



Bayesian Approach to Interpreting Archaeological Data (Statistics in Practice)

By Caitlin E. Buck, William G. Cavanagh, Cliff Litton

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The authors of this important text explore the processes through which archaeologists analyse their data and how these can be made more rigorous and effective by sound statistical modelling. They assume relatively little previous statistical or mathematical knowledge. Introducing the idea underlying the Bayesian approach to the statistical analysis of data and their subsequent interpretation, the authors demonstrate the major advantage of this approach, i.e. that it allows the incorporation of relevant prior knowledge or beliefs into the analysis. By doing so it provides a logical and coherent way of updating beliefs from those held before observing the data to those held after taking the data into account. To illustrate the power and effectiveness of mathematical and statistical modelling within the Bayesian framework, a variety of real case studies are presented covering areas of common interest to archaeologists. These case studies cover applications in areas such as radiocarbon dating, spatial analysis, provenance studies and other dating methods. Background to these case studies is provided for those readers not so familiar with the subject. Thus, the book provides an examination of the theoretical and practical consequences of Bayesian analysis for examining problems in archaeology. Students of archaeology and related disciplines and professional archaeologists will find the book an informative and practical introduction to the subject.

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