Animals and Inequality in the Ancient World

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INTRODUCTION

Archaeologists often classify ancient societies using a set of criteria to determine whether the social organization of that society warrants the label “complex.” Complex societies are usually stratified with differential and unequal access to positions of power, prestige, high status, and economic resources. The most characteristic aspect of a complex society is permanent and institutionalized inequality with vertical differentiation (Ames 2007:24). Identification of social complexity and inequality in the archaeological record, however, is not an easy task because of our vague understanding of the meaning of and relationships between diverse social, ideological, economic, and spiritual concepts and their reflections in material culture (Ames 2007; Stein 2008). Even so, researchers have conventionally used architectural, mortuary, and artifactual findings as material correlates reflecting social complexity and inequality in the spatial, spiritual, administrative, and technological organization of ancient societies in prehistoric times (e.g., Cohen 1998; Kuijt 2000; Plourde 2009; Trigger 1990).

The invention of writing in Mesopotamia during the last quarter of the fourth millennium BC enabled archaeologists to develop a picture of ancient societies and their patterns of social, political, and economic organization. With textual evidence added to their arsenal, archaeologists have been able to expand their ability to conduct research on the relationships between inequality and status, gender, and ethnicity.

In the Near East, the earliest archaeological evidence of social inequality and the interaction of various economic, social, and political units can be traced during...
the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (PPNB; ca. eighth millennium BC; all dates calibrated) (e.g., Bar-Yosef 2001; Cauvin 2000; Kuijt and Goring-Morris 2002; Richerson and Boyd 2001). Institutionalized permanent inequality, however, emerged later during the Chalcolithic period (fourth millennium BC), when precursors of cities also first developed. Pronounced social stratification, centralized leadership, administrative bureaucracies, institutionalized decision-making systems, and specialized economies characterize forms of profound institutionalized inequality (e.g., Algaze 2008; Cowgill 2004; Frangipane 2010; Rothman 2001, 2004; Stein 1998).

Borgerhoff Mulder et al. (2009) show that economic systems and societies that attach more value to material wealth and that transmit wealth across generations have more pronounced inequality. Along the same lines, Acemoglu and Robinson (2009) argue that the nature of material wealth and the socioeconomic and political infrastructure determine and govern transmission of wealth. Material wealth such as land and livestock, institutions regulating property rights and security, and technology facilitating inheritability of wealth play a significant role in the establishment of permanent inequality (Acemoglu and Robinson 2009:679).

Zooarchaeological research engages with similar theoretical and methodological agendas and faces similar limitations and challenges as those outlined above. For the most part, zooarchaeologists adopt a paradigm that focuses on subsistence economy and consider animals as sources of both food and secondary products such as traction, milk, and wool. In addition to subsistence-oriented research, new zooarchaeological paradigms that consider the use of animals in social and political domains to infer status and power and to study ideologies, identities, religions, and ethnicity have emerged during the last two decades (e.g., Albarella and Serjeantson 2002; Bray 2003; deFrance 2009; Grottanelli and Milano 2004; Nelson 2007). In the Near East, researchers have archaeologically documented that food production, acquisition, redistribution, preparation, consumption, and discard patterns may be associated with socioeconomic and political status or rank, ethnicity, and religion (e.g., De Martino 2004; Hesse 1990; Hesse and Wapnish 1998; Kansa et al. 2006; Lev-Tov 2000; Sasson 2004). Such an endeavor, however, requires integrating multiple and independent lines of evidence such as artifacts, ecofacts, and the textual record.

This chapter reviews a large corpus of texts from Kültepe/Kanesh to establish relationships between patterns of animal exploitation and socioeconomic status, gender, and ethnicity at Kültepe/Kanesh during the Middle Bronze Age (MBA hereafter; ca. 2000–1750 BC) in central Anatolia (comprising
much of modern-day Turkey). More than 23,500 clay tablets from Kültepe provide us with a unique opportunity to test whether status-, gender-, and ethnicity-based inequalities correlate with animal exploitation during the MBA. Evaluating the textual evidence from Kültepe/Kanesh from an anthropological perspective can inform us on various aspects of human-animal interactions in the central Anatolian and Mesopotamian MBA and can help us to integrate multiple lines of zooarchaeological, archaeological, and historical data.

