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Siguas 1: a newly identified Early Horizon Culture, Department of Arequipa, Peru

Joerg Haeberli

My interest in the valleys of Arequipa began in 1994. A curious set of textiles labeled Nasca¹ was attributed to the “Sihuas² Valley, Nazca region, Peru, south coast.” The iconography of these textiles was not Nasca but belonged to unidentified traditions. They most likely came from the Sihuas Valley in the department of Arequipa. In 1997 and 2000 I went to Arequipa to establish if their provenance indeed was the Sihuas Valley and other valleys in the department of Arequipa. This was confirmed in the field for the valleys of Sihuas and Vitor at four heavily looted cemeteries. In addition, early Nasca textile fragments and a fragmented Nasca 3 bowl were collected. Figure 1 shows the valleys of the department of Arequipa in relation to the cities of Lima and Arequipa, and the south coast that includes the Rio Grande the Nazca drainage, the Nasca heartland. Approximately 300 miles separate it from the valley of Sihuas.

Over several years I acquired a small archive of illustrations and photographs of the textiles in question in addition to those collected at the four cemeteries. I divided these textiles into seven groups based on a comparative analysis using differences in iconography, style, sequencing of colors and weaving techniques, where possible, as well as 34 Accelerator Mass Spectrometry radiocarbon dates. The temporal ranges of the identified traditions will be shown below in parenthesis. It will be followed by the number of dates available for each tradition. All dates presented in this article are corrected and at the 68% or 1 sigma confidence interval. Three of the groups are local traditions, named Siguas 1 (543 BC-AD 121; 10), Siguas 2 (AD 127-333; 2) and Siguas 3 (AD 144-775; 8). Early Nasca textiles from Arequipa (AD 55-428; 4) and provincial Pukara (AD 138-406; 3) form the fourth and fifth groups. The remaining two groups are proliferous early Nasca (AD 168-425; 2) allegedly from Arequipa and Siguas –3 Nasca (AD 405-541; 1). Siguas 1 has its beginnings in the Early Horizon (EH) and ends about AD 100, during the early Early Intermediate Period (EIP), with the almost simultaneous appearance of early Nasca, Siguas 2, Siguas 3, provincial Pukara and surprisingly proliferous early Nasca. Siguas 1 and 3 are local cultures and Siguas 2 may be a local reaction to early Nasca influence. Between AD 630-669 a Middle Horizon (MH) Wari tunic found its way to the site of Cornejo in the Sihuas Valley.

I was informed Siguas 1 textiles were found in the valleys of Sihuas, Quilca, Majes and Ocoña. At the heavily looted cemetery 1 of La Chimba in the Sihuas Valley the author together with the archaeologists Rómulo Pari Flores and Marko López collected only fragments of Siguas 1 artifacts while cemetery 2 had Siguas 1, early Nasca and Siguas 3 remains. In the Majes Valley Siguas 1 is documented at Toro Muerto through illustrations of petroglyphs. In addition to the fragments collected at La Chimba, there is a significant body of Siguas 1 textiles in collections. In the absence of decorated pottery, the Siguas 1 culture is defined through textiles, engraved canes, pyroengraved gourds, copper pins in the shape of undulating snakes and petroglyphs.

Yarns used for Sigvas 1 textiles are cotton and camelid fiber of different shades. The supply of camelid fibers most likely came from the slope of Nevado Ampato, the source of the Sihuas River, and not the altiplano. Camelid fibers were dyed in different shades of red, blue, green and yellow. The twist of yarns is 2Z into S and 2(2Z into S) into Z which also is typical for the south coast. Warp yarns are either cotton or less frequently camelid fiber; in the latter case used in pairs. I observed it twice among bands in interlocking tapestry (for one see Fig. 6) and twice among tunics where the plain weave warp yarns were doubled for the portions in interlocking tapestry.

So far the following textile techniques listed below have been observed. Nobuko Kajitani helped with the identification of some of the techniques. Fragments of techniques collected at La Chimba, Sigvas Valley are indicated by (LC):

- discontinuous double interlocking warp and weft (LC) for mantles, tunics (Fig. 2) and rectangular weavings with ties at corners (Figs. 3, 4),
- cross-looping (cross-knit looping) (LC) involving bands over a cotton foundation (Fig. 10) and as tubular edgings (Fig. 5),
- warp faced striping (LC) (see Fig. 5) at times with small designs for mantles and edgings,
- interlocking tapestry for bands (Fig. 6), tunics and epaulets (Fig. 2),
- balanced plain weave (LC) in natural colors or dyed red or dark blue for mantles and tunics,
- sprang (LC) for bands (Fig. 7) and textiles of unknown function,
- oblique interlacing (LC) (Figs. 3, 8) for ties,
- wrapping, in one particular example using strands of human hair as warp,
- simple looping (Fig. 11) and twining for bags,
- featherwork, applied to a plain weave white band (LC), and
- tie-dyeing (LC) (Fig. 8) for mantles and tunics.

