Abstract

The present paper examines current interpretations of the importance of mining activity in Inka expansion into northern Chile, and particularly into the Atacama and Southern Tarapacá regions. We first present a synthesis on the evidence for pre-Inka and Inka copper mining and metallurgy in the study area. We then go on to infer the organizational systems of production and administration of this activity during the Late Period (ca. 1,400-1,540 AD), and thus reconstruct the mining and metallurgical landscape created by Tawantinsuyu in Atacama and the southern altiplano of Tarapacá. We conclude that not only did copper mining play a major role in the reorganization of economic systems in the region, but that this activity and its symbolic context served as the principal axis of regional Inca social and sacred spaces.

Keywords

Mining production, Tawantinsuyu, administrative and ceremonial sites, mining and metallurgical landscapes, northern Chile.