The Social Uses of Animals in the Halaf Period

On the meanings of animal remains and animal representations

Lonneke Grimbergen

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1   Main aims

The Late Neolithic world was rich in artistic expression. Animals are quite prominent in Halaf art: We find animal symbolism in various media like paint, clay, plaster and stone. Furthermore, animals played a role in a diverse array of contexts; they figure in wall paintings in domestic spaces, they appear on Halaf pottery that was perhaps used in commensality practices, they come in the form of animal figurines which were supposedly used in ritual, they figure as images on sealings that played a role in administration, animal amulets were worn to adorn the body, and animal bones are found in graves and other ritual contexts (Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Halaf animals in diverse media (Kluitenberg 2013, 133; Brüning et al. 2013, 215; after Duistermaat 2013, 318; Author's image, S.I.P.; Author's image, S.I.P.).

Although people from the so-called 'Halaf period' must have understood their intricate meanings, prehistoric animal representations might not bear such obvious meanings to us. Yet, animals symbolism may be very informative on Late Neolithic worldviews, the Halaf society and various social aspects. The importance of animals in the Halaf is undeniable as animals figure so prominently in representations and ritual deposits, and contexts in which they figured are highly diverse.

The importance of animals, next to their major role in subsistence, will be advocated for in this thesis: Multiple authors have already stated (and restated) that animals are not only 'good to eat', they are also '*good to think with*' and function as '*food for thought*' (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 89; Gifford-Gonzalez 2007, 10; Russell 2012, 25; Serjeantson 2000). In this thesis I will show what relationships people had with their animals in the Halaf next to people's dietary dependence on them, and I will explain how exactly animals figured in the many different media mentioned above. I will also propose

how animals and their symbols were employed to enforce human-human relationships, or to strengthen relationships between human groups like 'sedentarists' and pastoralists, through for example communal rituals and the exchange of stories in which animals figure as a common language.

Because of the animal representations' figurativeness, they might be interpreted by modern day archaeologists to at least some extent. Halaf communities produced much abstract art too, like the many puzzling patterns that can be found on painted Halaf Fine Ware ceramics. Were those patterns meant to be decorative, or do they represent something as well, just like the animal symbols? One thing is sure for abstract motifs on pottery: They do appear alongside animal representations that can sometimes be found on the same vessel. Moreover, animal motifs can also be found in combination with figurative images that might resemble architecture or plants. If both abstract and figurative designs have meaning, are those meanings connected? And why do these 'scenes' or maybe 'narratives' combining multiple motifs appear almost exclusively on Fine Ware vessels, that were probably used as serving vessels? Are these decorative motifs like the pottery itself related to feasting, and what other functions do these motifs fulfil?

Another context where two-dimensional animal representations can be found is that of sealings that were supposedly used for administration. This already raises the question of whether their appearance in this context can be regarded as coincidental: How were the animal species represented on sealings connected to these practices of organization of stock?

The last category in which two-dimensional animal paintings appear is that of wall-paintings. Wall paintings are exceptional; Only two cases are known in which animals play a role, and they do not date to the Halaf period itself but are dated slightly earlier. Nevertheless, I would argue that those two cases are highly interesting and worth discussing shortly. How are they related to their context, which apparently is domestic space?

Moving on to a different material group, figurines are often thought to be related to ritual and religion. Many animal figurines have been found at Halaf sites as well, just as zoomorphic vessels. In this thesis I will evaluate various discussions on the functions of three-dimensional animal representations. Were they really used in religious spheres, or did they fulfil other purposes like for example as mnemonic devices?

A smaller category of three-dimensional animals is that of amulets. Apparently, Halaf people not only adorned their surroundings with animal representations, but themselves too. Why?

The final category I will study here is that of real animals. Animal remains are not only found in refuse contexts, but in other contexts as well. For example, animal remains have been found in graves and in contexts associated with feasting. What was so special about these animal species that they ended up in these 'special' or ritual contexts?

I would like to conclude that even though these different material categories of animal representations could all have had a different function, I would like to see if and how those categories are related to each other. Is the range of animal species encountered in one category the same as found in other categories, and how do different contexts of employment overlap? The many questions I addressed in this paragraph will be answered in the following chapters. To make my aims extra clear, my research questions can also be found in a scheme in Fig. 2.
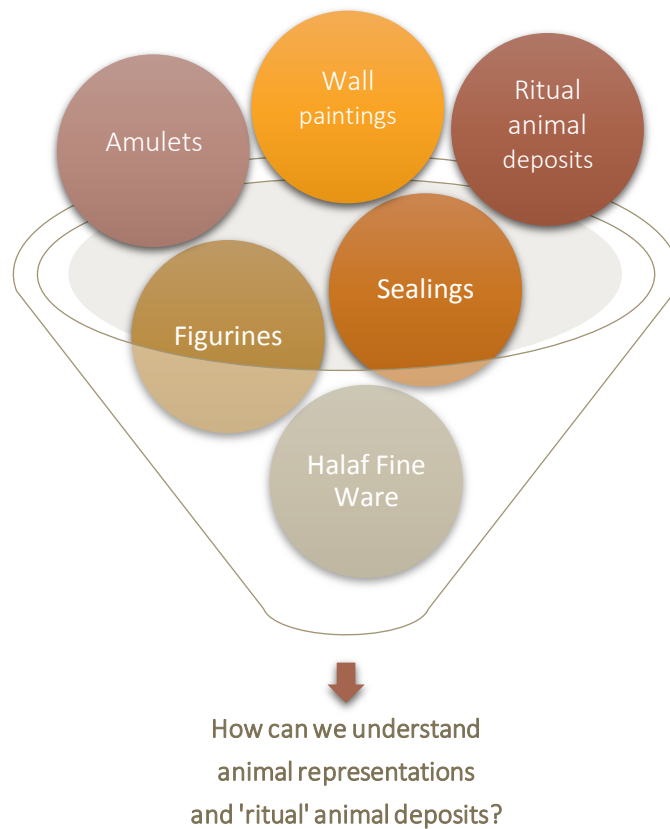
Figure 2: Overview of research questions. The circles represent the different material categories which are investigated in this thesis.

How can we understand animal representations and 'ritual' animal deposits?

- What are the contexts of employment of animal representations and ritual deposits, and how were the objects used on which animal representations are found?
- What different animal species are represented in the different material categories and can this be explained?
- Are the different material categories related to each other (for example though their context) and how?

1.2   Why is this all necessary?

Why would I study the meanings of animal representations and animal remains in ritual contexts? The simple answer is that this is something that has scarcely been done for the Halaf. Predominantly researchers have focussed on subsistence, regarding Halaf animals as food resources only, and as part of the economy. For a summary of those subsistence-centred studies, see chapter 4, 'Halaf zooarchaeology'. What about different employment of animals, and the more social aspects? There are a few studies that investigated animals as 'food for thought', but they often have only investigated a single category of animal

representation, like figurines, animal motifs on pottery, or particular ritual deposits. Those exceptional studies will be discussed further on in this thesis as well, and I refer to chapter 5, 'Halaf animal representations'.

Yet, a study of Halaf animal symbolism in general is still lacking, combining all different material categories and contexts in which animals can be found. Moreover, the framework of 'social zooarchaeology' has never been applied to the Halaf, a concept employed to investigate the social roles of animals, further explained in chapter 3 'Approaches to animals'. This is unfortunate, as animal symbolism can provide us with some insight into the minds of prehistoric people and how they saw and structured the world around them in the absence of written records, and how animals were employed in prehistoric activities like rituals. Studying ritual animal deposits and animal symbolism as found in different media, coming from a wide array of sites, might contribute to the formulation of some general meanings. These general meanings might then be refined in future research. Because the area that is attributed to the Halaf is so large, we cannot merely assume that symbols meant the same everywhere and that every ritual had the same purpose.

1.3   Strategy and structure of the thesis

First of all, this study needs a little background. Therefore, the next chapter is reserved for a general discussion of the Halaf. What is exactly meant with this term? In this general chapter I will synthesise some of the major general consensuses and controversies around the themes of whether we can call the Halaf a 'culture', the natural setting, the mode of subsistence, whether we can speak of social inequality at around this time, and what indications we have for ritual and religion.

Moving on to the theory part, main approaches to animals and animal symbolism will be outlined in the subsequent chapter 3 to serve as a backbone for my research. What is social zooarchaeology, and how does this approach differ from normal zooarchaeology? What kinds of social zooarchaeology can be distinguished?

Now we move on to the data. As will be shown, animals played important roles in Halaf societies. Yet, much research on Halaf animals is centred around how these animals

functioned to fill the human stomach. Halaf zooarchaeology is discussed in chapter 4, and this chapter is mainly based on zoological reports and subsistence studies, but I will also involve the scarce reports and interpretations on ritual animal deposits.

But how about symbolism? My research will be very much context-based, as it has already become clear that different material categories in which animals are represented figure in different contexts. Because of animals figuring in such a diverse array of contexts, it might be that they also had a whole array of meanings. Few symbolism studies that have addressed this 'food for thought' theme for the Halaf are summarized in chapter 5. Then, I will also add new data here on objects showing animal representations, and provide my own interpretations. My 'own' data principally stems from excavation reports, and reports and catalogues on the material categories. Considering the pottery data, another thing that will be involved here is my bachelor thesis that was on 'animals in Halaf ceramic art from Tell Sabi Abyad'. In my bachelor thesis I already made many conclusions on the meanings of animal symbolism on pottery. Some of the beautiful Halaf Fine Ware of Tell Khirbet esh-Shenef will be involved here as well: Currently I and my student colleagues are working on the 'Shenef Inventory Project' or S.I.P., as we call it. The project is aimed at making the Fine Ware available to everyone by means of publishing photographs of every worthy sherd on a website. These photographs will also find a place in this thesis. Of course, to prove this thesis worthy, it will be demonstrated how previous studies lack certain perspectives on animals, and how rare Halaf animal symbolism studies are.

The chapters on the data shall be followed by an in-depth discussion of the evidence in chapter 6, whereas theoretical concepts are appliqued, and exciting ideas from the are critically evaluated. What can we really say about the meanings of animals in the Halaf taking all the material categories together, and how reliable are my interpretations? What is lacking, and what future studies concerning this topic do I look forward to? This thesis ends with an overall conclusion, and the research questions that can be found in Fig. 2 will be answered pointwise.

2 HALAF

2.1 Introduction to the Halaf

The so-called Halaf period lasted from circa 5900 to 5300 cal. BC, making the Halaf part of the Late Neolithic of the Near East (Tab. 1). Archaeological sites dating to the Halaf period can be found across the *Fertile Crescent* of Southwest Asia. See Fig. 3 for the approximate distribution of the Halaf culture (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 115; Matthews 2000; Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 9).

Table 1: Late Neolithic chronology (after Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 10)

Date (BC)	Northern Syria	Northern Iraq	Central Iraq
5200	Ubaid	Ubaid	Ubaid
5400	Halaf-Ubaid Transitional	Halaf-Ubaid Transitional	Halaf-Ubaid Transitional
	Late Halaf	Late Halaf	Late Halaf
5600	Middle Halaf	Middle Halaf	Middle Halaf
5800	Early Halaf	Early Halaf	?
6000	Transitional	'Northern' Samarra	'Classic' Samarra
		Standard Hassuna	
6200	Pre-Halaf	Archaic Hassuna	?
6400		Proto-Hassuna	
6600	Early Pottery Neolithic	Final PPNB	
6800			
7000	PPNB	PPNB	

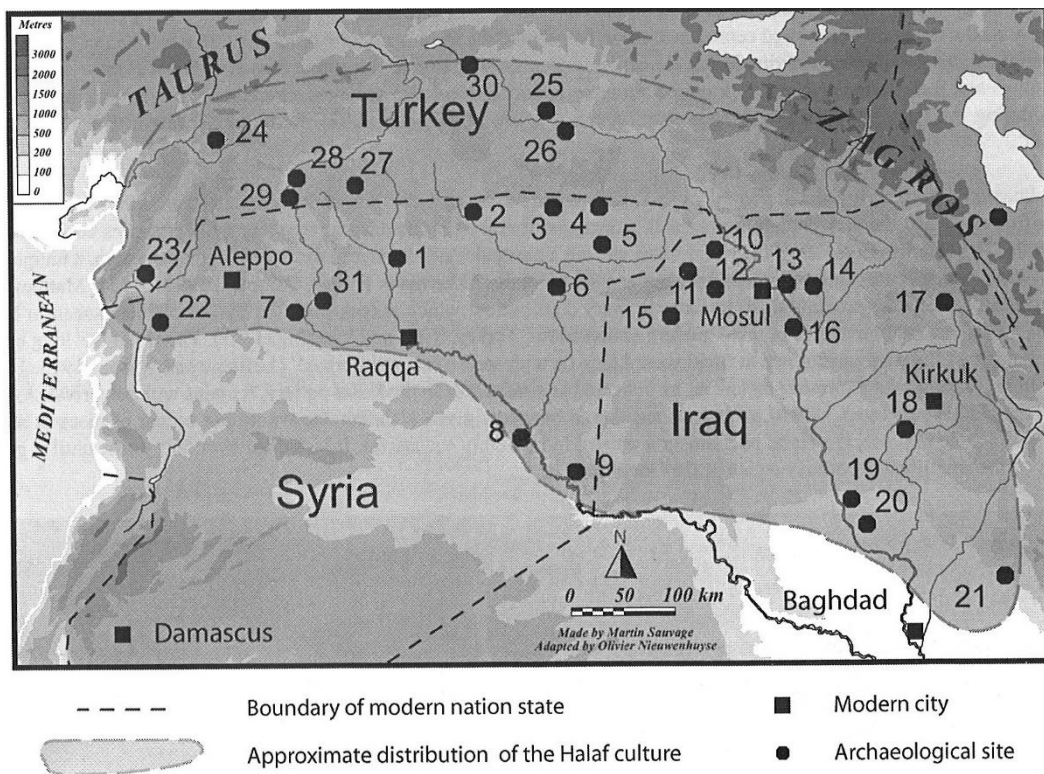(The left margin spanning rows 5400–6800 is labelled "Late Neolithic".)

Figure 3: Map showing the locations of several major Halaf sites: 1) Tell Sabi Abyad, 2) Tell Halaf, 3) Tell Aqab, 4) Chagar Bazar, 5) Tell Brak, 6) Tell Boueid II, 7) Tell Halula, 8) Tell Masaikh, 9) Tell Baghouz, 10) Khirbet Garsour, 11) NJP-72, 12) Yarim Tepe, 13) Nineveh, 14) Tell Arpachiyah, 15) Umm Dabaghiyah, 16) Tell Hassuna, 17) Shemshara, 18)Tell Matarrah, 19) Tell Samarra, 20) Tell es-Sawwan, 21) Choga Mami, 22) Tell el-Kerkh, 23) Tell Judaideh, 24) Domuztepe, 25) Boztepe, 26) Hakemi Use, 27) Kazane Höyük, 28) Fistikli Höyük, 29) Cayönü, 30) Hakemi Use, 31) Tell Dja'de (Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 10).

2.2   The Halaf 'culture'?

The name 'Halaf' relates mostly to the specific ceramic tradition first documented at the site of Tell Halaf (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 115; Matthews 2000). The Halaf has been termed the first widespread cultural horizon of Southwest Asia (Watson and LeBlanc 1973, 117). Often specific cultural attributes are ascribed to the period, all together being termed the Halaf 'package'. However, it must be emphasized that many of these traits can also be ascribed to other time periods as well, as there has been much continuity. The Halaf was characterized by the *tholoi* or roundhouses, obsidian objects, figurines, and clay sling bullets. Also, stone stamp seals to secure storage containers first make their appearance during the Halaf (Cruells 2008, 671; Matthews 2003, 21; Matthews 2009, 434; Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 9, 42). Finally, of course, the Fine Wares that are so particularly

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decorated are considered most typical. The painting of ceramics was only invented somewhat earlier, at the end of the 7th millennium BC (Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 9; 2013, 135).

This 'package' and view of the Halaf as a unified or homogeneous cultural phenomenon is oversimplified. From the discovery of the Halaf onwards the picture has become much more complicated, and it seems that 'Halaf' as a term often does no good. However, we still use the term, and the term will be employed in this thesis as well: The term still has utility in the academic world as we relate to it easily. Because of this, it is worth summarizing briefly how the term came into existence and what the more recent thoughts are on the issue.

At the beginning of the 20th century M.F. von Oppenheim directed the excavation of Tell Halaf in Syria. This is where they found the most unusual painted pottery, which would now bear the name equivalent to the site of discovery. This 'Halaf' pottery attracted the attention of another famous archaeologist, Mallowan, and he began searching for more Halaf sites in the 1930s, in which he succeeded. Because of Mallowan's search, the Halaf 'period' became recognized after its placement within the known prehistoric chronology. Mallowan did not stop here: After excavating Tell Arpachiyah in Iraq - a long-lived site with a long sequence of Halaf layers - in 1933 he was able to formulate a chronology within the period as well. Mallowan's work still forms the basis of our understanding of the period. Others followed him in refining his chronology through the study of pottery typologies, like Perkins in 1949 and Dabbagh in 1966. The amount of research focussed on the Halaf reached its peak in the 1970s and 80s. Many archaeologists were attracted to Syria, Iraq and Turkey because of the salvage work that needed to be done as a result of dams that were about to be constructed. Tell Arpachiyah was re-excavated, new excavations at the similar long-lived site of Tell Sabi Abyad were started, and various other sites, revealing ever more of the Halaf (Costello 2002, 117-9).

Until recently, it has been thought that there are many similarities in Halaf pottery from different sites, distanced so greatly apart. However, it is now argued that there existed much regional variation within the culture (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 115; Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 15; 2013, 136), and there is also evidence that the Halaf was connected to other Late Neolithic horizons like the Samarra and Hassuna (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 101; Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 11). Again, these 'culture-historical groups' are

formulated on a basis of ceramic assemblages and their regional complexities, but also other aspects like material culture, way of subsistence, style of architecture, and ritual (Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 15-6).

A recent increase in fieldwork has led to increasing complexity in terminology considering the Halaf and related 'culture-historical groups'. To indicate how complex the situation has become, Nieuwenhuyse has created a map showing some of the locations of major culture-historical groups that are related to the beginnings of the Halaf (Pre-Halaf) (Fig. 4). The terms presented in that map are known under various other names, and there is disagreement about which one suits best (Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 16). Later, the Halaf is supposed to have absorbed much of the territory where these culture-historical groups were located (Fig. 5).
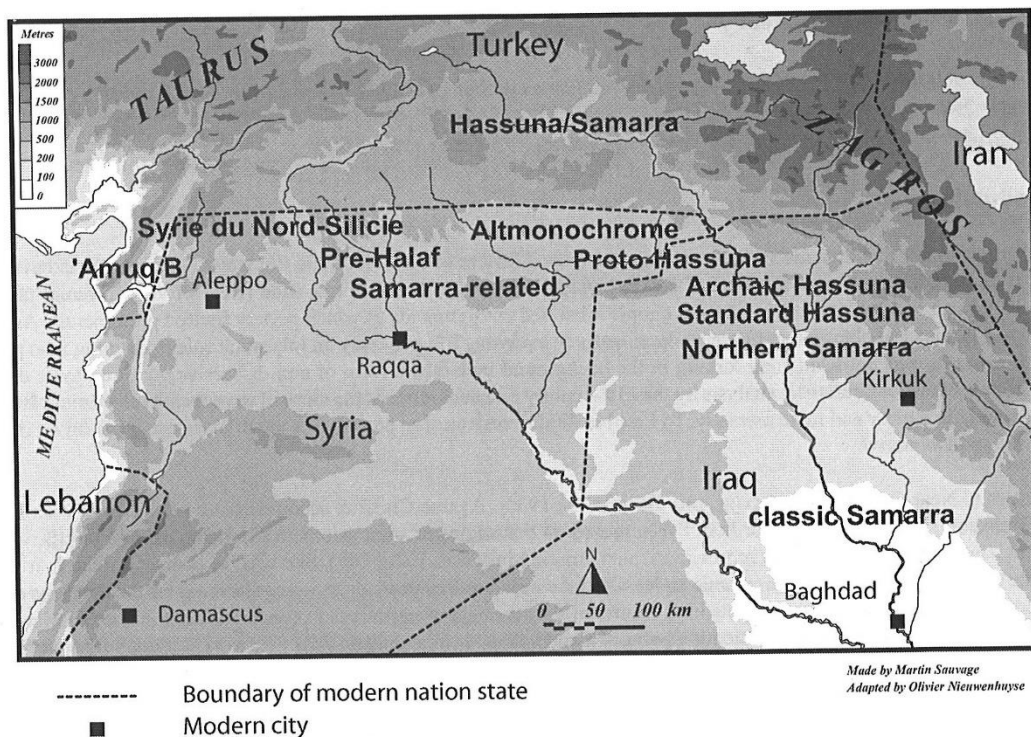

Figure 4: Major culture-historical groups locations that are related to the beginnings of the Halaf (Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 16).
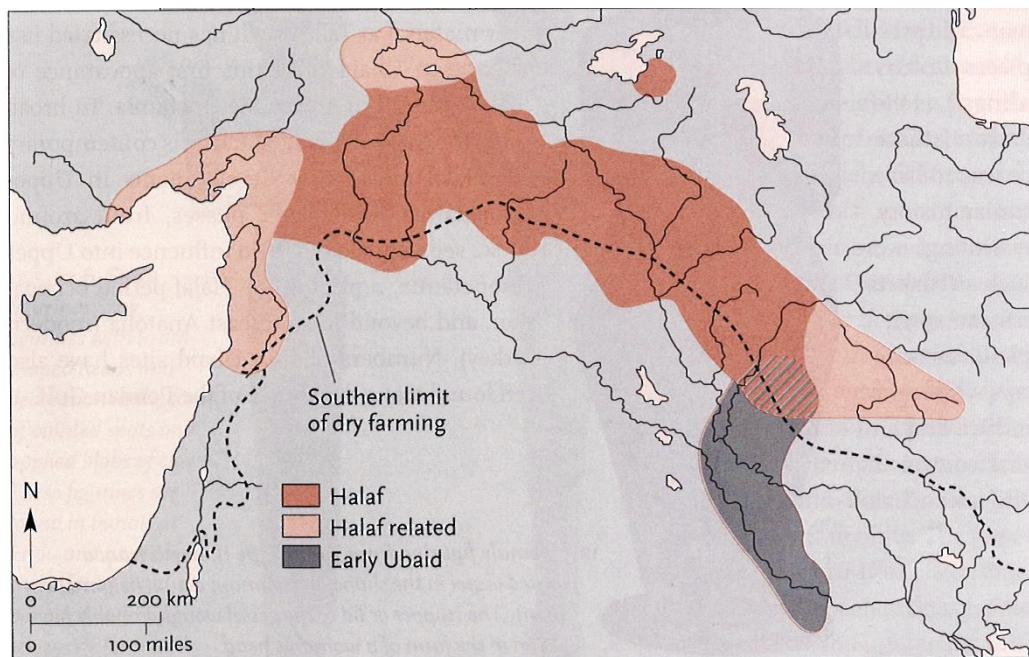
Figure 5: Distribution of sites related to the Halaf (after Matthews 2009, 435).