I am not aware of painted textiles nor of embroidery. Single interlocking warp and weft, and slit tapestry were detected only occasionally. However, both these techniques together with tie-dyeing, double cloth and slentre or oblique twill predominate during Sigvas 3.

We find tubular edgings (Figs. 2, 5) and two-dimensional bands (see Fig. 10) in cross-looping already among Sigvas 1 textiles; the latter frequently applied over a cotton foundation. The earliest example, a border band, is dated 543-395 BC while a tubular edging 379-197 BC. For the latter case the colored yarns apparently are carried invisibly until a color again is needed in the design. The earliest occurrence of cross-looping on the south coast among the bundles excavated at Paracas Necrópolis, according to Anne Paul (personal communication, 2002), occurs among Topará EH 10 textiles. It is early Nasca weavers that excel in this technique with three-dimensional figures and tabs in cross-looping over a cotton foundation. An example collected at La Chimba, Sihuas Valley, is dated AD 55-139.

Over 70 Sigvas 1 textiles in discontinuous double interlocking warp and weft using camelid wool are known. These textiles demonstrate the technique had reached a high level of maturity and is a testimony of the remarkable skills of Sigvas 1 weavers.

The number of examples in this technique known from the south coast is small, including one Ocucaje 9 example, two Ocucaje 10 and one Nasca 1 specimen (see King 1965, p. 151; Rowe 1972, p. 67). Presently, the earliest date for a Siguas 1 textile in discontinuous double interlocking warp and weft is 200-36 BC. Rectangular textiles with ties at each corner with representations of the Siguas 1 Central Head Theme (Figs. 3, 4) were exclusively made in this technique. Their number exceeds 45 and their size is variable, ranging approximately 100x90 cm to 200x180 cm. Tunics (Fig. 2) frequently were made using this technique in addition to examples in plain weave with areas in interlocking tapestry. In the latter case, two examples had two plain weave camelid warp yarns combined for the areas in interlocking tapestry. One tunic (Fig. 2) used single interlocking warp and weft to link large areas of a single-color field, contrary to the double interlocking used for linking differently colored areas to form designs. The size of tunics varies and ranges approximately between 70x40 cm to 110x65 cm. Thus, they are short in length, exposing the lower abdomen as seen in Siguas 1 iconography. Tunics have epaulettes with fringes.

Particularly three kinds of edgings help identify Siguas 1 textiles. They differ from south coast ones. The first kind is the Siguas Tubular Edging in cross-looping with geometric designs in beautiful colors. It was applied to rectangular weavings along both of the shorter sides (see Fig. 5) and less along all four sides. This edging was also applied to the neck opening of tunics (Fig. 2). Bands in cross-looping over a cotton foundation (Fig. 10) were applied to the edges of mantles and at the hem of tunics.

The second kind is a narrow band, usually four warp threads wide, with a short fringe (Fig. 8). The design is in weft-faced plain weave and consists of checker-like elongated rectangles alternating in color, the reason for calling it Siguas Checkered Band. There are two patterns. One has two alternating colors. The other involves three colors and alternating blocks where each block has two colors sequenced three times (Fig. 8).

The third kind of band has distinctive warp faced striping, the Siguas Striped Band. There are three major stripes that either have a zigzag (Figs. 5, 7), a fishbone or a dot design, usually in brown color on a yellow or white colored ground. These stripes are edged on each side by narrow stripes, first in blue and then in red. The latter color is shared if between major stripes. The color sequence of the major stripes is either yellow-white-yellow or white-yellow-white.

We frequently note a characteristic reinforcement at the corners to which ties are attached (Fig. 8) and also at neck openings of tunics (Fig. 2), in the latter case associated with a tab ending in a fringe.

