

Whether uncovering the social order of a specific time and place, or addressing the grand questions of social history, we often find ourselves doing archaeology. While other fields (ethnography, primatology and women's studies) have much to offer, especially in developing models of what life in the past might reasonably have entailed, archaeology's contribution is distinctive in addressing more directly what life *was* like. Such a claim does not just depend on lots of data, but on reliable means of discerning hierarchy from this data.

This book contends that despite traditional doubts, practical limitations, and contemporary critiques, a rigorous social archaeology is indeed possible. The early chapters outline what a productive social archaeology might look like, covering such issues as the possibility and prospect of cross-cultural social inference, the central importance of archaeological theory and of social models, the nature of inequality, and the extraordinary effects rules for arranging statuses have on the character of life. The following section of the book offers a systematic review and critique of cross-cultural correlates of inequality. For example, the ways in which residential buildings can vary are summarized and examined for how they might yield insight into a former status system. In the final chapter these correlates are used to help answer the question, "Was Çatal Hüyük a *ranked* Neolithic town in Anatolia?"

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Like you, I often read the front matter of books. Here I find authors saying they could never acknowledge everyone, so here are a few and let's hope the rest don't feel left out. Why not just list them all, I would ask. Can there be so many? When it came my turn, I decided to save the disclaimers for why I haven't used someone's favorite book and simply list everyone who made a difference. But I soon discovered how large the circle really is, and that just as in tracing genealogies, it is hard to know where to begin. Should I mention the college professors who had a special hand in teaching me how to think – Lou Pitelka, Joseph D'Alphonso, Robert Chute, Bruce Bourque – or go even further back to those evenings when my father read to us from his own favorite authors – Lewis, Tolkien, Conan Doyle – imaginative thinkers who, perhaps, have helped me become a little more flexible and a little less dull in thought and expression. Probably not. A better case can be made for starting much later with graduate school mentors like Bill Arens, Pedro Carrasco and Lou Faron, or with those who taught me archaeology – Bruce Bourque, Ed Lanning, Mike Gramley, Mike Moseley, Bob Feldman, Elizabeth Stone, Phil Weigand.

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