



WORLD ARCHAEOLOGY SEMINARS

COPPER, IVORY AND GOLD AT THE BEGINNING OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN IBERIA

THE PREHISTORIC CEMETERY OF HUMANEJOS (MADRID, SPAIN)

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Excavated between 2008 and 2012, Humanejos is probably one of the most spectacular sites to study the emergence of social hierarchisation during the mid-3rd millennium BC in Iberia. This site exhibits more than 100 tombs of a very long sequence, from the Late Neolithic (late 4th millennium BC) down to the Copper (3rd millennium BC) and Bronze Age (2nd millennium BC). The first signs of the emergence of social hierarchisation are seen from 2.700-2.500 BC, just before Bell Beakers arrive, with striking differences in the grave goods and the appearance of metallic artefacts and exotic raw materials (variscite beads).

These differences become more evident in the Bell Beaker tombs, with the display of finely decorated pottery, more copper tools and weapons and ivory and gold adornments. Those changes were also accompanied by important genetic novelties in the site, such as the first impact of the steppe ancestry signal, coming from outside Iberia, which has been documented in four individuals from Humanejos. However, this process of incipient hierarchisation appears to collapse at the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC, when tombs lack grave goods and apparent signs of social inequality.

Recent peptide and strontium analyses carried out on the human remains from Humanejos have provided new data on kinship systems and residence structures during this complex process of social changes documented in this exceptional site.

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