THE SITE

The archaeological site of Kültepe (“ash-mound” in Turkish), the ancient city of Kanesh, is located near the foothills of Mount Erciyes in the center of a fertile plain near Kayseri in central Anatolia (Özgüç 2003) (Figures 11.1 and 11.2). When the so-called “Cappadocian tablets” ended up on the antiquities market over a century ago, information consistently pointed to the Kayseri area and Kültepe as their source, leading to the first excavation campaign in 1893 and 1894 by Ernst Chantre, followed by intermittent excavations by Hugo Winckler and Hugo Grothe in 1906, by Bedrich Hrozný in 1925, and finally by Tahsin Özgüç of Ankara University between 1948 and 2005 (Özgüç 2003). Since 2006, new scientific excavations have been undertaken by Fikri Kulakoğlu.

Kültepe/Kanesh consists of a 21-meter-high city mound and fortified administrative quarter with palaces and temples, known as Kanesh, and a 2.5-meter-high lower city and commercial district, known as the kārum (“harbor”) of Kanesh (Özgüç 2003) (Figure 11.3). The administrative quarter yielded a long cultural sequence with eighteen building levels from the Early Bronze Age to Roman and Hellenistic periods, whereas the lower city revealed four well-defined strata (Özgüç 2003). The most spectacular era of the kārum of Kanesh is represented by Level II and is referred to as the “Assyrian Trading Colonies Period,” which dates between 1945 and 1835 BC (Özgüç 2003). One generation after the destruction of Level II as a result of conflict among Anatolian states, the kārum (layer IB) was reestablished and existed from 1800 to 1730 BC (Bryce 1985; Veenhof 2008).

KÜLTEPE/KANESH DURING THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE

The Mesopotamian city of Assur (in present-day Iraq) established a sophisticated network of trading colonies in Anatolia during the MBA. Anatolia was
rich in copper but lacked tin, which was the main additive element used to make bronze; Assyrians monopolized the supply of tin from Mesopotamia to Anatolia via donkey caravans (Özgüç 2003). Because tin was most likely obtained from central Afghanistan, the overland trade network was international, extending from Afghanistan to Anatolia via Mesopotamia (Dercksen 1996; Veenhof 1995).
In Larsen’s (1987:52) words, “the Old Assyrian trade was quite simple: tin and textiles were sent from Assur to Kanesh to be sold for silver; this was sent back to Assur to be invested in new consignments of tin and textiles.” Copper, silver, gold, precious metals, wool, and grain were other profitable commodities traded according to regional differences in supply and demand (Dercksen 1996; Gledhill and Larsen 1982; Veenhof 2010). A successful merchant could reap a gross profit of one hundred percent and could generate a net annual profit of nearly one hundred percent if two successful trips were completed, making the business lucrative for many Assyrians (Veenhof 1988:249).

Cuneiform tablets unearthed at Kültepe/Kanesh reveal that the central Anatolian plateau was politically divided into various independent city-states (Özgüç 2003; Veenhof 2003). There is clear and ample textual evidence for the presence of a hierarchy of settlements and sociopolitical organizations in Anatolia, as Assyrians explicitly referred to two types of commercial settlements, kārum and wabartum, the latter being subordinate to a neighboring kārum (Veenhof 1995:866). Kārum Kanesh was the oldest Assyrian colony and the administrative center and capital of the fifteen kārū (plural of

**Figure 11.3.** City mound and kārum of Kanesh.
According to Veenhof (1995), the absence of political unity and of a shared economic policy in Anatolia empowered Assyrian merchants to negotiate with local rulers based on local political and economic interests. The political institutions of the Old Assyrian city-state included the city assembly, the house of the city, and the royal palace, whereas the kārum organization in Anatolia also included a bicameral structure with small and big men and the bit kārim (the “house of the kārum” or the “city hall”) (Dercksen 2000; Veenhof 1995, 2000, 2003).

