

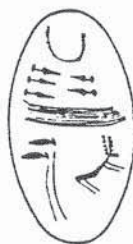
VALCAMONICA SYMPOSIUM 1993

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PREHISTORIC AND TRIBAL ART:

SYMBOL AND MYTH

PAPERS - ARTICOLI

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**PREHISTORIC AND TRIBAL ART:
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ABOUT HUMAN FIGURES, PRODUCTION AND SYMBOLS
Some Aspects of Northwestern Argentine Rock Art

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ABSTRACT

Topographic location and symbolic aspects of rock art sites from El Bolsón Valley - Catamarca Province, Argentine - and its nearest periphery are considered. This includes several different altimetrical floors between 1900 to 3700 m where contemporary and archaeological data points out to a different use of land for farming, herding and hunting-collecting activities. Relations between site locations and those different economical zones as well as with human figures or masks figurations, are used to construct a model which correlates symbolic aspects and subsistence/settlement strategies within social organization changes occurred during Northwestern Argentine Formative stage (600 BC to 900 AD).

INTRODUCTION

Archaeological data about economic and simbolyc behaviour in the highlands of the South-central Andes suggest the existence of an interchange net that was in action from ca.10000 years ago. At this time ancient hunter-gatherer people knew, obtained or exploited different resources from different ecological zones east and west of the Andes. The Andean environmental variability conditioned by altitudinal gradient, rainfall average and wind direction displays, in a 400 km West-East flight path, contrasting landscapes as desert Pacific coast, the Atacama desert, the Salares area, the higher Puna, the mesotermic valleys and the mountain forests. It is not possible to understand Andean highland rock art out of this net or out of a strategy of subsistence and settlement that faces the uncertainty of the desert environment using resources from the forest.

The role played by this net in the economical organization of these people and the alternatives to keep under control parts of the mentioned net are important factors that cannot be overlooked if we are to board the comprehension of socio-economical and symbolic processes occurred at different times during the Early Formative.

We base this work on the analysis of a delimited geographical area of North Western Argentina taken within a ratio of 65km, (geodesical distance) from a central place (Lampacillo 66° 45' W/ 26° 57' S) in the Valley of El Bolsón, Dept. Belén,

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Catamarca, Argentina. This somewhat arbitrary delimitation allows us to correlate rock art sites with environmental zones from the Eastern end of the Puna (3300/3700 m) to the lower mesoterminal valleys (1700/2000m). This important altimetrical variation within short distances, implies the existence of different possibilities of exploitation related to herding, farming or hunting-gathering occurred in prehispanic times.

The environmental zones related to rock art sites may be resumed as:

Mesotermic Valleys within	1900/2300m (zone I)
Intermediate Valleys within	2300/2900m (zone II)
Highland Basins within	3300/3600m (zone III)

For reasons of theme and length we will not describe here each zone and will not consider the specifications already exposed in a first paper about Archaeological survey of the area of El Bolsón (Korstanje 1993).

It is important to insist on the fact that the altimetric and climatic differences affect the availability of botanical resources and farming possibilities which could have modified the economical productivity of the zones. Within this perspective, as regards (zone III) we expect llamas (*Lama glama* sp) herding as main activity to obtain meat and wool, and/or transport facilities together with better expectations for vicuñas (*Lama vicugna*) hunting to obtain similar goods. Salt is another important resource from zone III, in the neighbourhood of Laguna Blanca Basin.

On the other hand the most suitable fields for maize (*Zea mays*) harvest and varieties of pepper (*Capsicum* sp.) among other crops occurs in zone I, as well as the gathering of main different wild fruits (*Prosopis*, *Opuntia* and *Trichocereus* sp.) .

The production of microtermic tubers- different varieties of potatoes (*Solanum* sp) and olluco (*Ullucus tuberosus*) among others and possibly the quinoa (*Chenoposium quinoa*) combined with llama herding, would be the characteristic for zone II.

Different authors agree on the division of the Formative or the first stages of development of the farming-herding people in Northwestern Argentina in two periods: Lower Formative (600 BC/400 AD) and Upper Formative (400/900 AD) to which a previous one (ca.1200/600 BC) should be added in which the sedentary process and pottery production would be already established (Nuñez, Garcia and Fernandez). In relation to this work we are interested on the description of the two first periods.

