Electron spin resonance (ESR) dating has been carried out on ungulate tooth enamel samples from the Pleistocene deposits of Mugharet el ‘Aliya, Atlantic coastal Morocco. Age estimations for wave-induced breaching of the cavity and initial sand deposition (Layer 10) are 62 ± 6 ka BP by the Early Uptake (EU) model and 81 ± 9 ka BP by Linear Uptake (LU). Samples from Aterian occupations in Layers 5 and 6 and a possible occupation in Layer 9 yielded EU estimated ages between 39 ± 4 and 44 ± 5 ka BP and LU ages between 47 ± 5 and 56 ± 5 ka BP. Incorporating the entire range of EU and LU model ages, the Aterian occupations are dated to between 35 and 60 ka BP. When compared with the published, mostly radiocarbon-based ca. 40–20 ka BP chronology for the Moroccan Aterian (e.g., Debenath, 1992), these new results imply an Aterian arrival or Mousterian-to-Aterian transition occurring beyond the upper limit of the radiocarbon method.

Keywords: ELECTRON SPIN RESONANCE, CHRONOMETRIC DATING, ATERIAN, MIDDLE PALAEOLITHIC, MUGHARET EL ‘ALIYA, MOROCCO.

Introduction

In Morocco, more than 60 cave and open-air sites possess Middle Palaeolithic archaeological deposits (Wengler, 1997) (Figure 1). Based on stone artefact typology and technological features, these assemblages have been divided into two facies: Mousterian and Aterian. Traditionally, the Aterian has been classified as an “evolved” end-stage of the local Mousterian, demonstrating greater laminarity and higher proportions of Upper Palaeolithic retouched tool types (e.g., endscrapers and burins) than its predecessor (Bordes, 1976–77). Most significantly, the Aterian is characterized by the presence of classic fossiles directeurs: pedunculates and bifacial foliates. A Mousterian-Aterian transitional sequence following these criteria has recently been advanced for the Grotte du Rhafas and Station Météo sites in eastern Morocco, where Aterian and Proto-Aterian deposits directly overlie Mousterian assemblages (Wengler, 1985–86, 1997). Studies of hominin fossils from Mousterian (Jebel Irhoud) and various Aterian localities in Morocco provide further support for a model of gradual, local evolution of early anatomically modern human groups during the late Middle and Upper Pleistocene (Hublin, 1993).

The absolute chronology for the Middle Palaeolithic in this region is less certain. Five electron spin resonance (ESR) determinations on tooth enamel samples from Jebel Irhoud suggest a Mousterian occupation during Oxygen Isotope Stage (OIS) 6, corresponding to 130–190 ka BP (Gru¨n & Stringer, 1991). However, the Early Uptake (EU) model age estimates range between 90 and 125 ka BP and Linear Uptake (LU) between 105 and 190 ka BP, indicating substantial uncertainty in the age determination, especially given the close stratigraphic association of the enamel samples (Hublin, 1993). The Aterian, represented at many more sites in the Maghreb, is generally assigned to the period between 40 and 20 ka BP on the basis of numerous radiocarbon and a few thermoluminescence (TL) and optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) dates (Debenath, 1992). Despite the appearance of continuity provided by the archaeological and skeletal evidence, the radiometric ages imply that hominin populations abandoned the region during the first half of the last glacial period. In the Central Sahara, Aterian occupations seem to have much greater...
dated Aterian deposits (e.g., Pericot, 1942; Debénath et al., 1986; Otte, 1997; Bouzouggar et al., in prep.). This position has faced criticism on both technological and chronological grounds (for a thorough recent review, see Straus, 2001).

