“Edible Cities: Interpreting the Politics and Landscape of food production in late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age China”

The Late Neolithic Period marks a critical moment in Chinese prehistory with the emergence of newly formed cities that abruptly transformed the political landscape of Early China. This study explores one aspect of this transition through exploring evidence of changing patterns of food production in North China between the Late Neolithic to Early Bronze Age Periods (approx. 2600-1900 B.C.E.). Through an analysis of preliminary archaeological data from foodstuffs and household assemblages from the site of Shimao (2600-1900 B.C.E.) in Northern Shaanxi Province, this study explores interactions between herding communities in urban and rural village contexts to achieve an adequate understanding of food production strategies. I will highlight how China challenges current interpretations of food production in prehistory and expand upon the limitations to these models. Furthermore, I will consider how this data can help us understand fundamental changes in the politics of landscape between rural villages and early cities during this period.

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