The Lower Formative or Early Period has been characterized as societies with productive economies which dwelled in scattered settlements or villages, who used stone architecture in their houses as well as in structures attached to their crops or herding. We presume for them a tribal social organization, where the figure of a extended family plays an important role, reflected in the spacial organization of the household clusters (Raffino 1988). Different pottery and lithic sculpture styles were featured for this period. (Gonzalez 1980). The first were organized on the basis of funerary contexts (Gonzalez 1955 and

later works) and originally applied to identify socio-cultural entities or specific "cultures". Present studies of domestical context and the remains of everyday life have proved, however, that these stylistic groups cannot be considered the only evidence to defferenciate those entities. Anyway, until detailed analysis about the production of pottery and lithics, as well as a greater number of domestical contexts research and datings are produced for each specific zone, pottery styles or other stylistic information can be used to point out social interaction within the net mentioned above.

For this period two different entities must be pointed out because of its apparent spacial concentration of household clusters: that of Tafi del Valle, about 130 km W-NW of our geographic point of reference and that of Alamito, on the Campo del Pucará, distant about 90 km W-SW of the same point.

Recent research work has stated the existence of a ceremonial centre in Alamito where sculptures and polished stone tools with antropomorphic and animal pictures, as well as metallic artifacts were produced (Nuñez and Tartusi 1993). It has also stated that this area, of the South Aconquiya mountains, acquire strategical importance towards the end of this period because of location and exploitation of arsenical copper for bronze artifacts production (Perez Gollan 1991). One of the most used hallucinogenic plants *cebil* or *vilca* (gen. *Anadenanthera*) was also available in the near East of this area and became an important resource of latter interchange traffic together with metallic artifacts (Pérez op.cit.). Regarding rock art we have to point out the increasing appearance of iconography based on the combination of feline imagines combined with camelids and antropomorphic figures (Gonzalez 1972). It is also important, as we shall see latter, the production of antropomorphic masks- different styles between Tafi and El Alamito (Gonzalez 1980)- and the existence of monoliths with and without antropomorphic pictures related to the household structures in Tafi.

In the **Upper Formative** (400/900 AD), the iconography known as **Aguada** mainly through the pottery remains, wins a noticeable spacial extension. On the basis of recent research this could be the outcome of the control seized upon the mentioned net by an entity located in the Valley of Ambato (Catamarca), near the settlements of Alamito. The use of hallucinogen - with inhalation practice - and the feline images are connected to complex settlement patterns that include pyramidal buildings considered as ceremonial centres of this entity in the Valley of Ambato (Heredia and Perez 1975, Gordillo 1990). Other distinct and far away places such as the Meridional Argentine Puna and the basin of San Pedro de Atacama, in the Northern part of Chile, form part of the net that expands this iconography and an specific paraphernalia related to the use of hallucinogen. This has opened the discussion about the existence or not of different forms of socio-political control, probably connected to an ideology which could have had its sources in the area of Titicaca lake, in the Bolivian plateau (Pérez 1991).

Rock art of the area we are considering has been studied in the latest decades by Lorandi (1966), Gonzalez (1980, 1989) and Podestá (1990). Our aim is to mark the behaviour of certain related variables in order to establish (a) a correlation to agricultural, herding and/or hunting devoted zones, and (b) to observe these relationship from the symbolic perspective on the basis of some hypothesis that the ethnohistoric information allows us to establish.

On the basis of the mentioned research :

1) there is evidence of simple geometrical paintings due to hunting/gathering groups of the Late Archaic period, or former, in the area of Corral Blanco, at Potrerito Site 2, to which images of masks and camelids appeared overlaid (units A and B in Podestá 1990). These paintings studied by Podestá (op. cit.) represent the most southern findings of simple geometrical expressions, prevailing the non figurative, characteristic of the Archaic art of the Argentine Puna (Aschero and Podestá 1986).

It is important to emphasize that those kind of motives are different to those included in later styles to which we will refer immediately.

