Archaeological Evidence of the Political Economy in Pre-State and Early State Societies in the Near East. Mesopotamia and Anatolia, Some Remarks and Comparisons

Marcella Frangipane

A Few Preliminary Thoughts

Before we can set about examining the economies and political economies in pre-industrial, pre-capitalist and pre-mercantile societies, we must set aside all the usual categories we automatically use and try to understand the real bases of economic thought in those societies.

It is certainly difficult for us to understand and even conceive forms of economic goals and relations that are different from the modern or contemporary ones with which we are familiar, and which refer to the economy as a system of 'rational actions' aimed at achieving maximum output with minimum effort. In today's terms, economic rationale is independent of politics and social ethics and aims at producing 'wealth', determining the 'value' of goods based on their 'scarcity' and of the rules established by the interplay of market forces. Precisely on account of our difficulty in understanding different types of rationales, the debate on ancient economies among most scholars has focused on the contrast between those who tend to see 'the first expressions of rational economic behaviour' appearing very early on, in the earliest Near Eastern societies, and those who tend to deny any recognisable form of economic rationality before the Greeks and Romans (see the discussion on this issue in Steinkeller 2015). I think, however, that this is not a matter of 'rationality', since, as Monika Poettinger has already pointed out, rationality as 'the effective use of means towards an end' has always existed in any economic action, but 'in every epoch it would be characterised by its own means and its own ends' (Poettinger 2013, 143–146). This is crucial to understand the profound differences between the political economies of different, sometimes very different, societies. The aims pursued by economic actions or strategy in early formative societies with some kind of central government or leadership may ultimately have been not only, or

M. Frangipane (✉)
Department of Sciences of Antiquity, Sapienza University of Rome, Rome, Italy
e-mail: marcella.frangipane@uniroma1.it

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not primarily, 'economic' in terms of today's categories. The search for goods in the emerging early state societies in the Near East, for example, appears to have not always been motivated by the need to solve problems of 'scarcity' or for the explicit purpose of accumulating surplus as wealth in a competing interplay among various components of the society, but very often appears to have been part of the political goals of the leaders/rulers, who seem to have aimed at controlling growing sectors of the basic production system of the population, by controlling the labour force (Steinkeller 2015, 5), and to some extent means of production, thereby consolidating their legitimacy to rule and exercise political power over the community and the territory. Centralised control over the movements of goods, already very clearly envisaged and theorized by K. Polanyi (Polanyi 1944; Polanyi et al. 1957), found its ideal tool in the introduction of sophisticated administration systems and an increasingly powerful bureaucracy, which were distinguishing features of Mesopotamian and Near Eastern societies. The boundary between political and economic spheres and ends is obviously ill-defined, and the leaders of the community and the persons in power certainly accumulated economic power as well, becoming the principal, strongest and unrivalled player in the economic competition. It is therefore crucial to try to understand the primary goals of their economic behaviours in order to identify their 'economic policies' and ultimately the functioning of the economic system as a whole.

It is certainly not easy to isolate and recognise the 'ends' and 'means' of a different type of 'economic rationality'—even very different and distant from what we are used to—especially in the case of the earliest centralised societies in the Near East that I shall be analysing, where the economy appears to have been closely embedded in politics and social relations systems. But these societies also were at the forefront of the historical process of State formation and trying to understand the economic relations and the modes of production and surplus appropriation that formed their backbone may lead to a significant advancement of our knowledge on these issues.

I would like to start by revisiting some basic concepts normally used in the analyses of economic phenomena, looking at them from the perspective of what we know from the early Near Eastern societies. The first concept to be examined in order to identify the economic objectives of a social group and the main object of contention within society to achieve these objectives is the concept of '*wealth*'. What was deemed 'wealth' for that particular social group?

Wealth is essentially all the material goods available to society or individuals to guarantee (1) their subsistence and (2) maintaining their material and social conditions as individuals and as a group. Where the production and consumption system of material goods is based on equality relations, I think that the system tends to preserve the existing conditions unless some 'external' factors of various kinds intervene to break the equilibrium. But where social relations are essentially based on inequality, in the sense that some individuals or groups for some reason are granted some kind of privileged access to certain essential resources, the system will often further widen the inequalities, producing change, sometimes radical changes, in the original conditions. In other words, those in a socially accepted position of privilege tend to use their prerogatives to extend their control and acquire more privileges by widening

the social gap between them and the rest of the community. This is what I think we have found, as I shall be trying to show shortly, in 5th and 4th millennium BCE Mesopotamia.

Bearing these premises in mind, the first crucial question to ask is *which goods* and which resources in each society are seen as essential for the system to function, and *constitute 'wealth'* in the mind of that community?

The second question, which stems from the first, is *what is the socially significant use made of this wealth?* Who uses it, how is it used and what kind of privileges does it confer on its holders?

In so-called 'formative' societies, generally coinciding with pre- and proto-historic societies, the first form of wealth accumulation by élites varied in kind in different social and economic contexts and in different parts of the world and shows that these goods were used differently and for different purposes by the population in general and by the emerging élites. A basic distinction has to be drawn between the staples linked to subsistence, and the so-called luxury and artisanal craft goods, usually linked to the sphere of prestige.

Staples, produced from farming and livestock, excluding by-products such as wool and flax, were perishables and had to be consumed, being unsuitable for long storage, and had to be 'reinvested', either by trading them for other goods or by using them to remunerate the labour force. This labour force could be used both in the production of more staples, trying to raise production and generating surpluses, and/or in public works or craft production. A system of this kind gradually expanded to the appropriation of the means of production such as land and livestock, to be exploited through the same labour force. But it did not lead to an accumulation of goods in the form of wealth, since they had to constantly be put back into circulation.

At the same time, increasing control over the lives of part of the population must have led to the constant growth of 'power', which was usually not so much expressed in the display of accumulated wealth, as in the construction of imposing seats of power, and was usually underpinned by powerful ideological legitimation, often in the form of religious/cultic consensus.