The extended occupation hiatus and very late survival of the Middle Palaeolithic in Morocco may be more apparent than real, reflecting limitations with the dating techniques employed. Most of the Aterian radiocarbon dates are conventional and derived from bulk samples of marine and terrestrial shell, bone, or carbonaceous earth, materials particularly susceptible to contamination (Aitken, 1990). Recrystallization, open-system carbon exchange, or minimal sample pretreatment may all result in significant underestimations of true age. In addition, a number of the dates are infinite, implying that some Aterian deposits may lie beyond the upper limit of the radiocarbon method. There is thus considerable ambiguity in the absolute Aterian chronology that could be confronted through the application of alternative dating techniques. In this paper, we present new ESR results on ungulate tooth enamel from stratified Aterian deposits at Mugharet el ‘Aliya, a limestone cavity on the Atlantic coast of northwestern Morocco.

**Background**

One of the “Caves of Hercules”, Mugharet el ‘Aliya is located at Cap Ashakar (35°45’N, 5°56’W), approximately 4 km south of Cap Spartel and 11 km southwest of Tangier, Morocco (Figure 1). It formed as an internal cavity by groundwater dissolution of the surrounding Upper Pliocene (Alouane, 1997) conglomeratic limestone outcrop. The chamber was subsequently breached by wave action during a high sea level phase (Howe, 1967), an event probably dating to the Last Interglacial (OIS 5). Associated with the cave breach, an uneven terrace of limestone rockfall filled with cemented beach deposits extends from within the cave entrance 5–10 m west toward the ocean. A single uncorrected $^{230}$Th/$^{234}$U determination on shell fragments from these cemented beach deposits, considered Ouljian or Last Interglacial in age according to the Moroccan marine sedimentary sequence (e.g., Weisrock et al., 1999), yielded a date of 125 ± 10 ka BP (Stearns & Thurber, 1965). At the base of the rockfall, a low (5–6 m above mean sea level) marine limestone platform, formed as waves cut into and eroded the rockfall deposits during a more recent high sea level phase (i.e., mid-Holocene), extends an additional 15–20 m west to the edge of the water. Presently, the cave entrance lies 18 m above sea level, 6 m below the top of the limestone outcrop hosting the cavern. The chamber is approximately 15·5 m long and 12 m wide, with a west-facing entrance.

Amateur excavators from Tangier conducted sporadic excavations at Mugharet el ‘Aliya between 1936...
and 1938, clearing most of the recent and Neolithic deposits (see Gilman, 1975). In 1939, Carleton Coon of Harvard University began a systematic study of the Pleistocene levels (Coon, 1957) and provided training in excavation methods to the amateurs, who continued the work through 1940 (Howe & Movius, 1947). Bruce Howe (Harvard University) and Charles Stearns (Tufts University) visited the site in 1947 to collect soil samples and study the stratigraphy, concluding research at the site (Howe, 1967). All of the excavated material is now stored at the Peabody Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, U.S.A. Nearly all of the sediment was removed from the chamber during excavation, and Mugharet el ‘Aliya has recently been converted into a café.

**Stratigraphy**

The Pleistocene deposits were described by Stearns (Howe, 1967: 27–35, 95–110) (Figure 2), whose work guided our interpretation of the local palaeoclimate. Based on the 1947 stratigraphic profile, he defined five units composed predominantly of fine- to medium-grained, well sorted sands. All of the deposits were of eolian origin, derived from beaches that repeatedly formed outside the cave during low sea level phases of the last glacial cycle. Differences in the colour and texture of the sediments therefore reflected conditions within the cave during and after deposition.

Beginning with the lowest Layer 10, here we describe the lithology of the sedimentary deposit:

**Layer 10: Cemented sand (includes “Layer 11” in Howe, 1967)**

This layer consisted of yellow-white beach sand and well-rounded pebbles deposited shortly after the chamber was breached by wave erosion. The rockfall debris altered the configuration of the original cavity floor, producing a “new” floor sloping steeply downward.
from the northwest to the southeast sectors of the chamber (Figure 2). Therefore, these deposits were confined to the back, southern end of the cave with thickness between 0·05 and 4·5 m. The sand may have been deposited during climatic conditions comparable to those in the area today. Subsequently, the sand was cemented through interaction with carbonate-rich groundwater. There were some areas of unconsolidated sand (defined as “Layer 11” in Howe, 1967), separated from the cemented portions by thin, black manganese and iron oxide crusts. The deposit was capped by travertine layer 0·02–0·05 m thick, indicating a period of high cave humidity and somewhat warmer external temperatures.

