



## Espaces, villes et sociétés

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### Nomads and goldminers: ancient habitation patterns in the Atbai Desert of Egypt and Sudan

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Despite being in the shadow of famous urban centres of Egypt and Nubia, the deserts east of the Nubian Nile, 'the Atbai', have only been sparsely explored, largely due to their remote terrain and difficulty of access. A new project combining wide area surveys with remote sensing and

community engagement has highlighted the common patterns of ancient habitation across the desert, while also documenting widespread destruction to local heritage from modern goldmining activities.

Initial work has uncovered successive and complex archaeological profiles in the Atbai, from widespread Neolithic rock art sites, to pharaonic goldmines, and extensive cemeteries and settlements in late antiquity. The Atbai was constantly changing and was subject to pronounced climatic shifts, and affected by the imperialism of new political blocs (New Kingdom Egypt, Roman Egypt, Arab-Islamic Caliphate). The most important changes by far, however, are the introduction of new domesticates in local nomadic pastoralist societies, especially the dromedary. Several 'crescendos' in the archaeological and historical record are clearly visible, the most obvious of which is the apogee of local nomadic power in late antiquity, c. 300-900 CE. This presentation will take a longue durée approach to elucidating the historical geography and habitation of the Atbai desert, stressing unanswered questions relating to climate, history, and imperialism in a nomadic setting.

Vendredi  
18 octobre  
2024

De 15h à 18h

salle Reinach  
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MOM  
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&

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**HISOMA**  
Histoire et sources des mondes antiques

