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The Exploitation of Animal Resources During the Early Medieval Period. Case Study: The Settlements in Popeni *Pe Pogor* and Cuceu *Valea Bochii* (Sălaj County)*

Margareta Simina Stanc, Daniel Ioan Malaxa, Dan Băcuet-Crișan

Abstract: The early medieval settlements in Popeni *Pe pogor* and Cuceu *Valea Bochii* have been researched archaeologically in 1978, 1979, and 1999. The two settlements have been dated based on their archaeological inventories: the site in Popeni *Pe pogor* to the second half of the 7th century and the first part of the 8th century and the one in Cuceu *Valea Bochii* to the second half of the 8th century and the first half of the 9th century. 842 faunal remains were collected during the archaeological researches performed in Cuceu *Valea Bochii* and 615 were collected in Popeni *Pe pogor*. The research method is specific to archaeozoology: anatomical, taxonomical and taphonomical identification of the fragments and their subsequent inclusion in a database that allows for a quantitative and statistical analysis, completed by osteometric measurements and estimations of the death age and gender in the case of some species. The domestic and wild mammal remains indicate two of the main occupations of the researched human communities (animal husbandry and hunting). Animal husbandry was especially important in their obtaining of the necessary animal proteins.

Keywords: animal resources; the Early Medieval Period; settlements; archaeological features; archaeozoological analysis.

Sites location. History of research, identified archaeological features, and the chronology of the vestiges. Alexandru V. Matei performed the first archaeological trial excavations on the site in Popeni *Pe pogor* (the municipality of Mirșid, Sălaj County) in 1978–1979. On that occasion he has archaeologically identified a pit-house (L. 1) and three pits (Gr. 1, Gr. 2, and Gr. 3)¹. The 1979 researches that have again envisaged the site have led to the identification of feature traces, but no precise observations could be made due to the disturbance caused by agricultural works².

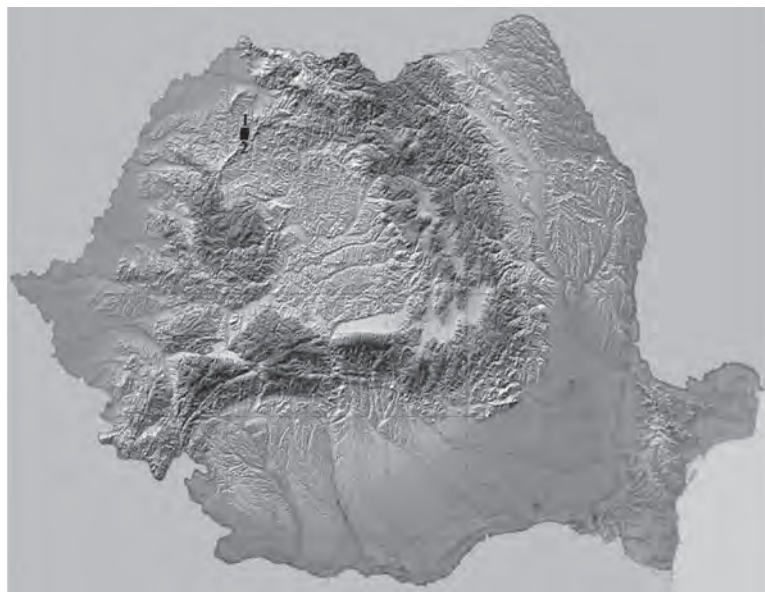


Fig. 1. The location of the two archaeological sites (1. Cuceu *Valea Bochii*; 2. Popeni *Pe pogor*) on the territory of Romania.

* Translated by: Ana Maria Gruia.

¹ Matei 1979, 483–484; Stanciu, Matei 1994, 136.

² Stanciu, Matei 1994, 136.

The archaeological excavations performed in 1999 were meant to rescue vestiges affected by the introduction of a gas pipeline between Jibou and Zalău³. Several household annexes were identified in the excavated areas (L6/1999, L7/1999, A/1999, and B/1999). On the basis of its archaeological inventory the site in Popeni *Pe pogor* has been dated to the second half of the 7th century and the first half of the 8th century⁴.