The long-distance trade involved the city assembly and the house of the city (bit ālim) from Assur, heads of the Anatolian branches of the Assyrian firms, wives and relatives of merchants in Assur and in Kanesh, Anatolian rulers and elite, and assemblies in Kanesh (Dercksen 2000; Günbatti 1992; Larsen 1977; Lewy 1958; Veenhof 1988, 1997, 2000). Despite the strong institutional involvement of the two city-states, Assur and Kanesh, and their bureaucracies, the trade was carried out by profit-driven private entrepreneurs and often financed by private investors and occasionally by such Assyrian institutions as naruqum-partnerships, temple loans (ikribû), and credit (beʿūlātum) (Dercksen 1999, 2000; Larsen 1987, 2002; Veenhof 1987).

The rich textual record clearly and explicitly identifies the population of Anatolia as belonging to different linguistic and ethnic groups—Hattians, Assyrians, Amorites, and Hurrians—and provides evidence for emerging multiethnic interaction (Dercksen 1996; Veenhof 1995). The involvement of the Syria and Palestinian regions in this large-scale international trade system can be inferred by references to men coming from or going to places such as Tadmur, Ebla, Mari, and Tell-Leilan (Beitzel 1992; Bilgiç 1994; Gledhill and Larsen 1982; Günbatti 2004). Thus, a very complex picture of interaction among different populations with different ethnic groups, economies, politics, and patterns of social organization emerged during the MBA in Anatolia. Cross-cultural interaction between Assyrian merchants and native Anatolians was peaceful and amicable, since the trading network was not based on military expansion or coercive persuasion. Furthermore, a notable number of workshops spread across the kārum and well-documented mixed marriages suggest that Assyrians did not live in distinctly Assyrian neighborhoods or “community enclaves” in an unwelcoming society (Michel and Garelli 1996; Veenhof 1982).

**INEQUALITY AT KÜLTEPE/kanesh**

Even though the presence of multiethnic cities and towns, mixed marriages, and overall amicable relationships between Assyrians, Anatolians, and other
ethnic groups depicts a rosy picture of MBA communities, numerous Kültepe tablets allude to inequality, conflict, and very intricate relationships among different social, political, and economic units at Kanesh during the MBA. The presence of prisons and the incarceration and punishment of Assyrian merchants for smuggling goods to avoid taxes and fees owed to Anatolian rulers and palaces are well documented in the textual record (Riemschneider 1977). Letters between Assyrian merchants show that Anatolian rulers arrested Assyrian merchants, searched their houses, and confiscated their goods until redemption money had been paid (Balkan 1974; Riemschneider 1977). Çeçen (1990:142) noted that despite violating official agreements and smuggling goods, Assyrian merchants often requested an appeal process and demanded direct negotiation with the kārum of Kanesh.

In contrast, Anatolian kings and rulers attempted to avoid engaging with merchants directly and preferred to refer them to public institutions such as the bit kārim (Günbatti 1996). The commercial involvement of Anatolian rulers and elites in formal capacities, however, blended public and private or individual and institution, and did not prevent powerful and influential Assyrian merchants from anticipating reciprocity, because they usually gave gifts and luxury items to local elites (Dercksen 2000). Moreover, the trade network was based on mutual interests, official agreements, treaties, and oaths sworn between powerful and wealthy Anatolians and Assyrians and their institutions. Thus, Anatolian supremacy in the military domain was balanced by Assyrian brilliance in the economic sphere (Veenhof 1982). As such, Assyrian merchants at times refused to accept the money offered by conciliatory Anatolian kings who satisfied merchants by offering additional incentives or extra money (Günbatti 1996).