Layer 9: Red sand 2
This layer was defined by red, clayey sand. Though loose in the centre of the chamber, it was cemented by calcium carbonate deposits along the cave walls and adjacent to the entrance platform. Yellowish beach sand was probably deposited during a cool, low sea level phase, and then subsequently weathered and rubified during a warmer period with increased precipitation. Thickness varied from 0·05 m near the entrance platform to 1·2 m in the southeast corner of the cave.

Layers 8 and 7: Grey and orange sands
These discontinuous lenses of loose sand had thicknesses between 0·05 m and 0·80 m. They were interspersed by crusts of calcium carbonate, particularly along the cave walls and near the entrance platform. Calcite weathering and crust formation similar to the top of Layer 10 imply high cave humidity and relatively warm, wet outside conditions.

Layer 6: Brown sand
This layer consisted of brown, clayey, sand of uniform texture deposited when the sea level was lower than today. Retention of iron oxides and formation of secondary carbonate nodules imply cool, dry depositional conditions within the cave, although there was some cementation along the walls. Thickness varied from 0·10 m in the northern end of the cavity to 1·6 m in the central and southeast zones.

Layer 5: Red sand 1
This loose-to-consolidated red sand closely resembled Layer 9, and also weathered and rubified after deposition during a warmer, wetter climatic regime. Associated with this weathering, discontinuous calcium carbonate crusts formed in the deposit, especially along the walls and near the cave mouth. The deposit varied in thickness from 0·50 m (northern end of cave) to the 1·4 m (central region).

Layers 4–1: Holocene deposits
Based on the recollections and photographs of the amateur excavators, these sandy layers were bedded horizontally to a maximum thickness of 1·7 m. Layer 4 contained Cardial and Channeled Ware (Neolithic) ceramic fragments, animal bones, and stone tools as well as a human child’s skull within charcoal-rich sediment. Layer 3 was a thin, discontinuous carbonate crust, while Layers 2 and 1 yielded a mixture of Roman, Mediaeval and recent artefacts (Howe, 1967: 103–104).

According to Stearns, Pleistocene deposition proceeded in three major phases: Layer 10, Layer 9, and Layers 6 and 5. Each of these phases was associated with a sea level lower than that found outside the cave today, allowing eolian deposition of beach sands. This setting would be consistent with sea levels during stadial periods of the last glacial cycle. Following this model, Layers 6 and 5 should be considered a single depositional unit. The red colour of Layers 5 and 9 is the result of post-depositional weathering processes in the soil related to increased ground water circulation and calcium carbonate precipitation, linked to a wetter environment within the cave. Thin travertine deposits bracketed the top and bottom of Layer 9 and occurred in small lenses near the walls and dripline (cave entrance) in the upper layers, suggesting repeated instances of locally higher moisture and cooler temperatures than today. The rubification and carbonate deposition phases could be associated with interstadial periods, during which there was little or no sand deposition. Layers 8 and 7, discontinuous deposits representing a time of carbonate crust formation and limited aeolian contribution, might have marked a transitional phase from humid to drier and colder local conditions.

Archaeological Content
The Middle Palaeolithic stone artefacts from Mugharet el ‘Aliya were described by Howe (1967: 110–146). Based on museum archive records, recollections of B. Howe (personal communication, 1997), and several instances of missing or empty artefact boxes noted during examination of the collection by one of us (PJW), there have evidently been some losses, both of tools and debitage, during museum storage. The extant portion of the original assemblage held at the Peabody Museum has recently been reanalysed by Bouzouggar et al. (in prep.). An isolated core found in an area of unconsolidated sand in Layer 10 was undoubtedly intrusive from overlying deposits. Layer 9 yielded a small assemblage (Bouzouggar et al., report 23 artefacts, to 54 in Howe) including sidescrapers, retouched blades, and two oval bifacial foliates. The foliates were recovered near the upper surface of Layer 9, leaving open the possibility that they were intrusive from adjacent Layer 6. Crusts and brown-coloured sediment adhere to several more of the artefacts, leaving only a
handful assigned with confidence to Layer 9 by Howe (1967: 144); so scanty is this assemblage that it may reflect sediment reworking by porcupines (see below) or groundwater rather than hominin occupation. The 13 lithics from Layer 7 may similarly have been intrusive from above.

