



Atti del 6° Convegno Nazionale di Archeozoologia

Centro visitatori del Parco dell'Orecchiella

21-24 maggio 2009

San Romano in Garfagnana - Lucca

a cura di

Jacopo De Grossi Mazzorin

Daniela Saccà

Carlo Tozzi

ANTONIO CURCI¹, STEFANIA MICHALOPOULOU², MARIO LANGELLA³

¹ ArcheoLabio. Centro di ricerche di Bioarcheologia. Alma Mater Studiorum, Università di Bologna

² University of Athens, Greece

³ Terrae. Indagini archeologiche e analisi di laboratorio

Baselice: zooarchaeological study of a neolithic village of Beneventano area

Baselice: studio archeozoologico di un villaggio neolitico del Beneventano

Summary - The site of Baselice (BN), along the left bank of Cervaro torrent, was excavated during 2001 and 2007. The archaeological finds, dated to Early Neolithic, are mainly small pits, some of which with ritual use, structures and burning pits. To Middle-Final Neolithic belong only some structures with ash and small amounts of faunal remains. The fauna of Early Neolithic indicates that ovicaprines are the most numerous among domesticated animals. Cattles, pigs and dogs are following. Hunting activity is still keeping a certain role at the meat supply procedure through the predation of red deer, roe deer and wild boar. Rests of deer antlers demonstrate the exploitation of that raw material for tool making.

Riassunto - Il sito pluristratificato di Baselice (BN), lungo la riva sinistra del torrente Cervaro, è stato oggetto di due campagne di scavo (anni 2001 e 2007). I resti archeologici sono riferibili al Neolitico antico con pozzetti, alcuni di essi con funzioni rituali, e ad alcune strutture e fosse di combustione. Al Neolitico medio-finale sono riferibili solo alcune strutture di combustione con scarsi resti faunistici. La fauna della fase riferibile al Neolitico antico mostra come pecore e capre siano i più numerosi tra gli animali domestici, seguiti dal bue e dal maiale. Completa il quadro dei domestici la presenza del cane. L'attività venatoria continua a mantenere un certo ruolo nell'approvvigionamento carneo attraverso la predazione di cervi, caprioli e cinghiali. Resti di palco di cervidi dimostrano lo sfruttamento di questa materia dura per la realizzazione di utensili.

Key words: Zooarchaeology, Early Neolithic, Middle-Final Neolithic.

Parole chiave: Archeozoologia, Neolitico antico, Neolitico Medio-Finale.

The site of Baselice (BN) is situated at the bottom of a valley, across the left bank of Cervaro torrent, ca. 320 m over sea level (Fig. 1). Excavations were conducted during 2001 and 2007 and they revealed a settlement with residential structures, burning pits and other functional structures. Three archaeological phases were distinguished at the site: two of the Early Neolithic (5th mil. B.C.) and one of the Middle-Final Neolithic (4th mil. B.C.), according to the pottery study. In the present paper are discussed only the Early Neolithic finds, because the Middle-Final Neolithic ones were too scarce.

Beginning with 2001 study and talking about the NISP (Tab. 1), it seems that among domesticated mammals, cattle predominates (32,4%). It is followed by ovicaprines (27%) and pig (19,8%). But according to the MNI (Tab. 2), ovicaprines predominate (30,8%) with pig (23,1%) and cattle (20,5%) to follow. The presence of dog (NISP: 5,4% and MNI: 5,1%), that completes the puzzle of domesticated animals, is testified only in some stratigraphic units. It's a case of only one individual of medium-small size of ca. 48 cm height¹. As far as age of death is concerned (Tab. 3), the majority of cattle (which seem to belong to a big size domesticated



Fig. 1. The site of Baselice.

species) was killed at the young and young-adult stage of life. The little adults, that were found, never overcome the age of 8 years old. A good percentage of ovicaprines was slaughtered at the beginning of adult life and another equal percentage was slaughtered between the age of 6 months to 2 years old. Totally absent are the very young individuals. On the contrary, pigs were killed between 6 and 12 months. Also about pigs, according to the canine morphology, were distinguished one young male and

¹ The size was calculated according to the bones of one posterior limb bone.

one young female and also one adult female. About wild animals, there were found three adult wild boars, one adult fox, wild cat parts, red deer and roe deer.