Çeçen (1990:146) wrote that Assyrians merchants at times recruited men from Mama—an Anatolian town—to intimidate, threaten, and coerce other Assyrian merchants into resolving business-related disputes. This shows that the relationships between different social, political, and economic groups were chiefly governed by economic interests, and ethnicity was not the primary factor, since compatriot merchants often ganged up against each other to ensure higher business profits. Sever (1995:12) noted a functionary title, “chief of intelligence,” indicating the presence of an organization that oversaw political affairs, coordinated activities, formulated new policies, and responded to shifting balances of power among independent city-states in Anatolia.

Despite the equality between Assyrians and Anatolian institutions and elites, many commercial contracts between Assyrians and non-elite Anatolians allude to vast economic disparities. Anatolians owned agricultural land and
produced the staple foods controlled by the palace of Kanesh and its tremendous administrative bureaucracy with more than forty official functionaries (Bilgiç 1963; Dercksen 2000; Donbaz 1996). Produce such as wheat and barley were the most frequently recorded foodstuffs in the texts (Albayrak 2003; Donbaz 1989a). Lewy (1956) postulated that the high prices paid for wheat show its value as the preferred food for the royalty and upper-class, including the commercial elite, whereas much lower prices paid for barley marks its function as the food of the masses and livestock. In addition to their regular consumption in large quantities as the staple foods, wheat and barley also functioned as capital in payments, interest on loans, and object of debts (Dercksen 2008b, 2008a).

Despite their principal role in local production and other economic activities, Anatolians usually appear as debtors for varying amounts of silver and other commodities such as grains, sheep, and cattle, and the rate of interest charged to Anatolians was often much higher than what was charged to Assyrians (Günbatti 1996; Veenhof 1982, 2010). Assyrian debtors had to pay 30% to 60% annual interest rate to Assyrian lenders, whereas Anatolian debtors would have to pay interest rates as high as 240% and provide securities (Sever 1995:146). Donbaz (1988:58) best exemplifies the economic situation at Kanesh:

the indigenous population of Anatolia and its economic existence was at the mercy of the Assyrians . . . They [Anatolians] appear as witnesses, debtors or buyers—in all probability they were debt slaves who were sold temporarily, for they are kept as erubbatum until they were cleared officially in the presence of others who were not yet indebted or had already become free of such claims.

No doubt, the Assyrians benefited from the existing situation in Anatolia.

Numerous tablets from Kültepe support Donbaz’s remarks and show that many Anatolians were crushed under the burden of heavy debts. As a consequence, Anatolians were coerced to sell themselves, members of their families, or their entire families (e.g., Albayrak 1998; Balkan 1974; Bayram and Çeçen 1996; Donbaz 1988, 1989b). The institutional slavery at Kanesh was quite sophisticated, involving complex and often flexible terms and conditions for the repayment of debt, higher prices and interest rates for the redemption of freedom, and Anatolian officials as private investors or in their official capacity (Bayram and Çeçen 1996). Even though slavery was usually practiced between Assyrian merchants and Anatolians, numerous examples show the involvement of wealthy Anatolians in buying, selling, or releasing fellow countrymen and -women for profit. It is interesting to note that when Anatolians were
involved in slavery as buyers, women were in charge of purchasing servants or housekeepers (Donbaz 1996). Thus, financial hardship, not ethnicity, determined the terms and conditions of slavery.

The Kültepe archives also hint at gender roles and relationships in Anatolian society and in the city of Assur during the MBA. Detailed information on marriage arrangements and compensation (e.g., dowry and bride price) as well as betrothal of girls during childhood can be found in contracts made between Anatolians and Assyrians (Balkan 1986; Michel and Garelli 1996). There is also evidence for divorces, divorce settlements, and dissolution of marriages by formal declarations of rejection by both men and women (Albayrak 1998; Balkan 1986; Farber 2001; Sever 1995; Veenhof 1998). In addition, very specific codes and verdicts published by the kārum describe how a man should appropriately conduct and treat an adopted girl or a wife, including how he should provide his wife with food, oil, fuel, and clothing when not present at home (Veenhof 1998).

