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Title: The Early Neolithic on Cyprus: An Examination of the Reasons Behind the Absence of Cattle

The Neolithic process first began around 11,000 years ago in the Near East, resulting in significant economic, social, political and ecological changes. Cattle were a significant component of the Neolithic, both in economic and ritual terms. The overall importance of both wild and domesticated cattle in Anatolia and the Levant is known from zooarchaeological data, wall art and zoomorphic figurines. Despite the importance of cattle, however, their spread and adoption in many areas outside of their core domesticated zones was varied, with many scholars currently arguing for human decisions being a significant factor. Similar questions surrounding the spread and adoption of cattle are also relevant to the surrounding Mediterranean islands, in particular Cyprus, where recent research has documented domesticated cattle at early Neolithic sites. This is thus far the earliest evidence for cattle outside of the Levantine and Anatolian mainlands. Curiously, however, cattle disappear by the late Neolithic and are not reintroduced to Cyprus until some four thousand years later. This paper examines the issue of cattle on Cyprus focusing on four scenarios that might explain their absence: an incomplete archaeological record, ecology, cultural decisions or disease (tuberculosis). Of particular interest is the final scenario since this has been the least explored. In general, it is known that cattle transmit tuberculosis to humans. Other wild animals, such as deer, can also transmit this disease to cattle. Deer were heavily exploited by the inhabitants of Cyprus during the early Neolithic, thus this might be relevant to the cattle disappearance. In order to better understand whether these scenarios were significant factors in the cattle absence on Cyprus, other areas will be reviewed, including Central Anatolia, Northwest Anatolia, the southern Levant and relevant Mediterranean islands. This will structure future research on the Neolithic on Cyprus, placing the island into a broader pan-Mediterranean context.