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Hunting and livestock farming in early La Tène in Alsace, the example of Obernai PAEI

The bones remains

The early La Tène structures excavated at Obernai (450-375 BC) outline an important rural settlement with a two hubs organization. They delivered a corpus of bone and dental animals remains composed of 1569 remains with a total mass of approximately 38 kg. This significant mass is due to the presence of thirteen animal skeletons, domestic and wild, more or less complete deposited in silos. The other remains constitute a characteristic rejection of meat consumption. Cattle, pig and caprineas are mostly consumed. Dog and equidea are also consumed but occupy a secondary place. Some wildlife remains, deer and boar, are also present in this rejection and show anthropogenic traces which confirm the consumption of these species

Domestic animals deposit

These deposits are composed of dogs, sheep and pigs. None of this subjects revealed any anthropogenic trace or significant absence of some anatomical parts related with their consumption. Their position in the structures indicates that they were carefully deposited; thus, it does not appear to be a simple rejection

of carcass. All dogs were found deposited in association with sheeps. The osteometry indicates that the dogs haven't the same morphology as those bearing consumption traces. These dogs don't seem to be for slaughter. The presence of caprinea and dogs deposited in domestic context is a common phenomenon for the period. It's difficult to found a explanation to this association between dogs and sheep but it is not unreasonable to suppose that these deposits are the reflexion of pastoral activities.

Deers deposits

Three deer were deposited in silos, two males and one female. None of these subjects, although they are carefully deposited, aren't complete. One in particular could be a trophy. Despite the absence of some anatomical parts, who reflect a partial consumption, all were discovered in connection. These bones don't bear antropogenics traces in relation to meat consumption. These deposits reveal a cynegetic activities in connection with aristocracy.

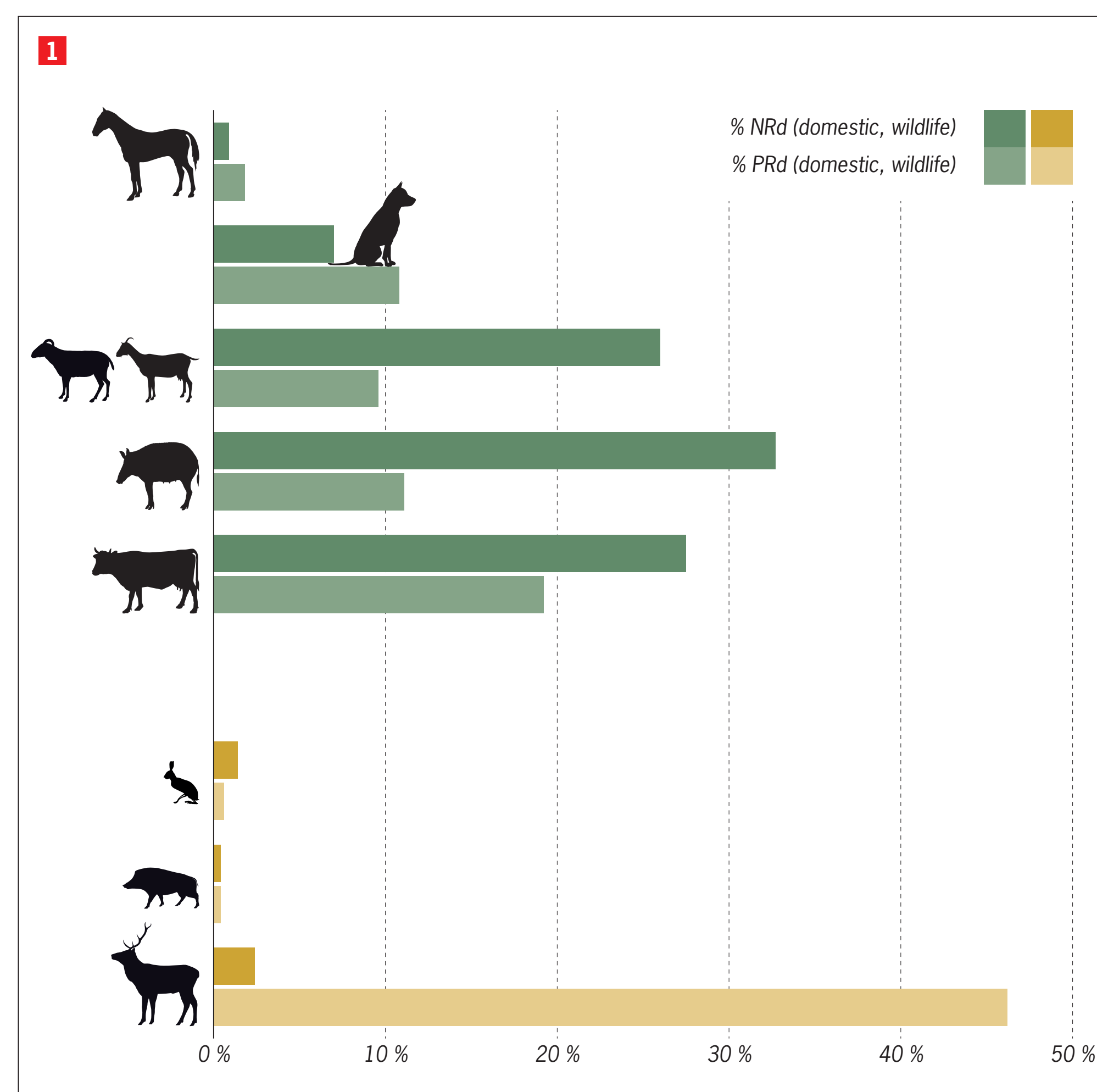
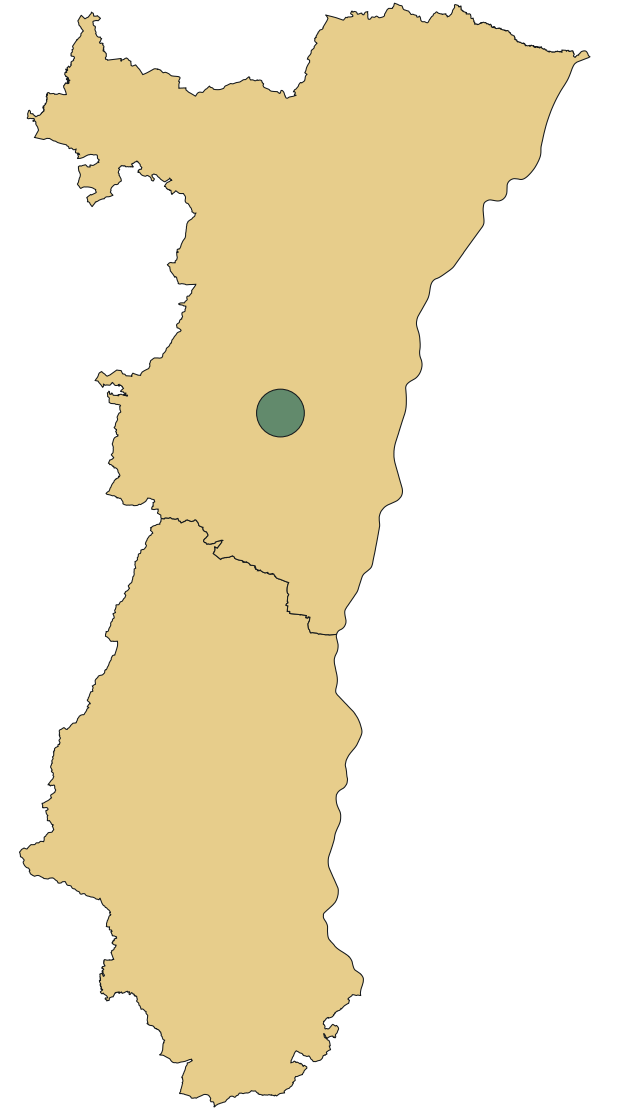
Discussion