Public works extolled the leaders, their power and their ability to offer benefits to the people, such as the mass redistributions of food. The latter must have seemed to be such a huge 'gift', since it could not be returned or reciprocated, and this further increased the elites' social distance and the submission of the population. It is no coincidence that some of the most important public works in the initial political and economic hierarchical formation phase of redistributive economies were temples and ceremonial areas, where redistribution had a hugely important social and ideological value, which further boosted the way the whole system operated.

Economic and political strategies in these societies were therefore very closely related, as was the interaction between 'wealth' and power, to such an extent that it is difficult to recognise which of the two was paramount.

Artisanal and luxury goods were, conversely, durables; they could be accumulated, and be used in various forms. Items of common use, even made of rare or not easy to obtain raw materials—such as obsidian tools or precious stone or metal ornaments—were object of exchange and circulated widely. But if accumulated exclusively in

the hands of some particular social groups, they were used essentially as a means of displaying their owner's 'prestige' and, to some extent, power. This was specifically the case when these objects, mostly consisting of metals, were concentrated in the public or private 'seats of power' and in certain burials, flaunted as symbols of wealth. In the burials, this symbolic function was also accompanied by the annihilation and actual destruction of the wealth, which disappeared from view and from circulation, and by so doing enhanced its symbolic value (Ling et al. 2017; Wengrow 2011; Stork 2015). The very common practice in certain societies to destroy metals and precious objects in burials may have had different meanings depending upon whether it was done widely in many tombs, in which case they might reveal a kind of social competition, or whether it was only the prerogative of certain special burials, in which case its function would have been to further emphasise the social distance and the dominant role of the individual buried there and her/his family or social group. In many instances, both aspects were present.

In any case, this way of using luxury objects, particularly metal objects, served no economic purposes in the earliest hierarchical societies, but fundamentally acted as a social and political tool. Rather than real wealth, these objects represented a '*symbolic wealth*' that was able to produce prestige and power, but not to generate more wealth (Frangipane 2017).

Metal hoards deserve a different consideration altogether. They were generally scattered around in the territory and sometimes were also present in settlements, noticeably in European pre-protohistory, but less frequent or less widespread in the Near East. Hoards may have had a real economic function when they were stores of valuable goods to be put back into circulation, but the main nature of their value, whether symbolic or real, depended on their social function, on the producers and the beneficiaries.

The situation changed in mature states in later periods (late 3rd and above all 2nd and 1st millennium BC) when the production of metal objects also included widely used weapons and tools. In this context, both technology and trade in crucial and rare raw materials—such as tin, capable to substantially transform the production of bronzes—developed considerably to become an integral part of the economic strategies pursued both in the private and public sphere. Material evidence of this transformation (both archaeological and textual) lies in the new enlarged and more regular trade networks attested in the Near East from the late 3rd millennium BC onwards, as well as in the fact that certain materials, most of all metals, and particularly precious metals such as silver, acquired a codified and measurable 'value' (Steinkeller 2016; for a general overview on the birth of weight and measure systems, see Rahmstorf 2016), which only made it possible to fruitfully use them in exchange transactions, generating 'profit' or at any rate obtaining an income from trade (Frangipane 2018b).

In the following, I shall briefly compare *two models of hierarchical societies* in the pre-proto-historic Near East in which various types of social and political organisations had conditioned and driven different political economy strategies by the emerging élites: the 4th millennium Mesopotamian world, and the 3rd millennium Anatolian societies.

Economic and Political Centralisation in 4th Millennium BCE Mesopotamian World

Economic and Political Strategies in the Early Centralised Societies of Mesopotamia

The region known as Greater Mesopotamia, following the courses of the Tigris and the Euphrates and the bordering areas (Fig. 1), had continuous and intense internal contacts from the Neolithic onwards, perhaps also accompanied by internal migrations that formed the basis for the subsequent formation of very similar models of centralised societies in the whole of this large area, albeit with clearly recognisable regional differences (Frangipane 2007; Carter and Philip eds. 2010). The roots of these new societies lay in Lower Mesopotamia. This was a region characterised by potentials and resources of various kinds (good extensive croplands, others more suitable for horticulture, coastal and various lagoon lands with plentiful fish resources, pasturelands, etc.), but also by arid and very risky climatic conditions (Adams 1981). The vast plains suitable for cereals offered great production potential provided that the people were able to control these risk factors.

It was precisely the ecological differences in a restricted area, combined with potentially expansive cereal production, though subject to the need for irrigation and water management, that were probably the main reasons for the early introduction of economic centralisation and related redistribution practices dating back to the very

