CONFÉRENCE

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Delving into the evolution of the date palm through aDNA and molecular clocks.

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Abstract:

The date palm, *Phoenix dactylifera*, has been a cornerstone of Middle Eastern and North African agriculture for millennia. It was first domesticated in the Persian Gulf, and its evolution appears to have been influenced by gene flow from two wild relatives, *P. theophrasti*, currently restricted to Crete and Turkey, and *P. sylvestris*, widespread from Bangladesh to the West Himalayas. Genomes of ancient date palm seeds show that gene flow from *P. theophrasti* to *P. dactylifera* may have occurred by ~2,200 years ago, but traces of *P. sylvestris* could not be detected. In this talk, I will present the outcomes of a research project that involved the archeogenomics of a ~2,100-year-old *P. dactylifera* leaf from Saqqara (Egypt), molecular-clock dating, and coalescence approaches with population genomic tests, to probe the hybridization between the date palm and its two closest relatives and provide minimum and maximum timestamps for its reticulated evolution.

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