2) **style I or Fantastic Figurative**, thus named by (Lorandi 1966 and Gonzalez 1980, respectively) would include the following elements discriminated from Lorandi's definition (the numbering added is from our own):

- 1.1- Felines, side view with shrunk legs;
- 1.2- Camelids (**Auquenidos sensu** Lorandi) with feline like teeth, legs or tail. (**Draconiformes**);
- 1.3- Camelid idem bicephalous;
- 1.4- Zoomorphic figure of feline aspect with atypical characteristics;
- 1.5- Feline footprints;
- 1.6- Human faces of triangular, quadrangular or other shape;
- 1.7- Complex human figure with or without cephalic ornaments or objects in their hands;
- As elements of possible association are accepted:
- 1.8- Schematic human figures with or without objects in their hands;
- 1.9- Footprints or handprints. (Lorandi 1966:150)

Lately Gonzalez suggested that this style should be assigned to entities of the Early or Lower Formative period, former to the expansion of the stylistic themes of Aguada (Gonzalez 1980:375-376). Likewise, the research by Podestá in Antofagasta de la Sierra tackled the association of elements 1.3 (and cases of four headed figures) with different types of schematic figures (1.8) wearing hairdresses, carrying weapons or diversity of objects, which indicate that the early figures are common to the styles of La Isla del Alto Loa, in Chile, dating 300-1100 AD (Podestá 1986/87 and 1988; Berenguer et al. 1985). The evidences on which these last authors hold such chronology suggests that the camelid

forms bi or four headed, associated to human figures above mentioned, would occur during a later time of the Lower Formative and after.

In a recent work by Gonzalez some aspects of rock art of El Tolar (dept. Belén, Catamarca) were exposed, in particular groups of human faces or mask like engravings of Site 2, assigned to Early Period. His proposal tends to identify a different style to the fantastic figurative of Laguna Blanca, that he intends to name antropomorphic faces of El Tolar (Gonzalez 1989). Beyond this proposal we are interested in pointing out the relationship between those faces, the stone masks and the mask like faces in the funerary pottery.

3) La Aguada style, which Gonzalez disregards from Lorandi's style I (González 1980), appears well characterized in sites East and North of the area we are interested at present. It appears in motives with marked emphasis of feline features in antropomorphosized rampant creatures or/and masked antropomorphous, feline atributes or ornaments, side view or front view with bended legs (De la Fuente and Diaz Romero 1979:figs.45-59; Gordillo 1990:fig. pag. 24; Nuñez Regueiro and Tartusi 1993: fig 11). As regards these sites-La Tunita, Sierra de Ancasti (Catamarca) and El Diablo, Valle Calchaquí (Salta)- it was pointed that they would be taken as border zones of the La Aguada style (Nuñez and Tartusi 1993).

4) Lorandi's Style II, also called intricate geometrical or of Campanas-Ampajango by Gonzalez in the above named paper. Its main characteristics are:

- II.1- Curvilinear geometrical elements (predominant) and rectilinear.
- II.2- Snakeform figures.
- II.3- Footprints of American ostrich (ñandú) or birds (tridigit or tripartite signs)
- II.4- Batrachian or saurian figures.
- II.5- Grouped or isolated camelids.
- II.6- Human figure related to zoomorphous motives.
- II.7- Curvilinear outline crosses.
- II.8- Simple schematic human figures or carrying objects in their hands. (Lorandi 1966:154)

The associations of this particular style are often subject of dicussion. Originally Lorandi proposed its relationship with post-formative entities, belonging to the Regional Developments or Late Period or even- for the punctual case of Campanas site- with La Aguada style North of La Rioja. In short, he accepts a chronological position between the end of the Middle and beginning of the Late Periods (Lorandi op.cit.:156-159). Gonzalez leaning on the diversity of pottery styles of the Late Period, suggests two alternatives: (a) of accepting the unity of rock art style "(...) may be due to the fact that at the beginning of the Late Period only one culture with resemblances of the Angualasto-Hualfin, took over great part of the land in which later a cultural differentiation occurred" (Gonzalez op. cit.:376);

(b) that the style might not be a unit and that later research could isolate different components"(...) and assign those components to the different cultural units" (op. cit. :376).

