



THE BICHA DE BALAZOTE

A brief recent history of this sculpture

This sculpture was discovered at the end of the 19th century in an area known as *Los Majuelos* owned by the Count of Balazote (Balazote, Albacete). Rodrigo Amador de los Ríos, who was working at that time at the National Museum of Archaeology, was the first person to mention the discovery in 1889. Arthur Engel made a series of sketches of the sculpture for the Louvre in Paris; the piece was in private hands until the late 1880s, when it was sent to the recently created Archaeological Museum of Albacete, under the supervision of the Provincial Committee for Monuments in the province. After suffering the consequences of being displayed in the open air in the gardens of the Provincial Palace, in 1910 the Provincial Council donated it to the National Museum of Archaeology (NMA). It became well-known thanks to the study by the archaeologist Antonio García y Bellido published in 1931, which included several photographs and a detailed description of the piece, suggesting its connections with the Greek culture.

Special points of interest:

- The *Bicha de Balazote* is a unique Iberian sculpture.
- It was found at the end of the 19th century, without any specific archaeological context. In the 1980s, a necropolis was found in the area.
- Balazote is on the so-called *via Augustea*, in the valley of the River Jardín or Balazote. This is a route that has existed since ancient times.

When the sculpture arrived at the museum in Madrid, it was placed in a room dedicated to *Iberian and Celtiberian Antiquities*, together with other pieces from the period, such as the *Gran Dama Oferente* and other votive offerings in stone from the Cerro de los Santos or the *Lioness of Baena*. As can be seen in the photo below, the cast of the *Dama de Elche* presided the centre of the room: at this time, the original was in the Louvre, from 1897 until it finally returned to Spain in 1941, during the dictatorship of Franco.



Left: Room at the National Museum of Archaeology with the Bicha in the foreground, and the Dama del Cerro de los Santos in the background. Glass plate from the 1950s. Archives of the NMA, inventory n.º FD/P/05611.

Above: Room III, Iberian and Celtiberian Antiquities. Postcard from the period 1917-1936 showing the typical museum design of the time. The postcard belongs to the documentary archive of the NMA, inventory n.º 2009/95/FF00001(18).

Characteristics of the sculpture

The sculpture is carved from limestone, and consists of two different pieces: one for the head, and another for the rest of the body. It shows a bull with a human head, with a beard and moustache. The figure has its legs folded beneath it, and has a base carved from the same block of stone. It is 90 cm long, 74 cm high, and 39 cm wide.

It has been suggested that it once formed a part of a funerary monument similar to the one in Pozo Moro (Chinchilla, Albacete), which would explain why it is only carved on its right side, which would have been at-



Lion from the funerary monument of Pozo Moro. This monument consists of a stepped tower, some 5 metres high in its current reconstruction. It is comprised of stone blocks with mythological scenes on their outer edges, and lions guarding each corner.

tached to the blocks of a tower, with figures on its corners. As has been noted on several occasions, it has undeniably oriental and Greek features for this ancient type of Iberian art. It is thought to date from between the end of the 4th century BC and early 5th century BC.



Tetrachma from Gela, Sicily.

«This sculpture is the daughter of Hellenes, and perhaps the granddaughter of Phoenicians, and the great-granddaughter of Mesopotamians» (Antonio García y Bellido, 1931).



Bicha de Balazote (MAN inventory no. 18529, photo: AMF).

The 3-D model

The figure was photographed with a Pentax 645Z camera and a lens with a fixed focal length of 55 mm. The camera automatically corrects distortions caused by the lens, as it has an internal calibration system. Due to its size, the figure was fixed in place and the camera was rotated around it in one full circle and one partial circle from a higher position to cover its upper part. Ambient room lighting was used, which is quite unusual, as this warmer lighting was mixed with daylight, with a colour temperature of 5500 k. This difference in lighting meant that colour calibration was not used, although white balance was applied. A total of 26 photographs were taken to create the model. The photos were then stitched together using a computer application, creating a *cloud* of points with coordinates in three dimensions. This *cloud* was then



used to create a mesh of triangles, onto which the colour was superimposed, based on the initial photographs. Finally, the model was closed using a shot adapted to the base.

The image shows the photographs taken to create the 3-D model: a total of 26, taken from different positions.



3-D model of the Bicha de Balazote. This is an embedded 3-D object; by opening this document in Acrobat Reader and clicking on the model, this will be activated an allow you to rotate it, change its size, make cross-sections, etc. The model is simplified to reduce its size: to see it in full quality, visit the link <https://skfb.ly/PJGs> and use the full screen setting on your monitor.

Participating bodies

MAN

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ARQUEOLÓGICO
NACIONAL

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GRUPOKRAKEN

ANÁLISIS DE DATOS
REPRODUCCIÓN Y MODELADO 3D



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CMPLab

CMPLab is a laboratory at the University Centre of Mérida, part of the University of Extremadura in Spain. It was created as a result of a project presented to a call for Funding for Scientific and Technical Equipment and Infrastructures from the State Secretariat for Research, and began operating in 2016. The CMPLab and its associated research groups use material for documenting cultural and archaeological heritage that includes two 3-D Go!Scan scanners, and a Pentax 645Z camera.



Basic bibliography:

- CHAPA BRUNET, T. 1985: *La escultura ibérica zoomorfa*. Madrid.
- IZQUIERDO, I. *et al.* 2004: *Diálogos en el país de los Iberos*. Madrid.
- OLMOS, R.; ROUILLARD, P. 2002: «Sculpture préromaine de la Péninsule Ibérique», *Documents d'Archeologie Méridionale*, 25: 269-283.

Other 3-D models from the series



Left: The Dama de Galera, from tomb 20 of the necropolis of la Tútugi (Galera, Granada), 7th century BC; centre: two-piece funerary urn from the necropolis of Tútugi, 3rd century BC; right: The Gran Dama Oferente from El Cerro de los Santos (Montealegre del Castillo, Albacete), 3rd century BC.