

## Re: Exploitation d'un grand cé tacé au Paléolithique ancien (Re: "carnivore tooth marks")

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On Mar 14, 9:19 am, Gerrit Hanenburg <[G.Hanenb...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:G.Hanenb...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:

"Paul Crowley" <[slkwuoiutiuytciiu...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:slkwuoiutiuytciiu...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:

Regular reliance on animal tissue as a resource requires systematic hunting.

Or trapping, or snaring, or digging (e.g. for pigs) or fishing, or foraging -- for eggs, termites, weevils, hedgehogs, porcupines, turtles, tortoises, snakes, etc., etc.

All of which you'll have to do on a regular basis if it is to make a significant contribution to your diet.

It's much easier to regularly get food from almost any of these activities than to rely on successfully hunting large animals.

On the basis of pollen spectra the Schöninger spear site is reconstructed as having had a boreal, cool temperate climate. The vegetation was a mix of meadow and forest steppe. How many of the items in your list do you think were available in such a habitat, in particular in the lean season?

Until recently the ecology of humans in such environments was heavily dependent on hunting, trapping, and fishing.

That's the significance of the throwing spears from Schöningen, that active hunting was not a single episode event.

What do you think those spears were used for? Beating an already dead (drowned) horse?

If you randomly dig the fields of Europe you will soon discover enormous quantities of discarded or expended ammunition. Do you think all (or even most) of it was used for hunting?

No, but the context of the Schöninger spears (butchery site) does not suggest they were used in intraspecific conflict.

A butchery site merely shows hominids were living there within a few thousand years either way.

So this is not a matter of either...or...

A weapon that can be used to kill a prey animal can also be used to kill a conspecific competitor. It's a question of relative frequency.

At the low population densities of the Pleistocene feeding yourself would be more urgent on a day to day basis than the occasional conflict with conspecifics about a widely dispersed movable resource.

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Besides, how reliable are throwing spears in such conflicts? The Schöninger spears have the ballistics of modern javelins, and unless you're 100% effective in hitting your target from a distance you're at the mercy of your enemy when you miss it, because once it is in the air you're without a weapon. A reusable weapon (thrusting spear, sword, club) is much more effective.

Many armies have used javelins, and throwing spears. No doubt they also carried swords (and other weapons) possibly slung on cords or belts over their backs or on their waist.

I don't see javelins being reliably useful against any prey. You'd have to get close enough, and the prey would soon understand their danger, and keep the appropriate distance. You certainly can't expect the prey to stand still after you've thrown the weapon.

Until recently Australian aboriginals used javelins very successfully against fast prey such as kangaroos. Of course, cooperation to drive the prey within range of the spear thrower will increase the efficiency of the hunt greatly.

Apparently these weapons were not frequently used in intraspecific conflicts, because the most frequent intentional injury in prehistoric Australians is depressed cranial fracture, which indicates blunt trauma, not penetrating (Larsen, C.S. 1997. *Bioarchaeology: Interpreting behavior from the human skeleton*. Cambridge Univ. Press).

Interesting. I don't think the aborigines themselves would agree. In areas where customary law is still partially intact – i.e. outback Northern Territory, ritual spearing is still sometimes practiced as a punishment – commonly a spear through the fleshy part of the upper leg.

The 2006 film *10 Canoes*, written by a tribal aborigine from Arnhem

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Land, includes such a scene. The main character murders a man from another tribe who he thinks has abducted his wife. To prevent an intertribal war, the man and his brother are forced to stand in the open while the other tribe's men hurl spears at them until one is hit.

Once one is hit, whether or not he dies (and I won't spoil the ending), the tribes agree that justice has been served.

Worth looking up in your DVD store if you haven't seen it...

Ross Macfarlane