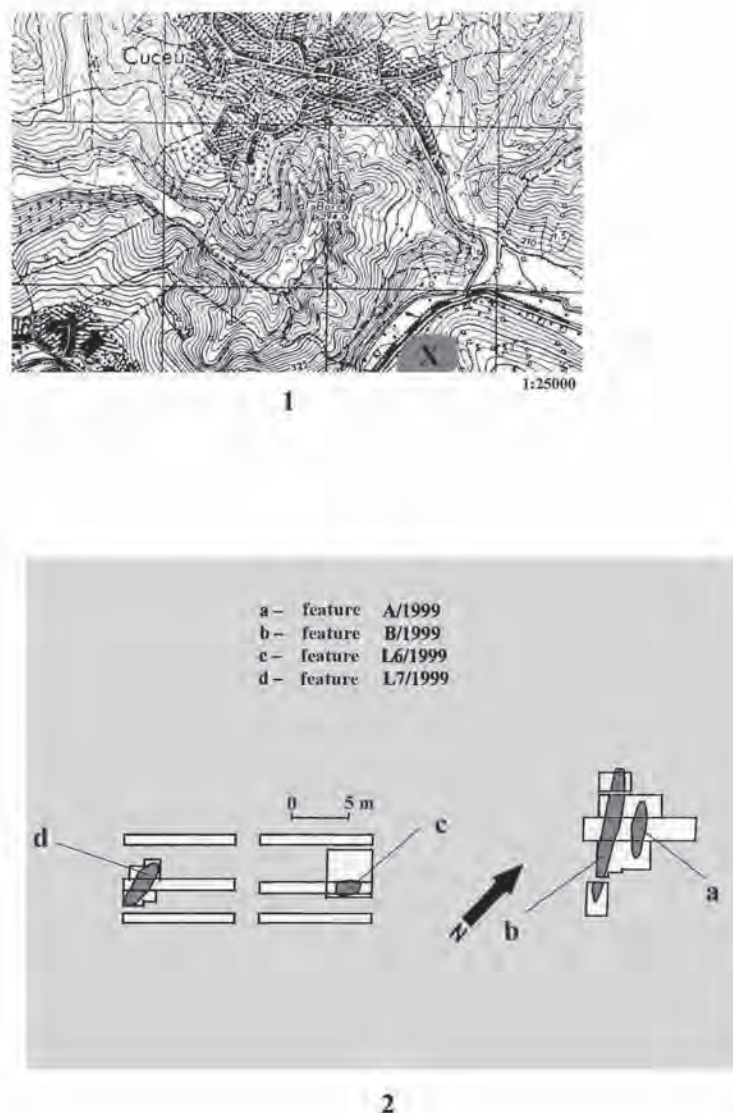


Fig. 2. Popeni *Pe pogor*. Site location (1). Archaeological features discovered in 1999 (2) (taken from Băcuet-Crișan 2014).

Alexandru V. Matei also performed the first trial excavation on the site of Cuceu *Valea Bochii* (that is part of the city of Jibou, Sălaj County) in 1978. On that occasion he has identified and researched one dwelling, one household pit, and one open-air fire installation. A channel was excavated in the same year for the introduction of a water adduction pipe from the Someș to Zalău and this channel seems to have sectioned an early medieval dwelling⁵.

Rescue archaeological excavations were performed on the site in 1999 during works for the introduction of gas pipes between Jibou and Zalău⁶. Four dwellings were researched on that occasion (L1/1999, L2/1999, L3/1999, L4/1999) and three household refuse pits (G1/1999, G2/1999, and

³ Băcuet-Crișan, Băcuet-Crișan 2000a, 78.

⁴ Băcuet-Crișan 2014, 25.

⁵ Matei 1979, 484; Stanciu, Matei 1994, 135–163.

⁶ Băcuet-Crișan, Băcuet-Crișan 2000b, 32–33.

G3/1999). The discoveries made in *Valea Bochii* have been dated to the second half of the 8th century and the first half of the 9th century⁷.