By contrast, Layers 6 and 5, yielding 750 and 431 lithic remains, respectively (Howe, 1967; Bouzouggar et al., report 472 and 10 lithic artefacts, respectively), display a clear Aterian affinity. The extant Layer 6 assemblage includes numerous bifacial foliates and sidescrapers, a few pedunculates, and several blades, Mousterian points and endscrapers, all on high-quality, local flint. According to Howe (1967), Layer 5 yielded proportionally fewer foliates and more Middle Palaeolithic tools (e.g., sidescrapers, Mousterian points) than Layer 6, but the assemblages are otherwise comparable, supporting the premise that the two layers represent a single depositional series or occupational sequence. Bouzouggar et al. (in prep.) report evidence of the linéale Levallais method (Boëda et al., 1990), whereby a single large flake (éclat préférentiel) is removed from a radially and (in this case) bifacially prepared core. Some cores continued to be rejuvenated and exploited by this method until they were quite small (<3–4 cm). In addition, rare blades found in the Layer 6 assemblage were removed from opposed platform cores, and some of the smaller cores became discoid in the final phase of reduction. Cortical flakes are rare and retouched pieces (tools, flakes, and flake fragments) comprise >60% of the total lithic material in these layers (Howe, 1967: 112), suggesting that Mugharet el ‘Aliya may have been repeatedly occupied for short episodes by mobile Aterian forager groups employing a highly curated toolkit (e.g., Binford, 1979). However, the selectivity of the collection places significant constraints on such inferences. Small debitage fragments were not regularly saved during excavation (B. Howe, personal communication, 1997).

The Pleistocene faunal material has recently been analysed by Wrinn (in prep.). All bone fragments were apparently saved during the Coon phase of the excavation (Coon, 1957: 61), yet it is clear that during succeeding phases and/or museum storage, a substantial portion of the small splinters and “unidentifiable” shaft fragments was thrown away. However, the existing collection is undoubtedly more complete, especially with respect to teeth (B. Howe, personal communication, 1997), than is the case for the lithic artefacts. Out of more than 3800 identifiable specimens, 29 animal taxa were recorded, including at least three species of gazelle, zebra, wild cattle, Pelorovis, hartebeest, warthog, golden jackal, and spotted hyena. Hyena coprolites and teeth from juvenile hyenas indicate that denning occurred intermittently throughout the depositional history of Mugharet el ‘Aliya. The assemblage from Layer 9 shows the strongest signature for collection by carnivores and possibly porcupines. At the same time, there is a sharp decline in taxonomic evenness between the lower Layers 10 and 9 and the upper Layers 6 and 5, with the latter deposits overwhelmingly dominated by gazelle remains. This shift in the faunal composition may reflect the arrival of Aterian forager groups coupled with increasing overall aridity in the region.

Hominid remains discovered at Mugharet el ‘Aliya include three isolated teeth and a juvenile maxilla containing three teeth (Senyurek, 1940). None of the fragments was found in situ, but fluorine analysis of a sample of the maxilla produced a fluorine/phosphate ratio consistent with animal bones from Layer 5 (Howe, 1967: 143). Initially assigned to Homo neanderthalensis (Senyurek, 1940), the maxilla shares morphological characters in common with specimens from other Aterian localities (e.g., Dar es Soltan II, Grotte des Contrabandiers, Grotte Zouhrah) (Hublin, 1993), and has recently been reassigned to early anatomically modern human (Homo sapiens Subspecies indet.) (Minugh-Purvis, 1993).

