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**Tunics from the Azapa Valley, Late Formative Period.
A new weaving tradition in the lower valleys.**

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Context

Due to the short distance between the Pacific Ocean and the highest point of the Andes, the area of Arica has been for millennia a frequently used passageway for human groups going between the coast, the valleys, the *sierra*, the highland and the eastern side of the Andes. (People also moved from north to south along the coastal border.) The Azapa Valley was probably one of the natural roads and several pre-Hispanic archaeological sites are located at the base of the hillsides.

The Formative Period in this area presents two stages: the Early Formative Period (1100-560 BC) (Santoro 1980); and the Late Formative Period (500 BC-600 AD). The Early Formative Period is represented by the sites Azapa 71 (Fase Azapa); and Azapa 14, with textiles – mats and loincloths –mainly made from vegetal fibers. There were also some wool twining blankets, fragments of single or double looping and a thin, child's headband made with sprang technique.

The coastal sites of Faldas del Morro, Morro-2 and El Laucho, PLM-7 (Focacci 1972) seem to be nearest to the Late Formative Period, judging by the dyed wool weaving using yellow, blue and red stripes. Also the blue belt made with sprang technique found in the coast, El Laucho is very similar to one found in the Valley (Az-70).

The Late Formative Period (500BC – 600AD) main sites in the valley are Azapa 70 (Focacci, Erices, 1973, Muñoz 1980, 1983, Rivera, 1974 and 1985; Azapa 71b (Santoro 1980); Azapa 122; and Azapa 115, (Muñoz 1980, 1983).

The site Azapa 70

This site is located at the northern side of the Azapa Valley, about 15 km from the coast. The funerary pattern based on small mounds belongs to the Late Formative Period. This area was excavated in 1971 by G. Focacci, and S. Erices, and in 1976 by C. Santoro and I. Muñoz. These excavators reported human remains, textiles and other cultural material which had been placed between layers of soil, straw, and vegetal fiber, and pressed with round stones.

The textiles

The textiles found at this site were made with camelid wool, using natural and dyed colors. Complete tunics and their fragments were found, as well as small bags, head deformer bands, and netting hats (Focacci and Erices, 1972, Ulloa 1982, Agüero and Cases, 2004, Horta 2004).

Three similar hats were made with simple looping, decorated with a stepped pattern design in dark brown, blue, ocher, reddish and off white.



Figure 1. Simple looping hat with geometric pattern.

A head deformer was made with two woven bands which are sewn together and decorated with a pattern of four head profiles; a red warp-faced rectangular bag decorated with pairs of white threads arranged at one-inch intervals; the bag is reinforced with a braid on one of the sides and with netting on the other side. This bag contains another bag which was used to hold pipes and other implements for inhaling hallucinogenic substances, and is decorated with a radiated frontal human or animal figure that is surrounded on both sides by stepped pyramids (Focacci and Ericces 1972, Horta 2004).



Figure 2. Interlocked and slit tapestry weaving bag, with human figure and geometric pattern.

A blue wool belt with sprang technique, and five tunics, that while only one of them is complete, indicate the way the loom weaving was executed.

The tunics

In the Azapa 70 site, we found probably the first tunics people used as garments after the use of mantles and loincloths. At this period the use of wool in weaving increased, probably because the local population was living in permanent settlements, and lived more sedentary lives.

The technology of the five tunics mentioned above shows the body made in a warp faced weave and the bottom part in a weft faced weave (loom woven) composed with one or two plain-

colored bands. Only one of the tunics has the bottom area completely decorated – with the design of a radiated frontal head and an animal figure on both sides, woven with interlocked tapestry and slit tapestry (*kelim*). The colors are blue, burgundy and white.

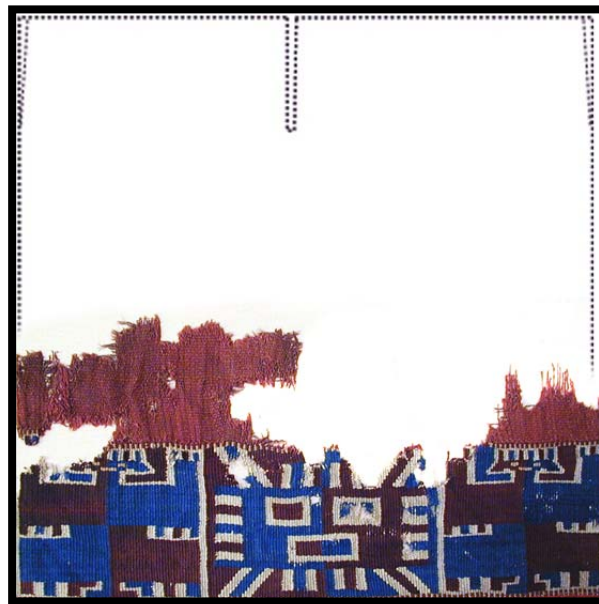


Figure 3. Bottom of tunic. Warp face woven on the plain area and interlocked and slit tapestry on decorated area.

