

Exploring the Influence of Climate Change on Food Behavior in Medieval France: A Multi-Method Analysis of Human-Animal Interactions

Authors : Unsain Dianne, Roussel Audrey, Goude Gwenaëlle, Magniez Pierre, Storå Jan

Abstract : This paper aims to investigate the changes in husbandry practices and meat consumption during the transition from the Medieval Climate Anomaly to the Little Ice Age in the South of France. More precisely, we will investigate breeding strategies, animal size and health status, carcass exploitation strategies, and the impact of socioeconomic status on human-environment interactions. For that purpose, we will analyze faunal remains from ten sites equally distributed between the two periods. Those include consumers from different socio-economic backgrounds (peasants, city dwellers, soldiers, lords, and the Popes). The research will employ different methods used in zooarchaeology: comparative anatomy, biometry, pathologies analyses, traceology, and utility indices, as well as experimental archaeology, to reconstruct and understand the changes in animal breeding and consumption practices. Their analysis will allow the determination of modifications in the animal production chain, with the composition of the flocks (species, size), their management (age, sex, health status), culinary practices (strategies for the exploitation of carcasses, cooking, tastes) or the importance of trade (butchers, sales of processed animal products). The focus will also be on the social extraction of consumers. The aim will be to determine whether climate change has had a greater impact on the most modest groups (such as peasants), whether the consequences have been global and have also affected the highest levels of society, or whether the social and economic factors have been sufficient to balance out the climatic hazards, leading to no significant changes. This study will contribute to our understanding of the impact of climate change on breeding and consumption strategies in medieval society from a historical and social point of view. It combines various research methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of the changes in human-animal interactions during different climatic periods.

Keywords : archaeology, animal economy, cooking, husbandry practices, climate change, France

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