

Our Daily Bread



Households

Thinking About Daily Bread

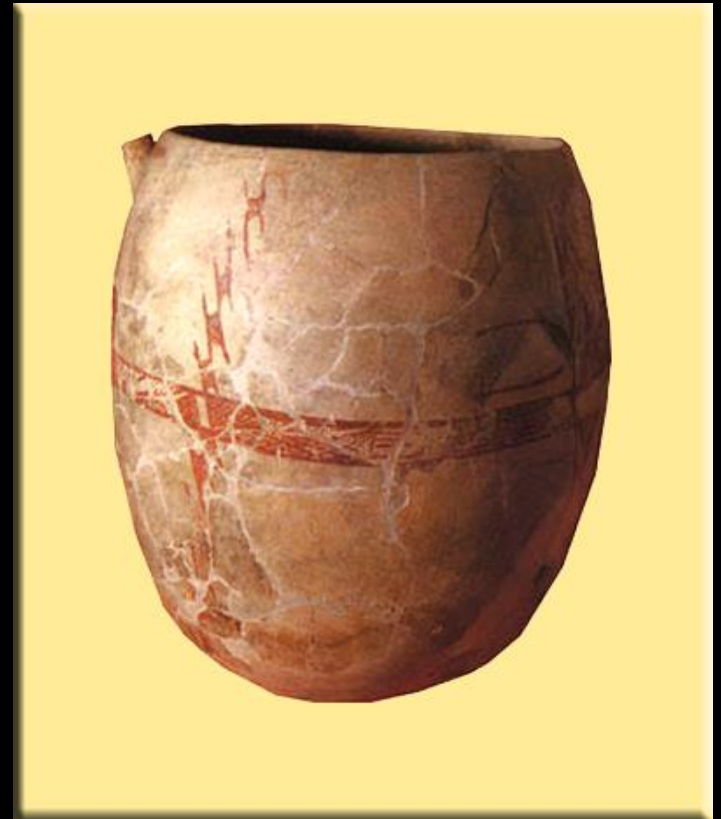
- What are the implications of provisioning the household in the Bronze Age?
- Basic subsistence: how & where do you source your food?
 - Daily production
 - Preparation
 - Storage
- Individual & community implications?



Grinding grain

Reliability of Food Production

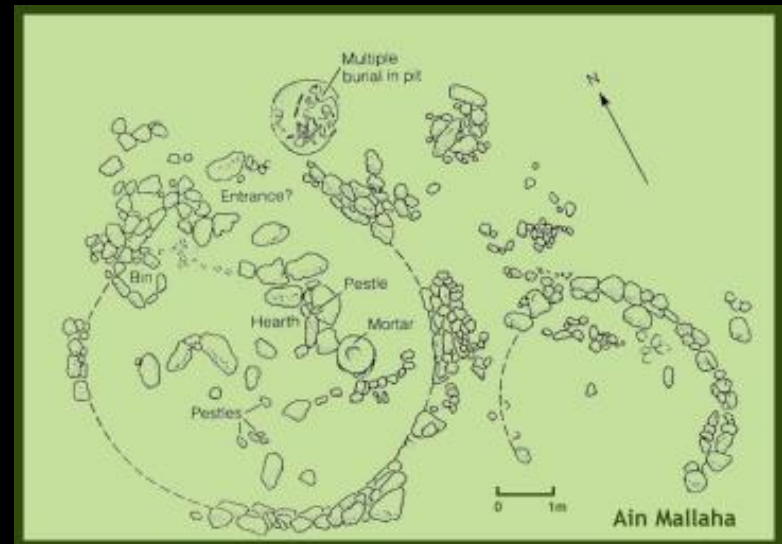
- Hunter-gatherer diet has better balance of nutrients:
 - Ju/'hoansi: average daily food intake up to 2,140 calories
- Farming necessitates surplus:
 - More insecurity in the food supply system
 - Less adaptability to environmental changes
 - Farmers at risk of starvation



