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TEXTILE TRADITIONS OF AUSANGATE, PERU
AND INDIGENOUS STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH TOURISM
AND THE CUZCO MARKET

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Contemporary Andean weavers are the descendants of a textile heritage dating from the earliest known plant fiber baskets found in the dry Gitarrero Cave in the Central Cordillera Blanca of Peru, carbon-dated 8,600 B.C. Luis Lumbreras, a well-known Peruvian scholar, said about Andean textiles, "Without a doubt, the art and manufacture of textiles constitute one of the most significant achievements of the ancient peoples of Peru."

In this paper, I will present briefly how Quechua cosmology or world view is taught, reinforced and retained through the continued use of traditional Andean textiles. Next, I will show through ethnographic data how the Quechua weavers of the isolated region of Ausangate, Peru, 180 kilometers SE of Cuzco persist in making textiles like their ancestors. In 1996, I did my dissertation field work funded by Fulbright-Hayes in Ausangate, after previous research and work relationships in the area for 12 years. In Ausangate, textiles are an integral part of Quechua life, woven primarily by women on horizontal 4-stake portable looms which produce weft-faced cloth with floats using supplemental warp structures. I will then briefly discuss how Quechua weavers near Cuzco deal with modernizing influences on their textiles and two cooperative efforts to aid them in marketing and communication of their textile traditions.

A major influence on my research was Dr. John Murra, a renowned Andean ethnohistorian who said, "Within the quipu, (the knotted, tactile communications system which used a base-10 mathematical code) we can show by the groupings of these categories what the priorities were in the thinking of Andean peoples. First come the people, second the camelids, then the cloth, fourth the ceramics and so on. For a people who have made a natural refrigerator, survive at freezing temperatures, built bridges as a community task and still weave and maintain a status system based on the fineness of cloth, to investigate this world, we must follow Andean thought and language patterns. *You have a logic, not our categories nor a historical one, but Andean logic.*" (Murra PBS:1980)

Another strong influence on my research methodology for studying Andean textiles was my graduate advisor, the late Dr. Alfonso Ortiz, a nationally known North American San Juan Pueblo Indian anthropologist. He told me "you cannot study textiles without studying ritual. You must look for the annual ritual cycle related to the agricultural cycle. You must speak their indigenous language if you want to understand textiles, and you must watch how these textiles move with the human body. The textiles were made to dance, to be folded, to make offerings--not

originally made to be hung on walls." He taught me about the ethnographic need for textile studies to be deeply contextual.

Ausangate, Peru and Persistent Andean World View

With this brief background, I will now speak of the people of Ausangate, Peru. They are Quechua speakers who are agriculturalists, herders and weavers bonded by a common cosmology and physical proximity to Apu Ausangate, one of the most respected Andean mountain gods for the Cuzco region. Their world is one of extreme verticality and high altitudes, producing cold winds (*chiri wayra*) and a harsh climate, with high passes between 15,000-17,000' which isolate and separate people into small clusters of stone and adobe or sod houses. While Ausangate signifies the name of a particular peak, the entire Vilcanota range of surrounding mountains is often commonly referred to as Ausangate. Until 30 years ago, Hacienda Lauramarka was the name used for the entire NW side of Ausangate because the large hacienda officially owned all of the region. Therefore, many textiles today are identified generally as "Lauramarka" which are from other villages such as Upis, Pacchanta, Ninaparayoq and other smaller villages.

Two major municipal centers exist in the Ausangate region. Ocongate (Province of Quispicanchis) is 8-10 hours SE of Cuzco mostly by dirt road. On the N.W. side, Ocongate controls the issuing of any official documents for that side of the mountain such as marriage licenses, death certificates and land deeds. It has a weekly Sunday market as does the smaller, nearby village of Tinquí, 30 minutes further by road. Pitumarka, the southern center for Ausangate (Province of Canchis) is two hours from Cuzco via the Puno-Cuzco paved highway. One enters Ausangate from Pitumarka via a rough dirt road passable by small pick-up trucks for an hour-two hours, turning into a path and llama trail for two to four more days walking to reach Chillca or Lake Sibinacocha close to the base of Ausangate peak. My research involved trekking and documentation of textiles on all sides of Ausangate in close proximity to the mountain, and I also lived and wove in the village of Pacchanta with the Quechua family of Maria Merma Gonzalo (14,300').

