

Ritual Cartography of a Myth of Cosmic Origin an Interpretative Proposal for the Rock Art Located in Cerro Quiñe, Valley of Linares, Central Chile

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ABSTRACT

The rock art located in the south block of Cerro Quiñe is part of a ritual cartography conformed by human settlements and structures of the immediate and the mountain chain landscape, which contains a mythological narrative of cosmic origin, materialized by circular structures aligned to astronomical objects. It is proposed that these engravings correspond to the first cartography of the Province of Linares, sculpted during prehistoric times by human groups who organized their territory around Descabezado Grande Volcano, and who sought to pass and impose their ideas to new generations in a context of highly complex cultural transmission.

Keywords: *Rock Art; Cerro Quiñe; Ritual Cartography; Valley of Linares; Central Chile.*

INTRODUCTION

The individual description of the figurative elements that make up the rock art of Cerro Quiñe has contributed substantially to the ignorance of the forms of cultural transmission used by the ancient human populations that inhabited the central valleys of the Province of Linares, Chile (e.g. Sanguinetti, 1969; Morales et al., 2017). On the contrary, we believe that rock art - as a form of language and an instrument for ideological transmission- makes its study essential starting from the contextual analysis of the meaning engraved in the walls, where its production should be considered as a defining element in the emergence of new ideologies.

This research seeks to explore the role of rock art - as a material support for the transmission of ideologies - in the processes of integration and / or resistance experienced by local populations when facing the arrival of foreign influence. Thus, we hypothesize that the rock art of the south block of Cerro Quiñe was part of a codified language that sought to express, impose and pass ideas and knowledge to new generations in a context of highly complex cultural transmission. Ultimately, we hope that the decoding of these engravings will contribute

to elucidate the mechanisms of cultural transmission deployed in the peripheral areas located south of the meridional Andes of Chile.

Archaeological Background of Cerro Quiñe

This large deposit is made up of residential areas associated with lithic artifacts and rock art (e.g. engravings and “piedras tacitas” or stone cups) on the upper slopes, and contiguous to the base of the hill (Albornoz 2018) (Figure 1). By applying GIS to the study of rock art located in Cerro Quiñe, it was possible to have a wide visibility of the valley that reached 84.81% (63.95 of 75.4 Km²) in the range of 1 to 5 kms of distance (Albornoz et al., 2014). Albornoz et al. (2014) state that the location of this archaeological site at a high point of the local geo-topography had as its objective to monitor and / or control the economic activities in the Valley of Linares.

On the other hand, long-distance visibility (> 5 km) only shows 39.74% (280.91 of 706.85 km²) of the territory (Albornoz et al., 2014). However, the loss of visibility from a long distance is compensated by the topographic characteristics of the Andes Mountain Range, which make it particularly noticeable from any point in the territory (Albornoz et al., 2014).

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Figure1. Cerro Quiñe. a: visibility towards the Valley of Linares; b: “Piedras tacitas” or stone cups; c: Lithic material on the surface; d: Residential area.

Archaeological Site / Rock Art of the South Block and Research Methodology

This archaeological site corresponds to a island-hill located south of the current city of Linares, specifically at the confluence of the Achibueno and Ancoa rivers (Figure 2). The rock art of the south block of Cerro Quiñe is located about 50 meters from the top of the hill, and is made up of engravings and stone cups displayed on a rock of basaltic-andesitic origin that has an approximate inclination of 30° (Figure 3).

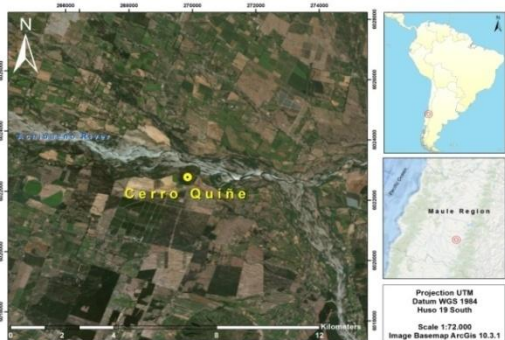


Figure2. Location of the Cerro Quiñe archaeological site, Valley of Linares, Central Chile (Source: Alborno et al., 2014).



Figure3. Engravings and stone cups (“piedras tacitas”) from the South Block of Cerro Quiñe, Valley of Linares, Central Chile (Photo: courtesy of Barbara Sonderegger).

This study contemplated the analysis of rock art based on: 1) the spatial location of figurative elements within the wall, and 2) the articulation of designs that inter-relate. These data were collected through: a) a topographic survey, b) standardized records, and c) archaeological drawings. This methodology provided us with the fundamental advantage of obtaining centimetric spatial information about the location and disposition of the figures within the panel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The identification of geo-topographic elements of the surrounding and distant landscape, coinciding with landmarks of the current landscape of the valley and mountain range, allows us to state that the engravings and stone cups that make up the rock art of the south block of Cerro Quiñe are part of a cartography of the Province of Linares (Figure 4).