All of the proposals are summarized in Chart 1 where we use a correlative numbering which joins or separates the original styles named according to the temporal accepted designation and the stylistic characteristic indicated. We will refer to this correlating numbering here on.

CHART 1

Proposal/author	Corr Number	Temp. Assig.
Arcaic Paintings of the Site Potrerito 2, Corral Blanco (Podestá 1990).....	A...	Arcaic (before 1200 BC)
Style I/Lorandi 1966..... or Fantastic figurative of Laguna Blanca/González 1980	B1...	Lower Formative or Early Period (600 BC - 400 AD)
Antropomorphic faces of El Tolar/González 1989.....	B2.	(idem.)
Style I of La Tunita (not in the area) /González 1980..... ?...	Upper Formative or Middle Period (Style.Aguada/400-900AD)
Style II/Lorandi 1966.....	C...	End of Middle Period or Beginnings of Late Period (700(?)-1000 AD)

These different proposals bring important data to render possible their use within other interpretative frames. Precisely this spacial delimitation aims to allow the operation in a spacial scale where different variables could be under control of subject and technique. The frame of this analysis must necessarily surpass the identification iconography-shape of ceramic/ socio-cultural entity. Before the identification of a style we have to identify punctual situations of inter relationship between the location of the rock art and the evidence of the actual use of this space (settlements, agricultural features, ways of access, etc).

We have also got to establish a relationship between the productive designs and the association of motives (proportion, techniques and themes) and the symbolic components which define the structural features of the settlements and/or of the motive designs that may occur in other artifacts recovered from other related sites.

Before attacking the subject of the symbolic analysis of human figures, we shall first present the rock art sites from El Bolsón Valley.

Rock art in El Bolsón Valley

During 1992 archaeological survey in El Bolsón Valley - (26°52' / 27' S lat. and 66°49' W long.) two sites with rock art were documented. They are located in two different landscapes from botanical and topographic point of view. The first of them is known as **Cueva Pintada** placed in a narrow gap, in front of an active watershed with abundant bushy vegetation (*monte*). The surrounding landscape is that of narrow gaps, bordered by sandstone cliffs. We point out that through this place runs the pathway that connects Barranca Larga with the Quebrada de las Cuevas, from which you can reach the Yocavil Valley (or Santa María) or the Hualfin Valley. The predictable exploitation of resources in this zone implies hunting-gathering and herding only possible in the upper parts of the gaps.

The so called **Cueva Pintada** is a rock shelter with paintings. It has 20m front, from which 11m belong to the more protected area where there is evidence of occupation. The postsherds correspond to what is known as *Aguada* or *Cienaga* ceramics. The wall shows scarce rock paintings in red and orange reddish, distributed in two separate groups, upon an irregular support of very thick grain sandstone.

Group A, to the left of the most protected area and at a height out of hand reach, presents three geometrical motives and a human face with a rectangular body with no indication of arms, legs or neck. Face and body are very simple and the whole figure forms an irregular rectangle similar to another geometrical figure of rectangular contour in a parallel position. The four motives are horizontally aligned two to two. To the human figure (28,5cm x 16cm) corresponds to the left a "star" like figure (diam. 20cm) of convergent strokes.

Group B, situated to the left of the most protected area, shows six geometrical circular motives with internal divisions, aligned in horizontal rows (3, 2 and 1). The use of colour and the conservation extent of the group does not suggest temporary differences. The treatment of the human figure is comparable, though in a simpler way to the patterns of elongated bodies, either rectangular or elliptical, without neck, which characterizes Lorandi's Style I (item 1.7 of the list above). The simple lines of the face are comparable to some faces from El Tolar (Gonzalez 1989: site 2, figs. 2.17 and 23). The geometrical motives inscribed in circular or rectangular fields are characteristic of the engravings of the Early Period in Antofagasta de la Sierra and Laguna Blanca (Podestá et.al. 1991: figs. 8-10), with antecedents in the Archaic rock paintings (Aschero and Podestá 1986). These references added to the characteristics of the surface ceramics suggests the placement of the rock paintings in the Early Period.

