mijares, was once the cutwater of a bridge that has all but disappeared save this element. In *El Machón* we can distinguish several phases of construction, which reflect its antiquity.





8. THE FLOUR MILL

This 19th century mill used the force of the water of the river Mijares to grind grain. It has a horizontal wooden waterwheel composed of blades or paddles that rotate when they are hit by the water from the flume. The waterwheel moved the axis, which made the millstone rotate on the bedstone.

Until 1838, when Montanejos was officially freed from the lordship of Vallterra, the mills were the property of the feudal lord, who was paid a portion of the milled grain (known as the *maquila*) as a tribute.



Diagram showing the functioning and the different parts of a hydraulic mill with a horizontal wheel.



9. THE BATHS OF ABŪ ZAYD

THE RIVER, PURIFYING ELEMENT AND CREATOR OF LEGENDS: THE LEGEND OF THE BATHS OF ABŪ ZAYD.

Popular legend has it that in this place, the Almohad governor of Valencia, Zayd Abū Zayd, ordered the construction of baths that would bestow eternal youth on the women of his harem.

According to the legend, the remains of these baths can be found

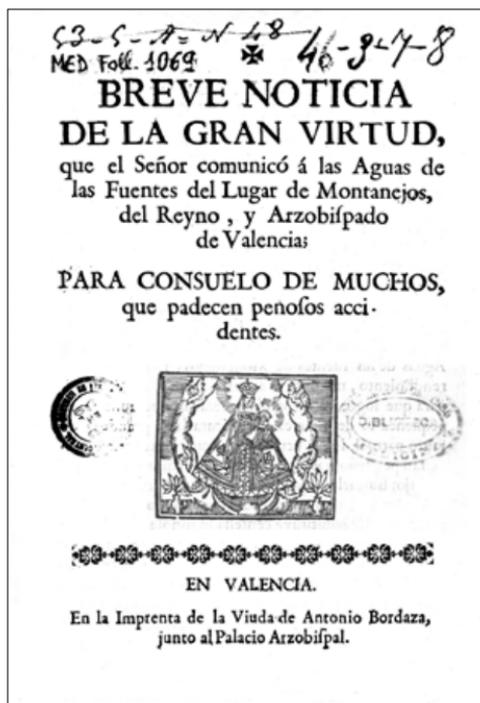
on the right bank of the river, near Fuente de los Baños. However, the location of the construction and the channels that carry water to it suggest that these are ruins of a mill, although the different phases of construction visible in the walls may reflect different uses.



Old postcard with an image of the baths of Abū Zayd, beside the river Mijares.
Source: Emilio Vera's blog *Caminando hacia las alturas* (Walking towards the heights)



10. FUENTE DE LOS BAÑOS



Book printed in 1718, containing a series of accounts with the names and surnames of the people who claim to have been healed by this spring.

The water of this spring flows at a rate of around 6000 litres per minute and has a constant temperature of 25°C. The Spanish Royal Order of October 13 1863 declared these waters to be of public interest, but their healing powers were already known by this time.

In 1718, a book was printed with the title “A brief account of the great virtues bestowed by the Lord on the Waters of the Springs of Montanejos, of the Kingdom and Archbishopric of Valencia: for the consolation of the many who suffer painful accidents”.



THE SOCIAL CULTURE OF THE WATERS: MONTANEJOS, THERMAL VILLAGE

Civilisations throughout history have revered water, which has conditioned their places of settlement and their ways of life, forming part of their traditions and culture.

The hot springs of Mijares, which flow by Montanejos, have been renowned for centuries. As a result, tourists have flocked to the thermal village to enjoy its waters and its natural environment.



11. THE CASTLE OF LA VIÑAZA OR ARENÓS (PUEBLA DE ARENOSO)

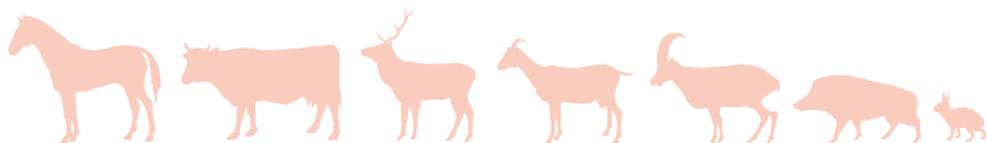
This castle is located on top of a hill, next to the functioning Arenós reservoir, in an area that has been populated since the Bronze Age, although the castle was erected in the period of Islamic rule. The earliest document containing a reference to the castle is the 1177 charter of Teruel, which defines the territorial boundaries. James the 1st granted it to Ximén Pérez de Tarazona, together with the title of Baron of Arenós. In addition

to Puebla de Arenoso, the barony included Cortes de Arenoso, Campos de Arenoso, Fuente La Reina, Los Calpes and some farmhouses in San Agustín.

