
Late Palaeolithic environment and human occupation in the eastern Baltic region: Latvia and Estonia

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Résumé

During the Late Palaeolithic in the eastern Baltic dominant species was reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus*), some bones and tusks from mammoth occur and the elk antler had been found, recently dated to the end of the Palaeolithic (beginning of Preboreal).

Reindeer has populated huge areas of the Pleistocene arctic steppe in Eurasia. During the Ice Age its northern distribution range in Europe has been reaching as far as north at the eastern Baltic region. However, our dated finds are coming only from the Late Pleistocene, the period when Scandinavian ice sheet retreated from the eastern Baltic areas and before the start of comprehensive warming and afforestation process in Early Holocene.

Finds include also bone and antler artefacts - harpoon heads and Lungby axe, found at south-eastern and south-western parts of Latvia, and by radiocarbon method dated to the end of Palaeolithic (Younger Dryas and very beginning of Preboreal).

In this paper we discuss about reindeer and artefact finds in connection with the climate, environmental changes and human occupation in the eastern Baltic region, i.e., Latvia and Estonia with the special emphasis on the reasons of appearance and disappearance of arctic animals from the temperate zone.

Mots-Clés: Final Palaeolithic, environment, first inhabitants, place in Northern Europe

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