The rests of 2007 outnumber these one of 2001. The identified pieces are 366 and 91% of them belong to domesticated animals and only 9% to wild animals. Talking about NISP (Tab. 1; Fig. 2), ovicaprines constitute the 41,5% of the rests and follows cattle with 33,6% and pig with 15,8%. At the wild animals of the 2001 study is added here, but it seems that wild cat is missing. Also in MNI

(Tab. 2) ovicaprines predominate with 32,1% but cattle with 29,6% overpass pig with 21%. Talking about the age of death (Tab. 3), cattles are slaughtered in young-adult and adult age stage. On the contrary, ovicaprines and pigs have a more wide range of age of death, from very young until adults.

As a special faunal find, can be referred the whole vertebrate column of one adult ovicaprine which was found inside a pit (Fig. 3). That deposition, which was covered by big calcareous stones (Fig. 4), could be a kind

Baselice	Excavation 2001		Excavation 2007		Total	
	NISP	%	NISP	%	NISP	%
Dog - <i>Canis familiaris</i>	6	5,4			6	1,3
Pig - <i>Sus domesticus</i>	22	19,8	58	15,8	80	16,8
Ovicaprines - <i>Ovis vel Capra</i>	30	27,0	152	41,5	182	38,2
Cattle - <i>Bos taurus</i>	36	32,4	123	33,6	159	33,3
Hare - <i>Lepus europaeus</i>			2	0,5	2	0,4
Fox - <i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	5	4,5	2	0,5	7	1,5
Wild cat - <i>Felis silvestris</i>	1	0,9			1	0,2
Wild boar - <i>Sus scrofa</i>	8	7,2	6	1,6	14	2,9
Cervidae ind.			1	0,3	1	0,2
Red deer - <i>Cervus elaphus</i>	2	1,8	4	1,1	6	1,3
Roe deer - <i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	1	0,9	18	4,9	19	4,0
Total of determinated bones	111	100	366	100	477	100
Total of indeterminated bones	294		1352		1646	
Total	405		1718		2123	

Tab. 1. Faunal composition expressed in NISP.

Baselice	Excavation 2001		Excavation 2007		Total	
	MNI	%	MNI	%	MNI	%
Dog - <i>Canis familiaris</i>	2	5,1			2	1,7
Pig - <i>Sus domesticus</i>	9	23,1	17	21,0	26	21,7
Ovicaprines - <i>Ovis vel Capra</i>	12	30,8	26	32,1	38	31,7
Cattle - <i>Bos taurus</i>	8	20,5	24	29,6	32	26,7
Hare - <i>Lepus europaeus</i>			2	2,5	2	1,7
Fox - <i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	1	2,6	1	1,2	2	1,7
Wild cat - <i>Felis silvestris</i>	1	2,6			1	0,8
Wild boar - <i>Sus scrofa</i>	3	7,7	3	3,7	6	5,0
Red deer - <i>Cervus elaphus</i>	2	5,1	3	3,7	5	4,2
Roe deer - <i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	1	2,6	5	6,2	6	5,0
Total	39	100	81	100	120	100

Tab. 2. Faunal composition expressed in MNI.

Baselice	Pig - <i>Sus domesticus</i>				Ovicaprines - <i>Ovis vel Capra</i>				Cattle - <i>Bos taurus</i>			
	2001		2007		2001		2007		2001		2007	
State of age	MNI	%	MNI	%	MNI	%	MNI	%	MNI	%	MNI	%
Very young	-		1	5,9	-		3	10	-		3	11,1
Young	4	50,0	6	35,5	2	28,6	6	20	1	16,7	3	11,1
Young-Adults	1	12,5	5	29,4	3	42,9	7	23,3	3	50,0	7	25,9
Adults	3	37,5	5	29,4	2	28,6	14	46,7	2	33,3	14	51,9
Old	-		-		-		-		-		-	
Totale MNI	8	100	17	100	7	100	30	100	6	100	27	100

Tab. 3. Age of death of the main domesticated species based on the MNI.