**ESR dating**

**Sample preparation and experimental methods**

The ungluted tooth enamel samples were taken from the Peabody Museum collection during the course of the faunal analysis (Wrinn, in prep.). They were sourced from each of the principal Pleistocene sediment layers (Table 1); Figure 3 gives approximate sample locations on the plan view. It should be emphasized that each sample had adhering sediment of the colour and composition appropriate to the assigned layer. The enamel on the teeth was in excellent condition with a pristine white colour. The teeth were prepared according to the protocol given in Rink (1997). The sediments attached to the teeth were heavily cemented. Sediments located less than 3 mm away from the enamel surfaces on the tooth were analysed for their U, Th and K concentrations, and used to determine the beta and gamma dose rates to the enamel from sediment, except for sample 97121a, where sediment recovered from the same stratum was used for the calculation. In this site, where the sediment is primarily sandy without a large contribution from

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>McMaster sample no.</th>
<th>Harvard ID</th>
<th>Archaeological layer</th>
<th>Taxon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>97123a</td>
<td>NWC.R1B/234</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bovid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97122a</td>
<td>NEB.R7/218</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bovid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97121a</td>
<td>I.K.R2/25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Bovid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97120a</td>
<td>1.10(BC)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Equid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Locations and taxonomic designations of Mugharet el ‘Aliya tooth samples
limestone elements, it was suspected that the dose rates derived from sediment attached to teeth should give reasonably accurate estimates of the bulk gamma dose rates.

The ages were calculated using the software ROSY version 1.41 (Brennan et al., 1999). This program includes new beta attenuation calculations (Yang et al., 1998) based on One-group theory which have recently been used in a number of ESR dating studies. The alpha dose rates were determined using the option “Varies with energy”. An initial \(^{234}\)U/\(^{238}\)U ratio of 1.4 was assumed in the age calculations. The density of the cementum, dentine and enamel were based on the average values of Rink & Hunter (1998): 2.54, 2.82 and 3.00 g cm\(^{-3}\), respectively. The density of the sediment was assumed to be 2.00 g cm\(^{-3}\). We used uncertainties of \pm 10\% of the density value in all cases. The moisture contents of the cementum, dentine and enamel were assumed to be 5 \pm 5\%, 5 \pm 5\% and 0 \pm 0\% respectively. The U, Th and K concentrations in sediment and the U concentrations in dental tissues were determined using neutron activation analysis at the McMaster Nuclear Reactor. The samples were irradiated using a \(^{60}\)Co gamma radiation source to the following dose levels: 10, 20, 40, 80, 120, 160, 240, 320, 480 Gy. The \(g=2.0018\) ESR signal intensity data was fitted with a single saturating exponential function using \(1/\text{intensity}^2\) weighting. The error in the gamma equivalent dose was determined following the approach of Brumby (1992). The software V-Fit (courtesy of E. Bulur) was used for the fitting and error calculations.

The moisture contents of the sediment could not be measured using fresh samples, thus the ages were calculated using three different geologically reasonable values: 0\%, 10 \pm 10\% and 20 \pm 10\%. These values and their uncertainties were used to calculate beta sediment dose rate, and the values plus a 20\% error in the dose rate value were used to reconstruct the gamma dose rate.

The gamma, beta and alpha dose rates to the teeth were significant but moderate, making the contribution from cosmic radiation more significant than in other settings. Because of this a detailed analysis of the geometry of the cave roof and the overlying sediments was needed to determine a reasonably accurate assessment of the shielding geometry above the teeth. The cosmic dose rate to the samples was reconstructed using a combination of the approximate sample locations on the plan view (Figure 3) and the cross section showing the thickness of the cave roof in Figure 2. Samples 97120a and 97121a come from the rear part of the cave, while 97122a and 97123a come from areas closer to the front of the cave, near openings to much smaller cavities in the limestone (Figure 3).

The cosmic dose rates were calculated using the data of Prescott & Hutton (1988) as incorporated in the ROSY version 1.41 software program. This calculation is based on a shielding geometry corresponding to a layer of overburden of uniform thickness and which extends to the horizon in all directions. However, in the cave nearly all of the shielding is due to the overburden of cave roof that lies away from the entrance and landward of the cave. This limestone has an approximate thickness of about 8 m. To correct for the fact that this overburden does not continue seaward, the calculation is made using the half-thickness of the cave roof that extends landward. Thus a shielding of 4 m was used as the shielding attributable to limestone overburden for all samples, since even the samples toward the rear of the cave receive negligible shielding seaward.

