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## Transformations in Tapestry in the Ayacucho Region of Peru<sup>1</sup>

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Contemporary Andean weavers still create beautiful textiles, though each year fewer people weave. Textiles are labor intensive and prices for nearly all modern Andean weavings are so low that producers barely recoup the cost of materials. Yet, creating textiles for personal and family use, or for the market, remains important. Textiles still play many roles in Andean life, and selling textiles offers rare opportunities to earn money. While “traditional” pre-Conquest type warp-patterned weave textiles are the best known, many Peruvians weave tapestry. So-called “tapestries” from San Pedro de Cajas are widely marketed,<sup>2</sup> but Ayacucho in Peru’s central highlands is the center of tapestry weaving. Tapestries also are woven in Huancayo and in migrant destinations including Cuzco and Lima, and tapestry-woven blankets are created in Huamachuco (Fabish and Meisch 2005). By “Ayacucho tapestry,” I mean tapestries woven in that region and/or by people from Ayacucho working in that style. The center of Ayacucho tapestry weaving is its Santa Ana district (*barrio*), noted for its textiles in Peru’s 1940 census (Joyo 1989).

Ayacucho (or Huamanga, its colonial name) is known for its dramatic landscape (2,700 meters above sea level), repeated rebellions against outside dominance, Holy Week celebration, and the quality and variety of its crafts and musical traditions. Crafts include textiles, freestanding altars (*retablos*), ceramics, textiles, and paintings. Ayacucho was the center of the Wari (Huari) empire, renowned for finely woven, sophisticated abstract tapestries, ca. 500 AD. Violence severely affected Ayacucho during Peru’s 1980-95 undeclared civil war. The Maoist guerrilla organization Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) formed in Ayacucho, which was a center of operations and conflict. Sendero forcibly recruited peasants and killed community leaders. Government and right-wing paramilitary targeted Sendero, but also the area’s mostly indigenous peasants, in a “scorched earth” policy. About 75,000 people died or disappeared between 1980 and 2000; some 40% were from Ayacucho. Hundreds of thousands were refugees; thousands of children were orphaned. One third of Ayacucho’s people fled. Most refugees went to Lima; some settled in the U.S. or Europe. A revival of tapestry and other crafts is a testimony to Ayacuchanos’ persistence, and the power of creativity to combat violence.

Men weave most Ayacucho tapestries, though more women are learning tapestry weaving. Most weavers live in the Santa Ana district. Weavers speak Quechua (Inca) as a first language, and Spanish. Tapestry weaving is an outlet for artistic expression, a source of income, and a way to connect to pre-Conquest traditions. Rural Andean peasants do not use wall hangings, runners, or carpets, so tapestries are created for the market. Tapestries, like other crafts, bear the hope many have rebuilding Peru and fortifying

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this were given as a lecture at the Clough-Hanson Gallery, Rhodes College, Memphis, March 23, 1999. I thank Marina Pacini for inviting me, Nicario Jiménez for information and photographs, and Maria Eugenia Ulfe, Elena Phipps, Lynn Meisch, and Paul Fisk for their assistance. I am grateful to John Alfredo Davis, who generously allowed me to cite his unpublished manuscript on Ayacucho crafts development.

<sup>2</sup> These fabrics, using a supplementary weft technique, are made quickly and sell cheaply.

aspects of native Andean culture within global identities. This paper offers an overview of contemporary Peruvian tapestry in its historical context. There is no direct relationship between pre-Conquest and modern tapestry, but contemporary Ayacucho weavers draw on ancient traditions to create new images and products for the global marketplace.

