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## BIOCHRONOLOGY OF THE PLEISTOCENE MAMMAL FAUNAS FROM ROME URBAN AREA

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#### Abstract

Biochronology of the Pleistocene mammal Faunas from Rome urban area. - In the Rome area nowdays it is not possible to verify the stratigraphical references on the Pleistocene faunal assemblages in different times. The writers, considering the last biochronological model of the plio-pleistocene mammals of Italy, make many observations on the biochronological sequences of mammals in the roman urban area from Olivola F.U. (Mammal Age late Villafranchian: early Pleistocene) to Vitinia F.U. (Mammal Age middle Aurelian: middie late Pleistocene).

RIASSUNTO - Biocronologia delle faune a mammiferi pleistocenici dell'area di Roma. - Nell'area urbana di Roma attualmente è impossibile qualsiasi verifica sul terreno delle diverse situazioni stratigrafiche nei numerosi giacimenti a macromammiferi pleistocenici segnalati già dal secolo scorso nei sedimenti terrazzati del Tevere. Gli autori, applicando lo schema biocronologico proposto dalla maggior parte dei paleontologi dei vertebrati nel 1997, ricostruiscono la biocronologia dei mammiferi pleistocenici dell'area di Roma dall'Unità faunistica di Olivola (Età a mammiferi Villafranchiano superiore: Pleistocene inferiore) all'Unita faunistica di Vitinia (Età a mammiferi Aureliano medio: Pleistocene medio superiore).


Parole chiave: Biocronologia , Mammiferi, Pleistocene, Roma.
Key words: Biochronology, Mammals, Pleistocene, Rome.

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays it is not possible to verify the stratigraphical references on the faunal assemblages found in the Rome area (fig. 1) in different times. These references could allow to attribute the faunal remains to a specific chronological period but in most of sites we cannot do any direct observation of the lithological sequences for the human activities; in some other cases, therefore, the Authors of the past do not give useful stratigraphical information that could correspond to a modern model.

The stratigraphical, geological and structural pattern of the Rome urban area might be redefinied with some work of modern Authors, like those of Conato et al. (1980) (fig. 2) and Marra \& Rosa (1995) (fig. 3). Starting from these information, where available, and considering the last biochronological model of the pliopleistocene mammals of Italy (Gliozzi et al., 1997), we can make some observations on the biochronological sequences of mammals in the Rome area during the Pleistocene. These sequences demonstrate that in the roman urban area there are numerous local faunas in a wide time span, from the late Villafranchian faunas to the late Aurelian faunas (fig. 4).

Most of remains considered for the realization of
this paper are stored in the Paleontological Museum of the "La Sapienza" University of Rome and they are mostly edited in different times, form the end of the last century to today. We want also remember that we will consider as the basis for the first occurrences and the last occurrences of the various macromammal taxa, the scheme proposed by Gliozzi et al. (1997).

## BIOCHRONOLOGY OF THE ROME URBAN AREA

## Late Villafranchian

Olivola F. U. - Tasso F. U.
The most ancient remain found in the Rome area is molar attributed to Mammuthus meridionalis. (Caloi \& Palombo, 1988); it was recovered from the sands and salty clays of Monte Mario (figg.1, 2) referred to the Lower Pleistocene (Santernian). The morphological features of this remain are similar to those of M. meridionalis meridionalis, a form tipically diffused in the faunal association from the middle Villafranchian to the Olivola and Tasso Faunal Units. These features, even if only a tooth has been found, do not testified the presence of M. m. vestinus which spreads from the Farneta F. U.

Pirro F. U.
Numerous mammal remains come from the gravel quarry of Redicicoli (fig. 1), in a different state of preservation, that have been studied only in recent works (Caloi et al., 1980a; Caloi \& Palombo, 1995).

According to the writers, the faunal assemblage is
constituted by typical villafranchian forms (Mammuthus meridionalis ssp., Bison (Eobison) degiulii) associated with galerian forms (Stephanorhinus hundsheimensis, Megaceroides cf. solilhacus, Bison schoetensacki) and with forms diffused in a wide biochronological span (Euraxis eurygonos, Equus aff. Equus altidens, Hippopotamus antiquus).


