



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Early Bronze Age Funerary Structures as a Window to Understanding the Settlement Process in Central Arabia

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Abstract

The settlement process of the Early Bronze Age in Central Arabia (Najd region), is marked by the absence of permanent settlements and irrigated agriculture, presenting an intriguing anomaly when compared to the immediately surrounding regions. The sole evidence of EBA occupation comprises a wide range of dry-stone tombs, primarily dated between 2300 and 1750 BC, and tapered structures that may have preceded them.

This study aims to investigate how the nature and distribution of these structures elucidate the demographic, territorial, and social dynamics of these ancient communities. The analysis is grounded in a comprehensive review of existing archaeological literature and recent fieldwork in the al-Kharj and al-F?w regions.

I propose a theoretical model suggesting that initially, vast territories of mobile pastoral groups were organized centrifugally around ecological niches (refugia). The nature of land use was profoundly affected by the climatic event of 4.2 ka BP, leading to a significant contraction of territories around these refugia. This era witnessed the emergence of extensive tumuli necropolises centered around perennial water sources, indicating a shift in land-use practices and increased environmental stress. These newly formed centripetal territories underscore the adaptability and resilience of mobile pastoral communities in Central Arabia during the EBA/MBA transition.

Keywords

Central Arabia, Najd, Early Bronze Age, Funerary practices, Land use

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