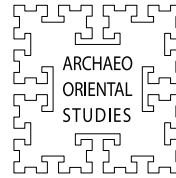




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ARCHAEO-ORIENTAL STUDIES
RESEARCH GROUP
UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW • EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE

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People of power in the bioarchaeological perspective

Abstract

The lecture will explore the current possibilities of studying people of power and their subjects through the remains of their bodies from archaeological contexts. Particular attention will be given to the methods applicable in research in Egypt and Sudan.

The human body, as a material entity, is shaped throughout a person's entire life. It is further altered after death and this process advances to the very moment it is examined by a researcher. The human body is rather like a diary that can be read on many different levels. A diary containing cumulative, hence vague, descriptions of many years of life and, sometimes, a list of critical episodes. After death, the record fades with the passing years but if anything remains of the body itself the data is never completely lost. We just have to know how to read it.

The record we read is the result of the interaction between genes and the environment which, in this context, is understood as the combination of a wide variety of extrinsic factors comprising the influence of nature, culture, and personal life history. Social stratification can influence the availability of critical supplies and people of power would have better access to these supplies than their subjects by the very nature of the power itself. Therefore, the extrinsic factors that shape their bodies are potentially different and sometimes this difference can be observed.