The fortress consists of two enclosures: the upper enclosure occupies the centre of the rocky platform, while the wall of the lower enclosure can be seen underneath, sitting on the edge of the flat-topped hill.



Remains of the Castle of La Viñaza, partially hidden amongst the pines.



12. THE CUEVA NEGRA OF MONTANEJOS

THE CAVERN

Located on the right bank of river Mijares, a hundred metres from the river bed, this 'black cave' opens its large mouth on the northeast slope of an extension that descends from El Frontón (996 m).

The mouth of the cave measures 22 metres by 13 metres, and leads to an expansive cavern with large blocks and a steep slope on its west side. This large cavern has a surface area of 2300 m², and a volume of almost 40,000 m³.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEOLITHIC PERIOD

During this period, when the climate was similar to the current climate, people moved away from the predatory life (dedicated to hunting, fishing and fathering) to become producers (introduction of agriculture and livestock). This entailed a true revolution of the economy, with the sedentarisation process bringing larger groups of humans together and shifting social structures.

Environment, economy and way of life

The climate of the Neolithic period (5500-2500 BC) was temperate, somewhat more humid than the present climate, with alternating dryer periods. The Cueva Negra would have been surrounded by Quercus and Pinus forest; but throughout this period, the area was deforested to create land for cultivation and grazing.

Neolithic farmers grew mostly cereals, and kept livestock. They later began to grow different crops and keep other domestic animals, such as sheep, goats, oxen or pigs. The wild animals most frequently mentioned in archaeological records are rabbits and deer; the latter indicating a wooded environment.



Map with the location of the *Cueva Negra*.



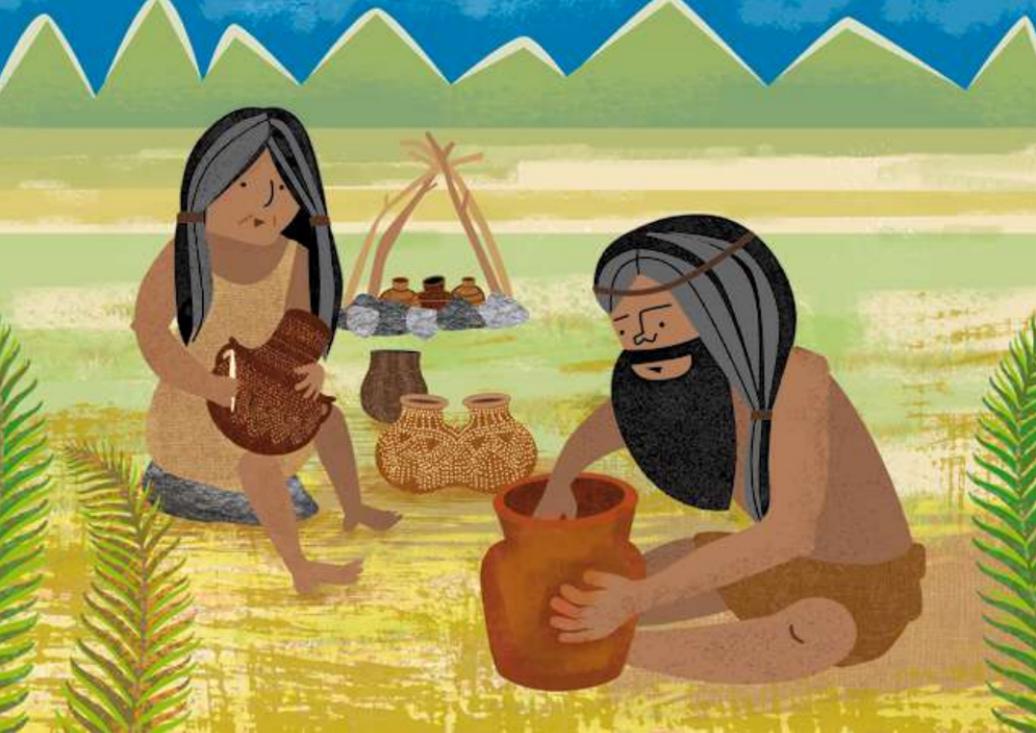


Illustration that recreates the Neolithic pottery production process.

