
Cerro Benitez after the Ice: Pioneer human exploration South of the Patagonian Ice Cap

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Résumé

The human exploration of Fuego-Patagonia is a complicated process that, at least near the Andean Cordillera, was dependent on environmental conditions. Cerro Benitez, Ultima Esperanza, Chile, is located immediately South of the Patagonian Ice Cap, and is the Western location where Late Pleistocene human occupations are recorded in Patagonia. The Late Pleistocene ice cover at Cerro Benitez began its retreat around 16,000 BP, while humans arrived around 11,000 BP. For a period of around 6000 years there were a number of environmental changes taking place in that region. These processes include karstogenesis, the cold period of the Antarctic Cold Reversal, continuous landscape revamping, biological colonization, human exploration and colonization, advance of the forest of *Nothofagus* and extinction of Pleistocene megafauna. Using a geoarchaeological and taphonomic approach, and on the basis of our recent results we will discuss the interaction between all these processes and will compare with the situation in other regions in Fuego-Patagonia.

Mots-Clés: Pleistocene, Hunter, gatherers, karstogenesis, megafauna

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