To conclude on the origins of the Halaf-term, which mainly refers to a ceramic tradition, and the recently discovered regional variation, it is probably risky to see the 'Halaf' as a culture: Does culture equal a specific pottery assemblage, and does one's culture depend on ceramic types only? I do not wish to elaborate on this discussion any further here as it is not the intention of this research to pose a solution, although I am aware of the problems caused by using the term. I do want to stress however that I will use the word 'Halaf' in this thesis where the authors referenced to have done this as well. Archaeological sites discussed here, attributed to the Halaf by the excavators, include Tell Sabi Abyad (Syria), Tell Khirbet esh-Shenef (Syria), Domuztepe (Turkey), Tell Kurdu (Turkey), Kazane Höyük (Turkey), Fıstıklı Hüyük (Turkey), Tell Arpachiyah (Iraq), Banahilk (Iraq), and Yarim Tepe I and II (Iraq).

2.3   The natural setting

Many Halaf sites are located along the so-called *Fertile Crescent*, meaning the crescent-shaped fertile land of the Middle East, stretching from the Persian Gulf through southern Iraq, Jordan, Israel, Syria and Lebanon. The Euphrates and Tigris rivers, running through the same area, have formed important water sources and routes of communication. The semi-

arid steppe of northern Mesopotamia, enclosed by the Euphrates and Tigris, is relatively flat and is also known as the *Jezireh* in Arabic (Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 31). It is this landscape that forms the physical setting for this thesis.

Seasonal contrasts are severe. The winters are characterized by rainfall, and are relatively cool. Occasionally snow is brought from the mountains of Anatolia. The rain season lasts from the last days of October to April, with brief and heavy rainfall. The summers on the other hand are hot and dry, accompanied by dust storms (Mulders 1969, 96-8; Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 31; Wirth 1971). Moreover, the northern area is wetter than the southern part. On the average the region receives around 200 to 600 mm of rainfall (Wilkinson 2003, 100-3): A study by Mulders has shown that the northernmost parts receive around 450 mm of precipitation, albeit the most southerner regions receive only 150 mm of rain (Mulders 1969, 27). The boundary from the north to the south is a gradual one, however. Only in the north the amount of rainfall is sufficient to support agriculture without the aid of irrigation. However, the main natural growing season is throughout March and April, the months in which there is some rainfall and temperatures are most favourable (Mulders 1969, 96-8; Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 31). See Fig. 5 for the southern limit of dry farming.

This difference between the north and the south had complications in the past as well. Dry farming was possible in the north, but since the landscape was very marginal and the amount of precipitation varied every year, people in the Neolithic probably had to deal with crop failures. Food production can be regarded highly labour intensive in Neolithic times (Mulders 1969, 28; Matthews 2009, 434; Russell 2010, 2). In the south where precipitation was minimal people mostly relied on hunting or herding. However, it is also suggested that agriculture may have been practiced close to the rivers where people could profit from the annual flooding of the rivers as some sort of natural irrigation (Akkermans 1993; McCorriston 1998; Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 31).

The Neolithic has probably been characterized by climatic fluctuations as well, which are often thought to be related to changes in for example subsistence and material culture. The climate event at c. 6200 BC, better known as the 8.2K event, was characterized as a period of aridification and a generally dry, windy, but cool climate (Russell 2010, 47-64). It could be proposed that this stage in the Late Neolithic witnessed a climatic deterioration, while before this was an optimum.

Even though climate fluctuations have marked the past, the landscape was not as empty as we know it from modern days. Present day landscape use and human overexploitation have caused the removal of natural cover (Gremmen and Bottema 1991; More *et al.* 2000), and only few areas remain that are not deforested. In those fertile areas and near the coast wild flowers can be found, reed grasses, vines, shrubs, olives, oaks, tamarisks poplars and apricot trees can be found. This must have been the case in the past as well, or at least in river valleys (Christie-Mallowan 1999, 179-80; Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 31; Russell 2010, 31).

A number of wild animals could be found in Mesopotamia in the Late Neolithic. There were the auroch (*Bos primigenius*), wild ass (*Equus asinus or africanus*), onager (*Equus hemionus*), sheep (*Ovis orientalis or ammon*), goat (*Capra aegagrus*), red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), fallow deer (*Dama mesopotamica*), roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), gazelle (*Gazella gazella or subgutturosa*) and wild boar (*Sus scrofa*). Smaller animals still present in the region in modern times include wolves (*Canis lupus*), foxes (*Vulpes*), various reptiles and birds like the partridge, pigeon, heron, stork, lark, owl, falcon, water fowl and migratory species. Aquatic resources are still to be found in abundance as well, like molluscs, fish, frogs and tortoises (Mulders 1969, 104; Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 31; Russell 2010, 33-6).

2.4   Subsistence

Recently we have come to know much about Halaf subsistence and patterns of settlement because of surveys. The period is characterized by dispersed villages and shifting settlements. A very small amount of sites seem large, around 12 to 20 ha. Nevertheless, those sites were probably never inhabited at once in their totality. In general, sites tend to be 0,5 to 3 ha (Akkermans 2013; Matthews 2009, 435; Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 31-6).

Changes in land use, organization of settlement, and demography occurred throughout the Late Neolithic. Studies of the Balikh valley for example have shown that settlements were sparse by the time of the later Pre-Halaf, and small. Two larger settlements are Tell Sabi Abyad and Tell Mounbatah, and those sites might have occupied a central position in the land. From the early Halaf onwards change is notable as the number of sites increases as well as the site density. By the Middle Halaf, already 20 sites

were in use. Permanently inhabited villages reappear in the south of the Balikh, whereas before sites were ephemeral. Tell Mounbatah began to grow exceptionally, and may have become 20 ha. A few other sites like Tell Sabi Abyad were to become 4 ha big, but most sites remained below 1 ha. Settlement patterns from the Khabur and also other areas are similar to the Balikh. However, it is unclear what caused these changes. Small changes in climate and rainfall are potential causes, as well as increases in population density resulting in pressures and expansion, but remain to be proven. Survey evidence seems to opt against such population pressures (Akkermans 1993; Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 128; Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 31-6).

Settlement size, however, cannot be regarded as the decisive factor determining the mode of subsistence. Above all, there is a lot of new evidence that Halaf people were mobile, and shifts in degree of sedentism might be a better explanation for changes in settlement patterns. This evidence includes not only regional survey data and data from recent excavations, but also the presence of stamp seals to mark individual property (likely used by pastoralists who made use of storage facilities of villages), and evidence for the production of dairy products (like objects used for processing dairy goods and zooarchaeological evidence). It is likely that the mobile lifestyle arose in the Late Neolithic, like seasonal mobility along with pastoralism (Akkermans 1993; Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 126-31; Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 31-6). I refer to chapter 4, 'Halaf zooarchaeology', for a discussion of this evidence for mobility.

Then what about food? At the basis of Halaf subsistence were domesticated animals, and people relied on their crops. Halaf people were farmers: Lentils and peas were grown, as well as barley and emmer wheat (Matthews 2009, 436).

Next to exploiting domesticated foodstuffs people occasionally hunted wild animals, like the ones mentioned in the previous paragraph. It is probable that some Halaf sites were even purposefully located along great migration routes. Besides game, also riverine areas were providing meals (Matthews 2009, 436; Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 31). Halaf zooarchaeology and pastoralism is discussed in more detail further on in this thesis.

2.5   Social inequality?

It is questionable whether social hierarchies were present during the Halaf, as there are no clear clues. It has been argued that chiefly elites appeared around this time because of the presence of the Halaf ceramic style which is so elaborate, but this is not convincing as the archaeological record has not demonstrated such social complexities. Burial evidence does not hint at social ranking, for example (Akkermans 1993, 291; Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 145). The picture is probably more egalitarian (Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 219-23). There are multiple studies that deal with social organization during the Halaf, but here I will only focus on two recent studies that I find most convincing. Convincing, as the first one is based on a very elaborate and detailed analysis, and the second one is a contextual study. Nevertheless, this does not have to mean that everybody was completely equal. Nieuwenhuyse has suggested that inequality during Pre Halaf and Halaf times existed in a form of impermanent hierarchies, established by ambitious individuals or groups and their achievements. According to him, a process called *emulation* was at play during Halaf times, and he concludes this from changes in decorated ceramics over time: There are indications of an increase in complexity of stylistic, morphological and technological aspects. This was the case at Tell Sabi Abyad from which the largest amount of studied ceramics came, but also at other Late Neolithic sites. From 6200 BC onwards we can observe plain Pre-Halaf ceramics evolving into the Halaf Fine Ware that is so intricately designed and painted. Nieuwenhuyse suggests that there was a competitive social context, that these innovations were structured, and that ceramics were a medium for shaping, negotiating, and the reproduction of social identities. The concept of emulation is simple: The lower rank and the higher rank both possess a different assemblage of pottery. When the lower rank wants to improve their 'status', they will copy the higher rank and use their specific pottery assemblage. As the higher rank wishes to keep their status and remain exclusive, they choose to adopt new ceramic styles. Then, the process repeats itself over and over (Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 219-23; 2009).

Özbal and Gerritsen have studied pottery as well to gain insight in social differences. They contextually investigated the Late Neolithic ceramics of Tell Kurdu, a site that is Halaf related as it is supposed that it had prolonged contact with Halaf communities. It was questioned whether painted wares were considered prestige items in the past, but the research showed that they probably were not explicitly deployed as items for social

competition. Painted ceramics were found in all sorts of contexts, meaning that everybody must have had equal access to them (Özbal and Gerritsen 2013). However, this research was conducted for this specific site only, and future research is needed to conclude on whether there was a form of social stratification.

2.6   Ritual and religion

In this paragraph I will not go into depth on the subject of ritual and religion, as a major part is discussed elsewhere: Namely, what roles did Halaf animals play in ritual and religion? Here, I will only provide the very basics.

Clues for ritual and religion during the Halaf are there, but they are less outspoken than in the periods prior to the Halaf. For example, we do not find plastered human skulls and big human statuaries, and large ritual buildings and monumental sites like Göbekli Tepe (Turkey). At this latter site fascinating stelae decorated with the reliefs of various animal species were uncovered, but in Halaf times the animal representations seem to have moved to other material categories; admittedly, home and kitchen stuff. Verhoeven argues that the Late Neolithic has been marked by *domesticity*; village meetings, the symbolic decoration of pottery, and occasional rituals were practised by the community, but with the household being the main organizational unit (Matthews 2009, 436; Verhoeven 2002, 6; 2011, 799).

'Ritual' in the Halaf period might be considered the cases in which objects are buried together in pits, which might implicate the death of those items. Otherwise, items like figurines could also have functioned in the administrative system, with the breaking representing the end of contractual obligations. Those 'burials' can contain all sorts of items, from pottery (fragments) to seals, from arrowheads to figurines. Sometimes it seems that the objects were destroyed on purpose, by force or fire. Burials of multiple items occurred at, for example, Tell Tawila and Yarim Tepe II (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 143-4; Becker and Helms 2013; Garfinkel 1994, 172; Merpert and Munchaev 1987).

Deliberate destruction was not only carried out with objects, but also with architecture. The destruction was conducted after abandonment, and by the aid of fire. An example of a house set ablaze can be found at Arpachiyah, where beautiful Halaf plates were smashed

inside the house as part of the ritual (Campbell 1992). From Tell Sabi Abyad another famous example is known: The so-called *Burnt Village*. The whole village was set ablaze after it was deserted, and so Verhoeven calls this an *abandonment ritual* (Verhoeven 2000, 48; Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 148-9). The case is discussed furthermore later on.

Another topic related to ritual and religion is that of burial, but of human beings. In the Late Neolithic the deceased were put to rest in various ways. There are cases in which the body is buried in simple pits, there are burials in pots, cremations, and burials happened under the floors of houses. At Yarim Tepe II there are even cases known of cremations along with supposedly ritually broken vessels in ovens. Also, there is the remarkable habit of secondary burial of skulls. Grave goods are not outspokenly present, but they are there. Mostly pottery accompanies the person, and in exceptional cases, like at Tell es-Sawwan, there are figurines, beads and alabaster bowls. It is often that children are buried beneath the floors of houses or else within the settlement, whereas adults get a spot in a cemetery outside the settlement. The latter is the case at Tell Sabi Abyad (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 145-6; Akkermans 2008, 622; Matthews 2009, 436; Oates 1978, 118-9).

To conclude this paragraph, it has been suggested by Nieuwenhuyse that feasting fulfilled an important role in Halaf people's lives. Feasting is discussed further on as well as there seems to be an important link with animals and animal symbolism. Feasting, and communal dining, could have had the critical function of tying the widespread Neolithic communities together, and to sustain distant contacts. Halaf Fine Ware would have been very suitable for these feasts, as form-function analysis suggest that they were greatly suitable for the consumption of food as well as beverages. Also, the concept of emulation could have been played out during feasts. At Tell Sabi Abyad there is a large open space nicknamed the central *plaza*, which was uninhabited. This would have been the perfect spot for a large scale party. In open areas like this one a large amount of hearths, ovens, just as refuse pits were uncovered that were probably used for public purposes. And it gets even better: The large tell on which the bigger village of Tell Sabi Abyad was located must not without doubt have been visible from miles away; a real focal point so to speak which would have attracted people from quite a distance.. Were the Halaf people of Tell Sabi Abyad real party animals (Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 38, 224-5; 2013, 135)?

3 APPROACHES TO ANIMALS

In this chapter a theoretical background will be provided on approaching animals and animal representations in archaeology. The topic is broad, but two main approaches can be recognized. The first one, zooarchaeology, views animals as being part of the food economy. The second one, social zooarchaeology, on the other hand also ascribes more 'social' roles to animals, and it is this approach that is important for this thesis. Nevertheless, even social zooarchaeology knows some variants as not everybody agrees on what aspects exactly should be studied. Some interpret 'social' in a more radical way than others. In this chapter I will summarize the relevant literature on social zooarchaeology and its sub-approaches, and then discuss this to see how everything can be appliqued to my own study.

3.1   Zooarchaeology versus social zooarchaeology

Two main approaches to animals can be recognized in zooarchaeology. The first and most common one, often just termed *zooarchaeology*, is the study of animal remains in order to assess which species are represented, what the domestication status is of the animal, to assess hunting and herding strategies and butchering techniques in the past, how animals were transported, etcetera. Overall, this zooarchaeology is focused around reconstructing the human diet (Russell 2012, 5-7) and views animals as objects for utilitarian purposes (Hill 2013).

The second major approach is fairly recent, and is named '*social*' or sometimes '*interpretative*' zooarchaeology since the 1990s (Hill 2013, 117). *Social zooarchaeology* is often described as being different from traditional zooarchaeology because it acknowledges that animals fulfil other roles besides consumption. It stresses the social significance of animals, and animals are often viewed as subjects. However, this approach is not a uniform one, which already becomes evident from the different ways in which the approach is interpreted. Then, also, it appears to me that the term itself is rather vague: What exactly do we mean with 'social'? What aspects of animals do we study then when applying the social zooarchaeology framework? In the sections beneath I discuss different

researchers and their views on social zooarchaeology. After each view I will give my own: What are the pros and cons of this researcher's view, and how can this particular view be applied to the Halaf?

Nerissa Russell is quite famous because of her contributions to social zooarchaeology. What she means by social zooarchaeology seems simple: Any approach different than viewing animals in terms of calories and proteins. In one of her works called 'Social Zooarchaeology: Humans and Animals in Prehistory' she has reviewed existing literature on the interpretation of animals in prehistory, and investigates *human-animal relations* in prehistory in the widest sense by taking a so-called holistic view. She argues that zooarchaeologists have always neglected the variety of roles animals could have fulfilled, such as symbols, pets, totems or spirit helpers, wealth, sacrificial victims, or objects of feasting or taboos. Those are the kinds of roles that are considered 'social'. Furthermore, she argues that these social factors shaped animal bone assemblages just as much as taphonomic processes. Bone assemblages are not the only evidence taken into account by Russell though, as she also involves classical studies, history and ethnography (Russell 2012).

I think Russell's formulation of social zooarchaeology as an approach that moves beyond viewing animals as calories and proteins is a simple one, which is good. Yet, what the exact approach is remains a bit obscure to me. Happily, examples of what Russell considers as social roles of animals are given, and those are all roles that can be investigated for Halaf animals too (see next paragraph). Halaf animals have figured widely in two dimensional and three dimensional representations where they might be considered symbols. Perhaps they are symbols of spirit helpers or totems. We also know of feasting contexts and it could be that animals functioned as sacrificial victims, wealth or even objects of taboos in those.

Poole (2015) did similar research and has investigated human-animal relations and the social meaning of animals as well, but specifically for the domestic cat in Anglo-Saxon England. He, too, notices the lack of this kind of studies. Yet, Poole also explicitly mentions the concept of 'agency', and stresses the performativity of animals in human-animal relationships. To date, the concept of agency mostly has been used to study inanimate objects and technological processes, but it can be applied to animals as well. According to

Poole animals have a great ability of 'acting back' because animals actually are aware of their surroundings and can respond to them, resulting in dynamic interactions between animals and humans. It is because of this dynamic human-animal interplay that animals are very much able to influence, for example, aspects of human or animal identity. Identities of animals and humans must be viewed as dynamic, and are dependent on the interactional context. This is contrasted with human-object interactions by Poole, as objects are bound to their physical properties and thus have a lesser ability to influence. Also, Poole suggests that we need to understand that animals come in a variety of species that are all considered different by people from the past, that some animals were more close to humans than others, and that they behave differently. Furthermore, we need to move away from dichotomies like nature versus culture. Making a distinction between domestic and wild for example is merely making categories of species, but this does not necessarily tell us anything about the relationships between humans and animals in the past.

I do not doubt that in Halaf times animals and their behaviour had a great impact on the minds of people. Why else would animals and their representations have appeared in so many different contexts? It is certainly worthwhile to investigate the contexts of where people directly came into contact with animals, the so-called interactional contexts by Poole, in order to understand the possible human-animal relations and meanings behind Halaf animal symbolism. It seems to me that traditional zooarchaeology is of aid here as subsistence studies can tell us of where these interactions took place, and of what formal relations people had with their animals: What species do we see in the zoological record? Were they pets, kept in a herd, or were they not kept at all? How do they relate to species represented in art or species found as remains in special contexts? Secondly, it would indeed be naïve to distinguish between wild and domesticated species on modern scientific grounds, but most probably prehistoric people differentiated between 'wild' and 'domestic' too; yet, their categories might have been based on different grounds than ours. I think it would be fruitful to distinguish between animals that are closer to humans (for example animals that were kept) and further away (animals that were not kept), as they probably imply different relationships.

Hill (2013) mentions the concept of animal agency as well and her critique is that even in social zooarchaeology there is a lack of interpreting animals as agents that organize society itself. It is often still the case that social zooarchaeologists *"consistently assume a human-subject/animal-object dichotomy."* (Hill 2013, 118). It is only considered that animals are good to think with, which *"implicitly denies agency to animals, fostering instead the view that animal bodies and behaviors are simply raw material with which to symbol, sacrifice, bury, represent, and conceptualize."* (Hill 2013, 118). Animals for example can play key roles in cosmology and mythology, and kin relations.

We also need to take into account that our Western perspective does not always match the one of prehistoric peoples, and boundaries between nature and culture or humans and animals can be fluid or absent. For example, in some societies animals were viewed as persons instead of animals. In hunter-gatherer societies animals often are thought to have personhood. For describing the systems in which animals act independently, are socially constituted sentient agents, and interact through performance, Hill uses the term 'relational ontology'. Furthermore, changes in human-animal relations are related to shifts in the mode of subsistence (ontological shifts) according to Hill. Pastoralists for example relate differently to animals than hunters, as animals became sentient property (Hill 2013, 118-21).

Hill goes on that animal burials and structured deposits are contexts to find strong evidence for the social relations between man and animals. Structured deposits are deposits of animal artefacts that are arranged intentionally in a certain way, and these deposits are often labelled as ritual deposits by archaeologists. 'Ritual', however, often just stands for non-utilitarian or irrational, implicating a dichotomy between ordinary and profane. As explained earlier, Hill suggested that these dichotomies might not have been there in the past and are thus not useful (Hill 2013, 122).

Although I do agree with much of the above, I think it is not easy to study prehistoric cosmology, mythology, and kin relations in which animals might have played an active role. We have no narratives, and therefore we might only get to comprehend the very basics of what social roles animals fulfilled. Nevertheless, for the Halaf period I can think of some scenes on Fine Ware pottery that might give us an insight into their cosmology, or at least the basics thereof. The many motifs found on a single vessel, including animal motifs, together seem to form some sort of narrative as will be explained

further in chapter 5. Also, there is the depiction of a human being who seems to be playing the role of an animal.

The possible absence of boundaries between nature and culture or ordinary and profane in the past, as Hill mentions, is something to take into account. It appears to me that, at least in the Halaf, 'rituals' involving animals were very much integrated in everyday life. Furthermore, I strongly agree with Hill stating that our Western perspective does not always match the one of prehistoric peoples. Nowadays, humans have become abnormally detached from their food resources. Hunting and caring for your personal herd surely yields all kinds of personal relationships with animals. This is an important observation, and can be very problematic: How can we ever adopt the same mindset as people had in prehistory? We might never be able to grasp Halaf thinking to the fullest and we might as well accept this. I do not see any problems with hypothesising though, as long as we keep in the back of our minds that they are suggestions only. Incidentally, the comment Hill makes on pastoralists in the past and them consciously viewing their animals as property is odd: How does she know?

Burials and structured deposits of animal remains, important sources of information according to Hill, are very much present in the Halaf (see chapter 5 as well). We have animal remains in human graves, and animal bones in feasting contexts. Also, there is the interesting case of a cattle astragalus cache found at Kazane Höyük in southeastern Turkey, leaving some researchers to fantasise that Halaf people practised some form of divination (however, we will see that there are more probable explanations for the use of astragali).

