

**Bato 200 CE – 900 CE**

**(Early Agricultural-Ceramic Period)**

### **Environment and geography**

The Bato people inhabited the coastal regions, inland valleys, and Andean highlands of Central Chile, but were most concentrated in the lands between the Petorca and Maipo rivers. The climate in this period was more or less the same as it is today—Mediterranean with rain in the winter and long, dry summers. Scrubland (*matorral*) was the main form of vegetation, with some woodland along water courses in the Coastal Mountains and the Andes, and grassy meadows on the banks of mountain streams.

### **Economy**

The Bato had a diversified economy based on their very mobile way of life. On the seashore they exploited marine resources and the plant and animal life around estuaries, consuming mollusks, fish, birds, and both marine and land mammals. In the inland valleys they depended on gathering wild fruits and planted quinoa, maize, squash, and beans.

### **Art**

The most characteristic feature of Bato ceramics is its decoration, which includes linear incisions framing dotted areas and relief painting, as well as nipple-shaped appliqués. Some vessels imitate the shape of gourds. Ceramic pipes were common, generally taking the shape of an inverted T. The *tembetá* (an adornment worn in the lower lip) was a fairly common item, and the most frequent type had the shape of a winged disk and was made of ceramic or stone. The same materials were used to make ear disks.

### **Social Organization**

The Bato lived in fairly independent family groups, each of which ranged over an extensive area. Despite this singular existence, they shared ideological elements with other groups, indicating their interest in identifying themselves with a larger socio-cultural unit.

### **Beliefs and funeral rites**

The Bato buried their dead in shallow graves, laid face down and with legs bent backwards. Grave goods and funeral offerings were scarce, and ceramic items are notably absent. Burial places held small family groups or individuals, and were located under dwellings or nearby. Their religion may have included a shamanic belief system that was practiced with the use of hallucinogenic plants smoked in pipes.

### **Settlement pattern**

The Bato had small settlements or semi-permanent shelters for their small and fairly mobile population. Their chosen sites were generally, but not always, located close to major water courses. Burial grounds were located on the edges of settlements or under the dwellings themselves.

### **History**

Bato society incorporated cultural elements from the first Ceramic Communities, such as ceramics with nipple-shaped appliqué and iron ore paint, the *tembetá*, and ceremonial pipes. They shared other ceramic-making characteristics with early communities in North-Central Chile and Northeastern Argentina, such as the use of the bridge handle, tapered bottle necks, and the crafting of plant and animal figures. But the Bato also developed their own stylistic features, which included linear incisions around dotted areas, and relief painting. Unlike the contemporaneous Lolleo culture, the Bato were a society with a strong hunter gatherer tradition, more mobile and less homogenous. Both groups may have used ceramics as a means of ethnic identification that marked differences between groups. This was also achieved through the use of the *tembetá* and their different funerary practices. In the Andean highlands, both peoples shared their range with hunter-gatherer groups that maintained their lifestyle until very late periods