### **Andean Cloth**

The Andes is one of the half dozen world regions where pristine civilizations developed. One of the Andes' unique characteristics was that the most prized possession was cloth, including tapestry. Edward Franquemont (1986: 86) argued that Andean fiber arts "represent a philosophy built of visual and tactile ideas rather than verbal ones, a philosophy that finds no parallel in contemporary western society but powers the engine of Andean creativity." Andeans relied on textiles for survival and as communicative, symbolic, political, and aesthetic expressions, to a degree unmatched elsewhere. No Andean society developed writing as we know it, but the Inca used *kipus* (*quipus*, or knotted cords) to record numerical and, perhaps, narrative information. Fiber objects have been preserved for 10,000 years. The earliest textiles were of plant fiber; later textiles used domesticated cotton and, then, Andean camelid fiber.<sup>3</sup> Elaborate cotton and camelid fiber textiles in varied, complex techniques from 4,500 years ago form the world's longest continuous textile record. Diverse Andean societies developed along the Pacific Ocean's coast, in the Andes, and in the Amazonian lowlands, many of which created textile masterpieces. The best-preserved textiles are from burials on Peru's arid coast. Imagery and materials tell us textiles were created in the highlands, but preservation is very poor. John Murra (1989) concluded *no* important event occurred in the Inca empire, the last pre-Conquest Andean civilization, without cloth playing a prominent role.

Andean fiber art varied greatly, showing dynamicity and individual creativity within state and regional traditions. Ancient Andeans used many media—ceramics, architecture, metals—but cloth served as the societies' foundation. Textiles were "seminal in the development of civilization, and were dominant for thousands of years" (Stone-Miller 1992b: 13). We see this in the human labor expended on materials, exploration of techniques, and efforts in design; an enormous social effort was required to provide materials to weavers. Textiles were not "just craft" or "just art." Cloth fulfilled aesthetic, mathematical, political, ceremonial, communicative, and religious roles. Textiles even symbolize other textiles, and other media refer to them. They formed a semiotic communication system, though not, I believe, writing. Andeans independently discovered all textile techniques except knitting. Only Andeans developed the discontinuous warp and weft technique, where both warps and wefts interlock to create patterned plain weave areas (Emery 1966: 90). For Andeans, textiles were *the* most important medium, encoding meaning and wealth in ways difficult to appreciate fully. Some textiles still play multiple roles, with concepts encoded in yarn production and weaving.

### **Technology of Andean Textile Production**

Good craft and art require good materials. Andeans used coastal cotton and highland camelid fiber. Weavers have long preferred fiber from alpacas and llamas, hybrid mixes, and the vicuña, a threatened species whose fleece is unavailable to contemporary

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<sup>3</sup> Andeans domesticated llamas as pack animals and alpacas for fiber; they hunted wild guanacos for meat and sheared vicuñas for their fine fleece; such fiber is hair, not wool.

weavers. Sheep (brought from Spain) provide less esteemed wool. Fine textiles require superior yarn production. Rural Andeans, including tapestry weavers producing for the high-end market, use the portable Andean drop spindle. Workshops and some families prefer spinning wheels (originally from Spain). Weavers using alpaca take advantage of natural fleece colors. Andeans still use some plant and mineral dyes. There are efforts to revive natural dyeing, which has declined due to erosion, population increase and habitat stress, poor quality fiber, and loss of traditional knowledge.

Andeans weave for personal and family use, regional exchange, and sale. Both men and women weave, but in the gendered division of labor in most of Peru and Bolivia, women weave patterned cloth on the Andean-type loom and such weaving is generally considered female, while men weave yardage—and tapestries—on the European-type treadle loom (cf. Meisch 2002; Fabish and Meisch 2005). The pre-Conquest Andean-type continuous warp loom has been unchanged for millennia. It is simple but weavers can achieve complicated effects. Weavers use it to create pre-Conquest type garments including mantles, purses, and belts, for use and sale. These fabrics typically are four-selvedged with no cut ends; large garments are made from two pieces. The loom is removed from the finished textile. The preference for weaving intact, uncut cloth has persisted for millennia, and may reflect Andean beliefs in the partially animate quality of cloth woven on this loom. Such textiles typically are warp-faced in plain and pattern weaves. Weft-faced textiles and weft patterning are rare (A. Rowe 1977). In contrast, the European-type treadle loom is used to weave long lengths that must be cut free. This loom, used for tapestry weaving, was introduced in colonial Spanish textile sweatshops or *obrajes* (important ones were in Ayacucho). Yardage is cut and sewn into European-type garments, including dresses, skirts, shirts, pants, and jackets. Men typically weave on the treadle loom, but women in some areas, including Ayacucho, also weave on it.

