



Paquimé in perspective

Caitlin S. Ainsworth, Scott D. Kirk & Emily Lena Jones

Interest in turkeys in the past has never been higher than it is today, particularly among archaeological studies of the Southwestern United States and Northwestern Mexico. Yet the unusual and intriguing turkey assemblage from Paquimé, which includes both turkey *bones*, is seldom discussed. This article presents the results of studies of the Casa Grande system. *Fossil data* from this site are rarely incorporated into broader narratives on turkey husbandry in North America. This represents a missed opportunity as Paquimé is both a large and complex site with a rich archaeological record, and an important centre of prehispanic agriculture where turkeys were raised alongside large numbers of non-local social species (macaws (see *Macaw*). How we name what is currently known about the Paquimé turkey assemblage, highlighting differences between this assemblage and other assemblages recovered from sites in New Mexico. We discuss the implications of our findings for understanding bird husbandry and domestication processes in this region.

The site of Paquimé

Papagüé (also referred to simply as Casas Grandes) is a UNESCO World Heritage Site located near the eastern base of the Western Sierra Madre in northwestern Chihuahua, Mexico (figure 4.1). Papagüé achieved its greatest size and influence during its first occupation phase, known as the Middle Period, which began around 1150/1200 CE and ended before the middle of the 15th century (Ono-Pérez 1974; Dixon & Rowlett 1993; Minnis & Whalen 2015; Phillips & Gamba 2015). The turkey and other birds from Papagüé discussed here all date to this period. As its name, the site spread over 36 hectares, contained over 1000 rooms, and housed a population of 2000 to 5000 people (Whalen 1996). The site is one of the largest prehistoric settlements not only in the region but in the Casas Grandes system, but is widely considered to be among the most socially complex sites in the combined US Southwest and Northwest Mesoizo (Whalen & Marx 2001: 15; Kalka & Cruz 2015: 58). It is known for its monumental architecture (e.g., Whalen & Marx 1996), sophisticated irrigation system (e.g., Doolittle 1988),

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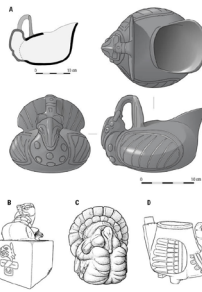


figure 6.2

[illegible]

Classic period (150-900 CE)

During the Classic period, turkeys become more widespread in the zooarchaeological record. In Western Mexico, turkey bones are found in the Classic occupations of sites from Guanajuato (El Mezquital-Los Azules; Manis

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Box 19.

[illegible]

More archaeological and historical research is required to determine when turkeys were first introduced into Colombian territory and the possible relationships with ancient specimens and with other records in Central and South America (Gonzalez-M. 2011). Further archaeological and genetic analysis of Colombian turkeys is required to shed more light on the introduction and trade of this bird from Central America into South America.

[illegible]

Figure 19.5

the southeastern coast suggest turkeys rarely were used prior to 1500 CE (Appendix E). Although many pre-Columbian coastal archaeological assemblages are large and contain the remains of numerous vertebrate taxa, turkeys are present in only five of the 17 pre-colonial assemblages summarized in Kennen *et al.* (2003, 2012a, 2012b, Birdsey *et al.* 1996, Celisano 2012, Kennen 2002, 2004, Martin 2005, Pearson 1984, Quintanar & Reitz 2005, Reitz 1982, 1991, Reitz & Dohren 2000, Reitz *et al.* 2009). They are absent in an

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Series Natures en sociétés

tome 10

165 x 240 mm paperback

text in English

406 pages, 95 figures

ISBN 978-2-38327-026-3

37 € TTC | 35,07 € VAT Excluded

Published on 26th June 2025

Exploring the history of turkey management and domestication

A transatlantic perspective

edited by Aurélie Manin, Camilla F. Speller, Eduardo Corona-M.
& Erin Kennedy Thornton

THE BOOK

The turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) is an iconic bird, widely associated with festive dishes in Europe, North America, and Central America, and extensively raised worldwide. Yet, its long-term interactions with human societies remain poorly synthesized, with significant regional imbalances in research. The role of turkeys in North America has been extensively studied, while their post-colonial dispersal and evolving cultural significance globally have received far less attention.

This volume brings together specialists to explore the paleontology of Meleagris, the early stages of turkey management and domestication in North America, and its subsequent global expansion. Following a chronological structure, the first part examines turkey-human interactions in the Americas before European contact (~500 years ago), with chapters on well-studied regions (Southwestern USA, Northern Mexico, and Mesoamerica) alongside lesser-known areas (Southern Central America and Eastern USA). The second part traces the last 500 years of turkey history, exploring artistic depictions, historical accounts, and archaeozoological evidence from multiple European countries, spanning Western Europe to the Baltic and Central Europe. It also examines the global spread of domestic turkeys, their reintroduction to the Americas through the colonial economy, and their further dispersal across the Pacific.

Blending comprehensive syntheses with original case studies, this volume offers new insights into the history of turkey management, domestication, and cultural symbolism through to the 21st century.

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tél. [33] (0)1 40 79 48 05 • fax [33] (0)1 40 79 38 40 • diff.pub@mnhn.fr

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