

The dispossession of the San Pedro de Inacaliri river: Political Ecology, extractivism and archaeology

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Copper mining and other extractive industries in the Atacama Desert have exerted pressure on water resources, with dramatic socio-environmental effects. The drying-out of the San Pedro de Inacaliri river basin is a paradigmatic case of this situation. Indigenous communities that used to graze their livestock in the area have seen the utter degradation of the ecosystems which have sustained their activities since time immemorial. In this article, we aim to contribute to the growing literature on the effects of extractive industries in northern Chile, based on an archaeological analysis of the remnants of the material culture in the basin. This analysis will complement historical and qualitative data to present a diachronic approach to the history of human use, occupation and abandonment of the basin and its transformations in time and space. The work analyses human occupation of the basin over thousands of years down to the present, concluding that while there was inc