

## THE ROUTE OF THE CONQUERORS OF THE NEW WORLD: SPAN AT TARAPACÁ RAVINE

*Edwin Binda Compton / Chile*

---

### **Origin**

There are two main routes of connection in the South American continent that run from the center to the south, these are called Camino del Inca: The Altiplano route and the one called from the coast (that did not run through the coastal line but through the Sierra, 80 to 100 kilometers from the sea line, to avoid the deserts and that also had resting and provisions areas, given the possibility of having cultivations). This route is the route of our concern and probably begun with the advancement and later the establishment in the territory by the natives. It becomes hard to conceive the reasons for the human establishment is such a hostile environment also considering the precarious conditions for human subsistence, however and considering the chronicles and archeological remains we must suppose that in previous times the environmental and production conditions were somewhat better than what they are today. In any case, from a modern perspective and from our western culture, the main reason for their existence can be the administration and control of the southern territories, with a major population and productivity. This is later complemented with the transfer of fundamental supplies that were obtained from the sea line: seafood and manure from the sea birds that was used as fertilizer. The salt even though it is mentioned in some literature is in this case not very probable given the existence of huge salt deposits in the desert and the altiplano. The sea communities probably received agricultural products (mainly grains) and some utensils. (The archeological findings, specially the burial type are the basis for this thesis).

### **Pre-Columbian Development**

The route allows and potentials the development of small communities in or at the border of its journey, especially in the sierra zone (mountains that fall from the altiplano to the pampa). This take advantage of each and every possibility of the agricultural exploitation that is mainly associated with the permanent or eventual use of water. The soil conditions with strong slopes are solved with artificial leveling for the cultivation and for the maximum water advantage. The highest mountaintops and some other geo-topographical peculiarities are relevant elements when it comes the time to establish ceremonial or very significant sites. The

relationship between the communities and the road that connects them is given through very precise and peculiar patterns.

### **Apogee of the Colonial Period**

The route has been used since the arrival of the Spanish as an expedition route toward what will be in the future the Chilean territory. Probably some of the smallest hamlets that are in this study will be the first stopping points in the route when going south. The Spanish settlements (Diego de Almagro) performs its first incursion through the altiplano route to descend to what latter will be Chile, close to Copiapó (Copayapo) and he will latter use this same route to return to the Virreinato of Peru.

Later, Pedro de Valdivia used "in his many journeys the Sea line Route" to avoid the "puna" and the rigid climate of the 4,000 m.s.n.m (4,000 meters – 12,200 ft. - over the sea level) of the altiplano route. The importance given to all of these communities, from the beginning, must be seen in the almost immediate construction of churches and chapels as well as the trace of "Damero" of the Tarapacá Village.

The discovery of the silver mine in Potosí and some local mines as Guantajaya, Challacoyo, Chanabaya and others somewhat smaller, meant for the road between Chiapa, Sibaya and Tarapacá the period of major economical importance through out its whole history. The transporting of the mineral from Potosi to the exportation or transferring points, associated to the traditional functions of the road, converts this route in one of the most important, traveled and commercially active during the colonies. The amalgamating works of Tilivilca (next to Tarapacá) is where the mineral is melted next to the route to the Altiplano and Peru. In parallel some vineyards are also developed giving place to the first presses in area. The strategic location of the Atacama village at the beginning when ascending the sierra at the border of the pampa, and due to the fact that it is the last place with water between the desert and the sea as well as being the last populated center of the span before the oasis of Pica and Matilla – some 70 kilometers south, helps it to become the only community in the area that had a governor, a church, a nun convent and the mayor population in the area.

### **Fluctuation of the Republican Era**

Once the silver mines located in Potosí and its surroundings are extinguished the importance of this road decreases and toward the end of the XVIII century, its use becomes once again as it was before the arrival of the Spanish. The discovery and exploitation of saltpeter deposits (Nitrate) in the pampa toward the end of the XIX century probably meant some apogee, this time, due to need of providing with agricultural products (food) from the Sierra to a population that had an explosive growth in a very short time. With the rise of the artificial saltpeter, the deposits were closed and a progressive abandonment of the area until this day begun.

The development of the automobile, the commerce between Chile and Bolivia and the traffic between and from Bolivia to Chilean ports will generate a regular use of this route, but now, over a modified journey to allow the traffic of motorized vehicles. At this point in time, it is very difficult to reestablish the original outline; beyond the joining of the road with the villages.

