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# THE HUMAN OCCUPATION IN THE CENTRAL PAMPEAN DUNEFIELDS OF ARGENTINA DURING THE HOLOCENE

Pablo Messineo\*<sup>†1</sup>, Nahuel Scheifler<sup>1</sup>, María Álvarez<sup>1</sup>, Mariela González<sup>1</sup>, Nélida Pal<sup>2</sup>,  
María Barros<sup>1</sup>, and Gustavo Politis<sup>1,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>INCUAPA-CONICET, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad Nacional del Centro de la Provincia de Buenos Aires. (INCUAPA-CONICET) – Av. Del Valle 5737, Olavarría (B7400JWI), Buenos Aires.,  
Argentina

<sup>2</sup>CADIC-CONICET, Centro Austral de Investigaciones Científicas, Laboratorio de Antropología.  
(CADIC-CONICET) – B. Houssay 200, Ushuaia (9410), Tierra del Fuego., Argentina

<sup>3</sup>División Arqueología, Facultad de Ciencias Naturales y Museo, Universidad Nacional de La Plata.  
(FCNyM-UNLP) – Paseo del Bosque S/N, La Plata (B1900FWA), Buenos Aires., Argentina

## Résumé

In the last decades, archaeological investigations were carried out on most areas of the Pampa grasslands of Argentina. These research generated several regional models related to diverse topics of prehistoric hunter-gatherers. However, the West area, recently formally defined as the Central Pampean Dunefields, largely devoid of systematic research, with very discontinuous field work and scarce analysis and 14C dates, did not significantly contributed in the generation of such models. This situation changed after 2010, when new systematic and continuous research started in this area.

In this presentation different lines of archaeological and paleoecological evidences are integrated in order to generate a model of human occupation for the Central Pampean Dunefields. To build this model, the results of faunal, bioarchaeological, techno-morphological, and chronological analyses obtained in several archaeological sites are presents and discussed.

The main landform of the Central Pampean Dunefields are linear dunes, 100–130 km long and 2–3 km wide, with a general N–NE trend, associated with parabolic dunes with temporarily shallow lakes and low frequency of permanent water sources during dry periods. One critical characteristic of this area is the absence of lithic raw materials; all the stone outcrops are located between 120 and > 500 km away from the sites.

The early traces of humans in the Central Pampean Dunefields date back to ca. 10,000 years cal BP (Burial 1 from Laguna de los Pampas). For later period, the archaeological contexts indicate that guanaco (*Lama guanicoe*) was the main faunal resource in this area, followed by the pampean deer (*Ozotoceros bezoarticus*), the greater rhea (*Rhea americana*), armadillos, and other small species. This subsistence pattern is also supported by isotopic values obtained from human remains dated to the middle/late Holocene. The lithic assemblages mainly consist of artifacts made on orthoquartzite and chert from the Tandilia hill range and,

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\*Intervenant

<sup>†</sup>Auteur correspondant: pablogmessineo@hotmail.com

in lower frequencies, other raw materials coming from diverse vectors of provenience (south, west, southeast, and northwest). Different types of reduction sequences, chipping techniques, and uses of the tools were identified in different moments of the Holocene. The chronology of the human occupation in the Central Pampean Dunefields shows a strong signal along the Holocene with some gaps. More research is still necessary in order to know if these hiatus are related to changes in human mobility and settlement patterns or it is a sampling bias derived from the limited number of radiocarbon dates available.

**Mots-Clés:** Central Pampean Dunefields, hunter and gatherers, human occupation model, technology, zooarchaeology, bioanthropology