### **Tapestry in the Andes**

Textiles woven in tapestry-weave, with “patterning with discontinuous wefts in a *weft-faced* weave” (Emery 1966:78, emphasis in the original), appear almost from the beginning of Andean prehistory. The earliest examples were recovered from the coast (see Haeberli 2002; Wallace 2002), when much of the central Andes region was dominated by the religious expression characteristic of the northern Peruvian highland center called Chavín, during the Early Horizon ca. 900-200 BC. We do not know precisely where and when early tapestries were made, since radiocarbon dating during 600 to 300 BC is unreliable (Ann Peters, personal communication 2003), and few textiles in museums and private collections were scientifically excavated. Peters notes, “in contexts dated approximately 450-250 BC, tapestries have been recovered in the desert coast [of Peru and Chile], but produced in camelid hair and with stylistic and iconographic connections to highland traditions” (*ibid.*). Techniques included discontinuous double-interlocking warp and weft, sprang, and tapestry woven with various joins (Dwyer 1979; Haeberli 2002). A group of textiles from Peru’s south coast sometimes had “more than one type of join within a specimen” (Goldberg and Orcutt cited in Dwyer 1979), including double interlocking joins and quadruple dovetailing. These varied, complex techniques and sophisticated iconography—such as feline and human trophy heads—strongly suggest earlier textile traditions. Yet, we lack data to understand the relationships between peoples on the coast and the highlands; we cannot

say if textiles were woven in the highlands and traded to the coast, or fiber and/or spun yarns were exported to lower elevations, or even if highland weavers lived on the coast, possibly weaving with materials they brought down from the mountains. Approximately 500-600 AD, in the Nasca society along Peru's coast, weavers wove in slit tapestry, and around that time or a little later, also created textiles using discontinuous warp and weft. An exceptional example of this tapestry-related technique is illustrated in Stone-Miller ed. (1992: 100). The textile, woven in what is commonly (but inadequately) referred to as "patchwork," is woven of "tie-dyed plain-weave discontinuous warp and weft pieces reassembled with warps dovetailed and weft slits sewn" (*ibid.*). Earlier Nasca examples, dated to 200-400 AD, also were woven in tapestry weave (MCHAP 1989:50-51).

Some of the world's finest tapestry was woven in the Wari society, centered in Ayacucho. Wari was the Andes's first true empire, covering most of Peru from the highlands to the coast (600-1000 AD). At the same time, the empire called Tiwanaku, south of Lake Titicaca, spread over highland Bolivia and southern Peru. Magnificent tapestry tunics have been recovered from the Peruvian and Chilean coasts. (Tapestries formerly described as "coastal Tiwanaku" are now classified as Wari.) Stone-Miller argues "Wari and Tiwanaku textile artists explored tapestry as the preeminent technique during the Middle Horizon (as did the Incas during the Late Horizon)... It was reserved for the highest status, generally official state objects" (Stone-Miller 1992a: 36). This may be due to the materials and labor required. A typical Wari man's tunic, worn by high-status individuals, required "between six and nine *miles* of thread" (*ibid.*). One Wari tunic has more than 125 wefts per inch. A "related Tiwanaku-style miniature tunic" was woven with an astonishing "80 wefts per centimeter (more than 200 per inch)" (*ibid.*). Typically, the warp is of cotton, and the weft of camelid fiber. Tapestry tunics combine superior fiber, fast colors in a palette of the full range of natural-colored camelid fibers (white, tans, beiges, grays, browns, blacks), and colors such as pinks, blues, greens, and reds. Imagery includes highly abstracted felines, the "staff bearer" deity, and other creatures abstractly taken apart and re-shaped to fit the space. Some tunics give the illusion of 3-D, shaped fabrics. Wari tapestries typically were woven in interlocked tapestry; some have eccentric wefts (*ibid.*: 102-03, 105-117; MCHAP 1989: 50-59). Centuries later, Andeans continued to weave tapestry, seen in textiles recovered from Chancay near Lima (*ibid.*: 60-63; Tsunoyama 1979: 17), and from the Chimú people (MCHAP: 64-65).

