

CROP STORAGE, PROCESSING AND TIMBER EXPLOITATION DURING EARLY BRONZE AGE III AT ARSLANTEPE (MALATYA, TURKEY)

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Arslantepe (Malatya), located in southeastern Anatolia near the river Euphrates, was inhabited continuously from the early 4th millennium BC until the Byzantine period. The superimposed archaeological layers built up an artificial hill about 30 m high. The Italian Archaeological Mission in eastern Anatolia financed by "La Sapienza" university of Rome started excavations in 1961. The plant finds discussed here were excavated during several archaeological campaigns, from 1987 onwards. The extensively excavated areas of each period provide us with a rare opportunity to study the evolution both of farming and environment along time, shedding light on crop distribution, food processing and plants in the landscape.

The current work concerns the plant remains analysis from the VI-D phase of Arslantepe (early Bronze Age III, 2500-2000 BC), characterized by a small village arranged on several levels and protected by walls.

The study led to the identification of 17 taxa from seeds/fruits and 13 taxa from charcoal analyses. A total number of ca. 11000 seeds/fruits, mainly cereals and legumes, and ca. 10 kg of wood charcoals, was identified. Among cereals, *Triticum cf. aestivum*, *T. dicoccon* and *Hordeum vulgare* are the main taxa. Legumes are represented principally by *Vicia/Lathyrus* and *Pisum*. Woody taxa are represented mainly by charred remains of *Populus*, deciduous *Quercus*, *Fraxinus* and *Juniperus*. The analyses allowed us to assess differences in indoor and outdoor activities, with the potential for identifying patterns of spatial organisation in the processing and storing of crops, and the preparation of food. The contemporary presence of charred *Vitis* pips, stems and grapes suggests wine making. Shiny agglomerates of free threshing cereal caryopses, probably wet before charring, induce us to think of crop processing.

The preponderance of *Populus* sp. among the trees and of free-threshing wheat (*Triticum cf. aestivum*) among the grains reflects a relatively moist environment. This fact is in apparent contrast with the Anatolian climatic data available for the same half millennium. This difference could be attributed to the hydrography of the territory surrounding the hill, characterised by several natural springs, but it has to be confirmed by analyses of other environmental proxies still in progress.

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