

Tiwanaku in the north of Chile

500 -1000 CE

(Intermediate Period or Tiwanaku Period)

Environment and Geography

The political center of Tiwanaku was in the city of the same name, located on the southern shore of Lake Titicaca in the humid Bolivian Altiplano. This great Andean civilization achieved dominion over a vast territory that included what is now Northern Chile, from the Azapa Valley in the Arica area to the Atacama Salt Flat. Geographically the empire ran from the enormous plains and salt flats of the Bolivian Altiplano to the Pacific coast and valleys of southern Peru and the desert oases of northern Chile.

Economy

The Tiwanaku developed a huge farming and herding economy. Although they grew crops in terraces and large depressions dug out of the ground, the bulk of their farming was carried out in *camellones* or raised beds surrounded by water. This technological response to the adverse Altiplano conditions allowed them to grow thousands of hectares of potatoes and quinoa. The camelids they raised were also important to the Tiwanaku, providing them with meat, wool and other material and, used as beasts of burden, enabling their active traffic in goods. In Azapa, the local communities grew maize, beans, squash, *jíquima* and gourds that were sent to the Altiplano by llama caravan. In the Atacama, in contrast, the groups had an economy based on mining and the caravan trade, as this was a hub for the exchange of raw materials and manufactured goods among peoples of distant regions, including the Altiplano.

Art

The ruling class of Tiwanaku is thought to have legitimized its rule through emblematic iconography, which was designed to proclaim and maintain its domination over the empire's many territories. Symbols of power were disseminated as portable artifacts that promoted adherence to Tiwanaku society through imagery and objects. This iconography represented a shamanistic religion based on hallucinogenic-induced trance. In the city of Tiwanaku, these common motifs are sculpted onto large boulders and were also reproduced on a variety of objects—fine textiles, ceremonial drinking vessels (*keros*) made of ceramic or wood, and on artifacts used to ingest hallucinogenic substances. Along with these objects went a series of body ornaments such as malachite necklaces, gold jewelry and the characteristic four-pointed caps, all of which signaled adherence to the State ideology.

Social Organization

Tiwanaku society was organized into different social classes in the following hierarchical order: leaders, priests, administrators, artisans and lastly the large masses of peasants and herders. In

these times the power of Tiwanaku extended to the Azapa valley, home of the Cabuzas, an agricultural society and heir to the Alto Ramírez tradition, whose local authorities or governors upheld the power of Tiwanaku, though at a lower socio-political level than the central State. More marked social distinctions operated in the Atacama oases, where the Atacameño elite controlled inter-regional relations and the busy caravan traffic to and from the center of the empire.

Beliefs and Funeral Rites

Early Tiwanaku religious practices display influences from the Amazon basin, especially in its emphasis on shamanism associated with the consumption of hallucinogens. Later, official State rituals gradually led to a more institutionalized form of worship with a focus on the consumption of fermented beverages such as corn *chicha*, which played an important role in the social relations and religious ceremonies of this society.

In funerary practices, the influence of Tiwanaku appears across the region. In Azapa, the Cabuza people traditionally buried their dead in cylindrical pits with the body bent and wrapped in elaborate *unkus* (locally made woolen tunics). However, around 800 CE a few tombs appear with much finer textiles and the four-pointed Tiwanaku hats, suggesting that the deceased individuals were officials or authorities of that State. Also found in graves of this time period were ceramic vessels, mostly in the Cabuza style but with the forms and iconography of Tiwanaku ceramics. In the Atacama region, tombs attributed to this period include those of miners, accompanied by tools of the trade; more notable however are tombs of the Atacameña elite class, whose bodies were attired in fine woolen tunics of Tiwanaku manufacture, along with a series of prestige goods such as gold ornaments, *keros* ceramic drinking vessels and finely crafted implements used for ingesting hallucinogenic substances. All of these artifacts were imported from the Altiplano State or decorated with their iconography.

Settlement Pattern

The Altiplano State of Tiwanaku developed a hierarchical system of settlements that included, first of all, the capital of Tiwanaku. They also had secondary population centers for regional administration, third-order centers for local administration and countless fourth-order settlements based on agriculture and livestock production. The peasant class lived in modest dwellings with mud walls and straw roofs built upon mounds of earth among their farm fields. The Cabuza farmers of Azapa practiced a similar way of life, building rectangular dwellings with stone foundations and cane and reed roofs that they arranged in small groups close to their fields. Little is known of the settlement pattern of the Atacameña communities of this period, but it is known that they began to establish large scale *ayllus* (corporate kinship settlements) in the salt flat oases, though probably less densely than in pre-Tiwanaku times. Groups in both regions built cemeteries apart from their dwellings, some with large groupings of tombs.

History

Consumption of hallucinogenic substances and shamanism were of enormous importance in Tiwanaku and the empire's initial contact with distant peoples would have been marked by those practices. Such contact included communities as far away as the Atacama Desert, where similar ceremonial practices were already in use. In fact, these two peoples shared a common ritual language that enabled the Tiwanaku elite to establish relations with their counterparts in the Atacama, making use of the tradition of Andean reciprocity. Under this tradition, the Atacameño elite would have been showered with rich gifts and would thereby have been obligated to respond in kind, sending a flow of goods to Tiwanaku that included the minerals they mined in their region. The later shift in ceremonial practices towards the use of fermented beverages would have strengthened ties with other groups. This occurred with the inhabitants of the Azapa valley, for instance, who grew corn and used *chicha* (fermented corn beverage) as an important element in their ritual practices. Relations between the local Azapa authorities and Tiwanaku are expressed in the *kero* ceremonial cups that were used for drinking *chicha* and are often found in the tombs of the Cabuza people of that region.

Thus, the Tiwanaku used different strategies to exert their dominion over different groups in the North of Chile. In Azapa they had a direct influence that impacted local styles, especially textile production and the local ceramic industry. The individuals found buried with four-cornered Tiwanaku hats also seem to demonstrate the presence of Tiwanaku representatives in Azapa. In the Atacama region, in contrast, the Tiwanaku established selective relations with key Atacameño groups. Here, the use of Altiplano-style objects never became common but was limited to certain individuals only. Around 1000 CE, the empire of Tiwanaku collapsed, and beginning in the north of Chile a process of restructuring and political, social and economic resurgence began among local people, which was to be known as the Period of Regional Development.