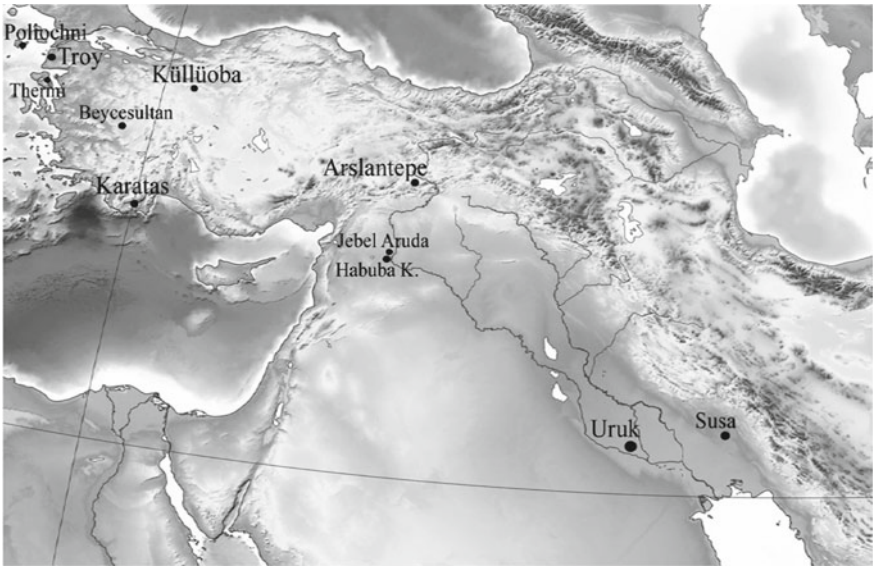

Fig. 1 Map of the near East with the sites mentioned in the text

first occupation of the territory (Adams 1966; Pollock 1999). The 'redistribution' system based on the centralisation of staples in various forms (offerings, tributes) by high-ranking persons and their redistribution in public and élite environments probably made it possible to more efficiently coordinate and manage a potentially rich production system varying in different zones and exposed to risks, making it possible for products to circulate among different sections of the population and attenuating the effects of crises that might arise in some micro-zones (Adams 1966; Frangipane 2018a). This type of coordination and economic control was linked to a society based on potentially stratified and unequal kinship-based structure, composed of large and competitive households (Pollock 1999; Frangipane 2007). A kinship system based on hierarchical descent may have, from the beginning, given rise to inequalities, archaeologically evidenced, already in the 5th millennium BCE (in the so-called Ubaid period), by large tripartite houses, very likely used to host extended families. These buildings, in the few extensively excavated settlements of this period, were standing isolated from one another as very distinct units, and one of them usually stood out for its dimension and special features suggesting it was the residence of a high-status or leader family, as is shown at Tell Abada and Tepe Gawra XII (Jasim 1989; Roaf 1989; Stein 1994; Rothman 2002; Frangipane 2007). While these differences were not necessarily associated with economic privileges initially, it is highly probable that certain high-ranking individuals were invested with increasing political and religious authority and perhaps also with the power to coordinate production by centralising and redistributing staple commodities (crops, livestock, and fish) in a ceremonial environment.

It is no coincidence that Lower Mesopotamia also saw the very early emergence (in the early Ubaid period) of religious ceremonial institutions housed in architecturally monumental buildings, in which evidence of ceremonial food distributions was found. It is likely that the high rank figures managed the rituals and the ceremonial food distributions, and the temples were the main places in which the community leaders performed their political, ceremonial/cultic and economic activities at the same time. There are very few recent archaeological data on this region, but thanks to the information obtained from a few 5th millennium BCE sites (Ubaid period) and, most of all, from 4th millennium large urban centres such as Uruk-Warka (Uruk period), we may offer hypotheses about the gradual development of a highly centralised organisation (Adams 1966; Frangipane 1996; Liverani 1998; Pollock 1999). The interference by the political and religious authorities in the basic economic life of the population has been further demonstrated by the hundreds of seal impressions found in many public areas of the Uruk period and the thousands of pictographic tablets found in the main city of Uruk-Warka (Nissen et al. 1993; Nissen 2015; Frangipane 2018a).

This circuit revolving around the income and outcome of staple products—basically foodstuffs—, which had probably begun in a ritualised form in the 5th millennium BCE, must have gradually expanded to accumulate further resources, not only in terms of commodities but also as means of production, land and livestock, which, together with an increased control over the labour force, would have allowed to obtain ever increasing quantities of staple goods. Since foodstuffs could not be

stored because they were perishable, they must have been constantly reinvested, gradually generating an 'entrepreneurial' type system which set aside at least part of the accumulated commodities to support an increasingly large number of workers, and consequently generating the production of new commodities. This system therefore generated surplus to be reinvested, while increasing numbers of individuals were becoming impoverished and in need for support, thereby further fuelling the system (Risch 2016; Frangipane 2018c).

In this situation, the ideological and religious legitimation of the authorities, and their right/duty to manage the 'res publica', and to intervene in substantial aspects of the subsistence economy, must have been an essential factor for ensuring the running of the system, and its political and social solidity. This power, which was also by now economic power, continued to enjoy a legitimacy linked to the cultic sphere. The large sacred Eanna precinct at Uruk, which occupied a vast area in the centre of the city, consisted of numerous architecturally different buildings that were probably the headquarters of many different public performances (Fig. 2c), including economic and administrative activities, as evidenced from the numerous seal impressions and pictographic tablets (Fig. 2b) (Eichman 2007; Butterlin 2012; Nissen 2015).

On the other hand, the iconography found on the Late Uruk seals (3400–3100 BC) (mainly attested from their impressions) emphasised the 'social order' with a strong emphasis on the sacred. The images depicted on the seals clearly illustrate the close relationship between the so-called 'king/priest', the temple, and the public and ceremonial management of food, as the three key elements holding up this system of centralised power, which characterised Mesopotamian society in the 4th millennium, and probably had its roots in the original social, economic and ideological structure of the communities living in the plain in the previous millennium. These representations, particularly those found at Uruk-Warka, ideologically emphasised the temple 'offerings', namely foodstuffs that must have entered to fuel the circuit that revolved around food redistribution practices (Fig. 3a–b). Images showing people at work were also common (more frequent in other centres, such as Susa and the colonial sites of Habuba Kabira and Jebel Aruda, on the Syrian Middle Euphrates), and further stress the ideological importance of labour control (Fig. 3d–e) (Pittman 1994, 2001; Boehmer 1999; Amiet).

Cretulae and mass-produced bowls (Fig. 2c) also show the vast scale of administratively controlled food redistributions. Administration was the key-tool to control both the circulation of goods and the people involved in the transactions and was also aimed at recording the operations performed in a highly articulated and complex centralised system (Nissen 2015). Administration and bureaucracy, by delegating power to an increasing number of devoted people (the administrators), moreover made it possible for the authority to exercise control over a wider territory.

