

Toconce – Turi

800 – 1550 CE

(Regional Development Period)

Environment and Geography

These pre-Hispanic societies occupied the highlands of the Upper Loa River basin, the inland regions of Antofagasta and the LÍpez region of the southern Bolivian Altiplano. The vegetation of the Puna environments and foothill ravines –grasslands, spiny shrubland and wetlands—were the best locations for raising the camelid herds that these people kept, while the rivers that flowed down from the high mountains provided enough water to allow the development of intensive agriculture.

Economy

The economies of these communities were based on extensive agriculture and livestock raising, taking advantage of the water from ravines by building systems of terraced gardens and irrigation canals. They also made good use of the forage available, which allowed them to keep large herds of llama. They grew maize in the ravines and quinoa and potatoes in the high Puna, complementing these activities by hunting wild camelid and lesser animals, as well as collecting wild plants. This economic strategy allowed them to take full advantage of the variety of resources offered at different ecological strata, which they did by coordinating their use of complementary resources in different ecosystems, coupled with interregional trading of surplus goods. Their use of llama trains was crucial to the trading activities that characterized this period.

Art

These groups manufactured a variety of crafts in stone, wood, bone, textiles and metal, as well producing baskets, decorated gourds, bead necklaces of worked copper and toba stone. They also made implements for inhaling hallucinogenic substances, such as tablets, tubes and small boxes. In the ceramic arts, locally they produced mainly large monochrome pots, jugs and plates. These had smooth or polished finished and were painted black or red. Most imported ceramics found in the zone are items that would have been acquired in trade with other groups living around Lake Titicaca and in northwest Argentina. Rock art from this period consists mostly of engravings of human figures in scenes with camelid caravans in schematic representations that nonetheless evoke the simple line drawings of ancient styles of naturalist rock art found in the region.

Social Organization

These societies were organized into “*señoríos*,” generally based on kinship relations and without social classes as such, but in which certain individuals had higher status and prestige due to their ability to mobilize the population and redistribute goods. Their agricultural technology and

knowledge of hydraulics reflects the ability of these “señores” or authorities to mobilize workforces and therefore increase surplus production, which was necessary for trade.

Beliefs and Funeral Rites

These groups usually buried their dead in small rock shelters on the steep ravine cliffs located near their settlements, although they sometimes also built cemeteries of cylindrical underground tombs lined with stones. There is evidence that the bodies were initially kept in other locations then moved after a time to their final resting place inside the shelters. The shelters themselves often were enclosed with stone walls, leaving a square opening for a window. The burial sites sometimes contained a single individual, but usually included several bodies in what were apparently family tombs. Grave goods left with the bodies included a range of artifacts such as basketry, ceramic plates and jugs, textiles and ornaments, along with implements for the consumption of hallucinogenic substances. Above their villages they often constructed shrines, called *chullpa*, small towers with a single window facing the surrounding mountains. These structures testify to the presence in this region of a belief in guardian spirits embodied in the mountains, an ideology that originated in the Altiplano but was common throughout the Andean region.

Settlement Pattern

Settlements in this zone were situated between 3,000 and 4,000 m above sea level and consisted of several well-defined sectors placed close together. Villages with a clustered dwelling pattern often were established on the slopes of ravines close to agricultural terraces. The buildings of these peoples were made of mortared stone walls with straw roofs supported by cactus wood beams. Most structures contained two or more rooms—different ones for sleeping, cooking and/or storage—with rectangular floor plans and shared walls. In some places, between the settlement itself and the highest part of the ravine, the people erected ceremonial *chullpa* shrines. Cemeteries were also located close by. Villages like these dotted the region, and were situated mainly in places where a year-round water source allowed the practice of agriculture.

History

While the influence of the State of Tiwanaku faded into memory in the Atacama region, local societies reconfigured themselves into *señoríos*, each with its own unique features, giving way to two major and rather distinct traditions: the Desert Tradition and the Altiplano Tradition. The Toconce-Turi groups represent the latter tradition, and many of their cultural, technological and ceremonial traits were strongly influenced by the cultures of the Bolivian highlands. The most noticeable of these Altiplano features include their complex terraced farming and irrigation systems, the ceremonial *chullpa*, the settlement pattern itself, and the decorative style found on some of their ceramics. Their extensive agricultural fields, which reflects an intensification of this activity, coupled with larger-sized villages, suggests a considerable population density, while the defensive features of some of those villages, which seem to be rather like forts or *pukaras*, illustrate that this process of growth did not occur without tension among communities. Later on,

these *señoríos* had to deal with the conquering Inka Empire and then the Spanish conquistadores, which completely reconfigured their culture and society. These groups are the most direct ancestors of the indigenous Atacameño groups, also known as the *likan antai* people, that still inhabit the inland territories of Antofagasta today.