

**"PUERTA DE ENTRADA HACIA  
UNA CULTURA MILENARIA"**

*"The entry to our ancient culture"*



*Comunidad Atacameña de  
Quitor  
San Pedro de Atacama.*

*Atacameño Community of  
Quitor  
San Pedro Atacama*

## *Atacameño Prehistory*

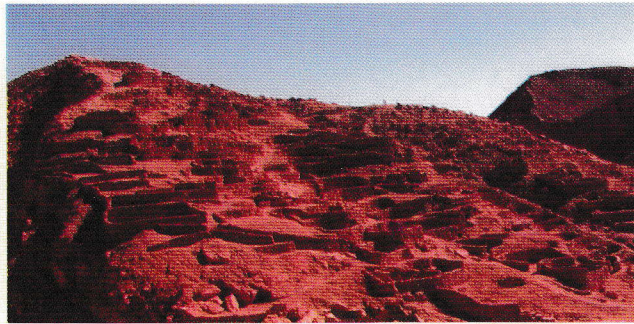
The earliest settlements in the Atacameño región go back to the Archaic Period (around 9,000/8,500 B.C.), and they were characterized by hunter-gatherer societies that moved across different areas. The process of domestication of plants and animals was consolidated later, during the Formative Period (1,500 B.C.- 400 A.C.), generating a new way of life, by which they began to produce more than to rely on the depredation of natural resources. The use of new technologies such as pottery making and metallurgy also began at this stage, and weaving, basketry and architecture continued to develop. This process ended up consolidating agro-pastoralist societies. During the Middle Period (400 A.C.- 1,000 A.C.), the Atacameño entered the circle of interaction of the Tiwanaku states, which spread its religion and imposed its hierarchy, Tiwanaku, however, did not establish permanent colonies in the area.

The Pukar of Quito was first used after the links between San Pedro and Tiwanaku had dissolved, during the late Middle Period (900 A.C.- 145 A.C.). This is also the time when a certain sense of unity begins to grow from the diversity that characterized the communities that were established in the Salar de Atacama and the Loa valley. The social and economic relationships of the Atacameño were redefined at the start of the period, when some degree of internal conflict also begins to show as they began to exploit the gorges nearby the Salar, and intensified their occupation of the Loa. Settlements in the gorges began to multiply with support from a technology that allowed them to use and live in and use spaces which were previously undervalued. The Pukara of Quito stands witness to this process that not only did the size and complexity of the overall population. Located nearby the mains Quito and Vilama also show that social conflicts over resources began to take a violent turn. Throughout this period, the settlements around the Salar and those in the Loa valley kept close bonds in today's Argentinian northeastern provinces.

This is the scene through which the Inca empire expands its political hold across the Atacama Desert, during the late period (1450 A.C.- 1550 A.C.), when the Inca state relies on the land uses and beliefs of the people of Quito, Catarpe, Vilama, Zapar, Caspana and Turi, to legitimize its power and spread its road network. The consolidation of Inca rule in the Loa and San Pedro areas resulted in strong hierarchical differentiation, social inequality leading to a series of internal conflicts. These formed the background of the first Spanish native encounters, which increased the already chaotic situation, giving way to a new era.

## El Pukara de Quito

El Pukara de Quito, ubicado a 3 Km. del poblado de San Pedro de Atacama, se construyó sobre un talud inclinado que forma parte de la Cordillera de la Sal. Su localización se relaciona con el río San Pedro y con una ruta de tráfico ancestral ocupada posteriormente en tiempos incaicos. Sin perjuicio del carácter estratégico y defensivo de este asentamiento, se plantea que fue ocupado de manera permanente ya que la alta densidad de vestigios arqueológicos en superficie y las construcciones domésticas que se identificaron así lo demuestran. Para su edificación se usaron técnicas de aterrazamiento y contención, registrándose alrededor de 200 estructuras que forman conjuntos arquitectónicos separados por vías de acceso y espacios entre-recintos. Se observan recintos pequeños (chullpas y cistas) y otros más grandes de carácter domésticos que corresponden a dormitorios-cocina, patios interiores, recintos sin techar a modo de ramadas y otros. Las estructuras de mayores dimensiones probablemente fueron plazas, espacios de uso comunal o corrales.



## The Pukara of Quito

The Pukara of is located 3 Kms. Away from San Pedro de Atacama, and it was built on a slope of the Cordillera de la Sal. It overlooks the San Pedro river and helped to control an ancestral trafficking route, which was also used under Inca rule. This fortress not only had strategic and defensive purposes: surface archeological remains and domestic constructions reveal it was inhabited. Building techniques include terraces and restraints. There are more or less 200 independent architectural spaces connected by access-ways and open spaces. There were small quarters (like the "chillpas" and "cistas") as well as bigger ones (like rooms, Kitchen, indoor patios, roofless structures resembling stalls and others. There also seems to have been even larger structures that had a common use, like squares and pens.