A Study of Butchery Marks Left on Faunal Remains of
the Early Jomon Period: An Analysis of Mammal Bones
from 1985 Season of the Torihama Shell Mound, Fukui.

HONGO Hitomi

Faunal remains from an archaeological site are the end products of various modifications both by human and non-human agents. Modification of bones by humans occur in the process between the killing of animals and the discarding of unnecessary bones. Various activities such as butchering, distribution of the meat, and cooking are included in this process.

In order to reconstruct the hunting and consequent human activities in the Early Jomon period, 8229 fragments of mammal bones which have been excavated from the Torihama Shell-mound in 1985 are examined. The location and the characteristics of butchery marks on the bones are recorded. Burnt bones are also examined and recorded. In addition, breakage patterns of the limb bones of deer and boar, the two major animals in the faunal assemblage, are analyzed.

The proportion of modified bones in the sample is rather small: Only about 4% of the sample bear butchery marks, and about 2% of the sample are burnt. On the other hand, most of the bones have been broken. Butchery marks were left on the bones during the primary butchery following the hunting activities (including skinning and dismemberment), and also during the secondary butchery in the process of cooking of the game. An attempt is made to distinguish the characteristics of modification by the primary and the secondary butchery.

Few butchery marks are observed on vertebrae (except for boar atlas) and ribs. There are some differences between deer and boar in the location of butchery marks and in the breakage patterns of limb bones. Butchery marks are observed on more than 15% of the pelvis of boar, while they are not found on many of the deer pelvis in the sample. On the other hand, many of the deer femur are broken at the distal half of the shaft. It seems that the hind limbs of boar seems to have been separated at the proximal epiphisis of femur and processed as two different units. The pelvis and proximal femur of deer seem to have been treated as a unit. Lower parts of the limbs of boar seem to have been discarded intact, while metacarpals of deer were usually broken, probably to utilize
them for making tools. These differences would reflect the units of carcass treatment of the two animals, which result from the difference in the location of meat-bearing parts between deer and boar.