### **DESCRIPTION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SPAN OF THE ROAD**

The span of the road that has been studied, belong to the one that goes between the villages of Chiapa – Jaiña – Tarapacá – Pica / Matilla, covering a distance of approximately 130 kilometers of longitude.

Its importance lies on the abundance of “ayllos” that in the pre-Columbian era were the location of small Indian villages and that later became the “Spanish” settlements that were located next to them, and in some cases in the same place.

Since its origins up to the early XX<sup>th</sup> century the span was a road or pedestrian way that was only adequate for the traffic of people and animals by foot (given the geography and the unevenness between its extremes: from approximately 800 to 1000 m to more than 3,500 m. above sea level).

The transport of goods was always done by men or on the back of a local kind of camel (llama) and due to the almost non existence of rains in the sierra and in the pampa as well as the toughness of the soil, the road in some areas could have been nothing more than a track, but there are some historic references and archeological findings (rare today) that show that a partially paved road of concave surface with a width that would approximately vary from the 2 feet (60

cm) and 2 poles (1,50 m) close to 4 poles (3,28m) of with in the area close to Copiapó (Copuyapu or Copayapo, that later in the pre-Columbian period was San Francisco of the Jungle). The stroll of caravans, its transit and the civil works that implied its definition on the Inca period help to consolidate this span in the route or “official” way.

Its original trace mainly serpent under the ravine and its proximities, assuring the supply of water and some shade. In its origin it was a much direct road than today, because it could easily overcome the strong slopes (as an anecdote: There are some areas in which a traveler that had experience and knew the area, could cover the distance between two villages, through the old road, faster than someone driving on today’s road).

From our perspective of the late XX century, it is difficult, if not impossible to get the image of what must have been the reality of the transit of the Region of Tarapacá during the period of the Incas and latter the Colonial times.

Even today, when we travel with the adequate vehicles and with complete information about the way in the roads of the Sierra of Tarapacá gorge, it is as entering a strange and foreign world, isolated and immerse in another reality, like frozen in a past time.

Certainly in the colonial period the road was much more important than later or even today, but we have no evidences that the road may had a relevance or special gravitation for the development of the centers of power or culture that it depended of, even thou it was an obligated stroll toward the south to areas of relevance as Copiapó (Pocayapo, Copayapo) an the central valley of Chile.

The geography, the climate, the lack of water and the few sources of richness, make it difficult to conceive the reasons for which man of an historical period, decided to populate this wide area. Archeological sites let us know of the conditions under which they lived, these were milder than the one we find today, supported by historical references of the conquering period let us suppose that the landscape and the environment were less arid in the past. The tamarugo forests that give the name to the Pampa del Tamarugal and many wells or Puqíos that have disappeared speak of another reality.

They will be the native inhabitants that lived in the area, exploiting the scares but irreplaceable agricultural potential of the sierra as well as the supply of seafood, much before the Inca Empire made theirs this area. It was the genius and the Inca techniques, takes or learned from their

predecessors which allowed an agricultural development of which we still today have clear awareness.

For small human groups, wondering to some place that allowed them to live, the road will be no other than the path behind them, to a place where the conditions of a small valley will permit – with great effort – self provide the minimum required conditions for subsistence. It will only be with the overcoming of the Empires, or ideas of centralized power, when the road will become a nexus or the necessary communication and in some cases transcendental for the subsistence of them all.

We are talking about an area with a basic economy and of marginal subsistence in relation to the centers of power and culture and whom taxation to the empire should have been more than scares, but not with that, underestimating its strategic importance that seem to be the basic reason for its existence. From this perspective we must note that the area was almost all inhabited if there had – even a minimum – subsistence condition, creating a net of populated centers that covers the whole area.

The tendency to a straight line in many of the Inca routes here it becomes logic, but that did not avoid that the trace would be altered to prevent geographical accidents or other natural obstacles. We do find though cases in which exist or existed two alternative ways to join to areas and we can also suppose that the longest one – which was regularly traced in areas of less altitude – must belong to later traces used by the conquerors less used to transit in high areas. It is important to make a reference to the longitude system applied by the Incas in their routes, where the distance is a relative measure to which definition it also gives not only a physical measure as our current patters of measure, but also the time that takes to travel the distance, the one that is naturally influenced by the slopes and particular conditions of the landscape. This partially explains the diverse distances between two locations in a relay or stoppers (Tambos) along these routes.

The Spanish consequently, will find a territory in which the conditions to conquer were reasonable prepared, with a basic highway system defied by a net of routes that allowed the possibility of supplies.