The second tunic is similar to the above, but the lower area is plain blue and dark brown. Both lateral sides are joined with a closed herringbone stitch in white thread. The sewing at the bottom section is a loose herringbone stitch in a black thread.



Figure 4. Detail of lateral side of tunic using closed herringbone stitch and loosed herringbone stitch.
(Diagram: Hoces de la Guardia and Brugnoli).

There are two tunics made with natural color striped designs in the body. One of them is completely mended; the mending attempts to follow the stripe pattern, however the mending yarn is coarser than the original thread.

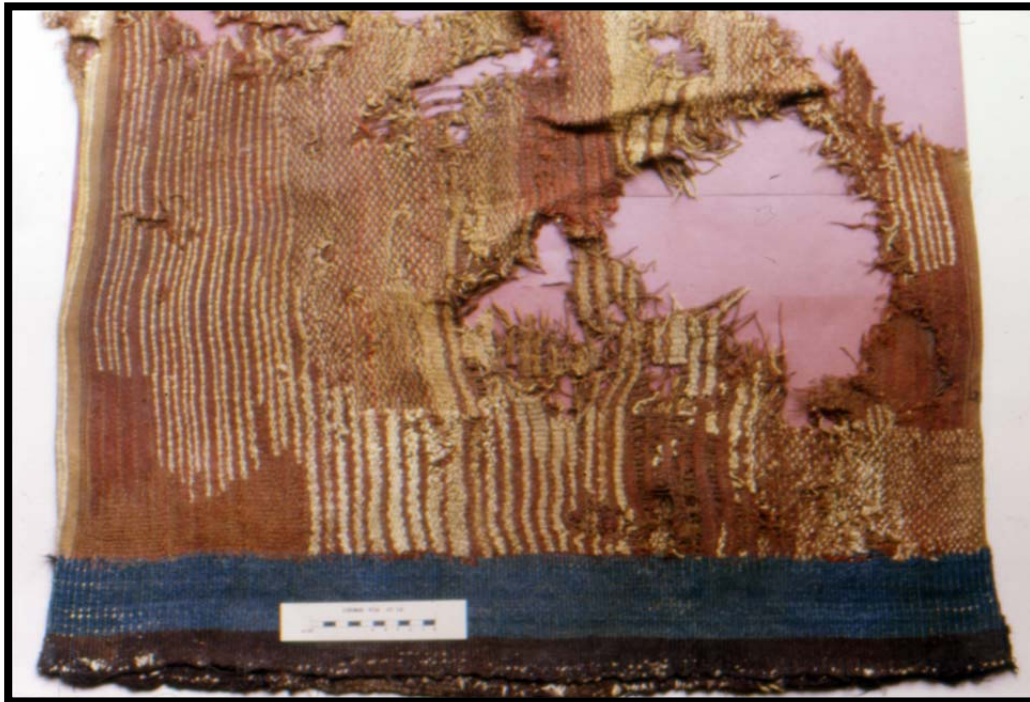


Figure 5. Reused and mended tunic following the original striped pattern.

There is only one complete tunic, and it, too, has the same combination of structures at the bottom. The body is composed as a red warp, but striped with three pairs of white and red threads at one-inch intervals. The bottom section measures 3.5 inches high along the contour of the tunic, with two colors: greenish-blue and brown.