Overton and Hamilakis (2013) take animal agency to its extreme in an article about swans and other animal beings in the Mesolithic. They regret the focus on subsistence and economy in zooarchaeology similar to above researchers, but they also opt for a revised version of social zooarchaeology. According to them previous social zooarchaeological approaches, including Russell's work, still do not provide a way out of established epistemologies and ontologies: They focus too much, as Poole (2015) and Hill (2013) also mentioned, on a nature-culture division, dividable in mundane versus ritual, economic versus symbolic, etcetera. The term human-animal relations is often not entirely in its place as researchers eventually only look at how animals figure in human-human relations. In

this the roles of animals are often viewed as symbolic, totemic, or representational for an identity. The animal is considered passive, and as studies revolve around humans and how they benefit from animals in one way or the other, these studies can be considered anthropocentric.

Overton and Hamilakis therefore provide a new framework which moves away from subsistence, but also from functionalism and viewing animals as symbolic resources for human benefit. Their new framework is built upon alternative 'zoontologies' which focus on animals as autonomous and sentient agents, and real human-animal relations. They suggest that we should study each species in their own right as individuals, and as having a soul like ours, which is different from what we are used to; our western perspective would homogenize animals, viewing them as all the same and different from us humans. Animals have, like us, a point of view on the world and on us. We should also study the interpersonal and intimate relationships between humans and animals, the emotional interaction, and the sensorial (Overton and Hamilakis 2013, 113-17).

To be honest, I find that Overton and Hamilakis are making things quite complicated. Surely we can assume that our modern views are different from the ones people had in the past, but how do we as archaeologists dig up the immaterial 'souls' of individual animals and the animals' point of view on the world? Of course, there is nothing wrong with hypothesizing this was the way in which people viewed animals in the past, as being like 'us'. In the case of animals being humanlike, I would expect animals being treated similar to humans, for example in burial. At Halafian Domuztepe, discussed in the next chapter, we will see that dogs received a treatment similar to humans after their death.

Second question is, how are we supposed to study interpersonal and intimate relationships between humans and animals, as well as emotional interaction, or what they call 'sensorial experience'? In a case study Overton and Hamilakis investigate the experience of hunting whooper swans, consuming them, and finally depositing the leftovers. They say that the hunt would have been a dramatic event; an individual swan was chosen to be killed, maybe a swan that was seen before this decision was made and therefore recognized as this same 'individual', the swan would have made theatrical sounds as it was killed, and the look of the red blood on the white wings must have been startling for the hunter. Then this person would have eaten the same swan, still remembering the experience of the hunt, followed by that he would then have disposed

of the swan's remains in the proper way. One context in which whooper swans were found were alongside humans in graves, indicating an intimate relationship.

This little fantasy can by no means be proven, but it still makes us aware of how different the experience of getting something to eat must have been in the past. When we go to the supermarket, we buy a pack of meat which says something like 'beef'. We do not know much about that particular bovine, just that it came from a place where it was bred to end up in the supermarket, or maybe that it had some space to move around if the package said 'organic'. If we lived in Halaf times there would have been a high chance that we knew that particular cow because it lived by our side. We probably would have remembered how much effort and time it costed to raise such a large animal, and how we cared about it. I can imagine that the act of ending such a long-term relationship must have made quite some impact. As will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters, this view might be interesting considering animals that were chosen to be eaten during feasts, and also animals that are found in graves.

For a simplified summary of the existing approaches in zooarchaeology described above see Fig. 6 provided beneath. Even though social zooarchaeology does not seem a unified approach, maybe because the approach is still young, it does provide some grounds which I should take into account in my research as I've made clear in the above sections. In the following paragraphs some of the 'social' roles of animals which were suggested by Russell and others are outlined to a further extent: Animal symbols like art, metaphors, totems and taboos, and animal roles in ritual, including burials, structured deposits and contexts of feasting.
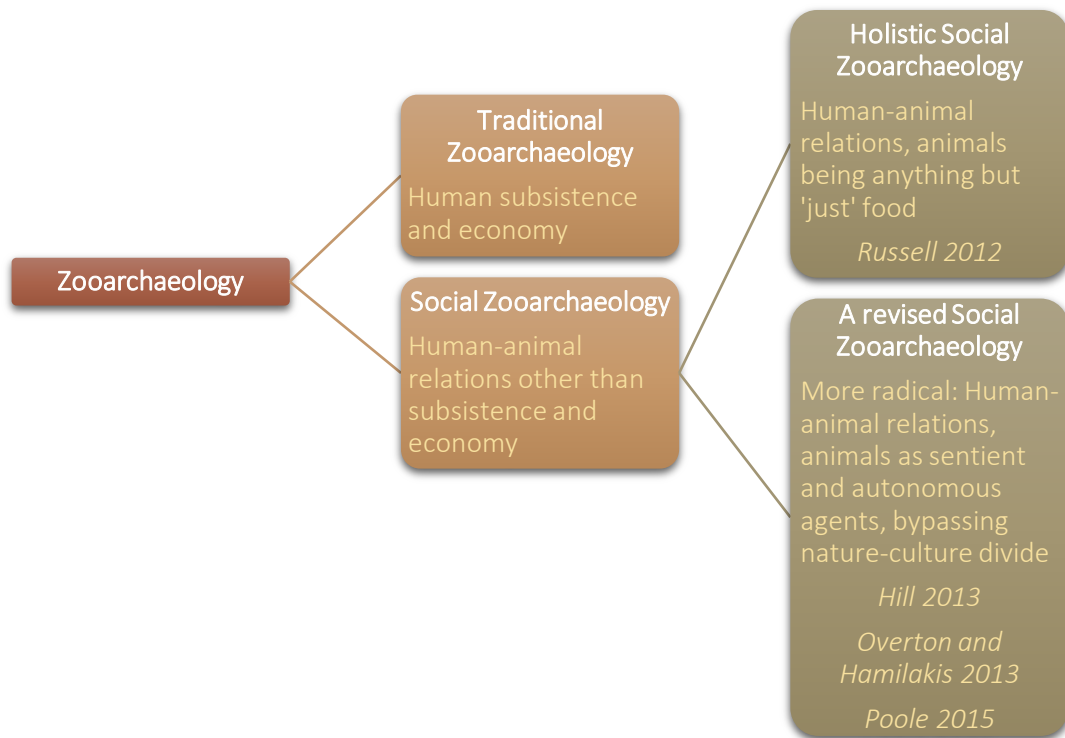
Figure 6: Approaches in zooarchaeology.

3.2   Animal symbols

Russell (2012) is convinced that animal representations as well as faunal remains can tell us a lot about the symbolic role of animals in prehistory. Belief systems about animals might have influenced the context and spatial distribution of animal remains, next to taphonomic processes. Sometimes we might find that certain animal species did not contribute in a major way to the diet, but were brought to the site for special purposes. Also, animal symbols are used to shape human relations, for example ideas about gender (Russell 2012, 50-1). Russell has highlighted some of the possible roles that animals exactly can have in symbolism, including animal art, metaphors, totems and taboos. These types of animal symbols, which sometimes overlap, will be explained in the following paragraphs. Furthermore, I will relate them to the different material categories in which animals are represented in the Halaf (for a summery, see Tab. 2).

With art Russell means numerous kinds of representation. She investigates a number facets of animal representations which may be helpful in approaching animal remains and the symbolic importance of animal species. First of all, it appears that the ratio of animal species found as depictions often does not match the ratio of species present in the archaeozoological record. So, there is often no direct relationship between subsistence and art. Then the question is what the motivation was for the portrayal of animals.

For prehistoric hunters it is suggested that animals represented in art were the most favoured, the largest, or feared prey, that they served in myths or for education, that they were related to hunting magic, shamanistic trances and animals as spirit helpers, or initiation rituals and alternative ceremonies. Russell suggests that larger animals were not always taken for their protein, but also for their prestige value. Depictions of animals do not always have to do with hunting however, the creation of art itself might also be considered a ritual (Russell 2012, 13-7).

In the case of pastoralists it is suggested that their art resembles their primary herd animals with divine attributes. This might be less evident for mixed farming communities however, and it could also be that the most frequently herded animal is not the most frequent one in art. Other types of value could be related to the animal in question, as for example power and danger, prestige and their ritual significance (like Russell suggests for the bull in earlier Neolithic of the Near East). Also, it can be that there is a focus on undomesticated animals in art, referring to the wild or maybe implicating symbolic domestication. Hunting in farming societies can be related to gender roles and construction of (male) identities (Russell 2012, 18-21).

For investigating animal art in the Halaf, all material categories in which the representations of animals occur should be considered, thus, wall paintings, Halaf Fine Ware, sealings, amulets, and figurines. A comparison between the ratio of animal species found in the material categories and the ratio of species present in the archaeozoological record is then necessary: This would make clear whether there is a relationship between Halaf subsistence and art, and an hypothesis can then be formulated for the motivation which laid behind using the animal as a symbol. Russell suggests communities with different modes of production have different motivations. However, the Halaf knew many modes of subsistence, so we can expect many kinds of reasons for picking animals as their

symbols. They were farmers, pastoralists, and occasionally hunters (see chapter 2 and chapter 4).

Animal metaphors

"We use animal categories to understand human society and human categories to understand animals" (Russell 2012, 11). Animal symbols can not only be used to classify humans or human groups, but can also communicate moral lessons. In the latter case animals are often attributed with certain human qualities, to make them heroes or the opposite. The other way around is also possible; animal qualities can be used to describe human individuals or groups (Russell 2012, 12).

I think animal metaphors are easy to recognize when ancient texts are available. For the Halaf, only images remain. I do not know of any images in which the animal shows human features. However, there is one decorative motif found on a sherd which seems to resemble a person with a tail (see chapter 5) that can perhaps be interpreted as an animal metaphor, but this will remain speculative.

Totems

Animal species representing human groups is one of the common forms of totemism. Sometimes this also means that the particular animal species is not eaten because of taboos, that animal parts are used as talismans, that the animal is worshipped, and that there is a belief of descent from the species, but this is not always the case. Animal totems occur in all types of society, but can be employed differently in each one. According to Russell, if we wish to approach totemism as archaeologists, we should carefully study the context of the representations of animals and their remains. Contexts like houses, public buildings or burials are of special interest here: Are animal remains or representations associated with these context, or the opposite? If they are, then it might be that this particular species was seen as connected with the particular group of people living there. If certain species are the totems of particular groups, then it would be obvious if the distribution of representations and remains is in line with these groups. It must be noted however that a certain totem is not necessarily shared by the whole group of people that lived at a site. There can also be a diversity of totems used at a single site, if it was perceived that there were different subgroups of people (for example 'women' and 'men', each having their own totem). Yet, studying totemism can be difficult as totemism is not

practiced in the same way everywhere which leaves us with uncertainty about what the exact indicators might be (Russell 2012, 24-8).

From the above we can conclude that totemism is a very wide concept, and can be employed in different ways. Since the exact indicators for totemism are unclear, probably only tentative suggestions can be made about whether people associated themselves with animals during the Halaf. As Russell implied, burials are contexts in which totems can be found, and there are cases in the Halaf where animal materials were put in humans graves. Houses or public buildings are other important contexts here. Two wall paintings were discovered in domestic contexts at Tell Bouqras and Umm Dabaghiyah, and cattle astragali caches were found in domestic and burial contexts. Furthermore, I would say that animal amulets can be indicative for personal animal totems as well, and we do know them from many sites dating to the Halaf.

Taboos

Russell starts off with explaining that food taboos shape cosmology and identity, although they might fulfil various purposes. For example, taboos are often related to gender differences, age divisions, productive states and reproductive states (Russell 2012, 29-33). But what is a taboo? According to Russell a taboo includes multiple prohibitions: *"Taboos may forbid the killing of an animal, the consumption of its meat, the consumption of certain parts of the animal, or its consumption under certain circumstances. Such taboos may apply universally or only to certain people or at certain times."* (Russell 2012, 29).

Studying taboos can be tough. The absence of a species in the archaeozoological record does not necessarily mean that it was not eaten, but it can rather mean that the required technology to hunt the animal was absent or that the animal did not occur in that environment. Also, when a whole group does not eat a particular animal this is easier to recognize than when only certain group members were prohibited to consume the species. So, how can archaeologists recognize taboos? Sometimes animal remains in special contexts or remains used as artefacts can be clues, as well as distinct spatial distributions. In the case of animal representations, animals represented in art but not represented in the archaeozoological record might be the subject of taboo (Russell 2012, 38-40).

The last thing mentioned, comparing which animals are represented in art and which animals are represented in the archaeozoological record, can easily be tested for the

Halaf. Representations are numerous and there exist some good archaeozoological reports which are quite specific on which species are present. Moreover, I will also consider animal remains in special contexts or remains used as artefacts. Thus, all material categories in which animals are represented should be contextualized against the archaeozoological record.

Table 2: Russell's types of animal symbols versus the material categories in which animals are represented in the Halaf (Russell 2012). Where can we expect these types of symbols?

	Animals in art	Animal metaphors	Totems	Taboos
Ritual animal deposits			X	X
Wall paintings	X		X	X
Halaf Fine Ware	X	?		X
Figurines	X			X
Sealings	X			X
Amulets	X		X	X

3.3   Animals in 'ritual'

Next to exploring the ways in which animals can figure in symbolism, I will now explore some of the ways in which animals can figure in ritual in more detail. I will discuss burials and structured deposits of animal remains, and feasting as those are contexts in which Halaf animals appear.

Burials and structured deposits of animal remains

According to Russell a contextual approach is needed when studying animal remains in ritual. However, context is often overlooked by archaeozoologists as this is often not of their concern, and so special deposits or distinctive spatial patterning of animal remains tend to be left uninterpreted (Russell 2012, 142-3). Hill (2013) mentions that animals can be found in burials, buried alone or alongside humans, with or without grave goods. This is frequently the case with dogs, and Hill suggests that dogs might have been perceived as persons by many in the past. Of course, animals different than dogs could have been

regarded this way. Personhood of the animals might have been based on their life history. There are even cases in which animals seemed to have had a special status, reflected in the way they were buried (Hill 2013, 122-4).

Animal burials form a huge source of information regarding human-animal relations, but also other contexts where disarticulated remains are found can be of potential. Structured deposits differ from discard and can include iconic or indexical parts of the animal, which often received special treatment and had a certain significance (Hill 2013, 124-5).

For the Halaf there exist both the burial of disarticulated remains and burials of complete animal skeletons. It is interesting that the case of dogs is mentioned here. Few dog burials are known for the Halaf period, except for Domuztepe (see next chapter).

Animals and feasting

The topic of feasting has grown to be quite trendy in archaeology (Russell 2012, 378). Hayden (2001) has provided a famous theoretical background, although his ideas focus on politics and power. He states that feasts are greatly important for transegalitarian groups, meaning the types of society that are in between complex chiefdoms and egalitarian foragers. He found a number of general practical uses of feast; Feasts are good for mobilizing labour, for creating cooperative relationships between groups or, on the opposite, the exclusion of certain groups, for creating cooperative bonds between social groups, for transforming the surpluses of products into profit in terms of social, economic and political purposes, and for attracting the desired partners, labour, alliances, or exchange of wealth by promoting the success of a group. Also, feasts can create political control over, for example, commodity and labour by constructing a network of mutual indebtedness. They can function to acquire favours, or they can be a means for compensating violation.

Russell acknowledges the social and political opportunities created by feasts as well, and they feature predominantly in societies practicing pastoralism in order to obtain dairy products (Ingold 1980 in Russell 2012, 377). The definition of a feast differs per author, ranging from the serving of food distinct from ordinary meals to the ritualization of the event. Russell defines a feast by its scale: A feast is a feast when it is attended by guests who are from beyond the household. Additional factors that can relate to feasts are gift

exchange, prestige, competition, potlatch, and the intensification of production and the creation of surplus. Moreover, feasts can have a gendered aspect as there can be divisions in the roles men and women fulfil during the event or the organization. However, it is not always the intention to create inequality. Feasts can also be about establishing the sense of solidarity and community. This bonding of people is often done through rituals, dancing and animal sacrifice, which creates strong memories. Feasts can also be calendrical events, following the harvest or hunting season, or specific stages in life (Russell 2012, 377-84).

But how to trace feasts archaeologically? When only considering the archaeozoological evidence for feasting Russell suggests we should look into spatial and contextual associations, we should see what feasting foods were selected, and how the carcasses and disposal were treated. What one would expect is an accumulation of foodstuffs similar in date in a specific context. Ceremonial structures or places are excellent locations for feasts, like monuments or (public) open areas or plazas. Other important places are ceremonial contexts like burials. The place where the large amount of remains are deposited might be outside of the settlement as well for hygiene reasons, and are then rapidly buried or burnt instead. Foodstuffs used in feasts are usually different from the ones consumed normally, and include for example large animals that provide large quantities of meat, or species which are usually not eaten. Moreover, the animals may differ from normal in sex and age, because these relate to the value of the animal. Animals might also have been caught in a different way, by for example ritualized hunts. Then, body parts might have been brought from far away, making feasting deposits characterized by the limited distribution of body parts, another possible indicator if the deposits represent parts with a symbolic value. In order to prepare meat for feasts different butchering and cooking techniques might be applied (Russell 2012, 384-92).

Overton and Hamilakis criticise the way in which feasts are juxtaposed to daily consumption in a binary way, and how feast are seen as a power mechanism (like Hayden did). They wish to lay the focus on the interspecies engagement if consumption is being studied. Their version of social zooarchaeology *"…recognizes the embodied, incorporating character of eating and its sensory and mnemonic dimensions"* (Overton and Hamilakis 2013, 117). They suggest that the embodied engagement with the animals is pursued through eating animal substances. Also, consumption can recall previous moments of the

engagement with that animal through the sensorial experience, by which they mean for example the hunt or the raising of the animal (Overton and Hamilakis 2013, 117).

Feasting is an interesting topic for this essay as there are some strong indicators for communal and ritual consumption of animals during the Halaf, or even certain animal species. The discussion of two sites are of great importance here; Tell Sabi Abyad and Domuztepe, as will be dealt with later on. I doubt however whether Halaf feasts can be classified as one of Haydens categories as he focuses too much on politics and power relations which might not have been explicitly present during the relatively egalitarian Halaf. Yet, some inequality might have existed as Nieuwenhuyse already pointed out (see chapter 2). When linking animals to feasting contexts in the next chapters, I will try to take into account the whole feasting experience. What was the spatial setting for a feast and for what possible reasons was the feast held, what kinds of animals played a role here and why, and how were these animals treated before, during, and after the party?

3.4   Conclusion

Many different viewpoints have been discussed above. It appears that social zooarchaeology can be of value when approaching animals in the Halaf. Now, I will summarize the aspects of social zooarchaeology that will be beneficial for this thesis. Those insights will be appliqued to the data in the following chapters.

To start with, animals are more than just food. When studying animals in the Halaf I should consider that animals could have fulfilled other roles. Especially important for my research is animal symbolism: Of interest here are animals in art, animal metaphors, animals as objects of taboos, and animal totems. Lastly, animals could have played a prominent role in 'ritual', as for example in burial or other kinds of special depositions, or feasting (Russell 2012).

According to Russell (2012) a contextual approach is important when interpreting animal remains or representations. For the Halaf it will be possible to study contexts of deposition and spatial associations if the excavation reports are clear on this, and hypotheses can be made for the contexts of use. Another important thing to do is drawing comparisons with the zooarchaeological record: Is the represented animal species a species that was commonly consumed, or are we dealing with something special?

Furthermore, I should also study the interactional context as Poole (2015) suggests. This means studying the context in which people directly came into contact with animals, for which I will use traditional zooarchaeology to gain insight into Halaf subsistence and the role of animals in this.

The more radical zooarchaeologists warn for thinking in terms of dichotomies (western thinking), like nature vs. culture, wild vs. domestic, non-utilitarian vs. utilitarian, and ordinary vs. profane. Therefore I shall try to not discriminate between wild and domestic animals based on modern scientific grounds, but rather consider whether some animals were more close to humans than others (e.g. I will distinguish between kept and not-kept animals). Also, I will consider Halaf ritual practises as being integrated in everyday life (Hill 2012; Overton and Hamilakis 2013; Poole 2015).

Various interpretations are possible for Halaf animal representations and 'ritual' deposits when viewing them in the light of social zooarchaeology (see Fig. 7 for an overview). Those, and more, will be considered when discussing the data in the next chapters.
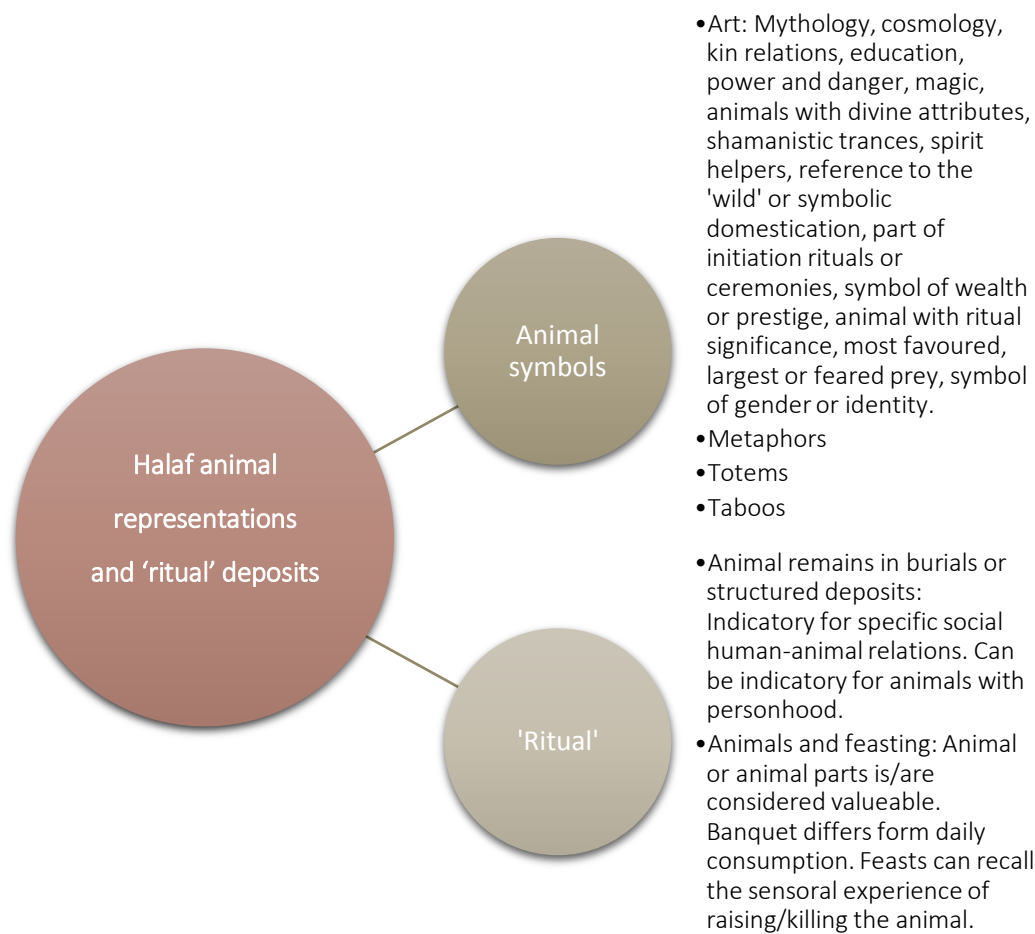
- **Animal symbols**
  - Art: Mythology, cosmology, kin relations, education, power and danger, magic, animals with divine attributes, shamanistic trances, spirit helpers, reference to the 'wild' or symbolic domestication, part of initiation rituals or ceremonies, symbol of wealth or prestige, animal with ritual significance, most favoured, largest or feared prey, symbol of gender or identity.
  - Metaphors
  - Totems
  - Taboos

- **'Ritual'**
  - Animal remains in burials or structured deposits: Indicatory for specific social human-animal relations. Can be indicatory for animals with personhood.
  - Animals and feasting: Animal or animal parts is/are considered valueable. Banquet differs form daily consumption. Feasts can recall the sensoral experience of raising/killing the animal.

