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Hunting in the Medieval Serbia: Historical and Zooarchaeological Records

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During the Middle Ages, the territory of Serbia abounded with forests and numerous wild animal species. In the medieval society hunting was the obligation of the lower class and the main entertainment of noblemen, but also an opportunity for practicing and staying in shape during the times of peace, which provided rich feasts as well. This paper summarizes the results of zooarchaeological analysis of the faunal material incorporated with historical records on the matter of importance of hunting in the medieval Serbia. Some information about the presence of certain wild species was preserved in toponyms and written records, whereas some representations in frescos in churches and monasteries show high resemblance to the real animal species. There are numerous representations of game and hunting on monumental medieval tombstones, on the basis of which both different animal species hunting methods and customs related to this activity can be reconstructed. There is only a small number of zooarchaeological faunal remains analyses which indicate a higher significance of animal husbandry in the economy of medieval settlements and monasteries, while the role of hunting was of less importance. The results indicate that animals that were predominantly hunted in the medieval Serbia were those animals that lived in the areas surrounding the sites, and that were accessible to the inhabitants on a daily basis, which include: wild boar, red deer, roe deer, brown bear and hare.