

The Animal Bones Distribution as a Reflection of the Hunting Activity

(Summary)

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In archaeology one should distinguish direct evidence and indirect evidence of hunting. The indirect evidence is frequent, direct evidence is rare. Animal bones can undoubtedly be referred to the indirect evidence. The frequency of different species bones and the distribution of bones over a site can also be regarded as indirect evidence.

I shall consider the material from the Avdevo site which is not far from the town of Kursk, situated in the East European Plain. A great number of different animals bones has been found at this site.

The assemblage of the stone and bone tools from Avdevo totally coincides with the assemblage of the famous Kostenki site, which is 200 km to the east of Avdevo. Most intriguing are the mammoth remains. Anatomical groups of mammoth bones are rare. They occurred only in the pits. They are predominantly cervical or lumbar vertebrae. In one case they were with the ribs.

It is hard to explain the presence of mammoth skulls and mandibles at the site. The great number of teeth proves that there had been many more skulls at the site before, which later disappeared. Prehistoric men, the dwellers, of the site brought skulls with the tusks to the site in spite of their uselessness as meat resource, and discarded them into pits. The fact that the

skulls are found in pits or so-called dug-outs, points out that there existed the practice of their discarding in the peripheral area of the site.

The remains of four animals are distributed over the site in another manner. There are lots of full skeletons of polar fox and wolf. There are areas with a rather large number of wolverine bones, but only mandibles. There are many full skeletons of wolves at the bottom of pits and dug-outs. There are some dug-outs where wolf bones first appear at the top of the cultural layer. There, the bones are disarticulated; there are no complete skeletons but only groups of bones in anatomical order. The deeper we go down, the fuller become the anatomical groups of wolf bones with complete skeletons at the bottom.

The difference between fur and meat groups of animals is also expressed by cut marks on the mammoth bones. There are no cut marks on the wolf and polar fox bones. There are ornamental motives on metapodes of wolf. There are groups of skeletons of polar fox in some pits and dug-outs. They occupy a special place in them along the pit/dug-out wall.

All these considerations prove that dwellers of Avdevo site pursued two different aims: to get furs from the killed polar foxes and wolves and to get meat from mammoths. The purpose of other carnivora (such as pantherae and lion) hunting remains unknown for me.

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