Figure 7: Some possible interpretations for Halaf animal representeations and 'ritual' deposits of animal remains according to social zooarchaeology (after Hill 2012; Overton and Hamilakis 2013; Poole 2015; Russell 2012).

4 HALAF ZOOARCHAEOLOGY

4.1 A focus on subsistence

The mode of subsistence and the degree of mobility of people have been hotly debated for the Late Neolithic in general. As it appears, people might have practiced different modes at the same time or they shifted from the one mode to another. People were sedentary, but also mobile. Pastoralism is something that became quite prominent in the Late Neolithic, but this way of life might have had its roots already in the preceding PPNB. Hunting was still practised as well (Köhler-Rollefson 1992; Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 32-6; Stordeur 1993). In this paragraph I will discuss subsistence strategies of the Late Neolithic to get a clearer picture of how animals played different roles in people's sustenance, as well as some case studies.

Settlement patterns

Overall, there was a large variety in settlement in the Late Neolithic. There are both smaller and larger sites, they differ in duration of occupation, and in layout. However, small sites are the more common ones and they are often understood as bases for pastoralists or specialized hunter campsites. This is because there are breaks in the archaeological sequences, and it appears that the settlements change in their pattern over time, perhaps indicating seasonal occupation. Moreover, it is often that the smaller sites show no signs of any permanent installations. At the few smaller sites where substantial buildings were present these buildings might have functioned as houses or hamlets, although these buildings were in use for over a few generations only. There might have been more structures than those that remain visible today, but these constructions could have been simple ones created out of perishable materials (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 103, 126-31).

Smaller settlements are contrasted with the larger long-lived settlement mounds which were sometimes even inhabited for over hundreds of years. Archaeologically speaking those sites generally have relatively unbroken sequences. It is suggested that the layout of the villages involved some planning. Substantial architecture here was created out of mudbrick, pisé, and even stone foundations. Nevertheless, these villages appear

bigger than they might have actually been: Many might not have been inhabited in their entirety at a single moment in time. Also, it has been suggested that larger villages, like for example Tell Sabi Abyad, provided facilities for a mixed society that was both mobile and sedentary. These facilities included storehouses for example that were probably for communal purposes, and new administrative systems were at stake here like the use of stamp seals. Moreover, they might have functioned as centres for exchange and production, and social engagements like festivities (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 103, 126-31; Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 32-6).

For an example of a study that focused on mobility during the Halaf period and settlement layout we move on to the site of Fıstıklı Hüyük in Turkey. It is for this site that Bernbeck (2013) studied the degree of mobility of people living there, and he took a quite innovative approach. Instead of looking at the overall layout of the site, he studied the stratigraphic sequence, as well as Halaf architecture and objects. From the results it appeared that the site had changed in character through time, and quite rapidly as well. The total timespan comprised around 100 years, consisting different phases of about 30-35 years. From the first phase (IV) it became evident that the site had started out as a camp site, where only a small ditch was present, and a shallow depression half encircled by a clay edge. The next phase (III) is characterized by different sub-phases: First, a dike-like earthwork and a small storage building appear. Then, residential structures (two tholoi, oven, and a huge waste dump) show up, indicating permanent settlement of people. Later, three more tholoi, a small circular structure and an oven are added, and subsequently even more ovens and another round structure. There are indicators for population increase and the differentiation of various activities like the processing of cereals and the preparation of foods. The end of the phase is characterized by abandonment; first there is still intensive agriculture, and later the site reverts to a camp again. To Bernbeck this proves that sites can change in character, and that pastoralism was not always something that was practised on a seasonal basis; At Fıstıklı Hüyük it appears that pastoralism was practised for several consecutive years before the strategy was abandoned. There is one fundamental problem to Bernbeck's study, however. His analysis is based on small exposures as the site was not fully excavated. It could well be that architectural features were simply missed by the excavators which would have altered the outcome of this research.

In general there is a lot of inter-site variation regarding the exploitation of animals, but broad trends can be recognized; at the vast majority of sites people relied on domestic sheep and goats, and the husbandry and domestication of these animals were well developed. Sheep and goats were primarily kept for their meat, but there are also signs that people began to show interest in their secondary products (Russell 2010, 45). These signs for the production of dairy products is further substantiated by the presence of milk residue on contemporary pottery sherds from various sites in the Near East (Evershed *et al*, 2008). Next to sheep and goats, people relied on pigs and cattle as well, but in a lesser extent. The domestication statuses of these animals vary from site to site. Pigs usually show signs of at least partial domestication, but for cattle the process of domestication had just started as they appear to have been present in both domestic and wild forms (Russell 2010, 45).

At the larger long-lived settlements there is a lot of evidence for a reliance on domestic animals, next to dry farming. Small numbers of wild animals appear in the archaeozoological record, however. Domestic animals that were kept include mainly sheep and goats, but also pigs and cattle, however in smaller numbers (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 103, 126-31; Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 32-6). Nevertheless, it must be noted that settlement size is not necessarily linked to subsistence strategies.

An interesting study has been done for Tell Sabi Abyad in Syria, a site that also existed during the Halaf. Tell Sabi Abyad is such a bigger and long-lived settlement. Cavallo (2000) has done research into the roles animal species had that people most relied on. She found that cattle were domesticated during the Transitional Period at Tell Sabi Abyad, before the start of the Early Halaf. Nevertheless, cattle might have been kept earlier, but it is in the Transitional period that they decrease in size (Cavallo 2000, 55). Also, it appears that sheep and goats were also kept for their wool and milk in the Early Halaf, while in earlier times this was only for their meat (Cavallo 2000, 106-7). The exploitation of sheep and goats thus became more specialized, as Cavallo suggests that they were kept more and more away from the village. Next to sedentism, a more mobile lifestyle arose. During the Early Halaf, two main modes of subsistence existed at Tell Sabi Abyad: That of semi-pastoralism and that of agriculture (Cavallo 2000, 114-5). Later research carried out by

Russell (2010) on the mortality profiles of sheep and goats at Tell Sabi Abyad provided similar results; In the earlier levels the primary focus was on meat production, but later there appears to have been a shift towards a more mixed economy and the production of secondary products like milk and fleece. However, the production of meat was still the primary objective (Russell 2010, 119).

Later, Van der Plicht (2012) and colleagues have carried out Isotopic analysis on the bones of animals in order to reconstruct their diets to see whether the animals were foddered or that they were grazing away from the tell. If the animals got their food from elsewhere, this would mean that people practised some form of pastoralism. Isotope compositions of various plants of which remains were uncovered from the site itself were known data, and those isotope compositions were compared to the ones found in the bones of animals. The main animal category that was studied was goats and sheep, but humans, equids, pigs and cattle were involved in the study as well to function as a comparison. The results were minimal, but this was to be expected due to the fact that the bones are multiple millennia in age and badly preserved because of drought. Nevertheless, it was revealed that the diet for sheep and goats varied. The diet of 22% of the sheep and goats was similar to other domesticated animals at the settlement, but the rest shared the diet of wild animals. Another interesting fact that was found were high nitrogen values. It was suggested that this could mean that the animals were foddered with crops that were fertilized. To conclude, the people from Tell Sabi Abyad practised pastoralism, but maybe a very localized form according to the researchers (Van der Plicht *et al.* 2012).

Many smaller sites have provided evidence for the hunting of wild animals, and primarily for the hunting of onager and gazelle. When the opportunity arose, also aurochs, fallow deer, roe, turtle, birds, foxes, hare and fishes were hunted. At Khirbet esh-Shenef for example, a small Halaf site in Syria, 40% of the archaeozoological record exists of wild animals. Next to the exploitation of the wild, there is a high reliance on domestic sheep and goats at the smaller sites (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 103, 126-31).

To elaborate a bit on hunting strategies, it is very probable that the hunting of wild animals might mainly have been done during autumn and winter when herds were bound to a small territory and herds sizes were rather large, or when migratory species were present. As suggested by Akkermans and Schwartz, animals that can be considered large

and swift must have required multiple hunters to cooperate in the hunt, butchering, and transport of the beast. It was during the Late Neolithic that people started to use new kinds of weaponry like clay sling missiles, the *Haparsa points* (small and sharp, and suited to bring down even very large animals like the auroch), and transverse arrowheads (probably used with poison) (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 103, 126-31).

Small finds related to animals and subsistence

Spindle whorls, invented during the Pre-Halaf phase at the end of the 7th millennium, have been indicatory for herding and the production of animal fibres. They have been found at numerous sites all over Mesopotamia. At Tell Sabi Abyad for example a substantial number of these objects have been found, along with so-called 'pierced disks' made of pottery or stone, presumably used for the same purpose since their weight is similar to those of spindle whorls. The appearance of spindle whorls there coincides with changes in herd management, which shifted from a focus on the production of meat to a more mixed economy and a partial focus on secondary products (Rooijakkers 2012).

The best known Halaf items related to administration and, perhaps, pastoralism are probably stamps for sealing and their impressions in clay. They are found at both large settlements as small hamlets. The stamps could be made of various materials ranging from stone, bone, clay, wood and shell. Often the seals have a flat surface with geometric motifs carved into it, or sometimes animal or plant designs. When containers like baskets, ceramic or stone vessels, or sacks were sealed, wet clay or plaster was appliqued to the fastening or opening, after which the clay or plaster lumps were impressed with the stamp. In this way the sealing had to be broken in order to open the vessel, preventing unauthorized opening (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 139-41).

Duistermaat suggests that the emergence of sealing practises was connected to changing subsistence practises and the need for having private property in the communal context. Because of the increasing mobility of people and the increase in exploitation strategies that required the absence of great numbers of people, for example in herding and hunting, it became difficult to monitor private property, especially bulk goods. An administrative system involving the use of seals formed the solution here (Duistermaat 2010; 2013).

Other interesting administrative tools are *jetons*. Jetons are small disks that are often made of reused chipped pottery, but also of other materials like stone. For the Neolithic they are often thought to have been related to administration or to have functioned as tools of memory and information storage. Jetons appear to be very prominent at Halaf sites (Costello 2002).

Costello (2002) has studied the Halaf jetons that were found at Fıstıklı Höyük, and has tried to unravel what information the jetons stored and in which activities they were used by means of analysis of context and spatial co-occurrence of other objects. In general, jetons were excavated from pits, middens, interior and exterior surfaces. Objects considered to have a positive or negative relation to jetons include Coarse and Fine Ware pottery, shaped clay like tags and maybe tokens, lithics and lithic tools, animal bones, calcareous stone objects, burnt stone and river stones. At the time when the research was conducted only a preliminary analysis of the faunal material was available, so Costello was not able to say anything about the specific species that were found in relation to jetons. Faunal remains were generally identified as domestic cattle, sheep and goats, pigs, and gazelle and red deer (Foree 2001 in Costello 2002, 187).

Some interesting correlations were visible. Jetons had a strong spatial relation with pieces of shaped clay which can be, like jetons, also interpreted as mnemonic devices. Jetons had an even stronger spatial with animal bones: Jetons and animal bones were found together in surface loci and trash contexts, and this probably indicates that they were disposed of and used alongside faunal material. Costello therefore suggests that the information that was stored by jetons was related to processing and distribution of either whole animals or meat. Her interpretation is strengthened further by the strong co-occurrence of jetons and lithics and lithic tools presumably used for food processing in surface and trash contexts. Besides this the analysis also showed a spatial correlation of jetons with Fine Ware, the type of pottery that is so often linked to food serving and hospitality and could very well have been used for distributing animal products. This is contrasted to Coarse Ware which has a negative relation with jetons, probably meaning that there was no relation with cooking or storage (Costello 2002, 218-20, 245).

However, Costello emphasises that jeton assemblages differ from site to site. They may not have been interchangeable between sites, and jetons might have stored different

information elsewhere. Future studies of different jeton types that exist and the different contexts in which they appear are needed (Costello 2000, 243-4).

I find it unfortunate that there was no detailed information available on the animal species, ways of butchering, used parts of the animal, and the sex and age. If there was, it could be determined whether these jetons were used to distribute daily meals or that they were perhaps only used as special occasions like feasts. However, Costello does note the presence of large open spaces at the site a maybe related to feasting, but the connection is speculative (Costello 2002, 245). Nevertheless, this study has provided interesting information on the animal economy and administration of animal products.

Conclusion

In sum, what was the overall context in which animals and humans interacted in the Halaf, the so-called 'interactional context' by Poole (2015)? Our context is not a homogeneous one to start with. There was a lot of inter-site variation when it came to subsistence. Yet, everybody relied on animals in some way. In general, people relied on domestic sheep and goats, primarily for their meat but also for secondary products like milk and fleece. Cattle and pigs were kept as well, although we perceive their domestication statuses as differing from site to site. Some sites relied greatly on wild animals, while wild animals are only rarely attested at other sites.

There are signs that an administrative system existed for the ownership and distribution of animals, animal products, and belongings of mobile groups. The mobile groups might have made use of storage facilities at large permanent settlements. Moreover, either wild or domestic animals and secondary products might have been items of trade, as traded between pastoralists or hunters and people from more permanent settlements. As some researchers suggested, this could have taken place at the larger sites that functioned as meeting places for mobile and sedentary groups. Also, mobile groups might have participated in festivities there as well, and perhaps their animals fulfilled a role in banquets. In this light, I think animals can be viewed a 'tool' for tying pastoralists, hunters, 'sedentarists', or any form in between together: Animals were something everyone had in common. Can this perhaps also explain the extensive use of animal symbolism, because they were symbols recognized by each?

4.2   Animal remains in 'ritual' deposits

In archaeozoological reports on the Halaf period there mainly has been a focus on the reconstruction of human diet and subsistence. Animal remains in 'ritual' deposits on the other hand are sporadically interpreted in different ways, like the burial of animal remains. Yet, the dataset for animal remains in graves and other special contexts is problematic. Different case studies will be discussed beneath.

Animal remains in human graves

It is only sporadically that we find animal remains associated with those of humans. This might also be because these cases are poorly reported, however. At Tell Sabi Abyad there was an interesting case of a complete adult inhumation; on top of this person lay a disarticulated human skull, and on top of this skull lay a large cattle femur (Fig. 8). As far as I know, however, this case remains unique for the Halaf. Anna Russell believes that it is no coincidence that the cattle femur appears alongside the human remains, and this is probably a deliberate deposition, as she briefly mentions in her PhD dissertation on changing subsistence patterns at Tell Sabi Abyad. She suggests that it is clear that social meanings were tied to these deposits. What the exact meaning was behind this specific deposition is something she does not discuss (Russell 2010, 248-9). However, she does acknowledge the importance of cattle in the Neolithic. These animals can be considered suitable for feasts as they provide a great quantity of meat. Next to this, cattle might have carried prestige as they require long-term investment, implying risk, and require substantial resources before maturing. Perhaps they can be regarded as a very early form of capital as well (Hodder 2006, 49; Kansa *et al.* 2009; Russell 2010, 248-9). But what to think of the specific case presented in Fig. 8? To me, a femur is not exactly a very representative part of the animal while the horns for example are. Why would someone place a thigh in a grave? When you think about it, the thigh is a very meaty part of an animal. It would make more sense if this femur represented some kind of offering of a meal to the dead. Perhaps this was all part of a small feasting ritual, wherein a bovine was consumed and shared with the ones who passed away. Apparently someone (an ancestor?) who had passed away earlier than the buried person also played a role here; his or her skull was interred as well.

Figure 8: Cattle femur resting on top of a disarticulated human skull. Both are deposited on top of the complete inhumation of an adult (Russell 2010, 249).

The burnt village of Tell Sabi Abyad

The uncovering of Level 6 at Tell Sabi Abyad in Syria revealed an astonishing event that happened during the Transitional period. Series of heavily burnt structures were brought to light, and were well preserved. The village became known as the 'Burnt Village'. Next to the remains of structures, ovens, pits, as well as large quantities of in-situ finds were still present (Verhoeven and Kranendonk 1996, 38). It seems that the village was set ablaze deliberately, but after its abandonment. Therefore, Verhoeven speaks about an 'abandonment ritual' (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 148-9; Verhoeven 2000, 48).

Most interestingly is one of the associated rituals that took place. One of the structures that were set afire functioned as the final resting place for a man and a women. Judging from the spatial distribution of their remains their bodies must have been located on the roof of the building formerly, but after the roof collapsed their bodies must have fallen into the structure. Furthermore, ten large oval clay objects (29-62 cm tall) were discovered in various rooms of the building. In an adjacent building one more was found. The objects must have stood on the roof as well originally, surrounding the two corpses.

One of the objects showed a hole in which the upper part of the skull of a mouflon, a wild sheep, was inserted. Back in time the horn must have been visible, sticking out of the oval ball. Other objects (six in total) show the same kind of holes, indicating that those too must have been horned. Except for sheep bones, also the rib and part of a bovid femur were found inside an object (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 148-9; Verhoeven 2000).

It remains speculative how the fire was started. Warfare is unlikely since there seem to have been no victims laying inside the structures, unless they escaped. Another option is that the settlement was set on fire by the inhabitants themselves. This must have been quite an undertaking as clay structures are not easily burned. But why the two human skeletons? Usually adults were buried outside the settlement. Verhoeven (2000) suggests the two persons had a special social status, which might be linked to their relatively old age (over 30 years old). Their location on top of the roof must have been visible and imposing as well. Moving on to the clay objects, it is noticeable that they are very stylized. Perhaps, according to Verhoeven, they are stylized animals or mythical liminal creatures playing a central role in ritual. In this funerary ritual, fire can be seen as a medium for transforming life into death. Perhaps the ritual also functioned to intensify the community's cohesion, consisting of presumably both nomads and residents at that time (Verhoeven 2000).

When viewing the horned objects as objects of art in a social zooarchaeological manner, it can also be suggested that these objects were thought to possess magical powers. The horns can be related to danger and power. Perhaps the clay creatures were guarding or assisting the dead.

The Domuztepe Death Pit

A conspicuous type of burial structure has been found at the Halaf-related site of Domuztepe. At least 40 individuals have been buried here at different times of deposition, yet over a short time (perhaps days), hence the name 'Death Pit'. They were accompanied with the remains of animals, pieces of ceramics and stone artefacts. The animal remains show traces of consumption. It is suggested by Kansa and Campbell that this ritual incorporated communal consumption and is perhaps a feast of the dead (Kansa and Campbell 2004).

The way in which the animals were used here seems out of the ordinary. The main species encountered are sheep and goat, after which cattle are most prominent. Well

represented are pigs, and in low numbers are the remains of dogs. Comparing this to the frequency of animals species for the rest of the site, it becomes clear that the Death Pit contains significantly more cattle and dog bones, and half as many pig bones. The distribution of species also varies per layer inside the Death Pit (Fig. 9). Human remains were most prominent in fill A, B, and C (Kansa and Campbell 2004).
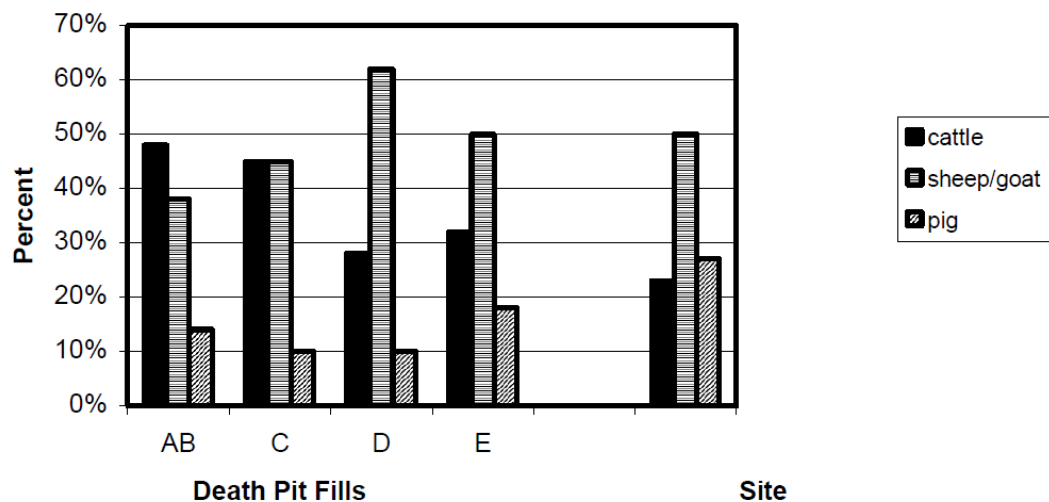

Figure 9: Distribution of common species per layer of the Death Pit (Kansa and Campbell 2004, 5).

