



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Defining Cultural Practices through Food: Preliminary Insights on Coba Bowls from Late Chalcolithic Upper Mesopotamia

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Abstract

Eating is a universal necessity, but how food is consumed is deeply rooted in cultural practices. Recent research increasingly highlights food as a valuable tool for defining cultural spaces, reflecting both social structures and shared identities. This paper explores these dynamics through the study of coba bowls, one of the most distinctive pottery forms of the Post-Ubaid/Late Chalcolithic period in southeastern Anatolia and Upper Mesopotamia.

Characterized by their standardized design and frequent recovery in large concentrations, coba bowls are often associated with food distribution systems. Their discovery in situ in domestic spaces—such as central halls near fire installations—suggests their involvement in communal or economic activities. These vessels thus serve as a material proxy for exploring cultural practices and the socio-economic transformations of Late Chalcolithic communities.

Experimental replicas of coba bowls were produced and tested in culinary contexts, including as containers for porridge and molds for baking bread. These preliminary results underline the potential of food-related artifacts in defining cultural spaces and identities. This study reinforces the role of food practices as a lens to understand past communities, shedding light on the localized behaviors and broader cultural implications of Late Chalcolithic societies in Upper Mesopotamia.

Keywords

Food, Cultural practices, Experimental archaeology, Pottery, Function

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