

TWO FAUNAL CHANGES IN THE PALAEOLITHIC HORIZONS OF THE KARAIN CAVE B, TURKEY

by

Hubert BERKE *

During the 1985 excavation of the Institut für Urgeschichte Tübingen, in the south Turkish cave site Karain, approximately 70 000 bones — mostly splinters — were recovered. This rich and well preserved fauna provides us with a meaningful analysis, even from a few square meters, opposed to the bone splinters from the profile Karain E, which were inbedded in a very hard Travertine, and had to be extracted by quite rude methods and therefore are almost unidentifiable.

There are two major faunal changes in the sequence of Karain B, one more qualitative at the border of Middle to Upper Palaeolithic and one more quantitative during the Upper Palaeolithic, which I describe first.

The Upper Palaeolithic horizons show a predominance of bones from *Capra aegagrus* and *Ovis ammon*, together 96 to 100 % of the total faunal sample. Because of the similarity and the equivalent size of the bones from these two species, it was only possible to distinguish them in 10 % of the cases (Figure 1).

But if we look at these remaining 10 % we find a clear change in the proportional occurrences:

Levels 30 to 24 a predominance of *Capra aegagrus*

Levels 23 to 20 a predominance of *Ovis ammon*

Since there is no evidence for a climatic change to be seen at this point of the profile, I assume that there was a change in the method of hunting from the lower horizons to the younger ones.

It is — or better it was — much easier to hunt *Capra aegagrus* (Bezoar goat), because this animals have a very short flight distance, based on their excellent climbing ability and their courage.

For example in 1839, on an uninhabited Greek island, these animals had to be killed with bayonets, because some stranded soldiers were actually attacked by the goats while climbing a cliff to get to safety (BREHM 3. Ed., 1891; 3, 192).

* Institut für Urgeschichte, Schloss, D-7400 TÜBINGEN, R.F.A.

On the other side are wild sheep (comparable to *Ovis ammon*), able to climb quite well too, but their flight distance is higher and all the time there is one animal whose job it is to observe the surroundings, looking for enemies. Therefore, it is necessary to use a weapon which can reach some distance.

What does this mean for the site Karain B? Shortly after the clear change in the artifact inventory with the appearance of backed points and bladelets we observe the change in the fauna, too. Obviously, it became possible using better weapons — perhaps bow and arrow or far-distance-spears — to hunt sheep effectively.

After this innovation it was not only possible to hunt *more* sheep but an intensification of hunting activities took place too, visible in the count of identifiable bones. So it was possible in horizons 23 to 18 to identify 1000 to 1500 bones from only one square meter and 5 cm depth. In this part of the profile the sediment is almost totally built of bones! But in the lower part, only 100 to 500 bones were identifiable.

Beside this change in the percentage during the Upper Palaeolithic sequence, one can see another clear change in the lower part of the profile at the border between Middle and Upper Palaeolithic. Indeed, there is still a predominance of *Capra* and *Ovis* bones, but other species are more common and the total amount of bones is much smaller. Only 72 and 190 bones could be identified in the horizons 31 and 32. More common are Carnivores like *Vulpes vulpes*, *Canis lupus* and *Ursus* (*cf. arctos*) and, additionally, *Bos sp.* and *Cervus dama*.

As seen by gnawing marks, some of the bones may have been brought in the cave by Carnivores, but some clear butchering marks verify the influence of Middle Palaeolithic man who didn't use this part of the very big cave system as intensively as it was used during the Upper Palaeolithic.

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