When looking at the kill-off pattern for sheep and goats, it seems that females were most prominent. According to Kansa and Campbell this suggests that valuable resources were chosen for this feast. The low fragmentation of the bones of all animals might indicate that they were not processed thoroughly like normally, reflecting the nature of the feast, but this can also be explained by their good conservation because of rapid burial (Kansa and Campbell 2004).

Dogs at Domuztepe

The role of dogs has scarcely been studied for the Late Neolithic in general. Bichener (2013) has attempted to change this, and as a starting point of her study she choose the Domuztepe Death Pit. As animals and humans are buried here in various ways she suggests that this might reveal the position of dogs in relation to humans. It appears that dog remains were treated differently than other animals, but similar to the human remains. Cranial elements of humans and dogs are strongly represented, as for the other animals it

is the axial elements that are more common. Also their location within the pit differed from other animals. While other animals were deposited in the earliest and later levels of the pit, dog remains and human skulls and longbones were concentrated and packed in a pise matrix. Human skulls and cranial parts of dogs were deposited on top of the pit's fill as well (Bichener 2013; Kansa and Campbell 2002).

Surprisingly however the main difference between the way how human remains were treated compared to those of dogs is that human remains show traces of defleshing, human gnawing, and perhaps cooking. Bichener therefore suggests the possible presence of taboos, and that the taboo of cannibalism was less great than the taboo of eating dogs. Dogs were apparently used for their pelts though. In an early phase of the pit dog tail and foot bones belonging to one individual were found. It has been suggested that the pelt was used to wrap something (Bichener 2013; Kansa *et al.* 2009).

The decapitation of the dogs probably had symbolic connotations as well. According to Bichener, the cranium can be viewed as the seat of identity. This would imply that dogs were seen as individuals, like humans, with an identity. Furthermore, Bichener suggests that the dog's pelt was used to imbue the wrapped objects with the identity of the dog. What the role was of the dogs in this context can only be speculated about. Bichener proposes that they were guarding the dead, or they were assisting the dead to the other world. Nevertheless, this case is unique for Domuztepe, and no other Halaf dog burials in this way are known (Bichener 2013).

Astragalus caches

Kazane Höyük in south-eastern Turkey is one of the largest known Halaf sites. The Halaf occupation extended over 20 ha, but perhaps the site was not inhabited in its totality during this period, and further excavation of the site is needed. Ceramics indicate that the site is Late Halaf in date. Most interesting is that over 57 cattle astragali were found in a domestic context in the largest structure of the site, a tholos (Fig. 10). Astragalus is the term used for knuckle and ankle bones. They were found in a pile laying on the mud-plaster floor, close to the stone foundation of the wall of the Tholos. McCarty (2013) suggests the astragali may have been kept in a bag or chest made of organic material that was hanging on the wall, but is now long decomposed. Measurements of the astragali indicated that they were derived from both domesticated and wild animals, both females and males. It

could be that each bone came from a separate animal, but the minimum number of individuals represented is 34. It is unlikely that all animals were slaughtered at once because of the enormous amount of meat this would produce. Faintly visible cut marks are equivalent to hide processing or butchery. The cache was found along other objects: A ground stone mortar, Halaf Fine and Coarse Ware sherds, and a flare-rim vessel (Fig. 10) that is buff red-slipped (McCarty 2013).

McCarty suggests this find can be used to study Halaf social inequality or variability, and the cache can be interpreted in three different ways, which do not exclude one another: 1) as incipient craft specialization, probably hide working as indicated by the particular cutmarks found on the astragali, and pastoralism, the corresponding mode of production, 2) as counting devices, and 3) as associated with feasting, gaming or augury. We know from historical contexts (like Classical Greece) that astragali were used for divination, but in Halafian spheres they might as well have been used as tools for recording herd sizes, or maybe recording episodes of feasting. Therefore, McCarty suggests that these bones are symbolic for the achieved wealth or household abundance, like trophies, being cattle or wild animals. Moreover, next to trophies they might as well have functioned as gaming pieces. It was at least already since the Late Bronze age that astragali of sheep and goats are used as gaming devices by people practicing pastoralism and herding for gaming or even as tools to divide property. They work like a dice, and sometimes the sides are worked through rubbing (McCarty 2013).

The astragalus cache is not a totally unique find. The curating of astragalus bones happened at other Halaf settlements as well. At the Halaf cemetery at Yarim Tepe I in Iraq over 200 astragali of gazelle were uncovered. The gazelle astragali were cached together in a long and narrow pit, in which also some human remains were found resting on some sort of platform. Maybe the human remains were deliberately buried in this fractional state, but this could also be due to bad preservation. Other objects in the pit included fragments of three vessels of clay and three stone items, one of which seems to be a mace. Moreover, a large auroch skull was placed above the pit. Merpert and Munchaev have suggested that the person buried here was a hunter (Akkermans 1989a, 77; Merpert and Munchaev 1971, 17).

Yet another example of a smaller cache was found at Banahilk. The cache contained 5 astragali of either goats or sheep. Its exact context remains obscure, although

it is assumedly a domestic one. In the same trench also a ground obsidian ornament was found. It seems that the astragali were smoothened through rubbing against some abrasive surface. Elsewhere at the site two worked astragali were found, and according to the excavator they can be interpreted as gaming pieces (Watson 1983 in McCarty 2013, 228).
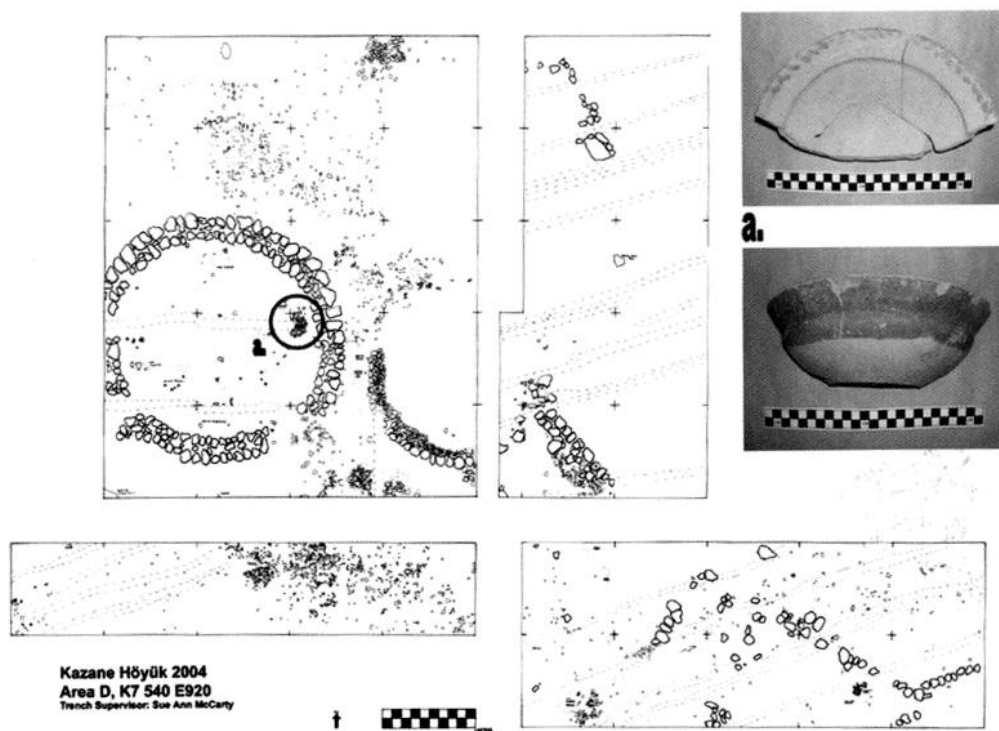

Figure 10: Location of the astragalus cache and the flare-rim bowl that was located near it (McCarty 2013, 226).

I think the interpretation of these astragali as gaming pieces and at the same time gaming devices is an interesting one. Especially the link with feasting or communal consumption might be of importance here. At Kazane Höyük the cattle astragali cache was found in relation to a flare-rim vessel. Not only are this type of open Fine Ware vessels extremely suitable for serving foodstuffs, they also carry symbolic meaning as I am suggesting in the next chapter. Although this particular one does not show any animal imagery, it is usually this type of vessel that is decorated with bucrania. And not only that; it seems that the profile of the vessel resembles the shape of cattle's horns when looking frontally at the animal. Therefore, the vessel itself might be representative of the animal. Is it coincidence that this vessel was found next to cattle bones? Probably not.

It is noticeable that these caches appear in both domestic and burial contexts. However, we have seen that feasting was probably not only something related to the living. At Domuztepe, discussed above, the dead clearly played a role in communal consumption, and the adult and perhaps an ancestor buried together with a cattle femur at Tell Sabi Abyad might have taken part in a smaller feast. The 'hunter' at Yarim Tepe I might have been buried with his trophies, the gazelle astragali. Perhaps they also marked his identity, with the gazelle functioning as his totem. Maybe he had provided the settlement with gazelle meat throughout his life, perhaps for consumption during feasts as people normally would rely on their domestic animals. Now that this person was put to rest he may have been honoured with a small feast himself; a large cattle skull was placed on top of his grave. Possibly the skull had other symbolic connotations here as well, and it may have functioned as a grave marker or a warning whereas the dangerous horned bovine would have symbolically protected the grave.

Finally it is clear that it was not only one particular animal species that figured in these cache-contexts. Multiple animals had symbolic meaning here. We have bovine, gazelle, and sheep and goat astragali, and the reasons why these species were chosen might be site-specific or personal decisions. Cattle, sheep, goats, gazelle, and many other species are represented in art as well. It is especially the Halaf Fine Ware that shows a wide array of animal species representations, as is shown in the next chapter. Perhaps this is not such unexpected as both Fine Ware and these animal species figured in commensality. In addition, the caches contained both wild and domesticated species. Judging from the cattle astragali cache, presumably containing both domesticated cattle and auroch remains, people probably did not discriminate between 'wild' and 'domestic'. Maybe all bovines were of equal symbolic importance, or at least at Kazane Höyük. This might have been different at Yarim Tepe I; gazelle were not kept.

'Votive deposit' at Tell Arpachiyah

At Tell Arpachiyah in Iraq an extraordinary deposit was uncovered containing the ribs of a sheep and four vessels (Fig. 11 and Fig. 12). Mallowan and Cruikshank Rose mention the case very briefly, and they have little doubt that we are dealing with a votive deposit here. It appears that the objects were deliberately smashed and buried by means of a 'magico-

religious ceremony', and perhaps the breaking of pots can be interpreted as an apotropaic rite (Mallowan and Cruikshank Rose 1935, 135).

I doubt that the rib as visible in the picture in Fig. 11 is a sheep's rib, as it appears rather big and wide. Maybe this rib belonged to a bovid. The two long bones are very tall and straight, and I am wondering to what kind of animal they could belong except for a human being. If I were to guess they are an ulna and a tibia. However, the scale is not indicated and I might be wrong. Also, the picture does not allow to view the bones in detail.

The idea of this buried collection of objects being a votive deposit is interesting, but for what reason was this offering made? Meat could have been attached to the cattle rib, making it a food offering, perhaps reminiscent of a feast. In this same light the two 'offered' human limbs seem at first glance lugubrious, but they are not meaty parts and it could very well be that they were disarticulated remains which were re-buried here. Also, if the whole arm was placed here the radius would have been found next to the ulna. Maybe they represented the parts of an ancestor, although this is usually suggested for secondary deposited skulls. Now, the scene is somewhat similar to the grave found at Tell Sabi Abyad described above containing the adult, a human skull and a cattle femur. But what about the pottery? All vessels probably fall into the category of Halaf Painted Fine Ware, but they are not the usual open vessels (like bowls) that are so often associated with the serving of foodstuffs and feasting. Even Mallowan and Cruikshank Rose admit the specialness of a particular vessel which they call a 'champagne vase' (the most right vessel in Fig. 12) (Mallowan and Cruikshank Rose 1935, 135). It could be that they were used for presenting very large amount of food though, as the vessels are still very different from Coarse Ware cooking vessels and plain and crude storage vessels. Still, this collection of objects remains enigmatic.

Figure 11: A so-called 'votive deposit' according to Mallowan and Cruikshank Rose of sheep bones and pottery at Tell Arpachiyah (Mallowan and Cruikshank Rose 1935, Plate XXI).
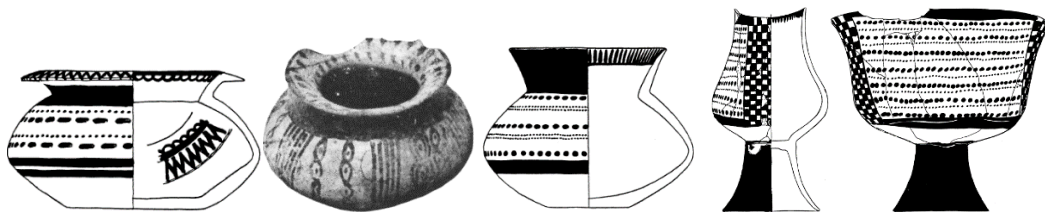
Figure 12: Vessels from the 'votive deposit' of Tell Arpachiyah (after Mallowan and Cruikshank Rose 1935).

Conclusion

Conclusively, what can be said about animal remains in 'ritual' contexts? Coming back to the first research sub-question considering the contexts of employment of ritual deposits it can be said that animal remains often appear in contexts related to death and/or feasting. However, all cases discussed here are strikingly different from each other when it comes to their implementation. Perhaps there was no set of defined rules for 'rituals' including animals, and the performance depended on the circumstances.

My second sub-question was 'What different animal species are represented in the different material categories (in this case 'ritual' deposits) and can this be explained?'. From social zooarchaeology we have learnt that food consumed at feasts is often considered valuable and different from daily meals. Furthermore, the 'sensorial experience' of raising and/or killing the animal and the effort it took can be recalled through consuming it. Species present in the Halaf 'ritual' deposits discussed above include wild and domestic cattle, wild and domestic sheep, goats, gazelle, pigs, and dogs. Cattle are very suitable for feasts as the slaughter of one adult cow produces around 200 kilograms of meat, offal and fat, too much for a single family to consume (Russell 2010, 268). Furthermore, it might well be that cattle carried prestige since it takes substantial resources and time in order to raise them to maturity (Kansa *et al* 2009). Wild animals were rarely consumed in Halaf times except at some smaller sites, as people mostly relied on domestic animals. Perhaps this is why they figured in banquets as exotic meals. Other animals mentioned, like domestic sheep, goats and pigs, do not seem so special. Yet, there might be more to these seemingly ordinary animals; most of the sheep and goats at Domuztepe for example were female, and thus valuable for the survival of the herd. The dogs at Domuztepe, apparently, were not eaten. Social zooarchaeologically speaking, this can be explained by the existence of taboos, and perhaps also the personhood of animals since their way of burial was similar to that of humans. Next to having value in a sense of wealth, prestige, unusualness, suitability for feasts, or personhood, some animal species might have been chosen for other reasons for deposition. The gazelle astragali cache in the burial of the so-called hunter at Yarim Tepe I might be related to identity, and the gazelle can be interpreted as a totem animal here. The clay horned objects surrounding the bodies of a man and a woman at the burnt village of Tell Sabi Abyad might have to do with some form of magic, power and danger.

5   HALAF ANIMAL REPRESENTATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of various case studies on Halaf animal representations, as well as critique from my point of view. I will add new data and own interpretations here as well. It appears that the social zooarchaeology approach has not really entered the Halaf research sphere yet. I will present my case studies here as ordered by the contexts in which they are found.

5.1   Domestic space: Animals in wall paintings

The two wall paintings in Fig. 13 with the depictions of animals are, in fact, slightly earlier than the Halaf. The wall painting from Tell Bouqras dates to the Early Pottery Neolithic (see Tab. 1), while the wall painting from Umm Dabaghiyah dates to the second half of the 7th millennium (Proto-Hassuna, see Tab. 1) (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 102, 121). However, they will be discussed here as these two uniquely preserved wall paintings are the only ones found in their particular context and are the only ones showing animals.

The left frieze in Fig. 13 shows cranes or ostriches which were painted on a white plastered walls in red ochre at the site of Tell Bouqras (Syria), located on the lower Euphrates (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 120-1). Russell and McGowan (2003) have investigated the symbolic role of cranes at the Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük in Turkey, but they also included crane symbolism beyond this site. They successfully linked the zooarchaeological record to symbolic imagery. At Çatalhöyük a deposit associated with the construction of a building was found, containing the bones that must have derived from a wing of a common crane, together with cattle and wild goat horn cores, a dog's head, and a stone macehead. Russell and McGowan think that the wing most probably has been part of a costume that was used in ritual performances, judging from the placement of cut marks and holes which could indicate attachment to the body through the use of string. At the same site there is a relief showing a pair of cranes that are facing each other. Other animals in reliefs at Çatalhöyük are often shown in pairs as well, implicating that cranes are part of a larger symbolic system. Other wall paintings include the representations of different animals and maybe dancing humans making gestures and wearing leopard skins and feathered tails, or perhaps wearing bird costumes. Since it appears that crane symbolism was widely shared

throughout the Near East, then maybe there existed a common myth. Amongst other human-like traits cranes perform dances, both in groups or as breeding pairs, and many different human societies in time have been inspired by cranes and have imitated their dances. Therefore, Russell and McGowan have suggested that the wing at Çatalhöyük was used in dances, and cranes in general had a special place in the minds of Neolithic people (Russell and McGowan, 2003).

Although Russell and McGowan have mentioned the wall painting from Tell Bouqras as well, to me the scene appears very different from the one at Çatalhöyük. The cranes or ostriches at Tell Bouqras appear to be in a group and are all facing the same direction. It is not clear whether the birds are performing a dance. However, probably the scene is not linked directly to diet either. The people from Tell Bouqras mostly relied on sheep and goats, comprising about 80% of the faunal remains. Other animals included pigs and cattle, gazelle, deer and onager (Buitenhuis 1990). Then, how can the wall painting from Tell Bouqras be interpreted according to social zooarchaeology? The existence of taboos regarding the consumption of these birds seems plausible, but the absence of bones can also be due to poor excavation techniques. Small and fragile bird bones are easily missed.

Other interpretations for the Bouqras wall painting might include the role of these animals in mythology and cosmology, as Russell and McGowan already suggested. The painting decorated the wall of one of the buildings at Tell Bouqras, while a stylized human face in relief decorated the wall of another building. The face was made out of plaster and covered with red ochre, and one of the preserved eyes was inlaid with fragments of obsidian. Akkermans and Schwartz therefore suggest that these buildings might have been imbued with special significance. Nevertheless, except for the decorations the buildings hardly differ from other buildings at the site (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 121). Maybe the building cannot be interpreted as a shrine or ceremonial place where myths were discussed, but the cranes or ostriches might have had special significance to the people living in (or making use of) the house. Perhaps the animals were their totems or related to their identity.

Interestingly however, an Early Halaf pottery sherd from Tell Sabi Abyad shows a human figure with a tail, perhaps a tail made out of feathers (Fig. 14). With a little

imagination this human being seems to be performing a crane-dance. However, this remains very speculative.

Umm Dabaghiyah was probably seasonally occupied and used as a storage point for semi-nomadic people. The wall painting showing onagers at Umm Dabaghiyah in Northern Iraq (Fig. 13, the image on the right) have not received much attention, although onagers appear to be the most represented species (next to gazelle) in the archaeozoological record at the short-lived site (Bökönyi 1973; Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 127). Clearly, there seems to be a connection to diet. Funnily enough, the painting decorated a 'kitchen' wall (Kirkbride 1975, 7). Kirkbride has suggested that the onagers in this painting are running judging from their backward positioned ears and waving tails, and the hooks as seen above and below the onagers could represent tools for attaching a hunting net (Kirkbride 1975). This would suggest that this wall painting is related to hunting, but this reasoning is perhaps too obvious. As presented in chapter 3, Russell recommends various interpretations for animal art created by hunters. Possibly the animals depicted here could have been the most favoured, largest, or feared prey, and therefore the most prestigious. Besides, animal images could have served for education, or they might have been related to ceremonies like initiation rituals (involving hunting), or hunting magic. Nevertheless, whether any of these interpretations holds truth for this particular case remains a mystery. However, it does seem that onagers played a wider symbolic role at Umm Dabaghiyah, as I would suggest that some of pottery is decorated with the images of onagers as well, appliqued in clay (Fig. 15).

Figure 13: Frieze showing cranes or ostriches from Tell Bouqras (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 124) and frieze showing onagers from Umm Dabaghiyah (Kirkbride 1975).

Figure 14: Representation of a human being with a feathered tail on an Early Halaf vessel from Tell Sabi Abyad in Syria (Akkermans 1989b, 210).
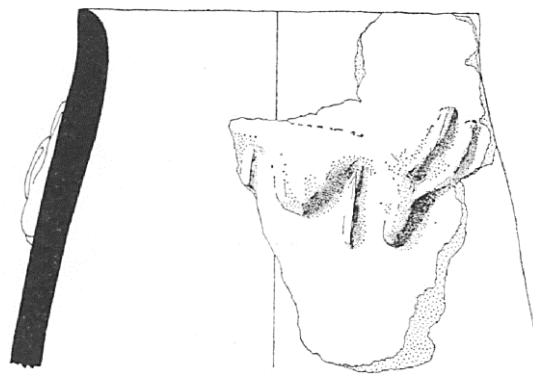
Figure 15: Appliqued decoration on a ceramic vessel, probably representing a pregnant onager (Kirkbride 1973).

5.2   Commensality: Animal representations on pottery

The studies that have been done on animals as painted on Halaf pottery are lacking social zooarchaeological interpretations. Most often animal motifs are regarded as merely decorative, like the rest of the motifs, and are almost never interpreted on their own. Halaf pottery in general has been studied in a descriptive way by the bulk of archaeologists (Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 27). Archaeologists have used painted motifs as a tool for describing stylistic properties of pottery in order to define culture groups and subgroups, typology and chronological groups (Campbell 2010, 144) and to trace the spread of the Halaf culture

and its origins, just like those of the Samarra and Hassuna cultures (Nieuwenhuyse 2013, 136).

Others have searched for the existence of social inequality and identity as expressed through differentiation in styles. Societal organization has been studied by analysing the chaîne opératoire of pottery and ways in which ceramics were redistributed. Painted Fine Ware ceramics have often been deemed as prestigious or luxurious items of trade and thus implicating the existence of a hierarchical societies during the Halaf period. The concern of the researchers was with tracing how and when complex societies and civilizations arose, and social evolution. The appearance of complex societies is often thought to have taken place in later periods (Nieuwenhuyse 2007, 18).