12-A. POTTERY OF THE *CUEVA NEGRA*

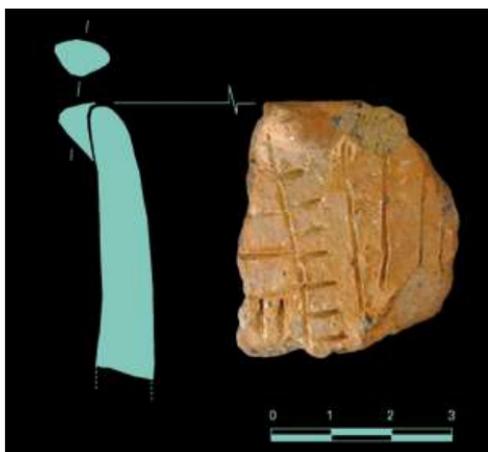
The timeline of the collection of pottery spans from the 6th and 5th millennium to the 2nd millennium BC. There are also a few pieces from the Late Bronze Age and even the Early Iron Age.

NEOLITHIC POTTERY

In the Early Neolithic period, a variety of techniques and different decorative motifs were applied to create compositions of some complexity.

The predominant technique is impression. Most pieces have been decorated by spatula with parallel vertical bands, although others have been decorated with a comb, a toothed chisel, or finger nails. We find significant use of the Boquique technique, characteristic of the Early Neolithic period.

There are also many examples of incised decoration, such as exhibit NI.6, which is decorated with vertical and horizontal lines.



Fragment of a bowl decorated with vertical and horizontal incised lines, forming a complex pattern.



Fragment decorated with the *Boquique* technique.



Neolithic basin with two dotted bands impressed under the rim.



Illustration that recreates the process of grinding with a hand mill.

12-B. LITHIC TECHNOLOGY

LITHIC MATERIALS OF THE CUEVA NEGRA

The tools carved in stone indicate a phase of Early Neolithic occupation (5800 BC–4400 BC).

BLADES AND BLADELETS:

KNIVES, GEOMETRIC MICROLITHS, DRILLS AND MISCELLANEOUS TOOLS

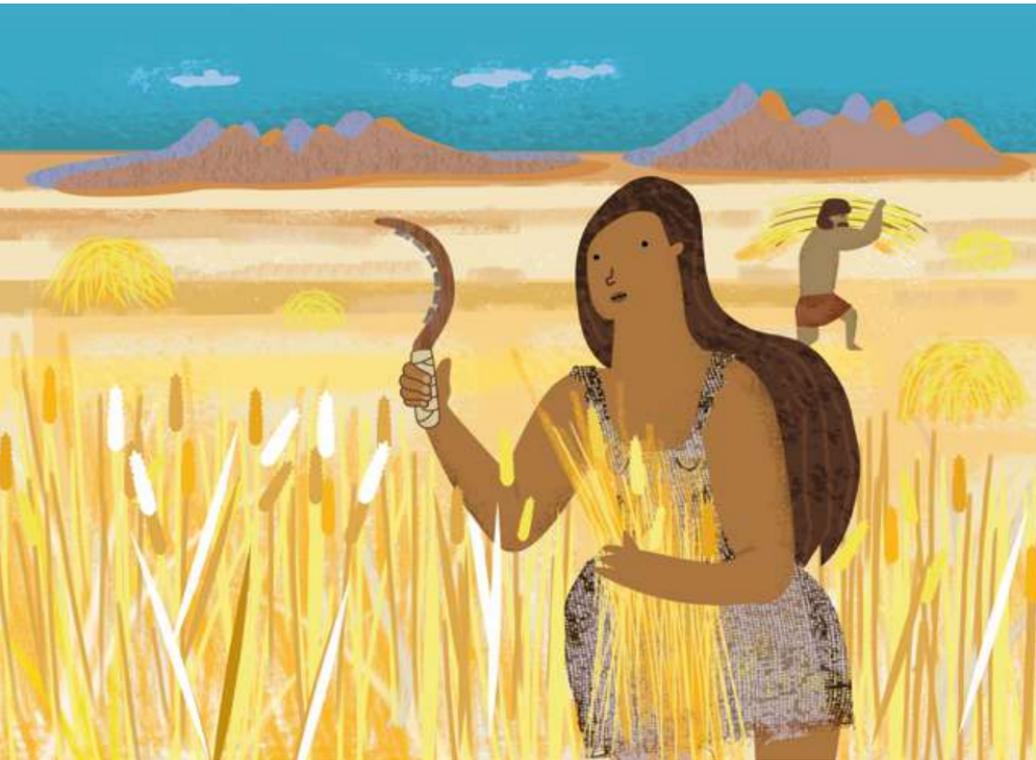
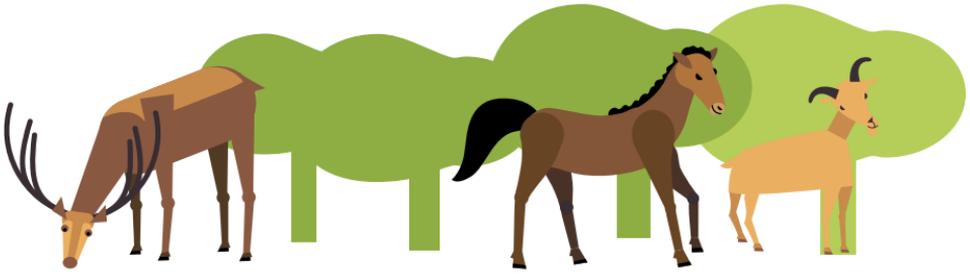
Some blades would have been used in their original state as hafted knives, as shown by the traces of use visible on their edges. Others were transformed into drills, chisels or scrapers.