The following site we deal with is El Overito with rock engravings and remains of agricultural structures. It is placed in a terraced landscape, hills and slopes, with low cover of vegetation and grass, next to a temporary water stream. It is placed near the path that connects Lampacillo in the main valley with a lateral gap that shows a high concentration of agricultural structures in a place known as Yerba Buena and El Alto El Bolsón.

The site presents two engraving groups with superficial pecking in blocks of a granitic rock with black varnish. There are five blocks named A to E in two separate groups distant 25 mts from one another (A,B,C and D,E respectively) Most of the engraved surfaces look to the North and the main contrast between varnish and engraving is placed in block E. It is noticeable that A and E blocks concentrate the human figures, meanwhile the intermediate blocks show geometrical curvilinear motives (predominant) and rectiline ones which are characteristic of the group. Bird footprints (tridigits) are also associated.

The human figures in block A, the biggest ones, are placed in both ends of a group which includes curvilinear geometrical motives and different camelids, a central bigger one doubled outlined and other schematic little ones with raised tail. One of the human figures is most deteriorated (left) but both show the same size and design. They have rectangular bodies with checked clothing, hanging arms-the right arm carrying an object-head with headress of radial strokes. In the best kept figure one of these strokes continues in a circular zoomorphic head, placed in vertical position.

The human figures in block E are three, one of which is placed at the top of the block. The body is plane pecked, rectangular with a big outlined circular head without any headress. The opened arms seem to carry objects and one the very long feet ends in a schematic camelid head. The other two figures are rectangular smaller bodies. One of them carries an object suggested by a diagonal stroke. Both are located in the bottom of the block, near the floor.

The recurrence of elements II.1-3,5 and 8 and the similar placement with Ampajango sites (Lorandi op. cit) determines the general characteristics of Lorandi's Style II. The camelid and human figure designs suggest its temporal placement towards the end of the Middle Superior Formative.

The differences between the two sites are marked by the characteristics of design and site location. In every case landscapes are unlike and so are the expectations of land use, being also this difference the outcome of a different cronology.

We shall now see this behaviour in a larger spatial scale.

Rock art and productive zones

The distribution of rock art localities within the above mentioned zones are considered in Chart 2, where we point out the known places, altitudinal variations, temporal stylistical assignation and geodesic distance from Lampacillo place towards the centre of El Bolsón Valley. For indications A, B1, B2 or C see Chart 1. The places which include several sites with the exception of those of El Bolsón Valley are the following:

- Ampajango: Mesada Barrera, Campo del Ingenio, Río Seco del Ingenio, Camino Ampajango-Andalhualá and Río Vallecito. (Lorandi *op.cit.*)
- El Tolar: Sites 1 to 5 (Gonzalez 1989)
- Corral Blanco: Corral Blanco site; Sites from Potrerito 1 to 3 (Named as El Potrero in Gonzalez 1980) (Podestá 1990)

CHART 2

Locality	Zone	Altitude	Style	Distance
Ampajango	I	1900/2200	B1 & C	65 km
San Fernando	I	1700/2100	C	47 "
Puerta Corral Quemado	I	1700/1900	B1 & C	35 "
Quebrada Villavil	I	2000/2300	B1(?) & C	25 "
Cajón de Corral Quemado	II	2400/2600	B1(?) & C	25 "
El Overito	II	2600	C	3 "
Cueva Pintada	II	2650	B1	4 "
Corral Blanco	III	3400/3600	A & B1	53 "
El Tolar	III	3200/3500	B2	60 "

From Chart 2 we know that the characteristics of rock art assigned to Early Period are present in all zones meanwhile those assigned to the transition from Middle to Late Periods are not in any of the Upper zones.

As regards to the first, the presence of this characteristic rarely occurs in the sites of Ampajango and here as well as in Villavil, Puerta and Cajón de Corral Quemado it is denoted by human figurations with feline aspects, associated to crosses of curvilinear contours and/or feline footprints (see qualitative analysis in Lorandi 1966).

