

Timing and evolution of modern human origins in North Africa

Call for abstracts

Archaeological sites in North Africa provide rare sources of information on the lives of early modern humans and the best evidence for early expansion of the Palaeolithic groups in Northwest Africa. The sites contain Early Stone Age (ESA), Middle Stone Age (MSA), Late Stone Age (LSA), Neolithic and Protohistoric sequences. Some of these cultural phases appear to have occurred exclusively within *Homo sapiens* populations and are often characterized by an abundance of symbolic artefacts and other indicators of behavioural and cultural modernity. Recent research has helped clarify significant uncertainties around the nature, timing, and significance of cultural variability throughout the period spanning from 770,000 years ago to the 8th century BC (Before Christ).

Objectives

This session aims to contribute to a better understanding of both human origins and cultural behaviour in North Africa, and thus fits perfectly with the aims of the UISPP.

The archaeological excavations undertaken by joint North African-International teams confirmed the presence of the ESA dated to 1.8 million years, several other MSA sites extraordinarily rich in artefactual and organic remains including both the earliest *Homo sapiens* human remains, dated to ~300,000 years, and the oldest shell beads, dated to between ~140,000 and 150,000 years. The LSA archaeological sequences yield abundant fauna, lithics and human remains, including the largest Epipalaeolithic necropolis (13,000–12,000 years ago) to be recently excavated in North Africa, containing one of the earliest trepanations and the earliest human DNA from Africa, with its implication to identify the connections between North Africa, West Africa, Southern Europe and the Levant. The Neolithic displays one of the oldest domesticated fauna in North Africa and cereals dated to more than 6,000 years ago. Both the Neolithic and Protohistory display one of the richest rock art traditions in Africa. Some of these prehistoric periods provide evidence of trans-Saharan and trans-Mediterranean exchanges.

Several collaborations were set up within a range of different projects and which bring together numerous partners from North Africa and other international institutions. These archaeological projects provide expert training for the new generation of scientists and postgraduate students who are beginning archaeology careers in universities, museums and heritage management. They offer excellent opportunities for knowledge transfer and to develop the future research career prospects for postgraduates, and they also allow new networks to be built between universities, museums and heritage organizations, consolidating links between both North African and international universities.

Organizing committee:

Abdeljalil Bouzouggar, Larbi Boudad, Houda Ouddouche and Driss Chahid

E-mail:

abouzouggar@yahoo.fr

<https://uispp2026.com/>