

ARCHAEOANTHROLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF A MULTIPLE SECONDARY BURIAL WITH SIGNS OF PERIMORTEM VIOLENCE AND POSTMORTEM CLEANING DURING THE LATE HOLOCENE IN LA PAMPA, ARGENTINA

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Background: The Médano Petroquímica site (La Pampa, Argentina) is a pre-Hispanic burial area located in a sand dune structure of aeolian origin, characterized by burials with a high density of inhumed individuals. Between 2006 and 2009, six burials were excavated, from which approximately 130 individuals were recovered. Six radiocarbon dates suggest that the site was used towards the end of the Late Holocene, between 1435 and 1635 AD.

Objective: We present the results of a funerary taphonomic analysis of the human skeletal remains from burial feature H6-3.

Materials and methods: The analysis focused on the observation of intentional anthropogenic marks and the presence of natural taphonomic signs that could affect and interfere with the assessment of cultural features.

Results: This secondary multiple burial contained the remains of 39 individuals, including adults and subadults. Insect traces, ochre, articulated and disarticulated bone segments, signs of perimortem violence, and postmortem cleaning marks were observed on some bones. Some individuals appear to have died violently, and most were exposed to the elements in a primary context to accelerate decomposition, as evidenced by the widespread signs of *Dermestes*. Subsequently, the individuals were likely moved to this multiple burial, with bodies in various stages of decomposition and degrees of natural disarticulation arranged together. Finally, many of them were covered with ochre, except for the perinatal remains, which must have been protected in textile containers. The archaeoanthrological analysis provides information on the formation process of the funerary deposit.

Keywords: Pampas hunter-gatherers; Late Holocene; Secondary burials; Differential decomposition.