Ausangate, like all apus or earth spirits, must be constantly fed and worshiped through rituals and offerings made by ritual specialists on behalf of the people. In Ausangate, Quechua cosmology teaches that balanced relationships between people, animals, land and natural forces are vital to the continuation of life. One of the most important *misayoqs*, or ritual specialists, lives in Ausangate above Pacchanta. He was called upon often to help when people needed to feed, awaken and pray to Apus to ask for their assistance for good health, their communities well-being, or for their animals.

Traditional textiles made in Ausangate help Quechua people, who do not keep their history, myths or cultural rules in writing, teach their children. Annual rituals, such as *Pentecoste* and *Qoyllur R'iti* pilgrimage actively communicate world view through dance, masks, clothing and textiles with specific roles for communication of the ancestors beliefs. For instance, an *unkuna* cloth is sacred and at the same

time functionally stores and protects coca for ritual use or reciprocal exchanges of carefully selected leaves. An unkunita protects a despacho prepared by the ritual specialist, Mariano Turpo who lives at 15,500' near Campa pass, until the evening when it is burned and its prayers are carried off to Apu Ausangate by the smoke.

Information is communicated in the textiles via pallas, a Quechua word literally meaning to pick-up yarns, which also refers to the designs themselves and possession of the knowledge of how to do the pick-up. When I began weaving with Maria, a Quechua woman, head of her household and her family in Paccanta, I learned that you gain status by the number and difficulty of the pallas you learn and can make on your own. I've been a weaver for over 25 years, so when I began to weave with Maria, I had to adjust to the continual giggling at my efforts. After my fourth pallas, Maria's mother Manuela said to me "you do like to weave don't you?" When I continued weaving with them, later became godmother to her great-grandson and let them dress me like them for dances and baptisms, Manuela said, "You are a good Quechua woman". It was while weaving with them I realized the fine points of what they were doing. I heard the younger girls softly counting in Quechua. The older weavers wove silently and it seemed they could sense the relationships of the figures and still chat, chase ducks, watch children and keep an eye on their animals all at the same time.

Weavers use horizontal back-strap looms in Paccanta producing 4 selvage textiles and all yarn is spun on drop spindles. Even synthetic yarns bought in Tiqui, Ocongate or Pitumarka markets are re-spun on larger drop spindles before used. My spinning teachers were Maria's entire extended family, her twelve year old daughter Silea, her mother and both her sons along with any visiting sisters, uncles or neighbors.

Alpacas, sheep and llamas are why life continues here: the pelts are the beds; the dung is fuel for heat and cooking, as well as fertilizer for planting; llama meat is occasionally made into charki (jerky) and the hair is spun for making clothing. Crops are hard to produce, hail or drought can give a poor annual yield. By freeze drying potatoes in June and July each year, crops can be made to last until the next harvest is finished. Little is wasted and the concept of storage was critically important to ancient Andean people and continues to be so today.

As I wove with them, I realized the most frequently made pallas in this region was qocha, which is Quechua for lake. Quechua words are multi-vocal so it is critically important to try to understand the various levels of meanings, for example, pachamama translates both as mother earth and time/space. Pallas also means to pick fruits, to pick out yarns and to join in union. In the broader definition of qocha, it is a place or object which stores moisture, water, liquids, in the sense of preserving it. Michael Mosely stated that qochas are also man-made ponds around Lake Titicaca and Jorge Flores Ochoa, a well-known Peruvian anthropologist in Cuzco says qocha also refers to holes in the backs of stone llama called conopas used in Inca times for offerings which were rubbed with llama fat and filled with liquids.



