

Computed tomography study of snuff trays from San Pedro de Atacama (Northern Chile)

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Wooden snuff trays from San Pedro de Atacama (SPA) in northern Chile are objects of particular museological value. Computed tomography (CT), a non-destructive analytical technique useful in the analysis of archaeological objects in which physical tampering is not desirable, was used to study provenience of wood, quality of craftsmanship, taphonomic processes and nature of gemstone inlays in a group of snuff trays. While wood used in the manufacture of trays was mostly exogenous to SPA, gemstones used in inlays were likely of local origin. These findings support the active exchange of goods proposed for the south-central Andes region. Several features revealed in the trays support the view that craftsmen producing them were skillful artisans. © 2012 Elsevier Ltd.