PLANT RECORD AT THE WETLAND SITE ZAMOSTJE 2,
SERGIEV POSAD

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The site

Zamostje 2 is located 100 km North from Moscow at the bank of the Dubna River. The excavation began in 1989 and is currently still active. Four archaeological layers have been located, dated to the late Mesolithic and the Neolithic time span (beginnings of the 7th to the middle of the 5th millennium cal BC) (Lozovski et al., 2013). Neolithic is characterized by the appearance of ceramics, while agriculture is absent. Organic materials preservation is exceptional due to the constant presence of water within the archaeological layers. European elk (Alces alces) and Eurasian beaver (Castor fiber), predominate during both, Mesolithic and Neolithic periods. The only domestic species is dog (Canis lupus familiaris), present in both levels (Chaux, 1996). Fish remains are abundant: till date 11 taxa have been identified. Northern pike (Esox lucius), carp family fishes (Cyprinids) and European perch (Perca fluviatilis) are the main species (Desse-Berset et al., in press).

Future Research

From field season 2013 onwards, a new sampling strategy will be implemented. The excavation will continue the same 1x1 meter grid, and two archaeobotanical samples will be sieved in the field with a mesh size of 2 mm. The second one (1 litre) will be processed for the processing and sorting of the samples. Moritz Hallama helped with the elaboration of the pictures.

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Results

33 samples coming from 52 archaeological units, excavated between 1996 and 2011, yielding ca. 4150 plant remains. 4050 seeds and part plants, corresponding to 35 taxa, have been identified. The archaeobotanical assemblage is dominated by water plant species, outstanding the water yellow lily in both settlement phases. Bur-reed, bogbean, powweed, watermilfoil, spiny naiad and hornwort are relatively abundant. Water chestnut is also represented. Forest plants like alder, hazel, bird cherry, oak, dwberry, raspberry, stone bramble or guelder rose are as well present. Most of the identified species are edible or have many other potential uses. We have detected differences among both phases, regarding the represented species and the importance of them. Interesting is the case of Rubus species, which are completely absent from the Neolithic level.

In the Mesolithic level, a small tuber has been found. Although during the past two decades many authors have insisted in the important role of tubers as a staple food among hunter-gatherers (e.g. Hather and Mason, 2002), their study constitutes a weak point regarding gatherer’s archaeobotany. The remain is currently under study.

Literature


The Mesolithic layer is characterized by the presence of certain wild species, which are completely absent from the Neolithic level. A single grain of hulled barley (Hordeum vulgare) was found in the Mesolithic layer (7th. Millennium B.C.). Apparently, it indicates the contact with other groups. Even if its presence is due to a contamination from the upper Neolithic layers, since agriculture has not been documented neither at the site, nor at the region. Dating of the grain is planned in order to clarify this question.