



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Desert dynamics: Neolithic Exploitation patterns in the Hyper-Arid Negev

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Abstract

Located at the centre of the Saharo-Arabian desert belt, the southern Negev is an extreme, hyper-arid region. Despite severe conditions, it seems that human exploitation of the area during the Neolithic was quite intense. Still, these desert populations, which remained based on small, mobile groups, have long evaded the focus of archaeological research; they were deemed Palaeolithic 'relics', static and unchanging, and research, quite understandably, focused on the settled agricultural communities of the Mediterranean zone.

We will show that these populations were anything but static during the Neolithic; yes, sites are smaller and more ephemeral, but they are numerous, ranging from base camps and hunting stations, to special, ritual-related sites, indicating intensive and complex patterns of exploitation of this harsh region.

Through a high-resolution study of human activities, the micro-environment, and how the two were intertwined, we will shed light on the complex adaptations of these Neolithic populations. We will discuss how the differential exploitation of distinct niches within the hyper-arid environment contributed to the resilience of these groups, and how, in turn, they may have contributed to the wider Neolithisation processes in the region.

Keywords

Neolithic, desert, subsistence, Mobility, Palaeoenvironment

Session

5. Neolithic paths

Workshop

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Type of paper

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