



Exploring stress and social inequality through the lens of spatial bioarchaeology

Abstract

Advances in the bioarchaeological conceptualization of inequality have emphasized social power the driver of variation in social status. These power imbalances become embodied in the skeleton as skeletal stress markers, allowing the identification of structural inequities in the archaeological record. Epidemiological spatial relative risk mapping techniques allow the visualization of fluctuations in health across space and may therefore provide insights into fluctuations in social power indicative of social inequality amongst groups and individuals. This talk will first review spatial analyses in bioarchaeology and then explore spatial patterns of stress and variation in grave goods among the inhabitants at late Iron Age (300-800CE) Non Ban Jak in northeast Thailand. This period has been characterized as undergoing 'late and rapid' social change on the basis of archaeological evidence. While grave goods quantities suggest power dynamics at the site were unstable, experiences of stress are frequent and homogeneous, suggesting that power may have been expressed in ways other than dominance in this society.

Dr Stacey Ward is a lecturer in biological anthropology at the Australian National University. Stacey's research explores how ancient humans weathered large scale social transitions such as the rise of social inequality.

Details

4pm AEST, Thursday 20 May 2021

Zoom Link

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