



The paleo-environment of the first early-Holocene inhabitants of the Bolivian Amazon

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The Llanos de Moxos (LM), in the Bolivian lowlands, is a seasonally flooded savannah which has been inhabited since the beginning of the Holocene. Early Holocene archaeological sites, mostly shell middens, are nowadays hidden under forest islands: patches of forest surrounded by savannah. Despite their similar aspect, these archaeological sites are located in very different geomorphological and stratigraphic settings. Preliminary results of geoarchaeological research on two early-Holocene sites and their surroundings will be presented. The data suggests that the early Holocene landscape of the LM was significantly different from what we see nowadays. One of the sites, associated with an early to mid-Holocene paleosol, has been almost totally buried by fluvial sediments and only its topmost 30-40 cm has remained above the alluvium that forms the current savannah. The second site, currently outcropping in the middle of a flat swamp, was actually located on a sandy fluvial levee and subsequently flooded and partially buried by peat-like sediments. The events that lead to the burial of these sites, and probably caused the abandonment of the area, are still not completely understood. Linking together paleo-ecological reconstructions and archaeology, this research hopes to shed some light on the large scale environmental changes that took place in south-western Amazonia during the Holocene, the nature of human-environment interactions at the time and the potential value of these sites as paleo-environmental proxies.