Figure 1.1 and 1.2. Costumed dancers at the annual pilgrimage of Qoyllur R'iti, Colque Punku, Ausangate, Peru. In 1.1, Chuncho dancers re-enact mythological tales wearing head dresses of makaw tail feathers. In 1.2, dancers' costumes incorporate local traditional textiles with Qocha pallay.

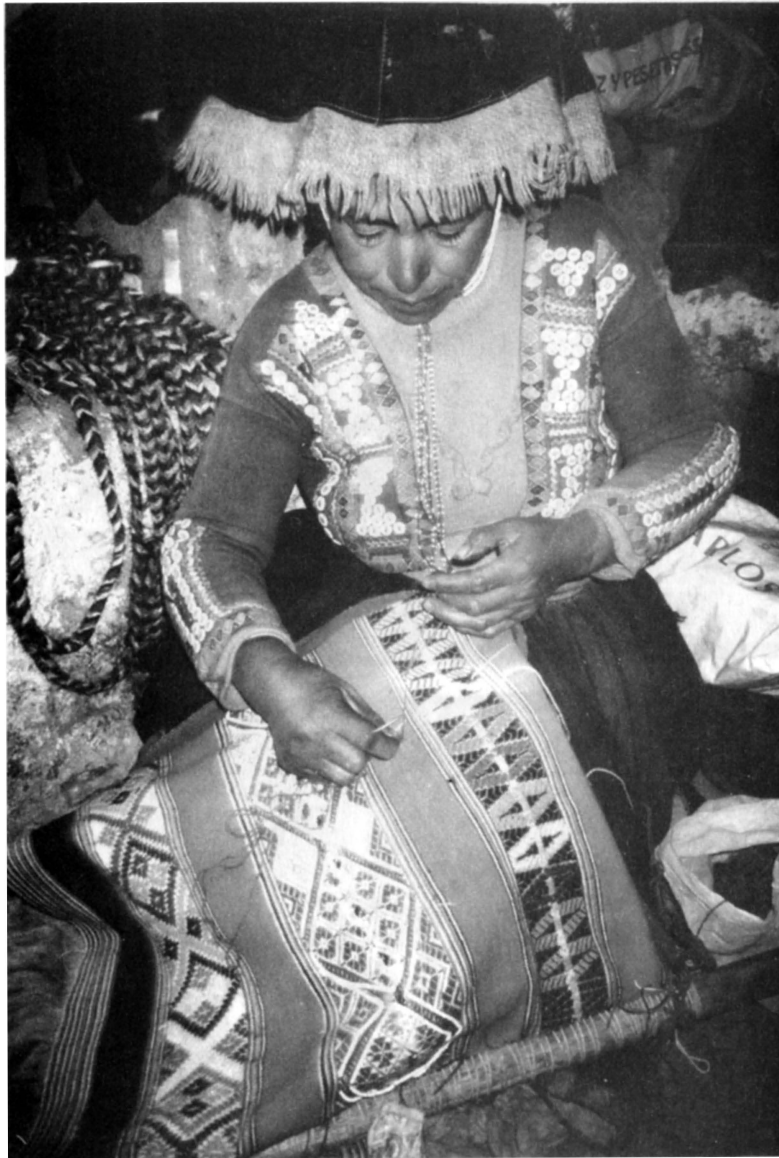


Fig. 1.3 Maria Merma Gonzalo, a Quechua woman from the village of Pacchanta, Ausangate, embroiders various colored yarns on top of woven huasca qocha pallay to give more brilliant color and varied colors in her son's poncho pallay. She is wearing typical women's dress including polleras, hoyona and montera from N.W. side of Ausangate (also commonly known by the old name of Lauramarka standing for the old Hacienda or Ocongate, the local municipal center.

Multicolored, mineral-rich lakes are fed by the glacier melt-off of Apu Ausangate, therefore storing the sacred waters of the Apus which then feed the rivers maintaining yearly water flow to the villages below like Pacchanta and Chillca, both well known for delicious potatoes and abundant herds. I asked them why they weave qochas and they patiently explained to me what any young child there would already know: "We weave qochas because that's the way it's done, the way it's always been done, the way the ancestors did it".

