



## Animals and inequality in Chalcolithic central Anatolia

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### ABSTRACT

This paper explores the changing social and economic roles of livestock within three increasingly complex societies in Chalcolithic central Anatolia. By specifically addressing practices associated with the production, distribution and consumption of livestock, particularly sheep and goats, I show how changes in the use of animals were dynamically linked to the emergence of new sociopolitical environments. These changes, including the development of intensive caprine pastoralism and complex provisioning systems as well as an increased focus on the production of secondary products, strongly suggest that control over animals, particularly sheep, and their products played a central role in the development of increasingly complex and hierarchical social systems in MC Anatolia.

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### Introduction

Charting the course of the rise of societies characterized by significant and persistent inequalities has been a dominant topic in the archaeology of southwestern Asia. Although Childe's (1936) influential conception of Near Eastern prehistory was structured around Neolithic and Urban "Revolutions" separated by millennia of relatively little activity, recent work has shown that the origins of complex societies characterized by a high degree of internal inequality extend well back into the fifth millennium, or Chalcolithic period, in Greater Mesopotamia where the Ubaid culture exhibits many features signifying the emergence of managerial elites with control over agricultural and exotic resources and significant internal socio-economic differentiation (Algaze, 2008; Carter and Philip, 2010; Stein, 1994; Wengrow, 2010).

Despite recent interest in the development of increasingly complex societies in the Chalcolithic period (Duru, 1996; Özbal et al., 2000; Stein, 1998) relatively little is known about the development of systems of persistent inequality in the early part of this period (sixth and fifth millennia BC), particularly in 'peripheral' regions such as central Anatolia where the rise of complexity is often implicitly assumed to have been chronologically late and resulting from contacts with more progressive neighbors to the south and east (for discussion see Schoop, 2005).

In addition, most studies addressing the rise of social inequalities have focused on the role of elite control over agricultural products and high status, exotic commodities (Damerow, 1996; Stein, 1994; Wengrow, 2010) but few have systematically examined

the role of animals within increasingly complex pre-state societies. Despite the fact that early texts from the late fourth and third millennia BC clearly indicate that animals and their diverse products were central concerns of early states (Englund, 1995; Green, 1980; Killen, 1964), there have been few attempts to contextualize the role of animals within the processes that led to the rise of complex societies in the ancient Near East (although see Algaze, 2008; Pollack, 1999).

Recent trends in zooarchaeology have begun to expand beyond the discipline's traditional emphasis on paleoeconomic approaches to prehistoric animal economies to recognize and emphasize the central social roles that animals play within complex social environments (Defrance, 2009). This developing direction for zooarchaeological interpretation focuses on animals as highly socialized entities fully integrated within a range of cultural systems and actively used in a wide variety of social contexts. Within this paradigm it can be argued that animals are raised as much for the social value that they confer upon their owners as for their value as subsistence resources—an unthinkable statement in the early days of the discipline.

Although increasing attention has been focused on hunting as a social performance (e.g., Hamilakis, 2003; Sykes, 2007) domestic animals also have complex and multifaceted "social lives" (Appadurai, 1986). Every stage in the process of raising domestic animals provides an opportunity to communicate information about social position, status, group membership, etc. The act of animal production creates herds which are highly visible symbols of status, often marked with the symbols of ownership, and which act as mobile banks reflecting wealth (or poverty) and the ability to mobilize valued resources (meat, fat, hides, etc.) as well as social capital. Harvesting secondary products such as milk and especially

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wool provides another means to intensify the productive capacity of herds thereby increasing their potential value in the production of storable commodities. Slaughtering and distributing carcass portions, which are themselves ranked according to culturally-specific preferences, become material reflections of social difference and whether in a household or public context provide opportunities for inclusion or exclusion, emphasizing or potentially de-emphasizing social distinctions (Silverman, 2003; Wiessner, 1996). Strategies of animal management, therefore, can be seen not just in terms of the subsistence resources they produce (e.g., Payne, 1973) but also within the multiple “regimes of value” (Appadurai, 1986, p. 4) in which animals operate linking them to processes involved in maintaining, creating, or subverting inequalities.

In this paper I examine the social production of animals and their roles within the increasingly complex prestate societies of Chalcolithic Anatolia (6000–3000 BC). Specifically I turn to the archaeological record of the central Anatolian plateau, including the sites of Köşk Höyük, Güvercinkaya, and Çadır Höyük, with a focus on understanding how changes in the use of animals, particularly sheep and goats, the most abundant domesticates, were linked to social changes reflecting the rise of increasing inequality in this poorly understood region.

### Chalcolithic central Anatolia

The Chalcolithic of central Anatolia clearly witnessed major transformations in the scale and complexity of sociopolitical systems (Baird, 2005; d’Alfonso, 2010; Schoop, 2005). From its beginnings in relatively egalitarian Neolithic villages the Chalcolithic period on the central plateau records the development of increasingly complex pre-state societies characterized by settlement hierarchies, emergent elites, the use of administrative technologies such as seals, large-scale public architecture and metallurgy. It thus provides a productive context for exploring the changing roles of animals within this dynamic social environment.

