Abstract

Historians claim that European colonizers of the northern coast of Rio de Janeiro State found vast herbaceous fields when arrived in this region. Hypotheses about the origin of these fields include forest burning by the Goitacás Indians and periodical floods by the Paraíba do Sul River and the lagoon system. The palynological analysis of two lake cores obtained in the municipality of Campos dos Goytacazes revealed opening episodes of hygrophilous forest and the establishment of field vegetation, recorded at ca. 6,500 and ca. 4,000 14C yr BP. The partial replacement of forest by field vegetation in the first episode was probably caused by floods of the lower areas during the development of the Holocene lagoon phase. During the second episode, successions of vegetational patterns occurred due to lowering of the sea level. Drying and enlarging of the coastal plain have allowed its colonization by herbs and heliophyte plants. The palynological analysis does not provide any evidence that sustains the theories of use of fire and agricultural activities by indigenous groups during these periods.

Keywords

Brazil, Campos dos Goytacazes, Holocene, palynology, vegetation dynamics.