The management of such a system may have strengthened political power, and this in turn may have also fostered the concentration of an ever-expanding economic power in the hands of the leaders. It is interesting to observe that the paramount leader, the so-called 'king-priest', who is recognisable in the glyptics for his distinct features (dress, beard, long hair), is represented in connection either with the 'temple' or with

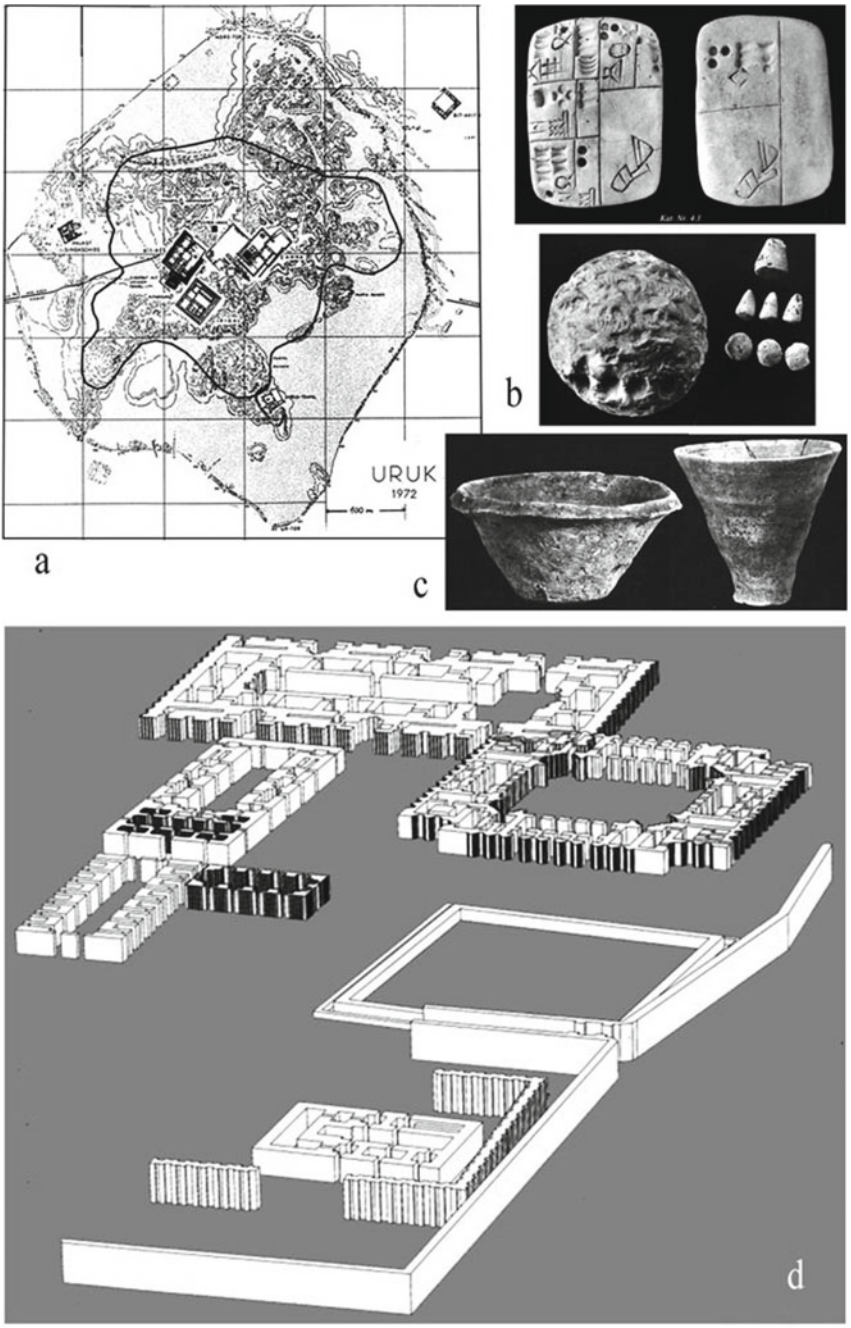

Fig. 2 Uruk-Warka. **a** Map of the city of Uruk (after Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka (UVB) XXIX-XXX, Berlin 1974). **b–c** Pictographic tablet, spherical bulla with seal impressions and mass-produced bowls from Uruk (after Nissen et al. 1990, p. 14 and figs. 6c and 6f). **d** The Eanna sacred precinct, re-elaborated in 3D (by C. Alvaro, © MAIAO)