The Chalcolithic of Central Anatolia is generally divided into Early, Middle, and Late phases (Sagona and Zimansky, 2009). The Early Chalcolithic (EC) (c. 6000–5500 BC) is defined by distinctive painted pottery and architecture but retains many similarities with the preceding Neolithic (Baird, 1996, 2005; Duru, 2008). Settlements include small farming villages occupying up to four hectares in area and lack clear evidence for centralization or hierarchy (Baird, 2002). Moreover, the presence of finds such as a large copper mace head from Can Hasan I, the removal and caching of plastered human skulls, as well as human representations emphasizing dancing, hunting and feasting suggest a decentralized but highly ritualized and, likely, socially competitive environment (Erdoğan, 2009; Muhly, 1995). Many of these features are exemplified at the site of Köşk Höyük.

Köşk Höyük represents a small farming settlement located on the eastern margin of the broad Konya-Ereğli-Bor Plain. Excavated between 1980 and 2009 by Ankara University archaeologists Uğur Silistreli and then Aliye Öztan in collaboration with the Niğde Museum, Köşk Höyük represents the most important Final Neolithic/Early Chalcolithic sequence (levels V–II) in the region (dating from 6200–5400 BC) (Öztan, 2002, 2007, 2010; Silistreli, 1985, 1989).

The subsistence economy at EC Köşk was based on agriculture and pastoralism (Arbuckle et al., 2009; Öztan, 2010). Barley and emmer wheat were grown, as were legumes including pea, lentil and vetch. The EC occupation is characterized by crowded, small and irregular domestic structures made of both mudbrick and stone with internal hearths, platforms, and bins (Fig. 2A). The ceramic corpus is unique to this region on the western margin of Cappadocia and includes primarily red and black burnished wares

with prominent relief decorations including spectacular images of animals as well as humans engaged in dancing, harvesting and hunting activities (Öztan, 2007).

Although burials are limited primarily to young children, variability in grave goods suggests some differences in the wealth and status of households within the community (Öztan, 2002; Silistreli, 1986). The presence of infant burials with rich grave goods including multiple vessels, stamp seals, and elaborate jewelry, and others with only a single sherd indicates that some households had the ability to invest significant amounts of material goods in the context of funerary ritual, whereas others did not. Moreover, the presence of nineteen plastered and painted skulls, elaborate figurines and a recently discovered wall painting, indicate a prominent role for ritual within this community (Özbek, 2009; Öztan, 2010). That several of the plastered skulls present evidence for trauma also suggests levels of interpersonal violence previously unidentified in the region but which are now being corroborated from other finds in EC Anatolian communities (Bonogofsky, 2005; Kansa, 2009). Finally, the presence of stamp seals with stylistic parallels to those of the Halaf tradition in southeastern Anatolia suggest both involvement in inter-regional exchange as well as an early interest in administering the movement of goods (Özkan, 2001).

The Middle Chalcolithic (MC), c. 5500–4500 BC, is characterized by a cultural discontinuity with the EC in Central Anatolia with the appearance of new forms of pottery, architecture, and settlement plans (Gülçür, 2004; Öztan, 2002). The few excavated MC settlements in the region exhibit internal variations in house size and storage capacity and some exhibit impressive fortification walls (Çaylı, 2009). These features, along with increasing evidence of the use of copper and seals with stylistic links to the Halaf and Ubaid traditions of Greater Mesopotamia, suggest both the presence of increasing variation in status and wealth within MC communities as well as significant participation in inter-regional exchange networks (Gülçür, 1999).

The MC occupation of Köşk Höyük (level I; 5300–4700 BC) represents a significant cultural break from the earlier levels. Following a brief hiatus after the abandonment of the EC occupation, the MC settlement was laid out according to a new plan with linear banks of houses lining several wide, stone-paved streets (Fig. 2B). It has been suggested that the regularity of this *bauplan* reflects a degree of higher-order and centralized decision-making not seen in the organic growth of the EC village (Öztan and Faydalı, 2003).

The remains of MC houses conform, more or less, to a homogeneous plan, including a roughly similar internal arrangement of niches, platforms, hearths, ovens, and storage areas (Öztan and Faydalı, 2003). Despite the homogeneity in house arrangement, house size varies significantly. Although identical to other houses in internal arrangement, House II is approximately twice as large as its neighbors, contains the largest storage capacity of any structure so far uncovered, and includes concentrations of grinding stones. These features suggest that the residents of this structure played a prominent, and perhaps central, role in the community.

The MC is also represented at the site of Güvercinkaya. Excavated since 1996 under the direction of Sevil Gülçür in cooperation with the Aksaray Museum (Gülçür, 1997, 1999; Gülçür and Fırat, 2005; Kiper and Gülçür, 2008), Güvercinkaya represents a small (c. 1–2 ha) settlement overlooking the Melendiz river valley, an important East–West communication route through the region. The site is contemporaneous with Köşk I, representing an MC agro-pastoral village and the two sites exhibit many clear material affinities with each other.

The settlement at Güvercinkaya was occupied from c. 5300–4700 BC, and consists of a lower and upper settlement (Gülçür and Kiper, 2003) (Fig. 2C). The lower settlement consists of a dense cluster of relatively small domestic structures oriented

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