

Coast-inland Mobility during the Early Holocene in the Semi-arid North of Chile: La Fundición Site

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In the semi-arid north of Chile, the first coastal human occupations are regionally known as the Huentelauquén Cultural Complex (Jackson and Méndez 2005; Llagostera et al. 2000). These contexts show a first phase (13,000–11,000 CALYBP) with a clear coastal adaptation, while in a second phase (11,000–9000 CALYBP) evidence shows humans being more hunting oriented, with settlements being located along ravines that connected coastal, inner valleys, and mountain range environments (Jackson and Méndez 2005).

Within this framework, the La Fundición site is located in the inner valley of Chile in the semi-arid region (Lat. 29° S.), 60 km from the coast. The site shows an extensive hunter-gatherer residential camp with strong typological links to the Huentelauquén Complex (Castillo and Rodríguez 1978; Llagostera et al. 2000).

The archaeological deposit of this settlement is 70 cm deep, without significant changes in the stratigraphy. However, two previously obtained radiocarbon dates and one new AMS date (Table 1) indicate at least three occupational events. The earliest date of the site should be regarded as somewhat later taking into account that it is a marine mollusk sample uncorrected for local reservoir effect; consequently, the beginning of the occupation probably dates back to 10,200 CALYBP.

Table 1. Radiocarbon dates of the La Fundición site (Beta 108308 – Beta 108307; Llagostera et al., 2000).

| Code Lab. | ¹⁴ C date, RCYBP | $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ | Calibrated age, CALYBP (2 σ) | Calibrated midpoint, CALYBP | Stratigraphic provenience | Material |
|-------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|---|--------------------------------|------------------------------|----------|
| BETA 108308 | 8730 ± 90 | | 10,119–9489 | 9675 | 30–40 cm | Charcoal |
| BETA 108307 | 9640 ± 150 | | 11,385–10,524 | 10964 | 60–70 cm | Shell |
| UGAMS 8095 | 9130 ± 40 | -20.6 | 10,484–9954 | 10231 | 30–35 cm | Bone |

The site contains stemmed lanceolate projectile points (Figure 1), blanks and blank production debitage, knives, scrapers, and grinding stones among other implements, among which some polygonal stones similar to those recorded in coastal Huentelauquén sites stand out. Associated with this lithic assemblage are combustion features (i.e., hearths) and faunal remains that basically correspond to very fragmented camelid bones (*Lama guanicoe*), some with signs of fire exposure, as well as some rodent remains, bone fragments of otariids, and mollusk shells (Castillo and Rodríguez 1978; Llagostera et al. 2000). Among the mollusk remains are 120 fragments representing eight

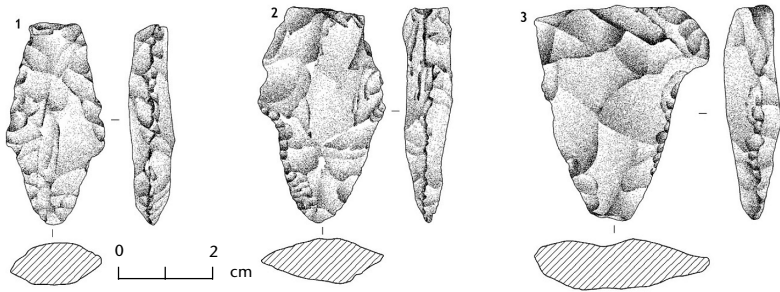


Figure 1. Stemmed projectile points from La Fundición site.

species, with a predominance of bivalves (61.3%) over gastropods (38.7%), in addition to the presence of some equinoderm remains (*Loxechinus albus*). The shell remains of some of these mollusks show anthropic signs (cuts and trimming) that indicate artifacts in their process of elaboration.

La Fundición also has yielded a burial of six individuals, including four male adults, one young adult, and a child of indeterminate sex. Two of the individuals were in flexed positions, while the remaining appear to represent secondary burials, following the same funeral pattern of sites along the coast (Costa-Junqueira 2001; Costa-Junqueira and Quevedo 1997).

The above-described characteristics of La Fundición suggest it served as a repeatedly occupied winter residential camp that was oriented essentially to hunting guanaco (*Lama guanicoe*), procuring lithic raw materials, and producing bifacial tools. The presence of some otariid remains and the abundant mollusk remains link this settlement to the coast, whereas the presence of obsidian and other siliceous raw materials suggests links to inter-Andean valleys.

This settlement is strongly connected to coastal Huentelauquén Complex occupations, which contain evidence of partial transport of camelid anatomical parts and lithic raw materials from the interior. Likewise, analogous sites in the inter-Andean valleys such as La Fortuna, located some 120 km from the coast, show the presence of sea mollusks and radiocarbon dates (8160 ± 160 RCYBP[9056 CALYBP]) (Gambier 1974) consistent with those obtained from La Fundición as well as coastal sites.

The evidence from La Fortuna site and other settlements situated in the middle valleys of the semiarid north of Chile (Jackson 1998; Méndez and Jackson 2008) supports the interpretation that the Huentelauquén Cultural Complex, after 10,000 CALYBP, was characterized by a mobility-settlement pattern that articulated coastal, valley, and mountain-range environments, with more of a hunting-oriented than marine-resource-oriented economy.

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