ANTH 2103 - Lab #8

Archaeology of a Neolithic Village

Each group is given different information about the kinds of archaeological evidence that were found at a (fictional) Neolithic site in the Middle East named 'Ain el-Kelb. Your group has information on animal and plant remains, the cemetery, architecture (houses and other buildings), tools, or unusual artifacts found at the site. Using the information that your group has, try to answer the questions below. You will not be able to answer all of the questions with the data that you have. What kinds of questions are best answered with your data? What kinds of questions are very hard to answer with your data? At the end of the class, each group will present their answers to the questions, and (hopefully!) we will be able to put together a more complete picture of life during the Neolithic period at 'Ain el-Kelb.

Village life

How many people do you think lived at 'Ain el-Kelb in the Neolithic?
Many farmers have higher birth rates than hunters and gatherers or modern industrial people. Does this seem to be true at 'Ain el-Kelb?
What kinds of activities did men at 'Ain el-Kelb participate in? What about women? children?

Diet

What foods did people eat at 'Ain el-Kelb? What plants? What animals?
What evidence do we have of the way they planted, tended and harvested food?
What evidence do we have of the way they processed and cooked their food?
How did they store their food?
Were people at 'Ain el-Kelb healthy?
Is there any evidence that certain people in the society were responsible for certain types of food? For example, did most women herd sheep and goats or did children grind most of the grain?
Did any plants or animals have religious importance? How can we tell?

Social Organization

Was 'Ain el-Kelb an egalitarian society, or were there differences between different groups of people in terms of property or status?
If there are status differences, do we see achieved status or ascribed status?
Is there evidence for leaders or chiefs at 'Ain el-Kelb? What kind of evidence?
Is there evidence for specialization? What kinds of specialists?
What evidence do we have of shared religious beliefs?
What evidence do we have of conflict within the society?
Were people at 'Ain el-Kelb trading with villages in other regions? How can we see this?
Write Up

Your write-up should answer as many of these questions as possible—please be specific about which questions are being answered! Your answers should range from detailed to vague, depending on the question and your data set. After answering as many questions as possible, discuss what common characteristic(s) the other questions have that make them difficult to answer with your dataset. What types of data would have been more useful for those questions? Is it possible to come at answers indirectly (for example, use food data to try to get at social status questions)?