

Study: First Europeans lived in Italy

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A team of Italian scientists says it has determined the first Europeans lived in southern Italy and not Spain, as had been thought.

Researchers from universities in Rome, Turin, Florence and Ferrara say a collection of fossilized flint tools and other instruments found in the southeastern region of Puglia has been dated to about 1.7 million years ago -- predating the oldest Spanish finds by nearly 1 million years, the Italian news agency ANSA reported.

The researchers say their discovery means paleontologists will have to redraw maps charting the path of ancient man out of Africa.

"This discovery reopens the debate on the origin of the population of the whole of Europe," said Carmelo Petronio of Rome's La Sapienza University. "It supports the theory that the first Europeans migrated westward across the Near East and not from northwestern Africa."

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