

PRESS RELEASE

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During the e 2009 field season a finding of great interest in the site of the cave of the Sima del Elefante has been produced, which deserves to be singled out as **a scientific fact of great significance in the study of our origins**.

It is recalled that in 2007 and 2008 the oldest human fossil of Western Europe were located at the site in the TE9 level. It was a jaw, which was the cover of the *Nature* magazine in April 2008, and a phalanx of hand which for the time being, remains unpublished. The dating of human fossils and the associated lithic industry is **1.3 million years**, according to the dating by the method of cosmogenic nuclides.

By July this year has been located **at the TE9 a small fragment of humerus of an adult**, which could belong to the same individual of the jaw, and which also **exhibits cut marks and percussion mark** similar to those seen in the remains of mammals of the same level. While we still hope to find further confirmation of additional human remains, **we can venture the hypothesis of the practice of cannibalism more than a million years ago in the Sierra de Atapuerca**. This would be the oldest case of cannibalism known in the history of human evolution, delaying by about half million years this practice anthropophagic, as it is well known, it is also well proven in the remains of *Homo antecessor* found in the neighbouring site of the Gran Dolina cave.

Atapuerca Research Team