The sediment thicknesses above the samples must also be considered in the shielding geometry. As the sediments accumulated over the history of burial this thickness was changing significantly. To accommodate this, we have assumed that the average sedimentation rate was constant, which yields an approximation that the average overburden above each sample was 50\% of that encountered at the time of excavation. The total shielding for each sample was then calculated as the sum of 50\% of the sediment overburden plus 4 m associated with the roof. Considering all four teeth, the cosmic dose rate makes up 12 to 21\% of the early uptake total dose rates, and 16 to 24\% of the linear uptake total dose rates.
Results

The analytical data for the dental tissues and the sediments studied are given in Table 2. The sediments are generally quite low in U, yielding very low gamma dose rates, which though low, are typical of some calcite rich sedimentary environments in caves. The teeth have a low to moderate level of uranium in the calcite rich sedimentary environments in caves. The dose rates, which though low, are typical of some sediments studied are given in Table 2. The sediments.

ESR Dating of Tooth Enamel From Aterian Levels at Mugharet el ‘Aliya (Tangier, Morocco) 129

Table 2. Analytical data on dental tissues and sediments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>McMaster sample no.</th>
<th>D_EU (Gy)</th>
<th>U En (ppm)</th>
<th>U Den (ppm)</th>
<th>U Cem (ppm)</th>
<th>U Sed (ppm)</th>
<th>Th Sed (ppm)</th>
<th>K Sed (Wt%)</th>
<th>Enamel thickness (μm)</th>
<th>Sed side rem (μm)</th>
<th>Dentine side rem (μm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>97123a</td>
<td>25.30</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>1470</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97122a</td>
<td>20.20</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>1408</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97121a</td>
<td>18.20</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>1152</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97120a</td>
<td>38.75</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>11.71</td>
<td>9.37*</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>1121</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All analytical uncertainties are shown as ± in values in parentheses. D_EU is equivalent dose; U is uranium concentration; Th is thorium concentration; K is potassium concentration; Sed is sediment; rem is removed. Thickness of cementum = 920 μm.

Table 3. ESR dating results (ROSY Ver. 1.41) for Mugharet el ‘Aliya

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>McMaster sample no.</th>
<th>Sample no.</th>
<th>EU Age (ka)</th>
<th>LU Age (ka)</th>
<th>EU Age (ka)</th>
<th>LU Age (ka)</th>
<th>EU Age (ka)</th>
<th>LU Age (ka)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>97123a</td>
<td>97121a</td>
<td>41 (3)</td>
<td>53 (5)</td>
<td>42 (3)</td>
<td>56 (5)</td>
<td>43 (3)</td>
<td>58 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97122a</td>
<td>37 (4)</td>
<td>44 (5)</td>
<td>39 (4)</td>
<td>47 (5)</td>
<td>41 (4)</td>
<td>49 (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97121a</td>
<td>43 (5)</td>
<td>49 (6)</td>
<td>44 (5)</td>
<td>51 (6)</td>
<td>47 (5)</td>
<td>56 (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97120a</td>
<td>59 (5)</td>
<td>77 (6)</td>
<td>62 (6)</td>
<td>81 (9)</td>
<td>64 (6)</td>
<td>85 (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Uncertainty in individual age estimates is shown in parentheses after the age value in ka.

Discussion

The variation in age with moisture content is much smaller than the uncertainty in the burial age.
associated with uranium uptake into the dental tissues for the uppermost and lowermost teeth. The small amount of uranium uptake into the other two teeth (97121a and 97122a) yields EU and LU model ages for each individual tooth that are statistically indistinguishable. Thus these two teeth currently represent the best estimates for possible burial ages in the site. This is the best situation for ESR dating of teeth in a site; when little U-uptake occurs, the precision on the age estimate is mainly influenced by the other sources of error. Since this site is in a maritime setting, the 0% moisture content values are probably not applicable, and for the following discussion we refer to only the age estimates calculated using 10 and 20% moisture (Table 4). Provided that either the EU or LU model is the correct U-uptake model, we can conservatively say, taking into account the other cited sources of uncertainty, that the burial events for tooth 97122a occurred between 35 and 54 ka BP, and that of the next deeper tooth (97121a) occurred between 39 and 62 ka BP.