In ethnographic field work, how questions are asked can influence the answers given and for this reason, the example of Mari Lynn Salvador, my Master's advisor at UNM and her use of a sample set of Kuna molas used to encourage open discussion of the makers own aesthetics was important. In Pacchanta, an unusual bag is woven to guard coins. It is called a pachaqchaki bag (100 feet in Quechua) which is shaped like a centipede. I started my collection of these bags years ago and put together a diverse sample set of 20 pieces in order to stimulate design discussions. General consensus about the names existed within families and between the five large families I consulted and if a disagreement occurred, an older woman was consulted to settle it.

Almost every pallay name included the word qocha and it was the basic unit to build composite visual metaphors and expand meaning. A flower, or more specifically a potato flower or rose, a sun, or a star for instance, were woven inside the lake and were stored by the qocha diamond-shaped form. The lake explanations were enhanced by adding Quechua words in front of qocha, such as sinku (bags 1,2,15,17) which produces a shimmering effect like lake surfaces with sunlight reflecting on them(E. Turpo). Huasca (1,2,4,15,16) qocha are singular side lakes; rumpu (10,11,17,20) qocha are singular long vertical lakes; and sarta (17) qocha are series of repetitive lakes. Chili-chili pallay refers to a medicinal plant woven inside the qocha which also produces a red dye (Ccarita & Turpo). Popular flower pallays are rosas (9,12) and wacontay used for cooking. Knitted into chullos or men's ear-flapped hats were also puma paws, corn, viscachas, llamas footprints, wheat and other food stuffs. (The above numbers refer to the sample set not shown here.)

From documentation of qocha pallay, I learned from them about their persistent belief in the Inca myth that when the black llama constellation dips its head towards the horizon in its annual cycle in the Southern hemisphere, it takes a hearty drink from the ocean. Then when it returns high in the sky, the waters are recycled back up to the highlands in the form of rain and snow which fall on the Apus and fill the mountain lakes and rivers. Water is vital to life in the Andes. Quechua weavers display this knowledge in their persistent choice of qocha pallay.

Materials, dyes and Andean aesthetics

Roads and major marketplaces do not exist within the high reaches of Ausangate but aniline dyes in small powder packets are easily transported back up to weavers by traders or Quechua people who have visited market to sell animals or surplus crops below. These dyes have been used about 50-100 years, but recently

within the past 10 years, synthetic yarns purchased in the local markets are more widely used in Ausangate, especially in the Ocongate side of the mountain.

When I arrived, I evaluated the materials weavers used in Ausangate by my own North American textile aesthetics and I did not like synthetic colors. After living and weaving there, I realized that for them: it's different; it's all about brilliant colors. Status was based on knowing your many local pallas, wearing bright colored skirt trims whirling while dancing and backs covered by llicllas, ponchos that could be seen from way up the valley because of the bright colors. In ritual, the llicllas, or woman's shoulder cloth, worn layered 5 or 6 at a time could not even be seen, but others still knew how many you wore and how bright they were. In Ausangate, a woman wore 3-4 skirts daily and as many as 10-15 for special occasions. Brilliantly colored yarn t'ikas or flowers were worn at the waist while dancing and indicated that you were single and available. (They only told me this after dressing me up for a baptism and putting many t'ikas at my waist, then letting me dance all night advertising my availability.)

Synthetic yarns come in brilliant colors which do not fade. The synthetic wool is the moda, the style. They do not use it because it is fast or easy. They say the spin is ugly and must be re-spun before it can be used. While natural materials remain popular weavers are often drawn to the bright colors in markets.

Shiny multi-colored sequins, white buttons, colored ric-rac and white beads purchased from market vendors are popular in Pacchanta. Buttons are also popular adornment on the Pitumarka side of Ausangate. Some older women with gold buttons on their waist coat say they prefer gold but cannot get them at market or from traders anymore. Many prefer gold or silver threads on their hats because it catches the sunlight and reflects it they say, a tradition given to them by Inca and pre-Inca ancestors who wore small plates of gold and silver on tunics. Pacchantans laboriously stitch sequins to ponchos and llicllas because they shimmer like reflected sunlight on lakes they say. Manufactured ric-rac, called qenqo, or zig-zag, signifies river or lightning and they stitch it on their coats, vests and ponchos.