Halaf Fine Ware ceramics have also been viewed as utensils. Of course, the items also fulfilled a practical role in the past. Nieuwenhuyse (2009) and Özbal and Gerritsen (2013) have for example studied the social significance and uses of decorated Halaf ceramics.

Nieuwenhuyse has suggested that emulation was at play at Tell Sabi Abyad in Northern Syria, and that this was the driving factor for changes that are observable in the ceramics. Fine Ware increases in complexity through time in stylistic, morphological, as well as in technological ways. Emulation can be described as a form of competition in which individuals pursue improvement of their status. They do this by acting like individuals with a higher status: They adopt their lifestyle and material culture (Miller 1982 and 1985 in Nieuwenhuyse 2009, 84). Moreover, feasting and new commensal practices might have provided the context in which emulation took place. Dancing figures in Halaf painted iconography, and the great suitability of Fine Ware ceramics for serving food and beverages support this argument of Fine Ware serving as table ware at feasts. Nevertheless, these studies do not cover the possible social significance of painted animal motifs in particular, although Nieuwenhuyse does suggest that the appearance of bucrania (stylized bulls' heads) on Halaf vessels might be related to the full assimilation of domesticated cattle in the economy, and the probability that these animals provided the meat for feasts.

Özbal and Gerritsen concluded that decorated Halaf Fine Ware from the site of Tell Kurdu in the province of Hatay in Turkey was suitable for serving food as well by taking into consideration the surface finish and vessel shapes (Özbal and Gerritsen 2013, 114). They also performed contextual analysis for the ceramics and found out that they were not used

for social competition explicitly however, and were probably not items of prestige, as the site inhabitants had equal access to them.

Others also sought meaning behind animal motifs. Images of bulls and bucrania have been linked to a hypothetical cult of the mother goddess and the bull, present throughout the Neolithic (Mallowan and Cruikshank Rose 1935; Cauvin 2000).

Multiple works have been dedicated to the imagery of a bowl found in a funerary context at Tell Arpachiyah, showing both humans and animals performing in a scene (Fig. 16) (Hijara 1978; Ippolitoni-Strika 1990 and 1996; Breniquet 1992). The bowl is unique in its complexity of designs. Breniquet proposes that the scene does not relate to the life or death of the individual alone although this view is tempting, but rather to essential symbolic themes of that time (Breniquet 1992, 69-70). The specific symbolic event displayed here might be that of the safeguarding of the herds, expressed by the man that is pointing his weapon towards the feline creature, the external threat, and the cow behind it. The story might have functioned as a myth that was celebrated, that created cohesion between group members, or that functioned in events of initiation. The two bucrania can be interpreted as masks, totems, or ancestral creators of the Halaf society that could have been used at initiations as well. The two people painted at each side of what seems to be a jar might represent protagonists of a banquet (or feast) (Breniquet 1992, 74-7). Ippolitoni-Strika has interpreted Halaf tholoi as cultic buildings, and has suggested that the bottom of the bowl (Fig. 16, image c) reflects such a shrine. However, much of the construction of tholoi is not visible anymore today, so this standpoint cannot be proven (Breniquet 1992, 75-76).
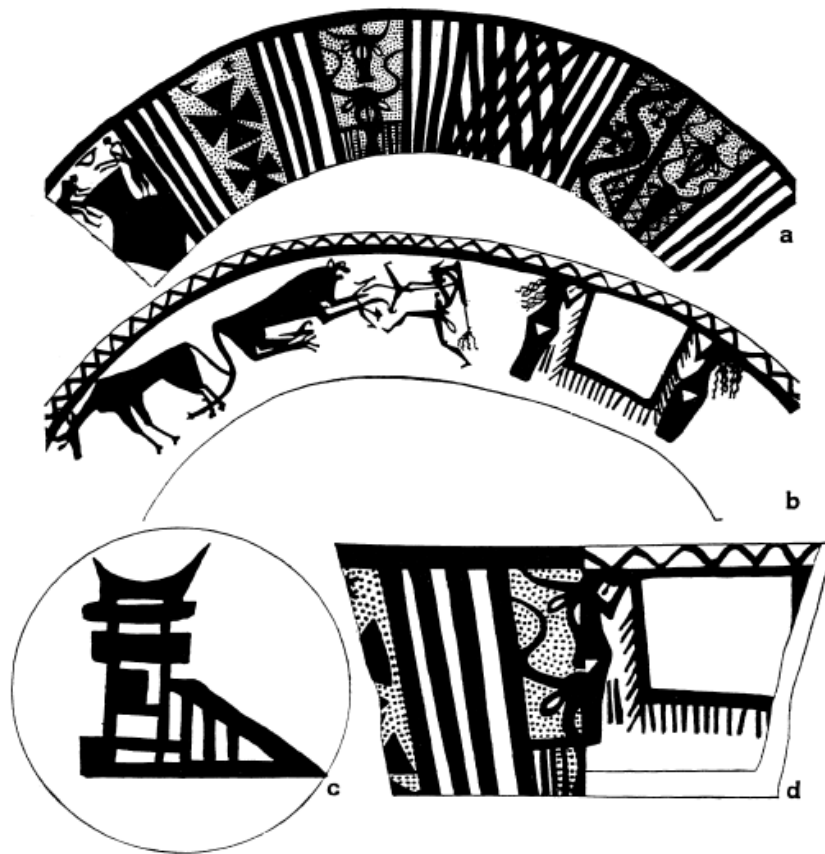
Figure 16: Halaf vase from a funerary context at Tell Arpachiyah. (a) Exterior, (b) interior, (c) bottom, (d) profile (Breniquet 1992, 72).
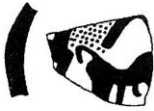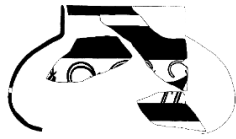
Campbell (2010) has tried to discover the general meanings behind both figurative and abstract designs. He studied how these motifs functioned within the symbolic communication system and considers the figurative and abstract motifs as equally valuable and as meaningful for both the group as the individual. He advocates that specific combinations of motifs have specific meanings, be that of a certain myth or narrative. Symbols tend to get more stylized as well, often resulting in abstract motifs that can no longer be understood by archaeologists but that might still have had the same explicit meanings in the past (Campbell 2010, 148). Unfortunately, Campbell does not go into detail on specific animal motifs and their meaning.

Erdalkiran (2009) is probably leading the way when it comes to researching animal representations in the Halaf period. She investigated animal motifs found on pottery from archaeological sites from all over the Halaf region, and was able to distinguish between

different species represented: The bull (the most occurring one), mouflon, deer, gazelle, mountain goat, onager, leopard, cheetah, fish, snake, scorpion, and various birds. She concluded that these animals are not merely mirroring Halaf subsistence. They must have had symbolic connotations referring to the wild and danger, to the hunt, and to male identity as mostly wild male animals are portrayed (see also Verhoeven 2002). Dangerous animals might have played various roles in mythology, and all animals might have been related to religious beliefs. This kind of symbolism is common throughout the whole of the Late Neolithic, but animal motifs are found throughout different media in time. This suggests that they were part of traditions which were kept alive for a long period of time. Nevertheless, Erdalkiran's work, as she also mentions herself, forms only the basis for future research.

In my Bachelor thesis I have investigated the meanings behind animal representations on Halaf pottery myself, by focussing on the ceramics from Tell Sabi Abyad (Syria). I have started so by linking the animals motives to the archaeozoological record of Tell Sabi Abyad in order to see which species they represent, and if not sufficient I have made comparisons with the modern fauna. An overview of types of animal motifs and which species they possibly represent can be found in the table beneath (Tab. 3) (Grimbergen 2015).

Table 3: Overview of animal motifs found on Transitional and Halaf pottery from Tell Sabi Abyad, and which species they represent (after Grimbergen 2015).

Bucrania	Auroch / Cattle	Ovicaprid heads	Ovicaprid
Auroch or cattle heads, often termed 'bucrania'. Both species were present in the zooarchaeological record.	Probably aurochs or cattle laying down. Both were present in the zooarchaeological record at the time.	Sheep or goat heads. From the zooarchaeological record we know that both domestic and wild versions were present, and the image perhaps represents mouflon, argali, the domestic sheep, the wild goat, ibex or domestic goat.	Sheep or goat heads. From the zooarchaeological record we know that both domestic and wild versions were present, and the image perhaps represents mouflon, argali, the domestic sheep, the wild goat, ibex or domestic goat.
This sample is from Tell Sabi Abyad (Source: Tell Sabi Abyad Project).	This sample is from Tell Sabi Abyad (Source: Nieuwenhuyse 1997, 240).	This sample is from Tell Sabi Abyad (Source: Tell Sabi Abyad Project).	This sample is from Tell Sabi Abyad (Source: Nieuwenhuyse 1997, 240).

Mythical ovicaprid head
This sheep or goat head could not be identified because its horns appear to be twisted in an unrealistic way.

This sample is from Tell Sabi Abyad (Source: Tell Sabi Abyad Project).

Markhor or blackbuck head
The image resembles the markhor (a wild mountain goat) or the blackbuck (an antelope) best. However, those species were never identified in the zooarchaeological record, and the species do not live nearby the site where the sample came from today.

This sample is from Tell Sabi Abyad (Source: Tell Sabi Abyad Project).
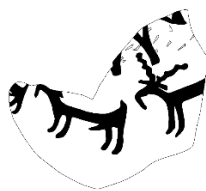
Markhor
The image resembles the markhor (a wild mountain goat) best. However, this species was never identified in the zooarchaeological record, and the species does not live nearby the site where the sample came from today.

This sample is from Tell Sabi Abyad (Source: Nieuwenhuyse 2007).

Gazelle head
This sample probably represents the head of a gazelle. This species was identified in the zooarchaeological record.

This sample is from Tell Sabi Abyad (Source: Tell Sabi Abyad Project).

Cervid
Judging from the hooves, we could be dealing with a cervid. In the zooarchaeological record fallow deer, roe deer and red deer are present.

This sample is from Tell Sabi Abyad (Source: own artistic reconstruction, after Tell Sabi Abyad Project).

Short bird
Small birds on a roof. Various smaller birds are known from the zooarchaeological record: Duck sp., partridge, pigeon sp., bird of prey sp., oyster catcher, gull sp., great bustard, ruff, rail sp., woodcock, thrush sp., and the hooded crow.

This sample is from Tell Sabi Abyad (Source: Akkermans 1989, 199).

Medium sized bird
In the zooarchaeological record goose species are present.

This sample is from Tell Sabi Abyad (Source: Tell Sabi Abyad Project).

Tall bird
A tall bird species. In the zooarchaeological record we have stork species, and the Demoiselle Crane.

This sample is from Tell Sabi Abyad (Source: Tell Sabi Abyad Project).

Mythical bird

Leopard or cheetah

Quadruped

Human

A three-legged bird?	The cheetah and leopard are not present in the zooarchaeological record. Nevertheless, a leopard bone was found at the relatively contemporary site of Çatalhöyük in Turkey.	A not so recognizable four-legged creature. Candidates from the zooarchaeological record are the cat, dog and fox.	Our own kind.
This sample is from Tell Sabi Abyad (Source: Le Mière and Nieuwenhuyse 1996, 277).	This sample is from Tell Sabi Abyad (Source: Own picture).	This sample is from Tell Sabi Abyad (Source: Le Mière and Nieuwenhuyse 1996, 241).	This sample is from Tell Sabi Abyad (Source: Nieuwenhuyse 2008, 224).

In total about 70 sherds belonging to different pots were decorated with animal motifs. Some species appear more frequently on pottery than others. Cattle are most common, followed by ovicaprids and the many bird species. I was not able to determine whether the images of cattle and ovicaprids represent wild or domestic animals since both had horns and because the images are simply too schematized. Also, it could be that certain features of the animal, like the horns, are exaggerated and are thus not indicatory of the wild or domesticated status of the animal. On the other hand, animals that are unmistakably wild like gazelle, the cervid, markhor (a mountain goat) and blackbuck (an antelope) are found in low numbers. The mythical 'bird' is only encountered once, and the mythical ovicaprid shows up thrice (Grimbergen 2015, 59, 63-4).

It is equally interesting to consider the absence of certain animal species. There are other impressive wild animals that one would expect on this pottery. However, images of for example onagers and wild boars are lacking. It seems that there existed a preference for the depiction of horned animals and birds, next to some exceptions (Grimbergen 2015).

Wild horned animals, as many of the images might be interpreted, and the bull were possibly linked to the idea of 'the dangerous and wild dimensions of nature', as opposed to the safer domestic sphere and culture, an idea suggested by Verhoeven (Verhoeven 2002, 252). Also, images of dangerous horned animals might have evoked protective forces, safeguarding the user of the vessel or the contents of it from harm. This type of magic is also called apotropaic magic (Grimbergen 2015).

It can be argued that the animals as seen on the pottery of Tell Sabi Abyad often have an inverse relationship with the archaeozoological record. People relied only

minimally on hunting, and only few wild animals are represented in the archaeozoological record. This makes the wild animals depicted on pottery quite special. It might have been that certain taboos existed about bringing certain hunted animals and animal parts onto the site, and that this was only permitted on special occasions (maybe feasts) like at Çatalhöyük (Hodder 2006). The painted motifs interpreted as blackbucks or markhors are even more astonishing: Those animal species are not known from the archaeozoological record of the site (or any contemporary record), and in modern days these species do not even live in the region as well. The markhor prefers mountainous areas, while the blackbuck is now only present in the Indian subcontinent. This leaves us wondering of how the people at Tell Sabi Abyad had knowledge of these animal species, if they indeed represent those. Perhaps the only explanation is the mobility of the site's visitors (Grimbergen 2015).

Many wild animals represented might only have been hunted during the hunting months. Gazelle and birds for example are migratory, and were only available during specific months of the year. These animals therefore might be viewed as symbolic for seasonality (Grimbergen 2015).

It is this theme of seasonality that seems to be represented by other motifs on vessels of Tell Sabi Abyad as well. Animals are combined with other types of motifs that refer to a place and time, such as architecture, plants, dots (the rain and winter months), stars (referring to a time when a certain star is visible or perhaps night time), and curved lines (maybe alluding to water or a moist area, a certain amount of water, or the winter months in which the wadis fill up and rivers expand) (Fig. 17). Wild animals combined with the rain motif might have referred to seasonality, the autumn and winter months, and thus the hunting months. Together the figurative designs seem to form a small narrative. Also, it seems that the typical vessel shape for vessels decorated with bucrania motifs is a shape which would fit in between cattle's horns (Fig. 17). This type of vessel is often called a 'flare-rim bowl'. This could mean that this particular vessel shape is connected to the animal (Grimbergen 2015).

Figure 17: Different motifs found on the ceramics of Tell Sabi Abyad which together make up complex narratives and the flare-rim bowl; a typical vessel shape for vessels decorated with bucrania (Tell Sabi Abyad Project).

Lastly, I have attempted to link these painted Fine Wares from Tell Sabi Abyad to their context of use. Form and function analysis suggests Fine Ware was very suitable for serving food and drinks (Nieuwenhuyse 2013). Perhaps these items were used at for communal dining. Feasts are excellent occasions to eat something different than the daily meals, perchance luxurious or exotic beasts that can be found as images on the ceramics. Cattle, too, can be considered feasting animals. Furthermore, precious Fine Ware serving vessels were intended to be seen. They were presumably used in contexts involving eating and drinking together. People would have moved the vessels around, commenting on the stories painted on them, or they were given away as a gift. These vessels and their stories might then have been regarded as precious memorial objects as well. Moreover, each narrative, as painted on the vessels, seems unique. There probably were stylistic formulae for decorating a vessel, but copying is clearly avoided. It seems that every vessel has a unique set of motifs, or else different colours are used and motifs differ in the way they were executed. Perhaps these objects were highly personalized, adding up to their value. Another indicator for the preciousness of Halaf Fine Ware in general are the signs of repair some vessels show (Grimbergen 2015).

Depositional context analysis was not possible for the ceramics coming from Tell Sabi Abyad because most sherds are tertiary finds. Depositional context analysis of sherds

from Tell Damishliyya, a Halaf site that is also situated in the Balikh valley, did not show any correlation between particular animal motifs and particular contexts. It might be that all painted fine ware was used in a similar way, and pots with animal motifs did not receive a special treatment when discarded. Sherds were found in uninhabited areas, inside or near pits. The fact that precious Fine Ware was discarded means that the objects could lose their precious status, and the meaning of the stories on them was then lost or no longer relevant (Grimbergen 2015). And, maybe most importantly, it could not be proven that Halaf Fine Ware and its animal imagery are related to feasting. However, this does not mean that the hypothesis is invalid.

At Tell Khirbet esh-Shenef the repertoire of animal species represented on pottery is much smaller (see Tab. 4), as was concluded during the Shenef Inventory Project. Only cattle (or aurochs) and ovicaprids can be identified. Like at Tell Sabi Abyad, the imagery is not much in line with the zooarchaeological record. Late Halaf Khirbet esh-Shenef's faunal remains have been studied by Hendrichs for a MA thesis (which is unpublished). 485 fragments of animal bones were retrieved from the small trench excavations, of which less than 30% could be identified to species level. The majority of animal bones could be ascribed to the skeleton of a badger (*Meles meles*). Ovicaprids predominate the sample (44%), but wild animals are well represented too (36%). Onagers were a favourite prey (32%), more than gazelle (17%). Birds and carnivores are missing from the record, but this might well be due to the small size of the sample and recovery methods (Hendrichs 1990 in Cavallo 2000, 29). However, animals found on pottery only include aurochs or cattle and ovicaprids.

Table 4: Overview of animal motifs found on Halaf pottery from Tell Khirbet esh-Shenef, and which species they represent.

Bucrania	Auroch / Cattle	Ovicaprid heads
Cattle nor aurochs were identified in the zooarchaeological record.	Cattle nor aurochs were identified in the zooarchaeological record.	Ovicaprids predominate the zooarchaeological record.
This sample is from Tell Khirbet esh-Shenef	This sample is from Tell Khirbet esh-Shenef	This sample is from Tell Khirbet esh-Shenef (Source: Own photo, S.I.P.).

In conclusion, it must be said that although certain animal species reoccur on Halaf pottery (like cattle and ovicaprids), probably each site knew a different repertoire of images. This for example becomes clear when comparing Tell Sabi Abyad to Tell Khirbet esh-Shenef. At Tell Sabi Abyad the repertoire is much more diverse, even though both sites are located in the Balikh valley. Of course the scale of excavation might also be of influence here. Moreover, despite the stylistic formulae for decorating, copying was avoided and different narratives were created. It might well be that every site knew different narratives or at least different versions of stories regarding animals, and the role of animals in taboos, communal ceremonies, feasts, danger, gender and magic.

5.3 Ritual and administrative objects: Animal figurines and zoomorphic vessels

Animal figurines

Figurines have always drawn a lot of attention, leaving us with an array of interpretations. Human figurines might have received most interest, and especially female figurines that are often thought to be related to some kind of 'mother goddess cult' or matriarchal societies (for example Cauvin 2000). However, there exists a multitude of animal figurines as well, although they are less common. Animal figurines in the Halaf period could be made of unfired and sun-dried clay, lightly fired clay, gypsum, or stone (Arntz 2013; Kluitenberg 2013, 125-7). Here, I will use the figurines found at Tell Sabi Abyad as a case study since they are well described.

Excavations at Tell Sabi Abyad have produced a great amount of figurines, and their contexts are well documented. Both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines from the Transitional to Early Halaf phases at Tell Sabi Abyad have been thoroughly investigated by Kluitenberg (2013) and Arntz (2013).

Kluitenberg's work is descriptive in nature. She investigated the figurines from Operation I from the 1994 to 1999 campaigns. She grouped the figurines in an anthropomorphic group and a zoomorphic group, and where she could she identified the animal species, and described their specific archaeological contexts. In total 14 animal figurines made of clay and gypsum were investigated, of which only three were complete

or nearly complete (for examples, see Fig. 18). The broken parts possibly represent heads, horns, legs and torsos. Since many of the animal figurines were broken, she suggests that body parts could have been broken off intentionally in the past in order to ritually kill the animal, although this remains uncertain at this stage. According to Kluitenberg most of the animals represent bovines because of the perpendicular way the neck is attached to their bulky body and because of the presence of horns. She identified other animals as sheep and wild boar (Kluitenberg 2013).

In general, animal figurines were found in midden deposits, room fills and open-courtyards. Interestingly, five (of which two virtually complete) of the animal figurines were found in a very particular context. Along with two human figurines and over a hundred other objects, among mostly tokens and sling missiles, they were found in an oven dated to the Transitional phase (the phase before the Early Halaf). The oven was located in an open courtyard (Kluitenberg 2013, 127-8). This particular case however has not been interpreted any further by Kluitenberg, and she does not discuss the meaning of animal figurines in particular.
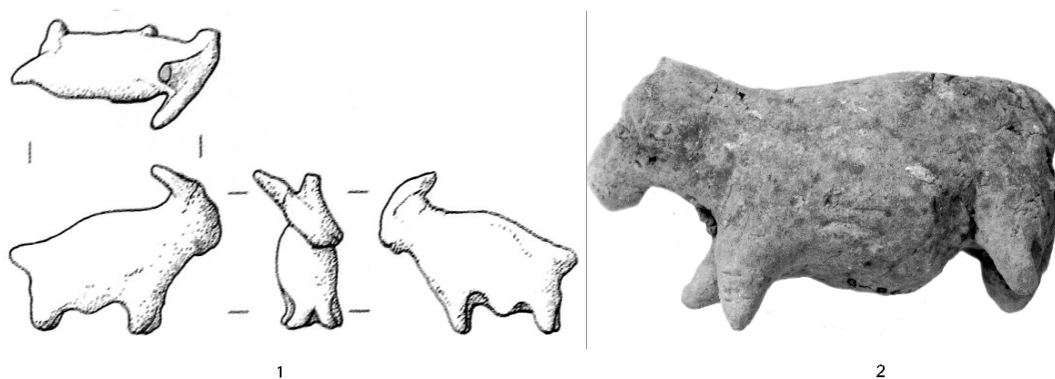
Figure 18: Complete or nearly complete zoomorphic figurines from Operation I, Tell Sabi Abyad (after Kluitenberg 2013, 132, 133).

