



EARLY HOLOCENE LONG-DISTANCE OBSIDIAN TRANSPORT IN CENTRAL-SOUTH PATAGONIA

TRANSPORTE DE LARGA DISTANCIA DE OBSIDIANAS EN PATAGONIA CENTRO-SUR DURANTE EL HOLOCENO TEMPRANO

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Chronological based data for Early Holocene obsidian transport is not abundant for sites in continental Patagonia. We present ICP-MS analyses of obsidian samples from two well-dated stratified cave archaeological deposits in the steppe plains of the Aisén region (Chile) and discuss the implications of this data for constraining temporal trends in technological decisions related to hunter-gatherers mobility and use of space. The evidence presented suggests that recurrent obsidian circulation routes were established in central-south Patagonia at the onset of the Holocene.

Key words: Obsidian transport, ICP-MS, Patagonia, Early Holocene.

Los datos con fundamento cronológico para el transporte de obsidiana durante el Holoceno Temprano en Patagonia continental son escasos. Presentamos análisis de ICP-MS en muestras de obsidiana de dos depósitos arqueológicos estratificados bien fechados bajo reparo en las planicies esteparias de la región de Aisén (Chile) y discutimos las implicancias de estos datos para precisar las tendencias temporales de las decisiones tecnológicas relacionadas a la movilidad y uso del espacio de cazadores recolectores. La evidencia presentada sugiere que fue con el inicio del Holoceno que las rutas recurrentes de circulación de obsidianas se establecieron en Patagonia centro sur.

Palabras claves: transporte de obsidiana, ICP-MS, Patagonia, Holoceno Temprano.

In Patagonia (southernmost South America) there is a significant amount of geochemical obsidian sourcing data which has identified available sources and provided a great deal of information for discussing the spatial scale of prehistoric transport of high-quality obsidian throughout the region (Barberena et al. 2010; Belardi et al. 2006; Civalero and Franco 2003; Favier Dubois et al. 2009; García-Herbst et al. 2007; Méndez 2004; Méndez et al. 2008-9; Molinari and Espinosa 1999; Morello et al. 2004; Stern 1999, 2004; amongst many others). South of 42°S, a total of six sources have been recognized as systematically exploited and their obsidians widely transported (Figure 1). These include translucent grey obsidian from Chaitén volcano (Stern et al. 2002); black and translucent grey-black obsidians from Sacanana and Sierra Negra sources in Somuncurá plateau (Gómez Otero and Stern 2005; Stern et al. 2000);

green obsidian from Seno Otway (Morello et al. 2001; Stern and Prieto 1991); banded grey-green obsidian from Cordillera Baguales (Stern and Franco 2000) and black obsidian from Pampa del Asador (Espinosa and Goñi 1999; Stern 1999). The latter has been the most recurrently transported lithic raw-material in the region, with exceptionally long-distant movements of more than 800 km (Stern 2004). As expected, obsidians are not randomly distributed; for instance while Chaitén and Seno Otway obsidian artifacts occur along western archipelagic areas and thus belong broadly, though not exclusively, to the realm of maritime hunter-gatherers of the Pacific (Méndez et al. 2008-9; Morello et al. 2001, 2004), the other four types are basically recorded at continental locations of the steppes of eastern Patagonia and within the forest/steppe transition at the eastern margin of the Andes mountain range (Stern 2004).

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