



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

New estimates of social and gender inequality in West Asia from Chalcolithic to Iron Age: evidence from bioarchaeological sources

BATEN J. 1, STEPHAN M. 1*

¹ Univ. Tuebingen, Tbingen, Germany

*Corresponding author

Abstract

Although our knowledge about social and gender inequality has recently grown for early eras, large areas and periods of West Asian inequality history are still terra incognita. Sources are either unavailable or unreliable for many regions and for the earliest periods. In this study, we trace the inequality history of West Asia in interregional comparison using bioarchaeological methods. Recently, new techniques have been developed to obtain inequality estimates based on the coefficient of variation of femur length (that correlates with human stature variation). Other methods allow to reconstruct trends in gender inequality using similar methods. This new evidence allows to analyze the roots of social and gender inequality trends, going further back in time than was possible before. We study in particular the following hypotheses:

1. Social inequalities increased during the Early and Middle Bronze Age, as negative side effects of higher mercantile activities.
2. Lower gender inequality was observable in mountainous, peripheral regions in which cattle farming played a relatively strong role
3. Moreover, after major demographic breakdowns both social and gender inequalities declined.

Keywords

bioarchaeology, inequality

Session

7. Characterizing culture ?

Type of paper

Oral presentation