



PERGAMON

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Preface

South America: long and winding roads for the first Americans at the Pleistocene/Holocene transition

Since 1998, the idea of discussing different topics referring to the peopling of the Southern Cone at the Pleistocene/Holocene transition was occupying our interests. Finally, and with the agreement of INQUA through the Working Group "The Archaeology of the Pleistocene/Holocene transition", a meeting was held in Argentina in December 2000 with the aims of stimulating dialogue about the existing information, and mitigating the problem of heretofore-scarce communication among those colleagues working on the archaeology of the First Americans in South America. The workshop was organized by us, with the valuable collaboration of many Argentine colleagues and friends.

This inter-INQUA congress event included presentations and discussions during two days about the theoretical and methodological framework used by specialists in different South American countries, and the status of our ideas about the assumed relationships between the first colonizers and the Quaternary megafauna. Some models for the peopling of southern South America at different geographic scales were presented. However, a very interesting point of this meeting was a 4-day field trip to the main archaeological sites related to the First Americans in southern Patagonia, where the earliest human settlements of southern South America were discussed from interdisciplinary points of view, integrating natural science and archeological analyses and evidence.

The papers compiled in this issue are only a few of a large number of contributions that were presented in the meeting. All of them not only present new data on the subject, but also new ideas that highlight the backgrounds concerning paleoenvironments, human adaptations, academic policies, and regional and continental models, as well as the state of the art in different countries.

These contributions explore significant questions such as: the beginning of the social complexity among the hunter-gatherers during the Pleistocene/Holocene transition. Dillehay's paper presents solid arguments and challenges a major temporal depth for the first semi-permanent settlements or a style-life village ("proto-households"). The area where Dillehay explores landscape and distribution of architectural feature is the northern coast of Peru. In the same direction, Karen

Stohtert and collaborators discuss the structure of resources in the mangroves from Ecuador, even looking at other archaeological and paleoenvironmental markers. They analyze the social complexity through the variability of burial practices. In both papers, the background is the high availability and biodiversity of maritime and terrestrial resources in the tropical Andes, along the Pacific Coast, during the period under discussion.

Eduardo Tonni and his colleagues contribute to the regional scheme of paleoclimates in mid-latitudes during the Late Pleistocene and Holocene through faunal evidence (mammals), new radiocarbon dates, and paleoenvironmental data. Moreover, they discuss the asynchronicity of the Younger Dryas pulse in the Northern Hemisphere with those cold and arid conditions detected for the Southern Hemisphere in the Pampean Region. In this sense, this information is useful for the interpretation of the environment during human colonization times in the above-mentioned area.

As another point of view in the human occupation of the mid-latitudes in the Pampas, Nora Flegenheimer and coauthors present a detailed discussion on the First Americans' networks of tool stone and its transport in an ample region between the Uruguayan and Pampean plains. Likewise, these authors support the idea that this transport was possible since those societies would have been sharing cultural, social, environmental information, which could minimize risks for their reproduction in the long time.

R. Suárez and J. López synthesize and highlight new information on the archaeology of early inhabitants of a poorly known region, related to the main streams in the Uruguayan sector of the Río de la Plata basin, as well as the Atlantic littoral and coastal zones. María T. Civalero and Nora Franco, based on an ecological model, focus on technological organization in the southernmost Patagonia Eastern Andean slope, between two lacustrine basins, with differences of raw material availability and diversity.

Luis Borrero reanalyses the faunal context from a locality of Tierra del Fuego Island, from a site formation processes perspective. He concludes that these processes are very complex in the area, but confirms the primary association for the earlier context.

(Layer Va) of Tres Arroyos I, dated around 10,500 BP. Thus, the paper indicates the necessity and importance of this type of study. L. Miotti and M. Salemme consider the colonization of Patagonia, and remark on the existence of some gaps for the earliest radiocarbon dates in an intermediate steppe area and discuss sample bias in some key areas.

F. Mena and colleagues present the finding of five Paleoamerican individuals, dated from at least ca. the ninth millennium BP. These skeletal remains are important not only for their completeness but also for the remarkable information about traits of biological human affiliation. From the bioanthropological view, H. Pucciarelli and colleagues present their approach to the Paleoamericans, using cranio-functional analyses. They studied samples from ancient and modern Amerindians and concluded that variations observed could be explained by a cause-effect relationship between cranial morphology and environment, confirming that these analyses are useful to explain several adaptive trends from Paleoamericans to modern Amerindians.

Robert Kelly discusses the time of entry of early people in North America and discusses the inability to locate Pre-Clovis sites, the asynchronicity of Late Pleistocene/Early Holocene dates between North and South America, the possibility of inaccurate dating of South American sites, and finally, a probable coastal migration that could have passed-by the interior of the continental northern ice mass. He concludes that at present, the apparent paradox between South and North American initial occupation data and models remains unexplained.

L. Miotti discusses the Clovis-The First model as a unidirectional explanation that disagrees with the complex archeological and environmental variability available for the Southern Cone. Finally, A. Bryan and R. Gruhn discuss and reaffirm emphatically the alternative model, in the continental scale, supporting the

Pacific way of entering the American continent. Technological aspects, paleoclimatic and geomorphological indicators of the corridor, as well as radiocarbon dates, are keys in the discussion, discounting some of the main arguments of Clovis-The first model.

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Laura L. Miotti^a

^a CONICET, Departamento Científico de Arqueología, Facultad de Ciencias Naturales y Museo, Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Museo de La Plata, Paseo del Bosque s/n, 1900 La Plata, Argentina
E-mail address: lmiotti@museo.fcnym.unlp.edu.ar

Mónica C. Salemme^b

^b Centro Austral de Investigaciones Científicas (CADIC-CONICET), c.c. 92, V9410BFD Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina
E-mail address: labcuat@satlink.com