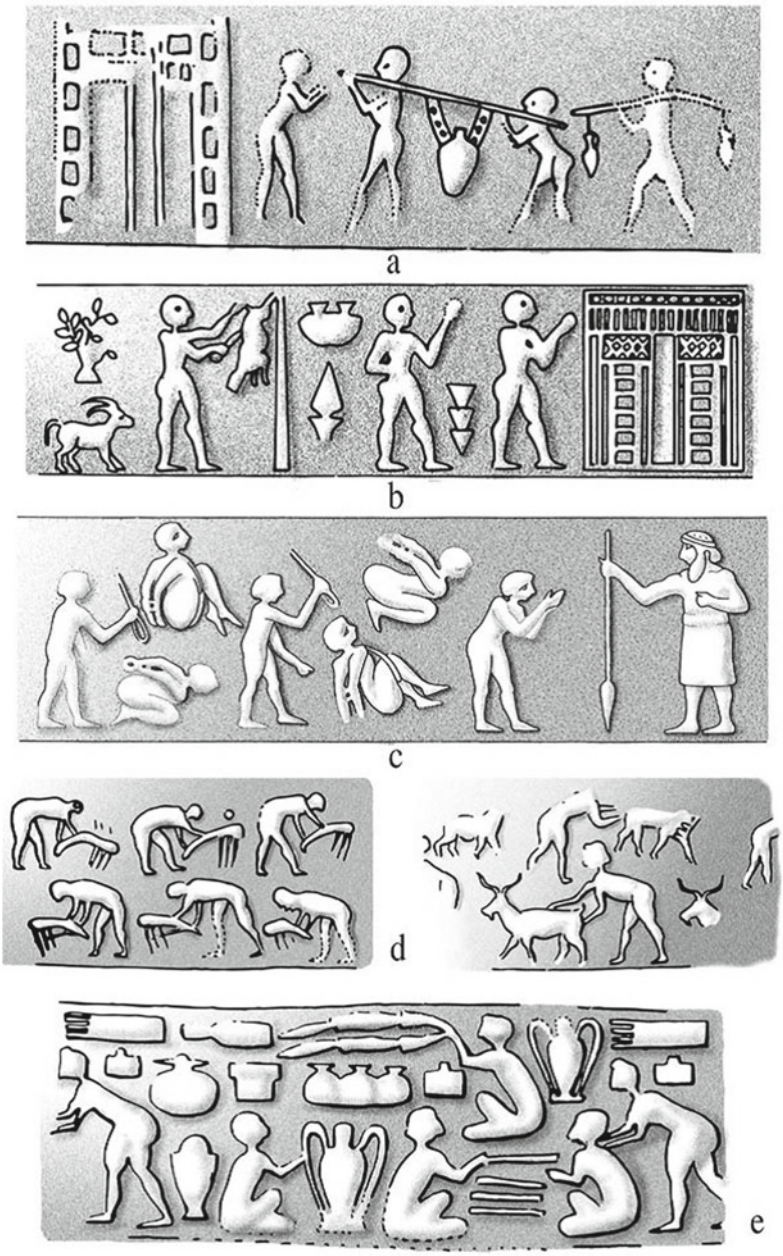

Fig. 3 Seal designs from Uruk-Warka (Late Uruk period). **a–b** Offerings to the temple (redrawn after Amiet 1961, Pl. 13 bis, D, and Brandes 1979, Taf.30, respectively). **c** The Priest-King in front of subjugated people (redrawn after Boehmer 1999, Taf. 17). **d** Agriculture and animal breeding works (redrawn after Amiet 1972, Pl. 15, 621 and 614). **e** Craft activities (redrawn after Amiet 1972, Pl.16, 646) (re-elaboration of drawings by Alice Siracusano, MAIAO)

scenes where he displays his political power by exercising violence on subjugated people (Fig. 3c).

Increasing numbers of productive activities were certainly also brought into the centralised economic system, as evidenced from the pictographic tablets, on which the lexical lists mention craftsmen of various kinds, hierarchically organised (Nissen et al. 1993). We do not know whether these artisans were 'employees' of the central institutions or whether they simply took commissions from them. Yet by the end of the 4th millennium BC, the central institutions exhibited an increasing capacity to control larger sectors of the production system and perhaps also to somehow stimulate crafts production by increasing the demand for artisanal products (Adams 2004; Yoffee 1995). But the political and economic strategies of the ruling groups seem to have continued for a long time to mainly hinge around controlling staple production activities, which probably grew more thanks to the increasing domination over the surrounding land.

The role of private components in the production activities must have played an increasingly important role as the urban dimension of society expanded (Algaze 2008, 2018; Emberling 2015). Urbanisation played a key role in Mesopotamia and was one of its distinctive features (Adams 1981, 2004; Algaze 2018; Frangipane 2018a), stimulating specialisation and structural interconnection between different cohabiting sectors of the population.

Certainly, artisanal craft activities and trade were given a new boost in the 4th millennium, providing the élites with objects made using new technologies and non-local materials, such as metal (Algaze 2008). But in this phase these objects had, in my opinion, a limited circulation, being mainly used in the elite sphere probably to flaunt power and privilege and to manifest the leadership's capacity to 'control' resources, emphasising the social distance from the other members of the community. I am not persuaded that there is any evidence in this period to show that trade played a major 'economic' role in the political economy strategies of the early rulers of Mesopotamian and peri-Mesopotamian regions.

Evidences of 'Political Economy' Strategies in an Emerging Early State System at the Periphery of the Mesopotamian World. The Case of Arslantepe

The long-term field research carried out at the site of *Arslantepe*, located at the northern periphery of Greater Mesopotamia, in the mountainous region of the Turkish Upper Euphrates in south-eastern Anatolia (Fig. 1), have shown the emergence of a strongly centralised society in the 4th millennium BCE, which was growing in parallel and in connection with the contemporary developments in Mesopotamia. The information we have got from this site confirms with a great deal of details that the goods accumulated and centrally managed in this kind of socio-economic systems were essentially food and the labour needed to produce it (Frangipane ed.

2010). In this site, where a very early and precocious example of a palace complex of the end of the 4th millennium BCE has been brought to light (Frangipane 2019) (Fig. 4b), we have found no evidence to show any storage of durable goods, but a complex of central storerooms where food was kept and continually put back into circulation (Fig. 4a). This is evidenced from the probable presence in the storerooms of elaborate foodstuff (as suggested by the large number of *pithoi* and jars and the absence of seeds) (D'Anna 2010, 2015), the small dimensions of the storerooms—suitable to contain food continuously put into circulation rather than to store large quantities of foodstuffs—, and the huge number of *cretulae* (clay sealings) and mass-produced bowls found concentrated in one of the rooms, all revealing food distribution to large number of people, perhaps workers (Frangipane et al. 2007, 2010). As in Mesopotamian sites, administration was a crucial device to manage this centralised political economy, as is documented in detail by the finding of thousands of clay sealings in situ in special areas of the Arslantepe palace. The thorough study of these materials and of their associations has demonstrated they have been used to seal different types of containers, mainly pots and sacs, but also door closures and locks, by a large number of people with administrative responsibility, who were hierarchically organised, thus suggesting the emergence of a bureaucracy in connection with a systematic and continuous circulation of foodstuffs (Frangipane et al. 2007).

Even the iconography of power, expressed both in seal designs and in wall paintings at Arslantepe, was interestingly linked to the sphere of staple production and stresses the symbolic and real relationship of the person in power with food production and the related activities (Fig. 5).

In the Arslantepe case, however, contrary to what we have seen in Southern Mesopotamia, and in connection with the foundation of a precocious palatial system, there was no clear reference to the ritual or religious sphere. And there was no urbanisation process as well.

