
The evolution of cattle management in the southern Levant

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Abstract

A shift in cattle-human relationships was underway in the southern Levant by at least the early eighth millennium cal. BC when cattle exploitation increased in importance by the Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B. However, a more nuanced understanding of early cattle management trajectories and subsequent intensification in cattle husbandry for the region has eluded researchers due in large part to high fragmentation of recovered cattle remains. Here, we present new biometric and demographic data measured from relatively large faunal assemblages recovered from PPNA and PPNB settlements located east of the Jordan Valley along with re-analyses of previously published data sets spanning the Natufian to the Early Bronze Age. Using multiple zooarchaeological proxies (LSI, fusion timings and tooth wear) together with up-to-date statistical techniques such as mixture modeling and Bayesian analyses, we demonstrate a more complex picture of developing cattle exploitation in the region that involved prey pathways, local management, uptake of domesticates and, eventually, specialized production.

Keywords: cattle, Pre, Pottery Neolithic, Bronze Age

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