In conclusion of this brief discussion of materials chosen, Ausangate weavers are making active choices based on their own aesthetics of color. Outside buyers are asking them to make more non-synthetic pieces which they do not exactly understand.

Dynamic traditions: tourism and market influences

A world market now exists for Andean textiles, both pre-Columbian and contemporary. This market was created and is fueled by international museums, private collectors, tourism and businesses. How are indigenous dealing with these influences and what are they selling?

As Nelson Graburn asked years ago, "Do they produce the same things for the tourist market that they produce for themselves?". In the case of Ausangate, weavers can sell their textiles or in the local markets to vendors who come weekly from Cuzco and return to Cuzco to sell the weavings. Occasionally a neighbor or

relation collects textiles and goes to Cuzco to sell to textile merchants who have shops in Cuzco or market stalls who then sell to the tourist foreign market. In the past, they took fine llicllas to sell, which sometimes draw higher prices, but often a tourist does not recognize the fine workmanship of the cloth or the time and knowledge necessary to spin and weave the cloth. The old highland system of barter to exchange goods is being replaced by a money economy with sales of textiles depending on how much weavers want to sell a piece and how much the tourist or collector is willing to pay for it.

Recently, in the last three years, Ausangate knitters and weavers have begun knitting and weaving miniature textiles for the tourists because they realize a trekker may not want to pay for a full-sized piece but they do want to buy a textile to remind them of Ausangate. Weavers now weave miniature unkuna cloth and knit miniature hats about two inches high. A regular size chullo hat with no adornment costs 40-60 soles while a miniature costs 10-15 soles and is quicker to make. Weavers make book bags with qocha pally for their sons to carry to school and these are popular in the tourist market.

However, the weavers still persist in weaving the same high quality for themselves using the designs taught to them by their ancestors and the women continue to wear distinctive Ausangate clothing. Women rarely attend school and some do not even go to local markets in Tinquí or Ocongate. Some young men journey off to work in the cash economy in Puerto Maldonado, as Maria's middle son Eusavio did, to earn money to marry or for their families. Men who travel into the exterior change their traditional clothing before arriving in the cities realizing that they will be discriminated against for being Indian if they do not. They manipulate their clothing and the readability of their identity by changing parts of their traditional dress, but they however return to their community clothing and identity by the time they get home to their villages.

Two examples of how indigenous weavers are dealing with these markets are by educating foreigners and preserving their traditions at the same time. In the first case of Pitumarka, Timoteo CCarita, the mayor is an indigenous Quechua man who dyes with natural dyes. He has handwritten a document of local dye recipes. He weaves colonial style transitional textiles besides weaving Quechua pally and he has organized the local mother's club, an organization encouraged and sponsored by the government to teach Pitumarka women who have lost their knowledge of weaving to weave again. Some of the men who usually do not weave are now learning to weave pally. Other accomplished weavers within the group are reviving a form of discontinuous warp weave often called warp scaffolding which was used in Inca and pre-Inca cloth.

In the second case, Nilda Callanaupa of Chinchero founded and coordinates the Center for Traditional Textiles of Cuzco. Over 60 women in Chinchero have documented 36 weaving pally. They provide weaving demonstrations for groups including dye processes, spinning, plying, and weavings with detailed step by step explanations. Nilda works with Timoteo to educate foreign groups interested in

weaving about the persistent quality of contemporary weaving in the outlying regions around Cuzco.

How does this help weavers market their textiles? Last month, I visited both Timoteo and Nilda while leading a cultural group who had attended an archeology conference in La Paz and Lake Titicaca. The demonstrations in Chinchero and Pitumarka gave the group a deeper sense of Andean contemporary textile traditions and that some Quechua weavers are actively preserving and transmitting their cultural information to the next generation. The group bought regional textiles from both groups paying higher prices because of a clearer appreciation for the fine weaves and technical processes involved. These two indigenous weaving groups through community organizations are effectively marketing, reviving and maintaining their own weaving traditions while improving their interactions with international markets through good education of their clientele and good local leadership.