The occupation of the territory, basically based on the same strategic principals of the Inca Empire – assuring the link with the southern regions – secures the occupation of the conquered territories which importance is mainly based in the exploitation of the minerals found, the base of the colonial economy of this area.

The remaining villages probably justify their subsistence and development with two reasons: take advantage of all the area of agriculture possible to secure the supply of food and the necessary territorial spreading for the conquest.

One must not loose the view of the important role of evangelization, which support to the conquering tasks is undisputed. This allows assuming that a criterion, also used, was to settle churches and villages in every point where there was a native settlement that could be Christianized.

At this stage it is possible to adventure in a hypothesis relating to the small chapel of Illaya located next to and very close to the village of Chiapa. Its existence, considering the closeness to Chiapa, is not possible with out the assumption that this promontory hostessed some amount of natives that cultivated and took care of the terrace slopes of the area. The name as well as the topographic characteristics suggests a possible sanctuary dedicated to the God Illapa – God of the Ray and Rainbow.

Naturally the area must be provider after the Columbian period of agricultural products– fruits, grains, wheat and even grapes and wine that is not possible to cultivate in the altiplano. This also explains, and of most coherence, the administrative and ecclesiastic dependence of this area in relation to Arequipa. This must have necessary meant a frequent and abundant transit from and to the high regions, which produces the most important sub product of this highway network, the transmission and propagation of the faith and culture.

It is in this point in which the study of the roads and its trace and history become important from the perspective of the present job.

This routes will be, a very important artery in which not only people and good circulated but also ideas, knowledge, experiences, technologies and news, all of this what we now know as culture.

### **THE TRACE OF THE ROADS AND THE VILLAGES**

Our time, full of information, technology and science, is also immerse in serious ecological and environmental problems, along with abandoning and forgetting this region, it has been wasted or ignored the possibility of learning from it and with this to also apply a vast variety of knowledge that has been developed along history, all of these are a lesson of how to use and exploit the environment with out pillaging it.

An environment – an ecosystem – so fragile and delicate,

because of its own lack of resources forces its habitants to develop an entire cultural system that settled its own existence in the subsistence of the environment. This had nothing neither romantic nor conservative; it was only a need for their existence.

The conqueror was able to perceive some aspects of the precarious balance, but with a different mentality and new economical concepts, it had no possibility of understanding the enormous complexity of the total system.

The routes for the natives – without the knowledge of the wheel – was nothing more than a sidewalk where feet would surely level over an efficient span. Their width would then be defined by the intensity of the traffic, but even more important for this was the importance of determined processions – ceremonies – that used them. The ascending or descending slopes were related over anything with the human and animal capacity to overcome them and it was determined by the need of relays, depending on the effort required.

The villages, hamlet, tambos and relays, more than establishing a net or network of interrelations, configured a lineal system of chained bipolar relations. In this area besides Tarapaca the confluence sites of two or more roads are very infrequent. The road and the village form a bond of special particular connotations that are spatial, functional and strategic.

It is very uncommon that the road runs into the village and even more uncommon that it will impose its geometry on the village, it is more a subtle recognizing the geographic particularities of its surroundings gently discovering them, so as to arrive as a street, as proper as any of them, finding the paradox that the village will recognize the intrinsic preeminence of the road, giving it an expedition and naturalness to the encounter with the public and hierarchy spaces – the main square, the atrium, church, sight viewer – that will define with no doubt the role, hierarchy and meaning of the road.

Environmental harmony still surprises when we discover that the constructions were normally built over the quota of the water, forcing a mayor effort to supply their homes, but avoiding any possible area with agricultural production. The churches built by the conquerors were always next to the whole without aggress its original configuration, they respected that not written rule and with this they acquired a property very difficult to emulate regarding the context in which they were located.

An especial mention must be made to the “Plano de

Antonio O’Brien de 1765” A complete, detailed and precise cartographic mapping of the Tarapacá gorge. It reveals the interest and importance that in those days was given to the area and it is performed with the intention to build works that allowed the handing and distribution of the water (seasonal rains, and of waterfalls) of the high zone (Altiplano) over the Tarapacá ravine. This invaluable document states the mapping of the road, the locations as well as the organization of the villages and the areas for agriculture along the site.

## **HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**

The origin of the road is lost in time and it’s not possible to state the date of its creation. Its consolidation and major intensity of use or importance is given in the Inca domination and along the colony until the creation of the automobile.