Two mummies, one at La Chimba and the other from Santa Ana, Sihuas Valley, were associated with Siguas 1 textiles. Both mummies have an unusual type of hairdo. With the La Chimba mummy two braids from each side of the head were coiled into a bundle and tied to produce a horn-like projection on the upper forehead (Fig. 7). The Santa Ana mummy has its head and horn-like projection covered with a textile in sprang. We frequently observe this protuberance represented on Siguas 1 engraved canes (Fig. 9)

and pyroengraved gourds but also at least on one Paracas pottery standing man figure (Lapiner 1976, fig. 200) and on a significant number of figural early Nasca pottery starting with Nasca 1 (see Kajitani 1982, fig. 36, Rickenbach 1999, pp. 297, 298, 299, 300, 313). This hairdo should not be confused with Topará headbands wrapped turban-like with the ends tied in front to give a protuberance.

Due to space constraints, only some aspects of three relevant and diagnostic Siguas 1 representations can be covered, namely the Siguas 1 Central Head Theme, representations of humans and stepped designs. Central Head Theme textiles must have been of primary importance since their number exceeds 45. The theme has a primary and a number of secondary figures. The primary figure is the Siguas 1 Central Head, a rectangular head surrounded by eight radiating appendages. The theme may be divided into variants A, B (Fig. 3) and C (Fig. 4) based on variations among the appendages and to some extent the occurrence of kind of face, select secondary figures and use of background color. Future research may determine if the variants are temporal, spatial and/or symbolic differences. The head's face is stylized and below the eyes invariably are stepped or zigzag tearlines. One type of face is double-sided with two sets of eyes linked by zigzag tearlines reminiscent of double-headed undulating snakes (see Fig. 4). The eyebrows, nose and mouth combined are represented as a capital I. They are bilateral horizontally and vertically, a feature found also in Paracas 8 Ocucaje and Callango pottery (Menzel, Rowe and Dawson 1964, fig. 45 b-1, Sawyer 1966, pp. 120, 121) and an Ocucaje 9 tunic (Sawyer 1966, fig. 2). The occurrence of secondary figures associated with all three variants of the Siguas 1 theme is 70% for zigzag single headed snakes, 70% for an enigmatic figure, 27% for humans, and less than these values for severed human heads, monkeys, double-headed snakes and various geometric designs.

There are similarities between representations of the Siguas Central Head and those of the bodiless head of the Oculate Being, particularly as represented on textiles, one allegedly from Karwa (Kajitani 1982, figs. 13, 15), one from Ocucaje (Turkkan-Wille and Goodman May 1987, lot 31, ex Soldi collection) and an other from Paracas Cavernas (Dwyer 1979, fig. 11), among others.

Possibly related to the Siguas Central Head is this Siguas 1 bodiless front-face head with radiating appendages dated 202-53 BC (Fig. 10). We find particularly during the EH through the EIP into to the MH in the southern Central Andes front-faced heads with appendages. Ann Peter's presentation covers certain aspects of some of these heads.

Humans are represented front faced, although heads in profile do occur. Below the eyes we frequently note stepped or zigzag tearlines. Hair when indicated is a stepped or zigzag band falling down on both sides of the head to the height of shoulders or feet and frequently ends in a snakehead (Fig. 6). On the south coast, particularly among Paracas Ocucaje 9 and 10, hair is similarly indicated, ending in human, feline or snakeheads (Dawson 1979, fig. 12, Lapiner 1976, figs. 162-175). The representation of sexual organs in Central Andean iconography is rare and their relatively frequent representation in Siguas 1 iconography is surprising. One little rectangle in the groin area is for men and two little rectangles for women (Fig. 6). Women frequently are shown in a

crouching position. Some women have a small rectangle in the abdominal region and an equally colored rectangle between the vaginal lips, probably representing pregnancy and birth, respectively.

Siguas 1 textile iconography employs variations on a fret involving ascending and descending steps like “stepped platforms.” This fret in its simplest form has three steps of equal height and there is a color change in the middle of each top and bottom step. It occurs frequently as a band at the shoulder and hem of tunics (Fig. 2). Pukara, Topará and Nasca iconography also has a three-step fret, but most frequently of ascending steps only. We observe particularly among elongated Siguas 1 bags, executed in simple looping, bands of superimposed, multicolored ascending and descending steps, with or without their mirror image (Fig. 11; Turkkan-Wille and Goodman May 1994, lot 31). The number of steps varies from one to three, while the number of color bands is from three to nine. Three to six colors may be used. In some cases there is and in others there is no change in color in the middle of the top and bottom step. A variation of the above meander is where only one unit of superimposed ascending and descending steps and its mirror image is shown on a black background. What may be considered the first step is much higher than the remainder of steps and they all have a small square with a center dot aligned at the same height, giving the impression of a snakehead with a long tongue.

