

Living on the coast without depending on coastal resources. Isotopic evidence in Central Chile

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Along the Pacific coast of South America, including what is now Chilean territory, the coastal zone has been exploited since the earliest peopling of the continent and marine resources played an important role in the development of pre-Hispanic communities. Analysis of stable isotopes in human remains has confirmed the importance of marine resources in the diet of these populations; however, based on the isotope results presented here, Central Chile appears to be an exception. The analyses of stable isotopes of C, N and O that we have carried out show that occupation of coastal areas did not necessarily imply a diet based on marine resources. Individuals who lived on the coast from the Late Archaic and throughout the Early Ceramic and Late Intermediate periods present varied approaches to subsistence; only in some cases were low trophic level coastal resources the principal component of their diet. We argue that Central Chile is an unusual case in this region, when compared to populations along the rest of the Chilean coast who were highly dependent on marine foods.