Fig. 1 - Map of Rome with the main Pleistocene mammal fauna sites.
Mappa dell'area urbana di Roma con i principali siti contenenti faune a Mammiferi del Pleistocene.

| 1-Aventino | 8 - Cava Nera Molinario | 15 - Monte Sacro | 22 - Porta Cavalleggeri | 29-S. Agnese | 36-Via del Tritone |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 2-Batteria Nomentana | 9 - Cello | 16 - Monte Verde | 23-Porta Falminia | $30-$ S. Paolo | 37 - Via Nazionale |
| 3 -Boccea | 10-Fondamenta BNL | 17-Monti della Farnesina | 24 - Porta Pia | 31 - Saccopastore | 38 - Via Ostiense |
| 4 - Campidoglio | 11 - GRA km 2 | 18 - Parioli | 25 - Porta Salaria | 32 - Sedia del Diavolo | 39 - Vla Portuense |
| 5-Campo di Merlo | 12 - Monte Antenne | 19 - Pincio | 26 - Prati Fiscali | 33- Tor di Quinto | 40 - Vigna S. Carlo |
| 6 - Casal dé Pazzi | 13 - Monte delle Piche | 20 - Ponte Mammolo | 27 - Quirinale | 34 - Via Aurelia | 41 - Vigne Torte |
| 7 - Castro Pretorio | 14 - Monte Mario | 21 - Ponte Molle | 28 - Redicicoli | 35 - Via Cassia | 42 - Villa Chigi |

This faunal assemblage has been referred to the Colle Curti F. U. (Caloi \& Palombo, 1995), when some villafranchian elements still lived together galerian forms.

According to the writers, however, this hypothesis do not seems likely for some reasons:

1. Bison (Eobison) degiulii characterizes the Pirro F. U. and if we exclude its reference at Redicicoli, it has never been found in other Faunal Units;
2. B. schoetensacki is a typical galerian element, even in its primitive form, it occurs from the Slivia F. U. but it is widely diffused only from the Isernia F. U.; moreover, it is quite difficult to explain the contemporary presence of two bison species in a paleoecological point of view;
3. the presence of megacerine forms with slender limbs, attributed to Megaceroides solilhacus is referred only in the galerian faunas in the Italian peninsula, even if in Europe they are referred in late Villafranchian faunal association (Venta Micena - this attribution is however doubtful according to Azzaroli and Mazza, 1993), and they can be associated very hardly with Bison (Eobison) degiulii.

Nowadays it is not possible to reconstruct the exact position of the Redicicoli quarry and therefore its stratigraphy; some taphonomical observation on the differente state of preservation of the remains (frequent fragmentation, fluitation, non-uniform post-depositional permineralization) make more complex the picture.

On the basis of all these consideration, however, it seems reasonable to separate the remains from Redicicoli into two faunal association: the older one (Redicicoli 1) of late Villafranchian age referable to the Pirro F: U. and characterized by the presence of Bison (Eobison) degiulii, Equus aff. Equus altidens and Mammuthus meridionalis ssp., and the younger one (Redicicoli 2) of middle Galerian age characterized by Megaceroides cf. solilhacus, Stephanorhinus hundsheimensis and Bison schoetensacki. The Isernia F. U. (sensu Petronio \& Sardella, 1999) is characterized by $M$. solilhacus; the megacerine remains from Redicicoli 2 is represented only by a complete metacarpal with the biometrical and morphological features referable to a form with slender limbs very close to M. solilhacus (Di Stefano, unpublished data); however, the scarcity of the remains do not allow a more precise taxonomical attribution and therefore further biochronological considerations.

## Galerian

Isernia F. U.
Numerous vertebrate remains have been collected from the so-called "Ponte Molle gravels" (fig. 1) and they are referred to three different periods (Capasso Barbato ot al., 1998).

A faunal assemblage referable to a middle



 Schema generale dei rapporti stratigrafici delle Formazioni quaternarie nell riva desta, younger Dune (from Conato et al., 1980, modified).

 Formazione di Vitinia; v) Duna antica; w) depositi Neotirreniani; y) Duna recente; (ridisegnato da Conato et al., 1980).



 Monte Mario; 9) Unità di Monte Vaticano; 10) campioni a, b, cutilizzati da Marra \& Rosa, 1995; 11) perforazioni; 12) faglie (modificato da Marra et al., 1995).

Galerian faunal unit between the Slivia F. U. and the Isernia F. U. (because of biochronological considerations this last Faunal Unit is condidered younger than what most of authors has written and subsequent to the Ponte Galeria F U., Petronio \& Sardella, 1999) is testified by Cervus elaphus acoronatus and Euraxis eurygonos (Di Stefano \& Petronio, 1992; Capasso Barbato et al., 1998); these cervids do not allow to attribute the remains to a definite Faunal Unit but the presence of volcanic elements on them may hypothesize their reference to the first volcanic period of the Sabatine area, which dates back to 600.000 years ago. This datation could allow to attribute the "Ponte Molle 1" fauna to the Isernia F. U..