The other two teeth in the site had considerably larger amounts of U-uptake, giving spreads in the EU and LU model ages that are larger than the uncertainties in those model ages. Uranium series dating of the dentine and enamel in tooth 97123a, and the dentine and cementum in 97120a is underway to refine the true burial ages. However, because of the lower uranium uptake into the teeth situated between them, we can argue on the basis of their stratigraphic position for minimum and maximum age estimates. Thus the uppermost sample must be younger than the age range of 33–53 ka BP, and the deepest sample must be older than the age range of 38–62 ka BP. In order to be certain that this argument is factual, U-series dating is needed to make sure that either the EU or LU model is appropriate for teeth 97121a and 97122a. But if we accept the hypothesis that this is the case for all teeth, as has been proven in many cases for teeth which have been found in limestone caves, then the upper three teeth would have been deposited between about 35 and 60 ka BP, while the lower sample would have been deposited between about 60 and 100 ka BP.

The LU ESR age estimate for Layer 10 (81 ± 9 ka BP) lies within late OIS 5b or warm-phase 5a (c. 90–71 ka BP). This result is consistent with the proposed timing of the cave breaching event, resulting from wave erosion during a high sea level phase of OIS 5. Waves probably carried sediment into the newly exposed cave, and additional sand may have entered from nearby exposed beaches during a subsequent cool, lower sea level phase (i.e., OIS 5d, 5b or 4). Similar absolute dates have been obtained on other Ouljian (Last Interglacial marine terrace sediments along the Atlantic coast of Morocco (Texier et al., 1994; Weisrock et al., 1999). The single $^{230}$Th/$^{234}$U determination of 125 ± 10 ka BP on shell from adjoining cemented beach deposits (Stearns & Thurber, 1965) may correspond to the same high sea stand. The ESR results support major accumulation and cementation of the Layer 10 sands and associated fauna during late OIS 5 or OIS 4.

Enamel samples from the overlying Layers 9, 6, and 5 produced nearly identical EU and LU ESR age estimates, as discussed above. All of these dates fall within OIS 3, a period of marked climatic instability according to various proxy data (e.g., Zhao et al., 1995; Petit et al., 1999). This may account for the relatively rapid succession of cool, dry (depositional) and warmer, moister (rubification, carbonate precipitation) episodes recorded in these strata. The close overlap in age estimates for Layers 6 and 5 is consistent with the view that these layers represent a single depositional episode. It is probable that the Aterian archaeological material recovered from these strata derived from a sequence of occupations prior to the reddening and cementation of Layer 5.

The approximate age range for the Aterian occupations at Mugharet el ‘Aliya is 35–60 ka BP. Due to its meagerness and questionable provenience, the artefact assemblage from Layer 9 should probably be excluded from discussions of the Aterian. Stearns (Howe, 1967: 35) had previously reported a range of 31–26 ka BP for Layers 6 and 5 based on correlations between the cave sediments and northern European glacial cycles as they were understood prior to the development of the marine oxygen isotope record. More significantly, the assemblage from Layer 6 had been assigned to the “Full” (Howe, 1967) or “Final” (Debénath et al., 1986) Aterian phase because of the qualitatively fine craftsmanship of the pedunculates and bifacial foliates and the high frequency of the latter. This assessment related to the typological evolution of the industry proposed by Caton-Thompson (1945), and later re-worked for the Maghreb by Antoine (1950). According to their developmental schemes, the latest Aterian assemblages contained the highest proportions and most specialized forms of pedunculates and/or bifacial foliates. If correct, the ESR dates for Layers 6 and 5 imply that the classic Aterian fossiles directeurs behave poorly as temporal markers.

