Managing the Data: The Tell Ziyadeh Archaeological Project

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Archaeological Process

Archeology uses data to reconstruct past lifeways. This poster uses the Tell Ziyadeh Project as an example to illustrate this point.

Goal of project: To document the early prehistory of the region and to better understand the relationship between environmental changes and human responses in an agriculturally marginal settlement.

Research design and methodology: Regional survey augmented by excavations and analyses.

Data Collection

Data from several sites are currently in a database for later use in the interpretation process. With the development of digital technology, the amount of data that can be incorporated into such archaeological projects has grown exponentially. The Tell Ziyadeh Project uses ArchaeoLab, a digital database for organizations and epistemological analyses.

Data Analysis

Once the project moves to the interpretation phase, analysis is continued in the archaeological laboratories. After further sorting and identifications, some artifacts are studied by specialists in answer-specific research questions.

Processing of Data

After the data is collected, it is processed. The first stage of processing starts in the field. It is continued in the field lab and then in the archaeological laboratories. This stage involves rounding, sorting, initial identifications, recording, and photography.

Technical analyses can provide more detailed data. For example, petrographic analyses of sherds have been used to better understand the manufacturing technology as well as provide insight into the movement of people and pottery.

The stratigraphic record in the field provides information about the occupation sequence and cultural affinities. If features and structures are excavated, they are then mapped and recorded, and the data is collected and cataloged. The Tell Ziyadeh Project uses a high-resolution satellite system to capture the site's topography.

Interpretation and Synthesis

Analysis of the material data is spearheaded using contextual data, stratigraphy, cross-sections, and artifactual and iconographic comparisons on examples of such data.

Dissemination and Archive

Results are traditionally presented in conferences and published as articles in journals or anthologies. Now, digital archives have become invaluable in making archaeological data more accessible to other analysts and the public, as well as allowing for better preservation of data.

Techniques such as digital photography and x-rays are used to provide a more detailed understanding of the artefacts.

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