The analyses of the sophisticated metal objects found at Arslantepe (whose location is not far from the northern/northeastern Anatolian mountains that are rich in metal ores) have shown that they are made of a type of copper (arsenical copper with specific trace elements, such as nickel and antimony) whose circulation seems not to have gone beyond the area of the Turkish-Syrian border in the Middle Euphrates valley (Palmieri et al. 1999; Palmieri and Di Nocera 2004; Di Nocera 2013). This is evidence of a restricted regional circulation, suggesting that the metal produced in the Arslantepe province was probably not intended for long-distance trade towards Mesopotamia, but rather for a local circulation among the elites. The morphology, composition and manufacture of these metal objects are moreover very similar to analogous items found in the subsequent period, at the very end of the 4th millennium BCE, when the Arslantepe palace and its centralised system had definitively collapsed, and a new group of mobile pastoral people linked to South-Caucasian communities of the so-called Kura-Araxes culture settled on the ruins of the palace (Frangipane 2014). Such close similarities with the metal production in a phase characterised by a very different type of society that does not show any evidence of centralisation, while revealing strong connections with mobile populations moving across mountainous areas rich in metal ores, suggest that the metal 'industry' was a

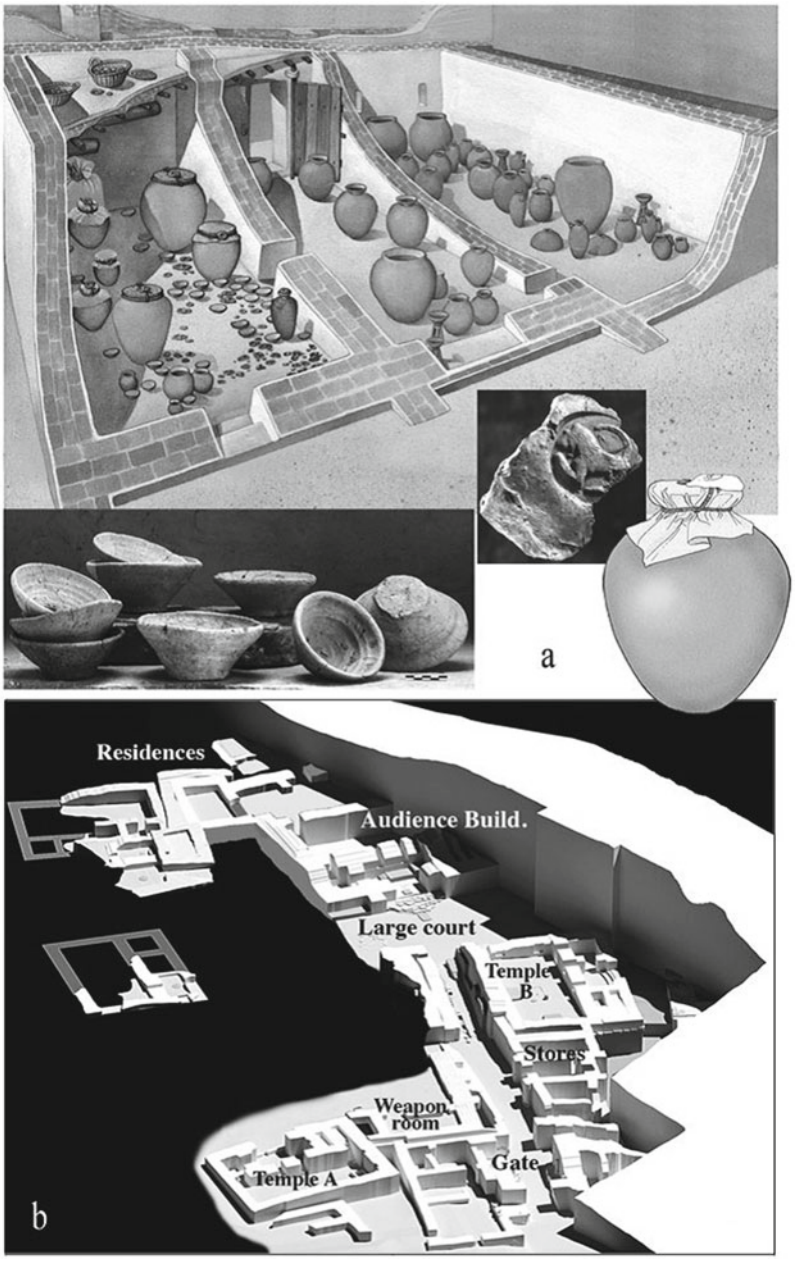

Fig. 4 The Arslantepe 4th millennium Palace (Period VIA, 3400–3200 BCE) and evidences of central storage. **a** Reconstructive drawing of the three storerooms with a relocation of the materials in situ after they have been restored (drawing by Tiziana D'Este), wheel-made mass-produced bowls for redistributing food, cretula with seal impression and the reconstruction of a sealed pot. **b** 3D drawing of the palace complex (by C. Alvaro) © MAIAO

