

Study correlates climate change and early human activities at the Algerian site of El Kherba 1.7 million years ago

April 25 2017



El Kherba. Credit: J. Mestre

Mohamed Sahnouni, coordinator of the Prehistoric Technology Program

at the Centro Nacional de Investigación sobre la Evolución Humana (CENIEH), leads a study, published online in the journal *L'Anthropologie*, using fossil fauna and carbon stable isotope to reconstruct paleoenvironments of the newly discovered site of El Kherba (Algeria) dated to 1.7 million years ago, in relation with hominid behavioral activities.

The results of this paleoecological study indicate the occurrence of an increasingly open landscape, which is supported by the pedogenic carbonate data showing a climate change that is consistent with the documented Plio-Pleistocene continental trend of increasing aridification and grassland expansion.

The [climate change](#) likely impacted hominid foraging activities, particularly in the Archaeological level A. The level A witnessed a drastic decrease in [hominid](#) activities characterized by a considerably lower density in stone tools and fossil bones as opposed to the lower level B, characterized by a closed habitat and abundant archaeological materials.

"The open habitat in level A would have caused major constraints for early hominids, such as limitations for access to food supply and water as a result to their diffusion and shortage on the landscape, as well as riskier possibilities for meat acquisition due to competition with carnivores," explains Mohamed Sahnouni.

More information: Mohamed Sahnouni et al. Mise en évidence d'un changement climatique dans le site pléistocène inférieur d'El Kherba (Algérie), et son possible impact sur les activités des hominidés, il y a 1,7 Ma, *L'Anthropologie* (2017). [DOI: 10.1016/j.anthro.2017.03.015](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anthro.2017.03.015)

Provided by CENIEH

Citation: Study correlates climate change and early human activities at the Algerian site of El Kherba 1.7 million years ago (2017, April 25) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-04-climate-early-human-algerian-site.html>

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