In her bachelor thesis, Arntz (2013) delved into the many theories regarding figurines in general, and reviewed approaches taken in the past and current trends. She then explored the figurines from Tell Sabi Abyad and connected them to their depositional contexts and the rest of the artefact assemblage. In her interpretation she applied some of the recent themes of figurine theory: The theme of figurines in contexts related to fire,

fragmentation (the intentional or unintentional breakage debate), miniaturisation (done to make the figurines manageable, transportable, manipulable, schematized or exaggerated in certain ways, etc.), and that of materiality.

Arntz's dataset consisted only of the figurines found during Operation III which lasted from 2002 to 2009, when the north-western slopes of the mound of Tell Sabi Abyad were excavated. The figurines date to the Pre-Halaf, Transitional and Early Halaf periods, and their stratigraphic contexts are well defined and C-14 dates are known (Arntz 2013, 34-5). Arntz was able to distinguish between different figurine categories: Anthropomorphic (cone-shaped, pillar-shaped, and round-shaped), zoomorphic, undetermined and un-diagnostic. Only five of the figurines belong to the zoomorphic category (Fig. 19), which makes up 12% of the whole assemblage. Nevertheless, she was not able to distinguish between different species as this was too difficult because of the damaged state of the figurines. Some of them seem to have been horned, others have a ridged back like a wild boar. In any case, all zoomorphic figurines are quadrupeds (Arntz 2013, 39-40).

Overall, Arntz was able to conclude that the size of the figurines in general was not something that was standardized. Also, no material classification could be made; the zoomorphic figurines for example were made out of either baked and unburned clay. Contextual analysis of the figurines did not yield any patterns as well; all five zoomorphic figurines were derived from open areas, but this was the case for most of the figurines in general. It must be noted that most figurines were intermixed with refuse like animal bones, which makes one question why these objects were treated as waste. Apparently figurines could lose their meaning and could be disposed of like any other 'normal' refuse (Arntz 2013, 42-7).

Concerning the life of the figurines in general before disposal, some tentative conclusions were made by Arntz. The figurines in general show signs of breakage where one would expect this to happen, and whether parts were broken off intentionally is difficult to determine. For animal figurines these points are located at the tail, snout, ears or horns, and legs. Not much can be said about the materiality of the figurines, except that they were probably not made to be durable. In fact, all figurines are perhaps made very brittle on purpose, and probably made on a household level in order to fulfil their function after which they were disposed of. Furthermore, next to being ritual objects it has been

suggested that figurines could have played a role in administration as well, and that the breaking up and dividing of a figurine symbolizes each party taking part in something. This idea of figurines in general taking the role of tokens might be confirmed by the context of the figurines found in the Burnt Village of Tell Sabi Abyad, as they were uncovered in relation to storage spaces (and clay disks, other tokens and miniature clay vessels, see Duistermaat 1994, 61). Verhoeven however finds this rather unlikely and prefers an approach which involves religion: The breakage would symbolize the release of life-force of the figurines that was thought to be a living being, resulting in particular benefits for the parties involved. One of the benefits was the creation of cohesion and union between pastoralists and residents, who interacted through these figurines (Arntz 2013, 48-58; Verhoeven 2007, 179-80).

Figure 19: Selection of zoomorphic figurines from Operation III, Tell Sabi Abyad (Tell Sabi Abyad archive, Leiden).

Indeed, it appears to me that defining the animal species for these figurines is a difficult job. These animals take crude forms and they are damaged. All of the animal figurines seem to have a bulky body, and I do not think we should interpret this as specific for a certain species. This is rather an effect of the crudeness of the figurine and the quick way in which

the object was made, or perhaps people meant to portray fattened animals. The shape of the tail and horns are probably more indicatory for the species here, but unfortunately those are the parts that are often broken off. I would argue that at least one of the figurines presented above represents a sheep- or goat-like species, because its horns are curling backwards (the left animal from Operation I in Fig. 18). The animal figurines of which the tails did not break off, have a short one. This would imply that we are not dealing with cattle here, but rather sheep and goats as well, in case these figurines formerly had horns. This would mean that we are mostly dealing with animals that formed the main source of meat. Pigs or wild boars form a different option, but this seems unlikely to me as pigs do not have such long and certainly no upraised necks like the figurines do.

The roles of animal figurines in specific have not been discussed by Kluitenberg and Arntz. Perhaps their roles equal those of human figurines as they are found in the same contexts. What I find striking is that the animal figurines are found in relation to public facilities, like middens and open courtyards, and even an oven placed on such a courtyard. Perhaps they are related to public events, like Painted Fine Ware ceramics could have been related to communal dining. The case of the oven mentioned by Kluitenberg is thought provoking, especially when thinking in terms of ritual. Could it be that a feast or another ritual was symbolically acted out here, by means of storytelling with the figurines being the puppets? In case we are mostly dealing with sheep and goat figurines here, being the main herded species, these particular figurines might be representative of part of a herd. To continue this fantasy, perhaps the two human figurines represent the owners of the herd and the clay sling bullets represent the killing of the animals. The animals are fat; Perchance they were fattened by the owners for the feast that would take place at the courtyard. The event ends in the oven, which is maybe symbolic for either the preparation of the meat or either destruction or ending of the event. Then, animal figurines were meant to be destroyed at the end of the ritual, and it is perhaps for this reason that the figurines were not made to last - or were they? In case of intentional breaking, could it be that parts of the 'killed' animals were kept by people as mnemonic objects of this event, just like was the hypothesis for the astragali in chapter 4? This is all very speculative, but it would imply some sort of administration of the ritual performed with these animal figurines. Then, lastly, it could indeed have been that figurines were used to achieve cohesion between pastoralists and inhabitants as Verhoeven suggested, maybe by means of performing small

rituals with these figurines in which pastoralists and inhabitants took part. However, we should not forget that animal figurines were also found in association with more 'everyday' objects like tokens, clay disks and miniature vessels. Maybe they fulfilled less ritual purposes as well by functioning in the overall administrative system of stored goods.

Zoomorphic vessels

Very special types of figurines are zoomorphic vessels, which are rarely found. They are perhaps better understood as hybrids between figurines and vessels. Two Halaf ones that resemble pigs are known from Iraq, from the sites of Yarim Tepe II and Tell Arpachiyah (Fig. 20). The one from Yarim Tepe II was found in a pit in which traces of fire were observed, the burnt bones of animals, and the remains of, according to Merpert and Munchaev, intentionally broken vessels (Merpert and Munchaev 1987, 27). The pig vessel from Tell Arpachiyah was uncovered from a Halaf level called TT 6, and more detailed information on the context is perhaps not available. The most important structure from the level was a large burnt house (Mallowan and Cruikshank Rose 1935). Pigs were quite common at Tell Arpachiyah. At a certain phase they even comprised about a quarter of the total faunal assemblage (Hijara 1980, 152; Merpert and Munchaev 1987, 19). The uses and meanings of both vessels have not been investigated.

Interestingly enough pigs never seem to appear as painted motifs on pottery, or at least as far as I know. However, these zoomorphic vessels are decorated with some motifs that can also be found on other Fine Ware vessels. For example, there is the dotted 'rain' motif and the curved lines or 'water' motif. Most of the surface of the pig from Tell Arpachiyah decorated with short stripes, maybe indicating the bristly fur of the animal. The decoration of the pig from Yarim Tepe II is more complicated. Especially the two wheel motifs found on the side and the behind of the animal are puzzling, but because I have never seen this motif elsewhere I am not able to provide an interpretation here.

Because zoomorphic vessels can be regarded both figurines and Fine Ware vessels, was their function perhaps a combination of both? These Fine Ware pigs were probably not suitable to serve foodstuffs because of their closed shapes, but were perhaps used to store liquids. Perhaps because of their uniqueness they were only used at special occasions. At Yarim Tepe the vessel was disposed of together with other vessels and animal remains that might have been part of a ritual meal. All together the items were destroyed

along with fire, possibly after the meal was consumed. The destruction and the element of fire reminds of the figurines that were placed in the oven at a courtyard at Tell Sabi Abyad described above.
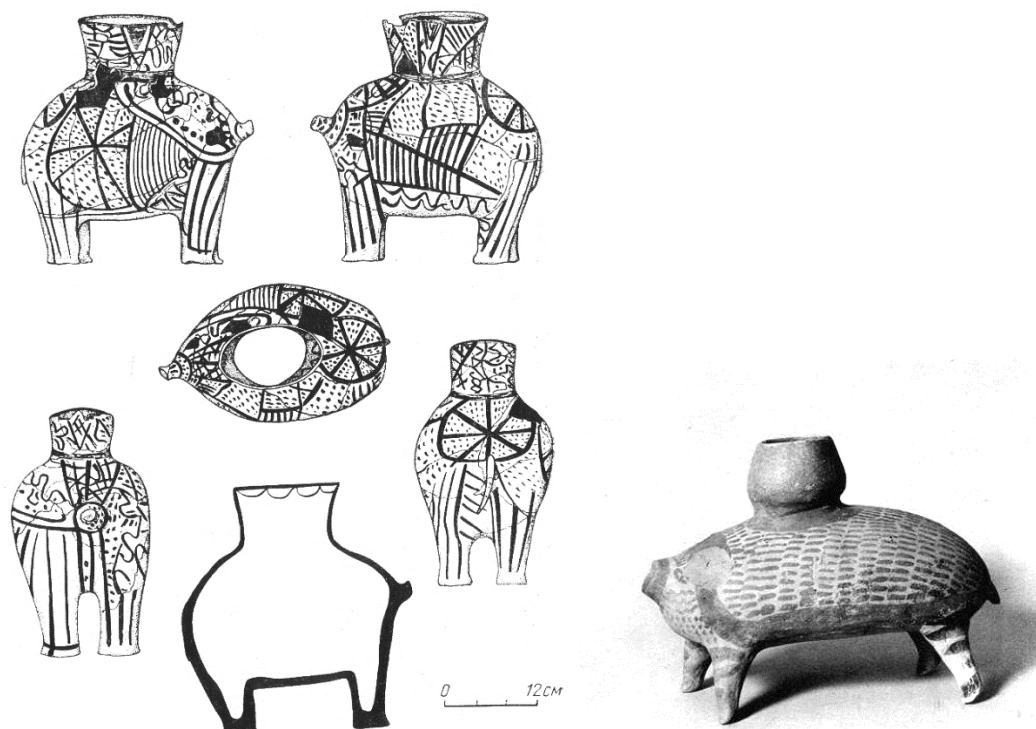
Figure 20: Zoomorphic Halaf vessel in the shape of a pig from Yarim Tepe II (Merpert and Munchaev 1993, 147) and a similar one from Tell Arpachiyah (after www.baghdadmuseum.org).

5.4   Administration: Animal representations on sealings

Animal imagery has also permeated the administrative sphere in Halaf times. Costello (2011; 2013) has very generally investigated the imagery on pottery, pallets and seals or seal impressions from the Neolithic period. She concluded that they represent elements of a belief system since many images reoccur, and that they might be linked to the processes of sedentism and domestication. In many cultures birds and snakes have symbolic potency, and these animals can also be found on Neolithic objects, as well as quadrupeds. Generally speaking, these objects might have referred to the place of humans in the cosmos and a desire to gain more control over natural resources. In some scenes human figures can be recognized who might represent religious specialists performing ritual practices like dances, trance and soul flight. Especially bird or composite bird-human imagery could be

related to the latter practice. Bird images refer to the sky, quadrupeds to the earth, and the snake to the underground, and according to Costello this refers to the three-tiered cosmos, making the images religious in nature. Furthermore, in many cultures snakes and birds are related to life and death. She argues that the same kind of imagery can also be found on pottery (Fig. 21) (Costello 2011, 257).
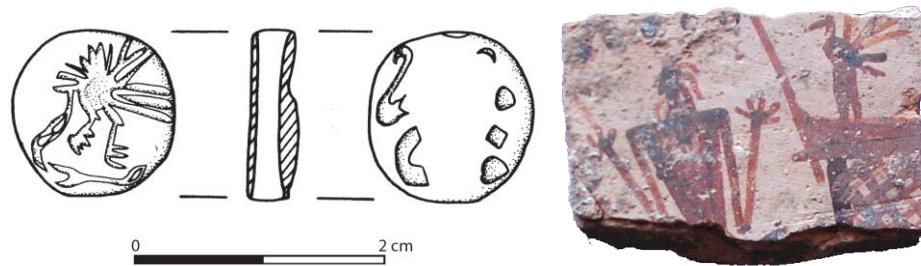
Figure 21: Left; Halaf seal from Tell Kurdu showing a vulture and its prey (Özbal et al. 2004 in Costello 2011, 254), right; Halaf pottery sherd from Fısıtklı Höyük (Costello 2011, 256).

Maybe the idea of a three-tiered cosmos is a too modern interpretation, derived from more recent cultures. If the intention was indeed to represent some kind of cosmological ordering, I would expect the imagery to be more ordered. Instead, we find different elements combined in the same image. On pottery for example, birds are often depicted sitting on the roofs of perhaps village houses, and many scenes seem to have referred to seasonality instead of a cosmological ordering. Also, each scene is different (Grimbergen 2015), which does not imply an institutionalized belief system being represented. Possibly the sealings should be interpreted more 'down to earth' as well.

For a more down to earth approach I will use Tell Sabi Abyad again as a case study here because the sealings and stamps from this site have been extensively documented by Duistermaat, as well as their context (see for example Akkermans and Duistermaat 1997; 2004; 2014; Duistermaat 1994; 2010; 2012; 2013). Hundreds of clay sealings have been found, as well as a number of stone stamps for sealing, dating to 6000 BC or slightly later. Most of them were uncovered from the Burnt Village, either from inside the carefully planned small circular buildings and large closely spaced rectangular storage structures, or from debris layers. At least 70 different patterns can be recognized stemming from only this period of occupation, indicating that sealings were used by a large number of people and not just a select group (Akkermans and Duistermaat 2014, 116).

Akkermans and Duistermaat assume that all sealings were used for the same purpose, being to control the goods that were stored in the repository structures by marking them to prevent unauthorized opening. This marking of goods implied individual ownership (Akkermans and Duistermaat 1997; Duistermaat 2010; 2013). However, there are clay seals which have the imprints of two stamps. In order to use the stored goods again the seal was simply broken and then discarded. There is evidence for that the goods were stored inside small transportable containers. Imprints on the reverse of sealings show that they were often formerly attached to baskets and rope. The storage facilities were probably mainly used by travelling pastoralists who used Tell Sabi Abyad as their base camp (Akkermans and Duistermaat 2014, 113, 116).

It is remarkable however that the imprints in clay are so common, while the objects for making these imprints are rarely found. Therefore, Akkermans and Duistermaat suggest that the stamps for sealing were precious and might have been carried around on the body, or that many of them were made of perishable materials like wood or bone (Akkermans and Duistermaat 2014, 113). In the next paragraph we will see that some of the stone stamps were pierced, suggesting that they were indeed worn as amulets.

Even though hundreds of seal impressions were uncovered at Tell Sabi Abyad, only two animal species are represented (Fig. 22). One of the sealings found seems to represent a lizard or froglike creature (Akkermans and Duistermaat 2014, 120). Others, which appear in larger numbers (50 in total), bear the representation of a goat or sheep with long and curved horns. They come in eight variants. Almost all of them were found in one building, but this is true for the majority of seals in general and this motif does not seem to be bound to a specific context different from other sealings (Duistermaat 1994).

Because sealings come in so many variants (at least 70 types are known from the Burnt Village only) and because they probably were personal emblems to mark individual property, it might have been that their meanings were appealing to the individual only. Nevertheless, the goat or sheep motif seems to have been rather popular. This might not be much of a coincidence if storage facilities were mainly used by pastoralists, and thus sheep and goat herders. The sheep or goat images then refer to their identity.
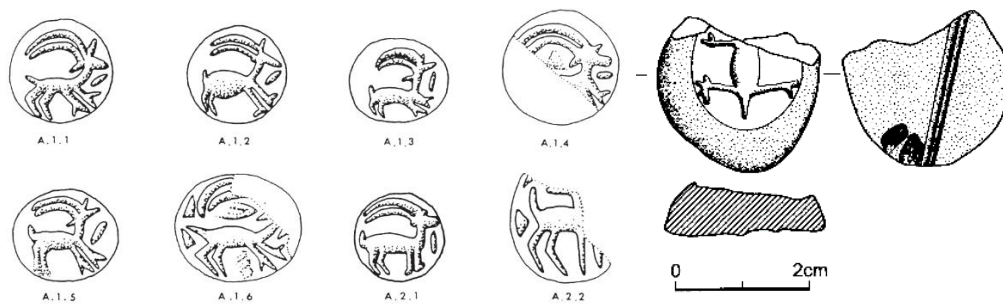
Figure 22: Stamp seal impressions from Tell Sabi Abyad representing goats or sheep (Duistermaat 1994, 35) and perhaps a lizard (Akkermans and Duistermaat 2014, 120).

5.5 Bodily adornment: Animal amulets and stamps for sealing

A last category where animals are represented is that of bodily adornment. Evidence for Late Neolithic people wearing ornamentations mainly stems from human figurines and vessels depicted wearing these. Curiously enough however, only little cases are known where people were buried wearing ornaments. Archaeologists have often interpreted the body and bodily decorations by means of identity, gender and personhood, but bodily expression is now also being seen as a tool for people to communicate with the world around them and to understand this world (Croucher 2013).

For the Halaf we find animals as pierced amulets, as small objects that could have been worn on the body, but also as stamps used for sealing, a less obvious category. These objects are often made of stone, for example serpentine. When considering the evidence from only three sites which are all located in different regions (Tell Arpachiyah in Iraq, Tell Kurdu in Turkey, and Tell Sabi Abyad in Syria) it already becomes evident that a wide variety of animal species is represented in this material category, all executed in different ways (Fig. 23, 24, and 25). Because of their diversity and that these objects probably belonged to individuals, I would argue that these objects are highly personalized, and therefore illustrating the identity of the wearer, or their personal totems. The objects might also have carried very personal meanings which are not easily accessible. They might have functioned as magical pendants as well, for luck for example, or as having apotropaic functions. However, if worn in a visible manner, these amulets could also have functioned as

instruments communicating these meanings. Some of the incised examples were assumedly also used as stamps for sealing practices, perhaps to mark individual belongings.
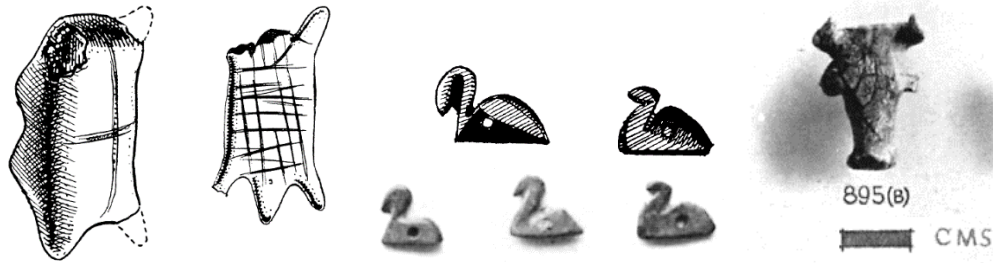
Figure 23: Seals/pendants and small objects from Tell Arpachiyah, perhaps representing a tortoise, animal skin, swans, and cattle head (after Mallowan and Cruikshank Rose 1935).
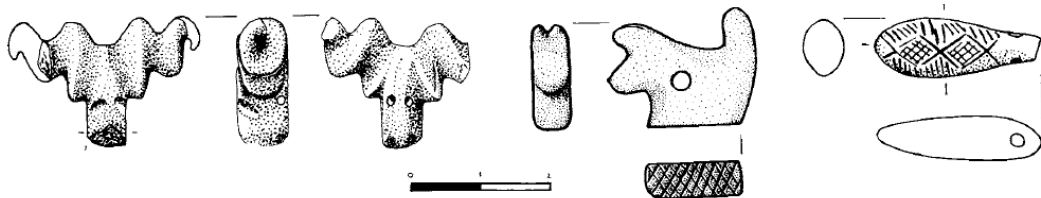
Figure 24: Pendants from Tell Kurdu, perhaps representing a sheep, dog, and snake (After Yener et al. 2000, 113).

Figure 25: Unfinished pendant from Tell Sabi Abyad, perhaps representing a sheep (Brüning et al. 2013, 215).

5.6   Conclusion

To conclude, what can be said about Halaf animal representations? Returning to the first research sub-question considering the contexts of employment of animal representations and the use of the objects on which the representations are found, we have seen that animal representations mainly occur in four different contexts: 1) Domestic space, 2)

'ritual', including communal events and commensality, 3) administration, including storage, the marking of property, and the usage of objects as mnemonic devices, and 4) bodily adornment. Amulets obviously belong to the context of bodily adornment, and occasionally stamps for sealing were worn on the body as well. Sealings fall into the category of administration, as well as animal figurines in the case they are used as mnemonic devices. Figurines also appeared to have functioned in 'ritual' contexts, and the same can be argued for Halaf painted Fine Wares. Finally, wall paintings appear in domestic space.

The second research sub-question addresses the different animal species that are represented in the different material categories and how this can be explained. The cranes or ostriches in the wall painting at Tell Bouqras can perhaps be interpreted as related to wider spread crane symbolism. Since cranes did not appear in the zooarchaeological record of the site they might have been subject to taboos. Because they appear on the wall of an ordinary building, cranes might have functioned as the totems or identity of the members of the house. The onagers in the wall painting of Umm Dabaghiyah on the other hand are probably related to diet and the hunt. The scene resembles a hunting scene, and onagers are well represented in the zooarchaeological record of the site.

A wide array of animal species can be found on Halaf painted Fine Wares: Cattle, ovicaprids, gazelles, cervids, birds, leopards, perhaps the markor and blackbuck, onager, fish, snake, scorpion, and mythical animals. These animals figure in scenes or narratives, like many other painted motifs. The narratives revolved around seasonality, the hunt, danger and maybe taboos (since the depicted wild animals rarely occur in the zooarchaeological record). Endless diversity in narratives might imply the personal nature of these stories. Fine Ware vessels were used in commensality, and maybe feasting.

Animal figurines from Tell Sabi Abyad mainly represent sheep and goats, but perhaps also bovines, or more unlikely pigs. They seem to have been used in administrative contexts and ritual. The latter might have involved storytelling, and intentional breakage. Other figurine-like objects include the rare zoomorphic vessels from Yarim Tepe II and Tell Arpachiyah. They both represent pigs. The function of zoomorphic vessels might be regarded similar to pottery and figurines. The function of zoomorphic vessels might be regarded similar to pottery and figurines, and they might have been used as drinking vessels during special occasions.