Today the route has been substantially modified to allow the transit of motorized vehicles and it is one of the main connections between the coast (Iquique – Chile) and the Bolivian Altiplano. An important volume of commercial traffic and cargo travels trough it.

## **MEANING OF THE ITINERARY**

With no doubt the span of this itinerary allows the visitor to connect with the most authentic aspects and elements and less “culturally polluted” of the ancestors of the area and the “epopee” that the colonization meant to the southern extreme of the continent.

Within the span we find untouched manifestations of the, resources and technology developed throughout the history to survive within an environment of these characteristics.

It becomes evident how in the span, how through the road travels culture in its vast definition. The contribution of every stage of development of the civilizations, mixing between all, allows the human development in the most demanding conditions of the environment. The condition of strategic structure that acquires the route to the power structures or to models more “civilized” of organization.

Within the ruins and in the human practices sill current and valid we can read, the knowledge, expertise and the capacity of human beings to adapt to a hostile environment as well as its capacity to interact with it. The evidences of the evangelizing process as a clear over imposing and mixing with the beliefs and ancestral rituals are showed in

the buildings (churches, chapels and burial sites) and in the public spaces (main square, atriums, roads, etc)

## **RELEVANT RITUALS**

The churches or chapels and by extension each one of the hamlets, from the beginning of the evangelization were dedicated or “devoted” to a Holy Protector of devotion and admiration. The religious celebrations of each village correspond to the annual celebration of each saint. Just to name some: San Lorenzo de Tarapacá, San José de Laonsana, San Antonio de Padua de Mocha, San Juan Bautista de Guaviña, El Salvador de Limacsiña, Santa Rosa de Lima de Usmagama, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Illaya, etc.

In some cases these rituals of the catholic religious celebrations merge or superpose elements of the previous rituals that allow recomposing or at least sight-view values or meaning of relevant geographic elements for the pre-Columbian culture, making concrete a religious syncretism proper of this region.

## **PATRIMONIAL CONTENTS**

### **1 Materials**

With no doubt the villages themselves – as a whole – with their constructions, public spaces and even its environment and its content – furniture and art – are the “material” of highest relevance and patrimonial value. The churches with their own elements as Atriums, Burial Sites, Crosses, Ceremonial Ramps, Towers, Bell Tower as well as its contents, retable, images, mural paintings, bells, liturgical accessories, etc. All of it complements with archeological cultivation terraces that are still in use, etc., Indian cemeteries, signs or ruins and stone-pictograms, pictograms and many archeological remains on the route as well as elements of ancestral cult of the pre-Columbian period along the route.

### **2 Non-tangible patrimony of character non-material or spiritual.**

As important as the material patrimony at the route, is the non-tangible patrimony conformed by people who still lives in an authentic and real mix between their ancestral culture and the legacy of Spanish conquerors, using in their daily lives the best and useful of each culture legacy.

From this view point, the natural environment and the real state patrimony and non-tangible patrimony are for them the things which they live their every day’s life, far and far different experience to our western culture more “academic”

and perhaps out of place view of the Cultural Patrimony.

Is important here to point about the authenticity and the low levels of “cultural pollution” we can find along the route, perhaps the most fragile and delicate aspect to be preserved.

### **3 Environmental: Cultural Landscape and natural landscape incidence.**

Apart from beauty and magnificence, the natural landscape has blended into cultural landscape throughout history. This has been a perfect symbiosis and a tangible example of balance between men with his environment when and where his needs for survival depends on his adequate relation with his surroundings, modifying it in agreement to his needs but not going beyond the limit where his action implies depredation.

The locals with their knowledge and ancestral sensibility do not intellectualize nor promote these aspects other than the generational transmission through daily tasks, without any formal teaching or instruction.

This makes that the natural, human and cultural landscape, those entire extremely precarious and fragile, fundamental aspects but very delicate to preserve as basic key for the infrastructural patrimony integrally understanding, avoiding to turn them into false structures and touristy iconography lacking content.

### **4 Legal administration and protection of the goods belonging to the patrimony**

The administration and protection of Chilean Patrimony is assigned by law to the “Council of National Monuments”, and has the corresponding “Law of National Monuments.” This is the only legal framework available for these issues, passed in 1970. It is not enough; it has anachronisms and above all lacks a by-law which would allow an adequate and positive application.

## **STATE OF CONSERVATION, AUTHENTICITY AND INTEGRITY OF THE GOODS**

The real estate patrimony is mainly made up of Adobe buildings in the lower zones and Rock and Clay in the higher mountainous areas. It is important to mention the consistent and recurring tremors and the high frequency of earthquakes which generate structural damage in different levels.

