

## V. OSSEOUS REMAINS

*Aleksei K. Kasparov*

Almost all the osseous remains found in the course of the excavation of building U6 at the settlement of Panskoye I came from the well in the centre of the courtyard; and this, regrettably, was the only spot to yield what might be regarded as an actual collection of osseous remains for study. It should be noted that our faunal finds were not the general, everyday waste that always accumulates (often in a redeposited form) in the cultural layers of any settlement but the refuse from perhaps just a few meals buried *in situ*.

Thus the finds described here do not enable us to reach any definite conclusion regarding, for instance, the composition of the flocks of domestic animals at the settlement, the character of the inmates' hunting activities, or the economic structure of the community, *etc.* In my view the osseous remains discovered in the well reflect the food ration of the inhabitants in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. only, and possibly for a period that itself was not very long. As mentioned elsewhere, the settlement that included building U6 was destroyed during some military operation, and we can only guess who the attackers were. Therefore it is highly probable that the bones found in the well were the remains of a victory feast held by whoever had seized the settlement. The specific composition of the faunal remains is presented in Table 1.

As the table shows, most of the bones were horse. It is remarkable that only in the case of these horse remains can we be absolutely confident that we are dealing here with the refuse of a meal and not *e.g.* with the burial of dead animals, for many of the ribs and some fragments of the neck vertebrae bear the characteristic traces of a knife suggesting that somebody cut the meat from the bones. As can be seen from the table, the quantity of identifiable bones is rather small, and probably, the modest number of individuals which we have been able to identify is fairly close to the real one. Thus it is clear that the proportion of horse meat in the diet of those who left these food remains behind was fairly great.

It should be noted that the Greek population did not use much horse as food. Thus *e.g.* in Geroyevka – an out-of-town settlement in the Nymphaion *chora* on the opposite side of the peninsula – the small cavicorns (sheep, goats) predominate among the material from household pits, cows take the second place, pig is the third, and horse remains are very few. The predominance of sheep and goats among the osseous remains in the levels of the Hellenistic period at settlements in the north-pontic area has been reported more than once by different scholars.<sup>1</sup>

It will be observed that there are no remains of pig among the refuse from the well of U6. However, in the light of the spontaneous and singular formation of this particular accumulation any judgements made on the basis of this fact would be unjustified.

Among the other osseous remains taken from the well were numerous small bones from the hind legs of the large jerboa or 'earth-hare' (*Allactaga jaculus* Pall.). Quite a number of complete thigh-bones and tibiae (Pl. 191) were found, too, and there were also two small fragments of pelvis and three fragments of the upper parts of metapodii. No other bones or bone fragments of jerboa are represented in this collection.

The earth-hare is the largest of the jerboas found in the territory of the former USSR. Its body length reaches 260 millimetres and its weight 500 grammes. Naturally, the meat-rich hind legs of this large rodent would have been used as food when other forms of sustenance were scarce. The bones found in the well belonged to mature or half grown animals in which

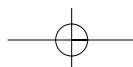
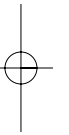
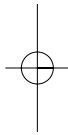


Table 1. Faunal finds from buiding U6.

Species	Bones / Individuals	%
Horse	141 / 3	58.3
Cow	16 / 2	6.6
Sheep, goats	28 / 2	11.5
Pig	–	–
Dog	–	–
Jerboa	48 / 18	13.6
Birds	9	2.6
Number of identified bones	242	100
Number of bones impossible to identify	352	

both or only the lower of the epiphyses are absent, while the size of the bones already corresponds to that of a fully mature animal. Such close age grouping suggests that these jerboas were caught during a single, short period, at a time when the young had not yet appeared or were not active, and those born in the previous year had already reached, or almost reached, maturity.

It is probably safe enough to assume that earth-hares were hunted in the spring. When the first night frosts begin these animals go into hibernation from which they do not emerge until the end of March or some time in April. Therefore we may very approximately time the destruction of the settlement to late spring or early summer.

Since the large jerboa is active only at night, it is most easily caught by means of snares set near the mouth of its burrow. There were no traces of the knife on the jerboa bones; probably there was no need of a blade for taking off the meat. Small 'hams' of the animal were eaten whole without any additional preparation.

The avian remains were identified by A.V. Panteleev (Zoological Institute, RAS). It was possible to identify only eight bone fragments. Three of them belonged to the black-throated diver (*Gavia arctica*), one – to the ferruginous duck (*Aythya nyroca*), and four – to the saker falcon (*Falco cherrug*). All these birds are wild and most probably represent a chance bag. It is difficult to tell if they were all used as food, though such a supposition is highly possible in the light of the origin and peculiarities of the deposition of the remains. However, the idea of eating such a species as the saker falcon, which is certainly not normally thought of as a game bird, may occasion surprise.

The presence of bones of the large jerboa is also surprising, for it is highly improbable that armed intruders having first destroyed the settlement would then start hunting earth-hare among its ruins, or, even less likely, engage in the laborious business of setting snares. Probably, it was the surviving inhabitants of the settlement who, having been robbed of all their property and food supplies, attempted to live on wild birds and jerboa after the withdrawal of the enemy.

## NOTE

1. Calcin 1960; Liberov 1960; Kasparov 1995.