

More than 7,500-year-old fish traps found in Russia

January 25 2012

A team of international archeologists, led by the Spanish National Research Council, has documented a series of more than 7,500-year-old fish seines and traps near Moscow. The equipment found, among the oldest in Europe, displays a great technical complexity. The survey will allow us to understand the role of fishing among the European settlements by early Holocene (10,000 years ago), especially in those areas where inhabitants did not practice agriculture until nearly the Iron Age.

Ignacio Clemente, CSIC [researcher](#) (Institut Milà I Fontanals) and manager of the project, explains: "Until now, it was thought that the Mesolithic groups had seasonal as opposed to permanent settlements. According to the results obtained during the excavations, in both Mesolithic and Neolithic periods, the human group that lived in the Dubna river basin, near [Moscow](#), carried out productive activities during the entire year".

According to Clemente and his team, during Neolithic and Mesolithic periods, the [inhabitants](#) of this region known as Zamostje 2 preferred to hunt during summer and winter, [fish](#) during spring and early summer, and harvest wild berries at the end of summer season and autumn. Clemente states: "We think that the fishing played a vital role in the economy of these societies, because it was a versatile product, easy to preserve, dry and smoke, as well as store for later consumption".

Advanced Technology

During this project, which has just come to an end after three years, several types of objects have been found: everyday objects (spoons, plates, etc.), working tools, hunting weapons and fishing implements, all of them manufactured with flint and other stones, bones and shafts. CSIC researcher adds: "The documented fishing equipment shows a highly developed technology, aimed for the practice of several fishing techniques. We can highlight the finding of two large wooden fishing [traps](#) (a kind of interwoven basket with pine rods used for fishing), very well-preserved, dating back from 7,500 years ago. This represents one of the oldest dates in this area and, no doubt, among the best-preserved since they still maintain some joining ropes, manufactured with vegetable fibers".

In addition, the researchers have recovered some objects related to the catch and processing of fish, such as hooks, harpoons, weights, floats, needles for nets manufacture and repair, as well as moose rib knives to scale and clean the fish.

Organic remains

One of the peculiarities of the Zamostje 2 site is the preservation of numerous organic materials, such as wood, bones, tree leaves, fossil feces, and especially fish remains. According to Clemente, "it is really unusual to find sites with so much preserved organic remains. The ichthyological remains that we have found give us an idea of the protein percentage provided by fish in the diet of the prehistoric population. Furthermore, these remains will help us to conduct a survey from the point of view of species classification, catch amount and size, and fishing season among others. These details are essential to be able to assess the role played by fishing in the economy of these human groups".

The site was discovered in the 80s, during the works to build the channel through the waters of the currently flowing Dubna river (Oka-Volga basin). Zamostje 2 displays four archeological levels: two from the Mesolithic period (between 7,900 and 7,100 years ago) and two from the Neolithic period (between 6,800 and 5,500 years ago). CSIC researcher concludes: "These levels are found under a subsoil layer with groundwaters and a subsequent peat bog level, which has allowed an excellent preservation of the archeological materials, even those of organic origin".

Provided by CSIC, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas

Citation: More than 7,500-year-old fish traps found in Russia (2012, January 25) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-01-year-old-fish-russia.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.