

REINDEER EXPLOITATION IN THE UPPER PALAEO LITHIC SITE OF BUDA, EASTERN ROMANIA. EVIDENCE FROM OLDER AND NEWER EXCAVATIONS

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Abstract: The Upper Palaeolithic site from Buda (Bacău County) has been known since 1952 for the large amount of animal bones discovered alongside Gravettian tools. The revision of the osteological material from the old excavations (1958–1960), as well as the study of newly discovered specimens excavated in the 2012–2014 field seasons was carried out. The faunal material is dominated by long bone epiphyses and elements of the distal limbs, suggesting that the site functioned, for a short period, as a butchery site where the steppe bison and reindeer carcasses were dismembered, long bones were cracked for marrow extraction and then the skeletal elements that presented no interest were abandoned. Based on the population structure and reindeer antler development, we estimate that the hunting expeditions took place at the beginning of the cold season.

Cuvinte-cheie: arheozoologie, ren, sezonalitate, Gravetian, sit pentru tranșare

Rezumat : Situl de la Buda, jud. Bacău, a fost cunoscut încă din 1952, însă primele săpături arheologice au avut loc între anii 1958–1960, când au fost prelevate, alături de materialul litic gravetian, numeroase resturi osoase. O mică parte dintre acestea au fost studiate și publicate în acea vreme. După 60 de ani, noi săpături au fost efectuate în perioada 2012–2014, fiind descoperite noi materiale în contexte similare celor din vechile cercetări. Vom prezenta o imagine de ansamblu a modului de exploatare a renului, specie secundară ca abundență, dominant fiind bizonul de stepă. Studiul arheozoologic al resturilor osoase de ren prelevate din săpăturile vechi și recente, arată, ca și în cazul bizonului, predominanța elementelor scheletului apendicular. Toate indiciile sugerează că situl a funcționat ca loc pentru tranșarea primară a animalelor, acțiune urmată de abandonarea părților scheletice care nu mai prezentau interes pentru vânătorii paleolitici. Pe baza structurii populației și a ciclului de dezvoltare a coarnelor de ren, estimăm că vânătoarea a avut loc în sezonul rece, foarte probabil la începutul acestuia.

INTRODUCTION

Reindeer, *Rangifer tarandus* (Linnaeus, 1758), also called caribou in North America, is a Holarctic cervid species widespread in circumpolar areas, with habitats ranging from Boreal forests to grassland tundras (Gunn 2016). The oldest occurrence of the species is from the Middle Pleistocene of Süssenborn (Kahlke 1969), timing confirmed by other subsequent reports from the Middle Pleistocene of Germany, France, England and Spain (for a review, see van Kolfschoten *et alii* 2011). Reindeer remains are common occurrences in the late Pleistocene European fossil assemblages (Kahlke 1999; Kurtén 2007; Croitor 2018a) becoming widespread and abundant, during the Last Glacial, occurring across most of Europe either as part of natural assemblages, or, very often, as part of anthropic accumulation formed as a result of intense hunting (e.g.: Kahlke 1999; Weinstock 2002; Lorenzen *et alii* 2011; Piskorska, Stefaniak 2014; Piskorska *et alii* 2015; Croitor 2018b)

Reindeer remains were reported in natural assemblages from several late Pleistocene sites of Romania (e.g., from the Vârghiș Gorges – Orghidan, Dumitrescu 1962–1963; Sîndomic – Samson, Rădulescu 1969; Bordu Mare Cave – Păunescu, Abbasi 1996; Bursucilor Cave – Terzea

2001), but generally as part of faunal lists, with no descriptions, illustrations, or dimensions of specimens assigned to this taxon. More detailed information is given in zooarchaeological studies and preliminary reports, mostly from the Middle and Upper Palaeolithic of Eastern Romania: Ripiceni and Mitoc (Moroșan 1938), Bistricioara – *Lutărie* (Bolomey 1966); Poiana Cireșului, by far the richest in reindeer remains (Cârciumaru *et alii* 2007–2008, Dumitrașcu 2008), Lespezi – *Lutărie* (Bolomey 1989), Buda – *Dealul Viilor* (Bolomey 1961; Necrasov, Bulai-Știrbu 1972); whereas the only reindeer material described from Dobrogea is the one from La Adam Cave (Dumitrescu *et alii* 1962–1963).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site of Buda – *Dealul Viilor* (in short: Buda) is located at the top of the hill called “Dealul Viilor”, northwest from the village of Buda (Blăgești Commune, Bacău County), Eastern Romania (Fig. 1). The Palaeolithic stone tools excavated in two separated intervals (1958–1962 and 2012–2014) were assigned to the Gravettian typology (Nicolăescu-Plopșor *et alii* 1961; Căpitanu *et alii* 1962; Căpitanu 1967; Tuffreau *et alii* 2018). They were accompanied by numerous faunal remains in a 0.4 m thick