

Consumption of meat and methods of enclosing the animals in Ostrów Tumski in Wrocław

The discussed collection of bones was unearthed in 2004 during archaeological excavations in north part of Ostrów Tumski in Wrocław. 4115 bones of mammals have been identified: 4083 (99,22%) bones of domestic animals and 32 (0,77%) bones of wild animals.

A pig was the commonest species of domestic mammals (53,63%). Two size variations have been distinguished. The first one corresponds to the size of domestic pig, whereas the other one is a transitional form between domestic pig and wild boar. Remains of swine usually belonged to individuals under the age of 22 months. Pigs are marked by high fertility and quick mass increase, therefore usually animals under a year or almost two years old were slaughtered; pigs seldom came up to three years. Preponderance of males probably resulted from economic reasons. Keeping of males was unprofitable, since only one boar was necessary for reproduction, thus other males were slaughtered.

Cattle are the second species in respect of number (36,78%). All examined bones belonged to shorthorn cattle. Remains of adult females, above the age of 3, produced high rate of the material from Ostrów Tumski. Adult cows were more valuable than sows since cows reproduce more slowly and breed only one young at a time. Besides, cows yielded milk, thus they were kept for longer time. Most probably males prevailed in lower age category (under 24 months). After covering a heifer they were slaughtered.

Remains of small ruminants formed 7,51%. Difficulties with separating of bones of a sheep from bones of a goat have prevented us from determining the exact percentage of both species and sex of animals.

A horse is the fourth (1,4%) among domestic mammals. It was not a consumable animal hence its bones have been preserved in quite good condition. On the basis of height from the ground to the withers it has been determined, that small and medium horses were used.

Inhabitants of Ostrów Tumski in Wrocław kept also dogs and cats, however poor condition of their bones has prevented us from drawing any detailed conclusions.

The discussed assemblage includes small percentage of wild mammals' bones. Remains of a roe-deer (34, 37%) and a hare (31,25%) predominate, whereas bones of a red deer (12,5%), a wild boar (9,37%), a squirrel (6,25%), a beaver (3,12%) and an otter (3,12%) are less numerous.

Homogeneity of assemblages of bones in individual periods has been examined with independence test χ^2 . It consists in comparison of frequency of occurrence of bones of individual species in a given set with theoretically expected frequency. Thus, we can determine surplus or deficiency of some parts of carcasses within individual species. Subsequently, we can interpret culinary preferences and guess, where the carcasses were portioned, whether the animals were slaughtered and prepared in the place of consumption, or in some other place, from which only parts of carcasses could be delivered to the site.

All layers show deficiency of class I (less valuable) parts of cattle's carcass. It indicates that cattle were not slaughtered on the spot and better parts of carcass were delivered from some other place, probably from a nearby villein settlement. Besides, the hypothesis that cattle were not bred on the site is supported by observations, that there were not discovered any buildings enough spacious to hold so big animals (except for stables intended exclusively for horses). Pork in all periods belonged equally to the regions of limbs, trunk and head. Probably it resulted from the fact that actually all parts of pig's carcass can be cooked. Surplus of class I bones of a sheep and a goat has been observed. It may imply that small ruminants were slaughtered on the site and more attractive parts of their carcasses were taken to another place, maybe to the main part of the town, for more affluent inhabitants.

Research on relics of buildings in Ostrów Tumski resulted in distinguishing 76 units, where animals were kept. Presence of bristles or fur and animal droppings were main criteria for distinguishing them. The animals were kept in three types of constructions: in separate buildings intended exclusively for them, on yards in open-air pens, or in a room of a dwelling. Sheds for livestock were usually constructed with wattle-and-clay technique. Many of them were internally divided, and their area ranged from 0,5m² to 23 m². Usually such buildings were situated near dwellings or were included in farmsteads. More than a half of them are dated to the 11th c.