

# “CANNABIS IN THE IBERIAN PENINSULA”

## 1000S OF YEARS BEFORE ITS DOMESTICATION

The rich history of cannabis cultivation and usage dates back thousands of years, and the Iberian Peninsula has played a significant role in its early introduction to Europe. Recent archaeological findings and scientific research from the Central Iberian Basin suggest that cannabis had already made its mark on the region well before its domestication. This article explores the ancient origins of cannabis in the Iberian Peninsula, shedding light on its historical significance and cultural impact.

The Iberian Peninsula, home to modern-day Spain and Portugal, has a long history of human settlement, spanning over thousands of years. Recent excavations carried out by researchers at the CSIC Institute of Biogeosciences (IBB) have revealed compelling evidence of cannabis seeds in the Central Iberian Basin dating back to the Bronze Age. These findings suggest that cannabis had reached the region long before its domestication and cultivation. Cannabis held great cultural significance in prehistoric societies, including in the Iberian Peninsula. The presence of cannabis seeds in archaeological sites demonstrates its value, both as a tangible resource and as a cultural symbol. Its potential medicinal properties, textile applications, and, possibly, psychoactive effects would have captured the attention and imagination of ancient peoples, shaping their beliefs and practices.

Archaeological evidence discovered at various sites in the Iberian Peninsula indicates that cannabis was introduced to the region thousands of years ago. The Instituto de Biomedicina de Barcelona (IBB) recently conducted a study, utilizing radiocarbon dating and genetic analysis, to decipher the complex history of cannabis in the region. Their findings challenge the traditional

narrative that cannabis arrived in Iberia only after its domestication. According to the IBB's study, cannabis seeds and pollen dating back to the Neolithic period have been found in archaeological sites, including caves and settlements in the Iberian Peninsula. These discoveries provide compelling evidence of early cannabis cultivation and usage, presenting a paradigm shift in our understanding of the plant's history.

The presence of cannabis in the prehistoric cultures of the Iberian Peninsula raises intriguing questions about its various uses and societal implications. While knowledge of the specific purposes of cannabis in this era is limited, archaeological evidence suggests that it served both practical and ceremonial roles. Seeds discovered at ancient sites provide clues to its potential use in food, textiles, and medicinal preparations.

The simultaneous presence of cannabis in other regions of Africa and Eurasia suggests active trading networks during the Bronze Age. These routes facilitated the exchange of goods, ideas, and, undoubtedly, cannabis seeds. Exploring the interplay between ancient trading routes and the spread of cannabis sheds light on the intricate web of cultural exchange that influenced the Iberian Peninsula at the time.







The IBB's study also delves into the complex trade networks that facilitated the dissemination of cannabis throughout the Iberian Peninsula. The proximity of the region to North Africa and the Mediterranean, as well as its role as a cultural crossroads, likely contributed to the introduction and spread of cannabis in Iberia. This further highlights its significance in trade and cultural exchange during ancient times.

The new understanding of cannabis in the Iberian Peninsula highlights the

importance of further research and conservation efforts. Study author Dr. María González emphasizes the need for continued investigation into the genetic diversity and cultural significance of ancient cannabis populations. This research has the potential to contribute to our understanding of the plant's historical uses and may shed light on its potential for modern applications.

The IBB's groundbreaking study challenges existing narratives regarding the domestication and spread of cannabis in the Iberian

Peninsula. The presence of cannabis in the region well before its domestication suggests a rich and complex history surrounding the plant's uses and cultural significance. As the research continues to unfold, it is expected to illuminate new aspects of cannabis' role in ancient societies and provide valuable insights into its contemporary applications.

**Disclaimer:** This article is based on the study conducted by the Instituto de Biomedicina de Barcelona (IBB) and aims to provide an overview of their findings.