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Animal deposits in the tombs of the Khor Jarama necropolis (Oman - 3500-2900 cal. BC)

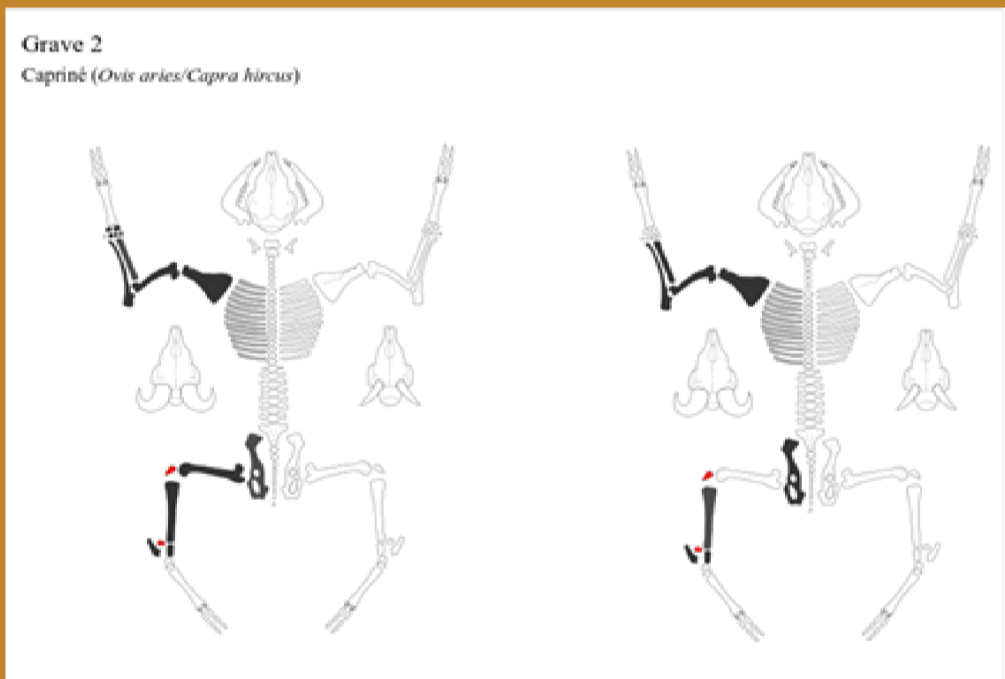
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The excavations led since 2018 on the site of Khor Jarama, in Oman's Ja'alan, have revealed the construction of the first monumental tombs known in the region (3500-2900 cal. BC), associated by new burial custom including livestock species, due to the regional traditions which communities usually value marine or mangrove resources (malacofauna, marine mammals and fishes).



Grave 4, southern group (3300-29000 cal. B.C.)



Anatomical representation of sheep and goat meat pieces deposited in grave 2.



Erratic human/animal bones scattered around the massive slab (animals bones in yellow, grave 4).

- The necropolis is composed of two groups of tombs
 - Northern Group Phase 1 (3500-33300 cal. BC, 3 graves), single initial human deposit.
 - Southern Group Phase 2 (3300-2900 cal. BC, 4 graves), two or three (simultaneous?) human deposit.
- The excavation of southern tombs has provided bone elements of sheep and goat (*Ovis aries/Capra hircus*).
- These bones represent meat quarters which correspond to anatomical pieces of high food value (limbs and ribs), taken from young adults or juveniles (18-20 months, male and female).
- The sacrifice involves two or three individuals at most for graves 2 and 4. For other tombs of the southern group, the presence of isolated bones does not make it possible to specify the involvement of animals in the ritual (offering or funeral meal?).
- Only one side of the animal is selected - the left side for grave 2 and the right for grave 4.
- This argues for a probable sharing of the body between the deceased and the living, including a slaughter and a ritual consumption.
- Other animal deposits or objects made of hard animal materials are attested in four graves (north and south groups) - shell beads and a shell of *Mimachlamys townsendi* (G. B. Sowerby III, 1895) (right, grave 7).
- The deposits of pieces of meat are placed separately from the bodies of the deceased, sometimes in a small specific area.
- This choice of species from livestock constitutes a rare case of an animal funeral offering in this chronological and geographical context.
- The age of slaughtering of the juveniles makes it possible to specify an occupation during the warmest periods (from April to October), which renews questions related to the mobility of these human groups or the identification of new socio-economic identities.
- Future archaeozoological issues are now focused on a better characterization of caprine morphology, motivated by the presence of two distinct morphotypes (specific attribution, sexual dimorphism, geographical origin?).

SÉVIN-ALLOUET et al., 2021 - Living and dwelling around the Khor Jarama French Archaeological Mission of Khor Jarama Report 2021, 61 p.