With respects to the second, Gonzalez (1980) as well as Podestá (1990) mark the absence of Late elements in the rock art of Corral Blanco (in the area of Laguna Blanca). The same has been pointed out in respect to ceramic associations in the archaeological structures relieved by Albeck and Scattolin (1984). The mentioned research has proved the level of occupation of the area in the Early Period related to the agricultural production, particularly in the place Corral Blanco. At the same time, this zone as well as that of el Tolar are known as areas particularly apt for pasture.

The preponderance of rock art of the Early Period in upper zones - as occurs in Antofagasta de la Sierra (Podestá 1986/87)- turns out to be a possible indicator of the important role played by the llamas cattle raising in the economy of these upper andean societies. The open zones with a high potential of cattle raising (vegetal formations of tolar and pastizal altoandino) especially those that allow some kind of agricultural exploitation turn to be favourite areas for early settlements. This comes to be a different strategy of that followed during the Middle or Upper Periods, which imply the increase of agricultural production and the expansion towards the lower valleys as those of zone I.

To analyse the rock art (or any other aspects) these zones must be seen as central in relation to the interaction with each periphery in order to determine symbolic behaviour associated either to ways of access or specific exploitation areas.

Thus, the concentration of rock art in Laguna Blanca and El Tolar during the Early periods may be understood under this perspective.

From this point of view we may hypothesize that:

(1) Our zones III and II should show a marked interaction (1.1), that may be observed in types, modes of production, use and/or circulation of artifacts or other products which include rock art; (1.2) A major concentration of rock art sites related to settlements of the Early Period.

The role of camelids and the social organization that holds the herding activities in this strategy concern to the symbolic study of rock art in two aspects:

a) in its relationship with productive spaces, divided into pasturing fields and fields suitable for agricultural production, so much in a generative sense (fertility), and that of dominance (landmark) and

b) in the role that plays the domestic camelid (llama or alpaca) in the symbolic organization, particularly in its articulation with the feline image.

As regards to this social organization we must take into account familiar or private character of herding recognized as characteristic of Herding Societies and proved to be valid for the early developments of the economies involved (Ingold 19). This implies: (2.1) we can expect a significative variability in specific designs, in technical forms or other characteristics within the different rock art sites. This is due to the existence of a number of relatively autonomous socio-economical micro systems supported by the extended family which operated simultaneously in the use and exploitation of useful spaces for this strategy. (2.2) Beyond this variability the connected elements would be by patterns of design and the recurrent thematic. Thus we assume that these socio-economic micro systems share a common symbolic system.

Regarding the second strategy the predominance of Lorandi's Style II components, within or near suitable fields for agricultural production in zones I/II and also directly related to house holds (Lorandi 1966:52), (3.1) would show this intensification in the use of the agricultural potential of this zones. (3.2) The abundant use of geometrical curvilinear motives, in several combinations in the mentioned fields, suggest a kind of symbolic relationship between them and the agricultural practices and/or the handling of water supplies. An evidence to this suggestion is given by an exceptional bas-relief engraved rock from Confluencia site, in Antofagasta de la Sierra (Podestá 1986/87:257)

The choice of the black varnished surface of blocks used as rock art support seen in El Overito and repeated in the sites of Ampajango, Corral Quemado, Villavil and San Fernando. (3.3) might be conditioned to the circumstance of a particular distribution of blocks in the horizontal plane of the ground and not only to the fact that there are no other possible supports.

The choice of vertical supports occurs in sites where human figures are clearly associated to Early Period. This is the case for all other sites. Puerta de Cajón Quemado and Cueva Pintada share placements related to ways of access and/or landscapes of narrow gaps. This can alternatively be considered as (4.1) territorial landmarks in the pathways that connect one valley to another (Nuñez 19) (4.2) landmarks in places suitable for hunting and gathering and/or for seasonal herding fields; that is to say related to specific activities.

In different situations and regarding some of the hypothesis here considered (1.1 to 4.2) the human figure appears with different design patterns and/or different motive types. At the same time there has been a change of the headresses, the objects carried or associated zoomorphous.