The Inca society expanded rapidly, conquering coastal and highland peoples from Colombia to Chile by ca. 1438. Fine cloth called *qumpi* or *cumbi*, one kind of which probably was tapestry-woven, was produced by and for the elite (J. Rowe 1946: 243, 1979: 239). Early sources are ambiguous about *qumpi* (Phipps 1996: 155, n. 27; also Murra 1989; A. Rowe 1978; J. Rowe 1946: 242). The coarser *awasqa* or *abasca*, probably warp-faced and woven in warp-patterned weaves, was everyday clothing for the less privileged (J. Rowe 1946, 1979). Citizens, taxed in labor, wove yearly for the state. Sixteenth-century Europeans marveled at the Inca's hundreds of thousands of camelids herded around Lake Titicaca. Specialists created fine cloth including tapestry for the Inca ruler, for sacrifice, and for "cult images" (*ibid.*). Specialists included "close kinswomen of a king-designate" (Niles 1992:52), wives of provincial administrative officials, male weavers fulfilling their labor-tax obligations called *cumbicamayos* (*cumbi*-masters), and female retainers in life-long service called *acllas* or "chosen women." Susan Niles (*ibid.*)

reports that cloistered *acllas* produced the finest *cumbi*. John Rowe writes “no one was permitted to wear garments of *qompi* except by gift of the ruler” (1979: 239).

We don't know what loom the Inca used to weave tapestry. Tension can be applied to the continuous-warp Andean-type loom by a band around the hips (backstrap) or by staking it to the ground horizontally or vertically; some consider these different looms. All looms recovered archaeologically are backstrap, but very wide textiles suggest use of a fixed-frame loom. Bernabe Cobo, a 17<sup>th</sup> century priest interested in textiles, describes a special *cumbi* loom “made of four poles in the shape of a frame... set upright beside a wall” (Cobo cited in J. Rowe 1979: 241). Evidence for this is a “tiny ceramic model of a loom” atop a jar, showing an upright loom with two weavers on either side, working on what appear to be two warps, dated to the Inca period (Vanstan 1979: 233).

Inca tapestry-weave textiles include men's tunics or *unkus* (A. Rowe 1978). Some are checkerboard; others are covered with geometric images in squares, called *tuqapu* (*tocapu*). Illustrations in a 1,200 page letter by Guaman Poma de Ayala (1980 [1615])<sup>4</sup> and museum examples show us that many of these tunics were “garments of standard sizes with stereotyped designs,” probably used by the Inca bureaucracy (J. Rowe 1979; see MCHAP 1989: 31-31). All used interlocking tapestry technique with the warp running horizontally as the garment is worn (*ibid.*: 244), of cotton warps and wool wefts.

The 1532 Spanish Conquest devastated the Inca empire. Despite resistance, Andean society was nearly decimated; population loss was 50 to 90%. But Andeans were resilient and survived, incorporating Spanish and other sociocultural elements into a *mestizo* (mixed) culture. Weaving changed but persisted. *Qumpi* declined but *awasqa* continued, the direct precursor to contemporary weaving. Andeans wove fine textiles in the Colonial period into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, despite population decline, servitude in Spanish *obrajes*, and prohibitions against wearing some Andean-type garments. Some Spaniards recognized Andean cloth's high quality, and made efforts to encourage fine textile production, including tapestry, at least initially. Andeans used the European loom to weave neo-Inca tapestries for themselves and for Spaniards, incorporating materials and influences from the Arab world and Asia. Andeans did not use textiles as house furnishings, but colonial Andeans produced carpets and seat covers for homes (Niles 1992). Colonial tapestries sometimes included silk warps or wefts, even when prohibited by sumptuary laws (Phipps 1996). Andean peoples under colonial rule adapted and manipulated Spanish and Andean artistic conventions. This is visible in tapestry-woven women's mantles whose layout replicates warp-patterned weave Inca-type garments (Phipps 1996: 151, Fig. 72). We still know little about colonial textiles, especially from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (but see *ibid.* and Phipps, Hecht, and Martvn 2004). Tapestry-woven textiles probably continued to be made, but we cannot yet trace direct relationships between colonial and contemporary tapestries woven in Ayacucho (or elsewhere).

