

Animal remains of the medieval settlement near Brankovtsi village (Vidin Region, NW Bulgaria)

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Abstract. A total of 9 taxa of 6 domestic forms and 3 wild species of animals have been identified, among them wild boar, red deer and roe deer. All finds are dated Middle Ages (10th – 13th century A. D.).

Key words: mammals, birds, Medieval fauna.

Introduction

Archaeozoological data from the settlements of Northwestern Bulgaria are extremely scant. We have only fragmentary information for 12 archaeological sites, most of them prehistoric: (1) Kozarnika (Suhi Pech) Cave near town of Belogradchik (Vidin Region), late Pleistocene (MNQ 18-26, end of Saalian, Eemian and Weischelian) (Fernandez 2009); (2) Mishin Kamik Cave near Gorna Luka village (Montana Region), late Pleistocene (135 000 – 85 000 BC) (Gurova *et al.* 2016, 2017, 2018); (3) Magurata Cave near Belogradchik (Vidin Region), late Pleistocene (39 280 BC) (Ivanova *et al.* 2016); (4) Ohoden near Ohoden village (Vratsa Region), early Neolithic (N. Spassov – unpubl. data) (5) Gradeshnitsa - Malo Pole near Gradeshnitsa village (Vratsa Region), early Neolithic (Spassov *et al.* 2015); (6) Temnata Dupka Cave near Targovishte village (Vidin Region), Chalcolithic (Nikolov 1977, 1983); (7) Lepenitsa Cave near Belogradchik (Vidin Region); late Chalcolithic – early Bronze Age (3000-2000 BC) (Boev & Iliev 1991); (8) Baley near Baley village (Vidin Region); early Bronze Age (N. Spassov – unpubl. data); (9) Bagachina between Brankovtsi and Rasovo villages (Vidin Region), early Iron Age (1300-1000 BC) (Boev 1996); (10) Ratiaria near Archar village (Vidin Region), Roman period (2nd-4th century AD) (Iliev *et al.* 1993; Boev 1996); (11) Baba Vida fortress (Vidin), Middle Ages (10-13th century AD) (Boev 1995, 1996); and (12) Smardan Dupka Cave near Krachimir village (Vidin Region), late Holocene (before 17th c. A.D.) (Boev 2013, Boev & Spassov, in press).

In the region of the site there was probably also a fortification during the Roman period - a castle or larger military site and settlement.

Material and Methods

Recently (October, 2019) a small sample (164 pieces) of animal finds have been handed for examination by the archaeologist Dr. Katya Melamed (National Archaeological Institute and Museum – BAS). They originated from the archaeological excavations (April-August 2019; 13 samples of 1.84-1.88 m depth), dated Middle Ages (10th – 13th century A. D.). Location of the site: 43°49'N, 22°34'E.

Results and Discussion

A total of 9 taxa of 6 domestic forms and 3 wild species of animals have been identified (Table 1). All wild animals are highly valued hunting mammals even until recent time. One of them, the red deer now is both a hunting and protected species in Bulgaria. One of the four roe deer finds, a proximal (basal) part of an antler (Fig. 1-a, b), bear traces of processing. It was carved at the base (Fig. 1-b).