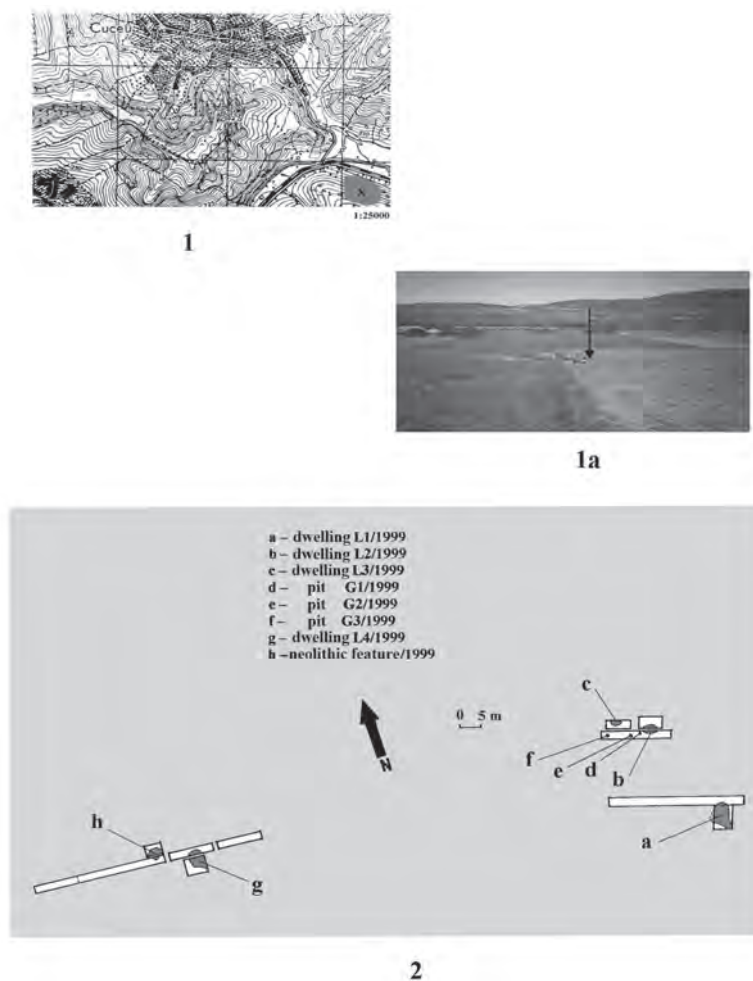


Fig. 3. Cuceu *Valea Bochii*. Site location (1–1a). Archaeological features discovered in 1999 (2) (taken from Băcuet-Crișan 2014).

Archaeozoological analysis. A number of 842 faunal remains were collected from Cuceu *Valea Bochii* and 615 from Popeni *Pe pogor* during the archaeological researches performed on these sites. The research method is specific to archaeozoology, consisting of anatomic, taxonomic, and taphonomic identification of the fragments and their subsequent inclusion in a database that allows for a quantitative and statistical analysis, completed by osteometric measurements and estimations of the death age and gender in the case of some species.

The two samples consist of remains that are time-resistant in sediment conditions, namely bones, cornual processes, and teeth. These are remains from birds and mammals, though bird fragments are less numerous than mammal fragments (Table 1). Most of the mammal bones display traces of knife cuts (performed during meat cutting) and dog teeth marks. Such traces are more numerous on the bones found in Cuceu *Valea Bochii* sample than on the bone remains from Popeni *Pe pogor* sample.

The sample in Cuceu *Valea Bochii* includes two chicken bones (*Gallus domesticus*), while the one in Popeni *Pe pogor* includes five such bones. Mammal bones represent 99% of both samples, consisting of 840 and 610 remains respectively. The remains are of household origin, from animals sacrificed or hunted for food. The bones display a high degree of fragmentation, so that few of them have been measured.

