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ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

The Neolithic of Arid Environments bringing the margins to the center

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Abstract

The large deserts and desertic steppes of the Levant have always been perceived as marginal environments within the 'Neolithic world' – not only ecologically, but by extension also economically, socially, and culturally. However, marginality is not dictated by the abundance or scarcity of water: the southern Levantine 'Desert Belt', for example, running from the Sinai Peninsula in the west, through the Negev desert, to the Jordanian Badia in the east, plays a central role in the story of the Neolithic period. Archaeological research has already shown the persistent occupation of these regions from the Late Epipaleolithic to the end of the pottery Neolithic, despite the arid conditions indicated by paleo-environmental reconstructions. What were the economic and settlemental modi operandi that enabled these populations not only to survive but to flourish in these harsh conditions?

Moreover, keeping a more mobile way of life, the populations of the arid regions were crucial actors, connecting the various, dispersed agricultural societies in the Mediterranean zones, transmitting commodities, but not less importantly, ideas. Located in the center of the wider, Saharo-Arabian desert belt, these arid regions, must have also had a role as a connecting node within the larger, supra-regional transmission systems.

This workshop supports an inter-regional approach, aiming to bring together research from different arid regions within Eurasia and Africa, to promote a discussion of the similarities as well as the variability apparent in the archaeological record, putting the so-called 'marginal' in the center, with a more synthetic, wider viewpoint.

Keywords

Neolithic, Desertence, Resilience, Marginal environments

Program

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