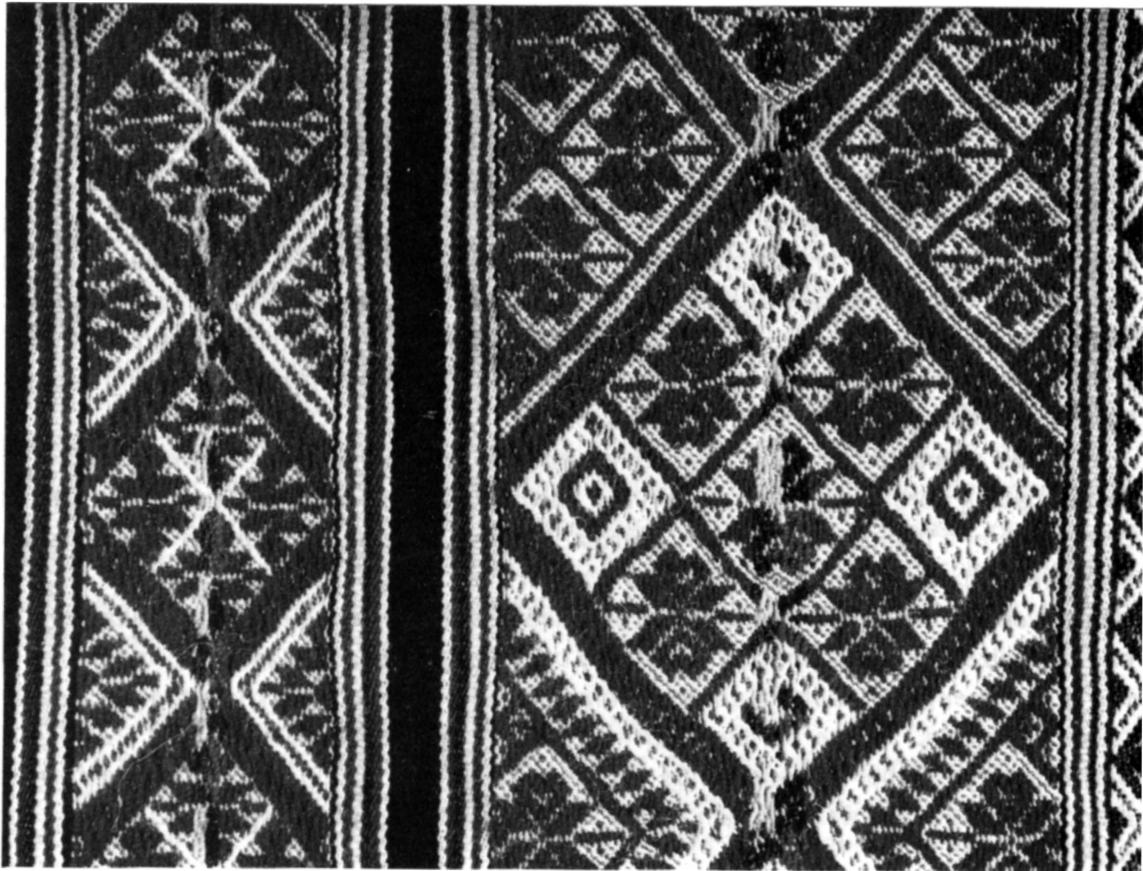


Fig. 1.4. Detail of a woman's woven carrying cloth displaying several qocha (lake) pally from Pacchanta, Lauramarka N.W. side of Ausangate. The larger qocha contains flowers inside (t'ika qocha pally).

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was funded by the Fulbright Foundation; the Latin American Institute at the University of New Mexico and a FLAS Foreign Language Advanced Studies grant for advanced studies in Quechua at Cornell University.

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