
Causes of hunter-gatherer mobility in the western Carpathians in the Upper Pleniglacial

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Résumé

Among the most studied periods in Palaeolithic archaeology is the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM) some 24,000 years ago (24 kya) when the Eurasian Ice Sheet (EIS) expanded to the 52°N latitude and brought the coldest environment to the Western Carpathians of the last 130,000 years. The EIS retained this position until 20 kya and started retreating northward 19 kya, causing climatic amelioration for this area. This environmental change in this area is seemingly synchronous with changes in human site distribution. Before the LGM, Late Gravettian people were highly mobile and foraged around the Western Carpathians. By the LGM the Epigravettian hunters moved their sites to the Carpathian basin, reduced mobility and hardly foraged across the mountains. With the climatic amelioration, the site density in the Carpathian basin became thinner and the Epigravettian hunters recommenced long range mobility across the mountains. Because Epigravettian people were mainly reindeer hunters, and reindeers seasonally migrate over large areas, it can be supposed that the changes in site distribution were related with the foraging behaviour of the prey. The density of human occupation in LGM in the Carpathian Basin may be because reindeer shifted foraging area to this area and ceased seasonal migration across the mountains. Thus, humans halted northward foraging, and adapted their tools to less mobility. The human reoccupation of the northern periphery after EIS started retreating could be because reindeer recommenced northern migration. The range of human mobility increased again. The aim of this paper is to test whether the formation of the archaeological record of the Western Carpathians in the Upper Pleniglacial is significantly affected by prey animal ecology, which is studied through stable isotope sampling for strontium ($^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$), oxygen ($\delta^{18}\text{O}$), carbon ($\delta^{13}\text{C}$), and nitrogen ($\delta^{15}\text{N}$).

Mots-Clés: hunter, gatherer mobility, hunting, animal migration, Upper Palaeolithic

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