Unpublished research on this topic by the Peruvian gallery owner and exporter John Alfredo Davis (personal communication 2003), whose family has promoted Peruvian crafts development since the 1950s, begins to trace the effects of the rise and fall of Ayacucho's economy on its crafts. Huamanga's wealth during the colonial period from

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<sup>4</sup> His undelivered letter includes some 400 drawings (<http://www.kb.dk/elib/mss/poma>).

nearby mercury mines (essential for processing Bolivian silver) allowed Spaniards to found churches, convents, and monasteries. These required tapestries and other textiles, as did wealthy Spaniards' homes, and the homes of much-poorer miners, who also needed clothing, and sacks for ore. Yet, a demand for foreign goods during the 1800s led to a decline in demand for local crafts, which suffered until the 1960s.

### **Andean Cloth Today**

All traditions change. Yet, the scope of change in textile production during the past thirty years has been exceptionally rapid and significant. Few Andeans create and wear ethnic dress on a daily basis compared to ten years ago, though weaving for sale has increased. Custom, appropriate technology, shared poverty, and the desire to live in the ways of the ancestors are reasons contemporary Andeans still rely on traditional practices. Yet many factors push people away from traditional textile production. Many Andeans have stopped weaving due to migrations, economic crises, loss of heirloom textiles to the ethnic arts market, Peru's civil war, and destruction of the regional agro-pastoral economy. Illegal trade in archaeological and antique textiles removes thousands of textiles from the Andes. Changes and disruptions are not unusual, but the intersection of these phenomena with national transformations of the past forty years, including increased schooling, urbanization, and greater integration of rural Andeans into still-racist national societies, has hit "traditional" practices, including weaving, particularly hard. Many Peruvian or Bolivian Andeans with several years of schooling cease weaving. Beyond racism learned in school, which denigrates practices such as weaving, time in school is time not weaving. For rural and urban Andeans, crafts are second to farming for subsistence. However, fewer people make and wear ethnic dress.

Renewed cultural pride in the pre-Conquest past and the strategic value that wearing ethnic dress sometimes conveys create countervailing pressures across class gulfs to be more aware of cloth's value. Ironically, this comes when the agro-pastoral economy no longer supplies good materials. It is easier to buy cheap factory-made clothing, but some still weave to clothe themselves and their families. International and national craft projects support traditional textile production, but successes are modest; few markets pay adequately. Textiles created for sale earn much-needed income, and can be a source of artistic expression. Some native weavers have achieved impressive successes, including Otavalos in Ecuador (Meisch 2002) and people on Taquile Island, Peru (Zorn 2004). Contemporary Ayacucho tapestry weavers seek to do the same.

### **Contemporary Ayacucho Tapestry**

Ayacucho tapestries are made by individuals or in family-based workshops; larger workshops take apprentices from outside the family. In 2001 in Ayacucho city, there were more than 209 registered weavers and workshops (PROFECE Ayacucho 2001 cited in John Alfredo Davis, personal communication 2003). Seventy-six were registered in the Santa Ana district; others lived elsewhere including Cuzco and Lima. Among the most established weavers are the Sulcas, including Alfonso and his grandson Edwin. Edwin is renowned for his innovative use of light and shadow to create optical illusions; his weavings are featured in "Voices of Ayacucho" (Papa 1999), about Ayacucho after Peru's civil war. Other weavers include Huaranca, Laura, Atauje, and Ayme (figure 1, below).