244 fragments from Cuceu *Valea Bochii* and 248 fragments from Popeni *Pe pogor* (consisting of fragments of ribs, vertebrae, skulls, small parts of long and flat bones) could not be identified to the

⁷ Băcuet-Crișan 2014, 29.

species level, but one knows they belong to the identified domestic and wild mammals. The remains of domestic mammals represent 88.4% in Cuceu *Valea Bochii* and 93.9% in Popeni *Pe pogor* (Fig. 4). The recovery of domestic and wild mammal remains indicate two of the main occupations of the human communities under research (animal husbandry and hunting). Animal husbandry was very important for these communities in obtaining the necessary animal proteins. The following species of domestic mammals have been identified: cattle, sheep, goat, pig, horse, and dog, the latter not used for food. In the case of both samples, the cattle remains were the most numerous, representing almost half of all identified fragments: 51.8% in Cuceu *Valea Bochii* and 47.5% in Popeni *Pe pogor* (Fig. 5). Sheep/goat remains were the second most numerous in Popeni *Pe pogor* (24.3%), but pig remains were second in Cuceu *Valea Bochii* sample (20.9%) (Table 2). Horse and dog remains were infrequent in both samples. The distribution of fragments according to anatomical elements in the case of identified species is presented in tables 3 and 4.

The proportion of wild mammal remains is small in both samples, representing 11.5% in Cuceu *Valea Bochii* and 6% in Popeni *Pe pogor* (Fig. 4). Four species have been identified (red deer, wild boar, roe deer, and hare), among which the first (red deer) holds the highest proportion (Table 2); these species are indicative of forest and treeline biotopes.

Compared to the minimum number of estimated individuals, cattle predominate in the sample from Cuceu *Valea Bochii*, followed by pigs and sheep/goat (Fig. 6), similar to the results of the quantification according to the number of identified remains. Most of the cattle, pig, and sheep/goat individuals were sacrificed at a mature age (Fig. 7), estimated on the basis of dentition. Based on the identified fragments, 13 cattle individuals were estimated, among which nine were mature and four were immature at the time of sacrifice. In the case of pigs, based on the 125 fragments we have estimated a minimum number of eight individuals, among which five were mature and three immature; the presence of the canines has indicated the existence of four male individuals. Among the sheep/goat, out of the seven identified individuals five were sacrificed at maturity, while two had been immature. A single mature individual was identified in the case of both horses and dogs. As for the wild mammals, four species have been identified, represented by 12 individuals estimated based on the 69 preserved fragments: five of the individuals were red deer (two immature and three mature), four were wild boars (mature), two were roe deer (mature), and one was a hare (mature).

Faunal group	Cuceu <i>Valea Bochii</i>		Popeni <i>Pe pogor</i>	
	NR	%	NR	%
Birds	2	0.24	5	0.81
Mammals	840	99.76	610	99.19
Entire sample	842	100	615	100

Table 1. Proportion of faunal groups identified in the two samples (NR-number of remains).

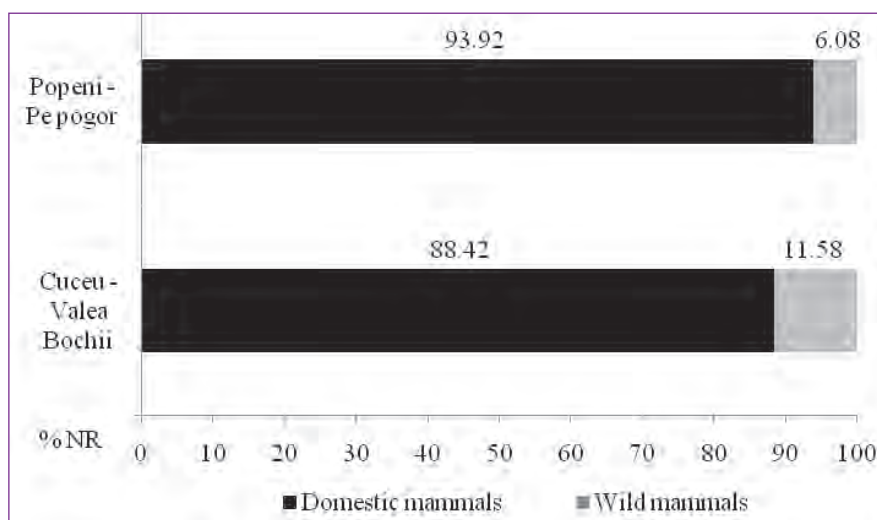


Fig. 4. Proportion (% NR) of mammal groups in the two samples.