Chalcolithic storage jar

Built Settlements

- Natufian Levant:
 - 12,800 – 10,300 BP
- Less mobile life, but can it be classed as fully sedentary?
- Appearance of substantial stone-built structures
 - Stone architecture
 - Heavy-duty material culture
 - Storage pits: essential strategy



Sedentism and Storage

- Non-mobile population:
 - Dependent on resources collected within a small area
 - Development of storage facilities
- Need to provide against shortfall
- While storage facilities are not numerous . . . they may indirectly reflect the importance of plant food storage for some Natufian populations' (Olszewski1993: 424)



Pits at Mallaha

Ground Stone Artefacts

- Secondary evidence for sedentism:
 - Not easily portable
- Also evidence for increased intensity in the harvesting, storing & processing cereals



Natufian ground stone tools

Bread & Beer

- Hayden questioned the effort involved in cereal gathering & subsequently production)
- Time consuming: special food & drink for feasting
- Commensality:
 - Beer & bread binding communities together
 - Time of massive social change



Experimental archaeology, Israel

Shaping the body?

- Grinding grain: labour intensive, repetitive motions & handling heavy tools:
- Study of bones at Neolithic Abu Hureyra:
 - Identified a number of changes to normal shape of the bone
 - Related to posture & actions involved in grinding grain
 - Pressure on hip, knee & toe joints & damage to bones
- Teeth:
 - Worn by the stone dust & chips from quern stones found in the flour



A Malian Dogon woman grinds grain

Dietary Changes & Population Growth

- Availability of cereals suitable for making gruels & porridges:
 - Could wean children at younger age
 - Smaller intervals between pregnancies
- **Wadi Kubbaniya**: similar practices happening in Upper Palaeolithic



Wadi Kubbaniya:
Palaeolithic grinders

Dietary Changes & Population Growth

- **Ju/'hoansi:** clear increase in female fertility & decline in infant mortality following adoption of cereals in diet
- Cereal-based diet associated with agriculture inevitably increases population
 - & potentially improves health



Ju/'hoansi mothers

Grinding Stones

- Apparent simplicity of ground stone technologies:
 - Until recently little “social engagement” in literature
 - empirical
- Gendered narratives:
 - Paraphernalia of female household activities
 - Daily processing of foodstuffs



Quern & rubber, Arediou

Grinding Stones

- Typical grinding equipment - a single toolkit :
 - Saddle quern & rubber
- Location within household?
- Quern represents social & economic capital:
 - Significant investment in time, labour & skill to produce
 - Carefully curated
 - Mari: part of woman's dowry



Quern & rubber, Arediou

The Daily Grind

- “The arduous nature of wild-cereal processing has been widely underestimated” (Wright 1994, 257)
- Labour intensive:
 - Harvesting & dehusking
 - Storage
 - Grinding & baking
- Food-processing central to social reproduction of the household:
 - Provided its members with their daily bread
 - Shaped female (?) interactions at an intimate, familial level on a daily basis



Iron Age grinding scene

Household Production with Querns

- Rhythmic, repetitive work & communal activity?
- Fendin: importance of singing to accompany & mimic the rhythmic process of grinding
- “a very social & socialized activity that undoubtedly bound together members of the household, most probably female, in a variety of embodied activities” (Steel 2016: 87)



Arediou querns: grinding grain

The Daily Grind

- “Daily praxis embedded in food production therefore might be viewed as a creative process which shaped social reproduction and lived experiences in the Bronze Age Cypriot household” (Steel 2016: 87)



Red Polished trough scene

Significance of Grinding Stones

- Socially embedded in the household & community...
 - Significance of quern toolkit: social & economic capital
- Arediou Building 2:
 - Well deposit



Arediou Building 2



Summary

- Subsistence & Bronze Age Households:
 - Significant proportion of working hours involved in production & preparation of food
- Archaeological narratives have described the relevant technologies
 - Only recently socialised them
- Emphasis is on engendering the activities
- Evidence from Cyprus might draw attention to communal nature
 - How these were socialised