If the animal deposition phenomenon in silos is very common in Alsace and in France during the early La Tène, the deer presence in these particular contexts makes of Obernai a case that we haven't encountered anywhere in literature. Their presence and all the staging around it reveal the importance of the hunting for this population. This is also visible in the consumption rejection where wild species are presente in a proportion of 5%. At the same period, at Geispolsheim, their presence don't exceed 1%, with no remain of big game except deer antlers. At La Tène final period (130/60 BC) at Obernai, their portion is small (3,4%).

These comparisons show a differentiated use of natural environment according to the periods of Iron Age and as well as the sites. At Geispolsheim, an occupation richer than Obernai, no staging highlights the role of hunting, which is barely represented.

The Obernai's deposits demonstrated the importance of breeding and hunting for the population of this site. The first is more common for this period, but the second seems to play an unusual role.

Contenu scientifique
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1 Composition of remain bones corpus of Early La Tène at Obernai.
The mass of deer remains and, to lesser extent, dog remains is clearly overrepresented because of the presence of subject's deposits almost complete
NRd: nombre de restes déterminés, number of determined remains
PRd: poids de restes déterminés, weight of determined remains

2 Dog and sheep deposit in structure 2083
Both animals were deposited complete; bones, which don't show any anthropogenic traces, are in strict contact, indicating a simultaneous deposit.

3 Female deer deposit of the structure 1512
The female deer was deposited complete, with exception of the left front of leg which seem to have been removed; the decomposition has been carried out in an open environment although protected all the same: the skull rolled against the edge of the silo, a few centimeters below its initial position.

4 The deer deposit of the structure 1924
Just the anterior part of the animal was deposited in connection; the anterior left leg (scapula and humerus) and posterior right leg (femur and tibia) are also represented. The antlers bear cut

traces linked to the collection of raw material.
Photo: C. Féllu

5 Proportions of differents species present in the bone remains workpackage of Early La Tène at Obernai

6. Proportions of differents species present in the bone remains workpackage of Early La Tène at Geispolsheim
The deer are only represented by a antler's fragment, which could be a sheds antler.
Excavation: M. Landolt 2009; study: O. Putelet (IPAR)

7. Proportions of differents species present in the bone remains workpackage of la Tène finale at Obernai
The wildlife is mainly represented by batrachians.
Study: D. Cambou.

for more information on the site