AXES AND POLISHED ADZES

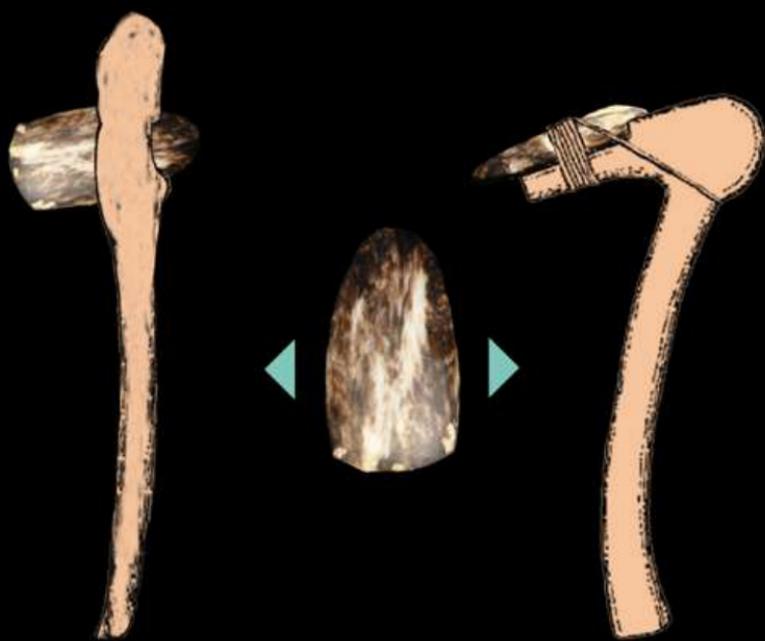
Two artefacts: one small adze made of imported sillimanite, and a larger one made from a piece of sandstone, which is abundant in the area.

GRINDING MATERIAL

The relative abundance of these tools in the *Cueva Negra* indicates subsistence production and in situ food processing.

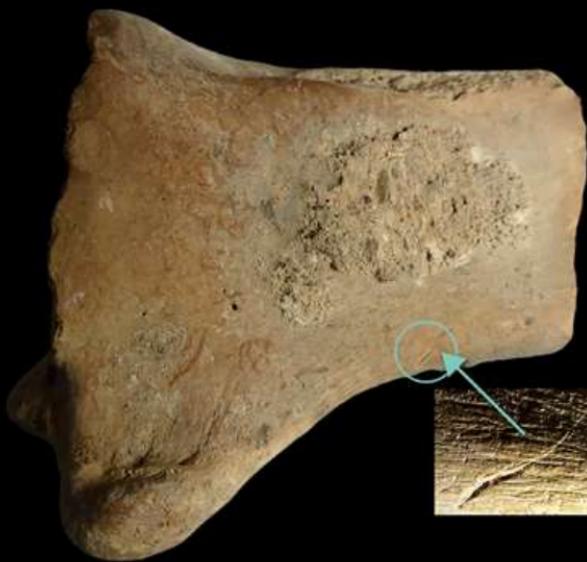


Harvesting cereal using a wooden sickle with stone (silex) teeth.



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MUSEUM GUIDE

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