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Mammoth cutlery: mammoth flakes for mammoth steaks

A. Hannus

Augustana College, Archeology Laboratory, Sioux Falls, USA - hannus@inst.augie.edu

Excavations were conducted between 1980 and 1984 at the Lange/Ferguson site, a mammoth kill-butchering locality situated on the edge of a Late Pleistocene pond or marsh in the White River Badlands of South Dakota (USA). These investigations established the presence of a Clovis technocultural complex. One human activity area at the site contained the associated remains of an adult and a juvenile mammoth. Both animals had been systematically butchered using culturally modified elements of mammoth bone. Bone flakes were deliberately removed from mammoth bone cores by Clovis hunters during the butchering process. The flakes were removed from both dorsal and ventral faces of prepared bone cores. Flake removal parallels the longitudinal axis, with several specimens exhibiting transverse flaking. SEM evaluations on several of the mammoth bone flakes as well as on other mammoth bone tools from the Lange/Ferguson assemblage, was able to document the unequivocal evidence for the utilization of these specimens in the butchering process. A second human activity area at the site, in a context stratigraphically related to the first area, revealed three Clovis points. The recovery of mammoth bone implements, coupled with the recovery of well-preserved proboscidean, non-proboscidean, and invertebrate fauna, as well as fossil pollen and phytoliths, has expanded our insights into butchering systematics associated with the Clovis culture.