The iconography on engraved canes (Fig. 9), pyroengraved gourds and petroglyphs (Disselhoff 1967, p. 148 above left and below left and right) is alike and frequently differs in subject matter from that noted on textiles.

Based on the results outlined above, including Nasca findings of apparently locally made textiles and pottery not covered here, I propose the valleys of Arequipa and those of the south coast were linked during the late EH and early EIP. Linked through diffusion of textile techniques like cross-looping and double interlocking warp and weft. Through fashion like hair tied to produce a horn-like projection on the upper forehead. Through iconographic representation of hair emerging from the head and falling as stepped or zigzag bands down on both sides, frequently ending in snakeheads. Through ideologies reflected in iconography such as bodiless heads with radiating appendages. Contrary to Nasca, I have yet to note Paracas and Topará influence on Siguas. The diffusion during the EH was apparently northward, from the far south coast toward the south coast and during the EIP southward from the Nasca heartland into Arequipa. It suggests some form of interaction although its nature is still to be determined, including the possibility of dispersed Nasca enclaves in the valleys of Arequipa.

Notes

- 1 Nasca spelled with an “s” will be used to designate the Early Intermediate Period (EIP) culture while Nazca is used for the geographical area.
- 2 I shall use Sihuas, a more recent form of spelling, for the geographical area, and Siguas, an older form of spelling, for the ancient cultural traditions.

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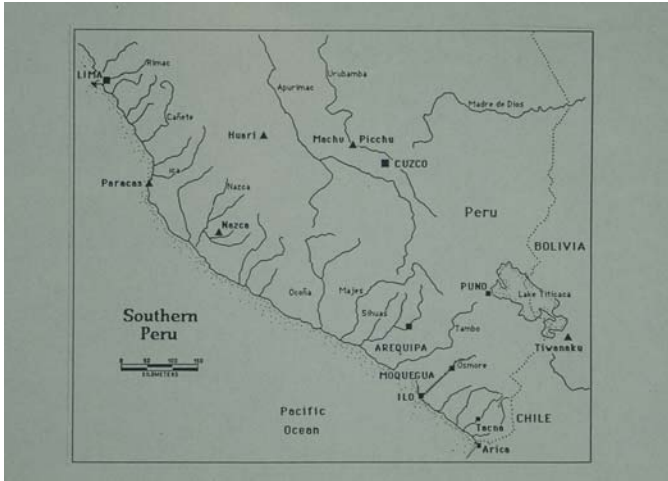


Fig. 1 – Map of southern Peru with far south coast valleys.



Fig. 2 – Opened tunic (103x99 cm) in double interlocking warp and weft. Fringed epaulets in interlocking tapestry. Neck-opening edged in tubular cross-looping and with a reinforcement with fringed tab. All in camelid fibers, except epaulet's warp is in cotton.



Fig. 3 – Textile (1.0x0.89 cm) in double interlocking warp and weft having ties in oblique interlacing at each corner, all in camelid fibers, with Sigwas Central Deity Theme, type B



Fig. 4 – Textile (142x127 cm) in double interlocking warp and weft, camelid fibers, with Sigwas Central Head Theme, type C,



Fig. 5 – Textile (59x95 cm) with warp faced striping, folded over showing two type of edgings, one in tubular cross-looping, the other in Sigwas Striped Band. Warp and weft in camelid fibers.



Fig. 6 – Band (12.5x22 cm, fragment) in interlocking tapestry using one weft and two warp yarns, both in camelid fibers, with representation of a crouching woman.



Fig. 7 – Mummy (La Chimba, Sihuas Valley, 19 April, 1997) with unusual hairdo and two Sigwas 1 textiles. One is a striped mantel with the Sigwas Striped Band edging and the other a band in sprang with fringe, both in camelid fibers.



Fig. 8 – Textile, tie-tyed, with Sigwas Checkered Band edging in three colors and typical reinforcement for ties, camelid fibers.



Fig. 9 – Drawing of figures engraved on upper three sections (9.4, 8.5, 8.2 cm) of a cane.



Fig. 10 – Band (55x26 cm, fragment) in interlocking tapestry with weft in camelid fibers and warp in cotton. Narrow band at the hem in cross-looping over a cotton foundation. Represented is a head with radiating appendages and secondary figures



Fig. 11 – Elongated bag (41.5x19 cm) in simple looping with interlocking color change, strap in plain weave, all in camelid fibers. Design is bands of superimposed, multicolored ascending and descending steps, and with mirror image.