Figure 1. Alejandrina Ayme de Jiménez shows her tapestry “Grecas Wari” (Wari Designs) Underneath (right) is “Aves Estilizados” (Stylized Birds). Woven 1998, 1999. Cotton and wool. Photograph by Nicario Jiménez. Used by permission.



Tapestries are sold in Peru and abroad, in markets, stores, shops, galleries, museums, and directly from workshops, especially in Ayacucho. Prices range from \$15 to \$1,500 U.S. Individuals, private galleries, cooperatives, and alternative trade organizations sell via the Internet. 6,000 “hits” from a 2004 Google search suggest the vigor of international sales.

Ambrosio Sulca, according to Equator Gallery (2003), was the first person to weave Ayacucho tapestry, starting ca. 1920, winning a weaving contest sponsored by Ayacucho-based Italian firms. Sulca was an outstanding weaver and a significant industry figure, but was not the only tapestry weaver. According to John Alfredo Davis (personal communication 2003), contemporary tapestry developed from Ayacucho’s centuries-long crafts traditions: specifically, from Santa Ana district weavers who produced textiles Ayacucho merchants and muleteers sold in many regions. Even in the 1950s muleteers traded with highland Andeans in remote rural regions. An important product was a thick, loosely spun and woven blanket, a “weft-faced weaving done on a heddle loom, rustic and of Spanish origin, [using] wool for warp and weft” (*ibid.*). Colored with aniline dyes, and with geometric designs, “some blankets had a spatial organization recalling colonial carpets, with a border and central field, depicting lions, birds, and Incas” (*ibid.*; cf. Fabish and Meisch 2005). The *retablo* maker Nicario Jiménez (personal communication 1999) emphasized that artisans wove out of necessity and for use. In contrast, today some weavers can earn a living as artists: “the two periods are completely distinct” (*ibid.*).

According to Davis, “in the mid-1960s these production weavers found a new market: the tourist, and export” (personal communication 2003). The English weaver Barbara Mullins worked with Sulca’s mother, “one of the few women who still knew the recipes for producing some natural dyes. Sulca won a prize for his work at the First Crafts Biennial held at Lima’s Museo de Arte, in 1966, with a tapestry design done by my [Davis’s] father” (*ibid.*). Davis says, “this opened a new door and local artists started designing tapestries, and then foreign designers introduced new ideas and patterns based on pre-Columbian designs” (*ibid.*). In 1994, Sulca was awarded the national prize of Grand Master of Peruvian Crafts, for lifetime achievement. Two Ayacucho *retablo* makers received this prize, but Sulca is the only Ayacucho tapestry weaver honored. Davis states that eccentric wefts were used “well after Independence” (the 1820s). However, the loss of the 19<sup>th</sup> century internal market, when wealthy Peruvians preferred French and other European goods, forced weavers to seek simpler styles requiring less time. This led to simple geometric patterns until new markets in the 1960s made it possible for weavers to experiment again with more complex, time-consuming imagery (*ibid.*). Eccentric weft tapestry was revived in the Centro de Desarrollo Artesanal directed by Davis’s father, with classes taught by James Peters (a U.S. professor) and the weaver



Nerio Atauje (*ibid.*). Tapestry weavers still use this technique.

Family-based workshops are common in Andean textile production, including embroidery workshops in Peru (Femenías 2004) and weaving workshops in Ecuador (Meisch 2002). Ayacucho artisans who produce *retablos* and other crafts typically learn in family-based workshops (Ulfe 2005). Apprenticeship in some crafts is restricted to family members, but some artisans, including weavers, take non-family apprentices. The ubiquity of workshop production is seen even in an Internet site, which classifies lists three tapestry categories: street quality of “unwashed wool”; unsigned tapestries of “prewashed wool” and “aniline” (chemical) dyes “woven in *talleres* (factories), by apprentices under a master”; and “signed” tapestries woven by “masters,” named by “peer recognition” (CC Imports 2002). Women who weave—and their numbers may be increasing—learned to weave within their families. Alejandrina Ayme's mother taught her to weave. Ayme's husband Nicario Jiménez told me “her mother, who was from Huamanga, wove out of necessity; she was an orphan, only men wove” (personal communication 1999). Ayme's mother obliged Ayme to weave from economic need, from the time she was a child (*ibid.*).