It is also clear from the marriage contracts and divorce settlements found in the private Kültepe archives that wealthy families were proactive in approaching their property and ownership rights judiciously to minimize financial losses and to prevent division of possessions if and when facing divorce and divorce settlements (Donbaz 1989b; Veenhof 1998). Even though the basic marriage type in Assur was monogamy, Assyrian law permitted Assyrian men to have two wives: an Assyrian lady from Assur and an Anatolian woman from Kanesh, or a second Assyrian wife residing at Kanesh (Michel and Garelli 1996:300). All of these suggest that women had some rights at least in marriage and divorce.

The Kültepe tablets show that Assyrians had specific rules of inheritance under the jurisdiction of courts, since all the available documents and testaments from Kanesh exclusively belong to Assyrians and we do not know much about the Anatolian side of the equation. One letter attests to conflict between two siblings regarding the division of property and the passing on of debts and obligations upon the death of the father (Albayrak 2000). Another letter details a struggle between a sister and her brothers upon the death of their father: the woman first writes to her brothers who are in Anatolia, then pressures her younger brother, who is in Assur, to obtain her share of inheritance. She then takes her claim to a court in Assur where a ruling is made that adjudication must wait until the brothers return (Albayrak 2000). Although at first glance this may suggest the practice of patrilineal succession in Assur, the evidence is not sufficiently conclusive to permit one to correlate patrilineal inheritance with gender inequality. The Kültepe texts amply show that women
assumed various roles as powerful patrons and active businesswomen repre-
senting the family firms in Assur (Günbätti 1992; Michel and Garelli 1996;
Veenhof 1995).

ANIMALS AND INEQUALITY AT KÜLTEPE/KANESH

Information on the pastoral economy was partially and sometimes indirectly
registered in the texts and can also be obtained from anonymous expense lists
or shopping records as part of business transactions, farewell parties, or cel-
ebrations of visits (Albayrak 2003; Dercksen 2008a, 2008b; Donbaz 1989a).
These records provide snapshots of the social lives of Assyrian merchants liv-
ing in Anatolia alongside indigenous Anatolians. Furthermore, the patterns
of animal consumption directly or indirectly reflect socioeconomic inequality
and patterns of sociopolitical organization.

Sheep, cattle, and pigs were regularly consumed during the MBA at Kanesh
(Albayrak 2003; Gökçek 2004). Despite the fact that mixed herds of sheep and
goats were typical in Mesopotamian history, as attested in the faunal record,
goats were not particularly valued, nor were they as visible in the texts, in
contrast to the frequent mention of various prized sheep breeds that provided
meat, fiber, and capital value (Gökçek 2004). Moreover, the Kültepe texts spe-
cifically provide detailed descriptions of cuts and carcass parts used such as
breast, stomach, leg, and shank (Albayrak 2003). The purchase of sheep, cows,
and pigs at varying prices has been amply documented. Gökçek (2004) listed
a number of tablets revealing a complex and selective pricing policy for sheep
involving the color of fleece, place of origin, quality of meat, body condition,
and breed, with a price range from 1.4 to 4.6 shekels of silver per sheep. Cattle,
with a much higher price range than sheep, were not only bought and sold, but
also rented: 12 shekels of silver per animal for purchase and 0.8 to 3.5 shekels
of silver for rental (Gökçek 2004:69). Besides buying live animals, residents of
Kanesh also bought “cooked meat” for a price between 0.16 and 0.5 shekels of
silver (Albayrak 2003). Dercksen (2008b:94) argued that only the privileged
local elite and wealthier Assyrian merchants consumed meat regularly, as sug-
gested by high prices paid for sheep and oxen. Some commercial contracts
from Kanesh recorded the sale of diseased cattle at much lower prices, indicat-
ing that poorer Anatolian buyers might have been able to afford only cuts of
beef from diseased cattle (Gökçek 2004).