The precarious local conditions combined with the isolation and scarce economic and technical support, which in many cases is null, that is given to the communities or local organisms for the protection and conservation of their

patrimony has meant the total or partial loss of the patrimony. This has happened because restoration tasks or at least structural consolidation after a tremor have not been done. The communities takes on these tasks, “repairing” or “transforming” by their own but, having lost traditional techniques and knowledge or opting for “modern” solutions, which are easier, simple or available, for example the use of metal sheets, cement, or other “modern” materials.

In a previous presentation we had said: *“The present research’s main purpose is to promote this important patrimony, with the hope of creating an understanding of the need and importance of protecting it. For now, the only thing we have achieved is to have a detailed and very complete registry. If his is not promoted in a short time it will be the only existent information (stored and unpublished) regarding this lost patrimony.”*

**Today we face, what we had said all along, our research has become for practically all of this patrimony, the only graphical, iconographical and technical document that shows its existence and importance.**

**While we prepared this presentation a ferocious earthquake hit the area on June 13, 2005 with an intensity of 7.9 on the Richter scale. Churches and villages on this route were left in ruins, precisely on the stretch we encounter. There are neither enough words nor images to explain the huge patrimonial lost and the disaster that affected the area.**

The isolation, precarious environment and the little or almost null economic importance of these communities for the country, allows us to anticipate that the recovery actions will hardly take place. Seeing our previous experiences, wherever it will intervene, and the restoration tasks will not be faced technically or professionally at the level which this patrimony requires. Furthermore, we can hardly expect restoration of the villages as a whole, as a spatial and architectural units. Immediately some authorities appear proposing a rushing intervention, inadequate at technical and in materials, and what is worse, aggressively against the community.

The natural disaster is considerable. Eventually the churches and the villages could be restored, although in some cases the monuments has been lost definitively. The structures and buildings that configure the villages are unlikely to be recovered without the adequate help and considerable material support. The worse part of this disaster is that the material loss has caused a cultural loss in terms of way of life, social network, community structures, the

feeling of belonging, the authenticity, the respect and cohesion of the culture to the place and/or environment.

It is difficult to outweigh the effects of this terrible disaster and it even more difficult to imagine if there will be a will to restore this Patrimony. The technical capacity and information is available. The need and the hope of the dwellers to recover “Their Patrimony” are huge, but the economic resources, which in fact are not much, and the logistics involve in such a task, require a strong impulse from the local community, in terms of commitment, effort, and the will of the national government as well as the help from the international community in order to save this World patrimony in danger of extinction.

### Abstract

This work is focused on a significant distance of approximately 130 kilometers of which was the ancient Route that connected north and south of the South American territory, between the Pacific Ocean and the high plains of the Andes mountains. The space located in the Fault of Tarapacá in the North Chile (latitude south 19°55', longitude 69°, and height of 995 to 3150 meters above sea level) was part of the road that was the beginning of the Seaside Inca Trail and which allowed the communication, administration and domain of the Southern area of the Empire (TWANTISUYO). Then it became the main Trail of the Spanish Crown (The Route of the Conquistadores and then of the King's Route) in order to communicate to administrative and evangelize the Crown's possessions in the south (Finis Terrae). Its role in both cases was initially strategic, political, military and administrative but then it became a commercial trail for trade and cultural interchange, and also for religious pilgrimage for the local festivities.