As previously said, the faunal assemblage named Redicicoli 2, characterized by Megaceroides of. solilhacus, Stephanorhinus hundsheimensis and Bison schoetensacki, could be referred to this biochronological span.

## Fontana Ranuccio F. U.

The presence of this Faunal Unit in the Rome urban area is testified by the finding of an antler of Cervus elaphus eostephanoceros (Di Stefano \& Petronio, 1993), in the site of Cava Nera Molinario, in the northern boundary of the city (fig. 1). This subspecies is an important evolutive phase for the red deer because, for first time, it shows the complete development of the crown in the upper part of the antler. From the stratigraphical point of view, the antler has been collected form volcanic tuffs which dates back to 500.000 years (fig. 5) (De Rita et al., 1992; Di Stefano \& Petronio, 1993). This datation is confirmed by biochronological considerations because C. e. eostephanoceros is exclusive and characterizes the late Galerian faunal assemblages of southern Europe (Hundsheim, Fontana Ranuccio, S. Cosimato ecc.) and it can be considered as a "marker" for this biochronological period (Gliozzi et al., 1997).

The cervid remains from the "lionate lithoid tuff" of Sedia del Diavolo (figg. 1, 6) (named Sedia del Diavolo 1 in this paper) could belong to a phase a little younger than the Cava Nera Molinario fauna. It dates about 360.000 years (Caloi et al., 1980b), but the remains, constituted in two female skulls, do not show any feature which allow to attribute them to a particular form of C. elaphus.

## Aurelian

Torrimpietra F. U.
The aurelian faunas are highly represented in the Rome urban area. The lithotypes which characterize the Aurelia Formation, from the typical coastal zone of Via Aurelia (northwest Rome area) to the internal zones, are slowly substituted by tuffs and lacustrine silts,


Fig. 4 - Biochronological framework of the mammal faunas from the Rome area. Modello biocronologico delle faune a Mammiferi dell'area di Roma.
rich of Sabatine and Alban volcanic elements and cutted by terraces of different order of the Tiber and Aniene rivers.

The faunal assemblage from the intermediate levels of Sedia del Diavolo (named Sedia del Diavolo 2 in this paper - fig. 6) - tuffs and yellow silts upon the lionate lithoid tuff, corresponding to the stage 9 of the paleotemperature scale (De Rita et al., 1992; Gliozzi et al., 1997) - could be referred to this Faunal Unit (Caloi et al., 1980b). It also yields Meles meles, Elephas antiquus, Stephanorhinus of. hemitoechus, Dama sp. and Bos primigenius.

## Vitinia F. U.

The faunal assemblage from the so-called "upper gravels" of Sedia del Diavolo (named Sedia del Diavolo 3 in this paper) may be ascribed to the Vitinia Faunal Unit. The faunal association is characterized by Canis
sp., Stephanorhinus sp., Equus sp., Equus caballus, Equus hydruntinus, Elephas antiquus, Sus scrofa, Hippopotamus amphibius, Dama dama tiberina, Dama cf. clactoniana, Cervus elaphus and Bos primigenius. The presence of the archaic form of the species Dama dama (Dama dama tiberina, Di Stefano \& Petronio, 1997) (fig. 7) allow to refer this fauna to the middle Aurelian. The fossiliferous level of Sedia del Diavolo 3 has been correlated with the upper levels of Vitinia (Caloi \& Palombo, 1988, 1995), which have been referred to the stage 7 of the paleotemperature scale (Conato et al., 1980; Malatesta \& Zarlenga; 1988). The remains of $D$. dama tiberina are very abundant, even if often fragmented, and the antler remains, limb bones and teeth are strictly similar to the fossil material from Vitinia (that is stratigraphically correlatable) and to the holotype described by Di Stefano \& Petronio (1997). The contemporary occurrence of $D$. dama tiberina and D. clactoniana is therefore recorded also in other localities (Vitinia upper levels, Grays Thurrock) (Di Stefano \& Petronio, 1997).

Numerous vertebrate remains have been found along the Via Nomentana, next to the confluence of the Aniene river with the Tiber river, during the last century. The faunal assemblage, mostly unpublished, is characterized by the presence of Dama dama tiberina.
The site of Batteria Nomentana is completely correlatable with Sedia del Diavolo 3 which is, otherwise, only some hundreds of metres far. The few remains from some sites as Porta Salaria (where a fragmented mandibula of Dama dama tiberina has been collected) and Vigne Torte can be also referred to the same age.