In the sample from Popeni *Pe pogor*, based on the 172 identified fragments of cattle we have identified seven individuals, representing 25% of all estimated mammal individuals (Fig. 6); based on their dental age, two of the cattle individuals were immature at the time of death and five were mature (Fig. 7). Six sheep/goat individuals have been estimated, most of which had been sacrificed at a mature age (four mature and two immature individuals). In the case of pigs, the frequency of the two age groups is similar (three immature and three mature individuals were estimated) (Fig. 7). As for horses and dogs, a single mature individual was identified for each species. Seven wild mammal individuals were estimated: three red deer (mature), two wild boars (one immature, the other mature), one roe deer (mature), and one hare (also mature).

Species	Cuceu Valea Bochii				Popeni <i>Pe pogor</i>			
	Number of remains		Minimum number of estimated individuals		Number of remains		Minimum number of estimated individuals	
	NR	%	NMI	%	NR	%	NMI	%
<i>Bos taurus</i> (cattle)	309	51.85	13	30.95	172	47.51	7	25
<i>Ovis aries</i> / <i>Capra hircus</i> (sheep/goat)	85	14.26	7	16.67	88	24.31	6	21.43
<i>Sus domesticus</i> (pig)	125	20.97	8	19.05	77	21.27	6	21.43
<i>Canis familiaris</i> (dog)	1	0.17	1	2.38	2	0.55	1	3.57
<i>Equus caballus</i> (horse)	7	1.17	1	2.38	1	0.28	1	3.57
Total domestic mammals	527	88.42	30	71.43	340	93.92	21	75
<i>Cervus elaphus</i> (red deer)	39	6.54	5	11.90	15	4.14	3	10.71
<i>Sus scrofa</i> (wild boar)	24	4.03	4	9.52	3	0.83	2	7.14
<i>Capreolus capreolus</i> (roe deer)	5	0.84	2	4.76	2	0.55	1	3.57
<i>Lepus europaeus</i> (hare)	1	0.17	1	2.38	2	0.55	1	3.57
Total wild mammals	69	11.58	12	28.57	22	6.08	7	25
Identified mammals	596	100	42	100	362	100	28	100
Mammals not identified	244	-			248	-		
Total mammals	840	-			610	-		

Table 2. Quantification of the mammal remains in the two samples.