Assyrians acquired meat through various direct and indirect channels,
including purchase of live animals, or purchase of cuts of meat or cooked
meat. Interestingly, the word for butcher does not occur in any text at Kanesh.
Some texts specifically mention “fattened cattle,” suggesting that backyard fattening of cattle for meat and fat, particularly by Assyrian merchants and their Anatolian wives, was a common activity (Albayrak 2003; Gökçek 2004). As such an activity most likely required additional resources such as time, dedicated space, labor, and fodder, backyard fattening of animals can also be associated with status-related economic inequality. Yet, there is no evidence for the institutionalized fattening of animals by the central administration, that is, palatial flocks (Dercksen 2008b). One record reads, “if the pigs are not fattened enough, sell them; if they are fattened keep them” (Albayrak 2003:64). Textual records also report the use of animal fat and lard, and rank different oil types as normal, fine, top quality, and bad quality (Albayrak 2003). Balkan (1979) noted that words denoting the subsoil plough and its parts or components (plough-heel or ploughshare) were usually included in contracts. This would indicate that cattle were mainly used in ploughing and as draft animals, reducing cattle’s role in the “meat” or food domain. Along the same lines, there is not a single mention of the word milk or of other dairy products in the large corpus of Old Assyrian cuneiform tablets, despite direct and indirect references to various other aspects of the agropastoral economy (Albayrak 2003:65; Irfan Albayrak, personal communication, January 2011; Fikri Kulakoğlu personal communication, January 2011). Given that the Kültepe tablets usually directly reflect Assyrian commercial interests, the complete lack of milk and dairy products in the texts suggests that those products did not play a major role either in the domestic economy or in international trade (Atici, in press).

The creation of grain surpluses and the necessity to mobilize resources within the intra-Anatolian trade network involved the utilization of cattle to draw two-wheeled carts and four-wheeled wagons to haul heavy and bulk commodities. Cattle were thus indispensable in the production and redistribution of grain surplus, playing a central role in the establishment and maintenance of wealth and inequality. The high prices paid for selling, buying, and even renting cattle and associated equipment, vehicles, and services amply appear in the text.

Textual evidence suggests that the wearisome and frequent back and forth trips between Kanesh and Assur further stimulated the economy in both cities and in other colonies in Anatolia and Syria, creating a strong and active market for donkeys. Caravans at times included up to three hundred donkeys, some of which were overloaded and died en route (Michel 2002). Assyrian merchants usually bought black donkeys near Assur for 20 shekels of silver and sold them for 30 shekels of silver upon completion of their business in
Anatolia, keeping only sufficient numbers to make it back to Assur with gold and silver (Gökçek 2004; Michel 2002). Besides the utilization of donkeys (*Equus asinus*), Michel (2002: 192) documents the use and trade of an equid hybrid, *perdum*, translated as “mule.” References from Kanesh suggest that *perdum* was a coveted and rather pricy equid, about four times as expensive as a donkey, and it offered a faster ride to those privileged and high-status individuals who could afford such an animal (Michel 2002:193). Unlike the pricy and faster *perdum*, the slower donkey, the beast of burden transporting commodities and people within the international trade network and between Anatolian towns, was associated with poverty, as such expressions as “do not even have a donkey to ride” are seen in the records (Michel 2002:193).

The fact that Kültepe texts specifically mention the trade of twenty-four kinds of common and twelve kinds of rare textiles that originated from Anatolia, Assur, and Babylonia indicates the presence of a highly developed and organized textile industry and large-scale sheep raising for wool in Anatolia during the MBA (Cebeşoy 1995; Gökçek 2004). Other lines of direct evidence also come from the textual record, since several sheep breeds and palace functionaries such as “chief of shepherds” and the “shepherd of the queen” are mentioned in the textual record (Dercksen 2008a; Gökçek 2003; Lassen 2008).