The human figure

We want to take here three types of human figures that occurs in this area. The first is the Cueva Pintada-Puerta de Corral Quemado type that corresponds to the pattern of elongated bodies, rectangular or eliptical, as we have mentioned it in Cueva Pintada case. This pattern represents a marked tendency in paintings and engravings of the beginnings of Formative Period at Inca Cueva and Cueva Cristóbal, both of them in the Puna of Jujuy, Argentina (Aschero et al.1992; Fernández 1991). Usually they have not neck and, in some cases, not differentiated legs. They are also associated with geometric figures that are similar in shape and dimensions (Aschero et al 1992; Lorandi op.cit.:99). This pattern seems to have evolved in slightly short forms with differentiated legs as well as the headress. This is the case for antropomorfic motives from Ampajango sites (Lorandi op.cit :86). The body usually has divisions; it is horizontally or vertically segmented, but the former is more recurrent and appears to be an initial pattern in what is presently known. Now, it is important

to retain those characteristics referred to body contour and the others that imply a vision of the body like a mass where appendices are neglected or misunderstood.

The other type of human figure is the face or mask-like face. They were isolated at El Tolar by González and there were others at El Potrerito, near Corral Blanco. It is interesting to remark that both groups are of different designs. The former are quite similar to Alamito stone masks and the latter to the Tafi stone masks and particularly similar to monoliths engravings or basrelief engravings (González 1989 and 1980). In his work about El Tolar rock art Gonzalez (1989) displays a series of correlations between mask-like faces and dead flesh symbolism. The only stone mask with a known context - most of them are in private collections with unknown contexts - came from a grave with associated Early Period ceramics (Rio Diablo /Condorhuasi style; Gonzalez, op.cit.), corresponding to Muniz Barreto collections from Hualfín Valley - inside our area- nowadays at La Plata Museum.

There are a couple of correlations that we must point out. First that the location of both rock art sites in zone III, south (El Tolar) and North (El Potrerito) of El Bolsón Valley, coorespond to an area of predictable interaction between the two majors settlement density areas known at present, Alamito and Tafi. In one way it reinforces the idea of the strategy formerly mentioned; in other suggests that both mask like faces could be applied - in those similar supports and locations - to the same simbolyc function.

If we accept -as Gonzalez does - association between dead flesh (an specific corpse) and masks it is possible to open a series of correlations with monolith use in Tafi house hold clusters and ethnohistorical information about dead fleshes, land fertility and landmarks. The Duviols study (1976) about double andean symbolism and ancestors lithomorphous gives an important basis for construct some hypothesis.

The huanca, hard stone monoliths and the huauqui, a figurine kept by the ancestors in their graves, was the two split forms of a dead man that conserves a part of the vital fuid. As Duviols said " (...)chacun des deux est un double de l'homme auquel il s'attache, chacun des deux peut recevoir et conserver une partie du fluid vital de cest homme, peut-etre aussi des autres fluids vitaux exterieurs" (1966:359). The monoliths (or huancas) could be antropomorphous or zoomorphous, height less than human beings, and placed in the center of the fields and/or at the entrance of villages (marca or llacta). The huancas had two functions: a pacifier one and other of fertility. It was also received offerings and was subject of a cult joined with agrarian rituals.

In the case of Tafi mask like faces occur -in several occasions- as motives added to the monolith. Then it wouldn't be daring to suppose that El Potrerito or El Tolar engravings are equivalent to huancas. That is to say that their placements could have been related to landmarks and fertility of the herding and/or harvest fields.

The first type of human figures, as seen as their formal relations with monoliths, could have probably been used in the same way.

The third type is that of El Overito marked by his significative headress. It is similar to Aguada representations in bone and other materials (Gordillo 1993). The Overito case has also a zoomorphic figure placed in vertical position as occur in some bronze plates - characteristic from Aguada - that has a couple of felines on both sides. This figure had constituted a theme widely spread in the Andean Higlands.

What we want to conclude is that this late figure marks a different relationship between symbolism and economic production. This theme is spread in times of the Upper Formative, with a changed strategy of production and settlement. The extended family strategy was framed in other strategy based on a Chiefdom form of control. Warriors, status symbols denotation, and highly standarized iconography is expected. This we think is the symbolic difference between Ampajango-El Overito site-types vs. Puerta de Corral Quemado-Cueva Pintada or El Tolar-El Potrerito site-types.

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