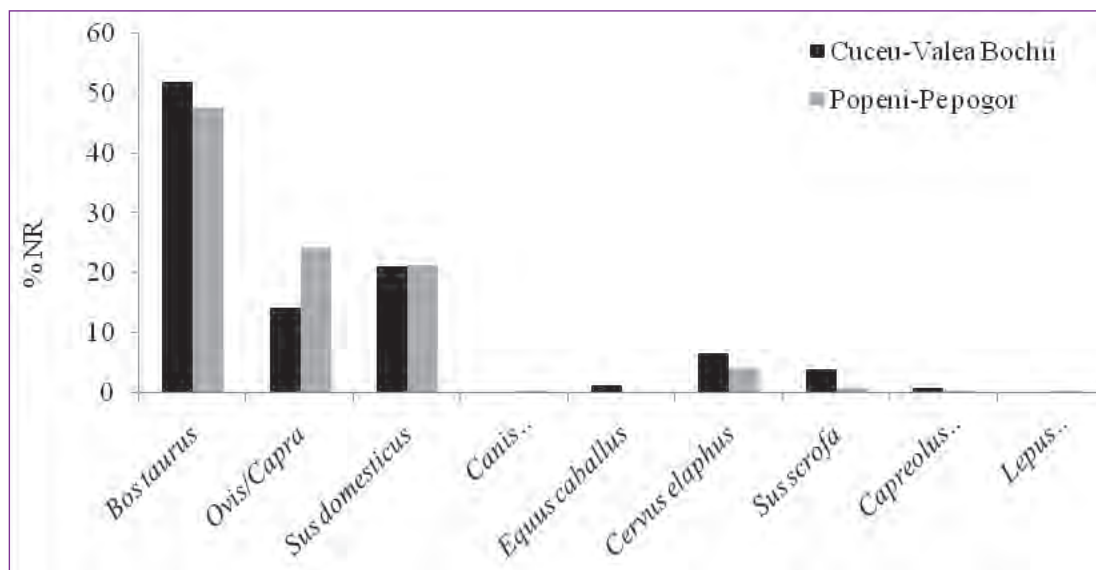


Fig. 5. Proportion (% NR) of mammal species in the two samples.

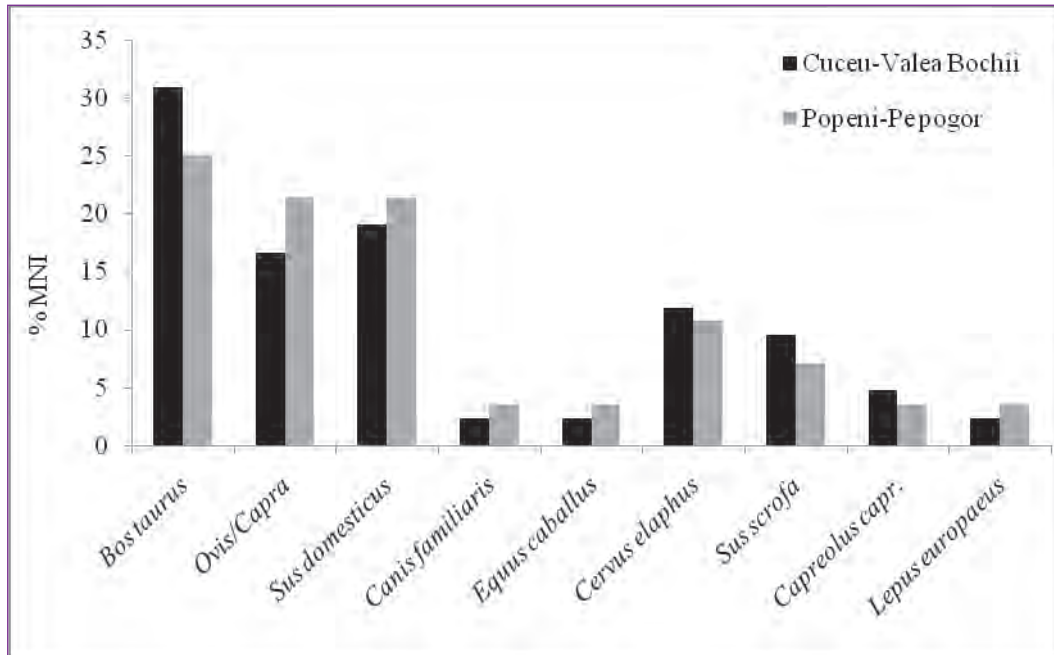


Fig. 6. Proportion (% MNI) of mammal species in the two samples.