The three-dimensionality observed in its design accounts for a number of scenes linked to the interrelation between circular structures and stellar objects, where -technologically speaking- the engravings represent elements of the terrestrial landscape and stone cups embody cosmic bodies that orbited the universe (Figure 5). This cartography sought to attribute super-human qualities to the hills and mountains, where they would have operated as inter-dimensional stations and / or portals.

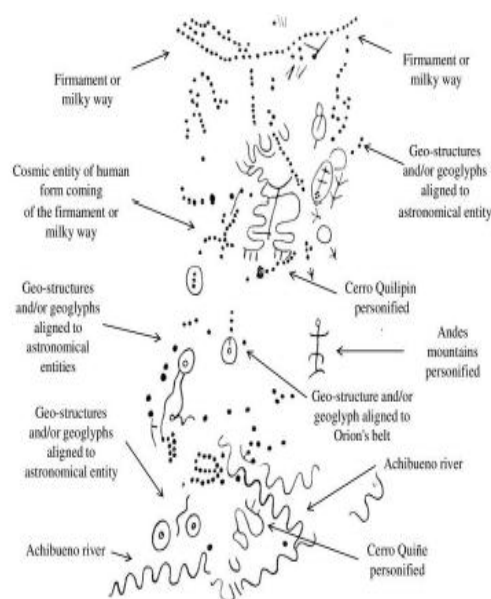


Figure4. Figurative elements of the southern block of Cerro Quiñe, Valley of Linares, Central Chile (Source: Own Elaboration).

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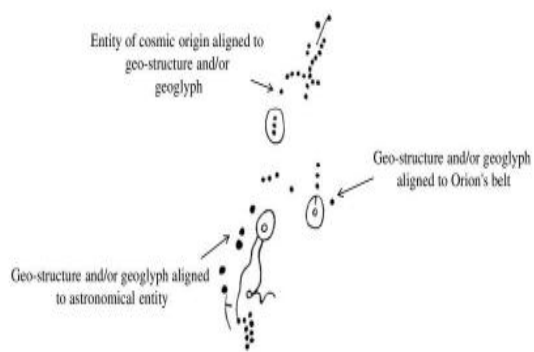


Figure 5. Scene of interrelation between circular structures and astronomical bodies, from human settlement located in the Valley of Linares (Source: Own Elaboration).

On the other hand, it is stated that in this cartography a cosmic origin myth is found, which narrates the arrival of a super-human, from the universe to the valley of the Province of Linares (Figure 6). This myth would offer a legendary account of the origin of humans, and therefore of the founding of the first social groups that managed to impregnate in the archaeological record their way of seeing and interpreting the world. We estimate that the implementation of this story was part of a strategy that operated coercively on populations that lived in geographically distant territories with the objective of homogenizing the social groups in pursuit of veneration and adoration of a unique supernatural deity.

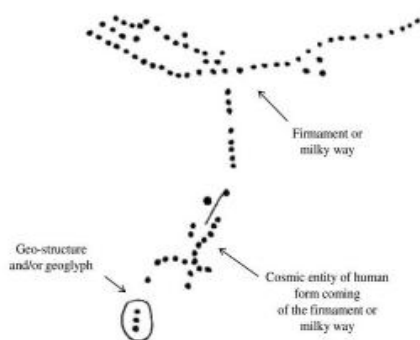


Figure 6. Cosmic entity of human shape coming from the firmament (Source: Own Elaboration).

Within the framework of this interpretative proposal, the archaeological sites Potrero Las Violetas-1 and Las Gabrielas-2 have been identified, confirming the existence of human settlements with geo-structures and / or imprints of geoglyphs in the Province of Linares (Albornoz 2018; Henríquez 2019). The geo-location of Potrero Las Violetas-1 archaeological site in between the geo-topographic structures with rock art in the immediate landscape (Cerro Quiñe and Cerro Quilipín), and the geo-location of the archaeological site Las Gabrielas-2 on the south / west bank of the Achibueno River, coincide with the characteristics of the human settlements of the valley and foot of the Andes recorded in the cartography of Cerro Quiñe (Albornoz 2018, Albornoz and Henríquez 2019) (Figure 7).