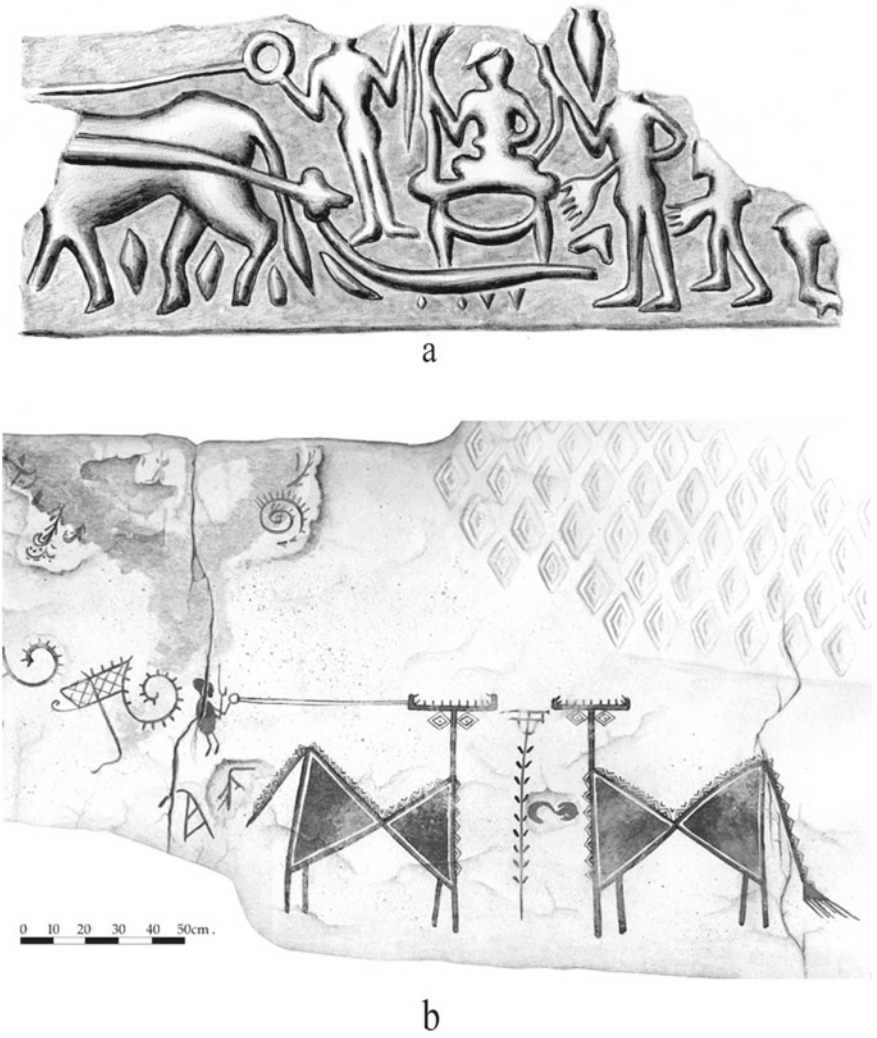

Fig. 5 Arslantepe, the iconography of power. **a** Cylinder seal design showing the transport of a leader figure on a threshing sledge car (tribulum). **b** Wall painting in the main entrance corridor of the 4th millennium Palace depicting a scene with two oxen driven by a coachman and pulling what seems to be a plough (drawing by T. D'Este) © MAIAO

production run by autonomous groups even in the previous phase, when the craftsmen must have been independent of the central authorities, though certainly stimulated by their requests.

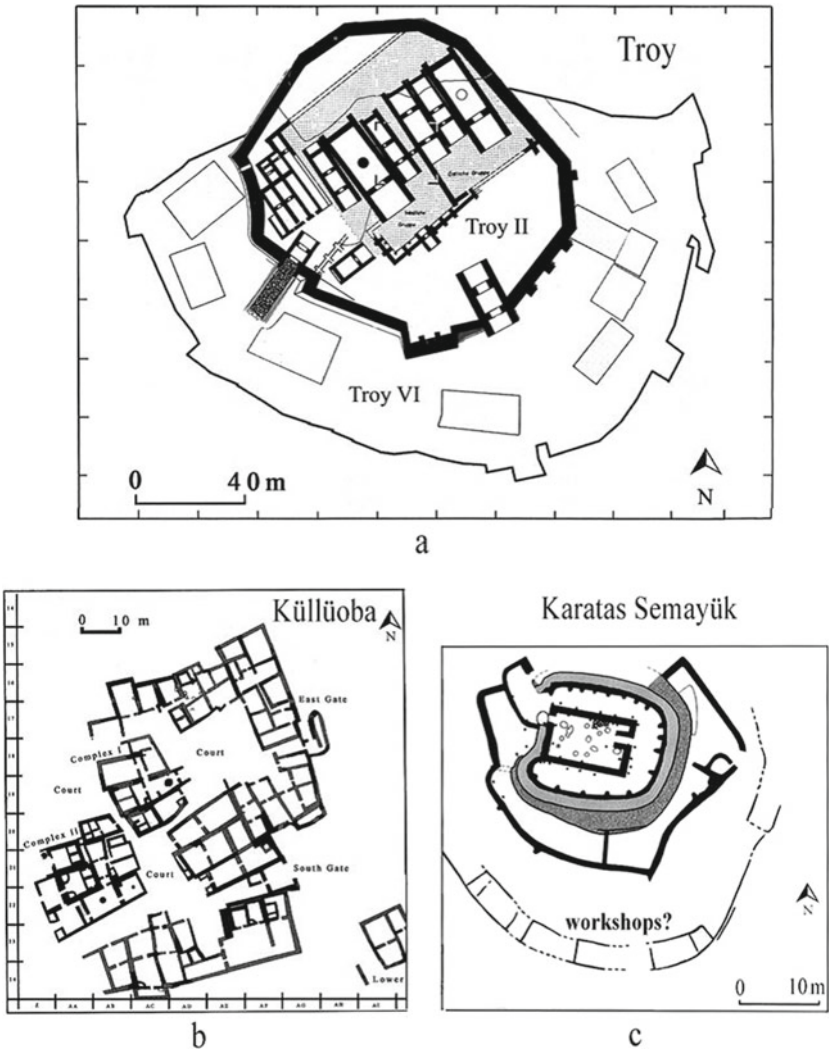

Fig. 6 **a** Plan of Troy II (adapted from Mellaart 1966, Fig. 43 and Korfmann et al. 2001, Fig. 403). **b** Plan of the upper town building complex at Küllüoba (after Efe and Fidan 2008). **c** The Central Complex at Karataş Semayük (after Mellink 1974)

A Comparison with the Economic Strategies of the Emerging Leaders in 3rd Millennium Anatolia

The economic policies of the early Mesopotamian rulers cannot be ascribed as a rule to any type of emerging hierarchical society. A very different type of economic strategies and power structuring is for instance recognisable in the early so-called 'urban' societies of the Early Bronze Age in Central Western Anatolia (3rd millennium BCE).