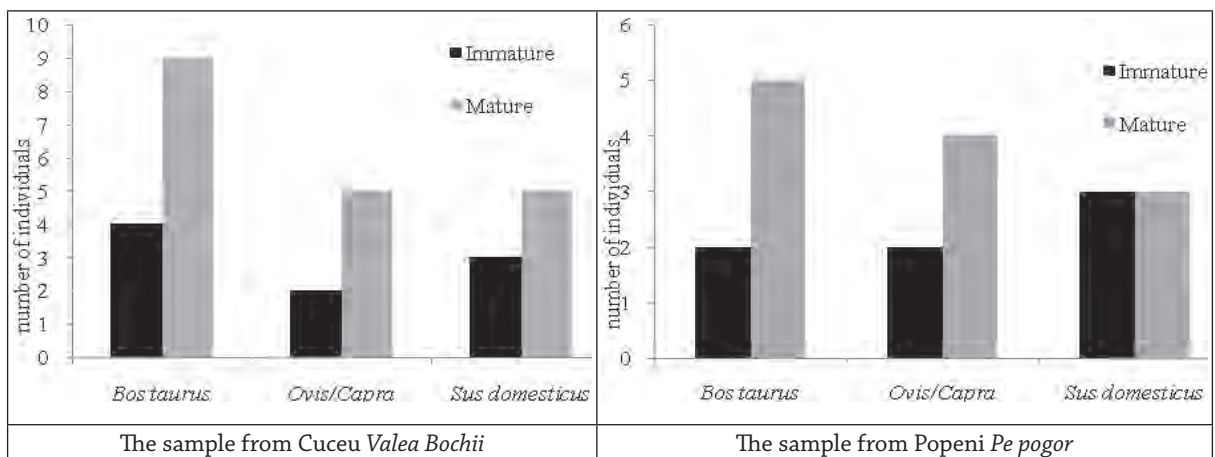


Fig. 7. Age groups when the main domestic species were sacrificed.

Anatomic element	Bt	O/C	Sd	Cf	Ec	Ce	Ss	Cc	Le
carpus+tarsus	24	2	3		3	6	1		
rib	44	10	16	1			4		
horn	2	1				1			
coxal bone	14	2	3			5	3		
cranium	9	1	15			1	1		
ulna	2		9				1		
isolated teeth	51	22	12		1	2			
phalanges	26		2		1		1		
femur	14	2	5		1	1	2		
humerus	15	5	3				4	2	1
malleolus	1								
mandible	29	8	21			1	1		
metacarpus	4		3			2		1	
metapodial	7		1			1			
metatarsus	6	4	2			7			
scapula	4	4	10			1		2	

Anatomic element	Bt	O/C	Sd	Cf	Ec	Ce	Ss	Cc	Le
radius	18	4	7		1	2			
sesamoid	1								
tibia	10	16	10			7	3		
vertebrae	28	4	3			2	3		
Total	309	85	125	1	7	39	24	5	1

Table 3. Distribution of mammal remains according to anatomic elements in the sample from Cuceu Valea Bochii (Bt – *Bos taurus*, O/C – *Ovis aries*/*Capra hircus*, Sd – *Sus domesticus*, Cf – *Canis familiaris*, Ec – *Equus caballus*, Ce – *Cervus elaphus*, Ss – *Sus scrofa*, Cc – *Capreolus capreolus*, Le – *Lepus europaeus*).

Anatomic element	Bt	O/C	Sd	Cf	Eq	Ce	Ss	Cc	Le
carpus+tarsus	3	2	2			1			
rib	52	20	10	2					
horn	3	1							
coxal bone	2	2							
cranium	21	3	7			3	1		
ulna	5	1	4			1			
isolated teeth	9	6	3				1		
phalanges	7	1	3			2			
femur	9	11	9						
humerus	5	5	2			1			
mandible	16	1	15			3	1		1
metacarpus	1	2	1			1		1	
metapodial	1	3	2						
metatarsus	4	2	1			1			
scapula	8	9	6						
fibula/ malleolus	1		2						
radius	7	9	3		1	1		1	
tibia	10	8	7			1			1
vertebrae	8	2							
Total	172	88	77	2	1	15	3	2	2

Table 4. Distribution of mammal remains according to anatomic elements in the sample from Popeni Pe pogor (Bt – *Bos taurus*, O/C – *Ovis aries*/*Capra hircus*, Sd – *Sus domesticus*, Cf – *Canis familiaris*, Ec – *Equus caballus*, Ce – *Cervus elaphus*, Ss – *Sus scrofa*, Cc – *Capreolus capreolus*, Le – *Lepus europaeus*).

