



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Which inequality? Assessing and comparing inequalities from food storage records and house sizes in the Fertile Crescent

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Abstract

The role of food storage in the emergence and development of social inequality and hierarchy has long been a central topic in the archaeology of Southwest Asia. However, inequality has sometimes been treated as a monolithic and indistinct socio-economic concept, and this theoretical ambiguity has hampered attempts to generate meaningful interpretations from material remains. Over the last decade, insights from economics and anthropology, as well as archaeology, have been combined to provide a much richer theoretical framework, and new methods for assessing material wealth from the archaeological record have been developed, including the use of Gini coefficients on artefactual and architectural data. This paper focuses on the analysis of a dataset of storage features from the Fertile Crescent, also made through the calculation of the Gini coefficients, seen in relation with the estimation on households and compared and contrasted with interpretations built around other kinds of archaeological evidence. Besides discussing challenges in definition of storage features from legacy data and the standardisation of large datasets, it investigates the nuanced expressions of inequalities that might be grasped from the diverse proxies, suggesting that food storage capacity might have exhibited different trajectories of inequality than those detected for households' living areas.

Keywords

Fertile Crescent, Inequality, Storage, Households, Gini coefficients

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