The new ESR estimates represent a significant departure from the short Maghreb Aterian chronology of c. 40–20 ka BP (e.g., Debénath, 1992; Wengler, 1997) and suggest that the earliest Aterian sites in Morocco probably lie at or beyond the limit of the radiocarbon dating. Figure 4 places the Mugharet el ‘Aliya results alongside published dates for the Aterian in Morocco, organized by material dated and the radiometric method employed (for more detail, see Hawkins, 2001). Many of the published dates are infinite and only a handful may correspond to calendar ages <30 ka BP. Nearly all of the radiocarbon dates are conventional and were obtained from bulk samples of shell or carbonaceous sediment. As Stafford et al. (1991) have demonstrated, dates obtained from poorly preserved or minimally pretreated bone consistently underestimate true age relative to dates from collagen or individual amino acids. Delibrias et al. (1982) do not identify the
bone material (i.e., collagen, apatite, etc.) for the Grotte des Contrabandiers bone date, nor do they define the term "carbonaceous earth" in reference to samples from this site (Level 12) or Taforalt (Level 19 Top and Bottom). Terrestrial and marine shells may continue to exchange carbon with the environment or may undergo recrystallization after the death of the organism. These effects, which can cause significant age underestimation, cannot always be addressed with pretreatment. In addition, oceanic $^{14}$C reservoir corrections must be considered for marine shell (Aitken, 1990). As Beck et al. (2001) have recently indicated, correction of radiocarbon ages older than about 30 ka BP is made difficult by great instability in atmospheric $^{14}$C levels largely attributable to fluctuations in the carbon cycle. Based on earlier correction criteria (e.g., Mazaud et al., 1991), radiocarbon dates in this range are 3–6 ka younger than their true ages. Thus, the published Aterian chronology should probably be considered minimal in most cases because of the materials dated, unclear pretreatment, and/or problems with estimating true age. In most cases, information on sample context, condition, and pretreatment provided in the Aterian date publications is simply too limited to effectively evaluate age reliability.

**Conclusion**

Stratigraphic and ESR dating evidence indicate that the el ‘Aliya cavity was breached by wave activity during an OIS 5 high sea stand. Layer 10 was deposited by eolian transport of beach sands during a cooler, low sea level phase of late OIS 5 or OIS 4. Significant overlap in ESR ages implies that deposition of Layers 9–5 and weathering of Layers 9 and 5 occurred fairly rapidly. The variable environmental conditions responsible for the lithology of these layers are consistent with short-term climatic vacillations and instability documented during OIS 3. Because the enamel samples were taken from a museum collection and their placement in the cave deposits had to be reconstructed, some
uncertainty is introduced with respect to dose rate calculation. However, figures in the Howe (1967) monograph, archive records held at the Peabody Museum, and a visit by one of us (PJW) to the site in April, 2000 permitted reasonable estimation of roof thickness, sediment distribution and sample location. Accounting for variation with moisture content, the Aterian Layers 6 and 5 date between 35 and 60 ka BP, with a broader EU-LU spread for the Layer 5 sample due to higher U content.

The Aterian levels at Mugharet el ‘Aliya are too old to provide support for an African origin for the Solutrean of the Iberian peninsula, despite suggestive geographic proximity and some similarities in artefact typology (see Bouzouggar et al., in prep.), but they do not completely preclude Aterian-Solutrean connections. The existing Moroccan Aterian chronology rests mostly on unreliable radiocarbon dates, and further datings of other sites by AMS or other radiometric techniques will be necessary to determine the latest extent of the industry. The Mugharet el ‘Aliya ESR results do indicate an arrival of Aterian foraging groups, or a Mousterian-to-Aterian transition, in Morocco prior to 40 ka BP. This conclusion corresponds well with the early Aterian chronology of the Central Sahara, based on the $^{230}$Th/$^{234}$U record of lake episodes and new TL and OSL results from the Tadrart Acacus (c. 90–60 ka BP) (Cremašči et al., 1998).

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