

Material Repertories in Archaeological Sites of the Northern Lowlands of Tucuman (Argentina)

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ABSTRACT

The archaeological materiality recorded in two pre-Hispanic sites located in the lowlands of the province of Tucumán (Argentina) is presented. The recovered archaeological materials allow us to establish relations of obtaining, production and circulation of non-native and native goods for the region.

KEYWORDS: Materiality, Lowlands, pre-Hispanic, Argentina, Circulation of Things.

INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this work is to present the material variability recorded in two archaeological sites located in the northern sector of the lowlands of Tucumán. For this, the Tambo and Bahía archaeological sites are taken into consideration, located in a Yunga environment in the northern part of the province of Tucumán, constituting these sites as micro-regional markers in the distribution and characterization of the production and circulation of certain goods for the area. At the same time, a contextualization of the materials presented and their consequent interpretation is carried out within the aforementioned analysis framework.

The analysis of the materials consisted of classifying them according to raw materials, styles and shapes where appropriate, as well as the possible function that these fulfilled in the context of association and their relationship in the mechanisms of production and circulation of goods at a micro-level regional and regional. This analysis is supported by chronological

associations that allow establishing temporal approximations in the mechanisms of use of the established material repertoires.

TAMBO SITE

This site is located in the town of San Pedro de Colalao, on provincial route No. 311. The open-air site has an approximate area of 750 m². It was divided into 15 sectors of 10x5 m each. No architectural features were identified on the surface, but a large amount of lithic, ceramic and bone materials were identified. A total and systematic survey of each of the sectors was carried out. A 1x1m survey was carried out in one of the sectors (S12) where a profile with archaeological materials was discovered, indicating a pre-Hispanic occupation.

From the surface collection carried out in all sectors, flakes, points and cores of obsidian, quartz and pink quartzite were recovered; formatted materials such as ³/₄ axes and modified stones; ceramic fragments and bone remains (animal and human). The dispersion area of

surface materials corresponds to sectors S4, S8, S9, S11 and S12.

The survey carried out in S12 showed a depth of 120 cm, with a depth of archaeological materials of 80 cm from its surface. In total, eight levels of 10 cm each were excavated. Between levels 3 to 6, the highest concentration of archaeological materials was detected, consisting mainly of bones, lithic and ceramics, as well as an arrangement of stones above said materials, among which charcoal and ashy sediment were recorded. Radiocarbon dating was performed on a human bone that yielded an age of 1809±49 BP (AA99228) corresponding to level 4.

In total, 131 obsidian flakes, 13 obsidian points (figure 1), one quartz flake, and 21 pink quartzite flakes and cores were recovered from the entire site and excavation area. From the survey, three polished artifacts (hand axes) and three modified stones and one polisher were recorded.

Regarding the ceramic material, 46 fragments were recovered. Among the decorations, those fragments with paint stand out, which can be assigned to the Vaquerías and Condorhuasi styles, while the rest corresponds to those known for Candelaria.

Regarding the bone material, it was determined that they correspond to camelids and humans. The macroscopic description of the human bone remains from the Tambo site, coming from the S12 survey, yielded a MNI (minimum number of individuals) of 1. The following

bone pieces were identified: 5 metacarpals (from both sides), 2 phalanges, 4 bones of the carpus, 7 fragments of ribs (1 fragment corresponding to the vertebral extremity), 3 fragments of epiphysis and 8 fragments of diaphysis of forearm bones (identifiable among them 1 fragment of distal epiphysis, 1 fragment of proximal epiphysis and a fragment of diaphysis of left radius, a distal epiphysis of the ulna, and 2 fragments of the shaft of the ulna and radius), 1 fragment of the shaft of the humerus, 2 fragments of the shaft of the femur, 3 fragments of the innominate and 1 possible bezoar (stone).

The bone remains are in a good state of preservation, although they are incomplete. In some of them, longitudinal fractures can be observed, in the direction of the major axis of the piece, of a postmortem nature. The transverse edges of the fragments are mostly clean cut.

It is worth mentioning that a rapid test was applied to detect traces of human blood in five obsidian points (3 points from level 1 and 2 points from level 6) associated with the individual recovered from the Tambo site, using Abon Fob Test reagent. It gave negative results.

Camelid bones (part of jaw, phalanges, and vertebrae, among others) were also recovered, associated with human bone remains. In general, the remains are in a very good state of preservation. It is notable that some fragments of jaws, phalanges and ribs of camelids were burned.



Figure 1. Obsidian points recovered in excavation

BAHIA SITE

It is located in the town of El Cadillal, on the west bank of the “Celestino Gelsi” dam. It forms an area of about 350 m² where a stone alignment composed of five edged stones stands out (figure 2). It was excavated and ceramic materials were recovered. On the surface, 62 fragments of decorated ceramics were recovered (30 with paint decoration and 32 with point and stripe incisions and modeling). During the excavation, four decorated fragments of the Vaquerías and Condorhuasi style were

recorded. Among those collected from the surface, those of the Condorhuasi and Candelaria styles stand out. Lithic material composed of obsidian flakes and points, quartzite flakes and nodules of various shades, and an opal and quartz flake was also recovered on the surface.

Also bone fragments of mammals and a molar with the presence of simple hypoplasia (which would indicate probable nutrition problems in the first years of the individual's life). One of the bone fragments was dated but did not produce results due to lack of collagen.

However, due to the ceramic styles present, the site can be associated with early moments of the Formative.



Figure 2. Excavation of the stone structure

CONCLUSION

The materials recovered at both sites show the presence of mechanisms of production and circulation of goods at the micro-regional and regional level. Elements such as obsidian are indicators of relationships (direct or indirect) with groups from the Puna, as has been manifested in other sites in the area (Caria et al. 2008). The Vaquerías and Condorhuasi styles are also elements that manifest relationships or at least circulation mechanisms of these goods with other areas external to these sites. The presence of burials as in the case of the Tambo site with contexts of allochthonous materials demonstrate a marked process in the development of the organization of these sites in these sectors of the northern Yunga of Tucumán. The dating of 1809 ± 49 BP would indicate that these processes were present from the initial moments of occupation of these territories, at least for the sectors for which chronological data are available in the study area (Caria 2007).

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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ETHICAL CONSIDERATION AND INFORMED CONSENT

Not applicable.

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