
Using lithic assemblages to trace human dispersals; did the Nile Valley always act as a corridor between Africa and the southern Levant?

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Résumé

During the late Pleistocene several events of technological diffusion, possibly due to human dispersals are recorded in the lithic assemblages of eastern Africa, the Nile Valley and the southern Levant. Most notably is the spread/diffusion of the Nubian technology associated with MIS 5e. A similar diffusion of technological traits from eastern Africa to the Nile Valley is seen in MIS 4. Inter assemblage variability in these neighboring regions present a mosaic of concurrent technological traditions. While the Nile Valley, a geographical and ecological corridor linking between them, displays large amplitude variability. Several human dispersal events have been suggested to take place during the late Pleistocene. These were suggested to coincide with periods of climatic amelioration, blurring geographical boundaries between sub-tropical Africa and the Levant. During the later stage of MIS 4 and MIS 3 assemblages within the Nile Valley display a technological change, when alongside MP/MSA technological traditions appears a new volumetric, blade oriented technology. Cautiously, due to paucity of available data, it seems that this change is different to what is mirrored in the east and north African MIS 3 assemblages as well as in the southern Levant.

During periods of climatic amelioration (such as MIS 5e), the Nile Valley played an important role in human dispersals 'out of Africa', what role did it play during MIS 3? While using lithic assemblages to trace human dispersals across the landscape is far from being a simple task, these assemblages are the most visible evidence of past societies and their behaviors. Using inter-site variability together with geographical and climatic data it is proposed that during MIS 3 the Nile Valley acted more as a refugium than as a corridor.

Mots-Clés: Late Pleistocene, Human dispersals, Nile Valley, southern Levant

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