

Proboscidean bone modification in the Middle/Upper Palaeolithic of the Japanese Islands

A. Ono

*Archaeology Laboratory, Tokyo Metropolitan University, Japan -
ono@bcomp.metro-u.ac.jp*

Most Japanese palaeolithic sites have been found in aeolian tephra layers; the acid tephra layers preserve no organic materials at all, and over all the Japanese Islands only a few exceptions to this situation are known. The Late Middle Palaeolithic site of Tategahana, dating to OIS 3 and located on the shore line of Lake Nojiri in Central North Japan, is a unique site where numerous mammalian fossils and many palaeolithic artefacts have been recovered by archaeologists during excavation of the lacustrine sediments. The bulk of the mammalian fossils belongs to two species. The remains of Naumann's elephant (*Palaeoloxodon naumanni*) represent 91,9%, and bones of Yabe's giant deer (*Sinomegaceros yabei*) 7,9% of the total number of mammalian fossils. This faunal as-

semblage suggests selective big game hunting by palaeolithic hunters according to the composition of the faunal remains. Lithic tools, such as scrapers and borers, and flakes were associated with the bones within the same layer. The bone tool inventory is made from elephant bone and comprises an oblong side scraper, a cleaver, a knife shaped tool, and flakes with retouched bases. In the Middle Nojiri-ko Member I, a bone cleaver as well as bone flakes with retouched bases, and chips of bone, which could be refitted, were found together in a concentration. This evidence suggests that some areas of the site functioned as a kill-butchered locale on the shore of the lake, implying that the elephant hunters also produced bone tools during their kill-butchered activities.