
Conservation methodology applied to the *Homo neanderthalensis* remains from Cova Foradà site (Oliva, Valencia, Spain)

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Abstract

Cova Foradà is an archaeological site located in Oliva village (Valencia, Spain) in South-Eastern of Iberian Peninsula. The site is placed inside a karstic cave where several archaeological levels have been documented, from Upper Pleistocene to Holocene (including Mesolithic and Bronze Age levels). The excavations started at the end of the 70's in the twentieth century to the first decade of the twenty-first century. Between 2000 and 2010 field seasons different human remains were recovered associated with abundant fauna and Mousterian lithic industry. These fossils belong to different anatomical parts of the cranial and postcranial skeleton and have been attributed to *Homo neanderthalensis*. When the human remains are excavated at Cova Foradà site their state of conservation is deficient. They are fragile due to diagenetic processes and the hard sediment that cover their surfaces and difficult the excavation. Although the hard sediment concretion contributes to the preservation of the fossils, at the same time it difficulties their morphological and anatomical study and prevents the analysis of the bone and teeth surfaces. Since 2009 the fossils were transported to the Laboratory of Conservation at Institut Català de Paleoecologia Humana i Evolució Social to clean the human remains and to perform a new paleoanthropological study. In this work we explain the methodology and criteria applied to clean, to reconstruct and to store the human fossils recovered at Cova Foradà from 2000 to 2003. We describe the methodology to record the state of conservation before, during and after the conservation by 3D techniques and we propose a packing system to store and transport with the objective of guarantee their conservation in the best conditions.

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