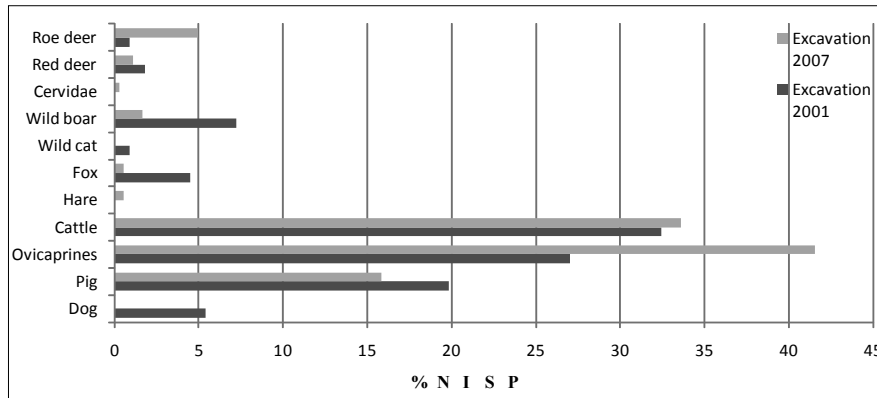


Fig. 2. Graphic of the faunal composition in NISP and expressed in %.

of ritual connected possibly with fertility of the earth. But further analysis and evaluation of the elements could give answer to such a possibility.

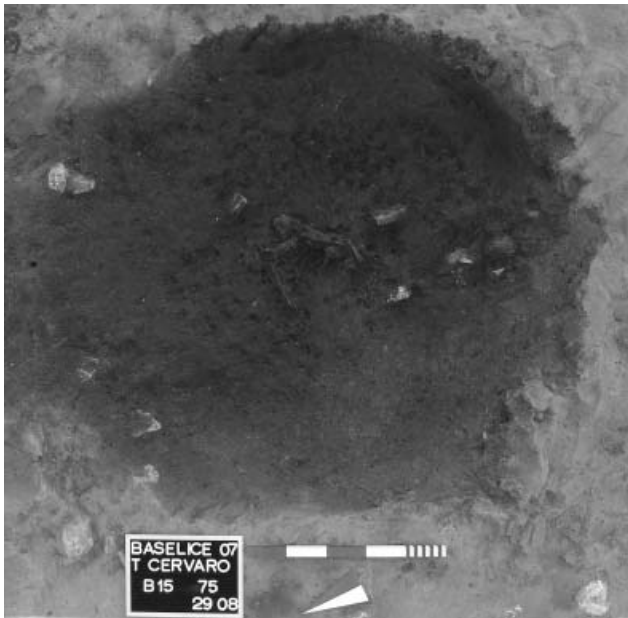


Fig. 3. The pit after the excavation (stratigraphic unit 75). At the bottom the bones of one ovicaprine.

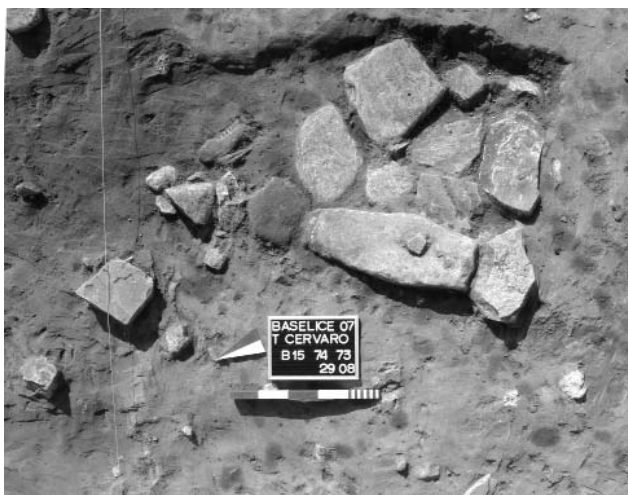


Fig. 4. The pit before the excavation (stratigraphic units 73 and 74), covered by big calcareous stones.

CONCLUSIONS

The main difference between the materials of 2001 and 2007 is the increase of the rests in the second period but also of the percentage of ovicaprines. It seems that during the Early Neolithic in Baselice the habitat of the area around the settlement was more favorable for ovicaprines and for that reason they predominate to the rest of the animals. Dog is also present. Hunting continues to keep an important role as a meat supply activity. Animals like roe deer, wild boar and red deer are predated. Rests of deer antlers were found and it seems that they were used as raw material for tool making. The presence of fox and wild cat possibly connects the hunting of these animals mainly with the use of furs and not so much with meat supply. From environmental point of view, all the wild animals indicate areas with wood coverage close to the site.

REFERENCE

Curci A., Langella M. 2005. *Tre piccole tessere per la conoscenza della preistoria del Beneventano*. In G. Malerba, P. Visentini (eds), *Atti del 4° Convegno Nazionale di Archeozoologia*. Pordenone, 13-15 Novembre 2003, *Quaderni del Museo Archeologico del Friuli Occidentale*, 6: 169-175.