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Abbreviations

ActaArchHung	Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae.
AAC	Acta Archaeologica Carpathica, Cracow.
ActaMN	Acta Musei Napocensis, Cluj-Napoca.
ActaMP	Acta Musei Porolissensis, Zalău
AnArchRessoviensia	Analecta Archaeologica Ressoviensia, Rzeszów.
AAS at CEU	Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU, Budapest.
Apulum	Acta Musei Apulensis – Apulum, Alba-Iulia.
Alba Regia	Alba Regia, Székesfehérvár.
Antaeus	Antaeus, Budapest.
Arrabona	Arrabona, Győr.
ArhMed	Arheologia Medievală, Cluj-Napoca, Brăila, Reșița.
ArchBaltica	Archaeologia Baltica, Vilnius.
Arch.Inf	Archäologische Informationen.
ATS	Acta Terrae Septemcastrensis, Sibiu.
ArchÉrt	Archaeologiai Értesítő, Budapest.
Banatica	Banatica, Reșița.
BBMÉ	A Béni Balogh Ádám Múzeum Évkönyve, Szekszárd.
BUFM	Beiträge zur Ur- und Frühgeschichte Mitteleuropas.
BCMI	Buletinul Comisiei Naționale a Monumentelor, ansambluri situri istorice. București.
CommArchHung	Communicationes Archaeologicae Hungaricae, Budapest.
CCA	Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice, Comisia Națională de Arheologie, București.
CIL	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, Berlin.
CMA	Complexul Muzeal Arad.
Dolgozatok	Dolgozatok az Erdélyi Múzeum érem- és régiségtárából, Cluj.
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Dolg. ÚS	Dolgozatok az Erdélyi Múzeum Érem- és Régiségtárából, Új Sorozat. Cluj-Napoca / Kolozsvár.
EphNap	Ephemeris Napocensis, Cluj-Napoca.
HOMÉ	A Hermann Ottó Múzeum Évkönyve. Miskolc.
JAHA	Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology, Cluj-Napoca.
JAM	Jósa András Museum, Nyíregyháza.
JPMÉ	Janus Pannonius Múzeum Évkönyve.
JRGZM	Jahrbuch des Romisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, Mainz.
KRRMK	Kaposvári Rippl Rónai Múzeum Közleményei, Kaposvár.
LMI	Lista monumentelor istorice, updated in 2015.
MittArchInst	Mitteilungen des Archäologischen Instituts der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
MOL	Magyar Olaj- és Gázipari Részvénytársaság / Hungarian Oil and Gas Public Limited Company
Marisia	Marisia, Târgu Mureș.
NyJAMÉ	A nyíregyházi Jósa András Múzeum Évkönyve, Nyíregyháza.
PBF	Praehistorische Bronzefunde. Berlin.
Przegląd Archeologiczny	Przegląd Archeologiczny, Wrocław.
Rad	Jósa András Museum, Archaeological Archive
RégFüz	Régészeti Füzetek, Budapest.

RKM	Régészeti Kutatások Magyarországon/Archaeological Investigations in Hungary, Budapest.
RAJ Arad	Repertoriul Arheologic al Mureşului Inferior. Judeţul Arad. Timişoara 1999.
RAN	Repertoriul Arheologic Naţional.
Sargetia	Sargetia. Acta Musei Devensis, Deva.
SCIV(A)	Studii şi Cercetări de Istorie Veche şi Arheologie, Bucureşti.
SGB	Studii de Geografie a Banatului, Timişoara.
SIB	Studii de Istorie a Banatului, Timişoara.
Slavia Antiqua	Slavia Antiqua, Poznań.
SlovArch	Slovenská Archeológia, Nitra.
SMK	Somogyi Múzeumok Közleményei, Kaposvár.
SovArh	Sovetskaja Arheologija, Moskva.
SRTM	Shuttle Radar Topography Mission.
StudiaUBB Historia	Studia UBB Historia, Cluj-Napoca.
SzKMÉ	A Szántó Kovács Múzeum Évkönyve, Pécs.
Századok	Századok, Budapest.
Terra Sebus	Terra Sebus. Acta Musei Sabesiensis, Sebeş.
Tibiscum S. N.	Tibiscum S. N., Caransebeş.
TransRev	Transylvanian Review, Cluj-Napoca.
ZalaiMúz	Zalai Múzeum, Zalaegerszeg.
ZSA	Ziridava. Studia Archaeologica. Arad.
Živa Antika	Živa Antika, Skopje.