

Oct. 3, 2006 - Supplemental lecture notes

Developments immediately preceding the “Agricultural Revolution”

Natufian - in Levant

Witnesses the development of economic patterns and concomitant social patterns, unlike anything we've seen in record previously, either in Middle East or anywhere else for that matter.

Similar entities may be present in adjacent regions of Middle East - esp. Zagros area, but scarcity of research in these areas does not provide us with as clear a picture.

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Issues and features of note:

-) increasing sedentism - (house plans appear more permanent)
 -) storage - storage pits (facilities)
 -) increasing processing of grain - appearance of grindstones, sickles
 -) scheduling of resources on seasonal basis
 -) burials in cemeteries (land demarcation? - elaboration - status representation?)
 -) increasing settlement size - pop. size?

-) social and cultural changes
 - increasing complex social organization - harvesting, storage, distribution
 - social mechanisms for dispute settling (fission - less an option)
 - increasing level of social stratification
 -) population growth (more sites on landscape, larger numbers in sites)
 -) issue of diversification or intensification of economy
 - wider range initially
 - intensification on several species later

-) social/cultural concomitants
 -) social mechanisms for group control/cohesion
 - dispute settling
 - fission
 - labor coordination
 -) population growth
 -) health - ? deteriorating
 -) birth spacing - decreasing

Subsistence Strategies for Hunter/gatherers

temperate regions and environments - seasonal changes

resources temporally and spatially restricted, and seasonally available

requires/encourages them to adopt mobile strategies to effectively use resources

Criteria for settlement locations - a balancing act

- 1 water
- 2 shelter
- 3 protection - other humans/wild animals/diseases
- 4 firewood/fuel
- 5 food
 - vegetable - fixed positions - "low risk"
 - meat - moving/migratory - "high risk"
- 6 proximity and accessibility to other groups

Benefits of mobility

- 1 avoid exhaustion of resources and over exploitation of the environment
- 2 group size flexibility - (including maintaining large group size)
- 3 reductions of social stresses - due to possibility of fission of groups
- 4 wider range of dietary resources

Benefits of sedentism

- 1 less annual movement and risks attached to high mobility
- 2 storage potential
- 3 greater opportunity for investment in material culture
- 4 improved ability to monitor high quality resources

Drawbacks to sedentism

- 1 greater exposure to infection and disease
 - greater population size and proximity to diseases (malaria, diarrhea, ex.)
- 2 increased potential for intragroup conflict
- 3 (+ or - ?) - increase in population - less mortality with less movement, possible reduction of birth spacing
- 4 depletion of resources in immediate area of camp
 - diminishing returns on labor investment over time

Alternative strategies - in archaeological jargon - known as mobility strategies or mobility patterns

think of these as two ends of a continuum of possibilities

Circulating

seasonal movement
temporary camp

best in highly seasonal environments with
widely and evenly distributed high yield resources

Radiating

multi-season base camp with
seasonal "logistic" camps

best when low risk resources are not highly
seasonal and/or when they are widely dispersed, but in
dense patches