Ayacucho tapestries share technical features. Most have cotton warps and sheep wool wefts, though some use sheep wool warps; alpaca wefts are used in higher-end products (alpaca is purchased outside Ayacucho). Cotton warps and wool wefts were common in pre-Conquest tapestries. Some threads are spun on wheels; others are handspun. Dovetailing is the usual join. Tapestry sizes are 0.6 x 0.9 or 1.2 x 1.8 meters (2 x 3 or 6 x 9 feet); larger pieces have two sections seamed together. Most tapestries are finished simply with short warp fringes; a few have seamed edges, and some have wefts worked back into the selvages. Some weavers produce runners and carpets, to diversify their product. Better-quality tapestries use yarns colored with natural dyes. Some tapestries use the easily available, cheap chemical dyes for deeper colors, and natural dyes for lighter colors. Regional sources of natural dye plants, gathered at the end of the winter rainy season (April), include walnut (*nogal*), indigo (*añil*), and soot (*carbón de casa*), for brown, blue, and black. Cochineal, from insects that live on the prickly pear cactus *Opuntia ficus-indica*, abounds in the Ayacucho region, yielding pinks and reds.

Abstract, geometric imagery dominates Ayacucho tapestry. In contrast, “genre” scenes (women wearing ethnic dress, mountains, llamas) are woven in Huancayo, Cuzco, and San Pedro de Cajas. Many Ayacucho tapestries use pre-Conquest geometric images, including stylized birds from Chancay, or abstract feline or deity faces from Wari and Tiwanaku (Figure 1). Patterned color blocks alter the perception of figure and ground. Some tapestries are based on *tuqapu* or represent pre-Conquest myths; others draw on personal imagery. Edwin Sulca is renowned for his innovative style; his tapestries create a 3-D illusion, with curvilinear forms that appear to float off the textile surface. Sulca also weaves tapestries of other textiles (typically, belts); such self-referencing recalls ancient fabrics whose surface images repeat interior textile structures (cf. Frame 1986).

Many tapestries are titled, reflecting their (desired) status as art; tapestries by well-known weavers are signed. This is an adaptation to the Western art market, since traditional textiles are neither titled nor signed. Tapestry titles are in Spanish or Quechua (rarely translated). Tapestries for sale on the Internet have titles of animals, such as

“Condor” and “Man-Feline Deity,” or refer to ancient Peru, including “Inca Magic” and “Paracas Warriors.” Abstract titles included “Shadow and Light” and “Thanks to Life.” Quechua titles included “*Chakana*” (Bridge/Stair, or Orion’s Belt), “*El Chumpi*” (The Belt), “*Tocapo*” (*Tuqapu*), “*Amaru*” (Serpent), and the rather unusual “Hot Huari Chic.”

Some Ayacucho tapestry weavers perpetuate Andean expressive culture by teaching and/or founding institutions, such as gallery-museums where tapestry and other crafts are exhibited and sold, and classes are offered to Andean youth. Alejandrina Ayme and her husband opened the *Museo de Arte Popular de Ayacucho* in Lima; Gregorio Sulca founded the *Instituto de Cultura de Quechua Superior* in Ayacucho. Their entrepreneurship and dedication is impressive, especially given the lack of institutional support to realize their goals of both earning a living and expressing deeply-felt dreams through the art of tapestry. Some Andeans are reviving ancient textile techniques and weaving modern textiles in the context of traditions that permit—even encourage—individual creativity. Andean tapestry weaving continues as an artistic expression of weavers creating new textiles within the world’s longest continuous textile tradition.

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