



## **Guanaco traces and hunting strategies at Alto Patache North Chilean fog oasis**

H. Larrain (1), P. Cereceda (1), and L. Pérez (2)

(1) Instituto de Geografía, Centro del Desierto de Atacama, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile (dcereced@uc.cl/56-2-5526028), (2) Universidad Bolivariana, Iquique, Chile (luchonomas@hotmail.com)

1. In foregoing Fog Conferences, some of us have made explicit the rich botanic and faunistic inventory to be found at this Chilean Fog site. This was specially apparent under strong ENSO conditions, as it happened in 1997/98 in the area.

Among the mammal biggest species represented, the guanaco (*Lama guanicoe* Müller) merits special mention. Clear traces of their presence and eventual hunting and slaughtering by primitive populations have survived until present times. Among them, the myriads of guanaco trails still covering practically all the slopes along the foggy area, close to the sea, and their wallowing and defecating places are found. Also, although less studied, plant eating traces left behind by roaming camelids can be seen.

2. Guanaco hunting traces still visible at Alto Patache can be portrayed differently through : A) Analysis of lithic artifacts used as arms in hunting operations; B) Botanic response to animal attack; C) Examination of topographic traits used by primitive man in guanaco hunting strategies.

A. Hundreds of lithic instruments made of stone, were abandoned by hunters in situ, some of them were intact, some fragmented, which would demonstrate a direct relationship with hunting and slaughtering, and also their elaboration in workshops at place. Lithic points, scrapers and knives were found at places specially apt for hunting or slaughtering activities. Total isolation of the mountain fog site previous to our arrival in 1996, favoured their conservation at place.

B. Careful observation of some local plants showed clear traces of guanaco feeding habits. As a proof thereof, old cactus of the species *Eulychnia iquiquensis* show in their basal portions clear signals in the forms of scars, caused by the eating by guanacos. Guanaco faeces were found at the foot of *Ephedra* plants. Many dead *Stipa ichu* plants (Gramineae), in different areas of the oasis provide evidence of cutting close to their basis, caused by sharp guanaco tooth under severe food scarcity.

C. Special lookouts located at high places offering clear visibility were used by hunters. Some were built up, some others consisted of natural stone arrangements. The same can be said for the wallowing places, located in plains with loose or sandy soils.

Pictures showing different artifacts, plants or topographic traits used, will be presented here as evidence of guanaco hunting activity at place.