



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Evidence of Plant Exploitation during the Neolithic in the Zagros Foothills: A Functional Perspective of Stone Tools and People at Bestansur and Jarmo

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Abstract

The Central Zagros region in northern Iraq was pivotal in the transformation of human and environmental perspectives after the Pleistocene, around 12,000 years ago. The Neolithic sites of Bestansur and Jarmo, situated in the resource-rich foothills of the Zagros, provide evidence of the transition from foraging to settled agriculture, dating back to 7700-7100 BC and 7300-6400 BC, respectively. Excavations at Bestansur by the Central Zagros Archaeological Project and at Jarmo by the University of Tsukuba explore changes in human-environment interactions related to increasing sedentism and plant and animal management.

This contribution presents the traceological analysis of stone tools from domestic contexts at Bestansur and Jarmo, revealing plant gathering and crafting activities. Use-wear and residue analyses identified specific tools for collecting and processing various siliceous and woody plants. These preliminary findings provide insights into on-site food production and craft, highlighting technological innovations and resource management shifts during the Neolithic transition. Further, we aim to outline future research directions in studying early agriculture and plant-related technologies in Southwest Asia, including implementing experimental plant processing, developing specialised reference collections, and conducting ethnographic investigations. This could significantly enhance our understanding of historical knowledge related to plant use and intangible cultural heritage in the region.

Keywords

Eastern Fertile Crescent, Use-Wear and Residues Analysis, Plant-gathering, Plant-crafting, Lithic tools

Session

5. Neolithic paths

Type of paper

Oral presentation