



## **The Nile Valley at the end of the Pleistocene: corridor of dispersal and/or environmental refugium?**

Alice Leplongeon (1,2)

(1) University of Bologna, Institute of Advanced Study, Department of Cultural Heritage, Bologna, Italy (alice.leplongeon@gmail.com), (2) UMR CNRS 7194, Human & Environment Department, Muséum national d'Histoire Naturelle - Université Via Domitia Perpignan - Sorbonne Universités

Under the present environmental conditions, the Nile Valley acts as a 'natural' route between Africa and Eurasia, and is often considered as a corridor of dispersal out of and back into Africa in the past. This paper intends to address the role played by the Nile Valley at the end of the Pleistocene (25-15ka) in the context of modern human dispersals, from an archaeological perspective. Genetic studies based on both modern and ancient DNA indicate pre-Holocene dispersals 'back into Africa' as well as genetic interactions between modern humans across Africa and the Levant. During the Last Glacial, the lowering, or even desiccation of major eastern African lakes, including Lake Victoria, reduced the White Nile to a highly seasonal river, depriving the main Nile from its most important tributary. This had deep consequences, although still debated, on the behaviour of the main Nile and the landscape around the Nile Delta. Despite this shift to more arid conditions, there is abundant evidence for human occupation in the Egyptian Nile Valley and in the arid zone of the Southern Levant at this time. Here, we use lithic data to characterise human occupations in the Nile Valley and test for potential technical diffusion between the Nile Valley and the southern Levant. This study failed to highlight compelling evidence for contacts between the two regions at the end of the Pleistocene. Combining available geological, palaeoenvironmental, anthropological, genetic and archaeological data, we discuss problems encountered when trying to reconcile results from different fields, current limitations of the available data and research perspectives to further address the role of the Nile Valley as a corridor of dispersal or environmental refugium at the end of the Pleistocene.