Investigated sealings had the representations of vultures, a lizard, and many sheep or goats. Sealings were used for administration to mark individual property. It is very probable that the animal motifs represent personal emblems which might have had personal meanings. Sheep and goats might be related to the pastoralist identity, since it is supposed that mobile people made extensive use of storage facilities and they had to mark their property to prevent unauthorized opening when they were away.

Animal amulets, sometimes also including pierced stamps for sealing, bear the representations of many kinds of animal species, like the tortoise, cattle, swan, sheep, dog, and snake. They were used for personal adornment, and occasionally for administration. They are personal objects and might thus have had personal meanings, they possibly figured as totems, but amulets might very well have been visible markers of identity as well.

6 DISCUSSION: COMPARING DIFFERENT MATERIAL CATEGORIES

Now that different case studies have been presented in chapter 4 and 5, it is time to answer the third research sub-question and see how the different material categories in which animals appear are related. In what way are the contexts of the material categories in which animals are found connected, and what happens when we compare the range of species represented in different material categories?

Four main contexts can be distinguished in which animal representations and exceptional deposits can be found. These are: 1) Domestic space, 2) 'ritual', including communal events, commensality and burial, and 3) administration, including storage, the marking of property, and the usage of objects as mnemonic devices, and 4) bodily adornment. It is often the case that a material category functioned in more than one context. For instance, the animal remains in 'ritual' deposits can be interpreted as the remains of feasting, but also as mnemonic devices for administration, which was the case with the astragali. So, these four main contexts should not be seen as separate areas of prehistoric activity. A similar symbolic system connected them, in which animals played a major role. Also, material categories are related to each other: Stamps for sealing are used for administration, but are also occasionally carried around the body like amulets. Zoomorphic vessels might be interpreted as Fine Ware vessels, but they can also be seen as figurines. A graphic overview of the relations between material categories and contexts is given in Fig. 26.

I would like to suggest that animal symbols are used as some sort of common language that was recognized by different human groups practicing different modes of subsistence, as these symbols can be found at a diverse array of Halaf sites throughout the Near East. This might be explained by the fact that animals fulfilled a key role in the subsistence economy in general, and their symbols are thus easily recognized by everyone. Moreover, animals, the objects on which they appear, and their contexts might be considered part of a sharing economy: Animals figured in shared narratives and myths,

animal products and materials were administered and distributed in communal events and used in communal rituals. Thus, it can be argued that animals were used to enforce human-human relationships, to create ties between different human groups by uniting them in communal activities.

However, it became clear that there is endless variation between different cases studied here which makes it difficult to recognize any patterns. For an overview of the cases presented in this thesis, see Tab. 5. 'Ritual' deposits are highly diverse: Both wild and domestic animals figure in these deposits, the way of implementation of faunal remains differs per case, and the species represented in these deposits are highly diverse. Nevertheless, the same species (and a lot more) can also be found on Halaf Fine Wares. Perhaps this is not such unexpected as both Fine Ware and the animal species found in the particular deposits probably figured in commensality. Only the dog forms an exception here. This species appeared in the Domuztepe Death Pit, but was apparently not eaten. Also, I do not know of any undisputable representations of dogs on Halaf pottery.

While the largest variety of animal species can be found on Halaf Fine Ware, there is also large variety in species represented on stamps for sealing, sealings and amulets. It is in this category that we encounter species that are not frequently encountered in the other media discussed here, like the tortoise, snake and dog. Other species are not unique for this category, like ovicaprids and cattle. As stamps for sealing and amulets were probably for individual use, the many species represented might have been personal choices as well. The many ovicaprids represented on the sealings of Tell Sabi Abyad and ovicaprid-shaped pendants might have been related to the pastoralist identity, as I mentioned earlier.

While wall paintings are scarce, but the two cases discussed showed different species: Cranes or ostriches and onagers. Cranes and ostriches might very well be represented on Fine Ware pottery as well, like for example at Tell Sabi Abyad (see 'tall bird' in Tab. 3). One of Tell Sabi Abyad's sherds might (which is not undisputable) even show a human figure with a bird's tail. Perhaps cranes were not directly connected to consumption, but they might have been imitated in dances at communal events, or they might have had other symbolic connotations related to myth, identity, totemism or taboos. Onagers on

the other hand, as far as I know, scarcely make their appearance on Halaf Fine Wares, while they do appear often on the earlier pottery of Umm Dabaghiyah. Also, onagers do not seem to appear in other media as well. Apparently they had little symbolic importance at the later Halaf sites which were discussed here.

It was difficult to recognize the species of animal figurines. However, it appears that figurines mainly represent sheep or goats, or maybe bovines. These species are not unique to this material category as they appear in all media discussed here, except for the two wall paintings. They thus had a prominent role in Halaf symbolism. Sheep, goats and bovines are all species that can be herded, and in general they can be linked to pastoralism. Their exact symbolic role most probably differed per material category, or even per context (again, see Tab. 5).
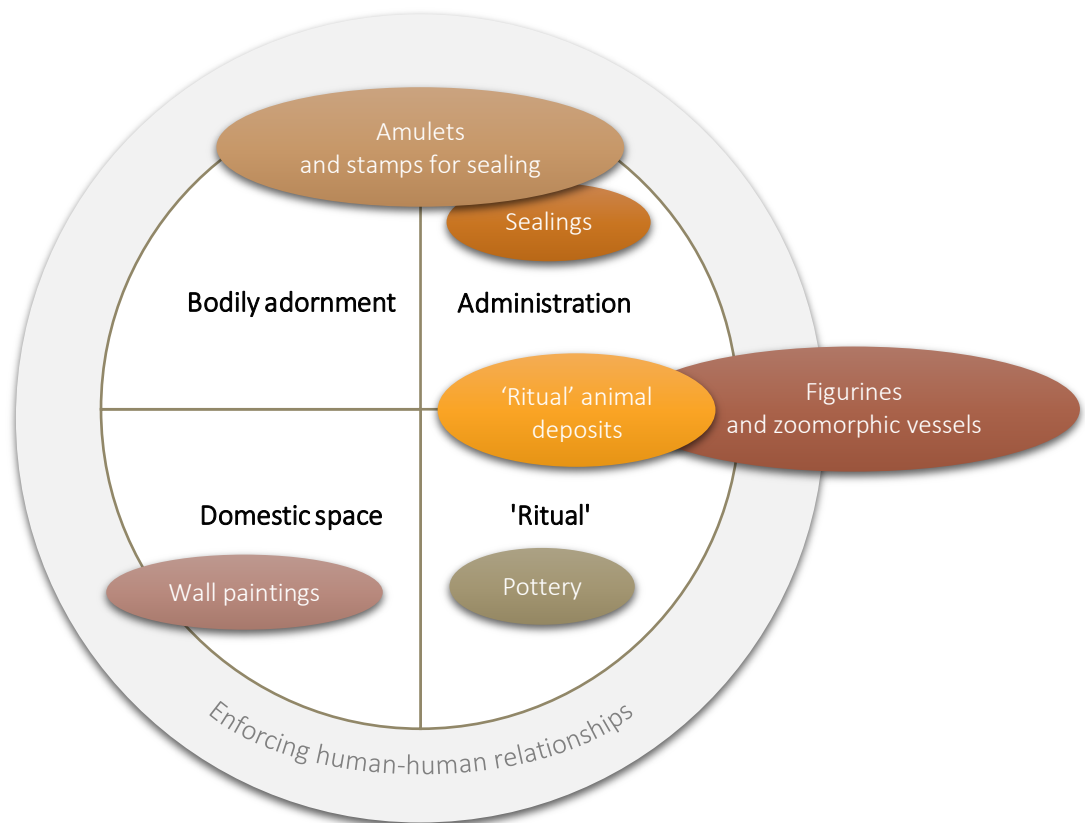
Figure 26: Overview of how different material categories are related through their contexts, as based on the previous chapters 4 and 5.

ANIMAL REMAINS IN 'RITUAL' DEPOSITS

DEPOSIT TYPE	SITE	CASE	INTERPRETATION
ANIMAL REMAINS IN HUMAN GRAVES	Tell Sabi Abyad (Syria)	Cattle femur resting on top of a disarticulated human skull. Both are deposited on top of the complete inhumation of an adult.	*Small feast celebrated with the dead, involving the consumption of a bovine.*
THE BURNT VILLAGE	Tell Sabi Abyad (Syria)	'Burial' of a man and woman on a roof surrounded by horned oval clay objects containing the remains of wild sheep and bovids.	*Abandonment ritual involving the burning of the village, and burial of persons with special status.*
DEATH PIT	Domuztepe (Turkey)	Enormous pit wherein remains of sheep, goats, pigs, dogs and humans were rapidly deposited in different layers.	*Feasting or communal consumption of valuable resources, involving the dead. Consumption of dogs was taboo.*
ASTRAGALUS CACHES	Kazane Höyük (Turkey), Yarim Tepe I (Iraq), Banahilk (Iraq)	A cache of 57 wild and domestic cattle astragali (domestic context), a cache of over 200 gazelle astragali (grave context), and a cache of 5 goat or sheep astragali (domestic context).	*Used as gaming pieces, or devices for administration (counting herd sizes, trophies, events of feasting).*
VOTIVE DEPOSIT	Tell Arpachiyah (Iraq)	Deposit of human longbones, a cattle rib, and painted Fine Wares.	*Deposit of a feast involving the dead.*

ANIMAL REPRESENTATIONS

MATERIAL CATEGORY	SITE	CASE	INTERPRETATION
WALL PAINTINGS	Tell Bouqras (Syria), Umm Dabaghiyah (Iraq)	Depiction of cranes or ostriches, and onagers.	*Perhaps related to wider spread crane symbolism, taboos, totemism and identity. Onagers are related to diet and the hunt.*
POTTERY	Tell Sabi Abyad (Syria), Tell Kurdu (Turkey), Tell Arpachiyah (Iraq)	Depictions of various animals, like cattle, ovicaprids, gazelles, cervids, birds, leopards, perhaps the markor and blackbuck, onager, fish, snake, scorpion, and mythical animals.	*Animals figure in scenes or narratives, like many other painted motifs. These narratives revolved around seasonality, the hunt, danger and maybe taboos. Endless diversity in narratives might imply the personal nature of these stories. Fine Ware*

			vessels were used in commensality, maybe feasting.
FIGURINES AND ZOOMORPHIC VESSELS	Tell Sabi Abyad (Syria), Yarim Tepe II (Iraq), Tell Arpachiyah (Iraq)	Sheep and goat figurines, perhaps also bovines or more unlikely pigs. Zoomorphic vessels represent pigs.	*Used in administrative contexts and ritual. The latter might have involved storytelling, and intentional breakage. The function of zoomorphic vessels might be regarded similar to pottery and figurines.*
SEALINGS	Tell Kurdu (Turkey), Tell Sabi Abyad (Syria)	Various animals, vultures, lizard, and many sheep or goats.	*Used for administration to mark individual property. Represent personal emblems, probably with personal meanings. Sheep and goats might be related to the pastoralist identity.*
ANIMAL AMULETS AND STAMPS FOR SEALING	Tell Sabi Abyad (Syria), Tell Kurdu (Turkey), Tell Arpachiyah (Iraq)	Various animals, including a tortoise, animal skin, cattle head, swans, sheep heads, dog, and snake.	*Used for personal adornment, and occasionally for administration. Personal objects with personal meanings, possibly totems, but also used to visibly express identity.*

In conclusion, how can we understand animal representations and animal 'ritual' deposits in the Halaf? After comparing different material categories in which animals make their appearance, it became clear that animals were part of a grand symbolic system encompassing many contexts and many distant Halaf sites. Nevertheless, there is high diversity in implementation of animal symbols and ritual deposits, and the species represented differ per case, so it is difficult to recognize any patterns here. But, perhaps, this was to be expected. There were many types of communities during the Halaf, practising different modes of subsistence and shifting from one mode to another. It was of no use to this mixed and turbulent society to formulate a firm set of rules on how to use animals in representations, or how to perform 'rituals'. On the contrary: People made creative use animals in symbolism and ritual, resulting in varying practises and attempts, presumably to unite people with different backgrounds.

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1   Review of the methodology used

My main research question I have attempted to answer here was 'How can we understand animal representations and ritual animal deposits?'. I have done this by investigating different material categories in which animals appear: Ritual animal deposits, animal representations in wall paintings, animal motifs on pottery, on sealings, on stamps used for sealing and amulets, and animal figurines and zoomorphic vessels. Sub-questions formulated for this research were:

- What are the contexts of employment of animal representations and ritual deposits, and how were the objects used on which animal representations are found?
- What different animal species are represented in the different material categories and can this be explained?
- Are the different material categories related to each other (for example though their context) and how?

I was able to provide very tentative answers to these questions, which will be summarized in the next paragraph. This tentativeness is mainly due to the scope of this research: Only a limited number of sites was studied, and only particular and often unique case studies were picked for this analysis. Moreover, many of my interpretations on the ideas behind the use of animals as symbols or in rituals are merely suggestive and cannot be proven. This is simply because of the lack of evidence. However, this is often the case when we try to interpret prehistoric remains. Future research could prove me wrong on my approach, which is social zooarchaeology, as new archaeological paradigms may emerge and dispute this way of thinking. Others will prove me wrong on my species identification as many animal representations are difficult to interpret because of their schematic forms. New excavations will reveal different animal representations and ritual deposits, challenging my ideas. Nevertheless, I have made a start, as similar research has never been done before.

7.2   Results

What are the contexts of employment of animal representations and ritual deposits, and how were the objects used on which animal representations are found?

In general we find animal representations and ritual deposits in four different contexts: 1) Domestic space, 2) 'ritual', including communal events, commensality and burial, and 3) administration, including storage, the marking of property, and the usage of objects as mnemonic devices, and 4) bodily adornment. For an overview of the exact uses and contexts of different material categories and deposits, see Tab. 5 in the previous chapter.

The 'ritual' deposits of animal remains as discussed in this thesis were often related to death and burial, feasting, or both. However, every case presented here is unique and animal remains were implemented in different ways. Apparently, 'rituals' involving the remains of animals were not standardized, and adjusted to the circumstances.

Regarding animal representations, amulets belong to the context of bodily adornment, and occasionally stamps for sealing were worn on the body as well. Sealings figured in administrative contexts, as well as animal figurines in the case they were used as mnemonic devices. Figurines also appeared to have functioned in 'ritual' contexts, and the same can be argued for Halaf painted Fine Wares. Finally, wall paintings appear in domestic space.

What different animal species are represented in the different material categories and can this be explained?

For an overview of represented species and interpretations, I refer to Tab. 5 in the previous chapter. It seems that certain species that can be associated with commensality and/or death and burial, like wild and domestic cattle, wild and domestic sheep, goats, gazelle, pigs, and dogs. The remains of those species were found in 'ritual' contexts. These species might have been regarded valuable because they were wild animals, because of their size, or their importance for the survival of the herd. Dogs were probably subject to taboos as they were not consumed, perhaps because they were viewed as persons. In some cases animals and their remains could have had other symbolic connotations as well, related to identity and totemism, or magic, power and danger.

Animal representations are highly diverse in the Halaf. The cranes or ostriches in the wall painting at Tell Bouqras might have been subject to taboos, totemism or identity.

The onagers in the wall painting of Umm Dabaghiyah on the other hand are probably related to diet and the hunt. Fine Ware vessels are supposed to have figured in commensality, and the animals painted on them might have as well. The horned animals, birds, and occasionally other creatures portrayed on pottery possibly figured in narratives that revolved around seasonality, the hunt, danger and maybe taboos. Figurines, often resembling sheep and goats, seem to have been used in administrative contexts and ritual, which might have involved storytelling and intentional breakage. Sheep and goats also figure on sealings, and appear in the form of amulets as well. These symbols might have been used by pastoralists to mark their property and express their identity. Many other animal species appear in these media as well that might have functioned as visible markers of identity or even totems: For sealings those species include vultures and the lizard, and investigated amulets represent species like the like the tortoise, cattle, swan, sheep, dog, and snake.

Are the different material categories related to each other (for example though their context) and how?

Yes. Material categories are related because they often share the same context, and objects in these categories can have similar uses. A graphic overview of how the material categories are related through their context can be found in the previous chapter, in Fig. 26.

There is also some overlap in the species that are represented in the different material categories. However, as explained earlier, it is difficult to recognize any patterns here because of the wide variety of represented species represented in general. The most reoccurring species are ovicaprids and cattle, either wild or domestic. These species appear in all material categories except for the two wall paintings discussed here. These were species that were often hugely important to the economy and they can be linked to herding, pastoralism and secondary products. These animals gained multiple symbolic connotations possibly dealing with feasting, danger, identity, totemism, and more, depending on the material category in which they appear and context of use. For specifics, see Tab. 5.

Conclusively, how can we understand animal representations and ritual animal deposits?

As enforcing human-human relationships. Animals functioned in the sharing economy, being the trade and administration of animal products and the communal consumption of those, and were widely employed in storytelling and ritual. It were those activities in which different peoples were assembled from inside and outside of the settlement. Animals can be understood as a common language, recognized by Halaf groups from a vast region. From all over the region people were highly dependent on animals for their diet, and this might explain their prominent role in symbolism as their images appealed to all and were highly recognizable. Nevertheless, creativity is endless: The underlying themes are common, like for example administration and feasting which can be recognized at multiple sites, but it appears that animals are employed in endless differing ways. Not one of the investigated ritual deposits was the same, animal representations on walls, pottery, amulets, stamps and seals are diverse and personalized, and many seem to have played roles in multiple contexts, like for example the animal figurines that played a role in both ritual and administration. It seems that this diversity in the employment animal symbols reflects the diversity of people; pastoralists, farmers, hunters or anything in between. Creative solutions had to be made in order to communicate and engage all of them in communal events.

7.3   Future research

This social zooarchaeological study of the Halaf has been preliminary in nature. Many unique cases and contexts in which animal remains or representations are found were randomly picked for this research, and then discussed. Without doubt, more of these cases can be designated which might provide different conclusions.

I suggest that we should study particular sites more in depth in the future, and see what animals are represented in each material category of that specific site. Only then good comparisons can be made with other sites. This might result in patterns that I was not able to see: Are animal representations and ritual deposits employed differently at different sites? And, how can this be explained?

ABSTRACT

Animals have played a major role in the Halaf. Animals did not only figure in Halaf subsistence and the economy, but they also played a prominent role in symbolism. We encounter animals in different material categories, as images in wall paintings, on Halaf Fine Ware ceramics, sealings, and as stamps for sealing, amulets, and figurines. Animal remains have been found alongside those of humans, or in other special or ritual contexts. How can we understand these animal representations and 'ritual' animal deposits? This preliminary study explores the meanings of animals in the Halaf by using a new approach that was never employed in this area before: Social zooarchaeology. Social zooarchaeology views animals not only as 'good to eat', but also as 'good to think with' as Lévi-Strauss so famously pointed out.

This study investigates multiple case studies from various sites, like Domuztepe (Turkey), Tell Kurdu (Turkey), Kazane Höyük (Turkey), Fıstıklı Hüyük (Turkey), Tell Sabi Abyad (Syria), Tell Khirbet esh-Shenef (Syria), Tell Arpachiyah (Iraq), Banahilk (Iraq), and Yarim Tepe I and II (Iraq). In order to interpret the various animal representations and ritual deposits, every material category and ritual animal deposit is considered in its depositional context and context of use. Furthermore, comparisons with the zooarchaeological record are made, and subsistence.

Four main contexts can be recognized in which animals fulfilled symbolic roles, and these often overlap: 1) Domestic space, 2) 'ritual', including communal events, commensality and burial, and 3) administration, including storage, the marking of property, and the usage of objects as mnemonic devices, and 4) bodily adornment. It appears that animals might have functioned as a common spoken language in the sharing economy, figuring in complex narratives, myths, and rituals, enforcing human-human relationships and tying together diverse people from various backgrounds in communal events.

SAMENVATTING

Dieren hebben een belangrijke rol gespeeld in de Halaf. Ze maakten niet alleen onderdeel uit van het dieet en de economie, maar ze speelden ook een grote rol in symbolisme. We treffen dieren aan in verschillende materiële categorieën, zijnde als afbeeldingen in muurschilderingen, als motieven op Halaf Fine Ware aardewerk, op verzegelingen, en als stempels voor het maken van deze verzegeling, amuletten en figurines. Dierlijke resten zijn aangetroffen naast die van mensen, of in andere speciale of rituele contexten. Hoe kunnen we deze dierlijke representaties en rituele dierlijke deposities interpreteren? Deze inleidende studie onderzoekt de betekenissen van dieren in de Halaf door gebruik te maken van een nieuwe benadering die nooit is toegepast op dit gebied: Social zooarchaeology. Social zooarchaeology beschouwt dieren niet alleen als 'goed om te eten', maar ook als 'goed om mee te denken', een bekende uitspraak van Lévi-Strauss.

Deze studie onderzoekt meerdere case studies afkomstig van verschillende sites, zoals Domuztepe (Turkije), Tell Kurdu (Turkije), Kazane Höyük (Turkije), Fıstıklı Hüyük (Turkije), Tell Sabi Abyad (Syrië), Tell Khirbet esh-Shenef (Syrië), Tell Arpachiyah (Irak), Banahilk (Irak), and Yarim Tepe I en II (Irak). Om tot een interpretatie te komen van de diverse dierlijke representaties en rituele deposities, wordt iedere materiële categorie en rituele dierlijke depositie in hun depositionele context en gebruikscontext beschouwd. Daarnaast worden er vergelijkingen gemaakt met het zooarcheologische bestand.

Vier hoofdcontexten kunnen worden onderscheiden waarin dieren een symbolische rol speelden, en deze overlappen vaak: 1) Huiselijke context, 2) 'ritueel' (met inbegrip van gemeenschappelijke evenementen, gemeenschappelijke consumptie, feesten, en begravingen, 3) administratie (met inbegrip van opslag, het markeren van eigendommen, en het gebruik van objecten als geheugensteuntjes, en 4) versiering van het lichaam. Het blijkt dat dieren gefungeerd zouden kunnen hebben als een gemeenschappelijk gesproken taal in een economie gebaseerd op delen en uitwisseling, en dat dieren figureerden in complexe vertellingen, mythen, en rituelen, en zo relaties tussen mensen versterkten, en diverse mensen met verschillende achtergronden verbonden in gemeenschappelijke evenementen.

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FIGURES

TABLES