Numerous mammals remains have been collected form the site of Vigna S. Carlo, now completely destroyed by the urbanization. Among these remains a large part of a left antler of Dama dama tiberina have also been found, from the trez tine until the complete palm. This antler is very similar to the antlers from Ponte Molle and Vitinia in its morphological and biometrical features

The rich faunal assemblage from Casal de' Pazzi, which also includes Elephas antiquus, Dama dama tiberina and Bos primigenius, is referable to the Vitinia F. U. (Caloi \& Palombo 1995); to the same Faunal Unit can be attibuted the remains of Mammuthus chosarichus and Cervus elaphus ssp. collected from two neighbou-


Fig. 5 - On the top Stratigraphy of the Cava Nera Molinario section (Via Flaminia, Rome) the top, redrawn from Blanc et al. 1956): 1) fluvial gravels without volcanic minerals, 2) fluvial gravel with volcanic minerals, 3) grey lithoid tuff, 4) "tufo rosso a scorie nere".
On the bottom - Right antler of Cervus elaphus eostephanoceros Di Stefano \& Petronio (1993) from Cava Nera Molinario.

In alto - Stratigrafia della sezione di Cava Nera Molinario (Via Flaminia, Roma) (ridisegnata da Blanc et al., 1956): 1) ghiaie fluviali senza elementi vulcanici, 2) ghiaie fluviali con elementi vulcanici, 3) tufo litoide grigio; 4) "tufo rosso a scorie nere".
In basso - palco destro di Cervus elaphus eostephanoceros Di Stefano \& Petronio (1993) da Cava Nera Molinario.
ring sites at the km 7 and km 8 of the Via Flaminia (north-eastern zone of Rome) (Kotsakis et al., 1978).

## Late Aurelian

The faunal assemblage from Saccopastore can be refferred to this biochronological unit. This site is famous because it yielded two skulls of Homo neanderthalensis s.l., but it also yielded numerous vertebrate remains among which B. primigenius, E. antiquus, C. elaphus, D. dama configure it as a typical faunal association of the first part of late Aurelian.

Nowadays we cannot attribute with certainty other faunal associations to the late Aurelian in the Rome urban area, because of their uncertain stratigraphical position and the scarce remains.

There are instead numerous sites which yielded holocenic remains in the whole Rome urban area, but
they are not considered in this work.

## Sites of uncertain age

In the Rome urban area there are numerous zones which yielded vertebrate remains which cannot be located in a biochronological model. This situation arise from the presence of uncertain faunal elements with wide biochronological range and/or belonging to faunal assemblages of different age and finally, as already said, because it is impossible to verify the stratigraphy with modern approach. It could be only possible for some sites to assign a lower and/or upper biochronological limit.

In the Tab. 1 are indicated the most important sites which yielded vertebrate remains, stored in the Paleontological Museum of the "La Sapienza" University.


Fig. 6 - Stratigraphy of the Sedia del Diavolo section (Rome) (modified from Caloi et al., 1997): 1) fluvial gravels, 2) "tufo litoide lionato" with Sedia del Diavolo 1 mammal fauna, 3) tufitic deposit and yellow limes with "tufo rosso a scorie nere" elements reworked (Sedia del Diavolo 2 mammal fauna), 4) fluviolacustrine deposits (Sedia del Diavolo 3 comes from the upper part of the gravels), 5) humus.
Sezione stratigrafica di Sedia del Diavolo (Roma) (modificata da Caloi et al., 1997): 1):ghiaie fluviali, 2) "tufo litoide lionato" contenente la fauna di Sedia del Diavolo 1, 3) deposito tufitico e limi gialli con elementi rimaneggiati di "tufo rosso a scorie nere" contenente la fauna di Sedia del Diavolo 2, 4) depositi fluvio-lacustri (lafauna di Sedia del Diavolo 3 proviene dalla parte superiore delle ghiaie), 5) humus.


Fig. 7 - Antlers of: a) Dama clactoniana (middle Galerian - middle Aurelian), b) Dama dama tiberina (middle Aurelian), c) Dama dama dama (late Aurelian - Recent) (from Di Stefano \& Petronio, 1997).

Palchi di: a) Dama clactoniana (Galeriano medio-Aureliano medio), b) Dama dama tiberina (Aureliano medio), c) Dama dama dama (Aureliano superiore-Recente) (da Di Stefano \& Petronio, 1997).


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