

## **18<sup>e</sup> Congrès International de Spéléologie de l'UIS – Savoie-Mont-Blanc**

### *Symposium 8 : Archéologie et Paléontologie*

#### Proposition de communication :

#### **The HOMME project – *Human Origins in Mozambique and Malawi Environments* : Looking for our origins in the Mozambican karst**

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#### **Abstract**

As a link between southern and eastern Africa, Mozambique is a crucial area for the understanding of our evolutionary history, particularly during the early phases of the Quaternary, from 2.5 to 2 Million years ago. Located at the southern end of the Great Rift, this country is geographically the key to explore palaeobiogeographic contact between the two main fossiliferous areas of East and South Africa. The HOMME project – Human Origins in Mozambique and Malawi Environments – aims to identify traces of hominins

(Australopithecine and early *Homo*) in this poorly-studied area, and characterize the palaeoenvironmental contexts in which they may have lived. This paper presents the first and preliminary results of the project. During our first field season, we explored various karstic cavities located along the Buzy river and the Cheringoma Plateau west and north of Beira city. Our exploration revealed the important palaeoanthropological potential of the Mozambican karst systems. We discovered various endokarstic deposits containing palaeontological remains. These discoveries reveal the richness of this area as well as the fundamental role of karst in the accumulation and preservation of fossil remains. Accordingly, these exploratory missions will make it possible to address continuing debates about the paleobiogeography of ancient Hominins.

### **Keywords**

HOMME project, Mozambique, Quaternary, Plio-Pleistocene, Palaeontology, Karst, Exploration