Because wool was expensive in Assur, textiles imported from Babylonia and Syria along with textiles woven by Assyrian women were included into the shipments sent to Anatolia for sale (Özgüç 2003). There were also centers in Anatolia with native wool and textiles such as *Habhum* (in southeast Anatolia) or *Lubusattia* near Kanesh (Özgüç 2003; Dercksen 2008a). Despite the competitive nature of local wool production organized by the *bit kārim*, where wool and textiles were stored, Assyrian merchants played an active role in wool trade in Anatolia and exchanged wool for copper, as evidenced by a record showing the shipment of 630 kilograms of wool from Kanesh to another city in Anatolia (Dercksen 2008a; Özgüç 2003). The sheep shearing (*buqūmum*) period seems to have also been a period for repaying debt, further emphasizing the role of wool and textiles in the local economy and trade (Dercksen 2008a). Thus, wool was an important product and source of wealth that enriched the palatial enterprise, which controlled this critical resource to maintain the *status quo* and its inequalities.

The textual evidence shows that sheep, cattle, and pigs brought to Assyrians for “payment” were accepted in lieu of “money” (silver), showing that the use of livestock for “meat” was not the primary focus, at least not in the texts. Dercksen (2008b:95) noted the following examples: out of fourteen sheep received as payment, only one was slaughtered for immediate consumption,
with the remaining thirteen sold for 31.16 shekels of silver; out of eleven sheep received as payment, nine were sold for silver, whereas two were slaughtered for consumption. As such, livestock became a commodity and acted as a means of direct or indirect exchange with value (Dercksen 1996).

CONCLUSION

Assyrians and Anatolians established and administered a sophisticated international trade system interconnecting different geographic regions through the movement and exchange of complementary resources and profitable commodities. The major concern and priority of both Anatolians and Assyrians seems to have been the control of public and private land and of economic wealth, as attested by the presence of numerous institutions and individuals within a highly hierarchical framework from the cities of Assur and Kanesh. For this, the two cities were fully committed to protecting the administrative organization, entrepreneurial operation, and ideology behind the international trade network. The cattle-drawn plough and wagons, pack donkeys, and woolen fibers obtained from sheep played a substantial role in this system by creating and mobilizing surpluses and wealth on both a local and an international scale. Cattle and sheep also played significant roles supporting farmers, pastoralists, and craftsman in Anatolia, and were also actively bought and sold as commodities.

This chapter demonstrates how systems of animal management and exploitation played a central role in establishing and maintaining systems of inequality at Kanesh during the MBA. Meat was an expensive commodity that might have been consumed more frequently by local rulers, elites, and rich Assyrian merchants. Asymmetrical access to secondary animal products such as transportation is also evident by the high prices of mules: riding mules was a luxury enjoyed predominantly by Assyrian merchants and wealthy Anatolians. In addition, wool was under the tight control of the palatial system to protect the trade network and to legitimize the local political agendas.

I must reiterate that a very complex picture of interaction between various ethnic groups, economies, polities, and patterns of social organization existed during the MBA in Anatolia. I must also emphasize that socioeconomic status and power, not ethnicity, was the prime factor determining the degree of access to animal resources. Ethnicity seems to have been a fluid and flexible aspect of life and differentially negotiated by various individual agents operating in a broad sociopolitical and economic context, producing a “trade diaspora” (sensu Stein 2008) or “creole” (sensu Hawkes 1999). Conspicuous markers
of ethnicity-based inequality, thus, cannot be traced in the textual record from Kültepe.

I conclude by emphasizing that the review presented here has some inherent biases. The content of almost all Kültepe tablets reflects Assyrian merchants’ private concerns and commercial interests. The information usually does not directly engage with indigenous people or reveal all aspects of the systems of animal production and consumption in Anatolia. As such, this chapter is only a start and merely an attempt to draw scholarly attention to textual records that concern animals and to stimulate further analysis and discussion of the nature of subsistence practices in a complex society. The next step is to analyze large faunal assemblages from Kültepe/Kanesh to initiate a dialogue between the textual and zooarchaeological records so that we can see how the zooarchaeological record confirms and/or supplements the texts.

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WORKS CITED


