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## Textiles and Their Messages: Perspectives from the Central Andes: An examination of structure as "message" in the Chavin textiles.

William J. Conklin  
*Textile Museum*

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**Textiles and Their Messages: Perspectives from the Central Andes:  
An examination of structure as “message” in the Chavin textiles.**

William J Conklin

The Chavin cotton textiles created during the first millenium bc contain both painted and structured images. These images closely resemble both the carved stone images found on the temple of Chavin de Huantar and the images portrayed on the metal and stone artifacts attributed to Chavin burials. Through iconographic analysis it is possible to easily trace the influence that Chavin images had on the imagery of subsequent Andean cultures, but it is also quite possible to trace the influence that the Chavin structural techniques had on subsequent Andean weaving. This paper examines the relationship between the use of textile structures in the Chavin textiles and the use of those structures in cultures that show direct Chavin visual influence and on cultures whose visual connection to Chavin iconography seems remote. The question is examined as to whether the new technical fabric structures found in the Chavin textiles were in themselves the “messages” or at least part of the “messages” or were merely techniques subservient to the “messages” that were conveyed by the iconography.

William J Conklin, an architect and archaeologist, is currently the Guest Curator of a Textile Museum exhibition entitled “Messages from Minus Time: the Chavin Textiles of the Ancient Andes.” He is also a Research Associate at the Textile Museum as well as a Research Associate at several other institutions. His papers on Andean Textiles have included those on specific Andean cultures such as the Moche, Huari, Tiwanaku and Chavin cultures but have also included general papers on the meaning of textile structure in the Andes, on the use of fabric structures in architectural construction and on the importance of the individual in Andean archaeology. Mr. Conklin’s current fieldwork is in Chile where he spends two months each year in excavation and in museum research.