Early Bronze Age settlements in this region, located in favourable well-watered valleys and plains, continued to remain small as in the Neolithic, and a basic economic autonomy of the domestic units seems to have been also retained. This is evidenced from the lack of any substantial central storage of foodstuffs and no evidence of regular administrative practices connected with a centralised control of the circulation of primary goods. Clustering of handicraft activities in the places of power may have existed in some sites, as is perhaps the case of a row of small rooms with a large number of spindle-whorls, possibly workshops for textile production, located around the 'Central Complex' at Karataş Semayük (Warner 1994) (Figs. 1 and 6), and concentration of luxury goods are also attested, as in the citadel at Troy II (Blegen et al 1950, 1951; Korfmann 1995, 2006; Easton et al. 2002), but no redistribution activities or economic transactions involving mobilisation of staple products to finance these activities or support the artisans were documented in Western Anatolian sites, at least judging from the available archaeological evidence. Storage places in central building complexes, in the few cases they are documented, seem to have mainly been deposits of goods for the elites, in the form of accumulation of wealth, as in Troy II, or merely food supply in their residences, as it seems at Küllüoba (Efe 2003; Efe and Fidan 2008). The rare cases of possible concentration of handicraft activities in the seats of power, as may be inferred by the already mentioned numerous spindle-whorls found in the rooms around the Central Complex at Karatas, probably indicate some sort of privileged relationships of the craftsmen with the central elites rather than implying a centralised system of production. Conversely, the development of handicraft must have indeed taken place at a community level, as evidenced from the numerous workshops found scattered in various settlements, such as Thermi, Poliochni and Küllüoba.

There was also a lack of any very prominent public shrines, while evidence of cultic practices or rituals only refer to domestic spheres, as is possibly the case of Beycesultan, levels XVI-XIV (Lloyd and Mellaart 1962). This also seems to refer to a local Anatolian tradition since the Neolithic as suggested by the numerous household shrines at Çatal Höyük (Mellaart 1967; Hodder ed. 2010).

The wealth accumulation by the elites, mainly in the form of metals and luxury goods, at any rate suggests a privileged access to resources that regularly circulated as part of an economic interaction with the community.

The funerary customs, almost absent in the 4th millennium Mesopotamian world, here exhibited a wide range of rituals (cist graves, *pithos* graves, inhumations, cremation, etc.), which were only partly regionally diversified and were not matched by significant differences in terms of the wealth of funerary gifts or the emphasising of social statuses. The diversity of rituals was linked perhaps to a variety of group components, probably related to a similarly variegated picture in the Neolithic. These communities seem to have tended to be based on a clan structure, which had paramount chiefs, but was probably not very stratified in terms of complex social differentiation.

Socio-political élites and pre-eminent social figures, which certainly existed in Early Bronze Age Anatolia, lived in places that were kept separate from the rest of the community, in the architectural form of fortified 'citadels' or upper towns

(Fig. 6), built in the centre of the inhabited areas, where they hoarded luxury objects, particularly metals, as in the most prominent of these places, the citadel of Troy II (Bachhuber 2009). The big boost given to metallurgy in these societies probably came from the incentives given to these activities by the elites, who were the main purchasers of these goods, as well as, possibly, from the protection they were able to guarantee to trade routes. And forms of interregional exchange, or trade, appear to have been well developed among the EB western Anatolian communities (Mellink 1986; Efe 2002; Şahoğlu 2005), being probably also structurally related to the political and social competition that shaped these societies as competing small polities.

The widespread use of fortifications and the fortified compact arrangement of some villages, as well as the large use of metal weapons, suggest in these societies a tendency to conflict, perhaps also for the control of trade routes. It is possible that the paramount leaders acquired their political authority as defenders of the community, and perhaps also as protectors of the routes and promoter of the procurement of raw materials for the craftsmen.

Direct interference by these élites in the people's staple production system conversely appears to have been virtually non-existent. This type of society did not exhibit 'early-state' features and did not evolve in a real urban society.

Only the later expansionism of the great empires in the 2nd millennium BCE and the emulation of the Mesopotamian organisation by the Hittite State deeply transformed the Anatolian societies, their political power structures and their economic system.

Some Concluding Remarks

All the archaeological evidence shows that food, land, livestock and labour were the main focus of the economic interests of the early Mesopotamian ruling classes and formed the core of the central administrative management system. Control over these resources, by intervening in the basic production systems, gave the ruling classes an immense power over their population, supported by an ideological/religious consensus and managed through an increasingly efficient administration and bureaucracy, which formed the body of the nascent State and the main instrument for effectively conducting its centralised political economy. I believe that the very concept of 'wealth' in these type of formative early State societies in Mesopotamia referred above all to the fully availability of foodstuffs and the means of producing them (Pollock 2012; Frangipane 2018b), and there is very little evidence to show any real hoarding of durables, central control of metal production and the resultant establishment of a system of standard values and equivalences for trading purposes.

Economic relations and the 'value' attributed to materials and objects were to change in the course of the 3rd millennium BCE. The difference between early and mature states was not only a difference in scale but also a difference in terms of quality. The structure of the state, when it reached full maturity in the 3rd millennium, was

transformed politically by taking on a clearly defined territorial character, which, in my opinion, it had not had in the 4th millennium. The economic policy pursued by the ruling classes developed and changed, facilitated by the immense political power they had already acquired before, precisely thanks to their ability to interfere in the life of the population. They broadened their sphere of interests including craftsmanship and trade, by controlling large scale metallurgy and long ranging trading networks, to acquire resources on a regular basis as tin to produce tin-bronzes (Steinkeller 2016). In this framework, they perfected the system for raising revenues in the form of taxes and levies, giving objects measurable 'values' for trading purposes, making it possible to generate 'profit' through these activities too (Sallaberger 2013; Stork 2015; Rahmstorf 2016). In this context the role of the private components in various activities seems to have acquired greater importance and the competition must have consequently also increased. Political and military capacity to attain new expansionist goals and to protect the trade routes supported these new performances, and the ideology of power changed to focus on increasingly extolling military might.

New interregional networks of relationships, variously based and fostered (trade and/or war), linked mature states and empires in an international system of political and economic bonds that constituted the framework of a new, more compatible, though more complex, Near Eastern world.

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