

Can we visit the graves of the first Niger-Congo speakers?

One of the puzzles about Niger-Congo is where it originated. Although the 'centre of gravity' is clearly in West Africa, the presence of several branches in Kordofan is yet to be explained. I have previously proposed there is a correlation between the reconstruction of 'bow' and 'arrow' in Niger-Congo and the Ounanian culture of SW Mauretania and Mali, which introduced microlithic points about 10,000 years ago. Bows and arrows were introduced from North Africa and it is reasonable to argue that they were associated with the abundance of large land mammals in the era of the 'Green Sahara'. Interesting confirmation of this has come from the remarkable cemetery at Gobero in Northern Niger. The earliest skeletons are called 'Kiffian' by the excavators, and are linked with North African physical types. These are hunter-gatherers, using bows and arrows and hunting large land mammals. So to get a feeling for the lives of the first Niger-Congo speakers...