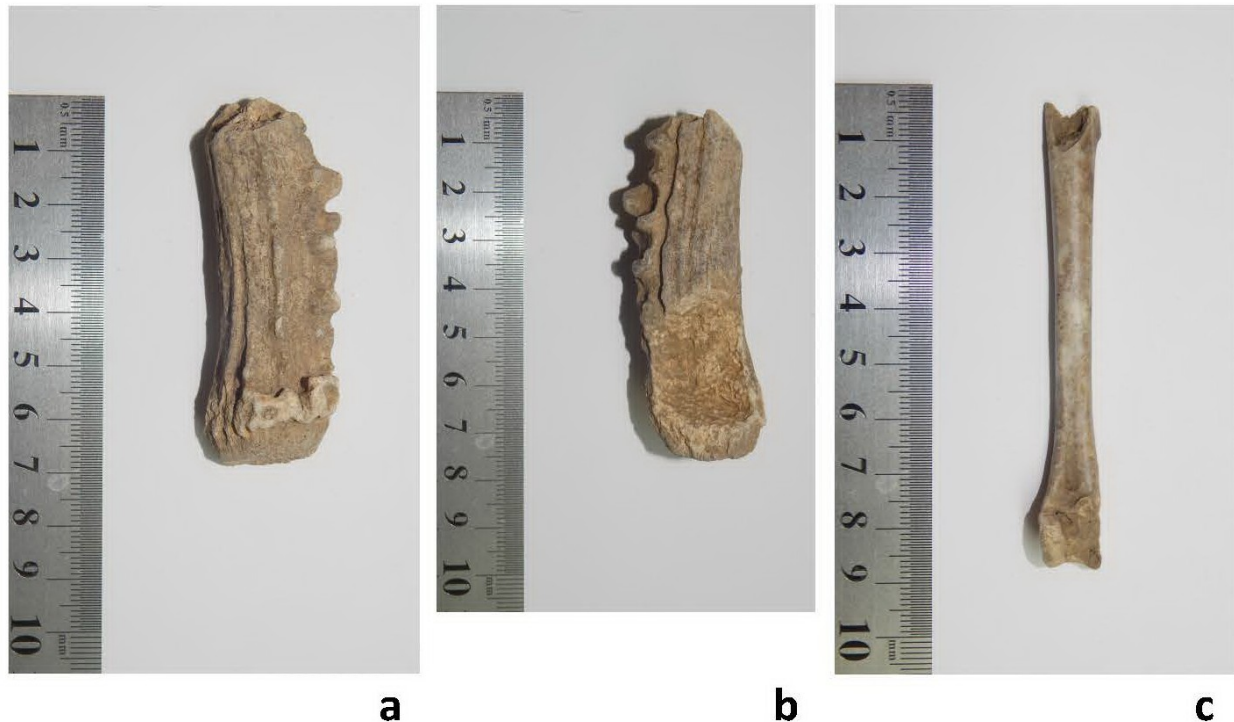


Fig. 1. Some animal remains from the medieval settlement near Brankovtsi village: *Capreolus capreolus*, proximal right antler (a, b), *Gallus gallus domestica*, tibiotarsus sin. (c). Photo: Z. Boev

Table 1. Composition and representation of the examined animal remains from the medieval settlement (10th – 13th century A. D.) near Brankovtsi village, Vidin Region, NW Bulgaria

No	Taxa	English Name	Number of bone finds
1.	<i>Bos taurus</i> Linnaeus, 1758	Domestic cattle	36
2.	<i>Cervus elaphus</i> Linnaeus, 1758	Red deer	2
3.	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	Roe deer	4
4.	<i>Sus scrofa scrofa</i> Linnaeus, 1758	Wild boar	6
5.	<i>Sus scrofa domestica</i> Linnaeus, 1758	Wild boar/Domestic pig	20
6.	<i>Capra hircus</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	Domestic goat	3
7.	<i>Ovis aries</i> Linnaeus, 1758	Domestic sheep	8
	<i>Ovis / Capra</i>	Sheep/ Goat	3
8.	<i>Equus ferus caballus</i> Linnaeus, 1758	Domestic horse	8
9.	<i>Gallus g. domesticus</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	Chicken	1
	Unidentifiable bone splinters		75
	Total		164

45.7 percent of the finds represent unidentifiable bone splinters. The majority of the remains belonged to domestic cattle and domestic pig. Only one bone of domestic birds has been found. It belonged to a medium/ small-sized domestic chicken (Fig. 1-c).

Wild (hunted) animals represent ca. 13 percent (i. e. one eighth) of identified animal remains. Hunting was only a supplementary mean of supply of meat resources for the inhabitants of the settlement. All hunted mammals are forest dwellers and indicate the former presence of woodland habitats in the surroundings of the medieval settlement.

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