

Notes on North African prehistory

(From <http://www.afrique-du-nord.com/forum/viewtopic.php?pid=16297>)

There seem to be three phases in North African Paleolithic that can be attributed to modern humans:

1. **Aterian:** [Cremaschi et al \(1998\)](#) suggest that the old C14 datations that placed this culture after 30,000 BP are fundamentally wrong. Based in other datation systems (uranium specially) he concludes that Aterian has dates as old as c. 90,000 BP and that it should have gone extinct c. 65,000 BP because of excessive aridity. Nevertheless other authors think better of 25,000 or even as late as 15,000 BP.



Aterian tools

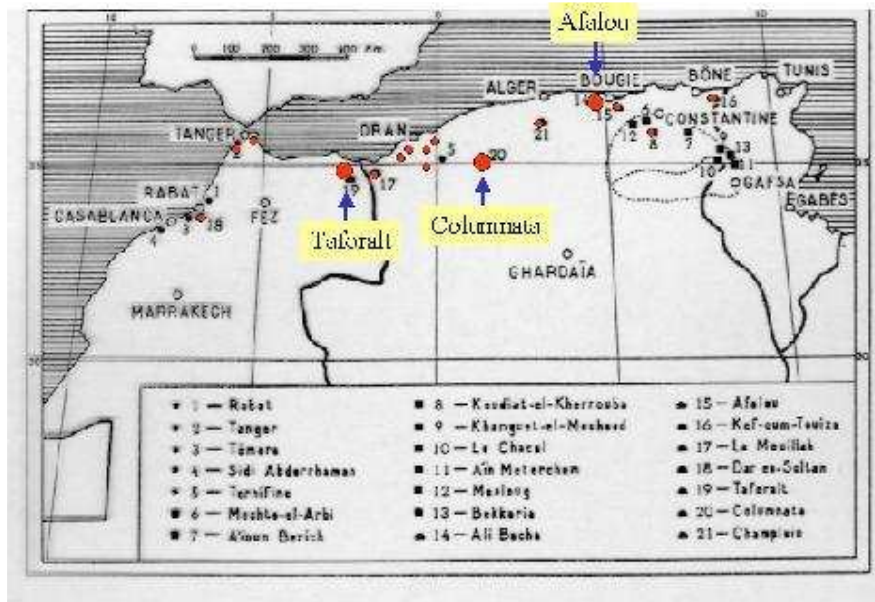
2. **Oranian (Iberomaurusian):** earliest date I found is 21,900 BP. But other sites manage shorter chronologies (since c.16,000 BP). There is controversy on wether it is an offshot of the peculiar cultures of SE Spain (Gravettian, Gravettizing Solutrean or even Parpalloan Magdalenian) or a derivation of Egyptian [Halfan culture](#). Its distribution was specially along the coasts. Latest date c. 7000 BP



A beautiful Oranian arrow point

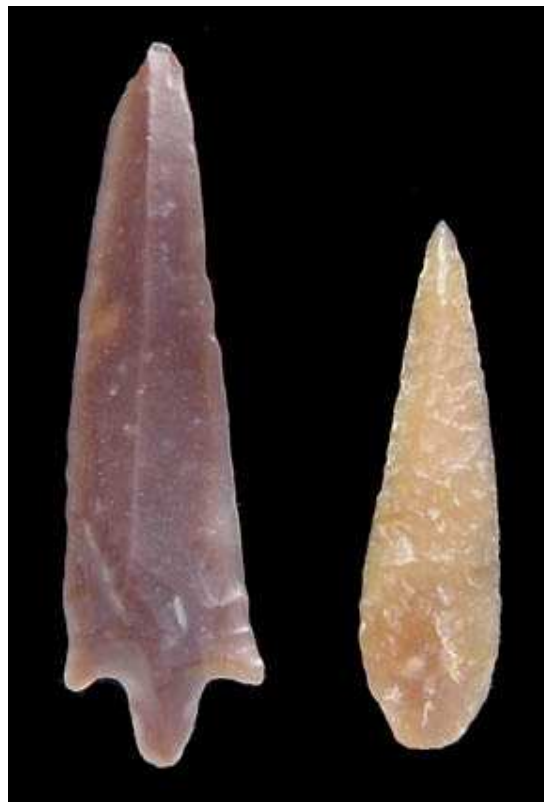


Oranian "Cro-Magnon" skull



Distribution of main Oranian sites

3. **Capsian:** arrives c. 10,000 BP and is considered finished with the Neolithic (c. 6500 BP). Its origin can be traced via the Lybian desert at southern Egypt and is generally considered at the origin of the Berber language (if this is not a Neolithic introduction), as it correlates well with the dates for the dispersion of Afroasiatic languages. It has a more interior distribution than Oranian. There is also a *Neolithic of Capsian tradition*, poorly studied that continues it.





Various Capsian tools and weapons

Forum post contributed by Maju, March 10, 2008.