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Quaternário: Processos Naturais e Antrópicos. Um desafio para o desenvolvimento Sustentável

TWO PALEOECOLOGICAL HISTORIES SPANNING THE PERIOD OF HUMAN SETTLEMENT IN SOUTHEASTERN BRAZIL

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Resumo

The absence of human occupation sites in southeastern Brazil during the mid-Holocene has been referred to as the "Archaic Gap" (8970 cal. a BP - 1940 cal. a BP), and is predicted to have resulted from increased aridity. A c. 14000 cal. a pollen history from two well-dated lake sediment cores located within the archaeological district of Lagoa Santa, in the State of Minas Gerais, southeastern Brazil, was used to test this hypothesis. Our analyses indicated that the present cerrado and tropical semideciduous forest mosaic persisted throughout the mid-Holocene, until c. 5500 cal. a BP, and the Lagoa Santa region did not experience especially dry conditions during the Holocene period. The early Holocene pollen spectra contained an assemblage of cold-adapted taxa such as *Podocarpus*, *Myrsine* and *Araucaria*, co-occurring with taxa from cerrado, e.g. *Caryocar*. A replacement of cold taxa by the modern cerrado-semi-deciduous forest vegetation took place progressively, but appears to have been completed by mid-Holocene. No evidence of sustained drought was found in sedimentation or forest composition was found, nor any prolonged dry event in the study region. Holocene dryness as an explanation for the abandonment of Lagoa Santa region is not supported by the palynological analyses conducted in this study. Rather it is suggested that unpredictable climate may have underlying that abandonment.