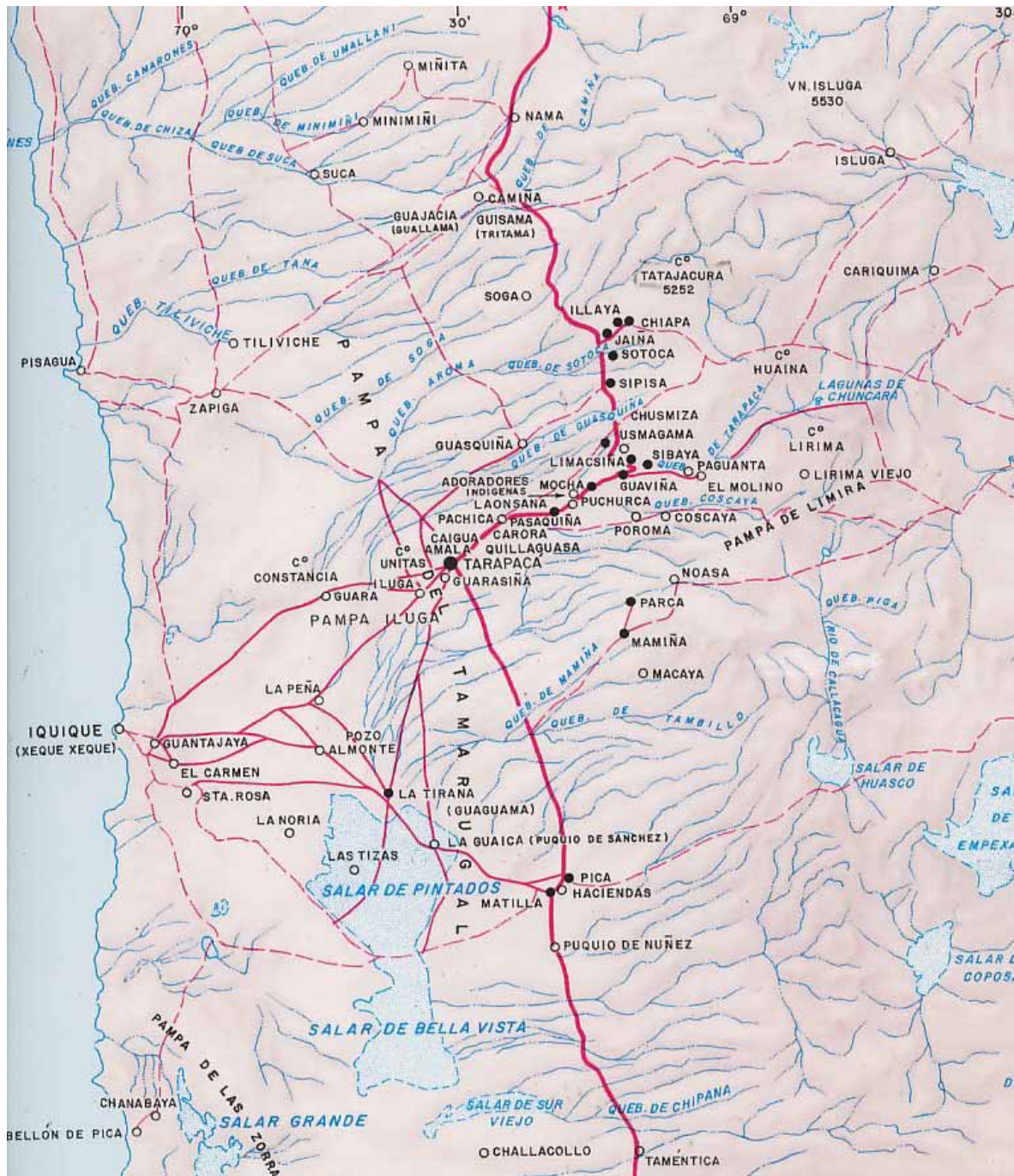
Its importance is given by the concentration in a space Route of the evidence of valuable natural heritage which is untouched on these walls. Also, there is a variety of cultural spot, which are an evidence of different times in history. There is a valuable property, which can be summarized in urban and architectural structures (about 17 little villages). To the above, there is a religious heritage of antique data that can be added and which is of great interest. As for the intangible heritage this is still alive (rituals and festivities on one side and the way of life and social interaction on the other)

### References

1. Binda Compton, Edwin – Trebbi del Trevigniano, Romolo – Miniño Vera, José Miguel – Lizama Diaz, Carlos: **“Tarapacá, Religious Architecture of the Confine”**. (Waiting financing to be published)
2. Local Press: Articles and photographic material Published due to the June 13, 2005 Earthquake.

## THE ROUTE OF THE CONQUERORS OF THE NEW WORLD: SPAN AT TARAPACÁ RAVINE

*Edwin Binda Compton / Chile*



**Approximate Extension:** Total Span = 130 km

The villages of the study, along the span that concerns us are 18 (Tarapacá, Laonsana, Mocha, Guaviña, Limacsiña, Sibaya, Chiapa, Illaya, Jaiña, Guasquiña, Sipisa, Sotoca, Usmagama, La Tirana, Pica, Matilla, Mamiña, Parca.)





Fig.1



Fig.2



Fig.3



Fig.4



Fig.5



Fig.6



Fig.7



Fig.8



Fig.9



Fig.10



Fig.11



Fig.12



Fig.13



Fig.14



Fig.15



Fig.16