



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Evolving perceptions of synergies within past Central Asian agro and pastoral societies

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Abstract

Archaeological investigations of human subsistence economies in the mountains, deserts, and steppes of Central Asia remain highly valuable for understanding enduring human adaptability in sustaining food productivity. Moving away from common understandings of these areas as “marginal” allows us to acknowledge their diverse economies and extensive production and resource networks. Reflecting changes over the past 20 years in methodological and theoretical approaches to studying agro-pastoralism, this review highlights significant shifts in our understandings of changes in crop and animal repertoires across time, and their potential intersections with past climates and water management systems. With an emphasis on the second millennium BC, I discuss key research across Eurasia and how it influenced our perceptions of Central Asian subsistence strategies, the evolution of multidisciplinary studies of resilient agro-pastoral economies, and some remaining goals in this body of research. This review aims to situate ongoing archaeological research in Central Asia in a broader disciplinary and theoretical context, revealing the strong connections between studies of archaeozoology, archaeobotany, water management, past climate, and resource networks. This perspective provides a richer view of the past and the diversity of its inhabitants, and in turn, how we might approach them archaeologically.

Keywords

agrobastoralism, crop cultivation, pastoralism, food production, marginal environments

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