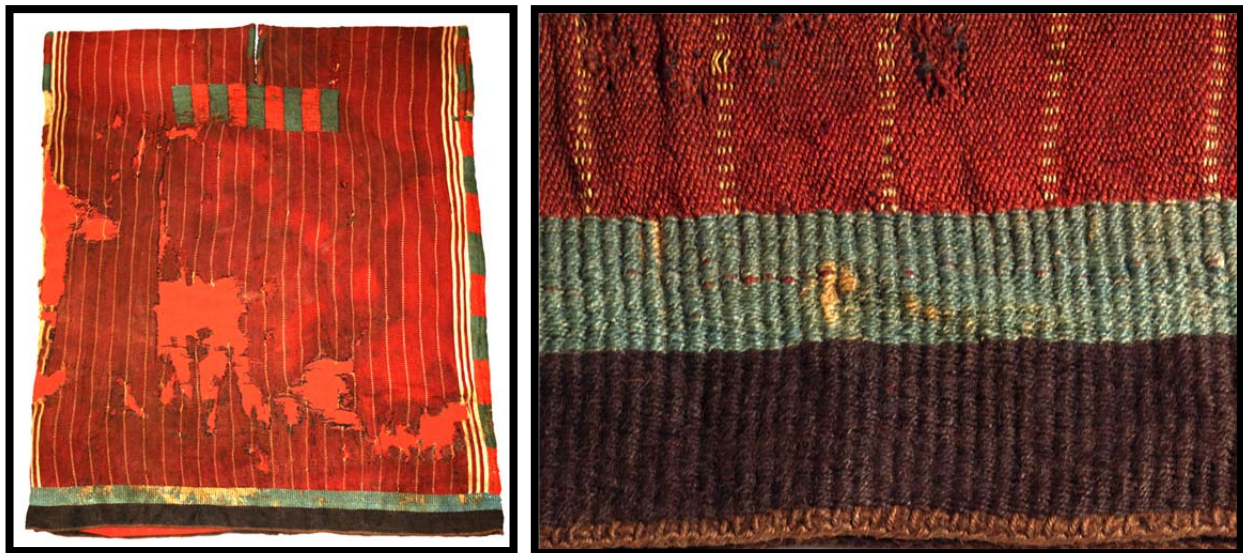


Figure 6(left). Whole warp face tunic that changes to weft face at the bottom (Photography O. Lagos).

Figure 7(right). Detail of the change of weaving structure.

To create the structure change from warp to weft orientation, it is probable that the two sections were woven independently. First the body was woven with warp faced plain weave. Then discontinues warps were added at both extremes of the loom in order to complete the bottom part of the tunic. These added warps are made up of coarse threads that interlock into a group of 3 to 5 of the warps of the part of the tunic already completed, and were woven with a weft density of 15 -18 threads per cm. (as opposed to the 6 wefts per cm. in the body of the tunic). In contrast the warp density at the bottom part of the tunic is 2 to 3 warp threads per cm., with 12-14 warp threads per cm. in the body area.

This structural design, produced by the sudden change in density and color, created a particular effect that occurs in tunics from this Late Formative Period. We can also observe this kind of change in density in the structure of some loincloths and coarse tunics from the coast of Tarapaca (Agüero and Cases 2004).

Embellishments

The lower part of the neck opening is also decorated and reinforced by an embroidered area that is about 12 inches wide with five vertical sections of green threads and four vertical sections of red threads.



Figure 8 (left). Embroidery of selvedge at the bottom of the neck opening. (Photography G. Hevia).

Figure 9 (right). or reinforcement around the neck opening (Photography G. Hevia).

Around the selvages at the armholes and neck opening there are festoon stitches which reinforce and protect all the contoured edges, but at the same time, match the rest of the embellishment of the tunic.

The lateral sides are joined with very dense and wide herringbone stitches. The embroidery reaches 3 inches in width, and was made using strong red and greenish-blue camelid wool threads.



Figure 10 (left). Reinforcement around the sleeve opening and lateral side (Photography G. Hevia).
Figure 11 (right). Detail of the stitches.

The occurrence of this type of tunic goes beyond the Azapa Valley towards the Southern desert coast of Camarones and Pisagua and the dry valleys, like Tarapacá and Quillagua. Horta 2004 counts about 30 pieces, which were found at locations in Azapa 70, Camarones 15, Tarapaca 40, Pisagua; and even farther near the Loa area, in the sites of Quillagua and Topater.

We can assume there was a local textile tradition with several connections between groups of people who moved from Arica to the Loa Region.

The development of loom weaving, and the subsequent improvement of the weaving process by use of *illaguas*, or manual heddles greatly helped to increase the possibilities of pattern design based on the juxtaposition of complementary and supplementary warps. The iconography was growing rapidly, with new shapes and iconic designs that were used for many centuries. At this point it makes us wonder which was first: the necessity of improving the technology to be able to show that new patterns belonged to certain groups of people or the development of technology that enabled the creation of new pattern designs. And at the same time, the occurrence of tapestry structures or weft-faced weaving used in this area decreased, and only a few pieces that are associated with Tiawanku culture remain –probably oriented only to certain elite people who were related to this highland culture that had begun to have a presence in the region.

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