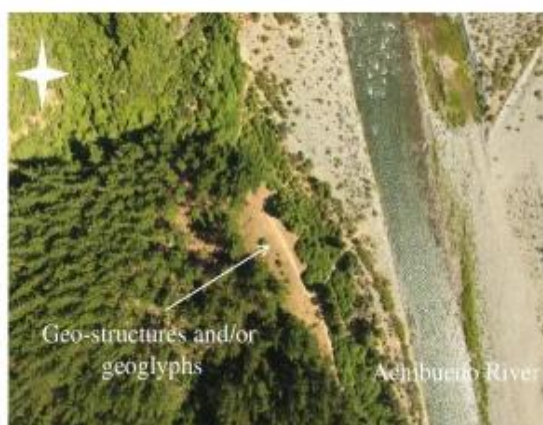
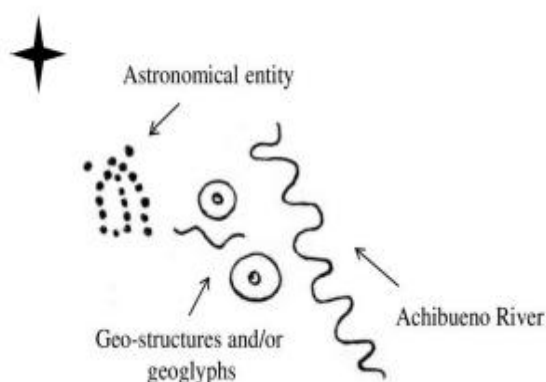


Figure 7. On the left: human settlement at the foot of the Andes recorded in the south block of Cerro Quiñe; To the right: Las Gabrielas-2 archaeological site, foot of the Andes in the Province of Linares, Central Chile.

On the other hand, recent analysis of equidistance between archaeological sites and geo-topographical structures of the immediate and distant landscape allowed to determine a territorial organization of the settlements with

rock art around the Descabezado Grande Volcano (Albornoz and Henríquez 2019). Albornoz and Henríquez (2019) propose that this situation was part of a strategy of territorial control that coercively operated in the Province

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of Linares, with the aim of uniting the population in pursuit of the veneration and / or worshiping of the geo-topographical mountain structure of greater height, and thus favor

communication between ancestors who orbited the universe and social groups that sought to interpret the cosmic order.

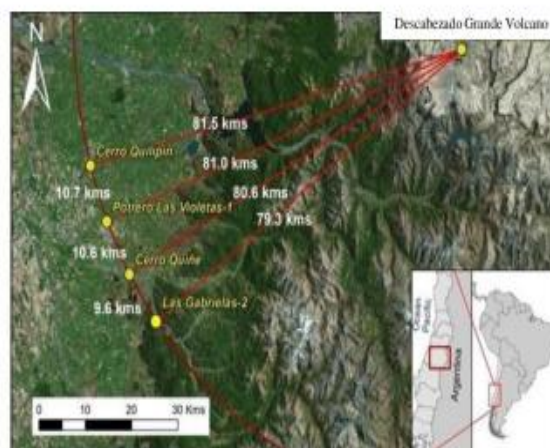
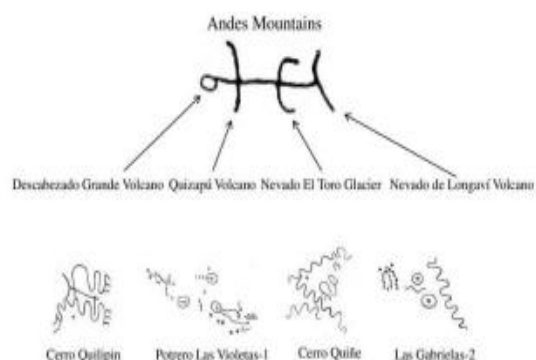


Figure8. Territorial organization of human settlements with rock art around the Descabezado Grande Volcano.

To the left: Interpretation of the territorial organization of human settlements and structures of the immediate and distant landscape recorded in the southern block of Cerro Quiñe. To the right: archaeological sites and geo-topographic structures oriented towards the Descabezado Grande Volcano.

CONCLUSION

The results of the archaeological record of the rock art of the south block of Cerro Quiñe allow us to propose that these engravings and stone cups are part of a ritual cartography, which is made up of human settlements and structures of the immediate and distant landscape, where a mythological story of cosmic origin, which narrates the arrival of the superhuman to the valley of the Province of Linares, coming from the firmament, is written.

This interpretative proposal of the engravings of Cerro Quiñe has been corroborated using the identification of archaeological sites with geo-structures and / or imprints of geoglyphs in the valley and foot of the Andes areas. On the other hand, the crafting of the engravings present in the South Block of Cerro Quiñe is not attributable to the rock art producers of the Guaiquivilo style; on the contrary, its production would correspond to ethnic groups that organized their territory and social life around the worshiping of the Descabezado Grande Volcano. Similarly, we propose that the rock art of the south block of Cerro Quiñe was sculpted in pre-Hispanic times, and therefore,

corresponds to the first cartography of the current Province of Linares. This interpretation opposes the historical accounts about our province, that indicate a construction of the territory during colonial times. We hope that this work will encourage the attraction of new audiences, eager for a knowledge that bounds the past and the present and builds bridges that bring us to appreciate our province, its heritage and its people. Further more, we hope that the ancestral knowledge that has been extracted constitutes an irreplaceable source of inspiration and identity for the population, since it will be the inheritance of what it was, the substrate of what is, and the foundation of the tomorrow that we aspire to bequeath to our children .

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