

Publication

Quantitative approximation to large-seeded wild fruit use in a late Neolithic lake dwelling. The case study of layer 13 of Parkhaus-Opéra in Zürich (Central Switzerland)

JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)

ID 3525090

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Year 2016

Title Quantitative approximation to large-seeded wild fruit use in a late Neolithic lake dwelling. The case study of layer 13 of Parkhaus-Opéra in Zürich (Central Switzerland)

Journal Quaternary International

Volume 404

Number A

Pages / Article-Number 56-68

A specific sediment sampling strategy was applied to a late Neolithic settlement phase (dendrodated to around 3160 BC) in the pile-dwelling site of Parkhaus Opéra (Zürich, Switzerland). It consisted in a systematic collection of over 2100 large-volume samples (3–10 L) in an area of ~3000 m², of which 255 were selected for archaeobotanical analysis. Over 80,000 plant macroremains of large size (>2 mm) were recovered and a rich assemblage of large-seeded wild fruits was evaluated. Hazelnuts (*Corylus avellana* L.), acorns (*Quercus* sp.), apples/pears (*Malus/Pyrus*), sloes (*Prunus spinosa* L.), wild rose fruits (*Rosa* sp.), beech nuts (*Fagus* sp.) and wayfaring tree fruits (*Viburnum lantana* L.) were among the most frequently and abundantly gathered and consumed wild fruits at the settlement. Three methods of quantification were used to evaluate their importance in the economy taking into account the samples retrieved from 16 fully excavated structures: total average density of fruit items, total estimated amount of fruits, and their calorific contribution. The estimation of the calorific importance of large-seeded wild fruits depends on assumptions on taphonomic biases. A first estimation suggested that they probably provided between 1.5% and 15% of the total calorific input by the settlement's inhabitants.

Publisher Elsevier

ISSN/ISBN 1040-6182 ; 1873-4553

edoc-URL <http://edoc.unibas.ch/43267/>

Full Text on edoc No;

Digital Object Identifier DOI 10.1016/j.quaint.2015.08.003

ISI-Number WOS:000376070200006

Document type (ISI) Article